

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 233
December
2014



MOTHER CORONA

"Our riffs would kick Godzilla's arse"

Also in this issue:

RIDE - Return of the OX 4!

Jonny come home!

Radiohead star announces Oxford show

GAZ IS BACK - second album due soon

Oxford remembers **Philip Guy Davis**

Introducing **Charlie Cunningham**

plus

All your Oxford music news, reviews and gigs

Cooz The Power To Be Creative
www.coozes.com
Protocols HD Recording & Neve Summing
Rehearse with drum kit, pro PA, amps and mics
'Cooz's Live' can record you at the O2 Oxford as well as other great venues!
'NVCooz' for recording courses!
Equipment Hire!
T: 01865 236117
E: help@coozes.com
"The Best Sounding Live room in Oxford" - Not My Day

OXFORD DUPLICATION CENTRE
cheryl@theduplicationcentre.co.uk
Office: 01865 457000 Mobile: 07917 775477

Supporting Oxfordshire Bands with
Affordable Professional CD Duplication

**FANTASTIC BAND RATES
ON ALL SERVICES**

Professional Thermal Printed CDs
Full Colour/Black & White
Silver or White Discs

Design Work Support
Digital Printing
Packaging Options
Fulfilment

Recommended by Matchbox Recordings Ltd, Poplar Jake, Undersmile, Desert Storm, Turan Audio Ltd, Nick Cope, Prospekt, Paul Jeffries, Alvin Roy, Pete The Temp, Evolution, Coozes, Blue Moon and many more...

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

THE BULLINGDON

DECEMBER 2014

Saturday 29th November
A Nite of Music:
Gappy Ranks
White Magic Sound
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 30th November
3 Daft Monkeys
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 2nd December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 5th December
Dreadzone
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 6th December
Church of the Heavy
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 6th December
Simple:
Pangaea (Hassle Audio)
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 7th December
Buried in Smoke
Xmas Weekender
Doors: 1.30pm

Monday 8th December
The Haven Club:
Oli Brown's RavenEye
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 9th December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 10th December
STEAMROLLER
With Special Guests
Roy Young
Dave Smith
Johnny Berry
Mark Freeman
Rory Evans
Doors: 7pm

Friday 12th December
The Lost Art
Album Launch
Sea Stacks
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th December
Autumn Saints
Seven O'Clock Junkies
The Pink Diamond Revue
Puppet Mechanic
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th December
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 14th December
Laetitia Sadier Trio
Stereolab
Doors: 7.00pm

Tuesday 16th December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 18th December
It's All About the Music
Christmas Bash!
Doors: 7pm

Friday 19th December
Foals (DJ Set)
Chad Valley Live
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 20th December
The Beat
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th December
Simple & HouseWurk:
Grant Nelson
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 23rd December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 27th December
White Magic Sound
House of Roots
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 28th December
NTNS vs We Are Elements
Illghazi
Man of Science
Pool Tax
Doors: 7.30pm

Tuesday 30th December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 31st December
NYE - Barbarama
The Dublings
Dave Norton
Sam Seller
Oxford Allstars
Johnny's Sexual Kitchen
Doors: 9pm

Tuesday 6th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
The Rory McInroy Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 13th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
The Martin Pickett
Organisation
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 20th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 24th January
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 27th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit
Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 2nd February
The Haven Club:
Jon Amor (The Hoax)
Joel Fisk (UK)
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 3rd February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 7th February
Drew Holcomb (Duo)
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 7th February
Simple:
Scuba
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 10th February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Heavy Dexters
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 14th February
Sons of Bill
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th February
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 17 February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 18th February
Frontier Ruckus
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 21st February
Space Heroes
of the People
The Long Insiders
Hugh McManners
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 24th February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 3rd March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 7th March
Police Dog Hogan
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 10th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Blakes 7 Funk Project
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 11th March
Tragedy - A Metal Tribute
to The Bee Gees & Beyond
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th March
Ben UFO
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 17th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 21st March
The Knights of Mentis
Black Feathers
The Shapes
Trev Williams
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 21st March
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 22nd March
The Selector
The Tuts
Doors: 7pm

Monday 23rd March
The Haven Club:
Stephen Dale Petit
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 24th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 30th March
The Haven Club:
Ben Poole
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 31st March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 18th April
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Monday 20th April
The Haven Club:
Earl Thomas
Doors: 7pm

Monday 27th April
The Haven Club:
Girls with Guitars
Blues Caravan
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 30th April
Simple:
Pearson Sound
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 2nd May
Bloodstock
Metal to the Masses
1st Semi Final
Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 18th May
The Haven Club:
Virgil & the Accelerators
Doors: 7pm

Monday 8th June
The Haven Club:
Laurence Jones
Doors: 7pm

JAM SESSION
FREE EVERY THURSDAY
FROM 8.30PM



NEWS

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

THE OXFORD PUNT returns next year for another showcase of local music talent. The annual festival takes place on **Wednesday 13th May** across five venues in Oxford city centre – The Purple Turtle, The Cellar, The Wheatshaf, The Turl Street Kitchen and The White Rabbit.

The Punt is open to all Oxfordshire bands and musicians from any genre. Any acts wanting to play should send a link to online music to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net. Please clearly mark your email Punt and **include a contact phone number**. All acts should be (at least partly) Oxfordshire based, can't have played The Punt before and must be over 18 years old (sorry, not our choice – it's all down to the venue licences).

Last year's sold-out event featured sets from Vienna Ditto, Rawz, Balloon Ascents, Flights of Helios, Hannah Bruce, Lee Riley and many more, while local acts who have enjoyed early local exposure at The Punt include Stormoway, Foals, Young Knives, Spring Offensive and The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band.

Deadline for entries is the 10th March. As ever a limited number (100) of all-venue Punt passes will be on sale early in the New Year.

WOOD FESTIVAL 2015 has been confirmed for the 15th-17th May next year at Braziers Park, near Ipsden. Early Bird Weekend Tickets go on sale on Monday 1st December. They've had a winter freeze on the price, held at £65, plus booking fee. 2015 will be WOOD's Year of the Bee, following on from this year's Year of the Badger, so expect plenty of bee-related stuff, as well as all the usual music,

workshops and children's activities. Tickets from Truck Store or www.woodfestival.com

THE DREAMING SPIRES release their second album, 'Searching For The Supertruth', on February 23rd next year. The new album, on Clubhouse Records, is the follow-up to last year's 'Brothers In Brooklyn' debut. The vinyl format will be a two-disc, 13-song gatefold LP, including the three tracks from the current digital EP, 'Darkest Before the Dawn'. The album will also be available as a ten-track CD or download.

Recorded at their own Truck Studios and mixed by long-time associate Rowland Prytherch, Robin and Joe Bennett are joined by drummer Jamie Dawson and guitarist Nick Fowler, as well as guests including St Etienne's Sarah Cracknell, Jackie Oates, and Tony Poole of Starry Eyed and Laughing. The band play their regular New Year's Eve party at the Rusty Bicycle, Magdalen Road.

DESERT STORM release their third album on January 26th next year. 'Omniscient' is out on Blindsight Records, the follow-up to 2013's acclaimed 'Horizontal Life'. The ten-track album was produced and mixed by Jamie Dodd, who has worked with Orange Goblin, at Flesh & Bone Studios in Hackney. A track from the new album, 'Queen Reefer', was streamed by *Terrorizer* this month. Talking about 'Omniscient', the band said. "This album is a natural progression from our previous releases; it has elements of blues, sludge, stoner, psychedelia and even a bit of folk. We've mixed things up a bit for a more interesting album – in our opinion. We're looking

GAZ COOMBES releases his second solo album on the 26th January. 'Matador', the follow up to 2012's 'Here Come The Bombs', is released on gatefold vinyl, CD and download on Hotfruit. The album was self-produced by Gaz at his home studio and Courtyard in Sutton Courtney; Gaz also played all the instruments on the ten tracks, other than drums on four songs, played by Ride's Loz Colbert, and synth on one song, played by brother Charly Coombes. Full tracklisting for the album is 'Buffalo'; '20/20'; 'The English Ruse'; 'The Girl Who Fell To Earth'; 'Detroit'; 'Needle's Eye'; 'Seven Walls'; 'Oscillate'; 'To The Wire'; 'Is It On?', and 'Matador'. Gaz also plays a hometown show at the O2 Academy on Saturday 7th February, as part of a seven-date UK tour. Fans can pre-order a signed copy of 'Matador' from Gaz's website at www.gazcoombes.com.



RIDE HAVE REFORMED FOR A SERIES OF SHOWS IN 2015. The legendary Oxford band will play live together for the first time in 20 years, having split in 1996 after the release of their fourth studio album 'Tarantula'. The reunion was officially announced by Mark Gardener and Andy Bell on Sean Keaveny's show on 6Music on the 19th November, although a photo of a banner for Primavera Festival in Barcelona bearing Ride's name had done the rounds on social media the previous day, heightening anticipation of an announcement. The band will play a series of gigs and festival shows across the UK and Europe next summer, including gigs at The Roundhouse in London on the 24th May and a headline set at Field Day on Sunday 7th June. Other dates include shows in Glasgow, Manchester, Amsterdam and Paris, as well as an appearance at Primavera Festival on the 29th May. The Roundhouse show sold out within minutes of tickets going on sale on the 21st November.

Formed in 1988 by Mark and Andy, along with Steve Queralt and Loz Colbert, Ride came to define the shoegaze sound of the time, signing to Creation Records and scoring the label its first ever chart hit with their eponymous debut EP. They went on to enjoy further chart success, including two Top 5 albums. Debut album 'Nowhere' has come to be acknowledged as an indie classic. Intrinsically linked to the Oxford music scene – and managed by Dave Newton whose *Local Support* magazine laid the foundations for *Nightshift* in the late-80s – they were the band who more than any put Oxford on the international music map, inspiring Radiohead and Supergrass along the way.

While Ride have gone to be an inspiration on subsequent generations of bands, and have been dogged by questions of a reunion for years, they have always played down the possibility, their individual careers taking precedent. Mark has pursued a solo career as well as running his OX4 Sound production business; Andy formed Hurricane #1 after Ride split before joining Oasis and later Liam Gallagher's Beady Eye, while Loz has played drums with the reformed Jesus & Mary Chain and latterly Gaz Coombes. Steve left the music business behind completely. The quartet did briefly reconvene in 2001 for the recording of a Channel 4 *Pioneers* show in tribute to Sonic Youth, recording a twenty-minute jam session, while Andy joined Mark and Loz onstage at The Cellar in 2003 for a run-through of 'Leave Them All Behind'. It was the disbanding of Beady Eye in October, though, that finally paved the way for the reunion so many local music fans have dreamed of.

forward to seeing what other people think, come January." Desert Storm have also been

confirmed for next year's Desert Fest, which takes place across various venues in Camden from the 24th-26th April. They join Sleep, Red Fang and Orange Goblin on the bill. Visit www.desertstormband.com for more news.

HALF DECENT RELEASES A NEW MIXTAPE this month. The local rapper's self-produced 'Love Is Dead' features contributions from Lee Smilex, Theoretical, Inspekta, Nonsensible and Full Spectrum and is free to download at www.halfdecentmusic.com, or stream at soundcloud.com/halfdecent. Review next month.

NEWS



JONNY GREENWOOD will perform a one-off hometown show at **St John the Evangelist** on Iffley Road next year with **The London Contemporary Orchestra**. The intimate show on **Saturday 21st February** will see the Radiohead guitarist performing new and previously unheard pieces, as well as music from his soundtracks to *There Will Be Blood*, *The Master* and *Norwegian Wood*, plus interpretations of works by Xenakus, Purcell, Messiaen and LSO's Edmund Finnis. The centrepiece of the concert will be a performance of Steve Reich's 'Electric Counterpoint'. Jonny will be playing guitar as well as tanpura and a rare ondes Martenot keyboard at the Beard Museum-curated concert. Tickets are on sale from Truck Store on Cowley Road, priced £30 (£20 for students). Jonny, meanwhile, has been working on the soundtrack for *Inherent Vice*, an adaptation of the Thomas Pynchon novel, with is compositions set alongside songs by Neil Young, Can and Minnie Riperton. He is also back in the studio with Radiohead, working on material for their next album.

Talking to BBC Oxford's Dave Gilyeat, Jonny said, "working with Radiohead is all about repetition and working slowly. It always feels when we start up like we still don't know really how to do it, and we don't know quite what to do. 'Looking down avenues' is a very kind way of putting the kind of fumbling that we do, mainly because every time we try and do it like the last time – because that worked – it never seems to work. So we talk about different approaches and we're currently trying a bunch out."

BEGINNERS release their debut EP this month. The band, formed by former Fell City Girl and Winchell Riots frontman Phil McMinn and ex-Gunning For Tamar singer and guitarist Dan Pollard, recorded the EP live at the Jacqueline du Pre building and the New Road Baptist Church with the West Oxford Academy Of Performing Arts performing choir duties on the songs. The self-titled EP is being released as a limited number of boxed CDs, designed by local artists Theo Peters and Sarah Hoyle, with every box a different design and containing a 32-page handmade, screen-printed book, with sheet music and photos. The Beginners project follows on from two solo EPs Phil has released since the demise of The Winchell Riots, and the split of Gunning For Tamar. "Dan and I both come from similar places," explains Phil, "we've both been in bands and we've both tried doing it the hard way. "It started when Dan sent me a text message in the middle of the night. I had put two EPs out under my own name but I've never felt comfortable as a solo artist and was really struggling to play shows on my own. I loved what Dan sent me and it gave me a bit of a lift when I needed it most. We both had the same desire to work quickly and with no expectations. 'Show your workings,' Dan said. We're named after a Raymond Carver book I read, about that idea." Explaining the difference between his previous music and Beginners Phil said, "I listened to a lot of John Martyn over the last few years, and his way of singing really sent me on a new path; I'm happy to be incoherent now, so I think the whole thing sounds a lot less thought out, a lot messier, maybe even improvised. And I think these are the first lyrics I've written that are just direct love songs as opposed to about drowning someone or dying in space. "The venues were integral to the project. The Jacqueline du Pre was where The Winchell Riots played our last ever show, so I felt like I had to go back

ZUBY releases his fourth album this month. The rapper, who made his name on the Oxford music scene, releases 'The Year Of Zuby' on his own label, and has raised over £9000 through a Kickstarter campaign to make a video for every track on the album. Full review next issue but check it out at www.zubymusic.com or find zubymusic on Facebook and Twitter.

ROYAL BLOOD's sold-out show at the O2 Academy has been rescheduled for Thursday 8th January after the original November show was cancelled due to ill health. Tickets remain valid for the new date or refunds are available from point of purchase.

DON'T MAKE A SCENE is a field guide to putting on DIY gigs, released as an 84-page zine this month. The guide has been put together by Rob St John and Emma Cardwell who promoted the Adventures Close To Home shows in Oxford. It also features contributions from promoters, booking agents, sound engineers and musicians on all aspects of putting on gigs and club nights. The zine is available from www.dontmakeascene.co.uk, priced £4.

THE THURSDAY BLUES JAM has found a new home at the Ampleforth Arms pub in Risinghurst from this month. The long-running jam was forced to move from its previous home, The Jack Russell in Marston, in September when the pub was sold to be turned into flats.



FOALS take over the decks at *The Bullingdon on Friday 19th December for Roadblock's club night*. The bands will be playing "slick'n'funky 80s inspired synth pop - Alexander O'Neal meets Dam Funk." Chad Valley will be playing a live set beforehand. Tickets are on sale now from Wegottickets.com

OXFORD GIGBOT provides a regular local gig listing update on Twitter (@oxgigbot), bringing you new gigs as soon as they go live. They also provide a free weekly listings email. Follow them. Do it now.

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.musicinoxford.co.uk. The site also features interactive reviews, a photo gallery and gig guide. Nightshift's online form is open to all local music fans and musicians at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net



there and put things straight. And the Baptist Church was an amazing place to record, right in the middle of town, so you can hear Oxford all over the recordings; we left all the shouting homeless people and angry children in the mix." Sadly there are no plans for the pair to play live for now. "I wanted to make a record like 'Vespertine' or 'Ladies & Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space': something impossible to create live properly. Both Dan and I have been so restricted over the years by broken sound systems, broken sound men, and I've had enough electric shocks from faulty microphones for one lifetime. So the requirement to recreate these songs live was removed at the beginning of the project. That was extremely liberating for us both." To download the Beginners EP, visit philmcminn.bandcamp.com.

Tributes have been paid to Philip Guy Davis, who ran the Famous Monday Blues club in Oxford, who has died, aged 78. Philip, affectionately known as Silver Phil on account of his mane of silver hair and copious amounts of jewellery, passed away from heart failure in the John Radcliffe on the 12th November after a spell of ill health that had forced his retirement from promoting live music back in September. Phil had celebrated his 50 year anniversary in music with a Famous Monday Blues party at the Jericho Tavern, featuring a set from long-time friends Never The Bride, a band he had managed and who had regularly played at the renowned blues club. Phil's promoting days began in his native Cheltenham back in 1964, and he went on to manage clubs there and in London, working with legendary names like Kenny Ball, Tommy Steel and Alexis Korner, before relocating to Oxford in the 1980s (according to Phil himself, to avoid Mafia attention). With his extensive connections to American contacts he helped book bands at the Monday blues nights at the Red Lion in Gloucester Green run by Bob Foley, Tony Jezzard and Jonathan Lee, eventually taking over running the club in 2001. Over the years the FMB moved around town, including stints at Jongleurs and the Bullingdon, before finding its latest home at the Jericho. The club played host to bands from around the world, as well as generations of UK blues acts, with Phil the instantly recognisable face of the club. Talking to *Nightshift* last month about his retirement, Phil expressed his sadness at having to quit, but happy to have gone out on "a lovely party." He also declared his highlight of all the years at club to be Chaka Khan's appearance at

PHILIP GUY DAVIS 1936-2014



a FMB Christmas party at the Bullingdon. "I was told if I got her a decent bottle of champagne – a really decent bottle – she would come and sing. They wouldn't say for how long but she just kept going. It was lovely, a great Christmas present." Earlier this year Phil was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the British Blues Awards. Among those to pay tribute were Phil Freizinger and Sue Smith from Klub Kakofanney and The Mighty Redox, who played the FMB a number of times. "We first got to really know Phil about 16 years ago after a FMB gig at the Philosopher and Firkin, when we were invited upstairs for an after-party. Philip – as he preferred to be known – was accosted by a fairly inebriated Irish woman fan, who grilled him about his origins – he was half Native American – and his love life. Philip politely answered all of her overly personal questions with a breathtaking candidness that was equally

fascinating and disarming. This level of personal straight-forwardness and honesty in life matters was remarkable. His love of music and his acts were deeply felt, and were the heartbeat of his life. He came to lots of our gigs in much less salubrious venues and would immediately attract the attention of the crowd. His dry delivery and humorous repartee found him very often surrounded by fascinated women at the end of the night, and he gallantly drove them home in his vintage Merc. He was like a visiting celebrity with the status of a Micheal Winner, and the same self-deprecating haughtiness, which cracked us up. We will miss a humorous and engaging friend – a true Oxford personality." Nick Clack from The Missing Persians, said of his friend, "What I liked about Phil was that he was always supportive of local artists and though one might think he was not really interested, he came across as being very knowledgeable about the local music scene. He booked the last four bands I have been in for The Monday Blues and garnered sessions for me with other acts. I will miss him, he lived for his music." James Serjeant co-ran the blues nights with Philip for a number of years, and said, "Philip was an overtly enthusiastic supporter of the blues and revelled in the opportunity to run the Monday Blues in 2001 having previously helped by offering touring bands from his own promotions. Intensely focussed on the club, he was an engaging and humorous soul who lived for live music and the good life." Philip is survived by his two sons, Marcel and Jools. *Nightshift's* deepest condolences go out to them and to all of Phil's friends and family. He was a man – a true character – who will not be quickly forgotten in Oxford.

photo:Johnny Moto



OXFORD'S INDEPENDENT MUSIC HUB
CD DVD VINYL
New releases, classic albums,
recommendations, pre-owned,
local music & The Keen Bean Coffee bar

**DON'T FORGET OUR GIFT VOUCHERS CAN BE USED IN BOTH STORES... WE ALSO NOW STOCK
A HAND-PICKED RANGE OF TURNTABLES, PERFECT GIFTS FOR MUSIC LOVERS THIS CHRISTMAS!**

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 101 COWLEY ROAD OX4 1HU
truckmusicstore.co.uk 01865 793866



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS
Oxfordshire's longest established
independent entertainment store
A huge selection of CD, DVD and Vinyl including
hundreds of new releases each month and
an extensive back catalogue. Plus we offer a
fast & efficient ordering service. Drop us a line

01993 700567 UNIT 12 THE WOOLGATE CENTRE, WITNEY OX28 6AP
rapturewitney.co.uk info@rapture-online.co.uk

A quiet word with MOTHER CORONA



“DRINKING WITH ORANGE Goblin in Manchester was fun; Lee almost died from swallowing his own tongue. He’d been drinking like a dog for about four days and just loving it. We had to call the paramedics out because his body went into some kind of shock. The doctor was pretty sympathetic and said it must be hard living this kind of lifestyle with it eventually catching up with you! Then he asked how long we had been on the road for and we said three days and the doctor laughed and said sarcastically ‘three days! Only three days!’ Ha ha!”

