

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 206
September
2012**

SHHHHHHHHHH!

it's

SECRET RIVALS

and they're
here to save
indie pop!

Also in this issue:
**Introducing
ToLIESEL**

**WILDERNESS
and
SUPERNORMAL
FESTIVALS reviewed**

plus

**Local music news, reviews and four
pages of gigs**

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

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|---|--|
| TUE 20 AUG PAUL KELLY 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO | SAT 05 NOV JACK SAVORETTI 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |
| SUN 25 SEP SMOKE FAIRIES 19.30 ADV 18+ O. ACADEMY OXFORD | WED 07 NOV PULLED APART BY HORSES 19.30 18+ O. ACADEMY OXFORD |
| TUE 25 SEP TWISTED WHEEL 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO | SUN 10 NOV TOM MCRAE 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |
| FRI 03 OCT KYLA LA GRANGE 19.30 ADV 18+ O. ACADEMY OXFORD | TUE 12 NOV THE REVIVAL TOUR 2012 19.30 ADV 18+ O. ACADEMY OXFORD |
| MON 08 OCT BENJAMIN FRANCIS LEFTWICH 19.30 ADV 18+ OXFORD TOWN HALL | FRI 16 NOV RUFUS WAINWRIGHT 19.30 18+ NEW THEATRE |
| THU 10 OCT STRAIGHT LINES 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO | FRI 16 NOV LAU 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |
| SAT 13 OCT WHY? 19.30 ADV 18+ THE BULLINGDON | TUE 27 NOV JUAN ZELADA 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |
| WED 17 OCT WE WERE PROMISED JETPACKS 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO | FRI 30 NOV THE MILK 19.30 ADV 18+ O. ACADEMY OXFORD |
| SAT 20 OCT GATHERING 19.30 ADV 18+ GATHERING STIVAL 2012 | FRI 30 NOV THE REVIVAL HOUR 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |
| MON 27 OCT LIANNE LA HAVAS 19.30 ADV 18+ O. ACADEMY OXFORD | SAT 01 DEC ICEAGE 19.30 ADV 18+ THE CELLAR |
| FRI 01 NOV MAD DOG MCRAE 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO | TUE 04 DEC ADMIRAL FALLOW 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |
| FRI 02 NOV 2-54 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO | WED 20 NOV 2012 THE TRAVELLING BAND 19.30 ADV 18+ THE JARDINO |

GATHERING feat.
DRY THE RIVER
SPECTOR LIARS
LUCY ROSE JAKE BUGG

BASTILLE CLOCK OPERA CUT RIBBONS
FOSSIL COLLECTIVE FOXES GEORGE EZRA HEY SHOLAY
INDIANA KARIMA FRANCIS LEWIS WATSON
NINA NESBITT THE OTHER TRIBE OTTILIA PEACE
SPLASH THE STAVES STORY BOOKS SWISS LIPS

BETA BLOCKER & THE BODY CLOCK
BLACK HATS FINE UNION GLASS ANIMALS
PIXEL FIX WILD SWIM
plus many, many more tbc.

Map of venues:
 ↑ COWLEY ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
 ⚓ PORT MAHON
 🏠 EAST OXFORD COMMUNITY CENTRE
 🏠 THE BULLINGDON
 🎪 O. ACADEMY OXFORD

O. ACADEMY OXFORD // THE BULLINGDON // PORT MAHON
EAST OXFORD COMMUNITY CENTRE // COWLEY ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER
GATHERINGFESTIVAL.CO.UK

TICKETS ON SALE WWW.ALT-TICKETS.CO.UK & O. ACADEMY BOX OFFICE
ALL AGES, UNDER 14 TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT // LINE UP SUBJECT TO CHANGE

NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
Phone: 01865 372255 email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net
Online: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

AUDIOSCOPE release a 40-track compilation album in aid of homeless charity Shelter this month. 'Music For A Good Home 2' features exclusive contributions from Ride (a Portishead remix of 'Moonlight Medicine'), Wire, Four Tet, Karma To Burn, Beak>, Deso Child, SJ Esau, Warm Digits, Boxcutter and Spectrum, as well as a strong local contingent that includes The Rock Of Travolta, Richard Walters, Kill Murray, Listing Ships, Gunning For Tamar, The Half Rabbits, Phil McMinn, Flights of Helios and Message To Bears.

This year's Audioscope mini-festival, in aid of Shelter, takes place in November, with the line-up set to be announced soon. Before then there's a launch gig for the album at the Wheatsheaf on Friday 14th September featuring Kranky Records signings Felix, with support from The Cellar Family and The Half Rabbits. Buy 'Music For A Good Home 2' online at www.musicforagoodhome.com for a bargain £5.

OXJAM returns for its second citywide takeover on Saturday 13th October. Fixers, Dubwiser, Kill Murray, Secret Rivals, Grinding Young, We Aeronauts, The Family Machine, Black Hats, Grudle Bay, The Yarns, ToLiesel and Robots With Soul are among a host of local bands playing across venues that include Modern Art Oxford, The Purple Turtle, The Cellar and The Turl Street Kitchen, while there will also be a Blessing Force takeover, with acts yet to be announced.

Oxjam has been running events across the UK since 2006, raising money for Oxfam in its campaign to eradicate global poverty. A limited number of early bird tickets, priced £7, are on sale now from Wegottickets.com. Visit www.oxjamoxford.co.uk for more news and line-up details.

WILDERNESS FESTIVAL has launched early bird ticket sales for its 2013 event already after this year's festival sold out. 10,000 punters attended the music, arts and food festival at Cornbury Park in August and, following on from a sold-out **Truck Festival** and big turnouts at **Cornbury Festival**, **Charlbury Riverside** and **Supernormal** across the summer, marked a highly successful festival season in Oxfordshire.

Next year's Wilderness, which this year featured headline sets from Wilco, Spiritualized, Rodrigo Y Gabriela and Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings, takes place over the weekend of 9th-11 August 2013. Tickets are on sale now, priced £99.50, from www.wildernessfestival.com. Next year's Cornbury Festival, meanwhile, takes place over the weekend of the 5th-7th July, with early bird tickets expected to go on sale shortly. Visit www.cornburyfestival.com for details.

RICHARD WALTERS releases his third album in October. 'Regret Less' is released on Beard Museum Records on the 15th. The album was recorded by Richard with A Silent Film's Robert Stevenson



MR SHAODOW releases his new album this month having recently celebrated selling his 10,000th CD, almost entirely while rapping on the streets of towns and cities around the UK.

ShaoDow, who made his name on the Oxford music scene while studying for a law degree at the University, releases 'Cut The Bullspit' on his own DIY Gang Entertainment label. He called Nightshift to talk about his recent gigging and the new album.

"I've just finished an eight date UK tour planned and funded between me and (fellow Oxford rapper) Zuby and obviously my album is out now as well. In general, over the last year, I've been focusing on making myself the best artist I can be.

"Quite frankly the album sounds like somebody managed to capture epicness, drain it of all its essence and then squeeze that all over a bunch of MP3s. That's my album. For me it's musical freedom, with no label or industry bigwigs telling me what to do. I can completely say this album came from the heart: I've pushed myself with the lyricism and the genres range from hip hop to rock metal to house to dubstep to grime, all of it uniquely ShaoDow. I've collaborated with artists such as Ghetts, MC DT (Pied Piper), Serocee, Raxstar and Casso Blax. It's simply me making the music I love, so I'm very confident that you won't hear or find anything else like it.

Regarding his 10,000 CD sales, ShaoDow explained his incredible success for a completely independent artist:

"My only advice is be willing to put in the work. Music is my full time job and it's taken me a lot of time to get to this level and it'll take me a lot more time to get to the next level. Ultimately though, there's no short cuts or cheat codes – not if you want to be a credible artist with longevity. A lot of people don't want to hear that though but unfortunately it's the truth."
You can download 'Cut The Bullspit' at tinyurl.com/CutTheBull or visit www.MrShaoDow.com for more news and gig dates.

and financed by fan pledges and an auction of Richard's musical equipment and personal effects. Richard launches his new album with a show at St Alban's Church

on Charles Street on Thursday 4th October. Support comes from We Aeronauts and Adam Barnes. Visit www.richardwaltersmusic.co.uk for more news.

TROPHY WIFE lead up to the release of their long-awaited debut album with a video collage that will build up over a series of instalments into a full picture. The album, the band's first release since last year's 'Bruxism' EP on Blessing Force, is already recorded and due for release early in 2013. Explaining the video collage concept, Jody Prewett said, "We've been quiet for a while now and we wanted to show people what we've been up to by gradually releasing short videos of images and sounds that are associated with the album; it's like a treasure hunt that leads you to it". Bandmate Kit Montheith added, "it's our way of letting people in to experience what we've spent the last nine months of our lives doing. Each video features sections or stems from tracks that will be on our debut album. We feel that alongside the music the most important way for people to experience our band is through its visual elements... thats why we've decided to create this evolving art project on our blog to be, for the time being, the only vehicle through which people can discover what our debut record is all about." To view the videos, visit trophywifeband.tumblr.com.



NEWScontinued



LISTING SHIPS release a new 12” vinyl EP in November. In keeping with the nautical theme of all their music, the local post-rock quartet recorded the EP at the Royal National Lifeboat Institute’s station at Hayling Island, which was converted into a recording studio for a weekend. As well as as recording tracks among the lifeboats, on the slipway and on the seashore, the band sampled the lifeboats in action for use in the music. Stuart Fowkes from the band told Nightshift, “We were keen to make the nautical theme running through the band much more than a gimmick or a name, and we’re collectively obsessed with the practices of field recording and taking something from the recording environment into the final product. We’d have had a hell of a time getting a drumkit up the stairs in a lighthouse, so a lifeboat station was the obvious choice and the RNLI were into the idea from the beginning. The location is going to come through in the title and the artwork, as well as hopefully some samples on the record too.”

Visit www.listingships.com for release date and live dates.



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TRUCK STORE plays host to a rare instore set from Cincinnati’s cult rockers **WUSSY** this month. The band, who formed back in 2001, have never played in the UK before or even had their albums officially released over here but are making their debut outing in September to coincide with the release of ‘Buckeye’, a compilation of highlights from previous US-released albums. They play an intimate Truck Store set on **Monday 24th September** and are joined by Dallas outfit **American Werewolf Academy**.

Other Truck instores in September include **Duotone** on Saturday 15th; **Undersmile** and **Ides Of Gemini** on Monday 17th; Nightshift cover stars **Secret Rivals** on Saturday 22nd as part of a live music all-dayer that also features **Band of Hope** and **We Aeronauts**, and an Oxjam warm-up show on Saturday 29th, featuring **Cooling Pearls**, **Nairobi** and **Dallas Don’t**.

For set times and more news about Oxford’s only independent music store, visit www.truckmusicstore.co.uk.

