

# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month  
Issue 223  
February  
2014

Books'n'  
cakes'n'  
rock'n'roll

# Jess Hall

Oxford's folk siren talks  
beaches, baking and her  
new album, 'Bookshelves'.

*Also in this month's issue:*

Introducing **AFTER THE THOUGHT**  
plus

Local music news, reviews, previews and  
four pages of Oxfordshire gigs

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

## Coming Up

Thursday 06 February  
**NOTHING BUT THIEVES**  
THE ART BAR

Friday 07 February  
**GEORGE EZRA**  
THE ART BAR

Sunday 16 February  
**FAT WHITE FAMILY**  
THE ART BAR

Saturday 22 February  
**LAUREN AQUILINA**  
O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2

Sunday 02 March  
**PAPER AEROPLANES**  
THE ART BAR

Tuesday 04 March  
**BONOBO**  
O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY1

Sunday 09 March  
**THE MARTIN HARLEY BAND**  
THE ART BAR

Wednesday 19 March  
**STORY BOOKS**  
THE ART BAR

Monday 24 March  
**SAINT RAYMOND**  
O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2

Tuesday 25 March  
**METRONOMY**  
O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY1

Sunday 06 April  
**RHODES**  
THE CELLAR

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# NEWS

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Online: [nightshift.oxfordmusic.net](http://nightshift.oxfordmusic.net)

**THIS YEAR'S SUPERNORMAL FESTIVAL** takes place over the weekend of the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> August at Braziers Park, near Wallingford. The artist-curated, not-for-profit festival was one of the highlights of last year's music calendar, featuring sets from Clinic, Hookworms, Comaneci and Mugstar, mixing leftfield music with experimental art. Visit [www.supernormalfestival.co.uk](http://www.supernormalfestival.co.uk) for news.

It looks like being another packed weekend for festivals as Fairport Convention's Cropredy Festival ([www.fairportconvention.com](http://www.fairportconvention.com)) has been confirmed for the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August, while Wilderness, which has yet to be confirmed, has previously taken place over the same weekend.

Dates for this year's Truck Festival also yet to be finalised, although early bird tickets will go on sale on the 4<sup>th</sup> February and local bands are being invited to apply to play – information on both counts is at [truckfestival.com](http://truckfestival.com). Cornbury Festival, at Great Tew, is already etched in for the weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> July, with the line-up being announced on the 7<sup>th</sup> March. See it here when it's cooked and ready to eat: [www.cornburyfestival.com](http://www.cornburyfestival.com).

**APPLICATIONS FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT** are still open. The annual showcase of unsigned Oxford talent takes place on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May**, featuring 20 or so acts at **The Purple Turtle, The Cellar, The Wheatsheaf, Turl Street Kitchen** and **The White Rabbit**.

Bands or solo acts wanting to play at The Punt can submit demos, either by emailing links to online music (no sound files, please) to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net), or sending CDs to **Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**. In both cases, please clearly mark your demo PUNT and include both phone and email contact details and a brief bio of the band. Only acts from Oxfordshire may apply; you can't apply if you played The Punt previously and, due to the licensing conditions of all the venues, only bands aged over

18 will be eligible. Deadline for demos is the 10<sup>th</sup> March, with the line-up announced on the 15<sup>th</sup>. As ever, a limited number of all-venue Punt passes will be on sale from February.

**TRUCK STORE** celebrates its third birthday this month. The independent record shop on Cowley Road hosts a full day of instore live music on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February. No acts confirmed as we went to press but check [www.truckmusicstore.com](http://www.truckmusicstore.com) for news, and make sure you support your local record shop.

**HMV** in Cornmarket is set to close at the end of February. The music chain, which has suffered well-documented problems over the past few years, is looking to relocate to a smaller site in Oxford, but failing that, it spells the end for music retail in Oxford city centre.

**AGS CONNOLLY** releases his debut album 'How About Now' this month. The Witney singer-songwriter, who was one of the star turns at last year's Oxford Punt, drawing admiring comparisons to Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash, launches the album with a hometown show at Fat Lil's on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February, followed by an instore show at Truck Store on Cowley Road on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March. Go and visit him at [www.agsconnolly.com](http://www.agsconnolly.com).

**DAISY RODGERS MUSIC** are looking for under-18s bands for a special show at The Art Bar on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, supporting Coasts (*pictured*). Given the limited opportunities for under-age bands to play around Oxford's venues, this is a great chance for some proper gigging experience. Any bands with members aged 16 or 17 can apply via Daisy Rodgers Music's Facebook page.

**THE EVENINGS** are reuniting for one night only this month. The long-time local electronica favourites, formed by drummer Mark Wilden, played almost 100 gigs between 2002 and 2007 and featured some 60 different



**GLASS ANIMALS**, We Aeronauts, Salvation Bill and Charlie Cunningham have been selected to play the Oxford leg of the inaugural **Independent Venue Week** at the **Jericho Tavern**. The bands were picked by Radiohead's **Colin Greenwood**, who was appointed as national ambassador for IMW, along with BBC Oxford Introducing producer Liz Green. The festival runs from 28<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February, involving 18 venues nationwide, and aims to "celebrate the spirit of independence and ignite people's passion for live music." The Tavern show takes place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February, with tickets priced £6. Visit [www.independentvenueweek.com](http://www.independentvenueweek.com) for more information about the events happening nationwide.

musicians over the years. The band's triumphant headline set at the Oxford Punt in 2003 is still regarded as one of the great Punt sets of all time. The show takes place at the Wheatsheaf on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February. It features three sets – Tiger Mendoza with The Evenings, followed by The Half Moon Allstars, and culminating in a headline set by The Evenings with Tiger Mendoza. It's on a pay what you like basis, so no excuses to miss out.

**OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC** has announced the first names in the **Audiograft 2014** festival. Audiograft is an annual festival of contemporary experimental music and sound art curated by the Sonic Art Research Unit (SARU) at Oxford Brookes University and co-promoted by OCM. According to its organisers the festival "presents a programme of exhibitions and events hosted in the public venues and galleries of the city which seek to engage the widest possible audience from Oxford and beyond with these practices."

Art and sound installations will run from the 11<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> March, with musical events from the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>. Among the music events already confirmed is a live concert of *musique concrete* by Jerome Noetinger and Lionel Marchetti. Get yourself over to [www.ocmevents.org](http://www.ocmevents.org) for more details and news on OCM's spring music programme.

**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](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford). Regularly updated local music news is available online at [www.musicinoxford.co.uk](http://www.musicinoxford.co.uk). The site also features interactive reviews, a photo gallery and gig guide.

The latest issue of **Oxfordshire Music Magazine** is out now from local venues and shops, featuring an interview with country-rockers Empty White Circles as well as local music reviews.

Nightshift's online form is open to all local music fans and musicians at **nightshift.oxfordmusic.net**

**FINALLY, A HUGE NIGHTSHIFT CONGRATULATIONS TO AMELIA FLETCHER** on her OBE in the New Year Honours List. Amelia – singer with local music legends Talulah Gosh and Heavenly, and now fronting Tender Trap – sadly didn't get her award for services to 80s indie pop fashion but for her work at the Department of Fair Trade. Nightshift awaits its Knighthood for ruthless culling of unworthy musical abominations, with bated breath.



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## Upcoming Events

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**Sun 4th March**  
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A quiet word with

# Jess Hall



photo: John Cairns

**JESS HALL HAS A SIMPLY** stunning voice. You could argue otherwise but you’d be wrong and you’d look a bloody fool. In an age of *The Voice* and *X-Factor* and the BRIT School, plenty of singers have good voices. They’re tutored and mentored and polished and honed to a point of almost perfect blandness and sold to the masses as What Voices Should Sound Like. Jess Hall’s voice – limpid and elegant, as pure as cut crystal, variously playful, pretty and almost hymnal – is as wondrous and natural as the Devon beaches that provide so much of her musical inspiration. “Pick up shells and listen to their sea tunes,” she coos gently on ‘Sea Song’, from her debut album, ‘Bookshelves’. Hers is a voice to lose yourself in.

**“I GREW UP IN NORTH** Devon about twenty minutes from the seaside and when I went to university to study International Development I lived in Swansea,

only three minutes from the sea,” explains Jess to *Nightshift* as we talk to her ahead of the release of ‘Bookshelves’ this month, an album she plans to launch with a show in the suitably hallowed environs of the Holywell Music Room. The album is awash with imagery inspired by the sea and seashore; even at her most wistful, all questing, nostalgic and lovesick, there’s a feeling of almost childlike idealism about those places. There’s an element of irony then that Jess’s musical career has really taken flight in the decidedly landlocked county of Oxfordshire. “I moved away from Devon in 2008 for work. It felt like the right time to be in a place that was a bit more connected. Rural life is beautiful and peaceful but I needed something a little more at the time. Oxford provides the perfect medium. One of the first things I did when I moved here was look for open mic nights. I’d started going along to some in Devon

before I left and had enjoyed the experience. My first port of call was the Catweazle Club, which I remember very fondly because everyone was so warm and welcoming.” In truth, Jess Hall’s sparse, romantic acoustic folk music is perfectly suited to Oxford, with its rich history of traditional music. Like the best contemporary folk singers, from Kate Rusby to Laura Marling, Jess makes her music sound both timeless and new, the aching emotion and devotional feel of songs like album opener ‘Dearest Heart’ almost ridiculously simple but invested with a wonderful poetic depth. In many ways she reminds *Nightshift* of Kate Garrett, another West Country lass who made the move to Oxford and caught the imagination of local music fans: vocally she shares a similarly pure voice, and lyrically is steeped in nature and a sense of longing. That the late, great Kate’s husband Barney Morse-Brown produces and contributes cello to

‘Bookshelves’ serves to reinforce such a comparison, one that Jess is understandably shy of remarking upon.

**FROM THOSE EARLY OPEN** mic slots, Jess began to pick up fans and plaudits, winning gigs around town from smitten promoters, including sets at the O2 Academy and the Oxford Punt, at which she would often provide home-baked cakes for fans, and now seems the right time to release a full album of songs, eight originals plus a cover of traditional folk classic ‘I Will Give My Love An Apple’. It is easily equal to anything else coming out of the UK’s traditional folk scene and shows the strength of Jess as both a singer and songwriter. “I started thinking about the album in April 2012. Barney Morse-Brown had just returned to Oxford and I had worked and played with him on a number of occasions, and admired his work as Duotone.

