

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 210
January
2013

photo: Marc West

DEATH OF HI-FI

"We want to be a faceless production unit"

Oxford's sci-fi obsessed hip hop warriors beam down.

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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THE OXFORD PUNT returns for another musical trip round town in May. The annual showcase of unsigned Oxford talent takes place on **Wednesday 8th May**, featuring 16 acts at **The Purple Turtle, The Cellar, The Wheatsheaf, The Duke's Cut** and the newly-opened **White Rabbit** in Friar's Entry, off Gloucester Green.

Bands or solo acts wanting to play at The Punt can submit demos, either by emailing links to online music (no sound files, please) to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, or sending CDs to **Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**. In both cases, please clearly mark your demo PUNT and include both phone and email contact details and a brief biog of the band. Only acts from Oxfordshire may apply, you can't apply if you played The Punt last year and, due to the licensing conditions of all the venues, only bands aged over 18 will be eligible. Deadline for demos is the 10th March, with the line-up announced on the 15th.

As ever, a limited number of all-venue Punt passes will be on sale from the end of January. Running since 1996, The Punt has previously given early exposure to bands such as Young Knives, Stormoway, Fixers and Little Fish, as well as Yannis and Jack from Foals' first band Elizabeth, and Hugo Manuel's pre-Chad Valley and Jonquil band, The Modern.

A BIG NIGHTSHIFT CONGRATULATIONS TO ELIZABETH PRICE, who won the Turner Prize last month. Before becoming a renowned artist, Liz was co-vocalist in **Talulah Gosh**, one of the pivotal bands in Oxford's music history and a major influence on both subsequent generations of local bands as well as the riot grrl movement. Liz's victory brought renewed interest in Talulah Gosh, with *The Independent* running a feature on the band and its high-achieving former members. Oxford music is just the best, ain't it?

THE PEOPLE'S SUPERMARKET on Cowley Road are looking for local bands and musicians who would like their music played in the store. The community-run shop is situated at 124 Cowley Road. You can email links to downloads to music@tpsoxford.org or drop a CD off to the store between 8am and 10pm any day of the week.

LITTLE FISH announced a change of band name at their brace of sold-out shows at the Rotunda in Iffley in December. The band will

now be known as **Candy Says**, reflecting the change in musical style they have undergone in recent months, since the departure of original drummer Neil Greenaway. The band was joined by Californian author Miranda Ward for both shows, reading extracts from her book, *Fuck The Radio, We've Got Apple Juice*, which was written alongside Little Fish and deals with their trials and tribulations with the music industry and on the road, as well as musings on being in a band in the modern age. Candy Says are set to release their debut single in late January. Visit www.littlefishmusic.co.uk for more details.

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

JAMES CULLING 1972-2012

Oxford sadly lost another of its musical sons at the end of November when James Culling, guitarist in Veda Park and Zim Grady, passed away after battling leukaemia. He was 39. James joined Veda Park in 2001 and released two albums with them. After his first recuperation from leukaemia, he formed Zim Grady with Veda Park bandmates Peter Madams and John McManus and together they recorded an album, 'Balsam For Battered Souls', which featured guest appearances from Phil Freizinger and future Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band member Richard Cotman, followed by a number of singles and EPs. Talking about his friend and bandmate, Peter Madams said, "James was a multi-talented musician, an under-rated and

gifted songwriter, and a very lovely man who I will miss greatly."

Nightshift's condolences go out to James' wife Kirsty and sons Daniel and Luke as well as all of his family and friends. A memorial fund has been set up in James' name at www.justgiving.com/jamesculling with money raised going towards leukaemia and lymphoma research.



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a quiet word with

DEATH OF HI-FI



photo: Marc West

“WE HIT IT OFF STRAIGHT away as we shared a common vision about how we could make crazy videos for tunes we hadn’t even written at the time. Although there was nearly beef as I was a ZX Spectrum fan and he was firmly in the Oric 1 camp.”

ANDY HILL, ONE HALF OF production team Death Of Hi-Fi is recalling how he first met his partner in musical exploration, Dan Clear. “We’d already agreed by email to meet up and had discussed what we wanted to do so we already knew we had similar ideas,” continues Dan. “Death Of Hi-Fi already existed as Andy’s project; I’d not long moved to Witney and wasn’t doing much with my other bands. I had already started working on ideas for a solo album, which was to be called ‘Anthropocene’ so the album was underway before we met. I think we hit it off okay; we went to the pub and sat in the garden in the sun, which is always the best way to start any project.”

THE FRUITS OF ANDY AND Dan’s meeting were revealed in December with the release of ‘Anthropocene’, hailed by Nightshift as possibly the best local hip hop album ever released.

‘Anthropocene’ is a loose concept album based on the idea of “aliens creating a musical interpretation of Earth, made up from hearing snatches of radio transmissions” and features a revolving cast of guest MCs, from local stars like Asher Dust, Half Decent and N-Zyme to international guests like Dizzy Dustin, Mark Deez and Copywrite. Heavy on the electronics, and employing some seriously heavyweight industrial guitar noise along the way, the album in infused with attitude and fun, atmosphere and pop hooks, musical adventure and some virtuoso rap displays. Eclectic and masterfully produced, scattered through with snatches of the duo’s beloved sci-fi themes and dialogue, ‘Anthropocene’ brings together influences as diverse as MC Doom, Nas, Nine Inch nails, Aphex Twin and even Future Sound Of London, a heady brew that raises the bar for local hip hop several notches. Not bad for two blokes from Witney with a fair few years of history in local bands behind them.

PRIOR TO MEETING DAN Andy was, in his own words, “a rent-a-rapper,” badgering his way onstage with his mates’ bands, moving into production because “in the pre internet days I had no idea where

to get original beats from,” and enjoying some brief critical acclaim back in 2007 with his electro project The Mysteriou2. For his part Dan had been playing in bands for about 25 years, including as bassist in local metallers Sweet FA and Swindon-based jazz-funk/trip-hoppers Sepiatone, as well as Captain Mandate, where he met Stuart Anderson (Disco from Beatbullyz) who became a chief influence on his beatmaking, and where he first began experimenting with video projections, which he’s brought to DOHF’s live shows since.

COMING FROM QUITE different musical backgrounds, how, we wonder, did Andy and Dan manage to hit it off musically and what did they bring into each other’s world? Andy: “I’ve mostly worked as a solo artist so it must be difficult for Dan, as I’m used to making snap decisions on a whim. Having said that it’s brilliant working with someone again, as Dan works as a great bullshit meter. He’s not afraid to tell me when I’ve got too self indulgent. Which reminds me I need to order a 2:1 scale model of Stonehenge for our live shows.” Dan: “When I first discovered rap music as a genre it was clear it

wasn’t really that new; I’d heard rapping plenty of times before I’d heard the term ‘rap music’ in about 1980 and I was already aware of the culture of hip-hop – the graffiti, the musical experiments with beats and turntables etc. – through American TV shows. “Fusing rock with hip-hop though was never an original idea. When I first heard AC/DC’s ‘Back in Black’ it was clearly rap – and the guitar riff was later sampled by The Beastie Boys – and of course ‘Walk This Way’ by Aerosmith was always a rap tune, Run DMC just gave it a harder beat and delivery. Stephen Tyler grew up as a drummer in New York; if you listen to the beats and funky bass lines of early Aerosmith you can see they were coming from the same place as many of the hip-hop pioneers. We could go on about new wave crossovers of course, with Blondie etc, but if you look back at the history, almost everything’s been included in hip-hop already.” Andy: “Totally agree; hip hop for me is like the old 50’s b-movie, *The Blob*. It absorbs all it meets and grows in size and strength. Hip Hop has always been and should always be about youthful rebellion, it’s just a shame that some rappers these days choose to talk incessantly about nothing but material gain.”

MENTION OF *THE BLOB* brings us neatly to one of Death Of Hi-Fi’s favourite obsessions – classic science fiction, references to which are littered throughout ‘Anthropocene’, from its central concept to snatches of anything from cheesy blockbuster *Independence Day* to lost 1970s cult classic *The Changes*. Dan: “It’s much of what we grew up with. I used to love anything that was a bit dark, so *Dr Who* of course but also *Blake’s 7* was a great antidote to the positive messages of *Star Trek*. One of my favourite kid’s TV shows was *The Tomorrow People* and I liked weird things like *Sapphire and Steel* as well. My dad was probably to blame for getting me into sci-fi; I seem to remember he was always the one who knew when *Star Trek* was on.” Andy: “We bonded immediately over a love of the wobbly set, low-budget BBC sci-fi. As a kid, I used to listen endlessly to the BBC Radiophonic workshop records and marvel at these unearthly sounds they created. I also really love things like *Akira*, *Robotech* and *Ghost in the Shell* for its sheer technicality and bizarreness.”

Equally, much of the instrumentation across the album references industrial electronic acts, even touching base with Throbbing Gristle at its heaviest, which gives the album its dark, gritty core. Andy: “I’ve always been a fan of melting pot music generally, so the influence is definitely there. The biggest influences from my point of view are people like Aphex Twin, KLF, Tangerine Dream and Prefuse 73, as well as Flying Lotus. Mind you the earliest memory I have of music is listening to my Dad’s copy of ‘Revolver’ and being blown away by ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’. The production sounded like it was from outer space and listening to it today, it seems so far ahead of its time.” Dan: “The most direct influence for me has always been from the musicians or producers I’ve worked with. I’ve definitely been influenced by a lot of artists, but I tend not to notice until it’s pointed out. As a guitarist I remember being compared to Andy Summers. I was never a huge Police fan but it seemed to make sense when I heard it. Alex Lifeson from Rush influenced me quite a lot, despite the fact I was trying to play like Eddie Van Halen or Randy Rhodes. Apart from musicians, I’ve been heavily influenced by movies. I love the dramatic use of orchestras and choirs so that’s possibly why I’m unable to create anything minimalist.”

