

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 212
March
2013

"We have carved out a dimension where whatever we do, or feel, or think, is right, simply because we created it that way. It's about freedom"

The Goggenheim

Festival line-ups announced!
Horrors and Ash for Truck
Noah & The Whale and Empire of
the Sun for Wilderness
Bunnymen, Seth Lakemen and
Imelda May for Cornbury
plus
WOOD returns!

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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ALL-VENUE PASSES FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT have gone on sale. 100 passes are available, priced £8, from oxfordmusic.net or **Truck Store** on Cowley Road.

This year's Oxford Punt takes place across the evening of **Wednesday 8th May** and showcases some 18 of the best unsigned local acts across five venues in the city centre. Previous Punts have provided early exposure for the likes of Stornoway, Young Knives, Fixers, Spring Offensive and future members of Foals and Jonquil.

The passes allow access to all five venues on the Punt circuit: **The Purple Turtle, The Cellar, The Duke's Cut, The Wheatsheaf** and **The White Rabbit**, although there will also be entry to individual venues available.

Local acts wanting to play at the Punt have until March 10th to submit demos, either by emailing online music links (no sound files please) to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, or sending a CD to Nightshift at **PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**. In both cases please clearly mark your entry PUNT and include both phone and email contact details and a brief bio. Only acts from Oxfordshire may apply, all acts must be over 18 and you can't play if you've played the Punt before.

The **Punt line-up** will be announced on the Nightshift forum on March 15th.

CHARLBURY RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL will take place over the weekend of the 27th-28th July this year, moving from its

traditional June slot. Last year's June event was postponed due to flooding worries but the rearranged event attracted a record crowd of 8,000 festival-goers.

Riverside will be running their usual stage at Cornbury Festival this year over the weekend of the 5th-7th July. A battle of the bands competition at Chipping Norton School last month saw False Alarm picked to play the Riverside stage.

JESS HALL hosts and co-headlines a charity gig in aid of Christian Aid this month. The local singer-songwriter joins The Family Machine at The Bullingdon on Friday 29th March, along with The Cooling Pearls, Bethany Weimers, Empty White Circles, My Crooked Teeth, Matt Chanarin and Dan Rawle. Proceeds from the show will go towards the aid charity, with Jess also running the London marathon to raise money. The show kicks off at 5.30pm with tickets priced £5 in advance from Truck Store or £6 on the door.

FOURIER TRANSFORM RECORDS release a limited edition, individually hand-packaged cassette recording of John Cage's 'Indeterminacy', recorded by members of Fixers, King Of Cats and Red Square. The release follows on from the sold-out show of John Cage's music by the artists at the Port Mahon in January. Visit www.fouriertransform.com to find out more.

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC host their annual Open showcase on Friday 21st June at



NOAH & THE WHALE have been confirmed as headliners for this year's **Wilderness Festival**. It will be the folk-pop stars' only UK festival appearance of the summer and will follow the release of their fourth album, 'Heart Of Nowhere', in May.

They will be joined by Australian electro-rock duo **Empire of the Sun**, also playing their only UK festival show; Detroit's cult guitarist **Rodriguez**, who was the subject of the celebrated *Searching For Sugarman* film last year after spending years in musical obscurity; British soul singer **Michael Kiwanuka**, London indie rockers **Tribes** and Aussie singer-songwriter and *Australian Idol* runner-up **Matt Corby**. More names are due to be added soon with **The London Folk Guild** set to once again host a folk and roots stage.

Wilderness takes place over the weekend of **9th-11th August** in the picturesque surroundings of **Cornbury Park**, near Charlbury.

The festival won a host of awards last year for its mix of live music, theatre and performance, banquets, talks and discussions, parties and outdoor activities.

Rumpus will be hosting the Secret Garden Party, while Yotam Ottolenghi and Russell Norman are among chefs hosting banquets. Shakespeare's Globe, Circus Ronaldo and Transe Express will be among the theatre and performance hosts, while The Royal Observatory, School of Life and The Idler once again provide opportunities for discussion.

Tickets for Wilderness are on sale now from the festival website at www.wildernessfestival.com, with adult tickets priced at £139.

the Pegasus and are now accepting demos from acts wanting to play. Original musicians or bands of any style can apply by sending demos, links or MP3s to info@ocmevents.org. As ever there will be a separate Youth Open show for under-18s acts.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Saturday evening between

8-9pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best local releases and demos as well as featuring interviews, gig reviews and local music news. The show is available to stream or as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

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

THE HORRORS and **Ash** headline this year's **Truck Festival**.

The first batch of the bands for the event, which runs over the weekend of the **19th-20th July** at **Hill Farm** in Stevenon, was announced at the end of February. Other acts so far confirmed include **Toy**, **Dan le Sac vs Scroobius Pip**, **Gaz Coombes**, **Dry The River** and **Rolo Tomassi**, while an **Alcopop!** takeover of the barn stage will feature **Tall Ships**, **Gunning For Tamar**, **Crash of Rhinos**, **Salvation Bill** and more.

Other names on the bill include **Lewis Watson**, **Max Raptor**, **Brother and Bones**, **Fight Like Apes**, **Axes** and **Computers**.

After the financial troubles of 2011, last year's Truck Festival sold out, having been taken over by the organisers of Derbyshire's award-winning Y Not Festival, who continue their tenure this time round.

Tickets for Truck are on sale now, priced £74 for adult camping tickets, from truckfestival.com.



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NEWS



songstress earning widespread praise for her debut album, 'Dream Of Life'. She is joined by **The Dreaming Spires**, **Jali Fily Cissokho**, **Trevor Moss & Hannah Lou**, **Flights of Helios**, **Nick Cope**, **Julie Hawk**, **Syd Arthur** and **Jack Day**, with more acts to be announced soon.

WOOD FESTIVAL makes a welcome return to the local music calendar this year.

Having been forced to take a year out in 2012 in the aftermath of Truck's financial problems, organiser Robin Bennett is bringing Wood back to its **Braziers Park** home over the weekend of the **17th-19th May**.

The award-winning eco festival is pitched as a celebration of music and nature, with an emphasis on folk, roots and world music, with solar and cycle-powered stages, organic food and compost toilets among its carbon-neutral features.

Rising folk singer **Mary Epworth** (pictured) is the first headline act to be announced, the Norfolk



ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN, **Keane**, **Imelda May** and **Seth Lakemen** are the first acts to be confirmed for this year's **Cornbury Festival**.

The full line-up for the festival is due to be announced on March 1st. Cornbury reaches its tenth birthday this year and organiser Hugh Phillimore has consulted festival regulars for favourite acts from previous events to invite back for what is being dubbed 'The Glorious Tenth'.

Cornbury Festival takes place in the rather idyllic **Great Tew Estate** over the weekend of the **5th-7th July**. Earlybird tickets for the event have sold out and tickets will go on sale as soon as the full line-up is revealed. Visit www.cornburyfestival.com for all the news when it's released.

new things like the Kindling tent filled with poets, scientists and other interesting speakers - something I never quite got off the ground previously - and even more stuff for families to do. There will

also be even more music than before." Tickets for Wood are on sale now, priced £75 for adults, £65 for under-18s and under-12s going free, from www.woodfestival.com.

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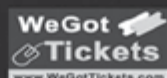
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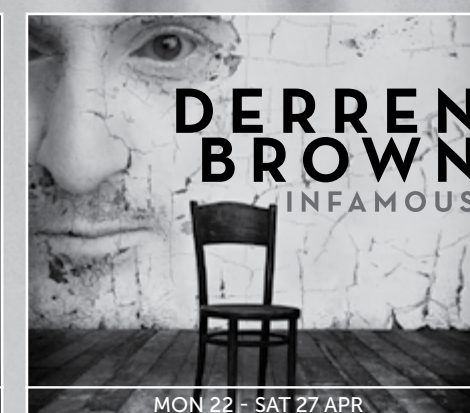
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a quiet word with

The Goggenheim

photo: Johnny Moto



“**WE ONCE PLAYED ON A** carnival float going through Malmesbury town centre. I remember quite an old man looking at me as we chugged past, with a really aggressive, disgusted look on his face, shouting ‘Horrible! Horrible!’. Another time we played the Dublin Castle. A girl came up to me afterwards and said, ‘congratulations, you’re a genius, can I buy you a pint?’”

NIGHTSHIFT IS TALKING TO The Goggenheim, indisputably the strangest, most mischievously inventive, most difficult to categorise and most fun band in Oxford (and some way beyond), and asked them what some of their favourite reactions to their music have been. Singer Grace Exley provides the Malmesbury and Dublin Castle stories. Bassist Rowan Allingham simply recalls, “One guy asked me ‘are you guys taking the fucking piss?’”

A BAND LIKE THE Goggenheim will always attract polarised opinions. Here is a band that doesn’t fit in. Anywhere. Call them pop, post-punk, psychedelia, funk, jazz, disco, Krautrock, or pretty much any other damn thing you like and you’d be a fair bit right, and

a fair bit wrong. They’re all those things but none of them completely. Instead they’re a bewildering, exhilarating, restlessly-mutating, expectation-confounding, all-partying amalgam of not just styles and influences, but ideas, ideals, attitude and made up languages, dressed up in cranky garb and fronted by an ancient Egyptian burlesque queen from the planet Saturn. And if that all sounds a bit over-the-top, you obviously haven’t witnessed The Goggenheim yet. Because if you had you’d know it was all true, and plenty more besides.

THE GOGGENHEIM HAVE history that goes back almost fifteen years, though the band really started to come together thirteen years ago when Grace was spotted singing 4 Non-Blondes’ ‘What’s Up’ at a village pub karaoke session. Grace and Rowan joined guitarist Alex Jenkins and drummer Stewart Shape before the quartet expanded to its current six-strong line-up with the recruitment of guitarist Andrew ‘Bowsh’ Bousher and saxophonist Richard Brotherton a few years back. Rarely has Nightshift seen a group of musicians pull in such wayward directions and yet sound – and *look* – so cohesive a band. “Our approach to creativity has

been consistent,” explains Grace, the stunningly-attired alien cheerleader of the band on stage. “We have always enjoyed exploring one another’s creative capabilities. When we get together we play, as children do, only we’re less violent with one another and we have a better ability to focus. It’s a hoot, and it’s highly exhilarating and deeply creative. Naturally after thirteen years, our unique sound and performance style have come together into something very strong. We’ve never released an EP before because we never felt the need to, but we are doing it now because the momentum behind what we do has built up so much.”

AH YES, THE EP RELEASE. Until now the only way to experience The Goggenheim beyond their sporadic but essential live shows has been via their videos on Youtube. None of yer all-together-on-stage camcorder dreariness either, but weird, sometimes disorientating psychedelic collages that play down The Goggenheim’s individual identities in favour of visuals that far better convey the band’s unique personality. Nightshift has been somewhat addicted to those videos in recent times, particularly for the songs ‘Ah Samina’ and ‘Moth’, long-time

live favourites that now provide the core of the band’s debut EP, out at the end of March. Two songs that capture what is genuinely brilliant about a band who defy as many rules about pop music as there are rules to defy, yet are instantly accessible and can thrill everyone from hardened musical avant gardists, to kids who want funny sounds and a great tune to sing along to.

INTERVIEWING THE Goggenheim is as fun and challenging as their music; they’re full of – often conflicting – opinions and ideas. But we suggest first that whole Goggenheim sound sounds, to these ears at least, like it comes from a similar musical background to those musicians who felt freed by punk but rejected its rockist constraints: bands like This Heat, The Pop Group, Art Bears, Au Pairs and Renaldo & The Loaf. Stewart: “Yes, very good! I have to be truthful and say I do hope we never sound like any other band, but I can say I like all those bands. I would also add Thinking Plague, the Suu’s and Faust to your list!” Bowsh: “I’d also include those guys who came *to* rock from funk, like George Clinton and Sly; from jazz and r’n’b like Miles Davis, Soft Machine and Hendrix; from folk like John Fahey and Fairport, and the blues, like Beefheart.

THOUGH MANY OF THE names bandied about might sound dauntingly obscure, The Goggenheim’s music takes experimental, off-kilter ideas and sounds and makes them incredibly accessible. They’re pop. Just not as you might know it. Grace: “Yes! Yes! Yes!” Alex: “There is no reason to create something with a view to performing it publicly, yet excluding everybody who encounters it. If we write music and we enjoy it, however weird, the chances are others will too and the more the merrier.” Bowsh: “They’re just the sounds at your fingertips. The function of being in a band is not to educate but to entertain, whether an idea came from Alan Sondheim or the Scissor Sisters it doesn’t matter so long as you can dig playing and displaying it. It just so happens people feel they are letting go to the Gog in a way that’s perhaps new for much of the

audience; that’s a happy coincidence with us playing experimental music!” Richard: “Yes, there is no reason why experimental music can’t be accessible. We are used to hearing strange sounds, noise and effects in films, theatre or TV to set a mood. We just do it with real musical instruments in songs. For example, we could have used a computer to create the buzzing insect-like sound in ‘Moth’, or even a real-life sample, but it’s more fun to be playing a saxophone with a tremolo effect on stage than a laptop!” Do you think it’s possible to get people in general to listen to music that actually challenges them? Stewart: “If you question things that happen in your life and look seriously for a meaning to it all then you will want your mental framework challenged; if you don’t you won’t. I believe it may be possible to encourage the don’ts and won’ts, but only in small numbers, but then it’s not about numbers. Music has changed my world outlook. Alex: “Most people want to be challenged but will only be exposed to the music they happen to hear in the course of their daily lives. I am often surprised by those who show most appreciation. It is a reminder that genuinely unusual people have little concept of their own peculiarities, whereas self-proclaimed “crazy” characters are often anything but. Bowsh: “I think people forget how much of a challenge mainstream music can be to appreciate. Lots of popular musical ideas out there are very strange, from Donna Summer, to Queen, to Bowie, to Hendrix, to Tricky; we are lucky that there are large audiences out there who want their ears to be bent out of shape from time to time. Oxford is very good for that.”

EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO the Goggenheim experience is that, for all their musical strangeness and charm, there’s a refreshing lack of the po-faced seriousness you too often get with modern experimental music – all those overly-serious, overly academic improv types. Has music, we wonder, lost its sense of theatre and ridiculousness? Grace: “Hmmm, I’ve certainly been to gigs where I have felt that the atmosphere was killed off by performers taking themselves too seriously, and I agree that a lot of music that is complex can be a bit of a turn-off because it is either too dry or too bleak. We are very proud to be exploring complexity with an upbeat attitude and sense of humour. We feel that the Cellar Family have a similar approach to ourselves, so we’re thrilled to have them on the bill with us at our EP launch.” Stewart: “We have never regarded

ourselves as musicians. I hate that word, it’s a meaningless label, it’s damaging to music, and it’s damaging to the way music is played. What we make as a band is a collective noise or sound. If a band play ‘free’ music but take themselves very seriously, then how on earth can their music be ‘free’? Music is bigger than any band or musician; music should be free to go where it wants; it is in everyone’s psyche at birth, or even before birth; it is there already in everything, and all around us, just let it flow!” Alex: “It would be ridiculous to think that what we, or any other band, do is important. Acknowledging this is perhaps the first step in gaining any credibility. Worthwhile music should make the listener think, feel, move, etc. but this can be achieved without elevating the performer to the position of a temporary god or whatever it is they might consider themselves to be. To surprise and enchant an audience

is fantastic but to feel superior for doing so would be pathetic.” Richard: “Theatre and ridiculousness are an important part of the entertainment process. On stage, we have a job to do - if we are having fun while doing so, then the audience knows we want to include them in our fun. Those serious types you describe may be very talented musicians, but they can alienate potential fans by thinking that their talent or academic nature means they are more important than the audience.”

‘MOTH’ AND ‘AH SAMINA’ are perfect examples of The Goggenheim’s balancing of serious experimental musical adventure and silly, simple pop brilliance. Stewart: “They are songs which have immediate accessible references; they are what one could call pop songs in the literal sense of the word pop, or bang, or blast. They are instant in their appeal, like a chant or anthem say, but then we distance those songs from such simplistic appreciation by adding seemingly meaningless vocals, to make the road to its enjoyment a little more swerving, sophisticated and less direct. That forms subtle divisions in the mind and a more complex way of perceiving music ensues...we hope!” Grace: “They’re both instantly accessible whilst being pretty unique. They are certainly very good examples of what The Goggenheim do. It’s always been of great

amusement to me, on reaching the part in ‘Ah Samina’ where I burst into song, to observe the facial reactions of the crowd, particularly when playing to fresh audiences.”

AH YES, GRACE’S VOICE. IF the singer’s exotic onstage garb is something out of the ordinary, her voice is a genuine thing of wonder – from girly chirrup on EP track ‘Houston’, to accusatory witchiness on ‘Acutay Yu’, to startling otherworldly warble on ‘Ah Samina’. Where does that come from? Grace: “My Dad used to do comedy impersonations of Edith Piaf at the dinner table. That was the inspiration behind the way I use my voice in ‘Ah Samina’. Ari Up from the Slits used her voice and her lyrics so joyfully and so playfully, even when she was singing about pretty dingy subjects, and I remember being blown away and thrilled by that when I discovered ‘Cut’. Some of the music I like is quite complex, unusual and

sophisticated, but a lot of it is utter trash, and I’ve been influenced by the whole lot. Sometimes I revel in music purely because I know it’s shit. Good or bad, it all goes in, I digest it, and it comes back out again in its own way. When we create new material I let my voice express itself in whatever way it feels works best with the feel of the music. Each song we write has a different narrative, and this frequently calls forth new protagonists for me to explore. Which, in part, explains why my voice may appear to stretch off in different ways.” There’s obviously an emphasis on the visual side of your shows as well as the music; is that important to you? Grace: “Very important. Seeing a band live is about so much more than what comes out of the speakers. There is a whole network of dimensions to play with. A band is always communicating visually, whether it realises this or not.” Richard: “It’s great when audience members are obviously enjoying themselves dancing at the front. But the people standing still at the back of the room are equally as important and may be enjoying themselves even more. Grace’s costumes and stage presence, the video projections and the band’s attitude and energy all help make sure we stimulate as many senses as is hygienically possible.” Alex: “Grace has always stunned audiences but the band as a whole is now a spectacle with an emphasis

on contrast. A little effort goes a very long way and turns a gig into a performance.” Stewart: “I remember Richard Branson had the first smallish colour video camera in the early 1980s and I had a bookshop next to his sister Vanessa’s art gallery. He hardly ever saw that camera coz I was using it all the time making loads of art and music videos for my solo albums. I now make TV programmes, so I have always been very visual. Grace is very visually driven too, so it was inevitable that we exploit that in the set, it is what we do already so doing on a platform is natural to us.

GRACE’S STAGE PERSONA IS particularly striking and, for all the collective musical input, provides the focus for The Goggenheim’s shows; is there, for her, a concerted effort to create an onstage persona that’s a different character to herself off stage? Grace: “I have many different stage personas, but I think the one you are thinking of is the one with the big glittery headdress and the little silver grass skirt and knickers. That persona is a homage to the evil Maria character from Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* – the 1920s sci-fi masterpiece. When I wear that outfit even my on-stage choreography is inspired by her. Maria can get away with being evil because she was created by an evil scientist. In a way she is innocent, and the way she carries off evil is utterly delightful. Perhaps this is because the film is so antiquated that she looks all quaint. Perhaps originally she was terrifying. She is also sexy, alluring and otherworldly. These are all things that I like. In the film, the metropolis fell to pieces under her wicked influence, but when they rebuilt it, it was purer and better, so she was in fact a force for positive change and greater awareness. My guess is that somehow, some part of me relates to all that. “And, yes, I do put energies into creating on-stage personas that are different from my off-stage character, because my off-stage character feels that to pick my daughter up from school wearing only silver knickers, vigorously shaking my booty and screaming about gorillas and carrots and moths and things in pidgin English, would be a little inappropriate. There is a time and a place. The whole point about the Goggenheim is that we have carved out a dimension where whatever we do, or feel, or think, is right, simply because we created it that way. It’s about freedom.”

The Goggenheim launch their EP at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 30th March with The Cellar Family and Junkie Brush. Visit thegoggenheim.com for more news and stuff.

RELEASED

STORNOWAY

‘Tales From Terra

Firma’

(4AD)

If ever an album was born out of the success of its debut predecessor then ‘Tales From Terra Firma’ is it. The residue of globally touring ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’ shows throughout, in the giddy motion that travel brings to the mind, unattached to earth and daily constraints, allowing it to think on life and all its sweeping vistas and perspectives as they gaze at horizons from aircraft and bus windows. Musically too, you can see it has been densely enriched by the bonds forged by the enforced intimacy and a band of brothers reliance on each other.

Album opener ‘Take Me As I Am’ bolts at you with a Van Morrison ‘Bright Side Of The Road’ gaiety, as if you’ve just entered a room where the *soiree* is already in full swing. It then gallops madly along in a torrent of words, Hammond and Theremin, and over into a white water crescendo of brass and piano. It’s a breathless, contrary beginning and it takes the sublimely haunting ‘Farewell Appalachia’, almost out-fleet foxing itself with dulcimer, the sound of chopping wood, and dreamy waves of bass, to connect you to the more familiar Stornoway signature spiritualism of the universal rhythm of nature.

From thereon in the epic quality of their recent journeys take over, entreating you to widen your mental focus in ‘The Bigger Picture’, the six minute proposal of ‘A Belated Invitation To Eternity’, with its bolero suite of time changes and mood shifting, and on into the runaway high-speed love train of ‘Hook, Line



and Sinker’, a scream-if-you-want-to-go-faster paean to the thrill of passion. Now, before you start thinking, in this treasure trove of inventiveness, where’s the fuelled-up, singalong, pub shanties of yore, along comes ‘The Great Procrastinator’, with its “I’m a lumberjack and I’m okay” lilt morphing, by way of jazz-age clarinets, into a boozy Scott Joplin after-party. But this is the grown up Stornoway and they immediately follow all this rollicking with ‘The Ones We Hurt The Most’, a chain of psychological truisms that you ponder on long after the weeping Barrington Pheloung-esque strings have subsided. The solo, acoustic coda of ‘November Song’ is just that, a simple song of gratitude, of travelling finished, of a job well done, and while it’s Brian Briggs’ distinctive and welcoming voice that is the fingerprint of ‘Tales From Terra Firma’, it’s the sheer wealth and variety of musicianship on display here that ultimately leaves you two feet off the ground. **Paul Carrera**

inspired sounds. The lead track from Mick’s new EP is, by his own admission, inspired by Link Wray’s *Batman* theme, and he ain’t lying, that big ol’ dirty guitar groove sets itself in from the off, Mick’s vocals alternately snapping and urgent or airily carefree as he meditates on the joys of, well, meditating. Chuck in some nice old Korg synth parts and its vintage credentials are sealed.

‘Falling Down’ is similarly dirty under its fingernails, punked-up 60s-styled rhythm’n’blues that might have swaggered out of Canvey Island back in the day. While it falls away from its initial fuzzgun punk-pop blast towards the end, ‘Pocohontas’ is a chunky Kinks-like romp and should maybe have nicked ‘Falling Down’s title since it’s about Mick’s accident five year’s ago when a fall from an upstairs window in France hospitalised him with a broken back.

Luckily time and a full recovery mean he can now laugh – and sing – about it, as he opens with the line “I’m falling through the empty space,” the whole thing sounding like he barely has a care in the world.

Dale Kattack

Sponsored by



CO-PILGRIM

‘A Fairer Sea’

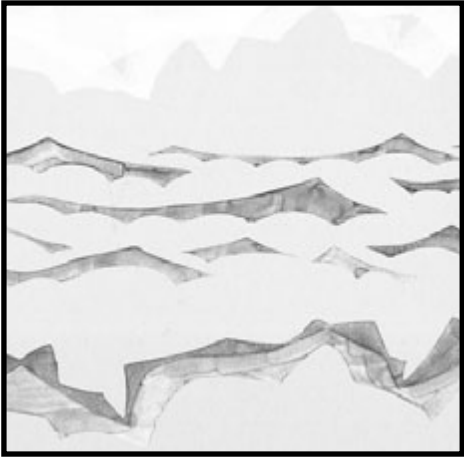
(Battle Worldwide Recordings)

“I’m going to the country”; so state the lyrics on the similarly-titled fifth track on ‘A Fairer Sea’, the latest album from Co-pilgrim, aka Mike Gale, previously of Black Nielson, alongside Dreaming Spires’ Joe Bennett. Very apposite words, as here’s another band that seems to typify the effortless country-rock sound of late 1960s/early 1970s California. Along with bands like The Dreaming Spires themselves, Goldrush and The Epstein, it’s as if a warm sunshine glow is enveloping at least part of Oxfordshire.

The cover artwork suggests the colours, tones and wide-angle breadth of the Nevada/California desert, and as with bands such as the Beach Boys, Byrds or Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Co-pilgrim are positive-sounding and uplifting, yet grounded in a dry air of melancholic reflection. The ten tracks of ‘A Fairer Sea’ each have at their core a clear melodic line, but a variety of walking, flowing basslines, rhythms and reflective tunes bustle around in the background. Opening track ‘22’ nails this combination with a rolling, rollicking, undulating sense of motion, and Gale’s husky voice, pure in intent, elegantly traverses scales, backed up with some quite beautiful vocal melodies and instrumental echoes.

Whilst there’s a slight lack of variety over the whole of the album, it follows a pleasingly ever-more-intimate journey from beginning to end. That dusty, wide-open-sky Americana style is everywhere, as with the reverbed slide guitar of the title track and the warm fireside glow of ‘Roslindale’; elements of more modern American indie bands like The Posies inform tracks like ‘Come On Come On’. The final tracks, ‘No Man Or Mountain’ and ‘No Guiding Light’ strip back the richness and suggest that Co-pilgrim would be equally effective both as a full band and a live acoustic act. Skating intelligently around a blandly commercial sound, ‘A Fairer Sea’ is a strong set of songs that speak of a particular set of musical influences and loves: a good soundtrack for going to the country.

Simon Minter



THE REAPER

‘You Will Fall’

(Own label)

With a heavy metal band whose average age is 13 it would be easy to be horribly patronising and say things like “awww, I bet their mothers still buy their bullet belts, bless ‘em.” Well forget it. One listen to The Reaper’s debut album and it’s clear they could drag many of their local contemporaries kicking and screaming into the netherworld. Students at the Witchwood School Of Rock – made famous by a surprise tutorial from Guns’n’Roses guitarist Ron “Bumblefoot” Thal – it’s obvious the training has done them good. Their heavy,

chugging guitars would force even the most sceptical metal head to throw up the horns. Although fond of a dramatic intro, as album opener ‘Suffocating Me’ demonstrates with its long-winded approach, this is clearly a band who pay more attention to metal music than just choosing a t-shirt. Indeed, cut through to the heart of the track and thanks to a Zakk Wylde-themed squealing main riff, some solid metal breaks out.

Setting themselves somewhere between the dirty power of Machine Head and the joyful riffing of Anvil, The Reaper posses some genuine moments of excellent metal with a wider appeal. Saying that, the scythe comes down on ‘Unfound’ and ‘Cry Me A Place To Be’, which sound as if they were built around some interesting solo work with little else to shout about. The sinister ‘You’re Not What You Say’ and the all-out attack of ‘Twisted Mind’ prove to be the superior choices.

The star of this black show is front man Joey Kenn, a guitarist and singer who can throw down both belligerent riffs and tuneful solos. Ably assisted by fellow guitarist Harry Winks and a thumping rhythm section of bassist Joe Landles and drummer Callum Woodward, they prove to be quite the powerhouse.

It seems Satan is smiling upon them, and with some tighter song writing these guys could be onto something great. To, perhaps inevitably quote Blue Öyster Cult, don’t fear The Reaper. **Dan Bond**



MAEVE BAYTON

‘2nd May’

(Own label)

From its opening lines, “Last night I had a party and my house was full of people.... There was laughter and people making music, but I was feeling sadness, cos I was missing you,” Maeve Bayton’s second album is cut through with an almost palpable sense of sadness and loss. Lyrically, whenever an opportunity for fun, or a ray of sunshine, impinges, heartache is only a thought away.

