

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 208
November
2012**

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NEWS

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SPRING OFFENSIVE play a special show at a secret location in east Oxford this month. The local faves, who released a new single, 'Not Drowning But Waving', last month, will play at an undisclosed location on Sunday 18th November. Ticketholders will be told of the show's location the day before. The band's last Oxford gig was a spectacular show at St. Barnabas Church in Jericho in June. Tickets are on sale now, priced £6, from **Wegotickets**.com. Support comes from Among Brothers and ToLiesel.

LITTLE FISH play a special pre-Christmas show at the Rotunda in Iffley on Sunday 16th December. The show takes place in the afternoon, with a 3pm start, with children welcome. There'll be mince pies and mulled wine as part of the ticket price and a support set from Candy Says. Tickets, priced £15 (kids free with a paying adult), are on sale from littlefishmusic.com.

DREAMING SPIRES release their new single 'Just Can't Keep

This Feeling In' on iTunes on the 12th November. The single is taken from the band's 'Brothers In Brooklyn' album, which was released in June on Clubhouse Records. The track recently won 6Music's Rebel Playlist vote, while the album has been picking up rave reviews in the national press. The Dreaming Spires launch the new single with a hometown show at the Bullingdon on Saturday 10th November, with support from The Hi & Lo and The Relationships. Visit www.thedreamingspires.co.uk for more news.

CATWEAZLE CLUB has launched a new weekly open mic club night in east Oxford. The Bluebird Club runs every Tuesday night at the Oxford Blue on Marston Street (at the Iffley Road end) and follows in Catweazle's footsteps of showcasing the best local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists. More details of both clubs at catweazleclub.com.

WILDERNESS FESTIVAL won the award for Best Festival under 15,000 capacity at the UK Live Music Awards in October, beating the likes of Kendal Calling and 2,000 Trees. Early bird tickets for next year's Wilderness, which takes place at Cornbury Park over the weekend of the 9th-11th August, are sold out, with tickets on general sale now, priced £139.

SUPERGRASS reconvened for the unveiling of a **PRS Heritage Award** at the **Jericho Tavern** last month. Gaz, Danny, Mick and Rob came together onstage for the first time since they split in 2010 for a question and answer session with an invited audience before a commemorative plaque was unveiled on the front of the pub where the band played their first shows back in 1993. In a slightly embarrassing *faux pas*, the plaque quoted their first show as 1994. Still, it's all rock and roll, isn't it? Don't let minor details get in the way of an afternoon of free booze.

photo: Jonny Moto



STORNOWAY play two homecoming shows at **Oxford Town Hall** in February. The band will perform on **Thursday 14th and Friday 15th February**, ahead of the release of their long-awaited second album, the follow-up 2010's 'Beachcomber's Window' on 4AD. Tickets, priced £15, are on sale now from www.alt-tickets.co.uk and **Truck Store** on Cowley Road.

This year's event featured sets from Rodrigo Y Gabriela, Wilco and Spiritualized. Visit www.wildernessfestival.com for details.

THIS YEAR'S WINTER WARMER takes place over the weekend of the 15th and 16th December at the Wheatsheaf. The annual mini-festival, organised by Gappy Tooth Industries and Swiss Concrete, this year features two nights of four bands. Saturday sees sets from Graceful Slicks, Ulysses Storm, Yellow Fever and Very Nice Harry, while Sunday's bill is Undersmile, Dallas Don't, Tiger Mendoza and D Gwalia. Additionally Sunday features a free acoustic session in the downstairs bar hosted by Klub Kakofanny. Advance tickets, priced £4 per night, are on sale at **Wegotickets.com**.

ETHAN JOHNS makes a rare live appearance at **Truck Store** on Cowley Road this month. The renowned producer, whose credits include The Vaccines, Kaiser Chiefs, Laura Marling, Tom Jones and Kings of Leon, is on a UK tour of independent record stores to promote his new album 'If Not Now Then When'. He will be on stage at 5pm and fans are encouraged to contact **Truck Store** to register their interest as the show is likely to be extremely popular with capacity limited. Other instore appearances at **Truck** this month are recent Gathering stars **Wall** (Wed 7th); **Listing Ships** (Fri 9th); **Black Hats** and **Matt Midgeley** (Sat 10th); **Trevor Moss & Hannah Lou** and **Jess Hall** (Sun 11th); **Natureboy** (Thu

22nd) and **Tellison** with **My First Tooth** (Fri 30th). Visit www.truckmusicstore.co.uk for more info and set times.

BEN PERRIER's new band **Blasted** release their debut EP next month. The former-Winnebago Deal singer and guitarist has teamed up with Tommy Randhawa, formerly of Do Me Bad Things. 'Exposed/Time To Die' is out on the 3rd December on Dry Heave Records, via Plastic Head. The colour splatter 7" features four tracks of velocity 80s-styled hardcore, proving that Ben isn't ready for piano ballads just yet. Find out more at www.facebook.com/blastedband.

PHIL McMINN releases his debut solo EP next month. 'A Crystal / A Diamond / An End / A Start' is released on Beard Museum Records in the first week of December as a limited edition of 100 CDs with sleeve artwork by local artist Theo Peters, available from **Truck Store**. Phil plays at the **Jericho Tavern** on Saturday 17th November as support to See Of Bees.



photo: Jonny Pugsley

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NEWS

JACK GOLDSTEIN curates and performs at an evening of music by and inspired by John Cage in the New Year. The Fixers singer will be joined by fellow Fixer Roo Bhasin, as well as King of Cats' Max Levy, and Ian Staples from improv band Red Square at the Port Mahon on the 12th January. Explaining the performance, Jack told Nightshift, "The venue is the perfect small, non-academic receptacle for the performance and it should be very exciting. I want the evening to teach as well as invite critique, not necessarily of Cage's work but of the performers' understanding of the composer; you could almost refer to the idea as a 'practical assignment'. The pieces we will be performing are 'Indeterminacy', '4'33'', 'Water Walk' and an improv piece inspired by the anti-disciplines of Cage himself. There's more info on the blog site eachoneofushashisownstomach.tumblr.com.

local community radio station launching in the New Year. Part of the station's programme will be a local music show called, The Local (did you see what they did there?). Organisers are looking for unsigned local acts to play on the station. Acts interested can visit www.abingdonxtra.co.uk and upload their tunes.

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

Regularly updated local music news is available online at www.musicinoxford.co.uk. The site also features interactive reviews, a photo gallery and gig guide. Nightshift's online forum is open to all local music fans and musicians at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net, while the new Oxfordshire Music

ABINGDONXTRA is a new



THERE WAS MUCH EXCITEMENT AT NIGHTSHIFT HQ back in July when the excellent new **ULTRASOUND** album dropped unexpectedly through the letterbox – a mere 13 years after their 'Everything Picture' debut, which pre-empted the band's acrimonious split shortly after. That excitement reached fever-pitch with the announcement the band will be playing at the **Jericho Tavern** on **Thursday 6th December**. A chance to revisit the epic rock and roll extravaganzas Ultrasound regularly visited upon Oxford in the mid-90s, when they were adopted as honorary Oxfordians – becoming the only non-Oxford band ever to play at the legendary Your Song parties. Tickets for the show are on sale now from www.alt-tickets.co.uk. It's gonna be awesome, we tell you. Awesome.

Scene quarterly magazine is available as a PDF online at www.oxfordmusicscene.co.uk featuring interviews with local singer-songwriters Lewis Watson and Richard Walters.

Another locally-themed music podcast is From The Ladder Factory, which plays music from Oxfordshire and Wiltshire – get it at www.fromtheladderfactory.com.

Pete Galpin 1950 - 2012

Oxford musicians have been paying tribute to Pete Galpin, the singer and guitarist nicknamed Cowley Road's 'Mr Chillout'. Pete passed away on October 7th at Sobell House after battling mesothelioma.

A popular veteran of the local blues and jazz scenes, Pete started playing working men's clubs at the age of 14 and played in a number of local bands over the years as well as solo. Tony Jezzard of Reservoir Cats said of his friend, "He was a restless intellectual and musical spirit, sometimes challenging but always generous with his time and opinions. He was an accomplished guitarist and musician - his knowledge of jazz theory and chords was unrivalled and at times daunting."

Dai Amos, who played with Pete in Blues Rumour, said, "Pete had a unique laid-back style, part groove, part jazz which he pedalled every Sunday afternoon at the Bully in the early noughties. He could be found hanging out at the Music Box, talking politics in the Excelsior, and jamming at the Chester. He was, indisputably, Cowley Road's Mr Chill-out."

Liz Henry from Headington Hillbillies added, "Pete had been on the Oxford music scene for about 20 years, running a regular Sunday afternoon jazz/blues session at the Bullingdon and was a frequent contributor at many other venues, as well as being a well-known friendly face on Cowley Road." Nightshift's thoughts go out to all of Pete's family and many friends.



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LISTING SHIPS



photo: Giulia Biasibetti

“I’M INTERESTED IN THE history of how we used the oceans for discovery and trade and what it must have been like. Particularly what ancient mariners must have imagined lay beneath the surface of our oceans: the fear of the unknown. Catching a glimpse of a huge tail flying past a ship must have been terrifying in the 15th Century. Old badly rendered maps illustrate this well; I’m fascinated by those odd looking sea creatures that apparently used to roam our oceans.”

LISTING SHIPS GUITARIST and keyboard player Mike Bingham is explaining his band’s fascination with all things nautical. Formed two years ago by Mike along with former Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element and From Light To Sound chap Stuart Fowkes (bass, keyboards); Stuart’s friend Jim Hey (guitars), and ex-Witches drummer Dave Balch, everything about Listing Ships, from the band name to each and every one of their song titles carries this sea-faring theme. “It was a convenient way to tie everything together,” continues Jim. “We found that as we played together more and got into the whole nautical vibe, it became an interesting vehicle for the songs. Even without the obvious samples that we add in, the structure and general feel of the songs feels very nautical. “When we established that as the ‘theme’ for the band, we were pretty determined to avoid it becoming gimmicky as far as we could,” adds Stuart. “What we didn’t really see

coming, though, was to what extent the concept would come to shape many of our songs. Several of the band, if they were still at school, would be what you’d call ‘visual learners’, and creating a story or strong image that we want a song to represent can have a strong bearing not just on the samples we use or the accompanying video, but on the shape of the song. “Then Venice Sank”, for instance, takes the suggestion that Venice may one day become a second Atlantis to create something around the panic of inevitable decline. ‘The 100 Gun Ship’ is entirely based around a victorious sea battle, right down to the Morse code for SOS coming into the final section as the vanquished vessel sinks.”

PURELY INSTRUMENTAL, Listing Ship’s sound is an alternately intricate and bullish brew of post-rock textures, film score atmospherics and Krautrock grooves. They’ve drawn comparisons to acts as diverse as Tortoise and Neu!, Billy Mahonie and Holy Fuck – all similarly instrumental or sparing on the vocal front. Their music glides or lurches from moments of pensive ambience to bone-crushing brutality, and when they’re in full flow, as on tracks like ‘The 100 Gun Ship’, or ‘Alba Adriatica’, from their new EP, released this month, they’re as all-consuming as a north Atlantic storm. “Originally the plan was to put together some kind of multi-guitar no wave ensemble along the lines of Rhys Chatham,” explains Stuart of

Listing Ships’ origins, “but things rarely work out how you’d imagined when you get into a room, especially when several of us hadn’t actually met each other before the first rehearsal. Originally it was a case of me asking around among people who I’d always thought I’d like to play in a band with, and remarkably all of them being up for it at the same time. But then things always sound different once you start playing together and we ended up sounding how we do now very naturally.”

IN KEEPING WITH THE nautical theme Listing Ships recorded the new EP at the RNLI’s Hayling Island lifeboat station. That must have been a challenge to organise – they couldn’t have been too keen on a bunch of scruffy musicians cluttering up the slipways, surely? MIKE: “They couldn’t have been more helpful and accommodating to be honest. They offered us full use of the station and moved boats out to make way for our amps and kit. There was always the ‘four minute response’ we needed to be weary of, though. If alarm bells kicked off we were warned we’d have to clear out of the way pretty sharpish, which wasn’t easy with all the kit we’d set up. We got lucky though with no call outs during our visit. The day before they’d had three. For the record we’re pretty well kempt too.” STUART: The original idea was my partner Giulia’s – brilliant in its simplicity! It made total sense and we figured we had nothing to lose from asking, so basically just

dropped them a ‘we’re not mental or anything, but...’ email. Then about three weeks later they got back to us with a very enthusiastic ‘sounds like a great idea’. The tricky thing for them was to find a station that suited our needs, and would also allow us to let them keep it open as a working rescue station while we were recording. We needed somewhere big enough to set up a full band, far away from main roads, and quiet enough that we could actually record without all sorts of harbour noises all over the tunes. In the end they settled on Hayling Island down by Portsmouth. The staff and volunteers were absolutely lovely and gave us the run of the station, literally pushing the boat out for us and letting us take as much time as we needed. We got a lot of interest from dog-walkers and passers-by, and a few rescue radio interruptions but that was about it. The weekend doubled as a field recording exercise as well, sampling everything from beaches and waves to the radio transmissions and putting them onto the new record. One track, ‘Nutcracker Six’, is entirely composed of RNLI samples.” How much did the station itself become part of the music and the recording process, we wonder. MIKE: “It influenced everything. The natural reverb sound created in the main hall, once we’d cranked up our guitars, was immense. The only other time I’ve been that excited about playing guitar was when I first kicked on a grunge pedal, aged 15.” Can you imagine any other similar recording or gigging scenarios you’d like to explore? An underwater recording session on a sunken wreck perhaps, or a tour of North Sea oil rigs? JIM: “I’m not actually sure any of us are actually great swimmers, so not sure how we would fair underwater. I think we would like to play places like the Thekla in Bristol though and even perhaps record on a ship. STUART: “I don’t think we’d go back to recording in a regular studio if we can help it. We’d love to do a lighthouse next, although getting the gear up all those stairs may kill at least one of us. We’d love to tour only coastal towns in the UK, record on an oil rig - anything! If the Elysian Quartet can record a piece in four helicopters, I reckon we can get ourselves set up on a battleship sometime.”