ANOTHER ELEMENT THAT keeps ‘Anthropocene’ so fresh and invigorating is the array of vocal cameos across the album. The local contingent represents the best

of Oxford’s current crop, but the presence of American MCs like Ugly Duckling’s Dizzy Dustin feels like a real coup for a pair of producers from Witney. Dan: “Most are friends; Dizzy Dustin, Mark Deez and Copywrite are courtesy of Andy’s badgering. I knew AJ Mayhew from Swindon; he’d performed a lot with Beatbullyz and had a drum&bass group called Verbal Destruction before that. Stella Walton was the vocalist in a band that had come from Sepiatone. We asked her to sing on a track that ended up not making it to the album but when she was recording she had a listen to ‘Painted Faces’ and she had something for it; I love the way that came out. She also did backing vocals on ‘So Over You’. The other artists were already part of BG Records, Half Decent had also worked with us and Tiger Mendoza, so it was right he should be on the album. And of course he gave us our entry into the Nightshift Top 25 with ‘Until I Stop Breathing’.” Andy: “I’ve been a massive fan of Ugly Duckling for a long time and have been pestering Dizzy to do something. I’m surprised I’ve got this far without a restraining order being put in place.” Of the Oxford crowd, you’ve got young guys like N-Zyme and a local veteran like Asher Dust; what different approaches and influences did they bring to their songs? Dan: “It’s hard to say. Zahra (Tehrani from BG Records) did most of the vocal production but from my perspective, the differences come from personalities rather than age or experience; they’re all telling their own stories.” Andy: “Dan’s right; they all come at the same type of thing from a different angle. It’s a bit like giving a script to different directors and seeing how they interpret it; Quentin Tarantino would give you a very different rendering of that script compared to Michael Bay. I’m not for a second comparing any of them to Michael Bay by the way; they’re all miles more creative.” Mention of Zahra Tehrani brings us to perhaps the defining figure on the local hip hop scene in recent times. Through her work with Ark-T and the Oxford Young Women’s Music Project, as well as her own BG label, Zahra has been an incredibly big motivational force for aspiring local musicians and rappers. How important has she been for DOHF? Dan: “Without question. If there are any artists who want a chance to work with experienced artists, or get to play on stage with well known acts, she has done everything to make it happen. On top of this she’s provided mentoring and workshops with big name artists who are happy to tell them the harsh realities of the industry while proving ordinary people can and do make it. I’d say it’s not just hip hop

acts that could learn from Zahra.” Andy: “Zahra is the 5 of Megacity 5, which is the biggest compliment I can pay her.” WITH SO MANY VOCAL guests, how do Death Of Hi-Fi’s live shows pan out, compared to their recorded stuff? Dan: “We started as an instrumental act so our live shows can be done without vocalists but nowadays we tend to use the guest vocals on backing track unless they’re available to come on stage with us. As we started without vocalists we used projections to make the show visually interesting, so now I think we can be quite versatile, depending on what a gig needs.” Those of you who have caught DOHF live will remember the pair take to the stage in masks, much like fellow local electro manglers Coloureds; is that a defence or a statement about criticisms about electronic music being faceless? Dan: “We both have form for doing fancy dress on stage and the expressionless faces sort of represent the idea behind the album of robotic emotionless observers, taking it all in but not being effected. I like the fact no one can see the faces I pull whenever I make a huge mistake as well. Another benefit I’ve discovered is that people don’t recognise me after a gig which is great, I can be really grumpy when I’m setting up or packing down and don’t like to be disturbed.” Andy: “We wanted to be a faceless production unit where the music or the collaborator is the star, rather than our ugly mugs. We admired the robotic performances of Kraftwerk; throw in a measure of Daft Punk and it plays with the idea that people won’t know what to expect from us.”

WITH ‘ANTHROPOCENE’ Local hip hop has undoubtedly hit a new high. The local hip hop scene has produced some great talents over the years but still struggles to attract a big cross-over audience in Oxford, particularly live, why do Dan and Andy think that is, and can Death of Hi-Fi change things? Dan: “I think it’s down to the culture. Where I’ve worked with hip hop acts in Swindon getting a crossover audience is easy as it’s more of a clubby town. Oxford is known for its live scene and it may be that people who don’t follow the well known local acts aren’t aware that there are other things going on. I don’t think DOHF can change that ourselves but BG Records maybe can, and have had success getting big name acts to play Oxford and put local supports on. There’s also Fastest Dog promotions and Theoretical Presents, as well as a few other local promoters actively trying to build up interest in the electro scene. Ultimately it’s down to

the locals though. If they want it, it will happen. It’s just a case of taking that risk of going to see an act they’ve never heard of.” COMING BACK TO THE concept of ‘Anthropocene’, how did the thematic ideas form? Does the album have a particular narrative, or is it a more nebulous concept that binds the album together? Dan: “We tried to imagine how an alien intelligence would interpret the transmissions from earth. Philosophically this was hard, trying to imagine what it’s like to understand nothing of earth, but create a picture from just snippets of sound and vision. For that reason there’s no firm narrative, the listener is like the alien observer, free to create their own narrative. The concept behind ‘You Are Here’ is the final transmission from the observer on Earth, having arrived in time to see the end of the world. It’s both hopeless and optimistic: you’re too late to change what happened but at least you got to see some of it. I don’t think that comes across in the music without the accompanying visuals.” Andy: “It’s also about telling these tiny little stories of life on Earth and how we interact with each other and our environment, either on a grand scale or on an individual basis. It’s akin to channel surfing through the lives of the storytellers.” We’re living in the Anthropocene era now and humans are shaping the climate and more. Your home town Witney flooded again last month. If it were up to the pair of you, what would Death Of Hi-Fi do to make the world a better place? Dan: “There’s nothing I could suggest that hasn’t been said by many people far more intelligent than me but in truth, the world can only be a better place from a human perspective. If a critical mass of humans decide to make it so. Anything that I suggest that starts with ‘people will all have to...’ goes against my wishy-washy liberal politics but if I had to, and had the power, I’d give everyone a ride in our space ship, take them back to the birth of the solar system, let them watch the next 4.5 billion years at fast forward, slowing down until the present, then take them home and let them get on with their lives.” Andy: “Dan’s summed it up for me there. I’d like to see more people look at the bigger picture and realise that a take, take, take mentality is unsustainable in the long run. It’s about giving back at the very least the same as what you take. But it starts with all of us. To paraphrase Immortal Technique, I am not the revolution, you are not the revolution, *We* are the revolution.”

‘Anthropocene’ is out now on BG Records. Hear the album at deathofhifi.co.uk

RELEASED

FLOODED HALLWAYS

‘One Variable’

(Own label)

I’m not much of a lyrics guy, and Flooded Hallways’ album being hip-hop, is made up largely of lyrics. And as such there are messages and stories to be had. However, approaching ‘One Variable’ from another angle, one can hear the lyrics rather than listen to them, and from this perspective the vocals are a success. They wend their way through a rather sparse, sample-based backdrop, doubling up from time to time and flip-flopping between vocalists to enrich the sonic textures on display over the album’s eleven tracks. Flooded Hallways are prolific; ‘One Variable’ is their fourth release of 2012. It seems that – lyrics, potentially, aside – they’ve been diligent, ensuring a varied sound that joins the dots between the delicate and minimal opener ‘Move Like The Wind’, the rich and disorientating eastern instrumentation backing on ‘Buenas Noches’, the Mo-Wax-style fuzzed trip-hop of ‘Mememes’ and the heavier and more aggressive loping beats and chants of ‘Life Pourings (O.V.O.)’. It’s very rare that the quality – in terms of clarity of sound, sharpness of production or neatness of arrangement – dips, and while the range on display could begin to repeat itself on a longer collection, over this album length it’s just enough to satisfy.

TREVOR WILLIAMS

‘Storm’

(Own label download)

We wonder if anyone, even Trevor himself, has quite worked out Trevor Williams yet. He’s been a fixture on the local scene for a decade or so now and we still never know whether his next song is going to be a gem or a heap of dung. Two Nightshift Demo of the Months in a row, this full EP release features four songs which scatter themselves between both extremes. In the former is ‘Skeleton’, a dark, slightly bleak slice of maudlin self contemplation. “Who are my real friends, and why are they so afraid?” he wonders, perhaps contemplating whether he himself is some kind of a curse. He certainly has the ability to dig deep into his own reserves of self doubt and loathing, while sometimes poking his head above the parapet to offer a clarion call for resilience and doing your own thing. Which is where he can fall flat. ‘Keep Singing’ is awash with positivity but also horribly twee mixed-up similes: “Blackbird singing in the dark / Falling like a star / But singing like a lark.” It’s all very well singing your own song, but it helps if it makes sense. Mostly though, Trevor’s cosy mix of warmth and alienation wins out. ‘Storm’ reiterates his craving for love over sparse acoustic guitar jangle and neatly unobtrusive synth whooshes, while ‘Lucky’ finds his insecurities laid bare as he pleads, “I want my lollipop / I want my red balloon / I want my teddy bear.” Childish perhaps but more honest



It’s on a couple of tracks – ‘Try Me’ and especially ‘Theoretical Measure’ – that Flooded Hallways hint at an invention and craft that may truly set them apart. Both pieces are ostensibly mid-tempo hip-hop with a spooky, moody selection of samples arranged into a skeletal backdrop; not afraid to turn melodic corners in totally unexpected ways. ‘Theoretical Measure’ is a pivotal point for ‘One Variable’: it’s weird and creative, opening with stunted half-heard sounds before switching tempo and feel to twist up the tension. It then does the same trick twice more to create an odd structure that works in ways that it really shouldn’t.

Simon Minter

than many singers of this ilk can ever manage. Still a bit of a conundrum then, but with ‘Storm’, Mr Williams keeps us guessing, while reminding us that at his best he’s deserving of that love he craves.

Dale Kattack

TRAPS

‘I Won’t Crawl’ /

‘Stop The Machine’

(Own label)

A debut double a-side from Traps, who were last year’s MMG Battle of the Bands winners. Centred on the powerful, soulful vocals of singer Lex, and pumped up on stadium-pop steroids, ‘I Won’t Crawl’ is a close cousin of Skunk Anansie, muscular riffage held at bay by the sky-searching vocal lead. It feel a bit polished to start with – like an *X-Factor*-friendly idea of what a modern rock band should sound like, but finds a bit of thunder in its belly halfway through and cranks up the heaviometer significantly without losing its soft, soulful core. ‘Stop The Machine’ is sharper, all serrated grunge guitars and yelping punked-up backing vocals, but again it’s Lex’s voice that steals the show. It’s the stronger of the two songs here, daring more to tread in turbulent waters, but you feel it’s the safer sounds of ‘I Won’t Crawl’ that are likely to win Traps a wider audience.

Ian Chesterton

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STEM

‘Atlas’

(Own label)

“How did you know I was grey” queries Stem’s singer Mike Hill two tracks into his band’s second album. We just listened to a few of your songs, Mike and it quickly became apparent. Life needs filler, we guess, padding to stop the good stuff getting dented and Stem might be the musical equivalent of those styrophone nuggets you get in the box when you buy something nice and shiny. They’re not really satisfying enough to be bubble wrap.

