




NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 237
April
2015**

*"I now understand
more than ever
that we must have
done something
right!"*



MARK GARDENER

**The Ride man on working with
Robin Guthrie and getting the
old gang back together again**

Also in this issue:

Introducing **THE BALKAN WANDERERS**
CORNBURY, TRUCK, OXFORD PUNT,
BIG FEASTIVAL and **WOOD** line-up news
plus

News, reviews, previews and six pages
of Oxford gigs.

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THE BULLINGDON

APRIL 2015

Monday 30th March

Ben Poole

Doors: 7.30pm

Tuesday 31st March

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited**

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 1st April

The Helen Highwater Band

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd April

Tremorheart

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd April

**Project Storm
DJ Slideout
mandidextrous
Matt Storm
Razbo**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 4th April

**Homeplanetearth
Echoic**

Esther Joy Lane

Doors: 7.30pm

Saturday 4th April

Desta*nation

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 7th April

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Bullingdon Hot Club**

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 8th April

Turbowolf

Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th April

**Larkin Poe
Jess Morgan**

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 11th April

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
Heat 5**

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 13th April

Federal Charm

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 14th April

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Martin Pickett Organisation**

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 15th April

**HT Comedy Presents:
Phil Kay
Javier Costales
Luke Capasso
Andrew McBurney
Jack Kirwan
Danny Clives**

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 17th April

Maiians

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 18th April

**Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!**

Doors: 11pm

Monday 20th April

Earl Thomas

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 21st April

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet**

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 22nd April

Creeper

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th April

New Faces Tour:

**Frances
Tenterhook
Charlotte OC
Freddie Dickson**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th April

**Deep Medi
feat. Compa, Kaiju
Commodo, Tunnidge**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 25th April

Goin' Loud:

**Too Many Poets
Crime
Echoic
The Fixation
Alan Jaggs**

Doors: 7pm

Sunday 26th April

Ugly Duckling

Doors: 7pm

Monday 27th April

**Girls with Guitars
Blues Caravan**

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 28th April

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited**

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 30th April

CC Smugglers

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 30th April

Pearson Sound

Doors: 11pm

Friday 1st May

Shushians

Doors: 6.30pm

Friday 1st May

**Bronwyn Leonard's
Evening of Jazz & Soul**

Doors: 9pm

Saturday 2nd May

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
1st Semi-Final**

Doors: 6.30pm

Tuesday 5th May

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band**

Doors: 6.30pm

Tuesday 12th May

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Big Colours (16 Piece band)**

Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 16th May

Bedrock

**Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!**

Doors: 11pm

Monday 18th May

Virgil & the Accelerators

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 19th May

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit**

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 21st May

**JP Harris and
the Tough Choices**

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 22nd May

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
2nd Semi-Final**

Doors: 6.30pm

Tuesday 26th May

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited**

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 27th May

**An Evening with
Slaid Cleaves**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 29th May

Chuck Prophet

Doors: 7pm

Friday 29th May

**Bossaphonik Presents:
The Dele Sosimi
Afrobeat Orchestra**

Doors: 11pm

Monday 1st June

**Chameleons Vox
'What does Anything Mean? Basically' Tour**

Doors: 7.30pm

Tuesday 2nd June

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Funk Bake**

Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 8th June

Laurence Jones

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 9th June

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited**

Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 13th June

**Danny and the
Champions of the World**

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th June

**Simple & Playground:
Kowton & Peverelist**

Doors: 11pm

Monday 15th June

Ryan McGarvey (US)