OXFORD HAS ALWAYS DONE post-rock, instrumental and more experimental music pretty well; what do Listing Ships bring to the party

that’s different? STUART: Oxford certainly *did* post-rock and instrumental music well - there was a real high water mark around the time of Youthmovies’ early records, The Rock of Travolta enjoying loads of success, and back then I was trying something different with Sunnyvale Noise Sub-element too, but over recent years there’s been a move away from that part of the musical map. In terms of what Listing Ships bring, I’d say there’s an absolute determination *not* to sound like generic post-rock; I’d hate for people to think we’re a knock-off of Explosions In The Sky or something. I also feel like there’s a restlessness to make the sounds as interesting and melodic as possible while pushing ourselves in new directions. There’s a huge range of influences we bring to bear on the sound too; the krautrock elements are pretty much just my personal obsession for which the rest of the band shouldn’t be held accountable. They’re more musically balanced than me, by which I mean they’re not completely rooted in 1970s Dusseldorf.” MIKE: “We’ve realised that you have to work a lot harder as an instrumental band. Vocalists carry a lot of musical dead weight that you only notice when it’s absent. I’d like to think we breathe energy and ideas into this area and add our own nautical theme to hold things together. Live is a pretty cathartic experience for us.” Get Stuart talking about krautrock and you can settle yourself in for the evening, but it’s a source material that’s become increasingly influential on new bands in recent times, including Oxford’s own Radiohead, Foals and Gaz Coombes. Why does Stuart think it retains such an appeal over 40 years later? STUART: “I think fundamentally because it was so far ahead of its time, that people are just catching up now on the possibilities that Neu!’s first record opened up, and no one has really ever caught up with what Can did. It was genuinely groundbreaking, exploratory music that made its own rules. And it’s such a vague term covering so many bands that it can cover everyone from ice-cool synth-pop bands nodding to Kraftwerk through to acid-frazzled maniacs who’ve heard a few Guru Guru records. There’s a really satisfying and growing number of neo-krautrock bands, for want of a better word, in recent years, all putting their own slant on the sound rather than just whacking down a straight 4/4 beat and calling it motorik. Baltic Fleet and Warm Digits are both doing amazing things.” The quartet There’s also an interest from the band in soundtrack music; who in particular has inspired them from that side of things? STUART: “For me, soundtrack

music is often one of the more satisfying sources of genuinely groundbreaking, exciting instrumental music, far away from plodding post-rockers. Right the way from Goblin in the 1970s creating mental psychedelic masterpieces to soundtrack Dario Argento movies through to the amazing stuff Clint Mansell produces, there’s some really inspiring stuff out there once you get past 4Music’s ‘50 Greatest Movie Tunes Of All Time’. The pieces Kryzstof Penderecki put together for *The Exorcist* are some of the most astonishing music I’ve ever heard - for something to have the ability to genuinely scare you almost every time you hear it is outstanding. It’s a far more durable form of horror even than the film itself.” Asked which film from history Listing Ships would most love to have soundtracked, Stuart answers with typically dry self-deprecation. “*Das Boot*, because like one of our songs there are a few really

“I’d like to do the soundtrack to Das Boot, because like one of our songs there are a few really interesting bits, but mostly it’s incomprehensible, not that much happens and it’s at least three times as long as it should be.”

interesting bits, but mostly it’s incomprehensible, not that much happens and it’s at least three times as long as it should be. Dammit no, *Jaws*! I meant *Jaws*!” **ON SATURDAY 10th NOVEMBER** Listing Ships will open Audioscope at the Jericho Tavern, the annual mini-festival organised by Stuart alongside long-time friend and fellow former Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element chap Simon Minter. Since its 2001 inception Audioscope has raised over £23,000 for homeless charity Shelter, while showcasing some of the most innovative leftfield and underground bands and musicians from around the world, including, in the past, Michael Rother and Dieter Moebius from Neu! and Harmonia; Four-Tet; Six By Seven; Clinic and Deerhoof. Its uncompromisingly esoteric nature has made Audioscope an essential, if sometimes overlooked, part of Oxford’s music calendar, one that has provided Nightshift with some of its most spectacular musical memories. It is an event, and a cause, very close to Stuart’s heart. “It originally came out of a bored day at work, when me and Simon decided to see if we could put on a music festival, ‘cos, y’know, it looked easy. We set out two parameters right at the beginning that I’m really proud we’ve always

stuck to: that the festival would be dedicated to raising money for Shelter, a charity we both feel really passionate about, and that both Simon and I would both agree on every band, trying to make a bill that just interested us both and made us both happy. We figured there must be enough other like-minded people out there to enjoy it, so although the first festival was cobbled together with the goodwill of bands we were friends with, the guiding principles stay the same. “Now, though, the entire landscape of music has changed, as the recession kicked in, plus people stopped buying music, which meant live was where bands made their money, so it was harder to book bigger acts without being quoted thousands of pounds. But what I love is that means every band that plays does it because they care about the cause, and about the show. So we’re both still really excited about the event, and as long as people keep

ONE OF AUDIOSCOPE’S ALL-time great sets came courtesy of Damo Suzuki, former frontman of Krautrock legends Can. Suzuki played an improvised set with members of Bilge Pump and Wolves (Of Greece); this time round his “sound carriers” will be local experimental drum troupe The ODC Drumline. What’s it like for Stuart to be dealing with someone who’s both a personal hero and a genuine musical legend? STUART: By turns strange and completely normal. Picking Damo Suzuki up at Stansted and then talking to him about German football on the way home was one of the most surreal experiences of my life; all the time my head was just screaming ‘YOU’RE TALKING TO THE SINGER FROM CAN ABOUT FOOTBALL!’ And that’s part of the great thing of Audioscope – the moments of surrealism, the unexpected parts and the moments of pure joy that make nine months of working on it worthwhile, every year. “We’re really proud of this year’s show; the band we’ve got lined up for Damo is amazing, with five brilliant drummers and some other

guest musicians. It’s going to be quite an experience to see how he plays with all those drummers, and I imagine a bloody nightmare getting them all on the stage. Other than that, Laura Moody is unmissably bonkers and I’m really happy to have Land Observations on. It’s James from Appliance, who played for us ten years ago, and he remembered the show very fondly and wanted to come back and play again for us.” “My favourite ever Audioscope moment may well have been offstage, though: taking Michael Rother from Neu!, who if you’re talking personal heroes, is up there for me, to the Gardeners in Jericho, watching him get drunk on two pints and start singing Harmonia lyrics in the bar. Like I said earlier, it’s the surreal moments that make Audioscope worth doing every year.” **AUDIOSCOPE HAS RAISED** £23,000 for Shelter over the years; do Stuart and Simon get to see directly how the money has helped? “Yes, Shelter keep in touch with us all year round and are super-happy about what we do for them – always up for putting things out on their website and so on. We went on a visit to one of their services a few years ago and met some families who were helped by their work; they provided a day care centre for children whose parents were suffering housing problems, and it was the absolute highlight of their week, their chance to get to know other kids in the same situation, and for their lives just to feel a bit more normalised and balanced. Really moving and humbling to see, and at the same time there’s a huge part of Shelter that’s hardcore lobbying to tackle the root causes of homelessness, which is the only way we’ll ever end the problem. Really, no government for the last thirty years has helped the housing situation: there’s been no real commitment to affordable housing for everyone, which you would hope would be a basic human right. People certainly do have a misconception of homelessness - if you’re not sleeping rough, for many people, you’re not homeless. But the problems are so much deeper and more complex than that; imagine being forced to live in a B&B more or less indefinitely, with no cooking facilities, no home address, no stability and no sense of ever being at home. To be trite about it, after Audioscope, we all go back to our homes and reflect on a brilliant day, but for the people for whom Shelter is working, that simple fact of being able to go home at the end of the day isn’t possible.” **‘The Hayling Island Sessions’ is out this month on Idle Fret. Listing Ships play at Truck Store on Friday 9th November and as part of Audioscope on Saturday 10th. Visit listingships.bandcamp.com and www.musicforgoodhome.com.**

RELEASED

CHAD VALLEY

‘Young Hunger’

(Loose Lips)

Here’s an album that forces either a reassessment of cynicism or an unpicking of the listener’s approach to music. ‘Young Hunger’ is heavily, unashamedly indebted to mainstream pop music of the mid-1980s, and as such, it’s tempting to dismiss it as shallow pastiche or snarky comment on the state of current independent music. To do so would be a disservice to what is in fact a collection of incredibly well-crafted songs, and looking beyond the production values – and, indeed, analysing why the album’s influences generate such a knee-jerk response – helps to define ‘Young Hunger’ as a great record, regardless of the listener’s hang-ups or expectations. Chad Valley – or Hugo Manuel – has a singing voice not dissimilar to A-Ha’s Morten Harket, a velvety-smooth slow honk of a vocal style that’s echoed, Auto-Tuned and processed in various fashions across the album’s eleven tracks. He’s



had the *nous* to invite guest vocalists onto more than half of the songs here, and this fends off one-dimensionality by introducing otherwise impossible vocal ranges and textures (including the familiar pseudo-American style of Fixers’ Jack Goldstein, on ‘My Girl’). Such sensitivity in production and songwriting is reflected in some very subtle working of

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synthesised sounds, providing familiar hooks to create reminders of mid-80s John Hughes soundtracks, ‘Beat It’ dry drum hits, Joyce Sims r’n’b gloss and Tears For Fears’ neo-bombast. The overall feel for ‘Young Hunger’ is one of warmth, and it seems to be an album with a lot of heart. While there’s no dramatic variation in style across its eleven tracks – it stays relatively close to a heartfelt, medium-tempo, synthesised pop sound throughout – in its detail there’s enough going on to repay repeat listens. That said, it’s certainly no one-trick pony of a record; alongside all of its sonic nods to Dire Straits, Talking Heads and The Cars, there are tracks like ‘Interlude’, an almost Tangerine Dream-esque tone poem, and ‘Up & Down’, which could almost be an offcut from New Order’s ‘Low-Life’. In the 1980s, many musical artists used new technology to experiment with and augment songwriting: then, it wasn’t ironic or knowing. The technology may now be old, but Chad Valley lets the songs, not the tools - or our modern-day attitudes to them - dictate ‘Young Hunger’'s success. *Simon Minter*

WILD SWIM

‘Echo’

(Believe)

Like fellow current Oxford rising stars Glass Animals, Wild Swim’s music often feels like it comes from a strange, ghostly netherworld, possessing no corporeal presence. The opening two-thirds of this debut release for Believe Records is a mist-shrouded drift through delicately twinkling guitar, softly shimmering synths and shuffling, barely-there beats, with singer Richard Sansom’s voice casting an almost operatic, oriental shadow over proceedings, one small – but all-important – step away from being preposterously over-egged. Like Foals, and to a lesser extent The xx, Wild Swim coalesce the shifting separate parts of their songs with a deft hand, ‘Echo’ discovering rock courage deep in its pockets somewhere around the three minute mark, a bolshy guitar attack bringing everything into stark focus. Such a delicate touch is very much their bag, the skittish, airy ‘Bright Eyes’ offering the lightest funk touch, while Richard’s voice comes at you from the ether, hints of James Blake in his tremulous vocal delivery as well as the song’s scrabbling electro coda. A remix of ‘Echo’ by the band’s own side project Cubiq



(guitarists and keyboard players Jamie Jay and Carlos Posada) stretches the canvas even further, a taut, meandering pathway between Japan’s early-80s ambient experimentation and Radiohead’s trippier explorations. Such a leaning towards musical understatement means Wild Swim might never be an instant hit, relying on repeated listens to get in your head and under your skin, but once there they’re difficult to dislodge, and almost two years on from their first Nightshift Demo Of The Month, they’re as fascinatingly evasive and bewitching as they ever were. *Dale Kattack*

THE FAMILY MACHINE

‘Skeletons & That’

(Beard Museum)

The Family Machine release a second single ahead of their long-awaited second album, and like the last – the sweetly underplayed but sinister ‘Quiet As A Mouse’ – it’s a song that feels almost too delicately constructed to make it all the way to the end without being swept away by a gentle passing breeze. Yes, there’s an almost orchestral feel about the arrangement, but then again it might as well have been put together using blossom and confetti, although even that suggests some kind of cheeriness and an air of springtime *joy de vivre*, rather than the reflective autumnal lament that Jamie Hyatt delivers here. Even the song’s title, and the way it is delivered in the song, feels like a self-conscious shrug to ward off feelings of self pity as he contemplates a life without a certain special other; Jamie has a natural ability to convey wistful melancholy without ever sounding sorry for himself. Most of all, it sounds effortlessly lovely – something The Family Machine have long since excelled at. *Dale Kattack*



THE MECHANISMS

‘Once Upon A Time (In Space)’

(Own label download)

“The Mechanisms are an Oxford based seven-piece steampunk space pirate band, who (in character) travel the universe in the starship Aurora, spreading death, destruction, story and song. “ So runs the introduction to The Mechanism’s press release for their debut studio album, and we’re briefly unsure whether to kick them firmly in the nether regions and tell them to grow up. But read a little further in and it starts to sound interesting, the album being a concept album (“a space opera” in their words) based on old folk songs and fairy tales with Old King Cole cast as a vicious tyrant, Rose Red his cloned supersoldier, Snow White as Rose Red’s sister and Cinderella as Rose’s bride.

Add to this a tale of rebellion, death and love and featuring cameos from The Three Little Pigs, Red Riding Hood, Jack The Giant Killer and even Gepetto as a war criminal, and you’ve got a recipe for silliness on a dramatic scale. And so it is. Alternating spoken word passages that move the story on with shanties and madrigals and the odd skit and the whole thing feels more like an experimental stage play than an album. No surprise to learn then, that The Mechanisms performed the story as part of this year’s Edinburgh Fringe festival. As with Borderville’s recent concept album reworking of ‘Metamorphosis’, ‘Once Upon A Time...’ relies on lashings of almost operatic excess and a degree of camp that makes Lady Gaga look like Liam Gallagher, and while at times it feels a bit like Andrew Lloyd Webber presenting *Jethro Tull – The Musical!*, something keeps you listening, even if it’s simply morbid curiosity. There are nods – knowing or otherwise – to *Star Trek* and *Red Dwarf*, while the idea of assorted fairytale characters thrown together in an alien adventure, with a bit of Sapphic desire thrown in for good measure, seems to owe something to Alan Moore’s *Lost Girls*.

So does everybody get to live happily ever after? We’re not going to spoil the ending for you, other than to say there’s no knight in shining armour riding in to save the day, and if ostentatious prog-folk really isn’t your thing, then maybe you won’t want or need to find out, but for anyone inclined towards something more out of the ordinary and, yes, slightly silly, it might just be your bag of cosmic acorns. *Ian Chesterton*

THE SCHOLARS

‘Wired’

(Own label download)

Having been quiet over the past year during which they slimmed down to a three-piece, The Scholars return with the first of a planned series of six new singles. Their reduction in band members hasn’t made their sound any more slender, mind, ‘Wired’ carrying all their old hallmarks of drama-laden gothic indie rock, all coruscating synths, driving guitars and portentous vocals. Like Editors – still the closest comparison – and fellow local rockers The Half Rabbits, The Scholars make a virtue of sounding impossibly serious without being pompous or histrionic. ‘Wired’ maybe doesn’t have the melodic depth or scope of previous Scholars favourites like ‘This Heart’s Built To Break’ or ‘Turbulence’, but still sounds ambitious with its stretch to sound epic. *Dale Kattack*



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Propaganda

G I G G U I D E

THURSDAY 1st
THE PROCLAIMERS + BLUEFLINT: O2 Academy – Always bound to be remembered for their 80s chart hits ‘I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles)’ and ‘Letter From America’, Fife’s identical twin brothers Charlie and Craig Reid had a brief return to the national consciousness a couple of years back with the Comic Relief appropriation of their biggest hit, but that aside, they’ve continued to tour and release increasingly accomplished albums that mix up their traditional Scottish folk ancestry with a punky attitude that complements their unwavering political campaigning, and as their last show here, back in 2009, showed, they’re pretty much unbeatable for a spot of singalong folk anthem fun.
KATZENJAMMER + BEN CAPLAN: O2 Academy – Never mind Gangnam, it’s time to party Viking style – *see main preview*
FLIPRON: The Bullingdon – Upbeat barrelhouse pop and psychedelia with the odd ska flourish from Somerset’s Flipron, whose new single, ‘The Comet Returns’, features Neville

Thursday 1st
KATZENJAMMER: O2 Academy
Cornbury Festival definitely saved the best til last when they chose Katzenjammer to close the festival back in July. The Oslo quartet cut through all the reverential blues and staid soul prevalent over the festival weekend with a set that oozed a sense of fun, as well as packing a serious musical punch. The description “Four Norwegian girls playing Balkan folk music” barely scratches the surface of Katzenjammer’s sound and live show, which involves not just 20-plus instruments and a dizzying amount of swapping around, but also a range of sound that stretches from a polka take on Genesis to some heart-stopping choral balladry reminiscent of the ‘Voix Bulgares’ albums that 4AD released in the 1980s. And then on through some classic rock’n’roll, bluesgrass, Cossack dance and some shiny pure pop for good measure. There’s a sense of burlesque about the band’s stage show, but they’re too seriously rocking to be cast aside as some cabaret turn. Hell, if you can’t witness Katzenjammer live and come away happy as a clam and in love with every thing about them, you probably died sometime in the last century. Apparently the name translates as a fit of self-pity; an ironic moniker for a band capable of bringing such joy.



