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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 199
February
2012

Asher Dust

Oxford's maverick MC on his
incredible lifetime of music making
plus
all your local music news, reviews
and upcoming gigs.

photo: Zahra Tehrani

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SAT 28 APR
MARTIN HARLEY BAND

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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TRUCK FESTIVAL is set to return this summer after founders Robin and Joe Bennett handed the event over to new management.

Truck, which had been the centrepiece of Oxford's live music calendar since 1998, surviving both floods and foot and mouth crises, succumbed to financial woes last year, going into administration in September.

However, the event has been taken over by the organisers of **Y-Not Festival** in Derbyshire, which won Best Grassroots Festival 2011 at the UK Festival Awards. The new organisers hope to take Truck back to its roots as a local community festival.

In a statement on the Truck website, Joe and Robin announced, "We have always felt a great responsibility for the integrity and sustainability of Truck Festival, which grew so quickly and with such enthusiasm from very humble beginnings in 1998. Via Truck's unique catering arrangements with the Rotary Club, tens of thousands of pounds have been raised for charities and good causes every year, including last year, and many great bands have taken their first steps to international prominence.

"However, after a notoriously difficult summer of trading for Truck Festival, and festivals in general, we have decided it is time for us to step down from our role at the event.

"During the 14 years of its existence, since we started it round our kitchen table, the festival has suffered various threats and disasters and taken on a life of its own. We like to think it has brought joy to a lot of people. It's right for this tradition with so many benefits to the community to continue; a chance encounter with the organisers of Y-Not festival in Derbyshire has given it the opportunity to do so.

"We are glad to say that, rather than finish for good or be in corporate hands, the festival in 2012 will go back to basics under the management of the Y-Not team. We feel they are the right people to take on the event, give it a fresh start and rebuild it over the next few years, and we hope you'll give them your full support."

The dates for this year's Truck Festival have been announced as the **20th - 21st July** at Hill Farm in Steventon.

DEMOS ARE STILL BEING accepted for this year's **Oxford Punt**. The annual showcase of new local music talent takes place on **Wednesday 16th May**, featuring 20 acts playing across five venues. Participating venues are **The Cellar, The Purple Turtle, The Wheatsheaf, The Duke's Cut** and **The Junction**.

Bands or solo acts wanting to play at the Punt can submit demos, either by emailing links to online music to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, or sending CDs to **Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**.

Please clearly mark your demo **PUNT** and include both phone and email contact details and a brief bio of the band. Only acts from Oxfordshire may apply, you can't apply if you've played the Punt before and, due to licensing conditions of the venues, only acts aged over 18 will be eligible. Deadline for demos is the 10th of March, with the line-up announced on the 15th.

A limited number – 100 – **all-venue Punt passes** are on sale from 1st February from Truck Store on Cowley Road and online at oxfordmusic.net, priced £8.



BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY makes visits Oxford in May when he teams up with alt.folk band **Trembling Bells**. The two acts combine to play at **The Bullingdon** on **Friday 4th May** for local promoters **Pindrop Performances**.

Tickets, priced £15, are on sale now at wegottickets.com and, with Will Oldham/Bonnie 'Prince' Billie's legendary status in alt.country circles, it'll sell out pretty damn fast, so off you pop and get yerself one.

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC launches its spring programme this month with a series of concerts and interactive performances at the North Wall in Summertown and Modern Art Oxford.

Kicking off the new season is a night of electronic music from **Simon Bookish and Leafcutter John** at **Modern Art** on **Saturday 11th February**. This is followed by an evening of urban and ancient Asian fusion music with **Sambasunda** at **North Wall** on **Saturday 25th**. **Saturday 3rd March** sees **Speech Project** attempting to bring the words and music of folk legends back to life at the Northwall, plus polyrhythmic groovers **Snorkel** at **Modern Art** on **Saturday 17th**.

Friday 20th April finds oud star **DoubleDare** at the North Wall, while moving into May, there's a double dose of interactive musical

fun at Modern Art on Saturday 5th with **Janek Schaefer's Local Radio Orchestra** and **Phoenix & Phaedra Holding Patterns**. The season concludes on **Friday 18th May** at the **Holywell Music Room** with a performance from ethereal Norwegian ensemble **Arve Henrikson & Trio Mediaeval**.

In addition to the one-off concerts, **Audiograft** returns to **Brookes University** from **Tuesday 28th February – Saturday 3rd March**, featuring performances, sound installations and exhibitions featuring over 25 different artists, which local musicians are invited to become involved with.

More information on all those events, plus tickets, can be found at www.ocmevents.org.

THIS YEAR'S CORNBURY FESTIVAL will take place over the weekend of **29th June – 1st July** at its new home of the **Great Tew**



FIXERS will play a headline show at **The O2 Academy** on **Thursday 17th May** to celebrate the release of their debut album on the 14th.

Singer Jack Goldstein told Nightshift at the start of January, "Things are good at the moment; we're lining up a brand new version of 'Iron Deer Dream' as our next single: it should be going to radio this week. Zane Lowe might even play it this evening, I'm a bit out of the loop to be honest! We're cooped up in a cold, windowless rehearsal cabin in the middle of nowhere at the moment and I resemble Kurt Russell in *The Thing*, beard and all. We really want to try and make this Oxford show special - I'm officially having it as my birthday party!"

Tickets for the Academy show are on sale now from the venue box office.



GUNNING FOR TAMAR release their new EP as a limited edition wrist watch next month. The suitably-titled **'Wristwatch EP'** is released on local label Alcopop! on **19th March** and the math-rock favourites will head off on a UK tour with *Jumping Ships* to coincide, including a show at **The Cellar on Saturday 24th March**.

Jack Pop from the label explained how the novel concept works: "The wristwatch idea has been a long time coming, and one Gunning For Tamar were absolutely insistent on. After all, the lead track is called 'Time Trophies' and this watch is exactly that! Unfortunately we couldn't make the watch sing the A-side so each one comes with a download code on the back to download the full EP. I think it kinda works, and they've proved massively popular already."

Gunning For Tamar singer Joe Wallis, meanwhile, is looking forward to the forthcoming tour: "If we're not touring, we tend to feel hollow and sad, so it's for the best we hit the road as much as we can, and we'll be hitting some new places this time round too. Over the summer there'll be festivals and we're also going back to Europe armed with songs and our friendly foreign expansionist plan. We're currently writing and demoing new songs for our album towards the end of the year and planning a couple surprises for 2012. We'll keep on moving forward, that's the plan. Unless we see a *Tyranosaurus Rex*."

Estate. Early bird tickets for the event, which last year featured headline sets from James Blunt, The Faces and Status Quo, are already sold out. For more information visit www.cornburyfestival.com.

TINDERBOX FESTIVAL also returns this summer. The leftfield and experimental music festival, curated by north Oxfordshire jazz-metal crazies Red Square, takes place at **Cropredy Old Wharf on Saturday 16th June**.

TRUCK STORE celebrates its first anniversary this month with a weekend of live in-store music.

The record shop, on Cowley Road, opened last February as a joint venture between Rapture in Witney and Truck Festival and has provided a much-needed outlet for local music and gig tickets as well as hosting a series of in-store shows by touring acts.

Kicking off with an early evening performance by **Danny & The Champions of the World** on **Friday 10th February**, Truck Store hosts a full day of music on **Saturday 11th** featuring **The Yarns, Kill Murray, Deer Chicago, Gunning For Tamar, Dreaming Spires** and **Trevor Moss & Hannah Lou**.

On **Sunday 12th** Nick Cope, Jess Hall and **Spring Offensive** join **James Vincent McMorrow** in-store ahead of his show at the O2 Academy that evening.

The following **Friday (17th)** Canadian alt.country act **Ox** play at Truck ahead of their show at the Wheatsheaf the same night. **The**

Epstein also play.

As we've said many, many time before, keep supporting local independent shops like Truck. The importance of the service they provide for the local music community cannot be overstated.

EVOLUTION RECORDING STUDIO is a new facility in Oxford run by former Zodiac owner and veteran local musician **Nick Moorbath**. The new studio features a refurbished **Trident 80B Mixing console** from the legendary Sawmills recording studio, where Oasis, The Stone Roses and Ride recorded, and where it was stored for 15 years and is one very few left in the country.

Nick talked to Nightshift about the investment he's put into the new studio and the unique recording opportunity it offers:

"The way the desk sounds totally justifies all

THE HANDSOME FAMILY are the highlights of a new season of Oxford shows from *Empty Rooms Promotions* starting this month.

The cult alt.country duo, whose last local show was at *Truck Festival* in 2002, play at **The Bullingdon on Friday 25th May**.

Empty Rooms, which has brought a series of cult American and British acts to town over the past couple of years, including *Mary Gauthier, Richmond Fontaine* and *The Willie Nile Band*, also plays host to **Danny & The Champions Of The World** (Friday 10th February); **Chuck Prophet & Mission Express** (Fri 13th April) and **Dave Alvin & The Guilty Ones** (Thursday 19th April). All shows are at the Bully. Visit www.empty-rooms.com for more details.

the hard work and expense.

The studio is around 1000sq ft and has a great sounding live room, a spacious control room with natural light and great chill out facilities.

"Oxford really needed a top rate facility for bands, engineers and producers to work in. We've already had *The Relationships, Jonquil* and *Dubwiser* in, with *Sam Williams* and *Mark Gardener* bringing in production projects. *Chad Valley's* new album is due to be mixed here over the next couple of weeks. So it's all got off to a flying start."

For more information visit

www.evolutionstudios.co.uk or call **01865 203073** to arrange a visit. Evolution is running special rates for local unsigned acts.

GRAHAM COXON comes to the **O2 Academy** on **Friday 13th April** to promote his new album 'A+E' and is inviting fans to recommend and vote for local acts to support him. Anyone can nominate a band and link a Youtube clip of them to his site for people to vote for. Visit toursupport.grahamcoxon.co.uk.

GREY CHILDREN release their debut album 'Doctor Doctor' online this month. The collective, formed by former-Witches frontman Dave Griffiths, and featuring members of *Little Fish, The Evenings, Tamara & The Martyrs, Francis Pugh & The Whisky Singers* and *T-Rextacy* among others, recorded the album across eight locations in six towns over two countries last year with the aim of raising awareness of Pure-O, a little-known form of obsessive compulsive disorder.

To hear the album, visit

www.greychildren.co.uk.

ANDY KERSHAW will be sharing extracts from his new autobiography *No Off Switch* at **Glee Club** on Hythe Bridge Street on **Thursday 15th March**. The former Billy Bragg roadie turned Radio 1 DJ and BBC foreign correspondent was instrumental in popularising world music in the UK. Tickets are £15 adv. Visit www.glee.co.uk/oxford for more details.

