

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 230
September
2014**

photo: Johnny Moto



THE SMALL GUYS

**A CELEBRATION OF
OXFORD'S INDEPENDENT
PROMOTERS**

with
Klub Kakofanney, *Gappy Tooth Industries*, *Bossaphonik*, The Haven Club, *Skeletor*, *All Tamara's Parties*, Black Bullet Live, *Empty Room*, *Skylarkin'* *Soundsystem*, Daisy Rodgers Music and *Pindrop Performances*.

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THE BULLINGDON

SEPTEMBER 2014

Friday 5th September
Don't Go Plastic/The Deputees
Wardens/Blues!
Doors: 7pm

Sunday 7th September
One Drop Collective
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 7th September
Friday Street
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 7th September
Humour Tumour
Comedy Club
Doors: 7pm - 11pm

Tuesday 9th September
Jazz Club:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 13th September
Planet Rock Radio:
Black Wolf
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th September
Bedrock
Rock Club
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 16th September
Jazz Club:
Guitar Summit
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 18th September
The Haven Club:
Marcus Malone
Doors: 7pm

Friday 19th September
Man Makes Fire
Rusty G's/Endless Mile
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th September
Wittstock Fundraiser
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 23rd September
Jazz Club:
The Martin Pickett
Organisation
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 25th September
The Haven Club:
Will Wilde
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 27th September
A Nite of Music:
Country Cup Sound Clash:
White Magic Sound/LPOJ Sound
Kingspin Sounds/Sevilla Syndicate
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 29th September
Jazz Club:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 3rd October
Punch Drunk
Monkey Club
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 4th October
Tom Vek
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 4th October
Fonti & Mighty Moe
(Heartless Crew)
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 7th October
Jazz Club:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 9th October
The August List
and Co-pilgrim
Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th October
Chuck Prophet
& Mission Express
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 11th October
Dan Croll
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 11th October
Simple:
Boddika
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 12th October
Humour Tumour
Comedy Club
Doors: 7pm

Monday 13th October
The Haven Club:
Matt Edwards
Tom Mitchell
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 14th October
Jazz Club:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 15th October
Alexis Taylor
(Hot Chip)
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 16th October
Billy Lockett
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 18th October
Girl Power Phyal
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 18th October
Bedrock
Rock Club
Doors: 11pm

Monday 20th October
The Haven Club:
Billy Walton Band
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 21st October
Jazz Club:
Guitar Summit
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 24th October
The Travelling Band
The Shapes
Swindlestock
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 25th October
Ella Martini
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 25th October
A Nite of Music:
White Magic Sound
2xclusive crew + Guests
Doors: 11pm

Monday 27th October
The Haven Club:
Spellkasters
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 28th October
Jazz Club:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 1st November
Head Bangers Ball
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 1st November
Simple:
Leon Vynehall
Doors: 11pm

Monday 3rd November
The Haven Club:
Kirk Fletcher
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 4th November
Jazz Club:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 7th November
Amber Run/Fyfe
Kimberly Anne/Pixel fix
Doors: 7pm

Sunday 9th November
Humour Tumour
Comedy Club
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 11th November
Jazz Club:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 15th November
Wittstock Fundraiser
Doors: 7pm

Monday 17th November
The Haven Club:
The Brew
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 18th November
Jazz Club:
The Martin Pickett
Organisation
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 22nd November
MacMillan Cancer Research Fundraiser:
Salvage/I Cried Wolf
Evavoid/Godsbane
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 22nd November
Bedrock
Rock Club
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 25th November
Jazz Club:
Eddie Condon
Legacy Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 29th November
A Nite of Music:
White Magic Sound
2xclusive crew + Guests
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 2nd December
Jazz Club:
Stuart Henderson Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

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THE AUGUST LIST release their debut album this month. 'Oh Hinterland' is out on Monday 29th September. The west Oxfordshire porch-folk duo will be talking about the new album as part of next month's *Nightshift* front cover feature. Kerraleigh and Martin Child will launch the album with a show at the Bullingdon on Thursday 9th October, where they'll be joined by Co-Pilgrim and Vienna Ditto. Visit their Facebook page to find out more and hear just how great they are.

THE BULLINGDON is now back to being called The Bullingdon. After a few months going under the rebranded name of Art Bar, it reverts to its historic moniker with immediate effect. Not that anyone ever stopped calling it The Bully anyway.

OXFORD CITY FESTIVAL returns for its second annual outing later this year. The city-wide live music festival takes place from the 24th-29th November. Last year's event took in the O2 Academy, Jericho Tavern, The Wheatshaf, The Cellar, Holywell Music Room, Head of the River, James Street Tavern, The Marsh Harrier, The Corridor and more, featuring a wide range of local acts. Oxford acts wanting to take part in

this year should apply via the Oxford City Festival page on Facebook.

JOHN OTWAY teams up with Wild Willy Barrett for the first time in years when they perform together at the Old Fire Station on Thursday 9th October as part of a tour to promote *Rock and Roll's Greatest Failure: Otway the Movie*. The legendary rock loon celebrated the 25th anniversary of his solitary Top 40 Hit ('Really Free', with Barrett, in 1977) in 2002 with the single 'Bunsen Burner', which reached number 9 in the charts and remains only his second hit. Get your ticket to see the pair from www.johnotway.com.

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

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



STORNOWAY play The Sheldonian Theatre on Thursday 17th November. The show marks the fifth anniversary of the band's now legendary concert there when they became the first band ever to play the historic theatre. The show will be the first opportunity for fans to hear songs from Stornoway's forthcoming third album, currently being recorded with producer Gil Norton and set for a Spring 2015 release. The local heroes will once again team up with The Oxford Millennium Orchestra, playing songs from across their career. Tickets are available exclusively through Wegottickets, priced £18, plus booking fee.

Count Skylarkin (*centre*) with fellow Disco Shed proprietor Paddy Bickerton and Channel 4 presenter Max McMurdo



THE DISCO SHED has won the Best Normal Shed prize in Channel 4's annual Shed of the Year Awards. The travelling shed-based soundsystem run by local DJ and promoter Aidan 'Count' Skylarkin was rewarded for its innovative approach to taking music to the masses – an approach that has seen the Shed appearing at Reading and Leeds Festivals, T In The Park, Bestival, The Big Chill and Latitude as well as locally at Truck and Cornbury over the past few years.

"I expect it'll get mounted somewhere inside the shed - nowhere too prominent as 'Best Normal Shed' seems a curious misnomer," said Aidan after collecting his award, "in fact, we won Best Unique Shed at the 2009 awards, before a souvenir plaque or telly exposure was part of the deal, and hadn't planned to enter the competition this year. It was the TV show's researchers that initially got in touch and were keen to feature us, and the organisers came up with the solution of our entering in this category, as you're not allowed to enter again after you've won, and sheddies are nothing if not sticklers for the rules."

Count Skylarkin presents his monthly Soundsystem night at the Cellar on Friday 5th September, featuring a live set from rising UK reggae crew The Sidewalk Doctors.

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STATE OF INDEPENDENCE -

A celebration of local promoters

NOW THAT SUMMER IS SLOWLY FADING INTO THE DISTANCE *and the festival season has packed up its tent and wellies, it's time to leave behind happy memories of five-quid pints and overflowing Portaloos and get back to gig-going as God intended it – hot and sweaty, crammed into tiny pub basements or back rooms, where your shoes stick to the floor; where the future festival stars are born on tiny stages and where gigs are organised and promoted with love, dedication and occasionally blood, sweat and tears, by a small army of unsung musical heroes.* Nightshift talked to a selection of our favourite local small-time promoters, those brave souls who put on gigs once or twice a month for the love of good music, and asked them why they do it, what the best and worst things are about being a promoter, and most importantly, why **YOU** should go out there and see what they have to offer. *And when you've finished reading, we want you to make it your mission to go and see at least one band you've never heard of this month. You will thank us for it. And these good people.*

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES

Where? *The Wheatsheaf*
What? *Eclectic fusion of local and out-of-town bands*
When? *Usually the last Saturday of each month*
How much? *£4.50 on the door. Cheaper in advance*

RICHARD CATHERALL set up GTI twelve years ago with Alan Betteridge.

“We started the night because we felt that there really wasn’t anything similar on the local gig calendar at the time, and because we were in a band and couldn’t get any gigs, so we started our own night instead of moaning about it all day. Nobody starts a band in the hope that they can do something that is roughly the same as everyone else – at least, nobody who isn’t shit – so why should promoters be different? Every decent promoter tries to put on an event that stands out from the rest. We don’t have any rules about genre, we’ll mix the experimental with the mainstream, the quiet with the loud, the beautiful with the petrifying. Oh, and also, unlike most gig organisers, we know how watches work and the times we publish aren’t works of fucking fantasy fiction.


“We’ve had various acts that have subsequently gone on to varying levels of fame, but crucially when they were booked they were no better known than the other acts they shared a stage with. It was odd seeing Scroobius Pip playing to a wild crowd at last year’s Truck with Dan Le Sac, and remembering how he performed for us to about 30 punters with a laptop and an overhead projector.

“The best thing that happens at our events is when performers and/or customers enjoy an act they wouldn’t normally encounter: metal fans deciding they love East European folk trios, say, or pop bands making friends with noise improvisers and booking future gigs together. The worst things are pretty predictable: nobody turning up, acts not turning up, venues double booking, PAs falling apart, stuff like that. Our crowds and performers are very friendly; even the rude ones never get physical. We’ve had extreme *sonic* violence before, but only on purpose.

“Acts cancellaing is the most frustrating thing. It’s very hard to get people out to see performers they’ve not heard of, and it doesn’t get any easier when promoters are forced to say, ‘We’re not sure who is playing the gig, because the flautist in the advertised band couldn’t work out what date their granny’s birthday is.’ Of course, there are also promoters who don’t put any effort into their events, but whether they survive is in the hands of performers and customers.

“If you fear risk and the unknown, then don’t go to gigs like ours. However, if you don’t relish the idea of a future where all live entertainment is spotlessly orchestrated and market-tested, and all stages are effectively glossy advertising spaces with a drum riser, and chance itself is eradicated from art, then there are plenty of great promoters whom you can support. But, you know, we’re obviously the best.

Next up: Saturday 20th September with Overlord, Black Juju, Francis Pugh & the Whisky Singers.





Tamara and friend

ALL TAMARA’S PARTIES
Where? *Various, often unusual, venues around Oxford*
What? *Mix of live music and poetry with emphasis on female performers*
When? *Monthly, no set date*
How much? *£5*

TAMARA PARSONS-BAKER started running ATP nights two years ago in local chapels, cafés, pubs and even sheds.

“I was sick of playing gigs where I seemed to be the only female on the bill. Or going to gigs which showcased only male acts. I decided to create my own night as a platform to showcase more female talent, but without discriminating against men. If I could get the balance right then this night would prove that it isn’t hard for a promoter to add a touch of equality to their event, the talent is there if you look for it. I was also fed up with being paid in crisps and beer. No matter what you believe, a musician cannot be sustained on this diet alone. So my event also focuses on the artists getting paid for their performance, instead of the promoter or the venue pocketing all the door takings. At All Tamara’s Parties the bands receive all the money made via ticket sales and via any other random ideas we can come up with on the night. We had to stop George (Chopping) from performing a striptease though, even though I’m sure he would have cleaned up that night.

“I’m a musician, so I like to think I know how a musician would like to be treated when they are invited to play a gig. I definitely know how they would *not* like to be treated. I also add lots of personal touches to the event to interest and excite the audience, including a homemade mini-zine which acts as a programme for the night. Have you ever had to fold 50 mini-zines? We also manage to have an incredibly attentive audience, people come to listen to music and drink some beers, and it creates a lovely atmosphere for the performers.

“Oxford needs more diversity. Every year I do a little research into how diverse the local festivals and gigs are. Charlbury Riverside came top, lots of the other bigger festivals are really falling behind and not showcasing enough female talent in my opinion. I played Riverside this year and afterwards a member of the audience brought her little girl up to meet me and said ‘this is the first time she has ever seen a woman perform’. My first thought was relief that she wasn’t crying or traumatised; my second thought was mixed with a strange sense of wonder. Imagine being four years old and going to a festival seeing both talented men and women playing their hearts out; pretty inspiring stuff for a young person.

Next up: Friday 29th August with Rainbow Reservoir, Telegrapher, Tamara and George Chopping, at The Wheatsheaf. Friday 24th October (venue to be confirmed) with Jessy Bell, from Canada. Other acts tbc. Also a Charlbury show in November and a Christmas special in December.

SKELETOR
Where? *O2 Academy*
What? *Metal! Mix of local and touring acts*
When? *One Saturday each month*
How much? *£7 adv / £9 on the door*

JOHN SMITH started Skeletor four years ago.

“I wanted to push my own band forward by playing alongside bigger bands, and I wasn’t impressed with the organisation or promotion that went in to a lot of the gigs we were playing. There were so many other good metal bands in Oxford that I thought deserved better too, so I thought I’d give it a shot. Eventually my band split up but I kept Skeletor going for the other bands and the scene in general because it was so successful.