NOVEMBER
Staples on vocals and was produced by Rat Scabies. Compared variously to Tom Waits, The Kinks and Elvis Costello, they supported Donovan on his last UK tour.
MAD DOG McREA: The Jericho Tavern – Folk-rock, bluegrass and gypsy jazz from Plymouth’s Mad Dog McRea, championed by Mike Harding and chums with Seth Lakeman.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running and best open mic club night showcases local singers, musicians, poets and more every week.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Contemporary big band jazz from The Tommy Evans Orchestra.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The Wheatsheaf – Folk and Americana free in the downstairs bar.
ANNERO + TIGERS OF JUNCTION STREET + CONFRONT THE CARNAGE: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox metal night.
ROLL ON THURSDAYS: The Cellar – Floor fillers and party tunes every week.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston
FRIDAY 2nd
2:54 + PINS: The Jericho Tavern – Slowburning, claustrophobic gloom-pop from 2.54, sisters Hannah and Colette Thurlow, fusing elements of goth, shoegaze, folk and grunge. The pair signed to Fiction last year and recorded their album with Rob Ellis, who’s previously produced PJ Harvey.
HEAVEN 17: O2 Academy – From founding the original Human League, to their era-defining ‘Penthouse & Pavement’, Martin Ware and Ian Craig Marsh, along with singer Glenn Gregory, brought a sense of soul to previously austere electronic pop in the 80s and proved to be an influence on the likes of La Roux, with whom they recorded a 6Music session back in 2010. Marsh having departed the line-up, Ware and Gregory return to town, touring their second album, ‘The Luxury Gap’, particularly pertinent given the current political and social environment, so expect hits like ‘Temptation’, ‘Come Live With Me’ and ‘Crushed By The Wheels Of Industry’.
ALT.J: O2 Academy – Time to tessellate – *see main preview*
ANNIE MAC: O2 Academy – Electro and house from the influential Radio 1 DJ.
JOSEPHINE FOSTER + BRICKWORK LIZARDS: The Bullingdon – Delicate, sombre and inventively poetic American folk and acoustic blues from Colorado’s reclusive but prolific songstress, mining a sparse, traditional early-20th Century style, augmented by an almost operatic voice. She’s over in the UK to promote her new album, ‘Blood Rising’, her ninth solo outing. Turkbilly support from Brickwork Lizards.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with AGNESS PIKE + TALC DEMONS + RECKLESS SLEEPERS: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak’s monthly mixed bag of musical fruits, tonight with theatrical

thrash merchants Agness Pike, taking Anthrax and Metallica out shopping for fancy handbags, plus Rami’s Talc Demons and Phil Garvey’s Reckless Sleepers.
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Your monthly dose of ska, reggae, dancehall and soul in the company of Count Skylarkin. Tonight’s live guest turn comes from Phoenix City Allstars with their Skatalites and Studio 1-style ska, rocksteady and early reggae, reworking 2 Tone classics into a 1960s Jamaican style and featuring members of Pama International and The Sidewalk Doctors. Legendary septuagenarian DJ Derek makes the trip over from his native Bristol again for his trademark mix of reggae, dancehall and soul on the decks.
MAEVE DAYTON + IAN WYCHERLEY + JANE GRIFFITHS + THE FLETCHER BROTHERS: East Oxford Community Centre – Local folk singer Maeve launches her new album.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon – Funk, soul, r’n’b and house every Friday.
WHO DO YOU LOVE? The Duke, St Clement’s – Alt.rock, surf, garage-punk, 60s, soul, new wave and electro session with DJs Jim, Jens and Grizilla.
DISCO MUTANTE: The Library – Disco, cosmic funk, electro boogie and acid house session.
SATURDAY 3rd
SKA CUBANO + THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND: O2 Academy – A repeat of the party-starting double bill that rocked the Academy last time round and will do again. Led by irrepressible frontman Natty Bo, Cuban ska and mambo crew Ska Cubano mix traditional Cuban dance with Jamaican rocksteady and ska, plus a hefty dose of Calypso and the spirit of rock’n’roll, while local hot jazz combo The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band live life onstage like it’s still prohibition-era New Orleans. Together they make an irresistible force for fun and you *will* dance til you drop.
JACK SAVORETTI + KARIMA FRANCIS: The Jericho Tavern – Poetic acoustic folk and pop from Anglo-Italian singer-songwriter Savoretti, touring his third album, ‘Before The Storm’, having been spotted by and toured with Corinne Bailey Rae. Support from Oxford regular Karima Francis with her rootsy acoustic soul that’s seen her compared to Tracy Chapman and Joan Armatrading.
DAVID RODIGAN: The Bullingdon – A night of reggae and dancehall from an undisputed king of the genre, the recently MBE’d Mr Rodigan, the former Kidlington schoolboy who is now widely recognised as one of the chief authorities on reggae, as well as one of the finest and most respected reggae DJs in the UK, having toured with Shinehead and been name-checked in song by The Beastie Boys along the way.
DESERT STORM + DIESEL KING + THE WITCHES DRUM + KOMRAD: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke night with local stoner and psych-metal heroes Desert Storm

kicking it out raw, dirty and bluesy. They’re joined by sludgy downtempo brutalists Diesel King and Cardiff’s heavyweight garage and psych-metal riffmeisters The Witches Drum.
PUNK OLYMPIA: The Cellar (5pm) – An extended session of punk and punk-inspired noise from the likes of Twat Daddies, Barmy Army, Nuclear Skyline, The Great Big Bargain, Cocaine Cowboys, Jane Likes Book and Beaver Fuel.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy – Indie and rock at Propaganda every Saturday, plus kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy, and party tunes from Jack FM DJs.
WHAT YOU CALL IT GARAGE: The Cellar – UK garage, 2-step, 4x4 and bassline.

SUNDAY 4th
LARRY McCRAY: The Bullingdon – Blues rocking guitar and big, soulful vocals from Arkansas’ veteran bluesman McCray, inspired by the three Kings – BB, Albert and Freddie, and over on a rare UK visit ahead of a headline show at the Carlisle Blues Festival.
MYSTERY JETS: O2 Academy – Back in town after their shows at the Bully and at Truck Festival earlier this year, plying a rootsier form of harmony-heavy pop these days having recorded most recent album ‘Radlands’ in Texas.
MOON RABBIT + BEARD OF DESTINY + OXFORD UKULELE GROUP + PHIL FREIZINGER + CHRIS HILLS: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free acoustic session.

MONDAY 5th
MEURSAULT + ROB St JOHN: The Cellar

Friday 2nd
ALT.J: O2 Academy
You’d hope and expect a bunch of fine art graduates to make music that was a bit, well, arty wouldn’t you? And so it turns out with Alt.J who have gone from virtual unknowns to Top 20 chart stars and one of the favourites for this year’s Mercury Prize in the space of a few months. Listing to their debut album, ‘An Awesome Wave’, it’s not hard to hear why. It’s just great. Comparisons have been made to Radiohead, Foals, Wild Beasts and The xx, as well as Fairport Convention, but none of those really fits and Alt.J do seem to be out in their own little musical word, one where chamber folk, dubstep, electronica, jazz, murder ballads and ecclesiastical chants not so much collide as drift airily towards each other. Radio hit ‘Tessellate’ has helped bring them even closer to household name status, though they all seem far too nice and polite to make for proper rock stars, so instead they’re going to let the music do the talking, teasing critics by being almost impossible to categorise, but gently helping to drag guitar based music out of its self-imposed doldrums. Tonight’s show is sold out already, unsurprisingly.



– Caustic melancholy from the Edinburgh indie-folksters – *see main preview*
ROB TOGNONI: The Jericho Tavern – The Tasmanian blues devil returns to the Famous Monday Blues club, displaying the powerful and versatile electric style that’s served him well in his 30 plus years on the road, his style owing much to Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

TUESDAY 6th
ADAM ANT & THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE LOVELY POSSE: O2 Academy – The Dandy Highwayman returns after successfully resurrecting his pop career last year, his recent Bestival set critically lauded as a triumph. Having dominated the early-80s charts with theatrical glee and monster hits like ‘Ant Music’, ‘Stand & Deliver’ and ‘Prince Charming’, a gradual retreat into a less successful solo career and mental health issues followed, so Ant’s return to performing was as much a personal triumph as it was a welcome return of a man whose dedication to proper pop star entertainment puts most modern day manufactured nobodies to shame. As well as the hits there’s be plenty of early Adam & The Ants gems to keep the old guard happy.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz every week, tonight with The New Jazz Collective
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue – Launch night for Catweazle Club’s new weekly open mic session, following on similar lines, showcasing local singers, musicians, poets and performance artists.
BEATS AT THE BAR: The Cellar – Hip hop session.

WEDNESDAY 7th
WALL: Truck Store – The sludgy posters return to town for an instore after their showing at Gathering Festival.
SAINT SAVIOUR: The Jericho Tavern – Ethereal, hymnal electronic pop from London’s Becky Jones, previously singer with Groove Armada, under her guise of Saint Saviour, drawing comparisons with Elizabeth Frazer and Kate Bush on her debut album, ‘Union’, featuring reworkings of songs by Bowie, Siouixise and The Banshees, Depeche Mode and M83 among others.
SUBVERSE presents DJRUM + PRVDNT + JEZEBEL + SKINS: The Cellar – House, techno, garage and bass club night with guest DjRUM joining club residents on the decks.

THURSDAY 8th
DAMN THE TORPEDOES + THE MAGIC MANGO BAND: The Bullingdon – Tribute to Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers.
LIMEHOUSE LIZZY: O2 Academy – Tribute to Thin Lizzy.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Eclectic mix of Flamenco, Latin, oriental and rock-inflected jazz from the renowned guitarist.
MARVELLOUS MEDICINE + HEMAN SHEMAN + GABE ANDERSON + JACK STANTON: The Cellar – University magazine Isis celebrates its 120th anniversary with a night of live music from student bands. Followed by Roll On Thursdays.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
KATHRYN ROBERTS + SEAN LAKEMAN: The Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon – Husband and wife duo Kathryn and Sean return to playing and recording with each other with their new album



MONDAY 5th
MEURSAULT / ROB St JOHN: The Cellar
Another minor coup from local promoters Pindrop Performances, tonight bringing Edinburgh’s Meursault to town, a band much loved in the late night outer reaches of 6 Music and the darker corners of the music press, but typically overlooked by a mainstream hooked on polish and style over substance. Neil Pennyhook’s nine-strong band are generally labelled folktronic, but that’s a simplistic term for a band named after a character in an Albert Camus-penned existential novel. And it’s increasingly a misleading term since the band’s recent third album, ‘Something For The Weakened’, has left much of their earlier lo-fi electronic elements behind in favour of a more rounded and well-produced organic instrumentation, notably piano. What you get, though, isn’t a huge shift in stylistic gears from acclaimed debut album ‘Pissing On Bonfires / Kissing With Tongues’, morose, slow-burning laments with the occasional upbeat rock-out to leaven the mood, Pennycook’s richly intoned melancholy offset by moments of real contempt and menace. Tonight’s show is a benefit gig for Helen & Douglas House Hospice, with Meursault joined by locally-based Scottish songsmith and sometime collaborator Rob St John.

‘Hidden People’, mixing tender folk ballads with stomping acoustic rock, having previously formed Equation with Kate Rusby and Sean’s brother Seth.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 9th
LISTING SHIPS: Truck Store (6pm) – This month’s Nightshift cover stars launch their new EP and preview their Audioscope show tomorrow night with this instore appearance.
THE D.O.T: The Bullingdon – What Mike Skinner did next – *see main preview*
MIKE PETERS: O2 Academy – The Alarm singer keeps on keeping on.
PUNCH BROTHERS: O2 Academy – Progressive bluegrass and contemporary classical fusion from New York’s Punch Brothers, formed by former-Nickel Creek man Chris Thile, adding some rock dynamics, jazz timings and virtuoso mandolin playing into a live set that stretches from traditional folk songs to the odd Radiohead cover.
KILL MURRAY + MILLION FACES: The Jericho Tavern – Daisy Rodgers Music night with electro-tinged slacker pop fighters Kill Murray.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, with a live set from Klezmer and Balkan folk band She’Koyokh, and guest DJ Jokakeli.
THE DEPUTEES: The Wheatsheaf



Friday 9th

THE D.O.T:

The Bullingdon

The Streets had barely been and gone before Mike Skinner announced his new musical project at the end of last year – The D.O.T, a collaboration with Rob Harvey, previously frontman of Leeds’ epic indie rockers The Music. How that clash of musical worlds was going to pan out was anybody’s guess but they’ve quickly put a dozen songs online, while building momentum with a series of droll moc-doc monthly video diaries. The result isn’t a world away from The Streets’ take on UK hip hop, Skinner’s sample-heavy collages, replete with electronic squiggles, wobbly synths and sometimes almost dubby beats, backing Harvey’s slightly epic soulful vocals. The pair have collaborated with Ghostpoet and a recent single, ‘You Never Asked’, features Danny Brown and Clare Maguire to good effect. The pair’s debut album, ‘And That’ is due out around about now, and The D.O.T seem to be adopting a back-to-basics approach with a relatively low-key UK tour, so make the most of seeing them up close while you can.

COUNTRY FOLK SINGER-SONGWriters
CIRCLE: The Port Mahon – Like what it says on the tin, an intimate night of local country-folk singer-songwriters. Possibly sitting in a circle. The Epstein’s Ollie Wills is playing, as are Swindlestock, Ags Connolly and Ragdoll. Bring marshmallows and wood for the fire.

BREEZE: The Duke’s Cut – Live party tunes from the local band.

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 10th

BLACK HATS + MATT MIDGELY: Truck Store – Spiky new wave-inspired power pop from local faves Black Hats.

AUDIOSCOPE: The Jericho Tavern – A full day and night of leftfield music in aid of Shelter, including a headline set from Damo Suzuki. Alternatively you can go and watch a Stone Roses tribute band – *see main preview*

DREAMING SPIRES + THE HI & LO + THE RELATIONSHIPS: The Bullingdon – Warm-hearted Americana and 60s West Coast harmony pop from Dreaming Spires at tonight’s Empty Room Promotions show, the Brothers Bennett continuing to explore their love for The Band, Teenage Fanclub and Big Star on recent album ‘Brothers In Brooklyn, while local psychedelic pop legends The Relationships open the show.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Thirteenth birthday party for the long-running house and electro club, with guests Eats and residents.

RED SQUARE: Modern Art Oxford – Confrontational avant-jazz-cum-metal sonic explorers Red Square, the band formed by Oxford music scene vets Jon Seagroatt and Ian Staples back in the 1970s in Southend. Somewhere between John

Coltrane, Sun Ra and Black Sabbath, their aim is cranial damage and broken musical barriers and if you strain, you can probably hear them playing all the way up in Bicester. More bands should be so challenging. Alternatively you can go and watch a Stone Roses tribute band.

THE COMPLETE STONE ROSES: O2 Academy – Relive your Heaton Park summer fun in the cosier confines of the Academy.

THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + DALLAS DON’T + RIVALRIES: The Cellar – Return to local live action for Oxford’s mathsy rockers, leaning towards the Owls and Death Cab For Cutie scheme of things. Support at tonight’s 100% Mosh show comes from spiky Pixies and Idlewild-inspired starlets Dallas Don’t. Followed by Extra Curricular, playing a mix of garage, bass and house.
WATER PAGEANT + JESS HALL + WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD: Fusion Arts Centre – Wistful, folksy indie from Water Pageant at tonight’s album launch gig, where they’re joined by excellent local folk-pop songstress Jess Hall and acoustic pop outfit Welcome To Peepworld.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy
HOUSEWURK: The Duke’s Cut – Old school house session with Tony Nanton.
THE NEW ESSEX BLUEGRASS BAND: Three Horseshoes, Towersey – Harmony-heavy trad blouses tunes.

SUNDAY 11th

HALLS: The Bullingdon – Ecclesiastical chamber-pop from Sam Howard’s Halls – *see main preview*

TREVOR MOSS & HANNAH LOU + JESS HALL: Truck Store – Instore show from Trevor and Hannah Lou ahead of their Jericho show later tonight.

