

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 229
August
2014**

BALLOON

ASCENTS

**Oxford's most buoyant
band on the rise**

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TRUCK and **CORNBURY** festivals reviewed.

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SUNDAY 28th

A SHOWCASE OF ALL THINGS OXFORD, INCLUDING LOCAL ARTISTS, STREET FOOD, FARMERS MARKETS, HAVE-A-GO SPORTS, MOTORSPORT DISPLAYS AND THEATRE, DANCE AND MUSIC PERFORMANCES.

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EXPERIENCE EVENTS

NEWS

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



FRANK TURNER will play the final show of his upcoming UK tour at Oxford Town Hall on Tuesday 30th September. Frank, who has gained honorary Oxfordian status over the years for his regular shows in town as well as featuring three-quarters of local heroes Dive Dive in his band The Sleeping Souls, heads off on tour following the success of his recent 'Tape Deck Heart' album and main stage appearance at Sonisphere this summer. Tickets, priced £25, are on sale from various ticket agencies

TICKETS FOR NEXT YEAR'S TRUCK FESTIVAL have gone on sale already. Following on from this year's sold-out weekend, headlined by The Cribs and White Lies, early birds can get next year's Steventon-based festival fix for £74 (plus booking fee) at truckfestival.com.

SKYLARKIN makes its first forays into releasing records this month when it launches the debut single on Skylarkin Recordings, a cover of Fleetwood Mac's 'Everywhere' by rising reggae stars Mighty Leap, regulars at the Skylarkin' Soundsystem club nights and tour support to The Wailers. The single is launched at The Cellar on Friday 1st August with a live set from the band plus Count Skylarkin' and special guests on the decks.

FORMER TROPHY WIFE drummer Kit Monteith returns with his new band, Paddox, this month. The new band, self described as "delving deep into techno and lush ambient soundscapes, with a nod and a wink to Cologne's Kompakt Records," play their debut show at the OVADA Warehouse in Osney on Friday 1st August in conjunction with video artist JD Haigh and sculptor Jon Lockhart, whose Chimerical Waypoints exhibition runs at the warehouse until the 10th August. The gig is free and will also feature DJ sets from Bear on a Bicycle.

AGNESS PIKE release their new EP, 'Activate Elevate', as a free download one track at a time via their Bandcamp this month. The theatrical metallers' four tracks will be available on the first four Sundays of August, starting with 'Hole In The Plan' on Sunday 3rd, followed by 'This Is The One', 'Hot Like Fire' and 'Repetition'. Visit agnesspike1.bandcamp.com/album/activate-elevate.

SALVATION BILL releases a new single, 'FML (Feel My Lump)' on Idiot King Records this month. The single will be available on CD, limited edition CD with artwork print by Theo Peters, or digital download. Visit www.idiotking.co.uk to pre-order your copy.

JAMES' show at the O2 Academy on 10th July was postponed when signer Tim Booth lost his voice. The sold-out show has been re-arranged for Monday 10th November. Tickets remain valid or refunds are available from point of purchase.

NIGHTSHIFT IS NOW ON TWITTER! Several aeons behind the rest of the world but you can now follow us at twitter.com/NightshiftMag. Go on, it'll be fun. We'll try not to tweet whilst drunk at gigs, even if that's the kind of irresponsibility you crave.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Saturday night between 8-9pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring interviews and sessions with local acts. The show is available to stream or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford. Regularly updated local music news is available online at www.musicinxford.co.uk. The site also features interactive reviews, a photo gallery and gig guide. Nightshift's online form is open to all local music fans and musicians at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

OXFORD BANDS looking for members or musicians looking for bands can advertise for free in Nightshift. Simply email your needs in up to 30 words, to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net.



STORNOWAY SINGER BRIAN BRIGGS has been talking to *Nightshift* about the band's forthcoming third album, which they are funding through a PledgeMusic campaign. For the first time the band are working with a producer, Gil Norton, who has worked with Pixies; Foo Fighters; Maximo Park; James, and Echo & the Bunnymen.

Brian has been writing the album, which should see the light of day in early 2015, while living in Wales, though Stornoway remain rooted in Oxford and played at last month's Truck Festival as well as The Big Feastival later in August.

Brian explained how his relocation has inspired his new songs. "I moved to Wales last April with my family to be somewhere wilder, and cheaper, than Oxford, whilst writing. We are in the far north-west corner of the Gower peninsula, overlooking Rhossili Bay and across to Lundy Island and North Devon on a clear day. It has been an inspiring place for songwriting so far, and we were battered during this exceptionally stormy winter, which exposed new shipwrecks and petrified forests. On the north side of the peninsula is a huge and ever-changing area of saltmarsh, riddled with tidal creeks, birds and sheep. One of the first songs I wrote here used the relationship between the saltmarsh and the sea as a metaphor for two lovers."

Having parted company with their record label, 4AD, after the release of 2012's 'Tales From Terra Firma' ("it was very well received but didn't get as much exposure as 'Beachcomber's Windowsill', possibly because it has fewer three-minute pop songs on it.") Stornoway are now looking to finance the follow-up through their fanbase.

"After two and a half albums of self-producing songs we decided this time round that we'd like to try working with a producer, and we were pleased to attract the attention of Gil Norton who came to our Barbican show. He is best known for his work with rock bands but I think he fancied doing something a little different and we have proved to be an excellent match for each other and it has been an exciting and intense learning experience for us so far. Gil is especially influential and brutal at the pre-production stage, dismembering our demos and shaking things up in a pretty heavy-handed way. But although the songs have ended up clearer and more straightforward-sounding as a consequence, he's embraced our approach to arranging and instrumentation, so the songs have retained a distinctive Stornoway stamp, with plenty of sonic twists and turns, and a mix of the acoustic and electric.

"Lyrically of course the songs have the outdoors as their backdrop, with the Gower having a big influence. There are also a good few co-writes in there with Jon, including a track called 'Man on Wire', inspired by the film of the same name. After the richly layered arrangements of 'Tales...' we all wanted to create something simpler, and that has suited working within the time pressures of a studio environment. In some ways there has been a slight return to a fresher, more 'Beachcomber'-ish sound, but with a significant Gil influence, which makes the songs sound perhaps a little more confident in themselves and a bit neater round the edges; we never thought we'd meet someone who could be more of a perfectionist than we are!

"We are about half way through the recording process, and we have just teamed up with PledgeMusic for our album pre-order and exclusives campaign. They suit our ethos well in that they allow us to involve and connect more closely with our fans, whilst following our own creative vision and plans. It is proving very successful so far and fingers crossed the campaign will keep on growing, so that we can record the whole album in the way we want to! More and more bands are going down this route. Maybe it is the way forward as labels struggle to adapt to the changing music industry."

To pledge to the new album, visit www.pledgemusic.com/projects/stornoway

A quiet word with

BALLOON ASCENTS

photo: Gina Hood



THE PHRASE “IF YOU’RE good enough, you’re old enough” is as pertinent on the Oxford music scene as it is in, say, top class football.

There’s a proud lineage of über-talented young things being nurtured and supported in this city, whether it’s nascent world-beaters like Supergrass and Foals, or brilliant local cult heroes like Crackout and Dead Jerichos. Even when the musicians themselves are too young to get into the pubs and venues that will become their second homes, ways and means are found to make sure they get heard. It’s one of the chief reasons Oxford produces so many great bands, and why we’re able to be so excited by Balloon Ascents, a quintet of young men who have only in the last few months graduated to the stage where they can legally buy themselves a pint before they play, but who have already been described by one seasoned scene veteran as the best live band in town.

THAT MAN IS JOAL SHEARING, long-time mainstay of The Wheatsheaf and a man who has learned to recognise real talent when he hears it.

Joal was expounding the merits of Balloon Ascents to *Nightshift* at the start of this year when all we’d heard was a promising but half-formed

demo. As soon as we witnessed what they could do up on stage we were converted, and when we put them on at the Punt back in May a whole swathe of regular local gig-goers were similarly enthralled. On a night awash with fresh musical talent, the most excited talk was of Balloon Ascents. Ain’t it about time you too discovered what the fuss is about?

YOU’LL GET YOUR CHANCE soon enough as the band embark on another set of live fixtures around town, starting on the 6th September at the Wheatsheaf, the spawning ground for so many of Oxford’s finest emerging acts.

There’ll also hopefully be some recorded material to match their live shows soon as the band have just finished working with Stornoway’s Oli Steadman, a man who knows how to get the best out of a band in the studio, often with meager resources.

Yep, soon you too will love Balloon Ascents.

BALLOON ASCENTS ARE Thomas Robert (*vocals, guitar and piano*); Robin Christensen Marriot (*bass and backing vocals and occasional French horn*); Henry Soothill (*guitar*); Jonny Vickers (*guitar*) and Otto Wolf (*drums, violin*). Thomas is the band’s chief songwriter and live, with his swept-

back hair and Alice band, looking like a young and particularly fresh-faced Nick Cave, the focal point of the five-piece; Robin take the award for having the most classical training, while Otto has the coolest name and needs to start his own Viking metal band forthwith (“I’d be lying if I said I hadn’t day dreamed about my name on the front cover of magazines but it never crossed my mind that fronting a Scandinavian screamo band would be the way to get there. I guess I’ll need to reconsider my life plans now.”).

If the band are young now they weren’t even into their teens when they first met and began making music together. Thomas, Otto and Henry started playing in a band together at Cheney School in 2008. Thomas: “I think we were eleven or twelve when our music teacher suggested getting together and forming a jazz band, and looking back it’s a bit of an insult to call it jazz. We did ‘Buffalo Soldier’; there were two of us on the same piano and we had a cello back then too. When Robin got involved things got a little more interesting. We had our squabbles and drop outs for a while and it was only really three years ago when Jonny joined that we became settled.”

Jonny: “It’s like learning anything new really; it takes a few difficult years before you can understand each

other and express yourself fully. As time goes by everyone brings more variety to the table; back in 2008 all we really listened to was The Strokes and Arctic Monkeys.”

Robin: “Since then we’ve come a long way, even though our first song was about a monster, called vampire sea sheep, which was pretty cool.”

Henry: “The band has always been a big part of our lives so I guess now everything’s easier.”

Thomas: “It’s a big happy family.”

THE BALLOON ASCENTS

we know now are a long way on from such innocently ramshackle beginnings (they once played a local nursery while stoned – “all the songs felt really slow; we don’t do pre-gig intoxication any more”), a remarkably cohesive unit with grace and poise and a magpie approach to mixing and matching styles that finds songs like ‘Wears Me Out’ stretching from dubby intro to widescreen American folk-rock, full of big harmonies, before veering into something new; or the skronky, proggy space-funk of ‘Tundra’, or even ‘Into The Blue’ where electro-funk is given a whimsical makeover down Laurel Canyon.

The influence of both Radiohead and Stornoway looms large in their songs without detracting from their own style and when both King Tubby and Neil Young pop into your

head during a single song you know something special is going on.

Given their Cheney origins, how much of the Balloon Ascents sound comes from what they learned at school?

Thomas: “Not much ‘learning’ ever went on in music classes at school really. I used to write the odd song tucked away in the music rooms at break and lunch. I’d record endless ideas on my phone; once I recorded a song I was working on and a second after I played the final notes, the bell rang for my next lesson, it was pretty spooky.

“In lessons there’d be four of us in the corner trying to get down to ‘Hit the Road Jack’ or something and the rest of the room was a mess. But we already had the knowhow. Everyone’s been lucky enough to have been taught at least one musical instrument from an early age.”

Robin: “Being in an orchestra has really helped my bass playing.”

Henry: “Graham Barlow from Beard of Destiny taught three of us guitar, so we owe him a lot. He’s a great teacher, very patient with shitty guitarists like Thomas and Jonny.”

THE BIGGEST INSPIRATION

for the band, though, came when Thomas, Henry and Robin went to Reading Festival in 2009 and again in 2011 and finally witnessed the bands they loved in the flesh.

Thomas: “Seeing the Strokes in 2011 was pretty special; even though they barely turned up, it was a big moment, we knew all those songs inside out.”

Henry: “It’s so different to just listening to the record, being in a crowd like that for the first time, the energy is infectious.”

Thomas: “When you can play guitar, and I suppose especially when you’re in a band, seeing other bands live, you watch their fingers, you realise that there’s nothing overly special about what they’re doing, that ten or fifteen years ago they were in your position. That’s what it’s all about.

We got back to our tent and were like ‘man, we can do this’.”

Robin: “I just wanted to be as cool as The Strokes.”

Radiohead were headliners on the 2009 trip, as well as hometown heroes to the boys. There’s no denying their influence on the band.

Robin: “‘In Rainbows’ was a big album for us. It changed the way we write; we pay more attention to detail and focus more on how all the parts complement each other. We don’t try and pack too much in; sometimes playing nothing works far better.”

Thomas: “I think we all went through a pretty big Radiohead phase; we still admire what they do and how they work, but there’s less of the ‘make that noise’ or ‘let’s make a song like that’ kind of thinking now. I’ve always thought

that it doesn’t matter if in the beginning you sound like someone else. You just have to keep looking and stay focused and then one day someone will sound like you.