DAVE OGLESBY, THE singing drummer from Didcot’s groove-metal behemoths Mother Corona is recounting another on-the-road highlight from his band’s recent history. The man who nearly succumbed to that most rock and roll of demises is Lee Cressey, the band’s guitarist, Dave’s hometown friend with whom he formed Mother Corona in 2006 – originally under the name Nable. The trio – completed by bassist Rob Glenn, who answered an

ad in a local music shop – are hardened road warriors now, regularly heading off round the UK to preach their message of classic super-heavyweight rock music to the masses, while existing slightly below the radar of the majority of Oxford gig goers. *Nightshift* featured the band in an Introducing piece back in 2012 and they played The Oxford Punt in 2013 but they’re still an under-appreciated force (and we mean that in every sense) beyond the rock and metal fraternity. Now, as they prepare to release their second full-length album, ‘Reburn’, it’s time to spread the word about them further, and louder. Louder is something Mother Corona excel at.

IN MOTHER CORONA’S world The Riff is king. Their songs are beasts, behemoths, titans. They’re made of mountains and girders and powered by the Kraken’s giant beating heart. They’re steeped in the timeless rock music of Led Zeppelin and Blue Cheer, but also the psychedelic exploration of Electric Wizard

and coated in the scuzz of The Stooges and the fuzz of Smashing Pumpkins, and they’re rich in melody, Dave’s voice a measured foil to the onward tide of metal grooves, one of those small but significant elements that makes the band stand out from the crowd. Like a monstrous black obelisk.

MOTHER CORONA, IT’S FAIR to say, rock. Like bastards. They’re also affable Didcot town lads, who fell in love with Led Zeppelin at an early age and never looked back. “Me and Lee used to listen to them religiously when we were kids,” recalls Dave on the band’s origins. “I suppose what we’re doing is timeless, but it’s new to us,” he says, when *Nightshift* suggests the music they’re playing might have fitted in as well in the 1970s as it does now, and would still in another 40 years. “It has been said to us before that we would have fitted back in the 70s; I mean, when the whole grunge thing started in the early 90s everyone was saying that it was retro 70s but the attitude was very much of its day, especially

the things they were talking about, and I suppose that’s the way we see ourselves today.” Heavy rock – Mother Corona hesitate to call themselves a metal band, although they share much of the same terrain as many Black Sabbath-inspired bands – never really goes in or out of fashion. It’s always hugely popular while remaining outsider music. What’s the appeal for people of listening to huge, fuck-off riffs? “I’m not too sure, maybe it’s an empowering thing. Listening to a riff that makes you want to go crazy or perks you up and makes you feel like you can take on anything gives you a certain confidence I suppose, makes you feel *good*.”

AS WELL AS THE RIFFAGE, what stood out for *Nightshift* when we first heard Mother Corona were the vocals – they’re not the usual style you get with so many metal bands, closer to Billy Corgan at times than the typical guttural roar or hysterical scream of most contemporary metal acts. Was that a conscious effort or something that just occurred naturally?

“It was a natural thing for sure; I’ve never been able to scream, so I just sang, and I suppose growing up listening to classic rock music the singer sang melodies rather than screaming. And now with Lee doing more backing vocals and harmonies it’s taking on a new life, especially on this new album. It’s something we’ll be doing more of in the future.” There’s a strong melodic edge to your songs too; is that particularly important for you?

“Absolutely! The melody has to be running through the song to keep it interesting and something people can recognise. A lot of bands today shy away from melody, I think because they are afraid of people calling them sell outs, you know? ‘Oh, you’re singing now, what are you, Take That or something?’ It’s a kind of silly attitude to have cos I think a lot of bands are selling themselves short by having that attitude, but we embrace it. Melody is very important.” Timeless thought it might be in many ways, new album ‘Reburn’ sounds like an almighty blast of fresh air. What’s the secret to keeping heavy rock fresh sounding?

“Being yourself. Everyone has influences, but it’s what you do with them that counts. People used to say that Soundgarden were a rip-off of Led Zeppelin, but I don’t think that’s true. You could hear a lot of Zeppelin in them but they were telling their own story. You also have to listen to other styles of music to keep your palate fresh and a lot of people just pick a style of music and don’t listen to anything else. We’re all guilty of it; I used to do it a few years ago, but then I realised the stuff I used to listen to when I was a kid, like my mum used to love crooners and have that playing around the house, I have an old James Brown album that I had when I was younger that is still amazing. Be open to other styles of music and let it seep into your metal, ha ha!”

HAILING FROM DIDCOT, A town better known for its power station and railway connections than any kind of cultural heritage, what was it like for Mother Corona trying to get gigs early on; is there somewhere in town for bands to play or was it a case of trying to get into Oxford? “In all honesty we wanted to get out of town, although early on we put on a few gigs on at a couple of pubs: the Labour Club and The Waterwitch. They were messy and fun but they are both closed now; the Waterwitch got knocked down a few years ago and is now a row of flats, but there is no real music venue in Didcot, just pubs.

“Didcot isn’t really a hotbed for art or culture and that’s probably one of the reasons we formed a band, so we had an excuse to get out of there! All the best bands have come from shitty small towns anyway; it gives you a reason or motivation to want to better yourself.”

THIS RAISES A SIGNIFICANT point. There’s a clichéd idea in some quarters that the Oxford music scene is mostly made up of academically-minded hipsters making intellectual indie and electronic music, while so many of the city’s great bands are locally-born musicians, often from the country’s peripheral towns and villages. This is particularly true of heavier bands. Is there a cohesive metal/rock community in Oxfordshire, and who or what holds it together? “Well Desert Storm and the Cole twins have always been big advocates of our band and the Oxford music scene and have pushed the envelope for people outside of Oxford to get a little

“Mother Corona would have been the perfect soundtrack for the demolition of Didcot Power Station.”

interested in what’s going on here. People tend to think that ‘cause we’re from Oxford that we are posh and have no place in playing heavy music ‘cause we’ve got nothing to be angry about, but the bands that tend to play heavy music in Oxford are dropout kids or come from the surrounding towns, like us being from Didcot, which is a very working class town. So we gravitated towards where the local scene was, which was about twenty miles down the road and the people have accepted us even though we are townies! Ha ha! So it’s that openness that keeps the whole scene together – people coming together no matter who you are or where you’re from.”

Oxford does stoner, sludge and groove pretty well, don’t you think? We lost Caravan of Whores this year but who do you think are the best other bands of that ilk around the county? “Sometimes things happen in bands that rip bands apart: relationships get strained and people just can’t work with each other anymore. It’s happened to us too but the key is to be tolerant with each other, and accept people’s virtues and faults. You’re all fighting for the same cause at the end of the day and we are only human, but there are some killer bands around, like

Desert Storm, Trippy Wicked, Gurt, Tricorn, Grifter, XII Boar, Nomad, Enos, Bacchus Baracus, to name a few. They’re all good people and cool bands.”

BEYOND THEIR CULT BUT growing popularity in Oxfordshire, metal zines like *Sludgelord* and *Sleeping Shaman* have championed Mother Corona to a wider audience, a big factor in helping the band tour further afield. “Those zines are great, and it does help bands out, spreading the word on a larger scale, and they’ve all been pretty good to us. We’ve played the whole of the UK pretty much, and usually the reaction has been pretty good; London’s always a good show, it’s the place to be. There’s a place in Bournemouth called the Anvil; it’s really small but we always get a great reaction there. Edinburgh, Birmingham, Manchester are all great places with cool people.” You toured with Abrahma and Enos. “We went on a nine-day tour around the UK; it was an eye

thought fuck that, lets’ play from the heart and let the idiosyncrasies pour out of the music. We didn’t sit around saying let’s do a massive 15 track album, man, it just happened. We had a few songs that we had written even before Mother Corona was about, like ‘Cut The Rope’ and ‘Enough Time Spent’, that we have been playing live since we started and wanted to add them to the album. Even though the album is pretty much hard rock all the way through, the songs are diverse enough for people to know it isn’t samey, and having some beautiful guitar instrumentals like ‘Hangover’ and ‘Lily Mae’ gave the album some breathing space. ‘Lily Mae’ is something Lee wrote for his daughter that reminds me of a mantra or some kind of Native American chant.”

MORE THAN ANYTHING though, ‘Reburn’ has riffs. Did we mention those? The riffs? We did? Yeah, but did we mention them enough? Because they’re big, you know. Massive. They’d crush you to pulp if they landed on you. So come on then Dave from riffmonster titans Mother Corona – pick us one riff that conquers all others. “Jesus, that’s a tough one! The best riff of all time for me has to be ‘Into The Void’ by Black Sabbath: it just sums up everything about heavy rock/metal in six minutes; that’s why everyone covers it!”

If your riffs were made from some kind of solid material, what do you think they would be made from? Or would they be a liquid metal, like in *Terminator 2*? “Our riffs remind me of the place where we’re from: low vibration, dark, vast, kinda like the same material as the Didcot power station. I think Mother Corona would have been the perfect soundtrack for the recent demolition of the power station.”

Who’d win in a fight between Godzilla and the riff from ‘Black Acid Morning’? “Well, being that Godzilla is 60 years old I think ‘Black Acid’ would kick his arse! He’d put up a good fight though, ha ha!” And finally, bong, booze or acid? Which is best for listening to Mother Corona on? “Whatever your trip is! Don’t matter what you take, if you’re diggin’ the tunes then more power to you! You can listen to it stone cold sober or off your tits, it’s all good! Just leave enough Jack Daniel’s for us!”

Mother Corona launch ‘Reburn’ on Saturday 6th December at Buried in Smoke’s Christmas weekender. Visit www.facebook.com/mothercorona for more news and gig dates.

RELEASED

PADDOX ‘Aphrodisiaque’

(Bear on a Bicycle / One Note Forever)
In an Oxford music scene in which electronica isn’t exactly the most high-profile element, mostly limited to a handful of bedroom producers, Paddox are something of an anomaly. And to be producing synth-based ambient music is rarer still. It’s as if they’d overheard me in the pub complaining about the dearth of local acts taking inspiration from the 1970s kosmische movement, and obligingly went off to form a band that in places sound exactly like the early work of Harmonia. Very public-spirited of them. Not only that, but Paddox have arrived apparently fully-formed, with a record painstakingly constructed from the oscillations and modulations of classic analogue synths, giving them space to breathe and the time they need to work their magic. Perhaps surprisingly, given that the vinyl edition comes packaged in a 3kg slab of concrete, the music’s often feather-light and subtle. Its explorations of tone and texture are strikingly confident, mining the past to create something that sounds oddly out of its own time and place. The closest analogue (ho ho) to Paddox is possibly 70s German synth pioneers Cluster, whose cavernous swirlings (as well as their straight-faced numeric approach to song titling) are lovingly echoed by ‘001’, while at its darkest as on ‘005’, Paddox are redolent of Barn Owl’s desolate evocations.



THE RETROS In Our DNA’

(Self-released)
While a dedicated covers band is as much a valid part of a local live scene as any other type of band – people will always want to hear old classics of myriad hues played live – an album of those covers only seems to act as a memento of an evening out for those who were there, and even then, unless you’re going to do something radical with the source material, why not just head for the originals?



You get the impression that the tracks have been edited down from much longer explorations: ‘004’'s brief foray into the heart-lifting territory of A Winged Victory For The Sullen is over all too quickly, while perhaps the coda of the 18-minute centrepiece ‘001’ is perhaps the only section that might have benefited from a tighter trimming. A release that can live so comfortably alongside the likes of Tim Hecker or even John Carpenter is always going to be welcome as far as I’m concerned, and it’s a genuine pleasure to hear something coming out of Oxford that’s concerned with nothing else but the beauty of sound and space. Possibly my Oxford record of the year.

Stuart Fowkes

Which isn’t to denigrate The Retros’ new album, which if nothing else, shows decent taste (The Easybeats’ ‘Friday On My Mind’; The Move’s ‘Fire Brigade’; Bowie’s ‘The Man Who Sold The World’ amongst other). They’re professional but straight takes, and in the case of ‘Friday...’ and ‘The Man...’, both have been covered better previously, the former by Bowie himself and the latter by Lulu. We also get The Retros’ takes on The Who (‘So Sad About Us’) and – surprise! – The Beatles (‘You Can’t Do That’, here given a slightly bluesy make-over) amongst others, although, sneaked in among these are a couple of self-penned tracks, ‘Wait’ and ‘No Words’, which are similarly steeped in the 60s and 70s sounds the band so obviously love, all chiming guitars and breezy harmonies, either of which could be a lost cut from an old Traffic session. Hard, then, to direct overt criticism at a band simply – and to a reasonable if hardly inspired standard – indulging in nostalgia for their favourite old tunes, but a great cover version should always bring something new or unthought-of to the party (This Mortal Coil’s ‘Song To The Siren’ being a prime example) and ‘In Our DNA’ maybe serves as an introduction to the songs concerned for anyone who’s never heard them before.

Ian Chesterton

Sponsored by



THE DREAMING SPIRES ‘Darkest Before the Dawn’

(Clubhouse)

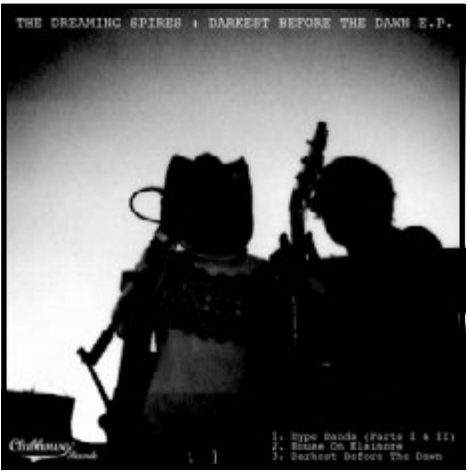
Long, long before it was *de rigueur* to grow a beard and pretend you were from Mississippi, brothers Robin and Joe Bennett were bringing a little soul-searching Americana to Oxford, both as founders of Truck Festival, always a welcoming home to such music, and at the helm of their band Goldrush. It’s a journey they’ve carried on for close to two decades now, including stints with Danny & the Champions of the World and lately Co-Pilgrim. The tides of fashion have yet to turn them.

And why should they when it seems to burrow to the very heart and soul of the pair. The Dreaming Spires might be a different name to Goldrush (or Whispering Bob as they were originally), but that all-enveloping love for Big Star, The Byrds, The Band and Buffalo Springfield remains resolute. Not least on the expansive ‘Hype Bands Parts I & II’, seven minutes of Robin’s characteristically plaintive, questing vocals set against rich, warm Stax horns, organ buzz and twelve-string jangle. It’s an almost euphoric country-soul canter that makes its way from roadhouse bar, past the embers of last night’s campfire and into a bright new dawn. It’s rare to find The Dreaming Spires sounding so upbeat but it suits them.

Bolder still is ‘House on Elsinore’, a muscly but sensitive country-blues march that clutches Tom Petty to its breast and waltzes into a heartbroken starry night.

The EP’s title track tips the mood even more fully into one of quiet melancholy, concluding a linked set of stories about an old friend, Danny, fallen on hard times. It’s highly personal stuff, but delivered with a warmth and almost heroic sense of positivity that’s as inviting and inclusive as Thanksgiving dinner. The Dreaming Spires continue to do what they’ve done best for so many years, and remain the benchmark for any and all who would follow in their footsteps.

Sue Foreman



MOTHER CORONA ‘Reburn’

(When Planets Collide)

Didcot doesn’t often feel like a churning hotbed of rock’n’roll, but ‘Reburn’, Mother Corona’s follow-up to 2012’s ‘Out Of The Dust’, confirms that there’s at least one band’s worth of small town stoned troopers flying the flag. This is a pretty heavy proposition of an album – it’s 76 minutes in length, and it provides hit after bludgeoning hit of exceptionally good, riff-heavy, rock-inspired guitar schwing. Throughout 15 tracks, there are many reference points to and reminders of music gone by: the petulant snarl of early Black Sabbath and prime-era Led Zeppelin; the gliding vocal whine of Smashing Pumpkins; the unhinged chunky riffing of Amphetamine Reptile acts like Tad or Killozer; the artistic psychedelic thuggery of Melvins. Like many of the best albums – and believe me, this is one of the best – when the influences are this good, and utilised with such strength and style as on ‘Reburn’, accusations of familiarity seem trite. There are only a couple of tracks on which the energy (intentionally) dips below “this one goes up to 11”: as such, ‘Reburn’ is a veritable long night at the Wheatheaf of an album. By the end of it, you’ve forgotten where you came in; you’re altered by cheap booze and relentless noise, and you stumble away dazed and joyously confused. Outstanding.

Simon Minter

LITTLE RED ‘Sticks & Stones’

(All Will Be Well)

A recurring issue we find with, predominantly, but not exclusively, new bands, is the release of full albums before they’ve developed their sound enough and written enough songs to merit one. Too often a clutch of good ideas gets lost amid filler that should have been discarded or at least left on the backburner until it was completely cooked.

Little Red are by no means anywhere near the worst offenders, and have to decency to keep their debut to a compact 33 minutes, but we’re still left with the feeling ‘Sticks & Stones’ would have made a decent four or five-song EP. The band, whose demo was reviewed positively in *Nightshift* a couple of months ago, are a gentle, intimate folk-pop affair, a three-

KID KIN ‘Holy Youth’

(Self-released)

Like Maiians, who he supported at their recent EP launch gig, Kid Kin – the musical moniker of Peter Lloyd – takes the fundamental ideas of ambient electronic music and puts them to work in a live band setting. In his case it’s a one-man-band but he exerts enough energy on stage for four, rather than simply relying on laptop and loops. Live, Peter follows Kevin Shields’ maxim that volume can be an extra instrument in itself, conjuring deafening washes of guitar and synth noise that test the normal expectations and definition of the word ambient, taking over every available molecule of airspace in the room in a way that can be as confrontational as it is calming. ‘Holy Youth’ prefers to temper such sonic extremity with more subtlety, even tenderness, which allow the four instrumental tracks here to wash over and around you instead of punching a whole through your midriff. ‘Frippery The Villain’ in particular, charming and chiming its way skywards via Eno’s laser-guided mood music and Slowdive’s shoegazey shimmer. Stand-out EP title track ‘Holy Youth’ pitches itself in just the right place to get a balance of snowstorm sweetness and glitchy awkwardness, while ‘Shogun Giant’ proves the man’s got a pretty tune or two amid the sumptuous electronic textures as well as a generous disposition towards the volume dial.