FOLLOWING THE SAD DEMISE OF THE OXFORD GUITAR GALLERY in November, manager **Dave Smart** has started a new business, *Smart Guitars*, specialising in guitar and amplifier maintenance and repair, from a guitar re-string to vintage restoration and re-valve to custom modifications for amps as well as pedalboard repairs.

Contact Dave on **07710216368** or smartguitars@ntlworld.com.





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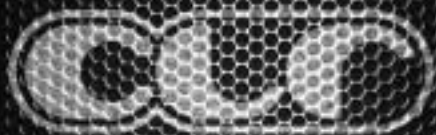
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a quiet word with

Asher Dust

photo: Sarah Lever



Asher Dust with collaborator Farjedi

HE'S BEEN PERFORMING ON the Oxford music scene since the 1960s. He's been signed to EMI and ZTT and worked with Trevor Horn and Paul Hardcastle. A list of artists he's collaborated with would fill this entire page. He's played the Oxford Punt at least twice and been Nightshift's Demo of the Month and Demo Dumper. He's played in some of Oxford's finest bands and yet Andrew Jones, aka Asher Dust, usually known simply as AJ, remains one of this city's most undervalued and enigmatic musical talents.

WHILE REVIEWING THE MOST recent Asher Dust EP – Demo of the Month in January's issue – it struck us we'd never actually featured the man on the front cover and felt obliged to immediately rectify the situation, though not before giving ourselves a right royal kicking for being so remiss.

Because not only is AJ a singularly maverick star, his story is one that demands to be heard. It's a musical story that began when he was a mere five years old, singing with his dad's reggae soundsystem, and has taken more twists and turns, peaks and troughs, than almost any other local act, not to mention one taking in myriad musical genres, from reggae dub and r'n'b to soul, hip hop, trip hop, electro and some stuff we were never able to put our finger on.

EVEN AMID SUCH A VARIED and variable musical journey, AJ's

latest offering, 'Maverick Trick', was a creative high point, the disparate, often ill-matched ideas he regularly throws into his peculiar mix, cohering into a fiery, soulful fusion of conscious rapping, dancehall, funky electro and trippy atmospherics, his voice rich and rough-hewn, easily equal to the likes of Seal or Terence Trent D'arby.

Additionally AJ provides the highlight of Tiger Mendoza's new 'LIBRE' EP with his abrasive vocal performance on 'Lovesick Vandal'.

THERE ARE MANY, MANY MORE releases and projects in the pipeline for 2012, but for those of you unfamiliar with the Asher Dust story, let's go back to the 60s when he was barely old enough for school...

"My father's sound was called Sir Jones HiFi. He used to hold parties every Saturday night above his Tailor's shop on St. Clement's. He would sometimes let me come and stand on a speaker box and sing a song called 'This World' by Roy & Millie. He also promoted reggae nights at Oxford Town Hall; I remember Desmond Dekker, Bruce Ruffin, The Pioneers and Laural Aitken all performed there... Sir Jones HiFi was one of the first sound systems in Oxford. The very first was run by the late (Mackating frontman) Slimma's father."

How did the experience shape your desire to make your own music? "I remember always wanting to perform and loving the attention and,

truth be told, I was a bit of a show-off. I would say my parents' huge record collection was more influential in shaping my desire to perform. From an early age I would play records and stand in front of the mirror pretending to be singing in front of a live audience.

"Both my parents are born again Christians now, so they believe I'm making the Devil's music. Ha ha! Bothered? Fuck no!"

AFTER THIS EARLY

introduction to performing, AJ played with the Addis Ababa Soundsystem through the 1970s and 80s. What was the scene like back then?

"Addis Ababa is a local reggae sound system that still plays out occasionally. We selected roots reggae, dub and lovers rock and exclusive dubplates. I would record vocals over dubplates along with brilliant local reggae MC Mackabush. The local reggae scene was very strong back then, there were several local reggae sound systems like Addis, Black Harmony, Macka. Every week there was a blues session or a dance at the Barns Court Youth Club, Roots Club, Littlemore Hall. Many big sounds like King Tubby, Jah Tubby, Coxson, Jungleman, Quaker City played in Oxford. The sound system culture was very important socially for the African Caribbean community, especially as many of the clubs at that time were not particularly welcoming towards black people. It was still a diverse mix of people,

black and white, that attended."

AS WITH ANY ASPIRING

singer, AJ hoped to break into the music industry and his chance came with separate deals with ZTT and EMI, although in both cases, the outcome was less than happy.

"The ZTT deal came about when I was working with a local guy called Stefan who was a wicked producer, who created really strong electro-tinged soul and reggae tracks. We dropped in to Sarm West studio reception area in London and left a cassette of three tracks we did together. Trevor Horn liked what he heard and we ended up recording a track there. My opinion of Mr Horn was that he was obsessive, neurotic... a genius. On one track we spent two 13-hour days listening to a drummer play the kick drum as he was searching for some sound that was in his head. Working with him shattered my confidence and was a catalyst for me giving up music altogether for a while. Plus, truth be told, Seal bloody came along and was frankly cooler, more talented and taller... Bastard!"

And the deal with EMI – how did the experience colour your opinion on making music and the industry as a whole?

"I met a rich, spoilt brat – nice guy though – at a university gig; he knew someone at EMI, took one of my tapes along and managed to get me a lot of studio time. The tracks were utter shite pop soul drivel. However, I was offered a deal, recorded a ten track album of this drivel and then was promptly dropped. The entire experience did put me off and made me mistrustful of everything connected to the music industry. I had an inept and dodgy manager and I met so many folk whose egos far outweighed their talent it was shocking. Still, I also made a lot of mistakes. In my desperation to make it I wrote a lot of insipid rubbish and would constantly jump on whatever musical bandwagon was trotting into town with more often than not disastrous consequences. The biggest thing that I learned from these, what appeared at the time to be golden ticket opportunities for success actually meant nothing in terms of national success."

AJ also found himself working with 80s hitmaker Paul Hardcastle, of whom he has few happy memories. "Ha ha! In the studio, if I dared to suggest an idea or question his judgement he would point to his discs on the wall for his trillion sales of 'Nineteen' or 'Rainforest' and remark 'When you have one of those, I will

listen to your opinion; until then, leave it to the expert.' Smug little twat. Needless to say I walked away." Given such a litany of bad experiences, who were the best people AJ worked with around this period of his life?

"Stefan, who I mentioned earlier, and Danny MSD Whittaker, who is a local reggae and dub producer, were by far the best people I worked with. I have to mention Trevor Horn, though, for his attention to detail and refusal to compromise. Stefan and MSD's influence on me was showing me how to use the Tascam 4 track and a reel-to-reel machine. I was inspired how they could create such brilliant music with very basic recording equipment, a drum machine and a keyboard. One of my regrets is that many of my earliest musical experiments on the Tascam never saw the light of day: they were very basic but innovative."

NIGHTSHIFT'S EARLIEST FIRST-hand experience of AJ was in his involvement in a series of early-90s bands in Oxford, including The Circle – a collective formed with members of local live trance faves The Egg – eclectic trip-hop group Nortica and rap collective Big Speakers, who all left their own mark on the local scene.

"The Circle was a nightmare time for me, partly because of my own personal problems, but also because I found the talented but controlling twins, Ned and Maff, very difficult to work with. The Circle were musically frustrating: too much jazz-funk wankery. However, it was fun to play live and we did write a couple of blinding tunes. Spider, Jonas, Malcolm Atkins and Dave on bass were totally cool and talented too.

"Nortica were the most forward thinking creatively and had the most potential to do something special. There was too much emotional drama, insecurity and weird band dynamics going on but the sound we created together was brilliant.

"Big Speakers was frustrating but fun: good people, very talented and I felt brought something different to the hip hop table. A one-off comeback gig maybe happening with some new recordings."

AFTER THE DEMISE OF BIG Speakers, AJ, perhaps understandably, took the decision to quit music completely. However, after hearing The Streets' debut album, 'Original Pirate Material', he relented, rejuvenated by the possibilities it offered.

"After my nightmare time with record labels and dealing with A&R wankers, it just sucked all the love of creating music out of me. Plus, with hindsight, I realised that I was partly to blame because I was so desperate to make it I was creating soulless rubbish

in an attempt to please A&R. Anyway, I settled into domestic living, parenthood and put any thoughts of creating music again on the shelf.

"Hearing The Streets' first album made me realise that even though I was from the UK and a below average rapper, I could still get my point across in a kind of spoken word, conversational way. Mike Skinner's slightly ramshackle production also gave me the confidence to work on my slightly off-kilter rhythmic ideas. The Demon Boyz were my favourite UK hip hop act, but I always felt their MC skills were way beyond me. The Streets seemed like a level that I could at least aspire to."

SINCE RETURNING TO MAKING music a decade ago AJ has never looked back, the decision to make music for his own pleasure rather than as an attempt to achieve commercial success giving him the freedom to both be himself and experiment.

One of the ways in which this has best manifested itself is his relentless stream of collaborative efforts which allow AJ to explore so many different stylistic streams, stamping his instantly recognisable mark on diverse projects. In fact the list of collaborators is quite dizzying when written down: from local reggae legends Dubwiser to electronic dub producer Meef Chaloin, who DJ Count Skylarkin recommended to us back in 2010 and with whom AJ is already recording a second album, and on to more unexpected bands like Tiger Menoza and Baby Gravy, whose drummer Zahra Tehrani produced 'Maverick Trick'. Elsewhere take your pick from DJ Chefal, Jack Sparrow, Von D, J Kenzo, Jonny Dollar, Bluesy, Monsieur Greg and Mark Boy. How does he find the time?

"The internet! Back in the day, there is no way I would have found the time. But now, pretty much all that happens is that someone will send me a track, I will write a song, record my vocals into my PC and email my vocals. The majority of collaborators I haven't met yet. I would say my most challenging was the track with Tiger Mendoza, mainly because I found it hard to come up with a melody that suited the crazy break beat riddim."

Your contributions to Dubwiser's album and the Tiger Mendoza EP in particular stand out; what are your feelings about those?

"Jonas From Dubwiser has been very supportive over the years, always encouraging me to be creative. I'm really proud of my contributions to both projects. And I feel that both projects are a perfect example of Oxford's diversity, to show that Oxford is not just indie landfill. I love Tiger Mendoza's forward thinking

and experimental electronica.. And Dubwiser's album showcases pop smarts and roots militancy in equal measure. I think one of my strengths, if I can humbly say, is my ability to jump on different genres but still maintain my own style."

After a succession of demos over the years that have ranged from inspired to incomprehensible, the new Asher Dust EP sounds like his most accomplished work to date. Does AJ feel he's hit a particularly creative purple patch of late?

"I'm not sure really. I am proud of it and it's certainly better produced than some of my past efforts, so yeah, I am pleased with how it turned out. I was surprised and happy to get Demo Of The Month: I believe that's three Demo Of The Months and two Demo Dumpings now...with a few mid table placings.