“I think you feel a little detached from the local music scene when you’re younger. It’s very easy to listen to a small number of artists to death and not get the bigger picture. A few years ago I could’ve happily gone a year listening to nothing but The Beatles. Maybe I still could.

As mentioned, the other local act who have made a profound impact on Balloon Ascents is Stornoway, although in a more roundabout fashion. The earliest recordings they made were during a trip to the Scottish Highlands, which perhaps explains some of the air of the wilderness about some of their songs.

Robin: “After the first time we explored the Highlands and recorded a few tracks, being there had a knock-on-affect to both the lyrics and the musical arrangement of songs. I suppose these new features can be seen in some of Stornoway’s songs.

“Seeing the Strokes in 2011 was pretty special; we got back to our tent and were like, ‘man, we can do this’.”

Also the acoustic instrumentation we were forced to bring gave our music more of a folky feel.

The Stornoway influence now continues as Balloon Ascents finish recording a new batch of songs with Oli Steadman.

Jonny: “It’s nice working with someone with experience, an impartial sixth opinion.”

Otto: “It’s not just the recordings, he’s given us a valuable insight into the music industry as well.”

Thomas: “But at the same time it’s not like he’s an overly big cheese. He’s a real nice guy who knows what he’s doing.”

Robin: “He’s become a great friend and has played a big part in inspiring us to do music for a living. His calm, cool attitude is wonderful to be in the presence of.”

It has to be said, Balloon Ascents’ early home-recorded demos (made in a self-constructed shed in Robin’s garden, where the band still rehearse) didn’t match their live sound; do they feel that imbalance will be rectified with the new stuff?

Jonny: “Yeah, I think for the demos, recording one part at a time rather than all together, meant that we perhaps didn’t capture the energy that we get from each other. That’s one of the great things about recording with Oli, being able to do full live recording. Listening to it so far I think we’ve managed to replicate our live sound much better.”

Thomas: “I suppose gigging and

rehearsing live is what we’ve done for while, we know how it works. I guess we didn’t have the same level of experience when we recorded those demos in the shed.”

Robin: “We built that shed ourselves. We moved 700 concrete blocks and 17 tons of sand through my house in wheel barrows. We’ve lost the muscles we gained doing it since, though. We’re now adverse to physical activity.”

Jonny: “The insulation, flooring and patio are all Balloon Ascents creations!”

Thomas: “And the roof; we’re pretty nifty with fiberglass.”

Henry: “Not all the lights work though, ‘cos Jonny did the electrics.”

Thomas: “We’ve got incense and plants, it’s pretty Zen.”

Robin: “Especially when the garden’s flooded, then we have to canoe to band practice, we’re that committed.”

So committed in fact they boast they already have two albums-worth of songs ready to go; is there a sense of frustration at not being able to get everything out there straight away,

Jonny: “We have been jamming more and more recently though. Probably, partly because we’re simply spending more time on songs but it’s also a helpful way of exploring ideas.”

Thomas: “It’s becoming easier and more collective. We’re in a good place now; we’re comfortable with each other’s ideas. But we have to be confident, that’s all part of it. If we want people to appreciate our music, first we have to appreciate it. Confidence comes with time as we rehearse and gig more. The great thing is we’ve been doing this for ages already and we still have time on our side.”

TIME IS, AS THE ROLLING

Stones would have it, on their side, but with the speed in which they’d established themselves on the local scene hopefully Balloon Ascents won’t need too much time to move up another level. Have they been surprised by how quickly people picked up on what they were doing?

Thomas: “It doesn’t feel like much of a surprise. I think if you studied structural engineering for five years and then went on to work as a successful structural engineer, you wouldn’t be surprised. We’re still learning, but the great thing for us is we’ll always be learning. That means for everyone; there’s so much more to come.

JOAL AT THE WHEATSHEAF

has been a fervent advocate of the band; how much do they feel he’s helped them, and what of others on the local scene? Have Balloon Ascents ever felt patronised as a young band?

Jonny: “The first gig we did with Joal was definitely a breakthrough gig for us. It really started the ball rolling in terms of gigs this year. I think Joal’s enthusiasm for us gave us a major confidence boost that it was possible to make this work.”

Thomas: “He made us feel like a ‘proper’ band. Being patronised is all part of it though. I’d rather be young and patronised than old and ignored. “It’s all about getting on the ladder; it’s about who you know. Growing that contact list is everything and it’s difficult when you can’t even enter all the venues in town. The biggest obstacle is just ability; people will put on young bands if they’re good enough, it just all takes time.”

Jonny: “I think the Oxford music scene in general is pretty good for new bands at the moment. There are a lot of promoters willing to find gigs for local acts.”

Thomas: “Yeah, imagine if we lived in Penzance, it’d take a lot longer.”

Balloon Ascents play The Wheatsheaf on Saturday 6th September. Hear them at soundcloud.com/balloon-ascents

RELEASED

VARIOUS ARTISTS

‘Music for a Good Home - Oxford Edition’

(Audioscope)

Okay, what have we here: Audioscope compilation, 19 quality Oxford acts, 90 minutes of music, with all the proceeds going to homeless charity Shelter. I’m liking it already, but you’ll be wanting to know what’s on it, so, track by track, with thumbnail sketch pad at the ready... let’s go in.

First up is Toliesel’s ‘Brothers’, carrying shades of Radiohead’s ‘No Surprises’ guitar lines, a Martin Carthy vocal, all blooming into a ‘Pabolo Honey’ whiteout. We’re off to a good start.

Kid Kin’s ‘Frippery the Villain’ has a stuttering glitch in the intro that halfway through makes you think your computer has sucked up a Trojan and jars you from your space ride, before twinkling into a gorgeous trip around a starry sky. Undersmile’s ‘Killer Bob’ manages 20bpm for its eight minutes of lovely, nightmarish, swamp crawling in a lightning-blitzed forest, desperately trying to escape Killer Bob. Jess Hall’s ‘Sail Home’ feels far safer; deliciously so with her sunlit Joni Mitchell vocals, strings, and a prayer for the return of a love from the ocean. Give that woman some sugar.

The Original Rabbits Foot Spasm offer a live take on ‘Eynsham Witches’, no doubt an ode to some of the gals who used to frequent the Newlands Inn, a cool cat ‘Minnie the Moocher’ vibe down the Cotton Club. Slinky. The gruff Americana of Reichenbach Falls’ ‘The Best I Could’, meanwhile, puts me in mind of Dr



Hook’s ‘Sylvia’s Mother’.

The funny guy lyrics of Hot Hooves’ ‘Limp Home Mode’ are delivered in that threatening Joe Pesci “In what way am I funny?” manner, wrapped up in a Punker Du, kick-out-the-jams mosh.

Jordon O’Shea’s ‘These Songs Are About You, They’re Not For You’ is, characteristically, a lament for a lost love; maybe he should have written her a song, and then maybe she wouldn’t have left him.

Lee Riley’s LB/GW incarnation bring us ‘Heaven’s Silver Shadow’, that could easily be an eight-minute soundtrack to a late night wander round the ossuary catacombs in Paris during a power cut armed only with a box of damp matches. The Scholars’ ‘Zurich’ is a quality slice of icy, uptight, Editors-style slickness. Too Cool for School.

ArtClassSink’s ‘Cry For Help’ is atmospheric, like one-time Alan McGee faves Arnold, or

Sponsored by



if Jake Bugg had been dropped a few too many Temazepam, which is appropriate as it’s followed by Coma Wall, the acoustic, southern gothic incarnation of Undersmile, so it’s back to the swamp crawl, though rather less nightmarish than their amped-up selves.

I love Listing Ships’ ‘Trace Inverter’; it’s like every rave I ever survived. After such a buzz I’m left craving a hefty dose of Eat Static. And there’s more quality electronica from Opened Space whose ‘The Clearing’ is the sound of a spaceship coming into land to take us back to our home planet. Full? Okay I’ll take the night bus.

Back in Guitarland, Spinner Fall’s ‘By Numbers’ is nicely schizophrenic and fractious and Killing Jokey, while Tamara and the Martyrs are possibly giving us a stay-away health warning in an incisive but sweetly innocent Chrissie Hynde kind of way on ‘Real Bad Lover’, although Agness Pike’s ‘Boing Boing Boing’ merely invites you to self damage with its headbanging PIL-influenced wonderfulness. Surely there is no sadder line ever than “No more, no more boing boing”. Give Martin Spear a knighthood.

Bringing the album to a close are D.Gwalia whose ‘Illuminations’ reminds us plenty of David Bowie, and We Aeronauts’ ‘Cope’, which makes me resolve to have my front door wired so when I put the key in, after a long journey away, it plays at full Sigur Ros volume.

So there you have it: not a duff track to be heard; you’ll love at least half the songs and the other half you’ll want to live with. Go on, give it a good home.

Paul Carrera

and his guitar. Of the former ‘Into The Wild’ and ‘Stay’ are the album’s high points, best displaying Lewis’ way with an understated but uplifting tune, avoiding over-egging the song and having a decent hook to hang the chorus on. There’s more than a hint of Coldplay in these songs, right down to the lyrical tropes (“we’re perfectly intertwined”), though throughout ‘The Morning’ Ben Howard and Ed Sheeran remain the chief cornerstones of Lewis’ sound.

The album does tend to get bogged down in overly-polished and pedestrian balladry too often though, particularly on ‘Outgrow’ and ‘Ghost’, a mumble and trundle over well-worn territory. And so ‘The Morning’ keeps rolling along, but you feel where it’s rolling is down a soft grassy meadow, free of the flints or rusted barbs that would tear through his skin into his very soul. Love, longing and, most importantly, hope are Lewis Watson’s touchstones; desolation doesn’t get much of a look-in, and if that makes it all so much easier to consume, it’s also what makes the whole thing ultimately feel emotionally detached.

Dale Kattack



RAINBOW RESERVOIR

‘400 Imperfect Rhymes’ (Self released)

An alternate title for Rainbow Reservoir’s ‘400 Imperfect Rhymes’ might be ‘400 Types Of Jauntiness’; such is the unerringly bouncy musical glee at play on these five songs. Based around American singer, guitarist and keyboard player Angela Space, now Oxford based, the band also features a drummer, trumpet player and bass player, completing a horns’n’keyboards indie-pop four-piece.

Stornoway’s brand of literary, knowing pop musicality is apparent here, and it’s hard to imagine this music coming from anywhere except Oxford: educated finesse is the order of the day, along with some precise references. ‘Siegried! Oh Siegfried’ lyrically mixes The Ring of the Nibelung into a tale of awkward romantic coupling; ‘Judith Victorious’ takes the story of Judith and Holofernes and gives it a Littlest Hobo joyfulness. (The latter also features the excellent couplet “This is a cautionary tale / Nothing good ever happened in a tent”).

Influences mentioned in the band’s blurb include Silver Jews, Eels, Magnetic Fields, Kinks and Beatles, but these ears hear more of Randy Newman and Ben Folds in these melody-led, arch and lively ditties. ‘Blue Crab’ dials down the jaunt, providing a warmer song based around echoed refrains. It’s a standout, with the feel of a simpler, less transcendent Julee Cruise, and it reveals how much arrangement and delivery is as fundamental to Rainbow Reservoir’s output as their songs and lyrics.

Simon Minter

LIU BEI

‘Infatuation’

(paradYse)

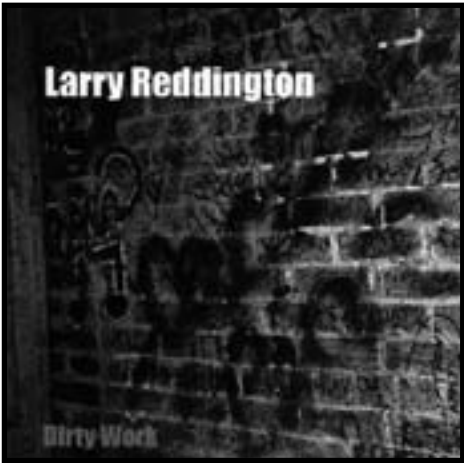
Just what, you wonder, will it take for the world to sit up and take notice of Richard Walters’ exquisite talents? His back catalogue of solo work, band projects and collaborations is scattered liberally with moments of musical magic, and yet he remains very much a cult concern, those who know him hanging on each new song, while far inferior singers flog CDs by the warehouse-load and rack up Youtube hits by the million.

Richard’s latest incarnation – having supposedly retired as a solo performer now – is named after a benevolent eight-foot tall Chinese warlord with enormous ears (possibly in a class of one on that score, we’d imagine), and sees him, with two new bandmates, “falling back in love with bands like Ride, Mazzy Star and Cocteau Twins.”

The latter in particular is instantly apparent on ‘Infatuation’, a characteristically bleak study in love lost, Richard intoning “You’re everywhere / You’re in my bones” to the memory of a former lover amid a sparse spangle of guitars that recalls Robin Guthrie’s gorgeous work on ‘Song To The Siren’. Again he finds himself at the sharp end of romantic fallout, and is such an expert at conveying emotional desolation with seemingly effortless grace the whole song feels like it was stitched together from winter starlight.