‘OXFORD: CITY OF SOUND Volume 1’ is a new compilation of Oxford’s heavier music past and present, available to download this month. The album has been compiled by Undersmile’s Tom

McKibben. Among current local faves featured are The Graceful Slicks, The Cellar Family, Komrad, Agness Pike, Caravan of Whores, Mother Corona, Von Braun and Desert Storm, while names from the past include Sextodecimo, Xmas Lights, Ivy’s Itch, Suitable Case For Treatment and Sevenchurch. Grab yourself a copy at tricksteroxford.blogspot.co.uk.

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.

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

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

Nightshift’s online form is open to all local music fans and musicians at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net, while the quarterly Oxfordshire Music Scene magazine is available as a PDF online at www.oxfordmusicscene.co.uk.

THE CELLAR FAMILY have issued a statement denying they are set to split as the band head for a period of reduced activity due to members’ jobs and student studies. The band have established themselves as one of the most exciting live acts in Oxford since relocating here from Winchester two years ago, including show-stealing sets at Truck Festival and the Oxford Punt.

Drummer Nick Reading told Nightshift, “The Cellar Family would like to dispel some rumours circulating that we are to split. However, we should make clear that the next twelve months are indeed likely to see a period of somewhat reduced gigging activity as Sam divides his time between Oxford and Italy, where he will be advancing his studies as a painter from late September onwards. Similarly, new job and further education prospects loom for both Jamie and me, so although we will still be playing live every month or two, we apologise in advance for lack of availability until a return to full form next summer. In the meantime, our most recent release, ‘Jumbo’, will continue to be available online and at Truck Store.



COMING SOON TO THE NEW THEATRE



ULTRAVOX
BRILLIANT

SAT 22 SEP



Dexys

TUE 25 SEP



STOMP

MON 1 - SAT 6 OCT



LEVEL 42

SUN 7 OCT



NEWTON FAULKNER

MON 15 OCT



THE SENSATIONAL 60's EXPERIENCE

TUE 16 OCT



DEACON BLUE

WED 17 OCT



JOOLS HOLLAND

SUN 28 OCT



ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS

MON 12 NOV



RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

FRI 16 NOV



JOAN ARMATRADING

SUN 18 NOV



PETER ANDRE

TUE 20 NOV



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a quiet word with

SECRET RIVALS



photo: Izzy East

“**THERE IS DEFINITELY A punk rock feel to our live shows; we want to pour passion into our performances. We’re a band that feels its lyrics and we believe in what we’re doing. Tom Robinson once said to me, ‘People don’t go to a gig to hear a sound, they go to see a performance’. That’s something I’ve taken on as a mantra for Secret Rivals. We’re inspired by bands like Idlewild and The Cribbs; I see a lot of similarity between ourselves live and those bands. Punk is about passion and being able to play with passion.**”

JAMIE CORCORAN, SINGER and guitarist with Secret Rivals, is explaining to Nightshift the difference between his band’s live incarnation and their recorded music. We’ve asked because there really does seem to be a disparity between the sweet, sometimes lush pop of recent singles like ‘Once More With Heart’ and ‘Tonight Matthew’, with their chiming guitars, coruscating synth lines and cute boy-girl vocal parts, and Secret Rivals’ spicier, often chaotic gigs where voices and instruments can sound like they’re fighting each other to the death – a

feeling accentuated by the fractious nature of many of Jay’s lyrics which find him reliving domestic spats with partner and co-singer Claudia ‘Clouds’ Saez (choice line: “I’ll tell you when you’ve had enough.”).

THE CONTRASTING SIDES OF Secret Rivals’ pop coin are all of part of their appeal of course, and Jay hits the nail on the head when he declares his desire to present his band as a spectacle rather than just another band approximating their records. “You don’t get the full sense of what a band is if you’re only judging them live or on record,” adds Clouds, “you need to take in both and I believe a band has to have several dynamics; we have a kill switch live! I didn’t like The Cribbs until I was dragged to a live show, I think like ourselves they only get a certain aspect of themselves over on record; we’re a pop band with a switch, you see this live.”

A POP BAND WITH A KILL switch. Yeah, that’s kind of Secret Rivals in a nutshell. Here’s a band who were once renowned in Oxford more for their online spats than for their music but are now among that

select group of local acts ready and set for a break into a higher league, armed with an enviable catalogue of ebulliently serrated electro-tinged indie pop songs that fidget and dance or just sweet-talk their way into your consciousness, and with a growing fanbase that just happens to include Tom Robinson, Steve Lamacq and Rob da Bank, as well as whoever it is who commissions the music for Sky’s sports programmes. After a succession of self-released singles and EPs over the past couple of years, Secret Rivals release their new single, ‘Everything I’ve Lost’, this month, a perfect encapsulation of everything we’ve come to love them for – simple, infectious and disarmingly pretty pop that channels the spirit of bands as diverse as The Cure, Belle & Sebastian and Los Campesinos! via boy/girl insurrectionists like Bis and Huggy Bear, fight-pop acts like Johnny Foreigner and Danananaykroyd to the new wave of vintage indie acolytes such as Allo Darlin’. It’s indie pop untarnished by the corporate landfill chug with which the term become associated and in love with a lost age of innocence,

attitude and joyous pop noise.

SECRET RIVALS WERE formed in Oxford by Jay (originally from Liverpool) and Clouds (from Chile) after the couple moved here following time spent travelling around Europe together. “We met in college up north and moved to Oxford because it reminded us of Amsterdam to be honest,” remembers Jay. “The idea of forming a band came after we’d been here a few months; we were watching bands pretty much every weekend as something to do. The more into the scene we got the more we thought we could offer something different to it. No one was making 90s sounding indie, so instead of waiting week in week out at the Wheatsheaf, hoping to see a band that spoke to us, we just formed one.” The pair found kindred spirits in Andrew Murton and Reece Chapman Jay: “I met Andrew after he advertised for band members; I always read those ‘members wanted’ posts at the time in case something jumped out. His advert read something like ‘band members wanted for Idlewild/Placebo/

Wedding Present-inspired indie fuzz band’. It seemed too good to not meet him. Reece was the sexiest boy in our local dance club, we had to get him in!”

Together the quartet set out their stall with increasing style, beginning with 2010’s debut ‘Start Fires’. However, after the release of ‘Make Do & Mend’ earlier this summer, Andrew left, to be replaced with Andy Beill. Jay: “We started out wanting nothing more than to sound like Idlewild’s ‘Captain’ EP. I think now we just want to make scuzzy pop that you can dance to. The most important thing regardless of who we’re listening to or what sound we’re going for on a particular recording is that we believe what we’re doing. If we say we’re pissed off we mean it. I think at the very least, like us or not, we mean everything we say, we don’t try and make a record for a particular scene. We’re not desperate to be the next anyone.”

ONE OF THE CHIEF FACETS of Secret Rival’s sound is the vocal interaction between Clouds and Jay. She is all sweetness and light, a gently swooning presence; Jay is the yapping, yelping counterpoint. There’s some real frisson between the two lyrically at times. Jay: “I write all the lyrics and yes they’re all based on real life arguments. Dave Gilyeat at BBC Oxford asked me recently, was it awkward for us to go public with our lyrics and that took me aback because it would be far more awkward to go on a stage and sing something I couldn’t feel on stage. We were never going to be one of those bands that decide we wanna sound like Interpol so write about despair and loneliness from the comfort of the middle class family home.” Clouds: “I think everyone can relate to what we sing about, I don’t think our lyrics are exclusive to us as a group; I’d like to think everyone can relate and has shared similar problems.” Is there a deliberate attempt to balance spikiness with sweetness in your songs?

Jay: “No not at all, we want to sound like Placebo’s debut album as much as want to pour our emotions out on record. I think the two combine and make a spiky yet sweet sound. We rarely discuss our sound but like a lot of modern indie pop – Pains Of Being Pure At Heart or Dum Dum Girls – we know there’s an aspect of homaging a certain sound or period in time, it’s just a case of doing it well and in an honest way. We know we sound like the 90s and it’s because we love that period. My favourite band ever is The Cure, so of course we bring elements of that into it as well; Secret Rivals is a

celebration of what we love.” Given Secret Rivals’ obvious love of pure pop, can they see any other Oxford bands making music from a similar place. Nightshift suggests Alphabet Backwards come at pop from a similarly unselfconsciously effusive direction. Jay: “We love Alphabet Backwards and I think we are different branches from the same tree. They just have a lot more Paul Simon in their record collections, where we have The Slits. I once described us as Alphabet Backwards’ scruffy little awkward brother; they see the positives while I think we more celebrate the hopelessness. Kill Murray I think probably have a similar kind of thing going on as well. There’s a lot of bands in Oxford putting proficiency over tunes, but there’s something for everyone I suppose.”

HAVING MOVED TO OXFORD to start the band, how did Jay and Clouds initially see the local scene? Jay: “There was stuff we loved, there was stuff that made us shake

“We were never going to be one of those bands that wants to sound like Interpol and write about despair and loneliness from the comfort of the middle class family home.”

our heads, nothing’s changed really. Oxford itself is amazing; it’s been said so I won’t go on about it, we all know how lucky we are to have the venues, the dedicated people who constantly blog, review, wave the flag for Oxford within the scene. We have the best BBC Introducing in the UK, we really do, and Oxford is small and big enough that there’s a band for everyone no matter what your tastes. We’re probably the most un-Oxford-sounding band you can get, though!” Clouds: “We arrived as the Zodiac was closing so although for a year or so it seemed like Oxford was losing its crown things have really taken off again what with Blessing Force, there’s a lot of attention on Oxford at present.” Born and bred in Liverpool, a recent highlight for Jay came in May when the band were selected to perform at Liverpool Sound City – the day after his band played at The Oxford Punt. That must have provided a nice contrast between his roots and his adopted home. Jay: “It was great; I got to play in front of my big brother, which was awesome. To be fair when we were there the only bands we really saw were Jonquil and Spring Offensive, so it would be unfair to comment on Liverpool’s current scene. There’s some great bands at present though: All We Are are pretty awesome and I think they’re about to break out

so hopefully we will all be aware of them soon.” Andy: “We felt we got a lot of recognition that week. We played a sold-out show with the Lovely Eggs and then the Punt, and got the best local feedback we’ve had. Quite a few people said they were won around after seeing how the band have come on since the early days. We were on a high after that and could really just enjoy ourselves for the weekend in Liverpool.”

SOUND CITY AND THE PUNT are all steps on the ladder Secret Rivals have been climbing with determined vigour lately. With every release they’ve picked up more fans, including some of the most influential DJs on national radio. Rob da Bank for example made ‘Tonight Matthew’ his tune of the day and invited the band to play at Bestival on the Isle of Wight last year, on the same bill as their heroes The Cure. It’s a diary date they’re set to repeat this month. Jay: “We were on the Sailor Jerry

that we’d rather mean something special to one person than be acknowledged by thousands; that’s still true so it’s so exciting for us at the moment seeing the responses we’re getting.” Reece: “I used to watch *Soccer AM* a lot when I was a kid so I was made up when we got our first bit of Sky play. I used to watch the football highlights not just for the football but for the music as well so it’s nice to know that we have picked up a few fans like the younger me along the way too.” Andy: “I want *Match Of The Day* now; I’m trying to get Jay to write us a ‘Life Of Riley’.”