Victoria Waterfield



BEGINNERS ‘Beginners EP’

(Self-released)

As with Richard Walters, as soon as you see the name Phil McMinn on a record you know you’re in for a vocal treat. After a couple of solo releases, the former-Winchell Riots man has teamed up with erstwhile Gunning For Tamar singer/guitarist Dan Pollard to form Beginners. Anyone expecting a new angular post-rock noise edge to Phil’s music will be disappointed though, not to say slightly foolish. Beginners is very much a continuation of the rarefied, glacial sounds he’s been honing for the last decade.

That he and Dan recorded this EP at the Jacqueline du Pre building and in the New Road Baptist Church with the West Oxford Academy Of Performing Arts providing choral backing tells you far more about what to expect: lonely, starlit chamber pop that’s as delicate as snowflakes and as elegant and majestic as a snow leopard. ‘Lazer Guided’ in particular is gorgeous with its choral crescendo enveloping Phil’s plaintive voice. The spirit of Sigur Ros is invoked but there’s a more intimate feel to Beginners for all their grandeur; instrumentation is stripped down to piano, acoustic guitar and sparse electronics, no beats, no padding. But then, when you have a voice like Phil McMinn’s, why would you want to hide it under a heap of instruments?

Dale Kattack

way, simply revealing a workaday acoustic blues shuffle that even they have probably forgotten already. The genial but anonymous ‘Out To Get Down’, meanwhile, is symptomatic of the way they massively under-use the vocal talents of Hayley Bell and her interaction with Ian Mitchell and Ben Gosling. They far better on the likes of ‘Petal’, where those voices combine over the most minimal acoustic and slide guitar backing and Hayley gets the lead role for once. At their best Little Red can conjure a comfort blanket of the gentlest of autumn moods, and we hope they’ll unfurl over the course of time to reveal their true capabilities. For now, take the best half of ‘Sticks and Stones’, and leave the remainder in the forest for the squirrels to plunder and hide away.

Dale Kattack

TRACKS OF OUR YEAR

That time of year again. Y’know, the endy bit where we look back on all the great music Oxford has produced over the past twelve months and attempt top squeeze it all into a fancy list-type thing with the absolute greatest thing at the top. Most of Oxford’s big guns were quiet in 2014 – no new recordings from Radiohead, Foals or Stornoway for example – but that never seems to matter when there’s so much good stuff going on. And, as ever, the diversity of music around is something that a lot of people fail to appreciate – from hellbastard metal to soothing ambient electronica; from poetic hip hop to pure, unrefined folk music, and plenty more besides and between. If Oxford produced one outstanding breakthrough act in 2014 it was GLASS ANIMALS, a band we’ve been proud to champion from the very start but who have quiet slipped into the big league with their debut album of ghostly, twilight electronic r’n’b. Here are Nightshift’s favourite Oxfordshire-made tracks of the year. Make your own list. Ours will be best.



1. GLASS ANIMALS ‘Gooley’

So subtle and lacking in fanfare was Glass Animals’ move onto the nation’s airwaves and into myriad music tipsters’ lists that even a sizeable contingent of Oxford’s regular gig goers didn’t realise they were one of ours. A quick delve into the *Nightshift* archive would reveal we had them as our Demo of the Month way back in 2010 and have been keeping a keen eye on them and their woozy, sci-fi r’n’b since. We were duly rewarded with full-length debut ‘ZABA’ in May this year, released on Paul Epworth’s Wolf Tone label, an album of hazy, languid atmospherics and an oblique lyricism that came from singer David Bayley’s insomniac tendencies (“between those half-wakeful hours and dusk,” as he said himself). A single ahead of the album, ‘Gooley’ encapsulated Glass Animals’ woozy charm with its talk of “peanut butter vibes”, David’s breathless vocals and the fragile electronic textures that hover wraith-like behind them as enigmatically elusive as a half-remembered dream, and just as alluring.

2. MAIIANS ‘Lemon’

Not since The Rock Of Travolta has an instrumental band captured the local imagination as much as Maiians, a band that began almost as a side project (of We Aeronauts) but who now threaten to eclipse the love felt for that collective. November’s debut EP, ‘Tokyo’, was a chilled coastal trip with a motorik heart, lead track ‘Lemon’ propelled by twin drummers Matt Goolding and Callum Peaston, which gave the electronic soundtrack a human heart and a dynamic sense of purpose, James Cunning and Sam King’s synths veering off Kraftwerk’s autobahn and along to Banco de Gaia’s tropical beach party via Fuck Buttons’ sleek silicon belligerence and Caribou’s neo-psychedelia. ‘Lemon’ clocked in around the seven-minute mark. In truth we’d have been happy to hear it carry on driving for another hour.

3. THE AUGUST LIST

‘Wooden Trunk Blues’

They came down from the hills. Married couple Kerraleigh and Martin Childs lived in a converted barn on a hillside in rural east Oxfordshire but sounded like they’d landed here from a shack in North Carolina or on the banks of the Mississippi. Their debut album, ‘Oh Hinterland’, was a raw, rustic joy, even when it dealt with the darkest of American gothic subject matter, as this opening bluesy regret that finds Kerraleigh accumulating emotional baggage and assessing her life with a vocal delivered in tones that are an engaging mix of Kate Pierson and Steve Nicks, and possesses a sublime hook that almost obscures the meaning of what she’s singing about. Given its bleak nature,

that might be just as well.

4. SPRING OFFENSIVE

‘Hengelo’

Here at *Nightshift* we’ve become almost immune to losing bands, but not completely immune, especially when the band in question has released a debut album that can be genuinely described as great. But so it was with Spring Offensive, whose recent relocation to London couldn’t stop them being an Oxford band at heart. ‘Young Animal Hearts’ was Spring Offensive fulfilling every ounce of promise they’d shown in their five-year lifespan – clever, intricate, epic, sometimes challenging, poetic alt.pop with, at its beating heart, songs to die for. Stick a pin in the track listing and you’ll pick a gem each time, but this was our favourite, an encapsulation of all those rare attributes.

5. JESS HALL ‘Sea Song’

Jess Hall originally comes from the seaside – Devon to be precise – and the sea dominates her gorgeous, pure, English folk songs. With a voice that’s limpid and elegant, as pure as cut crystal, Jess explores the shorelines of her native county across her album ‘Bookshelves’, most particularly on this highlight. Backed by sparse acoustic guitar and Barney Morse-Brown’s simple, solemn cello, it was a devotional hymn to the sea, and to love in the most old fashioned way. A song to drown in.

6. VIENNA DITTO

‘Feeling Good’

Vienna Ditto got the blues. In fact they got the blues far better than any traditional blues band we’ve encountered in Oxford in recent times. This despite being a primarily synth-based act and spending much of their time on stage laughing like loons and clowning around like they *just don’t care*. But hey, take your music seriously, not yourself, as we always say and Vienna Ditto lived up to that maxim with bells on. Hattie Taylor’s slinky, sultry jazz-blues croon snaked around Nigel Firth’s wild-abandon rockabilly guitar flurry, proclaiming “I’m feeling strained and smoking, chained and choking, finger-licking, pistol-whipping good,” while referencing “21st Century blues.” Which it damn well are. With extra bells on.

7. CANDY SAYS

‘Hummingbird’

With the busyness of a bee hive, Candy Says’ album ‘Not Kings’ delved deep into a toy box of musical trinkets and tricks and used each and every one of them to make for a bargain bucket masterpiece, a triumph of ambition and imagination over resources. ‘Hummingbird’ here was an introverted, confessional reverie based on a bed of buzzing organ and a chorus made up of buttercup petals and late afternoon sunshine, Julia Sophie’s voice more versatile now than it’s ever been and, coupled with Ben Walker’s intricate, elaborate arrangements, a song possessed of the sort of naivety that too much pop music has had filleted out. Lovely.

8. RAWZ ‘Mary Lamb’

Creatively prolific while often sounding like he’s barely got the energy to get out of bed, rapper/poet Rawz follows in Rakim’s footsteps of saying a lot while barely breaking a sweat, giving his mellifluous musings on love, religion and politics an air of gentleness even while they bite down

hard on the subject matter. Hence the philosophical musings of ‘Mary Lamb’ come wrapped in a comforting blanket of trippy warmth even while its core is a desert of fatalism and cynicism. One of Oxford’s most thoughtful and insightful lyricists, and this nocturnal tale lingers long after sunrise.

9. BALLOON ASCENTS

‘Cutout’

If you’re good enough, you’re old enough is a rule you could happily apply to Balloon Ascents, a band who have been making a serious name for themselves locally in venues that, until very recently, they weren’t even old enough to drink in. Despite that, there’s a wonderfully world-weary feel to ‘Cutout’, from their first demo, where they channel Radiohead’s oblique pop through Stornoway’s questing folk-rock; they’re a band with grace and poise and a neat magpie touch to their influences, and they’re very much a band with their best still to come.

10. MOTHER CORONA

‘Black Acid Morning’

Sometimes we want to leave all the clever stuff and sweetness behind and just rock out. Like bastards. Sometimes we need RIFFS. Didcot’s Mother Corona have riffs. Big ones cut from granite and girders and forged in the fires of Black Sabbath’s psychedelic iron foundry. In the grand, timeless tradition that runs from Blue Cheer to Electric Wizard, Mother Corona ride a groove as deep as the Mariana Trench, stay hard and heavy and dirty, and always, *always*, keep it ROCK.

11. LIU BEI ‘Infatuation’

We’re just guessing but we think Richard Walters had featured in *Nightshift*’s end of year chart more times than any other artist. Because whatever guise he goes under – band or solo – he remains a serious class act, with a voice that angels would die for. With his new band he’s crafted a characteristically bleak study in love lost, intoning “You’re everywhere” to the memory of a former lover amid a sparse spangle of guitars that recalls Robin Guthrie. 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.

12. PHILIP SELWAY

‘Waiting For A Sign’

While Tom Yorke’s latest solo opus was characteristically bleak and oblique, Radiohead bandmate Philip Selway’s second album was warm, direct and deeply emotive, revealing hitherto unknown, or unrecognised talents beyond his undisputed drum mastery. The delicacy and certainty of ‘Waiting For A Sign’ showed Phil has a voice to match any frontman, and you’re left asking not, ‘why has the drummer made a solo album?’, and rather ‘why hasn’t he made loads more?’

13. TIGER MENDOZA

‘Now That Days Are Colder’

A synthesis of rhythms and orchestra on a claustrophobic scale from Tiger Mendoza on this latest EP, ditching – other than a spoken word contribution from poet David Griffiths – vocals, preferring instead to build a series of synthetic mood pieces inspired by computer game music and film soundtracks, edging into the darkness with neat use of cello and violin and transporting the listener, briefly, to the dimly-lit deck of a shipwrecked spacecraft on a distant, dangerous planet.

14. AGS CONNOLLY

‘Trusty Companion’

Ags Connolly is a man with a voice of extraordinary power, capable of transporting you from a dank open mic pub in Witney to the Grand Ole Opry. His songs are deeply rooted in country, full of hardened wisdom and homespun turns of phrase; he’s a man absolutely in love with and at home with country music, into which he pours his heart and soul, none more so than on this sad, stately acoustic lament that really allows his voice to stand centre stage and make grown men weep into their whisky.

15. UNDERSMILE

‘Titanaboa’

It tells you plenty about Undersmile’s monolithic musical nature that even though they only released one song in 2014, it was longer than many band’s entire output for the year. 23 minutes to be precise. It formed one half of a split album with Bismuth and showed that rather than aiming to become a bit more accessible any time soon Undersmile are heading further into the black, by way of an ocean-sized doomscape that makes Mordor look like Disneyland Paris by comparison.

16. HANNAH BRUCE

‘Takes A Hold’

Making music that feels like it’s in focus can be an overrated skill, as Hannah Bruce proved on her debut ‘Homemade Recordings’ EP, featuring a guest appearance from fellow musical somnambulist Rawz on one track. Amid a woozy trip into a strange pop netherworld, this was the stand-out, like Tricky taking a particularly hazy approach to an obscure Kate Bush song. The age of the understatement is indeed upon us.

17. PADDOX

‘Crescent Moon’

Talking of favourite bands we’ve loved and lost, last year it was Trophy Wife who gave up the ghost at the same time as furnishing us with their debut album. Fast forward a year and drummer Kit Monteith has returned with a new band, one made of even more gossamer threads than the last. Paddox don’t so much head off into space as gently drift star wards on the back of some seriously soporific electronic twinkling, wowing and fluttering. Music from the Cosmos. Half a galaxy away from what you’d expect from an album that comes encased in a concrete box.

18. MUTAGENOCIDE

‘Half-Born’

If the concept that listening to music can resemble being verbally and physically assaulted by a gibbering mad man, but in a good way, seems alien to you, then you’ve probably not heard Mutagenocide. You come away from their shows feeling metaphorically spittle-flecked and bruised, yet feeling you’ve learned a valuable lesson, in their case possibly involving complex mathematical formulae for chord changes. They crush thrash, tech, death and classic metal into odd, angular shapes and hurl it at you with extreme prejudice. Frankly you’d be a fool to think about getting out of the way.

19. FLIGHTS OF HELIOS

‘Succubus’

The local psych-prog ensemble’s sunflight continued with this single, a characteristically slow-build, sudden-release trip that could burn up in the solar glare were it not for Chris Beard’s carefully

restrained vocal acrobatics, forever sounding like he’s on the end of a taut leash.

20. KID KIN ‘Shogun Giant’

Like a sunset on Morecambe seafront, Kid Kin’s music can be beautiful and overpowering in equal measures. Peter Lloyd’s simultaneously elegant and glitchy mix of skittering beats, burnished bronze electronics and shoegazey guitar sheen make for a pretty cherry-blossom soundstorm on tracks like ‘Shogun Giant’, a dappled, deceptively melodic cut from his recent ‘Holy Youth’ EP.

21. GIRL POWER

‘Consumers’

The art of hardcore almost seems lost in an era of metalcore and what’s laughingly termed ‘post-hardcore’. Girl Power play hardcore. Music that sounds like several angry bulls in the world’s largest china shop raging against human stupidity. Or, if you’d prefer, Discharge and Blitz in one godalmighty punch-up with the entire Amphetamine Reptile roster. Who’s the winner? You are, dear listener, you are. Now pick your teeth up off the floor, it’s time for round two.

22. ADAM BARNES ‘Green’

As well as one of the most impressive beards in Oxford, Adam Barnes also has one of the best voices – soulful, plaintive and reflective without ever lapsing into melodrama or self-pity. His debut album, ‘The Land, The Sea & Everything Lost Beneath’, was an autumnal journey with little promise of light at the end of the tunnel, but with the lovely sense of longing conveyed by ‘Green’, no-one would be wishing the sun to come up any time too soon.

23. BLANKDREAD

‘We Are Fucked Anyway’

Asher Dust is a restless and prolific creative force, a man who doesn’t seem to believe one great idea will suffice when you can stamp, staple, squeeze or weld six into a single track. Which is why his regular offerings are always a cause for celebration as much as occasional confusion. His Blankdread album veered frenetically between hip hop, trip hop, punk, jazz, electro, dub and blues with scattershot energy, but this elegant slice of blues-inflected soul-hop is characteristic of his invention, if far from typical of the sounds he creates.

24. SALVATION BILL

‘Dead Dog’

Ollie Thomas’s first of a brace of singles under his new Salvation Bill guise came encased in a dog food tin, a reminder that for every sad-eyed, bleeding heart acoustic songsmith, there’s one with a sense of humour, a sense of humour that made its way into his music with its morbid lyricism (this one was about killing his neighbour’s noisy dog, though we know he didn’t mean it really – right?), the jaunty piano throwing the subject matter into even starker light.

25. THE RELATIONSHIPS

‘Self-Esteem Flying Machine’

An air of typically English resilience hung over The Relationships’ ‘Phase’ album, the band dreaming of 1960s Californian sun while trapped in the Home Counties suburbs, heartstrings twitched like the net curtains of semi-detached houses along faceless cul-de-sacs. This understated highlight was a gorgeous, swooning shimmer through a form of psychedelic pop so sweetly restrained they must surely have downed their acid tabs with bone china cups of tea.

DELTA

MONDAY 1st
DELTA GIANTS: The Jericho Tavern – Mississippi-style blues at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.
RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC: The New Theatre – Big-stage tribute. To Fleetwood Mac.
DOT’S FUNKY ODYSSEY: The Cellar – Soulful tunes and funky grooves from the local funk and soul band, playing Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye and Michael Jackson among other classics and originals.
JACKIE OATES & MEGAN HENWOOD: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional English folk from the local singers.

Friday 5th
DREADZONE: The Bullingdon
Dreadzone come round this way regularly enough to take them for granted, but the fact they’ve endured for so long (they formed in 1993) and continue to gig almost unceasingly, is because they remain a great live band, a genuinely uniting musical force. Dreadzone’s is a peculiarly British form of reggae, fusing roots sounds and dub with a folky feel, trance and breakbeats. 21 years old this year, veterans of ten albums (plus a Best of), six Peel sessions and countless tours and festival appearances, Glastonbury is surely being their spiritual home. Their classic 1995 album, ‘Second Light’ spawned their only Top 20 hit, ‘Little Britain’, but their enduring appeal rests in their ability to transform any room, or field, into a reggae party. The trippy, spacious, almost rustic feel of their sound might feel almost archaic compared to what’s come since but it’s following their own path that’s ultimately kept them on top of their game for so long. And it’s weird to think that amongst the band’s earliest backing singers were Alison Goldfrapp and Melanie Blatt. They could so easily have called it a day back in 2006 when guitarist Steve Roberts died, but brother and band founder Greg (originally drummer with Big Audio Dynamite) rallied together a new band and the band are back out on the road doing what they’ve always done best – playing live to packed houses.



DECEMBER

TUESDAY 2nd
MYCELIUM: The Old Fire Station – Bruno Guastalla curates Oxford Improvisers’ finale to their autumn and winter season with a massed gathering of string players.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson’s Quartet at the Bully’s weekly club.
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s, new wave, disco, glam and synth-pop club night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern
THE CORN POTATO STRING BAND: Three Horseshoes, Towersey – Hot fiddle action.

WEDNESDAY 3rd
FROM THE HORSES MOUTH with ROB AUTON + ROSALIND PETERS + FEMI NYLANDER: The Cellar – Rap and poetry night with in-house band The Horse Band and guests.
SIMPLY GERSHWIN: St John the Evangelist – Pianist Viv McLean and singer/actress Sarah Gabriel celebrate the songwriting genius of George Gershwin in a fundraiser for the church restoration fund.

THURSDAY 4th
THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN: The New Theatre – Motown tribute spectacular with all the classic Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Supremes, Isley Brothers, Four Tops and Jacksons hits, plus more.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the veteran local swamp-blues faves.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – The long-running open club continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more every week.
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst – The long-running blues jam finds a new home after the closure of The Jack Russell in Marston. Open blues jam with the in-house band.