“Working with Barney is a huge privilege; I first came across him when he was supporting Stornoway at the A1 Pool Hall gigs. I was really taken by the beautiful cello playing and intrigued by the melancholic, romantic and spiritual nature of his lyrics. I got in touch with him to ask him about his lyrics initially because I was curious about them; he kindly wrote back and shared a little of his inspirations. After that I asked him if he would perform at a gig I was putting on and if he would also play on one of my songs. I was delighted he said yes. At the time I was working on my debut EP ‘Red Jumper’ and Barney agreed to play on three of the tracks. We played together whenever possible from then on. Barney brings a real understanding of where the music is coming from and has an ability to beautifully enhance a piece of music. This was extremely important when we were working on the album because we didn’t want to detract from the simplicity of the songs and make them into epic instrumental pieces, but keep the focus on the vocals. “We started putting demos together in November that year and recorded the album in May 2013. When it’s released I suppose it will be about two years in the making. The songs on the album were written over a period of four years. One of them has still never been played live.”

**“Unlike other Devonian artists like Seth Lakeman I wasn’t massively embedded into the folklore and traditions aside from eating cream teas – cream first, then jam!”**

“Moving to Oxford has made me pine for the sea. I spent lots of time wandering about with friends on the beaches in all seasons and I really do miss it. I think that’s probably why it features so much in my songs as a literal reference and a metaphor. I’ve not found another natural environment that has inspired me as much... maybe the trees that line one of the walkways in Florence Park, which sparked ‘Winter Branches’. There seems to be more gentle longing and wistful romance about your songs than any great emotional turbulence; is that a reflection of your character and life? “Life is full of emotional turbulence for most people and I’m no exception to that; things happen and hearts get broken in all manner of ways. In my songs I tend to focus more on the intimate and gentle, the restorative and hopeful because that’s my aspiration. That and I’m a bit of a hopeless romantic!” Did you grow up with the folk traditions of Devon and the West Country – its music, its legends and folklore? “Unlike other Devonian artists like Seth Lakeman I wasn’t massively embedded into the folklore and traditions aside from eating cream teas – cream first then jam!

**ONE OF JESS’S AVOWED** musical inspirations is Laura Viers, but more than other artists, and as

local church. On the night I got up and sang ‘Good King Wenceslas’ and my voice just came out, much to the surprise of my parents. After that I sang opera, songs from shows, folk music, and modern classical. It was the folk music that probably had the most resonance with me and naturally fits my voice. I often get comparisons to various lady folk singers... I have to confess that I’ve usually never heard of them. But I like that because it means I arrived at my sound by the most natural means rather than via influence. Nature seems important to your music and lyrics; how different have you found it changing from living near the sea to such a landlocked place as Oxfordshire? Are there similarities between the two places?

seems traditional in folk circles, her family background was a starting point for Jess’s musical journey. “Music has always been encouraged in my family; my dad was a piano tuner and restorer for a short time and our house was full of pianos – at least five at one point! – so my brothers and I all learned to play. Though I never met him my grandfather had a singing scholarship at New College Oxford so music is in the genes, I guess. At family get-togethers a guitar usually appears and everyone performs. My uncle Andy was big on the Bulgarian music scene in the late 80s and 90s and it was him that recorded and produced my first EP. “I did see Seth Lakeman play live in my hometown of Barnstaple shortly after I graduated and it reignited my interest in folk music.

I was really surprised at the interest there was in folk music and started to explore the genre a little more. I discovered that you could be folky without being trad and that there was a place for the sound that most naturally comes out when I write or sing. Jess’ early experience of singing in church has stuck with her too. There’s an almost spiritual or devotional feel about some of the songs on the album; is that an important element of her writing? ‘Duet’ for example has the feel of a religious aria. “Faith is an important point of reference in my life and so lyrically it naturally flows into my songs, there’s no intention for the songs to sound hymnal particularly but I think the perhaps my classical training brings this out.”

**AT THE END OF FEBRUARY** Jess will officially launch ‘Bookshelves’ at the Holywell. It’s a venue perfectly suited to her delicate, old world musical charm. Does she think a place like that suits her better than one of Oxford’s more usual venues? “I wanted to do something really special to launch the album. Oxford has some wonderful music venues but I wanted to perform somewhere seated that lent itself to just listening and focusing on the music. I can’t think of anywhere better than the Holywell which was specifically designed for musical performances

and will suit the nature of the music. I’ll be performing the album in its entirety along with folk that featured on the recording, so people can expect an evening of beautiful singing and gentle, intimate music. While Jess’s music is pure and folky, she isn’t trapped in a genre ghetto like so many traditionalists. Since moving to Oxford she has worked with a lot of other local acts, including James Cunning, of We Aeronauts and Maiians, as well as ambient electro-drone crew Flights of Helios, Stornoway’s Jonathan Ouin and country-garage duo The August List; what have each of those involved, what’s been the most fun and who, locally or beyond would Jess love to collaborate with in the future? “Having people like James and Barney to play alongside has been great and they’ve both really encouraged me in live performances and to persist with songs that I’ve not been sure about. I’ve loved being invited to take part in other people’s music; singing with Flights of Helios has very much expanded my musical experience. Working with Jon Ouin on the album was really amazing for me; I’m a huge Stornoway fan so when he said he was interested in being involved I was very excited. Both he and Barney have an amazing talent for instantly creating musical beauty. That sort of experience is very special. In the future I’d love to find a male vocalist to duet with. Laura Veirs sometimes sings with her husband Tucker Montaine who has a gloriously deep voice, finding someone like that to sing with would be great.” Even so, do you ever get the urge to turn everything up to 11, stamp on a few pedals and seriously rock out, or maybe form a death-metal side project? “Ha ha! Well, I’m sure everyone has the urge to sing at the top of their voice from time to time. I think that I value my eardrums too much to take on death-metal. My strangest gig line up to date has to be the Punt when I was followed by Caravan of Whores...so perhaps the two can mix?” You’re a renowned cake maker and get to hang out with local rock stars; does this make you Oxford’s answer to Jane Asher? “If every gig could have cake at it I would be a very happy woman, so yes, perhaps I am!”

**Jess Hall launches ‘Bookshelves’ at the Holywell Music Room on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February. Visit [www.jesshallsongs.co.uk](http://www.jesshallsongs.co.uk) for more news, songs and gig dates.**

*Jess Hall launches ‘Bookshelves’ at the Holywell Music Room on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February. Visit [www.jesshallsongs.co.uk](http://www.jesshallsongs.co.uk) for more news, songs and gig dates.*

# RELEASED

## JESS HALL ‘Bookshelves’

(Self-released)  
Since Mumford and Sons infiltrated the public consciousness in 2009, having mastered four chords and one “heartfelt, rousing” chorus that seemed to make an appearance in every song they went on to spew out, folk has become something of a dirty word. Sadly, for too many people still there’s either traditional folk, pertaining to Fairport Convention or some Morris dancer called Gottfried with bells on his shoes, or “popular folk”, essentially mid-2000s indie bands who rebranded by adding some idiot with a mandolin. Those who only acknowledge Mumford and Gottfried, however, miss out on all the good bits, which, luckily, we’ve never been short of in Oxford: the likes of The Yams, We Aeronauts, and of course, Stornoway. Jess Hall has been steadily making a name for herself in the midst of this local scene over the past couple of years, rising from open mic slots to the point where she’s soon to headline the Holywell Music Room, and ‘Bookshelves’ is her first full length offering, comprising nine gorgeously delicate folk songs. Most impressive, and immediately notable, is Jess’s voice: beautifully strong, clear and emotive, just as able to carry off a song unaccompanied - in downbeat album interlude ‘Apple’ - as it is backed by the album’s subtle instrumentation. Opening track ‘Dearest Heart’ builds from gentle acoustic guitar to include a mournful cello line, courtesy of Barney Morse-Brown,



## THE SEA THE SEA ‘Sub Rosa’

(Self-released)  
At first I thought my music file shuffle had selected The Editors’ ‘An End Has A Start’ instead of The Sea The Sea’s opening track ‘These Shadows’, as its familiar bursting intro and galloping riffery tears off, leaving my mind running to catch up with the resulting Zulu Winter vibe, which it does around the time the



giving more weight to regret-filled lyrics, before said cello makes a reappearance, softly plucked this time, under sweet group vocals at the end of ‘Sea Song’. Slightly more jaunty and upbeat, ‘Maps’ makes apparent an underlying lyrical theme of finding a way home, something that resurfaces throughout the record, later exemplified in the long, lingering notes of ‘Sail Home’. ‘Older’ is a vocal highlight, sweet harmonies illustrating a memory filled ode to an old friend or lover, and later the plaintive lyrics and intricate guitar on the album’s title track bring the album to an emotive conclusion. Jess Hall has put together an album of beautifully stark emotive songs, while effortlessly managing to avoid the over-earnest, rousing choruses of Top 40 ‘folk’, and as such, it’s a pleasure to listen to. **Caroline Corke**

dreamy falsetto chorus kicks in. Thereafter the mood changes, as if XTC’s Andy Partridge had joined an ‘Across The Sea’-era, Jeniferever as vocalist, as ‘System Sleeps’ descends into the gorgeous heartland of Scandinavian ambient post-rock guitar, a journey that continues in ‘What Came Before’, Matthew Clarkson’s matter-of-fact phrasing borne along on delicately picked and chiming guitars that ramp up into a full-on cinematic finale. The EP’s closing track, ‘Anemone’, successfully completes this trip, taking God Is An Astronaut’s exploding supernova sonics to bed with The xx’s bleak pop-*noir*, enveloping then disgorging you, leaving you stranded under an endless, glowing sky of Northern Lights. As a whole, ‘Sub Rosa’ certainly rewards multiple plays; it’s an intelligent, polished, if tentative, progression on last year’s ‘4 Demos’ release, and a classic EP set-up where every track works for each other rather than jostling to stand alone. If the band name comes from the cry the Ten Thousand (Greeks) uttered with the life-saving view of the Black Sea from Mount Theches in 401 BC, then Sub Rosa is a similar big picture glimpse of TSTS’s potential, and a heartfelt show of exciting things to come. **Paul Carrera**

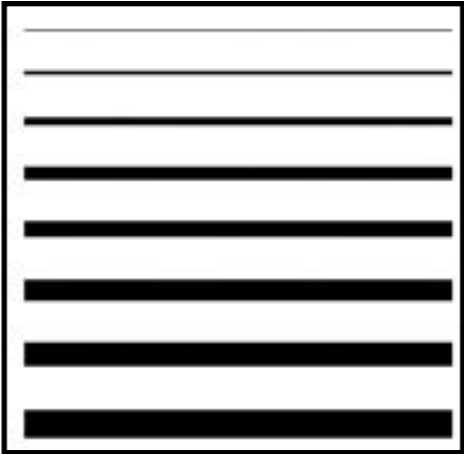


## AFTER THE THOUGHT ‘I Am No Different’

(Bear on a Bicycle)  
While most one-man-and-his-laptop electronica outfits are nodding politely towards dubstep or trying to program the next big festival tent-filler, After The Thought seems more likely to be sticking an old Loop record on his turntable or working out how to update the introspection of Flying Saucer Attack for 2014. And it’s all the better for it. First, the negatives. The beats don’t deliver enough punch to knock the EP into dancefloor territory; rather, they’re another, rhythmic texture to add to the mix. With some serious weight in the drum department (a rib-shaking kick drum and a crashing snare particularly) tracks like ‘JFK’, already a highlight with its insistent 8-bit Capcom-style lead melody, would hit a whole new level. But where ‘I Am No Different’ really delivers is in texture: After The Thought’s music is constructed using a wealth of hardware and lovely shiny effects pedals, and it shows through in the lustre and warmth evident in each track. There are nods to Fennesz and early Walls in the fulgent pulse of layered drones across most of these tracks, and ‘Solar’ has the emotional ebb and flow of something by Mountains or Hammock to go along with it. It’s warm, open fireplace electronica you can rely on to keep you going through these cold winter months.