AND SO THE PLAUDITS continue to pour in, something that ‘Everything I’ve Lost’ is sure to add to. For now, though, Secret Rivals are using Pledge Music to help finance the recording of an album, pencilled in for release next March. It’s a route being used by more and more bands these days as they avoid the precarious and often treacherous record label route. Since the interview was conducted the band have achieved their target amount in donations.

Jay: “I think it’s a great way to go for any band that’s confident they have people out there who will pledge; without it we would have had to wait for the big record label advance to record an album and we’re not really ones for waiting. People were asking us for an album and we realised that if we could work directly with the fans we could cut out any middle men and work with and for the fans. We’ve had a fair bit of label interest, there’s a couple of middle-sized indies that have been haunting London shows, but we’re just not a band for waiting about. ‘Tonight Matthew’ got an offer from one of our favourite labels but we would have had to sit on the track for five months for a release. We’re not deluded at this stage in our career, what’s important is winning new fans. We’re not too concerned with becoming a household name, we’re a fuzzy little indie band that’s gonna sit in the indie underground. The biggest ambition is to make something seminal. I don’t really care if it’s in the mainstream or not, just that it means something to people. We just got a £100 pledge from someone in London; that really touched us... it’s cheesy to say but I think we’re now at a stage where we can mutter the immortal words ‘our fans are awesome’.”

‘Everything I lost’ is released on 24th September as a free download. Secret Rivals play the Wheatsheaf on Saturday 22nd September and Truck Store the same day. Visit www.secretrivals.co.uk for download and gig dates.

RELEASED

MR SHAADOW

‘Cut The Bullspit’

(DiY Gang Entertainment)

Bullspit? How coy is that? OK, swearing isn’t always clever, but prissy self-censoring bowdlerisms never look good. Luckily, it’s about the only criticism we can make about ShaoDow’s outstanding new album (which is really a glorified single, padded with alternate versions, old favourites and skits, but for four quid on pre-order we’ll not complain). The new material reveals ShaoDow’s maturation into an artist of true stature, finding an alchemical blend between the erudite witticisms of his early tracks, and the roof-igniting ringmaster he has become live. Built on a loop from Bizet and some barefaced party-down handclaps, the title track should be a kitsch mess, but underneath the frothy fun of the hook, and winking lyrics about minotaurs and Slimer, the

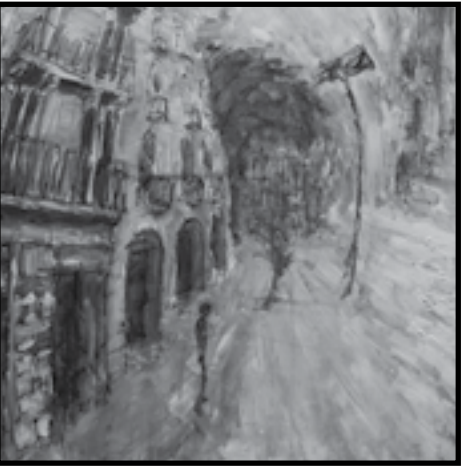


rhythm kicks like a wild Pamplona toro. A nice alt take featuring reggae star Seroccee is fitting, given Shadown’s dancehall-like tendency to strip mine single rhyme schemes in a way that

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differentiates him from the fanciful balletic flow of most other literate, theatrical rappers, from Flava Flav to MF Doom. The real jewel here, though, is ‘Posh Boy’, a hilarious riposte to those who say that Oxford Law graduates can’t rap, over a brilliant econostep beat that sounds like a broken Xerox. “Real” is a complex word in hip hop mythology, but in being honest about his background, ShaoDow embodies it better than most UK rappers. Aside from ‘Actin Up’, a collaboration with Zuby that dilutes both performers’ skills, this record is a must. Shadown’s sold over 10, 000 records by gigging and working constantly; his ceaseless dedication should be an inspiration to any number of weak-kneed, moaning musicians who can’t see beyond their last bad review or sparse crowd. Have hard work, self-belief and sincerity made ShaoDow a better artist? No spit. **David Murphy**



THE DOTS & STOPS

‘If I Look Uncomfortable, It’s

Only Coz I Need To Do It!’

(Planet Bohemia)

It’s not often I can hail an Abingdon-Berlin collaboration, but this potage of punkadelic, anti-pop pop, sadly only out on thick white vinyl at the moment, benefits from all manner of UK and Euro influences and, well produced as it is by James Warren, hangs together as a satisfying whole. Throughout the album the musicianship is top notch enough to take away any doubt it lacks integrity that mainly arise from the atonal singing style, and indeed there might even be a whiff of flawed genius happening in those vocals. You spend the first side coming to the notion that it’s Damon Albarn’s younger, evil brother wanting to be John Otway, via a mixture of Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, surf rock and Sparks’ ‘Amateur Hour’. I hope you’re getting the picture. There is the oddity of track six, ‘Marvin’, which seems to be a different vocalist, less Jilted John and more like Ian Brown doing a lolloping take on the Happy Mondays, but side two of the album is back to kooky business, with the two best tracks: ‘Shakerstylee’ – as if the Super Furries had teamed up with Gogol Bordello – and

‘Sister Gestapo’, a ‘Laughing Gnome’-era Bowie getting all funky.

If you like any of the above named artists, and have open ears, then you’ll find ‘If I look Uncomfortable...’ very entertaining. Which is all you can really ask of anything. **Paul Carrera**

TOLIESEL

‘The Light’

(Own label)

While it’s fair to say you can barely move for vaguely country-tinged indie bands in Oxford in recent times; the best of them are still an absolute joy. Case in point: ToLiesel, who impressed us at the Punt back in May and then again in July at Truck purely by dint of having a set packed to the gunnels with great pop songs, and here release their debut single, a small thing of no little splendour, a song that local league leaders in the field The Epstein would be happy to count as one of their very best. Adding a shoegaze shimmer to the sort of haunted alt.country that Band Of Horses peddle so sweetly, ‘The Light’ carries an air of restrained euphoria about it. In fact, heck, much more of this and we’ll be holding a lighter aloft and discovering Jesus. Lovely.

Dale Kattack

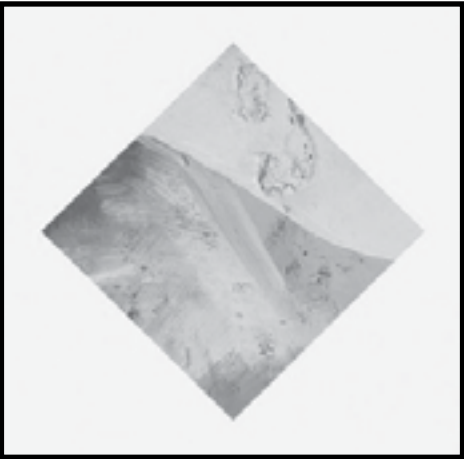


YELLOW FEVER

‘Masked’

(Own label)

Previously kicked sneeringly into the Demo Dumper, few local bands have worked so successfully to try and earn their spurs as Yellow Fever, now regularly tipped as one of Oxford’s younger bands to keep an eye on and possessed, in the form of Dele Adewuyi, one of the more engaging young frontman in town. This debut release might as well be a different band to the trite, tinny barrel of not much that we first encountered. The primary influences remain much the same – notably Bloc Party and Foals – but the execution is in a higher league by far, Dele’s voice richer and more forceful than his years would normally command, while the staccato funk rhythms and obstinately trilling guitars are lean and muscular, just the merest hint of a hi-life party waiting to start beneath the surface. It’s not quite as infectious as the best of their live show just yet but again increasing evidence that Yellow Fever, current line-up changes allowing, should soon graduate from the status of promising youngsters to full-blown local heroes. **Ian Chesterton**



A SILENT FILM

‘This Stage Is Your Life’

(CMI)

Though still officially an Oxford band, A Silent Film upped and left for the US of A a long while back, and don’t seem to have any immediate plans to return. Understandable considering their comparative success Stateside. The three track ‘This Stage is Your Life’ EP, recorded in Arizona, precedes the release of the band’s second album ‘Sand and Snow’ early next year. It might be lazy journalism to describe any vaguely alternative piano-rock band as ‘sounding like Coldplay’, but musically, title track ‘This Stage Is Your Life’ could have been taken from ‘X&Y’. Which isn’t to say it’s bad, (I actually like Coldplay, but that’s a different story, for a different review. And yeah, that sound you can hear might well be my journalistic integrity

flying out the window), ASF manage to ably manoeuvre that fine line between heartfelt and cheesy, using enough other instrumentation to transcend the “piano ballad” cliché. Second track, ‘Echoes Across A Bowl Of Tears’, exclusive to this EP, is a heady mix of urgent, driving Editor’s-esque vocals, soaring effects-laden guitar that channels 1980s Talk Talk-style synth and a solid but understated rhythm section, that together result in a piece of instantly catchy stadium rock brilliance. A piano version of ‘Danny, Dakota & The Wishing Well’ completes the EP, albeit with a rather different tone to the previous two tracks. As is often the case with stripped-down songs, the lyrics become more vulnerable and obvious, words that pass in the full band version sound occasionally clumsy or awkward here, unable to hide behind the majesty of soaring guitars and distortion. Though a perfectly pleasant song, it’s a somewhat anticlimactic ending to an EP that started off with such a huge sound. **Caroline Corke**

ANDREW MILLOY

‘Philomena’

(Own label)

To lose a child is quite simply the worst thing that can happen to any person. To then write about the experience and put it into music as tribute to that brief life and as a way of raising money to help other bereaved parents requires an ocean of courage. Andrew Milloy, better known on the local scene as bass player with Band Of Hope, lost his

daughter, Philomena, at birth back in 2008. Before then he had never even tried to sing but over these three songs he follows a lyrical course of hope and expectation, tragedy and reflection and, ultimately, tribute to his daughter. It’s emotive stuff – how could it be anything else? – but done in an understated fashion, Andrew possessed of a strong voice that’s naturally predisposed towards a croon, the music switching from almost jaunty Hammond-led jazz on opener ‘Breathe’, with its exhortation “All you need to do is breathe”, to more contemplative, rustic chamber pop, awash with strings on ‘English Rose’. Each of these three tracks would sit easily alongside Radio 2’s playlist and given the cause they aim to benefit – the Sands charity, which helps bereaved parents – you’d like to think the EP would get far wider exposure. As it is, it’s a fitting tribute to a young life, born of sadness but made with love.

Dale Kattack



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GIG GUIDE

SATURDAY 1st
THE ROLLING CLONES: O2 Academy – The Stones tribute band celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their heroes’ inception.
TRANSFORMATION + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy – Weekly three-clubs-in-one extravaganza with classic and contemporary indie at Transformation, kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy and metal, hardcore and alt.rock at Room 101.
HOMEWORK with TEMPLE FUNK COLLECTIVE: The Bullingdon
THE DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers.
RECKLESS SLEEPERS: The Old Bookbinders, Jericho
OXFORD WHEELS PROJECT: The Cellar – Fundraising gig for the local skate park project.