“Once Skeletor moved to the O2 Academy it became an opportunity for bands that put the effort in to play with touring acts at a well respected venue with a big stage and great sound and lights. This created a great scene and led to a lot of new bands forming; there are about 50 metal bands in Oxford now compared to the 15 or so when Skeletor started. Plus we’ve had the likes of Tesseract, Bleed From Within, Feed The Rhino, Breed 77, Bury Tomorrow, Xerath and loads more come to town.

“The worst thing about promoting is probably the sense of entitlement you get from a lot of bands who don’t understand the concept of capitalism. A lot of bands don’t realise how much money and effort you put in to it and think that it’s your job and that you are obliged to book them. Renting the venue costs a lot and people need to be paid, so if you give a band a chance and lose a lot of money it’s too much of a risk to book them again.

PINDROP PERFORMANCES
Where? *Various venues*
What? *Mix of local and out of town acts*
When? *One or two gigs a month*
How much? *Varies*

SEB REYNOLDS started putting on shows under the name PinDrop Performances ten years ago.

“I first put on a gig at the Cellar for my 19th birthday, 12 years ago; MC Lars played his first ever show outside of the US that night alongside two of my old bands, The Evenings and Dead Letters. I did a few shows at The Cellar as Wendy Carlos Presents (after the electronica legend) then came up with the ‘PinDrop’ idea of hosting events at the Port Mahon that encouraged people to sit and properly listen to the music.

“I book a wide range of gigs from unplugged events at the Albion Beatnik Bookstore to programming all sorts at Modern Art Oxford and have put on classical/electronica events at Christchurch Cathedral, as well as rock/indie etc. at all the classic pub venues across town. As I’m a musician as well as a promoter I like to think I’m pretty creative in terms of how I programme acts and encourage artists and bands to creatively respond to a brief or work with the space that I provide.

In the past I’ve promoted Patti Smith at the Holywell Music Room; Cocorosie and Silver Mt Zion, both at the Regal; Davy Graham at Jacqueline du Pre; the first ever public performance by Anna Log and her band who went on to be We Aeronauts; the debut Pet Moon gig at the Bully; what I believe was the second ever Stornoway gig at Port Mahon. Suitable Case For Treatment doing an acoustic set at the Port was amazing too. The list of local acts that we’ve had is never ending! Davy Graham’s barely coherent ramblings about trains in Morocco was pretty weird, and having dinner with Patti Smith at Nando’s after her gig was possibly the highlight. Meeting an all time musical hero, Efrim from Silver Mt Zion, wasn’t a disappointment. On the downside I once put Gunnbunny on at the Cellar and there was some sort of palaver with them trying to blag in underage mates into the venue; the bouncer went ballistic at me and it was a bit scary.”

Next up: Thursday 9th October at the Bullingdon with Co-Pilgrim, The August List and Vienna Ditto.

PinDrop
PERFORMANCES

“I think Oxford has missed having a proper rock/alternative night like Room:101. Loads of bands and fans used to hang out together and it was agreed place to meet likeminded people, so I’ve been organising a similar night called Bedrock which will play anything from cheesy rock anthems to pop-punk to metal. It’s gonna take place once a month at The Bullingdon. “Bands and independent promoters need to be supported so they can continue doing what they are doing and people need to make sure they don’t take things for granted and then complain when they come to an end. Supporting a genre of music you like locally will help it prosper and lead to more fun nights out.



Red Seas Fire at Skeletor: photo: Chris Blizzard

Next up: Saturday 6th September at the O2 Academy with When Our Time Comes, Godsbane, Ignite the Sky, A Killer Amongst Us and Being Eugene. Bedrock launches on Saturday 13th September at the Bullingdon.

BLACK BULLET LIVE
Where? *O2 Academy / Wheatsheaf / Bullingdon*
What? *Metal and heavy rock, touring and local acts*
When? *One or two shows per month, no set date*
How much? *£5 or thereabouts*

SARAH SMITH started promoting shows under the name Black Bullet in Birmingham in 2012 before branching out into Oxford.

“I started to help out our son at Uni to gain contacts for his future career; he is now an independent booking agent with his own roster at Pioneer Music Agency. We enjoyed it and have carried on ever since. We love touring bands, bands that have never had the chance to play Oxford and mix them in with a couple of local acts. We’ve booked The Temperance Movement, Baby Godzilla, Hacktivist, Fizzy Blood, Empress AD and Slam Cartel amongst other.

“What makes it worthwhile is when everyone leaves happy and had an enjoyable evening of live music, bands have made some new fans and want to come back. Our funniest gig was in Birmingham when a certain bass player was very drunk and had to be turned down in the mix when playing and spent most of the evening telling me and any female that would listen that he had a cock like a giraffe. Said bass player no longer in the band. The punters in the rock and metal genre are usually one big happy family so there’s never any trouble and most bands are lovely. We’ve only ever had one guitarist that was very rude from the start, and completely ruined the night for us, but we will never book the band again. Luckily the punters had a good gig and were none the wiser.

“Small gigs are the best: hearing new bands for the first time is never boring; band members are always willing to say ‘hi’ after the show; the merch is cheap and you can get that first EP signed so you can show it off when they make the big time and tell everyone you were there first!”



Sarah gives it the horns

Next up: Thursday 11th September with A Trust Unclean, and Friday 26th at the Bullingdon with two touring acts to be confirmed.

EMPTY ROOM PROMOTIONS

Where? *The Bullingdon / St John the Evangelist / St Alban's church*
What? *Cult Americana heroes and rising stars, mainly from the USA*
When? *Once or twice a month*
How much? *From £10 - £20 depending on act*



MIKE TROTMAN started putting on gigs at Tingewick Village Hall twelve years ago before starting promoting in Oxford.

“When people retire a lot of them take up golf – the game of the living dead. Being a lifelong live music fan I stuck

to rock’n’roll, which I find much more exciting. I have been going for 12 years now having being introduced to another fan of the band The Vigilantes of Love. We decided to put on a gig for them in Buckingham and I have just stumbled on from there. My philosophy, which is not very original, is to put on the bands I like, give both band and audience a good time and try not to lose too much money! The last bit is the hardest.

“I like to think I bring in top quality US Americana bands. It is a relatively small, roots-based genre but seems to be coming increasingly popular. Highlights that spring instantly to mind are, Guy Clark, Buddy Miller, Alejandro Escovedo, Raul Malo, Dave Alvin, Tift Merritt, Dawes, Chuck Prophet, J D McPherson, John Murry, Gretchen Peters, Tom Russell, Caitlin Rose, Hurray For The Riff Raff, Carlene Carter and Richmond Fontaine. “The best thing that happens is always to experience the wonderful life-affirming power of live music. I could not imagine life without it. The worst is when you don’t sell enough tickets, the room looks empty, you lose money – and it’s raining. I did get asked to supply a pack of disposable nappies on a rider once, which I thought was a bit strange. It turned out that the band were touring with a baby.

“All promoters like to feel they have an eye for spotting new talent who are destined for bigger things. Sadly when these acts do get bigger they tend to be scooped up by bigger booking agents and small independent promoters miss out, which is just a natural progression I suppose. There are people that I have put on in the past that I will try to promote again but feel they may have got out of reach. So my plea is for folks to come to see these acts while they are still playing relatively small venues and where you can chat to them afterwards before they disappear into huge impersonal places.”

Next up: Monday 8th September at St Alban’s Church, Charles Street, with John Fulbright.

BOSSAPHONIK

Where? *The Cellar*
What? *Jazz-dance, global grooves, where traditional sounds meet the modern day dancefloor with live bands and DJs*
When? *Second Friday of each month*
How much? *£7 adv / £8 on the door*

DAN OFER (*pictured*) started Bossaphonik in 2004

“I started the night exactly 10 years ago as I felt there was no regular night in Oxford representing the music I love: jazz-dance and global-grooves. For a time Po Na Na represented this scene to some extent but then they became franchised and moved in a more mainstream direction. I also wanted a regular outlet to DJ all the wonderful tunes I had accumulated. “Bossaphonik is the only regular base for live jazz-world dance music in Oxford. The bands in this area have usually got an incredible level of musicianship whilst also providing exhilarating dance music. I like to feel that the Bossaphonik experience is a powerful dose of musical uplift! “I’ve hosted over 80 bands, but the ones that really lifted everyone’s spirit into the stratosphere were Lokkhi Terra – a unique fusionary Bangladeshi-Cuban-Funk 10 piece; Dele Sosimi Afrobeat Orchestra – he used to be rhythm



KLUB KAKOFANNEY

Where? *The Wheatsheaf*
What? *Genre-bending mix of three or four local and out-of-town live acts*
When? *First Friday of every month*
How much? *£5*

PHIL FREIZINGER and **SUE SMITH** started Klub Kakofanney 23 years ago along with resident lights and artwork chap Ainan Addison, and assorted chums. It has long been an Oxford institution.

“We wanted to put on original, eclectic music, with bands that are willing to share fun, music and equipment. The money we take on the door is divided between the bands, sound engineer, door crew and if we break even, the three of us get a tenner each, or at least a drink. It’s our opportunity to give something back to the music that has rewarded us so much. We started by doing our own gig, as back then there weren’t enough gig opportunities for local bands. “We try to bring a sense of inclusivity to gigs, plus a friendly atmosphere, and turning what could be a routine gig into a special event with a party/festy vibe, “Our best show was probably Tongue & Groove – some of whom are now Knights of Mentis – selling out and playing a fantastic set as we celebrated Klub Kakofanney’s 20th anniversary. Our worst moment was finding the Elm Tree closed suddenly, and being left with no venue four days before our gig. Joal Shearing, our long-term sound man, searched the streets, and thankfully found The Wheatsheaf! The hottest gig was when John Otway played the first Kakofanney at The Wheatsheaf, and air conditioning wasn’t working. The ceiling was raining sweat. We all lost a bit of weight that night. The strangest thing was a fan turning up in full drag because he was banned as a man from the venue. Martin became ‘Martina’ and he managed to stay the whole event. Oh, and Dave Tomlinson, previous bassist in Retrogen, The Mighty Redox, and others, turning up on his wedding day with Jenny, his wife, and all the guests, to play. And he did the repeat performance ten years on from that day, this year, to celebrate their anniversary. “Oxford needs more live original music, less tribute bands and covers, less corporatism, and more individual characters running exciting, accessible venues, especially for our disabled performers and punters. It would also be really good if all ages could attend, as we need more inclusivity all round. There’s so much talent around now. Going to small local gigs is so much better than television and less expensive than most activities, and you might make a new friend while hearing something you’ve never heard before. Fun!”

Next up: Friday 5th September with Balloon Ascents, Punch Drunk Monkey Club and Children of the Sun. Klub Kak’s 23rd anniversary runs over the weekend of the 3rd-5th October at the Sheaf.



keyboardist in Fela Kuti’s Egypt 80 band; Orkestra Del Sol, who blew us all away with their Balkan ‘honk-step’, and Manteca, who recently delivered their powerful sounds of 70s-style Latin funk, salsa and cumbia. “The best thing is feeling blessed to bring such wonderful music to my home town; the worst moment was being threatened with violence from other promoters and getting in trouble because of unorthodox fly postering – which of course I don’t do any more! The only time I’ve felt like committing violence myself is on some of the punters with their dodgy DJ requests! People may complain about aspects of Oxford’s music scene, but I think we’ve got it pretty good here considering the size of our town. We’ve got six or seven live music venues with most types of music represented to some extent. I know other similar sized places that have got next to nothing. Any non-mainstream music scene is going to take place in the smaller venues. There are so many high quality bands without large-scale commercial prospects who you’ll only see somewhere like The Cellar here in Oxford, and with that comes the cosy intimacy of being ‘right there’ with the music. I think there really is more love for the music at this level from all involved.”

Next up: Regular monthly club night on Friday 12th September, followed by Bossaphonik 10th anniversary on Friday 10th October with the Dele Sosimi Afrobeat Orchestra and guests. Bossaphonik co-founder Gil Karpas will guest Djing.

SKYLARKIN’

SOUNDSYSTEM

Where? *The Cellar; plus occasional Academy shows.*
What? *Party-hearty mix of ska, dancehall and rocksteady with live bands and DJs*
When? *First Friday of every month, plus occasional others*
How much? *£5/6*

Skylarkin Soundsystem is run by **AIDAN LARKIN**, aka Count Skylarkin’. (“If you think that sounds a tad egomaniacal then you could be onto something.”)

“I started gigging using the Skylarkin’ name as soon as I moved to Oxford in 2000, but the night really began in earnest as a weekly DJ-only session in the old Brickworks basement on a Thursday from 2002. Things started getting out of hand when DJ Derek became a resident in 2004 and we had to upgrade to upstairs at the Zodiac. It hadn’t really occurred to me to start promoting bands until I bought what I thought was an old 7” of a band called Ska Cubano around about the same



had the odd bit of ruckus in 15 years, but I’ve still got a full set of teeth.