They’re not even terrible. Well not at first any road. Album opener ‘Bridges & Tunnels’ is passable grunge-lite, a bit like Idlewild without their sense of romance or ear for a great tune. ‘I Was Grey’ lives up to its name, passing three minutes without making impact, positively or negatively, on your heart or mind, and for the most part the album drifts, ambles, cruises and generally wafts along in a sea of fuzz, half-hearted gusto and hollow bombast. As we say, it’s passable. But since when did passable become something to aspire to? Does anyone ever find the middle ground and think, “this is the perfect place to build our dream home”? And yet it’s hard to listen through ‘Atlas’ without contemplating such a soulless void. Why have grand vistas and broad brushstrokes when you can have colour-by-numbers mediocrity? Who needs crushing heartache when there’s moon-in-June rhyming couplets and non-committal moaning to be dined upon? By the time Stem reach ‘Everything Urgently’, a mere four songs in, even they sound bored; ‘Point To Point’ is clunky and awkward, a song in search of an identity, while ‘Timeless Tree’ is a mournful dirge whose ending is a merciful release. To question the very point of a local band’s existence feels uncomfortable, but sometimes you have to wonder if there’s any reason or purpose behind the stale noise emanating from your speakers. Naming their album ‘Atlas’ suggests Stem have big ambitions, but searching for peaks amid the flat musical landscape laid before us, we imagine ‘Road To Nowhere’ might be a more apt title.

Dale Kattack



CRYSIS

‘The Defiant EP’

(Own label)

Producing something genuinely new in metal is becoming ever harder (pun intended). Norway’s Kvelertak were possibly the last band to conjure a genuinely groundbreaking metal album. Locally Undersmile’s ghostly doom, Desert Storm’s deceptively melodic southern stoner metal and Agness Pike’s theatrically camp Hammer Horror thrash sound fresh and invigorating in contrasting fashions.

For the rest, it’s a case of sticking to those golden rules of hard, fast and heavy. In such a charge, the strongest will survive; weaklings will perish underfoot. Luckily for them, Crysis sound more than capable of making it over the finishing line with limbs and armour intact.

The four tracks here adhere as close as dammit to Pantera’s hardcore thrash blueprint – shredded guitars; militant blast beats and Kial Churcher’s tonsil-ripping vocals, infused with apocalyptic rage. At times they might tread dangerously close to becoming a Pantera tribute band (there are worse things to be, believe us), but ‘We Will Rise’ in particular is more its own beast, old school guitar runs and an oddly euphoric choral backing adding a new dimension to the band’s onward rampage.

Obvious comparisons aside, Crysis are never less than loud, nasty fun – a single-minded wrecking ball of a band. You can stand in their path and question their originality if you like, but we sure as hell aren’t mopping up the mess afterwards.

Ian Chesterton

SHAKER HEIGHTS

‘Little White Doll’

(Own label)

Shaker Heights seem to have been around the local scene for nigh on a decade now without ever making a huge impact. Partly this seems to be because no-one’s quite sure if they’re from Oxford or Aylesbury, but more so because they so often seem to be one special ingredient away from producing something great.

Take this new single, an epic piece of country-tinted rock that sometimes sounds like its being weighed down by its own gravitas. The lyrics sound portentous, almost sinister, hinting at dark deeds done and deeply regretted. The atmosphere borders on claustrophobic, at least until they wander off into an extended guitar solo partway through. It’s a well-measured piece, Neil Young and Tom Petty its most obvious antecedents, but having established its oppressive ambience, and armed with a neat hook, it struggles to achieve take-off. It’s so nearly there but something, one small piece, feels like it’s missing.

Further into this four-song EP the band reaffirm their Neil Young affections with the reedy vocals of the lighter ‘We Are All Floating In Mid Air’, which wafts amiably, while ‘Acting To An Empty House’ picks up the pace, escaping its initial earnest balladry, and EP closer ‘The Dragging Of Carts’ treads a fine line between hazy psychedelic country hum and worthy soft-rock filler.

At their best a very decent band, but we’re still waiting for that magic moment.

Ian Chesterton

WELCOME TO

PEEPWORLD

‘Charm Offensive’

(Big Red Sky)

The cover of this EP features a photo of Welcome To Peepworld that’s clearly intended to echo Grant Wood’s painting ‘American Gothic’ (whereas Bert Audubert’s resemblance to a member of Grinderman is probably coincidental).

It tells you a lot about a duo that has a traditional craftsman’s touch, and an eye on the darker, sterner side of songwriting. It’s definitely the latter part of the equation that we enjoy, and a couple of tracks here, ‘All You Need’ and ‘Fool’, are immaculately performed, and wispy sweet, but a little generic. Things are definitely improved when the mood turns blacker and when Fi McFall pushes her voice beyond its natural warmth into more ravaged tones. On ‘Help Me’ and the title track she rises to a yearning corncrake scree that teeters on the far edge of melodicism, and the effect is captivating. At its best, this record reminds us of Kristin Hersh’s early 90s material: simple guitar strumming overlaid by wild-eyed drama and elegantly swelling strings (courtesy of the wonderful Barney Morse-Brown); if it can’t always keep up the emotional intensity, it at least never stumbles into open mic self-pity, and it does boast the best piece of singalong a capella break-up vitriol you’ll hear this year. Charm offensive? Stick to the bitterness, Peepworld, it’s far more interesting.

David Murphy

THE TRUCK STORE / RAPTURE
TOP 20 ALBUMS OF 2012

1. DIIV - OSHIN
2. ALT-J - AN AWESOME WAVE
3. FIRST AID KIT - THE LIONS'S ROAR
4. GRIMES - VISIONS
5. DEATH GRIPS - THE MONEY STORE
6. OF MONSTERS & MEN - MY HEAD IS AN ANIMAL
7. REVEREN PEYTON'S BIG DAMN BAND - BETWEEN THE DITCHES
8. KINDNESS - WORLD YOU NEED A CHANGE OF MIND
9. POLICA - GIVE YOU THE GHOST
10. BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN - WRECKING BALL
11. BOBBY WOMACK - BRAVEST MAN IN THE UNIVERSE
12. GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR - HALLELUJAH! ASEND! DON'T BEND!
13. ANAIS MITCHELL - YOUNG MAN IN AMERICA
14. DAMIEN JURADO - MARAQUA
15. DJANGO DJANGO - DJANGO DJANGO
16. EFTERKLANG - PIRAMIDA
17. THE XX - COEXIST
18. THE 2 BEARS - BE STRONG
19. THE DREAMING SPIRES - BROTHERS IN BROOKLYN
20. FIXERS - WE'LL BE THE MOON

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GIG GUIDE

TUESDAY 1st

THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue – Weekly open mic club from the Catweazle crew, showcasing singers, musicians, poets and more, every Tuesday.

WEDNESDAY 2nd

THURSDAY 3rd
MASK OF JUDAS + A TRUST UNCLEAN + ZAOS: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox metal night with Chichester’s groove and tech-metallers Mask Of Judas alongside local grindcore monsters A Trust Unclean and uber-thrash merchants Zaos.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running and best open mic club, showcasing singers, musicians, poets, performance artists and more every week.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

Saturday 12th
AN EVENING OF JOHN CAGE: The Port Mahon
Anyone lucky enough to have caught Fixers’ experimental set at Oxjam in October will know that Jack Goldstein and Roo Bhasin are perfectly placed to curate and perform at an evening of music by and inspired by John Cage. In particular, choosing the composer’s ‘Indeterminacy’ reflects their what-goes approach to music making, the piece leaving much of what is played and heard to chance, dissolving the fixed properties of musical composition and interpretation. Joined by King of Cats’ Max Levy, the pair will also perform Cage’s notorious ‘4.33’, usually misunderstood as pure silence but intended by Cage to allow the listener to absorb environmental sounds for its duration. Ian Staples, part of legendary improv band Red Square and a mainstay of Oxford’s improv scene over the past 20 years, additionally performs ‘Water Walk’, while all four musicians will join together for an original piece inspired by Cage’s works and ideals. A challenging show, then, but intended to bring Cage’s works to a new setting – a small rock gig venue – and maybe puncture some preconceptions about his music.



JANUARY

BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 4th
KING OF CATS + IDES + BETA BLOCKER & THE BODYCLOCK: Truck Store (5pm) – Frenzied oddball rocking akin to Bob Dylan being consumed by Sonic Youth from King Of Cats, alongside London’s seriously downbeat songstress Ides and noisy lo-fi noisemaking from Beta Blocker & The Body Clock at Truck’s first instore of the new year.
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Classic ska, reggae and soul party tunes in the company of the legendary DJ Derek, Count Skylarkin and Indecision.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with OSPREY’S OX4 ALLSTARS + MOON RABBIT + PHIL FREIZINGER & CHRIS HILLS: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak opens its account for the year with an intimate gathering of chums and regulars, including local veterans Osprey and Jeremy Hughes, plus KK host Phil Freizinger.
SNIE + RECKLESS SLEEPERS + LIGHTS OVER VEGAS + SOLLIS: The Hollybush, Osney – Free gig, with sets from Bicester’s soul rockers Snipe; Phil Garvey’s psychedelic warblers Reckless Sleepers; Newcastle’s semi-acoustic blues-soul outfit Lights Over Vegas and local singer-songwriter Sollis.
MASK OF JUDAS + REIGN UPONUS + I CRIED WOLF + ZAOS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox metal night with Chichester’s Mask of Judas sticking around Oxfordshire for a second night, alongside local punk-tinged thrash heavyweights Reign UponUs.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon – Classic funk, soul and r’n’b every Friday.

SATURDAY 5th
MATT MIDGELY + JORDAN O’SHEA + SIER PIN SKY + CRIES WOLF: The Cellar – Bear On A Bicycle night in aid of the Big Issue Foundation, mixing live music with photography and art exhibitions. Alt.folk songsmith Matt Midgley plays alongside acoustic popster Jordan O’Shea, and autumnal folk-pop from Sier Pin Sky.
CAT MATADOR + PHIL McMINN + JESS & NESS: Fusion Arts Centre – The latest quid-a-go pop-up show at Fusion, tonight with dark-hewn indie rockers Cat Matador; emotive acoustic troubadour Phil McMinn and folk-pop duo Jess & Ness.
NANG TUNES’N’SHIT: The Cellar – Hip hop, house and disco club night with Chesslo Junior, Man of Science, Man Of Faith, AAAARRRRFAA and Sound Control To Major Nang.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Red Lion, Eynsham – Blues-rocking from the local stalwart.

SUNDAY 6th
BEARD OF DESTINY + DAISY + STEM + MOON RABBIT + PETE FRYER: Donnington

Community Centre (6pm) – Free acoustic session with host Jeremy Hughes and assorted chums.

MONDAY 7th
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + FUSION FM DJs: O2 Academy – Classic and contemporary indie at Propaganda every Saturday, plus kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy, and dancefloor faves from Fusion FM’s guest DJs.