Tuesday 4th
ALABAMA SHAKES: O2 Academy
Given the monstrous success of Black Keys lately, it’s little surprise that Alabama Shakes are similarly riding a wave of love for all things authentic and vintage in rock’n’roll but also coated in a shiny sheen of pop-friendly paint. Already boasting a fancub that includes Adele, Bon Iver, Robert Plant, Jack White, Alex Turner and Russell Crowe, Alabama Shakes sold tonight’s show out months ago and seem to be the name to drop when you’re talking about up and coming rock stars. Corkscrew-haired, bespectacled, floral frock-wearing singer and guitarist Brittany Howard is hardly your typical pop icon in waiting, but that just adds to the band’s authentic allure, a full-on rock diva with a voice to match Janis Joplin, Robert Pant or James Brown at times and a carefree attitude towards performance. Rough Trade snapped the band up in an instant and debut album ‘Boys & Girls’ will undoubtedly be in every end of year list going, making a lie of the idea that rock’n’roll is dead or dying. Instead, the best of it continues to go back to the source and give it some serious welly. You want proper, old-fashioned songs about dancing and fighting and love gone wrong, sung by a former postie? Here you go – eat up and enjoy.



SEPTEMBER
SUNDAY 2nd
BEARD OF DESTINY + TONY BATEY + BLIN’ JOHNNY + DANNY & JEREMY: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free acoustic session.

MONDAY 3rd
LIGHTNIN’ WILLIE & THE POORBOYS: The Jericho Tavern – A return to the Famous Monday Blues for the Texas-born, Pasadena-resident electric blues guitarist, a huge favourite on the UK circuit with his lively mix of blues, swing, and rock’n’roll, inspired by Otis Rush, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eddie Cochran.
BLOODY MAMMALS + WITHOUT MAPS + MASIRO: The Wheatsheaf – Punk and post-hardcore in the style of Jawbox, Fugazi and Archers of Loaf from London’s Bloody Mammals, joined tonight by Nottingham’s shouty hardcore crew Without Maps and experimental mathcore types Masiro.
OXFORD UKULELE SESSION: The Port Mahon

TUESDAY 4th
ALABAMA SHAKES: O2 Academy – Long-since sold-out show from Alabama’s fast-rising rock’n’soul crew – *see main preview*
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz every Tuesday at the Bully, tonight featuring veteran reedsman Alvin Roy.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 5th
FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Hip hop club night.
ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil’s, Witney

THURSDAY 6th
MARY BENDYTOY + THE OMNIVIBES + MILLION FACES: The Bullingdon – It’s All About The Music show with industrial-gothic rockers Mary Bendytoy, alongside psychedelic blues rockers The Omnivibes.
ROLL ON THURSDAYS: The Cellar – New weekly club night playing floor fillers and party tunes.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
CIRCUIT CHASE + PRIVATE JET + GO ON, DO IT, JUMP + NO CHANGE GIVEN: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox rock night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 7th
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE GRACEFUL SLICKS + THE HAWKHURST

+ CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak’s traditional monthly club night features psychedelic garage-rockers The Graceful Slicks, alongside Kirsty MaColl-inspired folksters The Hawkhurst and Charms Against The Evil Eye, which is the new name for local stalwarts The New Moon.
SWINDLESTOCK + THE SHAPES: The Bullingdon – Rootsy, party-hearty Americana and folksy rocking from Swindlestock at tonight’s It’s All About The Music show.
SKYLARKIN’ SOUND SYSTEM: The Cellar – Classics ska, soul, reggae, funk and more with Count Skylarkin’ and guests.
NAIROBI + EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES + MATT MIDGELY: The Port Mahon – Afrobeat-tinged indie from Nairobi at tonight’s Daisy Rodgers Music night. Joining them are delicate Bon Iver and Bright Eyes-styled types Empty White Circles and Intimate acoustic troubadour Matt Midgely.
TAMARA & A MARTYR + BEN WALKER + FLORIAN WOLFF + BETHANY WEIMERS + JESS HALL + GEORGE CHOPPING: East Oxford Community Centre - Intimate evening of acoustic music from emotionally devastated songstress Tamara and chums
BREEZE: The Duke’s Cut
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 8th
ALPHABET BACKWARDS + THE GRINDING YOUNG + THE YARNS + CORREATOWN: O2 Academy – Oxford’s effusive electro-pop champs play a hometown show as part of their UK tour ahead of the release of their new album in October, the band’s ebullient, big-hearted pop anthems guaranteed to lift the heaviest of hearts. They’re joined by emotive folk-popsters The Grinding Young and sultry 80s-styled indie pop types The Yarns.
BEARD FEST: The Wheatsheaf (12.30pm) – A full day of music in celebration of facial hair, including competitions for best beards of all shapes and sizes (including any bearded ladies). Music comes from the appropriately-monikered Beard Of Destiny, as well as follicle-friendly acts like Stem, Superloose, Von Braun, Magic Booka & His Magic Pecker, Welcome To Peepworld, Dave Tomlinson and Moon Rabbit. Jeremy Hughes must surely be an odds-on favourite for the Best Natural beard title.
DANNY GEORGE-WILSON + TREVOR MOSS AND HANNAH LOU + THE DREAMING SPIRES + CO-PILGRIM: The Barn, Braziers Park (6pm) – An evening of acoustic alt.country and country rocking with the Danny & The Champions of the World main man alongside lovey-dovey duo Trevor and Hannah, local alt.country heroes The Dreaming Spires and more in the idyllic setting of Braziers Park’s barn venue.
RICHARD WALTERS + RHOSYN + TWO WHITE CRANES: Fusion Arts Centre –

Delicately-tonsilled songmeister Rich Walters opens his musical bag of emotional turmoil at tonight’s pop-up gig, where he’s joined by inventive string quartet and Blessing Force associates Rhosyn.
BREAK: The Bullingdon VON BRAUN + THE INDESCRIBABLE UNKNOWN + RUPERT FLINT CAHAN: The Port Mahon – Pixies and Nirvana-inspired grunged-up rocking from Von Braun, alongside Joy Division-styled newcomers The Indescribable Unknown and accordionist Rupert Flint Cahan.
TRANSFORMATION + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – Weekly house and garage club night.
W.A.M: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Ska punk classics.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The King & Queen, Wheatley – Unplugged set from the local blues-rockers.
EYE-CON: The Red Lion, Witney – Mod rock covers.

SUNDAY 9th
I SILECTA: The Bullingdon
THE DODGY JAMMERS 2012 + CATCH 23 UK + THE VIBE + EYE-CON UNPLUGGED: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3-6pm) – Bluenote Guitar Tuition Summer Festival with assorted young local bands.

MONDAY 10th
ROBERT HOKUM & THE GUVNORS: The Jericho Tavern – West London r’n’b outfit adding funk and Latin touches to their straight-down-the-line Delta and Chicago blues at the Famous Monday Blues.
STEAMROLLER: The Bullingdon – Super-heavyweight blues-rocking from the local veterans, cranking out the riffs in the vein of Hendrix and Cream at the Bully’s Haven blues club.

TUESDAY 11th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from The New Jazz Collective.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Monthly goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 12th
THURSDAY 13th
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig downstairs at the Sheaf.
TYDE: The Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon – Traditional folk from Newcastle’s one-time Radio 2 Young Folk Awards finalists.
STUKA SQUADRON: Fat Lil’s, Witney – A bunch of vampire Luftwaffe pilots inspired by classic Iron Maiden? That’s Stuka Squadron, then.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
ROLL ON THURSDAY: The Cellar

FRIDAY 14th
FELIX + THE CELLAR FAMILY + THE HALF RABBITS: The Wheatsheaf – Launch show for Audioscope’s new ‘Music For A

Good Home 2’ compilation, raising money for homeless charity Shelter. Kranky Records signings Felix bring their sparse, unsettling, piano-led chamber pop to the party, classically-trained frontwoman Lucinda Chua mixing grace and turmoil in a way that’s seen her compared to PJ Harvey. Venomous, angular hardcore noise in the vein of the mighty McLusky from local heroes The Cellar Family in support alongside gothic-tinged indie crew The Half Rabbits.
KITES + LOOK, STRANGER: O2 Academy – Foppish electro-indie from London’s rising starlets Kites out on tour after supporting Gary Numan, Peter Hook and The Maccabees.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon BOSSAPHONIC: The Cellar – Jazz dance, Balkan beats, world breaks and nu-jazz club night with live bands and resident DJs.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Swan, Wantage

SATURDAY 15th
MOTHER CORONA + ALUNAH + JACKNIFE HOLIDAY + CARAVAN OF WHORES + BLACK SUNRISE: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke metal night with monster-riffmongers Mother Corona blasting new life into the classic sounds of Black Sabbath and Blue Cheer, alongside the likes of stoner-rock types Caravan Of Whores.
DUOTONE: Truck Store – Intricate, loop-based cello and beats chamber pop from Barney Morse-Brown and James Garret, playing songs from their recent ‘Ropes’ album, including new single ‘Alphabet’.
REPLICA: Fat Lil’s, Witney
TRANSFORMATION + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy
WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf, Didcot
HUCK + SCOTT GORDON: The Hollybush, Osney – “One gig closer to Wittstock” fundraiser with bluesy troubadour Huck and supports.

SUNDAY 16th
GUN: O2 Academy – Heavy rocking and glam-metal 80s style from the reformed rockers, best known for their cover of Cameo’s ‘Word Up’.
THE WHITE TOP MOUNTAIN BAND: The Three Horseshoes, Towersey – Authentic old-time Blue Ridge Mountain folk dance from the Virginian family band.

MONDAY 17th
MITCH LADDIE + LAURENCE JONES: The Jericho Tavern – Bottletop blues, blues-rocking and funk-blues from Georgie guitar maestro Laddie, at only 21 already a veteran of Walter Trout’s band, riding high on the critical acclaim afforded his second album, ‘Burning Bridges’ and mixing original tunes with covers of James Brown and Marvin Gaye.
UNDERSMILE + IDES OF GEMINI: Truck Store – Deities of doom Undersmile, who graced last month’s Nightshift front cover, play an intimidatingly intimate instore alongside chums Ides Of Gemini.



Friday 21st
BUTCH HANCOCK: The Bullingdon
Another treat from the vaults of cult Americana courtesy of the wonderful Empty Room Promotions, this time bringing Lubbock, Texas’s influential songsmith Butch Hancock to town for the first time ever. A member of inspirational but short-lived country band The Flatlanders back in the early 1970s alongside Joe Ely and Jimmie Dale (though they reformed in the late-90s and are still going today), Hancock’s brand of “progressive country” paved the way for the alt.country movement, attempting to capture, as it did, the feel of windswept plains and prairies. Emmylou Harris is among those who have covered his songs and he’s often been hailed as the Texan Bob Dylan, but Hancock has almost willfully avoided commercial success for his music over the years, happy to alternate his musical career with a career as a photographer. But acclaim from critics and contemporaries just won’t leave him be and now, aged 67, he remains a singularly eclectic talent and cult hero.

FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + ROWAN COUPLAND + LORD MAGPIE & PRINCE OF CATS + HUCK: The Wheatsheaf – Pindrop Performance night with atmospheric electro and psych-pop collective Flights of Helios, alongside eccentric folk-rock troubadour Rowan Coupland.
TUESDAY 18th
THE LONG INSIDERS + QUADROPHOB + EYES OF EVE + HELL’S GAZELLES + RICHARD BROTHERTON: The Wheatsheaf – Benefit gig for the Prince’s Trust, featuring classic rockabilly and rock’n’roll stars The Long Insiders, plus funky ska-pop types Quadrophobe, epic thrash merchants Eyes of Eve and bluesman Richard Brotherton.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with The Hugh Turner Band.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern



Saturday 22nd

ULTRAVOX: The New Theatre

Having become increasingly epic to the point of corpulence towards the end of their 1980s lifetime, before finally falling apart in the wake of Live Aid, Ultravox’s reunion for a greatest hits tour in 2009 promised little but against the odds, delivered plenty, a reminder that they were a band, even when helmed by Midge Ure, either ahead or outside of their time. Of course the original Ultravox line-up, fronted by enigmatic synth pioneer John Foxx, were a far superior beast, leading the line in post-punk’s electronic revolution, but even after Foxx departed, to be replaced by former Rich Kids singer Ure, the band produced some great music, notably the ‘Vienna’ album, with its mega hit title track and Billy Currie’s richly atmospheric synth and electric violin parts. Subsequent albums like ‘Rage In Eden’ and ‘Quartet’ were increasingly pompous and mainstream but still produced a string of hits that have aged surprisingly well if their show at this same venue two years ago was anything to go by. And now they’ve released their first new album since their reformation. While the title, ‘Brilliant’, might be pushing it a bit, all the key elements that made them such an 80s pop behemoth remain intact.

WEDNESDAY 19th

GREGG WRIGHT: The Bullingdon – Classic blues and rock in a Hendrix style from the Californian guitar maestro, a veteran session man who has worked with Michael Jackson and Spencer Davies in an illustrious career, renowned for his left-handed playing of an upturned right-handed guitar.
JUMPING SHIPS: The Wheatshaef – Post-hardcore from the London-Brighton combo.
FREE RANGE: The Cellar

THURSDAY 20th

REEDS + HUMANIZER: The Bullingdon – It’s All About The Music local bands night.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston
ROLL ON THURSDAY: The Cellar
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatshaef – Free downstairs show from the local blues-rock stalwart.

FRIDAY 21st

BUTCH HANCOCK: The Bullingdon – The Texan Bob Dylan makes his Oxford debut, aged 67 – *see main preview*
RACHEL SERMANNI: O2 Academy – Soulful, occasionally jazz-inflected roots pop from the rising singer-songwriter from the Scottish Highlands, out on tour to promote debut album ‘Under Mountains’.
THE BIG TEN INCH: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’s monthly celebration of classic jump blues, rockabilly, ska and more, with live bands and the Count on the decks.
THE CORSAIRS: The Duke’s Cut – Classic rock’n’roll and rockabilly.
SKIP THE BEAT: The Port Mahon – Unplugged night with sets from Borderville, Eutopia and more.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 22nd

THE FRATELLIS: O2 Academy – The Academy celebrates its fifth anniversary in the company of recently reformed Glaswegian rockers The Fratellis, back from the four-year hiatus they undertook after the release of second album ‘Here We Stand’. Annoyingly chipper and prone to wearing silly hats from what we remember.
THE JESS HALL BAND + MARIANA MAGNAVITA + EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES + GAVROCHE + PRAXIS BOLD: O2 Academy – The O2’s monthly team-up with BBC Oxford Introducing gives the immensely talented Jess Hall a chance to shine on the big stage, the singer having impressed at the Punt earlier this year with her intimate, soulful acoustic pop that recalled Emiliana Torrini and Thea Gilmore. She’s joined by locally-based Brazilian songstress Mariana Magnavita, harmony-heavy, Stornoway-inspired folk-rockers Empty White Circles and inventive, genre-blending pop types Praxis Bold. A great way to discover a heap of emerging local talents in one night. Treat yerself.
ULTRAVOX: The New Theatre – The reunited 80s synth-pop heavyweights play their new ‘Brilliant’ album – *see main preview*
SECRET RIVALS + HELLO BEAR + ROBOTS WITH SOUL + ALPHABET BACKWARDS ACOUSTIC: The Wheatshaef – Single launch gig for this month’s Nightshift cover stars, kicking out their effervescent brand of 90s-inspired boy-girl indie pop, somewhere between The Cure, Idlewild, Bis and Allo Darlin’.
SECRET RIVALS + BAND OF HOPE + WE AERONAUTS: Truck Store – A full afternoon of live music instore at Oxford’s only independent music store. This month’s Nightshift cover stars Secret Rivals warm up for their single launch party at the Wheatshae

tonight, joined by lush folk-country ensemble Band Of Hope and sweet-natured orchestral folk-popsters We Aeronauts.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + SUPERLOOSE: The Jericho Tavern – Live album recording show from enduring local swamp-blues-rock faves The Mighty Redox and country-folksters Superloose.
FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – Wonky disco, house and breaks from the

resident crew.

THE UPPER FIFTH: The Port Mahon
SYNTRONIX: Fat Lil’s, Witney – 80s synth-pop hits, from Duran Duran and Ultravox to Numan and Depeche Mode.
TRANSFORMATION + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy
SAM KELLY: King’s Head & Bell, Abingdon

SUNDAY 23rd

SMOKE FAIRIES: O2 Academy – Ghostly folk madrigals from the south coast duo – *see main preview*
PHIL GARVEY + MARK BOSLEY + MARK ATHERTON: The Wheatshaef (2.30pm) – Free acoustic session in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar, hosted by Klub Kakofanney’s Phil and Sue.
HANS THEESINK: The Three Horseshoes, Towersey – Delta-style blues from the Dutch guitarist.

Sunday 23rd

SMOKE FAIRIES: O2 Academy

Despite growing up together in West Sussex and discovering a love for folk music while working as car park attendants at the Sidmouth Folk Festival, Jessica Davies’ and Katherine Blamire’s craft was forged over years travelling around America, particularly New Orleans. Hence Smoke Fairies’ music is a comfortably accomplished fusion of British folk-rock – Fairport Convention, June Tabor and The Unthanks all spring to mind – and American blues and roots. No surprise then that the pair got signed to Jack White’s Third Man label – the first UK act to do so – and support The Dead Weather at their first UK show. White also played drums on Smoke Fairies’ debut album, ‘Through Low Light & Trees’. Along the way the pair have toured with Bryan Ferry, The Handsome Family, Richard Hawley (who proclaimed them the best new band he’d heard in years) and Laura Marling. All due reward for over a decade of playing together, a fact that probably explains why their new album, ‘Blood Speaks’ sounds like the work of experienced songsmiths rather than merely a second album. The mood remains decidedly earnest and gloomy but ethereal, the rural idyll of their closely entwined vocals bolstered by electric guitars and an occasional tendency towards psychedelia, although the name Smoke Faires is entirely appropriate given the music’s often ghostly nature.



MONDAY 24th

GILES ROBSON & THE DIRTY ACES: The Jericho Tavern – Swift return to the Famous Monday Blues for the rising UK bluesman, discovered playing back-up to Muddy Waters’ son Mud Morganfield and rated as the best harmonica player on the European circuit, bringing a soulful blend of blues and r’n’b to town.
WUSSY: Truck Store – Bit of a coup for our chums at Truck Store today with cult Cincinnati rockers Wussy playing in store as part of their first ever UK tour. Despite forming in 2001, the band have never played over here or even officially released an album in the UK. ‘Buckeye’ is out now, a compilation of songs from their career so far, their grungy pop reminiscent of Yo la Tengo, early REM and Drive-By Truckers at times. Check the store’s website for stage time.

TUESDAY 25th

NICK KERSHAW: O2 Academy – The 1980s hitmaker returns with songs from his new album ‘8’ as well as hits from his mid-80s commercial peak, including ‘Wouldn’t It Be Good’ and ‘I Won’t Let The Sun Go Down On Me’.
DEXYS: The New Theatre – Music critics and broadcasters of a certain vintage are getting all frothed up about the return of Kevin Rowland and new album, ‘One Day I’m Going To Soar’ – the first under the Dexy’s name since 1985. And we’re happy for them. And we’ll freely admit that ‘Geno’ is a bona fide soul classic. But we simply can’t escape the fact that the band are responsible for ‘Come On Eileen’, the single most godawful song ever committed to vinyl and a pox upon every benighted wedding reception disco since 1982. Sorry, we just can’t.
TWISTED WHEEL: The Jericho Tavern – Return of Manchester’s blokey rockers who looked likely candidates for next big thing a couple of years ago after they supported Oasis at their Heaton Park shows, as well as opening for Paul Weller and Kasabian. Named after Manchester’s legendary northern soul club, their sinewy indie-punk mixes up various parts The Jam, Arctic Monkeys and The Clash.
GLASS CITY VICE + TOLIESEL: The Wheatshaef – Alt.rock in the vein of Biffy Clyro, Death Cab For Cutie and Futures from the Brighton outfit.
SOUL TRAIN: The Cellar – Motown, funk, soul, disco and r’n’b club night.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live jazz with The New Jazz Collective.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 26th

THURSDAY 27th

SHINY DARKLY + DALLAS DON’T + GRACEFUL SLICKS: The Cellar – Dark, dark, dark – and splendidly noisy – *see main preview*
RT-ZED: The Bullingdon – Steve Grantley, for the last fifteen years drummer with Stiff Little Fingers as well as The Alarm, and who has also played with Julian Lennon, Glen Matlock and Bruce Foxton, brings his band to town ahead of

the release of new album ‘Deja Voodoo’, with a punky form of blues-rock.
KOMRAD +AGNESS PIKE + MASIRO: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Technical hardcore twixt Dillinger and King Crimson from the mighty Komrad, plus oddball thrash from Agness and experimental math-noise from Masiro.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 28th

THEN JERICO: O2 Academy – More 1980s pop nostalgia, this time from the band behind hits such as ‘Big Area’, ‘Sugar Box’ and ‘What Does It Take’.
THE KRAR COLLECTIVE: Old Fire Station – Oxford Contemporary Music present the Ethiopian the collective, featuring Temesgen Zeleke, a former pupil of legendary Ethiopian jazz multi-instrumentalist Mulatu Astatke, who plays the krar, a six-stringed harp, here electrified for a contemporary edge on Ethiopian traditional music. The collective also features Robel Taye on kebero drums and vocalist-dancer Genet Assefa. Based in London they recently represented Ethiopia at the Cultural Olympiad.
THE SOCIAL CLUB + THE JIM BAND + GURP: The Port Mahon – Indie rocking in the vein of The Hold Steady, Weezer and Get Up Kids from former Captain Everything and Fireapple Red member The Social Club. Support from Slough’s Jim Band and local noisemakers Gulp.
HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night, tonight with special guest DJ Marky, from Innerspace Records, playing a two-hour set.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
OXEDELIC: The Duke, St. Clement’s – Monthly DJ session playing garage rock, psychedelia, soul, electronic, post-punk, Krautrock and acid house.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: King’s Arms, Bicester

