

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 217
August
2013

A word to the wise

RALFIE BAND

Oxfordshire's travelling
troubadour talks music, film
and the Mighty Boosh.

Also in this month's issue:

TRUCK and **CORNBURY** reviewed.

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plus

Local music news, reviews
and five pages of gigs.

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JAY BROWN JJ ROSA KIMBERLY ANNE MT. WOLF PORT ISLA
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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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NEW ZEALAND'S FRENCH FOR RABBIT are among a host of acts playing **Irregular Folk's** summer all-dayer festival this month. The Wellington-based dream-pop duo join a host of local and national acts for the event, set in a Bedouin tent in the garden of The Perch in Binsey, where Irregular Folk have set up residence since May, hosting nights of alternative and experimental folk music, from harp recitals to poetry evenings. The event takes place on Saturday 3rd August, from midday. Joining the Kiwi pair will be Message To Bears, Salvation Bill, Fraeda, Duchess, Bright Works, Beth Porter & the Availables, Sea Stacks, Ian Giles, Until the Bird and Jordan O'Shea. Tickets for the all-dayer are £10 adv or £12 on the day. Visit www.irregularfolk.co.uk for more details and future Irregular Folk shows.

CANDY SAYS are among the latest set of acts to be confirmed for **Gathering Festival** later this year.

The local favourites join already-announced acts Local Natives, London Grammar, Charlie Boyer & The Voyeurs, Temples and Wolf Alice on Saturday 19th October, with some forty bands set to play eight venues on and around Cowley Road across twelve hours. Last year's inaugural Gathering sold out and was shortlisted for Best New Festival and Best Metropolitan Festival at the UK Festival Awards.

Other new acts announced include Chasing Grace, Dancing Years, Drenge, Jay Brown, JJ Rosa, Mt Wolf, Port Isla, Pyramids, Ryan Keen, Sweet William, To Kill A King and Waxahatchee.

Tickets for the event are on sale now, priced £20 adv from Truck Store. More information online at www.gatheringfestival.co.uk.

FLASH HARRY PA HIRE is set to carry on despite the death of founder Tony Jezzard in June. Tony's cousin and partner in the PA company, James Serjeant, will continue to run the show, offering anything from 1.5k to 5.5k rigs for gigs and festivals. Give him a shout on 07919 147 350 or email flashharrysoundsystems77@gmail.com.

FLORENCE PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE is looking to host more gigs from this month. The venue is looking for bands to play or promoters to organise their own shows there. Local blues veteran Pete Fryer plays there on Saturday 24th August. Bands or promoters interested should call Mick on 07795 847898.

BEAR ON A BICYCLE launches a new compilation album this month with an instore gig at Truck Store on Cowley Road. My Crooked Teeth, Jordan O'Shea, Joshua Gilbert, Sier Pin Sky, and Rhys Baker all play instore on Sunday 4th August from 5.30pm to promote 'Family'. Visit www.facebook.com/boabrecords for more label news.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Saturday evening between 8-9pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring interviews, studio sessions, gig reviews and local music news. The show is available to stream or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford. Regularly updated local music news is available online at www.musicinxford.co.uk. The site also features interactive reviews, a gig guide and more.

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A quiet word with

RALFE BAND



“OXFORD IS PICKING UP ON this album, which is nice. I have played all over the UK and Europe and I suppose I didn’t associate that closely with a local scene before, but the fact that I’ve recorded so much here and so many musicians on the album have roots here makes the connection more real. I think people didn’t really know where I was from with the previous albums – my first album came out on Skint Records from Brighton, so people initially thought we were from there, and then The Mighty Boosh connection is very much a London thing.”

OLY RALFE, THE CENTRAL figure, if not sole member, of Ralfe Band, might not be among that cast of highly celebrated Oxford musicians just yet, but his overdue membership of that elite looks to have been signed off with the release of ‘Son Be Wise’, the third album released under the Ralfe Band name. The album, as enthusiastically stated in last month’s *Nightshift* review, is ripe for summer picking, while further afield, from 6Music and Radio 4 to *Mojo*, the plaudits are equally effusive, as writers and broadcasters fall for Ralfe’s mix of rustic, sometimes ramshackle psychedelia and homely eclecticism, which takes in waltz and bossnova time, music hall grandeur and folksy laments.

It is an utterly charming album, one whose mood of bucolic serenity is kept on its toes at each and every turn by some new, neat trick, sleight of hand or simple spark of something special.

AND YET, UP UNTIL THIS point few on the local scene would even have thought of Ralfe Band as one of our own. There have been Oxford gigs of course, and appearances at Truck Festival, with which he had strong links, but with a sense of wanderlust that has seen him living in Germany as well as travelling and recording around the world, alongside writing film soundtracks and making his own, prize-winning documentaries and videos, and links with the likes of *The Mighty Boosh*, Oly Ralfe has rarely felt like a settled Oxford musician, more an artist of the world at large. He grew up in London, learning to play piano in his teens, inspired by Eric Satie, Chopin, Bob Dylan and writers like Jack Kerouac (hence the travel bug, no doubt). Early on he played keyboards in band called Menlo Park before heading down his own path as Ralfe Band, moving, on and off, to Oxfordshire, drawn in by friendships forged with local musicians.

“I TRAVELLED A LOT OVER

the last few years,” continues Oly, explaining his lack of roots, “I think just being on the move can throw up creative ideas. Although you’ve got to settle down for a bit to turn the ideas into something. I find Oxford’s an easier place to work than London in a lot of ways, people have more time to get involved. “I’m back in Oxford now but I was living between here and Berlin for three years. Berlin is a great city and fun place to be creative. It has an amazing raw history, it’s spacious and cheaper. But the musicians I’ve played with on all my albums are in Oxford or London so that lured me back. And the ale of course.” The local musicians Oly has worked with, both on the new album and its predecessors, 2005’s ‘Swords’ and 2008’s ‘Attic Thieves’, are among the most respected names in the county: Garo Nahoulakinn and Rowland Prytherch for starters, whose CVs include Goldrush, The Epstein and Truck Studios; then there’s Nick Fowler from Gaz Coombes’ band, and Mike Monaghan from Candy Says. Beyond the local compatriots are the likes of Alessi’s Ark’s Alessi Laurent, and cult alt.country star Piney Gir, while ‘Son Be Wise’ also features production contributions from Stereolab’s Andy Ramsay as well as Rob Ellis, renowned for his work with PJ Harvey, Anna Calvi and Marianne

Faithfull. That’s quite a cast... “I’ve gradually got to know all these guys and they’re all friends. They heard my first album, ‘Swords’. It’s great working with Garo, Nick and Mike: they’re all brilliant musicians with great taste. They’ve also played a lot together, so have good empathy with each other. Andrew Mitchell, who I’ve worked with for years, also added guitar to this album, so pretty well everyone I’ve ever worked with is on the record. Rowland has engineered a lot of my recordings; I’d be lost without him! “On the live front I’ve been playing with different configurations of the band. I did the Europe dates supporting I Am Kloot playing as a duo with Garo, and recently I’ve played a lot with Mike. There has been a lot of instrument swapping, including washboard and trumpet.” Alessi and Piney between them add backing vocals to half the album, adding yet another dimension to the increasingly fulsome Ralfe Band sound. “I met Alessi through my manager Michelle. She has a unique voice. I really wanted female singing on this album; I love listening to girl singers and duets. All sorts of singers like Billie Holiday, Nancy Sinatra, Jane Birkin, Bjork and those female ghostly vocals on Morricone soundtracks. Alessi sings on four songs. I know Angela Piney through Garo and she has a great voice too and sings on ‘Dead Souls’. What did Rob Ellis and Andy Ramsay bring to the album, production-wise? “Rob produced some early sessions for this album in Wales. The song ‘Cold Chicago Morning’ made it onto the album and also features his drumming, and it’s one of my favourites, I love it. After that I recorded with Andy and that led to the song ‘Ox’, which starts the album. Andy’s studio is down in Bermondsey, surrounded by African churches; it’s quite a place. However I realised I wasn’t quite finished with a lot of the songs so I returned to Oxford where I carried on working with Rowland. I should also mention John Greswell who played all the strings and mandolin and mixed the album in Soho and is a big part of the final sound.”

AS MENTIONED, ‘SON BE Wise’ is Ralfe Band’s third album. How does Oly rate it compared to his previous two? “I think it’s quite an ambitious album and I hope it’s a step forward for me. My earlier albums tended to be mostly

produced by me and one or two other musicians – a bit more DIY – but for this one I involved more people along the way. For instance Nick played all the bass guitar on this album; he’s a great musician and you can hear it in the recordings.” John Peel once said he couldn’t tell who you’d been listening to, which is quite a compliment. Is that the sort of thing you hope to hear people say? “People do often say that Ralfe Band doesn’t sound like anyone else which is a compliment in this crowded world. I do have influences but hopefully they meld into my own concoctions. I just do my thing and try not to think about it too much.” Much of ‘Son Be Wise’ reminds *Nightshift* of cult 80s pop maverick Momus, partly vocally, partly because he too managed to sidestep falling into specific genres. Is that something Oly is aware of, or consciously aims for? “I have just had a listen to Momus, for the first time; I like it but it’s not an influence. It’s funny, people often mention other artists who I’ve never listened to. A few people have mentioned Lloyd Cole this time too, who I’ve also never listened to. I’m more influenced by Tom Waits, although I appreciate you may not hear it in my vocals. Not yet anyway! “Personally, thus far I’ve wanted to create albums with variety, that create a journey, a bit like a film soundtrack, rather than a set of ten similar sounding songs.” As befits a journey ‘Son Be Wise’ was recorded all over the world over many different sessions – was that deliberate or just the style and pace Oly prefers to work at? “It wasn’t deliberate to be honest, probably just more evidence of my chaotic lifestyle. But I wanted to try different settings and to work away from home. I don’t like being cooped up for too long and wouldn’t want to spend months in one studio. New surroundings can free me up, so it’s really worth moving around to generate ideas.”

TWO OF RALFE BAND’S biggest fans just happen to be two of the most influential DJs currently on radio, Mark Radcliffe and Marc Riley; how helpful has their patronage been? “Mark Radcliffe was a big supporter of my first two albums and Marc Riley has been too, especially the new album. Marc recommended Ralfe Band as the support for a big tour Kloot did in April and May, which we did and it went really well. It’s important to have people like this championing the music over time. We’re getting more radio attention than before with this album. We performed on *Loose Ends* (BBC Radio 4) a couple of weeks ago, so we can now count Clive Anderson as a supporter too!”

Oly is also an artist and filmmaker as well as a musician. As well as designing the sleeves for his albums, he has made a critically-acclaimed documentary, *The Ballad of AJ Weberman*, about the notorious Bob Dylan obsessive, which drew him to the attention of *The Mighty Boosh* crew with whom he’s subsequently work, while his animated video for the song ‘Women Of Japan’ won him Best Video at South by South West. Are there times when one of those is more important to you; how much do you try to fuse those roles? I know you designed the sleeve for ‘Son Be Wise’? “I like to work in other creative mediums, and look for a new challenge. Sometimes it can be confusing where to put your energies when there are so many possibilities, but I’ve worked like this for a while. Art and film feed into my music; it’s part of the whole thing for me. I created the artwork for the album: I love art and want to bring this into Ralfe Band. ‘Women of Japan’ won Best International Video at SXSW; that must have been a big boost. “People do love that video, it appeals to people who love strange animation.” What was it like working with *the Mighty Boosh*? “The Boosh liked my music and also saw *The Ballad of AJ Weberman*. They thought it was funny and asked me to film their second big tour. That led to the film *Journey of The Children*, a feature documentary. Last week I played piano and glockenspiel with the Boosh at the Barbican; we performed a song called ‘Cloaks’ from Beck’s new album of sheet music, ‘Songreader’, which lots of artists were performing, including Jarvis Cocker, Charlotte Gainsbourg and Villagers. I got to meet Beck, which was great, as I’ve always been inspired by him.”

FOR THOSE AMONG US YET to catch up with Ralfe Band live Oly is on the Folk Guild stage at Wilderness this month, the perfect setting really for music that’s exotic but equally at one with the natural world. “I’ve heard Wilderness is a great festival, so I’m looking forward to it. We’re playing in the evening which I’m happy about. We’ll create a set that builds into a feverish climax. “After that I’ve got a plan to record an album of instrumentals, which focuses more on my piano playing. ‘Son Be Wise’ is all songs, but instrumentals are also a big interest of mine. I’ve been recording lots of ideas and it feels good to have something new to create alongside gigging the current album.”

‘Son Be Wise’ is out now Highline Records. Visit www.facebook.com/ralfeband for more news.