An absolutely gorgeous return to action; frankly, we’d expect nothing less. We demand a full album immediately.

Dale Kattack



LARRY REDDINGTON

‘Dirty Work’

(Self-released)

Nobody is beyond criticism. Every musician is only as good as the last thing they did. However, if you were going to offer a local performer an indulgent bye, it might be Larry Reddington, veteran drummer from such varied bands as blues rockers Steamroller and billowing goths Mary’s Garden, as well as a genial presence at many an open jam or behind the counter of The Music Box. So, we put this record in the stereo prepared to go easy, and discovered a sincerely enjoyable selection of cultured, stately blues.

It’s all delivered in Reddington’s measured, scuffed vocal, sounding more like a perspicacious aged retainer than a whisky-suckin’ delta hollerer; in fact, it’s the sly humour that stands out on this record, from the fights dodged and situations defused in ‘Back In Ten Minutes’ to widow-romancing urban fabliau ‘Dirty Work’, in which Reddington’s laconic intonation of the chorus sounds oddly like the Bonzos’ Vivian Stanshall.

There are some notable friends helping out here too, from Aaron Keylock’s juicy slide playing, to Gary Good’s relaxed sax, but it’s the lead man’s character that defines the record, the unhurried tempos making it feel like an extended anecdote over a long coffee. The record is relatively varied, taking in Chicago ballads, Bo Diddley shuffles and even light reggae, but essentially if you’ve heard enough blues then you’ll find that Larry plays it pretty safe: still, why should this old dog learn any new tricks when we’re still falling for this one?

David Murphy

LEWIS WATSON

‘The Morning’

(Warners)

Given Oxford’s predilection for producing heart-on-sleeve acoustic songsmiths, what is it that’s lifted Lewis Watson the highest – at least in Youtube hits – and made ‘The Morning’, on Warners no less, one of the most anticipated debuts of the summer? If, as the old saying went, a million Elvis fans can’t be wrong, then what does six million Youtube views say about the young man from Bicester?

Perhaps what lies at the heart of Lewis’ popularity as much as his pure, easy voice and youthful good looks is his ability to soften the blow of emotional turmoil, turn it into something less than torment. Most people prefer a little romantic longing to staring into the void. Except goths, right? And black metal fans, of course.

Neither of which appear to be the target audience for ‘The Morning’. Instead this is a smooth journey into the heart of the songwriter; he’s hurting but there’s plenty of light on that



horizon, and anyway, who’s going to resist those puppy dog eyes and that plaintive poet’s soul? “We are only stones around the sun,” croons Lewis in the album opener of the same name, displaying a way with a metaphor that’ll chime with any One Direction fan. Musically the songs are either lushly orchestrated, all subtle strings, pianos and unobtrusive beats, or stripped-down acoustic ballads, just Lewis

G I G G U I D E

FRIDAY 1st
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM 7th
LAUNCH PARTY: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin hosts the first of a brace of shows this week, tonight a launch party for the first ever release on Skylarkin’ Recordings, courtesy of rising reggae stars Mighty Leap, a six-piece collective from Reading, who’ll be joined by resident and guests DJs, including, potentially, a certain retired OAP deckmaster from Bristol way.
KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + BLACK FEATHERS + BARKUS + FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS: The Wheatsheaf – Great night of roots music courtesy of It’s All About the Music. Inventive, expansive Americana from Knights of Mentis; Irish, English and bluegrass folk from Black Feathers; country-blues and Tex-Mex from Des Barkus’ band, plus whisky bar blues from Francis Pugh and crew. Ooh ooh.

Thursday 7th – Sunday 10th
WILDERNESS FESTIVAL: Cornbury Park
Of course few festivals are all about the music these days. That’d far too easy, not to say 20th Century. Nowadays you’ve got to span the entire arts spectrum and make sure the food gets an equal footing. In this Wilderness has been a roaring success, a polymath of a festival where the main music stage is just a part of a site where it shares star billing with banquets, discussions, theatre, outdoor pursuits, a spa, late-night parties, cinema and even a spot of skinny dipping, if flapping around naked in a lake in front of 20,000 strangers is your bag.

But it’s mostly the music *Nightshift* is interested in. And the food. Mustn’t forget the food. And we rarely do.
So, alongside banquets hosted by Simon Roga, Angela Hartnett, Russell Norman and Polpo amongst other, and parties hosted by the likes of Pandemonium, Styx and After Dark, you’ll encounters the weekend’s headliners: pensively ethereal moodists **LONDON GRAMMAR**,



AUGUST
DIDCOT MUSIC AND BEER FESTIAL: The Cornerstone, Didcot – First day of the music festival with sets from Flights of Helios; The Maybirds; Duchess; Adam Barnes; Sex With Your Ex and The Isleys.
PADDOX: OVADA Warehouse – Lush ambient soundscaping from Paddox at tonight’s free gig, former Trophy Wife drummer Kit Monteith making his debut with his new band.
SANCTUM: The Varsity Club – monthly metal club night, playing tracks from across the genre.
DISCO MUTANTES: The Library – Disco, house and boogie.

SATURDAY 2nd
DIDCOT MUSIC AND BEER FESTIAL: The

Cornerstone, Didcot – Live music all day with Maia; Jess Hall; Fred’s House; The August List; Lucky Club and Hey Bulldog.
PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy – Classic and contemporary indie hits every Saturday night.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – House, bass and techno club night every Saturday.
SEANI B: Art Bar – Hip hop club night hosted by 1Xtra’s “remix kid” Seani B.
COUSIN AVI: The Jericho Tavern – Rock-funk fusion from the Northampton band.
REPLICA: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock and pop hits.
BLONDES WITH BEARDS: The Swan, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club.

SUNDAY 3rd
DIDCOT MUSIC AND BEER FESTIAL: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Third and final day of the music fest with Ellie Williams; Band of Hope; James Daubney, and Reuben’s Rocket.

MONDAY 4th
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Reggae, dancehall and bass club night from Count Skylarkin, tonight featuring a live set from Zaia, a new local horns’n’dub reggae crew formed from the ashes of long-time faves Raggasaurus. Sensible Dancehall’s Robin is on the decks alongside Tom Showtime and Count Skylarkin.
DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA: Holywell Music Room – Oxford Contemporary Music host the local stop-off by London’s experimental folkies, undertaking a near-300-mile waterway tour from London to Bristol, rekindling the sounds, stories and songs of Britain’s canals via an unorthodox approach to traditional folk music.

TUESDAY 5th
OXFORD ACOUSTIC CLUB: The Jericho Tavern – Acoustic club with Megan Henwood, The Mighty Redox’s Phil and Sue, plus more.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 6th
THURSDAY 7th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park – First day of the four-day music, food and outdoor festival, with headline sets from Burt Bacharach, Metronomy and London Grammar – *see main preview*
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – The festival from the dawn of time returns for its annual outing, branching out slightly from its traditional folk roots but not too far. Tonight’s headliners are The Waterboys, who are joined by Steve Hackett, playing a set of Genesis material; Capercaillie, mixing traditional Gaelic folk sounds with modern folk, rock and funk, plus an acoustic set from festival

hosts Fairport Convention.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running and best open mic club continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists every Thursday.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 8th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park – Music, feasts and skinny-dipping abound as Wilderness clicks into gear – *see main preview*
SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park – Opening day of the leftfield music and arts festival, featuring, across a highly eclectic and esoteric weekend, sets from Breathless, Cindytalk, GNOD, Bong and Palehorse – *see main preview*
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – The Australian Pink Floyd provide the spectacular finale to the second day of Fairport’s gathering of the folk tribes. They’re joined by enduring rockney cult heroes Chas’n’Dave, who continue their critical reappraisal by dusting off hits like ‘Ain’t No Pleasing You’ and ‘Gertcha’; reformed 80s fraggle rockers The Wonderstuff; Manchester’s alt. folkies The Travelling Band; Anglo-Irish folksters Churchfitters and plenty more.
NOFX: O2 Academy – The Godfathers of American pop-punk stay angry – *see main preview*
TRAPS: The Wheatsheaf – Grungy power-rocking in the vein of Skunk Anansie from the local crew.

HIDEAWAY FESTIVAL: Fawley Hill, Henley – The latest addition to the county’s ever-expanding festival calendar brings a slightly retro feel to Henley with 50 acts over three stages across the weekend, with 90s electro-rock hitmakers Republica headlining the opening night. They’re joined by 70s British r’n’b heroes Eddie & the Hotrods, plus Voodoo Funk Collective and reggae starlets Mighty Leap amongst others.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Balkan beats, Afrobeat, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, tonight with a live set from Tantz, Leeds’ ‘power-klezmer’ crew, taking influences from eastern European Jewish klezmer, hip hop, dub and Balkan dance. Resident DJ Dan Ofer is on the decks.
ROOTS RAMBLE with SWINDLESTOCK + FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS + AGS CONNOLLY: Truck Store and beyond (6pm) – The Roots Ramble moveable feast of Americana and blues returns for a second trip round the hostelrys of east Oxford, Swindlestock, Francis Pugh and Ags Connolly starting off at Truck Store at 6pm before moving on to Big Society, James Street tavern, The Star and Port Mahon for pop-up live shows. Join them and drink in a merry fashion.
STEAMROLLER: The Turnpike, Yarnton – Beer and blues festival with local veterans Steamroller kicking it out in the style of Cream and Hendrix.

SATURDAY 9th
WILDERNESS: Cornbury Park
SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park
FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – Fairport Convention play their

Friday 8th – Sunday 10th
SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park, Ipsden
It wouldn’t be too hyperbolic to say that last year’s Supernormal was the most enjoyable and musically challenging festival *Nightshift* has been to in recent times. The experimental promise of its early years came to full fruition with superlative sets from the likes of Hookworms, Mugstar, Comanechi and Evil Blizzard, as well as innumerable sets, improvised performances and art installations that ranged from the sublime to the utterly ridiculous. Looking down the line-up for this year’s event we’ve high hopes it’ll be just as fantastic, if not better. We barely know where to start when it comes to picking choice selections out for preview purposes.
How about a double dose of This Mortal Coil-affiliated talents in the form of Gordon Sharp’s **CINDYTALK** and Dominic Appleton’s **BREATHLESS**: the former dark, intense gothic pop, the latter heavenly dreampop pioneers, between them featuring two of the finest vocal talents of the past 30 years.
There’s a lot of seriously heavy noise going on at Supernormal, but there’s pop relief to be found aplenty. How about **MARY HAMPTON**’s haunting, inventive folk, or **ALASDAIR ROBERTS**’ intimate acoustic demon-exorcising, or **GRUBBY MITT**’s ambient Toytown soundscaping, or **LAURA CANNELL**’s mediaeval folk music manipulation. Just for bloody starters.

But noise and associated musical ferocity are the heart and soul of the festival. Leading the charge will be Salford’s sonic battering ram **GNOD (pictured)**, a band-cum-collective of space Argonauts whose rhythm’n’noise journeys are beyond epic and who **WILL** destroy your hearing and sense of balance



forever. And you will thank them for it.
Joining them are sonic demolition derby duo **SHITWIFE**; crazy dissonant ensemble **SLY & THE FAMILY DRONE**; confrontational bass-heavy assault force **PALEHORSE**; monstrous tectonic drone tyrants **BONG**; avant-skrunk improv luminaries **DEATH SHANTIES**; none-louder noise brutes **PART CHIMP**, and blackened mutant psych-rockers **TAMAN SHUD**.
Shall we go on or have you gone blind with shock and awe already? Course not, so here’s jazz-funk trumpet-looping loons **SPACEHEADS**; experimental electro master **SETH AYYAS**; witchy nocturnal pop deviants **ESBEN & THE WITCH**, and Bahrain-via-Brixton crew **FLAMINGODS**, who mix African rhythms and feverish electro-pop to strange effect.
And then there’s **JOANNA GRUESOME**, who turns C-86-styled pop melodies bad by way of an awful lot of fuzzy noise.

There is more. Much more. Some of it possibly so noisy it will knock the earth off its axis and invoke demons from the netherworld. And you will dance with them all night and wake up pregnant with a two-headed unicorn lovechild to nurture.

The banana and coconut curry we had last year weren’t too bad neither.

Collective; Invisible Vegas and The Fleas.

MONDAY 11th
TUESDAY 12th
WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar – Garage club night from the Freerange crew.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm, dark wave and 80s club night.