FRIDAY 5th
DREADZONE: The Bullingdon – Party-starting folk-reggae from the enduring festival favourites – *see main preview*
BALLOON ASCENTS + RAINBOW RESERVOIR + JULIA MEIJER: Modern Art Oxford – Pindrop curates a special gig to help launch a new exhibition of Warhol and Morris artwork, with recent *Nightshift* cover stars Balloon Ascents fusing Radiohead’s understated, inventive electro-rock and Stornoway’s questing folk. They’re joined by jaunty Anglo-American

anti-folk songstress Rainbow Reservoir, and sweet, atmospheric electro-acoustic singer Julia Meijer.
THE WALL OF FLOYD: O2 Academy – Pink Floyd tribute.
EMBRACE: O2 Academy – The Brighthouse Britpoppers return, having scored a Top 5 hit with their eponymous comeback album earlier this year (their first album in eight years). Prior to that the band had enjoyed five Top 10 albums, including three Number 1s, enjoying the post-Britpop era’s commercial golden years with their epic soulful guitar-pop providing a more elegant counterpoint to Oasis and their ilk at times. Brothers Danny and Richard McNamara always talked a good fight, which drew regular comparisons to the Gallaghers but the band’s enduring success suggested they were in nobody’s shadow.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + PHYAL + NOT TOO SHABBY: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak’s monthly pick’n’mix of musical fun continues, tonight’s guests being rising electro starlets Flights of Helios, with their ambient, slightly proggy space rock. They’re joined by refired grunge rockers Phyal and hard-rocking crew Not Too Shabby.
SKYLARKIN’S SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Your monthly ska, reggae, rocksteady, soul and dancehall party engagement, hosted, as ever, by Count Skylarkin. He’s joined tonight by roots-reggae songstress Jewels & Jacuzzis, and RCA-signed soul boy James Joseph, currently recording his debut album with Amy Winehouse collaborator Baby J. Ireland’s dancehall party-starters Dirty Dubstars complete a suitably party-hearty line-up.
SANCTUM: The Varsity Club – Metal club night with classics and new releases across the genre.
DISCO MUTANTES: The Library – Disco, boogie and house night.

SATURDAY 6th
BURIED IN SMOKE CHRISTMAS WEEKENDER: The Wheatsheaf (3pm) – Hark and Slabdragger top the bill at today’s pre-Christmas Buried in Smoke all-dayer – *see main preview*
UK FOO FIGHTERS: O2 Academy – Foo Fighters hits rendered with authentic British pronunciation.
THE DEVIATED + NOT TOO SHABBY + SUGAR DARLING + BLUE SHIFT: The Bullingdon – Church of the Heavy presents an evening of classic heavy rock, metal and noise with a selection of local bands.
ADAM BARNES + WILLIE J HEALEY + JESS HALL: The Cellar – Three of Oxford’s finest singer-songwriters come together for an evening of musical tenderness. Soulful and plaintive acoustic reflection from Adam Barnes, whose ‘The Land, The Sea and Everything

Lost Beneath’ debut earlier this year was a real treasure of an album. Similarly Jess Hall’s stunning ‘Bookshelves’ debut, with its rich, emotive folk songs about the sea and shore. Willie J Healey, meanwhile, is looking to be next year’s bright young local singer-songwriter starlet with the release of his new EP, produced by Stornoway’s Oli Steadman and Spring Offensive’s Pelham.
SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House and techno club night.
TRASHY: O2 Academy – Kitsch pop hits, 80s and glam fun at the O2’s weekly pop extravaganza.
WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar – Garage, grime and house club night.
HONOLULU COWBOYS: St Giles Church Hall – Hawaiian tea party with live music from the Honolulu Cowboys.
QUADROPHONIC LIVE: The Newman Rooms, St Aldates – Classic albums of the 1970s played in quadraphonic sound, compèred by David Freeman and kicking off with Pink Floyd’s ‘Dark Side of the Moon’.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin,

Saturday 6th – Monday 8th
BURIED IN SMOKE CHRISTMAS LONG WEEKEND: Various venues
Oxford’s most consistently quality metal promoters host their annual pre-Christmas extravaganza, this year stepping it all up another gear to cover three days and three venues. Saturday’s all-dayer at the Wheatsheaf is headlined by progressive sludge monsters **Hark**, the band formed by Jimbob Isaac from Taint. Joining them are Croydon’s sludge/stoner/hardcore riffmongers **Slabdragger** and Milton Keynes’ sludge-doom crew **Seven Hundredth Unicorn**, as well as a seriously heavyweight local contingent that includes psych-blues heroes **Desert Storm**, stoner warriors **Beard of Zeus** and **Indica Blues**; old-school hardcore types **Girl Power**; drone-meister **Lee Riley** and of course this month’s *Nightshift* cover stars **Mother Corona**. Sunday is another all-day affair, moving onto the Bullingdon with Brighton’s downtuned hardcore merchants **Warwolf (pictured)**, ex-Hang the Bastard crew **Mine**, Dorset doomsters **In The Hills** and Portsmouth’s heavy-duty blues-metallers **Tricorn** among a dozen or so acts. On Monday, if you still have any sense of hearing left, Justin Greaves’ epic progsters **Crippled Black Phoenix** are back in town at The Cellar. And if you survive all three days, you get a medal. And a new set of internal organs.



Wallingford – Blues rocking from the local stalwart.

SUNDAY 7th
BURIED IN SMOKE CHRISTMAS WEEKENDER: The Bullingdon (1.30pm) – Second Buried in Smoke all-dayer, with Warwolf, Mine and In The Hills amongst those keeping it well ‘eavy – *see main preview*
ALABAMA 3: O2 Academy – Larry Love and the Very Reverend Dr D Wayne Love return once more with another dose of acid house blues and country medicine, riding the rough highway between Hank Williams and Happy Mondays, spreading a little bit of worldly wit and chemically-enhanced joy as they go.
THE JESTERS + CALLOW SAINTS BAND + JOHN POTTER & MARK BOSLEY + THE FIREGAZERS + MATT SEWELL: The Wheatsheaf (2.30-7pm) – Klub Kakofanney host a free afternoon of unplugged live music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.
ARTHUR + BEARD OF DESTINY + MOON LEOPARD + OXFORD UKULELES + RIVERSIDE VOICES: Donnington Community Centre – The monthly Donnington music sessions celebrate Christmas with an extended evening of acoustic live music, with blues from Beard of Destiny; folk from Moon Leopard; ukulele classics from Oxford Ukuleles and Christmas carols from Riverside Voices.
MISSING PERSIANS: The Royal Oak, Burford – Americana, blues and rock from the local crew.

MONDAY 8th
CATFISH & THE BOTTLEMEN: O2 Academy – Sold-out show from Llandudno’s retro-rocking indie stars on the rise, touring their debut album for Island, ‘the Balcony’, coming in somewhere between Arctic Monkeys, The Manics and The Kooks.
OLI BROWN’S RAVENEYE: The Bullingdon – The Haven Club welcomes back Norfolk’s 23-year-old rock wunderkind, his debut album, ‘Open Road’, released when he was just 17, marking him out early on as one of the UK’s new breed of blues heroes, while drawing admiring comparisons to Rory Gallagher and Steve Cropper. Its 2010 follow-up, ‘Heads I Win, Tails You Lose’, featured regularly in end of year round-ups and found Oli winning Best Male Singer and Best Young Artist at the British Blues Awards. Since then his reputation has continued to grow, winning Best Album at last year’s Blues Awards and another Best Young Artist gong, while ‘Here I Am’ featured cameos from Paul Jones and Dani Wilde among others. He also achieved that blues seal of approval when he briefly replaced Rocky Athos in John Mayall’s band and has drawn praise from the venerable likes of Johnny Winter, Walter Trout and Joe Bonamassa for avoiding the pitfall of displaying clever fret technique over real blues soul, instead relying on simple riffs and rolling grooves to get his music across.
CRIPPLED BLACK PHOENIX + SEDULUS: The Cellar – Concluding Buried In Smoke’s Christmas long weekender, Iron Monkey, Electric Wizard and Mogwai man Justin Greaves’ grandiose prog-rockers return to play another intimate local show ahead of a major European tour, drawing on the darker side



Wednesday 10th
BOB LOG III: O2 Academy
If your idea of the blues is earnest old men taking their fretplay very seriously indeed, then Bob Log III probably isn’t for you. Likewise, if your sense of humour doesn’t involve regular mention of breasts, booze and scatological references, the Tucson, Arizona one-man slide-guitar band won’t be up your street. He’s pleasing someone though, since he’s been plying his trade for 25 years now, touring the world, both solo and with his old band Doo Rag, opening for Blues Explosion, Ween and even Franz Ferdinand along the way. Musically he adds some punk rock attitude to classic Delta blues, Mississippi Fred McDowell and Screaming Jay Hawkins by way of Chuck Berry, AC/DC and Bo Diddley. It’s his stage persona that grabs much of the attention, though: aside from his slide guitar and feet-powered drums, he wears a human cannonball suit and a motorcycle helmet mic’d up to a telephone receiver, keeping his identity semi-secret. He’s prone to getting ladies – and the odd gentleman – up onstage to sit on his knee while he plays, or performing from the ladies toilets, and with song titles like ‘I Want Your Shit On My Leg’ and ‘Clap Your Tits’, you can pretty much imagine the bawdy barroom nature of his particular brand of blues.

of Pink Floyd’s extravagant sonic expeditions for their monolithic slabs of eloquent noise – *see main preview*
LINDISFARNE: Nettlebed Folk Club – Newcastle’s enduring folk-rockers, still led by singer Ray Jackson, return to the intimate surroundings of Nettlebed’s weekly folk club.

TUESDAY 9th
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, bop and swing with veteran clarinetist Alvin Roy and his Reeds Unlimited band at tonight’s weekly jazz club.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night with residents Doktor Joy and Bookhouse
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 10th
THE ENEMY + THE TWANG: O2 Academy – Double dose of enduring Midlands rock acts, with Coventry’s lustily militant indie punks The Enemy kicking it out in the tradition of The Clash, The Jam and The Libertines, while Birmingham’s The Twang keep the spirit of Britpop and baggie alive.
BOB LOG III: O2 Academy – Delta blues



Thursday 11th –

FOXES: O2 Academy

Back in town after her show here in February, Foxes – the stage name of Southampton’s Louisa Allen – has seen her star very much in the ascendancy since that gig. She’s released her debut album, ‘Glorious’, for starters, which went Top 5, garnering mixed but generally positive reviews, but most importantly she was on *Dr Who*. Singing Queen’s ‘Don’t Stop Me Now’ on The Orient Express. In space. How cool is that? Even in our most fevered, drug-induced dreams, we’ve never done that. But then, it seems to be fully in the nature of a singer who always seems to be striving for grandeur, the album polished and sumptuous and awash with epic choruses, even while she’s singing about the most mundane details of teenage/early-20s life. Where Foxes is coming from, many have been before, notably Ellie Goulding, Marina & the Diamonds and Emeli Sandé – bombastic yet baroque electro-pop with a theatrical edge, coupled with an exotic, slightly kooky look that seems to owe a bit to avowed influence Bat For Lashes. The pensive ‘Youth’ and the almost stately ‘Beauty Queen’ show she’s got the voice and the tunes to make it big in her own right, though, and right now, upwards is the only way Foxes is heading. Right up into space, on the Orient Express.

played in a punk rock style by a guy in a human cannonball suit and motorcycle helmet. No, really – *see main preview*

STEAMROLLER’S ROCKING, ROLLING AND BLUES CHRISTMAS: The Bullingdon

– Heavy-duty 60s-style blues-rocking in the vein of Hendrix and Cream from the veteran local rockers playing in aid of the NSPCC. They’re joined on stage by a series of guests, including Roy Young, Dave Smith, Mark Freeman, Rory Evans and John Berry. **MONKFISH + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + BURNING BEES + BEAVER FUEL: The Wheatsheaf** – Moshka’s Christmas shindig with gothic rock veterans Monkfish; techno/synthpop duo Space Heroes of the People, local rock supergroup Burning Bees and lo-fi punk-pop urchins Beaver Fuel. **OXFORD ACOUSTIC CLUB: The Jericho Tavern** – Unplugged sets from Adam McMillan, Ben Avison, Samuel Edwards, Anastasia Gorbunova, Lee Valentine and Alan Jaggs. **OUTER LIMITS: The Cellar** – Hip hop, grime and garage club night with Destiny 105 stalwart Dr Erbz and friends.

THURSDAY 11th

FOXES: O2 Academy – Baroque electro-pop from Louisa Allen, back from her adventures in time and space – *see main preview*

MIDWINTER DRONE FEST: Modern Art Oxford – Drones, drones, ambience and more drones from Pindrop Performances – *see main preview*

LEWIS WATSON: St. Barnabas Church – Homecoming show in the suitably ornate and genteel environs of St Barnabas Church for Bicester’s Lewis Watson, capping off a successful year that saw him tour around Europe and release his debut album, ‘The Morning’, his soft-centred songs of love and longing owing a debt to Coldplay, Ben Howard and Ed Sheeran, while his pure, easy voice has earned him multi-million Youtube hits along the way. **THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf** – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the veteran local blues-rock eccentric.

JOHNNY’S SEXUAL KITCHEN + THE MATT EDWARDS BAND + MAD LARRY + TOM IVEY BAND + SAL & TONY: The Cellar – It’s All About The Music blues and rock night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

THE COTTONETTES + BEARD OF DESTINY + LEPER KING: The Bell Inn, Bicester – Punk from Guildford’s Cottonettes, blues from BoD and psychedelic groove rock and blues from Leper King at tonight’s Strummerroom Project show.

OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon BROTHERHOOD OF MACK: Joe Perk’s, St Clement’s – Lounge lizard blues, playing Delta blues through to acoustic Motorhead covers. **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 12th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE SHAPES + NON-STOP TANGO + GEMMA MOSS + VOLKERFUNK: The Wheatsheaf – The reliably eclectic GTI celebrates the end of another year fighting the good fight of bringing new music to the masses in the company of 60s-styled rock’n’soul outfit The Shapes, with a sound that harks back to the classic songwriting of Van Morrison, Squeeze, and Elvis Costello among others. Support comes from Oxford Improvisers supergroup Non-Stop Tango, fusing jazz, funk, electronica, prog and more; decidedly offbeat gothic torch singer Gemma Moss, and Teutonic-style electro-pop act Volkenfunk. Go on, take a chance, you might hear something you like.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz dance club night, tonight with a live set from locally-based kora player and Mandinkan griot Jali Fili Cissokho and his band, playing funky mbalax Afro grooves. He’s joined by London-based Ghanaian DJ Volta 45, with his extensive collection of African dance music, plus host and resident DJ Dan Ofer.

SAXON: O2 Academy – The Barnsley metal titans return, stars of the NWOBHM scene in the late-70s and early-80s, going on to sell some 15 million albums worldwide, including the genre classic ‘Wheels Of Steel’. Original singer Biff Byford and guitarist Paul Quinn still helm the rock and roll battleship, so expect all the big hits as well as tracks from their 2013 album, ‘Sacrifice’, the group’s twentieth. **FRACTURE + STROKE OF LUCK + STORYTELLER + ROCKY VALLEY + RAYZO: O2 Academy** – It’s All About the

Music local bands showcase with epic stadium pop from Fracture; soulful guitar pop outfit Stroke of Luck and more.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: The James Street Tavern

SATURDAY 13th

METHOD MAN & REDMAN: O2 Academy – East Coast dope buddy rap royalty come to town – *see main preview*

IRREGULAR FOLK CHRISTMAS PARTY with THE MAGIC LANTERN + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + JORDAN HUNT: East Oxford Community Centre – While Irregular Folk are sadly no longer a monthly concern on the local scene, they still pop up occasionally to showcase acts whose approach to folk music is unusual, off-beat, inventive and, yes, irregular. Tonight’s pre-Christmas event features London’s Magic Lantern, with his warm, pure acoustic folk in the vein of Jeff Buckley and Joanna Newsom; erstwhile Irrepressibles chap Jordan Hunt, with his fragile, emotive piano-led acoustic pop, and local ambient space-drone crew Flights of Helios, tonight unplugging the synths for an acoustic set. Irregular Folk promoter Vez Hoper knows how to make a gig an occasion so expect festive food and décor alongside the music.

AUTUMN SAINTS + SEVEN O’CLOCK JUNKIES + PUPPET MECHANIC + THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE: The Bullingdon – REM-ish country rocking from Oxford-based Anglo-American trio Autumn Saints, alongside acoustic indie crew Puppet Mechanic and Reading’s psych-surf techno-rock stars The Pink Diamond Revue. **BEDROCK: The Bullingdon** – Classic metal and rock anthems, plus the best new heavyweight releases at Skeleton’s monthly rock club night. **BWARE THIS BOY + BLACKTHORN: The Cellar** – Folk-punk in a Clash-meets-Lindisfarne fashion from Beware This Boy. **EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar** – Techno, bass and house club night. **MAMBO MAMBO MAMBO: The Old Fire Station** – Mambo once, mambo twice, mambo thrice at tonight’s none-more-mambo show, with sets from Manchester’s Buggalo Foundations, bringing the spirit of 1970s New York to Oxford with heir fusion of jazz, r’n’b and Latin rhythms, and local twenty-strong Cuban big band Ran Kan Kan, with a lively set of classic tunes.

TRASHY: O2 Academy

SUNDAY 14th

TAKING BACK SUNDAY: O2 Academy – New York’s enduring post-hardcore crew hit the UK to tour sixth album ‘Happiness’. **SUPERLOOSE + DALE EASTHOPE + SONG & SUPPEROOMS + BEARD OF DESTINY + PURPLE MAY + JOHNNY’S SEXUAL KITCHEN: The Wheatsheaf (4-8pm)** – Free afternoon of acoustic music on the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.

MONDAY 15th

THE FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Jericho Tavern – Coming so soon after the death of FMB promoter Phil Guy Davis, tonight’s traditional Christmas party is likely to be an emotional

affair. Phil was an imposing presence at the club’s helm and tonight’s party sees the return of London’s funky blues and soul outfit 24 Pesos, a band Phil hosted a number of times over the years. A great occasion to celebrate Silver Phil’s very colourful life.

ST AGNES FOUNTAIN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional folk songs with a festive leaning from Chris While, Julie Mathews, Chris Leslie and David Hughes.

TUESDAY 16th

HOZIER: O2 Academy – Already sold-out show from the County Wicklow singer-songwriter, whose debut EP, ‘Take Me To The Church’ went to Number 1 in his native Ireland’s iTunes chart, with its raw, soulful take on Delta blues, not a million miles from George Ezra, but better, while his eponymous debut album similarly went to the top back home, while going Top 5 in the UK.

THE WONDERSTUFF ACOUSTIC: O2 Academy – Miles Hunt’s Stourbridge hitmakers go unplugged for a run-through of old favourites, from ‘Unbearable’ and ‘It’s Yer Money I’m After baby’, to ‘Size of a Cow’ and ‘Don’t Let Me Down Gently’.

GODSBANE + WE FIGHT LIKE KIDS + 13 BURNING + TELEGRAPHER: The

Thursday 11th

MIDWINTER

DRONEFEST:

Modern Art Oxford

Subtitled “An evening of sonic proliferation and mantric ruminations”, tonight’s Pindrop-curated show simply had to be set in Oxford’s premier art gallery. Coming up to their tenth year putting on gigs in Oxford, Pindrop do excel at out-of-the-ordinary shows, so hopefully this celebration of the drone will continue that fine tradition Topping the bill are **Petrels**, the work of former-Bleeding Heart Narrative frontman Oli Barrett, now mixing oceanic cello drones with fractious electronics and chant-like vocals. His set comes accompanied by a visual display by Laid Eyes. He’s joined tonight by **Paddox**, the new project of former-Trophy Wife drummer Kit Monteith, whose ambient electronica can be heard on debut album ‘Aphrodisiaque’, released this month on Bear on a Bicycle inside a concrete sleeve, and **After The Thought**, Matt Chapman-Jones’ collision of four-to-the-floor electronica and post-rock guitar ambience. In between sets dronemeister extraordinaire **Lee Riley** will be playing his characteristically menacing microtonal soundscapes. Winter is upon us, and here’s the perfect soundtrack.