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RELEASED

COLOUREDS

‘Pop Forlorn EP’

(Own label)
Let’s be honest, the new Daft Punk album is a bit shit, isn’t it? Oh yeah, there’s some good stuff in there but mostly it sounds like Shakatak rather than the modern day disco classic we’d hoped for and been led to believe would be delivered. So anyway, the best thing you can do right now is flog your copy on Ebay and spend the couple of quid you get on this wee beastie. You see, Coloureds, despite appearing to be the sort of nutters whose sole purpose in life is to break music into tiny pieces and laugh hysterically while they’re doing it*, actually know how to write a proper disco monster. That monster being ‘Automate’, which is pretty much exactly what we’d hoped ‘Random Access Memories’ would be like: nasty serrated synth bites, four-to-the-floor beats and enough funk to pimp the Cowley BMW works’ entire car fleet. “Now you’ve got a funky beat / You can’t help but move your feet” whoops the looped vocal sample as synths squelch like Godzilla stamping on a blanchmange the size of Manhattan, and they’re not wrong. ‘Pop Forlorn’, for its part, sounds like the sort

MASIRO ‘EP’

(Own label)
After the gloomy atmospherics of 64-seconds-long opener ‘Intro’, Masiro leap headlong into the business at hand with ‘Tong Warrior’, setting out the band’s stall within around a tenth of its duration. What sounds like dual guitars - no bass guitar; perhaps one baritone - crunch out riffs with a glorious sense of urgency, whilst prog-metal-style drumming (with double kick drums abounding) build a backbone of the rhythmic and structural changes that happen disarmingly often throughout the songs on this five-tracker. The most significant parallel with Masiro is Oxes, with whom they share a vocal-less musical approach, incredibly direct and close-sounding guitars, and a healthy inability to stick to what they’re doing. This is all to the good, as Masiro also share Oxes’ supreme sense of dynamics, tunefulness and humour, sprinkling enough twists and turns throughout their work to not only engage but also to amuse. At times the Oxes similarities are exceptionally close - on ‘Decayer’ especially - but there’s nothing wrong with taking inspiration from the best. Where Masiro nudge things in their own direction is with some subtle processing and use of effects. ‘Tong Warrior’ uses looped sounds to good effect; ‘Sky Burial’ includes overdubbed guitar twinkles (for want of a better word); ‘KPanda’ chucks in some wah-wah squeal. Combine that with flawless musicianship and



of malfunctioning robot techno we’ve come to know Coloureds for, wobbling spasmodically at the bar as the beats and bass rock the joint. There are additional remixes here from Sssh! The Deaf Have Aids and Kenji Run, though neither improves on the originals and really, while the world enthusiastically settles for second best, this is our new soundtrack to hitting the dancefloor and breaking stuff. You’d be daft not to join us. **Dale Kattack** (* - which they bloody well are)

TAMARA & THE MARTYRS

‘Get Him Out’

(Big Red Sky)
So tightly bound in plastic is this CD it takes almost military force to prize it from its sleeve. Getting Tamara Parsons-Baker to open up about her feelings takes rather less effort. In fact ‘Get Him Out’ is three and a half minutes of turbulent emotional unravelling, brooding hurt rising to almost operatic heights of gothic despair, the sense of drama so ladled on the song would have fitted in well on Marc & the Mamba’s ‘Torment and Toreros’ opus. “Your shop sells lots of nice hats / Have you got one big enough for my whole head?”, asks Tamara at one point, sounding like a tempestuously bitter cross between Nico and Anna Calvi. Strange but bewitching. And like any good witch, Tamara demands and deserves your unconditional love. Just don’t forsake her; we couldn’t vouch for your health in such circumstances. **Dale Kattack**



AFTER THE THOUGHT

‘Process of Illumination’

(Own label)
For something which Matt Chapman, sole auteur of After the Thought, openly admits was just a de-cluttering operation, when he chronologically cut and pasted all his music composition files from the last two years onto CD and packaged it in brown paper origami, these 16 tracks are the most remarkably coherent and resonant batch of ambient-electro I’ve heard in a long time. Possibly it’s the fact I’m reviewing this during the 86-degree heatwave: with its soporific humidity, supernatural haze and timeless reflections of lost childhood summers, but many of the pieces here share the same contemplative quality, as if you are sat in the cool of the shade, watching the shimmering landscape. Mood and depth are the key elements of good ambient music and throughout ‘Process Of Illumination’ you get a real sense of Matt’s care and deftness of touch in these areas; even the three included remixes, notably Spring Offensive’s ‘Worry Fill My Heart’, and Listing Ships’ ‘Then Venice Sank’, blend in with the dreamy chill of the whole. Outside of the waveforms, ‘XFD’ sounds like a cunning Kraftwerk mash-up of ‘Billie Jean’’s synth bassline and Berkana Sowelu’s ‘Solid Fuel’, while ‘Buzz’ jauntily sets off on what feels like the intro to ‘For Once In My Life’ waiting for Stevie to lash harmonica all over it. Only one track, ‘Pianoplays’, jars the atmosphere with its five minutes of insistent piano loop, but maybe it’s designed to. I can’t recommend this collection highly enough to anyone who loves William Orbit’s ‘Strange Cargo’ trilogy, B So Global, or Maurice Jarre’s soundtrack to the film *Witness*. ‘Process of Illumination’ is just that: enlightening. **Paul Carrera**



SAMUEL ZASADA ‘Winter’s End EP’

(Big Red Sky)
So here’s the deal – a band who sound like the musical incarnation of a frosty autumn morning make their comeback at the height of the hottest summer in recent memory and call it ‘Winter’s End’, which would mean spring, right? Hell, no wonder the hedgehog who lives in our back garden feels confused; he doesn’t know when or where he is. Anyway, just to confuse things a little bit more, there is no-one called Samuel Zasada. Instead it’s the band name of singer-songwriter David Ashbourne, previously Demo of the Month winner in these pages and a man possibly even taller than he is melancholy. This comeback EP sees no new-found optimism in Ashbourne’s outlook. If anything most of the drama and fight of his superb ‘Obit’ EP has gone, replaced with weary resignation and romantic reflection. Not such a terrible thing when you hear the chilly, spectral close harmonies of the EP’s title track, David’s slightly strangled voice sitting uneasily amid his bandmates’ almost ecclesiastical voices. The song sets the snowy scene for most of the rest of the EP, notably the harrowed, introspective ‘Between The Ground & The Sky’, pitched somewhere between old world Scottish folk and gothic beachcomber blues. While ‘Scratching’ tends to drift inconsequentially, ‘Lifelessly’ is more aggressive, almost military in its onward march, and sounds like a bluegrass take on Thin Lizzy, which isn’t as odd as that might appear. A toast to Samuel Zasada’s return, then. But what to drink? Iced Pimm’s or a deep, rich Shiraz? Ah sod it, let’s have a pint of everything, then we won’t know or care what day of the week it was, never mind the season. **Dale Kattack**

ECHO BOOMER ‘Beats & Bones EP’

(Own label)
A name that’s hovered around the local scene for a fair while now, Echo Boomer have always been predisposed towards the epic side of delicate pop; stadium-sized introspection if you will. If that description gets you to thinking of Radiohead around ‘The Bends’ you’re not too wide of the mark, Echo Boomer singer Jonny Race in particular echoing Thom Yorke’s

LUKE KEEGAN ‘Conker & The Wheel’

(Own label)
Man with guitar and a small satchel of melancholy. Been there, seen it, decided against buying the t-shirt. Seriously, while such a set-up is essentially timeless, you really have to be saying or doing something special to stand any chance of standing out, and Luke Keegan’s ‘Conker & The Wheel’ offers little evidence that something special is there for the taking. It’s not awful as such. The album’s pleasant (hmm...), well-crafted (tsk...), decently produced (getting desperate here...) and simply executed (small mercies), while Luke himself has an unadorned voice that he utilises well within its comfort zone, so there’s none of that tortured excess you get with too many woe-is-me butchers of Bob Dylan’s questionable legacy. Among the ten songs there are hints of Crosby, Stills & Nash, Paul Simon and even America, particularly on ‘Hermit’ and the album’s title track, nodding gently in the direction of sunnier 1960s shores. But mostly the album somnambulates wearily by way of some bitter ruminations on past relationships – the incongruously wistful ‘Anyone Can See’ in particular with its easy sax embellishment that simply adds an extra layer of varnish to an already overly-polished sound. It’s typical of a pedestrian-paced set of songs that threaten to tumble into David Gray territory at any point, while ‘Birds’ feels like an endless night of *Later...* re-runs with an old copy of *Q* magazine the only form of alternative “entertainment”. And we probably shouldn’t mention that album opener ‘Pack Up & Leave For Paris’ reminds us of Enrique Iglesias’ risible ‘Hero’. It does, however, remind us just how much we love Extreme Noise Terror. **Dale Kattack**



plaintive falsetto at times, while the band’s mix of electronics and heavily-treated guitars does little to dispel such images. Lead track here, ‘The Circle’, turned up on the band’s last EP back in 2010 but has doubtless been given some extra production polish along the way and seems built purely to fill whichever wide open space they dream of playing to, while resting on a squelchy, silicon Kraftwerk groove. The overlong ‘Making Eyes’ is pure U2, both guitar and vocal-wise, lush in construct and texture but somehow spiritually empty. ‘Beautiful Mind’ is better, closer to Field Music’s



KING B ‘Down at the Blues Café’

(Own label)
Optimism in blues seems like a contradiction in terms, but “good-time blues” is a common self-description for the sort of bands who frequent that circuit, leaving the desolation and heartache to acts like Tamara & The Martyrs and Vienna Ditto, two local bands who more deeply embrace the spirit but not the clichés of the genre. Long-standing Oxfordshire regulars King B declare that a sense of optimism runs throughout their album, believing that “having the blues is no bad place to be.” Which feels like they’re coming from a place of comfort where real blues can never touch them, or they it. And the easy nature of these six songs bears that feeling out. Claire Johnson’s voice is smooth, the guitars smoother still; everything is laidback, tending towards jolly on the album’s major chord centrepiece, ‘Blue Café’. Nothing grates or suggests raw emotional engagement; rather the whole thing sounds like the gentle background hum to Sunday night pub sessions. Only ‘Down’ really comes close to hitting the spot with its darker, almost rockabilly rumble and Johnson’s more regretful vocal tone. Recently we read an interview with Eric Clapton which suggested the essential elements of playing the blues were technique and strict adherence to the age-old traditions, which seems to be where so many (mostly white) blues musicians have dropped the ball since the early part of the 20th Century. And why so much modern blues sounds both sterile and lacking authenticity. King B are no worse than anyone else in these stakes, but there doesn’t seem to be much here that we’d consider blues beyond playing the right chords in the right order. If it’s the real spirit of the blues you want, you’re better heading somewhere far darker than this particular café. **Dale Kattack**

harking back to 70s rock but never quite takes flight when you hope and expect it to. Echo Boomer are at their best when they rain in the histrionics. ‘Make You Feel’ is easily their best song to date, airy yet insular and with the emotion both more natural and less imposing. ‘Animals’ similarly holds back on the big stage bombast, benefitting from the pensive atmosphere they create. It’s in moments such as these, when they make themselves sound smaller, that Echo Boomer suggest they could be so much bigger. **Dale Kattack**

GLGUGUDE

THURSDAY 1st
ACOUSTIC SESSION: The Bullingdon – Starting a run of free acoustic music in the front bar of the Bully every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday throughout August.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Singers, musicians, poets, performance artists, storytellers and more every Thursday at Oxford’s longest running, and best open mic club.
OSPREY & THE OX 4 ALLSTARS: The

Thursday 8th – Saturday 10th
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy
The origins of **Fairport Convention**’s annual festival now seem so far in the mists of time we wonder if even the band themselves remember the earliest occasions. Having seen the band enjoying the odd pint or twelve backstage once, it wouldn’t surprise us if they don’t even remember the previous year’s. But here it is again, Oxfordshire’s oldest live music festival, one that according to the organisers belongs as much to the regulars as it does the hosts. The event hasn’t changed an awful lot over the years, an atmosphere of family-friendly *bon homie* abounds, but change it has. Fairport themselves still headline the Saturday night, their three hour set littered with old favourites from their fifty-year career, and plenty of guest turns, but the inclusion of 70s shock-rock legend **Alice Cooper** atop the opening night bill will surprise many. Cropredy is no longer a folk purists’ reserve though and the great man will doubtless get a warm welcome. Ditto 80s electro-pop hitmaker **Nik Kershaw** and soft-rock veterans **10cc**. **The Levellers** would once have been considered to uncouth and punky to play here but now they fit in perfectly, as do returnees **Edward II** with their folkified reggae. More traditional folk fare comes courtesy of **Peatbog Faeries**, while **Mediaeval Babes** performs songs from a time even before Fairport or their festival was imagined.