WEDNESDAY 13th
THURSDAY 14th
EMPRESS AD + WREN: The Wheatsheaf – Heavyweight prog from London’s fast-rising rockers Empress AD at tonight’s Black Bullet Live show, the band winning a steadily growing army of new fans with their complex but melodic fusion of Mastodon, Soundgarden, Pink Floyd and even a bit of Elbow.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston



Friday 8th

NOFX: O2 Academy

Before 30 Seconds to Mars and Good Charlotte and all their ilk; before Blink 182 and even before Green Day there was NOFX, the band who pretty much created the blueprint for American pop-punk for decades to come. Formed in California back in the early 80s, taking their early cue from Minor Threat, The Descendents and Bad Religion, the core quartet, fronted from the very beginning by the excellently named Fat Mike (who’s also run the highly successful Fat Wreck Chords label for the last 25 years), has remained pretty constant ever since, a few temporary fill-ins aside. Their story could be summed up with the phrase ‘no-nonsense’, both musically and in their general attitude to the media, for which they have precious little time (they’ve refused to allow MTV to play their music and baited them frequently), while happy to mock fellow punk bands along the way (notably The Offspring, albeit in a good-natured fashion). Musically they’ve rarely strayed from the straight and narrow of politicised and heavily energised punk over 30 years and a dozen albums and they’re undisputed elder statesmen of a genre that was steadfastly underground when they began and seemingly ubiquitous now. Respect is due.

FRIDAY 15th

KARMA TO BURN + DESERT STORM + HATEMAIL + EVAVOID + OVERLORD: O2 Academy – Riffs. Riffs as big as mountains. And beards. Beards as long as rivers. Riffs and beards. That is all – *see main preview*
THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: The Meadow, Waterstock – Long-running local house and techno club night host their second festival, three days of dance music from across the spectrum and featuring sets from Asadinho; Dutty Moonshine; Count Skylarkin’; Paul Soul; Kostas G and a host of resident and guest DJs, playing everything from house, bass and hip hop to roots, reggae and ska.
THE SCARLET VIXENS SUMMER BURLESQUE: The Wheatsheaf – Burlesque show.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + MUDSLIDE MORRIS: James Street Tavern – Country, folk and Americana from Headington Hillbillies, plus rootsy blues from Mudslide.
STEAMROLLER: The Midget, Abingdon
DEEP COVER: The Cellar

SATURDAY 16th

THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: The Meadow,

Waterstock – Dancing the weekend away some more.

ARTCLASSSINK + IONEYE + TAMARA PARSONS-BAKER + OP21: Art Bar – Cure-inspired indie from Artclasssink, plus acoustic popsters Ioneye, and wonderfully emotionally turbulent songstress Tamara.
REIGN OF FURY + RETRIBUTION + I, THE DECEIVER + LATE NIGHT LIGHTS: The Wheatsheaf – Classic thrash from Reign of Fury at tonight’s metal night in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust.
PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy
EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar
ELDER STUBBS FESTIVAL: Elder Stubbs Allotments –The annual family music festival returns on the allotments site, with live sets from The Mighty Redox and more.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: Cricketers Arms, Temple Cowley
RED SHOES: The Swan, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club.

SUNDAY 17th

MARK BOSLEY + ECHOIC + RICH STICKERS + DAVE TOMLINSON: The Wheatsheaf (2.30-7pm) – Free unplugged afternoon of live music hosted by Klub Kakofanney, and featuring the delightfully doleful Mark Bosley and chums.
THE SIMPLE WEEKENDER: The Meadow, Waterstock

MONDAY 18th

CAROLINA CHOCOLATE DROPS: St John the Evangelist – Classic down-home jug blues and pre-war Americana from Carolina’s finest – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 19th

TONIGHT ALIVE: O2 Academy – Punk-pop in the vein of Paramore from the Aussie crew best known for their contribution to the *Amazing Spiderman 2* soundtrack, over in the UK to promote last year’s ‘The Other Side’ album,
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 20th

SPARKY’S JAM NIGHT: James Street Tavern – Open mic and jam session.

THURSDAY 21st

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – The opening day of this year’s folk festival, featuring a headline set from The Bootleg Beatles. For a full line-up for the five days, visit www.towerseyfestival.com.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 22nd

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – The long-running folk festival gets into full swing with a headline set from English folk guitar legend Richard Thompson, as well as sets from Dick Gaughan, Nancy Kerr and James Fagan, Blair Dunlop and Debs Newbold.
OFF THE RADAR: The Wheatsheaf
BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney – First of a

two-night stint from the Bon Jovi tribute band at the Witney venue.

SATURDAY 23rd

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – Devonian folk hero Seth Lakeman is today’s star attraction, the fiddle virtuoso and singer bringing stories and legends from the west Country to life via his rich, vibrant take on traditional English folk. Also today is a celebration of Topic Records’ 75th anniversary with sets from Norma Waterson and Eliza Carthy from England’s premier folk family; innovative nu-folk from Lau, plus sets from The Gift Band and Georgia Ruth.
THE 2-STROKES + NO AGENDA: Art Bar – Barely has the dust settled on the Wittstock Festival weekend than the build-up to next year’s free charity event begin, tonight with new local rockers The 2-Strokes and more.
NED KELLY: The Wheatsheaf – Veteran local blues-rockers.
PROPAGANDA : O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar
BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney

Friday 15th

KARMA TO BURN / DESERT STORM: O2 Academy

Beards. Hair. Marshall stacks. Riffs. These are the building blocks of West Virginia’s grizzled stoner rockers Karma To Burn. No frills, no prisoners, just... riffs. The band have been around as long as the mountains from which their instrumental opuses seem to be carved it seems, certainly since the mid- 90s, though there were a few years off in the middle while everyone seemingly went off to play for someone else. The trio’s granite-like sound is based on the steady bedrocks of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin and they share plenty of ground with Kyuss, with whom they have extensive connections (Scott Reeder produced their ‘Appalachian Incantation’ album, while John Garcia guested on vocals). Their last visit to Oxford was a suitably monolithic set at the Bully last year and tonight’s Buried In Smoke show should be cut from equally heavy-duty cloth. Suitably heavyweight stoner support from Oxford’s leading metal warriors Desert Storm, whose recent ‘Horizontal Life’ album has earned them much overdue national press praise, alongside an extensive local support cast that features Hatemail, Evavoid and Overlord. Grow your hair, grow your beard and prepare to rock.



Monday 18th

CAROLINA CHOCOLATE DROPS:

St John the Evangelist

We’re not sure how they keep doing it but Empty Room Promotions have plucked yet another cult Americana gem from the bag and brought them to a suitably intimate venue in Oxford, marking them as one of the most consistently high-quality promoters in a town that’s not short on such things. Tonight sees a first visit to Oxford for Carolina Chocolate Drops, still fronted by founder Rhiannon Giddens, the ever-evolving band celebrating and updating the traditional African-American music of pre-war America, plucked banjo, saw fiddle and acoustic guitar combining to revitalise downhome antique blues, jug band and gospel, music that’s often remembered as white folk music. Formed in 2005 their 2010 album, ‘Genuine Negro Jig’ saw them winning a Grammy for best Traditional Folk Album, while 2012’s equally warmly welcomed follow-up, ‘Heavy Eden’, was recorded in Nashville with Buddy Miller. There’s history in their storytelling but humour too and after sold-out shows at venues like Cecil Sharp House they’re gaining a serious cult following in the UK as well as back home.

SUNDAY 24th

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – Sets from The Chipolatas, The Urban Folk Quartet, Dan Walsh and more.
ERIN BARDWELL COLLECTIVE: Art Bar – Live reggae and rocksteady from the local crew. Plus DJs Jason Hughes and Johnny Roots. Followed by Do The Ska club night.
STEAMROLLER: The Bystander, Wootton

MONDAY 25th

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Playing Field – Michael McGoldrick and John McCusker join forces to headline today’s final leg of the annual folk festival. John Smith is among the supporting cast.

TUESDAY 26th

IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC SHOWCASE: The Jericho Tavern – Local bands night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 27th

THURSDAY 28th

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 29th

THE BIG FEASTIVAL: Alex James’ Farm, Kingham – Opening night of the foodie festival with tribute bands Bjorn Again and Fleetwood Bac among the acts on show – *see main preview*
ALL TAMARA’S PARTIES with TAMARA PARSONS-BAKER + TELEGRAPHER + RAINBOW RESERVOIR + GEORGE CHOPPING: The Wheatsheaf – Emotionally turbulent gothic chamber pop from the very excellent Tamara, performing at her own regular ATP night. She’s joined by jaunty, quirky singer Rainbow Reservoir and poet George Chopping amongst others.
BUNKFEST: Wallingford –The annual market town festival returns, tonight with an opening night headline set from Baka Beyond, plus support from The Hut People and Merry Hell.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: James Street Tavern – Swamp blues, funk and psychedelia from the enduring local faves.

SATURDAY 30th

THE BIG FEASTIVAL: Alex James’ Farm, Kingham – Fatboy Slim tops today’s foodie bill – *see main preview*
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE KITES + OCTOPUSES + THESE ARE OUR DEMANDS: The Wheatsheaf – Electro-tinged indie-folk from The Kites at this month’s GTI show. They’re joined by Brighton’s indie popstrels Octopuses, who some round here will remember in their previous incarnation as Foxes! Pensive gothic rocking from erstwhile Harry Angel folks These are Our Demands.
MASSIVE WAGONS + DEFY ALL REASON + DIATESSARON: The Cellar – Classic heavy rock in the vein of AC/DC and Black Stone Cherry from Massive Wagons at tonight’s Oxrock show.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar
PERCEPTION + CLOCKWORK + MUTAGENOCIDE + I, THE DECEIVER: Art Bar – A night of tech-metal with local newcomers Perception alongside Wokingham’s progsters Clockwork and genre-spanning super-heavyweights Muragenocide.
WHITE MAGIC SOUND: Art Bar
SKITTLE ALLEY WEEKENDER: The Plough, Long Wittenham (12.30pm) – The long-running Abingdon live music club takes it annual jaunt out into the country for a full weekend of live music. Today’s line-up features techno duo Harcoresmen of the Technopalypse, plus SR & Digby, Osprey & the OX4 Allstars, Brightworks, Superloose, STEM and more.
BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford – Cornish folk-punks 3 Daft Monkeys headline today’s festival proceedings, alongside sets from Blair Dunlop and Martyn Joseph.
PROPAGANDA : O2 Academy
BREAKER 1-9: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Trucking greats, from Eagles and Free to Lynyrd Skynyrd.

SUNDAY 31st

THE BIG FEASTIVAL: Alex James’ Farm, Kingham – Rounding off a weekend of cheese

indulgence is Jamie Cullum, plus Stornoway – *see main preview*
SKITTLE ALLEY WEEKENDER: The Plough, Long Wittenham (12-5pm) – Second day of the mini festival, with sets from Nudybronque, Purple May and Horatio Cuppa Tea and the Zeppelin Crew, plus plenty more.
BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford – Final day of the free festival, with sets from Tarras, Jackie Oates and Allan Yn Y Fan.
OPEN BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm)

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Friday 29th – Sunday 31st

THE BIG FEASTIVAL: Alex James’ Farm, Kingham

Each addition to the local festival calendar needs to stake its territory, and The Big Feastival is aimed squarely at the foodie crowd with as much if not more space dedicated to cookery demonstrations, food stalls and Q&As with chefs as to live music. You’d expect nothing less from any event hosted by Jamie Oliver and bassist-turned cheese farmer Alex James, but this year they’ve stepped up the music several notches. While Friday’s entertainment leans towards cabaret with tribute bands **BJORN AGAIN** and **FLEETWOOD BAC**, Saturday’s headliner is **FATBOY SLIM**, revisiting his 90s big beat glories. He’s joined by r’n’b star **KELIS (pictured)** who’ll hopefully bring the hits, from ‘Milkshake’ and ‘Trick Me’ to ace current single ‘Fish Fry’, and the rather wonderful **LAURA MVULA**, whose ‘That’s Alright’ might just be the catchiest song of the last couple of years. **JAMIE CULLUM** brings his daytime radio-pleasing jazz-pop to the big stage on Sunday, though the star attractions should be hip hop legends **DE LA SOUL** and local heroes **STORNOWAY**. There’s plenty more besides each day and if you’re anything like *Nightshift* last year you’ll spend half the day grazing around the extensive farmers-style market where you’ll discover *it is possible to eat too much artisan cheese*. There are far worse ways to go.



LIVE

Truck gets ready to party hard



Blood Red Shoes



TRUCK FESTIVAL Hill Far, Steventon

FRIDAY

Seventeen years since it kicked off on the back of a lorry on Hill Farm, Truck Festival is almost unrecognisable from its humble roots – indeed, it’s undergone some significant changes even in recent years. The weird, experimental corners of out-there music have all but upped sticks and decamped to Supernormal, the heaviness of the Barn has got markedly less heavy, and there’s generally less challenging fare on offer. But what it’s retained and built upon is the sense of friendliness, community and the kind of manageable size that means you can see twenty bands in a day. That feel of a village fete with louder guitars. Families with young children co-exist happily with hordes of drunken teenagers and hardcore festival-goers, and alongside the music the organisers haven’t forgotten that many of the most important festival memories happen offstage. There’s a coordinated mass paint fight, a Saturday night bonfire and everyone’s favourite man-sized furry Truck monster (filled by a very sweaty and very patient man) makes another appearance. The team have set up a Wild West-style saloon

bar venue complete with swinging doors, and there’s even a ‘secret’ rave area hidden behind a Tardis-style hollowed-out Portaloo.