TOM McRAE + TREVOR MOSS & HANNAH-LOU: The Jericho Tavern – Chelmsford’s master of mirth returns to town to promote his new album, ‘From The Lowlands’, a direct follow-up to ‘Alphabet Of Hurricanes’, continuing to plumb the depths of musical sorrow and melancholy in rather splendid style and with a featherlight vocal touch that leavens his tales of gloom and lost love. Support from lovey-dovey alt.country duo Trevor and Hannah-Lou.

THE BEAT: O2 Academy – The Ranking Roger and Everett Morton version of the 80s hitmakers return to town, revisiting ‘Mirror In The Bathroom’, ‘Too Nice To Talk To’ and more.

MONDAY 12th

THE NOISETTES: O2 Academy – Frothy, chart-friendly electro-pop and retro soul from the indie scrappers turned chart stormers. Having made the leap from the toilet circuit to hitting the charts with 2009’s ‘Wild Young Hearts’ and its unmissable accompanying single, ‘Don’t Upset The Rhythm’, they’re still on course for pop glory with eclectic new album ‘Contact’.

MAX MILNER: O2 Academy – Saucy rhymes and innuendo from the veteran music hall singer and comedian who died in 1963.

GRAINNE DUFFY: The Jericho Tavern – Powerful blues and soul 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 again as headliner ahead of the release of her second album.

ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS: The New Theatre –

Elvis tribute spectacular.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd
GET YOUR ROCKS OFF: The Cellar – Indie club night.

TUESDAY 13th

THE REVIVAL TOUR: O2 Academy – Chuck Ragan’s back-to-grassroots tour continues apace, the Hot Water Man joined by an international cast of roots musicians, including, for this latest leg of the tour, Australia’s Emily Barker, Canada’s Jay Malinowski and American singer-songwriters Rocky Votolato and Cory Branan. They don’t allow campfires inside the O2 but if they did, it’d be the perfect setting for such an evening of downhome musical intimacy.

BETA BLOCKER & THE BODYCLOCK: Ovada Gallery, Osney Lane – Dirty lo-fi groove-heavy noise from Beta Blocker at the opening of new warehouse gallery Ovada.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

Saturday 10th

AUDIOSCOPE:

The Jericho Tavern

Twelve years in, Audioscope remains one of Oxford’s most understated but musically ambitious annual events. Previous years have seen underground stars like Wire, Four-Tet, Deerhoof, Rother & Moebius and Luke Vibert grace the bill, while 2007’s set by Shit & Shine remains one of the greatest gigs Nightshift has ever witnessed. And all the while Audioscope has raised thousands of pounds for homeless charity Shelter. This year’s event finds one of the star turns of old return, in the form of **Damo Suzuki**, the legendary former Can singer, who for tonight’s headline set, is joined by the ODC Drumline, making their Audioscope debut. Expect the unexpected with a hefty side order of rhythmic, spaced-out krautrocking psychedelic madness. Also on an impressive bill are Baltimore’s psychedelic grunge-folksters **Arbouretum**, groove-farmers par excellence, who are like an epic collision of early Fairport and Earth; Manchester-Newcastle duo **Warm Digits**, bringing Neu!’s motorik electronic up to date in scintillating fashion; new Mute Records signings **Land Observatory**; technical rock experimenters **Alright The Captain**; ambient Krautrock-inspired rockers **Baltic Fleet** and Elysian Quartet cellist **Laura Moody**. Not to mention the fantastically named, and fantastically noisy **Dethscalator**. A strong local contingent features **Gunning For Tamar**, **Message To Bears** and this month’s Nightshift cover stars **Listing Ships**. It’s a full day of music that’s often challenging, occasionally confrontational but always rewarding and for anyone wanting their ears opened to new and exciting sounds, while benefitting a very worthwhile cause, it’s an event not to be missed.



JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live jazz from The Hugh Turner Band.

THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 14th

IMAGINE DRAGONS: O2 Academy – Pumped-up, polished stadium-rock from the Las Vegas band whose ‘It’s Time’ was a massive radio hit Stateside over the summer, sounding a bit like Killers by way of Take That. They’re over in the UK to promote debut album ‘Night Visions’, tonight’s show upgraded from the Jericho Tavern.

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

THURSDAY 15th

GRAVENHURST + SEABUCKTHORN + SOLEDAD VELEZ: The Cellar – In a fair and just world Gravenhurst would be far, far bigger than Coldplay but it seems the great CD-buying public doesn’t like its melancholy too honest or intimate. So Bristol’s Nick Talbot remains a cult concern, utterly beloved of a small but dedicated, and hopefully growing, fanbase. He’s just released his fourth album for Warp Records, ‘The Ghost In Daylight’, with its almost hymnal psychedelic leanings but that fragile, hushed sense of autumnal melancholy remains. Tonight’s show is part of the Cellar’s new Irregular Folk club and Talbot is joined by atmospheric local soundscapist Seabuckthorn, who’s just released his new album ‘The Silence Woke Me’, plus Valencia’s emotive indie-folkster Soledad Velez.

EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES + RED CROW + THIRD LIGHT + THE METHOD + THE ATTITUDE BOYS: The Bullingdon – Highly promising rootsy folk-pop from Empty White Circles and others at tonight’s It’s All About The Music show.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with SIMON SPILLETT: The Wheatsheaf – English jazz tenor saxophonist Spillett guests at the Spin, drawing on Courtney Pine and Wynton and Branford Marsalis for inspiration.

FRANKIE’S WHISKY NIGHT: The Port Mahon – Whisky-fuelled Americana from Francis Pugh & The Whisky Singers at tonight’s malt-infused session, plus folk-pop from The Oh So Many and acoustic songs from Oliver Talkes.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 16th

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT: The New Theatre – Showtunes and romance from the quirky troubadour – *see main preview*

GOJIRA: O2 Academy –As you’d hope and expect, French rockers Gojira are every bit as monstrous as their namesake – the original Japanese moniker for Godzilla. In fact Gojira used to be called Godzilla before they had to change their name for legal reasons. Formed in 1996, theirs is a mid-tempo, sometimes meandering, but technical and highly rhythmic form of death-metal with all its hallmark sounds, from the double kick drum salvos to Joe Duplantier’s death growl vocals. Somewhere between Meshuggah, Morbid Angel and Sepultura, they’re brutal but (for the genre) melodic. New album ‘L’enfant Sauvage’ continues their run of epic releases, with a running fascination with all things spiritual and environmental, beacons of positivity in a genre more normally obsessed with

black-hearted death and ruin.

LAU: The Jericho Tavern – Trad-folk innovation and experimentation from the award-winning Scottish trio – *see main preview*
YASHIN + WE BUTTER THE BREAD WITH BUTTER + SHADOWS CHASING GHOSTS: O2 Academy – More identikit post-hardcore/screamo/whatever from Glasgow’s Yashin. Why are *they* playing in town and not Fucked Up? Not fair. Nyer nyer, not fair, whine whine, whimper, wee in our pants. Oh no, we’ve only gone and written a new song for Yashin. Bad Nightshift.

THE BIG TEN INCH: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’s monthly celebration of classic rock’n’roll, jump blues and rockabilly, with live sets from Hipbone Slim & The Kneetremblers and Crown Toppers, plus Bestival’s Greg Butler and Count Skylarkin on the decks.

KILL CITY SAINTS + REEDS: The Bullingdon – Blues, country and rock from Kill City Saints at tonight’s It’s All About The Music show.

EMPTY VESSELS + CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE + ARTCLASSSINK: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with heavyweight blues and proto-metal in the vein of Led Zep and Blue Cheer from the mighty Empty Vessels.
EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES + ALEX KEALY + BEN WALKER + JONATHAN O’NEILL: The Port Mahon – A night of live music and comedy with local newcomers Empty White Circles adding an electronic edge to their folky pop, leaning towards the Stornoway and King Creosote scheme of things.

THE MANATEES: The Duke’s Cut – Folk session; new musicians welcome.

PAUL HANDYSIDE: Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot – Emotive rootsy acoustic folk.

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 17th

ETHAN JOHNS: Truck Store (5pm) – The BRIT Award-winning producer, who’s worked with The Vaccines, Kaiser Chiefs, Laura Marling, Tom Jones and Kings of Leon among many, many others, as well as playing with Ryan Adams and Rufus Wainwright, launches his new album ‘If Not Now Then When’ – his first since 1992 – with a tour of the UK’s best independent record stores, plying a suitably intimate form of campfire country and American folk music.

THE WEDDING PRESENT: O2 Academy – David Gedge’s enduring indie heroes play their 1991 third album, ‘Seamonsters’ in full, the harsher, Steve Albini-produced album spawning chart singles ‘Lovenest’ and ‘Dalliance’.

UPSTAIRS with CHEW LIPS: O2 Academy – London electro-pop duo Chew Lips return to action with a slicker, more disco-fied sound on new single ‘Hurricane’, having opened their pop account with a brace of excellent singles on Kitsune back in 2009 and toured with Killers, We Are Scientists and Howling Bells. Local support from funky electro-rockers Grudle Bay; industrial electro and hip hop starlets Tiger Mendoza and trip-hop outfit Stem.

SEE OF BEES + PHIL McMINN: The Jericho Tavern – Delicate, cutesy folk-pop and Americana from Julie Baeziger’s Sea Of Bees, with angelic dream-pop support from former-Winchell Riots frontman Phil McMinn.

EXTRA CURRICULAR featuring COLOURED’S: The Cellar – Local electro crazies Coloureds return to live action at the weekly Extra Curricular dance club, the duo now augmented on drums by former-Youthmovies man Graeme Murray.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy
TERRAFORMS: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass



Sunday 11th

HALLS:

The Bullingdon

It is, as you read this, officially the very deepest, darkest depths of autumn, so what we need right now is a soundtrack to all that solitude and solemnity. And hey, here’s Halls to provide just that. Halls is the musical moniker of south London’s Sam Howard, a man who records in churches and gives the resultant tracks titles like ‘Roses For The Dead’ and ‘Shadow Of The Colossus’. Have you got your dancing shoes on yet? But really, this is beautiful stuff – eerily atmospheric and glitch in equal measures, mixing ambient electronica with choral and classical music and sombre dubstep atmospherics, a sepulchral soundtrack to solitude and possibly films with lots of snow and death and reflections on the meaningless of it all. No wonder much of Howard’s music was created as he sat confined to his house for a period. Comparison-wise, you can hear echoes of Thom Yorke’s most insular recent work as well as Burial’s dooziest pieces, while Dead Can Dance’s gothic-mediaeval portent encroaches at times. Christchurch Cathedral might be a more apt arena for all this but wherever you listen to him, Halls will sound nothing short of wonderful.

club night with Exit Records’ DJ Loxy.
TOM & BEN PALEY: Three Horseshoes, Towersey – Founder member of The New Lost City Ramblers Tony Paley performs with his son Ben on fiddle.

1000 MILE HIGHWAY + KING TERRIBLE + JEREMY + TREV WILLIAMS: The Hollybush, Osney – Wittstock fundraiser with Charlbury’s rootsy Americana and alt.country





Friday 16th

LAU: The Jericho Tavern

Having won Best Group three years running at the BBC Folk Awards, you might expect Lau to be playing bigger venues than this as they head out on tour to promote their third album, 'Race The Loser', but you need such intimacy to really appreciate the three-piece. Singer and guitarist Kris Drever, fiddle player Aidan O'Rourke and accordionist Martin Green are inspired by the landscapes of their native Scotland, so there's a rugged homeliness about much of Lau's jigs, reels, drones and ballads, but unlike most folk traditionalists the interplay between three such virtuoso musicians twists everything into new territory. On the new album they've even teamed up with producer Tucker Martine, who's worked with REM, and introduced electronic beats that power their complex, often improvised arrangements, negotiating tricky time signatures and an almost orchestral feel to some of their more expansive pieces. Beyond the instrumentals, Drever's stirring, reflective vocals bring the best out of songs about the death and decay of old ways and old industries, though, just as the band have integrated the modern into the traditional, they offer hope for the future.

outfit 1000 Mile Highway, plus soulful acoustic troubadour Trev Williams.

SUNDAY 18th

SPRING OFFENSIVE + AMONG BROTHERS + TOLIESEL: **Venue to be announced** – Spring Offensive continue their habit of playing unusual semi-secret shows, this time keeping the location of their east Oxford gig under wraps until the day before the show. Get your ticket and await further instructions.
JOAN ARMATRADING: **The New Theatre** – After a headline set at this summer's Cropredy Festival, the veteran singer enters her fifth decade of pop with a new album, 'Starlight', still a major league act after her commercial heyday in the early-80s with 'Me, Myself & I' and 'Walk Under Ladders'.
GONG: **O2 Academy** – Daavid Allen and Gilli Smyth continue to explore the mythology of the Gong universe, the pair – the only remaining members of the classic early-70s Gong line-up – adding 2009's '2032' to the concept album stream that started back in 1973 with 'Flying Teapot'.
SIOBHAN McCLUSKY + THE SHAPES + THE AUCTIONEERS + JANE LIKES BOOKS + LES CLOCHARDS + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: **The Wheatsheaf (2.30)** – Free acoustic Klub Kakofanney-hosted session in the Sheaf's downstairs bar.

MONDAY 19th

CHERRY LEE MEWIS + DEBBIE BOND

& RICK ASHERSON: **The Jericho Tavern** – Wales' rising blues singer Mewis returns to the Famous Monday Blues after her show there last year, playing a style of blues akin to a young Bonnie Raitt, with a powerful old-time blues voice that sees her doing justice to songs by the likes of Koko Taylor, Blind Willie McTell and Memphis Minnie alongside her own material, while her classic sound is mixed with hillbilly boogie, 50s skiffle, jazz and soul. She's supported tonight by Alabama's Debbie Bond, a long-time favourite at the FMB and, like Mewis, a singer often compared to Bonnie Raitt for her mix of rocking blues and soul.
THE FEELERS: **The O2 Academy** – Pumping stadium rock from New Zealand's enduring faves, touring their fifth album, 'Hope Nature Forgiveness'.

GET YOUR ROCKS OFF: **The Cellar**

TUESDAY 20th

PETER ANDRE: **The New Theatre** – Shit on stilts.
DOT'S FUNK ODYSSEY: **The Cellar** – Funk and soul club night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **James Street Tavern**
JAZZ CLUB: **The Bullingdon** – Live jazz from The New Jazz Collective.
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: **The Oxford Blue**

WEDNESDAY 21st

REVOKER + SACRED MOTHER TONGUE + KORROZION + OVERLORD: **The Courtyard, Bicester** – Arguably the biggest name band to come to Bicester in many years, Welsh metallers Revoker play a special show at the Courtyard youth centre after touring with Anthrax and before that Ozzy Osbourne. Their first album for Roadrunner, 'Revenge Of The Ruthless', exposes their hardcore thrash in the vein of Metallica and Pantera. Joining them are EMI signings Sacred Mother Tongue, melodic tech-metallers inspired by System Of A Down and Killswitch, plus Towcester's metalcore and classic hard rock outfit Korrozion, and local psych-metallers Overlord.