AUGUST

Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the local veteran songsmith and chums.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 2nd
CHRIS RYDER: Truck Store (6pm) – Instore set from the local singer-songwriter.
RETRIBUTION + IGNITE THE SKY + MORDECAI + CROWS REIGN + MINIMATA CONVULSION + EVAVOID: O2 Academy – Skeletor present a night of rising local metal talents, including the reformed Retribution; death-metal-cum-metalcore crew Ignite the Sky; prog-rockers Mordecai; metalcore and thrash merchants Crow’s Reign, and virulent deathcore warriors Minimata Convulsion.
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Your monthly dose of party-hearty reggae, dancehall and roots with Count Skylarkin and chums. Tonight’s shindig features regular visitor DJ Derek, the legendary septuagenarian reggae and ska legend, soon to hang up his boots, and here making his penultimate visit to Oxford, so not to be missed. Meanwhile Jewels & Jacuzzis return to live action with their trademark sultry, soulful roots reggae.

ONE WING LEFT + THE DRAKES + MEGAN HENWOOD: The Wheatsheaf – Indie rock from local newcomers One Wing Left at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show. They’re joined by fellow local rockers The Drakes and acoustic singer-songwriter Megan Henwood.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + MARK ATHERTON: James Street Tavern – First of many shows this month for the hard-working local swamp-blues veterans.
ULTIMATE 90s: The Bullingdon – Fortnightly celebration of 90s club classics and old skool faves.
FOLLYFEST: Faringdon Square – First day of Faringdon’s annual music fest, today featuring Josie & the Outlaw; The Hedgerow Crawlers; Power Train; Swamp Root and The Yearning.

SATURDAY 3rd
IRREGULAR FOLK ALL-DAYER: The Perch, Binsey (12 midday) – Irregular Folk rounds off its summer encampment at the Perch with an all-day mini-festival of folk-inclined sounds in a Bedouin tent. Among those playing are sweet New Zealand dreampop duo French For Rabbit; wispy folk, electronica and minimalist classical ensemble Message To Bears; atmospheric acoustic indie crew Salvation Bill; bouncy afro-popsters Duchess; orchestral folk-pop act Sea Stacks; local folk singer Ian Giles and friends; inventive chamber-pop trio Until

The Bird; funky afro-pop types Bright Works, and melancholic balladeer Jordan O’Shea.
SACRED MOTHER TONGUE: O2 Academy – Epic metallers on the rise outta Northampton, mixing elements of classic thrash, metalcore, tech and death-metal together on their new album, ‘Out Of The Darkness’ and out on tour following summer showings at Bloodstock and Download.
THESE ARE OUR DEMANDS + THE OTHER DRAMAS + MARK COPE + STEM: The Jericho Tavern – Taut alt.rocking and rockabilly rumbling from former-Harry Angel chaps These Are Our Demands, alongside The Other Dramas, Maria Ilett’s new band with Richie Wildsmith.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy – Weekly three-clubs-in-one shindig, with indie hits at Propaganda; kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy, and dancefloor faves from Jack FM’s DJs.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – Techno, bass and house club night, every Saturday at the Cellar.
BREEZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney
FOLLYFEST: Faringdon Square – Live music and more all day, including sets from Boogie Me; Kiff; The Mighty Redox; Tramp Aviators; Cooper Black; The Shapes and Eat, Love, Sing.

SUNDAY 4th
MY CROOKED TEETH + JORDAN O’SHEA + JOSHUA GILBERT + SIER PIN SKY + RHYS BAKER: Truck Store (5.30pm) – Local label / collective Bear On A Bicycle launch their new sampler album with an instore featuring gentle country-folkster My Crooked Teeth (Jack Olchawski from ToLiesel); melancholic troubadour Jordan O’Shea; autumnal, misty-eyed folk-popsters Sier Pin Sky and ambient post-dubstep acoustic pop chap Rhys Baker.
MERCILESS PRECISION + MEATPACKER + ACID SHARK + FUCKING WORTHLESS: The Wheatsheaf – A night of grindcore ferocity with Bristol’s Merciless Precision and Acid Shark, plus Leicester’s one-man aural assault machine Meatpacker, self-described as “the audio expression of hatred and anger against the meat industry and the corrupt system that upholds it,” which sounds just dandy to us.
FOLLYFEST: Faringdon Square – Third and final day of the festival, today featuring Ukebox Jury; Owen & Stone; The Hawkhurst; 14Ten and Adina & Johnson.

MONDAY 5th
TUESDAY 6th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC CLUB: The White Rabbit – New weekly open mic session, with a free pint for all

performers.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 7th
FREERANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep club night.
ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil’s, Witney

THURSDAY 8th
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – Fairport Convention host their annual gathering of the folk-rock tribes – *see main preview*
STEAMROLLER: Red Lion, Cropredy – Heavy-duty blues rocking in the vein of Cream and Hendrix from the local veterans as part of the Cropredy fringe festival.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 9th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park – Opening day of the music, food, theatre and outdoor activities extravaganza – *see main preview*
SUPERNORMAL: Brazier’s Park, Ipsden – A three day feast of decidedly leftfield music and arts happenings in the picturesque setting of Braziers Park – *see main preview*
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – Second day of Fairport’s annual folk and rock gathering, with 10cc atop the bill – *see main preview*
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Balkan beats, world grooves and nu-jazz club night with live bands.
KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + BLACK FEATHERS: The Jericho Tavern – Country, roots and Americana from Knights of Mentis and Country For Old Men.
TEMPESTORA + RETRIBUTION: The Wheatsheaf – Classic thrash metal from Gloucester’s Tempestora.
JUICE: The Bullingdon – Upfront house with DJ AC, Alex Salt and Lee Harris.
STEAMROLLER: The Nag’s Head, Abingdon
MATT R JACKSON: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Michael Jackson tribute.

SATURDAY 10th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park
SUPERNORMAL: Brazier’s Park, Ipsden – Crochet and Homosexual Death Ride in perfect harmony – *see main preview*
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – Fairport round off their weekend party with their traditional three-hour set, guests and all – *see main preview*
BLEED FROM WITHIN + BRICKS & MORTAR + GODSPEED + I CRIED WOLF: O2 Academy – Deathcore and groove metal, inspired by the likes of Lamb of God, Pantera and Machine Head from Glasgow’s rising stars Bleed From Within, out on a headline tour to promote third album ‘Uprising’, having previously opened for Testament and Megadeth, as well as supporting Rise Against in Oxford last time round.

Friday 9th – Sunday 11th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park
Wilderness is not, as the organisers themselves point out, just about the music. There’s plenty of it, but it shares equal billing with all manner of other stuff. Like food. And theatre. And outdoor activity stuff. Did we mention the food? At last year’s event one Nightshift scribe was forced to eat four meals a day just to make the most of the smorgasbord of tasty treats on offer. We’re not sure if said scribe joined in the mass skinny dip in Cornbury Park lake, but there’s that on offer too.

But yes, Wilderness is a veritable polymath of a festival party. Amid the scenic loveliness of Cornbury Park you’ll find banquets – courtesy of chefs like Russell Norman and Polpo, Yotem Ottolenghi, and Mark Hix; theatre from Shakespeare’s Globe, English National Ballet, Unicorn Theatre and House of Fairytales; late-night parties orchestrated by Secret Garden Party; talks and forums with Intelligence Squared, The Idler, The School of Life, the Royal Observatory and the Napoleon Association; wellbeing stuff with a lakeside spa and Headspace. And of course a sing-along *Wickerman* session. Did we mention the food? Mmm... food.

But anyway, you could go all weekend without setting eyes or ears on a live band, but it’s the musical side of things we’re most interested in here at Nightshift. Well, aside from the food obviously.

This year’s headliners are grandly-proportioned indie-folk hitmakers **NOAH & THE WHALE**, Detroit’s cult fok-rock politico **RODRIGUEZ**, whose story, told in the film *Searching For Sugar Man*, is one of the most intriguing in modern music history – the missing, presumed dead cult hero a major star in South Africa, unbeknownst to himself, and now a belated celebrated artist worldwide; plus Aussie electro-pop duo **EMPIRE OF THE SUN**, who should provide a suitably

SHATTERED DREAMS: The Wheatsheaf – A one-off reunion show from the local melodic pop-punk faves.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
SINKING WITCHES: The Cellar – Grunge from the local rockers.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar
LITTLE BLACK DRESS: The Bullingdon – House club night.
FUSED: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers, from Chili Peppers and Foo Fighters to Kings of Leon.
OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS: The Marsh Harrier

SUNDAY 11th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park
SUPERNORMAL: Brazier’s Park, Ipsden
HIPSHAKIN!: The Library – Monthly dose of 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll,



euphoric soundtrack to any sunshine that invades the weekend.

Joining this trio of bill-toppers are London soul man **MICHAEL KIWANUKA**, winner of the BBC’s Sound of 2012 poll and previously tour support to Adele, and the frankly lovely **MARTHA WAINWRIGHT**, who not only has a fantastically powerful voice but also has the best cheekbones in pop music right now. Yes she does.
Further along, there’s the fresh-faced Cobain-alike **TOM ODELL**; epic stadium-popsters **TRIBES**; wistful folk songstress **LUCY ROSE**; beardy Isle of Wight quirk-pop outfit **BEEES**; dreamy Parisian psychedelic popstrel **MELODY’S ECHO CHAMBER**; soul singer **JOHN NEWMAN**, best known as the voice of Rudimental’s ‘Feel The Love’ and ‘Not Giving In’; Mercury-nominated traditional gypsy folk revivalist **SAM LEE**, and pensively ethereal moodists **LONDON GRAMMAR**.

There’s loads more too, including a stage hosted by The London Folk Guild that will feature not only long-time local hero **RICHARD WALTERS**, but also this month’s Nightshift cover star **RALFE BAND**.

To go into any further detail at this point would only keep us from indulging in something sumptuous, doubtless involving a truffle and red wine sauce, before discarding our clothes and plunging headlong into the lake. No, sorry, not an image we wish to leave you with. Just think about all the great music instead. And the food. Don’t forget the food.

Food.

jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul.

MONDAY 12th
REVELATORS: The Jericho Tavern – Slide-led Delta blues with a southern gospel edge from singer and guitarist Paul Morris and his band at the only Famous Monday Blues show of the month.

TUESDAY 13th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm, cyber-punk and darkwave club night.
OPEN MIC CLUB: The White Rabbit
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 14th
KOTCH + MWJ + SKINS: The Cellar – Calligraphy club night with guests and residents playing house, garage and bass.



Friday 9th – Sunday 11th

SUPERNORMAL:
Braziers Park, Ipsden

There are festivals – you know, where people come and watch bands, often famous ones, on stages while enjoying a few beers and perhaps some organic pig roast – and then there are festivals. Events where boundaries between artist and audience, music and art, theatre and, oh god, what else – crochet! Yes that’s it, blur to such an extent you’re never quite sure what you’re experiencing, or where, and you come home with your life changed a little, or maybe a lot. Maybe you’ll leave the civilised world behind completely and go and live in a tree with just a loincloth and an iPod full of psychedelic doom metal for company. At least until Supernormal comes round again.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Supernormal is small but is very deliberately imperfectly formed, and it is not for the faint hearted. Now in its fourth year at Braziers Park environmental study centre, the artist-curated festival is all about breaking down barriers and opening ears, eyes and minds. In this it is getting better and better. This year’s musical line-up alone is quite stunning, even if the biggest bands on the bill are a long, long way from being household names.

Chief among equals are probably Liverpool’s veteran art-rock weirdoes **CLINIC**, whose synthetic update of 70s New York underground experimentation is still going strong. Likely highlight of the entire festival though, could be **SHIT & SHINE**, a loose collective of noisebound psycho merchants whose set at Audioscope a few years back remains one of the greatest, and definitely most intense, musical displays Nightshift has ever witnessed. Whether there are five or twenty of them on stage, they will be awesome. Ditto **HOOKWORMS**, fantastic psych-krautrock drone groovers on the rise. Or maybe

THURSDAY 15th
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free unplugged show in the downstairs bar from the local blues rockers.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 16th
DRIVEN + MARTYR DE MONA + KOMRAD + SALVAGE + K-LACURA: O2

DETHSCALATOR, dissonant noisecore merchants in the tradition of Amphetamine Reptile Records. Or maybe even Neurosis and Converge-inspired feral metallers **ART OF BURNING WATER**. The again it could well be the recently reformed **TERMINAL CHEESECAKE**, whose bad acid trip psych-rock set them up as the UK’s answer to Butthole Surfers back in the early-90s.