Things are at their best when tracks take their time to build, slowly unfurling over the course of several minutes rather than giving away most of their secrets too early. Of course, it could be that I could simply listen to an entire album of these pulsing, layered intros doing their thing for ten minutes at a time, but it remains that there’s a new-found elegance here that bodes really well for the next release. Contemplative, classy and confident: After The Thought is fast developing into a force to be reckoned with.

**Stuart Fowkes**



## UNDERSMILE / BISMUTH ‘Split EP’

(Tartarus)  
Heavy, heavy, heavy. Slow, slow, slow. Since Sunn o))) dragged their reflections of Earth’s glacial sludge to a wider audience than may previously have enjoyed “that kind of thing”, the rule of thumb for the doomist has been “if all else fails, make it heavier and slower”. Some get it, some don’t; those that do are the ones that tend towards to the macabre and mystical. On this split release we find two such exponents offering different paths into darkness. Nottingham duo Bismuth keep things somewhat trad – relatively speaking – with their 17-minute guttural drawl of a song ‘Collapse’, screaming and devil horn-ing their way through the sounds

of the foreboding forest pictured on the sleeve. Witney’s Undersmile are a little more way out, and seem to be stretching drone-based doom music in new directions, their 23-minute ‘Titanaboa’ betraying a warm heart, with glorious vocal vibrations (and, later, lyric-free tones) providing a weightless sense of revelation. Gruff, long guitar notes exists in among this darkly choral soundscape, pulled through a longform melody that’s as winding and hefty as the giant Paleocene snake their song is named for. Both bands keep it heavy and slow; both – Undersmile in particular – display an intriguing sense of experimentation. **Simon Minter**

## HANNAH BRUCE ‘672: Home Recordings’

(Self-released)  
There’s an art to musical understatement. It’s an admirable attribute in an age when “smashing it” seems to be the buzz phrase for any aspiring singer. Then again, tip too far the other way and you get an intangible fog with no sense of purpose. It’s this balancing act local singer-songwriter Hannah Bruce attempts on this new EP. Sometimes she succeeds; occasionally she sounds lost in that fog. Opener ‘Two Years’, with its stubbornly restrained grunge guitar, feels less like a song than five minutes of internalised emotional unravelling and really needs to progress, Hannah displaying a naturally intense voice that reminds us of Sinéad O’Connor. She’s joined by local rapper/poet Rawz

for ‘Hard Hearted’, and the pair seem to share a similar feel for woozy atmospherics and an almost somnambulant approach to getting from A to B. The EP’s highlight, ‘Takes a Hold’, feels like Tricky taking a particularly hazy approach to an obscure Kate Bush song, Hannah thankfully avoiding overdoing the drama, preferring to subsume her voice to the sparse piano and synthetic strings. ‘This Year’s Girl’ is a succinct three minutes and feel positively urgent compared to the rest with its synthetic harpsichord stabs, like a lo-fi Bat For Lashes, while closer ‘Lost In The Fire’ further displays Hannah’s ability to venture off the beaten track structure and instrumentation-wise. It’s an intriguing EP that points to something better to come. If Hannah can bring more focus to some of her songs, she easily has the voice and grasp of atmospherics to make something special. **Dale Kattack**



# G I G G U I D E

**SATURDAY 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**GLASS ANIMALS + WE AERONAUTS + SALVATION BILL \_ CHARLIE CUNNINGHAM: The Jericho Tavern** - Colin Greenwood curates the Oxford leg of Independent Venue Week, plumping for spectral electro outfit Glass Animals, alongside indie-folksters We Aeronauts, lachrymose songsmith Salvation Bill and rising singer-songwriter Charlie Cunningham.  
**DIESEL KING + STONEGHOST + BLACK SKIES BURN + IN THE HILLS + MASIRO: The Wheatshaeaf** – Sludgy downtempo brutality from London’s Sabbath-inspired Diesel King at tonight’s Buried In Smoke show, the band having previously supported Corrosion of Conformity and Karma To Burn as well as playing last year’s Bloodstock. Support comes from south London’s Pantera-inspired heavyweights Stoneghost, local death-metallers Black Skies Burn and angular math-core crew Masiro.

*Friday 7<sup>th</sup>*  
**THE DEEP DARK WOODS / TREMBLING BELLS: St Albans Church**  
Deep and dark by name, deep and dark by nature. That’s Saskatchewan sextet The Deep Dark Woods for you. They recently recorded their fifth album, ‘Jubilee’, in a isolated cabin in the woods and it shows. Produced by Laurel Canyon folk revival stalwart Jonathan Wilson, the album continues the band’s exploration of late-night, empty barroom romance and regret, an air of stately melancholy hanging over everything as chief songwriter Ryan Boldt’s maudlin baritone mixes with keyboard player Geoff Hillhurst’s exotic array of vintage instruments – including novachord, celesta and vibraphone. Despite promises of electronic psychedelia their style is comfortably rooted in the traditional Americana of The Band or Roger McGuinn’s solo songs and for one night only a church in east Oxford will become a backwoods bar where the lost and lonely go to pour their hearts out. Great support tonight from British electric folk faves Trembling Bells, recent visitors to town with both Will Oldham and Mike Heron.



## FEBRUARY

**DUCHESS + COUNT DRACHMA + BALLOON ASCENTS + BRIGHTWORKS: The Cellar** – Oli Steadman from Stornoway launches his new live music club night, tonight with a strong African music influence. Township jive, calypso and pure pop from the rhythm-heavy Duchess; fresh-faced indie-pop from Balloon Ascents; Afro-pop-indie rocking from Brightworks, and Oli’s own Zulu folk music outfit Count Drachma.  
**BARNEY MORSE-BROWN + GAVROCHE + ALICE REAM: The Port Mahon** – Tertium Quid gig with cello’n’loops maestro Barney Morse-Brown playing a set of new material, plus playfully wayward piano-led jazz from Gavroche and contemplative piano balladry and observation from Alice Ream.  
**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy** – Weekly three-clubs-in-one night with indie anthems at Propaganda; kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy and dancefloor faves from Jack FM DJs.  
**EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar** – Weekly techno, house and bass club night.  
**TERRAFORMS: The Art Bar** – Drum&bass club night with Logistics and DJ Die.  
**JORDAN O’SHEA + THE MAYBIRDS + SWEET WILLIAM: Fusion Arts Centre** – Pop-up gig for a quid round the back of East Oxford Community Centre, with joyously bleak acoustic pop from Jordan O’Shea, genteel acoustic pop from Sweet William, and harmony-heavy folk and soul from London-based all-female quartet The Maybirds, plus art installations and cake.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: James Street Tavern** – First of severalty shows this month from the ever-gigging funk, blues and swamp-rock stalwarts.  
**FUSED + WAM + FREEFALL + CATCH 44 + THE HAZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – A charity gig in memory of Fused bassist Paul Thompson.  
**SANCTUM: The Varsity Club** – Monthly metal night playing classic and new tracks from across the genre.

**SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**BEARD OF DESTINY + DES BARKUS + MOON LEOPARD + RICHARD BROTHERTON: Donnington Community Centre (6pm)** – Free acoustic blues, folk and country sounds from local scene regulars.

**MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**VOODOO ROOM: The Jericho Tavern** – Tribute to Hendrix and Cream at the Famous Monday Blues from new blues-rock power trio.  
**AN EVENING WITH BRIAN McNEILL: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Battlefield Band founder and Feast of Fiddles mainstay McNeil plays a solo show, adept at bouzouki, mandocello, guitar and concertina as well as the fiddle.

**TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**FAIRPORT CONVENTION: St John the Evangelist** – The seminal folk-rock legends continue to turn up in unexpectedly intimate venues, tonight playing a doubtless sold-out show at the Iffley Road church venue, Msrs Nichol, Pegg, Sanders and Leslie running through classic numbers from across their near-fifty-year career.  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Art Bar** – Free live jazz every Tuesday, tonight with regulars The New Jazz Collective.  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The White Rabbit**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: James Street Tavern**

**WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**DEL AMITRI: The New Theatre** – Earnestly emotive soft-rock from the 80s/90s Scottish minor hitmakers.  
**MAYDAY PARADE + MAN OVERBOARD + DIVIDED BY FRIDAY: O2 Academy** – In a rock and roll death match, Mayday Parade would probably lose to Del Amitri after tripping over their own hair and crying so hard they drowned in a puddle of their own tears. Honest to God, can’t someone get Henry Rollins to start a bootcamp where big girls blouses like this get violent lessons in being less soppy and shit?  
**SUBVERSE: The Cellar** – House, garage, techno and bass club night, with sets from former Eclectric mainstay Emre, alongside Skins, Harry Scholes and Midnight Mary.  
**SPANISH MUSIC NIGHT: The Art Bar** – Weekly Spanish-flavoured acoustic music session in the front bar.  
**BROOKES CONNECTION: The Art Bar**  
**NIKKI LOY: Cotswold Arms, Burford** – First of several gigs around the county this month for the local soul-pop songstress and piano balladeer.