THURSDAY 22nd

NATUREBOY: **Truck Store** – Instore gig for the local nu-jazz, folky psychedelia and 60s acoustic pop chap Dave Noble.
DANCE A LA PLAGE + JOHN WEAN + YELLOW FEVER + NORTHMOOR: **O2 Academy** – Blokey indie-funk in the style of Scouting For Girls and Kooks from Banbury's Dance a la Plage.
OX MARKS THE SPOT: **The Cellar** – Hip hop club night with a local bias, featuring homegrown sets from Rhymeskeemz, Universal Protection Collective, Pilgrim, Benofficial and Pierce Artists, plus DJ sets from Bagul and Ideal Self.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: **The Wheatsheaf** – Live jazz from Gary Crosby and Denys Baptiste.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre**
OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Half Moon**
BLUES JAM: **The Jack Russell, Marston**

FRIDAY 23rd

THE TIFT MERRITT BAND + ROD PICOTT: **The Bullingdon** – Another quality dose of American roots courtesy of Empty Room Promotions, tonight hosting North Carolina's Tift Merritt, over in the UK to promote her new album, 'Travelling Alone', mixing up classic country, r'n'b, soul and folk-rock, drawing

comparisons to Emmylou Harris, Joni Mitchell and James Taylor along the way. Since her acclaimed 2002 debut, 'Bramble Rose', she's toured with the likes of Ryan Adams, Joan Baez, Iron and Wine and Elvis Costello, as well as playing for Barack Obama.
VIENNA DITTO + DEAD GIRL PARK + MARY BENDYTOY: **The Wheatsheaf** – Electro-heavy rockabilly from the jazz lounge from Vienna Ditto, conjuring up a jarring mix of Suicide, Portishead, Sneaker Pimps and Nina Simone. Melodic fuzzcore from Dead Girl Park and industrial gothic drama from Mary Bendytoy in support.
THE LAUREL COLLECTIVE + PETER & KERRY + AFTER THE THOUGHT: **Modern Art** – Eclectic mix-up of funk and soul grooves, dancehall rhythms and psychedelia from Domino signings The Laurel Collective, likened variously to Dexty's, The Specials, Sly & The Family Stone and Super Furry Animals.
IN ZANADU: **The Port Mahon** – Jazz and soul-influenced groove pop from the Banbury collective.
THE RIFLES: **O2 Academy** – East London's laddish rockers return, still sounding a bit like The Jam.
THE CORSAIRS: **The Duke's Cut** – Rockabilly and psychobilly covers.
RORY JAMS MOONLIGHT: **Phoenix Picturehouse** – Live guitar jam duel.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: **The Bullingdon**

Friday 16th

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT: The New Theatre

Seven albums in and Rufus Wainwright finally feels like the major playing international star he's always been capable of but perhaps seemed a bit quirky to ever really become. For all the big, orchestral arrangements, almost operatic excess and expert songwriting, he's always felt a bit leftfield for mass acceptance, but with his new album, 'Out Of The Game', recorded with Mark Ronson, he's made his poppiest and most soulful record to date and there's little doubt he'll sell out tonight's show. Ronson's production doesn't seem to have impinged too much on Wainwright's trademark romanticism, just made it all feel a bit simpler, and the grand themes of his songs remain – love, loss, family, politics. Recently married to his long-term partner, Jörn Weisbrodt, maybe Rufus's emotional lyricism is becoming less turbulent, but however grand the concert halls and big the album sales figures, his charm remains the feeling of a slightly troubled outsider, and long may that continue.



SATURDAY 24th

SKELETOR WITH UNKNOWN FLOW + MILK WHITE THROAT: **O2 Academy** – Jazz and prog-inspired rocking from Unknown Flow at tonight's Skeletor monthly metal extravaganza, plus Brighton's prog-metallers Milk White Throat.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SPINNER FALL + LIONFACE + RUSKIN BOB: **The Wheatsheaf** – More mix'n'match fun at GTI's monthly club night. There's shoegaze and post-punk noise, mixing up elements of The Fall, Ride and Husker Du from Spinner Fall, featuring former members of Skydrive, Callous and From Light To Sound, plus dramatic, almost operatic pop in the vein of Kate Bush and Florence & The Machine from Devon's Lionface and acoustic blues and folk from Ruskin Bob.
POLLY & THE BILLETS DOUX + KNIGHTS OF MENTIS: **The Cellar** – Winchester's twee, smooth-edged country-folk and jazz outfit Polly & co. return to town with local Americana outfit The Knights of Mentis in support.
SABRINA CHAP + ELLIE JAMISON + UNEEK + ELOISE REES: **Studio Blanco** – Oxford Young Women's Music Project presents a night of female artists, including Chicago's burlesque pianist Sabrina Chap, mixing balladry, ragtime and cabaret with a fair dash of humour. She's joined by Cambridge soul-folk singer Ellie Jamison and excellent local rapper Uneek.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: **O2 Academy**
BEN WATERS: **Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot** – Boogie woogie piano from Jools Holland's favourite ivory thumper.

SUNDAY 25th

CHAD VALLEY + TROPHY WIFE + SOLID GOLD DRAGONS: **The Cellar** – Hugo Manuel cracks open his little box of electronic tricks again as he launches his new album, 'Young Hunger', which features collaborations from Twin Shadow, Active Child, Fixers' Jack Goldstein and Orlando from Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs. Top drawer support comes from exotically airy popsters Trophy Wife and Solid Gold Dragons.
CHURCH OF THE HEAVY with MOTHER CORONA + CARAVAN OF WHORES + LAST DAYS OF SUN + GOD SPEED: **The Bullingdon** – Metal night with Groove metal behemoths Mother Corona unleashing the spirits of Black Sabbath, Electric Wizard and Smashing Pumpkins on the world. Fantastically dirty stoner-metal noise from Caravan of Whores.
THE STUART BROTHERS: **Three Horseshoes, Towersey** – Songs and stories from the Appalachian mountains.

MONDAY 26th

FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS: **O2 Academy** – Our Frank returns to his spiritual second home after playing to a billion people at the Olympics opening ceremony – *see main preview*
MATT SCHOFIELD: **The Bullingdon** – The Haven blues club hosts the acclaimed guitarist who started his career playing with Lee Sankey and Dana Gillespie, as well as The Lester Butler Tribute Band, before going out on the road with his own band, mixing traditional electric blues with New Orleans funk and soul. Amid a slew of awards, he's been hailed as one of the ten greatest UK blues guitarists of all time, alongside Eric Clapton and Peter Green, and his eclectic style incorporates influences from The Meters and Box Tops alongside more traditional blues innovators like Freddie and Albert King.

FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES: **The Jericho Tavern** – Live blues at the long-standing club, with acts to be confirmed.
OPEN MIC: **Far From The Madding Crowd**

TUESDAY 27th

JUAN ZELADA: **The Jericho Tavern** – We last encountered Juan Zelada at Cornbury Festival. His set coincided with a torrential downpour which meant we had to huddle under a clump of trees while getting bitten to buggery by mosquitoes. It was more fun than his set.
AKALA: **O2 Academy** – Politicised rap from the Camden rhymer, inspired by the likes of Gil Scott Heron as he explores racism, child poverty and more, cramming Shakespeare and sampling Siouxsie & The Banshees as he uses hip hop as much as an educational tool as a form of entertainment, harking back to old school sounds and style.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **James Street Tavern**
JAZZ CLUB: **The Bullingdon** – Alvin Roy & Reeds Unlimited are tonight's guests at the Bully's free weekly jazz club.
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: **The Oxford Blue**

WEDNESDAY 28th

MARVELLOUS MEDICINE: **The Wheatsheaf** – Jazz, folk and reggae-infused pop from the University band.
FREERANGE: **The Cellar** – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep club night.

THURSDAY 29th

ALABAMA 3: **O2 Academy** – Larry Love and the Very Reverend Dr D Wayne Love return once more with another dose of acid house blues and country medicine, riding the rough highway between Hank Williams and Happy Mondays, spreading a little bit of worldly wit and chemically-enhanced joy.
HOT HOOVES + X1: **The Cellar** – Powerhouse punk-inspired rocking somewhere between Husker Du, Guided By Voices and early Teenage Fanclub from Hot Hooves ahead of the release of their second album. Malevolent old school hardcore from the recently reformed X1 in support. Followed by Roll On Thursdays club night.
MICHELE STODART: **The Jericho Tavern** – Solo show from the Magic Numbers singer and bassist.
IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC ACOUSTIC CLUB: **The Bullingdon** – Unplugged sets from Moogie Man, Rory Evans, Rachel Ruscombe King and The Art, among others.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB with CHRIS GARRICK: **The Wheatsheaf** – Jazz violin from Garrick.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre**
OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Half Moon**
BLUES JAM: **The Jack Russell, Marston**

FRIDAY 30th

TELLISON + MY FIRST TOOTH: **Truck Store** – Intimate instore show from London's alt. rockers Tellison, in the vein of Get Up Kids and Jimmy Eatworld, but mixing militant indie funk and Foals-y guitar trilling into their deceptively catchy indie anthems.
VON BRAUN + GREY CHILDREN: **The Wheatsheaf** – Serrated grunge rocking in the

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Monday 26th

FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS: O2 Academy

For all the manufactured, TV-hyped pop nobodies clogging the charts and gossip column inches, you can't beat a genuine hard graft musical triumph story, and Frank Turner is that story. Nightshift remembers Frank when he was playing support down at the Wheatsheaf and now here he is, performing in front of an audience of a billion as part of the Olympics opening ceremony. Mr Turner has been an honorary citizen of Oxford for many years now of course, in part, be due to his regular visits to our venues, including appearances at Truck Festival, but also due to his backing band being mostly made up of local punk-pop heroes Dive Dive. The Bahrain-born, Eton-educated Turner has made the unusual but not unprecedented journey from hardcore punk screamer to folk singer over the past decade, from his days in Million Dead to his more mild-mannered, but no less politicised modern day incarnation, Turner finding many of his songs working better stripped of their noise, and his debut solo release, 'Campfire Punk Rock', was as much a perfect description of his music as it was a title. Since then he's managed to mix love songs and social commentary over a succession of increasingly commercially successful albums, including last year's 'England Keep My Bones', in much the same way as his most obvious antecedent, Billy Bragg. Given his background his is hardly a rags to riches story but it is heartening to see such dedication to constant gigging and song writing, beyond major label funding and hype, reap such rewards and he'll get a fanatical reception at tonight's already sold out show worthy of any hometown hero.

vein of Nirvana and The Pixies from Von Braun. Plus a debut gig from former-Witches frontman Dave Griffiths' Grey Children, joined by Witches bandmate Rich Thomas and Evenings main man Mark Wilden, together coming on somewhere between Neil Young and Daniel Johnston.
REVIVAL HOUR: **The Jericho Tavern** – Soulful electro-rocking from sometime Sufjan Stevens collaborator DM Stith and former-Earlies chap JM Lapham.
THE MILK: **O2 Academy** – Chelmsford's gustily soulful crew in thrall to Stax and Motown, as well as offering nods to The Style Council and Dexty's.
IMPERIAL LEISURE: **The Cellar** – Ska and rap-inspired party tunes from the ever-popular band. Followed by drum&bass club night HQ.



GATHERING

Various venues

The first thing you notice is how busy Cowley Road is, even for a term time Saturday afternoon.

If last year’s Leylines was a brave but understated attempt at a one-day east Oxford festival, Gathering can’t be described as anything other than a triumph. Even at 4pm there’s a buzz about the place, with a steady shifting tide of gig goers meandering along Cowley Road between venues as disparate as Truck Store and Cowley Road Methodist Church. Forty acts in a little over eight hours is going some even for seasoned gig hands like Nightshift, but it’s also what we were born to do.

The Husker Du and Dinosaur Jr T-shirts are hardly necessary - it’s clear from the outset where **POLEDO**’s particular affections lie. Their set is a frenzied, resolutely finesse-free thrash through the heavier end of 80s alt-rock, each hook like being pawed around the head by an angry bear. Make no mistake though, there are tunes buried in them there songs, scrapping to get out; perhaps they could be allowed more of a victory (though on points rather than an outright knock-out).

It seems J Mascis is a sartorial icon as well as a musical god in OX4, judging by the frontman of **BETA BLOCKER AND THE BODY CLOCK**. The band - now apparently a trio - specialise in a brand of nicely blurred-around-the-edges Hipstamatic slacker-indie that calls

to mind Atlas Sound. Denied a final song by the stage manager, they end meekly - but on this performance they’re an understated (if slightly solipsistic) gem who don’t get the crowd appreciation they deserve.

While Beta Blocker And The Body Clock are quite content to meander to nowhere (and no one) in particular, **SEASFIRE**’s slick combination of strident electronically inflected rock and magnified vocals suggests sights set firmly on globe-straddling superstardom. I don’t suppose you can fault them for daring to think big, but in the context of a Saturday afternoon in the East Oxford Community Centre it inevitably feels rather pompous and self-important. **EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES** are equally accomplished but without any of the poseurish attitude. The Anglo-American collective, last-minute replacements for gothy popsters Binary, are far more conventional (and far less studiously or self-consciously cool) than most of the other artists on the bill - you can imagine parents enjoying rollicking folk-rock/alt-country hoedowns like ‘Change In Me’ - but certainly none the worse for it. Another band to add to the lengthy list of loveable locals, then.

“Fuck this, it’s too quiet”, exclaims one festival-goer to his mate, promptly pirouetting on the spot and returning from whence he came. I’m not sure what he expected

of an acoustic singer-songwriter performing in a church. **KARIMA FRANCIS** cuts a striking figure, coming across like Cate Blanchett’s portrayal of Bob Dylan in Todd Haynes’ eccentric biopic *I’m Not There*. The Jools Holland-approved native of Blackpool may not be breaking any new ground, but her songs are strong, her voice is true and the respectful silence and rapt attention of her audience is entirely justified.

Also down from the North West for the day is **DAN CROLL**, against whom fate seems to be conspiring. A van booking cancelled at 3.30am left him and his band to travel down from Liverpool by a combination of cramped car and train, and amidst the stress he forgot all the vinyl merchandise - “but, y’know, we’re happy to be here”. However, with the likes of playful, infectious Metronomy-does-Grizzly Bear single ‘From Nowhere’ in his locker, everything should turn out just fine in the long term.

CUT RIBBONS’ leaden-footed by-numbers rock is more than a bit dull, not helped by the female vocals being lost in the mix. Would it be mischievous to suggest that with SwN, Cardiff’s equivalent of Gathering, also taking place this weekend, the Llanelli quintet represent the dregs of the south Wales music scene?

Far more excitement is to be found down at the Port Mahon, where an

unbelievably fresh-faced duo called **YRRS** are kicking out a superb fuzz-punk racket in the vein of No Age and Wavves - simple but darned effective. “This song’s called ‘Teenager’”. Of course it is.

We position ourselves right next to the speaker to reap maximum benefit. The last track - by their own admission “unfinished” and “likely to go tits up” - is a bit of a misstep, slower when what we really want is to be battered and bruised some more, but overall it’s more than enough to restore one’s faith in the future of humanity.

There’s a fair queue to get into the Academy, but it moves fast and the wait proves to be worth it. Like Metronomy’s Joseph Mount, luxuriantly bearded Guy Connelly was originally a bedroom producer and remixer with a love of lithe basslines who put together a band to perform his ‘chop pop’ compositions. **CLOCK OPERA** have come a long way since the loosely Animal Collectivesque stylings of 2009 debut single ‘White Noise’, inching ever closer to the mainstream via releases on uber-hip labels Kitsune and Moshi Moshi while never quite losing sight of those leftfield roots. Tonight’s stand-out track ‘Belongings’ is typical, a ballad that builds to a headrush climax which satisfies both heart and head.

Much more low-key is the Truck Store’s headline act, **LUKE SITAL-SINGH**, who on record sounds like a British answer to Bon Iver but who tonight performs a spellbinding stripped-back set crafted out of nothing more than intricate electric guitar and fragile croon. ‘Fail For You’ is sufficiently swoonsome for one weak-at-the-knees girl to have to be assisted outside for fresh air. Or maybe that should be attributed to too much white cider.

Without doubt the biggest – and noisiest – crowd of the day is for **BASTILLE**, but we’re left wondering why. It’s like some record company exec thought Foals sounded a bit cool but should appeal more to a boy band audience. So while you get some tribal indie funk and a smattering of dubstep-lite electronic, mostly they sound like Blue, and occasionally Take That. Everyone goes mad for it. We’re in a minority of one here but we’ll not concede. They’re dreadful.

Upstairs in the Academy, local rabble-rousers **THE BLACK HATS** are far more rock and roll – bassist Bud is even playing with a broken shoulder sustained in a motorcycle accident – and they waste no time introducing the crowd to new album ‘Austerity For The Hoi Polloi’ (how George Osborne refers to the Budget, you’d assume) in the same way that a loan shark might introduce a

baseball bat to a debtor’s kneecaps. It’s no-nonsense, brusque new wave-tinged pop punk, terrace chant-alongs composed by a lagered-up and lairy Futureheads.