Talking of buttholes, **HOMOSEXUAL DEATH TRIP** not only have the best band name of the weekend but have a song called ‘Temple Of Butthole’, which is seriously freaky. They describe themselves as “fat old dykes,” which doesn’t quite convey how great they are. And on the subject of celebrating being old, **GREY HAIRS** are on hand with some middle-aged post-punk ire in the vein of Mission of Burma and Pere Ubu. You want more? Are you crazy? Well how about Oxford’s own **COMA WALL**, with their all-consuming folk-doom? Or earthy, loop-driven balladeer **DAVID THOMAS BROUGHTON**? Maybe disturbingly psychotic trip-rockers **EVIL BLIZZARD**? Or splenetic agit-punks **GOOD THROB**?

There’s a serious danger of Nightshift getting a bit carried away with all this musical carnage compacted into one weekend, and we haven’t even mentioned **MUGSTAR** and their Hawkwind-heavy blizzard of riffs and grooves, or cult British folk and bluesman **MICHAEL CHAPMAN**, nor tar-black sludgers **I’M BEING GOOD** and **PHYSICS HOUSE BAND**’s mix and match of drum&bass, surf and psychedelia. And we shouldn’t really go before we’ve mentioned **THEE BALD KNOBBERS CHURCH OF CHAOS**, because there’s every chance they will wander off into the woods with your children in tow.

Beyond such simple, sedate pleasures as all this music, there is also art, cinema and workshops, but often not as you might expect them to be. And then there’s a chance for some Bowieoke if you want to get up on stage yourself. Heck, Nightshift is even going to be doing some DJing at some point. Probably involving lashings of obscure synth-pop. And we weren’t joking when we mentioned crocheting. It’s the new knitting, apparently. That’s how weird and wired Supernormal is. So go along. And if we don’t hear from you again, we’ll just assume you enjoyed it all a bit too much.

Academy – A night of heavy, heavy noise with London’s rising metal starlets Driven, riding the grooves in the style of Corrosion of Conformity and Lamb of God and riding high on the back of the acclaim accorded their debut EP ‘A Breakdown of Character’ and set to play Metal Hammer’s Hammerfest later this year. They’re joined by Stourbridge’s epic prog-metallers Martyr de Mona, local tech-core titans Komrad and thrash-core merchants K-Lacura.
THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: Rookery Far, Shabbington – Opening night of Simple’s weekend of dance – *see main preview*

MAYORS OF MIYAZAKI + PUNCHING SWANS + MASIRO: The Wheatsheaf – Grungy, spasmodic fight-pop in the vein of Huggy Bear from London’s Mayors of Miyazaki, plus complex math-core ferocity from Masiro.
DIRT ROYAL + THE REEDS: The Jericho Tavern
THE PETE FRYER BAND + PURPLE MAY: James Street Tavern – Oddball blues and classic covers from the veteran local bluesman.
BOHEMIANS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Queen tribute.
ULTIMATE 90s: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 17th
THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: Rookery Far, Shabbington
ELDER STUBBS FESTIVAL: Elder Stubbs Allotments (12-6pm) – Live music, food and family activities in aid of Restore.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: James Street Tavern – Swampy blues and psychedelic funk from The Mighty Redox alongside local Americana and bluegrass faves Headington Hillbillies.
DUCHESS + THE MILLER TEST + 2 STROKES + ADINA & JOHNSON: The Hollybush, Osney – One gig closer to Wittstock fundraiser, tonight featuring sunshiny afropop collective Duchess.
DJ SWITCH: The Bullingdon – Hip hop, drum&bass and electronica from the three-times DMC DJ champion.
THE SECRET KIDS: The Wheatsheaf – Grungy pop-punk.
ONE WING LEFT + THE OTHER DRAMAS + SUPREMIS + MEGAN HENWOOD: The Cellar
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar
STEAMROLLER: Chalgrove Festival

SUNDAY 18th
THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: Rookery Far, Shabbington
MEGAN JOSEPH + LAIMA BITE + LEIGH ALEXANDER + PURPLE MAY + BLIN’ JONNIE + BEARD OF DESTINY: The Wheatsheaf (2.30-7pm) – Free unplugged afternoon session hosted by Klub Kakofanney, featuring the likes of gothic folkstress Laima, caustic songsmith Leigh and genial bluesman Beard of Destiny.

MONDAY 19th
ARBOURETUM: The Port Mahon – Brooklyn’s very ‘eavy psych-rock dudes prepare to blast a small room to smithereens – *see main preview*
EELS: O2 Academy – Mark Everett sings tales of woe with warmth and wit – *see main preview*
NICK OLIVERI’S DEATH ACOUSTIC + DESERT STORM ACOUSTIC: The Cellar – Acoustic show from the QOTSA, Dwarves and Mondo Generator man-monster – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 20th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC CLUB: The White Rabbit
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 21st
FREERANGE: The Cellar
SPARKY’S JAM NIGHT: James Street Tavern – Open jam session.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Fat Lil’s, Witney

THURSDAY 22nd
TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – First day of the enduring local folk festival, kicking off with a show from Ian Dury’s old band The Blockheads, playing old hits, from ‘Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick’ to

Friday 16th – Sunday 18th
THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: Waterstock Meadow
Since the demise of Arcane Festival a few years back Oxfordshire hasn’t had a dedicated dance-orientated festival to call its own. Who better to rectify that situation than long-standing local house and techno club Simple, who are promising a back-to-basics three-day event, doubtless in the spirit of the early days of free parties and raves. Eschewing big-name out-of-town acts, they’re keeping it mostly local and low-key, an assortment of Simple residents and regulars augmented by DJs from club nights such as London night Peoples, with their fresh underground house, techno, breakbeats and bass; local vinyl aficionados Cratedigga, with a selection of classic dance tunes from across the spectrum; London’s deep house, techno and disco crew Flight Rhythm; bass, old skool hip hop, roots, dub, funk and soul from Oxford’s Dub Politics and Bassmentality, and long-standing local party hosts Sonic. Dozens of DJs, from well-known old hands to some playing their first festival, and not a corporate logo in sight.



‘What A Waste’.
FRANKIE’S WHISKY NIGHT: The Port Mahon – A night of whisky-infused folk, blues and roots music in the company of the equally homely and exotic Francis Pugh & The Whisky Singers with their sour mash blend of bluegrass and gutter blues. They’re joined by country-blues crew Swindlestock and sweetly plaintive Grey Children.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
VOODOO VODOO: The Library – 50s and 60s vinyl trash, surf, rock’n’roll, mambo and garage session.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 23rd
TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – The festival gets going in earnest with a headline set from Northumbrian folk stars The Unthanks, alongside quirky brass collective Orkestra del Sol, veteran protest singer Vin Garbutt, innovative banjo man Dan Walsh, and local Turkobilly crew Brickwork Lizards.
UNKNOWN FLOW + ALIAS + NOT TOO SHABBY: The Wheatsheaf – Jazz and prog-inspired heavy rocking from Unknown Flow.
DOWN & OUTS + BEAR TRADE + THE CELLAR FAMILY: The Port Mahon – A night of punk fun at the Port, with melodic Liverpoolian punkers Down & Outs, Sunderland’s Bear Trade and local hardcore scourers The Cellar Family.
BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Bon Jovi tribute.
JUICE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 24th
A TRUST UNCLEAN + ANNERO + EYES OF EVE + DEMASK THYSELF : The Wheatsheaf – Virulent grindcore from rising local starlets A Trust Unclean, alongside metalcore crew Annero and more.
TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – Show Of Hands team up with Miranda Sykes for today’s headline set. Also on the bill are English folk veteran Martin Simpson, Debs Newbold, Gas Mark 5, Lucy Ward, Moulettes and Tim Eden.

THE AUGUST LIST THE YARNS + BRIGHT WORKS: Modern Art Oxford – Garage-raw porch songs from Kerraleigh and Martin Child, together as The August List, creating backwoods magic inspired by the likes of The Handsome Family, The Low Anthem, White Stripes and Wilco. They’re joined for tonight’s Pindrop Performance show by jangly indie-folksters The Yarns and afropopsters Bright Works, who’ve just changed their name from Nairobi. There’ll also be live theatre from Awkward Actors.
CHURCH OF THE HEAVY: The Wheatsheaf – Rock, hardcore and metal night with Malmstrom, Bludger, Masiro and Confront the Carnage.
BE READY DJs: The Bullingdon
KNOTSLIP: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Slipknot tribute.
PETE FRYER BAND: Florence Park Community Centre



Monday 19th

ARBOURETUM
/ COMA WALL /
LISTING SHIPS:
The Port Mahon

Anyone who witnessed Arbouretum’s headline set at Audioscope last year will be positively salivating at the prospect of seeing the band in such dangerously intimate confines as the Port Mahon. The Baltimore rockers’ grunged-up psychedelia is big enough to fill whole galaxies, never mind a venue not much bigger than your gran’s living room. So anyway, it’s going to be immense and you will probably leave with the inner workings of your ears broken into tiny pieces, but it will be worth all that for the sheer sonic thrill of getting up close to such a dark, dirty ooze and rumble of musical lava that sounds like Fairport Convention being bulldozed by 80s dronemeisters Loop, or an eternal, infernal battle for sonic supremacy between Black Sabbath, Crazy Horse and Band of Horses. Their last album, ‘Coming Out Of The Fog’, was their finest yet, the elongated jams replaced by more compact songs that could be bewitchingly tender, or terrifying in their intensity. A terror and intensity that’s sure to be matched by Coma Wall, the dark, unplugged alter eg of arch doomsters Undersmile, who sound like Hell’s own folk band. Them and nautically-obsessed electro-heavy post-rockers Listing Ships. Oh yeah, this one’s gonna rock.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar

SUNDAY 25th
TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – More folk and world sounds from Mama Rosin, Home Service, Martin & Eliza Carthy, Nidi d’Arac, and The Spooky Men’s Choral, among others.
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm)

MONDAY 26th
TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – Local(ish) English folk heroes Spiers & Boden round off five days of Towersey-based fun and dancing in fine style, alongside Anglo-Scots folk femmes The Poozies.

TUESDAY 27th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC CLUB: The White Rabbit
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern



Monday 19th

EELS: O2 Academy

Mark Oliver Everett has, as you'll know if you've ever read his excellent but often harrowing autobiography, led a life beset by tragedy and heartache, particularly as far as his family went. And over the years, from his early home-baked demos to a succession of critically-lauded hit albums, he's documented that life with a combination of musical invention and deep, dark humour. And musically he's never stood still, veering from intimate indie balladry and country to voodoo blues, 50s rock'n'roll and swampy pop. His gigs too can be unpredictable – what you get from tour to tour, or even gig to gig, can vary immensely but he and his band are master musicians and the spectacle is rarely less than enthralling and visceral. From the gorgeously sardonic reflection of debut album 'Beautiful Freak', through musical highpoints (often emotional lows) like Electric Shock Blues' and 'Blinking Lights', to his latest, tenth, album, 'Wonderful, Gorgeous', the stories keep coming and the sound, while essentially always Everett, keeps shifting. At every turn, though, quality is assured.

WEDNESDAY 28th

THURSDAY 29th

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free unplugged set in the downstairs bar.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 30th

POKEY LAFARGE: O2 Academy – Hot swing, early jazz, ragtime blues, bluegrass and country from St Louis string band revivalist LaFarge, who's drawn acclaim for breathing new life into traditional American roots music. Jack White is a big fan, having produced the band as well as inviting them to open for The Raconteurs. They're over in the UK to promote last album 'Carry Me Back'.

BLUE ON BLUE + AFTER THE THOUGHT + KID KIN + LEE RILEY:

The Port Mahon - Ethereal, stripped-down electronic and shoegaze from London's boy/girl duo Blues on Blue at tonight's Tertium Quid show.

BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford – Bunkfest returns to Wallingford, providing a weekend of music across various venues in the town, highlights of the folk and blues-based bill including The Oysterband, The Albion Band, Ahab and Gordie McKeeman & His Rhythm Boys. There's also a host of ceilidhs, kids activities and a beer festival through til Sunday.