SATURDAY 29th

THE COOLING PEARLS + NAIROBI + DALLAS DON’T: Truck Store – Oxjam warm-up instore, with atmospheric acoustic outfit Cooling Pearls and serrated indie rocking from Dallas Don’t.
SKELETOR presents DEDLOK + IMPALED EXISTENCE + A TRUST UNCLEAN + KOMRAD + LEST WE FORGET: O2 Academy – Skeletor’s monthly metal team-up with Room 101 sees a headline of extreme thrash and punk-tinged uber-metal from Dedlok, supported by north Wales’ progressive death metallers Impaled Existence, local grindcore and death-metal crew A Trust Unclean and tech-core cotypes Komrad.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with GO ROMANO + THE WISHING WELL + HOT HOOVES: The Wheatshaef – Another determinedly mixed bill at this month’s GTI with rousing, funk-ed-up singalong rocking from



Thursday 27th

SHINY DARKLY / DALLAS DON’T: The Cellar

Dark by name, dark by nature; Copenhagen’s Shiny Darkly, in the own words, “write songs about the gloominess in the young human’s heart.” This they do while dressed in black leather motorcycle jackets and utilising enough reverb to provoke a decent sized tsunami. Listen to songs like ‘He’s Suicidal’ or ‘Into The Shade’ and you’ll hear a world of darkly-inclined influences that stretches from The Doors, to Suicide, to The Horrors, taking in The Jesus & Mary Chain, Loop and more contemporaneously Black Angels and A Place To Bury Strangers. Swamped-up surf guitars, vintage synths, honey-dipped melodies and howling, heavily effected vocals, it’s a storm of pure bloody musical joy for fans of great noise rock and psychedelic gloom. The trio are over the in the UK for only the second time, and in Oxford courtesy of the ever-excellent Pindrop Performances, tonight playing Oxford’s darkest venue just as the nights start to draw in. Perfect. Excellent local support too from Pixies and Idlewild-inspired noise-pop starlets Dallas Don’t.

Go Romano, supported by Australia’s lush, orchestral folk-pop outfit The Wishing Well, recalling Ryan Adams, The Waterboys and Dave Matthews. Show openers Hot Hooves feature local legends Mac and Pete Momtchiloff, plying a sweet line in witty, sardonic post-punk in the vein of Guided By Voices and early Teenage Fanclub.
VON BRAUN + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS: The Cellar – Grungy rocking from Von Braun, plus psychedelia and garage-rock from The Graceful Slicks.
TRANSFORMATION + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy
SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass.
INDESRIBABLE UNKNOWN + THE FREEMANTLE + THE AUGUST LIST: The Port Mahon
EYE-CON: The Red Lion, Eynsham

SUNDAY 30th

FUNK JUGGLERS + ILGHAZI + BAGUL: The Cellar – Funk-rock from the local outfit, launching their new EP.

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

LIVE

WILDERNESS FESTIVAL Cornbury Park

FRIDAY

In a year when the British public have supposedly fallen out of love with outdoor festivals it's good to find one that has found a definite niche and then been rewarded with unexpectedly perfect weather. The general consensus is that the focus here is not so much on the music as the wealth of activities, workshops, talks, food and other hidden treats that could easily take a full weekend to sample. In fact it's odd to find yourself heading to the main stage to escape the crowds, as modest and gentle as they are. The food deserves a review of its own, so good that Nightshift finds itself eating four meals a day just to keep the taste buds happy. And restricting the capacity to 10,000 means short queues and no pinch points, so nothing feels like hard work.

Down at the lake dozens of happy bathers are being carefully watched over by a lifeguard in a canoe. The family-friendly festival is a concept often put forward but this really seems to have hit on the right formula, though this perfect setting of a deer park normally kept away from the public is a huge help. The inclusion of Northamptonshire's Vintage Festival, who couldn't make a go of it alone, means we're regaled everywhere by folk in their finest tweeds, spats and pleated dresses, further adding to the fairytale atmosphere.

Friday starts off a little quietly with a visit to the tiny bandstand stage, host to many of the weekend's pleasant surprises. **BWANI JUNCTION**'s breezy indie blows through the site like a reincarnation of fellow Scots Orange Juice, with a perfect blend of jangly guitars, African rhythms and catchy tunes, while over on the main stage **WILLY MASON** sounds so much like Johnny Cash it's a constant shock to look up and see a baby-faced 27-year-old, with a maturity beyond his years. The first act to inspire real enthusiasm in the crowd, songs like 'We Can Be Strong' come across as powerful if a little downbeat.

A wander to The London Folk Guild tent, tastefully constructed with real wooden beams, finds the young and eager **ORLANDO SEELE AND THE SWELL**. Though clearly well versed in the classic British folk traditions of Fairport Convention and Sandy Denny, the pleasingly fresh

update brings just the right blend of complexity, darkness and danceability to proceedings. Don Letts lookalike **KING CHARLES**, meanwhile, bravely takes on 'We Didn't Start The Fire', Billy Joel's questionable defence of US foreign policy, with updated lyrics including references to Robert Mugabe and Whitney Houston. Fortunately we're all too busy dancing to get into any serious analysis.

Back at the main stage **THE CRYSTAL FIGHTERS** are one of a number of bands coming across as an awkward collision of musical styles. In this case it's The Stereos MCs, The Gypsy Kings and Pendulum, in an attempt to take a renegade crusty attitude and give it a shiny modern sheen. This could prove to be a winning formula but despite the bombastic energy it doesn't really pay off, though they could be a hit if you like well-toned, long-haired men with hairy chests.

SHARON JONES AND THE DAP-KINGS are a solid choice as headliners. Formed in New York and highly successful as the house band for funk/soul label Daptone Records, even before being hired by Mark Ronson for his 'Version' album, they're probably best known here for their contribution to Amy Winehouse's 'Back In Black' album and subsequent tour. It's all a dizzying blend of punchy horns and driving percussion, expertly crafted and a treat for the eyes and ears, though Jones keeps reminding me of Wanda Sykes in *Curb your Enthusiasm*. Elsewhere Secret Cinema's immersive production of *Bugsy Malone* is in full swing. Groups of actors play out scenarios around the field as we're invited to buy cans of shaving foam, or 'Splurge', for seven quid to spray at each other.

A lucky escape to the bandstand finds **ROO PANES** playing the sensitive Nick Drake type, and making a decent job of it too, but the night is given a proper send-off in the Folk Guild tent by **THE STAMP COLLECTIVE**, a collective from the Guildhall School of Music mixing up various styles of folk including Baltic, west and east European. Three violins fight for attention with brass and percussion in an infectiously danceable whirlwind



that sends us all to bed happy.

SATURDAY

Saturday gets off to a shaky start with **LOTTE MULLIAN**'s stodgy 70s rock. Maybe she's been booked to get everyone off to a workshop to make a wooden plate or ride a camel. Crowded on the bandstand are the largest band of the weekend and probably the musical highlight: **THE SHOUT CHOIR**, from Stratford-On-Avon, are 25 singers plus a small band knocking out the likes of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and 'Wild Horses' with exactly the right blend of looseness and professionalism. Placing a pure love of music firmly over any need to be cutting edge or even vaguely original, they're an as innocently uplifting an experience as it's possible to have, in a field or anywhere else. **JAKE BUGG**'s acoustic take on an Arctic Monkeys sound with a bit of rockabilly thrown in is diverting enough but a bit lacking in originality or substance.

THE STAVES are a trio of sisters who grew up in Watford. That unglamorous backdrop doesn't seem to have roughened up their sound, which is rather non-confrontational folk guitar music in the vein of the Cranberries and the Corrs.

They set the scene for the event with a somewhat refined, rather comfortable-sounding set that pushes neither volume levels or creative boundaries. They do, though, maintain an excitable charm, and it's hard not to like their awkward crowd interactions.

THE TEMPER TRAP are another car crash of a band; this time it's Bronski Beat in collision with U2. Australian bands are rarely over-endowed with subtlety but all this energy could surely be put to some kind of better use. **STORNOWAY** are one of a handful of Oxford bands at Wilderness and they, like the others we hear, play a well-received and impressively solid set. They're a band that always seems to be on form, and in this environment their chattiness and charm comes across with direct precision.

ORCHESTRA ELASTIQUE, on the cute bandstand stage (which is, literally, a traditional bandstand) play improvised, meandering jazz-esque music using a theremin, vocal sounds, drums and a variety of - for want of a better term - 'ethnic' instruments. It's good listening as the sun slowly goes down; something non-structured, hypnotic and metronomic like this fits well and generates a kind of comfortable edginess.



RODRIGO Y GABRIEL & THE CUBA ORCHESTRA close Saturday's proceedings with a joyous and vibrant set to a huge, enthusiastic crowd. That's it, though - it's joyousness and vibrancy over and over, with little diversity in rhythm, tone or style. Even an eight-minute bongo solo isn't as hilarious or diverting as one might imagine, and while the group are obviously amazingly proficient and professional, they just don't engage with at least this member of the audience.

Back down by the lake once more, the late night masked ball is actually a disco in a tent, with the most cutting edge tune on offer a 'Blue Monday' remix, not that anyone's complaining. But by now we've all cottoned on to the fact that this whole weekend is more of a celebration of the past (recent and more distant) than a look to the future, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

SUNDAY

Lunchtime and **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS** are the latest attempt to push the definition of folk to its absolute limit. Something of an Oxford supergroup, their multi-layered soundscapes and tasteful cover of Mercury Rev's 'Holes' make them the most spacey offering of the

weekend, and the best hangover cure. The Secret Forum tent, meanwhile, is hosting a surprisingly interesting and well-reasoned debate on consumerism, though the high point is seeing Claire Fox firmly cut off at the end of her five minutes. Nearby there's a workshop on time in a digital age, but when we're asked to get into groups with pens and paper it's time to head to the art tent to cast our votes in the worst painting competition.

Back at the main stage **TO KILL A KING** have a pleasing complex sound with more than a hint of Doves, songs building nicely to a satisfying conclusion. They look the part too, all rolled up sleeves and designer stubble. **FIELD MUSIC** pick up where Cloud Control left off, but steer things in a rather more structured direction. They're solid and rhythmic, creating traditionally-instrumented pop songs that don't offer much in the way of surprises, but do provide a most pleasing musical backdrop. **GRANT LEE BUFFALO** seem to be the first act with a bit of genuine drive to them: fuzzy overdrive, for the most part. Back for one of their first shows in over a decade, they pick up pretty much where they left off in the mid-1990s, providing warm and buzzing indie rock that nods equally to Americana and early 1970s folk rock. They're enjoyable, charming,



and it's a pleasure to have them back.