**THURSDAY 6<sup>th</sup>**  
**NOTHING BUT THIEVES: The Art Bar** – Smooth, epic, verging-on-boyband soft rock balladeering from the Southend newcomers.  
**LISTING SHIPS: The Cellar** – The local nautically-obsessed, electro-heavy, instrumental, post-rockers bid farewell to drummer James, last month’s show with The Oscillation having been cancelled.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatshaeaf** – Free downstairs show from the local psychedelic blues veterans.  
**ISIS presents BRAINFREEZE: The Cellar** – Bands and DJs at Isis’ club re-launch, including Thomas Blower, Moonbow, Dog In The Snow, Midnight Mary and Funhouser.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** – Singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more every week at Oxford’s longest-running open mic club.  
**THE REVELATORS: Café Tarifa** – Delta blues and boogie from the local outfit.  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon**  
**BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston**  
**NIKKI LOY DUO: Joe’s Bar, Summertown**

**FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup>**  
**DEEP DARK WOODS + TREMBLING BELLS: St Albans Church** – Pour yourself another large bourbon and let the melancholy in – *see main preview*  
**SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar** – Count Skylarkin’s monthly reggae, dancehall and rocksteady party night, tonight featuring a live set from The Delegators, with their infectious blend of early rocksteady, ska and soul and fronted by the superb Janet Kumah. On the decks Skylarkin is joined by Nice-Up honcho DJ Shepdog, spinning raga, dancehall, hip hop and drum&bass.  
**GEORGE EZRA: The Art Bar** – Recently voted Number 5 in the BBC Sound of 2014 poll, Bristolian songsmith Ezra heads off on tour to promote single ‘Budapest’, armed with an earthy, soulful voice to complement his angsty lyrics, which has seen him compared to Jake Bugg and Ben Howard as well as, for some reason, Tom Odell, which we feel is rather unfair.  
**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE GRACEFUL SLICKS + MOIETY + DOTS & SPOTS: The Wheatshaeaf** – Another jolly mixed bag of sounds at Klub Kak, this month featuring 60s-styled garage-rock and psychedelia crew The Graceful Slicks; indie-folk and country gothic people Moiety, plus London’s spacey, glitchy electronica, Krautrock and post-punk act Dots & Stops.  
**THE METHOD + BEN HAMMERSLEY + HANNAH BRUCE: The Port Mahon** – Daisy Rodgers Music night with mellow young local indie rockers The Method, drawing comparisons to Kodaline. They’re joined by Ben Howard-influenced singer Ben Hammersley and indie-folkstress Hannah Bruce.  
**SWITCH with ETON MESSY: O2 Academy** – The O2’s weekly electronic dance night hosts Bristol’s Youtube sensations Eton Messy, a DJ collective who’ve turned their online presence into a live showcase for new future garage and bass artists, hosting the likes of Pusherman, Maribou State and Bondax along the way.  
**HACKTIVIST + A TRUST UNCLEAN + VISIONFALL + I CRIED WOLF: The Courtyard, Bicester** – Re-arranged from September last year, Milton Keynes’ rap-metallers play an all-ages show at the Bicester youth and arts centre, the band, formed by former Heart of a Coward people, fusing rap and grime onto tech-metal and djent, somewhere between Meshuggah and Rage Against the Machine. They’re joined by a local supporting cast that includes death-metallers A Trust Unclean and Banbury’s metalcore crew Visionfall.  
**OXFORD UKULELE BIG BAND + TARIK BESHIR + HUFFENPUFF: Florence Park Community Centre** – Benefit gig for the planned Oxford City Farm project, with the local massed ukulele orchestra, alongside Brickwork Lizards’ master of the oud, Tarik, and folkies Huffenpuff.  
**HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: James Street Tavern** – Country-folk, bluegrass and Americana from the local regulars.  
**HOUSE FOUNDATIONS: The Art Bar** – House club night.  
**DISCO MUTANTES: The Library** – Old and nu-skool disco, house and rave club night.  
**GUNS Vs ROSES: Fat Lil’s, Witney**

**SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**NICK HARPER + MULE: O2 Academy** – The acoustic guitar virtuoso, highly eclectic songwriter and political folk singer returns to

town, promoting his new album, ‘Riven’, having first made his name as a member of his dad Roy’s band, before collaborating with Glenn Tilbrook and The Levellers, among others.  
**POLICE DOG HOGAN + DREW HOLCOMB: The Art Bar** – Upbeat urban bluegrass, suburban country, fun drinking songs, tales of failed barbecues and souvenir tea towels from the ever-touring septet, last seen round these parts playing the Westgate Library as part of the Oxford Folk Weekend.  
**OVERLORD + XII BOAR + 13 BURNING: The Port Mahon** – Rising local prog-groove-blues metallers Overlord play a headline show in support of their debut EP ‘Authors’, joined by heavy-duty southern rockers XII Boar, somewhere between Motorhead and Black Sabbath, and old school metallers 13 Burning.  
**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy**  
**EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar**  
**SYNTRONIX: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Synth-pop classics, from Numan and OMD to Japan and Depeche Mode.  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: Florence Park Community Centre** – Eccentric blues-rocking from the longstanding local fave.  
**R’N’B, SOUL AND HIP HOP NIGHT: The Art Bar**  
**NIKKI LOY: Fox & Hounds, Uffington**

**SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> BIRTHDAY PARTY: Truck Store** - A full day of live music at Oxford’s finest record store as they celebrate their third birthday. bands to be confirmed.  
**NIKKI LOY: The Blue Boar, Chipping Norton**

**MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**GILES ROBSON & THE DIRTY ACES: The Jericho Tavern** – Swift return to the Famous Monday Blues for the UK bluesman, discovered playing back-up to Muddy Waters’ son Mud Morganfield and rated as the best harmonica player on the European circuit, bringing a soulful blend of blues and r’n’b to town.  
**THE CHURCHFITTERS: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Energetic folk fusion from the Anglo-Irish-French band, mixing up original songs with updated takes on traditional British folk tunes.

**TUESDAY 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**LESS THAN JAKE + REEL BIG FISH + ZEBRAHEAD: O2 Academy** – A triple bill of American punk veterans tonight, topped by Florida’s ska- and pop-punk heroes Less Than Jake, back out on tour to promote their new album, ‘See The Light’. They’re joined by regular visitors to town, California’s Reel Big Fish, enduring ska-punk party starters led by sole remaining founding member Aaron Barrett. Fellow Californians Zebrahead complete a line-up of bands with over 60 years gigging experience between them but showing no signs of tiring just yet.  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Art Bar** – Live jazz from The Hugh Turner Band.  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The White Rabbit**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: James Street Tavern**  
**INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Goth, industrial, ebm, darkwave and 80s club night.

**WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**THE KITES + DON’T GO PLASTIC +**



*Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>*  
**FAT WHITE FAMILY: The Art Bar**  
From their very name, through their ragged squat existence, to their organising of a triumphant ‘The Bitch Is Dead’ party in the wake of Margaret Thatcher’s death, Fat White Family ooze squalor and a sense of disgust. While we try to ignore the plethora of ‘Ones to Watch’ lists that emerge at the start of every year, Brixton’s degenerate six-piece have crept into the corners of all the most reliable ones and genuinely look like being a band to ruffle feathers and win disenfranchised hearts in 2014. Their background has inevitably drawn comparisons to The Libertines but musically they’re nothing like them, their dark, deviant blues, gothic country and narcotic post-punk more of an uneasy battleground between The Fall, Frank Zappa, The Birthday Party, Johnny Cash and Captain Beefheart, while meat and ofal-strewn videos like the one for single ‘Cream Of The Young’ are pleasingly disturbing. The band have a debut album out, ‘Champagne Holocaust’, which is well worth getting your hands on, though it’s their live shows that are drawing the greatest plaudits and it’s great to hear a band whose music genuinely sounds like it just crawled out of a rank inner city gutter attracting so much attention.

**BALLOON ASCENTS: The Art Bar** – Electro-tinged indie-folk from The Kites at tonight’s It’s All About The Music show. Garage rockers Don’t Go Plastic and folky indie types Balloon Ascents support.  
**GWILYM SIMCOCK + YURI GOLOVBEV: St John the Evangelist** – Often hailed as one of the most talented and original pianists on the contemporary classical scene, Gwilym Simcock played alongside Nigel Kennedy at 2013’s Last Night Of The Proms and was nominated for the 2011 Mercury Prize for his solo album ‘Good Days at Schloss Elmau’ but has latterly drawn praise for his collaboration with Russian double bass player Yuri Golovbev on their album ‘Reverie at Schloss Elmau.  
**GORDIE MacKEEMAN & HIS RHYTHM BOYS + JOSIE & THE OUTLAW: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington** – Old-time roots music from Canadian fiddler MacKeeman and his outfit, plus Swindon’s rockabilly crew Josie & The Outlaw.  
**FREERANGE: The Cellar** – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep club night.  
**SPANISH MUSIC NIGHT: The Art Bar**

**THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup>**  
**CASH: O2 Academy** – Tribute to the one and only Man In Black.  
**THE MANATEES + ZANDER SHARP + AFRO GIRAFFE + WILL JOHNSON: The**



*Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

## SAM LEE & FRIENDS: Cogges Manor Farm, Witney

As well as a musician, promoter, academic and broadcaster, Sam Lee is a song collector, in particular of lost or forgotten folk songs. His 2012 Mercury-nominated album ‘Ground Of Its Own’ found him breathing new life into gypsy and traveller folk songs, which he discovered hands-on by living and working with the communities where the songs, or memories of them, still thrive. The album revealed Lee to be a singer with a distinctive, unforced baritone, almost a croon, while he eschewed guitars in favour of jews harp and shruti box to further enhance the austere, ghostly atmosphere of the songs. His latest project, ‘Forever England’, in conjunction with the Imperial War Museum Centenary Partnership, is collecting and reviving folk songs from the First World War period. In this he’s travelling to four rural communities in southern England – Pewsey, Calstock, Branton and Witney – to trawl archives and personal artefacts and bring together the songs of the period. Later in 2014 he’ll team up with The Unthanks, who are doing something similar up north, for full-scale concerts, but for now he, alongside musicians Nico Brown, Cosmo Sheldrake and Gwendolen Chatfield, are providing those locales with low-key premieres of his songs, alongside exhibitions of found archives and artefacts. A little bit of history, in every sense.