Understandable of course. The title track of ‘2nd May’ in particular deals directly with the loss of Maeve’s husband to cancer, but the whole album feels touched by the event – from the romantic reflection of ‘Man From The North Country’, to the attempt at fortitude of ‘Willow’. Add to the lyrical theme a sparse, wistful musical style, just acoustic guitar and

harmonica and occasional violin, courtesy of local folk luminary Jane Griffiths, and the scene is set for a ramble through the meadows of melancholy.

On the one hand it’s an intensely personal journey, and Maeve has an unblemished, pure voice, not unlike Sally Timms at times, while the music is simple and homely, particularly the old-time campfire country of ‘Friend’; on the other, you sometimes want the album to pick up a bit of pace, show a bit more of its spirited side – Maeve was part of pioneering local all-female punk band The Mistakes back in the 70s before becoming a lecturer at Ruskin College, so she knows how to kick it out as well as gaze serenely at the birds and trees.

Also, while it’s hard to be critical of songs written about such personal life experiences, lines like “You drove off in your Ford Mondeo car / And I sat down alone with my guitar” sound clumsy to the point of adding an unintentionally comic element to what should be poignant moments.

That aside, while everything here, from the cover shot of a goldfinch, to the birdsong and church bells, reflect the rustic idyll of Maeve’s Otmoor abode, her songs prove that in every dream home lies a heartache. **Dale Kattack**

DALLAS DON’T

Retrace This Place

(Own label)

Songs about burning witches tend to be a bit of a downer, don’t they? Well, no actually, and certainly not in the hands of chipper indie-types Dallas Don’t whose debut EP, ‘Retrace This Place’, spans the post-Libertines landscape of guitar-oriented music, with a healthy dose of angst and angular noise thrown in for good measure. While the band hinted at something along the lines of a singalong on their previous demo (‘Fife For Life’), opening track ‘The Witches Stone’ is a brighter representation of Dallas Don’t’s catchy songwriting abilities, infusing a familiar chord progression with bouncy, wonky charm and singer/guitarist duo Niall and Jenny’s boy-girl vocal dynamic. But things get really interesting when the band allow the feedback to rage on the Mclusky-esque ‘Solution’, Nial sounding like the vitriolic Andy Falkous had he been born about a hundred miles north. Plumming further back, the final two tracks sound like they could have been plucked from Idlewild’s ‘Captain’: wonderfully scrappy guitars, frenetic drumming, and an undercurrent of emotional urgency (‘Screaming At The Sea’) and tension (‘New Wolf’).

Sometimes you expect a band to go one way and they go another; Dallas Don’t’s previous demos suggested that they would go down the weirder Cellar Family route but they’ve actually reached a pleasant plateau where they exist on their own terms, balancing light and dark with a prototypically indie framework and the occasional urge to make an abrasive racket. ‘Retrace This Place’ will either hit you immediately or require a few listens, but sooner or later Dallas Don’t will put a spell on you. **Tom McKibbin**



DB BAND

‘Loosen Up’

(Own label)

While Gaz Coombes has headed into more experimental, electronic territory post-Supergrass, Mick Quinn’s DB Band sound like they’re on a more traditionalist trip, a very different 60s flashback to Gaz’s Krautrock-

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GIG GUIDE

FRIDAY 1st
OF MONSTERS & MEN: O2 Academy – Opulent folk-rocking from Iceland’s latest success story – *see main preview*
SWITCH featuring RAM RECORDS DJs: O2 Academy – Andy C’s RAM Records, home to Chase & Status, DC Breaks and Sub Focus, takes time out from heir Fabric residency for a night of dubstep and drum&bass at the O2’s new weekly electronic dance night.
SUSANNAH BORSCH + DANIEL TERUGGI: Modern Art Oxford – Audiograft returns for another season of experimental music in conjunction with Oxford Contemporary Music. Alongside a month of installations and exhibits are a brace of concerts at Modern Art, tonight, featuring virtuoso recorder player and electronic sound manipulator Susannah Borsch, performing a UK premier of Sohrab Uduman’s ‘Chants, Airs, Graces’. She’s joined by Daniel Teruggi, director of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales, performing

Friday 1st
OF MONSTERS & MEN: O2 Academy
If you asked a casual passer by which Icelandic act had enjoyed the biggest chart success in the States in recent years they’d doubtless guess at Björk or Sigur Ros, but it’s newcomers Of Monster & Men who scored a Top 10 over there with debut album ‘My Head Is An Animal’, simultaneously hitting the Number 3 slot in the UK and enjoying huge commercial success across the rest of Europe. And why not – the world needs more songs about mythical beasts, talking trees and transfigured kings, presented in an epic folk style that is just made to top summer festival bills and comes with several large sacks of rousing harmony-heavy choruses. Singers Nanna and Ragnar (we can’t print their surnames here as Nightshift’s computer doesn’t recognise some of the characters involved) are a cosy, breathy vocal team, singing in English, while retaining a strong Icelandic inflection. Like Arcade Fire and Mumford & Sons, the music is expansive but earthy, inspired as much by Motown as traditional folk music, and they come with a dark edge too – when they sing about the birds and the bees, it’s about a bloody war between the two species with the sky blacked out by killing machines. Something you probably won’t hear about on the latest Rihanna album.



MARCH

his own compositions as well as classic pieces from the GRM’s history.
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with MIGHTY LEAP: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’s monthly dose of reggae, dancehall and bass features the return of Bermudian singer Desta Zion Wilson to town with his new band Mighty Leap, mixing Caribbean rhythms beneath his sweet reggae singing voice. On the decks tonight is Nice Up! Head honcho DJ Shepardog with his trademark mix of big bass, singalongs and mild nudity.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with HARDCORES MEN OF THE TECHNOLYPSE + X-1 + TRUE RUMOUR: The Wheatsheaf – A goodly selection of local music veterans at tonight’s Klub Kak, with one-time techno faves Hardcoresmen of the Technolypse back and raving once again. They’re joined by reformed hardcore monsters X-1.
BROTHER & BONES + TOLIESEL + GO ON, DO IT, JUMP: The Jericho Tavern – Daisy Rodgers Music night with rustic folk-rockers Brother & Bones, coming on somewhere between Ben Howard, Mumford and Dry The River, plus support from local Americana pop dreamers ToLiesel and grungy rockers Go On, Do It, Jump.
THE OXFORD COUNTRY FOLK SONGWRITERS CIRCLE: The Port Mahon – Cosy campfire songs and stories with local country and folk faves Swindlestock, Olly Wills, Robin Bennett and Jess Hall. Bring marshmallows, anecdotes and good cheer.
ATTENTION THIEVES + NECK DEEP + RELOAD THE RADIO + BROKEN REVOLUTION: The Courtyard, Bicester – Melodic post-hardcore rocking from Reading’s Attention Thieves at the Courtyard’s all-ages show, alongside Wrexham’s punk-pop crew Neck Deep, and local pop-punk acts Reload The Radio and Broken Revolution.
NAIROBI + THE SHAPES + LOAN TREE: The Bullingdon – Local bands night with afro-pop types Nairobi and country rockers The Shapes.
NIKKI LOY: The White Hart, Wolvercote – Soulful acoustic jazz and pop from the local songstress.
HOPE & GLORY: East Oxford Conservative Club – Classic songs from Madness, The Specials and Bad Manners to Trojan Records classics.
BLACK DOGS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Led Zep tribute.
BREEZE: The Duke’s Cut – Lively covers and party tunes from the Duke’s Cut regulars.
FUNK IT: The Bullingdon – Jack FM DJ Rich Smith spins club classics, pop and r’n’b.
NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK: Baby Love – Eclectic club night mixing up everything from disco, garage rock and soul to 80s pop, Britpop, new wave, hip hop and ska.

SATURDAY 2nd
UPSTAIRS with DEER CHICAGO + PIXEL FIX + VON BRAUN + DALLAS DON’T + MATT MIDGLEY: O2 Academy – Excellent

local bands bill at the O2’s monthly Upstairs showcase. Turbulently oceanic shoegazers Deer Chicago launch their new EP, the follow-up to their acclaimed debut ‘Lantern Collapse’. They’re joined by chilled, spectral electro chap Pixel Fix; Pixies and Nirvana-inspired grungers Von Braun; sharp-elbowed noise-pop crew Dallas Don’t, and emotive acoustic songsmith Matt Midgley, inspired by Bright Eyes, Ryan Adams and Nick Drake.
GRIFTER + MOTHER CORONA + BEAR Vs MANERO + REFUGEES OF CULTURE: The Wheatsheaf – Behemoth-sized riffery from Devon’s stoner-rock heavyweights Grifter, calling at all stations from Sabbath to Clutch. They’re joined for tonight’s Buried In Smoke show by Sabbath, Electric Wizard and Smashing Pumpkins-styled groove-metallers Mother Corona; oddball garage rockers Bear Vs Manero, and heavyweight psychedelic blues rockers Refugees of Culture.
PHILL NIBLOCK + THOMAS ANKERSMIT + ORNIS + VALERIO TRICOLI: Modern Art Oxford – Audiograft concert in conjunction with OCM, tonight featuring minimalist composer Phill Niblock’ dense, microtonal droneworks and electronic sound manipulation from Thomas Ankersmit.
THE FAMILY MACHINE + THE HALF RABBITS + CLARE CHAPMAN: Fusion Arts Centre – One-quid pop-up gig with long-time local indie faves The Family Machine and indie-gothsters The Half Rabbits.
MILLION FACES: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Polished, soft- centred stadium rock from the local outfit.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy – Weekly three-in-one club night with indie at Propaganda; kitsch pop, 80s and glam at Trashy and dancefloor faves from Jack FM DJs.
SONIC: The Bullingdon – House night with South London Ordnance and guests.
WHAT YOU CALL IT GARAGE: The Cellar – Underground garage sounds old, new and future.

SUNDAY 3rd
FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND + MARMOZETS + STEM: O2 Academy – Post-hardcore rockers attempt to go back to their roots – *see main preview*
OXFORD UKULELES + TWIZZ TWANGLE + MOON RABBIT + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + OLIVIER & CELESTE + MAX: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of acoustic music, including local ukulele mini-orchestra, pop mentalist Twizz Twangle and Jeremy Hughes’ Moon Rabbit.

MONDAY 4th
CHANTEL MCGREGOR: The Bullingdon – Bradford’s fast-rising guitar virtuoso returns to the Bully’s Haven Club. Having played from the age of six, she became the first student to graduate from the world-renowned Leeds College of Music with a 100% pass mark and 18 distinctions. Since then she’s played alongside Joe Bonamassa as well as joining Jeff Beck, Keith Richards and Albert Lee for a 60th anniversary celebration of the Fender Telecaster. She won Best Newcomer at the 2011 British Blues Awards and was nominated for Best Female Singer at the 2012 awards. Musically

she’s inspired by everyone from Hendrix to Robin Trower and Walter Trout, while vocally she’s drawn comparisons to both Stevie Nicks and Bonnie Raitt.
NEVER THE BRIDE + AARON KEYLOCK: The Jericho Tavern – The Famous Monday Blues plays host to long-time club favourites Never The Bride, with singer Nikki Lambourn belting it out in the style of Janis Joplin and Tina Turner.

TUESDAY 5th
THE DAN REED BAND: O2 Academy – One-time Dan Reed Network mainman returns with his new, more soulful funk-rock project, mixing songs from his new album with old DRN faves.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz every Tuesday, tonight with club regulars The New Jazz Collective.
POLAR PATTERNS + HARD MACKEREL + TAKE IT UP THE OCTAVE: The Cellar – Rock, funk and samba from assorted Brookes bands.
NAIROBI + RM HIBBET + BETHANY WEIMERS + MARCUS CORBETT: Albion Beatnik Bookshop – Pindrop Performance acoustic session with Wantage’s Afro-pop crew Nairobi; gothic folkstress Bethany Weimers and more.
BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue – Weekly open mic club from the Catweazle crew.
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 6th
FRANKIE COCOZZA: O2 Academy – Ooh, we wondered what had happened to Frankie since he got kicked off of *X-Factor* after dropping his trousers to reveal the tattooed names of the girls he’d slept with on holiday, before heading

Sunday 3rd
FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND: O2 Academy
Bridgend’s one-time emo heroes have moved on so far from their lively, and subsequently influential post-hardcore debut outing, ‘Casually Dressed & Deep In Conversation’, that they’re almost unrecognisable as the same band these days. That might equally have something to do with the merry-go-round of band members, long-time drummer Ryan Richards the latest to depart, guitarist Kris Coombes the sole original member of the band. Lately the band have tried to reconnect with that initial raw sound but the energy really isn’t there any longer, and they haven’t sounded like innovators of any kind for a long, long time, too many years spent on a major label maybe squeezing them into tighter creative corners, the drive for poppier hits overriding punk ideals. Along the way they simply became a screamo archetype, verging on stadium rock bluster, histrionics an onstage staple. The band are on tour to plug their latest opus, ‘Conduit’, still popular, but now fighting to once again be the cheerleaders for youthful emotional bloodletting they started out as.



off to snort cocaine in assorted minor celebrity hangouts. Actually we hadn’t wondered at all. We’d completely forgotten he ever even existed in the first place. But no, seems Frankie’s got himself a proper pop career and a single called ‘She’s Got A Motorcycle’, wherein the motorcycle in question is used as a metaphor for a lady’s more intimate parts (sample lyric: “She’s got a motorcycle / Why won’t she let me ride it?”). Not since The Wurzels’ ‘Brand New Combine Harvester’ has machinery sounded so sexy. Musically it sounds like something Robbie Williams left in the toilet and the video makes Frankie look like he desperately needs a poo. One day there will be statues built in Frankie Cocozza’s honour.
FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep club night.