Wheatsheaf – Proggy Viking metal from Godsbane at tonight’s heavyweight show, plus Midlands metalcore crew We Fight Like Kids, local dissonant electronics and noise-rock newcomers Telegrapher, and old-school metallers 13 Burning.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with funky club regulars The Hugh Turner Band. **OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 17th

’68: O2 Academy – Stripped-down hardcore from Atlanta duo ’68, the latest musical vehicle for former-Norma Jean and Chariot frontman Josh Scogin, over in the UK for a tour to promote debut album ‘In Humour & Sadness’. **IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Wheatsheaf** –The the local promotions club hosts its Christmas do with The Oxford Beatles, Tranceplant and Freddie Phoenix. **SPARKY’S JAM NIGHT: The James Street Tavern** – Open mic and jam session.

THURSDAY 18th

SALVATION BILL + KANCHO! + JURASSIC POP: The Cellar – Idiot King hosts its Christmas party with darkly humorous folk-bluesman Salvation Bill, plus Jurassic Pop – possibly the only band whose songs are completely dedicated to the *Jurassic Park* films. **VAGUEWORLD + LUNAR GHECKO + IDEAL KOALA + TIM MAYO + PHILLIPA MORAN: The Bullingdon** – Lo-fi noisy indie rocking from Abingdon’s Vagueworld at tonight’s It’s All About the Music gig. Support from cello’n’drums duo Ideal Koala. **YOUR SONG: The Library** – Smash Disco host the annual festive cover version bunfight, with loads of local sorts massacring your favourites and more. Plus the return of Red Death. **STEAMROLLER & GUESTS: Kidlington Football Club** – Second charity show of the month from the veteran local blues-rockers, raising money for the NSPCC and others in the company of guests Rod Crisps from Falling Leaves, blues guitarists Krissy Matthews and Aaron Keylock and former member John Wyvene **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon** **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 19th

FOALS DJs + CHAD VALLEY: The Bullingdon –The local stars take to the decks for a night of 80s-flavoured funk, soul and electro. **THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + THE LONG INSIDERS + THE SHELLAC COLLECTIVE: O2 Academy** – The Rabbits host their now traditional festival jazz riot, keeping the sounds and spirit of pre-war r’n’b and jump blues alive and very much kicking. They’re joined tonight by The Long Insiders, inspired by the punked-up rockabilly of The Cramps as much as classic Elvis, while The Shellac Collective will be keeping the party rocking with classic rock’n’roll, r’n’b, jump blues, rockabilly, swing and jazz. **CRAIG CHARLES’ FUNK & SOUL SHOW: O2 Academy** – The man with the most



Saturday 13th

METHOD MAN &

REDMAN:

O2 Academy

The East Coast comes to east Oxford tonight as two of rap’s most playfully creative rappers continue their on/off collaboration. Friends before signing to Def Jam with their respective acts – Meth with Wu Tang Clan, Red with Def Squad – the pair’s musical double act came together via regular (good natured) rap battles, sharing a love of stoner humour that’s seen them starring in stoner movie *How High* and a brief, best-forgotten Fox sitcom *Method & Red*. Despite first getting together in 1994 it wasn’t until 99 they released their debut album together, the well-received ‘Blackout!’, and another decade before they made a follow-up, 2009’s ‘Blackout! 2’. You’d have thought, given the time to think about it, they’d have come up with a slightly more original title. Still, they’re busy fellas with myriad commitments, and both albums come with the expected guest appearances from each others’ day job bands. The chemistry between the duo is clear for all to hear, their shared humour augmented by a love for funky flow and typical MC braggadocio, all of which should make for a highly entertaining evening, as well as a rare chance to see two of rap’s big hitters in town.

boundless sense of enthusiasm on the planet brings his crates of classic funk and soul to town. You *will* party.

INVISIBLE VEGAS + BALLOONASCENTS + THE FAMILY MACHINE: The Wheatsheaf – Roadhouse power-pop from Invisible Vegas at tonight’s Sheaf show. They’re joined by rising local teen indie starlets Balloon Ascents with their sweetly epic electro-folk-pop, and veteran indie pop heroes The Family Machine. **FLUID: The Cellar** – Bass, garage and house club night with DJ Q.

SATURDAY 20th

THE BEAT: The Bullingdon – Classic ska-flavoured pop hits from Rankin Roger’s version of the 80s veterans – *see main preview* **SIMPLE & HOUSEWURK presents GRANT NELSON: The Bullingdon** – Two of Oxford’s leading house club nights team up to host one of the true godfathers of UK garage, drum&bass, hardcore and 2-step, Nelson at the leading edge of each genre as it broke since the early 90s, and still a leading light of the house scene with his Swing City Records. **ORANGE VISION + WHITE BEAM + CAMERON AG: The Wheatsheaf** – Alt.



Saturday 20th

THE BEAT: The Bullingdon

It’s symptomatic of the way the heritage band circuit has gone over the years that simply saying The Beat are playing in town isn’t enough. Which Beat? There are two, without even counting the American band whose existence lead to the British Beat having to change their name to The English Beat in the States (and The British Beat in Australia). There’s The English Beat starring Dave Wakeling, and then there’s The Beat with Ranking Roger. Confused? Well, tonight is the latter. The two acts have the same source of course. The Beat were among that mini revolution of bands in the late-70s/early-80s bringing ska to the masses, alongside The Specials, Madness, The Selecter et al. Hits like ‘Mirror In the Bathroom’, ‘Too Nice To Talk To’ and ‘Hands off, She’s Mine’, as well as a cover of ‘Tears of a Clown’, and a brace of Top 5 albums made them stars, before they fractured and split, reforming in the two formats that currently tour on a regular basis. Joining lead man Roger in this line-up is his son Ranking Junior, as well as former-Wonderstuff drummer and 90s dance hitmaker Fuzz Townsend. All you really need to know, though, is they’ll be playing the hits, and much more. That much is simple enough to predict.

rocking from Orange Vision, alongside goth-tinged indie rocking from newcomers White Beam, formed by ex-members of Red Star Cycle, X-1 and Mephisto Grande, plus melancholic singer-songwriter Cameron AG.
OXROX CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Cellar – Heavy rock club OxRox hosts local rock and metal covers band Terminus and DJ Krusher Joule (ex-Noisy Mothers) for some serious old-school rock action.
FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – Techno, house and disco club night, with a live set from electro-core crazies Coloureds, plus London synthman Infinite Scale live and resident DJs.
MATT SAGE + RICHARD NEUBERG + BETHANY WEIMERS + PROVINCIALS + JAMES BELL + SWINDLESTOCK: St Giles Parish Room – Pindrop’s final show of the year brings a host of acoustic solo performers,

including Catweazle host Matt Sage, and gothic folkstress Bethany Weimers, to the St Giles Parish Room.
TRASHY: O2 Academy

SUNDAY 21st

MARK SOLLIS + PETE LOCK & MARK BOSLEY + LAIMA BITE + TWIZZ TWANGLE + BEARD OF DESTINY + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30-7pm) – Klub Kakofanny host an afternoon of free acoustic music, including Moiety duo Pete Lock and Mark Bosley, gothic folkstress Laima Bite and one-man blues army Beard of Destiny.
SUNDAY SESSIONS with ALICE RUSSELL & NATUREBOY + SWINDLESTOCK: Florence Park Community Centre (2-5pm) – Family-friendly music session with acclaimed soul singer Alice Russell joining host Natureboy, plus rootsy Americana outfit Swindlestock.

MONDAY 22nd

HAVEN CLUB CHRISTMAS SHINDIG with THE MATT EDWARDS BAND + MAD LARRY + CATCH 44 + CAT SHAKERS: The Bullingdon – The Bully’s rock and blues club night hosts its festive party, with live sets from rising local bluesman Matt Edwards and band, and Larry Reddington’s new band, mixing blues, country, rock and folk.
BELSHAZZAR’S FEAST: Nettlebed Folk Club – Best known as fiddle and oboe player with Bellowhead, Paul Sartin has been a staple on the English folk circuit for night on twenty years and together with accordion player Paul Hutchison makes up Belshazzar’s Feast, bringing humour and virtuosity to old English dance tunes, ballads, war poems and folk standards.
CLARK & MOORE + THE OTHER DRAMAS: Phoenix Picturehouse – Live music in the cinema’s upstairs bar with country-tinged guitar and piano duo Clarke & Moore, plus garage-pop duo The Other Dramas.

TUESDAY 23rd

TOO MANY POETS + DECOVO + REEJAI + THE AUREATE ACT: The Jericho Tavern – Tightly-wound, Foals-y indie pop from Too Many Poets, plus fidgety guitar pop from Decovo and spacious, almost proggy pop from The Aureate Act.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 24th

REGGAE CHRISTMAS with DUB MAFIA: O2 Academy - The Academy’s traditional Christmas Eve reggae party returns, this year with Bristol’s bashment breakbeat heroes Dub Mafia returning to town after their showing at The Cellar back in March. Fronted by the reggae siren Eva Lazarus, the seven-piece have taken their floor-pounding blend of drum&bass, dancehall, dubstep, breakbeat and world music all over the globe, from Asia to Scandinavia, amassing over 1,000,000 Youtube hits along the way. Count Skylarkin, Constant Jammin

Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion is the 20th of each mont - no exceptions. Email listings to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net. All listings are copyright Nightshift Magazine and may not be reproduced without permission.

and Desta*Nation Soundsystem will keep you dancing from the top til the very last drop. This year the whole event is dedicated to the memory of Mackating bassist and Reggae Xmas originator David Norland, and in his honour a donation will be made to The Leys CDI Youth Music Project.

THURSDAY 25th

Soft-hearted, lifelong vegetarians though we are at *Nightshift*, we’re looking forward to carving up the bloated corpse of the new Pink Floyd album, stuffed with the glistening gizzards of Sam Smith and topped with Ed Sheeran’s stupid fat head with an apple stuffed in its mouth. At least that should shut him the fuck up for a few minutes while we neck our bottle of Lidl own-brand port in peace. Merry Christmas, everybody!

FRIDAY 26th

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Seacourt Arms – Boxing Day party with the veteran local blues rocker.

SATURDAY 27th

WHITE MAGIC SOUND: The Bullingdon

SUNDAY 28th

MONDAY 29th

ALEXANDER O’NEAL: O2 Academy – The veteran soul and r’n’b singer heads out on tour to relaunch his career, which peaked with 1987’s ‘Hearsay’ and 1991’s ‘All True Man’ albums, and hit singles ‘If You Were Here Tonight’, ‘Never Knew Love Like This’ and ‘Criticise’.
MILLENNIAL LIVE: The Cellar – Deep house, trap and drum&bass showcase night with Legion, HDZVP/Arro, Olde English and DJ Nazz.

TUESDAY 30th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon

WEDNESDAY 31st

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM NEW YEAR’S EVE PARTY: The Cellar – Dance into 2015 in the suitably festive company of Count Skylarkin. Temple Funk Collective play live, the New Orleans-style eight-piece brass band taking their cue from the Louisiana legends, and adding gypsy dance, jungle and hip hop into the fun gumbo. Disco Shed favourite Del Gazebo serves up bass bin-bothering bashment boogie, Harvey K-Tel picks prime hip hop, funk and disco delights, while the Count plays his characteristically party-starting mix of reggae, hip hop and funk into the New Year.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + MARK ATHERTON + THE BB DREADSOUND DISCO: The Wheatsheaf – New Year’s Eve hoe-down in the company of swamp-blues crazies The Mighty Redox and chums.
THE DREAMING SPIRES: The Rusty Bicycle – Americana-themed NYE party in the company of Oxfordshire’s godfathers of alt.country.

LIVE



Public Service Broadcasting photo: Giulia Bitsberti

AUDIOSCOPE

The Jericho Tavern

It’s pissing down and blowing a gale. Wretched weather; who’d be homeless on days like this? Far too many people, tragically. Which is why events like Audioscope, in their own small way, are so important; in 14 years the annual mini-festival has raised getting on for £30,000 for Shelter.

Charity gigs are hardly uncommon but few have the identity and quality of Audioscope, which has carved a niche for itself in the local gig calendar for its ability to bring the best leftfield and underground sounds to town.

They’ve pulled off several serious coups this year, hosting two bona fide legends and attracting a headline act who would otherwise be playing far bigger venues than this.

That’ll be **Public Service Broadcasting**, whose finale to an eleven-hour music marathon is sporadically engaging if slightly scrappy. Their shtick – motorik instrumentals tied to vintage Pathé newsreels – may not be hugely original but it’s rarely less than engaging, particularly on the superb,

not to say rather moving, ‘Spitfire’, and the studiedly bookish duo have an endearingly understated sense of humour, leaving any between-song chat to an iMac that talks with an old-school posh accent.

Much, much earlier in the day psych-rockers **The Neon Violets** carve out a neat groove of noise, somewhere between Hawkwind and Wooden Shjips, while **Kid Kin**’s richly-textured instrumental electro-shoegaze creates a warmly welcoming fog of noise to bring the day gently into life.

Australian seven-piece folk ensemble **The Doomed Bird of Providence** are folk music in the same way as The Pogues and Jacques Brel were, exploring the dark, seedy underbelly of life with vim and vigour by way of dark waltzes and gothic shanties. It’s deliciously stark, grimy stuff, like Fisherman’s Friend remodelled by Warren Ellis and you can just imagine them popping up as the bar band in a Nick Cave-scripted movie.

Earthling Society have played with Hawkwind and it shows – their spaced-out psych-jazz jams teetering between indulgent noodling and hypnotic propulsion. They’d do well to ditch the vocals which drag them down to pub-rock band level at times

because when they cut loose they’re properly engaging, and if the new Pink Floyd album was half as good we might actually care about it.

One of Audioscope’s most appealing facets is the audience who are open minded and respectful throughout, so even when **You Are Wolf** come perched between two very loud acts with their gossamer traditional folk, there’s no chatter to detract from their songs. Songs that are mostly about birds, taking often ancient stories and songs and adding just the right twists of modernity to make them compelling and, at times, absolutely beautiful.

Far more so than **Matt Elliott**’s lumpen acoustic set. The guy was in Flying Saucer Attack for heaven’s sake – there’s no excuse for being so dull.

That’s a rare aberration on a day packed with quality and cult heroes. One of which is **Silver Apples**, a New York duo who laid down the foundations for so much Krautrock, electronic music and psychedelia back in the 60s, now just modulator man Simeon, now in his 70s, and showing no signs of mellowing musically as he crafts hypnotic electronic space grooves out of an extensive home-made board of machines that look like something from the fevered imagination of Professor Quatermass.

Afterwards we shake hands and have our photo take with him as he chats genially and we feel genuinely humbled.

We similarly turn into simpering fanboys in the company of Stephen Mallinder, who is as approachable as his music is alienating and austere. As part of Cabaret Voltaire he is an electronic music god, no question. His new band, **Wrangler**, sounds like prime Cabs – future factory industrial hiss and clang, electro-primitivism and abrasive synthetic melodies, occasionally cut through with foreboding vocals. It’s music for Dalek discos. It is, frankly, astonishing.

Telescopes, though, are equal to it. Last time they played Audioscope they were deliberately contrary and indulgent. Tonight they sound like the storm at the heart of the sun, Stephen Lawrie hunched centre stage howling into the void as his band crush rock music to a point of singularity via vast psychedelic drones that in the malevolent intensity stakes make Begbie from *Trainspotting* look like The Dude from *The Big Lebowski*. They’re like a musical incarnation of the deluge outside, but condensed into thirty minutes of sonic catharsis, and there’s no roof in the world can save you from such a storm.

Nor would we want it to.
Dale Kattack



MAIIANS / KID KIN / THE CRISIS PROJECT

Modern Art Oxford

There are times when good sounds aren’t the same as good music. The Crisis Project, a man from Bristol with a rack of tech, certainly knows which buttons to punch and which pots to twist to produce a tasty stutter, lurch or glitch, continually derailing what might just be warm house tracks with inventive treatments a la Funkstorung, but sometimes you just want him to stop and think about structure for a moment. The second tune promises hints of early Black Dog, but soon gets swamped by the tricks and twiddles, until it’s more like watching a hardware tutorial than a gig. Make us feel as though you’re gifting us art, not as though you’re selling us Kaos pads.

Kid Kin is almost the opposite, setting up surprisingly simple rhythms and spicing them with cleanly elegant keyboard lines and swathes of ultra-fuzz guitar crescendos. The average Kid Kin track sounds like Mogwai jamming on the tension cues from a mid-afternoon game show, which might have ended up an overbalanced mess if he weren’t so adept at arrangement, constructing solid melodic edifices before swamping them with a deluge of warm reverbed strumming. Some moments are overly nice, perhaps, but even then we’re reminded of Angelo Badalamenti’s knack for studied kitsch

(ironically, as *Twin Peaks* was projected behind Crisis Project, whereas Kid Kin gets the first 30 minutes of *Labyrinth*, which rather shoots down the soaring sonic beauty).

Maiians, with their sleek yet bouncy double-drummer synth instrumentals, at first seem like an Oxford music throwback, melding The Evenings and Sunnysvale with scrambled bits of The Egg. Even bashing away in a dark basement there’s a seductive smoothness to their music, taking the kick of funk, but cosmetically covering the sweat and airbrushing out the solos, in a manner that recalls disco genius Arthur Russell. Oxford has never been short of the arch, the articulate and the impeccably measured – and we’re not just talking about music – but it’s refreshing to see a band that takes controlled eloquence and adds dancefloor nous. By the end of an impressive set, our reference points have morphed: Maiians are Tortoise at their warmest crossed with the sort of post-samba outfit you always see perking up the runners half way along the London Marathon... which is far more satisfying than pressing the machines that make the nice noises, as it turns out.

David Murphy

BO NINGEN

O2 Academy

Once upon a time in a dark Japanese dungeon, Lemmy from Motorhead and Sadako from *Ring* spawned a quartet of skinny, demonic imp children. They formed a band called Bo Ningen, who were taught to played guitar by Satan, who was actually Dave Brock from Hawkwind in disguise, and set out to destroy the world with sound.

Tonight’s short set, opening for Band of Skulls, who must have cowered in their dressing room wondering what they’d done to deserve this, is

incendiary in the extreme, the quartet’s space-riding psychedelic noise blast and propulsive jams not so much music as a sonic torrent of noise, its intricacies – of which there are many – simply flotsam and jetsam amid the oncoming storm.

Centre-stage is singer/bassist Taigen Kawabe, a gurning, grimacing presence who finishes the set atop the barrier in front of the crowd, guitar aloft, shrieking hysterically into the ether as the rest of the band play merry hell, cataclysmic crescendos

threatening to reach climax but forever piling on the pressure until they implode under their own mass.

Three tracks in thirty minutes tells you much about what you need to know about Bo Ningen: they do nothing by halves and make a laughing stock of anyone who says rock music has lost its power to shock and awe. Only Gnod and Mugstar of the bands we’ve seen in recent years can match this show of guitar power.

And if you can detect a sulphurous smell in the air today, it’s either the gates of Hell opening up, or Bo Ningen just tore Oxford a new arsehole.

Dale Kattack

MUTAGENOCIDE / SANITY LOSS / DEVIL INSIDE / TWISTED STATE OF MIND

O2 Academy

On the way to tonight’s gig it’s announced that Cream’s Jack Bruce, one of the grand old men of British rock music, has died. Fitting then that the first band we hear are Witney’s Twisted State of Mind, all of them just 14 years old but belying their tender years with extreme prejudice. Back in the UK after an American tour, they look like they should be auditioning for *McFly*, *the Next Generation*, but they’re possessed by the spirit of 80s thrash and kick it out full throttle with theatrical zeal. Guitarist Luke Ashby appears in the crowd to play his solo atop a table, while Damon Marshall’s tumultuous drumming propels everything onward. The trio play up to the clichés of the genre, milking them for all their worth on songs like set highlight ‘Rock and Roll In Hell’, tempering the thrash onslaught with a sense of melody that reminds us of Judas Priest and Accept at times. Rock music, it seems, is in safe hands. Follow that, grown-ups.