It’s equipment that’s broken at the Port, **PAWS**’ instruments the casualties of a war waged on them repeatedly by three Glaswegian punks with a need for speed. They’re trying to play one particularly breakneck song quicker every night of the current tour, and tonight only miss out on improving their time by just over a second. This fast and furious blitzkrieg is an unmitigated delight for those of us dismayed by the airbrushed sheen of Male Bonding’s second album and indeed for everyone present, from the sensibly dressed fifty-something bloke grinning from ear to ear (a proud dad, most definitely) to the girl helping out by holding the bass drum in place with her foot.

By stark comparison **GLASS ANIMALS** are positively ghostly, their music a spooked, frosted-glass window into a world of shifting shadows and voices that reach out from darkened corners. “These creatures are vampires,” croons David Bayley, as if to reinforce the haunted feeling. Glass Animals are a band unafraid to leave notes hanging or leave spaces in their music, a dreamy somnambulating ambience wafting their set along, synths wuthering like a wind off the moors. The set’s highlight comes when they ditch the guitars, sounding like Gnarl Barkley’s ‘Crazy’ reimagined by ‘Tin Drum’era Japan. It’s simply gorgeous stuff and the only complaint we can make is their set coincides exactly with **WILD SWIM**, Oxford’s other champions currently taking rarefied electronic pop into the wider world.

DRY THE RIVER seem to have been following the signs marked ‘Big Time’ for three years now. With debut album ‘Shallow Bed’ behind them, they seem to have arrived at their destination. No longer folkly troubadours with a penchant for the pastoral, they now carry the clout and bluster of a fully fledged rock band - all tossed locks, horn sections and echoes of My Morning Jacket - and are rapturously received by a capacity crowd. The same can’t be said of **FOXES** (not to be confused with Foxes!, formerly of this parish). Normally reliable label Neon Gold presumably see Louisa Rose Allen and the two prettyboys flanking her on synths and percussion as ice-cool experimental electro a la Zola Jesus or Bat For Lashes, when in actual fact they’re pathetically contrived and choreographed warble pop. The band and label will probably put the experience down to audiences in the

‘provinces’ being unsophisticated and uncultured, but I say well done us on sending them back to London with a bloody nose.

THE STAVES represent a welcome respite from the sound and the fury elsewhere, their folkly stylings and soft harmonies a balm amidst the storm and evoking thoughts of an all-female Fleet Foxes. “You’re nice and quiet, and clap in the right places”, we’re commended, before being told of their recently filmed video shot on the set of an old western movie out in the desert in Spain. Apparently there are actors’ lovechildren everywhere, but we have to promise to “keep that between us”. Don’t worry, we’re sure your secret is safe with me and everyone packing out the hall and lobby of the East Oxford Community Centre.

Back to the late-running Bully for **SPLASHH**, who have little to offer other than - appropriately enough - watery grunge lite. Did someone say Yuck? This is more like very mild disgust. Set-closer ‘Need It’ (what, a spellchecker?) has a touch more about it, but the overall impression is of a band who, in the live environment, find themselves embarrassingly denuded of the fig leaf of studio trickery. Much hyped, instantly forgettable.

Unlike **THE OTHER TRIBE**. When you’re dressed like you’ve been imprisoned in Adam Ant’s dressing room for a fortnight, you’ve really got to stand and deliver - and they do. This particular tribe has five members verging on fifty, judging by the number of people daubed with facepaint. Someone’s wearing a headdress and they’re not even in the band. Much like the girl in the video for euphoric single ‘Skirts’, we’re all undergoing some kind of initiation ceremony. Sod nu-rave, this is rave of the old school (or should that be ‘skool’?) - a techno dance party that almost makes you want to neck a few pills, grab a glowstick, wave your hands in the air and cavort in a wood until Monday morning.

So, how do **LIARS** follow that? Well, the answer is that they don’t. Literally. It’s nearly 2am by the time the Brooklyn veterans take to the stage, play one song, twice attempt another and then abandon the set citing technical difficulties. We hang around in the forlorn hope that it might not be all over, but finally give up and trudge off for a kebab-scented sauna with the cast of *Skins* (aka a nightbus home). A desperately disappointing conclusion, but not one that should be allowed to tarnish the memory of a varied and enjoyable day’s entertainment. Here’s to next year.

Words: Ben Woolhead, Dale Kattack

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THE GOGGENHEIM / THE LAMPOST GULLIVERS
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SINGERS

The Jericho Tavern

Fittingly for a gig organised by a music photographer – in tonight’s case long-time Nightshift snapper Jonny Moto, launching his exhibition at the Tavern – all the acts tonight are as much about the visual spectacle as the music. That said, the music tonight is across the board excellent.

Faced with a potentially empty room early on in the evening, Francis Pugh & The Whisky Singers serenade the punters in the downstairs bar, inviting them to follow up into the venue where they proceed to play their entire set unamplified in the middle of the crowd. It makes for a more intimate show and a greater spectacle, the quartet – including trumpet, banjo and fiddle – are just the right amount of ramshackle to suit their jug band-style blues, though you wish you could hear the singer a little better, since you feel there’s some real wit on show here.

Vienna Ditto are an Oxford-Reading boy-girl duo and are huddled cosily behind a bank of keyboards and gadgetry. Such closeness accentuates the deliberately jarring nature of their music, Nigel’s serrated sheet-metal guitar and Numanesque synth belches set uneasily against Hatty Taylor’s warm, almost jazzy vocals, alternately coquettish and strident. He’s all fevered intensity, she’s calm and grinning like a Cheshire cat; together they sound like a band from a forgotten Fritz Lang movie, robotic rockabilly in the jazz lounge. It’s simply stunning.

Any worries that Liam Ings-Reeves’ voice might have mellowed with age are instantly punctured as the quietly-spoken offstage persona switches to Hell’s own goblin king mode, growling and rasping, gurning like a gargoyle while his new band – featuring Nought

drummer Johnny Mitchell and one-time Silverfish bassist Chris Mowforth– lurch into a torrent of ugly, gnarled brutish blues metal. It’s good but not immediately great, but when they hit one monstrously hypnotic mantra and switch into jazz-inflected krautrock, like Can infected with death metal toothache, there’s no way back – as if you’d want one by now.

Trying to pin down The Goggenheim in simple words is like describing colours with sign language. They look like a bunch of freaks – all dressed in safari shirts, thick-rimmed spectacles and flat caps, except for singer Grace Exley, who’s done up like a burlesque turn from the court of Cleopatra – and sound even stranger. First song in they could be Altered Images reimagined as a post-punk free jazz collective, warped, wobbly bass and brass backing Grace’s cutesy girl vocals. Then comes ‘Moth’, a mad, metronomic slice of psychotic psychedelia, witchy Yoko Ono-like haziness infected by Renaldo & The Loaf’s off-kiler mentalism. From here we get a fluid, groove-led melange of mutant funk, spaghetti western soundtracks, swanny whistles and much, much more. “There’s the carrot, you’re the monkey / Eat the fucking thing” intones Grace like the impish offspring of Lene Lovich, while the band make like Scissor Sisters fighting to hold their own against a whacked-out practical joke by This Heat.

They’ve run out of songs by the time they’re called back for a deserved encore, so we get the first two songs of the set again. Back where we started. But what a trip.

Dale Kattack

ULTRAVOX
The New Theatre

Bands from yesteryear returning with a new album can be such sad, tawdry spectacles. “Shut up and play the hits,” as LCD Soundsystem would have it. LCD Soundsystem along with the likes of Gary Numan and more recently Ladytron, who drew inspiration from the early, John Foxx-helmed, incarnation of Ultravox, now regarded as major league pioneers in electronic music.

Less time or critical reappraisal is lent to the more commercially successful, Midge Ure-led line-up. But tonight, mixing tracks from their new album, ‘Brilliant’, into a two-hour set of hits from their early-80s heyday, Ultravox Mk.2 dispel both that initial reservation about new songs, and suggest their influence over subsequent generations might have been overlooked.

‘Brilliant’ might be overstating things as titles goes; ‘Far Better Than Expected’ would be closer to the mark. The songs from the album played tonight suggest a shift towards atmosphere and texture over anthemic melodies, but the likes of ‘Rise’, with its jerky electronic rhythms harks back to Ultravox’s old Kraftwerk influences, while ‘The Change’ somnambulates with moody intent and ‘Flow’ is positively oppressive in its pensive nature. Only ‘Contact’, bizarrely played as tonight’s set closer, fails to impress, an awkward, downbeat end to a show that is epic in intent and execution.

From the off Ultravox show their songs have aged incredibly well - ‘New

Europeans’ and the oddly mysterious ‘Mr X’ a reminder that ‘Vienna’ was an exceptional album then and now. Further in ‘Visions In Blue’ is lush and almost proggy, while ‘Rage In Eden’ is towering and hymnal, and you start to hear how Ultravox, with all their pomp and musical grandeur, have helped define the likes of Muse, whether the latter would admit it or not. Certainly the magnificently overwrought ‘Vienna’ itself, or the searing ‘Astrodyne’ carry echoes into Matt Bellamy’s more outré pieces.

Looking at Ultravox onstage, Midge Ure has retained a dapper demeanour, bald and besuited, as happy to underplay his frontman role, stood behind a synth as often as he’s lording it out front.

The rest of the band have worn slightly less well, but remain an enigmatic outfit, particularly Billy Currie when he emerges from behind his bank of keyboards to revisit those scouring viola parts as the set builds to a heady climax – the stark, dramatic ‘All Stood Still’ and a lustily singalong ‘Hymn’ in particular, while encore ‘Dancing With Tears In My Eyes’ is a reminder that 30 years ago songs about nuclear annihilation were a regular part of the Top 40 rundown.

The age of tonight’s crowd suggests a younger generation aren’t ready to go in search of Ultravox just yet, but as a spectacle the show is a nailed-on triumph and a reminder that this incarnation of the band is worthy of serious re-evaluation.

Dale Kattack

MARINA AND THE DIAMONDS
O2 Academy

Marina Diamandis’s PhD thesis would surely be on the relationship between surface and substance, with special reference to American society.

Her medium would be her remarkable voice, blessed with a beguiling mix of Kate Bush, opera and the histrionics of a couple having an argument.

Her conference papers would cover the various personas manifested on her second album, ‘Electra Heart’, all of which are present tonight: the regretful teen idol; the unapologetic, lock-twirling homewrecker; the prima donna, and the trapped-in-suburbia Su-Barbie-A from the nihilistic *Valley of the Dolls*, a nod to the themes of fame, success and self-destruction of the 60s novel and film.

It seems appropriate that to deliver ‘Electra Heart’ she’s plunged more fully into what is often said to be the most ephemeral and transient mode of music: pop.

It’s a bit odd to pepper this concept album with the earlier, more new wave stuff; she covered similar themes on a lot

of her ‘Family Jewels’-era songs, such as ‘Hollywood’ and ‘Oh No!’ (albeit from a somewhat more cynical outside viewpoint of celebrity culture), but she still leaves the out-and-out bangers – the Calvin Harris-esque metaphor-flogging ‘Radioactive’ and latest single, ‘How To Be A Heartbreaker’ – until later.

Given the many layers steeped in the obsession, it’s a relief to see her paraphernalia limited to a bit of set decoration (neon signs, an old TV) and a few props (like a veil, a negligee and the toy dog, Marilyn, from the ‘Prima Donna’ video); mock castles and hordes of dancers would have been overwhelming. It’s an overtly confident performance, even when the lyrical content is more vulnerable, as in ‘I Am Not A Robot’; whereas Lana del Rey seems to trade on being a victim of the American dream, absorbed and confused, Marina examines it from different sides, from ‘Power and Control’ to ‘Fear and Loathing’.

Kirsten Etheridge

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ULTRAISTA / CREWDSON

The Jericho Tavern

London producer Crewdson has the stage crammed with hardware, including old computer game controllers and joysticks, his hands darting all over to create itchy, restless music with echoes of early Aphex Twin. He’s not too cool to sing and blows a mean sax but it’s all a bit hard to pin down. He may have impressed Peter Saville into designing his album cover but you can’t help thinking that fifteen years ago this would have been seen as exploring radical new territory, whereas today it looks like another addition to a rather crowded marketplace. Ultraista don’t look exactly nervous but it comes as no surprise to learn that this is their fourth gig and the first in the UK. Keyboard and bass player Nigel Godrich is of course best known as producer of Radiohead (and no, they aren’t here), as well as playing in Thom Yorke’s Atoms For Peace, so it seems natural for him to describe Oxford as “my spiritual home”. Drummer Joey Waronker’s CV, meanwhile, includes spells with Beck and REM, and tonight seems happy tapping away at his unamplified kit, producing rhythms that are at once simple and fiendishly complicated. Singer and keyboard

player Laura Bettinson, who also makes music as Femme, looks very much in control of proceedings. Poised and confident with perfect timing, she exudes an aura of sexuality that’s both coy and slightly unsettling. Things start well with ‘Bad Insect’, cascading keyboards and a catchy vocal line building nicely and drawing us in as layers of sound meld perfectly together. It’s also a complete re-work of the version they put on Soundcloud only a few weeks ago. Keyboard lines work together in unorthodox but fascinating ways, competing but never clashing, and despite Godrich’s comment that they never thought they’d play the (imminent) album live, it actually sounds better tonight than the few tracks posted online. The strength of their collective musical pedigree is all too clear, despite the unfamiliarity of the material, yet the determined complexity stands in contrast with the generally poppy vibe, with ‘Smalltalk’ a good example. Whether this is a time-filling side project or a serious stab at success remains to be seen, and maybe they haven’t decided themselves, but they’re definitely better than Garbage. *Art Lagun*

JAGUAR SKILLS

O2 Academy

Let this be a warning. Always make sure you read the advertised gig correctly, or you too may turn up at a venue expecting an indie band and wind up faced with several late night hours of relentless drum&bass. Error established (Jaguar Love/ Jaguar Skills mix up) it’s with an initially heavy heart that we arrive at the O2. Things don’t get much better when we’re asked if we’re dealing by an already gurning punter within several seconds of entering the venue. Just because we’re skulking in the darkest corner and looking out of place doesn’t necessarily mean that we’re laden with happy pills, sadly. First up is Calvertron with a strangely subdued and fairly generic stroll through wobbly drum&bass. His breaks are continuously hampered by a lack of volume, so what should kick like a mule just taps like a toddler, so maybe it’s not entirely Calvertron’s fault that they fail to make an impression. Adam F’s set is far punchier, a master of his trade, he’s meaner, harder and seems to have discovered how to make the bass really thunder out of the PA. Most importantly he scatters his set with tunes and humour, both elements

lacking in Calvertron’s set. But like Calvertron before him, and Jaguar Skills later on, he’s obsessed with getting everyone to put their hands in the air and screams for everyone to make some noise (phrase of the night, which *never* gets tired). It seems to have escaped everyone that he’s the bloke with the soundsystem. Just when all hope seems lost, Jaguar Skills lifts the roof off the place. He’s an easy target for dance snobs, but there’s little doubting that he most certainly has skills. A frenzy of nimble mixing tricks, quick cuts, and all-too-knowing samples, the set is on another level. Never settling on a groove for too long, it’s almost too clever for its own good, but there’s no denying that everything is finely crafted and expertly executed. A few crowd pleasers later (‘7 Nation Army’ mashed to death, a dash of Prodigy, and a berzerk ‘Ace Of Spades’) party mode has been established, and it never lets up. This is a masterclass, and only an utter churl would dismiss it as anything else. What could have been a disastrous evening turns out to be a pretty fortuitous mistake. *Sam Shepherd*