THURSDAY 7th
THE ALARM: O2 Academy – Mike Peters’ enduring welsh rockers come back round, kicking out old faves like ‘68 Guns’ and ‘Spirit of 76’ alongside songs from their increasingly extensive back catalogue.
HALESTORM + IN THIS MOMENT + SACRED MOTHER TONGUE: O2 Academy – Screechy pop-friendly heavy rocking from Pennsylvania’s Halestorm, recent tour support to Evanescence, to whom they bear an uncanny musical resemblance.
AETHARA + GOD SPEED + HEADSTONE HORRORS + LAST RITES: The Bullingdon – Heavy duty action with local metal hopefuls Aethara and Nottingham’s horror-metallers Headstone Horrors.
NIKKI LOY + MAKOTO KURIYA: The Big Bang – Local pop and jazz songstress Nikki, plays along with Japanese jazz pianist Makoto Kuriya.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running, and best open mic club night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets and performance artists.
CALL MR ROBESON: The Old Fire Station – Musical dramatisation of the life and tribulations of civil rights activist and singer Paul Robeson, written and performed by classical singer Tayo Aluko.
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston
THE MIGHTY REDOX UNPLUGGED: The Wheatsheaf – Acoustic set in the downstairs bar from the local blues faves.
ISIS PARTY: The Cellar – Funk, soul and Motown at the Uni magazine party, with live music from student funk band Garfunkel. Student. Funk. Band. Mmm....

FRIDAY 8th
JAGUAR SKILLS: O2 Academy – Nimble mixing skills, quick cuts and knowing samples from the drum&bass party starter, back in town after his last show here in October.
SWITCH featuring JOKER: O2 Academy – Pioneering dubstep from scene leader Joker at the O2’s weekly electronic dance night.
SAM LEE & FRIENDS: The Holywell Music Room – Return to town for recent Mercury Prize nominee Lee after his Pindrop Performance show before Christmas, breathing new life into traditional gypsy and traveller folk songs on his album, ‘Ground Of Its Own’.
GREY HAIRS + MASIRO: The Wheatsheaf – Most band’s self descriptions are hopeless, deluded and inaccurate, but we rather like Nottingham’s Grey Hairs’ blurb: “For the men and women of Grey Hairs the present and the future is confusing and upsetting. The young distress them and they



Saturday 9th
PETRELS: The Cellar
Anyone averse to purple prose or general music journo pretentiousness, look away now. There’s no other way really to describe Petrels – the solo project of Bleeding Heart Narrative’s Oliver Barrett – without slipping into such territory. Barrett’s solo debut, ‘Haeligewielle’, was a concept album of sorts, revolving around the theme of water and suitably oceanic in both its texture and scope, while creating a myth of the story of Winchester Cathedral and in particular William Walker, the Winchester Diver, who spent five years working in pitch darkness beneath the cathedral to secure its foundations, which nonetheless are doomed still to collapse one day. So, as well as myth-making, the album is a meditation on heroic futility and man’s powerlessness in the face of greater forces (there’s reference to King Canute too). Musically Petrels’ elegant, sometimes oppressive use of bowed strings, synth washes, drones, distortion, choral voices and sparse percussion is fantastically dense and immersive, an expansive ebb and flow that variously recalls Godspeed, Richard Skelton and Angelo Badalamenti. If you’re after an easy night of simple pop songs, you’d be advised to stay away; anyone wanting to hear music that sounds as huge and as overwhelming as the universe itself, form an orderly queue.

deal with modern technology like a dog being shown a card trick. Are they angry? Yes, they’re angry. Can they be arsed to do anything about it? They cannot.” What do they sound like? Wobbly, warped and noisy and they quote Pere Ubu as an influence, so we bloody love them from the off. Technical math-core instrumentals from Masiro.
VIENNA DITTO + WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + JORDAN O’SHEA: The Port Mahon – Fantastic electro-rockabilly-soul-blues-trip-hop from Vienna Ditto, coming in somewhere between Portishead, Suicide and Nina Simone. Support from southern gothic acoustic duo Welcome To Peepworld and atmospheric acoustic chap Jordan O’Shea.
LEFTOUTERJOIN + WHO PUT BELLA IN THE WITCH ELM? + JERRY AFRAID: The Bullingdon – Local electronica night with thundering acid house from Leftouterjoin, plus Witney’s electronic two-piece Who Put Bella...
STAGECOACH: Truck Store – Grungy indie pop from London’s Huw Stephens-favoured Alcopop!-singd Stagecoach, out on a national tour of indie record stores.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar - dancefloor Latin, afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz at the monthly world dance club, tonight featuring a live set from Leeds/Manchester outfit Bugalu Foundation, harking back to New York’s 1970s melting pot scene to mix up soul, funk, jazz, salsa, Latin dance and mambo Harlem style.
THE CARRIVICK SISTERS + BLAIR



Sunday 10th

JOHNNY MARR: O2 Academy

Overused as the term is these days, Johnny Marr is very definitely a legend. In the pantheon of rock and pop guitarist he sits pretty damn close to the throne. There was that strange little Manchester indie band he was in of course – The Smiths or something – who redefined post-punk indie music. But then there was also his work with The The. And Electronic. And Modest Mouse, who he helped turn from oddball underground faves to chart-topping rock heroes. And The Cibs. And The Pet Shop Boys. We’ll maybe brush over and forgive The Healers because frankly Johnny is the most un-rock god-like rock god probably of all time, stamping his signature firmly on everything he touches without ever over-indulging his bountiful talent. And now he’s decided, after all this time, to front up his own band again and do some singing. The first sample of this came with single ‘The Messenger’, preceding his eponymous album this month. Of course nothing Marr does will ever eclipse what he achieved with The Smiths but pretty much everything he’s involved with is worth hearing, always expressing the inexpressible through his guitar playing. As we say, a legend.

DUNLOP: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Rootsy bluegrass and folk from Devon’s close-harmony sibling duo The Carrivick Sisters, plus acoustic folk from Cardiff’s Blair Dunlop.
THE JOHN YOUNG BAND: Fat Li’s, Witney – Prog-rocking from the veteran guitarist who’s played with Paul Rogers, Bon Jovi and Scorpions.
FUNK IT: The Bullingdon
PETE FRYER BAND: King’s Arms, Bicester

SATURDAY 9th

PETRELS + LEE RILEY + STUART CHALMERS: The Cellar – Rock Paper Scissors music night with ambient soundscapist Petrels – *see main preview*
SPACE: O2 Academy – The 90s electro-tinged Britpop hitmakers return to action, playing hits like ‘Female Of The Species’, ‘Neighbourhood’ and ‘The Ballad Of Tom Jones’ alongside songs from a planned new album.
THE COURTEENERS: O2 Academy – Oh for God’s sake.
DALLAS DON’T + ONE MAN TEAM DANCE + C IS FOR CALCULUS + POLEDO: The Wheatsheaf – EP launch gig for local noise-pop crew Dallas Don’t, their raucous post-hardcore recalling early Idlewild, Pixies, Sonic Youth and Prolapse. They’re joined tonight by High Wycombe’s frenetic synth-core-cum-math-mayhem outfit One Man Team Dance; Sheffield’s trashy lo-fi pop-thrashers C Is For Calculus, encouragingly named after a Rolo Tomassi song, and local

Dinosaur Jr and Pavement-inspired band Poledo.
HEART OF A DOG + MILLY HIRST + AIDEN CANADAY: Fusion Arts Centre – Divine Schism and Pop Up Gigs team up to host an evening with two luminaries of the Norwich folk scene – sleepy, atmospheric types Heart of a Dog, inspired as much by Sigur Ros as the likes of Sufjan Stevens, and pastoral songstress Milly Hirst, following in the lineage of Joni Mitchell and Joan Baez.
JIM MORAY: The Guildhall, Abingdon – Macclesfield’s English folk revival pioneer Moray comes to Abingdon, playing songs from his latest album, ‘Skulk’, his eclectic approach to classic songs seeing him drawing on African music and rap as well as traditional acoustic instrumentation, and with a flair for both tenderness and drama that’s seen him winning BBC Folk Awards as well as playing with the likes of The Oysterband, Bellowhead, Billy Bragg and Eliza Carthy.
SUPERLOOSE + TWIZZ TWANGLE + CRIPPLE CREEK GALS + THE BIG SOCIETY + ELEPHANT SHAMPOO: The Port Mahon – Benefit gig for Soundabout, helping young disabled people with communication problems. Rootsy Americana and folk from Superloose; madcap pop from Twizz Twangle and electronica from Guillemots drummer Grieg Stewart’s Elephant Shampoo project.
EVOLUTION: Fat Li’s, Witney – Classic rock covers from the 70s, 80s and 90s.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass with Original Sin and MC Evil B.
ROMANCE IS BORING: Baby Simple – First night of a new indie, Motown, electro and pop club night, launching with a special Oxford Women’s Festival do, playing wall-to-wall female bands and singers in aid of the Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre.
FREE SOUL: The Duke’s Cut – Modern and classic soul with Tony Nanton and Robin Haynes.

SUNDAY 10th

JOHNNY MARR: O2 Academy – The legendary Smiths guitarist goes it alone – *see main preview*
TWIZZ TWANGLE + MARK ATHERTON + JEREMY & DAN + PETE MADAMS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Free afternoon of unplugged acts hosted by Klub Kakofanny.
DB BAND: Truck Store – Mick Quinn’s 60s r’n’b-inspired rockers launch their new EP instore.

MONDAY 11th

JESSIE WARE: O2 Academy – Sultry soul and heartache from the steely pop siren – *see main preview*
OCASAN + SCHOLARS: The Cellar – Anthemic post-hardcore rocking from Northamptonshire’s Ocasan out on tour. Dark-hewn indie rocking from Banbury’s Scholars in support, leaning towards the Interpol and Editors scheme of things.
BAD INFLUENCE: The Jericho Tavern – Rocking blues from the UK veterans, led by singer and guitarist Val Cowell, and inspired by Tom Petty, Fleetwood Mac and Bonnie Raitt. Back on tour after supporting Status Quo at the end of 2012.
HAVEN CLUB: The Bullingdon – Rock and blues bands, to be confirmed.

TUESDAY 12th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from Alvin Roy & Reeds Unlimited.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm and cyberpunk club night.
BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue

WEDNESDAY 13th

RAGGED CLAWS + BECKY STONHAM + ALEX LANYON: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with an acoustic leaning.

THURSDAY 14th

NUDY BRONQUE + BILLY TRIVERS + NOE & THE PASTEL FRONTIER: The Cellar
LAIMA BITE + KATE & JESS + GLENDA HUISH + PLUMIE RACKET + BEN PHILIPS: The Bullingdon – The Bully’s acoustic club.
ROLL ON THURSDAYS: The Cellar – R’n’b, hip hop and soul with Kid Fury.
CATWEAZLE: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 15th

THE BIG TEN INCH wit PAMA INTERNATIONAL: The Cellar – After a two-

Monday 11th

JESSIE WARE: O2 Academy

It’s fair to say that Jessie Ware would have been chucked off *X-Factor* before the grand final. She’s just too understated for the gibbering goons and gibbons who want their divas to holler and smash it. Anyway, she’s too classy to even consider such a crass pathway to pop fame, even if she comes across as a pretty down to earth south London girl in interviews. Stick her in front of a microphone though and Jessie sounds as glacial and elegantly sculptured as her image suggests. Having started out doing backing vocals on tour for school chum Jack Penate, she sang for SBTRKT and Joker before releasing her debut album, ‘Devotion’ last year. Next thing you know she’s up for the Mercury Prize and soundtracking Olympic games montages. And she’s done it without sounding like every other soul-pop singer on the endless production line. Instead of melisma and over-emoting, we get a more studied form of musical heartache that’s closer to Sade or Chaka Khan, 80s-styled electro soul mixed up with modern pop and enough clever post-dubstep stuff to keep tastemakers happy. There’s an occasional tendency towards lounge funk too, but compared to much of the current competition, Jessie looks and sounds like a paragon of cool for now.



year hiatus, there’s a return to live action and to Oxford for supergroup Pama International, moving away from their early ska and rocksteady sound, the band at various times featuring members of Galliano, Steel Pulse, The Specials and Madness, formed by Special Beat duo Finny and Sean Flowerdew and signed to legendary reggae label Trojan. As well as Pama’s live set, Big Ten Inch host Count Skylarkin is on the decks, alongside Jason King, spinning classic jump blues, rhythm & blues, doo wop, gospel, ska, calypso and rock’n’roll.
SEAMING TO + KIRA KIRA: The North Wall, Summertown – Grandma we love you, grandma we do – *see main preview*
YASHIN + FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS + TAKING HAYLEY: The Courtyard, Bicester – Post-hardcore and screamo from Glasgow’s Yashin, playing a special all-ages show at the Courtyard Youth Centre, rising up the ranks on the back of constant touring, including tour support to Papa Roach and appearances at Download and Slamdunk. Support from London’s floppy-fringed death-pop crew Fearless Vampire Killers, out on tour to promote debut album, ‘Militia of the Lost’.
HUCK & THE XANDER BAND + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + THE KEYS: The Bullingdon – Humphrey Astley – formerly of the mighty Sextodecimo and Huck & The Handsome Fee – presents his concept album/show for the first time, inspired by Paradise Lost and On The Road, and musically by Nick Cave, Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen, to create a dark and moody but raucous tale of escape and drug-crazed adventure. Psychedelic-drone-pop outfit Flights of Helios support.
SWITCH featuring B-TRAITS: O2 Academy – Drum&bass, hip hop and soulful electronica from Canadian DJ/producer Brianna Price at the O2’s weekly electro-dance club, best known in the UK for last year’s Top 40 hit ‘Fever’, featuring singer Elisabeth Troy.
RECTIFIER: The Wheatsheaf
VANILLA POD + THE CHARM ASSAULT + GURP: The Port Mahon – Melodic punk from Norfolk’s Boss Tuneage signings Vanilla Pod at tonight’s Kerosene promotion. Support from former-Caliber and All You Miss types The Charm Assault and lo-fi punk-pop lurchers Gurp.
ZZ TOPS: Fat Li’s, Witney – Tribute to the southern boogie masters.
FUNK IT: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 16th