Devil Inside, sadly, can’t. There are six of them but they make half the noise of Twisted State of Mind. They look like they want to be Black Veil Brides, but as soon as the ominous synth intro fades, we’re into messy standard metal territory as each member battles to be centre of attention but mostly succeed in bumping into each other. The singer

manages some decent semi-operatic sense of epic but they’re all show and no tell.

Sanity Loss are similarly attired – all black leather and silk scarves – but they’re a far tighter unit, the goth-glam look belying a well-drilled metalcore sound that, if breaking few musical barriers, makes for 30 minutes of well-choreographed death-tinged fun. Their bassist is the star of the show: a pouting, peroxide fretboard-licking poser who spends one song with a girl’s bra clasped between his teeth. Metal needs more cartoon characters like this. Mutagenocide, though, are in a class of their own, a growling, rasping speedfreak collision of tech, thrash, death and classic metal that’s a brutally thrilling thing to behold, like being sonically pummelled by a champion kickboxer. Singer Jay’s relentless yapping vocal onslaught is barely decipherable but it matters not a jot, and as a small but overly enthusiastic pit breaks out, we remember that tonight marks the tenth anniversary of the death of John Peel. And we imagine him smiling approvingly down on the musical terror unfurling below. “Louder! Faster!” as the great man was fond of saying. Instructions Mutagenocide follow to the letter.

Dale Kattack

ELLA MARTINI

The Bullingdon

With her hair covered by a large headband and a voice that ranges from kittenish and cutesy to slightly tigerish, Ella Martini could pass for a young Eartha Kitt at times. Certainly the large, noisy throng gathered before the 19-year-old singer from Botley seem to think she’s a new soul sensation in waiting.

She’s no diva yet, mind. Between songs she’s self-effacing and seems a little taken aback, embarrassed even, by the enthusiasm directed towards her, while in song she’s an understated presence. While she’s not immune to melisma, mostly her voice is tightly reined in. When she veers close to hip hop, she reminds us a little of Ms Dynamite’s more restrained delivery, while even in those moments Ella lets her voice unfurl into full soul sister, she’s closer to the flitsy sweetness of Minnie Riperton than any of the brazen, smashing-it, sirens *X-Factor* continue to foist upon the world. Which endears us to her all the more.

Lyrically her songs, like ‘Story’, ‘Dealing With This’ and ‘Ragdoll’, tend towards the confessional or emotional politics – boys who’ve done her wrong, or boys who aren’t good enough for her best friends (she seems worried we’ll all think she’s a man-hater, though let’s be honest, there’s plenty to hate in that department).

There’s a worry, at least here in a live setting, compared to the slick soulfulness of her recent single ‘You’, that some of her songs fizzle out before they’ve got going, and we’d like to hear her keyboard player’s strong backing vocals more – he’s buried in the mix when what you can hear adds a whole heap of depth to the feel of the songs. Vocally though, Ella’s talent is undeniable, and importantly possesses its own personality rather than overly trained or polished, and at her age she certainly has the time to work out what’s the best platform to show it off on.

Dale Kattack

BALKAN WANDERERS / RECKLESS SLEEPERS / PUPPET MECHANIC

The Wheatsheaf

Club Kakofanney head honchos Phil Freizinger and Sue Smith do a brilliant job promoting all that is eclectic about Oxford music and, despite a late pull out from bluesman Beard of Destiny, we and a ragbag of decidedly varied characters are primed for another musical journey of discovery at The Wheatsheaf.

Puppet Mechanic open with a more indie-oriented sound than the folk overtones of their recorded output would indicate, although they veer towards Americana a third of the way through while also dabbling in the more jaunty pastoralism of English folk. A volley of covers close the set – the Magnetic Fields’ ‘I Need A New Heart’ giving way to the Jacksons’ ‘Blame It on the Boogie’, the latter starting languidly before morphing into a riotous hoedown. Forced back on stage for an encore, they finish on a reworking of Kraftwerk’s ‘The Model’ and jolly fine it is too.

Similar enthusiasm greets the hardworking Reckless Sleepers, replete with capes, warbling and a degree of wackiness that homes in dangerously close to morris dancing territory. Synths straight out of the soundtrack of an Arnie movie come courtesy of an

X5 keyboard which, while being this band’s most appealing characteristic, is only marginally better at doing the job than the notoriously inefficient Oxford to Cambridge bus of the same number. The transport theme continues with ‘Bus to Carfax’, while covers of Midlake’s ‘Roscoe’ and Jefferson Airplane’s ‘White Rabbit’ prove to be well chosen.

Enter Balkan Wanderers, a five-piece who channel the spirit of the whole eastern half of the European continent, occasionally plunging deep into the music of Mother Russia itself but dabbling in Middle Eastern rhythms via opener and best known tune ‘Cairo’, as well as singer Antica’s native Croatia. Nattily-hatted English guitarists add a twist of Nutty Boys’ madcappery but the secret ingredient is Clare Heaviside’s clarinet – providing gorgeous warmth to a set that can’t help but get you moving. Balkan Wanderers’ upfront exhibition of their influences shouldn’t see them pigeonholed as a genre band and songs such as ‘Sleep Around’ have as much right to soundtrack the city as any straightforward bunch of Radiohead copyists. Put simply, they are excellent.

Robert Langham





LA ROUX O2 Academy

Around the time the seminal 2009 BBC documentary *Synth Britannia* was first shown, OMD’s Andy McCluskey memorably spat, “People ask why I don’t like La Roux and I say it just sounds like a woman warbling, badly, over an old Depeche Mode record.” And lo, in the early-80s synth revival in the late 2000s, as someone who profoundly reveres Depeche Mode, I was predisposed to think La Roux was a bit, well, naff. Chiptune might be more widespread now thanks to the popularity of videogame soundtracks and retrogaming, but to me then, La Roux’s first, eponymous, album was derivative; too trebly, too plinky – and Elly Jackson’s falsetto was just gimmicky.

Five years later, having shed her bandmate Ben Langmaid halfway (though he has co-written a lot – the best – of the second album, ‘Trouble in Paradise’), Elly is in Oxford with a full band. This band give a new depth and emotional dimension to the old stuff – especially in the wonderful harpischordy chord progressions of ‘Tigerlily’; ‘I’m Not Your Toy’ becomes less music-box and more cry-for-help.

The 80s vibe is still evident (‘Silent Partner’ would have fitted snugly into the *Flashdance* soundtrack), and the new stuff is infused (spiritually if not visually) with a more relaxed, *Miami Vice*-era, seedy – though observant (‘Sexotheque’), not decadent – sensibility. There’s less falsetto; less putting on a persona.

It’s clear that Elly’s more content with this Roxy Music-esque fuller sound; it feels like she’s discovered that a SID chip might not be the most satisfactory way to express herself. To borrow and clumsily twist a line from ‘Colourless Colour’, 2009 La Roux was like a new build with 80s décor: in vogue but transient. Now she’s more comfortable as a suburban semi with Chic retro influences; less divisive, more content – less distinctive, but ultimately triumphant.

Kirsten Etheridge

MASSIVE / SKAM / HELL’S GAZELLES

The Wheatsheaf

Metal will never die, that much we know. It might get older, and balder, and sometimes it’ll pretend to be Nu, but essentially the basic blueprint is so primal that, musically at least, it defies the laws of evolution.

Hell’s Gazelles are like a band of fresh-faced archaeologists who’ve discovered a really cool skull ring. Their entire set harks back to the period in the mid-80s when the majority of the NWOBHM bands began to inject a little American glam into their sound. There’s one moment when they sound too much like WASP for their own good, but the sheer confidence and vocal dexterity of singer Cole Bryant is astounding. Should Rob Halford hang up his leathers, there’s a worthy successor in the shape of Bryant.

Skam straddle the 80s and 90s with aplomb. Sometimes they incorporate a slight grunge aesthetic into their sound, but songs like ‘Let’s Get

Rocked’ keep things much more traditional. At times it’s a little workman like, but to their credit, they work the audience with assured professionalism.

With AC/DC on borrowed time with ill health and “legal problems” affecting the band, it’s only a matter of time before Australia will require a new full-on rock behemoth. Massive might just be that band. It’s the end of their tour so they’re up for a party and it shows. A mass of cliché, they’re almost too Spinal Tap for their own good. Downing Fosters and choreographed rocking out, they’ve got the classic rock and roll signifiers nailed down. When they throw in a couple of AC/DC numbers, it’s almost one step too far, but their own songs hold their own in such auspicious company. It’s generic, it’s got long hair, and it smells bad, but it’s damn fine fun.

Sam Shepherd

HEATHER PEACE O2 Academy

Unsurprisingly actress/singer Heather Peace has something of a cult following, with fans travelling from the States to be at tonight’s show. Sadly though, the end result is even more indecisive than her confused *Waterloo Road* character. It meanders from relaxed music, which wouldn’t go amiss in a late night cocktail bar, to attempts at pop and rock. At times her voice and musicianship dazzle with hints of Melissa Etheridge coming through, but this is negated by a desire to shift sounds with each song. The stripped-back piano-led ‘Fairytale’ is one of the highlights of the night, the subtle violin addition bringing a melancholy vibe to the song. Elsewhere ‘Dance With The Devil’ further confirms it’s the ballad numbers that are her strong point. Unfortunately, however, she too frequently strays and the result is a mixed bag of different styles performed with wildly variable degrees of success.

Her version of Fleetwood Mac’s ‘Go Your Own Way’ serves to highlight the lead guitarist’s skill as he thrashes through the end of the song. Nevertheless it fails to live up to Peace’s desire to “put [her] own spin on things,” her delivery being all too similar to the original number. Her version of Ne-Yo’s ‘Let Me Love You (Until You Learn To Love Yourself)’ is markedly better, with Peace bringing her acoustic guitar to the sound and delivering a simplistic version that allows the lyrics to shine through. Whilst ‘Love Affair with Misery’ highlights her ability to cross over into louder sounds, the title track of new album ‘The Thin Line’ loses power with the drumbeat dominating the song. Elsewhere, though the album version of ‘Clown’ is stripped back and sympathetic, the live rendition loses this in favour of a cabaret vibe that wouldn’t be out of place on a Disney soundtrack.

Though the gig is not a disaster and Peace delivers crisp vocals, two studio albums in you’d expect the whole thing to sound more accomplished. Instead she meanders through so many different styles it leaves the night feeling like a bag of Revels with far too many coffee-flavoured numbers thrown in to the mix.

Lisa Ward

DEAD PREZ / SUBCULTURE SAGE O2 Academy

Over two decades, Dead Prez have made a name for themselves as the most unapologetically radical of rap outfits, applying lofty disdain to the music industry circus, adopting a fiercely anti-corporate and anti-government stance, declaiming the victims of the war on drugs as ‘political prisoners’ and advocating a fierce brand of pan-Africanism. It’s a blend that has achieved favour among white hipsters as it has among black communities and the duo, Stic. man and M-1, have remained firmly outside the mainstream as a result, despite an early collaboration with Kanye West and an appearance on the movie *Dave Chappelle’s Block Party*. Whether that fierceness could be maintained in the not particularly urban surrounds of Oxford would be intriguing and an audience as satisfyingly diverse as you could hope for are present to find out.

Enlisted to set the scene, Brit rappers Subculture Sage are determined to have a ball, the reggae overtones of ‘Childhood’ increasing an already lively mood.

Entering the fray at 11.15 isn’t the most radical thing Dead Prez have ever done but it’s late for a Tuesday night down the Cowley Road and the torpor that had begun to set in due

to an interminable gap between acts and one too many vodkas is quickly blown apart by a typically aggressive performance from the duo. There’s no sign of what *Pitchfork* described as the ‘neutered new age crooning’ of most recent LP, ‘The Information Age’ as the duo blast out their message with gusto. That said, the set is light on tracks from their 2000 masterpiece ‘Let’s Get Free’ and attention spans do begin to wander as the rival attractions of smartphones begin to take a hold. Finally, they treat us to a rendition of by far their most well-known tune, the millstone-like ‘Hip Hop’: far from the best thing they have ever done, but, unquestionably the ditty this Oxford audience have come to enjoy. They follow up with a convincing ‘They Schools’, the high point of the evening by far and a song the message of which predated the magnificent fourth series of *The Wire* by a good few years.

Dead Prez once rhymed ‘futon’ with ‘croutons’ so are not afraid to flirt with the ridiculous but tonight they seem relatively prosaic, raising spirits but unequal to some of the more outlandish stage antics of the past. Nonetheless, it’s a pleasure to have them in town.

Rob Langham

JAMES / BLOSSOMS O2 Academy

Stockport’s Blossoms have found themselves lumped in with Manchester’s current psychedelic revival but deserve a look without such preconceptions. Resplendent in black turtle-necks, the 60s-inspired harmonies and guitars are matched by some decent songs, leading to some high profile support slots.

James have been through the predictable mill of labels, producers, breakups and reunions in their thirty-two years, from jangly indie kids, through Madchester figureheads, to chart-topping stadium fillers. So it’s nice to see most of the key members present and correct for the opening night of this ten-date tour. Singer Tim Booth is now bald with a pointy beard and wide-collared shirt, looking a bit like a 70s pub singer, but his voice retains its urgent clarity, despite a few cracks, and his manic, flailing dancing still gets an occasional outing during the set. New album ‘La Petite Mort’ contains yet more songs that sound recognisable on the first listen, with some pleasing excursions into electronic territory, and most sound great tonight. But this is a band who attract the kind of fervent following that can get in the way of a relaxing evening. So during the frequent quiet sections

we get big, angry men shouting “shut the fuck up!” at anyone talking audibly. This shouldn’t be a big deal but it gets to the point that the band almost becomes incidental to the all-cloaking air of reverence.

Despite this the old favourites still have the power to thrill, except ‘Sit Down’, which is banned from the tour. ‘Seven’ and ‘Sometimes’ are uplifting and emotional yet beautifully controlled songs, a trick that partly explains their enduring appeal. Yet as the gig starts to veer towards a football terrace sing-along you start to miss the poignant intimacy of a listen to their better albums (which are great to cook to, incidentally). The band play well, but the arrangements don’t allow for the quirky experimentation the new album displays. Then comes an unexpectedly hilarious moment when Booth climbs onto the merchandise stall and leaps out to surf the crowd, only to be gently lowered to the floor like a rolled-up carpet.

‘Out To Get You’ and ‘Born Of Frustration’ are fitting and thrilling encores but to finish off we’re treated to ‘Just Like Fred Astaire’, a perfect blend of epic and intimate, which could just about sum James up.

Art Lagun

KATE TEMPEST / DEATH OF HI-FI O2 Academy

So Death of Hi-Fi are unmasked onstage at last, and turns out they’re not the aliens their sci-fi inspired hip hop had us believing. The Witney outfit are very much a trio these days – rapper and producer Andy Hill and guitarist / electronics chap Dan Clear joined full time by singer Lucy Cropper whose sultry, darkly soulful vocals are taking them into new territory from their excellent ‘Anthropocene’ debut. The likes of ‘Swim Away’ are trippier than before, though set highlight ‘Bullspit’ is a reminder of their harsher, more typically hip hop roots, and their chief strength is their versatility, able to switch from hard-assed anti-fascist rap to a brave –and respectable enough – cover of Lorde’s ‘Royals’. Set closer ‘Lazarus’, a forthcoming single, is almost old-skool rave, and proof they’re not getting comfortable any time soon.

Kate Tempest is the most unlikely rap star, probably ever. A slam poet forged in the unforgiving fires of south London open rap sessions, she skips onstage, a blur of ginger curls and puppyish grin, but once she’s off you can see why even the great Chuck D has fallen under her spell. Simply she’s stunning, a rhyme master with a faultless flow and a mind so alive with ideas and a way with words so casually brilliant you can see why she’s won poetry prizes as well as BRIT awards.

Tonight’s set is pretty much Mercury-

nominated album ‘Everybody Down’ in its entirety, with its interlinked stories centred on a core of characters that venture from terse family conflicts, through wanky record company launch parties to loneliness and self-doubt, the emerging message being to believe in yourself (but with none of the mawkish aspirational cod-philosophy that might entail in lesser talents). In fact Kate’s simple, down-to-earth honesty is as much the star of tonight’s show as her words or the incredible band she’s formed around her – a backbone of percussionists who hammer out a staggeringly heavy future-factory tattoo throughout, as well as a bobble-hatted backing singer/dancer who provides a great soulful foil to Tempest’s verbal hurricane delivery. The pair positively ricochet off each other at times as the band build tracks into slabs of near-industrial electronica.

Unsurprisingly ‘Circles’ gets the biggest cheer of the night – an infectious singalong that has Kate musing on playing to six people in a pub in Sunderland not so long ago – but ‘The Heist’ is the real highlight: hard, heavy, a brain-scouring beast of a song. Her overnight success – a mere decade in coming – is no more than she’s due; her poetry and her presence make her a star, but an incredibly likable one. Sometimes the good guys win in the end.

Dale Kattack

ANIMAL HOUSE / THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE

The Jericho Tavern

It’s a rare treat when you’re faced with a band you can imagine leaping from the stage to do you some serious physical damage. Reading duo Pink Diamond Revue’s guitarist Tim Lane holds that air of subtle menace about him, his sullen, hollowed-out, gum-chewing demeanour giving him the look of a 1950s thug. Musically too the band offer an often oppressive sound from the darker edges of the 50s, Tim’s subterranean surf shimmer hovering wraith-like over drummer Rob’s beats, electronics and vocal samples from old b-movies, tracks building up into rockabilly dirges that make the band sound like Death In Vegas jamming it out with Dick Dale and Bo Diddley in some dark, dank basement. Opener ‘Last Meal Request’ feasts on the fried chicken breast and corn on the cob of a death row inmate, while the more languorous ‘Weird Love’ feels like it’s escaped from the soundtrack of David Lynch’s *Wild At Heart*. Throughout the set a naked, limbless

mannequin stands centre stage, eyeing the crowd impassively in place of a traditional frontperson. “The dirtier the better,” intones a disembodied voice over and over again between two numbers. The Pink Diamond Revue’s acid house surf-rock is as fabulously dirty as it gets.

After which Animal House are a barrel of light-hearted normality by comparison. An Australian quartet relocated to Brighton, they describe themselves as garage rock but they’ve more in common with the classic 60s sounds of The Kinks and Small Faces, songs like ‘Sour’ the closest they ride to The Strokes, while their set closer reminds us a lot of The Violent Femmes. They’re fun enough for half an hour – and compared to the truly risible headline act that follows them, a whole heap of quality – but with a sound so rooted in classic traditions, they’ll have a fight on their hands to stand out from the crowd.

Dale Kattack

STORNOWAY

The Sheldonian Theatre

It’s five years since Stornoway became the first ever pop band to play the Sheldonian Theatre. Since then, precisely no other bands have graced its centuries-old stage, making them also (kind of) the second band to play it. They seem, at most, mildly fazed by the fact that they’re making Oxford history as we watch this evening. “Hello,” frontman Brian Briggs announces, slightly awkwardly, to all 750 members of the capacity audience, “Hope you’re well”.

If his conversation is awkward though, his singing is anything but. His clear, dulcet voice swells to fill the expanse of the venue, and when backed by the other band members, the resultant vocal harmonies are vast and striking. Early favourite ‘Here Comes the Blackout’ feels infinitely bigger than it ever could have done on record, whereas new song ‘Josephine’ – entirely acoustic and staged around a single microphone – is notable for the very fact it manages to transcend its acoustic limitations, and is afflicted only somewhat by the noise of students from a nearby pub, whose raucous voices surge into consciousness at every quiet moment.