SUBMOTION ORCHESTRA / CORNELIA

O2 Academy

“I write songs and in turn they rewrite me”. So claims London-based Swede Cornelia’s Facebook. It’s a nice sentiment but through the course of her solo show we are diverted, even lightly intrigued, but sadly untransformed. Her voice is strong, low breathy intimacies turning to bright, harsh aluminium tones at the high end, and her synthesised backing errs on the side of approachable chunky simplicity. She’s at her best when she rides simple keyboard hums or Omnichord buzzes, bold enunciation and sudden changes in vocal register adding drama (although the kooky, spooky hand jives are too much; Hot Gossip disbanded years ago, you know). But we’ve seen a lot of theatrical, artfully coiffured women channel their cyber-Kate Bush over electronic beats and, likable though the set is, by the end we’re just a bit Bjored. Seven people are not an orchestra: fact. No surprise that Submotion Orchestra have hit on the term, though, as their whole show is about justifying electronic comedown music through the supposed authentication of live musicianship, climbing out of the chillout room and into the salon. And that’s all well and good, but the trouble is that crass, clumsy downtempo pop sounds equally facile when played by a Leeds

(ahem) orchestra as it does bashed together in FruityLoops, and aside from the odd dubstep-inspired chunk of bassweight, Submotion’s thin ditties mostly resemble off-cuts from the catalogues of Curiosity and Morcheeba remixed by Alex Reece. The playing is technically strong, especially the percussion and flugelhorn, but unlike the best dance productions the music has no poise, no sense of space or balance, it’s just an endless smug celebration of proper musoship for its own dubious sake: look, Ma, both hands! Ironically, the band’s best weapon is its singer, who has a sweet voice slightly reminiscent of Lamb’s Lou Rhodes, and her parts are smothered in clumsy digital delay. It’s like they’re doing things arsefacewards solely to annoy us. The harsh truth about Submotion is that they sound like Sting’s backing band cutting loose and jamming at soundcheck, when he’s not looking (probably out back, doing the Downward Dog on a mound of quinoa and lutes). We don’t know whether we’re writing this review or whether this review is writing us, but we know we’re bored with this vapid, self-conscious stodge. *David Murphy*

SHINY DARKLY / DALLAS DON’T / NEON VIOLET / POLEDO

The Cellar

We’re not normally fans of fake American accents, but in Poledo’s case we’ll make an honourable exception. Twice Nightshift Demo Of The Monthers, the band are a supernoisy blend of Dinosaur Jr’s slacker grunge, Pavement’s rough-hewn lo-fi rock and Yo la Tengo’s chuck-it-all-in-the-blender pop noise. Yeah, it’s a bit like finding yourself back in 1990 as Poledo screeled through a succession of frantic songs where the tune is forced to cling on for dear life by its fingernails, but the trio are a deceptively cohesive unit and had they grown up in the right town on the other side of the Atlantic, they’d doubtless have toured the world with Sebadoh or Mudhoney and be cult heroes right now. Neon Violets are back in live action with a revamped line-up, bassist and singer Joe Chapman still leading the line. With a history in local bands like The Factory and Spiral 25 it’s no surprise that Neon Violet mine a deep, dense groove of psychedelic drone-rock. There are flange pedals and what occasionally sounds a bit like a sitar, and an obvious love for all things Velvet Underground, but what you most need to know about Neon Violet is that they are seriously heavyweight. And dark too; for a band with violet in their name there are an awful lot of reminders of bands with black in theirs – Sabbath, Mountain, Angels and Rebel Motorcycle Club, in roughly equal measure. They make our ears go numb. This is a good thing. Lighter – relatively – spikier and more

angular are Dallas Don’t, but no less uncompromising in their pursuit of noisy oblivion, although when we (mis)hear the lyric “I love your mind / I love your fluffy head,” we’re rather disarmed. But, seriously, they’re bloody great, dealing in short, sharp shocks of caustic guitar shrapnel that, allied to singer Niall’s rich Scottish burr, makes us think of Arab Strap if they came armed with power tools and Marshall stacks instead of a hazy sense of regret. At one point they sound bizarrely like Hawkwind but end on a singular headlong rush into oblivion that finds Niall and guitarist Jenny trading vocal lines in a style that reminds us joyously of Prolapse. You beauties. After such a tirade of quality local bands, Copenhagen’s Shiny Darkly might easily wither, but, despite all looking about 12 years old, they’re equal to anything that’s gone before, an opening number coming on like ‘God Save The Queen’ rendered as a gothic anthem and everything reverbed to absolute buggery. Killing Joke sheet metal guitar clangs against the Bunnymen’s darkly swirling sense of pop theatre, feedback oozes from amps between songs and they even manage to out-Horror the Horrors on tracks like ‘She’s Suicidal’. On the one hand it’s like an early-80s indie-goth disco come to life in the 21st Century, but on the other it’s simply the pitch black icing on top of what is a genuinely superb show. *Dale Kattack*

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Modern Art

While Blessing Force’s shows have an enviable reputation for both quality and unpredictability, tonight’s Oxjam takeover of Modern Art surely surpasses anything they’ve put on previously. We only catch the last couple of songs by **BETA BLOCKER & THE BODY CLOCK** but it’s enough to gauge their determinedly lo-fi groove mining, as they make a virtue of sounding like they’re playing at the bottom of a well. Or more precisely sounding like a container lorry full of cutlery falling down a well. Enough to make us want to hear more.

KING OF CATS is an unnerving experience when you first hear him sing. It’s like encountering the demonic toddler offspring of Joe Pasquale and Joe Pesci on the verge of an almighty tantrum. Here’s a

man who used to package his old demos in origami Y-fronts. Once a solo performer now he’s backed by a full band, and while that means he’s got volume on his side, he’s no less intense and warped. “Sometimes I see you in the faces of aging porn stars,” he proclaims splendidly at one point. If Bob Dylan had take more acid and been exposed to Sonic Youth as a kid, he might have been this much fun. After which anything would sound straightforward, but in **SISTERLAND**’s case their direct approach is their strength, a reminder that sometimes great songs really can be that simple. Theirs is a full-pelt punk-tinged torrent at the heart of which are great rough diamond melodies that sometimes feel too big for this intimate room, like The

Chameleons at double speed and everything turned up to 11. At this point it’s perhaps necessary for **PET MOON** to ease the tempo down a notch, and initially they do, the opening couple of numbers conjuring an almost doomy electro vibe, glitchy and electronic as Andrew Mears fronts proceedings with poetic intensity. Once he’s joined by Karina Scuteri on vocals though, they ramp up the funk and soul side and we’re right back in classic Heaven 17 territory, Depeche Mode trying to gatecrash the party, the whole thin coated in a slick modern r’n’b sheen. Nothing, absolutely nothing, could have prepared anyone here for **FIXERS**’ set tonight. It’s not even really Fixers, just Jack Goldstein and guitarist Roo Bhasin, respectively dressed as a Mexican bandit and a satanic-looking Geisha. The setlist boasts well-known titles like ‘Swimmaus Johannesburg’, but what we get is nothing of the sort. The opening

track is an oppressive ‘Venus In Furs’-like drone with Roo growling menacing nothings into the ether, which becomes a scowling, skulking cacophony that pervades every corner of the room like a malignant wraith. Vague, fleeting echoes of what we once knew to be Fixers flicker and fade amid a cartoonish, hallucinatory, ever-shifting tapestry of noise. When respite comes it’s in hilarious fashion, a sample of Paul McCartney’s ‘Wonderful Christmas Time’ lefty hanging in the air. ‘Crystals’ comes by way of Pinky and Perky on a serious acid trip and by the time the pair have smashed their guitar to pieces and ended in a prolonged onstage embrace, they’ve just strip mined the very soul of Sabbath’s ‘Iron Man’ and gutted every rule of rock and roll with Butthole Surfers’ sense of macabre mischief. We’re left giddy and slightly breathless. Gig of the year. And next. *Dale Kattack*

KYLA LA GRANGE

O2 Academy

Opener ‘Woke Up Dead’ sets the tone for tonight’s show, starting with a heavier sound than the more subtle album sound, before building throughout the song to parallel the album track. Though there are technical issues with Kyla’s guitar her vocals shine through, making the comparisons to Kate Bush and Florence And The Machine feel more than justified. While for me it takes until the marching rhythm of ‘Been Better’ to really find myself lost in the sound, it’s clear the rest of the crowd are captivated from the word go. Though at times tonight’s set seems almost ominous, Kyla adds anger and sorrow to her sound, creating a feeling that lingers long after the end of the set. ‘Heavy Stone’ is comparatively stripped back compared to the rest of the set and the pain in Kyla’s voice combines with a drum beat akin to a heartbeat. Meanwhile ‘Vampire Smile’ is clearly the song that has drawn the crowd in and her husky, seductive vocals give a hint of Katie Melua,

highlighting her vocal dexterity. ‘Walk Through Walls’ carries an anthemic quality to it, and it’s during this song I get drawn in by the band, the punchy riffs and bass heavy sound carrying the song. It’s the kind of song that is larger than the venue, calling for a festival stage to really allow it the space it commands. ‘To Be Torn’ on the other hand carries a more haunting style, and the band are sympathetic to this swelling in the background midway through the song to build before stripping it back for the final chorus and marking it as one of the tracks of the night. Sadly, the sound is suffering. The volume is pushed up too high, leaving it to become distorted and muffled amid the black of the room, and Kyla’s vocals occasionally fall flat in the mixing. Despite this, by the end I’m won over and though tonight is short, it makes me realise that ‘Ashes’ is perhaps one of the most innovative albums of 2012. *Lisa Ward*

SUSANNA

The North Wall

Seated at the piano and playing without a break, Norwegian singer songwriter Susanna shreds her emotions and those of the small crowd who enter her world for ninety minutes without mercy. It’s intimate, intense and often very bleak, and it seems almost improper to be sitting comfortably in a well padded seat listening to such a public display of personal torment. Susanna started out as Susanna & the Magical Orchestra; tonight she introduces her band as “we are all Susanna,” which is fitting since guitarist and sound manipulator Helge Sten, and percussionist Erland Dahlen are as integral to her sound world as her own sparse piano playing and voice. They conjure a bleak biting musical wind and a storm of ice crystals seem to be blowing through the venue. Over tonight’s set, from opener ‘For You’, to her despondent cover of ‘Love Will Tear Us Apart’, with Susanna characteristically stretching syllables, the song’s bleakness heightened by the eerie sound of Dahlen playing a saw, there’s hardly a moment when the intensity drops. ‘Jolene’ gives us the desperate voice of a woman at the very point of breaking, with Susanna imploringly repeating “Jolene” in an ever-rising

voice. During her cover of Agneta Fältskog’s, ‘Can’t Shake Loose’, she squirms on her piano stool like an escapologist attempting to free herself from lock and chains. No wonder that she later sings Thin Lizzy’s ‘Jailbreak’. If Susanna has been best known so far for covers, the self penned songs from her latest ‘Wild Dog’ album show this could be about to change. Anyone who writes lines as good as “I used to live a rock and roll life, offering free rides in my soul” (‘For You’) or “Winter please come and freeze my heart” (‘Freeze’), deserves to be known as a songwriter in their own right. When she leaves her song ‘Believer’, one of the best break-up songs written, out of the set, and resists a repeated call her most famous cover, ‘Hallelujah’, it’s confirmation she is confident she’s an artist coming into her full power and ever more comfortable with what she does. What next? With the Oxford Lieder Festival on, the fanciful thought occurs that with only a little re-ordering of her set list she could have a modern day equivalent of Franz Schubert’s 19th Century song cycle, ‘Winterriesse’; the greatest break-up epic of all time. *Colin May*

ECHO LAKE / THE GULLIVERS

The Bullington

So often in music less is more. It’s something The Gullivers might do well to observe. Admirably giving it their all in front of a virtually empty room, singer and keyboard player Sophie is sounding sweetly off-key over tentative melodies, like a cute kid sister of Pram or even Young Marble Giants at times. The guitar is spangling airily around her voice. But what might be appealingly spaced-out pop is being rocked off its axis by the drummer’s incessant thump, thump, thump. Its swamping everything, tethering the melodies firmly to the ground. When they do clear away the clutter, the drumming becoming sparser and more abstract for one number, the bass similarly taking a back seat, they’re exposed in a far more flattering light. Thereafter the set drifts to an untidy conclusion but we’ve caught a glimpse of something better; you feel that if they’d existed some time around the turn of the 1980s they’d have had a couple of Peel sessions and collectors’ item of an album to their name. It feels cruel to point out the strength of Echo Lake’s drummer

by comparison, given that he’s replaced Pete Hayes, who died at the tragic age of 25 back in the summer, but his inventiveness and ability to recognise and utilise space adds so much to the band’s songs. Even when he’s sounding like the rumble of an oncoming storm, it’s a menace that lies well beneath the celestial soar of the songs. Singer Linda’s voice carries a similar tender power to Julee Cruise or Cranes’ Alison Shaw at times, in a perpetual state of swooping and soaring, though live there’s a heavier, more dynamic feel to Echo Lake than on recent debut album, ‘Wild Peace’. At one point they sound like they’re about to break into Joy Division’s ‘Atmosphere’, while the droning shoegaze guitar noise that swirls around every melody reminds us of Slowdive’s morose grandeur. The set ends, predictably perhaps, but no less enthralling for it, a blizzard of glissando and a sense of gothic euphoria. Echo Lake may be a band who have endured tragedy, but in their music rests the brightest of hopes. *Sue Foreman*

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11th Divine Schism presents HALLS

25th CHURCH OF HEAVY with MOTHER CORONA / CARAVAN OF WHORES / LAST DAYS OF THE SUN / GOD SPEED

DR SHOTOVER: Children Of The Quorn

Ah – talking of kebabs - there you are. Welcome to the East Indies Club bar - pull up a vegeburger. It's amazing – some would say stirring - how many members of the Oxford Music Scene are vegetarians. Remember 90s doom metal merchants Sevenchurch? Their mighty guitarist Dave “Man Mountain” Smart played so loud ‘n’ heavy that he made Black Sabbath’s riffs sound like mewling kittens – but slaughtered animal products never graced his plate, no-sirree. Mad punker/Arthur Turner’s Lovechild? progenitor/fearless promoter Mac – there’s another veg-botherer. Lamb, duck, bacon – he eschews it. (No, Pilkington – ES-chews it). Our Esteemed Editor – ditto. He sneers at mince, he laughs in the face of brisket. The ex-members of the legendary Ride? Beef-avoiders. Full-on Paul-and-Linda McCartney-ites. They love bean curd like they love the Beatles. Jon Anyone Can Play Guitar Spira? Cutlet free. Thom Yorke? Vegan... he won't even have cheese in the house, let alone black pudding. And so on and so forth. Which all goes to show that you don't have to be Ted Nugent to be able to rock like a bastard. In fact, frankly I'd rather you weren't. Give me Man Mountain over Man Huntin' any day. (For our younger, non-Americanized readers, Ted Nugent is a pathetic neanderthal who plays RAWK guitar, votes Republican, hunts animals and supports every reactionary, redneck, gun-totin' cliché in the book). (Plus, the arse-wipe doesn't touch drugs or alcohol). Where were we? Ah yes, you were about to buy me a drink. Mine's a pint of Brian's Saved Badger, thank you very much, Mr May. Cheers!

Next month: Numan vs Nugent



Ted Nugent: “Whatchoo say we shoot some squirrels then have us a wrestle in loincloths, fella? Hell, you ain't GAY, are ya?”

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INTRODUCING....

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

Vienna Ditto

Who are they?

Oxford-Reading duo Vienna Ditto are Hatty Taylor (vocals, synths, glockenspiel) and Nigel Firth (guitar, synths). Nigel used to teach Hatty guitar when she was small. “She was actually amazing at the guitar, but a total slacker. But she couldn’t half sing” remembers Nigel. The pair bumped into each other six years later and recorded “a Johnny Cash tune with a bit of a synthy arabic feel to it,” and then “a kind of electronic rockabilly tune” of their own. It got played on Radio 1. That bagged them a slot on the BBC Introducing Stage at Glastonbury and a Maida Vale session. Since then they’ve self-released a number of demos and EPs, most recently August’s ‘I Know His Blood Will Make Me Whole’, with ‘Liar Liar’ set for release in February next year.