CHAD VALLEY: Truck Store – Hugo Manuel plays his only hometown date on his current tour, promoting last year’s excellent ‘Young Hunger’ album, mixing mid-80s pop themes into his party-friendly electro soul.
LAWSON + MIKE DIGNAM + ROOM 94: O2 Academy – Sometimes music can make grown men weep. Weep at its magnificence, its ability to capture the essence of heartache and the sheer, blinding genius of the imagination behind it. Sometimes, though, music can make grown men weep because it seems to encapsulate the utter fucking futility of millions of years of supposed evolution and the realisation that, even though we can put men on the moon, see across the universe and mend minds and bodies almost destroyed by illness and injury, a sizeable proportion of the population are still willing to suck up shit like this. For crying out loud people, what are you thinking? Lawson made their name supporting The Wanted and Westlife. They sound like a cross between The Script and Maroon 5. They have all the style, soul, spirit and rock and roll fire as a carton of supermarket own brand yoghurt. You could stick a

used herbal teabag on stage and it would kick out the jams better than this quartet of crapola. And yet this gig is already sold out. There is something wrong with the world. There is something really fucking wrong.
GUNNING FOR TAMAR + WOT GORILLA? + PHIL McMINN + SALVATION BILL: O2 Academy – Anyone wise enough to avoid Lawson at any cost should head upstairs at the O2 tonight instead for the launch for Gunning For Tamar’s new ‘Camera Lucida’ EP, the local math-rock faves playing their biggest headline show to date ahead of an extensive European tour, and preparing to move into the big league. See them before you can’t get a ticket. See them before they wipe the likes of Lawson from the face of the earth and... sorry, are we getting carried away? Anyway, in conclusion: Gunning For Tamar; they’re great, see them. Great supporting cast too, with Halifax’s widdly math-pop crew Wot Gorilla?, emotive local songsmith Phil McMinn and former Old Grinding Young chaps Salvation Bill.
PUNKOLYMPIA II: The Cellar – The Bully’s celebration of underground punk-inspired music returns for a second outing. Among those cranking it up without due care for health and safety rules are local punkabilly and ska outfit Jane Likes Books; Banbury’s country-tinged rockers The Wreck Scene, declaring themselves the bastard offspring of Strummer, Costello and Cash; Cardiff psychobillies Cowboy & The Corpse, and 50s r’n’b, rockabilly and blues crew Josie & The Outlaw. The Cellar Family’s Jamie Harris is on hand to lend proceedings a sense of menacing absurdity with his Donkey The Jacket project.
THE GREAT BIG BARGAIN + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + SKEPTICS + CATSHAKES: The Hollybush, Osney – One Gig Closer To Wittstock fundraiser for the annual free festival, tonight featuring Banbury’s ska-punk and hip hop outfit The Great Big Bargain, plus acid house and synth-pop duo Space Heroes Of The People.
THE DEPUTEES: The Wheatsheaf
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
LITTLE BLACK DRESS: The Bullingdon – Urban, r’n’b and reggae from DJs Boi Wonder and Platinum.

SUNDAY 17th

THE MARTIN HARLEY BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Folk and blues from the Welsh singer and slide guitarist, out on tour to promote his fourth album ‘Mojo Fix’, having previously supported the likes of Newton Faulkner and G Love & Special Sauce.
SPRING OFFENSIVE: Turl Street Kitchen – Low-key unplugged show from Oxford’s brightest young pop hopes.
JOSH FLOWERS & THE WILD: Truck Store – Folky chamber-pop instore.

MONDAY 18th

THE STRANGLERS: O2 Academy – Classic punk anthems, from ‘No More Heroes’, ‘Peaches’ and ‘Something Better Change’ to more tender masterpieces such as ‘Always The Sun’ and ‘Golden Brown’ from the enduring Men In Black.
THE MITCH LADDIE BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Bottletop blues, blues-rocking and funk-blues from Geordie guitar maestro Laddie, at only 21 already a veteran of Walter Trout’s band, riding high on the critical acclaim afforded his second album, ‘Burning Bridges’, mixing original tunes with covers of James Brown and Marvin Gaye.
HAVEN CLUB: The Bullingdon



Friday 15th

SEAMING TO / KIRA KIRA: The North Wall

Grandmas. There’s not enough grandmas in music. ‘Grandma We Love You’ doesn’t count. Norma Waterson does. Anyway, tonight’s concert, hosted by the reliably eclectic and adventurous Oxford Contemporary Music, features two highly individual artists paying homage to grandmas. The remarkable Seaming To, an operatically-trained singer and multi-instrumentalist whose voice defies almost any kind of comparison, but who has collaborated with myriad stars of myriad musical worlds, including Robert Wyatt, as well as releasing her excellent eponymous debut album last year, here presents her new song cycle, ‘Songs For My Grandma’, performed with her mother, the renowned concert pianist Enloc Wu, and written with poet Judy Kendall. As well as piano and clarinet, the music also utilises spycorders as well as Seaming To’s beloved array of vintage electronics. She’s joined tonight by Icelandic artist Kira Kira (known to her mum and grandma as Kristin Bjork Kriitjansdottir), performing her ‘Grandma Lo-fi’ set of songs, a tribute to the Icelandic woman who started making music at home, aged 70, utilising everything from homemade instruments to the sounds of her pets’ purrs and coos, and ended up releasing 59 albums in just seven years, becoming a cult figure on Iceland’s experimental music scene. So here’s to grandmas everywhere – large port and lemons all round!

TUESDAY 19th

GABRIELLE APLIN: O2 Academy – Having hovered over Christmas like a fragile-voiced wraith with her cover of Frankie Goes To Hollywood’s ‘Power Of Love’ for John Lewis, Ms Aplin gets down to her pop career proper ahead of the release of her debut album, ‘English Rain’ and a tour support to Ed Sheeran in Australia and New Zealand.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from The New Jazz Collective.
BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 20th

FORMERLY OF THE DUBLINERS: The New Theatre – A night of classic Irish folk with one-time Dubliners members Sean Cannon, Eamonn Campbell, Patsy Watchorn and Gerry O’Connor running through ‘Whisky In The Jar’, ‘The Irish Rover’, ‘Dirty Old Town’, ‘Molly Malone’ ‘The Wild Rover’ and more.
THE TRAVELLING BAND: The Jericho

Tavern – Return of Manchester’s rootsy psychedelic folk-pop collective, in the vein of Crosby, Stills and Nash.
SINKING WITCHES + LOWERING THE TONE + THE RIGHT HOOKS + THE RACKETTS + GEMMA MOSS: The Bullingdon – It’s All About The Music local bands night.
FREERANGE: The Cellar
SPARKY’S SPOTLIGHT: James Street Tavern

THURSDAY 21st
IRREGULAR FOLK with MAIA + THE MAY BRIDES + ALICE REAM: The Cellar – More cosy rustic musical fun at the Cellar’s sort-of-monthly Irregular Folk (the clue is in the name). Tonight they welcome back the first band they ever booked, Huddersfield’s eclectic Maia, whose pop-friendly take on traditional folk has predictably seen them compared to Mumford & Sons, but are much more than that and have been wooing festival audiences, including Cambridge Folk Festival.
PON DE DANCEFLOOR: The Cellar – Time for a spot of traditional Trinidadian liming tonight in the company of Bristol’s fast-rising DJ team Jus Now, special guests at Pon De Dancefloor’s monthly tropical party night, playing a wide selection of dancehall, reggae, soca and Caribbean bass.
DIZRAELI & THE SMALL GODS: O2 Academy – Hip hop storytelling, social commentary and beats distilled through the prism of traditional English folk from Dizraeli and his band, whose debut album, ‘Engurland (City Shanties)’ came packed with comic, fluent,

Friday 22nd
FRONTIER RUCKUS: The Jericho Tavern
City boys playing rustic folk music isn’t anything new, but few do it as convincingly as Detroit’s bluegrass stars Frontier Ruckus. In the main that’s due to singer Matthew Milia, who formed the band with banjo-playing chum David Winston Jones while studying poetry at university. Milia’s poetic leaning adds vivid colour to his lyrical descriptions of rural American life and scenery, as well as an intensity to his tales of heartache and longing. Musically the five-piece band employ an array of traditional folk instruments, from musical saw and violin to melodica to create delicate, aching rustic sounds, while subtle use of brass adds an oddly uplifting feel to even the most melancholy of songs. Ryan Adams is an avowed fan of the band, while they’ve drawn comparisons to Palace Brothers, Neutral Milk Hotel and particularly Sufjan Stevens for their ability to so fully document the vitality and minutiae of American life. Tonight’s show is hosted by the enduringly ace Beard Museum people and support comes from local folksters My Crooked Teeth and Empty White Teeth. Bring your own tumbleweed.



emotive tales of Englishness, from riots to atheism.
THE BOOTLEG BEATLES: The New Theatre – Tribute to the Fab Four.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 22nd
BASTILLE + TO KILL A KING: O2 Academy – Since this is already long-since sold out, it’s probably safe for us to wonder aloud again which particular record company marketing drone decided it would be a great idea to foist a boy band take on Foals’ indie disco on the world. Come on people, they sound like Blue ferchrissakes!
DAVID FORD: O2 Academy – Eastbourne’s be-hatted songsmith returns with his new album, ‘Charge’, mixing the personal and often acerbically political, stylistically ranging from intimate soulful pop to caustic folk-punk that recalls Bob Dylan as well as Mike Scott.
FRONTIER RUCKUS + MY FIRST TOOTH + EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES: The Jericho Tavern – Beard Museum host Michigan’s bluegrass stars – *see main preview*
THE CRUSHING + BEAVERFUEL + WE ARE GOOSE: The Wheatsheaf – Local gig-going stalwart Leon ‘The Dancing Man’ Stiles celebrates his 30th birthday in the company of some of his favourite local acts, including none-more-metal ragers The Crushing; caustic indie-punks Beaver Fuel and jokey acoustic duo We Are Goose. Doubtless Leon will dance to all of them.
DESMOND CHANCER AND THE LONG MEMORIES + CLARK WISEMAN: The Port Mahon – Gutter blues and jazz in the style of Tom Waits from Desmond and co.
THE TOM McCONVILLE DUO: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Newcastle’s virtuoso folk fiddler and singer, who has played with the likes of Lindisfarne and Richard Thompson, reinterprets traditional and contemporary songs.
GREENISH DAY: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Tribute band
SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Acid house legend Andrew Weatherall mans the decks at tonight’s house and electro club night, having made his name with his Boy’s Own label and under his Sabres of Paradise guise as well as epoch-making remixes for Primal Scream, New Order, My Bloody Valentine and Happy Mondays.

SATURDAY 23rd
OXFORD WHEELS PROJECT PARTY with THE SOCIAL CLUB + BEAR TRAP + THE TENTH TRY TEN FEET AIRS: The Cellar – Celebration after-party for the opening of Oxford’s new skate park, featuring live sets from former-Captain Everything and Fireapple Red types Social Club, coming in somewhere between The Hold Steady, Weezer and Get Up Kids, and up and coming local heavyweights Bear Trap, harking back to Tad’s classic early grunge noise. Drum&bass sounds from legendary local DJ Lee Ching on the decks.
ILLEGAL EAGLES: The New Theatre –Tribute night.
RUARRI JOSEPH: The Jericho Tavern – heartfelt acoustic soul and jazz-inflected pop from the Cornish singer-songwriter in the vein of Cat Stevens and David Gray, touring last year’s ‘Brother’ album.
BLACK HATS + THE SCHOLARS + YELLOW FEVER: The Wheatsheaf – Post-punk



Tuesday 26th
PALMA VIOLETS: O2 Academy
Things have moved on a tad since we first caught Palma Violets supporting Savages at the Jericho Tavern last summer. They’ve eclipsed even that band’s fast-rising fortunes, topping *NME*’s song of the year poll for 2012 with their rabble-rousing thrash-pop anthem ‘Best Of Friends’, and seemingly an object of desire for every surviving A&R scout in the country until they signed on the line for Rough Trade. Why such a frenzy of excitement about a guitar band when such things are again being predicted to be going the way of woolly mammoths and dodos? Maybe record companies spy the new Pete Doherty/Carl Barrett in Palma Violet’s Chilli Jesson and Sam Fryer, or maybe it’s the band’s decidedly old-school post-punk/indie rock sound, which recalls everyone from Jonathan Richmond and The Strokes to Bauhaus, Teardrop Explodes and Adam & The Ants at various points in proceedings. It’s a ramshackle rampage for sure, but a rampage nonetheless, and who can resist one of those?

power-popsters Black Hats preview songs from their forthcoming second album, mixing up influences from The Kinks and The Who to The Jam and Young Knives into a feisty rocking brew. Shiny, dark-hued indie rocking in the vein of Editors and Interpol from The Scholars, plus Afro-pop-tinged rocking from Yellow Fever.
FREEFALL: Fat Lil’s, Witney
HOPE & GLORY: The Harp, Abingdon – Two Tone and Trojan tribute.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Red Lion, Eynsham
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
FUNK IT: The Bullingdon – The Bully’s Friday funk fest makes the trip into Saturday.

SUNDAY 24th
HONKY + DESERT STORM + MOTHER CORONA: The Wheatsheaf – Hard-rocking blues and boogie from Austin, Texas’ Honky, featuring Butthole Surfers’ DJ Pinkus, over in the UK after playing Stateside with the likes of Down, Fu Manchu, Karma To Burn and Nashville Pussy. Support at tonight’s Buried In Smoke show comes from local stoner/blues heavyweights Desert Storm and Sabbath-esque groover rockers Mother Corona.

MONDAY 25th
SIMON McBRIDE: The Bullingdon – Blues rock from Irish singer and guitarist McBride who won *Guitarist Magazine*’s Young Guitarist Of The Year award aged 15 and has since gone on to support Joe Bonamassa, Jeff Beck and Joe Satriani.
THE CARVIN JONES BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Texan roadhouse blues-rock from electric guitarist and singer Jones and his band, inspired by

the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jimi Hendrix and John Lee Hooker.