"I think the stuff I am working on now is stronger and also the new tracks forthcoming on BG records are also, in my opinion, a lot stronger. I'm really pleased with the EP though. I also love working with Zahra: hardworking, mad as pants and bloody talented."

You've also been working with Zahra at the Ark-T project for young musicians. Do you think your experiences can help steer them in the right direction?

"My involvement is more to do with mentoring young people and I do songwriting and composition workshops. I feel my experiences enable me to offer advice and encouragement in terms of the pitfalls of the music industry and in encouraging young people to believe in their ability and to work hard. My sadness is that for some, at the first whiff of potential 'stardom' comes a see-ya-later response. All I can say is don't spend money that's not in your bank account!"

TO FURTHER ENHANCE HIS own and others' projects, AJ recently set up his own record label, Moving Hand.

"Myself and Ads – aka Farjedi – have been writing on and off for about seven years. However, we never seemed to get around to completing tracks. We realised we had amassed a really strong set of songs and half-finished ideas. With the industry as it is, we didn't want to waste time trying to secure a deal in this current climate, so we created Moving Hand to release our tracks as digital downloads and limited edition vinyl. Our first release should be out in March. Its Farjedi & Asher Dust - 'Keep You' / 'Looking For The Way'... kind of electronica, phuture dubstep, soul. We are also releasing tracks from various local acts including Lost Youth, a breakbeat, techhouse, electro act from Wantage, as well as various other projects."

Chief among future releases will be a

full Asher Dust album; what can we expect from that?

"Hmmm... ghetto electro-pop wid a lickie hip hop. Ha! Seriously, at the moment it's sounding strong, production-wise, musically and lyrically. At the moment the album features just me and Farjedi on production and multi - instrumental duties, plus a brilliant horn player called Vicky Flint on trumpet duty, however I'm not ruling out having the likes of Jonas from Dubwiser coming along to bless the project with his talent, and maybe one or two others."

AND SO, LOOKING BACK ON such a long and varied musical life so far, how much does AJ think the local music scene had changed in the time he's been involved with it? Few local artists can have such extensive experience of the music business, both locally and beyond.

"Technology has almost totally changed the game. Anyone who knows their way around a computer with a bit of imagination can come up with incredible productions. I think the quality and diversity of bands coming out of Oxford is encouraging and it's great to see the local metal scene growing again. The likes of Skeletor and Buried in Smoke are putting on great metal shindigs. Personally haven't felt part of the local scene. Getting gigs became such a nightmare that it prompted my decision to quit performing live. It's not a gripe, it is what it is. Until BG Records came along I hadn't felt part of a local scene since my sound system days with Addis Ababa.

"I still think there is a reluctance to support local urban music talent; if it was not for Zahra at Ark T and BG Records, and Kid Fury's Wordplay nights, there would be little hope for local urban acts to shine. This has created an understandable reluctance on the part of young hip hop or r'n'b acts to approach promoters. My own experience has been far from positive with some local promoters, when I have tried to get a gig, stating that they don't wanna book hip hop or grime acts because there will be trouble etc. Because of course my Asher Dust project is really fucking hardcore gangsta rap! Still, I really believe the local scene musically is diverse and bursting with good quality talent from all genres and age ranges. Nightshift has improved its coverage of all things urban and along with the MusicinOxford site and Truck Store there is plenty of support for local talent."

'Maverick Trick' is available at bgrecords.bandcamp.com. Tiger Mendoza's 'LIBRE EP' is out now. Asher Dust plays live at Baby Simple on Friday 24th February. Visit soundcloud.com/asher-dust for more music and news.

RELEASED

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RICHARD WALTERS

‘Young Trees’

(Beard Museum)

It seems like forever that Richard Walters has been a part of the Oxford music scene, but he's always managed to sidestep over-familiarity, and has quietly been getting on with his thing, forging a respectable niche in a town that's never really short of either good vocalists or more than competent songwriters.

Regardless, his voice *is* familiar - but that's no bad thing. Quiet, soft, and effectively - yet subtly - powerful, it's simultaneously conversational and tuneful, leading you through songs, rarely wavering from deceptively being the centre of attention. On this five-track EP, it's as flawless and clear as on much previous work, sometimes sounding post-produced but in fact being impressively rendered as a straightforward vocal delivery.

On these tracks, the poetic lyrics seem slightly opaque; line by line, they hint at feelings of emotion and serious subjects, but patchworked into songs and as a whole EP, such simplicity of theme or message seems less important than the overall ‘feel’. The EP's title track is a quietly jaunty, subtly folky song that marries vocals to a twinkly cello background. With a couple of changes of focus and weight, as elements drop out and then return, it's like a more refined, less studied Fleet Foxes. Coming in at under three minutes, it's impressively succinct and to the point.

‘Regretless’ has a distant-sounding, blues-tinged piano melody at its core, with soft backing vocals creating an almost spiritual feel. ‘Dandelion’, in contrast, is almost cute - at least in the context of this set - before it falls back to



a more morose, string-swathed ending. As with ‘Regretless’, there are melodic snippets that form a coda here, a structural connection there, each of which could individually sustain a song in their own right.

‘Infinity Street’ is the most spartan and delicate song on the EP, and hence the most personal-sounding; ‘Bring On The Dancing Horses’ inverts the Echo And The Bunnymen song's sense of self-importance to become a mournful and intimate few minutes, with sweet, sharp guitar melodies providing respite from the fear of gloom.

As a whole, this is a brilliantly balanced EP - the jauntier, richer instrumentation in some songs is balanced (both within songs and across the set) with more sparse arrangements. In terms of songwriting, there's a lot of subtle stuff in play, with deceptively complex backing music carefully treading amongst the vocal lines to never dominate, but instead to co-exist in a well-defined, affecting and intelligent collection of songs.

Simon Minter



VIENNA DITTO

‘Bells’

(Silver Street Singles Club)

Vienna Ditto always sound like they should be playing in some twilit, possibly subterranean jazz club in either the distant past or the far future. There's something that little bit

otherworldly about their woozily ethereal gothic blues pop, which has been regularly compared to Portishead in the past as well as David Lynch's soundtrack music.

Singer Hattie Taylor forever sounds like an unearthly child, equally coquettish and dreamily naïve, never more so than when she's cooing playfully on the song ‘Snowbound’, which suitably sounds like it should be performed in the dining car of Krafterk's Trans-Europe Express as it ploughs through Arctic the tundra. It's a slight piece, less dense and immersive than the band's previous outing, which won them Nightshift's Demo of the Month, but so disarmingly bright-eyed you'd struggle not to fall under its spell.

‘Bells’, meanwhile, is more restless, a fidgety twinkle of machine parts trying to rearrange themselves beneath Hattie's playfully soulful vocal reverie. Because it doesn't seem able to get itself comfortable it lacks ‘Snowbound's’ seductive quality but the squelching synthetic rhythm that underpins it provides a neat counterpoint to the sweet dancing vocals.

Victoria Waterfield

ABANDON

‘Monsters EP’

(Blindsight)

Those familiar with Abandon's earlier two EPs will find no great surprises in their third offering, except that five of the seven tracks are remixes. Now consisting solely of founder Umair Chaudhry (ex-Xmas Lights), the long and sprawling tracks retain the bleak relentlessness, with unexpected melodic snatches that brighten proceedings like shards of sunlight glimpsed through a snowstorm. Anyone familiar with Jesu will see their influence all too clearly, even down to the artwork, only without the epic production and a more subtle guitar style reminiscent at times of Vini Reilly.

Opener ‘Monsters’ sets the scene with slow drumming, bass almost too low to hear and Chaudhry singing, almost droning, about doubt, dreams and running from himself. His voice is not really the band's greatest strength; neither dark enough to reinforce the music nor light enough to provide much of a contrast. ‘Night Terrors’ is darker still, with barely whispered vocals, slowed down drums and echoes of very early New Order and 80s gothsters The Danse Society. In fact the ghost of the 1980s stalks proceedings like a mountain wolf, only more goth than the lighter weight pop elements currently in vogue.

Two of the remixes here turn out to be by Chaudhry himself with collaborator Marco Ruggiero. The second take on ‘Land Of No Horizon’ is heavy on echo and hardly groundbreaking, but relatively cheerful next to the original. ‘Cower’, from 2010's ‘House Of Cards EP’, is given a more detailed and interesting re-work but by now his voice is really starting to detract from what little enjoyment there is on offer.

This EP shows no lack of ambition and those drawn to this style of music should find it good value, but limiting your palette to such a few colours leaves little room for manoeuvre. But then, the world needs bands like Abandon, if only to remind us just how bleak life, real or imagined, can be.

Art Lagun





SHAKER HEIGHTS

'Sitting In The fire'

(Own label download)

This single features "exclusive artwork based on the music". It's a line drawing of a man staring at a wall in an empty room. Yep, that's roughly how it makes us feel, too.

The single is not precisely bad – it's well made and shows evidence of talent – but it is dully anonymous. The title track starts with good ingredients, a maudlin country-inflected vocal and some pleasing keyboard embellishments, but doesn't know what to do with them. After a repeating these fragments a few times, the song drifts to a halt, like a finance administrator who realises that people stopped listening to his quarterly sales report half way through.

The b-side, 'Poised As Robots', is apparently

"attack-rock", if the press release is to be believed, although in reality it chugs along cosily like a vintage traction engine. It's a simple heartfelt tune that's far superior to the a-side, but it still has trouble asserting itself. It's as if the band have no faith in what they're doing.

So, we've got about one twelfth of a Beautiful South song coupled with a self-conscious Then Jericho track. Hmm, might take another look at that wall for a bit.

David Murphy

MACGILLIVRAY

'RadioPhonic Subluna'

(Own label)

Kirsten MacGillivray a Scottish artist resident in Oxford for the past decade, who has received notable acclaim for her previous work from Radio 3 and boasts former Nico collaborator and biographer James Young as her producer, here presents an album of such striking uniqueness and peculiarity that it leaves your reviewer completely stumped as to how to approach such a musical feat. This, as the title suggests, is an odd album, to say the least.

It's not often you get to hear music that "reflects the melancholy of the Highlands"; nonetheless, the album, a collection of atmospheric soundscapes occasionally overdubbed with artificially created and doom-laden vocals, creates a palpable sense of unease; a feeling MacGillivray undoubtedly intended to create and one she achieves with flair and

competency.

Such a well executed feeling of apprehension, one that lingers throughout the record, doesn't by itself an album make. The opening title track fades into the second, 'Downriver', with spectacularly jagged and unsuccessful results and too many tracks feature the irritating, poetic overdubs aforementioned, ruining the intriguing instrumentation and melody and leaving a sense of frustration for the listener.