What do they sound like?

At times slightly spooky, like a ghostly rockabilly-infused subterranean jazz club band, or Portishead soundtracking a David Lynch film. At others the duo are harsher, with heavier electronics and a heavily-reverbed voodoo rockabilly vibe, closer to Suicide backing Nina Simone as Hattie’s sweet, sultry vocals rub uneasily against Nigel’s serrated guitar and synth scree.

What inspires them?

“Train noises: a lot of stuff is written a boat on the Thames, and the trains run parallel to the river most of the way. The empty rolling stock moans at night, a kind of empty metallic moan bouncing across the meadow, the loneliest sound I ever heard. That’s where the guitar comes from.”

Career highlight so far:

“Our session at Maida Vale; it was our third gig and we were petrified. They filmed it and there were six camera persons peering at us. To be honest I wish we’d done it a bit later, I’m not sure we were worth all the expense.”

And the lowlight:

“Some dive we played in Whitechapel, which had cockroaches crawling over the mixing desk. I seem to remember that the same place had a door for Pete Doherty’s exclusive use. For crack breaks maybe.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“The Goggenheim. We really loved The Gog, and The Goggenheim are the hyper-amplified Technicolor Bollywood explosion version of the same.”

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

“‘The La’s’ - it’s full of these understated, beautiful little songs.”

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

“23rd November at the Wheatsheaf. Expect to see us grappling with outmoded technology and our own emotions. There’s no consistency between what we record and what we play live. All our equipment’s a bit old and cantankerous and we can be a bit random too.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“It’s an amazing music scene really. For the size of the City the resources and energy are phenomenal. I guess it’s a bit of a gravity-well and bands find it hard to break out from the city limits, and the early lockdown can be a chore.”

You might love them if you love:

Portishead; Sneaker Pimps; Suicide; The Cramps; Nina Simone; Gary Numan.

Hear them here:

viennaditto.com

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

20 YEARS AGO

A bad month for the Oxford music scene this as the November 1992 issue of *Curfew* reported a slew of venues cutting back on their live music or stopping gigs altogether. **The Brewhouse** were stopping Saturday night blues shows and booking fewer big name acts, while **The Punchbowl** in Woodstock too was ceasing its Thursday blues nights and **The Old Fire Station** had stoppe all midweek gigs. **The Pennyfarthing** and **The Cape Of Good Hope** on Cowley Road were putting a complete halt on gigs, with the Cape being turned into a students-only bar (“Students don’t like live music,” explained the pub’s manager). One small chink of light was the arrival of **The Hollybush** in Osney on the local gig scene, with shows promoted by musicians **Dan Goddard**. The pub was later to host some of the first shows by **Supergrass** and **The Nubiles**. Local cult heroes **The Bigger The God** graced the cover of this month’s *Curfew*, a band who had previously had a bit of a kicking from the mag but, in their own words, “Got off lightly”, and subsequently become enduring favourites around town. Singer David Cowells-Hamar informed us his songs were all about sex (“Because I never get any”); he had a habit of eating bananas onstage, “To try and bring out any homophobes”, and later moved to Brighton and became a lady. In the live reviews section, **The God Machine**’s show at the **Jericho Tavern** was declared “The best gig in the entire history of the world,” which weren’t far from the truth, even with twenty years’ hindsight. **Whytehouse**, playing at the **Oxford Venue**, meanwhile, were reviewed simply as “Shitehouse”. Brevity being the soul of wit and all.

10 YEARS AGO

Plenty going on the local scene in November 2002, with the main news being that **Goldrush** had left Virgin Records “by mutual agreement,” singer Robin Bennett explaining to *Nightshift* that “since the people who signed us to Virgin got sacked last year, things haven’t worked out, so we asked to be released from our contract six months early as we thought we could do a better job ourselves.” In more positive news for the Bennett family sister Katy, playing under the name **KTB**, was shortlisted for the BBC Young Folk Musicians of the Year on the back of her acclaimed debut album, ‘All Quiet In Dreamland’. Elsewhere Oxford was named as the UK’s sixth best musical city in a BBC survey, with Liverpool topping the poll. Polling less well was **Shifty Disco** release ‘Wheel On The Bus’ by Madonna impersonator **Mad Donna**, which was nominated for Best Novelty Single of the year at the National Music Awards having been awarded worst record of the week in both *NME* and *The Guardian*. Local garage-metallers **Winnebago Deal** pulled of a coup when they were invited to support **Fugazi** at the Kentish Town Forum this month. The main interview in this month’s *Nightshift* was with **The Young Knives**, their first interview anywhere, which found them declaring, “We’re inspired by Frank Black because he’s fat and plays rock, and so are we; Pavement because they’re clever and funny and we try to be, and Steely Dan, because they made rock music into amusing shapes like we try to do.” Nightshift declared that meeting the band was “like entering another world, where visitors have to be forever on guard for the understated and absurd humour that flies around.”

5 YEARS AGO

Little Fish, photoshopped into a sardine tin, made their first appearance on the *Nightshift* cover in November 2007. The band, back then a duo consisting of Julia Sophie Heslop and Neil Greenaway, had established themselves as one of the most exciting live bands in town and were starting to attract a host of record labels to their incendiary shows. Julia revealed how, in the wake of her previous band, Dolly, she had almost lost her voice forever due to stress and what might be politely described as unwise lifestyle choices, and also managed to chop part of one of her fingers off. Elsewhere, **Radiohead** threw away the music industry rulebook by releasing their new album, ‘In Rainbows’ as a download album with no pre-publicity and fans offered the chance to pay whatever they wanted for the album, selling over 1.5million copies in its first week, and changing forever the way music is sold. Coming to town this month were **Dizzee Rascal**, **65Daysofstatic**, **The Cardiacs** and **The Raveonettes** at the **Academy**, with **Action Beat** and **Jackie-O-Motherfucker** offering more leftfield pleasures at **the Wheatsheaf**. A classic **Audioscope** featured Krautrock legends **Michael Rother** and **Dieter Moebius**, as well as the incredible **Shit & Shine**, still one of the greatest sets *Nightshift* has ever witnessed. Over in the demo pages, **Mounted Insanity Cannon** topped the pile, featuring one future half of **Coloureds**, while **Lightbox** were dumped for what sounded like “all the most depressing aspects of *X Factor*, regional battle of the bands competitions, village hall charity rock nights and James Blunt”.



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Demo OF THE MONTH

CAMENA

It’s very definitely autumn; it’s getting cold and dark and when we look out of the window all we can see is drizzle and lived-in-looking people wearing anoraks. We need something summery to cheer us up. So it’s fortunate that Camena remind us a bit of The Beach Boys. Because what’s more summery than The Beach Boys? Okay, other than ice cream. Yes, and floods. Look, you get the idea, okay? We’re talking close harmony singing and a vaguely youthful spirit here, is all. ‘Monumentality’ in particular has that slightly hazy West Coast feel about it, although local music fans might equally point to a similarity with Fixers at times and it’s got an almost Afro-funk fluidity about the groove that buoys it along nicely even as it can feel a bit like lots of really nice, clever bits that don’t quite fit together all the time, or maybe did fit neatly together until someone put them in a box and tilted it slightly so they got a bit skewed, which isn’t such a bad thing, truth be told. Better still is ‘Valentine And The Sea’, all sparse, tenderfooted twinkling guitar, handclap rhythms and clickety clack drumsticks over which the voices can intermingle. It sounds like His Name Is Alive being gently dissected by Steve Reich, though it might be more obvious to compare Camena to Foals or even Spring Offensive for their subtle blending and bending of styles. Far more than a composite of cool local contemporaries though, Camena sound like a band capable of joining the likes of Wild Swim and Glass Animals as an Oxford act with an ear for inventive poppiness.

HALF NAKED

Nothing particularly inventive about Half Naked, though when you’re playing it straight-down-the-line fast and slightly furious, we guess experimentation isn’t too high up your list of priorities. Pitched partway between Rise Against’s militant post-hardcore and You, Me At Six without the soppy bits, Half Naked plough through a brace of brief numbers with a tumbling-down-the-stairs dynamic about them, not even pausing for breath as they finish one and start the second. ‘You Won’t Stop Us’

carries hefty hints of Dive Dive at times, but while there’s nothing particularly new or subtle going on, their energy levels carry them over the finish line.

JACK STANTON

Like Half Naked, Jack Stanton isn’t someone you could accuse of being particularly original, but like the previous band, he wins us over by sounding like he’s at least having fun making music. Jack here likes Depeche Mode. No, that’s too much of an understatement. Jack loves Depeche Mode. A Lot. So much so that pretty much everything here sounds like it might have been begged, borrow or stolen from a mid-80s Depeche Mode album, from the period-sounding synths to Jack’s voice which is an absolute dead ringer for Dave Gahan’s. Even his lyrics have an air of the Mode about them - ‘Don’t Worry’ reminds us of ‘Fly On The Windscreen’, while ‘Keep Off The Road’ unsurprisingly carries echoes of ‘Behind The Wheel’. Before you start thinking tribute bands, though, demo highlight ‘Locker’ is closer to The Knife with its more atmospheric synth curls and treated vocals, while amid the 80s worship you might catch glimpses of Blancmange and The Human League. He’s most certainly got taste then has Jack, so we’re going to let him stay around for a while and share our biscuits. Did we mention he likes Depeche Mode?

MORNING SLAVES

We’re not sure exactly how we’re meant to pronounce this band name, but we decide we like to think of it as a cheery greeting from some David Brent-like manager person as he strolls into his call centre every morning, winking at the pretty new graduate recruit who secretly wants him dead in the most grotesque manner possible. But Morning Slaves don’t seem like a particularly cheery bunch. The band introduce first song ‘She’s Lost’ by telling us it’s about “Mark’s growing unhappiness at living a mundane life and his desire to just break free and have all of his dreams come true. Even his relationship with his partner is making him unhappy. Of course he wouldn’t dream of writing about it in the 1st person, so he pours his emotions into this ‘lonely girl’ character in this song.” So if Mark Farrington’s partner is reading this she’ll be simply overjoyed. Musically it sounds like a slightly bland take on an old Billy Bragg love song, although when Mark sings “She’s a lost soul,” it sounds

uncomfortably like “She’s an arsehole,” which will provide further comfort to his other half as we titter like immature schoolboys. ‘Goodbye Caroline’, meanwhile, is an imagined conversation between Phil Lynott and his wife after he died, which is a novel concept for a song if nothing else, but maybe lacks the poignancy and emotional drama such a situation might bring about, being a bit mopey and all. Sorry, Morning Slaves were unhappy about life before we started on this demo; can’t imagine this review will have improved their mood any more than the weather has helped ours.

DROPOUT

Amid the information we glean from the very nice letter Dropout send us, we learn that there’s “only four songs and we don’t sound like Queen,” which is the first good news we’ve had all day and gets us onside from the off. Not that Dropout sound like a particularly cheery bunch from their music, which starts all dark and broody before billowing into some monster-chorded Eurogoth noise with the female singer wailing like a proper old blues harpy. The formula is played out in identical fashion for the first two tracks, ‘Self Inflicted’ and ‘Pull Me Down’ (you can almost feel the passion and hurt from the titles alone), churning and gurning in titanic fashion while the singer over emotes in heroic fashion, but they up the ante slightly with ‘Metallic Eyes’, with its industrial metal chug and fuzz and what sounds like a witchy Elkie Brooks in opera mode on vocals. They certainly don’t do understatement but Dropout at least never sound overblown and pompous. Unlike this next lot...

A RAINY DAY IN BERGEN

No idea what a rainy day in Bergen might be like but we’d rather spend a week in a typhoon-swept Arsehole-On-Sea than sit through this album-length demo again. Overblown doesn’t even start to describe this guitar-free stadium rock band, who make Muse sound like The Low Anthem in the subtlety stakes. In fact a sizeable chunk of this demo sounds like something Muse might have carted to their nearest landfill site, deemed unworthy of inclusion on their latest opus (c’mon, if it’s Muse, it’s gotta be a proper old opus, ennit?). Sorry, where were we? Oh yeah, Bon Jovi on a Mogadon-induced go-slow. With a piano. Did we mention the piano? You really can’t miss it, mainly

because someone is hammering it with the sweet sensitivity and discretion of a Tutu-wearing clown armed with a jackhammer, although that image at least conjures up some semblance of entertainment. The first track here is called ‘It Has Left’, which possibly refers to the melody, while the second is entitled ‘Struggling For Breath’, which is appropriate, since we’re struggling for anything resembling constructive criticism. What a fucking racket. Even when they attempt to slightly underplay things (which manifests itself as hammering the piano a bit less hard) the singer’s overwrought look-at-me operatic howling drags it right back into the land of excess. A Rainy Day In Bergen, then: not so much a bit of drizzle as a non-stop biblical downpour of bombast.

THE DEMO DUMPER

TORN LIKE COLOURS

There is, we’ve long since realised, a particular type of band for whom the term ‘Generic Battle Of The Bands Regional Heat Runner-Up’ was coined. Torn Like Colours are one of those bands: a bit of mid-paced, post-grunge pub rock fronted by a singer who sounds like she might have had designs on a West End chorus line once upon a time – a bit showy, a bit bluesy, sounding like the world’s least enthusiastic receptionist phoning her lines in while wishing she could just get on with eating her M&S tuna mayo sandwich, when even a modicum of sultry soulfulness might have elevated the mundane nature of the music to at least bearable levels. ‘Take My Hand’ is six and half minutes of droning tedium that feels at least twice that length. And with every other song clocking in around the six minute mark, brevity really isn’t Torn Like Colours’ strong point. Nor are memorable tunes. Or rock’n’roll attitude. Or... well, anything at all if we’re honest. It’s more like rock music with creeping dementia, trying and failing to remember what it once was, the odd flicker of recognition, by way of a bolshy guitar flourish, snuffed out before it can take hold. By ‘One Day’ they’ve sunk into a typically torpid girl band-style ballad, all faux emotional turmoil and hurt, when the real pain is the listener’s. Torn Like Colours? Torn like a new arsehole, more like.

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



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(Red Poppy Tour)

Fri 9th Nov • £15 adv
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Punch Brothers

Sat 10th Nov • £10 adv
7pm - 10pm
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Stone Roses**
+ Pete Macleod

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Mon 12th Nov • £14 adv
Noisettes

Mon 12th Nov • £8 adv
Max Milner

Tues 13th Nov • £14 adv
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Jay Malinowski
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Cory Brana,
Rocky Votolat,
Emily Barker
Also featuring:
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Imagine Dragons
+ Escapists

Fri 16th Nov • £10 adv
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+ We Butter The Bread With Butter
+ Shadows Chasing Ghosts
+ Azriel

Fri 16th Nov • £14 adv
7pm - 10pm
Gojira
+ Klone
+ Trepalium

Fri 16th Nov • £25 adv
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The Safe Sex Ball
ft. Wiley,
Drumsound & Bassline Smith,
Alphabet Pony,
Urban Knights

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7pm - 10pm
The Wedding Present
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'Seamonsters' in full

Sat 17th Nov • £6 adv
7pm - 11.30pm
Upstairs ft. Chew Lips
in association with BBC Introducing
+ Grudle Bay + Tiger Mendoza
+ Stem + After the Thought

Sun 18th Nov • £18 adv
Gong

Mon 19th Nov • £10 adv
The Feelers

Weds 21st Nov • £8 adv
Gentlemen's Dub Club

Thurs 22nd Nov • £5 adv
Dance a la Plage
+ John Wean
+ Yellow Fever

Fri 23rd Nov • £11 adv
7pm - 10pm
**The Rifles
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+ Milk White Throat
+ Fragment
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The Milk

Sat 1st Dec • £11.50 adv
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Sam & The Womp

Thurs 6th Dec • £17.50 adv
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Mon 11th Mar 2013 • £14 adv
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