BENJAMIN FRANCIS LEFTWICH talks a lot. The crowd seem to like this. This may be because it breaks up his set to ensure that it's more than a relatively formulaic stream of flawlessly delivered, but ultimately hollow-sounding soulful indie music. He's a nice chap, that much seems evident, but there's a lot of nice things around this weekend. Even **SPIRITUALIZED** sound *nice*, when Jason's singing about Jesus and getting all gospel-heavy on us. Unfortunately, it sounds rather tired and dated these days, and suggests that a wide open field isn't the best setting for this music - a dark and oppressive room would be so much more effective. However, when he digs into his Spacemen 3 past, such as with a thrilling and fierce 'Take Me To The Other Side', it's a reminder of everything that's good about this band: fantastic, genuinely psychedelic music that hopefully freaks out some Wilderness straights.

A line of vintage backline amps heralds the arrival of **WILCO** to close the main stage proceedings. Two years ago at End Of The Road they came across as self-indulgent musos with too much time on their hands, but tonight they reveal a more modest and subtle side, yet they still can't seem to

decide whether they want to be Blur or The Eagles. Nels Cline's virtuoso guitar solos are always worth waiting for, as he seems to try to squeeze some forgotten emotional memory from it. No band has ever succeeded in truly encapsulating the rustic white American experience, but with REM gone they may be the new best contenders. Over at the Future Cinema, **ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION** are playing a live soundtrack to *La Haine*, Mathieu Kassovitz's gritty 1995 film about desperation in the outskirts of Paris. The band still balance thoughtfulness with a confrontational musical style that has changed little since the 90s, despite numerous lineup changes. After the film they bring on some friends for a suitably chaotic freestyle lyrical jam, during which they announce that they're taking the whole experience to Afghanistan in the autumn.

At the end everyone agrees that Wilderness has been a resounding success, despite some curious musical choices. Yet this wasn't just about consuming music, it was to allow people to engage in something new and unexpected, and to that end it's been an unqualified triumph.

Words: Art Lagun and Simon Minter

LIVE

SUPERNORMAL FESTIVAL

Braziers Park

If Supernormal 2011 was a charming curio with a patchy line-up that varied from the inspirational to the shambolic, this year it established itself as an essential part of the summer for anyone of a remotely alternative musical persuasion.

With a little help from seasoned Brighton promoters Tatty Seaside Town, who assume the role of musical curators, the high points are plentiful – this year’s headliners **SEEFEEEL** alone represent quite a coup, but the rest of the bill features some familiar names to regular Oxford gig-goers, like **BILGE PUMP**, **HEY COLOSSUS** and other Gringo Records staples. **KOGUMAZA**’s mesmerising slowed-down Sabbath grooves set the bar high, prompting excitable cries of ‘best riff ever!’ from the assembled. Ex-Charlottefielders **SWEET WILLIAMS** match them blow for blow, trading Unwound and even Alice In Chains riffs over a

mastery of volume dynamics.

THE TELESCOPES’ late night blast through their classics, backed by one-note groove machine **ONE UNIQUE SIGNAL**, is fabulous, singer Stephen Lawrie kneeling desperate on the main stage while his backing band throw shapes amongst the crowd, ultimately handing over their instruments to a curious, drunken mass of spectators for a very do-it-yourself noise finale. The discovery of the weekend, though, is **THE FAMILY ELAN**, who seduce the entire site with an exquisite weave of traditional Azeri and Uzbeki songs.

There are a few missteps along the way - but then, what good is an experimental music festival if you don’t put a few noses out of joint along the way? **SAUNA YOUTH** are just plain bland, while **QUEER’D SCIENCE** offer up a distasteful blend of tuneless digitised guitar mewling underpinning Rolo Tomassi-lite



barks. But to dwell on these few moments is churlish, particularly when Supernormal trades on so much more than its music.

The woods are filled with bizarre sculptures hanging from the trees, halfway between *The Blair Witch Project* and a St. Martin’s College degree show, with impromptu film screenings and pop-up raves springing up in clumps of trees around the site. An old barn behind the Braziers Park hall becomes an arts village in its own right, hosting everything from (mostly godawful) poetry readings to a couple baking life-sized human corpses made of bread. There’s an entire afternoon dedicated to pure improv, which - as is typical for most improv programmes - varies from moments of inventive joy to the kind of abject ‘just hit anything and make some swirly noises’ depths that give the form a bad reputation in some quarters. Some of the weekend’s most beautiful musical moments come beneath the hay loft, though: the winsome and intimate folk of **MARY HAMPTON COTILLION** and a brittle, precious performance from ex-Bat For Lashes backer **CAROLINE WEEKS** are stunning.

Even in the beautiful old hall itself, strangeness abounds, whether in afternoons dedicated to discussing the cosmic majesty of the universe or an impromptu experimental drums and cello outfit set up in three corners of a field outside, mystifying onlookers. And if that all gets too much, there’s always the traditional English afternoon tea and scones in a country garden, which is only weird by contrast.

What you take away from Supernormal is that everywhere you wander on site, something is happening. You can be wandering past the food stalls and come across a self-performing installation made up of washing machines and vacuum cleaners humming away on its own through a rack of effects (take a bow, **POOLYPHOONUS POOLYPHOONY** and take that, Nightshift’s spellchecker). The entire site is buzzing with a sense of ‘anything’s possible’ creativity and community unmatched by any other festival, the boundaries between performer and audience member at times close to non-existent. That spirit, and by extension the whole festival, is something to cherish.

Stuart Fowkes

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photos: Giulia Biasibetti

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LIVE

SAVAGES / PALMA VIOLETS

The Jericho Tavern

It's a long time since we took any notice of music industry hype when it came to reviewing new bands but tonight's double bill arrives on the back of enough music biz excitement to fuel an entire year's worth of toddlers' birthday parties. London's Palma Violets (renamed from their original Parma Violets due to their being another band of the same name – one which, legend has it, an over-eager record company scout flew all the way to Scotland to see in error) couldn't be more stereotypically old-school indie looking if an entire fashion department had been dispatched from 1986 to clothe and style them. That's no bad thing of course. Nor is the fact that their opening number sounds like Bauhaus' 'In The Flatfield' remodelled by Adam & The Ants in the style of The Cramps. In fact, just reading that back reminds us how bloody great it sounds. From here we're on a ramshackle rampage through alternative pop's darkest forests – from The Doors to The Bunnymen, via The Teardrop Explodes, until we see light through the trees in the form of a song that might well be a cousinly cast-off from The Go-Betweens. There is Burundi-style drumming and an almost primal sense of chaos as the band do their damndest to look like they JUST DON'T CARE. Secretly they do of course, and on tonight's showing, so should we. Being an all-female band plying an unabashed post-punk sound, Savages – also from London – have already drawn comparisons with the likes of The Delta 5 and The Slits, but this is denser and darker than either of those bands. That their opening gambit might be not too distantly related to Siouxsie & The Banshees' 'Love In A Void' points the way we're headed – right back into that deep, dark forest where every song casts a long shadow and doubtless wears way too much eye-liner. Singer Jehnny Beth is possessed of a remarkably similar voice to Siouxsie – all whoops and swoops, screams and ghostly wails, her cut-glass jaw perfectly offsetting a pair of eyes that seem to stare right into your soul, like a female Ian Curtis as she stands rigid with determined intensity.

THE SEVENTH OXFORD MUSLIM MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Jaqueline du Pre Building

The aim of the day, according to the organiser, is to show Islam has something to offer musically. The seven-hour event remains the nearest to a world music festival Oxford has. A pity then that it appears to be shrinking, with the earliest outings having been held in the Town Hall and Playhouse and this one in the much smaller JDP and then very poorly attended. The thin crowd – if you could even call it a crowd – is a downer that most of the musicians do manage to overcome but unfortunately that can't be said of comedian **JEFF MIRZA**. If he was on the bill to show that Muslims can be funny he fails; instead he's simply embarrassing. Fortunately **ADEL ABRARY**, originating from



photo: Paul Carrera

The band's sound, meanwhile, veers towards the murky at times, an onward rush that lets in little light or space as it crunches through body parts of Killing Joke and X-Mal Deutschland, staccato tribal beats and an ocean of reverb powering fanning the circling storm.

Whether there's enough substance beneath all this to carry Savages further is up for debate; it's difficult to discern much by way of songs here tonight, but as a live spectacle, there are few new bands around who'll match them right now. **Dale Kattack**

Overall though, the band's set of new age-style keyboard led arrangements and harmonies is too bland for my taste. **SIMO LOGNAWI**, originally from Morocco, is anything but bland. He plays the Gimbri, a small African bass lute with three strings and his music is an exciting mix of desert blues and gnawa trance, not dissimilar to Tinariwen. He has a great voice and presence too even if finishing every number with a dramatic pose starts to irritate by the end of his set. Bengali singer **NAHID NAZIA** restores a sense of dignity to the proceedings before **SIMO LOGNAWI** takes to the stage again to jam with Mosi Conde, which turns into a mass jam with every musician left in the building joining in. It could be a horrible mess but becomes a joyous spontaneous celebration of music, ending the day on a real high. **Colin May**

THE CROOKED FIDDLE BAND / BRICKWORK LIZARDS / BIRD RADIO

The Wheatsheaf

Quel dommage, missed the start, so missed Bird Radio, his multi looped flute, his red suitcase bass drum and storytelling vocals. From the net, his medieval troubadour-tinged folk and electronica is definitely not Jethro Tull re-visited. Hope he gets invited back to Oxford soon. Tonight the Brickwork Lizards are minus trumpet and keyboard. But joined by Giles Lewin, once of Bellowhead and now often playing with Oxford harpist and vocalist Steph West, they are still eight strong. If everyone was present there would be ten of them, The Brickwork Lizards Orchestra perhaps. They use the 'Turkobilly' tag to introduce their set, which does them no favours as again tonight they show they are much classier than this label implies; they perform like a finely honed machine but with added panache and integrity, right down to vocalist Spencer Williams suffering for his art by wearing his trademark trilby and topcoat in the sweltering room. From the opener 'All That We Are', a jolly tune but a serious song about imperialism and war, they take the 'Sheaf with ease. As ever their lilting mix of 1930's western swing and Turkish and Middle Eastern traditions is infused with rap and other more hard driving recent influences. But there are surprising twists, as in 'When Will I See You Again, Tariq gives his oud a big western swing work-out, something all those oud quarter tones weren't built for. It shouldn't work but does. Spencer's rap growl does swallow rather too many of the words, but that's a small criticism on a night where the Lizards sparkled. When they cheerfully sing "you're going straight to hell," you know the