Next up: Friday 5th September with The Sidewalk Doctors, then Friday 19th September with The Nextmen (“just in time for my birthday”)

THE HAVEN CLUB

Where? *The Bullingdon*
What? *Touring blues and rock acts*
When? *One or two shows each month*
How much? *£6 - £14.Half price with NUS; 10% off for NHS staff.*

PENNY MARSH runs the Haven Club with Greg Owen, James Serjeant and Leon Stiles.

“Tony Jezzard started the club just over two years ago, having started and co-run the Famous Monday Blues for over 20 years, and decided to start a new venture with a different agenda. After Tony died in June 2013 there were bands already booked until the end of the year and we all decided that ‘The show must go on,’ so we continued the club Tony had worked so hard to establish. I stepped into the role and became ‘The Accidental Promoter’; Greg became more involved in the general running of the club; Leon was already doing the door and James was already helping Tony with the sound. The basic motivation is that we are all huge live music enthusiasts and fans and whenever we feel like giving up we think of Tony and know that we have to keep on, and hope that he is proud of what we have achieved. The whole point of The Haven Club is about welcoming people in, bands and audience; the ethos is to create a Haven of great music away from the worries of everyday life. “We try to bring a unique mix of different styles of rock music: classic, psychedelic, modern, blues and anything else that takes our fancy, bringing acts from all over the UK, Europe and the USA. We also like to give high quality and professional local acts the chance to play. So far we’ve had The Hoax, Mud Morganfield; Buddy Whittington; Nine Below Zero; Chantel McGregor, Aaron Keyloack and more. “The best thing about it is simply when people come along to a gig after all the hard work put in and you see them really enjoying themselves. The worst time, of course, was Tony’s sudden death. It’s frustrating that our posters keep mysteriously getting torn down and covered up. Perhaps the funniest was during Ron Sayer’s show; he was mid-song when a man hurried through the audience and handed him a piece of paper which he read and responded with, ‘I’ll take that as a compliment’. Later he showed me the note, which said, ‘you sound like Jamiroqui.’ He then produced his birth certificate and told me that Paloma Faith was his aunt. I realised he was on a different planet entirely. “People should take a chance on small local gigs because the vibe and atmosphere of an intimate venue is unbeatable, the personal touch of knowing the soundmen, audience, promoters and of course, musicians – you don’t get that in a big arena! We are so lucky to

have such a choice of live music in Oxford: a chance to see amazing bands on their way up; how many people would like to say they saw Radiohead etc before they were famous? I find it extraordinary that some people will only go to acts they have heard of, instead of experiencing the joy of hearing something new.”

Next up: Thursday 18th September, with Marcus Malone, and Thursday 25th with Will Wilde.



DAISY RODGERS MUSIC

Where? *Various venues*
What? *Mix of local and touring acts*
When? *Monthly but no set date*
How much? *As little as £2 in advance*

KEVIN ‘DAISY RODGERS’ started Daisy Rodgers Music in 2009 and the club celebrated its fifth anniversary this year.

“I’ve got a love of new music, so being able to curate a night and hearing people say ‘I’ve never heard of X before but I think they are amazing’ makes it all worthwhile. We work hard to get a great balance of bands for the night – all shades are included but generally nothing too shouty – and normally there is at least one band that surprises you with how amazing they are live. People who buy a ticket in advance can also choose a cover song to get played on the night by one of the acts. Spring Offensive nailing ‘Bonkers’ as their winning cover was a personal highlight. “Our first gig had seven people turn up but we persevered, tried harder and our first birthday gig sold out. One artist brought so much kit with him that during soundcheck he filled the whole venue with stuff but he did manage to have room for an ironing board and an iron! People always ask ‘Where is Daisy?’ Everyone we’ve ever met at our gigs has been super nice. Except maybe those that choose to chat loudly during the quiet songs in a small venue...then we do have dark thoughts. Oxford is a great place to see up and coming bands and artists before they make the big time but losing the Port Mahon means we do miss a smallish kitted-out venue that enables more intimate or experimental gigs. People should take a chance on small local gigs because you can be the one in the pub in five years’ time saying you saw the latest Glastonbury headliner at the Jericho Tavern.

Next up: Saturday 12th September at The Wheatsheaf with Yellow Fever and Be Good, followed by “something special” for Oxjam on Friday 10th October.



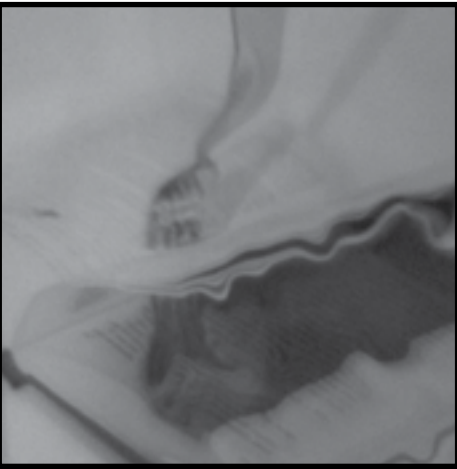
RELEASED

AGNESS PIKE

‘Activate, Generate’

(Self-released)
“You are my one desire / You set my heart on fire”, swooned a starry-eyed Buddy Holly in 1956. Nearly 60 years later, Agness Pike’s splendidly eccentric vocalist Martin Spear is declaring, “You are my one desire / You are the one on fire”. It’s not clear whether ‘Hot Like Fire’ is a tribute or a parody, a genuine love song or a confession that he’s set alight to his beloved. Knowing Spear, it could be all of the above.

‘Hot Like Fire’ is the third of four new tracks released weekly in August and collected together on an EP. None of them come close to conveying quite what it’s like to witness Agness Pike live – in my experience, being hectored by a man dressed as a 70s golfer while Faith No More have a nervous breakdown in the background – but ‘Activate, Generate’ might nevertheless whet your appetite. As metal bands go, Agness Pike are deliberately contrary and unconventional –



FOCI’S LEFT

‘Derelict Career’

(Self-released)
Ambient music can be a cul-de-sac, even if, at its best, a beautifully, or chillingly designed cul-de-sac. But Mick Buckingham, the man behind Foci’s Left recognises its limitations and ‘Derelict Career’ is apparently a concept album about how artists who exist only within the boundaries of the genre are destined to fail. So, does he fall on his own metaphorical sword with this his third album in a year? Such prolific output can often be a sign of



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THE FR3E LIONS

‘Freedom Is A Must’

(Self-released)
The Fr3e Lions are a hip-hop collective made up of Biscuit, Major H and a beat production line called Lion Palm Beats, all working out of that well known “Bronx of OX4”, Blackbird Leys, and this is their debut 18-track cut, which appears to be a compendium of pretty much everything they’ve ever recorded.

I say appears, as it has a distinctly evolutionary feel about it, with the first half of the album heavy on the profanity and light on wisdom; on the one hand continually blowing smoke up the ass of their own posse, and schizo-frenetically rapping about freedom of speech and how “freedom is a must for every human being” (‘Never Gunna Give Up’ and ‘Dialogue’) while on the other hand including contradictory lines dissing other rappers for “talking bollox”, as well as giving a polite approval of gang rape and of “MCs being hunted like tuna”. Freedom, it seems, has always come with a side order of Hip-Ocrasy.

But, before it all descends into a soundtrack for the BBC’s superb new pirate radio station comedy People Just Do Nothing, they start getting their act together with hints in ‘My Estate’ of the top quality they show later in ‘My Place’, and with equal skill, the very basic, squelchy sax and electronica back beats are replaced by revamped soul slices of the likes of Otis Redding’s ‘A Change Is Gonna Come’ (‘The Change’) and Sam Cooke (‘You Send Me’).

The poetry too starts to sound as if it is written rather than made up in a cloud of skunk, with tracks about paedophilia and domestic abuse (‘For the Kids’) and mental health problems (‘So Happy’) really hitting home. All in all, this might follow the well trodden path of acts like Taskforce and Skinnyman, but it bodes well for album number two, where I’m guessing they will still be prepared to “shit in your sandpit”, but hopefully, while doing it, they’ll be eyeing up even more socially aware targets to throw it at.

Paul Carrera



Swans, Jesu and Codeine, mournful, almost hymnal vocals riding punishing galley-slave beats and a driving bass dirge, blossom wilting and cattle dying in its wake. Those vocals actually serve to lighten the piece, and we wonder if a more rasping voice would really give ‘Nails’ the deathly, serrated edge it needs, but for now, it’s a timely reminder that summer’s on its way out and we’ve got a hundred years of winter to come.

Dale Kattack

SALVATION BILL

‘FML (Feel My Lump)’ / ‘Tony Blair Extraordinaire’

(Idiot King)
Ollie Thomas, the one man *tour-de-force* behind Salvation Bill (and previously Ute and The Old Grinding Young) already has one of the most recognisable voices in Oxford (something between a slur, a croon and a yelp) but he is also fast becoming one of the more recognisable songwriters too, which is a more impressive feat altogether. Under his latest guise his music has taken on a more grandiose, dare we say theatrical, bent, which lends itself well to the narrative style in which he writes. The artwork to this latest double A-side depicts a rather distressed-looking Edgar Allan Poe, which should give you some indication of the protagonist of ‘FML’s

mindset. ‘FML’ (Feel My Lump) is perhaps best described as anxiety-funk; deep sub-bass, and the contrasting rhythms of percussion, acoustic guitars and what sound like steel drums interlock in a syncopated groove to give the song an exotic feel which is delightfully at odds with the narrator’s existential crisis. On the flipside ‘Tony Blair Extraordinaire’ is Ollie’s take on a protest song, and with just an acoustic guitar and plaintive strings for decoration, his lyrics are firmly at the forefront, full of irony, satire and a tongue in danger of ripping straight though the cheek. There is plenty of lush musical mischief on display here to entice you into Salvation Bill’s curious world where it’s the small details of modern life that make for truly epic songs.

Tom McKibbin





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G I G G U I D E

MONDAY 1st

THE LAURA HOLLAND BAND: The Jericho Tavern– The rising London blues singer updates obscure classics from the likes of Ray Charles, Etta James, Little Milton and Elmore James at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.

TUESDAY 2nd

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 3rd

THURSDAY 4th

THE ROYAL HANGMEN: The Cellar – Guitar-fuzzing, organ-grinding garage rocking straight outta the 60s cookbook concocted by

Sunday 7th

PETER PAN SPEED ROCK / JD PINKUS ACOUSTIC / DESERT STORM / HATEMAIL / GIRL POWER:

The Wheatsheaf

That’s one helluva heavyweight gig you got there, my friend. Eindhoven’s Peter Pan Speed Rock return to town after selling out the Sheaf last time round, their heads-down, no-nonsense mindless boogie taking hits from a giant bong powered by equal parts Motorhead, Judas Priest, Turbonegro, AC/DC and ZZ Top. It comes packed full of hard rocking cliché but that’s more of a strength than a weakness and you’re well advised to leave your brain at home for the evening. A sterling support comes from Butthole Surfers bassist JD Pinkus, playing a solo acoustic set; primal stoner blues-rock heroes Desert Storm, cruising in somewhere between Clutch, Sabbath, Led Zep and Killdozer; scuffed-up punk rock from ex-Bear Trap chaps Hatemail, and monstrous attack-dog hardcore from Girl Power, keeping the spirit of Discharge and early Amphetamine Reptile Records noise alive and very much kicking. No softies allowed.



SEPTEMBER

The Sonics, Small Faces and early Stones from Zurich’s Royal Hangmen.
BETA BLOCKER & THE BODY CLOCK + POLEDO + THE WHARVES + CLEVEDON: The Wheatsheaf – Psychedelic fuzz-pop in a melting pot of Dinosaur Jr and The Stone Roses from the excellent Beta Blocker, alongside exiled Oxonian noise-rockers Poledo, dark, harmony-heavy psych-popsters The Wharves and morose country-folk crew Clevedon.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the enduring local swamp-blues faves.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running and best open mic club showcases singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more every week.
SIGNAL MY ESCAPE: Fat Lil’s, Witney
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 5th

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with BALLOON ASCENTS + PUNCH DRUNK MONKEY CLUB + CHILDREN OF THE SUN: The Wheatsheaf – Last month’s *Nightshift* cover stars Balloon Ascents top the bill at tonight’s Klub Kak, meshing Radiohead’s intelligent electro-rock with Stornoway’s wanderlust folk-pop, and plenty more besides. They’re joined by Banbury rockers Punch Drunk Monkey Club and polished pop outfit Children of the Sun.
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with THE SIDEWALK DOCTORS: The Cellar – Party-hearty mix of reggae, dancehall and ska courtesy of Count Skylarkin, with a live set from rising UK reggae crew Sidewalk Doctors, with their old-time rocksteady and ska that nods to the greats of Treasure Isle and Studio One and back in town after backing Susan Cadogan at the O2 last year. On the decks reggae re-edits godfather JSTAR visits from Berlin for a rare UK appearance, promising a set of dancehall and bassline thrillers.
DON’T GO PLASTIC + THE DEUPTEES + WARDENS + BLUESHIFT: The Bullingdon – It’s All About the Music show with Banbury’s spiky, effervescent garage-punk scrappers Don’t Go Plastic, and more.
DISCO MUTANTES: The Library – Disco, boogie and house club night.
GREENISH DAY: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Tribute band.