However, on the occasions that Macgillivray does actually sing, as opposed to computerised, sci-fi nonsense, the effect is excellent. 'Border Darkness' is a haunting, organ-led piece with strange, childlike vocals that is genuinely moving, while 'Then The Birds Came' creates a restless and unnerving quality reminiscent of Esben and The Witch's macabre, glacial doom mongering.

Jon Clark

MACGILLIVRAY

RADIO
PHONIC
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★ KILL MURRAY ★ DEER CHICAGO ★ THE YARNS ★



FEB 12TH
JAMES VINCENT MACMORROW
★ SPRING OFFENSIVE (ACOUSTIC) ★
★ JESS HALL ★
AND NICK COPE (12 NOON)

GIG GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st

PHAT SESSIONS: **The Cellar** – Fortnightly open jam session and full band set from The Phat Session Collective, plus resident DJ Kid Fury spinning a mix of funk, soul and hip hop.

WEDNESDAY BLUES: **James Street Tavern** – Weekly blues jam.

Friday 3rd

TOTALLY ENORMOUS EXTINCT DINOSAURS: The Bullingdon

There's no doubt that TEED are one of Oxford's major breakthrough successes of the past couple of years. Producer, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Orlando Higginbottom, himself the son of an Oxford University music professor, seems to be everywhere these days, whether it's being raved about in the dance press, playing every festival of last summer – including Glastonbury, Secret Garden Party and Bestival – or soundtracking Nokia adverts. He's one of that rare breed of acts who made their name beyond Oxford before really making a huge mark in their home city. Signed to Berlin-based, Hot Chip-associated label Greco-Roman and due to release his debut album on Polydor, TEED taps into the current desire to return rave to its early-90s roots, alongside the likes of SBTRKT echoing acts like 808 State and Future Soud Of London at times, marrying sweet, pulsing melancholy to wonky blips, euro-house and dreamy, cinematic ambience, merrily playing smash'n'grab with jungle, dubstep, breakbeat, dancehall and indie along the way. TEED's recent double-header with Fixers at the Ashmolean showed he's as at home in non-traditional indoor venues as he is in outdoor arenas and tonight's setting is a perfectly intimate environment for his post-iPod electronica, which comes with plenty of attention to detail on the live entertainment front.

FEBRUARY

THURSDAY 2nd

AGS CONNOLLY + REG & DOM + STUART NOAH + JACKIE D WILLIAMS + MARK NOBLE + GEMMA MOSS: **The Bullingdon** – It's All About The Music Promotions presents an evening of local acoustic talents, including country-folk troubadour Ags Connolly.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: **The Wheatsheaf** – Smooth, soulful jazz from in-demand session saxophonist Snake Davis, whose impressive CV includes work with Ray Charles, Tom Jones, Tina Turner, Take That, Cher, Beyoncé, Kylie, Paul McCartney and Pet Shop Boys among many others.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre** – Oxford's longest-running and best open mic club continues to showcase local singers, musicians, poets and storytellers every Thursday.

JUNKIE BRUSH + REIGN OF FURY + INDIGO MONTOYA: **Wahoo** – Oxford University's Rock Society presents a night of heaviosity, with live sets from local agit-punks Junkie Brush and Tewkesbury's classic thrash-metallers Reign Of Fury, plus rock and metal tunes from Discord DJs.

AETHARA + DECIMATION + ELYSIUM WAITS: **The Bell, Bicester** – Jambox metal night with molten metalcore types Aethara.

OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Half Moon Output:** **The Cellar**

JAMBOX ACOUSTIC & OPEN MIC NIGHT: **The Wheatsheaf, Banbury**

FRIDAY 3rd

TOTALLY ENORMOUS EXTINCT DINOSAURS: **The Bullingdon** – Orlando Higginbottom gets his spikes on again for what should be a celebratory hometown show – *see main preview*

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with VIENNA DITTO + YELLOW FEVER + WHO'S FELIX: **The Wheatsheaf** – Typical mixed bag of musical treats at Klub Kak, tonight featuring sultry trip-pop minxes Vienna Ditto, launching their new single, 'Bells'. Support from indie rockers Yellow Fever.

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: **The Cellar** – Reggae, dancehall and hip hop with Count Skylarkin and Mr Benn, plus booming basslines, rocking roots and culture, extra echo-chamber and soul-drenched vocals from Reading's The Drop, recently championed by David Rodigan and acclaimed by DJ Derek as "The best thing to come out of Reading since Huntly and Palmers biscuits".

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

MUNDANE SANDS + BLIN' JONNIE + WHYTHAM WOOD: **The Hollybush, Osney** – Folk rocking from Mundane Sands, veering between early Dire Straits and The Oyster Band.

BREEZE: **The Duke's Cut** – Party-friendly covers.

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

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: **Red Lion, Wolvercote** – Folk music and poetry.

REIGN UPON US + AETHARA + PITCHBLACK SUMMER +

DECIMATION: **The Wheatsheaf, Banbury** – Jambox metal night.

SATURDAY 4th

WILD SWIM + GRUDLE BAY + INCH-TIME: **Modern Art Oxford** – More esoteric musical fun from promoters Pindrop tonight, with extravagantly glitchy, washed-out electro-pop starlets Wild Swim alongside ambient Balearic-inspired electro duo Grudle Bay.

SIGIRIYA + DESERT STORM + PROSPERINA + UNDERSMILE: **The Wheatsheaf** – Buried in Smoke offers a double dose of Swansea-based heaviosity tonight with former-Acrimony chaps Sigiriya reinvigorating their monolithic groove metal noise on debut album 'Return To Earth', while Prosperina follow in the footsteps of Kyuss, Isis, Tool and Pink Floyd. Flying the local metal flag are bluesy stoner-rock heavyweights Desert Storm and tectonic sludgcore spooksters Undersmile.

THE COOLING PEARLS + THE GULLIVERS + WE AERONAUTS: **Fusion Arts Centre** – Three bands for a quid at Fusion tonight courtesy of hosts Cooling Pearls, with their atmospheric lo-fi spook-pop. They're joined for the night by ethereal indie popsters The Gullivers and hearty indie-folksters We Aeronauts.

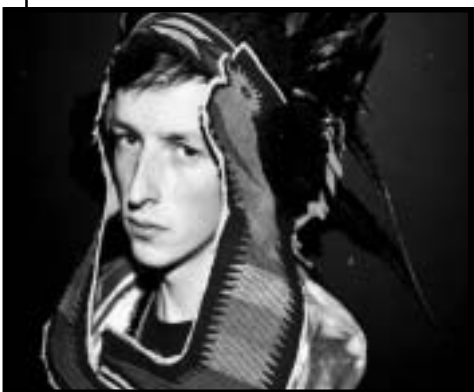
BOB MARLEY BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE NIGHT: **The Bullingdon** – Natty Hi-Fi pays homage to the reggae legend.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: **O2 Academy** – Weekly three-clubs-in-one extravaganza every Saturday with classic and contemporary indie at Propaganda, kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy and metal, punk and alt.rock at Room 101.

BREEZE: **The Junction** – Rock and indie anthems from Breeze, plus 70s-90s dancefloor classics from resident DJs.

BIG SOCIETY + MOFO + PHIL GARVEY: **Folly Bridge Inn** – Ska and reggae-tinged punk from The Big Society, plus classic rock covers from Mofo and acoustic 60s-style psychedelia from Phil Garvey.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE NEW MOON: **The Cricketers Arms** – Swampy



blues and funky psychedelia from enduring local faves The Mighty Redox, plus acoustic pop from The New Moon.

SUNDAY 5th

BEARD OF DESTINY + BLIN' JONNIE + DAVE & JEREMY + PHIL & SUE:
Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free acoustic session.

MONDAY 6th

THE KYLA BROX BAND: The Bullingdon – Daughter of British blues legend Victor Brox, Kyla has shared a stage with her old man many times, easily matching his powerful voice, but in recent years she's been on course to become one of the UK's foremost female blues singers, mixing up classic r'n'b, funk and soul into her traditional sound.

TUESDAY 7th

RAM'S POCKET RADIO: O2 Academy – Pocket orchestral pop and epic soft rock from Northern Irish drummer, singer and pianist Pete McCawley

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz every Tuesday, tonight with guests Heavy Dexters.

TREVOR WILLIAMS: Café Tarifa – Melancholic balladry from the hard-gigging local troubadour.

SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic club.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 8th

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Jungle and dubstep club night.

WEDNESDAY BLUES: James Street Tavern

THURSDAY 9th

CAT MATADOR + THE GULLIVERS + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS + MAT GIBSON: The Cellar – Dark-hearted indie from Cat Matador, plus spangled, ephemeral pop from The Gullivers and psychedelia and 60s-styled garage rock from Graceful Slicks. Followed by hip hop club night Wordplay.
SHATTERED DREAMS + VERY NICE HARRY + ARTCLASSINK + NUCLEAR SKYLINE + THE JUKES: The Bullingdon – It's All About The Music night with grungy pop-metallers Shattered Dreams, supported by heavyweight indie rockers Very Nice Harry and elegantly-crafted guitar-popsters Artclassink.

CASH: O2 Academy – Johnny Cash tribute.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Trumpeter and composer Josh Hoare plays alongside the in-house Spin band, having toured with Jamie Cullum and Super Furry Animals as well as recorded with Shirley Bassey.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
ELECTRIC YOUTH REVOLT + BURGUNDY + PRIMER: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox rock night.

FRIDAY 10th

DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: Truck Store – An intimate in-store show from Danny George Wilson's alt.country crew ahead of their Academy show tomorrow night and ahead of Truck Store's weekend of live in-store shows to celebrate their first anniversary.

TRAPS + WAYS ACROSS: The Wheatsheaf – Punky noise from local newcomers Traps, plus pop-metal from Ways Across at tonight's Moshka club night.

BOSSAPHONIK with THE HACKNEY COLLIERY BAND: The Cellar – Latin dance, Balkan beats, world breaks and nu-jazz from the Bossaphonic crew, tonight featuring a live set from east London's nine-strong brass band, inspired by New Orleans marching bands, Balkan brass, funk, ska, contemporary jazz and hip hop.

THE ELO EXPERIENCE: The New Theatre – Tribute to Jeff Lynn's orchestral rockers.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: The Chester Arms

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon BURGUNDY + AMONG HONOUR: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox rock night.
NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK: Baby Love - Motown, indie, ska and rock club night.

SATURDAY 11th

THE YARNS + KILL MURRAY + DEER CHICAGO + GUNNING FOR TAMAR + THE DREAMING SPIRES + TREVOR MOSS & HANNAH LOU: Truck Store (1pm) – Truck Store celebrates a year in business with a weekend of live music. Today's action sees sets from soft-focus jangle-popsters The Yarns; spiky electro-rocking from Kill Murray; epic shoegaze noise from Deer Chicago; melodic math-rockers Gunning For Tamar; lachrymose alt.country types The Dreaming Spires and lovey-dovey folk duo Trevor Moss and Hannah Lou.

DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: The Bullingdon – Sweet, uplifting alt.country and 60s West Coast pop from former-Grand Drive chap Danny George Wilson, back in Oxford, where it all started for this band at a jam session at Truck Festival a few years back, the band having previously featured Truck brothers Robin and Joe Bennett in their line-up.

BIG BOY BLOATER + JESS GRACE + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS: O2

Academy – Swampy soul, blues and r'n'b from the much vaunted British singer and guitarist, acclaimed by the likes of Mark Lamarr, Jools Holland and Craig Charles, making a name for himself under his own steam having previously worked with myriad US blues and r'n'b acts on tour in the UK, as well as performing as part of Imelda May and Paloma Faith's bands. Local supports from folk-blues songstress Jess Grace and psychedelic garage rockers The Graceful Slicks.



Wednesday 15th **SKRILLEX:** **O2 Academy**

If Skrillex wasn't the most divisive figure in music last year we struggle to imagine who was. For a bloke whose interviews reveal little by way of arrogance or attitude, Sonny Moore is loathed with a passion by huge swathes of dubstep fans. Maybe it's because he's taken a peculiarly British underground style so far overground that not only has he broken into the US charts but he's also remixed Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars. Maybe it's because he's an LA-born emo kid who looks like he should be playing in My Chemical Romance and seems to have accidentally chanced upon dubstep after growing up on Nine Inch Nails and Warp Records. Or maybe it's because his music seems to be a bombastic, testosterone-fuelled bastardisation of that underground sound, the trademark bowel-bothering bass wobble layered with unsubtle synth riffs in a similar way to Pendulum's stadium rock take on electro-dance. Whatever it is, Moore is probably too busy playing sell-out shows every night of the year (300 last year alone) to notice or care much. Tonight's gig is long since sold-out and there's little sign the man's upward momentum is slowing any time soon, so whether this even counts as dubstep any more or not, the purists best get used to it.

SIMON BOOKISH + LEAFCUTTER JOHN: Modern Art Oxford – Oxford Contemporary Music kick off their new spring season with this low-key show from experimental electronic musician and classical composer Leo Chadburn, who goes under the artistic guise of Simon Bookish. As well as





Friday 17th

DJ FORMAT + THE DISCO SHED SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar

From the word-of-mouth commercial success of debut album 'Music For The Mature B-Boy', to triumphant sets at Glastonbury, Reading and Leeds festivals, Southampton's Matt Ford in his guise of DJ Format has been a feelgood hip hop party host with few equals in this country for close to a decade. Making his name early on opening for DJ Shadow as well as driving Jurassic 5's tour bus, collaborating with the band's Chali 2na and Akil along the way, Ford has approached hip hop with an eclectic ear and a playful outlook, abetted by the likes of Abdominal on that funk-heavy debut and the likes of D-Sisive on 2005's tougher follow-up 'If You Can't Join 'Em... Beat 'Em'. Ahead of the release of his third album proper, 'Statement Of Intent', he brings the party to the intimate confines of The Cellar courtesy of Count Skylarkin's Disco Shed, his handful of mixtapes, including one for Fabric, fusing rock, soul and funk onto its hip hop beats, while live he spins a wide selection of rare funk, Latin, northern soul and golden age and daisy age hip hop. Count Skylarkin and Indecision get the party started with their trademark mix of hip hop, soul, ska, dancefloor and more.

working with Patrick Wolf and St Etienne, he's remixed Grizzly Bear and Franz Ferdinand in the past and tonight he teams up with Polar Bear member Leafcutter John for an evening of delicate electronica and wayward pop.

BRICKWORK LIZARDS + LAMORT SUBITE: The Cellar – Eclectic mix of 1940s jazz, hip hop and Arabic folk sounds from Brickwork Lizards, launching their debut album, 'Zaman'. Followed by beats and breaks club night Fresh Out The Box.

THE CHIEFS: The Junction – Good-time rock anthems.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

MARK PIDGEON + DAVID MENDAY + MIKE MOYSE + RAG'N'ROLL: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Witchwood – A night of acoustic folk, roots, Americana and ragtime blues.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Hollybush, Osney

ANIMALS IN LOVE DJs: The Port Mahon

SUNDAY 12th

JAMES VINCENT McMORROW + NICK COPE + JESS HALL + SPRING OFFENSIVE: Truck Store (1pm) – The second instalment of Truck Store's birthday bash features a day of acoustic music, including a special set from James Vincent McMorrow ahead of his Academy show later tonight. Joining him are former-Candyskins legend Nick Cope, ethereal folkstress Jess Hall and esoteric alt.rockers Spring Offensive.

THE SOUTH: O2 Academy – Former-Beautiful South members Dave Hemingway, Dave Stead and Alison Wheeler revisit their old band's hits and more.

JAMES VINCENT McMORROW: O2 Academy – Winty wistfulness and haunting, soulful acoustic balladry from the Dublin singer-songwriter, riding high – if that's the appropriate word – on the success of debut album 'Early In The Morning', his trembling falsetto drawing admiring comparisons to Anthony & The Johnsons and Bon Iver.

OUTFIT: The Bullingdon – Synth-tinged guitar pop of a distinctly 80s vintage from Liverpool's Outfit, armed with a sense of epic melancholic introspection that sits strangely at ease with their tribal rhythms, kind of like a meeting point between New Order, Icicle Works and Trophy Wife. Signed to Double Denim, they've supported Clinic and Ladytron in recent times.

MONDAY 13th

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA: O2 Academy – Dayton Ohio's Christian metalcore crew spread the good word in decidedly noisy fashion on latest album 'Dead Throne'.

THE GRAINNE DUFFY BAND: The Bullingdon – Powerful soul and blues from the County Monaghan singer, whose debut album, 'Out Of The Dark', was recorded with members of Sharon Shannon and Van Morrison's bands. In her native Ireland she's supported everyone from Little Feat to Ocean Colour Scene and now heads off around the UK ahead of a follow-up to her acclaimed debut.

TUESDAY 14th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Jazz Club regulars New Jazz Collective play live.

KATIE STILLMAN & SIMON LANE: The Jacqueline du Pre Building – The acclaimed violinist and pianist play a benefit concert for the Sumatran Orangutan Society.

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

SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 15th

SKRILLEX: O2 Academy – In the red corner – Skrillex and his billion-strong army of fans.

In the blue corner – the dubstep massive.

Seconds out, round ten – *see main preview*

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar – Open jam session, plus funk, soul and hip hop tunes.

THE REAPER + TWISTED STATE OF MIND + PURPLE COW + BRINK OF REASON: Fat Lil's, Witney – Local metal bands night, including precociously talented teenage thrash merchants The Reaper.

WEDNESDAY BLUES: James Street Tavern

THURSDAY 16th

FINK: O2 Academy – Fin Greenall remains an enduring oddity on Ninja Tunes, having started

Tuesday 21st

SPECTOR: The Jericho Tavern

The name Spector is, of course, synonymous with great pop music, be it Phil or Ronnie, but east London's Spector only chose the name because their first choice, Spectre, was already taken apparently. That and they knew it would wind people up. Seriously, anyone allergic or averse to image-conscious bands who talk a good fight, look away now. Be-suited and terrifyingly well groomed, Spector are fronted by the bespectacled Fred MacPherson who likes to bemoan modern pop music's "vulgarity", and if that sounds vaguely familiar you'll be less than surprised to detect hints of The Smiths in the band's sound, although they perhaps owe more to The Killers and Pulp, possessing a significant synth edge, most notable on the band's quite lovely 'Grey Shirt & Tie', a warm, romantic slice of epic electro-pop. Elsewhere they can be spiky, even drawing comparisons to The Vaccines on occasions, although Franz Ferdinand might be closer to the truth. Having found their way into many Tips For 2012 lists, it seems some folks are already willing them to fail and time will tell whether they're a victory for style over substance. Having supported Florence & The Machine, one thing is seemingly certain: six months from now, plenty of people will be fighting tooth and nail to see them headline the Academy, so get in early.



his career there as a dance artist and DJ, only to abandon the genre for a more traditional blues, folk and indie style back in 2006. After gaining fresh attention for his 2007 single 'This Is The Thing', he co-wrote songs with Amy Winehouse as well as releasing last year's 'Perfect Darkness' album, his contemplative semi-acoustic style more akin to Jose Gonzales or John Legend than the sounds you'd expect from his label.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Norway's acclaimed sax virtuoso Marius Neset is tonight's star turn, seemingly set to inherit the throne of Michael Brecker and Jan Garbarek.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OUTPUT: The Cellar

INDIGO ROSE + THE KAOS + RYKER

SEAR: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox rock and metal night.

FRIDAY 17th

DJ FORMAT + DISCO SHED

SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Hip hop party time with the south coast star – *see main preview*

OX + THE EPSTEIN: Truck Store – Early evening in-store from Canadian alt.country rockers Ox ahead of their Wheatsheaf show, alongside local country faves The Epstein.

OX + THE YARNS: The Wheatsheaf – Lachrymose alt.country somewhere between the worlds of Neil Young, Bonnie Prince Billie and The Velvet Underground from Canada's dope-soaked cult stars, fronted by the delightfully drawling Mark Browning and over in the UK to promote their new album, 'tUCo'. Local jangle-popsters The Yarns support.

COLOUREDS + PUBLIC SERVICE

BROADCASTING + ROBOTS WITH

SOULS: Modern Art Oxford – Underground electronic sounds from Basement Sessions, this month featuring local mutant rave duo Coloureds alongside London's Public Service Broadcasting, mixing shimmering soundscapes with vocal cut-ups, and Phantom Theory offshoot project Robots With Souls, fusing lo-fi drone-rock with grinding electronica.

I SELECTA: The Bullingdon

DIXIE & CO: The Duke's Cut – Rock and pop covers.

DIRTY DEEDS: The Black Horse, East Hanney – Rock, blues and funk covers, from Queen and Guns'n'Roses to ZZ Top and Led Zep.

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

HURTSEASON + ELYSIUM WAITS +

DELIVERANCE + LEST WE FORGET: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox rock and metal night.

SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE +

JUNKIE BRUSH + BEAVER FUEL +

SKEPTICS: The Hollybush, Osney – First night of a weekend of shows to raise funds for this year's Wittstock Festival. Electro-pop duo Space Heroes of the People headline with support from agit-punkers Junkie Brush and cynic-rockers Beaver Fuel among the supporting cast.

SATURDAY 18th

DEDLOK + TERRATHORN + IN

DECADENCE + A TRUST UNCLEAN +

EYES OF EVE: O2 Academy – Skeletor's monthly team-up with Room 101 continues to showcase the best local and out of town metal bands, tonight featuring a set from monstrous punk-tinged heavyweights Dedlok, whose brutal sound owes as much to Killing Joke and Discharge as it does to Boltthrower and Pantera.