TUESDAY 8th
NON-STOP TANGO: The Old Fire Station – Avant-rock, funk, jazz and electronica in the vein of Henry Cow and This Heat from Oxford Improvisers stalwarts Miles Doubleday, Malcolm Atkins, Pat Thomas, Chris Hills.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 9th

THURSDAY 10th
JACKIE OATES: The Unicorn, Abingdon – Traditional English folk from former-Winterset singer and fiddle player Oates, also a former BBC Young Folk Awards finalist, now relocated to Oxford and touring her new album, ‘Saturnine’.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THE MIGHTY REDOX UNPLUGGED: The Wheatsheaf – Acoustic set in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.
ROLL ON THURSDAYS: The Cellar – Floor fillers and party tunes every Thursday.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 11th
BOSSAPHONIC with DUNAJSKA KAPELYE: The Cellar – Jazz dance, Balkan beats, Afrobeat, Latin dance, world breaks and nu-jazz club night, tonight with a live set from Polish six-piece Dunajska Kapelye, mixing up a heady mix of gypsy dance, klezmer, tango and Balkan folk, plus Globoloco DJ Karamel on the decks.
VON BRAUN + MATT MIDGLEY + TOLIESEL ACOUSTIC: The Port Mahon – Grungy rock in the vein of Nirvana and The Pixies from Von Braun, plus minimalist alt.folk in the style of Nick Drake and Bright Eyes from Matt Midgley, and an acoustic set from local indie-Americana faves ToLiesel.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Baytree, Grove

SATURDAY 12th
AN EVENING OF JOHN CAGE: The Port Mahon – Interpretations of John Cage compositions with Jack and Roo from Fixers, and guests – *see main preview*
JOHN CAGE’S INLETS: Truck Store (5pm)

– Ahead of their night of John Cage’s music at the Port, Fixers’ Jack Goldstein and Michael Thompson, along with King Of Cats’ Max Levy, perform another Cage piece instore.
FRAGMENT + EYE FOR AN EYE + EYES OF EVE + STORMBRINGER + MANTRA: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke metal night, with rising dark lords of local black/death metal Fragment, coming in somewhere between Cannibal Corpse, Gojira and Carcass, plus Swindon’s southern-fried metallers Eye For An Eye, local epic thrash-core merchants Eyes Of Eve, and Northampton’s classic metal and thrash crew Stormbringer. Proper ‘eavy duty, missus.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + FUSION FM DJs: O2 Academy
THE MIGHTY REDOX: James Street Tavern – Swampy blues, funk and psychedelia from the local faves.
WHAT YOU CALL IT GARAGE: The Cellar – UK garage, 2-step, 4x4 and bassline.

SUNDAY 13th

MONDAY 14th
VOODOO ROOM: The Jericho Tavern – Tribute to Hendrix and Cream at the first Famous Monday Blues of the year from new blues-rock power trio.

TUESDAY 15th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – The first Jazz Club of the New Year sees regulars Alvin Roy & Reeds Unlimited playing live.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern

Saturday 19th
UPSTAIRS with TALL SHIPS: O2 Academy
Upstairs continues its remit of bringing on-the-cusp-of-bigger-things bands to town on an extensive bill of local talent with tonight’s visit of Brighton’s Tall Ships, slowly but steadily sailing across the precarious waters of pop promise. Comfortably fitting in with Foals and Battles’ spacious math-pop sound and Futureheads’ jerky indie-funk, they’ve more than enough character and tunes of their own to stand out; amid the often multi-part songs and tempo changes, singer Ric Phethean’s forlorn vocals and poetic, romantic lyricism stand out, and at their best, the band do sound pretty oceanic. Appropriate then that they’re joined tonight by local nautically-obsessed post-rockers Listing Ships, with a neat line in alternately pensive and cathartic instrumental ABH, and The Sea The Sea, formed from the ashes of Vixens, with their dark, hushed dream-pop. Joining them are Warwickshire’s harmony-heavy alt.folkies My Grey Horse and one-man loops’n’beats’n’riffs merchant Robots With Soul.



THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 16th
SUBVERSE PRESENTS: The Cellar – House, garage, techno and bass club night with residents Skins, PRVDNT, James Shirley and Harry Scholes.
MOSHKA: The Wheatsheaf – Live music with bands to be confirmed.

THURSDAY 17th
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston
ROLL ON THURSDAYS: The Cellar

FRIDAY 18th
THE BIG TEN INCH: The Cellar – Another trip into the heart of classic rock’n’roll, jump blues and rockabilly with Count Skylarkin’s monthly Big Ten Inch club night. Tonight features an Oxford debut from sizzling, greasy 60s-style garage rockers King Salami & The Cumberland 3. Former Clash on-tour DJ Barry ‘Scratchy’ Myers spins a goodly mix of 50s r’n’b, 60s soul, rock’n’roll, reggae, ska, calypso and more, alongside veteran local DJ Jason King.
MOTHER CORONA + GOURANGA + DEATH OF ORION + AGNESS PIKE: The Wheatsheaf – Groove-led stoner rocking from Sabbath-esque heavyweights Mother Corona; grunge-core and stoner metal from Gouranga and campy oddball thrash from Agness Pike at tonight’s Buried In Smoke gig.
MADRIGRAS SBB: Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot – Latin-American carnival dance down in sunny Didcot.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Swan, Wantage
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 19th
UPSTAIRS with TALL SHIPS + LISTING SHIPS + MY GREY HORSE + ROBOTS WITH SOULS + THE SEA, THE SEA: O2 Academy – Brighton’s oceanic math-pop starlets headline the latest Upstairs showcase – *see main preview*
IRREGULAR FOLK’S ODE TO THE CELLO with BETH PORTER & THE AVAILABLES: The Cellar – Irregular folk hosts a night of cello-based music, with a headline set from Bath’s Beth Porter, who has worked with Eliza Carthy, Newton Faulkner and Jim Moray among a host of acts. In her own right she melds elements of folk, blues, pop and classical, with a tendency toward improvisation.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + FUSION FM DJs: O2 Academy
WONKY DISCO: The Cellar – Fresh Out The Box presentation with a mix of disco, house and breaks.
THE CUMBERLAND: Truck Store (3pm) – An instrumental set from garage rockers The Cumberland, without band leader King Salami, following on from their show at The Big Ten Inch last night.
90s NIGHT: The Bullingdon

SUNDAY 20th
LAIMA BITE + LEIGH BEAVERFUEL + FIREGAZERS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Klub Kakofanney’s monthly free acoustic session downstairs at the Sheaf.



Wednesday 23rd
JD McPHERSON: The Bullingdon
While the likes of The Jim Jones Revue and Jake Bugg have their own updated take on 50s rock’n’roll, Oklahoma’s JD McPherson sounds like he’s in no hurry to let the 21st Century impinge on his music. Or even much of the latter half of the 20th Century if we’re being honest. We’re talking full-on, unapologetic 50s revivalism here in all it’s stripped-down, denim-clad, Brycreemed glory. A former punk who discovered Buddy Holly and never looked back, McPherson’s debut album, ‘Signs & Signifiers’, given a full major label release last year after originally coming out in 2010 and promptly hitting top spot in the Billboard Heatseekers chart in the US, sounds like it might easily have come from the same time and place as Fats Domino, Little Richard or Jerry Lee Lewis, right down to the use of period microphones and analogue recording equipment. Tom Waits and Nick Lowe are among his avowed fans, and even amid the growing band of 1950s revivalists, he stands out as an authentic custodian of past glories.

MONDAY 21st
KING B: The Jericho Tavern – Electric roadhouse blues-rocking from the local faves at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.

TUESDAY 22nd
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz, tonight with regulars The New Jazz Collective.
SOULTRAIN: The Cellar – Motown, funk, soul and r’n’b club night.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 23rd
JD McPHERSON BAND: The Bullingdon – Classic rootsy rock’n’roll from the Oklahoma retrohead – *see main preview*
BLACK SHAPES + RUMOUR MILL: The Wheatsheaf – 100% Mosh gig with London’s thunderous velocity hardcore crew Black Shapes, who describe themselves as “heavy, fast and noisy” and are pretty much on the button on that score.
FREERANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep club night.

THURSDAY 24th
SENSIBLE DANCEHALL presents PON DE FLOOR: The Cellar – Dancehall, soca, reggae, afrobeat, hip hop, calypso and more at the new monthly tropical party night.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
SARA WATKINS: Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot – Californian singer and fiddle player



Tuesday 29th

NADEAH / LE MAISON TELLIER: The Jericho Tavern

Australian-born, Paris-resident singer Nadeah Miranda is hardly a household name but as part of Nouvelle Vague, she's probably known to more folks than they realise. She duetted with Barry Adamson on Nouvelle Vague's take on Magazine's 'Parade', and was part of the band's live set up. She's also played as part of the band Lovegods, but is going out under her own name now with a solo album, 'Venus Gets Even'. It sounds as sultry, sleazy and glamorous as Nadeah looks, and she looks like a great lost Hollywood icon for the most part. She's also possessed of a great old-fashioned soul voice, while her songs are, unsurprisingly given her NV connection, a mix of slow-burning jazz, classic r'n'b and old-fashioned rockabilly. You can probably expect the odd cover version too, with anyone from Depeche Mode to Prince in her more than capable sights. She's joined for tonight's show by French band Le Maison Tellier, set in the American folk and country tradition, adding a little Cajun spice to their homely bluegrass, and knocking out a cracking cover of Rage Against The Machine's 'Killing In The Name'.

Watkins tours her latest album, 'Sun Midnight Sun', produced by John Paul Jones; the one-time Nickle creek member having recently toured with Tift Merritt.

THE PETE FRYER BAND UNPLUGGED:
The Wheatsheaf
STROKE OF LUCK: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 25th

WILD SWIM + FINE UNION + THE METHOD + BORDERLINE FIRE:
The Courtyard Youth Centre, Bicester – Atmospheric, highly textured electro-pop mixing up elements of The Associates, Japan, Wild Beasts and The Blue Nile from last month's Nightshift cover stars Wild Swim, playing a special under-18s show at the Courtyard. Support from Bicester youngsters Fine Union and The Method, plus Reading's Borderline Fire.
MOSHKA with LATE NIGHT ENVY: The Wheatsheaf – Former-Shattered Dreams people return to live action at Moshka
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass.

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

SATURDAY 26th

AETHARA + BLUDGER + CONFRONT THE CARNAGE + SURRENDER YOUR SILENCE + THE REAPER: O2 Academy – Heavy metal carnage on a grand scale at Skeletor's monthly carnival of noise. Rising local stars Aethara headline. They're joined by Leeds' thrashcore warriors Bludger, featuring former-Sow axe wielder Ansley Prothero, as well as death metallers Confront The Carnage and metalcore types Surrender Your Silence.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + LAST NIGHT'S VICTORY + AFTER THE THOUGHT: The Wheatsheaf – Dubby ambience, shoegazing atmospherics, electronica and free-ranging psychedelic pop from Flights of Helios at tonight's GTI. They're joined by Bristol/Cheltenham rock-dubstep crossover crew Last Night's Victory and ambient electronics type After The Thought, better known as the lovely Matt from Truck Store.
SLABDRAGGER + DESERT STORM + DEAD EXISTENCE: The Cellar – Buried In Smoke metal night with Croydon's sludgy stoner doom-metallers Slabdragger, alongside local stoner crew Desert Storm. Followed by Extra Curricular club night.