A good few of the songs showcased tonight are from Stornoway’s upcoming third release, and as such are new to the majority of the audience. But they receive as enthusiastic a welcome as much of the older material, though – after an impromptu drum and bass solo from the brothers Steadman - the rapturous applause and awed respect that greets the first plucked notes of ‘I Saw You Blink’ is unrivalled all evening. Although there are plenty of moments the Sheldonian has doubtless never seen before – Briggs’ transitional anecdote about Selby Leisure Centre springs to mind – parallels can definitely be drawn to its usual fare. Not least the addition of a full orchestra for the latter part of the set, which is, at the same time, oddly grand and hugely fitting. Hearing the wistful lone violin intro of ‘The Coldharbour Road’ backed by a full string section makes it hard to remember what it could sound like without one. Some bands seem made to play certain venues, but this evening it seems like the Sheldonian, with its centuries of history, was built solely to house Stornoway.

Caroline Corke

NONSTOP TANGO / MOMENTO

The Bullingdon

On a night when South Park’s firework display is lighting up the east Oxford sky, Momento’s world seems comparatively bleak, with references to shedding skin, flesh, want(ing) a chemical, and being told you smell. Their music is intriguing though, with an out of the ordinary line up of mainly djembe, fuzz guitar and harp or accordion all being brilliantly played. It’s the Incredible String Band meets Nick Cave with a dash of Captain Beefheart: a meeting you always wanted to happen. We’re not averse to the dark side but the trio conjure such a relentlessly bleak atmosphere, you occasionally want them to lighten up just a little. Desire to eat flesh and bondage crop up during Nonstop Tango’s part dream / part nightmare journey up the Cowley Road, starting with buying a wooden leg in The Ballroom on St Clement’s and ending, it seems, with entering paradise. In the 50 minutes it takes they do play almost non-stop as they stop off at familiar shops and watering holes where the protagonist has encounters and desires you don’t usually see acted out on the Cowley Road. The band also, magpie-like, stop off at a variety of musical styles,

though not, ironically, the tango. We get Greek chant and Greek folk song, riffs that are twisted Arvo Pärt and Chopin, some wonderful jazz soprano sax playing and, my favourite, Alex Glasgow’s ‘As Soon As This Pub Closes The Revolution Starts’ transformed into a goth anthem brimming with menace. It’s all integrated into a marvellous, musically-coherent kaleidoscope that’s surprisingly highly accessible. As you would expect from any band driven along by Chris Hill’s drums and Jon Seagroats’ bass, it’s all kept extremely tight, and it’s of huge credit to the band’s composing and playing chops that despite being absolutely magnificent as the dreamer/protagonist, performance artist Stavroula Kounadea doesn’t totally dominate. She is, though, spellbinding as she declaims and, yes, pants her way through the role, creating several different personas with just a white raincoat, a couple of wigs and a nylon stocking. Her and the whole band’s performance match the spectacular fireworks outside and if the bands forthcoming CD comes anywhere near, it will be quite something very special indeed.

Colin May

SPRING OFFENSIVE / WILLIE J HEALEY / SALVATION BILL

O2 Academy

The Academy is right royally packed for one of Oxford’s most accomplished recent bands and their farewell show tonight. Eyeliner is smudged, floppy fringes askew and the holes in those artfully distressed jeans are just a little bit larger than usual. First up after a change in the running order is Salvation Bill, multitasking as ever, the percussion recalling Tune-Yards while he also has time to somewhat cheekily cover the night’s headliners, a rumbling undercurrent of drone providing a new twist on their legacy. The set ends with a demonic rendition of ‘Dead Dog’ – like ‘Who Let the Dogs Out’ delivered in the style of Tom Waits – while things are plunged into even archer territory by the addition of a wolf’s mask and a saxophone. The jaunty, music hall rhythms of Willie J. Healey bring to mind the more tragic end of 80s indie and the Brilliant Corners’ ‘Brian Rix’ is a touchstone, albeit one from before the band will have been born. The overall show is more commercial than that, however, Alan McGee barnet notwithstanding, and an eye is being primed for a breakthrough. The tunes are certainly there as the drummer grins like an extra from *Carry On Up the Khyber* and Healey plunges into the audience for an unremarkable acoustic number, a trick that will be repeated later in the fray. From the opening hum of ‘Not Drowning

but Waving’, through a devastatingly passionate and magnificently delivered salvo of ‘Bodylifting’, ‘Hengelo’ and ‘Cut the Root’, the emotion of Spring Offensive’s set is clear. Singer Lucas Whitworth totters around manfully on crutches, his ankle the victim of a “shark attack,” while his accusatory question as to which members of the audience streamed the album maintains the financial theme underlying many of the songs – ‘No Assets’ is another highlight of a coruscating evening. Tunes redolent of Sufjan Stevens at his best are underlaid by the band’s trademark inventiveness with sound and when they ape Healey by descending among the faithful, ‘Carrier’ is quite perfectly delivered, this reviewer lucky enough to be within touching distance of Whitworth’s shoulder blades. I haven’t been living in Oxford for long but the gorgeousness of this play within a play must surely already rank high in any litany of the city’s musical highlights. Two encores showcase the band’s earlier songs, a nice touch provided by the arrival of former member Joe for a cameo, while the gestation of the band’s sound from a Foals-influenced cacophony to the individual stamp of album ‘Young Animal Hearts’ is strongly detectable. It’s a magnificent send off.

Robert Langham

DIDCOT’S NEW COMEDY CLUB

Thu 5 Feb 8pm | Thu 5 Mar 8pm | Thu 9 Apr 8pm

THREE TOP COMEDIANS & AN MC EVERY MONTH

Featuring the likes of Matt Richardson, Charlie Baker, Felicity Ward, Chris Turner and Nathan Caton

Book Now. £12, £10.50 (concs)

www.cornerstone-arts.org CORNERSTONE

01235 515144 | 25 Station Road, OX117NE

CRAZY HYBRID?

Penguitten?
Opera-core?
Folk-grime?
Synthadelia?
Sports-goth?

Then The Oxford Punt needs you!
Oxford’s annual showcase of new Oxford music talent takes place on Wednesday 13th May. Five venues across the city centre.
To apply, send sounds to **nightshift@oxfordmusic.net**
And make sure you include a phone number!



THE OXFORD RECORD DVD & CD FAIR

St ALDATES PARISH CENTRE
40 Pembroke St, St Aldates, OX1 1BP

Saturday 24th January
10am-4pm

Rock/pop/jazz/soul/reggae/indie/all other genres
Accessories/memoriabilia/books.
Brand new and back catalogue/Rare Vinyl
www.usrfairs.co.uk

CLEARWATER RECORDING
WWW.CLEARWATER-RECORDING.MOONFRUIT.COM



Mike Abbott
Manager

Office 01865 766112
Mobile 07818 342173

For live recording in Oxford.

SMART GUITARS ... RESTRING ...
... REVALVE ...
... REBORN ...

- Guitar, amp and pedal repairs, custom modifications, strings and accessories
- Collection and delivery service available

CONTACT DAVE SMART
smartguitars@ntlworld.com • 07710 216368

NEW YEAR’S EVE



TEMPLE FUNK live
DEL GAZEBO Disco Shed
DEEMAS J Tru Thoughts
SKYLARKIN

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM

10pm-4am
£10 adv from **wegottickets.com**
#bringingfestieback
at THE CELLAR
Frewin Court, off Cornmarket | **cellaroxford.co.uk**

TIGER MENDOZA with DAVE GRIFFITHS / MOTION STATIC / PUPPET MECHANIC

The Wheatsheaf

“Genre? Genre is over there weeping in the corner,” says Gappy Tooth Industries host Richard Catherall, introducing the acts; “We don’t do genre.” And so it transpires on another night of difficult to define, envelope pushing and reviewer-baffling music. Puppet Mechanic are probably the easiest of tonight’s three acts to wrangle with. A local band of affable, mortgage-paying guys, plying a well-plucked, chin-stroking alt-pop with a whiff of Morrissey in the vocals and a folky, Relationships-like vibe. At times it gets a bit drowsy and one key, with the smooth Irish singer the main culprit, but the group sing-a-long of the livelier ‘Shooting the Breeze’ perks up the Saturday night dancers, and makes you think maybe a violin or banjo might add something to it. But then they’d become Mumford, and we’d have to shoot them. Saturday night needn’t have worried though; the slamming electro-punk disco party that is Yaz, Cez and Baz from Motion Static brings its hard-hitting industrio-dubstep from London’s East End, like Chvrches if they’d gone into nitro-grime, but with the dirtiest drops this side of cliff diving into a factory canal, and in doing so they hot wire

perennial gig-enjoyer Leon the Dancing Man into working the crowd into making St Vitus proud. Stonking highlights of this rabble-rousing show are the much remixed singles ‘Tokyo’ and ‘On The Edge’. Brutal and brilliant. Motion Static’s erstwhile producer, the prolific Ian de Quadros, here in his electro beat boffin guise of Tiger Mendoza, has recently teamed up with David Griffiths (ex of eeebleee and Witches) with tonight the launch of their EP ‘Along Dangerous Roads’, bolstered by The Evenings ringmaster Mark Wilden, increasing the body count on drums. The collaboration with Griffiths is a side step for Tiger Mendoza into a more sophisticated sound of John Barry-like cinematic qualities, tempering the heavier beats, and while previous riffing epics like ‘Corporate Responsibility’ and ‘Something I Should Have Known’ do get a wolfish airing, it’s the depth and delicacy of new track ‘Eating Crayons’, and Dave’s tense and carefully enunciated vocals on ‘Literature & Life’ that prove the most memorable. Gappy Tooth Industries, it seems, really doesn’t do genre.

Paul Carrera

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

Fans celebrate return of Oxford indie legends

Music fans in Oxford and around the world have reacted excitedly to news that Ride are set to reform.

You are the

The band, who put Oxford music on the map in the early 90s with their incendiary brand of indie rock, and scored a succession of chart hits with their acclaimed EPs, split in 1996 but have subsequently been hailed as one of the most influential bands of the past 20 years and subject to regular speculation about a reformation. And now, following the news last month that Beady Eye have called it a day, singer and guitarist Andy Bell has broken the news Ride fans have waited almost two decades for – the band are back together and set to play a series of live shows in 2015.

Speaking on Radio Oxford presenter Bill Heine’s show, Andy said, “the four of us have remained friends since the split so it was always only a matter of time before we got back together, and now, with mortgage interest rates on the rise, and my Beady Eye pay cheq... I mean commitments at an end, it’s the perfect time to rediscover that old magic.

Crown of Creation

Fellow frontman Mark Gardener, speaking from the States where he is currently on tour, declared that, while his own solo career would prevent him



<< *Bob, can you check this is the right photo please – all those shoegaze bands look the same – cheers, Keith* >>

joining the Ride reunion, he wished Andy and the band all the best. Mark’s place will be taken by Scottish singer Alex Lowe.

Drummer Loz Colbert was also quick to wish Andy every success with the reunion tour, despite the fact his work with Gaz Coombes will prevent him being involved. Loz’s place behind the kit will be filled by local lad Gareth Farmer, an old friend of Andy’s.

Bassist Steve Queralt, meanwhile is, unfortunately,

“committed to a cycling holiday that week. Or month, or quite frankly whenever it’s meant to happen. Sorry. Best of luck, mate.” Undeterred, Andy was quick to comfort Ride fans that Will Pepper would be standing in on bass duties for the forthcoming tour. “He’s a great bloke and I know he can really play,” laughed Andy. Nervously.

I want to be

Fans quickly took to social media to celebrate the reunion of their shoegaze heroes. “This is the best news since Chapterhouse got back together,” declared lifelong fan Lypton Phewson on Facebook, “as long as they don’t do anything off ‘Tarantula’. It’s a shame that Mark won’t be back in the band. Or Loz. Or Steve. But I’m sure Andy has picked the best musicians around to do full justice to Ride’s monumental legacy. I’m sure all lifelong Ride fans will soon have the same affection for Alex, Gareth and Wi... hang on just one fucking moment. Are you telling me I’ve just forked a week’s wages for a Hurricane #1 ticket?

Your relation

Andy flatly denied the accusation, saying, “actually I’ve just had a phone call from Liam. Oasis are doing Glastonbury next year, so it looks like I’m busy anyway. “And if that goes tits up again, maybe Gay Dad will have me back.”

INTRODUCING....

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

Charlie Cunningham

Who is he?

Charlie Cunningham is a local singer-songwriter. A few years ago he played guitar in electro-industrial metallers Xmas Lights, but since their split he has been working on his solo songs and started posting them on Soundcloud a year ago. He started gigging around the same time and recently toured with King Creosote. Last month he supported Stornoway at their Sheldonian shows and plays with them again later in the year in Cornwall. This month he releases his debut EP, ‘Outside Things’, and heads off on a European tour with the band Mighty Oaks.

What does he sound like?

If the words ‘young man with an acoustic guitar’ conjure depressing images of some dreary, lovelorn sap who fancies himself as Nick Drake but really ought to buck his ideas up, then you can be forgiven. It does us too. But not in Charlie’s case. He’s possessed of a rather gorgeous voice, his songs, like ‘In One Out’ wrapped in a sense of wintry desolation. There’s a distinct celtic edge to his sound, while elsewhere there’s an almost flamenco flourish to ‘Outside Things’.

What inspires him?

“Friends and family. Music that I like. Music that I don’t like. The whole bloomin’ lot.”

Career highlight so far:

“Touring with King Creosote a few weeks ago was definitely a special experience. I got to play some amazing venues in parts of the country that I’d never seen before. I went to the Lake District for the first time, which was brilliant. I knew that it was supposed to be pretty up there but I really didn’t know the half of it! Stunning stuff. Kenny is a great guy with a great perspective, so hanging with him was awesome. I joined him and the band on stage for the last couple of shows too, which felt like a real honour.”

And lowlight:

“A dodgy festival earlier this year; there was a very persistent barking dog that was so, so much louder than me. That was tricky. Nice dog, though.”



His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Graeme Murray.”

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

“It’d have to be some kind of compilation, I reckon. I remember I bought one called ‘Sorted’ in about 1997. It was an indie compilation; it definitely had a good old mix of stuff on it; I’ll take that.”

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

“I’m mostly touring around Germany until the end of the year now. It’s acoustic guitar and singing but hopefully something a bit different. It should still sound quite familiar, though.”

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“There are so many great bands, but it’s hard keeping up with them all.”

You might love him if you love:

Rodrigo y Gabriella; Bon Iver; Beirut; King Creosote; Jamie T; Jose Gonzales.

Hear him here:

soundcloud.com/charliecunningham

THE WHEATSHEAF

Friday 5th December – KLUB KAKOFANNEY

FLIGHTS OF HELIOS

PHYL + NOT TOO SHABBY 8pm/£5

Saturday 6th December – BURIED IN SMOKE ALL DAYER

HARK

SLABDRAGGER + DESERT STORM + MOTHER CORONA + BEARD OF ZEUSS + GIRL POWER

WELCOME TO BLACK DELTA + SEVEN HUNDREDTH UNICORN + LEE RILEY + INDICA BLUES 3pm

Wednesday 10th December – MOSHKA

MONKFISH

SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + BURNING BEES + BEAVER FUEL 7:45pm/£5

Friday 12th December – GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES

THE SHAPES

NON STOP TANGO + GEMMA MOSS + VOLKENFUNK 8pm/£4.50

Tuesday 16th December – MD PROMOTIONS

GODSBANE

WE FIGHT LIKE KIDS + 13BURNING + TELEGRAPHER 8pm/£5

Wednesday 17th December – IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

THE OXFORD BEATLES

TRANSPLANT + FREDDIE PHOENIX 8pm

Friday 19th December

INVISIBLE VEGAS

BALLOON ASCENTS + FAMILY MACHINE 8pm/£5

Saturday 20th December

ORANGE VISION

WHITE BEAM + CAMERON AG 8pm/£5

Wednesday 31st December – KLUB KAKOFANNEY NEW YEARS EVE PARTY

THE MIGHTY REDOX

THE LEGENDARY PETE FRYER BAND + MARK ATHERTON BAND + BB DREADZONE DISCO

8pm / £8 Advance or £10 OTD

The Wheatsheaf 129 High Street, Oxford OX1 4DF / www.facebook.com/wheatsheaf.oxford

DR SHOTOVER: all our festive yesterdays

Fifty years ago: The young Shotover plays a festive gig with his happening beat group **The Swinging Turtlebacks** at the Cowley Tyre Fitters’ and Lube Workers’ Christmas Social. Five hours of non-stop cover versions, fuelled by Sprite and Preludin diet pills. All goes well until mop-topped drummer Dennis’s featured vocal slot – an exaggeratedly slurry rendition of *Blue Christmas* in a comical Elvis accent - incites the ire of the bequipped machine-shop grease-monkeys and their bouffanted birds. The band are bottled offstage. The police are called. The Swinging Turtlebacks waive their seventeen-and-sixpence fee and skid off into the night in a borrowed Mini Moke, harmonicas and ‘prellies’ flying out of the pockets of their houndstooth jackets.

Forty years ago: Dr S’s prog ensemble **Elfglade** support patched-denim boogie merchants **Rancid Fat** at the Horton-cum-Studley Young Farmers’ Christmas Bash. Elfglade’s setlist consists of one number - *Prince Minotaur Sleeps*. They are halfway through the third movement (*March of the Vestals*) when they are Party-Seven-ed off the stage by the headliners and their grebo mates for over-running their allotted slot by 90 minutes. The police are called. In the confusion, the members of Elfglade reverse their Afghan coats and creep off into the fields baa-ing, thereby blending in with the locals. They waive their five pound fee. But at least they have plenty of Watneys to drink.

Thirty years ago: Dr S treads the boards at the St Timothy’s College Christmas Ball with his proto-Goth outfit **Northern Sex Pest**. It’s a Dry Ice Promotion Night. During opening number *Cold Madonna Mine*, lead singer Augustus Bleaklord tries to do a Jim Morrison and unzips his leather kecks. No-one notices in all the onstage smoke. The fashion police are called. They can’t find the band. Nor can the promoter. Northern Sex Pest waive their twenty pound fee (‘plus all the vodka and Snapple you can drink’), due to having re-surfaced in another dimension. They supply the plot for a Colin Baker-era Dr Who adventure, *Smoke of the Barmi*. Sadly it conflicts with the laws of time and space, thus is never shown.



NORTHERN SEX PEST just want to wish all their fans a Very Merry Christmas

Next month: ‘Make mine a brandy butter - without the butter’

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

“Winter of No Content” ran the headline of December 1994’s *Curfew* magazine as the depressing local venue situation reached its nadir this month, with the news that **The Oxford Venue** on Cowley Road had shut down. Promoter Nick Moorbath had removed his PA and lights from the venue in protest against the building’s leaseholder, with all regular club promoters following his lead. The campaign to save live music at **The Jericho Tavern** was ongoing, but a petition signed by over 2000 music fans, and stories in *NME* and *Melody Maker* looked to have little impact on the pub’s owners, The Firkin chain. A date of January 7th was given as the pub’s last night.

Additionally, **The Hollybush** in Osney had closed, awaiting demolition, ending gigs there, while over at **The Brewhouse**, blues promoter Bob Foley had quit and a change of management was due. All of which left Oxford music with its biggest crisis in memory, and this at a time when homegrown bands – who had come up through those same venues – were out conquering the world.

This being December, *Curfew* printed its Top 20 songs of the year by local acts. ‘Dead’ by **The Mystics** topped the list, closely followed by ‘Mansized Rooster’ by **Supergrass**, ‘Iron Lung’ by **Radiohead** and ‘Something Blue’ by **The Anyways**. The Mystics featured three times in a Top 20 that also featured two Supergrass songs. Other names in there included **Ride**, **The Bigger The God**, **The Nubiles**, **Squid** and **Thurman**, as well as **Folk The System**, **Bosley** and **Skydrive**,

with a strong electro showing from the likes of **Logopolis**, **Faction** and **Blood Orange**.