WALT FRISBEE + DANNY MAC: The Jericho Tavern - 8-bit rap and electronica from Walt Frisbee.
IRON ON MAIDEN: Fat Lil's, Witney – Iron Maiden tribute.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford
ULTIMATE 90s: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 31st

THE BIG FEASTIVAL: Alex James's Farm, Kingham – Alex James is probably the only bloke on the planet who'd revel in being called the cheesiest man in rock, but that's what happens when you leave Chartland behind and dedicate your life to the wonders of dairy produce. And here he is, teaming up with nutritional saviour of children the nation over, Jamie Oliver, to present two days of food and music on a farm. Festival finds the music taking at most equal billing to the grub, but alongside the artisan sausages and locally-sourced galangal (as if!) there are big stage turns from house and garage giants Basement Jaxx; pop-friendly hip hop starlets Rizzle Kicks; folk and soul songstress Liane la Havas; Britpop veterans Dodgy; pioneering dance DJ Norman Jay and Norwegian singer and multi-instrumentalist Bernhof. The fun continues on Sunday when Justin from CBeebies will be leading a toddler moshpit
CARRIE RODRIGUEZ: The Bullingdon – Great traditional Americana, bluegrass and country-folk from Tex-Mex singer and fiddle player Rodriguez, who first came to attention playing alongside Chip Taylor but who has since gone on to play, record and write with Lucinda Williams, Rickie Lee Jones, John Prine, Mary Gautier and Alejandro Escovedo. She's over in the UK with her band to plug new album 'Give Me All You Got', representing another great coup for the excellent Empty Room Promotions folk.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with AGNESS PIKE + THE SILHOUETTES + WALT FRISBEE: The Wheatsheaf – Another great mixed bag o'noise at GTI this month with theatrical thrash merchants Agness Pike coming on like an acid-fried Christopher Lee fronting Machine Head. Support comes from Wolverhampton's Radiohead-inspired rock'n'electronica types Silhouettes, and 8-bit rap crazies Walt Frisbee.

BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford
ONE WING LEFT + MEGAN HENWOOD + FRANK & BRONWYN: The Jericho Tavern

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM
DJs: O2 Academy
OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS: The Plough, Long Wittenham
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Red Lion, Eynsham
PAUL & GRAHAM: James Street Tavern
THE MISSING NOTES: Masons Arms, North Leigh
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar

Monday 19th

NICK OLIVERI'S DEATH ACOUSTIC: The Cellar

For someone who seems a bit too well known for his turbulent personal life, Nick Oliveri has fitted an awful lot of music into his 42 years. Notwithstanding the arrests and apparently biblical drug consumption, he's played on countless albums with his bands Kyuss, Dwarves, Queens of the Stone-Age and Mondo Generator, as well as contributing bass, guitar or vocals to the likes of Motorhead, Mark Lanegan, Turbonegro and Slash. He managed to get himself sacked from QOTSA but was back for 'Like Clockwork', which suggests Josh Homme still holds a special place in his heart for Nick. Nick who looks like he was born to be a rock star, resembling a gothic backwoods serial killer and prone to playing at best semi-naked. With Mondo Generator he mixed and melded breakneck slasher punk with sprawling blues, augmented by Winnebago Deal's two Bens, but with this new band he's unplugging everything, so exactly what we'll get is open to speculation. A selection of choice cuts from his long and varied career is likely though and whatever happens, it's unlikely to be suitable for softies. To celebrate the occasion, Oxford's own masters of dark bluesy heaviosity, Desert Storm, go the full acoustic in support.



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LIVE

CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Great Tew Park

Friday

It might be beyond cliché but you can't underestimate the effect a bit of sunshine has on the mood of a festival. This summer's Glastonbury wasn't considered a vintage year because coffin-dodging pub rockers The Rolling Stones played. No, it was because for once people weren't bathing in a river of effluence come Saturday morning.

Nightshift has decided to form a band called River of Effluence forthwith, though sadly we can't imagine being invited to genteel Cornbury with a name like that (although you could posit that Lawson's music - of which more later, sadly - could accurately be described as such). But yes, Cornbury is too nice and polite for such nastiness. This year's event, the Glorious 10th no less, is even more genteel and posh than usual, someone having pimped the VIP viewing gallery with what appears to be something out of Henley Regatta. This, presumably, is the way festivals are experienced by people with extreme allergies and pots of cash. The mind can only boggle at what kind of depravity might go on in there. Noel Edmonds sectioned off, surrounded by his hoarded cereal bars? The Prime Minister hyping himself up for Squeeze's set by going through every email sent by anyone in the world, ever? Jeremy Clarkson endlessly banging on about Supertramp is probably closer to reality.

Meanwhile, back in the mortal world, half of *Nightshift's* review team is suffering from a stinking cold, which means he's getting through more Vick's Sinex than beer right now (pint for pint, it's cheaper than the bar here anyway). River of Effluence? Stream of Snot might be more apt.

But look, **CANDY SAYS** are opening proceedings on the Songbird stage and they're playing a song called 'Favourite Flavour' which is about love and ice cream, which is about as summery and sunshiny as it's possible to get. Unless you count 'Melt Into The Sun', which pretty much sets the entire scene for the next three days. **MATTHEW LEE** gets the main Pleasant Valley stage underway with a series of old rock'n'roll standards and the odd original thrown in for good measure. His originals are actually more convincing than his covers, which suggests he should stick to his

own material, but who can blame him for playing it safe. Like a midpoint between Jerry Lee Lewis and Jools Holland, Lee is surprisingly good fun. It's only when he detours into a classical medley that things go a little astray. Even Rick Wakeman would have considered it a folly too far. It's hard to know quite what to make of **KING CHARLES**. He's the kind of thing that pops up at festivals because he ticks all the boxes. He's a bit edgy, but not too much (updated lyrics on Billy Joel's 'We Didn't Start The Fire'), he's a bit rock, but not too much, and there's a touch of reggae about his rhythms too. But not too much obviously. It's all good clean fun, and nothing to get too excited about, but it's a fairly effective distraction from the peanut butter and chocolate ice cream that's doing a fair trade in the main arena.

THE OVERTONES are quite peculiar proposition in that they are a Barbershop harmonising boy band that appears to have taken their sartorial cues from the Nation Of Islam. In another universe, they'd be considered an elaborate satirical joke but here, it seems to make perfect sense. Frequently dropped notes and some quite unbearable between-song banter about how tight their strides are, actually enhances their set and everyone seems to love them.

There's no arguing about **BEVERLEY KNIGHT's** talents. She's still got a voice that would put several other soul divas to shame; it's just that her set seems a little too safe. We'd love to hear her really roaring, but tonight she seems content to go through the motions a little.

The *QI* tent is back again this year and they've really put some effort into making it an interesting place to take a break from the sun and the music. For a start, there's the quiz, where those foolish enough (ahem) to give it a go constantly fall foul of the *QI* Klaxon. There's the crowd sourcing publishing of Unbound to pass the time, and then there are the special guests. Over the course of the weekend, the likes of Alan Davies, Robert Llewellyn and Katy Brand take to the stage, but Friday belongs to Phill Jupitus. Performing to a packed tent, it's virtually impossible to see him, but his anger at being drowned out by the music from the

Songbird Stage is more than palpable. Wrapping up his set with a poem about Jeremy Clarkson committing sexual atrocities with a number of different vehicles is a nice touch, and a reminder that he's not just a team gonk on *Buzzcocks*, but an astute and very funny performance poet.

Back outside **IMELDA MAY** is something of a fixture at Cornbury, and long may that continue. Her rockabilly set contains enough nostalgic flavour to keep the older punters happy and just enough sauce and effortless cool to appeal to everyone else. As if sauce and effortless cool were important to anyone at Cornbury. May has grown in stature since she first appeared here, and has developed into a stunningly confident performer, putting many of the others on the bill here to shame. She might have made a better headline act than **SQUEEZE** to be honest. Perpetrators of timeless hits they may be but tonight they seem intent on force-feeding an album's-worth of inferior new songs on us, notably 'Tommy', which is a pale rip-off of 'Eleanor Rigby'. We do get the hits, eventually, from 'Labelled With Love' to 'Take Me I'm Yours' but you feel they've lost too many of the crowd by then and it takes 'Up The Junction' and 'Cool For Cats' to establish any kind of a high to end on.

Saturday

It's not often you get to see a former *Masterchef* host, sauce mogul and one-time punk playing guitar in a piss poor band, and today is not the day to set that straight. The jangly nightmare emanating from Lloyd Grossman's band **THE NEW FORBIDDEN** stinks worse than one of Heston Blumenthal's ill-conceived forays into faecal cheesecake.

Talking of stuff off of the telly, it's 'er off *Downton Abbey*. Apparently. Never seen it to be honest, but **SADIE & THE HOTHEADS** has period drama pedigree apparently. Unlike her band's music which is very much the mongrel, ranging from jazz-funk function band to penny-whistle folk and on to 50s doo-wop and polished bluegrass. At her best she reminds us of Dolly Parton (always a good thing), but too often it's Manhattan Transfer reincarnated.

Nothing at all contrived about **OSIBISA**, whose fluid fusion of west African dance, jazz and funk is pretty much made for this kind of weather. Plus their bongo player is the coolest looking man of the entire weekend. Apart from Ian McCulloch, obviously.

JJ GREY & MOFRO's blues and country balladry is well performed, and no less hokey than Seasick Steve's schtick. At times there are elements of The Faces sound that

creep in, and there's no doubting Grey's startling gravelly voice. Yet even at his angriest (during an impassioned version of 'Brighter Days') he's still quite smooth. Far be it for us to suggest that torturing artists should be allowed, but Grey is a fine example of a performer that could do with a few more rough edges and a hint of emotional trauma.

Is it The Wanted? Is it The Script? No, it's **LAWSON!** Quick, run away! Imagine, if you dare, the worst Bryan Adams power ballad ever. Now give it a good polish. Now coat it in a sheen of that effluence we were wittering on about earlier and whack up the volume. That's Lawson for you. And you're welcome to them. Oh that **THE PROCLAIMERS** were as loud. So quiet is their set that It would seem that they're attempting to play acoustically. Two miles away. It's a shame, because despite the fact that they've been often tarred with a comedy brush, their folk-smothered polemic is quite something to hear. They've always been fine songwriters and that's clear from what little can actually be made out. Still, they play all the ones that everyone knows... 'Letter From America', '500 Miles' and that other one about getting married.

More classic moments from **ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN** than it's decent to list here, from their opening 'Going Up', through magnificent renditions of 'Rescue', 'Do It Clean' and 'Villiers Terrace', to a rousing finale of 'Killing Moon' and 'The Cutter', they're simply a class above everything else. Ever. And when they play 'All My Colours' Nightshift feels like life is complete and we can die happy right here, right now. Which would at least save us from having to watch **KEANE**. Not that they're bad as such, just a bit of a comedown after such grace and intensity. The likes of 'Somewhere Only We Know' are surefire crowd-pleasers but their U2-lite stadium pop lacks that elusive star quality and we head off for the Disco Shed where they're banging out Daft Punk and claiming to be "the anti Keane".

The heat is clearly getting to the audience, and it's **AMY MACDONALD** that notices how flat they are. Making it to the festival just in time (she'd played a festival in Switzerland the night before) she's keen to get on. Despite running through all her bigger hits ('Slow It Down') and dropping a few classic covers in for good measure (Jackie Wilson's 'Higher And Higher' and Springsteen's 'Dancing In The Dark') she struggles to get the crowd, many of whom are huddled around radios listening to the Wimbledon final, going. "I'll not lie to you" she says "the Swiss put you to shame". Things perk up when she announces Andy Murray has won. People, eh?

VAN MORRISON needs his sleep, which presumably explains why his headline slot appears so early on

Sunday and strangely, before the end of Sunday's running order - effectively making Bellowhead and Seth Lakeman the headlining acts. Up there with Lou Reed, Richard Hawley and Neil Young as being one of the more grumpy entertainers, it's fair to say that Van Morrison's set could be an utter disaster. Yet unlike some acts this weekend, he opts to play the hits. Okay so there's a little jazz meandering during 'Moondance', but for the most part he keeps things fairly succinct. 'Gloria', 'Here Comes The Night', 'Jackie Wilson Says', and 'Brown Eyed Girl' all get a workout, and Morrison's voice is utterly perfect throughout. He might have written the most overrated album of all time with 'Astral Weeks', but today's set is quietly splendid.

As Van Morrison is readying himself for bed, **TIFT MERRITT** is over in the Songbird stage putting on one of the performances of the weekend. A stream of heartfelt and beautifully written country songs that along with the pedal steel (on 'Sweet Spot' for example) Merritt is more than capable of making a lump rise in the throat and a tear appear in the eye. Unless you're hardened cider drinking types of course. Like Joni Mitchell with a less irritating voice, with performances like this, it can only be a matter of time before she's considered Mitchell's equal.