JAMES BLACKSHAW + HUCK + MY CROOKED TEETH: Modern Art Oxford – Pindrop Performance show with acoustic twelve-string guitarist James Blackshaw, drawing comparisons to Bert Jansch, John Fahey and Jack Rose for his elaborate finger-picking style.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The James Street Tavern
KILL CITY SAINTS: The Bullingdon
SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House and techno with resident DJs.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + FUSION FM
DJs: O2 Academy

SUNDAY 27th

CHURCH OF THE HEAVY with THE LILITH PROJECT + REFUGEES OF CULTURE + I CRIED WOLF: The Bullingdon - Metal night.

MONDAY 28th

SOUTHERN BLUES FIASCO: The Bullingdon – Classic southern blues, southern rock, boogie and country from the Allman Brothers-influenced local rockers.
ERJA LYTTINEN: The Jericho Tavern - Return to the Famous Monday Blues for Finnish guitarist Erja, who has earned herself an enviable reputation as a rising blues star in her native country as well as working with British blues star like Ian Parker and Aynsley Lister.
SCHOLARS + MINIATURE DINOSAURS: Fat Lil's, Witney – New indie bands night for Fat Lil's with local electro-tinged rockers Scholars leanings towards the Editors and Interpol school of dark indie. Scottish indie-popsters Miniature Dinosaurs support.

TUESDAY 29th

NADEAH + LE MAISON TELLIER: The

Jericho Tavern – Sultry jazz and r'n'b from the Nouvelle Vague chanteuse – *see main preview*
CEREBRAL BORE + WARPETH + CEMTEX + ACRANIA: The Wheatsheaf – Brutality overload! – *see main preview*
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz, tonight with singer Alison Bentley.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern
THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 30th

SUBVERSE PRESENTS: The Cellar

THURSDAY 31st

JOHN MURRY: The Bullingdon – Dark alt.country balladry, world-weary folk-noir and soulful Americana from the Mississippi songsmith, whose 'Graceless Age' album has drawn rave reviews and comparisons to Warren Zevon, Ronnie Van Zandt and American Music Club.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
CARTHY, HARDY, FARRELL & YOUNG: Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot – Traditional English folk from the all-female supergroup, led by Eliza Carthy.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

Tuesday 29th

CEREBRAL BORE / WARPETH / CEMTEX / ARCANIA:

The Wheatsheaf

Never mind "Dude looks like a lady," in the case of Cerebral Bore vocalist, Simone Pluijmers, lady sounds like one bad-tempered Uruk-Hai with a testosterone surplus. Seriously, she makes from Eva Spence from Rolo Tomassi sound like Frankie out of The Saturdays. Sadly the lava-voiced lass departed Glasgow's rising death-metal/grindcore stars last month, so they've been carrying on without her, though there's a chance she may return at some point in the future. With debut album 'Maniacal Miscreation', Cerebral Bore brought both a melodic accessibility and sharp technical prowess to an often impenetrable sub-genre, touring alongside Dying Fetus and Cannibal Corpse along the way. They're still brutal, mind. Brutal like a supersonic battle tank driving over your twitching corpse. Brutal, guttural and utterly monstrous. Yeah. Sod all that New Year cheer and positivity. Let Cerebral Bore consume your soul and destroy your hearing for all eternity. Great support from south Wales' thrash merchants Warpath, declared best unsigned band in the UK by *Terrorizer* back in 2009; Glasgow's death-thrash crew Cemtex and French prog-thrash heroes Arcania. This is gonna rock. Like a bastard. And afterwards there will only be silence. For all eternity.



Empty Room Promotions

AMERICANA 2013 ROOTS MUSIC

The Bullingdon, Wednesday 23rd January, doors 7.30pm
J D McPherson Band
+ Sean Rowe

The Bullingdon, Thursday 31st January, doors 7.30pm
John Murry
+ Christopher Rees + Robin Bennett

The Bullingdon, Friday 1st February, doors 7.30pm
The Dale Watson Band
+ The Shapes

The Bullingdon, Saturday 9th February, doors 7.00pm
The Nebraska Sessions
(Celebration of Bruce Springsteen album - with 10 acts)

The Bullingdon, Thursday 21st February, doors 7.30pm
Fred Eaglesmith
+ Ags Connolly

The Bullingdon, Thursday 4th April, doors 7.30pm
Eilen Jewel Band (tbc)
+ support

Tingewick Village Hall, Friday 12th April, doors 7.30pm
Amy Wadge & Pete Riley
+ support

Tingewick Village Hall, Saturday 13th April, doors 7.30pm
The Coal Porters
+ support

The Bullingdon, Friday 26th April, doors 7.30pm
Chuck Prophet
and the Mission Express

Tingewick Village Hall, Friday 3rd May, doors 7.30pm
Willie Nile Band
+ Micky Kemp

The Bullingdon, 10th or 11th May doors 7.30pm
Hurray for the Riff Raff (tbc)
+ support

The Bullingdon, Friday 31st May, doors 7.30pm
The Handsome Family
+ support

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WHAT'S ON WHEN

MONDAYS

GET YOUR ROCKS OFF!
Club Night with music mainly made with guitars
Free Entry / Drink Deals All Night

TUESDAYS

1ST - HIP HOP CLUB
2ND - INTRUSION
Goth / Industrial / EBM Club
Dress code: Goth, Cyber, Industrial, Dark Alternative

3RD - CHECK WEB SITE

4TH - SOUL TRAIN
Motown / Funk / Soul / Disco / R&B

WEDNESDAYS

FREE RANGE
Drum & Bass / UK Garage / Dubstep / Grime
Fortnightly

SUB VERSE
House / UK Funky / Garage / Bass
Fortnightly

THURSDAYS

EARLY DOORS
LIVE BANDS MOST NIGHTS
ROLL ON THURSDAYS
Hip Hop / R&B / Chart
Free Entry / Drink Deals All Night

FRIDAYS

1ST - SKYLARKIN' SOUND SYSTEM
reggae / dancehall / hip hop
Live bands + Resident DJ
COUNT SKYLARKIN + Guests

2ND - BOSSAPHONIK
Jazz dance, Afrobeat, Dancefloor Latin, Balkan Beats, Nu Jazz & World
Live bands + Resident DJ
Dan Oler + Guests

3RD - BIG TEN INCH
Rockin' Blues, Hot Swing, Ska, Skiffle, Gospel, Calypso & Beyond
Live bands + Resident DJ
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LIVE

CHAD VALLEY / TROPHY WIFE / SOLID GOLD DRAGONS

The Cellar

To paraphrase, “The first rule of Blessing Force is, it’s best not to talk about Blessing Force”. But with three bands here, who shelter under that nebulous umbrella, plus a noisy sold-out crowd of converts and curious newcomers, there seems little choice other than to be sucked into the various arguments peppering the attendant anticipation; about the pros and cons of having an over-arching name, and whether the room elephant, Roland Orzabal, should even get a mention.

So it was a great relief when Sam Scott finally steps from behind the Jonquil bass and up to the poster-boy plate with his band Solid Gold Dragons, and gets a real grip on the evening, giving it the shake up it requires, and stymies the naysayers with his varied and fully engaging, song-smithery. Yes, the chassis is Tears for Fears, with China Crisis fenders, but the whole SGD ride has been pimped with a jazz-flecked blue-eyed soul *and* double trumpets, with the bracing ‘From Me To You’ and the up-tempo glitz of ‘Serious Lover’ balancing out the slower, ballad-minded songs like ‘Gone’. The heart-swelling standing ovation (by people who were already standing) at the end of the short, concise set says more about Solid Gold Dragons’ future than anything I can add here. By the time the far eastern synth

riffs and the soft-focused vocals of Trophy Wife reach our ears the audience had filled out considerably and we’re being squeezed like so much toothpaste through the brick archways on the fringes of the bar area. Trophy Wife are not a band about pop’s flash and burn, but there’s something quaintly revolutionary about them, a refinement and continuation of a host of possibilities laid down over the last few years: a refinement in that they’ve marshalled electronica and ante-indie into a quiet success; a continuation, because in dismantling and reassembling their familiar sources of Ride, Japan and Foals et al, they’ve rustled up a highly specific vibe, one which I can only describe as the soundtrack to shyness.

Although tonight is the launch party for Chad Valley’s album ‘Young Hunger’, Hugo Manuel, CV’s engine and auteur, is still visibly overwhelmed by the sea of home support massed in front of him, baying his name, and he reacts in kind by switching on a battery of computer operated fluorescent lights prosaically parked against his console on a fork lift pallet, and suddenly the whole place is white and bouncing to the beats, on holiday with Chaz Bundick and George Michael, in some resort whose name ends with del Mar.



photo:Paul Carrera

Say what you will about how this transcendental mash-up originates, but by crikey it works as live entertainment, and the front rows become like churning sand to the waves of hooks and crescendos from the newer ‘I Owe You This’, to old faves like ‘Now That I’m Real’. Karina Scuteri’s fabulously intuitive vocals match Hugo’s,

where the album’s featured artists are absent, and the final hoorah of the none-more-cool Jack Goldstein bouncing on stage for his part in ‘My Girl’ sets the seal on another year where Oxford can continue, without contest, to be rightly royally proud of their music scene.

Paul Carrera

THE EPSTEIN / FLIGHTS OF HELIOS / SAM LEE / UNTIL THE BIRD...

St, John the Evangelist

Pindrop Performances are well known for choosing unexpected locations and this church on Iffley Road is no exception. Like (I’m guessing) most of the audience I had never before set foot here, but its lovely acoustics and fine high ceiling make it a worthy addition to the ever-changing roster of Oxford venues. This event is a benefit for The Gatehouse centre for homeless people, who have provided some much appreciated refreshments.

After an afternoon of acoustic acts the evening session kicks off in style with Until The Bird..., a truly heartwarming three-piece, unassuming to look at but musically nothing less than inspirational. David Hawkins’ voice is entirely natural and unforced as it swoops and soars, presiding over the guitar, violin and accordion in a perfect take on folk-based English songwriting

that veers off in all sorts of unexpected directions. All the hopeless beardy folk-related bands currently clogging up the airwaves should be forced to watch them, like Alex in ‘*A Clockwork Orange*’, until they give up and buy a sequencer. North Londoner Sam Lee was a nominee for this year’s Mercury Prize and tonight performs unaccompanied some of the old songs he learnt from befriending gypsies and travellers, some living under the Westway in Shepherds Bush. As he points out this is music devoid of rhythm that stands or falls on the melody, words and phrasing. As bold and impressive a project as it is, with his clear, sonorous delivery, we start to wonder how good a job he’s making of his interpretations, but since these are songs familiar to relatively few we can but guess. Flights Of Helios’ Sunday lunchtime set at

Wilderness Festival was a perfect blend of spacy electronics, pure, heartfelt singing and psychedelic influences. While these are all present tonight the context somehow works against them and it all ends up a bit in-yer-face and bombastic. Maybe they’re best enjoyed in a more horizontal and fuzzy-headed state, though when they hit the spot they can be truly transcendent.