TUESDAY 26th
PALMA VIOLETS: O2 Academy – Trashy post-punk indie noise from the current bright young things – *see main preview*
LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER + BERSICKER + THE DAY THE MAN LOST: The Wheatsheaf – Death metal and grindcore fest from the Slaves To The Grind crew, tonight with Madrid’s growlers Looking For An Answer and local super-heavyweights Bersicker.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With The Hugh Turner Band.
BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue
OPEN MIC CLUB: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 27th
CHARLIE BAXTER + MIKE MOGNAHAN + WILL HEALEY + CHRIS MONGER: The Wheatsheaf– Moshka club night with electro-heavy one-man band Charlie Baxter.
CALLIGRAPHY: The Cellar – Drum&bass, garage, electro and bass with Masp, Zyklon Sound, Slim and more.

THURSDAY 28th
THE ROCKINGBIRDS: The Bullingdon – The reformed pioneering alt.country heroes return to town, playing songs from their cult classic albums, ‘The Rockingbirds’ and ‘Whatever Happened To The Rockingbirds?’, having split up in 1995 before getting back together in 2008.
DUB STEPPERS: The Cellar – Not, despite its name, another dubstep night, but an upbeat step through five decades of roots reggae, dub and more with MC Murray Man, Rootsting Soundsystem, Desta*Nation and Cornerstonemusik.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 29th
THE FAMILY MACHINE + JESS HALL + THE COOLING PEARLS + BETHANY WEIMERS + EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES + MY CROOKED TEETH + MATT CHANARIN + DAN RAWLE: The Bullingdon – An evening of mostly acoustic music in aid of Christian Aid. The Family Machine headline with their sweetly lachrymose pop, and are joined by folkstress Jess Hall; smoky acoustic pop types The Cooling Pearls; dark-hued folk singer Bethany Weimers; rustic folk-rockers Empty White Circles and more.
STEELEYE SPAN: The New Theatre – Return to town for the folk-rock legends, pioneers, alongside Fairport, of the British folk revival in the 60s and 70s, hitmakers with ‘Gaudette’ and ‘All Around My Hat’ but

best loved for their adherence to traditional English folk sounds and songs, still helmed by long-time members Maddy Prior, Pete Knight and Rick Kemp.
BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute band.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The James Street Tavern
FUNK IT: The Bullingdon
HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night

SATURDAY 30th
THE GOGGENHEIM + THE CELLAR FAMILY + JUNKIE BRUSH: The Jericho Tavern – Genre-defying space-cake, krautrock, psychedelic, pop-mangling, post-punk, warped-funk brilliance from this month’s Nightshift cover stars, launching their debut EP. They’re joined by intense, serrated, twisted hardcore wonders The Cellar Family and riot-starting agit-punk crew Junkie Brush. *See main interview feature*

SKELETOR with BLOODSHOT DAWN + CRYSIS + FURYBORN + EMPIRE DIVIDED + CHAPTERS + BLACK SKIES BURN: O2 Academy – Heaviosity beyond the call of duty from Skeletor at their monthly metal extravaganza, tonight with a distinct death-metal leaning as Hampshire’s blistering technical death-thrash merchants Bloodshot Dawn come to town, alongside Dorset’s industrial-death dealers Furyborn. Local metal core faves Crysis support, alongside Abingdon’s Empire Divided.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with X1 + DERBY SUNSHINE + BILLY T’RIVERS: The Wheatsheaf – Another quality mixed bag at this month’s Gappy Tooth Industries. Reformed local hardcore crew X-1 keep it twisted, angular and damn loud, while there’s dreamy electro-pop from London’s Derby Sunshine and sleepy Americana and alt.country from Billy T’Rivers and his excellently-monikered backing band, The Wild West Retirement Home.
FISH FROM A BOWL + DIRECTORS OF SPACE: The Bullingdon
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – Techno, bass and house club night.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Railway Tavern, Culham

SUNDAY 31st
CHURCH OF THE HEAVY with MASIRO + THE OMNIVIBES + NOE & THE PASTEL FRONTIER + NAVAJO BREAK: The Bullingdon – Heavy rocking an’ ting at the Bully’s monthly celebration of such things with instrumental math-core crew Masiro, and 60s psychedelic rockers The Omnivibes, among others.
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm) – Open jam session.

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

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STORNOWAY

Oxford Town Hall

Oxford Town Hall is grand and yet possessed of a slightly careworn charm; it is intricate and elaborate but unfussy and timeless, expansive yet homely. Very much like Stornoway then, who tonight follow in the footsteps of Ride and Supergrass as they bring some of Oxford's musical success to its palace of political power.

As with each and every location the band have chosen to perform in locally, Stornoway feel at home here. Importantly, for the most part the intimate, understated nature of their songs means they don't suffer from a booming sound that the building's high ceiling can provoke, and yet, at the set's climax, as Jonathan Ouin takes to the Town Hall's enormous church organ to do battle with Rob Steadman on a thunderous drum cascade, they fill each and every corner of the place with unexpected portent.

By complete contrast Brian Briggs is able to perform 'November Song', the cosy coda to new album 'Tales From Terra Firma', solo and completely unamplified and still make himself heard – helped of course by a crowd that stands in rapt silence for the duration.

The sombre violin drone that opens tonight's set quickly makes way for the wistful joviality of 'Knock Me On The Head', Brian singing like an old seadog reciting poetic sweet nothings to a long-deceased true love. 'The Bigger Picture' similarly mixes downbeat reflection with a sense of something approaching jollity, seabird imagery again a central motif as something grandiose rises and soars out of essentially intimate songs.

Stornoway are, at heart, romantics, but adept at avoiding lyrical cliché, whether it's the rollicking ode to engagement of 'A Belated Invite To Eternity' (apparently a couple had publically got engaged at a show earlier in the tour), to the almost hymnal 'Farewell To Appalachia' that switches its musical allegiances Stateside, to the 60s breeze of 'The Mamas and Papas'. They're having fun though, Oli Steadman managing a giddy pirouette across the stage at one point, while Brian tells rubbish jokes and recounts a tale of trying to eat an elaborate rider with a sword at one venue on the tour.

If songs from 'Tales...' sound instantly familiar, it's still old favourites that draw the biggest cheers – the still astonishing 'The Cold Harbour Road', and the gorgeously romantic 'Fuel Up', as well as singalong 'Zorbing' and a simply joyous 'I Saw You Blink'. Sometimes you forget how many genuinely great songs Stornoway have written.

When the band return for the encore it's again unplugged at the front of the audience balcony at the back of the venue, the sweet four-part harmonies of 'The Ones We Hurt The Most' again reducing the crowd to hushed awe, before they sign off in style with 'Watching Birds', back on the big stage, looking and sounding now every inch the big time stars Oxford has for so long known them to be.

Dale Kattack

BELLOWHEAD

New Theatre

Its been an award-winning journey for Bellowhead, formed by Oxford folk scenesters John Spiers and Jon Boden, from their debut at the Oxford Folk Festival 2004 to being probably only the second act (alongside Kate Rusby) on a dedicated folk label to play Oxford's biggest venue in recent times.

Along the way their sound has grown from simply embellishing songs already in Spiers and Boden's set to a fully-integrated band playing a repertoire almost still completely of English folk songs but reinventing that tradition with complex kaleidoscopic arrangements using styles from soul, disco, Balkan, Arabic and jazz, to medieval and hints of punk and classical. This, plus their feelgood, effervescent

live shows with theatrical touches, including a legendary gig at Truck 2010, plus 'Hedonism' selling 70,000 copies, has seen them playing to a far wider audience than the folk scene. Introducing a more rock influence on their latest album, the aptly titled 'Broadside', they are aiming for a wider audience still and to break new territory like the New Theatre, leading Spiers to observe that until tonight he'd only ever been on the audience side of the stage.

New too is more use of the other fine voices in the band to lay down staccato backing harmonies behind Boden's lead vocal. With thumping bass lines from Ed Neuhauser's helicon grounding the brass section and doing the work of a bass guitar, this gives Bellowhead a punchier

wall-of-sound Stax and disco feel on many of the songs from 'Broadside' in tonight's set, like opener 'Black Beetle Pies'.

With a front line numbering up to eight, and a custom-made set designed to evoke a ship at sea, few bands can occupy a stage like Bellowhead, and yet while there are several rousing moments, particularly a typically rumbustous 'Whisky Is The Life of Man', it takes a while for the night to take off in typical Bellowhead style. The band seemed a little tentative on what is the first night of a big tour. Perhaps the 'Broadside' songs are still too new to have been taken to the heart of the hardcore fans, and perhaps also the fans themselves feel restrained by the confines of an all-seater venue.

And so initially it's the slower numbers that impress: a mature

version of 'Amsterdam' with Boden cutting back on his vocal excess to good effect; 'Captain Wedderburn', featuring beautiful harmonising with Rachel McShane, and the lost-love ballad 'Betsy Baker', the best of the 'Broadside' songs in the gig along with the Kurt Weill-influenced 'Life of Man', even if it originated from Swindon. Bellowhead, though, have plenty of ammunition in their back catalogue to ignite a crowd. Starting with Spiers' catchy shanty 'Haul Away', they fire a fusillade, following up with a rousing 'London Town' and 'New York Girls'. Finally there is dancing in the narrow and people loosen their corsets, escape the confines of their seats and are on their feet showing that such restraints are ultimately no match for the communal Bellowhead experience.

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JESS HALL / AGS CONNOLLY / ERICA CONWAY
The Port Mahon

Irregular Folk teaming up with Tertium Quid leaves the night feeling aptly named; the combination of three impressive acts and an intimate venue in turn pull in a crowd which is incredibly respectful for a pub gig. There’s not even a whisper during songs, the audience instead transfixed by the music. Opener Erica Conway starts with a cover of Bell X1’s ‘Rocky Took a Lover’, which seems to hang with sarcasm, pulling out the female

thoughts of the original song. Meanwhile, the self-penned ‘Senses’ and ‘We Both Jumped In’ bridge a divide between Regina Spektor and Wallis Bird. The sometimes frantic strumming mixes with half sung, half spoken lyrics to great effect, and this in turn blends easily with her heartfelt cover of Dylan’s ‘Don’t Think Twice’. Ags Connolly’s style falls into a more traditional country vibe. In other words it’s songs of gloom and

heartbreak set to a slightly twangy guitar. This is not a bad thing and ‘That’s The Last Time’ highlights his ability to recreate the classic Cash sound. Nevertheless his jibe at Taylor Swift before he sings out “that’s the way they used to do it, when country was proud” seems in many ways to juxtapose with the more contemporary nature of evening. Meanwhile, it seems impossible that tonight is Jess Hall’s first headline show. Her effortless vocals blend with intricate melodies to produce something magical. The nostalgic ‘Bookcases’ oozes with sorrow, while ‘Maps’ feels almost

cautionary, the lyrics delivering earnest advice for a child or lover. While Jess’s sound is boosted by the addition of accordion and cello it’s her vocal prowess which turns everyday stories of love and loss into songs which force you to catch your breath. Nevertheless, there’s a telling pause at the end of her a capella version of ‘I Will Give My Love An Apple’, which suggests the audience lack familiarity with traditional folk numbers. Still, it’s clear when it comes to engaging a younger audience with folk, this is where a movement is beginning. **Lisa Ward**

PATRICK WOLF
St John the Evangelist

Patrick Wolf didn’t want to play yet another gig at the Academy, so jumped at the chance to perform at this most appropriate of settings and is rewarded with a large audience, mostly dressed up and overwhelmingly female, who have made St John’s the place to be on a decidedly wintery Monday. A few months ago Wolf put all his belongings in storage and set off on an acoustic tour that set him up as more the travelling minstrel than poster-boy pop singer. Backed by two or three accompanists, he revisits and reinvents some of the songs from his ten-year career, including last year’s ‘Sundark And Riverlight’ album. As flamboyant as ever, he emerges in britches, waistcoat and a cravat, topped off with a homemade ruffle he fashioned from Poundland purchases. Switching between ukulele, harp and grand piano he manages to blend showmanship with an intimate and heartfelt approach to his craft, with ‘Wind In The Wires’ a perfect blend of simplicity and sophistication. ‘Bermondsey Street’ comes with only a piano and violin accompaniment and benefits from the stripped-back arrangement, his huge voice easily filling

the cavernous space with the simple optimism of the words. It also reveals kissing as a recurring preoccupation, but beyond that it’s not always easy to work out what makes him tick. There’s the ambivalent relationship with his hometown, encapsulated in ‘London’ (originally ‘Requiem’), and he seems to be taking stock of approaching thirty having spent a decade in the public eye. ‘Hard Times’ can’t quite break free of a tendency towards introspection, while ‘The City’ lacks the upbeat bounce of the recorded version. Earlier in the day he met Prince Charles on a trip to the city, an experience that seems to have proved a little awkward. After being quizzed about his hair Wolf read him a poem written for the occasion called ‘The Arbor Tree’ that ends “Is this the dusking or the dawning of our crowning economy?” Yet overall tonight was an uplifting experience, more enjoyable than a trawl through his recordings, and he declares it probably his favourite show for a long time. As he skips away it’s hard to remain unmoved by his uncommon and very English talents. **Art Lagun**

KODALINE
The Jericho Tavern

Kodaline were on the BBC Sound of 2013 longlist, but they’re not new; as 21 Demands, they came second in the Irish TV talent show *You’re A Star* in 2007, their single topping the Irish charts. They’ve progressed from jangly busker fare to – well, not something entirely original. Tonight they launch with ‘Lose Your Mind’, with some pleasant Simon and Garfunkelish harmonies and a 70s psychedelic vibe, then ‘Pray’, which has an odour of wispy goth balladry in its reverb. From ‘One Day’ I get the full force of Snow Patrol and rock week on *The X Factor*, and Counting Crows and Travis from ‘Perfect World’. By ‘Love Like This’, with its banjo, harmonica and touch of the Mumfords, I think I’ve got the measure of them. Recycling for a new era: it’s nothing new, and it works. Shakin’Stevens built a career on it. But the more it happens and the older I get, the more cynical I am about it, despite

the good intentions of the musicians involved. Not that this lets Kodaline off the hook. They have swirls, builds, falsettos, anthemic aspirations, everything. But everyone places the fine line between beauty and dreary MOR rubbish in a different place, and that’s not just because of marketing. It’s odd that we’ve already got to the point at which bands sound so heavily influenced by Coldplay; as generational shifts go, I can see where the dads who complained about Ocean Colour Scene in my youth were coming from. The Matt Cardle-esque “All I Want” sums it all up: catchy but boring, epic but drab, influenced yet uninfluential. If there were ever a young band created in a lab for the sole purpose of appearing on *Later... with Jools Holland*, or even just for those redemptive montages at the end of *Holby City*, it’s Kodaline: peddlers of the finest melancholic mediocrity. **Kirsten Etheridge**