SATURDAY 6th

WHEN OUR TIME COMES + GODSBANE + IGNITE THE SKY + A KILLER

AMONGST US + BEING EUGENE: O2 Academy – Skeletor host their monthly meal extravaganza with a headline set from north London’s progressive metalcore crew When Our Time Comes, plus support from local Nordic-inspired metallers Godsbane; deathcore merchants Ignite the Sky; Banbury’s metalcore outfit A Killer Amongst Us and Abingdon’s groovecore types Being Eugene.
SEPREVATION + ABHORRENT DECIMATION + COLDWAR + FOUL BODY AUTOPSY + BLACK SKIES BURN: The Wheatsheaf – Slave To The Grind host another night of frenzied death, thrash and grind, tonight with Bristol’s Seprevation – previous support to Gorguts and Onslaught, alongside London’s Abhorrent Decimation, Leicester’s one-man death army Foul Body Autopsy and local death-thrash crew Black Skies Burn.
PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy – Indie dancefloor anthems every Saturday.
WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar – Monthly garage mash-up with B-III, Naughty Nath, Sharky & George, Dan Fitzgerald, DJ Face and hosts Macular and Sandman.
JOHN OTWAY & THE PETE FRYER BAND: Florence Park Community Centre – The clown prince of pop lunacy returns to town to team up with Oxford’s own enduring rock eccentric, Pete Fryer.
HOPE & GLORY: Oxford City FC – Ska classics and Madness hits.
FUSED: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Rock covers.
DAVID MENDAY & BRAHAM LEVY + DAMIEN CLARKE: The Swan, Shipton-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club hosts London-Oxford folk veterans Meday and Levy, alongside former-Pressgang chap Damien Clarke.

SUNDAY 7th

PETER PAN SPEED ROCK + JD PINKUS ACOUSTIC + DESERT STORM + HATEMAIL + GIRL POWER: The Wheatsheaf – Heads-down, no-nonsense mindless boogie from Eindhoven’s riff-friendly metallers – see main preview
JONATHAN PAYNE + EMMA HUNTER + PETE MOORE & CORRINE CLARK + THE JESTERS + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30-7pm) – An afternoon of free acoustic music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar, hosted by Klub Kakofanney.
MOON LEOPARD + BEARD OF DESTINY + SONG AND SUPPER ROOMS + HUGH McMANNERS: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of acoustic music hosted by Jeremy Hughes and his Moon Leopard, alongside bluesman Beard of Destiny, and more.

MONDAY 8th

JOHN FULLBRIGHT + DANNY GEORGE WILSON: St Alban’s Church – Oklahoma’s fast-rising songsmith Fulbright comes to town courtesy of the reliably excellent Empty Room Promotions, the young singer having won acclaim for his Grammy-nominated debut album, ‘From the Ground Up’ in 2012, drawing comparisons to Townes van Zandt and Randy Newman. He’s supported by Danny & the Champions of the World frontman Danny George Wilson, playing a solo set.
PHILLIP HENRY & HANNAH MARTIN: Nettlebed Folk Club – The winners of this year’s Best Duo at the BBC Folk Awards come to Nettlebed’s regular folk night with a sparse, almost bluesy take on traditional folk sounds.

TUESDAY 9th

CATE LE BON + H HAWKLINE: O2 Academy – Current contender for bestest pop thing on the entire planet brings her dark, folksy muse to town – *see main preview*
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Monthly goth, industrial and ebm club night with Doktor Joy, Bookhouse and guests.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 10th

THURSDAY 11th

LUKE SITAL-SINGH: O2 Academy – Emotive but uplifting acoustic soul-pop from south London songsmith Luke Sital Singh in the vein of Damien Rice, Jeff Buckley and Bon Iver, out on a headline tour to promote his debut album, ‘The Fire Inside’, after the success of singles ‘Greatest Lovers’ and ‘Nothing Stays the Same’.
PREGNANT + LIMBO KIDS + AFTER THE THOUGHT: The Cellar – Divine Schism presents California’s DIY folktronica outfit Pregnant – essentially the work of Daniel Trudeau – combining lo-fi electronica and folksy whimsy into something not a million miles from Panda Bear at times, while not too precious to attempt the odd Rick Astley cover while he’s about it. Fidgety, urgent indie noise from Limbo Kids and highly-textured ambient electronica from After the Thought in support.
A TRUST UNCLEAN + THIS IN TURN: The Wheatsheaf – Frenetic deathcore and tech-grind mayhem from Bicester’s A Trust Unclean, one of the brightest metal bands on the local scene.
CHARLIE HENRY: Warneford Chapel – The Welsh singer and multi-instrumentalist plays as part of Oxford Contemporary Music’s Outreach and Education programme.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THE MATT EDWARDS BAND + PUNCH DRUNK MONKEY CLUB + ALICE VICTORIA: The Bell, Bicester –Local bluesman Matt Edwards heads tonight’s Strummer Room project show.
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 12th

ESBEN & THE WITCH: Truck Store

– Instore show for Brighton’s atmospheric gothic pop troupe, fresh from their showing at Supernormal and set to release their third album, ‘A New Nature’.
THE KITES + RUSHIL + BRIGHTWORKS + DUCHESS + LEWIS & MICHAEL: O2 Academy – It’s All About the Music host a big-stage showcase of local talent, tonight featuring electro-tinged indie-folksters The Kites, alongside acoustic rockers Rushil; afro-indie-pop crew Brightworks, and Township jive starlets Duchess.
YELLOW FEVER + BE GOOD: The Wheatsheaf – Daisy Rodgers’ monthly music night with fidgety, funky Foals-y afro-pop faves Yellow Fever
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin dance, global grooves, Balkan beats and nu-jazz dance club night with a live set from Leeds/London twelve-piece Nubian Twist, fusing dub, hip hop and afrobeat with jazz improvisation, inspired by King Tubby, Fela Kuti and Herbie Hancock.
GEORGE BARNETT + THE METHOD + BLAME FATE + SAFETY IN NUMBERS: The Courtyard, Bicester – Herefordshire’s teenage pop starlet comes to Bicester’s youth arts centre, riding high on the back of 8 million Youtube views and counting, the one-time National Young Drummer of the Year set to follow up his debut album, ‘17 Days’, with a new EP this month.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + MIKE ABBOTT: James Street Tavern – Bluegrass, country and Americana from the local regulars.
STEAMROLLER: The Nag’s Head, Abingdon – First gig of the month for the local blues heavyweights, kicking it out in the vein of Hendrix and Cream.
SECRET POLICE: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Tribute to The Police.

SATURDAY 13th

THE DOORS ALIVE: O2 Academy – Jim Morrison is resurrected by a mad scientist in a spooky old castle. It’s alive! It’s alive! Cue, ‘Riders on the Storm’.
STROKE OF LUCK + SEA STACKS + FAMILY MACHINE: The Wheatsheaf – Local indie rockers Stroke of Luck headline, having previously supported Bastille and Electric Six, while Oxford stalwarts The Family Machine return to action.
PEERLESS PIRATES + RECKLESS SLEEPERS + CLAIRE LEMASTER + ETHEMIA + ONE WING LESS: The Cellar – Swashbuckling indie rockabilly from recent Demo of the Month winners Peerless Pirates at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show, plus psych-tinged folk-rocking from Reckless Sleepers.
SHOWADDYWADDY: The New Theatre – True story: last time *Nightshift* saw Showaddywaddy live (okay, the only time we’ve ever seen them live) they were supporting Einsterzende Neubaten, surviving an early hail of pint glasses to near enough blow their Teutonic drill-core chums off stage. So we’ve always had a serious amount of respect for the retro rockabilly fellas from Leicester, and anyway, ‘Under the Moon of Love’ is a corker, ain’t it? In fact we’ve got out pastel Teddy Boy suits on already.



Tuesday 9th

CATE LE BON: O2 Academy

If we can draw anything positive from the death of beloved pets, it’s that somewhere along the line some of them spawned the musical career of Cate Le Bon. Hailing from a tiny village in Carmarthenshire, but now residing in the rather less tiny Los Angeles, Le Bon is one of the most singular vocal talents of recent years with a haunting voice and dark lyrical edge, fixated on death for much of the time, that immediately recalls Nico, but wrapped in a warm, rich Welsh accent that makes her unique. While her earliest songs were sung in Welsh, she performs entirely in English now, which is a shame since old songs like ‘O am Gariad’ are as bleakly beautiful as music gets. After supporting Gruff Rhys on tour and playing in Neon Neon with him, Cate released her debut album, ‘Me Oh My’, *Nightshift*’s favourite album of the last few years, maintaining an air of imperious grace as it messed with all manner of lo-fi sounds and eclectic pop ideas, pitched somewhere between Bobbie Gentry and The Velvet Underground. Since then she’s gone on to play at Glastonbury, tour support The Manics and perform at last month’s Wilderness Festival. Now she returns to the stage where she supported Villagers four years ago, out in a league of her own and starting to win the wider audience she deserves. *Nightshift* is very, very excited. And so should you be.

PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – Techno, bass and house club night.
BEDROCK: The Bullingdon – Launch night for Skeletor’s new rock and metal club night.
STEAMROLLER: The Six Bells, Kidlington
FREEFAL: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Rock covers.

SUNDAY 14th

BASEMENT TORTURE KILLINGS + FRACTURED INSANITY + NECROSIS: The Wheatsheaf – Gore-obsessed serial-killer-worshipping grindcore crew Basement Torture Killings grace tonight’s Slave To The Grind show, with support from Belgian death-



Saturday 27th

OXFORDOXFORD: South Park

South Park has been an under-used open space as far as live music goes, Radiohead’s 2001 homecoming, a brief Carnival stint and a couple of Fox FM roadshows aside, so OxfordOxford should be a welcome addition to the city calendar. A three-day festival involving days dedicated to cinema and community activities, Saturday sees the music take centre stage in a huge marquee. **KLAXONS** are the day’s headline act, the rave-rockers bringing indie dancefloor anthems ‘Golden Skans’ and ‘Gravity’s Rainbow’ to the party, while their increasingly psychedelic explorations, as evidenced on riff-heavy ‘Surfing the Void’ has seen them become more of a rock-friendly proposition. They’re joined by Peckham songstress **KATY B**, the voice of a thousand dubstep, funky and r’n’b hits, working with Magnetic Man, Wiley, Jessie Ware and Diplo, before going on to achieve Top 5 success with her debut album, ‘On A Mission’ and the single ‘Lights Out’ with Ms Dynamite as well as this year’s follow-up, ‘Little Red’; local hero **GAZ COOMBES**, Supergrass singer gone solo, taking his trademark glam-pop into more electronic territories on his debut album, ‘Here Come the Bombs’; fast-rising Aussie stadium-pop crew **MANY THINGS**, whose exuberant, expansive sound has been likened to Arcade Fire and Elton John, and London soul man **MICHAEL KIWANUKA**, winner of the BBC’s Sound of 2012 poll. A full day’s bill also features a host of local acts like **BALLOON ASCENTS**; **PIXEL FIX**; **DANCE A LA PLAG**; **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS** and **ROBOT SWANS**. There’s more, and hopefully it’ll become an annual festival in the heart of Oxford.

metallers Fractured Insanity.

MONDAY 15th

ALTAN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Gorgeous Scottish-Irish ballads and traditional jigs and reels from the leading lights of the Celtic folk music scene.

TUESDAY 16th

OPEN MIC SESSION: St Aldates Tavern – Open mic night in aid of Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 17th

SPARKY’S JAM IGH: James Street Tavern – Open mic and jam night.

THURSDAY 18th

MARCUS MALONE: The Bullingdon – The Detroit guitarist returns to town for a show at The Haven Club, kicking out a hard-rocking form of blues and soul that borders on metal at times, having made his name on the UK and European blues circuit in recent years.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the veteran local bluesman.
PUNCH DRUNK MONEY CLUB + DRAWL: The Cellar – Banbury’s teenage indie rockers play tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 19th

THE NEXTMEN: The Cellar – Party-starting blend of everything from dancehall, drum&bass, dubstep and roots to hip hop, soul, funk and ambient electro from Brad Baloo and Dom Search at tonight’s Skylarkin-hosted club night.
FRACTURE + OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS + MEGAN JOSEPHY: The Wheatsheaf – Grungy indie rocking from Fracture at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show.
ROOTS RAMBLE: Various venues, Jericho – Another roots-based pub crawl, this time round the hostelries of Jericho, as Swindlestock, The August List and Francis Pugh and the Whisky Singers take fans on a musical trip into country, folk, blues and Americana. Meet at the Gardeners Arms in Plantation Road at 8 and follow the yellow brick road.
CHURCH OF THE HEAVY: The Bullingdon – Rock and metal showcase with Endless Mile, Man Make Fire, Rusty Gs, and Black Tish.
THE PISTOLS: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Punk tribute.