The Epstein are the closest thing to a rock band to emerge tonight. Hard to pin down, they encompass twisted country, folk and Wilco-style Americana, clearly benefitting from their six years of touring at home and abroad. Showcasing some new songs, presumably from the forthcoming ‘Murmurations’ album, they retain a precious quality that can border on the ponderous, though always based around a decent tune. On occasion it can seem like there’s too many people singing at once and they could benefit from loosening up into a bit of a jam, but this is a band with a clear idea of where they want to be and Oxford would be a poorer place without them.

Art Lagun

CHIMP SPANNER / PROSPEKT / CRYSIS/ REIGN UPONUS / ANNERO

O2 Academy

Annero open Skeletor’s final metal gig of 2012 with the words “We are One Direction and I am Captain Christmas”, kicking off the night on a less than serious note. Far from the dire comedy you might expect from such a pronouncement, they’re pretty good, washing the crowd in a familiar-feeling flood of old school thrash, with strong nods to Pantera and Anthrax. Frontman Craig Chatfield does err on the cheesy side when it comes to crowd interaction though, most of which is delivered through a laughably fake American accent.

They’re followed by Reign UponUs, who deliver an uncompromising deathcore set, which even includes, uncharacteristically for the genre, some nice, melodic, clean sections.

As the venue starts to fill, it’s clear the crowd are anticipating local metalcore giants Crysis’ return to the stage after a lengthy hiatus. Tonight also marks their EP launch and the energy and gravitas with which they conduct their performance shows that they are just as in tune to the special nature of this show as the crowd. New material from the EP is well received, as are a few well placed old crowd pleasers, and they provoke a set-long moshpit. There’s the odd uncertain moment,

such as bassist Kyle Quinell’s apparent attempts to avoid the microphone when singing backing vocals for opener ‘We Will Rise’, and vocalist Kial Churcher’s subsequent collision with the headstock of a bass guitar, but in general, Crysis deliver a tight, extremely well received set. Another familiar local face in the shape of Prospekt, tonight minus their vocalist and keyboard player, who have to be elsewhere. As usual, guitarist Lee Luland spins through a series of technical solos, and everything is very tight, but the presence of a frontman is sorely missed, and by the end of the set both the band and their crowd seem a little deflated.

This doesn’t last long once headliners Chimp Spanner take to the stage, demonstrating just how fantastic an instrumental set can be. An hour flies by, presented as a single, extended piece of music, leaping schizophrenically from moments of mesmerizing calm to tumultuous brutality. The raucous metal crowd seem hypnotized, content to quietly sip at their beers and revel in the impressive musicianship of Paul Ortiz and his fellow performers.

Tal Fineman

PHRONESIS The North Wall

Phronesis are a London based Anglo-Danish jazz trio who are hotly tipped to make an international jazz breakthrough, especially following their latest album ‘Walking Dark.’ So tonight could be a last chances to catch them in an intimate setting.

Their technical prowess and instinctive telepathy are a given; they have played gigs in a total blackout in response to Danish double bassist Jesper Holby’s sister losing her sight. But what is also on show is their knack of combining rhythmic complexity with making their music accessible and inviting; every tune has a catchy hook and a seductive groove which draws you in.

The trio are equally adept at keeping their audience on their toes by building tension, often by playing two-on-one before going through creative twists and turns, like Holby and English pianist Ivo Neme combining to drop the occasional bomb by hitting the basses of bass notes, until arriving at a resolution that’s sometimes optimistic, sometimes intriguingly ambiguous. While there’s plenty of virtuosic soloing, it’s all in service of a strong group ethic. Neme’s elegantly shaped piano lines hang together with both the tremendous articulation and impulsion of Holby’s bass playing and also the restrained, and at times

not so restrained, power of Egan’s brushwork. The appealing staccato sound of wood on metal is one of the features of the night as Egan peppers the kit with rim shots. The band is certainly up a league from when last in Oxford; as well as their playing, their compositional strength has developed with the band now performing tunes by all three members, whereas previously it was all Holby’s material. So Neme’s excellent, meditative ‘Lost Nomads’ provides variation from their more typical propulsive tunes like Egan’s ‘Economist,’ a standouts of the set. Phronesis are shot through with the qualities you hope for from a jazz group playing with heart, energy and tremendous improvisation, though always within a structure. This is not enough, though, for a heckler who calls for “something new just made up”. The heckler, possibly a fan of free improv bands, which Phronesis certainly are not, promptly leaves. The band, momentarily shaken, quickly recover, and the audience, which up to then has been attentive but restrained become much more vocal in their support and at the end stamp and cheer an approval which was no less than this sparkling trio deserve.

Colin May

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ULTRASOUND

The Jericho Tavern

Ultrasound were never ones for understatement, so when they open tonight’s set with ‘Welfare State’ it’s with sweeping, epic intent; four decades of stadium rock bombast condensed into a single riff. Thirteen years on from their last Oxford show and an acrimonious split, it’s an instant reminder of why we loved them so much first time round. “We’ve been away for a

while / But we were never in style,” comes as part of a barbed political commentary but it could equally apply to the band who were, briefly, hailed as rock music’s final grand statement before they blew it in spectacular style. Since reforming in 2010 and laying past animosity to rest, Ultrasound have been rediscovering that old magic with some style but beneath

the music press radar, which is a crying shame since their new album, ‘Play For Today’, is equal to anything else released in 2012 and a more cohesive statement of intent than their overlong, overdue debut, ‘Everything Picture’. Seeing Ultrasound back on stage together tonight, time has been kind both to their music and to the band members themselves: Tiny has

downsized just a tad from his imposing 90s presence, though initially it’s hard to tell as he’s wrapped up in a huge coat and scarf. Guitarist Richard Green is cutting preposterous rock god poses behind a curtain of hair, while bassist Vanessa Best is resplendent in an Iron Maiden t-shirt and looks to have aged not a day in over a decade, while her soaring whoops and screams remain that magical force of nature that make every Ultrasound song feel like the last siren call at the end of the world.

Of the new songs ‘Twins’ is a magical stand-out, a romantic skyride so at ease with its cinematic scope you could weep at its effortless grace. It’s equalled by old favourite ‘Suckle’, a vast psychedelic beast of a song that rises and falls and rises once again without ever sparing you its intense gaze.

There are more considered moments too, Tiny, Richard and Vanessa indulging in some gorgeous three-part harmonies that carry the breezy optimism of The Mamas & Papas at one point, while ‘Nonsense’ is sweet and sad and brilliantly tender. But it’s the glorious, over-the-top rock pomp of ‘Stay Young’ and ‘Same Band’ that beg to fill stadiums from here to the moon. “You’re the band The Who could have been!” shouts one fan, and he’s only half joking.

It’s easy to ponder what might have been had Ultrasound played it better first time round, but rather than an exercise in misty-eyed nostalgia, tonight’s gig proves that the band still have better songs and more genuine conviction than almost any other rock band around at the moment, and while the press continues to wring its hands and contemplate rock music’s sorry state, maybe Ultrasound are the saviours we’ve been waiting for. Just like before.

Dale Kattack

could, on a radically reworked ‘Only A Game’, be slo-mo Calypso freakout colliding with some oblique 60s psychedelia.

‘Lord’s Mistake’ finds the band playing down the mania in favour of a tribal tattoo, while ‘Dead On Arrival’ carries an almost funereal air about it. By stark contrast ‘Favourite Flavour’ is a playful vocal duel between Julia and Eliza, and ‘Understand The Night’ is a gorgeous hypnotic mantra. The sheer restless invention is typified by the clutter of musical trinkets that litter the stage, objects that make the sound of distant thunder, or ornamental cats that sound like a chorus of tiny tinkling bells. Our favourite is the thing that simply makes a boing noise before it’s merrily discarded.

As rebirths go, it’s a painless, joyful labour; as far as musical reinvention goes, the transformation is complete and Oxford has a new star in its firmament. Candy Says. Remember the name and make sure you sit up and listen.

Dale Kattack

LEWIS WATSON

/ JASMINE HILL

/ ADAM BARNES

O2 Academy

With a sea of teens swamping the front of the stage, it’s clear that Lewis Watson has the potential to become the next Ed Sheeran. Still, the jury’s out as to whether this is based on musical ability, or his looks. His set is at times samey, each song drifting into the next one and failing to hold my attention. As he begins to explain how ‘Calling’ is a song about drinking half litre bottles of WKD blue in the park, there’s a sense that my inability to really enjoy his set might in too many ways be linked to age.

While Ed Sheeran’s biggest hit is about prostitution, Lewis seems to linger on love, which has the effect of feeling like a three-year-old is teaching me algebra, and I end up cynical about his knowledge on the subject matter. ‘Into The Wild’, towards the end of the night, is his saving grace, though. Here though, the heavy drums and piano, and lower pitch of his vocals, move it away from his acoustic sound, leaving me to wonder if someone in the industry has whispered about variation in his ear, while handing him a song.

Jasmine Hill has the same degree of



naivety and though her vocal power is outstanding this is interspersed with a raspy breath between each line, which ends up being incredibly distracting. Though her cover of Maroon 5’s ‘One More Night’ seems well placed, it’s ‘Again’, written with Nik Kershaw, which shows where this 17-year-old is heading, It’s powerful and dynamic. Sadly as the set draws on, she falls into the same trap as Lewis, and ‘Go’, about

a boy “who’s a bit of a idiot” leaves me longing for singers who focus on themes other than love.

Adam Barnes, on the other hand, steals the show, and though he follows a similar thematic vibe, it’s done with such poetry and wisdom that I can’t help but fall for it. As he sings “All of the stars are singing notes I’ve never heard” at the start of ‘Come Undone’, there’s a sense of maturity and honesty to his songs.

Delivering this number unplugged in the centre of the crowd, there’s also a sense of showmanship to his set; it’s just a shame the hush of the youngsters isn’t matched by the adults who fill the back of the room. Meanwhile ‘Apples’ balances heavy keys with a weight of emotion, which leaves me longing for the release of his forthcoming album.

Lisa Ward

JON SEAGROATT & IAN STAPLES

The Old Fire Station

Jon Seagroatt and Ian Staples are best known as two thirds of long-running full-on free improv band Red Square. With tonight’s music a taster of their forthcoming album ‘Deathless’, based on the bloody Minotaur myth, you anticipate sounds equally red in tooth and claw (see what we did there); the bull-headed man’s diet being an annual tribute of 14 young men and women, and his fate being that he is slain in his labyrinth prison by the hero Theseus, with Adriane’s help.