Wheatsheaf would happily make the journey as long as the Lizards were on board too . The Crooked Fiddle Band come on stage looking like stereotypical extras from a film in the Australian outback. At the end of a long European tour they are as tight as the Lizards but outscore them on song titles heavy with significance. 'Countess Bathory's Finishing School For Girls' could possibly be the band's sponsors, while 'All These Pitchforks Make Me Nervous' is surely not so much a personal statement but rather a universal truth we all share. And then there is 'The Clockwork Bride', about which no more need be said. The band's set is almost entirely instrumental. They move easily across various folk traditions and high energy klezmer and Balkan and punk doing what the band call "chainsaw folk" and what others have called "14th Century Romanian metal". The nearest equivalent I can think of are 3 Daft Monkeys. Gordon Wallace hammers the bouzouki like a lead guitar and Jess Randell's violin is sometimes Dave Swarbrick in early Fairport, and sometimes the violin of Grinderman and Bad Seed Warren Ellis. Both sometimes dazzle and they certainly keep the crowd going. But what might distinguish The Crooked Fiddle Band from other Balkan mash-up bands is the superb double bass of Mark Stephens and that just when all the frenzy might be becoming a tad tedious, they come up with a cinematic, epic 'What The Thunder Said', which even if the Enya-style influence induces slight nausea, hints that this might be four Australians with bigger ambitions. **Colin May**

HEART OF A COWARD / AETHARA / ZAOS / REIGN UPON US / SLEEPWALKERS

O2 Academy

The prospect of a multi-band metal night can present a reviewer with all manner of preconceptions, be it wall-to-wall long hair and goatees or dropped headstock guitars in the non traditional mould. Every genre show doubtless brings with it similar clichéd expectations obviously but few modern musical styles are capable of offering such stylistic homogeneity. But let's wait and see... Even arriving early we mange to miss openers **Sleepwalkers**, but a chat with a couple of punters reveals mixed opinions, so we'll just have to find out for certain at a future date. We do see **Reign Of Terror**, who deliver a set of awesome abandon, all thundering bass drum and melody in abundance and with a singer adept at engaging with the enthusiastic crowd. Perfectly L'oreal-ed hair metal up next in the form of **Zaos**; because we're worth it I suppose. Hair-based gymnastics and pyjama wearing guitarists aside, this is the music

that if listened to whilst playing *Resident Evil 5*, would result in severe parental trauma, if not an immediate section under the mental health act. We like them; they rock. Even so, **Aethara** are a cut above the local metal pack. The lead singer is as lean as a butcher's pencil and has great moves to boot. They're all angular dynamics, as you'd expect from the best modern metal, but possessed of great washy soundscapes too. Very definitely ones to follow. **Heart Of A Coward** show why they're headlining. The Milton Keynes five-piece deliver great muscular slabs of sonic force. Having heard their 'Killing Fields' and thinking how it reminded me of Evanescence's big hit 'Bring Me Back To Life', I never expected them to go down so well, but tonight that recorded smoothness is swept away and they're all the better for the raw show of power on show. **Eggbastd**

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

TREVOR WILLIAMS

No-one will be more surprised that Trevor Williams has just scored his second Demo of the Month than Trevor himself in all likelihood. We have, after all, been equally kind to and damning of his songs in the past. This new offering – a single song demo entitled ‘Skeleton’ – further exposes the gulf in quality between Trev’s recorded works and his live shows. The latter tend to find him coming across like an over-excited, angst-ridden tribute to the late, great Frank Sidebottom, but not in a good way, whereas in the studio his voice can possess a strength and soulfulness he loses on stage. ‘Skeleton’ is a trotting semi-acoustic lament that seems to exist under a shroud of autumnal melancholy, the opening line “Who are my real friends, why are they so afraid”, carries a distinct air of taut, almost paranoid self-doubt about it, while musically the subtle moods and shadows cast by the song are deftly handled. If Trevor can translate the quality he’s shown on his last couple of recordings to a full album, or even just an EP, and then work on presenting it in a more reined-in fashion, perhaps the talent he’s obviously capable of will make itself more fully apparent.

SOBER DAVE & THE DRUNKEN RAMBLINGS

The man calling himself Sober Dave should be no stranger to followers of local rock music, having been part of Thirty Two and Pistol Kixx among others over the year, a man very much ironically named given his propensity for always singing like he’s just injected two pints of neat whisky for breakfast and thinks his furniture needs a good kicking. Here with his latest – and aptly named – band he’s knocking it out like the gruffest bluesman in Hicksville’s Last Chance Saloon. ‘Campfires & Rum’ pretty much reviews itself, sounding like the two things bashed together with a severe lack of subtlety, a roustabout punk-skiffle racket that would be asked to leave any more refined premises. ‘The Sky’ teeters on the brink of utter tunelessness, held together by

nothing more than sticky blobs of day-old bourbon and a party spirit, while ‘Oxford Summer’ resurrects the ghosts of New York Dolls and The Wildhearts and demands they get their bloody round in and pronto.

OVERLORD

This lot have got to be metal – they’ve even got a proper metal font band name and everything. And thusly the sludgy old riffs roll in. Except, hmmm, something’s not right. Opener ‘Crawl On’ feels like it’s rocking on half power, those riffs failing to hit home with necessary force. And vocally they’re completely incongruous, like someone pretending to be stoned rather than genuinely being out of their gourd on prime bong smoke. It’s all a bit weedy, and that won’t do, no sir. Thankfully ‘What The Hell’ brings a little bit more, well, Hell, to the party, the beats and riffs bigger and heavier and with a decidedly more psychedelic edge to them, rolling in with a greater sense of purpose. Again, though the singer sounds like he’s dancing to a different tune, even if we’ll concede it makes a change from yer typical gruff’n’growly stoner-metal singer shtick. ‘Blind’ introduces a darker, almost gothic mood, closer to early Siouxsie & The Banshees initially, before it billows and bulges into monstrous life, somewhere twixt Led Zep and Opeth and it’s a decent enough effort from a pretty new young band on the local scene. They’ll need to work on those vocals a bit though if they’re going to cut it with the likes of Desert Storm and Caravan Of Whores. Might we suggest they offer to take Sober Dave out for a pint or nine and learn something undesirable from an old hand?

LUBU

Talking of shouty people, Lubu’s singer might well be a particularly inebriated, degenerate meths drinker from a corner of Manzil Way into which even the most fearless vagrants dare not enter. Not even when they really, really need a wee wee and there’s a community police patrol in the vicinity. There he is bellowing and shouting and growling and making no sense at all over some standard noisy bastard heavy rocking of a fun but generic variety. The band name sounds like it should be a brand of sexual lubricant, though there’s precious little that sexy here, unless you’re into a bit of goblin humping action. They do have a song called ‘Autophagy’, though, which suggests an affinity with the mighty Carcass, a band on first name terms with the gory side of

bodily decay and cellular degeneration. This is a good thing. Decent folk might suggest it’s all just shouting for no good reason, but there’s always good reason for shouting. Particularly in the case of the next couple of demos.

PIANOROCKETSHIP

Having seen the name Pianorocketship in the gig guide a few times we’ve always imagined it to be some exotic steampunk experimental outfit, a fetish wear musical interpretation of an old H Rider Haggard novel. The reality, sadly, is rather more prosaic, akin to a tipsy bray-along to some old Weimer Republic cabaret after too many lunchtime G&Ts in front of the aga. Pianorocketship is the work of Karen Kay, a singer and – ta da! – pianist with a line in jaunty, slightly wonky cafe jazz that’s less Cat Power, more Victoria Wood without the jokes. Her songs are low-rent tales from coffee house floors, replete with exotic metaphors (“Here he comes, what a skyscraper / And she a Ferris wheel”) that are doubtless too deep and poignant for shambling troglodytes like us to fully comprehend without slow and patient explanation (Napalm Death’s “You suffer, but why?” is as close as we ever got to poetry). At her best Karen tones her voice down a bit, as on ‘Sandman’, which might have escaped from the contemplative middle section of a lost Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, but on ‘Coffee House’ it’s all wailing and warbling and over-emoting like a harpy that’s sat on a carelessly discarded drawing pin. If this was all camped up a bit and kicked out with some humour and sense of abandon it might be fun, but for now, it all sounds like it’s taking itself way too seriously with precious little justification.

LUCYSAMANDDAN

There’s no info here to explain who Lucysamanddan are, so we’ll just have to guess they’re three people called Lucy and Sam and Dan who are in too much of a hurry to write great pop tunes to bother separating their names, like Peter, Paul and Mary or Ben and Jerry. Except, u-oh, seems like they’re in such a hurry they’ve forgotten the great pop tunes bit too. They’re nice enough to start with; ‘Holiday’ is a simple acoustic strum-along with sparse bass and sultry female vocals (Lucy, we presume, though might be Sam if Sam is indeed female and not a Samuel). Lucy’s got a sweetly un-showy voice (Pianorocketship please take note), but you’d like her to maybe let go at least a little bit instead of letting the whole song simply coast to an innocuous conclusion having gone not very far at all. Similarly

afflicted is ‘One Night Girl’, where Lucy’s started warbling unnecessarily, perhaps to try and compensate for the lack of a hook or melody to grab your attention. Some salvation comes in the form of ‘Every Waking Day’ where her voice is more vulnerable and varied, the melody prettier by far, riding on a marching snare beat and showing signs, as it peeks timidly into more adventurous places, that the trio might have something worth listening to after all.

THE DEMO DUMPER

BLUE MOON TRAIN

We sometimes wonder if people send us demos with the express purpose of irritating the mcfimble out of us. Case in point: this demo is entitled ‘Chillaxe’. Anyone who ever uses the word chillaxe, even ironically – in fact particularly if they use it ironically – should be immediately beheaded with a fucking axe. It’s what etymological scholars call a ‘wanker’s word’ for reasons we shouldn’t really need to explain. So there you go – irritant factor is up to 9.5 already and we haven’t even taken the CD out of its sleeve yet. Initially we’re not sure if Chillaxe is the name of the band, or Blue Moon Train, since it’s not made clear at any point. Because they’ve failed miserably to include any information whatsoever, besides a contact number. And yes we are typing this with our fists now. Irritation factor 10 and counting. Could it get any effing bloody shitfuckery worse? Why, certainly. Let’s make this a laidback jazz-funk party shall we, and give the Nightshift demo reviewer a fucking stroke? Amble, amble, funky funk; ain’t we the cool, laidback bohemian types with our ethnicky snazz? “Chillaxing / Checking out the action / Chain reaction.” Those are the lyrics, dear reader. Do you see; it’s almost like poetry? But, like poetry written by an utter fucking total ruptured bollock of a semi-human tosspot. Six minutes of this. Six steaming great turd minutes. And then it fades out. Maybe we’re safe. But no. Back it comes, for another three sodbastarding minutes of wankstomping jazz-funking shitmongery. “Chillaxing / Checking out the action / Chain reaction.” Like musical salt and vinegar rubbed gently into a gaping wound. We’re not ones prone to demanding musicians be butchered with blunt industrial machinery. Okay, we are, but usually in jest. In this case, though, we really would be happy to be the ones to press the ‘On’ switch on whichever rendering machine looks likely to cause maximum suffering. Bastards.

*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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