With the shade from every tree taken, it's down to the Samsung TV lorry to provide all our air conditioning needs. That this means we have to endure a short promotional demonstration is frankly not a concern any more, and once the demo begins to go wrong we're glad we made the effort. Samsung TVs "work better elsewhere" is probably not the slogan they're after, though.

And so to Cornbury's climax, which should come in the form of perennial party faves **BELLOWHEAD**, but who fail to connect in the manner we've come to expect. Too often they seem to be more concerned with showing off their individual chops and becoming a virtuoso jam band rather than gelling as a simple fun unit. So instead it's up to **SETH LAKEMAN** to win the day, his serious heritage folk somehow more fun and rousing than Bellowhead's dance tunes. 'The White Hare' from his 'Freedom Fields' album is an early set highlight, but it's the droning, scouring 'Kitty Jay' that's the night's apex, Lakeman's dexterity and imagination on the fiddle is always a revelation and proof once again that whatever its musical variables, Cornbury never fails to finish as brightly as the weekend's sun shone.

Words: Dale Kattack and Sam Shepherd



Imelda May



Wilko Johnson



Osibisa



photos: Sam Shepherd

LIVE

TRUCK FESTIVAL

Hill Farm

Friday

This year, it's a sort of Omnitruck. There are little bits of everything that has been popular in Truck's past (except metal) all dotted around the site on special stages: there are big indie names on the main stage; there's a little metal shed full of Americana; there are old characters and a smattering of new local bands, some stoned east Oxonians spinning reggae, and a Big Scary Monsters/Alcopop! stage for people who like math pop and dressing like Ferris Bueller. It's a lovely line-up, and our only wish is that that styles could be mixed up on different stages, as it was this that drew us to Truck in the first place. And there should be probably be some metal.

Nightshift's weekend starts with Oxford's own **DALLAS DON'T**, who attack Postcard Records' jangle with the snarl of Future Of The Left, and who spark up rich, poetic indie tunes by throwing themselves at them full pelt – the drummer especially plays like he's trying to stab excitable cockroaches with a skewer.

We feel as though new stage The Great Western Whiskey Saloon And Blues Kitchen was probably created by polling the residents of the Abingdon area about what they'd want from a festival: proper pub stools, no stupid new-fangled pop music and vintage Watneys beermats, please, squire. Apart from the fact that the doorway isn't really big enough, and that moving on to spirits would be ill-advised in this searing sunshine, this turns out to be a wonderful stage, hosting quality performers, and warm-natured crowds. Opening act **THE SPARE ROOM**, for example, layer some wonderful West Coast three-part harmonies over pretty little guitar and glock ditties, which proves that novelty isn't the only route to success.

WILD SWIM are a peculiar proposition, and perhaps not one best suited for a boiling hot day. Their synth pop is overwrought to the point of sarcastic saturation; it's almost like an introspective version of Fixers' summery feel good pop. It's most certainly well executed, and brings to mind the theatrical flair of Antony Hegarty in places, but for now, it's sunny and we're in need of the joys of life. A heartbreak, a dark bar, a different weather report and one drink

too many, and Wild Swim would be quite wonderful. So we visit **TRULY FORD** at the Virgins stage instead. She's a young singer from Faringdon and she shows some real promise, dark cello tones enriching strong, approachably dramatic compositions. Our only real complaint is that she tends to over-emote vocally, which is the curse of current pop music: schoolkids should be made to listen exclusively to Billie Holiday and Leonard Cohen for at least two years before being allowed a sniff of Alicia Keys.

Liverpool's **ADY SULEIMAN** provides one of a couple of examples this weekend of an act that is shamelessly commercial, yet not hideously calculated. He has a fine vocal style, with plenty of contempo-chops and smooth jazzy phrasing, existing in a strange but comfortable space between Sheeran and Sade, and he can pen an ear-catching lyric too. Good luck to him.

We're sitting back at the main stage, trying to think of a way to describe **MILO GREENE**, so we ask the man next to us for an adjective. "Benign", he says. Yeah, that'll do. Their Fleet Foxes-style music seems to want to be anthemically big and subtly intimate simultaneously, and so ends up middlingly harmless. Benign. Good like a tumour is good: not exactly desirable in and of itself, but you suppose things could have turned out a lot worse.

Generally, pretention is the worst crime a singer songwriter can commit – in the literal sense of pretending to be what they're not; we quite like it when songs are about gryphons and particle physics and Mallarme, it at least fills the review word count nicely – but **AGS CONNOLLY** is the exception. Despite being a rural Oxfordshire boy who can almost certainly spell Faringdon and who has a speaking voice like a turnip salesman, when he sings it's in a deep, western croon that sounds as though it's being broadcast direct from Nashville (to us, that is – to Americans it probably sounds like Dick Van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*). And that should mean that we walk away without giving him a second listen, but something about his songs keep us enrapt. It's probably the lazily lachrymose melodies, and the sleepy-eyed resignation, that hits the spot in

the soul where songs don't need to be complex or original, they just need to be right. That whisky bar suddenly seems like a much better idea.

Tony Jezzard, who sadly passed away recently, provided sound for most of the events in Truck's history, so we go to see one of his old bands, **THE SHAPES**, in the Saloon to raise a glass in his memory. Whether the band find it as emotionally charged as we do, we're not sure, but they play fantastically, and with more a touch more gusto than we've witnessed previously, adding a tang to their accessible mixture of Van Morrison, The Rembrandts and Squeeze.

If you find Ten Benson a bit too baroque, then you might appreciate guitar and drums duo **WET NUNS**, who bash away at their huge stoner punk tracks like a cross between Winnebago Deal and Status Quo. They do one song that just sounds like the riff from 'Foxy Lady' made out of concrete over and over again. Then they do another that sounds exactly the same. Cracking stuff.

FRANKIE & THE HEARTSTRINGS play on the main stage on Friday. We literally cannot tell you anything about them. The programme mentions The Smiths, Orange Juice and Dexy's, but we've already seen how accurate that thing is. Instead of writing notes, our we draw a picture in our notebook of a local musician who's walking past, which says everything about how interesting The Heartstrings are. It's not even a very good picture.

We were talking to someone earlier in the day about how wide a range of customers festivals now get, embracing a greater variety of age and social background than in the distant past. Sadly, though, they still attract the stupid. A girl in a portaloos next to us is shouting to her friend outside: "Oh my God! It stinks in here! It smells like...it smells like...shit!". If that's a surprise, it begs the question what she was planning on doing in there if not the passing of human effluent. Hopefully she couldn't work out how to unlock the door.

Kudos to the Virgins stage for booking a couple of the more unusual acts of the festival, even if they're already well known to regular gig goers, not least a favourite of ours, **KING OF CATS**. Max Levy's tortured rodent screech and his allusive – or perhaps, elusive – lyrics won't be garnering fans as swiftly as Ady Suleiman, but he has a small, appreciative following, probably because underneath the awkward swagger, he can actually write songs. He's playing with a rhythm section today, although the solo songs work best, possibly because his music is

intimate and idiosyncratic, or possibly because his timing's so wayward the band sounds weird. We fervently hope a Trucker or two got their "I won't forget this!" moment from Max.

Entrenched in corduroy, **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** look for all the world like they've stepped out of the 1970s and onto the Market Stage. All of which is rather the point seeing as their set is based around old public information films, documentaries, and footage from black and white movies. Their entire set is a marvel: samples are dropped in with pinpoint precision, Wrigglesworth's drumming is surprisingly forceful despite having to operate carefully within each song's parameters and each hook is greeted with an outbreak of furious dancing in the tent. 'ROYGBIV' taps into the gentle feelgood vibe of Lemon Jelly's 'The Staunton Lick'; 'Spitfire' ups the ante considerably along with the abrasive thrash of 'Signal 30', while 'Everest' points towards their synth-pop influences. Those unfamiliar with the band might think that they rely on the visual element of their show too much, but the sunshine has made the AV element of the set pointless. That their songs can inspire such devotion suggests that Public Service Broadcasting have far more to offer than a clever idea; they have the songs to back it up too.

What's worse? Bands like **THE JOY FORMIDABLE** who make a "come hither" gesture as soon as they're onstage, or punters who actually move closer? Performers, stop worrying about a few measly feet of space, and listeners, if you want to jump about having a good time, don't wait for a formal invitation, it's a fucking rock festival not the Jane Austen Re-enactment Society. That rant aside, the band is rather good, throwing out graceful, melodic pop songs with a nice punchy rhythm and choruses people can hoof beachballs into the heavens to.

BO NINGEN are a very good band, at times a great band. They take the ultra-sucky garage burn that Japanese bands seem to do so well – Guitar Wolf springs to mind – and add some untamed freakout sections, as well as a mystical rock vibe which sort of reminds us of Steppenwolf, and then play it all in a manner that suggests someone said Didcot power station will explode if they ever drop below maximum intensity. Which is great, but as it's in the Barn we can't hear most of it, just a sort of rhythmic hum, so we buy a CD. If we throw the stereo down a well and sit in a cowpat, it'll be just like being there all over again.

We really like **BETA BLOCKER & THE BODY CLOCK**'s music, it's like a Benylin-woozy Dinosaur Jr

with the odd new romantic synthetic flourish. We should have gone for a wee when they were on, because afterwards we lose our sweet spot in the Saloon to answer the old call of nature (no aroma surprise reports from next door, this time), and when we return **THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND** are in full swing, and the building is impossible to get into. From what we can hear from outside the group is killing it as usual, the shouts and screams coming through the swing doors tell us that there's not much difference between the Rabbits' raucous jazz riot and a proper western bar brawl: bodies fly about the place, the noise is intense, and the piano never stops playing.

For some of the audience here at Truck, **ASH** are the soundtrack to their youth. They've had hit after hit with the likes of 'Girl From Mars', 'Shining Light' and 'Burn Baby Burn' and wisely, they've decided to keep the set to the hits and rightly so, it's a festival after all. It's a bit of a nostalgia fest, a solid set that keeps the weary ticking over for just a little longer.

Finally on the mainstage are **SPIRITUALIZED**, another band that no doubt provided the soundtrack to the young lives of a few people in the audience. However, those people were probably so wasted at the time they can't quite remember their youth, or Spiritualized. An odd choice as a headliner, Spiritualized are unlikely to get anyone up and moving, yet their opium-heavy blues jams do make it through to a fair section of the crowd. Contemplating the stars and getting lost in the waves of 'Electricity', 'She Kissed Me', and 'Come Together' might not be everybody's cup of tea, and watching J Spaceman sitting on his arse is not the most thrilling spectacle but after a day of getting roasted alive, Spiritualized provide a soothing conclusion to the first day.

Saturday

During the night The Barn has had something of a make over. It now resembles a beach scene, complete with deck chairs, a small boat, sand, a bar, and for some reason, a volleyball court in the middle of the venue. Whilst it's a nice idea to give the place a spruce up, the deckchairs make it impossible to navigate to the front in an easy way, and it goes without saying that having a bunch of lagered up twats playing volleyball while there's a band on is really pretty annoying. Still, good effort.

Getting a tent full of supremely hungover and tired punters skanking first thing in the morning is no easy task, but **MARVELOUS MEDICINE** manage it. With clouds

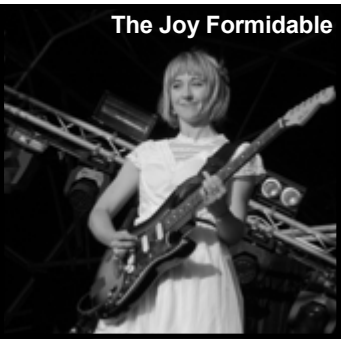
in the sky, it's down to them to provide a bit of sunshine. Ordinarily this is a band that would make us turn on our heels and run, performing ska-pop in the style of The Police or a watered-down Madness. Being open minded souls, we give them a chance, and to be fair they can clearly kick up a storm.

We're all for kids who can't play making pop music; to a certain extent that's what it's for, but even we can't get on with **BENTCOUSIN**, a pair of twins jiggling clumsily about, singing flatly about sibling rivalry and double chemistry and Panini sticker albums (possibly) over some floppy pop. Plus they eviscerate 'Boys Keep Swinging' and dance on its defiled cadaver. One of them is wearing a Wham! t-shirt and the make-your-own-fun vibe is so cloying it really is uncannily like watching an 80s episode of *Why Don't You?* So, naturally, we go off and do something less boring instead.

BRIGHT WORKS (formerly Nairobi) offer oddball pop of a more palatable nature. As we enter the Jamalot tent, the band is laying down some refined white funk and someone is doing a strange yodelling vocal over the top. It's like Hall & Oates fronted by Emo Philips, which is obviously great. Later they do some African jive, and throw in a few synth lines that sound like chase scenes from *Knigh Rider*, and it's all bloody good fun, and approximately four thousand times better than last time we saw them.