Instead the music is reflective, regretful and, at times, fearful, while still having an edge. This stems from Jon’s inspiration being not the original myth but Steven Sherrill’s re-envisaging of the Minotaur’s story in his novel ‘The Minotaur Takes A Cigarette Break’, which has a remorseful Minotaur escaping both being slain and the labyrinth to wander in the world.

The music, though, stands on its own and while it’s helpful to know for instance that piece six is called ‘The Minotaur Apprehends With Creeping Fear The Meaning Of Adriane’s Still Taut Thread’, it’s not necessary to be aware of this or

anything else about the Minotaur myth to enjoy it. The sequence opens with the only vocal piece, a rather beautiful wordless song from Bobby Watson over a drone. It then progresses with prepared electronic passages and live pieces, with Ian on his detuned hand-built double-decker slide guitar assemblage laying down different drones, over which multi-instrumentalist Jon improvises.

The live pieces are especially rich because the musical dynamic between the two is so alive, with Ian showing great sensitivity in laying down the ground for Jon’s communicative playing on soprano sax and flute, which often build to a melodic pattern of notes. It’s the bass clarinet pieces though, with Jon making full use of the instrument’s beautiful mournful undertone, that are the most affecting, and perhaps could have been subtitled ‘Pity The Poor Minotaur Parts 1&2’.

Even though the Minotaur is himself a victim, it’s difficult to empathise with him, so monstrous are his deeds. But tonight Jon’s bass clarinet almost persuades me.

Colin May

RAVENS AND CHIMES / RAINBOW

RESERVOIR / REICHENBACH

FALLS / AGS CONNOLLY

Modern Art

Cramming five bands into a mere three hours must be a logistical nightmare, but somehow Pindrop manage it without compromising the quality of any of tonight’s performances. First up is Ags Connolly, who surprisingly hails from Witney. Surprising because his pure country songs sound as if they’ve been plucked directly from the States, wrapped in a star spangled banner and preserved in malt liquor. There are any number of acts that try and create that authentic Johnny Cash/ Willie Nelson sound, but there are few that get it as spot on as Connolly.

Reichenbach Falls are stripped back to a single member for the evening whilst Co-Pilgrim are also one down thanks to a babysitting error. Neither suffers unduly from a lack of bandmates; if anything the circumstances and atmosphere conjured up by Ags Connolly sets the mood perfectly for their emotive folk. New songs ‘Canada’ and ‘The Departure Lounge’ from Reichenbach Falls in particular suggest that there

are great things in waiting. Rainbow Reservoir (pianist Angela Space) offers a slight change in direction. Quirky, amusing and not a little twee, her songs have the power to infuriate and delight in equal measure. Clever lyrics and earworm piano melodies combine to create songs that are instantly memorable and strangely familiar. ‘Scaredy Cat’ for example is essentially a nursery rhyme as written by Pam Ayres and performed by Victoria Wood. It’s this aspect in particular that is likely to divide those who hear her songs. Ravens And Charms could easily be dismissed as yet another typical New York indie band, but there’s depth, emotion and a strange kind of optimism to their songs and performance that is infectious. They sound a little like We Are Augustines might if they’d been influenced by Leonard Cohen rather than Springsteen. So it’s perhaps fitting that they opt to cover ‘So Long Marianne’ in some style at the end of their set.

Sam Shepherd

CANDY SAYS

The Rotunda. Iffley

“Candy says, I’ve come to hate my body.” An appropriate lyric for Little Fish to become their new selves, casting off the old skin.

This afternoon’s show, split into two sets, is not just a chance for some pre-Christmas fun, but the first outing for the band in their new guise. They’ve moved on so far from that original garage rocking incarnation – only Julia-Sophie’s peerless voice a constant – that a new identity feels entirely appropriate.

The first set feels like a bit of an indulgence, a family folk session where everyone gets their turn in the spotlight. Julia immediately punctures the convivial festive spirit of mulled wine, fairylights and dancing kids with a reading of her introduction to Californian author Miranda Ward’s book *Fuck The Radio, We’ve Got Apple Juice*, very loosely a reflection on the perils and

pitfalls of being in a band, written with Little Fish. From here we get acoustic renditions of a couple of old Fish faves – notably a stunning ‘Heroin Angel’ – alongside turns for keyboardist Ben Walker, with a series of 30-second vignettes, a chance for new co-vocalist Eliza Zoot to take the lead, and another reading from the book by Miranda herself. The set closes with a cover of The Velvet Underground’s ‘Candy Says’ as the transformation become official.

Ghosts laid aside, the news broken, the second half is much more about the future of the band, and a demonstration of just how far they’ve moved since original drummer Neil Greenaway left. Nowadays Julia is much more one equal cog in a four-part machine, four-part vocal harmonies and chants taking songs in more exotic directions, from French musical hall and *chanson* to what



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DR SHOTOVER: The Festering Season

Ah, good evening, my twinkly friend, welcome to the East Indies Club bar. We were just discussing the EIC-approved TV treats in store this Yuletide. Shame about the clash between the *Gothford Park* and *Downer Abbey* Christmas Specials. Perhaps I will stack several television sets up on the ancestral sideboard and watch various broadcasts simultaneously, while alternating swigs of festive snakebite with handfuls of Quaaludes. A bit like David Bowie in that “look-at-me-I-really-AM-an-alien” film he did... *The Mandrax What Fell To Earth*, that’s the one. I’ve certainly picked a few dodgy pills up off the ground at muddy 1970s festivals and/or Ladbroke Grove squat floors in my time... you just blow on ‘em before popping ‘em down. Never did ME any harm. [*Dr S dozes off briefly over the bar, only waking when he spills his drink*]... What was I saying? Ah yes, my New Year’s resolutions. Apart from the one about eating more cheese? Go and see more AC/DC tribute bands. Yes, definitely. And more films with Carey Mulligan and Andrea Riseborough in. And drink more Adnams gin... yes, it’s true! They really do make gin these days. Did you know that Adnams is an anagram of Sad Man? Funny, that. [*Dr S nods off again, while simultaneously lighting and starting to smoke a large baggy roll-up*]. What? What’s that? There’s a SMOKING BAN?!? Leave the premises your-f***ing-self, why don’t you? [*Draws himself up to his full height on his barstool*]... Beddingfield, I say BEDINGFIELD! Throw this man out! Oh, it’s a mirror...

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INTRODUCING....

FLOODED HALLWAYS

Who are they?
Hip hop outfit Flooded Hallways are Darran Ijada (Deeq), Frank Blanco (Nemrot), and Andy Marshall. Andy and Frank were friends from school, before Darran met Frank at college while studying art and design. Nemrot and Deeq both write and MC, with the former solely handling the production side. Andy is the “honorary third member” of the group, there to solve any technical problems. They have an enviable catalogue of material worth investigating and have just released their third album, ‘One Variable’.

What do they sound like?
Preferring a lo-fi production approach, much of Flooded Hallways’ best work comes coated in a stoner haze with a trippy edge, loops and electro squiggles mixing with occasional discordant jazz squalls and classic soul, over which Deeq recounts tales of Oxford life in an admirably home-grown accent. Nemrot has a penchant for sampling 70s b-movies and twee European crooners, which, according to Deeq “feels like he’s throwing shit in to test me, but he assures me there’s always a formula employed”; they also say, “lyric wise we feel like a blues group trapped in that hip hop conformity, although we do throw in a couple comedic lines arbitrarily.”

What inspires them?
“We are mostly inspired by life itself, the inner journey, subjects such as death, God, and love, and how we relate to these things. We’re also into mythology.”

Career highlight so far:
“A couple gigs: the first at East Oxford Community Centre, and the second at Fat Lil’s in Witney. Both times we sensed a special connection with the crowd, felt completely at ease, and gave our best performances to date.

And the lowlight:
“We got a gig at The Jericho Tavern. I remember the anticipation of playing such an iconic venue. Literally seconds after we finished checking mic levels, the lights went out! That whole side of the street was down; we couldn’t believe it. They still owe us too...”



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“Terao Hedges; simply because he’s dope! His writtens and music represent true hip hop.”

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“Ice Cube’s ‘AmeriKKKa’s Most Wanted; Mobb Deep’s ‘The Infamous’, or Shabazz The Disciple’s ‘The Book Of Shabazz (Hidden Scrollz).”

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?
“Passionate, poetic, personal wordplay... our songs are generally pretty deep, so you’re likely to find heads taking it all in as opposed to breakin’ or wiling out. As far as gigs, we expect to perform live again February time. Check our Facebook and Twitter for updates.

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
“Almost everything, from the bedroom producers of Soundcloud, to the rawness of the acts who frequent The Cellar. Only negative aspect would be those incestuous, self-hyping, phantom poster boys of the scene, who we haven’t seen at any local gigs, on stage or in the crowd.

You might love them if you love:
Task Force; The Streets; GZA; Ghostface Killah.

Hear them here:
soundcloud.com/flooded-hallways

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

We do occasionally look back and wonder what we were thinking. January 1993’s Curfew front cover was graced by a band called **Churn**, so named because they “really liked **Sevenchurch**’s logo and wanted to use it ourselves but the only words we could make from the letters were crèche, hunch and churn.” The band, based in Wood Farm, claimed to be inspired by an enduring loathing for each other, particularly their guitarist Martin, whose sole contribution to the interview was to tell his bandmates to “fuck off” when they derided him for liking Pink Floyd. We never heard from them again. Probably for the best.

In a typically quiet January, local gig highlights included a return trip to town for the mighty **Faith Healers** at the **Jericho Tavern**, as well as thrash punk veterans **GBH** and former Vice Squad screamer **Beki Bondage**, who was strutting her glam-punk stuff over at the **Stocks in Crawley**. Heady times.

This month also saw the arrival on the local scene of a now semi-legendary character, **Dan Eisenhandler**, aka **Twizz Twangle**, but back them going under the name **Oh Susannah Joanna**. He was Demo of the Month, the review stating “The cheapest Casio keyboard on the market is tortured beyond belief while Mr Eisenhandler lets the remains of his liquefied brain dribble out of his mouth and nose in a maddening stream of minced chicken swill. He’s even got his mum playing trombone. Absolutely appalling if you know what’s good for you. Great stuff if you’re ill in the head or blasted to buggery on drugs.” To his eternal credit, Dan never really changed or improved.

10 YEARS AGO

A new year and a new sense of optimism as January 2003’s Nightshift looked forward to the local bands we reckoned everyone should discover and love over the coming months. Leading the pack were such young striplings as **Elizabeth and Gunnbunny**, whose members would go on to form **Foals** and **Fixers**. A rave review of both bands at **the Zodiac** found us hailing a 15-year-old Yannis Phillipakis’ “dysfunctional melodies, that hover and crackle in the air before he crunches down on the fretboard with easy venom, sounding like a teenage Captain Beefheart trapped in Sonic Youth’s ‘Daydream Nation’.” We also marvelled at Gunnbunny’s frontman Jack Goldstein, “a long-haired bruiser with a throat-ripping voice that sounds like hell erupting.” As well as those two, we also recommended **Sexy Breakfast**, who would later morph into **Borderville**; **Suitable Case For Treatment**; **Sextodecimo**; **Ivy’s Itch**; **Coma Kai** and **Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element**. A pretty bloody splendid set of names, we’ll sure you’ll agree, and proving that Nightshift has bloody great taste and knows what’s good for you.