SATURDAY 20th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with OVERLORD + BLACK JUJU + FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS: The Wheatsheaf – A characteristic mixed bag of sounds and styles from the monthly GTI show, tonight with local prog/groove rockers Overlord, bringing a fresh thrash-infused take on classic 70s rock sounds, leaning towards Black Sabbath, Sleep and Electric Wizard at times. They’re joined by Aylesbury’s sleazy garage rockers Black Juju, worshipping at the altar of The Stooges and Cramps, plus warm, intricate Americana outfit Francis Pugh & the Whisky Singers.
THE IRON KNIGHTS + SANITY LOSS: The Cellar – Oxrox presents a night of heaviosity, with veteran rockers The Iron Knights featuring drummer Larry Paterson, who has served time with Chokehold and Blaze

Bayley.
THE STRAYS + JULES PENZO: The Bullingdon – One Gig Closer to Wittstock charity show.
PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy
EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar
WAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Ska-punk covers.
CHALICE + DEAR SOMEONE: The Swan, Shipton-under-Wychwood

SUNDAY 21st

THE MAGIC NUMBERS: O2 Academy – The Stodart and Gannon siblings return to the venue they launched seven years ago – *see main preview*
THE LULO REINHARDT LATIN SWING PROJECT: St. John the Evangelist – One of the current Gypsy Jazz guitar greats, Lulo Reinhardt is the grand nephew of jazz legend Django Reinhardt and nephew of gypsy violin master Shnuckenack Reinhardt, following a lineage of highly talented musicians. With his Latin Swing Project he brings elements of flamenco, bossa nova and tango to traditional world folk sounds.

MONDAY 22nd

SHARON CORR + JOHN GAUGHAN: O2 Academy – The one out of The Corrs that you can’t tell apart from the rest tours her second solo album, ‘The Same Sun’, playing the same song. Over and over and over again.

Sunday 21st

THE MAGIC NUMBERS: O2 Academy

The Magic Numbers will go down in local history as the first band ever to play the Academy after it opened back in 2007. Beyond that the band, double brother-sister quartet Romeo and Michele Stodart and Angela and Sean Gannon, have continued to do things at their own stately pace, this month returning from another extended break with their fourth album, ‘Alias’, continuing to balance joyous 70s-style harmony pop with elegant melancholy. Their music, with its air of almost rustic naivety at times and with a thick seam of sunshine running through the best of it, has always made them firm festival favourites, but they’re best appreciated in more intimate, and indoor confines, and the quartet’s unhurried approach to record-making reflects their indifference to the passing of the decades, making them a charmingly anachronistic presence in pop.



MOTHER OF GOD: The Cellar – Big beardy stoner-groove rocking from Sweden’s Mother Of God, over on a headline UK tour, meshing the classic 70s rock of Led Zep and Sabbath with the heavy-duty noise of Soundgarden and Alice In Chains.
THE JO HARMAN BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Rising star of the European blues festival scene comes to The Famous Monday Blues, riding high on the acclaim afforded debut album ‘Dirt on My Tongue,’ a genuine word-of-mouth sensation in blues circles, drawing comparison to Eva Cassidy, with her blend of soul, roots, blues and gospel, and having supported the likes of The Cranberries, M*ck H*ckn*all and Johnny Winter, Harman is now approaching festival headline status.
THE OUTSIDE TRACK: Nettlebed Folk Club – Scottish, Canadian and Irish folk-dance fusion from the award-winning outfit at tonight’s weekly Nettlebed folk session.

TUESDAY 23rd

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 24th

NEWS OF THE BAD + EPR + ADAM McMILLAN + SAMUEL EDWARDS: The Wheatsheaf
WARDENS + CROON + DAVE LABAT: The Jericho Tavern

THURSDAY 25th

WILL WILDE: The Bullingdon – Soulful blues and funk from British blues singer and harmonica player Wilde, nominated three times for Best Harmonica Player at the British Blues Awards, and tonight performing at the Haven Club.
SUSANNA STARLING: Warneford Chapel – One-time Inflatable Buddha member and Queen of Clubs host, Susanna Starling brings her (mostly) solo show to the none-more-intimate setting of the Warneford Chapel as part of OCM’s education and outreach project, reinterpreting classic English folk songs and jazz and cabaret standards, accompanied by upright bass and occasional human beatboxing.
BILL T’RIVERS & THE WILD WEST RETIREMENT HOME + BIG TROPICS: The Library – Album-launch show from the local pastoral post-grunge indie-folk crew at tonight’s Smash Disco gig, alongside indie-electro outfit Big Tropics.
THE ELO EXPERIENCE: The New Theatre – Hands-on ELO-themed science museum for kids. Discover what makes Mr Blue Sky blue; meet the Sweet Talkin’ Woman. Oh yes, hold on tight, it’s a wild experience.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
OPEN BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

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FRIDAY 26th

TRAPS + ORANGE VISION + CRAYON + RUSSIAN COWBOYS + ANASTACIA GORBUNOVA: O2 Academy – It’s All About the Music big-stage local bands showcase, with grungy rockers Traps bowing out with their final show. Arctic Monkeys-styled indie rockers Orange Vision support alongside Radiohead-influenced crew Crayon.
ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY: The Cellar – Anyone who doesn’t like a band with a song titled ‘You Eat Houmous, Of Course You Listen To Genesis’, is no friend of ours, and Liverpool’s “smash-rock” trio Alpha Male Tea Party have the fizzing, fuzzing guitar noise to back up the song titles. Not sure about the floral frocks, mind.
ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN: The New Theatre – One night and that’s your lot, y’hear. Freddie’s not as young as he was and Brian has to go out on badger patrol as soon as the gig’s over
OXJAM TAKEOVER: Castle House, Banbury – First of a two-day Oxjam event organised by The Strummer Room Project, tonight featuring recent *Nightshift* cover stars Balloon Ascents, alongside indie-rockers Friday Street, plus singer-songwriters Charlie Levy and Simon Dwight.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The James Street Tavern

SATURDAY 27th

OXFORDOXFORD: South Park – The music leg of the new three-day city festival, with Klaxons, Katie B and Gaz Coombes among the names on show – *see main preview*
CROWS REIGN + CONTEK + NEVER FOUND + MASIRO: O2 Academy – Skeletor metal night.
OXJAM TAKEOVER: Castle House, Banbury (midday) – Free full day of live music from the Strummer Room Project in aid of Oxjam, featuring sets from 2 Twenty 2; The Shapes; The Matt Edwards Band; Punch Drunk Monkey Club; Chloe Hanks; Chris Living; Jim Manser; Rob Lanyon; Alice Victoria, and Phoebe Rose.
PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Swan, Wantage
HOPE & GLORY: The George, Littlemore
HAIRFORCE 5: Fat Lil’s, Witney - Hair-metal covers.

SUNDAY 28th

STEAMROLLER: The Swan, Eynsham
THE SUNDAY SESSION: Florence Park Community Centre (2-5pm) – Live music, family-friendly activities and more.

MONDAY 29th

ELIZA & THE BEAR: O2 Academy – Expansive, euphoric afropop-inflected indie-

folk from the London starlets on the rise, drawing comparisons to Arcade Fire and Dry The River.
NEVER THE BRIDE: The Jericho Tavern– The Famous Monday Blues plays host to long-time club favourites Never The Bride, with singer Nikki Lambourn belting it out in the style of Janis Joplin and Tina Turner.
DERVISH: Nettlebed Folk Club – High-energy Irish folk-dance and lovelorn balladry from Cathy Jordan’s folk collective.

TUESDAY 30th

FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS: Oxford Town Hall – Oxford’s adopted son closes his UK tour with a sold-out show – *see main preview*

Tuesday 30th

FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS: Oxford Town Hall

Frank Turner has done a lot to defy expectations from pretty much every angle since he rose from the ashes of Million Dead in 2005, going against the grain of the grab-fame-quickly approach to build slowly and surely from the bottom via endless touring (*Nightshift* fondly remembers Frank when he was playing support down at the Wheatsheaf back at the very start), while releasing chart-topping albums on indie label Xtra Mile. He’s also defied the stereotype of the politically-minded folk-punk singer-songwriter as woolly Guardianista or Marxist firebrand by daring to declare himself a libertarian (for which he earned a whole heap of undeserved stick). But then the Bahrain-born, Eton-educated Turner simply does things his way and does them very well indeed, earning his place at the top table when he played the Olympics opening ceremony back in 2012 and selling out each and every tour he sets out on, accompanied by a trusty backing band that features Oxford scene heroes Nigel Powell, Tarrant Anderson and Ben Lloyd, which, along with his regular appearances in town, has made him an honorary Oxonian. His debut solo release, ‘Campfire Punk Rock’, is a description that still suits his music well, and following on from the success of last year’s ‘Tape Deck Heart’, he’s off round the country once again, tonight’s show the last date of the tour. A tour that is already long sold out.



LIVE

SUPERNORMAL

Braziers Park

FRIDAY

Supernormal might be synonymous with petrifying noise and introspective jazz abstraction, but it's not averse to a few pop thrills. Take opening act **RAVIOLI ME AWAY**, a charmingly inept pop confection whose first number is not a billion leagues away from Daphne & Celeste's 'Ooh, Stick You', and who later touch on Italio house and Bow Wow Wow euphoria with the clunky abandon of Dog Faced Hermans. A little of this fun could have enlivened **THE JELAS'** set, all angular intricacy, somewhere between Cap'n Jazz and Badgearer; the sax attack is effective, but the set lacks bite.

Down a muddy slope, that becomes increasingly treacherous as the day progresses, we seek out the Barn, a haven for the more refined artistic activity at Supernormal (including a Saturday morning life drawing class), and home for some of this year's highlights. **REBECCA LENON's** piece, 'Diet Terror', might not be one of them, but the spectacle of someone hitting a floor tom repeatedly below a film of a dog being hoovered whilst somebody wrapped in plastic sits with their back to us is intriguing... although not nearly as entertaining as the panicky looks towards the exit of someone who is worried they might be trapped here for another hour.

Despite the programme leading us to expect something resembling Can, **PIPER'S SON** offer a sort of hobo ambience, piling roots music offcuts together in a fashion which recalls Marc Ribot, which will do just fine instead.

Misleading krautrock allusions are nothing compared to **MOONBOW's** programme write-up, which promises choreography, set design and osmology (look it up; we did), whereas what we actually get is two people playing dubby synthesised pop. What's wrong with just saying that, eh? Especially seeing as Moonbow are actually bloody good at it, creating a glistening aura of woozy positivity that's somewhere between Fixers and a My Little Pony cartoon, sweetened by lovely Omnicord drizzles. Speaking of drizzles, it's a pity that this, some of the summeriest music ever made, is interrupted by the outbreak of an intense downpour that lasts the rest of the evening.

You can tell a lot about a festival in the rain: at some people ignore the

music and go play in the mud; at others, everyone goes home or hides in beer tents until someone off the telly comes onstage; at Supernormal it seems to make very little difference, and in fact the crowd watching Brighton's **SPEAK GALACTIC** on the Nest Stage seems larger and more effervescent than an hour earlier. Only fair, as this might well be the act of the day, giving wonky Dinosaur Jr-style tunes a sonic makeover with plenty of early techno tricks, in a style we call Slack Electro. At one point they get a little trendily bombastic, recalling the likes of Cut Copy, but manage to pull it back for more Model 500 grunge. We write a lot more in praise of them in our notebook, but unfortunately it dissolves before we reach the end of the page.

BARBEROS follow them up, and insanely the crowd is even bigger and more supportive, despite the rain being harder. Their triple drumkit avalanche is effective, but what we remember most is the sight of steam billowing from their stockinged heads as they pummel away.

GNOD's music is seemingly even more soluble than our cheap stationery, fizzing away into a single drone like a Disprin in a kettle. Whilst their endless thumps, hums and delayed vocals sound pleasant, especially when a Gregorian chant recording is thrown over the top, we're hard pressed to say it makes a vast impression.

BONG, who follow them on the main stage, do the same thing, but make it sound about twenty times better, which is part of the mystery of minimal noise rocking – why is it sometimes electrifying, and sometimes just annoying? Although we imagine Bong are named after their naughty smoking apparatus of choice, we prefer to imagine they're referring to the effect of being stuck inside Big Ben at midnight, repetitive clangs destroying your cranium. We go for a walk in the pitch black trees behind the stage during the set which, with the Old Testament weather still pounding down, feels properly terrifying.