CEREBRAL BORE / WARPETH / CEMTEX / ARCANIA / BLACK SKIES BURN

The Wheatsheaf

“The life of mankind is nasty, short and brutish,” wrote Thomas Hobbs in his 17th Century tome *Leviathan*. He probably didn’t envisage death metal when he was writing it but such a description could easily be applied to Black Skies Burn, tonight hosting the first of their new Slave To The Grind nights and opening proceedings with a set of merciless grindcore that stays true to the blueprint laid down by Napalm Death and Carcass. “This is a song about God being pissed off and raining down faeces,” growls the singer. The song is called ‘Shitstorm’. It’s nasty, short and brutish. Growling is the default setting for every vocalist tonight. Arcanaia’ by-the-book mix of rasping, shredding and blast beats quickly sounds shallow and sinks into the background but much better are Scotland’s Cemtex and Ireland’s Warpath, though both feel slightly interchangeable and not quite as brutal as you’d like or expect. The former are a storm of hair, riffs, rage and more hair, an intense thrash that veers close to Viking metal at times. The singer masturbates his microphone especially for the ladies in the front row before flashing his bits for real. Quite the charmer. The latter are fronted by what appears to be a psychopathic farm hand. They sound like Muse. Just kidding. They’re all decked out in Cannibal

Corpse and Cerebral Bore t-shirts and sound like they’ve listened to plenty of both. Cerebral Bore themselves take the night to another level. Having parted company with terrifyingly-tonsilled Dutch singer Simone Pluijmers late last year they might have lost their secret weapon in what is a traditionally male-dominated sub-genre, but the new singer, a shaven-headed American nutcase with an intense goblin-like leer, is an ample replacement. Guitarist Paul McGuire may look like Mr Tumnus from *The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe*, but there’s nothing cute about Cerebral Bore. Their technical skills are astonishing to witness but never impose on the raw, spasmodic carnage of their death/grind. They’re far more nuanced than what’s come before but again, it’s their rampant sonic violence that leaves you gasping, inciting an excitable slam-pit and going some way to fulfilling the promise earlier in the evening that tonight would be “the most brutal gig Oxford’s seen.” “Louder! Faster!” joked the late, great John Peel back in the 1980s when he introduced Napalm Death to an unsuspecting world. To their great credit, Cerebral Bore seem to have taken that proclamation as a golden rule to live by. **Dale Kattack**

JD McPHERSON BAND
The Bullingdon

Nightshift is standing in the middle of a packed Bullingdon feeling decidedly under-dressed. That gig staple of jeans and t-shirt feel strangely incongruous amid the throng of perfectly-lacquered quiffs and curls (boys and girls), and period frocks (just the girls). It’s a reminder of a time when people made a serious effort to look good when they went out to seek fun. One-time Oklahoma school teacher JD McPherson and his band are a reminder of such golden olden times too. Unlike, say, The Jim Jones Revue, they make no concession to updating their classic rock’n’roll and r’n’b, playing it as straight as if they were entertaining some seedy 1950s club or prom night. Not that they’re some throwback tribute band – McPherson’s set is made up for the most part by his own songs, with carefully-chosen covers of Chuck Berry, Johnny Mercer and Richie Valens threaded into the show, and his voice, though hampered slightly by a sinus infection that he claims is eating him up from the inside, is pure and soulful. His band are smart and slick, in every sense, particularly upright bass player Jimmy Sutton, who powers everything along as much as the drummer.

Spotting the reference points in songs like ‘Dimes For Nickels’ and ‘Northside Gal’, from his debut album, ‘Signs & Signifiers’, is like shooting fish in a barrel – from early Elvis and Carl Perkins to Fats Domino and Jerry lee Lewis, McPherson is not so much in thrall to the old heroes as at one with their music and legacy. If there’s criticism to be made tonight it’s that the band rarely cut loose in a rock sense, but then maybe we’ve just witnessed too many punked-up takes on this 50s sound over the years. Also, McPherson himself is oddly subdued on stage – again maybe down to not feeling so great – rarely engaging the crowd in between numbers, and since he’s not the tallest bloke in the room it’s sometimes difficult to connect with him as a performer. Not that any of the stylish devotees gathered here are complaining. If McPherson is the cult act he’s often referred to, it’s a cult that’s growing, and one crossing every age barrier you can chuck at it. “Hey, hey, my, me, rock’n’roll will never die,” sang Neil Young. Indeed, even its oldest incarnation seems to be in rude health. **Mark Strickson**

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UNDERSMILE / DESERT STORM / DEAD EXISTENCE

The Cellar

Opening tonight's Buried In Smoke show, London's hardcore-tinged sludgers Dead Existence's slow, tripped-out grooves are accompanied by a surprisingly energetic stage show, featuring plenty of hair flippery and similarly metal antics, while vocalist Jake Harding fronts the band with raucous, almost-shouted screams and a slightly inebriated swaying, supported by his mic stand.

Within the first few minutes of Desert Storm's set, its clear that a large proportion of the crowd are here for them, and they waste no time in tearing the venue apart with a fantastically tight, grooved set that showcases exactly why they could justifiably lay claim to be the best metal band in Oxford, and increasingly regarded as one of the up-and-coming underground stars of the UK stoner rock scene. They might lack a little of Dead Existence's onstage energy, but we guess they're channeling any surplus into their riffs and they're now an absolutely essential stop-off for

every metal fan in town. Another local metal act making slow but sure-footed progress beyond Oxfordshire are Undersmile. Although they and Desert Storm both exist on the slower end of the metal spectrum, there's still some serious mindset shift needed to adjust from the Storm's full-on rock party vibe to Undersmile's psychedelic gothic nightmare. As joint frontwomen Hel Sterne and Taz Corona-Brown sway gently as they moan eerily into their microphones and blast The Cellar with heavily downtuned, dissonant guitar chords, a kind of tense silence descends on the crowd. While some are uncertain if they're really enjoying Undersmile or simply find them intensely terrifying, they present a breath of chilling fresh air as far as live performance is concerned, and although their crushingly slow, heavy brand of doom metal definitely polarizes audiences, by the end of tonight's set, it's clear the vast majority are under their spell.

Tal Fineman

BILLY THE KID / JORDAN 'O SHEA The Cellar

Billy The Kid has a tattoo with the word "Lost" on her arm . She explained on *The Hour*, a Vancouver radio show, that it's about making your own map, going through a life like you just stumbled into something.

A shame then that this wasn't more the case for her potential audience tonight, because she turns in an excellent performance, wrought with the seductive wit of Joni Mitchell, and a poppier starlet non-warble like Delilah in equal measure. Support for tonight's The Long Way Home tour show comes from Oxford's own Jordan 'O Shea, a young lad who's been playing on bills with fellow acoustic songsmiths like My Crooked Teeth recently. 'Wintervention' gets us going as he tunes into stolen lights and stolen love; "Summer bring her back to me".

Performing with a non-waily energy that peaks at just the right points, while indebting itself to where the wail ends, with Radiohead and Foals at their shrewdest, he occasionally loses his grip on the lyricism but

when he's in full flow he can sound like bottled Ritz water. Billy The Kid is also shrewd, but for something else: her track ordering. For instance, 'These City Lights', a lovely country blues ballad she plays without accompaniment on guitar, comes greater the centrepiece, rather than at the beginning. A pattern shuffling is hence created where you can build your own maps, if you dared. And if you cared to deal with her meaty metaphors like "People as sand / Slipping through my hands", you're repaid. One word, though: attitude. "If I close my eyes, I worry / Do the stars all disappear?" sang Jordan earlier in the show. While Billy Pettinger prefers a toke with her collaborators Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr and R.E.M, and asks, "what are you, bummed?" in response to tonight's turnout, it raises a wry smile, but the lasting impression is, just because you've played with and produced top artists, don't make you no funstar. Mixed feelings on an evening that should have been teeming.

Mick Buckingham

FLIGHTS OF HELIOS / LAST NIGHT'S VICTORY / AFTER THE THOUGHT / YA OKAY YEAH

The Wheatsheaf

Gappy Tooth Industry nights are nothing if not a mixed bag, and tonight is no exception. Okay, so there's no cross-dressing poets or fire-breathing jugglers on the bill this time around, but you can't have everything every time.

A last-minute addition to the bill, Ya OK Yeah are squeezed in just because they happen to be over from France and in the area. It's this kind of flexibility that makes Gappy Tooth a constant surprise. They're playing acoustically tonight, which rather spoils the promise of the PJ Harvey/John Spencer comparisons because there's a lack of bite. That said, the songs themselves are pleasant enough, if forgettable in this form.

A strange mix of Balearic trance and pure chaotic noise, After The Thought are a musically interesting, occasionally terrifying proposition. As soon as a sleepy ambience is established, a raging stab of noise cuts through the room to disturb the slumber. It's effective and somewhat disconcerting at times, like being at a party where the DJ is Freddy Krueger.

Also mixing styles are Last Night's

Victory, who have soldered rock on to the wobble of drum&bass. Such a blend tends to work with metal more successfully (although whether Korn's adventures in dubstep could be considered a success is debatable) simply because it's a collision of two extremely brutal forms. With a lighter rock sound it doesn't quite work and Last Night's Victory come across as a slightly out-of-step novelty act. If Def Leppard covered Pendulum it'd sound something like this.

There's little doubt that Flights Of Helios will divide opinion. Some will consider their psychedelic explorations the worst kind of self-indulgence, while others will think it's the very best kind of self-indulgence. There are elements of both in tonight's set, but when it clicks they truly soar. The drift into the instrumental sections is when they're at their best, coming across like an early incarnation of Pink Floyd. After The Thought seemed intent to constantly puncture the trance-like state, Flights Of Helios, on the other hand, forever seek to enhance and nurture it.

Sam Shepherd

ANDA UNION

St John the Evangelist

World music reviews are often taken up with descriptions of the instruments, techniques, and even outfits. Education is all very well, perhaps, but nobody starts a dubstep review with an Ableton tutorial, and such lecturing seems to be evidence of publicists and journalists – and sometimes the artists – playing up the "otherness" of foreign cultures, as if we're only supposed to understand them as some diverting *National Geographic* slideshow. We can't confidently confirm whether the two-string fiddles Mongolia's Anda Union play are morin khuurs, but neither can we tell a Stratocaster from a Jaguar, and that never hurt us (in fact, we secretly think it makes us better than tedious musos who can); what we can tell you is that this band is phenomenal, hiding glorious melodies in a dark swathe of harmonised throaty vocals and relentlessly abraded strings, capable of forlorn beauty even as they whisk you up in a rollocking gallop. The range of vocal techniques is astonishing, from a lambent wistfulness that reminds us of Celtic folk, to tingling overtone singing, sending eerie motives across the

music like damned Debussian flutes. Much of the music is clearly influenced by the environment, with imitations of rushing wind and clanking stirrups, but there's enough melodic sensibility and suppleness on display to make it mere sonic metonymy: the opening of the last piece is clearly supposed to recall whinnying horses, but the cloud of wraithlike glissandi is more akin to Ligeti than a rodeo. Oddly, the one thing Anda Union repeatedly remind us of is The Velvet Underground. They have the same knack of bringing complexity and depth to material of heartbeat simplicity, and smuggling gorgeous tunes into relentlessly thumping mantras. When the strings leap from aggressive pizzicato to swooping arco plummets it's like 'Venus In Furs' fuelled by fermented mares' milk instead of heroin. No, we don't learn much about Mongolian culture from this Oxford Contemporary Music-curated gig, but we go home buzzing from complex harmonies and stampeding rhythms. Which would you rather have?

David Murphy

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DR SHOTOVER Interviews A Top Local Act

Dr Shotover: So, welcome, members of STOCKPORT! I imagine this is very exciting for you... your very first time in the East Indies Club bar! Barrie: First time? Erm, maybe first time this *week*. We’re pretty regular drinkers here, actually.

Dr S [*undeterred*]: And you must be over-awed to finally meet ME! Glenn: Er, yes,of course. Actually, have you got that tenner we lent you last w...? Dr S: Well, moving swiftly on. Why did you choose the name STOCKPORT? Over to you, Barrie.

Barrie: Ha ha, it’s sort of a joke in a way, in that it seemed like a really remote place to us, coming from Oxford, but there’s m... Dr S [*cutting in*]: Bloody hell, you’re right – STOCKPORT is a long way away. It’s in... the North!

Martin: Well, yes, but there is more to... Dr S: Which one are you? Are you the one with the moustache? Martin [*looks confused*]: No, that’s my brother Clive. The one sitting over *there*. With the moustache.

Dr S [*riffles through crumpled papers*]: Good, good! Clive. You’re also the one with the honorary degree from Reykjavik? Clive [*looking embarrassed*]: Erm, that’s ALL of us, in fact...

Dr S: And you’re all experts in... is it, Eskimo basket-weaving...? Barrie: That’s me. Glenn is the one with the marine biology degree, and Martin speaks Scottish Gaelic. Fluently. Clive mends harmoniums.

Glenn: Sorry but shouldn’t we talk about the gig we’re going to do in Oxford Castle? You know, that’s kind of why we’re here... Dr S: Castle, schmastle... you’re here to get your round in. And to teach us some more Orcadian drinking songs... Bedingfield, I say, BEDINGFIELD! Flagons of mead for all! And put them on the STOCKPORT tab! Tum-ti-tum, ring out those Solstice Bells...! [*Flutes are produced, man tights are donned, mead is quaffed, all start jigging round the bar*]

Next month: Paul McCartney elected Pope



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INTRODUCING....