They're joined by Southampton's old-school thrash crew Terrathorn, plus local metallers In Decadence and groove-core types Eyes Of Eve, coming in between Mastodon and Down.

BEELZEBOZO + SPINNER FALL: The

Wheatsheaf – Very metal rumblings from the mighty Beelzebozo, mixing up classic NWOBHM with 80s thrash with lashing of blood. Hectoring noise-pop and epic shoegaze from Spinner Fall in support.

SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass with guests Jumping Jack Frost and MC Fearless.

LETTUCE HEADS: The Junction – Party tunes from the London rockers.

SHATTERED DREAMS + THE SHAPES +

BEN PHILLIPS: The Folly Bridge Inn – Feisty pop-metal and grunge from Shattered Dreams.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101:

O2 Academy

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Garage special.

KOMRAD + BIG SOCIETY + KATE DARE

+ TREVOR WILLIAMS + MARK BOSLEY

+ NIGEL & HIS IMAGINARY FRIENDS +

CLASS DISMISSED + MARK

ATHERTON: The Hollybush, Osney (1pm)

– Full day of music ahead of Wittstock with math-core headliners Komrad alongside reggae-punkers Big Society, romantic troubadour Trev Williams, lachrymose balladeer Mark Bosley and more.

BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Port Mahon

SUNDAY 19th

DOG IS DEAD: O2 Academy – The Nottingham indie hopefuls return to town after playing at last October's Leylines festival, now signed to Atlantic Records, their jazzed-up euphoric pop, partway twixt Vampire Weekend and Level 42 at times, sounds unstoppable chartbound.

KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + MUNDANE

SANDS: The Bullingdon – Folk-rock and Americana night at the Bully with It's All About The Music Promotions.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Hollybush, Osney (1pm) – Wittstock fundraiser – all musicians welcome.

MONDAY 20th

RESERVOIR CATS: The Bullingdon – Tony Jezzard's hard-rocking bluesmen hit the Famous Monday Blues club.

TUESDAY 21st

SPECTOR: The Jericho Tavern – Suits, specs and a way with words – one of this year's most hotly-tipped band of hopefuls hit



Sunday 26th

LITTLE DRAGON: O2 Academy

For a band that's featured on so many critically-acclaimed and commercially successful music projects, Gothenberg's Little Dragon remain a little-known entity. Individually or collectively they've worked with Gorillaz, SBTRKT, Outkast, DJ Shadow and Dave Sitek, singer Yukimi Nagano being the chief in-demand Dragon. It's after her that the band is named, for her in-studio temper tantrums. Not that you'd know that listening to her nimble, almost Bjork-ish vocals on the band's new album, 'Ritual Union', their most commercial to date, influenced increasingly by modern r'n'b and electronic dance music, hints of everything from Prince to Zero 7 infecting the grooves. It's all relative, mind, Little Dragon remain too inventive, restless and off-kilter to worry about bothering the singles charts just yet, particularly live where they bridge the gap between gig and club night, electro-house vibes going up against big, bold rock rhythms and a propensity to go off on one like some old psychedelic jam band at times. They're mostly just bloody great though and if you're a stranger to their music thus far, or know them only through those big-name collaborations, here's your chance to really enter the dragon.

town – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with The Hugh Turner Band.

SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

PROGRESSIVELY LESS ELEPHANT:

Baby Love – Indie, electronica and Motown club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 22nd

LAST NIGHT'S VICTORY + TREVOR WILLIAMS: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with Charlie Baxter's new band Last Night's Victory, plus local acoustic pop songsmith Trev Williams.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Jungle and dubstep club night.

WEDNESDAY BLUES: James Street Tavern

THURSDAY 23rd

TO KILL A KING: The Bullingdon – London-based folk-rockers in the vein of

Grizzly Bear, The National and Mumford & Sons.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With keyboard player Phil Peskett.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

DISCORD BANDS & CLUB NIGHT:

Wahoo – Rock and metal bands, plus DJs from the University Rock Society.

KAMIKAZE TESTPILOTS: The Cellar – Classic rock riffs in the vein of Led Zep cut through with jazz and funk in the style of the Chili Peppers and an oddball Afro-rock edge from local veterans KTP.

AHAB: The Jericho Tavern - Harmony-heavy alt.country, Americana and traditional English folk music from the Cropredy Festival faves.

BLUEGRASS JAM: The Red Lion, Wolvercote – Jam along with resident musicians.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon HURTSEASON + EDGE OF RUIN: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox rock and metal night.

Monday 27th

COLD SPECKS: The Jericho Tavern

Cold Specks' real name is, apparently, Al Spx, which is, if anything, even more obtuse than her chosen stage name but beyond that there's little puzzle about the rise of the Canadian singer who's now living and recording in London, teaming up with Rob Ellis, who's previously worked with PJ Harvey and Anna Calvi. Cold Specks bears little resemblance to those two, mind, preferring an earthy yet spiritual form of blues and gospel that sounds like it might have escaped from a lost pre-war spiritual compilation album. Her old-fashioned vocal style and her songs of love and loss suggest a woman far beyond her 23 years. It's a gorgeously unpolished voice that harks back to Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Mahalia Jackson, a voice that's already found favour with Jools Holland, for whom she performed a capella on *Later...* Her debut single (if you discount obscure early releases back in Canada under the names Basket Of Figs and Hotel Ghost) is a wonderfully spectral lesson in what she calls doom-soul and a good few months of further critical plaudits are as inevitable as they are deserved. For Oxford pop aficionados, the cellist in her band is one Tom Havelock, last seen round these parts playing in long-lost electro-rock heroes Psychid.



FRIDAY 24th

ASHER DUST: Baby Simple – This month's Nightshift cover star presents his eclectic fusion of hip hop, dancehall, electronica, grime and soul as he launches his new 'Maverick Trick' EP – *see main interview feature*

COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + ASTEROX:

The Bullingdon – Old-time country roots from C4OM.

THE WILD MERCURY SOUND + DANCE A LA PLAGE + LEWIS WATSON:

The Jericho Tavern – Daisy Rodgers Music night with current Steve Lamacq Band Of The Week Wild Mercury Sound bringing their Bombay Bicycle Club-like fuzz to town. Local indie popstrels Dance a la Plage and Youtube sensation Lewis Watson support.

EDWINA HAYES + BEARD OF DESTINY: Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot – Lovelorn balladry inspired by Randy Newman and Leonard Cohen from the Yorkshire singer-songwriter who has supported Jools Holland, Nancy Griffith and Loudon Wainwright III on tour, as well as collaborating with Dennis Locorriere.

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass with dBridge, Loxy, Skeptical and SP:MC.

NUDYBRONQUE + OVERLORD: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox rock night.

SATURDAY 25th

BEN HOWARD: O2 Academy – Long-since sold out show from the Devonian singer-songwriter whose devout following have lifted him from the pub circuit to big time venues like this in a matter of months (it was only back in October he played at the Jericho Tavern). His delicate folk-pop adds to an air of almost prayer meeting-like reverie about his shows, his homely acoustic style mixed with a jazzy intricacy, influenced by Tim Buckley, John Martyn and Nick Drake.

UPSTAIRS: O2 Academy - Local bands showcase in conjunction with BBC Oxford Introducing.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with K-LACURA + ECHOBOOMER + DEAD RED

SUN: The Wheatsheaf – Characteristically mixed bill from GTI tonight with velociraptor metalcore crew K-Lacura going up against considered indie soundscapists Echoboomer and London's experimental sound explorers, inspired by Youthmovies and Steve Reich among others.

NINE-STONE COWBOY + PLAYER2 +

BIG NORTHERN SOUL NIGHT OUT:

The Bullingdon –Through-a-glass-darkly electro-tinged pop from NSC, with support from fidgety indie rockers Player2. After the show there's a northern soul club night.

SAMBASUNDA QUINTET: The North Wall, Summertown – Javanese Gamelan music gets a carnival vibe in Sambasunda's lively hands, the collective fusing urban rhythms with ancient Indonesian instruments and fronted by exotic singer and dancer Rita Tila.

THE YARNS + SCARLETT IN THE WILDERNESS + CRAYON: The Cellar –



Wednesday 29th

LABRINTH / DOT ROTTEN: O2 Academy

Right about now Hackney's Labrinth seems to be the go-to guy for any hopefuls wanting a bit of urban in their pop. Pixie Lott, JLS and Nadine Coyle are among those who have enjoyed his production skills, although his remix work for Gorillaz suggests there's more to him than a deal with Simon Cowell's Syco suggests. The man's got pop gold in his fingertips it seems – his collaborations with Tinie Tempah on 'Pass Out' and 'Frisky' produced number 1 and 2 singles, while his own solo debut, 'Let The Sun Shine' also scraped the top of the charts. In his own right Labrinth possesses a similar soul-lite vocal style to Ne-Yo or Usher, while his production has seen him likened to a British Timbaland (albeit a latter-day Timbaland rather than the pioneering beatmaster of old). With his debut album 'Electronic Earth' due out next month he's out on his first proper UK tour and is joined by fellow Londoner Dot Rotten who isn't, sadly, a fag-smoking, vitriol-spitting hybrid of Dot Cotton and Johnny Rotten, but a sharp, snappy rapper in the vein of Wretch 32 who emerged from the underground mixtape scene to remodel himself as a high-gloss grime artist, earning himself a deal with Mercury Records in the process.

Warm, semi-acoustic jangle-pop from rising local starlets The Yarns at tonight's Back & To The Left show, plus the return of Oxford's burlesque gypsy dance troupe Scarlett In The Wilderness and indie rockers Crayon. Followed by dance club Extra-Curricular.

WAY THROUGH + BOMBER JACKETS:

Modern Art Oxford – Shropshire-via-London's "pastoral punks" Way Through soundtrack both field and flyover with use of guitar, tapes, broken drums and vocals at tonight's Adventures Close To Home show.

INSOMNIA: The Junction

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Chester Arms

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Black Horse, East Hanney

SUNDAY 26th

LITTLE DRAGON: O2 Academy – Fire-

breathing electro-rocking from Sweden's collaboration-happy cult faves – *see main preview*

DODGY + BLACK HATS + SMOKE FEATHERS: The Bullingdon – The original Dodgy trio – Nigel Clark, Mathew Priest and Andy Miller – reunite once more, not just to kick out those classic Britpop era hits like 'Staying Out For The Summer' and 'Good Enough', but also to plug their new album 'Standing Upright In A Cool Place', their first studio output in eleven years. One of the more politically-minded bands of the early-90s indie scene – they toured Bosnia in the immediate wake of the war there as well as supporting causes such as War Child, the Dockers' Strike and Charter 88 – they're nevertheless unstoppably feelgood in musical outlook.