**Cellar** – A night of student bands and DJs to launch Turl Street Arts Festival.  
**WE WANT: The Art Bar**  
**BABYLON: Cogges Manor Farm, Witney** – Folk musical from The Flanagan Collective.  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf** – Free unplugged show in the downstairs bar from the local bluesman.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

### FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**BOSSAPHONIK with THE FONTANELLES: The Cellar** – World dance club night, tonight

with a live set from 10-piece Ethio-jazz, funk and Afrobeat collective The Fontanelles, originally formed to be part of the National Theatre’s *Fela!* Musical. They’re joined by DJ Dan Ofer and Kwassa Kwasser DJs.  
**SWITCH with ARTFUL DODGER + MATT JAM LAMONT: O2 Academy** – The O2’s weekly electronic dance night hosts veteran 2step, garage and r’n’b team Artful Dodger, still going despite the departure of founders Mark Hill and Pete Devereux.  
**SCARLET VIXENS + VIENNA DITTO: The Wheatsheaf** – Valentine’s Day burlesque night with Reading dance troupe Scarlet Vixens, plus local synth-soul duo Vienna Ditto.  
**MUSIC BOX: The Art Bar** – House club night.

### SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**UPSTAIRS with BLACK HATS + INVISIBLE VEGAS + LATE NIGHT LIGHTS + THE SHAPES + BAND OF HOPE: O2 Academy** – Another fine showcase of local musical talent at the O2’s monthly tie-in with BBC Introducing. Longstanding local favourites Black Hats top the bill with their effortlessly epic mod-rock and post-punk. They’re joined by roadhouse rockers Invisible Vegas; Husker Du-like indie rock heavyweights Late Night Lights; 60s-style rock and soul outfit The Shapes, and rustic country folksters Band Of Hope.

**THE EVENINGS + TIGER MENDOZA + JAMES BELL & THE HALF MOON ALLSTARS: The Wheatsheaf** – For one night only, the ever-morphing electro entity that was The Evenings returns to life. Centred around the eclectic talents of Mark Wilden, the band have featured around 60 members in their time, sometimes all at once. Tonight they’re teaming up with industrial hip hop-cum-electro people Tiger Mendoza for two separate sets, which should be unpredictable and inventive fun, whatever form it takes.

**BEN BARRIE: The Art Bar**  
**SIMPLE: The Art Bar** – House and techno club night  
**MONKFISH + SPINNER FALL + PUNCHDRUNK MONKEYCLUB + AFTER THE THOUGHT: The Jericho Tavern** – One Gig Closer To Wittstock fundraiser for the summer free festival with reformed local 90s gothic blues rockers Monkfish, 80s-style hardcore crew Spinner Fall; Banbury rockers Punchdrunk Monkeyclub and one-man techno army After the Thought.

**CARA DILLON: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Traditional folk music from the multiple award-winning Irish singer.  
**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy**  
**EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar**  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The White House, Abingdon Road**  
**RORKE’S DRIFT: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Heavy rock covers.  
**NIKKI LOY: Strickland Arms, Ducklington**

### SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**FAT WHITE FAMILY: The Art Bar** – Dirty, dirty people. Possibly not Brit School alumni – *see main preview*  
**ZENSHIT: The Cellar** – The latest Blessing Force club night brings folky indie rockers Trust Fund’s Neutral Milk Hotel-inspired sounds to town, alongside angular noiseniks The Jelas.

**MIKE PETERS: O2 Academy** – The Alarm frontman performs ‘Declaration’ in full to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.  
**MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + MAEVE BAYTON: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm)** – Free afternoon of unplugged music hosted by Klub Kakofanney.

### MONDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**THE HAVEN CLUB: The Art Bar** – Live rock, blues and more, with bands to be announced.  
**THE FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES: The Jericho Tavern** – Live blues, with act to be announced.  
**BOB FOX: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Veteran of the English folk circuit, and twice nominated for Best Singer at the BBC Folk Awards, takes time out from performing in *The War Horse* for an intimate solo show.

### TUESDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**TWENTY ONE PILOTS: O2 Academy** – Pop-punk, poetry, rap and Christian soft rock from the Ohio duo, signed to Fueled By Ramen and out on tour to promote debut album ‘Vessel’ after support dates with Fall Out Boy.  
**EXIST IMMORTAL + A TRUST UNCLEAN + EMPIRE DIVIDED + IGNITE: The Wheatsheaf** – Epic tech-metal from London’s Exist Immortal out on tour, alongside local death

### *Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>*

## ROYAL BLOOD:

### The Art Bar

Since White Stripes brought the blues back to life so spectacularly, the rocking duo format has become a staple set-up, from Death From Above 1979, through Black Keys to Deap Vally. To the ever-growing list you can now add Brighton’s Royal Blood. And don’t expect them to go fading away any time soon. Having made the cut for the debatable BBC Sound of 2014 list, they’ve been picked to support Arctic Monkeys at their mega Finsbury Park shows later in the year, Matt Heldy having been regularly spotted sporting a Royal Blood t-shirt. The sound isn’t anything wildly new – the pair exist fully in the lineage of Led Zeppelin, Queens of the Stone-Age and Black Keys – but they create a pleasingly thunderous old noise, particularly given they make it all on just bass guitar and drums. Singer/ bassist Michael Kerr has a great blues holler, while Ben Thatcher hits his kit with all the methodical violence of John Bonham, and together the pair resemble a couple of redneck truckers. Ahead of those Monkeys shows, they head off on a UK tour to promote debut single ‘Out Of The Black’, and you’ll doubtless be hearing a lot more of them this year. Probably from some distance away.



metallers A Trust Unclean and Empire Divided.  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Art Bar** – With The New Jazz Collective.  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The White Rabbit**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: James Street Tavern**

### WEDNESDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**HUCK & THE XANDER BAND + CHRIS MILLS + REICHENBERG FALLS + RICHARD NEUBERG: The Wheatsheaf** – Launch show for the second EP in Huck’s ‘Alexander the Great’ pop opera triptych, telling the tale of a young gay boy on the run from his religious upbringing.  
**SWIM GOOD + YEARBOOK + DANCE A LA PLAGE: The Purple Turtle** – Free gig with Guildford’s grungy math-rockers, inspired by Biffy Clyro and Taking Back Sunday, plus Hampshire rockers Yearbook and local guitar pop band Dance a la Plage.  
**SUBVERSE: The Cellar** – House, garage, techno and bass club night with dubstep party DJ Chris Barrance, alongside club regulars.  
**SPARKY’S JAM NIGHT: James Street Tavern** – Open mic club.  
**SPANISH MUSIC NIGHT: The Art Bar**

### THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**AGS CONNOLLY + SWEET WILLIAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Authentic country-folk from Ags, launching his debut album with a special hometown show, and channelling the spirits of Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson and Kenny Rogers to great effect. Gentle-natured acoustic pop from Sweet William in support.  
**DEEP COVER: The Cellar** – Hip hop, reggae and r’n’b club night  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**MISSING PERSIANS: Joe’s Bar & Grill, Summertown**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon**  
**BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston**

### FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**JESS HALL + THE FAMILY MACHINE UNPLUGGED: Holywell Music Room** – This month’s Nightshift cover star launches her debut album, ‘Bookshelves’ in the intimately grand setting of the Holywell – *see main interview feature*  
**THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + THE LONG INSIDERS + DJ MEMPHIS FLASH: The Jericho Tavern** – Oxford’s finest party starters return to action with their lively mix of hot jazz, swing and classic r’n’b, joined by The Long Insiders, returning from an extended hiatus for another swim in their dark rock’n’roll and rockabilly waters, mixing up The Cramps and Suicide with classic Elvis and Johnny Cash into a rollicking, diesel-fuelled stomp. Dress to impress.  
**HARLEIGHBLU + RED LIGHT BRIGADE: The Cellar** – Recent Tru Thoughts signing (home to Bonobo and Alice Russell) freestyling soulstress Harleighblu tours her debut album, ‘Forget Me Not’, mixing hip hop with sweet harmony-heavy soul. Followed by Needle In A Haystack club night, mixing up Motown, indie, ska, 60s, 70 and rock.  
**ORANGE VISION + OFF THE RADAR: The Wheatsheaf** – Indie rock and punk-pop from Orange Vision.  
**NAMGTMS: The Art Bar** – House club night

with Arthur Barr and Mike Stockwell.  
**ELIZA & THE BEAR + FRED PAGE + SONS AND LOVERS: Fat Lil’s, Witney**

### SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**LAUREN AQUILINA: O2 Academy** – Low-fat yoghurt-style soul-pop from the Ellie Goulding-inspired singer.  
**VIENNA DITTO + THE TROPHY CABINET + MATT MIDGELY + THE LARKS: The Jericho Tavern** – Voodoo sci-fi synth-blues from Vienna Ditto, channelling Nina Simone through Suicide, plus classic 80s-style indie jangle in the vein of Go-Betweens and Lloyd Cole from The Trophy Cabinet.  
**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + JACK FM DJs: O2 Academy**  
**EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar**  
**HOUSE FOUNDATIONS: The Art Bar**  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Swan, Wantage**

### SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**SAM LEE & FRIENDS: Cogges Manor Farm, Witney** – Songs and stories from WWI-era Witney from the folk song collector – *see main preview*  
**HAVEN CLUB: The Art Bar**

### MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**LUKE SITAL SINGH + ELIZA & THE BEAR + FAREWELL JUNIOR + ANNIE EVE: The Art Bar** – Emotive but uplifting acoustic soul-pop from Luke Sital Singh in the vein of Damien Rice, Jeff Buckley and Bon Iver, plus airy afropop-inflected indie-folk from Eliza and the Bear.  
**NICO’ZZ: The Jericho Tavern** – Funky blues and soul from the French guitarist and singer at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.  
**JACKIE OATES + PETER KNIGHT + MEGAN HENWOOD + KITH & KIN + BRUCE GOMERSALL + HUGH CRABTREE: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Nettlebed Folk Club’s traditional showcase evening brings together regular favourites.

### TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**JAZZ CLUB: The Art Bar** – Live jazz with Moss Feed.  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The White Rabbit**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: James Street Tavern**

### WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**ROYAL BLOOD: The Art Bar** – Stoner garage-blues from the fast-rising Brighton drums and bass duo – *see main preview*  
**SPANISH MUSIC NIGHT: The Art Bar**  
**FREERANGE: The Cellar**

### THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**FRACTURE + THE OTHER DRAMAS + STORYTELLER: The Art Bar** – Bluesy rocking from Fracture, plus acoustic pop from The Other Dramas.  
**ISIS presents SUPERSTITION: The Cellar** – Live funk soul and jazz from Cross Keys and Garfunkel, plus Holy Funk DJs.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon**  
**BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston**

*Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is 6pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month - no exceptions. Call 01865 372255 (10am-6pm), or email listings to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net). Gig listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be reproduced without permission.*



*Friday 28<sup>th</sup>*

## FOXES: O2 Academy

It’s unfortunate for Foxes – the stage name of Southampton’s Louisa Allen – that she’s about to be thrust more fully into the public glare not long after Lorde has become everyone’s favourite symphonically synth gothic pop queen. Because fantastic though the Kiwi teen star is, Foxes was doing something quite similar a couple of years ago when Neon Gold (who else?) released her debut single, while she also enjoyed serious worldwide exposure as vocalist on Zedd’s club hit ‘Clarity’ back in 2012. Then again, where Foxes is coming from, many have been before, notably Ellie Goulding, Marina & the Diamonds and Wolfette – bombastic yet baroque electro-pop with a theatrical edge, 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, but it’s a right old crowded market for this stuff right now and imminent debut album, ‘Glorious’ is going to have to fight its corner with suitably vulpine ferocity.

### FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**FOXES: O2 Academy** – Theatrical electro-tinged pop from the rising young Southampton singer – *see main preview*  
**5 SECONDS OF SUMMER: O2 Academy** – Feeble-minded pop from the Sydney outfit who openly cite Busted as an influence.  
**SWITCH with ANNIE MAC: O2 Academy**– Electro and house from the influential Radio 1 DJ at the O2’s weekly electro club night.  
**CUBAN COMBINATIONS: The Art Bar** – Live Cuban dance music.  
**DIAMOND FAMILY ARCHIVE + THE AUGUST LIST + JULIA MEIJER: The Port Mahon** – Intense, spectral psych-folk from the prolific Laurence Collyer under his Diamond Family Archive guise. Support at tonight’s Tertium Quid gig comes from local backwoods porch-folk duo The August List, and Swedish songstress Julia Meijer.  
**ULTRA PLAID TURBO SHIRT: The Cellar**  
**THE SHAPES + MASIRO + BLOOD RED STARS + PUNCHDRUNK MONKEYCLUB: Castle House, Banbury**  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The James Street Tavern**



## YELLOW FEVER / BRIGHTWORKS / DUCHESS

### The Wheatsheaf

Anyone who has been to the wrong student parties is wary of percussion: witnessing a stoned gaggle attempt to recreate side two of ‘Exile On Main Street’ using only bongos and kitchen implements can put you off for life. Still, in the right hands it can be a powerful tool, and Duchess are at their best when three of them are bashing, scraping or rubbing away at something sonorous, whilst chirpy pop vocals and African-influenced guitars gambol gaily over the top. From the “Wild Side” fret slides at the start, to the Bow Wow Wow does Taiko clamour at the end, Duchess’ set is a bundle of bouncy, upbeat glee, and if they might feel as though they’d dropped through a timewarp from a UCL charity bop in 1986, your cynicism can only survive as long as your feet remain

still.

Brightworks also swipe a few Ghanaian guitar licks, but are an altogether odder proposition. The mathpop trickeries are an interesting addition, albeit not one to raise many Oxonian eyebrows, but the vocalist is what really makes Brightworks unique, crooning poetic fragments with an atonal angst, whilst occasionally poking out rinky-dink lines on a tiny keyboard, like an emo John Shuttleworth. Occasionally they remind us of rubbery 80s pranksters Stump, but in general easy reference points remain elusive. Brightworks are many things throughout their set, and, frankly, “any good” isn’t always one of them, but we need artists whose output can’t be boiled down to a single hashtag. Now more than ever.

Yellow Fever have always been fun, but in their early days they were happy to base their sound on Arctic Monkeys’ rabble pop, which placed them firmly in a comfortable, crowded field. Over the past couple of years they’ve refined this sound, removing the blokey, everyman wallop and replacing it with either a taut intensity that brings them in line with local heroes Spring Offensive, or a freeze-dried fake funk that is a little like early Foals. At their very best Alexis Panidis’ woodblock-heavy rhythms underpin (yet more) West African guitar twiddles and Dele Adewuyi’s quietly emphatic vocals smuggle in an emotional subtlety, and you can’t help but feel that another year or so will see them as one of Oxford’s very finest acts.

*David Murphy*

## NOT TOO SHABBY / BALLOON ASCENTS

### The Jericho Tavern

Balloon Ascents have bought some family along, not a bad idea since only half of them look old enough to buy their own drinks. The local five-piece feature a singer who looks like he’s just landed from Liverpool in the 80s, one of three guitarists who jangle their way through the set, weaving their lines around songs that can best be described as half-formed. In a bizarre opening twist gig host Osprey’s announcement asking someone to move their car gets caught in a guitar effect, recurring as a loop throughout the first two songs like an art installation. All the basic elements of an Oxford guitar band are here, though said singer needs to control his voice more to prevent it drowning out his bandmates. ‘Cutout’ wins first prize for catchiness, though less disciplined here than their Soundcloud version. With a nod to Orange Juice, at least one of the guitarists shows real promise, as does the bass player, and given their collective age and current lack of experience you imagine that six months

down the line they’ll doubtless emerge impressively lean and tight.

The name Not Too Shabby stirs dim memories of a cheerfully danceable set at Klub Kakofanney six years ago, though inevitable line-up changes and failed record deals have befallen the band since then. A down-the-line rock band in the true sense, they make absolutely no concessions to what might be in vogue, keeping the beat steady and the riffs solid. They also look fantastic: rhythm guitarist Da Geena could have just stepped out of a Wilkie Collins novel; bassist Dr. Col is a lanky mass of hair, and singer Mazza strikes perfect rocker poses. Even his South Yorkshire accent is the perfect conduit for the between-song banter. As a slower section gives way to more heads-down boogie some songs verge on the leaden, but they’re not trying to be Alt-J. There’s a place in the world for bands like this and we’d all be poorer without them.

*Art Lagun*

## THE SPARK SIDE OF THE MOON / TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

### James Street Tavern / Half Moon

Seeking Tuesday night entertainment in the bleak midwinter month of January, *Nightshift* set out to explore what east Oxford offers by way of open mic and free music sessions. While there is a deep winter slumber on the Cowley Road, it’s still disappointing to arrive at The Art Bar and be told the Spanish music and the late night jazz are not back till next week. Just round the corner though, the open mic at The James Street Tavern is on.

Club host Sparky introduces the night as “the quiet one”, adding “the noisy one” is his long-running Thursday open mic at The Half Moon. We don’t know whether it’s by chance or not but all the first handful of acts are middle-aged solo male singers with a guitar. Our favourite of a competent bunch is a guy called **Antony** with his cover of The Band classic ‘The Weight’ and an echo of Antony Hegarty in his voice.

After this **Trio Copacabana** play a couple of familiar Brazilian classics into which they inserted complex jazzy breaks and even if they don’t quite come off you have to give them credit for being ambitious. Two acts, though, lift the evening to another level and get us thinking we just

might have stumbled across stars in the making. **Rowan**, a young South African, lyrically rhymes grim statistics from his country to create an epic rap. But even he’s just edged by a full-on set, if you can call two songs a set, by **Gemma Moss**. As well as sinister gothic, she also has an impressive take on gospel and soul and she sends us off to the Half Moon buzzing.

The Half Moon is another pub with a warm, convivial atmosphere and people listening attentively to the music, a monthly gig by jazzers **Time is of the Essence**. With a sax and powerful keyboards in the line-up, they’re capable of a big sound, though in the confines of the pub should probably be a breach of health and safety regs. They play upbeat stuff, a funky Brazilian tune, a Sonny Rollins near-classic and the highlight, an original ‘Unusual Suspect’ by saxophonist Olli Weston; all thoroughly enjoyable without being earth shattering.

The whole evening is a good advert for the open mic/free music scene, which sometimes seem to exist on the margins of the local scene and, best of all, there’s still more clubs on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to check out.

*Colin May*

## FIGHTING WOLVES / SONS OF ICARUS / PISTON

### O2 Academy

Staffordshire’s Piston have the honour of being the first band to grace the stage of Black Bullet Live’s new Rock Live night, and we’d like to imagine they set the tone for things to come. The band settles comfortably into the richly ploughed vein of AC/DC-style, balls-to-the-wall hard rock, with a few nods to more modern bands like Velvet Revolver and Alter Bridge. Their onstage energy and enthusiasm is palpable, and they treat the Academy like a sold-out arena, with guitarist Jack Edward’s rockstar antics proving somewhat overwhelming at times, although that’s not necessarily a bad thing. While Piston are certainly tight, it’d be hard to say there’s anything truly original about their sound; that said, some of their newer stuff feels a little more multi-dimensional, with some tasty blues licks thrown into the mix. Perhaps all they need is the time to settle into their own niche. Sons of Icarus have generated some serious media and industry attention over the past few years, and it’s great to see someone bringing them to Oxford in front of what is now a pretty sizeable crowd. It takes them a few songs to really get into the flow of things, but the resulting performance is an incendiary, effervescent education in sizzling, bluesy hard rock,

with Andy Masson’s high, clean vocals ringing out like Robert Plant over a well-crafted base of riffs whilst bassist (and we presume some kind of relation) Alex Masson grooves around stage right with a serious case of bassface. Once they get into full swing, its hard to believe anyone here tonight isn’t impressed by this lot, and you get the feeling that they might be playing to a considerably larger crowd next time they roll into town.

The crowd seem pretty excited for headliners Fighting Wolves, but something about this set just doesn’t quite seem right to us: it all feels a bit derivative, with the band slamming out the same power chords and throwing all the same shapes as every mainstream rock band of the last twenty years. Vocalist Paul Blue is perhaps not quite on top of his game tonight, frequently wobbling off pitch or falling flat, making for a somewhat underwhelming performance. Credit where credit’s due, Fighting Wolves do have great stage presence, and if the sound they’re making is nothing special, the performance they put on seems to be a winner as far as the enthusiastic throng down the front is concerned.