Onto the music, and one small but enduring problem at this year’s festival is the sound bleed when a loud band on the main stage clashes with a quieter band playing in the nearby Veterans & Virgins tent. As such, the quieter moments of **WE AERONAUTS**’ quite lovely set are marred by **DEAP VALLY**’s fuzz-rock caterwauling, but we do our best to focus. The atmospheric opener owes a debt to Múm and the Erased Tapes family, while elsewhere there’s more than a touch of Arcade Fire’s symphonic elegance bolstering the band’s pastoral charm.

In fact, in typical Truck style, it’s often the local and lesser known acts who provide the best entertainment and *Nightshift* spends most of the weekend wandering between stages, tents, barns and bars simply trying to see as much of what lies beneath as possible. **DANCE A LA PLAG**, for example, have a pleasantly light

The Crips



Zuby



poppy sound with that 80s feel that seems to be so prevalent. Things work best when they allow their funky side through, such as on new song ‘Move Your Feet’, even if it is a virtual re-write of Prince’s ‘I Wanna Be Your Lover’. **ACOLLECTIVE**, meanwhile, are a quirky seven-piece from Tel Aviv, driven by honky-tonk piano and lots of percussion. More anarchic and fun live than on record, the odd use of harmonica almost rouses the ghost of Captain Beefheart. Last time they came to the UK the Home Office deported them, though probably not for musical reasons. **DAMN DAMN PATRIOTS**, from Reading, provide more humour, this time of the Half Man Half Biscuit variety. Looking like a proper old-school indie band complete with analogue synths, asymmetric haircuts and polka dot shirts, songs are short and to the point, with an emphasis on the fun side of the punk spirit.

The Barn is still the place where the riffs hit you on entry and the dancing is not for the faint of heart. **THE ST PIERRE SNAKE INVASION** continue the humorous punk/metal vein with songs like ‘If The Only Way Is Essex You Can Kill Me Now’. What they lack in sophistication they more than compensate with exuberance and

positive energy.

Back on the main stage **FICKLE FRIENDS** are the perfect contrast: sunny, perfectly-constructed pop with an engaging singer and sophisticated, shimmering keyboards. New single ‘Swim’ may well be the catchiest tune of the day. Chipping Norton boys **CASELS** are very young and probably brothers. A guitar, drums and vocals duo they banish White Stripes comparisons by veering towards the leftfield with a Pixies edge that has earned them gigs in London and a single stocked by Rough Trade. Still a bit half-formed but showing promise, the guitarist switches effortlessly between styles within the same song. **NORDIC GIANTS** are another duo, this time keyboards and drums, in elaborate masks made out of exotic feathers. Carefully constructed video pieces accompany an epic post-rock soundscape, accompanied by vocal samples from William Burroughs and others.

No Truck is complete without a **DREAMING SPIRES** set and though the spirit of the 60s is never far away the new songs, well-hewn musically and lyrically, should make for an interesting second album later this year. **FLYTE** are another unexpected treasure. Lush 60s-style harmonies,

Cerebral Ballzy



proper tunes, understated arrangements and 8-bit electronics all work together to create something really rather beautiful, with maybe a hint of Scott Walker.

CATFISH AND THE BOTTLEMEN sounds like a pub band but they are in fact quite a professional outfit, signed to Island. Dressed all in black, the Llandudno rockers play driving, urgent psychedelia that would blow Temples clean offstage, and draw the day’s biggest crowd so far. **TOLIESEL** too have the crowd eating out of their hands with their joyous take on Lynyrd Skynyrd-style Americana. The lead guitar and bass playing are worth paying to watch on their own, but adding some deliciously catchy songs makes them a great live act.

Midway through **CEREBRAL BALLZY**’s set, we realise that they make the kind of music that exposes a reviewer’s relative levels of age and grumpiness entirely against our will. They play a brash, dumb and caustic brand of straight-ahead punk and hardcore, the guitarists belting out walls of heads-down riffage while singer – and birthday boy – Honor Titus climbs all over the stage screaming himself hoarse. All well and good, but we can’t but think “this

is fine if you’ve never heard Black Flag”. Thankfully we shake that off by the time the third song comes around and appreciate this for what it is – a much-needed whirlwind of energy and speed, delivered by consummate punk rock showmen. One of the highlights of the day. Where Cerebral Ballzy are rough around the edges and all the better for it, **BLOOD RED SHOES** are almost disturbingly professional. Every detail is honed to perfection, but something’s not quite right. Their music is composed according to a strictly-observed formula for creating catchy, instantly-absorbed anthems: call and response vocals around standard lyrical tropes like making mistakes, going home and so forth; singalong bits and chunky riffs that rock, but not *too* hard for fear of alienating anyone. We admire the songwriting craft and polished delivery, but it all feels calculated almost to the point of a business plan, and it’s hard to locate the heart in their music. **THE BRICKWORK LIZARDS** bring, in their own words, a taste of Turkabilly gyp-hop mashup to proceedings. A treat as much for the eyes as the ears, every town needs a band with a balalaika and Oxford is lucky to have them. They make you want to get married just so you can book them to play.

A very different sort of mash up from **MARY EPWORTH** and her band who come across as a bizarre combination of Black Sabbath and the xx, only not as interesting as that sounds. Slow but not mournful, the simple melodies are given tortuously complex arrangements that end up tripping over themselves. Apparently she’s into Greek progressive rock, which speaks for itself.

Over on the main stage, **PEACE** are so forgettable that we have to hit YouTube to remember anything about their insipid zeitgeist-chasing oeuvre. And after listening to ‘Money’ once on YouTube, we forget it immediately and have to listen to it again until some of it sinks in. Thus passes most of our reviewing Sunday, until we realise that their music is a cunningly-stitched web of nicked influences from across the decades, distilled into a consumer-friendly mix that makes us suspect they might actually rehearse inside a branch of Topshop. There is indeed a place for Peace, and it’s probably on the soundtrack to *Made In Chelsea*, forever. Sadly, Peace are just the starter, and it’s left to **THE CRIBS** to crush what’s left of our enthusiasm for the main stage bill with a frankly excruciating hour of uninspired landfill indie jauntiness. They’re delighted to have returned to Truck

ten years on from their 2004 debut, but their brand of workmanlike nice-bloke rock was probably outdated before they even formed the band. We’re struggling to find the right adjective to describe them until we hear their riposte to the critics, ‘Our Bovine Public’. ‘Bovine’ will do nicely. This is the music that goes through the Hill Farm cows’ minds while they’re grazing.

Musically, an ignominious ending to what’s been a thoroughly enjoyable day in the sunshine, until we stumble across **ZUBY** while fleeing for our lives from The Crips. And he’s fantastic – mixing up hip hop, dubstep and electro with his backing tracks somewhere between the Rawkus and Tigerbeat6 rosters, he’s all over the stage, fist-bumping the front row and delivering quickfire, slick rhymes. It’s his utterly infectious enthusiasm that wins over everyone in the room: a one-man show without so much as a backing band or even a DJ on stage with him, he has the entire tent eating out of his hand. Bonus points, too, for living his own brand. He films himself performing his own last song so he can stick it up on Facebook later, sports his own Zuby hat and T-shirt and – we later discover – even turned up to the festival in a Team Zuby-branded van. After 45 minutes of his show-stopping set, we’re all Team Zuby.



Flights of Helios



Gang of Four



Andrew WK



White Lies

JULIO BASHMORE’s late night set in the barn is a curiously pedestrian affair by comparison, with little variety in style or tempo, as though he’s constructing his set from a manual. It’s odd how as bands embrace novel ways to combine genres and influences dance music, at least as presented by DJs, seems to be retreating into tribal insularity. Most of us drift off to the Market Field, where Chaka Khan duels with The B-52s as a perfect half moon rises over the site.

SATURDAY

The overnight rain obligingly stops at 10am and, apart from a brief evening shower, leaves us alone for the second day, little short of a miracle given the dousing much of the county gets, bullet-sized hailstones and all. You can’t underestimate the difference decent weather can make to a festival’s mood, and while there is abundant evidence of a Friday night too well enjoyed among many festival-goers, the welcome return to a two-day Truck means everyone seems keen to continue yesterday’s liveliness.

Easing us in to the day, **M+A** are an electronic vocal pop duo with a pleasing dose of variety and a nod to Hot Chip. With a prominent piano sound it’s no surprise to learn they hail from Italy, the home to so much of dance music’s history, such as the little-remembered Progress

movement of the mid-90s. Winners of this year’s Glastonbury Emerging Talent Award, the set gets more interesting us the beats get heavier. Over at the Veterans and Virgins stage **THE FAMILY MACHINE**’s intricate shimmering pop is enhanced by a guest appearance from We Aeronaut’s James and Anna, and in The Great Western Saloon Bar, a perfect recreation of the kind we’ve all seen in the movies, **THE BUFFALO SKINNERS** are treating us to some pleasantly upbeat country rock, even if they do look more Manchester than Midwest.

Back at the main stage we find **AS ELEPHANTS ARE**, one of a number of this year’s bands with an anthemic 80s quality reminiscent of Simple Minds in their stadium period. Explosive snares, fiddly guitar and songs that build up to unsatisfying overblown crescendos; surely the world has moved on from all this. Despite clashing with one of the most-anticipated events of this year’s festival – the mass paint-fight on Saturday afternoon – Oxford’s **PIXEL FIX** attract a full tent and deliver a commanding performance. They sit comfortably in the middle ground between the kooky awkwardness of Panda Bear or Slasher Flicks and the more mainstream genre-bending of Egyptian Hip Hop. Two guitarists and a bass player hunched over various flashing boxes, they skilfully

weave samples, drum machines and synth pads over direct, poppy guitar lines. A promising future ahead, we reckon.

While the main stage boasts an awful lot of summery, chirpy guitar bands (Dodgy, Superfood, Swim Deep – a triple hit of sugar for a festival afternoon), it’s left to **THE TWILIGHT SAD** to bring the gloom, which they do admirably, summoning the first of several threatening storm clouds over us by their second song. It’s easy to file them under ‘the Glasvegas it’s OK to admit you like’, but there’s a lot more depth to them – frontman James Graham is enormously watchable, screaming at the skies and throwing more than a few Ian Curtis-esque shapes, and generally giving the impression that his music means an awful lot to him. Waves of shoegazey guitars and warm synths sit around gloomy tales of loss and desperation, and in songs like ‘Cold Days From The Birdhouse’ they have some genuine anthems.

That is dispelled in an instant in a remarkable moment during **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS**’ set, in which a lyric about ‘sun, moon and stars’ coincides with the sun suddenly making an appearance, bathing the entire tent in golden sun as set highlight ‘Dynah & Donologue’ comes to a close. As ever, they’re at their best when maximising Chris Beard’s gloriously pure vocals and Phil Oakley’s undulating bass work,

capable of taking them to places no other Oxford band is currently exploring. **LONELY THE BRAVE**, from Cambridge, are really rather wonderful; a black-clad fusion of Glasvegas and Pearl Jam with a singer who stands at the back of the stage. Despite this his presence drives the music with a controlled urgency that many bands strive for but few achieve so well. **SWIM DEEP**’s piano-led pop has a small debt to The Stone Roses, fronted by a camp singer with wonderful trousers. The Birmingham boys are part of the Digbeth-based ‘B-Town’ scene, along with Peace, and their dreamy sound has earned them a fanbase and a tour supporting Spector. And who could miss **DODGY** at a festival? Possibly the perfect outdoor act, they’ve never tried to be anything other than a great indie pop band, and we love them for it. ‘Staying Out For The Summer’ even manages to chase away that ominous mass of dark cloud that was threatening the site.

Someone seems to have stolen the original line-up of **GANG OF FOUR** and replaced them with some hired hands including a singer who apparently won a version of *Post-Punk Apprentice* to be part of the new band, and came straight from the office. It’s pretty misleading to label this line-up as Gang of Four, and perhaps therefore unfair to judge



The Twilight Sad

them as such, but this is really Gang of Four karaoke, with most of the urgency, agitation and muck-raking stripped out of what remains a very fine set of songs. The weak new songs on display here highlight the gulf in quality between *Entertainment!*-era Go4 and the 2014 model, and – Andy Gill or no Andy Gill – it’s all a bit of a let-down. A packed house for 6Music staples **SLOW CLUB**, who look fantastic, but unfortunately most of their songs sound like the montage sections in romantic comedies in which the plucky but unlucky-in-love heroine goes shopping for a killer outfit to snare her man.

GNARWOLVES are certainly having a lot of fun working up a healthy moshpit even if they basically sound like a hardcore, speeded-up version of Blink 182. But they’re the entrée to the massively-hyped main course of **ANDREW WK**, who’s been a topic of conversation all weekend. Will he just do ‘Party Hard’? How can he be playing solo? Is he just a massive idiot or a fiendish art prankster? His set is an hour of thumping backing track drums, over which he alternates between pounding out Chas ‘n’ Dave style bar piano and screaming exhortations to PART-EE HARD. Oh, and he has a mate with him who spends the time dancing like no one’s watching and screaming further exhortations to PART-EE EVEN HARDER. And that’s it. It may well be a reductive art experiment, and it could be that everyone in the room is part of a colossal ironic meta-joke about the state of modern music. But then if you have to approach something both drunk and ironically to enjoy it, the chances are that in the cold light of day it’s just hopelessly poor.