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

The Reaper

Who are they?

The Reaper are a metal band ,all aged 12 to15, from Chipping Norton and a product of Witchwood School of Rock, having performed their first gig at Halloween 2010. They are: Joey Kenny (13), Harry Winks (12), Joe Landles (15) and Callum Woodward (14). They enjoyed the dubious honour of being nominated by David Cameron as the best band in his constituency and went on to become runners up in Rock The House 2012 band competition. They were also semi-finalists and awarded ‘Most Shocking Band’ in the Metal To The Masses competition. As well as those, the band have played at numerous festivals including Alex James’ The Big Feastival, Crabstock, Riverside, and Cornbury, and “caused a riot at the Milton Queen’s Jubilee Festival where the local residents complained that we were too loud!” The video for their song ‘Cry Me A Place To Be’ has over 8,000 hits on YouTube and this month The Reaper release their second album, ‘You Will Fall’.

What do they sound like?

Despite their tender ages, The Reaper are both technically adept and know how to rock with serious conviction. They’ve overcome venue age restrictions to gig continuously and honed themselves into a seriously tight metal fighting unit that mixes traditional NWOBHM with 80s thrash and the more accessible side of tech-metal, while Joey’s vocals recall Rob Halford’s higher register explorations.

What inspires them?

“Bands that have great stage presence and put on a good show, like Alterbridge, Black Stone Cherry, Metallica, Slash, Guns’n’Roses, Motley Crue and System of a Down. They are awesome musicians.”

Career highlight so far:

“Playing at The Big Feastival, Cornbury Festival, and 02 Academy for Skeletor Promotions; filming our first video for ‘Cry Me A Place To Be’, and

the release of the new album.”

And the lowlight:

“Getting to a booked gig in Aylesbury and then not being allowed to play as we were under eighteen.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Crysis; it’s such a shame that they’ve just broken up.”

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

“Alterbridge – ‘Blackbird’, because as a whole they are brilliant musicians and each song is a masterpiece in itself and tells a story.”

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

“The Facebar in Reading. Expect to have a wicked time and experience a great show! You have just got to come and see us for the full experience!”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Favourite: the strong community and lots of original talented bands. Least favourite: the lack of metal/rock venues.”

You might love them if you love:

Metallica; Megadeth; Judas Priest; AC/DC; Stone Sour.

Hear them here:

www.TheReaperRocks.co.uk

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

It was all about Banbury in the March 1993 issue of *Curfew* magazine, as north Oxfordshire’s hard rock heroes **5 Alarm Panic** graced the cover. “You can hear a pin drop between songs when we play in Oxford. We have to chat to each other just to give the gig any atmosphere,” they chirped. But when they hit the stage in their home town venues, the place would go batshit crazy. “Oxford’s always had a problem with Banbury bands.”

Banbury, it seems, “is like the Seattle of Oxfordshire – stuck in the back of beyond,” claimed the band, whose fun-packed, fusion of everything from Faith No More to Slayer to Alice Cooper was finally making us cosseted city types sit up and listen. And they had pyrotechnics onstage too for added Spinal Tap value. “We know it’s clichéd, but so what? It’s a lot of fun.” Elsewhere this month **Radiohead** released ‘Pablo Honey’, which *Curfew* said showed the band as “one of the most potent songwriting units in pop,” while **The Candyskins** released their ‘Fun?’ album, and a new compilation album of local acts, entitled ‘Days Spent Dreaming’, attempted to expose rising local heroes like **Heavenly, The Jennifers, The Daisies, The Bigger The God and Arthur Turner’s Lovechild?** To a wider audience.

We do wonder, though, whatever happened to **Make Like A Tree**.

Highlights of the gigging month included that month’s big new thing **Mint 400** at the Jericho Tavern; polka champs **The Ukrainians**; punk veterans **Chelsea** and former-Loop noisemakers **The Hair & Skin Trading Company**.

10 YEARS AGO

Following the release of their second album, ‘My Elixir, My Poison’, artfully noisy buggers **Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia** were the featured band in March 2003’s *Nightshift*. “Why is it deemed pretentious to make music like ours,” they asked. “We don’t sit down and say, ‘let’s make this really pretentious and intellectually challenging’. We do whatever we want to. Whether that makes us punk or not, it’s honest creativity. Do you think all those new rock revolution bands have a say in what they’re doing? Do the Vines sit there and say ‘we want this six-minute slow song as the next single’? Do they fuck! Their managers, label and the industry control them. There are many bands today considered ‘cool’ who are pretentious and not as real as they seem. The Libertines are rich wasters who hang around the cool places in London. The Strokes are a cooler version of Menswear, who were a 90s version of The Bay City Rollers. Bands who spend all their time dumbing down, wearing ‘ironic’ rock band t-shirts and trying to get in the *NME*’s cool list by getting drunk in the right places can fuck off. Bands who do whatever they want regardless of a scene are the true punks and innovators.” Which pretty much told everyone. And this after the band had recently come second to **Kajagoogoo** in a Radio 1 poll to decide the worst band name of all time. They’d also reached the Top 10 of Peel’s Festive 50 and remain one of the most unique bands Oxford has produced, helping change the local musical landscape immeasurably during their time together. Glowering purposefully atop the month’s

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

demo reviews was a young bunch of newcomers called **Youthmovie Soundtrack Strategies**, here compared admiringly to Shellac, Slint and Cocteau Twins, and who, perhaps even more than **Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia**, would go on to shape the future of Oxford music.

5 YEARS AGO

Youthmovies, as they had by now become shortened to, were still a major presence five years on from that first review, releasing their ‘Good Nature’ album on Drowned In Sound’s label. It was, said the awed *Nightshift* review, like the musical equivalent of a web spun by a drug-addled spider – “a puzzling, complex and fascinating tapestry of tangents, open spaces and pockets of highly condensed silk.” Oh yes, we know a good bit of purple prose when we see it. Youthmovies influence on the local scene could be heard in this month’s cover stars, **Foals**, making their second appearance on the cover, interviewed from New York where they had recently signed to Sub Pop. Their previous appearance in Oxford had been a riotous semi-secret show at the Cellar and things were going potty bonkers for them. “It’s been fun and it’s been a blur,” they reflected from across the pond, “a lot’s changed, but we’re still the same smelly, obnoxious boys as we were before; we drink too much to remember much of what’s happened but we have some photos.” On arriving back home, the band were due to play an already sold-out headline show at the Academy, their biggest hometown gig yet, as part of a UK tour to promote debut album ‘Antidotes’.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

BEAR TRAP

Before it was emasculated by Orange County walking clothes horses, American alt.rock was made by giant man-bears like TAD, men who sounded as grizzled as the dirty, scuzzy music they were kicking out. Bear Trap remind us of such times. They sound like they've drunk too much and smoked too much and traded punches with similarly grizzled old bastards along the way, rather than been plucked fresh-faced from some casting agency's roster of potential punk-pop pin-ups. The singer is a beardy, baseball cap-wearing brute with a rough old rasp of a voice, very much like TAD himself. The two songs here, 'Growing Pains' and 'Wasting Away', are timeless, rough-hewn grunge diamonds that could slouch comfortably alongside Green River or Husker Du, getting on with the job with a cheery, beery sense of mild menace and a disregard for niceties or nuance. Bear Trap won't change the world, but they will probably make sure there's significantly less beer available in it by the end of the evening, and if you want to smash something – bottles, furniture, skulls – then they're precisely the soundtrack you need. Yes they bloody well are.

MILLION FACES

And here, straight after that comes what might be Bear Trap's parallel universe evil nemesis. As recently as December we stuck Million Faces in the Demo Dumper for being soulless sub-U2, stadium-friendly Christian soft rock, laboratory-made for mass consumption by people who are scared of sharp edges or anything more challenging than musical chocolate fondants. But here they are back again. And they no longer sound like U2. No sir. Now they sound like Nickleback. Take a moment to digest that fact, dear reader. Nickelback. Nickel fucking back. A band whose singer's name sounds like a tramp vomiting his own spleen into a skip. Why in the name of all that's holy would you want to sound like Nickelback? Unless it was deliberately to annoy Nightshift and make sure we wasted half an hour of our precious life staring with a tearily glazed expression at the office wall while seriously wondering whether it would be less painful to headbutt ourselves to death against it

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

rather than listen to another fucking second of something that sounds like fucking Nickelback? Ha! We're on to your game, Million Faces. Anyway, for those of you who demand some kind of descriptive review of the demos we get sent: hollering; chest-beating; heroic riffage; big choruses with harmonies; slick production; polish; fair chance of headlining the O2 Arena one day, or at least winning a couple of band competitions; erm... some more hollering. Can we drink this bottle of bleach now, please?

A MOVIE SCRIPT ENDING

There is over-produced, stadium-ready musical hogwash, and then there is clumsy, half-baked bedroom-bound hogwash. Movie Script Ending's album-length offering stretches its single idea across a patience-testing 13 tracks. That idea being to mope and moan just slightly out of tune over a no-frills acoustic guitar strum, or occasional undulating electronic backdrop; the latter, when they do poke their nose into the fray, sound strangely incongruous, as if a well-meaning passer-by has gently suggested MSE perhaps make some nod to the 21st Century. Mostly though this is an interminable trawl through muffled melancholy and droning inconsequentiality. What might just about pass for tunes wander off into the distance halfway through, and there's scant regard for how lyrics are meant to fit into the time and space available in each line, so he keeps speeding up and slowing down depending on the word count, like a mumbling imbecile attempting to give instructions to a place he went to once, years ago, occasionally remembering a useful landmark and hurriedly including it in his faltering flow. 'The Quiet Place' even makes a sneaky nod to 'You Spin Me Right Round' but strips away any last vestige of camp fun and replaces it with more moaning and mumbling. One song here is titled 'Watch The Fireworks'. We watch in hope, but each and every one is a damp squib.

DOGHOUSE

After the two previous demos Doghouse really isn't a name to inspire confidence. It sounds more like the place we've been sent to be driven insane by an incessant bombardment of mediocrity. The near-apologetic tone of the accompanying letter doesn't help either, though Mark Cochrane's lack of delusions of his own musical grandeur is endearing. Mark's

one half of this mostly acoustic duo, to whom the terms lo-fi and slightly ramshackle might be applied without fear of misrepresentation. The first song, 'I Can See A Wave Coming', is a too timid, too maudlin attempt at a shanty, unlikely to last long out at sea, but Two Macaroons' is considerably more jaunty, almost childlike with its "The digging is done / It's time for some tea / Two macaroons / For me, me, me," battle cry. 'Cold Lights Out To Sea' sounds like four different parts of four different songs all trying politely but unsuccessfully to fit together, but 'Standing Stones' is sweet enough, with its early-Beatles harmonies and bluesy harmonica. A bit messy and hardly inspiring, but right now, anything that doesn't drive us to self-immolation can be considered a triumph.

SCSELFIE

What we really need right now is a bottle of finest Rioja and some serious grindecore. What we get instead is Skelfie, whose name sounds like an unsightly skin condition from the Victorian era. Skelfie is the mostly solo work of Headington's Paul Wood, who plays guitar, keyboards and glockenspiel as well as emoting to a reasonably epic degree over two songs. The first of these, 'Last Rays Of The Sun', is too wrapped up in its own wistfulness, clattering and tinkling merrily up meadow hills, but we like the slightly daft, completely over the top backing vocals Paul's added all over the place, like a stray ghost who's tripping his tits off on the local mushrooms and wants to make the whole affair a bit of a party instead an ode to lost love or something. 'Gentle' is more striking though, an strangely intense piano ballad that you almost imagine Peter Hammill hammering out at some point in the 1970s, maybe filtered through Marc Almond's dying swan persona. It's simply done but comes with a sense of drama that's been missing for most of this month's pile.

FOCI'S LEFT

Still no grindcore, but here at least is a demo that makes you think about what constitutes music. Aiming across five tracks to reflect a trip through a mental hospital, the EP starts with a cough and feels decidedly off-colour throughout, the music disjointed, the lyrics fractured, the whole thing starting off untravelling and never gaining any semblance of coherence. Which, pretty much suits the central concept. 'In Patient' for example, sounds like someone with absolutely no prior experience of music, instruments

or the concept of singing, being forced at gunpoint to write and perform a Michael Bublé ballad on a detuned piano. The rambling, stream-of-consciousness lyrics paint disturbingly incoherent pictures, 'Out Patient' concluding with the line, "It's out of your control, like a freak on a leash," though it's never clear how much the words reflect the singer's own mental state. None of it makes any sense and as far as widely accepted notions of music go, it's random in the extreme, but compared to the polished, conformist crap we heard earlier, we've rather taken to it.

BRIDAL CRASH

As you might expect from a band featuring former members of Pistol Kixx, Bridal Crash's unreconstructed sleaze-rock sounds like it's got city dirt under its (badly painted) fingernails, a battered New York Dolls album under one arm and a half drunk bottle of cheap bourbon under the other. Richard Hell and The Ramones are Stateside touchstones, while The Wildhearts' growly, gravelly presence sits in the corner offering encouragement and more drinks on the house. Cavemen probably made music more sophisticated than this, but cavemen knew a thing or two about partying and killing stuff. Talking of which...

THE DEMO DUMPER

RUSHIL

You know when you try and watch something on Youtube you invariably have to endure a few seconds of some soul-sapping advert for G4 mobiles or herbal tea, and they all have a depressingly anodyne plaintively folk-grunge-becoming-epic-stadium-pop soundtrack? Well Rushil's song, 'Here & There' doesn't have one of those adverts before it. But we thought it did. Seriously, you could chuck a grenade into any marketing meeting in the western world (in itself not such a bad idea) and you'd blow up a million songs that sound exactly like this. You could equally set your clock by the moment the world-weary sensitive bit billows up into the sky-touching barrel of empty bombast. It's like the world's most banal music industry computer mail-merged equal parts of earthy Radio 2-friendly balladeer, self-consciously edgy boy band and generic American major label alt.rock, shrugged and asked, "will this do?" The world's a wretched fucking shit heap sometimes, isn't it, reader?

*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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