In between the Barn offers another highlight in the shape of **SARAH ANGLISS'** automata. Sadly, some of them have got damp whilst being loaded in, and the set is a little compromised, but when she uses a

theremin as a midi trigger to alter the speed of a vocal sample, whilst her Ealing Feeder carillon plays itself and a robotic crow stares you out, there's a pier-end eeriness that is unnerving; unnerving in the way a nursery rhyme is scarier than a slasher flick. A fascinating, unique set, and not one likely to grace many other festival stages this year... unless the instruments get up and crash the bill themselves, which, frankly, we're not ruling out.

SATURDAY

We notice in Saturday's *Guardian Guide* that Supernormal is singled out, with the description "vaguely leftfield". Considering our second day begins in a stone folly in which an old tape of accordion hits plays at random speeds, we wonder exactly what their music editor gets up to of an evening. This piece is the work of **PHANTOM CHIPS**, who later fill the bar with dark fuzzy noises, and invite an audience member to don an udder cummerbund they've created: when the brightly hued cloth nipples are yanked different brands of digital skree erupt from the speakers. The effect is like a cross between Incapacitants and Nursie from *Blackadder*, and frankly we'd like to see more of this madness in the bar, which seems to generally consist of a few people jiggling about to classic soul tunes during the day. Mind you, perhaps if there was much more of this the bar staff would revolt – we've already noticed that the First Aid tent is next to something called the Shed Sound area, a little gazebo from which the sound of amp hum and vinyl crackle can be heard a pretty much constantly, and we assume the St John's Ambulance boys are self-medicating by Friday teatime.

LUMINOUS BODIES features members of Terminal Cheesecake and Part Chimp, but what we hear is a default 'Heart of The Sun' riff sounding like a suburban metal band warming up in the school gym, so we sneak over to see **THE WHARVES** instead, who have plenty of Throwing Muses about their warm, simple tunes. Pity they wander through them so tentatively, like Shaggy and Scooby exploring a haunted mineshaft, but a strong melody will always win points.

On the Braziers House terrace, violinists **BENEDICT TAYLOR** and **HAKARL** have teamed up with an uncredited saxophonist for a relaxed improvisation, and these purely acoustic one-offs are the sort of thing we'd like to see more of at next year's festival, there are so many nooks and crannies on the site that could be enlivened by a freeform blowout or a subtle bit of lowercase tinkling. There are plenty of careering glissandi and percussive tonguing on display, but

the music doesn't sound gimmicky; in fact it reminds us of Benjamin Britten at times... perhaps these are the gulls circling out of shot in *Peter Grimes*.

CHARISMATIC MEGAFaUNA apparently formed at last year's festival. We wonder whether they've actually met since. Their show involves the three of them bashing out elementary rhythms and chanting clumsily, and is a good few rehearsals away from being convincing. Reverse cheerleading, we suppose, but also sadly the reverse of any good.

We leave **HENRY BLACKER** and their incredibly entertaining rock chugs, something like a heavy Ten Benson, to see a rare performance inside Braziers House. While punters at many festivals are content to sit playing hacky sack by their tents, or swilling in the beer tent until it gets late enough for someone famous, it's truly heartening to see a wave of listeners stream through the door to see a solo piano piece by **MXLX**. From our position in the doorway, we can't see a single ivory, but the sound has a pleasing Philip Glass air, with a dash of Charlemagne Palestine's intense key-pounding. It's only a short hop from there to the Barn, where **SETH AYYAZ** is vibrating a bunch of contact miked percussion. After a few minutes we're about to walk out when we suddenly start hearing massed church organs singing in the drones and loops, and before we know it our ears are filled with birdsong, Satanic mills, laughing policemen – either he's an adept at sonic craftsmanship, or we have a very fertile imagination.

This being Supernormal, we expect **HORSELOOM** to be a vast device made out of surgical trusses that recreates the sound of pack animals dying in the Somme. It's actually a man named Steve Malley, a single acoustic guitar and some lovely, mellifluous Martin Simpson-style folk tunes. He's not afraid of a little Bert Jansch percussiveness to keep the senses keen, but for the most part the pieces are played with a limpid simplicity that makes this quite possibly the set of the weekend. Perhaps his voice, though warm and unhurried, is a little pedestrian, but the playing is a sheer joy.

There's a lot of very heavy bands spread across the weekend, but it's **PALEHORSE** that perhaps impress the most. On record they're a seething mass of nuance and moods; at times they sound a little like the finest moments of Slint. Live, it's an entirely different proposition with precisely no room for fine detail or tonal shifts, just a relentless barrage of hardcore fury and it is utterly invigorating and compelling. When they scream you

feel as though you've been properly screamed at.

We don't get to see **SLY & THE FAMILY DRONE**, as they set up in the middle of the field, and are surrounded by a ring of spectators, some of whom may have been joining in. We have no idea where the band end and the audience begin. We have no idea where soundcheck ends and the set begins. We have no idea where egalitarian abstract noise theatre ends and taking the piss begins. But we do enjoy it, even if all we can really hear is one roaring guitar amp and a synthesised bass drum (rhythms optional).

SUNDAY

Overnight the rain has been so bad that the Nest Stage has had to shut down. To their credit the organisers respond well, and try and keep everything running as best they can. It does mean however, that our months of practice for the Fall-E-Oke later in the day have been for nothing as it is sadly struck from the itinerary .

Starting the day off with **THOUGHT FORMS'** angry Sonic Youth attack sets the day up as presumably, it means to go on, with outbursts of occasional aggression. **HOWIE REEVE** offers something a little more calming: a mix of flamenco bass and political comment might sound like a mixture born in the deepest bowels of hell, but it's actually beguiling and well performed. Importantly, it's as far away from endless bass solos as it is possible to get, and that can only be a good thing. Something more ominous looms in the darkest corners of **ANJI CHEUNG's** loops and bowed guitars. Over a paranoiac heart beat bass pulse is what appears to be an air-raid siren. It's yet another terrifying harbinger of doom, as if the pig head we encountered when entering the site first thing in the morning wasn't bad enough.

A bit of full-on rock and roll is what's needed and to that end we head off to catch **TAMAN SHUD**, who are apparently "psychedelic motorcycle punk". They are as it turns out, a dark and thunderous rock band. However, wearing wellingtons on stage is about as far removed from "motorcycle punk" as is possible to get.

Away from motorcycles and throbbing engines, **DARK NORTHUMBRIAN** offer a more rural feel for a just a short while. The songs they showcase come from the north east of England and the Scottish borders and surprisingly the songs from the region are every bit as dark and uncomfortable as those from the Deep South. The band itself is so large that it is almost an orchestra, and as a result, the sound is full and offers a warmth that is absent

in much of the subject matter of the songs. That we end up experiencing these occasionally unpleasant tales whilst sat next to a bloke that looks and behaves like Chris the homicidal camper from *Sightseers* makes for an edgy half hour.

Strolling around the field between acts we happen upon **SARAH ANGLISS** and friends playing an extremely wonky version of 'Big New Prinz' on homemade instruments. It's surely only a matter of time before they appear on a stage backing Mark E Smith.

In the barn **BUNTY** are putting in one of the sunniest and most fun performances of the weekend. Their pumped up, day-glo pop songs draw inspiration from The Happy Mondays, Peaches, and Le Tigre and they're an absolute joy. After a weekend of drone and unpleasant weather conditions, it is perhaps inevitable and totally understandable that the whole thing ends up in a euphoric conga line. Dragging everyone back down to earth are **CINDYTALK** a band more than adept at creating ferocious and uncomfortable soundscapes. Today is no different as they seem intent on delivering a series of primordial songs that bear an uncanny resemblance to Throbbing Gristle.

Choirs are lovely aren't they? However, angelic, heavenly and spellbinding, are all words that could never be used to describe **PHIL MINTON'S FERAL CHOIR**. An assortment of people, some over-enthusiastic, some looking like they'd rather be dead, and some possibly *actually* feral, take to the stage and honk, howl, growl, hum and chatter for a good 20 minutes. When it works, it makes a bezerk kind of sense (and bears a resemblance to Mike Patton's 'Adult Themes For Voice'), when it doesn't it feels like a hellish trip through bedlam.

As a whole Supernormal supplies a heady mixture of high quality and fascinatingly idiosyncratic failures. If there were no main stage highlights to come close to Evil Blizzard and Hookworms last year, the Barn feels better utilised this time, and it's pleasing that the interesting performances are spread across the site more evenly. Our only concern, when settling down to another doom rhythm, another guitar drone and another vocal delay unit is that the line-up is in danger of becoming predictable. The one simple thing that makes Supernormal better than any other festival in Oxfordshire is that it has not yet become a brand, and doesn't seek to sell us close-minded lifestyle choices instead of adventures: let's make sure it stays like that. Don't give us what we want; give us what we'll never forget.

David Murphy and Sam Shepherd



All photos: Sam Shepherd



WILDERNESS FESTIVAL Cornbury Park

It's quite a challenge to write about the lush, plush multi-day event Wilderness; it's been very carefully put together to appeal to many crowds. It has music, sure, but it's not a music festival any more than it's a foodie gathering, a family-friendly event or a late-night revellers' paradise. What the organisers have deftly pulled off is the creation of something that is very likely to be known as a 'lifestyle' festival – and in many ways one that adequately satisfies a huge range of interests and expectations.

The festival ground is big; bigger than last year, with scope enough to get lost but without a feeling of chaos or wasted space. It's difficult not to travel from area to area, with all good intentions to arrive at a particular performance, talk, or food truck, without being endlessly distracted and intrigued. For those that reach them, there are some musical heavy hitters here: most notably **BURT BACHARACH**, who offers what seems to be the most obvious set of cover versions imaginable – until one remembers that he *wrote* all of them, and that he can orchestrate a band to deliver them with flawless accuracy and total charm.

The other headliners, **METRONOMY** and **LONDON GRAMMAR**, do their thing adequately, although much of the bill tends towards the safe and comfortable – **JOAN AS POLICEWOMAN** sounding somewhat bored; **CATE LE BON** a too-shiny-for-this-reviewer smattering of mainstream pop. **MOUNT KIMBIE** poke their unshowy heads above the parapet with a set of subtle, disorienting electronica that dabbles with

enough weirdness to simultaneously please and confuse the audience. The food may excite rather more than the music, with J Sheekey's outstanding fish and chips and Bleecker Street Burger's far-too-tempting double cheeseburgers, for example, and the ambitious 'long table' banquets from Simon Rogan, Angela Hartnett and Russell Norman. In amongst the taste sensations, there are some Oxford musical treats to be found. **THE AUGUST LIST**, **JULIA MEIJER** and **GRUDLE BAY** represent the quality and diversity that abounds in the local scene, and **CHARLIE CUNNINGHAM** offers two sets of his brilliant, fascinating acoustic folk that blends Spanish guitar chops with a beautifully clear voice and friendly, relaxed confidence.

Much of the Wilderness crowd seem suited specifically to this event – 'Cotswold types' who've arrived in Aston Martins and who fill the event with frightening levels of self-confidence. It'd be easy to be alienated by this, but if one surrenders to the environment – wandering amongst people, stopping to take in unexpected events like having a personal, chosen-at-random Shakespeare sonnet reading, seeing a bell being forged, or hearing *Dragons Den* businessman Doug Richard effortlessly nail the concept of social entrepreneurship – Wilderness feels for a couple of days like a tiny, utopian village. It may not be all music, but perhaps the lifestyle it espouses isn't such a bad thing. As an escapist blur to glimpse into a multi-faceted world of wonder, it's unmatched.