A special word for the on-site security, who as far as we can see are friendly, helpful and unobtrusive throughout. Over the course of the festival, we see them high-fiving audience members, posing for and taking photos, happily bantering and even conducting a mass crowd singalong to ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ before White Lies take the stage.

So it’s left to **WHITE LIES** to bring things to a close. They’re charmingly grateful to be headlining Truck, seemingly overwhelmed to see the crowd singing their songs back to them as if their lives depended on it, and put in a performance to suit. There’s no question that they wear their influences on their sleeves, to the extent that from time to time they almost become a pastiche of Joy Division and Depeche Mode. But they’ve got enough cracking choruses to keep up the pace over a headline set, and enough good ideas to keep doing interesting things with their influences. ‘Farewell to the Fairground’ goes down particularly well as the new-look funfair section of Truck winds up, with Ferris wheel rides directly overlooking the main stage, and ‘There Goes Our Love Again’ is a massive hands-in-the-air moment for the festival. Many had their doubts about White Lies as a headliner, but they might just have pulled this one off.

Truck Festival, then – a family-friendly festival that doesn’t skimp on quality music, a festival with national-level headliners that makes sure the vibrant Oxford scene is well represented, and a festival that lets all of us just get on and do what Andrew WK wanted us to do all along. *Stuart Fowkes and Art Lagun*

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CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Great Tew Estate

FRIDAY

Cornbury has always worn its middle class credentials on its sleeve and increasingly it’s happy to adopt its unofficial “Poshstock” tag as a part of the package. It’s always had a whiff of exclusivity to it with its special enclosure fenced off to keep the proles away from the VIPs. So it comes as some surprise to find that this year’s celebrity spotting is a bit of a damp squib. There’s no David Cameron hanging out with Rebekah Brooks and Andy Coulson (presumably the latter had something else pencilled in the diary); there’s no Clarkson to be seen, and even Noel Edmonds doesn’t appear to have turned up to enjoy his own roped-off corner. The party in the estate’s grand manor house on Saturday night yields some juicy names however: marvel at Orlando Bloom! Giggle about Mr Dinkle with Russell Brand! And reminisce about Ricky with that Bianca from *Eastenders*. To be honest, it’s not a particularly posh showing. Throw in a Penelope Keith, and we’ll talk.

Celeb spotting is far from our minds when we arrive onsite, however. The first thing to worry us is how to get the flipping tent up in the high winds, and the second is the *hilarious* bloke that ask us and every other person with a tent in the vicinity to move their pitches a foot to the left so that the view isn’t spoiled. “He’s on day release... he’s mad, him” says Mr Whacky #2 (wearing a fucking Mad Hatter’s hat ferchrissakes, just in case you didn’t get just how CRAZY he is) thus proving that we’ve camped too close to a complete set of Colin Hunts.

Trudging back to gather supplies we happen on **AGS CONNOLLY** who has turned up at the festival to play a set in the Rapture Tent but has no idea how to get in. We suggest tunnelling, which must have worked because shortly after, he’s bewitching those few lucky enough to catch his set. He is, as always, quite amazing as he switches between his spoken Oxfordian twang and a sung southern states drawl. It gets us imagining what Johnny Cash would have written about had he come from Witney. Blankets? The car parking situation at Waitrose? Parish council tax hikes?

The extended consideration of any of which would be a drunken joyride through the Halls of Valhalla compared to watching **THE FEELING**. Ten minutes into their set our notebook is filled with swear words in a tiny spider scrawl

just so there’s room to fit them all in. “Fucking horrible jaunty piano jaunty fucking anodyne soft rock fucking fuck,” is one particularly considered observation. Which pretty much sums them up. “This one is from album number five,” announces the singer creature, “We can’t believe we got to this point.” Neither can we; we blame the Human Rights Act for allowing such an abomination to survive and flourish. Then they play ‘Daytripper’ followed by a medley of ‘Under Pressure’, ‘Another Brick in the Wall’ and ‘Park Life’, just in case we didn’t loathe them enough already. “You fall like rain,” sings main Feeling bloke with a hefty degree of prescience as it starts to drizzle, for which we blame them entirely. To quote *Taxi Driver*, one day a real rain will come and wash all the scum off the streets. Bagsy The Feeling are first.

SUZANNE VEGA, by contrast, is charming. After all, she has the material available to turn in a fairly hit-laden set. ‘Marlene on the Wall’ gets an early outing and ‘Luka’ makes an appearance too. Both are, as always, spellbinding but Vega seems intent on showcasing her newer material from ‘Tales From The Realm Of The Queen Of Pentacles’, which is a bit of a gamble when facing a festival crowd. As good as ‘Fool’s Complaint’ might be it struggles to connect with an audience that just wants the hits. “This one’s ‘Crack In The Wall’”, she says, which at least lets us know where she keeps the crack.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT turn in one of the sets of the weekend. Pumping bass, high-energy performance, and of course two *bona fide* classics in the shape of ‘Everyday People’ and ‘Mr Wendal’. They have the audience positively roaring, which considering that it is pissing it down is a considerable achievement. “They’re not really my kind of music,” states one rather surprised onlooker, “but they were really quite something”. This is about as high as praise gets at Cornbury and in that spirit we’d like to suggest De La Soul as next year’s hip hop act. Them or Ice Cube.

It’s Friday night, and what every good music lover needs on a Friday night is **JOOLS HOLLAND**, preferably walking backwards a bit, introducing musical guests. To that end, we have Jools Holland headlining, walking backwards a bit, and introducing **MEL C**, **MARC ALMOND** and possibly the local

greengrocer, such is the auspicious nature of some other guests. Almond in particular is impressive, his version of Marvin Gaye’s ‘This Love Starved Heart Of Mine (Is Killing Me)’ is wonderful. Mel C is also a blessed relief, in that her appearance ends a drum solo that long outstayed its welcome. It’s the extended jamming sessions that cause Holland’s set to really drag. There are good songs there, but they’re lengthened and rolled out to the point where they’re no longer fun or interesting. Even the hardest of chin-stroking muso would have to admit defeat by the end of the set.

SATURDAY

Friday night brings the rain in all its non-stop, bucketing down glory. It continues into Saturday morning, and initially shows no signs of letting up. With our tents getting hammered by the elements, we contemplate the notion that it’s possible we may have to watch Scouting For Girls whilst getting drenched. Checking the site map, we search for a Samaritans tent and then decide to self-medicate with breakfast lager (£4.80 a pint? We’ll have four, and keep the change. Oh, there isn’t any change...) and a blast of snuff procured earlier from the nearby Falkland Arms. If we’re going to get wet, we might as be covered in vaguely minty brown snot too.

Braving the weather is festival favourite **JON ALLEN**. He’s actually pretty entertaining considering the circumstances and the fact that his songs are quite laid back. At times he sounds a little like Dylan, or an epically stoned Lynyrd Skynyrd tackling ‘Sweet Home Alabama’, but perhaps more than anyone else, he sounds not unlike a youthful Rod Stewart, which is no bad thing at all. After which we get some old-time ska in the form of **THE DUALERS**. During whose set the sun decides to come out in full force. After all, you can’t listen to ska in the rain. It’s the law. Our mood improves tenfold, and even more so when they play ‘Message To You Rudy’.

Reverend Peyton of **REVEREND PEYTON’S BIG DAMN BAND** is impressed. He is impressed that this festival has toilet paper; clearly it’s the small things that matter. In fact what matters most to Rev. Peyton is the notion of authenticity. He is, after all, “front porch trained”. He goes to great lengths to point out that he’s playing on a home-made cigar box guitar, and is determined to point out that the throbbing basslines that populate the likes of ‘Let’s Jump A Train’ are all played by himself and not using a loop. Watching this incredible band is like happening upon a more punk rock Seasick Steve. Reverend Peyton preaches a kind of musical purity, but

it’s a sermon worth hearing. They’re that good they should have headlined Friday night.

Keeping up the authentic rock’n’roll slant is **SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY AND THE ASHBURY JUKES**. He might be a little workmanlike for some, but there’s little doubting his stage presence and quick wit. As you might expect from a luminary of Springsteen, his band is incredibly tight and well rehearsed. Southside’s vocals meanwhile possess equal elements of gravel and melody that allow him to cover Tom Waits and not sound ludicrous. ‘Love On The Wrong Side Of Town’, ‘Talk To Me’ and ‘Walk Away Renee’ all get an enthusiastic airing, and it’s obvious just why the band’s shows are the stuff of legend. A meandering monologue about merchandise ranks as one of the funniest things we’ve heard all weekend, and earns bonus points for including the word merkin.

Imagine a tin of beige paint developed just enough sentience to play guitar. Now imagine it wrote a set of songs contemplating the thrill of watching itself drying. That was **LISSIE**’s set and you’re welcome to it. After which the thing we really need to liven proceedings up is **SCOUTING FOR GIRLS**. Everybody knows that they had a huge hit in the shape of ‘She’s So Lovely’. What becomes quickly apparent during their set is that almost all of their songs are in the shape of ‘She’s So Lovely’, but why meddle with the template if it works? On the plus side, it’s not raining, but more snuff is required. More snuff and more booze. If Cornbury’s genteel nature means there’s no chance of having a pint of piss being hurled into your face, watching Scouting For Girls feels a bit like you metaphorically are.

Help is at hand though, and not from the Samaritans. Over on the songbird stage is **GEORGIE FAME**. Resplendent in a white tux and working his way through standards like ‘I Put A Spell On You’, it is a joy to see a living legend (sort of) plying his trade. Things do get a little weird when he starts talking in between songs, initially in an American accent, which slowly slides back into Geordie. It’s too much for some to take “He’s from FUCKING NEWCASTLE” mutters one quite distraught punter, heading off into the distance. He’s not quite right, Fame was born in Lancashire, but we know what he means.

If Jools Holland’ set last night would have worked best in a smoky jazz club and The Gipsy Kings tomorrow in a riotous tavern, **SIMPLE MINDS** show what a proper festival headline set is all about, filling the festival field and several miles beyond with

stadium pomp and glittering greatest hits, from opener ‘Waterfront’ to pumped-up sing-along ‘Don’t You (Forget About Me)’, although the real treats are a cover of Patti Smith’s ‘Dancing Barefoot’, which works surprising well, and an astonishing ‘I Travel’, strobing and snaking its way into the night sky by way of a seriously impressive light show. It’s easily the set of the weekend, amid strong competition and proof that some bands are just made for the big stage.

SUNDAY

One of the more interesting acts of the weekend is **GABBY YOUNG AND OTHER ANIMALS**. She a striking performer with a shock of bright red hair topping off an outfit that is probably best described as “burlesque Heidi”. Musically she’s a curious jumble of styles. One minute she’s working her way through Balkan folk, the next she’s mashing opera into music hall and punk. There is a tendency for her vocal style to border on the shrill but as a musical curio in a line up not geared to surprises, she’s a welcome and entertaining distraction.

Whilst Gabby Young is bringing something new and invigorating to the Cornbury crowds, *X-Factor* finalist **LUKE FRIEND** is entertaining the crowd with the something more comfortable and familiar. He covers ‘Old Pine’, a Ben Howard song, with reasonable aplomb, but it leaves you wanting more from a young man who has the face an eight year old and the hair of a crusty juggler. *X-Factor* might be based on covers, but it would be nice to see more young musicians find their own voices and songs. The youth of today is running mild. That’s not how it should be at all. No stranger to *X-Factor* or covers is **SAM BAILEY**; in fact she “triumphed” over Luke Friend in series 10. Overwrought and lacking in originality doesn’t quite cover her set. Some singers have left an indelible influence on music, some for the better, and some for the worse. It is a shame that the legacy of vocalists like Whitney Houston, Celine Dion and Christina Aguilera will be histrionic oversinging, but that seems to be the case. “Smashing It” has become a thing; in *X-Factor* talk this means something akin to “knocking it out of the park”; the reality is closer to “burying it in a shallow grave having caved its skull in with a hammer”. Technically it’s all very impressive, but finding any actual emotion would require a microscope and endless patience.

Resplendent in a pink suit **KID CREOLE** does his best to inject a little funk and party atmosphere into the day. He’s still quite a mover, and his Coconuts are still swinging free

and easy. There’s not quite enough momentum built up to carry a festival feel through the entire set, but the likes of ‘Annie, I’m Not Your Daddy’ still get the hips swaying, which in a crowd like this, is something of a nightmarish scenario.

On the Riverside Stage, there’s yet more covers to enjoy. **FUSED** have a fairly competent stab at a few indie rock standards, there’s some Killers and a few fillers, but when they play ‘Sex On Fire’ we call up our bookies and rake in the winnings. It’s all so predictable. As is **10CC**’s set, but at least it’s precisely what is required of them. ‘The Things You Do For Love’ is actually bordering on genius, but that might be the sun/snuff/beer talking. It’s the closest they ever got to sounding like The Beach Boys or The Beatles, and in the late afternoon sun, it makes for a perfect moment. ‘Good Morning Judge’ and ‘I’m Mandy Fly Me’ get an airing, and in delivering a set designed for festivals it rattles along ticking all the boxes. As unlikely as it might sound 10cc are a genuine highlight of the weekend.