10 YEARS AGO

The traditional *Nightshift* end of year Top 20 is always a good way to look back on what was happening in Oxford in any given year and 2004’s list found **The Young Knives** atop the pile with their superb ‘The Decision’. The year’s runner up was **Laima Bite** with ‘Did You Used To Love’, taken from her stunning debut demo. **Suitable Case For Treatment** (‘Dead Pigeon Teacher’); **The Evenings** (‘I Didn’t Remember’) and **Winnebago Deal** (‘Knife Chase’) completed the Top 5, with entries from **Trademark**, **Boywithatoy**, **Richard Walters**, **Headcount**, **Youthmovies**, **Fell City Girl**, **Sextodecimo** and **October File** showing the ongoing strength of the local band scene. The cover of this month’s *Nightshift* featured **The Thieves**, local rockers who were making waves over in the States. Brothers Hal and Sam Stokes had moved across the Pond two years previously, touring constantly, securing a deal with Papa Roach’s management company and were set to release their ‘White Lines’ EP. The band were back in their native Oxford for a show at **The Zodiac**. “I love the optimism and space and lifestyle in California,” declared Hal, “though the place lacks the community or self-awareness of Oxford.” In local music news, metalcore heroes **JOR** were to play their final gig at The Zodiac this month, while synth-pop band **Trademark** were heading off on tour as support to **The Human League**.

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Gig highlights of the month included **Alexisonfire**, **The Mad Capsule Markets** and **Ballboy** at The Zodiac, with **65Daysofstatic** at **The Wheatsheaf** alongside future-Foals **The Edmund Fitzgerald**, **Youthmovies**, **The Relationships**, **Nought** and **Sexy Breakfast**.

5 YEARS AGO

Was it really five years ago that **The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band** made their debut on the cover of *Nightshift*? Seems it was. The band, still relative unknowns on the local scene had made their reputation with a riotous set at the Punt earlier in the year and now talked about hiding all the Miles Davis CDs in HMV to stop people buying, instead encouraging would-be jazz fans to discover Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five and Jabbo Smith. “The people of Oxford never got their jazz riot,” declared band leader Stuart MacBeth. “They had to wait for The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm band to come and shake it up for them.” On the end of year Top 20 front, the divine ‘Coldharbour Road’ by **Stornoway** sat proudly at the pinnacle, with **Borderville**’s ‘Flights’, **Kate Garrett**’s ‘King of the Birds’, **Richard Walters**’ ‘The Animal’ and **Mephisto Grande**’s ‘Sea Life Part 2’ making up the rest of the Top 5. Other entries included **The Winchell Riots**, **Alphabet Backwards**, **Tristan & the Troubadours**, **Mr Shadown**, **Desert Storm**, **Baby Gravy**, **The Black Hats** and **The Dead Jerichos**, the latter’s ‘Red Dancefloor’ also winning this month’s Demo of the Month.

APPLETREE studios
72 TRACK DIGITAL / 24 TRACK ANALOGUE
Est. 1985
CELEBRATING 26 YEARS IN THE BUSINESS
Take a look at the new website and recent refurb at
www.appletreestudios.com
FOR ALL YOUR RECORDING, MASTERING AND DUPLICATING NEEDS
01844 237916
Great rates for local Bands / Soloists

WAREHOUSE STUDIOS
Recording and rehearsal studios
3 Rehearsal rooms
25 years of quality recording
Tel: 07876487923
Email: info@warehousestudios.com
www.warehousestudios.com

EVOLUTION RECORDING STUDIOS
We're a new 1000 sq. ft. recording, tracking and mixing facility in Oxford featuring, at our heart, a beautifully refurbished and awesome-sounding Trident Series 80B console.
Experienced Engineers, Session musicians and Producers in-house.
Call us for rates or to arrange a visit. Special rates for local unsigned bands.
Services Include
Recording and Mixing • Voice-overs • Producing and Programming • Film, TV and Advertising Music • Audio Post-production • Songwriting and Session Musicians
01865 203073
info@evolutionstudios.co.uk
www.evolutionstudios.co.uk

NEUME AUDIO
neumeaudio.com
07919 400 527
tim@neumeaudio.com
Location recording and production services
• Fully mobile digital recording studio
• Experienced and creative engineer
• Setup in any space
• Very competitive prices

DEMOS

Sponsored by

SILVER STREET STUDIOS
Music Recording & Rehearsal

DEMO OF THE MONTH

GIFT OF BLINDNESS

Umais Chaudhry, Oxfordshire's very own Baron of Bleakness, comes in so many musical guises it's sometimes hard to keep track of which one does what. What they all have in common though, is a dedication to a life less jolly. While his Abandon project has been much to the fore of late, with its move toward a more sedate, emotive almost, semi-acoustic dedication to wintry desolation, Gift Of Blindness is a severe gear shift back toward pulverising noise, in particular the industrial *sturm und drang* of early Swans and Godflesh – galley slave beats, downtuned guitar clang and portentous vocal rage. There's just the one song here, 'Automaton', but it clocks in at the ten-minute mark and consists of an onward churn and chug of grim, unforgiving noise rock that never has to move at anything more than a stately pace to bulldoze any resistance you have to offer. Not that you'd want to, not if you know what's good for you, however unhealthy it might feel as your sensibilities are crushed and filleted under Gift of Blindness's sonic tank tracks. 'Automaton' is taken from a full-length album, so in a way it's not even really a demo at all, but since the message here is clear – the world is a stinking hellhole and is going to collapse and we shall all die horribly in twisted, screaming agony – such details seem unimportant. Best just to enjoy the sweet suffering while you can. Cheers everyone, it's almost Christmas!

JESSICA LAW

Jessica Law has been reviewed a couple of times in the demo pages, a singularly incongruous presence with her often startling mix of 1930s musical hall chanteuse and 19th Century gin house harpy. This latest collection of songs doesn't see her compromising that stance an inch, the dappled, folky 'The Mermaid's Revenge' as sweet as she gets, mandolin and violin underpinning her simultaneously plaintive and playful voice which interweaves with Timothy Ledsam's backing vocals, the whole thing a softly swirling Arcadian waltz that feels like being at the middle of a shower of falling autumn leaves. Lovely. From here she's off through the trees like a Victorian wood sprite, sometimes shrill and caustic,

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

even bawdy at times, but equally capable of swooning and cooing gentle lullabies amid the thrum of often arcane instrumentation (come on, everyone has a resonator mandolele on their Christmas list, right?). Over the course of six songs such a startling voice, with its prominent quaver, can get a bit much - 'Jekyll & Hyde 4eva' is a bit too Victoria Wood – but it's a small price to pay for the best bits of a musician whose style and musical aim is pleasingly far removed from what passes for contemporary round these parts and, like the antique dress she sports on her photo, belongs in another age but holds up remarkably well to the passage of time.

CHARLIE LEAVY

Leeds-via-Hook Norton singer Charlie Leavy is currently studying for her A-levels but is already close to clocking up 100 gigs, and claims to have written as many songs. Live it's just her, an acoustic guitar and heart full of soul, but these recording are perhaps a better indicator of what's she's capable of, from the jazzy, very slightly funky soul-pop of 'The Way Life Is', to the sweet and simple unrequited love note that is 'Tongue Tied', both clear-eyed and uncomplicated songs that are polished but not so much they lose their inner naivety; the more straightforward acoustic 'Falter Baby' is over-egged by contrast, but best of the lot here is the lush, synthy 'Summer Day Runaway', again soulful but simple and poppy; the only thing between it and hit status is a decent publicist. There's obviously a strong Alecia Keys influence going on in Charlie's music, and it's hardly making a break for rock and roll's wildest hinterlands, but not every musician wants to tear up the rule book and alienate the entire human race like Scott Walker, and for those who prefer safer ground, Charlie Leavy's a decent outside bet for next local breakout artist.

RHIANNON KLOSE

It's a fine line between decent and dreadful when it comes to such things. Whereas Charlie Leavy's songs are soulful but understated, Rhiannon Klose's are sterile and overblown, bombastic r'n'b that sounds like it was made by a committee. A committee that decided "smashing it" as the accepted current term goes, wasn't enough and the whole thing needed a welter of deodorant advert-style grunge guitar ladled over the top just so isolated Amazonian tribes would sit up and notice it. If they could have afforded it, you imagine everyone involved in this recording would have clubbed together to hire the Rosetta space probe to splay Rhiannon's voice across the surface of the

moon in a display of ostentatiousness that makes one of Kim Jong-Un's speeches sound like a solemn word of wisdom from the Dalai Lama. "You must be exhausted," breathes Rhiannon with the sultry subtlety of a snorting rhino at one point. You have no fucking idea.

TOO MANY POETS

Too Many Poets sent us a link to a video of some anthropomorphised penguins negotiating a puddle by way of putting us in a good mood before their new demo. You see, that's the sort of care and consideration not enough bands give out these days. Hell, we're inclined to say nice stuff about them whatever now, even if they sound like the multi-headed hydra offspring of Nickleback, Level 42 and The Vamps. Only kidding. If they sounded like that, we'd be dead on the floor after self-immolating and thus incapable of constructive criticism. Luckily they aren't. They do seem, though, to be in a similar predicament as those poor penguins at times – whether to jump or try and waddle round the perimeter in safety. Too Many Poets seem to be adept at building up a musical mood – twinkling guitars and lush synth beds introducing each track here before flowing into trebly, trilling post-Foals indie pop, and it's all produced to a tee. But something doesn't quite stick. Maybe it's the vocals – slightly too detached, unwilling to leave their pedestrian comfort zone, or a general unwillingness from the band to really kick off from those promising starts. 'Red Dress Cliché' is their strongest track – tightly wound as is their stock in trade, but backed up with a decent melody. 'Elegance In Decadence', though, overstays its welcome by some distance at six and half minutes. It's okay stuff and starts to get its hooks into you a bit after a few listens but you feel they're capable of something wilder, more original. Bands – don't be afraid to take chances. Take that leap into the unknown like that brave little penguin. Maybe you'll fall flat on your face and we'll snigger unkindly while pretending to help dust you down, but we'll always prefer heroic failure over playing safe.

NOISESCAPE DISTURBANCE

"Thanks for your our last review. To be fair you got us pretty well, although you made it look like singing badly was a bad thing. We had no idea," announce Noisescape Disturbance good naturedly, referring to their last demo back in June's issue when they got knocked out of our Demo World Cup for having a singer with no apparent familiarity with the concept of singing in tune or time or even the right key. "The people involved haven't changed, the spirit hasn't changed, so now your expectations have been set, here you go," they continue, careful not to raise our hopes of any

significant improvement. And well they are to do so. The singer still hasn't been allowed out of his dungeon of eternal fury to glimpse, even for a moment, the basic elements of what normal human beings consider to be the bare essentials of actual music, so he shouts and hollers and barks a lot over the band's almost admirably directionless metal churn. It's got a few funky bits in it this time but mostly clatters along oblivious to choruses or anything like that, just a man shouting over an endless guitar solo, the two never having previously met. Give them a fancy haircut and a trendy Hoxton address and a thousand bloggers would declare it art. Let's do it.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE HAZE

Just how much can youth and inexperience excuse? A loose grasp on the intricacies of global politics and a lack of knowledge of obscure 1970s funk, for sure. Poor grammar, debatably. But doing a cover version of a Beady Eye song? Never. Never, ever, ever. That should be up there with potty training and not talking with your mouth full in the list of life essentials. But here we are on Witney teenage rockers The Haze's Soundcloud and their take on 'Flick Of The Finger' sits proudly atop the page, foul and slightly smug, like a pile of seagull poo on the seat of a playground swing. No matter that it's not one of the songs they wanted us to review; the fact is it exists. And we can't un-exist it. We are haunted by its very existence even as we swiftly move on to the band's own songs. And then we start to wonder to what extent we can forgive a band who claim to be aged between 15 and 18 for sounding like a bunch of fifty-something old blokes stuck in the corner of a benighted market town pub on a Sunday afternoon knocking out old 1970s rock standards with all the enthusiasm of a Friday afternoon production line operative on minimum wage. 'Hold Up Hold Back' and 'Floating On By' could easily have emerged from same sulphurous orifice that most of Liam Gallagher's "creative moments": turgid, landfill indie dirges with any semblance of soul replaced by a blurred, beery mumble, although 'Word Is Out' does have a certain hypnotic feel about its relentless pursuit of one-chord pub rock fuzz. Given The Haze weren't even born last time the brothers Gallagher did anything even half worth listening to, maybe we shouldn't be too harsh on their choice of influences, but equally, you'd hope young lads would listen aghast to the tired last hurrahs of old buggers whose time has been and gone and shout, "Fuck this, let's make something new!" And live in hope we do, however much reality tries to crush such simple optimism.

*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 Twitter either, else we'll print a screenshot and make you look like a prize tit.*

rotator
Interzone House
74-77 Magdalen Rd
Oxford OX4 1RE
REHEARSAL ROOMS
Available 7 days a week • From £28 for 3 hours
Centre of town location with car parking
Backline hire available on request
for bookings and enquiries please call
01865 240250
24 hour text & phone 07851 400618

shonk studios
Recording Studios
Protools on Mac
Great Sound
Rates For Local Bands
Phone - **01865 203922**
or
07878960286
info@theshonk.com www.theshonk.com

TURAN AUDIO.co.uk
Professional, independent CD mastering

Artists mastered in the studio last month include;
SATURNIAN MIST, TORI ALLEN-MARTIN, SID SIDBOARD AND THE CHAIRS, SWERVEDRIVER, THE DAMNED, ICONS OF FILTH, ANGELIC UPSTARTS, DISORDER, INFA RIOT, MAJOR ACCIDENT, 999, UK SUBS, THE VARUKERS, CHELSEA, KILLING JOKE, FIELDS OF NEPHILIM, SYRENNE, KIOKO.
01865 716466 tim@turanaudio.co.uk

THE COURTYARD RECORDING STUDIO
PROTOOLS HD2, MTA 980 CONSOLE 32/24/24, OTARI MTR90 MK2 24 TRACK TAPE MACHINE, 2 TRACKING ROOMS, SUPERB CONTROL ROOM WITH GOOD SELECTION OF MICS & OUTBOARD GEAR + MIDI FACILITIES (Inc LOGIC AUDIO, AKAI S1000, OLD SKOOL ROLAND etc.)
Residential facilities included.
www.courtyardrecordingstudio.co.uk
Phone RICHARD WALSH on 01235 845800

TAD STUDIOS
www.tadstudios.co.uk
www.facebook.com/tadstudios
Four hours from £30!
Call **07882569425**, e-mail info@tadstudios.co.uk or find us on Facebook to make an enquiry / booking
Two fully equipped rehearsal rooms located just off the A34 near Bicester:
• Mapex kits
• Fender/Marshall/Ashdown amplification
• 1kw PA system and microphones
• Backline included with room
• Fully maintained equipment
• Tea and coffee making facilities
• Doorstep parking
• Convenient hourly booking
• Open 7 days a week, 8am – Midnight
• Introduce a band / block booking / student deals
• Book by phone / e-mail / Facebook for your convenience

Trashy

EVERY SATURDAY

£4 advance / £5 on the door
£4 NUS / NHS cards
10.30pm - 3am + over 18s only

Fri 5th Dec • £19.50 adv

Embrace

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

The Wall Of Floyd
Performing the Greatest
Hits of Pink Floyd

Fri 5th Dec • £11 adv
11pm + over 18s only

Switch
Closing Party
with Hannah Wants
& DJ EZ

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

UK Foo Fighters

Sat 6th Dec • £11 adv
10.30pm + over 18s only

Society
ft. Zane Lowe

Sun 7th Dec • £18.50 adv

Alabama 3

Mon 8th Dec **SOLD OUT**

Catfish And
The Bottlemen

Weds 10th Dec • £10 adv

Bob Log III

Weds 10th Dec • £20 adv

The Enemy &
The Twang

Thurs 11th Dec • £12 adv

Foxes

Fri 12th Dec • £26 adv

Saxon
35th Anniversary Tour
+ Hell

Fri 12th Dec • £7 adv

It's All About
The Music
Christmas Party
and Awards Ceremony

Sat 13th Dec • £26.50 adv
6pm

Methodman
& Redman

+ M.O.P.
Double ticket with
Afrika Bambaataa
- visit website for more info

Sun 14th Dec • £18.50 adv

Taking Back Sunday
+ Marmozets

Tues 16th Dec **SOLD OUT**

Hozier

Tues 16th Dec • £15 adv

The Wonder Stuff
- Acoustic
+ Mark Morriss (The Bluetones)

Weds 17th Dec • £9 adv

'68
+ Trophy Scars

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

The Original
Rabbit Foot
Spasm Band
Knees Up 2014
ft. The Original Rabbit
Foot Spasm Band + The Long
Insiders + Special Guests

Fri 19th Dec • £16 adv
9pm + over 18s only

Craig Charles
Funk & Soul Show
+ Temple Funk Collective
+ Count Skylarkin + Tony
'Naked Nanton' + Fajita Funk

Mon 29th Dec • £25 adv

Alexander O'Neal

Weds 31st Dec • £12-£17.50 adv
9.30pm + over 18s only

Switch - NYE
ft. Wilkinson and B.Traits

Thurs 8th Jan 15 **SOLD OUT**

Rescheduled show + original tickets valid

Royal Blood

Fri 23rd Jan 15 • £15 adv
6.30pm

Amon Amarth
+ Huntress
+ Savage Messiah

Fri 30th Jan 15 • £8 adv
6.30pm

Alvvays

Weds 4th Feb 15 • £12 adv

King Charles

Fri 6th Feb 15 • £15 adv

Charlie Simpson

Sat 7th Feb 15 • £15 adv
6.30pm

Gaz Coombes

Sun 8th Feb 15 • £11 adv

Rae Morris

Fri 13th Feb 15 • £12.50 adv
6pm

The Staves

Sun 15th Feb 15 • £11 adv

Hudson Taylor
Singing For Strangers Tour

Mon 16th Feb 15 • £12 adv

Bear's Den

Weds 18th Feb 15 • £20 adv

8:58

Fri 20th Feb 15 • £10 adv
6pm

Cash
A tribute to the Man in Black
with full live band

Fri 20 Feb 15 • £16 adv

Jungle

Fri 27th Feb 15 • £15.60 adv
6pm

NME Awards
Tour 2015

ft. Palma Violets
+ Fat White Family
+ The Amazing Snakeheads
+ Slaves

Sat 28th Feb 15 • £10 adv
6pm

Room 94

Tues 3rd Mar 15 • £10 adv

Glass Animals

Weds 11th Mar 15 • £10 adv

Sleaford Mods

Sat 14th Mar 15 • £15 adv
6pm

Mike Peters
presents
The Alarm
Strength -
30th Anniversary Tour 2015

Tues 17th Mar 15 • £14 adv

Duke Special
+ Paul Cook & The Chronicles

Mon 23rd Mar 15 • £23 adv

The Stranglers

Wed 25th Mar 15 • £18.50 adv

Stiff Little Fingers

Mon 30th Mar 15 • £14 adv

Charli XCX

Thurs 9th Apr 15 • £10 adv
Rescheduled - original tickets valid

Bipolar Sunshine

Sun 19th Apr 15 • £13.50 adv

James Bay

Sat 25th Apr 15 • £12 adv
6pm

Cloudbusting
(Kate Bush Tribute)

Weds 6th May 15 • £22 adv

U.F.O.

Sat 9th May 15 • £15 adv

Dub FX

Weds 15th May 15 • £17 adv

The Wombats

Sat 3rd Oct 15 • £22.50 adv

From The Jam
'Sound Affects' 35th Anniversary

ticketweb

GET TICKETS AT TICKETWEB.CO.UK

o2academyoxford.co.uk

190 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE • Doors 7pm unless stated
Venue box office opening hours: Mon-Sat 12pm-4pm
ticketweb.co.uk • wegottickets.com • seetickets.com • gigantic.com