Simon Minter

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DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA

Holywell Music Rooms

I’ve heard of concept albums, and even concept bands, but Dead Rat Orchestra’s exploration of ‘The Cut’ is the first concept tour I’ve ever come across, the London three-piece are wending their way from London to Bristol by narrow boat, stopping to play gigs along the way and hoping to explore and imbibe the folk music of Britain’s canals. They tell us that they had a struggle finding material, but what they have found is fantastic. DRO are known for exploring traditional folk and reinterpreting it with a more modern perspective - and they sound exactly how you imagine they would, in the best way possible. Two facts that will help you get a better sense of their sound; 1) They have soundtracked a BBC film about the gannet hunters of the Hebrides and 2) I have previously seen them open for Godspeed You! Black Emperor. As this implies there are long passages of experimental instrumentation (for example knicker-elastic as a woodwind instrument) and droning chords, but for every dense texture there is a raucous foot-stomp-and-

fiddle number. Many of the songs the band have found on their journey are in fact *a cappella* songs written to celebrate the opening of canals, to be sung by the owner of the company. They are wordy and ignore common syntax for the sake of a rhyme but DRO bring them to life with such gusto you almost feel out of place without a shovel in hand and a sweat on your brow. The highlight of the songs in this style (though not a song of the waterways) is ‘Poor Old Horse’ – a 70’s folk-rock mainstay – where everyone in the room is bellowing in a cacophonous call-and-response . It takes great skill, not only to write and arrange songs such diverse music, but performing it cohesively and holding the audience in rapture through it all is something even more impressive. Dead Rat Orchestra three very talented men; they bring a breath of fresh air to traditional British music and at the same time expand the definition of contemporary music. *Matthew Chapman Jones*

KARMA TO BURN /

DESERT STORM

O2 Academy

An evening of titanic riffs tonight at the Academy, and Desert Storm have never sounded better. Through a PA that does their monolithic slabs of granite justice, the kick drum shakes the room and their sheets of guitar noise are all-encompassing. They should play here every week. Karma To Burn only know how to do one thing, and that’s RIFF. In fact, were Paddy Power to offer odds on stoner rock guitarists’ musical proclivities, I’d be willing to bet that William Mecum wouldn’t be able to write a ballad, a folk song or a jaunty little wedding number if his life depended on it. And the band have been doing it a long time; seventeen years is long enough to hone riffing into a fine art form, and at their best they’re outstanding. There’s no progression between old tunes like ‘Waltz of the Playboy Pallbearers’ and the newest material, but nor would we want anything to get in between us and our RIFFS. What’s more, they’ve worked their way through so many members now (onto their fourth drummer, third guitarist and second bassist) that they’ve transcended Spinal Tap levels of rock parody and are in fact in danger of becoming the stoner rock Sugababes. Tonight they’re joined by a bassist who couldn’t look any more nu-metal if he was wearing a Limp Bizkit T-shirt: long cargo shorts, sweatbands and enormo-dreads all present and correct. We could forgive this if he wasn’t apparently more bothered about throwing shapes than playing interesting bass parts. As it is, his plodding, workaday contributions actually drag the songs down, robbing them of much of the sharpness and intent evident on their last trip to Oxford as a duo. Karma To Burn have always been a band for whom less is more, and on tonight’s evidence they might be better served stripping things back even further. *Stuart Fowkes*

CAROLINA CHOCOLATE DROPS

St John the Evangelist

Singer Rhiannon Giddens promises us nothing less than a “survey of real American music” on taking the stage at this Iffley Road place of worship, and this writer, operating some way outside his usual comfort zone, arrives nonetheless eager for re-education, the majority of a sell-out audience bubbling with anticipation and enthusiasm. Carolina Chocolate Drops trade in the revitalization of old time tunes: from a cappella spirituals to raucous hoedowns; from melancholy laments to community sing-a-longs. The talent on show is staggering; the quartet deploying banjo, cello, snare drum and fiddle with transcendental results. Throughout the show, Giddens and fellow vocalist Hubby Jenkins obligingly explain the background to the songs and how so many have been appropriated by the white communities of the southern states, having originated amongst slaves – the banjo for instance is in reality an African-American instrument – while the ‘bones’ – the literal residue of a good meal

of fried chicken – are deployed to add lively rhythm. Highlights include ‘Train 45’ recorded for an upcoming BBC documentary on music from the South, a cover of Hank William’s ‘Please Don’t Let Me Love You’, and, astonishingly, an entire song sung in Gaelic, rooted in the tradition of the Cape Fear region of North Carolina, the Tar Heel State and a major centre for Scots-Irish immigration. The audience is in raptures but the band is at its best when they are at their most morose, the cello aching yawningly and the Giddens’ vocals evoking lives of hardship. Carolina Chocolate Drops have won a Grammy award no less for their ‘Genuine Negro Jig’ LP, two songs from which are aired to striking effect towards the end of the evening, and they succeed brilliantly in conjuring up a world that exists a long way from the Taco Bells and Subways of modern America. Their arrival in Oxford will be the highlight of the year for many an Oxford folkie. *Robert Langham*

DEAD KENNEDYS

O2 Academy

Dead Kennedys without Jello Biafra? The idea seems so perverse that *Nightshift* wrestles with the idea of even setting foot in the venue for the entire week before tonight’s show. Such is the animosity between the singer and the rest of the band, they’re only allowed to talk to each other via a lawyer. How did the greatest American punk band bar The Ramones, the scourge of the Christian Right in the States throughout the 1980s, come to this? How and why depends on which side of the dispute you sit, but here we are tonight with the remainder of the band’s classic line-up – guitarist East Bay Ray, looking like a gaunt Vic Reeves; bassist Klaus Flouride, a teddy bear kindly uncle figure, and drummer DH Peligro, still a sturdy, muscular presence – backing up singer Ron ‘Skip’ Greer, a tightly-wound bundle of mischief and energy who spends as much time among the front row of the enthusiastic crowd as he does skating around the stage. Where Biafra would punctuate songs with tirades against the establishment and myriad conspiracy theories, usually involving the CIA, Skip prefers to bait the crowd with genially vitriolic humour (“David Cameron told me to cut your benefits,” he proclaims before the band lurch ferociously into ‘Kill The Poor’; “Why can’t you just call it soccer like the rest of the world,” he asks to a chorus of

good-natured boos during an interlude centred on the World Cup). As such it’s a bit like a panto version of Dead Kennedys with Skip as both Dame and Villain. Which might be a crying shame if the show weren’t such great fun and those songs still so potent. Skip doesn’t try to be Jello but his voice fits a treat and from a raging ‘Let’s Lynch the Landlord’ to a closing blast of ‘Chemical Warfare’, you could close your eyes and never know the difference; his youthful energy is a welcome foil to the rest of the band’s now more stately presence. DH leads a call-and-response introduction to ‘Nazi Punks Fuck Off’, while ‘California Uber Alles’ finds Skip all but drowned out by the massed chorus of voices from the crowd. A set rich in old classics finds room for covers of ‘Viva Las Vegas’ and even a snatch of Warren Zevon’s ‘Werewolves of London’, but as the opening notes of ‘Holiday In Cambodia’ snake out of the PA the room erupts in a lake of moshing bodies, the years falling away as one of the greatest punk anthems ever written uncoils with serious menace. Jello Biafra or not, Dead Kennedys’ aim remains true. Are we glad we made the trip in the end? Damn right; we even get our photo taken with East Bay Ray afterwards. Lovely bloke. And a genuine rock legend. *Dale Kattack*

TARIK BASHIR & OXFORD MAQAM /

GILES LEWIN & DANNY CHAPMAN

Warnford Chapel

These are two of the gigs that Oxford Contemporary Music organises at the tiny Warnford Hospital Chapel, and which is full to capacity of sixty for both shows. One attraction is that the intimate setting, with the musicians playing totally acoustically, and without microphones, making a front row seat probably as close as it gets to having musicians round to your front room, Oud player and singer Tarik Bashir comes with a line-up from Oxford Maqam that included the exotic 72-string (yes, we’re close enough to count them) dulcimer/zither-like qanun. Performing music from late-19th and early-20th Century Egyptian and Turkish repertoire, it’s very different to what Tarik does with Oxford’s self styled ‘Turkobilly” mash-up band, Brickwork Lizards. While Oxford Maqam’s website talks of an academic approach and one band member is a musicology professor, this doesn’t inhibit them playing with warmth and passion. Tarik’s rich voice is underpinned by bright interplay between his oud and the qanun. Add fiddle and hand drum and the band’s other singer

Yara singing an extract from legendry Egyptian diva Um Kolthoum, and you have a wonderfully evocative set, the musical equivalent of strong Middle Eastern coffee. Equally enjoyable is ex-Bellowhead fiddler Giles Lewin’s all instrumental gig. With bass lines from Danny Chapman’s cello, Giles takes us on a kind of musical tour with tunes from the British Isles, Europe and Jewish music, and across time from Playford’s collection of 17th Century dance tunes to his own compositions. His playing has a stately quality even in the upbeat numbers that emphasises the tune ahead of any folk fiddle flashiness. No bad thing, and talking of tunes we especially like the Welsh one with the catchy bassline hook and the Jewish wedding klezmer tune which allows Giles, who is an occasional member of Oxford Maqum, to display his considerable Middle Eastern chops. The fact that the donations on the door go to the Artscape charity make both of these intimate gigs an even more excellent way to spend an hour. *Colin May*



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THE WHEATSHEAF

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POLEDO + THE WHARVES + CLEVEDON 8pm/£5

Friday 5th September – KLUB KAKOFANNEY

BALLOON ASCENTS

PUNCH DRUNK MONKEY CLUB + CHILDREN OF THE SUN 8pm/£5

Saturday 6th September – SLAVE TO THE GRIND

SEPREVATION

ABHORRENT DECIMATION + COLDWAR + FOUL BODY AUTOPSY + BLACK SKIES BURN 7:30pm/£5

Sunday 7th September – BURIED IN SMOKE

PETER PAN SPEEDROCK

JD PINKUS + DESERT STORM + HATEMAIL + GIRLPOWER 5pm/£8 Adv, £10 OTD

Thursday 11th September – BLACK BULLET LIVE

A TRUST UNCLEAN

THIS IN TURN 8pm/£5

Friday 12th September – DAISY RODGERS

BE GOOD

YELLOW FEVER + LEADER 8pm

Saturday 13th September – MD PROMOTIONS

STROKE OF LUCK

SEA STACKS + FAMILY MACHINE 8pm/£5

Sunday 14th September – SLAVE TO THE GRIND

BASEMENT TORTURE KILLINGS

FRACTURED INSANITY (Belgium) + NECROSIS 7:30pm/£5

Friday 19th September – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

FRACTURE

OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS + MEGAN JOSEPHY 8pm/£5

Saturday 20th September – GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES

OVERLORD

BLACK JUJU + FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS 8pm/£4.50

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

DR SHOTOVER: I Did It Norway

Hej folks. Welcome to the East Indie-sk Club bar. Pull up a perfectly-designed pine pew, but mind the splinters, ja? Ah, you wish to buy us a round of drinks, my good sir? Takk, takk. Mine is a microscopic glass of monstrosly expensive Dansk beer, so better start re-mortgaging your house now. Yes, it's true, we are celebrating all things Scandiwegian this evening. The Management invites you to: Knock back the afore-mentioned astronomically-priced drinks (or drinks-sk). Admire the nauseating squawks and rumblings of Stavanger's favourite doom metal Satanists HJÖRKK. ('So SICK they sold their souls twice!')... Enjoy the wall-to-wall Wallander and other gloomy amnesiac detectives on the big screen TV. Tuck into some pickled things that have been buried in the ground for a week and then dug up. More HJÖRKK. ('So SICK they ate their dinner twice!'). Later the jukebox will have – for your delectation – such Nordic luminaries as Stockholm Aitken and Waterman, Julian Copenhagen, Richard Helsinki and the Voidoids, Oslodive... and, of course, our old favourites, Danish Blue Oyster Cult. (We never tire of that one. NEVER). Then we will all grow beards, ja? Even you, Paltrow. Cheers!

Next month: Chairmen of the Smorgasbord



MEET THE HJÖRKK FAN CLUB!

INTRODUCING....

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

Salvation Bill

Who is he?

Salvation Bill is Ollie Thomas, best known on the local scene previously as the voice of Ute and The Old Grinding Young. "I knew I still wanted to carry on playing music and that a lot of the songs I'd written had longer and hairier legs than I'd first thought, but wasn't sure how to take them forward. I wanted to explore a basic solo acoustic sound with electronics. It grew into a bass, guitar and drums band for a while but then returned full circle to just me, this time with my karaoke box in hand." So far, whether with the full band or on his own, Salvation Bill has opened the main stage at Wilderness Festival, supported Gaz Combes at the O2, been picked by Colin Greenwood to play with Glass Animals as part of Independent Venue Week and been part of the DIY 'Ones To Watch' shows at The Old Blue in London. Since then he's released a single, 'Dead Dog', on a USB stick inside a dog food can, and this month releases his latest single, 'FML (Feel My Lump)', on Idiot King Recordings.

What does he sound like?

With a dedication to epic storytelling and a rich vein of dark humour in his songs, Ollie has drawn admiring comparisons to Nick Cave and Tom Waits, though his voice tends more toward the plaintive or strung out than gravelly or booming, and he has an indisputable soul about his best songs, all of which draw him far from the typical lovelorn acoustic singer-songwriter cliché.

What inspires him?

"I pick up lyrical ideas from anywhere I can: wonky sentences I overhear in the street, strange word combinations in news headlines, stealing phrases from incredible poets and re hashing them so it sounds like I made it up. I'm interested in the narrative thread of a story. I look for words and phrases I can magpie from elsewhere and then crowbar into my stories that allow splashes of colour. Musically, the biggest inspiration I have is from watching live shows, whether it's mind-blowingly good or cringingly bad.

Career highlight so far:

"A few weeks ago when I released my single 'FML' at Quarterhorse coffee shop and everyone I could have hoped to turn up did. I felt all fuzzy inside."

And the lowlight:

"When I had a very stressful day at work, left work early, drove to a gig in Shoreditch, missed my set while stuck in traffic in Acton; didn't realise where the gig was, parked miles from the venue and so had to run with all my equipment and was allowed to play one song acoustically in front of the stage while the other bands were changing over."