*Tal Fineman*

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*Deadline for entries is the 10<sup>th</sup> March.*

*All acts must be over 18 and from Oxfordshire.*

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01 LIVERPOOL Ly Academy 2	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
02 SHEFFIELD Ly Academy 2	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
03 BATH Komedia	01226 222 657	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
04 LEAMINGTON Spa Assembly	01922 505 000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
05 LEEDS Brudenell Social Club	0113 260 5070	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
06 READING Club 99	01493 763 111	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
07 HEDDERLEY BRIDGE Trades Club	01422 545 200	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
08 CARLISLE Brudenell	01204 77 1000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
09 KIRKCALDY Windsor Hotel	01844 77 1000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000	01 477 2000
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**MUSIC** *in the front bar*  
5<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> **BROOKES**  
**CONNECTION**  
26<sup>th</sup> **ROYAL BLOOD**

Thursdays  
6<sup>th</sup> **NOTHING BUT**  
**THIEVES**  
27<sup>th</sup> **FRACTURE** / **THE**  
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# FEBRUARY

Friday early gigs  
7<sup>th</sup> **GEORGE EZRA**

Fridays (*late*)  
7<sup>th</sup> **HOUSE FOUNDATION**  
14<sup>th</sup> **MUSIC BOX** – House night

21<sup>st</sup> **NAMGTMS**  
House night with Arthur Barr / Mike  
Stockell £5  
28<sup>th</sup> **CUBAN**  
**COMBINATIONS**  
Live Cuban band and dance night  
9-3am

Saturday early gigs  
8<sup>th</sup> **POLICE DOG HOGAN** /  
**DREW HOLCOMB**  
15<sup>th</sup> **BEN BARRIE**

Saturdays  
1<sup>st</sup> **TERRAFORMS**  
– Drum’n’bass with  
**LOGISTICS** / **DJ DIE** 11-4am  
8<sup>th</sup> **R’N’B, HIP HOP &**  
**SOUL NIGHT**  
15<sup>th</sup> **SIMPLE**  
House and techno  
22<sup>nd</sup> **HOUSE FOUNDATIONS**

Sundays  
2<sup>nd</sup> **HUMOUR TUMOUR** – Live  
stand-up comedy 7.30pm  
16<sup>th</sup> **FAT WHITE FAMILY** /  
**PHOBOPHOBES**  
23<sup>rd</sup> **THE HAVEN CLUB**

## THE WHEATSHEAF

Sat 1<sup>st</sup> February - *BURIED IN SMOKE*

### DIESEL KING

STONEGHOST + BLACK SKIES BURN + IN THE HILLS + MASIRO 7pm/£5

Fri 7<sup>th</sup> February – *KLUB KAKOFANNEY*

### THE GRACEFUL SLICKS

MOIETY + THE DOTS & SPOTS 8pm/£5

Fri 14<sup>th</sup> February – *A VALENTINE’S BURLESQUE SPECIAL*

### THE SCARLET VIKENS

VIENNA DITTO 8pm

Sat 15<sup>th</sup> February

### THE EVENINGS & TIGER MENDOZA

JAMES BELL & THE HALF MOON ALLSTARS 8pm

Tue 18<sup>th</sup> February – *WAR AT THE WHEATSHEAF*

### EXIST IMMORTAL

A TRUST UNCLEAN + EMPIRE DIVIDED + IGNITE 7pm/£5

Wed 19<sup>th</sup> February – *PINDROP PRESENT*

### HUCK & THE XANDER BAND

CHRIS MILLS + REICHENBACH FALLS + RICHARD NEUBERG 7:45pm/£6

Fri 21<sup>st</sup> February

### ORANGE VISION

OFF THE RADAR 8pm/£5

Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> February – *GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES*

### THE HEAVY DEXTERS

THE LUCKY CLUB + BEARD OF DESTINY 8pm/£4.50

Fri 28<sup>th</sup> February - *MOSHKA*

### GIRLPOWER

CLAIRE LEMASTER BAND + MOLOTOV SEXBOMB 8pm/£5

The Wheatsheaf 129 High Street, Oxford OX1 4DF / [www.facebook.com/wheatsheaf.oxford](http://www.facebook.com/wheatsheaf.oxford)

## DR SHOTOVER Grime Machine

Ah, there you are. Sit the frick down and buy me a BEER, dude. Out-STANDING! Whoaaa, this is AWKWARD - yesterday I saw two vampires MAKING OUT on the street, and I was like, ‘Ewww, gross, get a TOMB guys!’ Ha ha, that shocked you, didn’t it? Didn’t think I knew how to speak American, did you? Still, at least I’m not doing that made-up talking which Young People favour. ‘I was lake *chillin’* at Respect-fest, and dis OLD GEEZA lake come up, sayin’ to me lake, “I’m GREG LAKE, lake”, and I say, ‘No way, man, you is lake the SHIZZLE from Prog Rap troupe Eminem Lake and Parka, lake...?’” And he says, “Lake, true dat, bro”...” [Dr S bows slightly as a ripple of delighted applause patters around the East Indies Club bar]... Now, there was a time when I might have recommended a sound thrashing for anyone speaking this kind of Young-Person gibberish. However, thanks to last month’s Nightshift, my eyes have been opened to the ah MARVELLOUS musical possibilities afforded by the genre known as HIP HOP. Some magnificent ahem *dash-ups* can occur, eg the previously-described Urban Prog, not to mention LL Cool James Blunt, Snoop Patrol, Tenpole Tupac, Jay-ZZ Top, Tinchy STRYPER etc etc [Dr S takes a full bow as prolonged and stormy applause breaks out]... and let us not forget that lifestyle-related as well as musical changes can result... my old friend Freddie ‘The Fish’ Farquharson is about to open ... a HIP HOP CHIP SHOP! [Roars, howls, birdcalls]... And he’s going to call it... CRUSTACEAN DUB FOUNDATION! [Whistles, foot-stamping, vuvuzelas]... Now, where was I? Ah yes, about to RAP my lips around this bottle of beer [total silence, glassy stares, tumbleweed rolls through East Indies Club bar].  
**Next month: Lord of the Pants**



David Bowie: ‘Kanye... KANYE! Your doorbell’s not working!’

## INTRODUCING....

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

## After the Thought

Who are they?

After The Thought is the solo work of Matt Chapman Jones, until recently also known as the genial chap with the glasses who worked in Truck Store. He started making electronic noises four years ago, gigging regularly including supports to Ulrich Schnauss and Portico Quartet, and topping off last year’s Oxford Punt, as well as promoting his own Tertium Quid gigs at the Port Mahon. He released one EP and an album (“more a collection of songs I had sitting around and wanted to wipe the slate clean”), followed by a remix EP full of local talent. In January this year he released his first physical EP, ‘I Am No Different’, on Bear On A Bicycle Records.

What does he sound like?

A melting pot of ambient techno, shoegaze guitar, bleeps, drones and feedback and myriad other influences. “I try to make electronic music live,” says Matt, “I have no pre-sequenced order to the songs, just loops and ideas of how I played it last time. There is a structure but I don’t have to stick to it. In that way it sometimes resembles a DJ set, reading the room and chopping and changing with the audience. I don’t have to keep a verse the same length because of lyrics and I can take say a bass line out without having to plan ahead, or signal to another musician.” It’s “dance music to sit down to.”

What inspires him?

“All the music I absorb. At the moment I’m trying to make a blues-rock guitar sit in one of my songs. Not sure it’ll work, but in general I listen to a lot of ambient and post-rock music. I wish I could incorporate more neo-classical sounds but my piano chops are still at the sticks stage.”

Career highlight so far:

“Opening for Portico Quartet in the huge Newman Room in the OU Catholic Chaplaincy. I think I played to more people that night that I had cumulatively up to that point.”

And the lowlight:

“When I put myself and a couple of other excellent Oxford electronic acts (Daisy Beard and The Manacles Of Acid) on and only five people came.



Summer rain. Humph”

His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“At the moment it would be Maiians. They blew me away at the Academy in December. I love a band that leaves me wanting to run home and make my music better, my head full of new ideas.”

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

“Jeff Buckley’s ‘Grace’. It somehow covers almost every genre whilst being solidly a guitar album.”

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

“15<sup>th</sup> February at the Jericho Tavern. I always try and balance upbeat dance-y stuff along with the more ambient textured stuff. Come along with an open mind

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Favourite thing is the sheer variety of bands in one scene. Least favourite is the tendency for bands to sometimes get pigeonholed based on what went before them.”

You might love him if you love:

Four Tet; Fuck Buttons; Daniel Avery; Ryan Teague; Flights Of Helios; Mountains.

Hear him here:

[www.afterthethought.co.uk](http://www.afterthethought.co.uk)

## ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

### 20 YEARS AGO

“We’re about hedonism and love,” declared the band Pod, who graced the front cover of *Curfew* magazine back in February 1994, adding “we’re always very nice to everybody.”

Pod has a song called ‘Let’s Make It A Party’, which tended to sum up the band’s attitude to gigging, making them regular favourites on the local gig circuit, briefly attracting major label attention after they provoked a stage invasion at their first London show. Pod were fronted by singer and guitarist **Ady Davey** who, along with most of the rest of the band had previously served time in cult heroes **No Joy In Mudville**. Back then Ady was celebrating fifteen years playing in bands in Oxfordshire. Twenty years on he’s still treading the boards. Hey hey, my my, rock and roll will never die, as Neil Young would say.

Elsewhere twenty years ago several local covers bands were complaining to *Curfew* about the lack of review coverage they were getting compared to such terrible talentless young upstarts like Supergrass and The Candyskins, and said bands would doubtless be apoplectic that Twizz Twangle’s **Oh Susannah Joanna** band were Demo of the Month for the second time, *Curfew* heralding them as “possibly the worst band in the whole of Oxford, but also geniuses,” and “mad beyond belief; everything is all over the place.” We continue to stand by our belief that amateurish craziness is preferable to dead-eyed professionalism every time.

Gig highlights of the month included (at the time) much-hyped lo-fi indie thrashers **Cornershop** at the **Jericho Tavern** and ambient dub-techno chap **Banco de Gaia** at the **Oxford Venue**, while local names

lost in time included **Grey lady Down**, **Out To Lunch**, **The Haze** and **Monkeyhouse**.

### 10 YEARS AGO

February 2004 was the first month *Nightshift* featured a full-picture front cover of the month’s featured band, in this case crazed metal tyrants **Near Life Experience**, who were serious contenders for the local super-heavyweight rock crown, having been formed by one-time **Mindsurfer** guitarist Jonny O’Neill and future **Xmas Lights** fretmangler James Gray-King, and fronted by the **Zodiac**’s head doorman Penos Bougourd, which made them pretty much the hardest band in town if every sense. The band had just released their debut album, ‘I’ll Take Your Silence As A Loud Yes’ on **Hanging Out With The Cool Kids**. “If I was going to punch anyone it would be Phil Anselmo; he’s a whinging, whining c\*\*\*” announced Penos. We didn’t argue.