Not a great gigging month but there was one bona fide legend in town in the form of **Arthur Lee** and an incarnation of **Love**, up at **Brookes Union**. Dr Shotover in particular was very excited. Hidden in the demo reviews was a band called **Toshi Station**, who were compared to The Blow Monkeys and Curiosity Killed The Cat, which wasn’t very promising, but the band did feature younger versions of **Tim Bearder** and **Dave Gilyeat** who would go on to host **BBC Oxford Introducing** show. From little acorns and all that.

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

5 YEARS AGO

Hey, did we mention **Borderville** back then? Well whaddya know, here they are, on the cover of the January 2008 issue of Nightshift. “There are no proper stars left,” proclaimed singer **Joe Swarbrick**, before declaring that “there is not a shred of glamour in any famous British musician currently being hyped by the press. Punk has left us a damaging legacy – what was at the time a necessary spring clean, a definition of rock music as protest and pure energy, has become a reductive, fascistic ideology clung to by journalists terrified of not seeming cool enough.” Always one of our favourite interviewees, Joe set out his ideas for the band who were to blossom into one of the most musically and lyrically ambitious acts in Oxford.

Oxford’s big guns were gearing up for action, with **Radiohead** releasing ‘Jigsaw Falling Into Place’ as the first single from their groundbreaking ‘In Rainbows, while **Supergrass** released a limited edition 7” single, ‘Diamond Hoo Ha Man’ ahead of their ‘Diamond Hoo Ha’ album. **Foals**, meanwhile announced their biggest hometown show to date with a gig at the Academy in March, and tracklisting for ‘Antidotes’.

Elsewhere this month, **Mary’s Garden** released their debut album, ‘Mind Control’; former **Rock Of Travolta** founder Phill Honey’s **Boywithatoy** project was Demo of the Month, while **GTA**, the rap duo featuring Chima Anya, were down in the Dumper, sounding like “being stuck on the last bus out of town on a Saturday night in front of two juvenile wannabe rap stars whose tolerance of alcohol extends to two cans of cheap cider.”



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DEMOS

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Demo OF THE MONTH

MUSTARD & THE MONOCLE

Former Demo of the Month winners – back in April 2011 if our increasingly fragile memory serves us right – Mustard & The Monocle are now, it appears, a former Oxford band, their members having been scattered to the four winds (or moved to Bristol, from what we understand of their letter, but it adds up to much the same thing). Our loss it seems as they keep the quality high on this latest demo, giving traditional folk music another subtly punky update, nods made to The Oysterband and The Men They Couldn’t Hang at various points. ‘Jigcycle’ is fulsome and rocking without dumping on its folk roots, northern pipes giving it some extra vim as it stomps merrily along. ‘Betelgeuse’ is more romantic but no less hale and hearty, though it’s ‘Give It Back, Give It Soul’ that’s the demo’s high point, with a tune vaguely reminiscent of ‘To Be A Pilgrim’ and yet again infusing the traditional sounds with some rock stomp and spirit without imposing. ‘Antlers’ lacks such impact though manages a strong vocal performance, while closer ‘Outshine The Sun’ sounds like The Pogues’ ‘Thousands Are Sailing’ and manages to pull off that trick of harking back to venerable old sounds without being too earnest or worthy. Oxford’s loss is Bristol’s gain, but Mustard & The Monocle are welcome back in town any time.

MASIRO

Hey, why bother sending a coherent demo package when you can send us a link to five separate Youtube videos of your band playing in a rehearsal room, so we can wade through five separate adverts for 4G phones and broadband deals before we get to the grainy black and white videos. Thanks, Masiro, good job your music’s up to the job else we’d have had a pre-Christmas crucifixion on our hands. Masiro is the two-man follow-up project that came out of Dr Slaggleberry and treads a similarly obstinate funkcd-up, fucked-up instrumental mathcore path. Stripped down to guitar and drums there’s no excess weight being carried, just lean, abrupt instrumental duelling that takes influences from the likes of Mr Bungle, the harder ends of the Chili Peppers and Primus.

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

Mostly it’s frenetic and furious, but ‘Sky Burial’ is slower and more pensive and nuanced and displays more variety than the other pieces. Sometimes the pair sound like they’re just showing off their chops, trying to impress fellow musos, when they’re better letting the dynamics escape their complexity. And next time, chaps, don’t make us sit through a whole load of grainy videos. Not unless they have aliens or kittens in them. It distracts us from our LOLCats browsing.

GURP

Nothing complex or muso-ish about Gurp, whose name itself suggests mindless over-indulgence and the resultant flatulence. Instead we get another dose of their frantic two-chord pop-punk thrash, vocally harking back to early Green Day or Blink 182, but thankfully avoiding the brattish whining of the bands that those two inspired. Instead it’s more beery silliness, with lyrics like “I’ll drink until I’m feeling sick / Cos I can’t control that shit / What’s that pistol doing here / Now I’m going to shit myself.” As you can probably tell, it’s not exactly Leonard Cohen, but if you’re planning on going out drinking and fighting on Saturday night, Gurp will probably be far better company.

BINARY PSYCHOSIS

There’s bugger all information about this lot with the CD except that they come from Abingdon, but even tracking down their website reveals little other than some kind of fantasy about escaping a sanatorium in Coventry and moving to Oxfordshire to make music that sounds like “a humongous door slamming in the depths of Hell”, which turns out to be only a slight exaggeration. ‘The Method’ is rigid, almost robotic metal infused with some post-Crass punk political attitude, possessed of almost militaristic nihilism. ‘Chinese Food’ is Black Sabbath – particularly vocally – if they’d had a liking for post-punk political posturing, while ‘Anglican’ samples *Mad Max 2* and might well be Hawkwind on an android rock trip. Oh yes, in a very old school kind of way, this damn well rocks.

TWISTED STATE OF MIND

Having made our way halfway through the demo pile, we just stick this on without paying any attention to the accompanying letter. It’s good stuff. Punky thrash metal with an appealingly lava-gargling female

vocalist. Gets us to thinking about a heavier version of The Runaways. Then we read the letter. It’s three twelve-year-old boys from Witney. TWELVE YEARS OLD! And they sound like fucking Judas Priest on a punk rock jolly. This is crazy. Earlier in the day we were listening to death-core monsters Cerebral Bore and marvelling at how their female singer sounds like a bad-tempered Uruk-Hai with an excess of testosterone, and here we are a couple of hours later seriously impressed by a pre-pubescent lad who might be a young Joan Jett. According to the letter (and backed up with a photo) they played a heavy metal version of ‘Gold’ with Spandau Ballet’s Tony Hadley a few months back, which is cooler than anything we’ve ever done, ever. Blimey, if this was a bunch of twenty-something rockers we’d think it was a pretty decent. For a trio of twelve-year-olds it’s little short of staggering.

LIMBO KIDS

More than a bit of a change of pace from the previous two demo now with Limbo Kids who have been recording with Trophy Wife’s Kit Monteith and Andrew Halford, and who feature The Old Grinding Young’s Ollie Thomas and Rhosyn’s Rose Dagul on these songs. You can hear the Trophy Wife influence straight away as they drift into warm-hearted indie soul on ‘Heartshots’, with an airy sense of understatement governing its deliberately reserved dynamic. ‘Desire’ takes a similar path but wanders too aimlessly; it’s a bit slender and, it has to be said, a bit dull, but thankfully ‘Wanderlust’ finds them back on track in style, a spacious, atmospheric song with Rose’s sad-eyed cello contributing plenty to the atmosphere of a song that feels like it’s shrouded in mist. Whether Limbo Kids, given their associations, choose to shelter under the Blessing Force umbrella, on this evidence they sound like they have enough quality to fit in.

CLIO & THE PEACOCK

Clio is the singer in this duo, while The Peacock is actually called Andy, who plays guitars and stuff but is dressed on the CD sleeve like a proper old dandy, all hair and beard and crushed velvet jacket over a paisley shirt. It’s a promising start. ‘The Alphabet Song’ initially sounds like a clever-clever political nursery rhyme (“B is for bankers, rich because they’re clever / “P is for pleb” and so on), before it morphs into the much more interesting ‘No Change’, continuing the political theme but sounding like Crass re-imagined as a 60s psychedelic folk-rock act, sullen and messy but pretty cool. A shame they

can’t keep this up, though. ‘Whiling Away’ rumbles tunelessly like a hopelessly flat jazz torch song, just about bearable for its stumbling naivety, but soon the pair are wandering hopelessly off-key, culminating in the fuckawful ‘Once Upon A Time’, which sounds like it was recorded at the far side of a different town while hiding under a thick duvet, grumbling and staggering to an overdue conclusion like an arthritic old woman attempting to make it to the top of an icy hill with a burning log manacled to her ankle. After five minutes of such laborious misery we’d happily put a bolt gun to the sweetest old grandmother, if only to save everyone concerned any more suffering.

THE DEMO DUMPER

MARTIN ASH

Martin here is “a self-proclaimed Christian songwriter”, and tells us he “expects lots of gratuitous swearing and religion bashing in the ritual placing in the dumper”. Sorry, what was that about “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (*Matthew 7.1*)? Godless heathens we might be here at Nightshift but we’re also easy-going types and happy to let everyone believe in their particular deity / prophet / special friend in the sky (we only have Mr Shiraz and Mr Rioja and sometimes Mr Iggy Pop to lean on in troubled times and thus envy those of more spiritual faith). Ah well, best not disappoint the poor lad; if there’s anything religious folks thrive on it’s their own certainty. Martin’s professed remit is to revitalise songs of worship. Our first attempt to hear this is foiled by a failure of Soundcloud to work. And then again by some strange internet glitch. Tis Satan’s work, we tell thee! Finally we get it working and we’re confronted by a shrill, worryingly jaunty piano and fiddle-led pit of musical slurry that might well be a French & Saunders attempt to parody Steeleye Span. Followed by a stultifying succession of slightly folky sub-hymns of the sort you get on religiously-orientated cable TV-advertised Christmas albums. Fucking hell (there’s your gratuitous swearing, Martin), if we wanted to hear insipid mulch like this, we’d join The Jesus Army or go and watch an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical. Seems the Devil really does have the best tunes. Don’t go worrying yourselves about Nightshift going to hell for this review though, dear reader. We sleep safe in the knowledge Martin will forgive us. And since he’s got his wish to end up in the Demo Dumper we can, to paraphrase *The Wicker Man*, bestow upon him a rare honour – a martyr’s review.

*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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