Ordinarily cover versions are the worst kind of festival entertainment, but every so often somebody comes along and completely reworks tunes into something quite extraordinary. Japanese guitar genius **HOTEL**, is such a man. His original work is startling, and ‘Battle Without Honour Or Humanity’ (from Tarantino’s *Kill Bill*) is positively incendiary, but when he whips Led Zep’s ‘Immigrant Song’ into a freakish synth/j-pop rock extravaganza it’s a real eye-opener and a lesson in how to do covers. He makes it his own, to borrow a phrase from some tin-pot talent show or other.

Prior to this weekend we’d swear we couldn’t name nor hum a single **GIPSY KINGS** song. Thirty minutes into tonight’s finale set we realise we know every song they’ve ever made. Because we’ve heard them in every bar and restaurant we’ve ever been in on every holiday we’ve ever gone on, and doubtless will do til the day we die. Something we’d happily do a thousand times over in the most painful fashion possible rather than end up like the gang of festival-goers in front of us dressed as stereotypical Mexican bandits, sombreros and fake ‘tashes and all. Crazy people; maybe they know the bloke in the Mad Hatter hat. Maybe next year they could round them all up and give them their own exclusive enclosure and spare us their excruciating excuse for a sense of humour, leaving Orlando Bloom free to hang out with us and take snuff. Even at these bar prices we’d drink to that.

Dale Kattack and Sam Shepherd.





IRREGULAR FOLK’S SUMMER SESSION

The Perch

Through a combination of excellent programming, attention to detail and sheer hard work, Irregular Folk have earned themselves a position as one of Oxford’s most distinctive promoters of recent years. The Summer Session, established for a couple of years now in the Perch’s stunning Bedouin tent, is their annual showpiece. First up, the venue looks *stunning*: weeks trawling car boot sales and charity shops for vintage picture frames, lamps, cushions and pretty

much anything else come together to create a look that BBC period drama set dressers would be proud of. Musically, as it almost should be with any programme that aims to challenge, there are missteps, but mercifully few: **Ben Champion**’s toe-curling brand of musical comedy is like an episode of *Mock The Week* set to chirpy bar piano melodies. But there are many more triumphs – Oxford’s own **Salvation Bill** has been quietly honing his craft for long enough now that he can deliver an

effortlessly-striking set of beautiful songs delivered with character, humour and self-effacement, while **Duotone**’s complex multiple-looping, multi-instrument setup belies some strikingly effective simple songwriting of a high order. **You Are Wolf** bring the early Bat For Lashes-style quirkiness with their set of characterful, fascinating compositions based around ancient legends and the lives of birds. They also bring along the outstanding gimmick of asking the audience to

download different bird calls and form a smartphone dawn chorus. It falls to self-styled ‘art-pop orchestra’ **The Irrepressibles** to bring the curtain down on the evening, and how they pull it off, laying themselves wide open with extraordinarily delicate, stripped-down versions of their highly-charged emotional missives. Jamie McDermott’s pitch-perfect falsetto is breathtakingly affecting, whether he’s tackling Kate Bush or pleading with us all on ‘Two Men In Love’. Wonderful stuff to cap what is by now surely an essential fixture in the Oxford music calendar. *Stuart Fowkes*

PARQUET COURTS / ULTIMATE PAINTING

O2 Academy

James Hoare is clearly a workaholic. Not content with one side-project (The Proper Ornaments), the Veronica Falls guitarist has begun another, this time with Mazes’ Jack Cooper. At first, they’re not so much Ultimate Painting as Slapdash Doodle On Back Of Fag Packet. “This is our fourth show”, Cooper says sheepishly. “We’ve got an album out in October. Maybe we’ll have figured out how to do this by then.” Gradually, though, with the assistance of the headliners’ Austin Brown on bass, the songs swim into clearer focus, transporting us back to the halcyon days of British indie – Teenage Fanclub, The Wedding Present, The Jesus & Mary Chain et al. As nostalgia trips go, it could certainly be worse. When Parquet Courts came to prominence last year with ‘Light Up Gold’, they bore all the

hallmarks of being a Pitchfork writer’s wet dream made flesh: nerdy, witty, literate twentysomethings with a penchant for Pavement and a keen sense of their adopted home city of New York’s punk/garage lineage, from Television through Sonic Youth to The Strokes. While that widely acclaimed album had a perky and chaotic immediacy, its successor ‘Sunbathing Animal’ is a rather different beast, largely a less accessible exercise in sustain and release that hints at greater influence by The Modern Lovers. If perhaps less welcome on record, this shift turns out to work well in the live environment, where songs like ‘Bodies Made Of’, ‘What Colour Is Blood?’, ‘She’s Rolling’ and ‘Instant Disassembly’ come into their own, also throwing their faster counterparts into relief. According to Brown, ‘Sunbathing Animal’ is about freedom and

captivity, and certainly the quartet refuse to be held hostage to audience expectations, airing (by my reckoning) just three tracks from the album that made their name. For a band whose sound is often joyously messy (while simultaneously impeccably tight), they’ve earned a reputation for being surprisingly frosty and aloof, and Brown’s co-lead vocalist Andrew Savage eyes the moshpit with a degree of disdain. But, in pleasing themselves, Parquet Courts succeed in pleasing this punter, at least, and in the end they give their public what they want, wrapping up with the two albums’ title tracks. ‘Sunbathing Animal’ in particular is stunning in its blistering pace and wired intensity, albeit a cruelly punishing finale to the set for poor drummer Max Savage. In keeping with the punk ethos, there’s no encore. Beforehand, I would have thought that not playing ‘Stoned & Starving’ would have been unforgivable, but by the end I could forgive them just about anything. *Ben Woolhead*





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DR SHOTOVER: Raised By Monkeys

...And HE said, 'Blah blah blah, that's what I think of the Beatles' *White Album*', and I said, 'Well, fudge YOU, vanilla motherfucker!', set fire to his beard and made off with his stash in the confusion. Apparently it took a full Green Goddess

fire crew to put out the conflagration, by which time I was back in Ladbroke Grove, stoned as a board and jamming with the Pink Fairies ha ha *haaargghhh...* What? What's that? Ah, there you are. Was just

having a chinwag with Lord Archie 'The Man' Drax-Plunkett about the good old days. You weren't even born then, Pecksniff... but one thing I do know is... it's your round. Make mine a pint of Vintage Steamfair with a side-order of pickled hedgehog. And don't mention the World Cup or the festival season. I am doing my best to ignore the whole sordid business of the summer. When not occupying my usual stool here at the East Indies Club bar and discussing the finer points of my career in the blessed 1960s and 70s, I have been locked in at Shotover Towers with box sets of *Game of Drones*, *Faux Detective*, *Marvel's Agents of SHITE* and all the other cult televisual items *du jour*.

Apart from afore-mentioned sporting and festival chit-chat, I do not wish to hear about: pulled pork, Operation Yewtree, sexual Harris-ment, ROFL, LOL, David Hameron, Brooksy and the Chipping Norton toadies, or how reading the Sun/voting Tory makes you obese. Local music? If you must have local music, I shall sit at yonder piano and play you my rendition of *Creep* until you beg for mercy. Ha ha HAARRGGHH!

Next month: Do Yew Know What It Is Yet?



'Say, Mr Harrisment, can we borrow your wobble board for a scene in our next crazy teen-market-driven movie?'

INTRODUCING....

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

LEE RILEY

Who is he?

Lee Riley is an experimental noise musician from Oxford, who has been making and performing music under various names since 2007. He's best known locally for his project Euhedral and helping promote Permanent Vacation shows in Oxford a few years back. His debut live performance was at the house of one-time local experimental faves Elapse-O and since then he's gigged around the country and completed an MA in Composition and Sonic Art at Oxford Brookes. Most recently he has focussed on 'LR/GW' Lee Riley - Guitar Works, and released his debut album, 'Deeper Steps Into The New Path' at the start of this year. In May he played at the Oxford Punt and this month contributes to Audioscope's 'Music For a Good Home' album.

What does he sound like?

Challenging and genuinely experimental in a field where such words have been eroded. Lee's set at the Punt polarised the audience like few local acts ever could, as he coaxed sheets of rich hum, and harsh feedback from a guitar and sent plenty of folks scurrying for the door while the rest stood entranced at the power of his drone noise. His approach to music making is genuinely unusual, dragging a guitar through the streets of Oxford and "a piece for bowed metal container and 16 pints of water." Mostly his music is improvised but incredibly well crafted. Your grandparents probably wouldn't like it, unless your grandparents were John Zorn and Cosi Fanni Tutti.

What inspires him?

"Depends on what I am working on. I get inspired in many ways, be it a film and image or sound. I work in many ways. I do enjoy a good intense gig experience; the louder the better most of the time."

Career highlight so far:

"Playing OCM Open was great last year and the Punt this year. I played a duo set with baritone saxophonist John Grieve; a great gig with an epic storm to end the night."

And the lowlight:

"A few quiet gigs, not really a lowlight."



His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Undersmile, hands down. They are just too good!"

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

"Beck's 'Odelay': something for everyone on that album and still sounds fantastic whenever I put it on."

When is his next local gig and what can newcomers expect?

"No gigs planned but hopefully some recording in the near future and hopefully working with Undersmile in collaboration. I have been doing some remixing to under the name Broken No Fix. I have remixed After The Thought and Listing Ships. Soon you can hear my Flights of Helios 'Factory' remix and a remix for False Friends, a project from some good friends of mine.

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"There's a lot of good things going on in quite a small city, so can't complain really. Sometimes you can be spoilt for choice."

You might love him if you love:

Eno; Sunn 0))) ; Vibracathedral Orchestra; Mountains; Coil; Fushitsusha.

Hear him here:

leeriley1.blogspot.co.uk

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

All good things must come to an end apparently, and so it seemed back in August 1994 with the announcement that **Sevenchurch** had split, mere months after releasing their one and only album, 'Bleak Insight, on Noise International. Their legacy would remain however, with the album going on to achieve legendary status in the doom metal underworld, while various members would turn up in new bands over the years, singer **Martin Spear** still fronting the mighty, mental **Agness Pike**.

Not all good things come to an end, mind. Some just change their name, as is the case of **Rhythm Driven**, who graced the cover of *Curfew* magazine twenty years ago this month. Soon after the band became **Dubwiser** and still to this day they bring the reggae party vibes to venues and festivals around Oxfordshire and beyond.

Back then the four-piece were one of the biggest draws on the local live circuit and, during a chat at the Blackbird pub they railed against the cultural stripping of authentic reggae in the slew of reggae-fied pop hits around at the time, while declaring it their mission to "bring back the community spirit in Oxford" as well as reclaim the English language from Americanisms. "We want to reintroduce words like stove," they said. Age still has not withered them or their stated intentions.

A typically quiet summer gigging month saw **Fairport's Cropredy Festival** the only major outdoor music event of the year in Oxfordshire, while **Mother Gong** were at the Jericho Tavern. Local names playing included **Let's Be Frank**, **Out**

To Lunch, **Chudd** and **Soul Devotion**. You kids don't know how lucky you have it these days.

10 YEARS AGO

Talking of bands splitting up or not, August 2004 found then local heroes **The Rock of Travolta** contemplating their future as half the band departed, including founder member Phill Honey and keyboard-playing Grim Reaper Dave Crabtree. Geographical scatterment and work commitments were cited. The band did continue though, while Phill went on to create his own **Boywithatoy** project, and cellist Ros Murray went on to join the excellent **Electralane**.

On the cover of *Nightshift* a decade ago were **Days of Grace**, back then one of the leading heavy rock bands emerging from the scene generated by **The Club That Cannot Be Named**. The band, formed by ex members of **Black Candy**, **Slave Unit** and **Kaowin** was fronted by Patrick Currier, who would go on to front **Lights Action**, and was already showing himself to be one of the finest rock singers around.

Goldrush were also featured, talking about their long-awaited return to action with new EP 'Ozona', while post-rock and DIY pioneers **Youth Movie Soundtrack Strategies** (as they still were back then) released their new album 'Hurrah! Another Year; Surely This Year Will Be Better Than The Last; The Inexorable March Of Progress Will Lead Us All To Happiness', on Fierce Panda. We'd tell you what it sounded like but the title alone has used up our word count.

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

A new young singer around town by the name of **Laima Bite** was Demo of the Month this issue, enjoying one of the most enthusiastic reviews ever accorded a local demo. "Absolutely gorgeous," we said of tragic gothic ballad 'Did You Ever Love'. We still reckon it is.

5 YEARS AGO

"Love music, hate stupidity," ran the tagline of *Nightshift's* August 2009 cover, featuring a great action shot of local rapper **Mr Shadown**, talking about his move into grime, his non-stop DIY work ethic and new single, 'Are You Stupid?'. "I've got a 2:1 law degree, but I'd rather be a poor musician," he declared, though over 10,000 CD sales, mostly through busking, suggests he's not doing so badly. The main news this month was, sadly, the death of much-loved local producer and musician **Richard Haines** from cancer at the age of just 45. Rich had run **Dungeon Studios** for nearly 30 years, working with pretty much every local band of note, as well as playing in various bands, from **Freezing in Cannes** to **Soma**. "Rich would have been too modest to admit it, in fact he would have laughed at the very idea, but he was a genuine Oxford music legend," we said of him, and he will be long remembered as a pivotal figure in local music history.