As well as NLE’s album the notable local release was a split single between **The Edmund Fitzgerald** and **Youthmovie Soundtrack Strategies** on seminal local label **Vacuous Pop**. The band that would go on to become Foals had recently morphed from post-hardcore teenage bruisers Elizabeth into an obstinate math-core outfit whose track ‘Horses’ we compared to Shellac. The rest, as they say, is history.

News-wise the inaugural **Oxford Folk Festival** was launched by none other than **Joan Baez** and was set to feature a headline set from **Steeleye Span**. On the local gigging front **The Rapture**, **Spiritualized**, **Entombed**, **Avenged Sevenfold** and some new disco hopefuls called **Scissor Sisters** were coming to town.

## THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

### 5 YEARS AGO

We’ve been writing a lot about **Zahra Tehrani** in *Nightshift* lately, what with her being one of the pivotal figures in the local hip hop scene, but back in February 2009, she was drummer with electro-punk tykes **BabyGravy** and was standing there, hands on hips, gracing the front cover of the mag for the second time. We loved BabyGravy because they were all about mad, crazy pop fun and they really, really upset ancient musos who enjoyed things like guitar solos and Eric Clapton albums.

Pared down from their early six-strong dub-prog-punk-pop incarnation the band were now a more cohesive hip hop-infected synth-heavy fighting unit who were releasing a debut single ‘Did It Again’ on STW Records, somewhat akin to Kathleen Hannah fronting The Human League, while on the flipside they teamed up with **Mr ShaoDow** for the furious electro-skank of ‘Don’t Touch Me’.

Other local releases this month included ‘The Way’ album by rap duo GTA, and ‘Short Sharp Shock’ by **Borderville**, while local gigging highlights included **Soullfy**, **Florence & the Machine** and **Friendly Fires** at the **O2 Academy**, **Richard Thompson** at the **New Theatre** and most notably **Magazine**’s first gig in 30 years at the O2, a show that was to prove one of the high points of *Nightshift* entire lifetime, as well as reducing a certain **Jonny Greenwood** to the state of a gibbering fanboy.

Local music news this month centred on the uncertainty surrounding **The Regal** after its parent company went into liquidation. The venue was to remain open for a short while after before becoming a religious meeting place.

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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### 1877

As *Nightshift* sits down to review this month's demo pile it's early January, all trace of festive cheer has left the building; the bottle of port is down to the dregs; it's miserable and rainy and half of Oxford is under water. We need something – anything – the cheer us up. Strange then that this month's most determinedly miserable offering should be the one to raise our spirits. 1877 have won this title before, a couple of years back, and technically they're not even an Oxford band, hailing from near Aylesbury just over the Ox-Bucks border, but to hell with that: considering the tepid contemptibility of pretty much all the other offerings, we'd give the Demo of the Month title to a bunch of Martians if they could simply erase the memory of all those foghorn divas and earnest troubadours for even five minutes. And anyway, 1877 are fucking great and are wasted on a cultural void like Aylesbury. We should adopt them. Let's do it. They're stubbornly dour, with their shuffling electronic beats and glowering coffin-dwelling vocals and obstinate refusal to play to any rock hero clichés, preferring insular, downbeat contemplation and a funereal air of regret and pessimism, channelling the spectral spirit of Joy Division and The Sisters of Mercy and – oh yeah, get us with our encyclopaedic knowledge of obscure 1980s 4AD bands – Clan of Xymox into something refreshingly chilly. They even manage a decent cover of Springsteen's 'State Trooper', itself a tribute to Suicide, and, in the bleak depth of post-Christmas midwinter, it brings a little gothic warmth to our stone-cold hearts.

## THE AFFECTORS

A quick scan through the files suggests the last time The Affectors sent us a demo was about five years ago and we mostly liked it, especially the bits that sounded like Kraftwerk. Fast forward to 2014 and, what do you know, some more music and the best bits sound a bit like Kraftwerk. Oh for more of such consistency in life. As we say, the best things here veer toward the more electronically heavy. 'Re-Reverance 3' is a squelchy introverted techno squiggle, all dirty synths and simple, insistent electronic beats, while 'Deep' could be a remix of a

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

late-80s Primal Scream rarity by the Timperly Dub Orchestra or something, or maybe a lost Future Sound Of London cut. Possibly best of the lot though is 'Basis', wobbly electro-trance that sounds like an old Jean Michel Jarre soundtrack with a cursory acid house make over, veering just slightly into 'Trans-Europe Express' territory. They only let themselves go a bit on 'The Game Of', a misfiring Bontempi piano house thing that tries to liven itself up by going all glitchy, only to end up sounding even more of a mess than it did at first. Completely and utterly stuck in a time lock of its own making then, but of a time when most of the country was mashed off its tits on E, so not such a bad place to be stuck for all eternity.

## AURORA J YOUNG

This month's demo entry most likely to win *The Voice*, Aurora here offers a one-song affair that purports to be the second single from a forthcoming album, 'Reap What You Sow'. The track here, 'Passing Me By', is a standard slick r'n'b power ballad of the old school, in particular somewhere around 1986. There's a discreet country twang to it but nothing that lends it too much of an air of earthiness as rough-hewn edges are shunned like diseased rodents in favour of a polish you can almost see your reflection in. Mournful strings and tender piano provide an unobtrusive base for Aurora to exercise her indisputably powerful tonsils but however hard she tries to convey a sense of loss, longing or emotional hurt, it all feels like something lab-designed for a mobile phone advert or the National Lottery guest slot. We can just picture Tom Jones or Kylie sitting, fighting back theatrical tears, as Aurora belts it out, before telling her she "smashed it" and to "hang on to her dream". This is why *Nightshift* spends every Saturday night drunk to the point of psychosis on supermarket own-brand gin.

## TRULY FORD

Blimey, two contenders for *The Voice* in the same demo pile. Truly here, like Aurora, has a belter of a voice on her, perfect for cranking out those shiny soul power ballads, though vocally she seems to have a bit more character about her, a Florence Welch-style gutsy warble that would be equally at home fronting a wild-haired power rock band as soundtracking the denouement of a romantic movie or a Renault commercial. Not unlike Aurora though, it all sounds like it just beamed down from Planet Celine circa 1992, providing late-night singalong succour for drunken divorcees, doubtless to the chagrin of their sleep-deprived

neighbours.

## ANDREW MILLOY

Part of The Band of Hope, Andrew's previous offering was an EP of songs for his daughter who tragically died at birth, an unsurprisingly emotional set of gentle, poetic songs that, with the right breaks, you could imagine selling several squillion copies off the back of some serious Radio 2 play. This new one-song demo is less emotive but treads a not dissimilar musical path, understatedly orchestral MOR pop that's earnest, maybe a little bit mawkish but awash with enough wistful romanticism to get it off the hook. It is, we're told, a song about waiting for someone, in this case a girl called Phoebe, who is on her way to Andrew, who will hold her in his loving arms. Or maybe he won't. "Don't make me wait too long, just come home," pleads Andrew, and there's a slight risk the whole thing will drown in slushy, melodramatic cliché. But then love and longing are all but inseparable from cliché in song after all these years, and we can just imagine this soundtracking an advert for railcards or budget airlines. Doubtless the final scene in the ad would involve unabashed snogging on a station platform or arrivals lounge. Admit it, you're touched.

## SUBWAY TO VENUS

Talking of softies, a simple turn of phrase in a letter can soften our opinion of a demo. Abingdon youngsters Subway to Venus inform us that this is their first attempt to record any of their songs, adding, "we think they're pretty decent but we're biased. If you don't like it, hey man, we tried." See, no delusions of grandeur, no egos demanding to be massaged; it's almost as if they're apologising for taking our time. And such modesty becomes them since, if we're honest, this isn't all that. The first track, 'Your Madness' is a hesitant, grumbling slice of lo-fi maudlin rock with occasional funk pretences that sounds like the various band members need gathering together and pointing in the same direction as each other, possibly followed by a bit of a kick up the backside to hurry them along. Nothing offensive about it though. They save that for their second song, the decidedly funkier 'Purple Slap', which might, through rose-tinted specs, be a mildly backwards distant cousin of Red Hot Chili Peppers, or through a less generous fug, the ramblings of a terminally hoarse wino busker over a Jamiroquai bassline stuck on a one-bar loop. Subway To Venus sign off "yours eternally, the band," which we take to mean we own their souls from now until the ends of time. Excellent. You can start by pouring us a large single malt, boys. Then there's the kitchen floor to be scrubbed. Just stay away from any musically instruments while you're about it.

*Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto: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.*

## SATELLITES

Anyone else remember the annoying yappy Chihuahua-like bloke who used to ruin The Automatic's songs even more than they were in the first place? We seem to remember he left the band, which didn't actually improve their indie rock greyness that much, but listening to Satellites it sounds like he's formed his own band and made himself lead singer so the rest of the group can't just get the sound engineer to turn him down during gigs. He also seems to have bought himself a fancy piece of home studio trickery that perfectly replicates all your favourite Foo Fighters moments, a band who, let's face it, for all Dave Grohl being utterly lovely and all that, should have given up about five albums ago and only continue to exist because otherwise Green Day would have to headline Reading Festival every year instead of every other. People wonder why rock music has been usurped in young folks' affections by strange electronic sounds in recent times. Satellites are all the evidence you really need.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

## THE WRONG WAY BACK

We suppose it was only a matter of time before the Klaus Wunderlich revival came round but, like, informed by modern technology. So out go the Hammond organ and primitive Moog, in comes what might be a two hundred quid Yamaha with all the factory settings untouched and someone who seems to imagine themselves as the new Clint Mansell in the eerie, ambient soundtrack stakes. It starts off well enough – the easy piano jazz wander and spacey ambient swirl of 'JFK Chill Out' given life by the overlaying of news footage, from inauguration to assassination, but 'In The Lift With Soul' is simply an instrumental retreat of the same piece, revealing itself as nothing more than the soothing musak of a thousand holistic spa resort elevators and, frankly, a bit of a plod. From here it's subtle variations on a theme – featureless keyboard landscapes, sometimes with the incongruous relief of shuffling electronic rhythms. At best – 'Strange Club' – it might be an amateur attempt to recreate the music from the old kids' cartoon *Rhubarb & Custard*, but mostly it's the seemingly endless torpor of a recent retiree seeing if he can drive his spouse insane with choice cuts from the *Learn To Play Piano Like a Soulless Simpleton* book, right up to the point he does something unspeakable to Nirvana. And looking back over this month's demo pile, it seems to be little more than a list of people we're glad we don't live next door to.

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