KEVIN DEVINE: The Jericho Tavern – Brooklyn's alternately introspective and political acoustic pop songsmith Devine comes over the Pond to plug his new album 'Between The Concrete & The Clouds', inspired by Neutral Milk Hotel, Elliot Smith and Pavement.

MONDAY 27th

KING CHARLES: O2 Academy – Wry, rootsy acoustic psychedelia and electro-pop from the west London dandy, inspired by Donovan, Syd Barrett and Marc Bolan. He's out on tour ahead of an anticipated debut album, having previously supported Mumford & Sons on tour.

CONNIE LUSH & BLUES SHOUTER: The Bullingdon – The five-times winner of Best British Female Blues Singer award returns to the Famous Monday Blues with her powerful singing style taking in traditional blues, rock, jazz and soul.

COLD SPECKS: The Jericho Tavern – Timeless doom-soul and gospel from the Canadian singer now living in the UK – *see main preview*

DOT'S FUNKY ODYSSEY + GOVERNMENT MEN + CRISIS, WHAT CRISIS: The Cellar – University funk and jazz big band Dot's Funky Odyssey get the party started.

TUESDAY 28th

THE DRUMS: O2 Academy – The New York Anglaphiles return with their second album, 'Portamento', having gone from critical darlings (voted brightest new hope for 2010 by everyone from *NME* and *Clash* magazine to *Pitchfork*) to whipping boys in super-quick time after their eponymous debut album failed to deliver on the promise of sparky early

singles like 'Let's Go Surfing' and 'Best Friend'. After some line-up rejigging and a threatened split, the new album continues along that 80s indie-inspired route, New Order, The Wake and Orange Juice still the inspiration of choice, while Jonathan Pierce still has designs on being the new Morrissey.

KYLA LA GRANGE: The Jericho Tavern – Darkly dramatic witch-pop from Watford's Kyla in the vein of Stevie Nicks, Marianne Faithful and Florence & The Machine.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With live jazz from The New Jazz Collective.

SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 29th

LABRINTH + DOT ROTTEN: O2 Academy – Brit-rap starlets on the rise and tour together – *see main preview*

MARY BENDY TOY + STEM + AURORA J YOUNG: The Bullingdon – Industrial gothic rocking from Mary Bendy Toy at tonight's It's All About The Music show, plus soulful acoustic rock from Aurora J Young.

SONIC RISING + THESE REIGNING DAYS: The Wheatsheaf – Former-Spiral 25 psych-rock types Sonic Rising hit the noise groove button.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar

WEDNESDAY BLUES: James Street Tavern

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



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DANNY & the CHAMPIONS of the WORLD



Friday 10th February 7.30pm
THE BULLINGDON ARMS
162 Cowley Road Oxford

Tickets available from
The Bullingdon Arms, The Truck Store and www.empty-rooms.com



FEBRUARY

Every Monday

THE FAMOUS MONDAY NIGHT BLUES

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

6th **KYLA BROX BAND (UK)**

13th **GRAINNE DUFFY BAND (Eire)**

20th **RESERVOIR CATS (UK)**

27th **CONNIE LUSH & BLUES SHOUTER (UK)**

Every Tuesday

THE OXFORD JAZZ CLUB

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

7th **HEAVY DEXTERS**

14th **NEW JAZZ COLLECTIVE**

21st **THE HUGH TURNER BAND**

28th **NEW JAZZ COLLECTIVE**

Wednesdays

29th **MARY BENDYTOY / STEM / AURORA J YOUNG**

Every Wednesday – front bar open til midnight

Thursdays

2nd **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC ACOUSTIC NIGHT** with

AGS CONNOLLY / REG & DOM / STUART NOAH / JACKIE B WILLIAMS / MARK NOBLE / GEMMA MOSS

9th **SHATTERED DREAMS / VERY NICE HARRY / ARTCLASSINK / NUCLEAR SKYLINE / THE JUKES**

23rd **TO KILL A KING**

Every Friday*

FUNKY FRIDAY

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

*except

3rd **TOTALLY ENORMOUS EXTINCT DINOSAURS**

Friday early shows

10th **DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD**

17th **I SELECTA**

24th **COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN / ASTEROX**

Saturdays

4th **BOB MARLEY BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE NIGHT** featuring **NATTY HI-FI. 10-3am; £4**

11th **TBC**

18th **SELECTA – Drum'n'bass – with JUMPING JACK FROST / MC FEARLESS**

25th **NINE STONE COWBOY / PLAYER 2** followed by **BIG NORTHERN SOUL NIGHT OUT**

Sundays

12th **OUTFIT**

19th **KNIGHTS OF MENTIS / MUNDANE SANDS**

26th **DODGY / BLACK HATS / SMOKE FEATHERS**

DR SHOTOVER

The Nylon Lady

Bah! PAH! This 80s revival has got out of hand. Now they're bringing out films about Margaret Thatcher, implying that, far from being a tiresome old psycho in a nylon housecoat, she was in fact some kind of female Iron Man. Spare us these Monday-Club-style history-re-writes, please. How pitiful that, in these days of cuts and mismanagement, courtesy of the bum-faced twins Ham and Clegg, people are SO desperate to sex up their impoverished lives that they will opt for fantasies involving a bit of blue-chinned political rough from the past. ("Never mind the fact that you look like a bad female impersonator with five o' clock shadow... hit me again, Nanny Thatcher!")... IT MAKES ME SICK. Sicker than a second-year student slumming it on a Cowley Road pub-crawl. "Oh WOWWWWW, The Corridor - this is where Radiohead used to live! I must have another fifteen vodka-based drinks and then go and puke up outside the East Indies Club!" No, Hugo, you must not. What you must do is this - you must buy fifteen copies of *Anyone Can Play Guitar* from the Truck Store and send them to all your family members and schoolmates. Yes, even the ones who have stopped returning your calls or replying to your NerdBook requests because you are a boring pimply little jobbie. Then you will be on the very first step of the Dr Shotover Path To Enlightenment. Step Two – buy me a drink. But do not, under any circumstances, speak to me. Step Three (as Step Two, ad infinitum).

Next Month: The Correct Use of Tweed



"COO-EE, General Pi-no-chet!"

THE WHEATSHEAF

Live Music February 2012

Fri 3rd Klub Kokofunney Presents...

VIENNA DITTO

YELLOW FEVER + WHO'S FELIX 8PM/£5

Sat 4th Buried in Smoke Presents...

SIGIRIYA

DESERT STORM + PROSPERINA + UNDERSMILE 8PM/£5

Fri 10th Moshka Presents...

TRAPS

Fri 17th COO Presents...

OX

THE YARNS + JESS HALL 8PM/£5

Sat 18th Moshka Presents...

BEELZEBOZO + SPINNER FALL

Wed 22nd Moshka Presents...

LAST NIGHTS VICTORY

TREVOR WILLIAMS 8PM/£5

Sat 25th GTI Presents...

K-LACURA

DEAD RED SUN + ECHO BOOMER 8PM/£4.50

Wed 29th Moshka Presents...

SONIC RISING

THESE REIGNING DAYS 8PM/£5

Every Monday: The Oxford Inns Comedy... Every Thursday: The Spin Jazz Club www.spinjazz.com
The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford, OX1 4DP (Tel 01865 721158)
wheatsheaf.music@btinternet.com or www.myspace.com/wheatsheaf_music

INTRODUCING....

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

GRUDLE BAY

Who are they?

Grudle Bay (recently shortened from Grudle Bay Riots) are Nathan Allsworth and Tom Hodges. Hailing from Abingdon, the pair have been writing and performing as Grudle Bay for around six years. They met at school where they formed experimental pop band PYE, making their first forays into the local scene and setting the musical tone for their current incarnation. After a two year stint in London experimenting with ideas and developing a new electronic sound, Nathan and Tom returned to Abingdon with a cleaner, more mature approach to song-writing, included using vocals for the first time and recent times have seen them move away from a sample-based approach to more of a live sound, which people can experience when the duo play at Modern Art on February 4th.

What do they sound like?

The duo paint pretty, pastoral musical pictures with a decidedly chilled form of dream-pop, a come-down answer to Chad Valley's more euphoric Balaeric-inspired electro-pop where guitars twinkle, electronic beats chatter and breathless vocals swoon overhead. Or, in their own words, they "try to create an experimental mood using vocal harmonies and melodic guitars with elements of electronica. We hope to create an uplifting atmosphere charged with free flowing keys and a rolling rhythm section."

What inspires them?

"We love originality, and respect anyone who innovates."

Career highlight so far:

"We played a BBC Introducing night at the O2 Academy, which was our biggest gig to date."

And the lowlight:

"Finding out we won't be able to play Truck Festival this year."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Arthur Sawbridge; a very talented musician."



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

"The *Bladerunner* soundtrack by Vangelis – never tire of listening to it. It has such deep, melodic, atmospheric sound. Like the film itself, the soundtrack is ahead of its time, and hasn't aged a day."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"At Modern Art, Oxford on Saturday 4th February. Expect to hear something that we hope is original and unusual to the Oxford music scene. We love the music we're playing right now and we've had a great reaction so far. This has given us a confidence and energy that we bring to our live performance."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"We love the fact there are promoters who are open to new sounds and different ideas and give new bands a chance. This gives Oxford a unique and varied music scene. Also, that people turn out and support the scene. One disappointment is that there isn't a big major club in Abingdon. It's where our music's from and it would be great to play a big gig in our home town."

You may love them if you love:

Chad Valley; Toro Y Moi; China Crisis; Outfit; DJ Vital.

Hear them here:

soundcloud.com/grudlebayriots

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

20 YEARS AGO

The cover of February 1992's *Curfew* was graced by **The Daisies**, a band who would down in local music folklore as quintessential Oxford cult heroes before morphing into Medal a few years later. Interviewed in an old school hut in Eynsham the band were apparently reticent in their answers, due, mainly, to being frozen half to death. "It's fucking cold in here," says drummer Lemmy. The band expressed a love for The Cure, Sonic Youth and Ride and are enthusiastic about an emerging Eynsham scene centred on the local youth club.

Elsewhere this month it's announced that **the Old Fire Station** is stopping its live music nights to concentrate more on its restaurant, while **Flyposting** seemed to be the most pressing issue for local bands and promoters in an age before t'internet.

Highlights of the local month in gigs were **Ride's** mega show at the Apollo on the 7th, while *Levitation* and *Sunshot* played at Oxford Polytechnic, The Bhundu Boys at the Oxford Venue and The Wedding Present at the Jericho Tavern. **Heavenly**, **The Jennifers**, **The Anyways** and a double bill of **The Candyskins** and **On A Friday** were the highlights of the local contingent. In the demo pages **Gentle Ihor's Devotion** topped the pile for his "moody, broody, nasty, sullen and quite brilliant" industrial onslaught that reminded us of Sisters of Mercy and Front 242. At the opposite end of the pile **Spacehopper** "exist in sort of midway nowhere", while **The Ragged Boys** were "Slushy, sentimental stadium balladeers".