KIMBERLY ANNE is today's Ady Suleiman, except she's actually better. Whilst she plays guitar a percussionist adds flourishes on a small stand-up drum kit (side on, we're happy to report), and her outstanding muscular, low voice draws a line between the rich sincerity of Tracey Chapman and the sweet urban froth of TLC. This set of young, slick pop sounds as though it was built to move the heart and the feet, and not shift mobile phones, which is sadly rare nowadays. She must be good, because we've got this far into the review and not mentioned her amazing hair, which looks like a drunken guardsman's wonky bushy.

TOY have been recommended to us by a big Meatloaf fan, which would normally be enough to send us striding in the opposite direction, but this Meatloaf fan also really likes Beefheart, so we thought we'd give them a try. Very good choice. Toy's post-Velvets pop is a little like The Primitives, but with taut motorik drums driving everything relentlessly onwards, and some nifty McCartney guitar parts to hold the tunes together. We're not sure if it's bubblegum kraut or amphetamine shoe-gaze, but it's pretty damn intoxicating, and there always seems to be another plateau



photos: Sam Shepherd

TRUCK FESTIVAL

of guitar noise for the songs to leap up to: if you’ve ever listened to the first Psychedelic Furs LP and thought, “this could really do with fat layers of Korg in place of the goth”, you’re in luck.

THE RAMSHACKLE UNION BAND are playing some pretty good country stuff in the Saloon, according to what we catch through the window. Still, there won’t be a shortage of country in there for the rest of they day, so let’s not tarry. Back in the Veterans tent, we realise that **KATY ROSE** is actually KTB – we think we did know this, somewhere deep down – and that **THE CAVALRY PARADE** is actually Joe Bennett on a lap steel, which we didn’t know but is still not causing any reels of shock, let’s be honest. Katy has a very good voice, as we well know, and, if the material can be a touch refined for our tastes, ‘Bluebird’ is still a lovely song.

LA duo **THE BOTS** are properly gigantic, a vicious mess of feral guitar and pummelled drums that takes in Sabbath riffs, Hendrix via Last Exit solos, punk vocals and more pummelled drums. It’s irreverently witty, too, and our favourite moment is when one of them breaks off from caustic guitar screeches to stop and play three notes on a farty synth repeatedly for about two minutes. The other one, in case you’re wondering, was pummelling the drums at the time.

It’s often quite hard to get particularly excited about bands reforming, but we’ll make an exception for **ULTRASOUND**. They got back together in order to provide a song for a charity album for the benefit of Cardiacs’ Tim Smith and decided to give it another go. The resulting album is as good as we’d hoped, and on today’s evidence they’re still as great live as they ever were (even if Tiny’s not in the best of moods). Their half hour slot means that they never really get a chance to get going, this is a band after all whose songs are as expansive as Tiny’s waistline, but nonetheless the likes of ‘Stay Young; and new track ‘Deus Ex Natura’ are quite glorious.

Big stupid rock n roll hasn’t ever really been a fixture at Truck, but **ROYAL REPUBLIC** state a good case for its inclusion in coming years. A heady mix of Rocket From The Crypt, So-Cal punk, and school yard humour, they’re a much needed injection of dumb-headed brilliance. To call them a comedy band would be doing them a disservice; they’re brilliantly tight, have a raft of instant ear-worm tunes and quickly get the audience outside. Underwear is a shining example of how to handle a festival crowd, as vocalist/guitarist Adam Grahm takes the audience in the palm of his hand and leads them towards rock and roll heaven. Yes it’s showy and meticulously planned, but they’re a breath of fresh air. **AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** are on the main stage. It’s almost too easy. They might as well be called, And So I Nip Off To The Bar. Which isn’t to say they’re rubbish, but their twiddly posty-rocky thingy is not as interesting as watching kids climb over the giant CD sculpture, or trying to explain cryptic crosswords to a Swede (partial success). **FIGHT LIKE APES** are better, not least because their singer is dressed like Siouxsie and if they are overly fond of a repeated singalong vocal line, they know when to kick in enough energy to take a song home.

The timetable says the Jamalot stage should host The Fridge & Bungle Experience now, but it looks a lot like **ILODICA** to us. You have to love the way that he just plays his relaxed roots whilst members

The Horrors



photos: Sam Shepherd



of the organisation set up the stage around him, laying down airy melodic lines and singing in a style equidistant between Max Romeo and Horace Andy as if he is lost in his own musical world. He’s a proper ragamuffin too – we mean that in the original sense; his scruffy martial jacket makes him look like a disciple of The Libertines gone dread. He jams out a track with **PIEMAN**, who is next on the bill, which is rather a sweet way to treat set changeovers. Pieman is a beatboxer of some frightening ability, who is incredibly adept at replicating dubstep wubs and scratchadelic curlicues as well as the traditional drum sounds. And he can rap, it turns out. The bastard. We’d like to see him doing something more substantial one day, or perhaps a set of collaborations.

When **THE SUBWAYS** run onstage, fists aloft, like second-rate telethon presenters, we fear for our teeth, which can only take so much grinding of a weekend. But they’re actually good fun. They know their way from one end of a tune to another; they look as though they are sincerely having a ball onstage, and their set does actually make us a smile, even while we fail to recall any of their music mere seconds after it has finished. Plus, it’s endearing that their stage moves are a vindication for clumsy wedding dad dancing the world over.

The only thing that annoys us about **DAN LE SAC VS SCROOBIUS PIP** is the “Vs”. Considering they’re a laptop twiddler with a taste for 8-bit squiggles and late-90s breakbeat wrangling, and a bearded spoken word artist with a love for classic hip hop and Detroit hardcore, their music is a surprisingly cohesive collaboration. We can talk at great length about why we admire them, from the

impossibly infectious music to the erudite lyrics to the fact that they’re politically engaged musicians who don’t resort to rabble-rousing simplifications. This 45 minute show is inevitably a bit of a greatest hits workout, and we would have liked more time to explore their more esoteric work but seeing a packed tent leap manically to a track we first saw Scroobius play solo to fewer than 20 people in The Zodiac is pleasing. In fact, while this set is going on, other stages were being headlined by **SHAADOW** and **ROLO TOMASSI**, two more acts *Nightshift* first discovered playing blinding gigs to a tiny smattering of listeners, and it’s truly heartwarming.

Closing this year’s Truck are **THE HORRORS**, a band that definitely split opinion. There are those that will be delighted to hear that they showcased two new songs during their set, and there are those that will suggest that those two songs sound exactly like all the others anyway. There is, it would appear, no middle ground. A set that contains the Gothic Bowie strains of ‘Still Life’ and the Joy Division-like pulse of ‘Scarlet Fields’ should have enough to please everyone, though.

As The Horrors wrap things up on the main stage, it’s back to where we began with **THE EPSTEIN** at The Great Western Whisky Saloon & Blues Kitchen. It’s so busy that the crowd is spilling out of the saloon doors, and while it’s impossible to see them, it’s easy to hear why so many people are hanging on every note. They sound utterly elegant and nuanced tonight, the perfect way to end a thoroughly enjoyable festival.

Words: David Murphy and Sam Shepherd

LIVE
WE AERONAUTS / MAY THE BIRDS / THE BALLINA WHALERS

The Perch

The picturesque garden of The Perch is a perfect a setting for Irregular Folk’s Bedouin tent and the latest of their Summer Sessions. The Ballina Whalers are a young a capella trio specializing in sea shanties, executed with a tad more enthusiasm than talent. Then there’s that annoying thing of being taught a couple of lines that we’re supposed to sing back at them, like we’re back at school. This kind of thing may be back on trend, at least in Oxford, but it’s difficult to see what real purpose it serves, like playing the spoons, though it would probably work better late at night in The Half Moon.

The May Birds bring their London take on the acoustic, folk thing with considerably more clout. Thoughtful lyrics, some haunting cello and bags of atmosphere give them total command over the crowd, who are at risk of wilting in the heat. They also manage to take a traditional starting point and successfully create a musical world of their own, including a song about Top Shop, bringing in remixers to provide a new take on

their recorded output. More used to playing in Soho than leafy Oxford, they have just right amount of edge to prevent matters getting too polite and pastoral.

It’s hard to believe that four years have passed since We Aeronauts floored all challengers at that year’s Punt, but we’ve checked and they have. Now also London based apart from two members, they still weave expertly-crafted tunes with lush arrangements, making the best use of a trumpet since The Beggars ITA. With three singers to choose from, Anna wins on stage presence as well as voice, so it’s no surprise she ends up taking on most of the duties. Using a drum box rather than a kit lets us appreciate the songs with the full band but in a relatively restrained format to suit the setting. The climax is a triumphant, singalong ‘Chalon Valley House Band’ that could melt the hardest heart: emotional but never mawkish, much like the band themselves.

Art Lagun

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DR SHOTOVER: New Balls

Well, well. It's you again, is it? In search of more tantalising titbits and noisome nuggets from the Oracle of Oxford Rock, are you...? Pull up a pew. Bit warm, what? Do feel free to place a pint of the usual in front of me. Ah, thank you. *[Glug glug glug]*. Same again? Don't mind if I do. Keep 'em coming and I may even forgive the fact that you are wearing – ugh – trainers. Reminds me of the last meeting of the East Indies Club Special Promotions Committee, at which Sporty Longworth was heard to remark, 'If only the local music scene could be more like Wimbledon'. You can probably imagine the reaction... but, once we had picked ourselves up off the urine-scented linoleum and the mocking cries of 'Tennis elbow!' had died down, mature debate revealed that old Sporty might have a point. A few jugs of Steward Bedingfield's home-made sangria later, it was agreed that perhaps we in the world of Oxford Rock could learn a thing or two from Andy 'Mr Miserable' Murray's success in the arena of lawn tennis. (Pronounced, at this particularly well-refreshed juncture, 'tennish'). So, let's see... we need a dour, moody and traumatised-looking figure-head. Thom Yorke? Done! We need a sense of the ups and downs, the laughter and tears, the vagaries of Lady Luck... The Candyskins? Dude, (as our transatlantic chums would say)... that works for me! Plenty of top-quality super grass? Say no more. A bit of a racket? Abso-bloody-lutely! *[Dr S collapses in hysterical whoops of laughter and falls off his bar stool, all cheer wildly and the jukebox starts playing Desert Storm's stoner-sludge arrangement of Wimbledon theme music* Light and Tunesful].

Next month: The Umpire Strikes Back



Debbie Harry: 'Anyone for Denis, Denis?'

INTRODUCING....

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

The Graceful Slicks

Who are they?
Psychedelic garage rockers The Graceful Slicks are: Alex Abbott, Chris Davies, Patrick Coole and Lewis Burke-Smith (*vocals, guitars and bass*), and Joe Cleverley (*drums*). They formed from a combination of Oxford band break ups, and personal ads, citing a love of psychedelic music. Alex and Lewis were previously in a punk band together and wanted to mellow their sound out and work on something “more layered and psychedelic”. Various line-ups coalesced with the current five two years ago. Since then they have recorded a series of demos and have had their music released in the USA and China. In the States they shared a label with Bauhaus and The Dandy Warhols, while in China they made the front cover of a national music magazine. In May they played the Oxford Punt and later this year they plan their first official UK release.

What do they sound like?
Inspired by much of what happened in the 60s where hallucinogenics might have been involved, they mix up Nuggets-style garage rock and punky blues with droning psychedelia, 90s shoegaze, and moments of surf rock. Or, as a recent Nightshift live review had it, “All their songs are identical, thrashing a multi-guitar groove relentlessly whilst vocals mutate from murmur to howl: they change instruments and mic duties after each track, but it always sounds the same. It will always sound the same. Life is a myth, space is an illusion, and time one livid final flame.”

What inspires them?
“Other bands; a good Wikipedia page.”

Career highlight so far:
“Playing Charlbury Riverside Festival, a few hours before our lowlight...”

And the lowlight:
“D-fest the same day when some douche bag started singing Ed Sheeran by himself on stage and eating into our slot by about 20 minutes. Then we got eaten alive by mosquitoes and our drummer puked from dehydration.”



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“Von Braun. Two of us were in an Oxford punk band about five years ago and we used to always support each other. Since then we have become good friends and still always like to gig together. We also share needles. We're pissed at them though as they didn't mention us when they were 'Introduced' here; we must have been in a rut in the relationship at that stage.”

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“The *Easy Rider* soundtrack.”

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?
“Didcot music festival; expect to see the cooling towers produce rainbow-coloured smoke while five boys smile onstage and try not to laugh.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
“There's some really great bands, but there's not many psychedelic bands.”