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 16th June

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet**

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 18th June

**Well Hung Heart
Dave Arcari**

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th June

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
3rd Semi-Final**

Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 20th June

**Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!**

Doors: 11pm

Monday 22nd June

Hamilton Loomis

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 23rd June

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Rory McInroy Band**

Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 29th June

Larry McCray

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 30th June

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited**

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 1st July

Sarah Jane Scouten

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd July

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
The Final**

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 13th July

Moreland & Arbuckle

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 29th July

Angaleena Presley

Doors: 7pm

Monday 10th August

Little Devils

Doors: 7pm

Monday 14th September

Marcus Malone

Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 21st September

Kirk Fletcher

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 24th September

Cardboard Fox

Doors: 7pm

Friday 23rd October

**The Corn Potato
String Band**

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th November

Dedication 2015

Doors: 5.30pm

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NEWS

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THE LINE-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT has been announced. The annual showcase of up and coming local bands takes place on **Wednesday 13th May** and features 20 acts across five venues in Oxford city centre.

The full Punt line-up is:

The Purple Turtle: The Shapes;

Indica Blues; Cassels; Wardens.

The Cellar: The Balkan Wanderers;

Rhymeskeemz & Bungle; Peerless

Pirates; Zaia.

The Wheatsheaf: Ghosts In The

Photographs; Cameron A.G; Little

Brother Eli; Maiians.

Turl Street Kitchen: My Crooked

Teeth; Katie Jackson; Despicable

Zee; Adam Barnes.

The White Rabbit: White Beam;

Water Pageant; Esther Joy Lane;

Rainbow Reservoir.

The Punt kicks off at 7pm at the

Purple Turtle with The Shapes and

finishes at The White Rabbit at midnight with Rainbow Reservoir. The bill takes in an eclectic range of sounds, from indie, blues, metal, electronica and hip hop, to reggae, eastern European folk, post-rock, and acoustic pop. Still no brass band, though. One year we will.

A limited number (100) of **all-venue Punt passes** are on sale now, priced £8, online at wegottickets.com, or from **Truck Store** on

Cowley Road and **Blackwell's**

Music on Broad Street. Entry to

individual gigs is £5, though Turl

Street Kitchen and The White

Rabbit are free.

Profits from this year's Punt will be

split between **Tiggywinkles** animal

hospital in Haddenham, and the

Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape

Crisis Centre.

Check out the **Oxford Punt 2015**

page on **Facebook** for updated

news.

Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes
Nightshift has a new email address:
editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk
and website:
nightshiftmag.co.uk



THE CHARLATANS have been confirmed as the second main stage headline act at this year's **Truck Festival**. The indie veterans, who released their twelfth album, 'Modern Nature', earlier this year, join **Basement Jaxx** over the weekend of the 17th-18th July at **Hill Farm** in Stevenon.

Charlatans are among 25 new names added to this year's Truck, along with **Augustines**, whose last Oxford show at the O2 Academy led to riotous scenes along Cowley Road when the band concluded their set in the street and then

the Library pub. They're joined by post-hardcore crew **Don Broco**; New York indie stars **Darwin Deez**; sleazy-rockers **Fat White Family**, and poetic hip hop star **Ghostpoet**. There are also slots for **Lucy Rose**, **Eagulls**, **The Wytches**, **Bo Ningen** and **Demob Happy**.

Japanese acid-noise band Bo Ningen will plays as part of **Alcopop! Records** and **Big Scary Monsters'** takeover of the Barn stage, alongside **Pulled Apart By Horses**, **Tellison**, **Brawlers**, **Talons**, **Waylayers**, **Bloody Knees**, **Woahnows**,



TOM JONES headlines the Saturday night of **Cornbury Festival** this year. The legendary Welsh singer and *The Voice* judge joins Supertramp singer **Roger Hodgson** and **Razorlight** atop the bill over the weekend of the 10th-12th July at **Great Tew Estate**.

The line-up for the twelfth Cornbury features the festival's characteristic mix of big-name acts, cult legends, country, folk and blues stars and pop acts.

Among the extensive cast joining the headliners are Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, The Fratellis, Blue, Billy Ocean, Lulu, John Cooper Clarke, Larkin Poe, Jack Savoretti, The Felice Brothers, Ward Thomas, Hank Wangford, Paper Aeroplanes, Joanne Shaw Taylor, Police Dog Hogan and The Shires.