In more positive news, local blues-rock heroes **Steamroller** were reforming for their first gig since splitting in 1978, the intervening years seeing various members survive a stroke, cancer and alcoholism to return to keep on rocking, something they continue to do to this day.



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DEMO OF THE MONTH

PEERLESS PIRATES

We feel like we've been reviewing Peerless Pirates since the dawn of forever and yet, despite the fact they're a band who almost pathologically seem unwilling or unable to progress from a tried and tested formula, we can never tire of doing so. Because here's that seemingly rare thing, a band who simply sound like they're having the time of their lives. If, as film critic Mark Kermode wisely states, the more fun a comedy film was to make the less funny it will be, then that rule seems to be inverted with Peerless Pirates who take to the stage dressed as yer actual pirates and make a rousing rockabilly racket that forever sounds like they drink grog and rum for lunch and don't go to bed when their mums say so. While The Smiths remain their cornerstone influence 'El Gringo' here takes a bit of detour from Cornish inns and Balkan gypsy dances into a Mexican tavern where it demands "Give me Sangria" before sneaking a hefty dash of amphetamines into The Shadows' tequila and getting a spaghetti western theme party going. 'Your Grace' is more typical of the band, Cliff Adams' Morrissey-esque baritone cavorting around Kyle Mundy's freight train guitar, all full of creaking, baroque elegance, teetering on collapse. Rousing, a bit silly and more fun than you're going to have all week.

WARDENS

As Peerless Pirates prove, we don't demand Throbbing Gristle-level innovation and confrontation from every demo we listen to, just something resembling a bit of spirit or fire that suggests that behind the tunes the perpetrators are alive in their souls and not dead-eyed scum with one eye on a lucrative mobile phone ad jingle and the other on your kids' pocket money. So Wardens are alright in our book, even if demo opener 'Chronic' is little more than a scuzzed-up rip-off of 'Feel Good Song of the Summer', a two-and-a-bit-minute grunge chug based around one and half chords and the idea that noisiness in itself is a good thing. 'Middle Ground' is perhaps unfortunately titled as it finds Wardens coming on a bit more considered, almost goth-grunge and lacking that initial bite, but 'This Town' shows they've got much more to their armoury than mere fuzz pedals, a deliberately

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

awkward staccato mantra that infects The Strangers' bullish sense of melody with XTC's light-on-its-pins jerkiness. You see, people, being good really isn't that difficult now, is it? A simple three-song lesson for much of what comes after in this month's pile...

GEMMA MOSS

Then again, we like having a few weirdoes around to brighten the place up, and Gemma Moss probably wouldn't object to such a tag, her live performances seeing her performing near enough naked, often in the sort of positions that'd get you arrested if you did that in the middle of Cornmarket. Musically too she's never going to appeal to your average Five Seconds of Summer fan, whooping, warbling and mostly wailing witchily over a cavorting harpsichord like a backroom burlesque Diamanda Galas. There's a valid argument here that Gemma is taking the piss a bit but if ploughing your own furrow means you don't confirm to accepted ideas of tuning, then so be it. Of the three untitled tracks here, the last is the most striking, a pocket banshee death-metal opera on a budget of buttons and devil-may-care. Frumps may snort and demand "stop that bloody wailing," but the odd harpoon to musical expectations is always welcome.

TREV WILLIAMS

After what feels like a very prolonged absence, Trev Williams returns with a new set of songs, his last two offerings, some time ago, earning him Demo of the Month awards. Sadly on this evidence his occasional way with a slightly oddball pop nugget has taken an equally long siesta. Opening love ballad 'Whole' is pleasantly impassioned and pastoral but too smooth and innocuous to linger in the memory, while 'Remote Controlled Cockroach' finds Trev trying to rock things up a bit but merely demonstrates his limitations in such matters, lacking any real punch and fading out before it's properly arrived, and Trev's much more at home on the plaintive, almost timid, 'Left Behind', which finds him baring his soul most fully in lines like, "A person who was left behind / Like me." For some reason he's including an old track, 'Keep Singing', as a bonus here. Not sure why since it's about the worst thing he's ever done, featuring a series of rhyming metaphors that would shock even Liam Gallagher. Someone email Trev a photo of a sad kitten immediately; it's exactly the sort of inspiration he needs.

ROB GORE

Sad, sensitive soul that he is, Trev Williams is like Lemmy on a speed frenzy compared to Rob Gore here, who comes from the Elliot Smith / Damien Rice school of partying on down. He's also adept with a weird metaphor, singing "I know my age throws more red herrings than I can juggle," on 'Red & Running'. Rob offers us two songs here, both simple acoustic guitar and vocal pieces that set up camp in the mournful and ponderous field, which makes the leap into a (frankly fucking awful) cover of 'Rappers Delight' by Sam John & the Disciples that follows it on Soundcloud all the more jarring. Rob's stuff isn't fucking awful in particular, just typically achy and breaky as these things so often are. We do get a bit of laugh on 'Bow Out', though, when Rob sings "Sit at your desk and blow off the dust" by imagining he's left the words "the dust" off the end of the line.

MOOGIEMAN

As such Moogiemann probably has a more sophisticated sense of humour than us; he certainly sounds a bit clever and witty in a university footlights kind of way with his lyrical whimsy and clever wordplay. We reviewed Moogiemann – who is essentially Shan Sriharan and a handful of chums he's roped in – a couple of years ago and were slightly disappointed he wasn't really a bloke with a Moog, although apparently that was the original idea. Such disappointment was tempered by the realisation he knew his way round a dolefully humorous song or two and that continues with this latest set of tunes, even if there's a slight whiff of smugness about it all. Like a pop culture-savvy Victoria Wood reincarnated as Billy Bragg, Shan takes us through his odd, academic world of failed relationships and Pink Floyd puns, rhyming "incinerator" with "Van der Graaf Generator" on 'When We Vicariously Touch', or crooning "psychopathic tendencies" with sugary girl-band serenity on 'No More Flowers or Dreamy Hours'. By the time he sings "It was 2003 / And I had the winning entry / In the international code contest for obfuscated C" on 'Apostate Priest of the PDP-11', your head is whirling slightly at such wordy cleverness and Thom Yorke is starting to sound like Joey Ramone in the esoteric lyricism stakes. All very good, but if you'll excuse us we're going to sit down and listen to AC/DC for half an hour just to cool our brains down a bit.

FRIDAY STREET

It's worth remembering – necessarily humbling in fact – that as well as the legion of great bands of myriad hues

Oxford produces on an unnervingly regular basis, we also produce our fair share of supremely average bands, the sort that lurk like grey wraiths amid the lower rankings and support slots of the local gig circuit, happy to regurgitate what was cool last year and smooth off the sharp edges of anything too challenging. Take Friday Street, an honest, proficient bunch of blokes plying what now falls under the meaningless, catch-all term indie-rock. They sound a bit like Arctic Monkeys – quite a bit in the case of 'Sunshine Maggie', which even goes as far as nicking the Monkeys' pilfering of Queens of the Stone-Age's chug-a-boogie, as well as Alex Turner's accent. There's some nominal attempt at funk on 'Diane', plus the usual litany of bold backing vocals, cultural reference points, middle eights you could time your watch by and the feeling you've seen or heard part of their set in one of the smaller tents at Reading Festival a couple of years ago before getting bored and wandering off to buy a tray of noodles that was an equally pale imitation of the real thing. In towns and cities across the UK workaday bands like this do well for themselves; as The Courteeners and Pigeon Detectives and assorted interchangeable others prove, some of them even get signed and win fans by the busload after winning desirable tour supports. Here in Oxford we tend to have loftier lines of sight. Maybe it's us that's odd.

THE DEMO DUMPER

SENTON BOMBS

Hey music people, here's a fucking good idea: if you want your songs reviewed, try sending a link that allows the reviewer to listen to, like, a whole song or three instead of your Facebook page which give us 20-second snippets and then requires us to pay actual money for the dubious privilege of hearing the rest of them. Because, foolhardy and impetuous though we can sometimes be here at *Nightshift*, we have never knowing forked out hard-earned cash on something that, from the most cursory of initial impressions, we pretty much know is going to sound like the aborted lovechild of Guns'n'Roses and Motley Crue. Bands demanding we 'Like' their Facebook page before they even allow us to listen to a song is cretinous enough but requiring us to pay to give them free publicity makes them seem even more quarterwitted than those short snippets of music do. Oi, Senton Bombs, stick your Paypal up your arse and fuck off while you're about it.

*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. And don't fucking whine about your review on Facebook either; else we'll print a screenshot and make you look like a prize tit.*



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**Skeletor
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+ **Empire Divided**
+ **Devil Inside**

Fri 8th Aug **SOLD OUT**

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Only UK Club show this year

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**Skeletor
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+ **Hatemail**
+ **Evavoid**
+ **Overlord**

Tues 19th Aug • £13 adv

Tonight Alive

Tues 9th Sept • £10 adv

Cate Le Bon
+ **H. Hawkline**

Thurs 11th Sept • £9 adv

Luke Sital-Singh

Fri 12th Sept • £7 adv
6pm - 10pm

**It's All About
The Music
Presents...**

The Kites
+ **Rushil**
+ **Brightworks**
+ **Duchess**
+ **Lewis & Michael**

Sat 13th Sept • £10 adv
6.30pm - 10pm

The Doors Alive

Sat 21st Sept • £15 adv

**The Magic
Numbers**

Mon 22nd Sept • £17.50 adv

Sharon Corr
+ **John Gaughan**

Fri 26th Sept • £7 adv
6pm - 10pm

**It's All About The
Music Presents...**

Traps + Orange Vision
+ **Crayon + Russian Cowboys**
+ **Anastasia Gorbunova**

Mon 29th Sept • £8 adv

Eliza and The Bear

Thurs 2nd Oct • £15 adv

Wayne Hussey

Fri 3rd Oct • £20 adv
7pm - 10pm

From The Jam
'Setting Sons'
35th Anniversary Tour

Sat 4th Oct • £13 adv
6.30pm - 10pm • Show starts 7pm

Ultimate Genesis

Tues 7th Oct • £15 adv

Supersuckers

Weds 8th Oct • £9.50 adv

Patent Pending

Thurs 9th Oct • £15 adv

Nine Below Zero

Fri 10th Oct • £10 adv
6pm - 10pm

Bipolar Sunshine

Sat 11th Oct • £12.50 adv
6.30pm - 10pm

Dry The River

Sun 12th Oct • £12.50 adv
7.30pm - 11pm

Nick Mulvey

Thurs 16th Oct • £15 adv

The Orb

Fri 17th Oct • £11 adv
6.30pm - 10pm

**Guns2Roses
& Metallica
Reloaded**

Mon 20th Oct • £22 adv

Heather Peace

Fri 24th Oct • £13 adv
6pm - 10pm

**Skeletal Family
& Salvation**

Sun 26th Oct • £14 adv

**Kids In
Glass Houses**

Mon 27th Oct • £28.50 adv

UB40

Mon 27th Oct • £9 adv

Jess Glynne

Tues 28th Oct • £16 adv

Dead Prez

Thurs 30th Oct • £13 adv

**Limehouse
Lizzy**
Performing the Greatest
Hits of Thin Lizzy

Fri 31st Oct • £10 adv
6pm - 10pm

The Subways

Sat 1st Nov • £25 adv
6pm - 10pm

**Boomtown
Rats**
Ratlife UK Tour 2014

Sat 1st Nov • £11 adv
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The Smyths
'Hatful of Hollow'
30th Anniversary

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Band Of Skulls
+ **Bo Ningen**

Fri 7th Nov • £12.50 adv
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Kate Tempest

Mon 10th Nov **SOLD OUT**
Rescheduled • original tickets valid

James

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Fri 14th Nov • £8 adv
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Circa Waves

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La Roux
+ **Meanwhile**

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**Saedly Dorus and
the Hoolie Band**

Sun 16th Nov • £10 adv

Boy & Bear

Sat 22nd Nov • £17.50 adv
6.30pm - 10pm

**The Pretty
Reckless**

Sat 29th Nov • £19.50 adv
6.30pm - 10pm

Little Dragon

Fri 5th Dec • £18 adv
6pm - 10pm • show starts 7pm

The Wall Of Floyd
Performing the Greatest
Hits of Pink Floyd

Sat 6th Dec • £10 adv
6.30pm - 10pm • on stage 8pm

UK Foo Fighters

Mon 8th Dec • £9 adv

**Catfish And
The Bottlemen**

Fri 12th Dec • £26 adv
6pm - 10pm

Saxon
35th Anniversary Tour
+ **Hell**

Sun 14th Dec • £18.50 adv

**Taking
Back Sunday**

Fri 19th Dec • £7.50 adv
8pm - midnight

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