You might love them if you love:
The Seeds; The Morlocks; The Archie Bronson Outfit; The Doors; The Brian Jonestown Massacre; Thee Oh Sees.

Hear them here:
Thegracefulsicks.bandcamp.com

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Twenty years ago, as now, there were bands who felt undervalued in Oxford. Back in August 1993 it was the turn of **Radiance**, much favoured by *Curfew* magazine as well as **Jericho Tavern** promoter Mac and the **Oxford Venue**'s Nick Moorbath, but a band who struggled to pull any sort of crowd. The trio's front page interview feature in *Curfew* saw them talking about their passion (“Sometimes we're too upfront, too passionate; it scares people off a bit”) and their desire to “say something to people, rather than just make them dance and forget about us afterwards.” Singer Barrie – who would reappear on the local scene with The Anydays in more recent times – sang the praises of Elvis Costello and Paul Weller as lyrical inspirations, while trying to balance a determination to write optimistic songs, while generally feeling despondent. Decidedly more chipper were **Heavenly**, local indie legends who released two singles on the cult Sarah label this month, 'P.U.N.K. Girl' and 'Atta Girl' described as “perfect summertime pop,” and both going on to get Radio 1 airplay. Another band who have gone down in local music folklore, **The Anyways**, released their 'Sunshine Down' EP. Coming to town in what has always been a quiet gig month – and at a time when **Cropredy** was the only local summer festival – were band-of-the-moment **Mint 400**; ex-Swervedriver types **Skyscraper** and **Collapsed Lung**, all at the Jericho Tavern, while **Radiohead** played a headline show at the Oxford Venue, returning home after selling over a quarter of a million copies of 'Pablo Honey' in the States.

10 YEARS AGO

Mark Gardener was the featured artist in August 2003's *Nightshift*, to coincide with his appearance at Truck Festival over the summer and the release of 'Waves', a compilation of **Ride**'s Radio 1 sessions. Mark had, after the demise of his **Animalhouse** project with **Sam Williams**, looked like quitting music altogether, but here he was fresh from a tour of the States. He looked back fondly on Ride's “early chaotic transit van sell-out tours and recording 'Nowhere',” as well as the band's Reading Festival appearance in 1992 and playing the Royal Albert Hall, though bemoaning the experience of “having to watch Candyflip performing 'Strawberry Fields' six times for *Top Of The Pops*.” Mark went on to discuss The Animalhouse (“In the early days it was fun, but as time went on it became draining for all involved. The music industry was in total collapse and it was a bad time to be signed to a major label. But I think we made a great record in the end, despite it all.” An emotional reunion with Ride bandmate **Andy Bell** at a gig at the Cellar held a special place in Mark's heart: “It was a total surprise and totally unplanned until the morning of the show. Until then I didn't even know Andy was coming to the show. That's a great way for reunions to happen.” As for the present, Mark declared “I can't remember ever feeling this inspired and happy with new songs. The American tour was a great time to test new songs against some of the Ride favourites. I was very disillusioned with the music industry and life. I ended up in the Mojave Desert wondering what the hell I was going to do with my life.” Mark

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

then claimed conversations with chickens while living in France turned things round again, so let's give a big cheer for French chickens and spare them from red wine sauce.

5 YEARS AGO

As had now become normal in Oxfordshire, the summer of 2008 was awash with local festivals. August's Nightshift featured extensive reviews of **Truck**, **Cornbury** and **Wakestock**, while reporting that Zapfest, planned for South Park, had been cancelled due to money troubles. With the gig calendar at its quietest, indoor notable gigs included **Stornoway** supporting Edinburgh indie heroes **Ballboy** at **The X**, showing just how much things have changed in five years, while Greg Dulli and Mark Lanegan's **Gutter Twins** were the highlight of the month in music. **GTA** featuring **Jada Pearl** were the Demo of the Month for their collaborative “funk-disco dancefloor filler that threatens to be Shakatak but struts around amid the glitz and mirror balls like a rapped-up Grooverider.” At the other end of the pile **Red Valve** had issued a ten-point manifesto for their own success, which included, at number 9, the statement that “They are always willing to try out new ideas,” which seemed to manifest itself in a few rehashed AC/DC riffs and a load of attitude-free pub rock that “is so utterly devoid of character but goes on so long that listening to it is like trying to get an injunction against a faceless stalker who keeps reciting discarded Axl Rose lyrics down the phone to you for hours in a dull monotone.” Fun times.

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

GRANT

Longstanding gothic balladeer Grant comes around with a new recording every couple of years or so and while he's part of the furniture enough to take for granted (see what we did there?), it's always worth sitting up and listening properly, since he's out on a limb of one musically locally. A long-time acolyte of Scott Walker, Grant seems to be trying to follow his hero down that particularly convoluted rabbit hole he's gone down in recent years, discarding accepted song structures in favour of dense, disjointed atmospheres, none more so than on opener 'Digitalis', which is trippy and desperately dark enough to get us thinking of Tricky at his most paranoid and inaccessible (and thus best). Immediately he lightens up on 'Unless (SSR)', though it's all relative, his fulsome tenor belted out over simmering middle-distance blues, the whole thing teetering on the brink of being utterly preposterous. Grant tips maybe too far that way on the hammy 'Loam', but 'Theme From The Tantric Skull-Feeders' drags us right back to some obscure early-80s dark-pop noise, all churning but restrained industrial guitar, and scowling, semi-operatic vocals, like a cross between early Sisters of Mercy and Depeche Mode at their most gothic. Hell, it's even got what sound like Cossack chants on it. How to follow that? Why not something lovely and warm that's about two steps removed from being an old Matt Monroe ballad? Approximately twelve of you reading this will make any effort to search this out, but for you, the pathway to the kingdom of heaven is swept clear. The rest of you can sit and wallow in your Mumford and Sons effluence.

THESE ARE OUR DEMANDS

Back in what seems like Oxford's musical middle ages, Harry Angel were one of our most promising bands of noisy buggers, all fizzing post-hardcore fury in a kind of Sonic Youth-inspired death-pop fashion. Since then the band's singer Chris Beard has gone on to show he actually has the voice of a desolate angel in Flights of Helios, and here he is back united with two of his old Harry Angel bandmates in These Are

Demo of the Month wins a free half day at Silver Street Studios in Reading, courtesy of Umair Chaudhry. Visit umairchaudhry.co.uk/nightshift

Our Demands. Despite the name there's little that's particularly militant about them, aside from some ominous drum salvos, the mood held captive firmly in the pensive corner, dark surf guitars and Chris's falsetto adding up to a slightly edgy, lysergic night time road trip through a David Lynch-like moviescape. Best of the two songs here is 'Hospital Radio', which sounds safe and homely enough but is a starlit rockabilly rumble that sounds like a cross between Radiohead and The Cramps and which crawls to an odd conclusion via what sounds like Gandalf the Grey intoning strange elvish curses at some demon of the underworld. Well, that's summer buggered, then.

MARVELLOUS MEDICINE

Marvellous Medicine, by contrast, would doubtless like to keep summer going all year round, with every weekend a street carnival. Describing themselves as a university-based six-piece reggae band, their PR quotes The Specials, The Streets, Jamie T and Alphabet Backwards as reference points and the result is as disparate as that suggests. 'If I Am Young' starts off threatening to be a lightweight piano house cut before slipping into an easy ska canter, then into some slender r'n'b balladry and eventually a bit of Stevie Wonder-style funkling, the singer, meanwhile coming over like a young Michael Jackson wannabe. Not bad elements to fuse together but we're not sure they do fuse that well and just as you're ready to cast off your inhibitions and have a boogie, they're coming on all sensitive and self conscious. 'Air To Breathe' would be more cohesive – a contemplative acoustic amble that's not far off Robert Wyatt at times – if it wasn't punctured at random intervals by a full-on rap that just feels tagged on and incongruous. We're told that Marvellous Medicine are classically trained, which might explain that desire to be clever and keep going off in different directions, but sometimes just sticking to the point works far better. Talking of medicine, Nightshift used to be in a band called Homeopathy. We were like Placebo but less effective. Thankyouverymuch, we're here all week.

WHYRHYS

Short of employing a professional welsh person to translate the name we can only guess that Whyrhys means "Rhys is wired to shit on magic mushrooms," this being

the work of one Rhys Baker, formerly of Demo of the Month winners Camena and now aligned with the rather good Bear On A Bicycle collective along with one-time bandmate Jordan O'Shea. This debut outing is a one-song offering called 'You Blues', an eerie, airy slice of electronic minimalism that's kind of post-Radiohead, post-dubstep, a bit glitch, all slo-mo beats and what could be tiny alien mouse voices, all broken up by sparse acoustic guitar strumming. It doesn't really do a huge amount or go anywhere in particular but it does so in an elegantly shadowy fashion, so we like it, and have let it sit in front of the fireplace like a toy robot pet chinchilla. It's quite pretty, truth be told.

GAG REFLEX

Unlike Rhys, Cheltenham-Oxford punk duo Gag Reflex do very much have a sense of purpose. That and a determination to shout at anyone and anything that makes them vexed is what gets them out of bed in the morning. Adopting a stripped-down, lo-fi, almost industrial approach to punk, their laser-gun guitar attacks sound like they were born in the shadow of Killing Joke and raised on a diet of early Big Black EPs. 'Cut To The Spike' staggers and stutters along, maybe not quite as menacingly as it would like but sinewy enough, and armed with some Albini-eque scree, to make most folks think twice about starting anything untoward. 'I'll Be The Hyena' is similarly tinny and disjointed, but equally determined to make its mark, though 'Chew Myself' finds them getting a bit two-dimensional and shouty when the likes of 'What's The Deal, Kim Jong Il?' is a reminder of what they do better – keeping that menace in check and brooding on stuff rather than lashing out too forcefully, exposing a lack of raw muscle.

DR SLAGGLEBERRY

No risk of a lack of raw muscle where Dr Slaggleberry are concerned. They've been absent from the local scene for a while and now seem to be essentially just Chris Pethers, who's also in the mighty Masiro, but heck, the man makes enough noise for ten here, a beastly fifteen minutes of eviscerating guitar noise and pulverising drums, barrages of nasty angular hardcore math-rocking that dips into pockets of placid contemplation before emerging once again even uglier and more ferocious than before. Salvos of blast beats hold things together but the guitars remain intent on going off at tangents, reminding us at times of fellow local mathcore tyrants Komrad. It's all done with suitably pinpoint accuracy – stealth bomber rock with laser-guided riffs. Does it inspire shock and awe? It comes close-ish here in recorded

form but you imagine hearing it amped to the max in a live setting would really do the trick. Chris needs a new band to get to that stage, so track him down and offer your soul and services to the cause.

FOXY BROWN

An odd one this. The only address given is Jesus College and Foxy simply signs off as Ms Brown, so she's obviously not giving much away. And song-wise you feel she's keeping her cards tight to her chest as she closes down each of her five numbers here around the ninety second mark. It's like listening to short samples of full songs on Amazon or something, so we're not entirely sure what to make of it all. Certainly she's got a good voice, either crooning in haunted country folk fashion on 'Moon Glow', sounding like Cowboy Junkies in some afterhours basement bar, or getting bluesy and ballsy on the rough'n'ready r'n'b of 'Sugar Daddy', where she comes on like a lo-fi Amy Winehouse. Since there's five songs (or bits of songs) on the CD and only four tracks listed on the sleeve, we get a bit lost as to what's what halfway through but the general thrust of it all is towards the classic lady sings the blues lamenting of Billie Holiday et al, but while it could be great – really it could – it feels half-baked instrumentally and production-wise, and with each songs fading into the ether before it's really got going it's all a bit inconsequential right now, which is a genuine shame.

THE DEMO DUMPER

TERPSICHORE

Ooh, get us. We know what Terpsichore means. It's the muse of dancing in Greek mythology, though concentrating on the terps bit of the name, we'd happily neck an entire bottle of lighter fuel than listen to this wretched, rancid, house-lite landfill-friendly heap of inconsequentiality again. David Guetta has much to answer for – and maybe one day some wise soul in The Hague will call him up to answer to for his sins against good dance music. In the meantime his dispiriting shadow continues to loom over clubland like an overweight lorry driver's arse over a blocked toilet bowl, preparing to rain down more shit into an already overflowing lake of excrement. And Terpsichore's cliché-riddled lump of Radio 1 b-list makespace is just another turdplop into that benighted bowl. A great club hit needs only two things: some monstrous beats and a chorus as big as a horse's cock. This, if we may be permitted to extend the scatological imagery just a little longer, is less horse's cock, more dog's arse.

*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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