10 YEARS AGO

Local metal titans **Mindsurfer** were our main interviewees, set to release their 'The Right To Remain Violent' album, the band having replaced original frontman Steve Phelps ("the loudest man in Oxford") with James Greene (currently bursting his tonsils with prog-core monsters Komrad), bonding over a shared love of Holy Terror and Nuclear Assault. They also declared Headcount to be "a bunch of limp-wristed pussies, albeit fat ones," which we took as our cue to duck under the table til the carnage had blown over.

Elsewhere this month incumbents **Fusion FM** were up against newcomers Juice FM for a local broadcasting licence, both stations boasting a commitment to local music, Fusion having sporadically hosted a dedicated local show.

In other news **Shifty Disco** celebrated its fifth birthday by releasing a CD box set of every a-side on their monthly singles club; **the Bullingdon** was closing down for a month for a complete refit, **the Pit** in Witney returned to gigging action after a six-month lay-off; prog-popsters **Suriki** were calling it a day and rockers **Vade Mecum** were heading Stateside to make their names.

Best of the month's local gigs were Charger, Minus and **Sextodecimo** at the Zodiac as part of the Metal Supremacy tour; heavy rock legends Deep Purple at the Apollo and The Icarus Line's show for The Club That Cannot Be Named at the Zodiac. Local bands treading the boards included **The Rock Of Travolta**, **Dustball**, **Six Ray Sun** and **South Sea Company Prospectus** launching

their 'When I Wank On My Guitar, The Whole World Wanks With Me' compilation on Truck's Juggernaut imprint.

Sugababes and Clinic topped Nightshift's monthly hitlist while Enrico Iglesias was declared the worst record of the year as early as February.

5 YEARS AGO

Angel-voiced local pop darling **Richard Walters** graced the cover of February 2007's *Nightshift*, at the time signed to Warner Chappel Publishing and Courtyard Management, working with Noel Hogan of The Cranberries and Bjork and Britney producer Guy Sigsworth. It had been a year of very mixed fortunes for Richard whose song 'All At Sea' was used on *CSI Miami* but who had also suffered an epileptic seizure just as he was about to play for an audience of record company execs in the States. In local music news, there was the traditional call out for bands to play that year's **Oxford Punt**, while it was reported that REM's Michael Stipe, Mike Mills and Pete Buck all joined Robyn Hitchcock onstage at **the Zodiac** in a surprise treat for an audience that included **Thom Yorke**.

Goldrush, **Chantelle Pike**, **Laima Bite** and **The Walk Off** all released new CDs this month, while top of the demo pile was Umair Chaudhrey's **Monday Morning Sun** project – "the musical equivalent of something nasty stalking darkened corridors". By contrast **Wasted Potential** were dismissed as "the musical equivalent of tepid cabbage water. Potential? What fucking potential?"

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

DALLAS DON'T

Whoo hoo! We reviewed this lot's first demo a few months and reckoned they showed promise but maybe needed a few better songs. Now they got songs. Nasty serrated songs with sharp bits on what'd take the skin off yer elbows if you stood too close. They've also got a singer, Niall, who sounds like a cross between Idlewild's Roddy Woomble and Prolapse's Mick Derrick with his fantastically badgering Scottish bawl. In fact, originally hailing from north of the border and punningly named after their local whisky distillery Dallas Dhu, Dallas Don't can't escape comparisons to many of their fellow countrymen. 'The Ballad Of Phoebe Henderson' comes on like a particularly up-for-a-scrap Arab Strap as Niall semi-mumbles in the middle distance while guitars stick it to each other in the foreground; 'Lesson', meanwhile, carries elements of The Twilight Sad, albeit The Twilight Sad squaring up to McLusky over whose riffs have got the sharpest blade. 'The Runner' is a Caledonian Pixies, spindly, pensive passages giving way to explosions of guitar shrapnel, while, by way of contrast, 'Fife For Life' is a relatively lightweight jangly romp with Niall's warm, rounded burr giving you the feeling you're being genially hectored by a good-natured pub nutter up to the point he starts getting all wistful and romantic. It's not included on this demo but apparently Dallas Don't also have a song called 'This Town Needs Us'. On the strength of this outing, they're damn right it does.

do well to try and emulate. And by Odin they walk it like they talk it, three tracks in a little over seven minutes that ride roughshod over ideas about sensitivity or self-pity, simply crushing everything that stands in their path, mixing Discharge and Subhumans' hardcore punk thrash into single-minded metal force, using simple but effective tricks like sticking a lorry load of reverb onto tracks like 'Hi Def Death' to recreate an authentic early-80s punk vibe and simply rumbling and raging with an almost sullen ferocity until there's simply nothing left on the horizon to destroy. Do you hear that? They just destroyed the whole bloody world in seven minutes. And to think, some of the sad old tarts further down the page would struggle to punch their way out of a wet paper bag in that time.

A FACEFUL OF MARTHA

More metal but of a decidedly different vintage here from Witney's Faceful Of Martha, who endear themselves to us no end by calling us jerks in their email, then repeating the insult on their Soundcloud site. Come on boys, if you're going to be rude, at least be funny with it; Headcount you ain't. Anyway, AFOM are an instrumental band because, in their own words, they "can't sing or scream for shit and didn't want to sour the experience with any incessant whining or high-pitched shrieking". So what we get are four straight-down-the-line slabs of old school heavy rocking, nods duly given to Iron Maiden and Thin Lizzy on the one hand and Metallica on the other. Each chunders in, thrashes about a bit, then exits without fuss, leaving little impression. If you're going to play instrumental metal you really need to be a bit more inventive than this.

BERSICKER

One of our favourite local metal bands of a few years back were Government Mule who were Demo Of The Month here back in 2003 or 2004, just before they went their separate ways, singer Stephen Frame going on to batter the skins with extreme prejudice in Faith in Hate. Good to see, then, that three quarters of Government Mule have reconvened as Bersicker, declaring that "It's all about the riffs basically" with a straightforward, no-nonsense approach to life that a few of the undeserving scum reviewed below might

HELLO GHOST

Hello Ghost is the musical moniker of one Matt Ayes, a man armed with a guitar and a wallet full of lovelorn angst and... no, hang on, come back! Perhaps we didn't start to explain things properly. Yes Matt has a guitar – an acoustic one at that for the most part – and at some point we deduce that the object of his love seems to have bugged off and left him alone ("The mattress is still warm from where you used to be"; hmm, maybe she just went off to work and will be back soon), but to his credit Matt seems to be bearing up

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reasonably well. On demo opener 'Take Your Shot' he even sounds vaguely cheery, chugging away chirpily enough, if lacking any real bite or balm. In this Matt's not the only act in this month's pile that seems to have taken some inspiration from local popsters Alphabet Backwards but maybe lacks that sprinkling of pixie pop magic they seem to always possess. Softer, warmer and better is 'Rockhopping', a simple melody played on plucked acoustic guitar and restrained harmonica that reminds us a little of Nick Cope. Matt would be better off sticking to this way of working since the pedestrian guitar histrionics on the electrified 'Bloodstains', coupled with a voice now lacking genuine personality, make the whole thing sound like any other half-cocked indie band and a return to what he does best on 'Antarctica' turns out to be the demo's high point: slight in the melody stakes but, armed with a playfully swirling keyboard *à la* Alphabet Backwards again, light and airy enough to charm the hardest of hearts.

ANDY ROBBINS

While Hello Ghost prove it's possible to inject a modicum of humanity and – whisper it – fun into the one-man-and-his-guitar-and-a-bag-of-romantic-failure thing, Andy Robbins here proves that more often than not it's an unrelenting barrel of misery. Four songs here span a mere fifteen minutes but it feels more like an endless winter spent snowbound in an isolated forest cabin with only tinned spaghetti, roadkill and the Shopping Channel for sustenance, as Andy mournfully documents the unending trauma that is his, and your, life. At one point he's "Searching deep in side / Trying to find / When I was 19, I lost my mind"; the next he's telling you not to let your dreams fade away else you'll end up in a dead-end job on minimum wages. 'Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weenie, Yellow Polka Dot Bikini' this ain't. Thing is, we think there's meant to be a positive message in here somewhere, although it sounds more like a husky old cadaver griping on about how the country's gone down the pan since young people started listening to pop music instead of going down the mines/up chimneys when they hit their teens. And to cap it all, he concludes with the cheery "Cold winds cut through your bones" as we sit here watching hurricane-force winds turn our street into a reconstruction of an explosion in a landfill site. Yeah, and a Happy New Year to you too.

DANCE À LA PLAGE

When we first received Dance À La Plage's email we pondered the wisdom of their

inclusion of a selection of frankly hideous promo shots, which make them look like one of those family singing groups on the old *Songs Of Praise* albums, and probably not intentionally. Pretty quickly, though, we started to think it might have been a clever diversionary tactic to stop us noticing the music was equally unpalatable. Oh it's well-executed and all that, too well done if anything, like music that's been passed through several focus groups to weed out anything that Radio 2 listeners might consider upsetting. What this results in is some anonymous funk-lite guitar pop that what remains of the major record labels' marketing departments might bracket under indie. It's got just a hint of blokishness about it, but nothing that'd be up for heading down the pub and starting a scrap with Dead Jerichos and... oh, hell, we're avoiding the awful truth from you, dear readers. It sounds like Scouting For Girls. Can we go now?

THE DEMO DUMPER

TRAPDOOR

When it comes to the line "I've been chopping onions over you again, my dear," we're honestly not sure if it's a metaphor for a broken love affair or simply a euphemism so horrific even a Dutch porn director would blush. Either way, like the physical act of chopping onions, this demo makes us weep. Weep tears of both laughter and sorrow. It's not just that the line "I've been chopping onions over you again, my dear" is followed by the immortal "Cos the crosswords don't do themselves justice when you're not here," making it the single worst rhyming couplet since Ride's classic "You are my crown of creation / I want to be your relation", but because the song in question is so moribund it's in danger of sucking the entire universe into a black hole of self-pity. It sounds like a half-arsed copy of Alphabet Backwards stripped of any last vestige of melody and fed a non-stop diet of horse tranquillisers. Which is at least preferable to the generic, too-scared-to-rock sludge that follows in the form of 'Aphrodite', a kind of halfway house between The Arctic Monkeys and The Stooges but about one billionth as much fun as that description might suggest. Sorry, are we being too harsh? Perhaps it was unfair to describe those opening lines as the worst rhyming couplets of the past decade. Especially when there's "You could be my father figure / Your finger on the trigger" to consider. Go on boy, give that trigger a good squeeze. Put us all out of this misery.

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

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



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