His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Tricky, as most of them, like Spring Offensive and TEED, don't seem to live in Oxford anymore, but I'm always a big fan of what Tamara Parsons-Baker is doing: she's got that dark narrative soul and is a fiery live performer."

If he could only keep one album it would be:

"'Abbey Road' by The Beatles. Each song seems to be in a different style.

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

"I'm playing with Spring Offensive at the O2 in November. It's going to be my first show in months, so expect a nervous version of me!"

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite thing is all the friends I've made through it. Least favourite is the lack of great venues."

You might love him if you love:

Nick Cave; Tom Waits; Jeff Buckley; Plaid; Otis Redding; Thom Yorke.

Hear him here:

www.salvationbill.co.uk



ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

"In a month when the phrase 'a dearth of imagination' springs all too often to mind, this tape is a shining example of why we'd rather listen to something weird, wonderful and interesting, however poorly recorded, than any amount of proficient but dull dustbin fodder." So ran the review of the *Curfew* Demo of the Month back in September 1994. It's a principle we've stuck to like superglue over the decades but in this case we were talking about a demo by **Shard**, the solo demo by a young lady called **Sharron Kraus**. Sharron Kraus who is now one of the most acclaimed underground folk artists in the world. Back then she wasn't even doing folk music, instead a decidedly dark, jazz-inflected sort of gothic-pop that we compared to Patti Smith, Siouxsie and even Coil. While Sharron has never been tied to a single city, back then she was living in Oxford and we still claim her as our own. Because she's great. "Give this woman a record deal now!" we concluded. Soon after, someone did.

And further proving that Oxford isn't all about feckless young men with guitars and a satchel of angst, this month's front cover was graced by **Twist**, one of sadly very few all-female bands this city has produced over the years. Playing the sort of cool punk-pop that made the likes of The Shop Assistants and The Primitives so bloody ace, the quartet formed to play at an International Women's Day festival. We think singer Helen now lives in Brighton but beyond that they're just one of the severalty great twinkling wee pop stars that shone and burned out in Oxford over the years.

At least we still remember them, unlike names from

this month's gig guide like **Valley of the Dolls**, **Buzz**, **Let's Be Frank**, **Swanney Lane** and **Silas Brew**, any of whom might have been crazy pioneering electro-core acts who make the likes of Micachu & the Shapes sound like Eric Clapton. But we doubt it.

10 YEARS AGO

In an issue dominated by an extensive review of the previous' month's **Truck Festival**, the news in September 2004's *Nightshift* was headed by the imminent release of **Winnebago Deal**'s debut full-length album, 'Dead Gone', the follow-up to their 'Plato O Plomo' mini-album on Fierce Panda.

Elsewhere **The Famous Monday Blues** club was celebrating its 20th anniversary with a series of shows at the Bullingdon, one of which was by UK blues act **Never The Bride**. Who are playing at the Famous Monday Blues this month. Crack open the Prosecco, it must be someone's birthday.

After a quiet summer, Oxford's gig scene was gearing back up slowly with **Jetplane Landing**, **Smog**, **Julian Cope** and **The Faint** all coming to **The Zodiac**. So were **Ocean Colour Scene** and **Embrace**, but we've chosen to have any memory of that wiped from our minds. The month's real gig treat, though, came down at **The Wheatsheaf** (don't it always?) with the mighty (that's **MIGHTY** in capital letters, bold type and underlined twice) **Part Chimp** destroying sensibilities and solid stone buildings for a two-mile radius, supported in their mission to bring the noise by **Sextodecimo** and **The Edmund Fitzgerald**. The same Edmund Fitzgerald who were reviewed in the same issue as "Oxes meshing with The God Machine, Sonic Youth left to

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

untangle the wreckage. The sound of rock music on a victory roll." We know greatness when we hear it.

5 YEARS AGO

Richard Walters was and continues to be one of *Nightshift*'s favourite musical things ever, and back in September 2009 he was back on the cover to talk about his long overdue debut album, 'The Animal', ("a genuinely beautiful album from a genuinely unique talent," went our review, with no little hint of excitability). Richard chatted about playing in bands from the ripe old age of 15 – from **Polysoul**, through **Theremin** to going out under his own name – being temporarily managed by Radiohead and Supergrass' management stable and being signed to Warner-Chappell Music and working with Bernard Butler and The Cranberries' Noel Hogan as well as having music music used on *CSI: Miami*, which led to a flurry of global interest. He also talked about his diagnosis with epilepsy that at one point threatened to bring all this to an end. "I went through a crisis of confidence; I needed to get all the indecision and anxiety out of my system before I could make the album," he said. "It's been so long coming it now feels like a weight off my shoulders." Richard's latest band, Liu Bei released their debut single last month.

Emiliana Torrini, **Okkervil River**, **Tinchy Stryder**, **Marina & the Diamonds** and **The Temper Trap** were the big names in town this month, while a brilliant mixed bill at the **O2 Academy** found **My Shadown**, **Baby Gravy** and **Desert Storm** teaming up.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

SCOTT BOWLEY

The single most important piece of advice we ever give musicians is, take your music seriously but not yourself. Someone who's clearly taken this nugget of wisdom to heart is Scott Bowley who, a few years back, suffered a brace of particularly scathing Demo Dumpers with his band Red Valve. In his email he tells us the dark mood that brought on lead him into a life of drug addiction and crime and he hasn't spoken to his family since but has at least recognised that trying to be Thom Yorke while accompanied by a guitarist who wanted to be Angus Young and a drummer who wanted to be Dave Grohl probably wasn't the best musical move. So now he's back, solo, and trying to be Thom Yorke with considerably more appealing results. Accompanied by a woozily disorientating video, his one-song offering, 'You Don't Know Me', is a glitchy, mildly unsettling slice of ambient darkness, all pots'n'pans percussion, bass-heavy synth wobbles and Scott's indecipherable falsetto mumble. Very much like something our Thom might have conjured up over breakfast of a dark winter morning. But Scott makes no bones about the obvious influence and has the skills to make it work on its own terms, and in a particularly wretched month for demos, this is a rare glimmer of starlight against the bleak, black sky.

JAMES BLOWERS

After which, what we really need to hear is a bloke scraping his fingers up and down his guitar strings with all the élan of a tree branch against a window pane in a stiff breeze while attempting to capture the essence of human sadness in song. Or at least that section of humanity that is made up of lovelorn young men who fancy themselves as the new Nick Drake but only have enough cash to afford the Liam Gallagher pocket book of poetry, doubtless from The Works' clearance bin. Strum and mumble, strum and mumble, strumble, strumble, slip into coma while attempting to self harmonise before rousing yourself just enough to imagine that Ed fucking Sheeran is The Sound Of The Future and mumbling some more about submarines in a cesspit approximation of soul music and hoping the pretty girls will fall at your feet

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/

in awe of your poet's heart and.... Oh fuck it, just fuck it; we can't do this anymore. Shut up! Shut UP! SHUT THE FUCKING FUCK UP! You squalid, self-pitying heap of snivelling snot string. Get a grip. Get a job. Join the army if you have to. Just. Shut. The. Fuck. Up. *Forever.*

Christ, are we only on the second demo? God gives us strength. And a bottle of Jim Beam.

THE AUTUMN SAINTS

"The Autumn Saints is an Anglo-American trio that offers a new and intriguing sound," runs the opening gambit of this demo's accompanying letter, and we guess that sounding like 90s rockers The Gin Blossoms fronted by Tex Avery's terminally morose cartoon dog Droopy is pretty damn unusual, even if we doubt it has too much long-term commercial appeal. But while that description is a pretty accurate reflection of the band's (untitled) opening number, they're not without their charms and sound like they have the makings of a decent tune or two deep inside them, particularly when singer Britt Strickland hits a richer vocal vein on the second (equally untitled) second song, his quavering southern drawl bringing life to a track that edges into the darker realms of Americana. Tell you what, give us twenty minutes to neck this bottle of Jim Beam here and we'll be down the front dancing like there's no tomorrow. Very slowly, arm in arm with Droopy. Any port in a storm, right?

KID SLOTH

A couple of rules about making instrumental music – make it interesting, and if you can't do that, at least make it brutal. Or scary. Is that three rules? Whatever, Kid Sloth struggle to get past the first one, offering fourteen golden nuggets of vocal-free sonic exploration that seems to consider a stroll to the shop to buy milk an adventure. This despite promising us they were going to sound like "a trip into a surreal film-world of soundtrack delights," the fibbing bastards. Opener 'Mars' is a decent start, a dirgy noise-funk soundtrack to an imagined 70s spy flick, somewhere between John Barry and Parliament. We've high hopes. But it's a bit like when they cram all the best bits of a film into the trailer and you have to sit through the considerably less cool stuff for an hour and a half, as they slip into

standard funk-rock noodling by way of Van Halen on 'Return of the Native', bluesy bar boogie on 'Sloth Rock', slap-bass funk-metal on 'Revolutions' and ambient techno shuffling on 'Free Fall', as if trying to cover every musical base in an attempt to create an album of library music that'll fit any generic stock footage, whether it be wildlife panoramas, sports montages or closing-time fallout sick-on-the-pavement scenes. As we say, there's fourteen whole tracks of this stuff and we get to about number 8 before all the bits of our brain that control creative thought are wiped like an old VHS tape and we're left slumped and drooling on the sofa, forever destined to watch ITV2 reality shows while stuffing supermarket value frozen pizzas down our gullets until we burst like a giant balloon full of guts and death mercifully takes us.

TOO MANY POETS

Someone must have let slip that half-arsed funk music was the new dubstep or something, since it's all over this month's demo pile. Bit of sunshine and people go completely fucking mental, innit. Then again, given that what passes for indie rock these days is about as cool and in demand as dung-flavoured bagel chips, we guess you have to try and spice it up any way you can, and if the end result goes down with all the dignity of a fat Labrador on wet lino, so be it. We really wanted to like this lot since we caught a few minutes of a recent show down The Cellar and the very splendid Glenda Huish who runs Wittstock Festival was full of praise for them, but try as we might we can't discern any real semblance of character about this demo, which cuts its cloth from equal parts Arctic Monkeys (another seemingly ubiquitous influence these days, about five years after it might have been considered A Good Thing), Red Hot Chili Peppers (ditto but make that 20 years) and regional band competition heats. It's got plenty of energy and big guitar sounds and a sense of epic, and even a vague hint of something pleasingly proggy about it on nominal highlight 'Guilty Conscience', but every time they promise to take it to a more glamorous level they slip back into a grey haze of mundanity. Seriously, anyone even vaguely thinking of starting a rock band should be made to sit down and listen to Fucked Up for an entire week before being asked if they can honestly say they can do better.

PROFUMO

Another band with a hint of something that might once have been funk in the planning stages, Profumo say they're a band "from the North East", though they don't specify whether they mean Middlesbrough or Brackley. If it's the former they're unlikely to bother coming down to duff us up for

being rude; if the latter, they probably think they'll fall off the edge of the world if they travel further than Deddington, so we're pretty safe. Like Too Many Poets before them, they're not bad as such, just uninspiring: happy to tread a well-worn path with just enough musical ability to avoid tripping over the sofa as they negotiate the route between A and B, pretending all those mad, crazy diversions along the way don't exist. At their best, on 'Atlas', they sound a tiny bit like The Only Ones, which is obviously a good thing, though the exotically-titled 'Anorak' sounds like a band trying far too hard to sound intense and emotionally-wracked. So, a bit good in parts, but not really nearly enough. And that, Profumo, is the scandal of too much current indie rock. Profumo. Scandal. Did you see what we did there?

THE DEMO DUMPER

O RED LINE

"O Red Line is a 3 piece band from Witney. We have been playing together for about 2 years now and one day we might start listening to what each other is doing and maybe together begin to understand the elusive concept that is a proper song," says the letter accompanying this demo. Except we made that last bit up. Even though it's absolutely completely true and actually being a bit too kind as we could justifiably have said "and one day we may even grow opposable thumbs so we don't sound like a hippo fainting onto a giant cardboard box full of random guitar strings while its keeper shouts hoarsely in its general direction." Somewhere along the line one of O Red Line – the bass player we'd posit – imagined the opening track (none of them have titles, which suggests the music itself wishes to remain anonymous) was a loping ska skank instead a stumbling drunkard of a half-tune. The next similarly staggers randomly round a room full of things that good music should contain – choruses, a groove, the merest hope each band member has an iota of an idea what he's meant to be doing – only very occasionally brushing against any of them, while a third (but sadly not final) track sounds like it might be a sullen approximation of something Nirvana once toyed with. And when it's finally, *finally*, over, we realise we've completely refilled our bottle of Jim Beam with tears as we sob for the departed soul of something that was once rock music. "Some bands we like are Lightning Bolt, Electric Wizard, Rapeman, Neurosis, etc etc. But we don't want to sound like any of these," claim O Red Line. On that score at least they have succeeded admirably.

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