Plenty more stuff besides, and with the line-up for the Charlbury

Riverside stage yet to be announced.

Cornbury organiser Hugh Phillimore said he was excited to get Tom Jones on this year's bill after coming close last time. "Yes it's been quite a long road with Sir Tom but we got there in the end – I've always been insanely persistent. I'm really looking forward to Larkin Poe and particularly Paper Aeroplanes – saw them at the Union Chapel last year and they were totally stunning. Martha Reeves should be pretty entertaining – she's the only act that Secret Garden have ever booked twice. I think Chastity Brown will surprise people and I've just added Trevor Horn's band, The Producers, who play all the hits that he and his other mates in the band wrote or produced – much better than it sounds."

As well as the live music Cornbury hosts its usual array of comedy, including Joe Lycett, Katherine Ryan, Aisling Bea and James Acaster, workshops, kids activities, the Disco Shed and more.

Tickets for Cornbury are on sale now from www.cornburyfestival.com.

Delta Sleep and **Freeze the Atlantic**.

Other acts already announced for the 18th Truck Festival include Peter Hook & the Light, Saint Raymond, Slaves, Baby Godzilla, Jawws, Rae Morris, Honeyblood and King Pleasure & the Biscuit Boys.

Truck organiser Matt Harrap told *Nightshift* he believes this could be the festival's best ever line-up. "We're so pleased to add a band of the calibre of The Charlatans to the line up; it's absolutely amazing to get a band that have headlined huge festivals around the world for the last 25 years. We caught them on their recent sold out UK Tour and

NEWS

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afternoon of live music in its new upstairs venue and vinyl emporium, with Phousa, Black Feathers, Jonny Payne and Loud Mountains among the acts playing. A whole slew of limited edition releases from Gaz Coombes, Ride, Glass Animals and Slowdive among others are set for the annual celebration of the country's surviving (and thriving) record stores. **Blackwell's Music** on Broad Street also join this year's celebrations, with collectors' edition releases as well as a 10% sale on all full-price records and CDs, and record players.

CC SMUGGLERS, GILL SANDELLS & CHRIS TT AND THOMAS TRUAX are among the latest acts to be confirmed for **WOOD Festival**. Barna Howard, Jali Fily Cissokho, Band of Hope and Trevor Lou & Hannah Moss

will also be joining headliners **Tunng, Songhoy Blues** and **Treetop Flyers** over the weekend of the **15th-17th May at Braziers Park**, near Wallingford. WOOD's award-winning environmental approach to festival-making continues this year with a celebration of The Year of the Bee, as well as the festival's usual array of talks, workshops and activities. Weekend tickets are on sale from Truck Store on Cowley Road, priced £74, and kids under 12 going free, and for the first time, day tickets are available, from £20. Visit **woodfestival.tumblr.com** for more news and ticket details.



PALOMA FAITH, Groove Armada and **Grandmaster Flash** are among the big names at this year's **Big Festival**. The music and food festival organised by Jamie Oliver and Blur's Alex James takes place on James's farm in Kingham, near Chipping Norton over the weekend of the **28-30th August**. Paloma Faith headlines the Friday night with Groove Armada playing a DJ set on the Sunday. Saturday's headliners are yet to be announced, but it'll probably be Blur, right? Other acts confirmed so far include Ella Eyre, The Cuban Brothers and Norman Jay. News and ticket details at **www.thebigfestival.com**.

STORNOWAY AND JOAN ARMATRADING have been added to the line-up for this summer's **Towersey Festival**. They join a bill that features **Bellowhead** and **Show Of Hands**. The annual folk festival, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2014, runs over the weekend of the 28th-31st August at Thame Showground. Other acts already announced include Sally Barker, The Treacherous Orchestra, Martin Simpson, John Smith, The Travelling Band and The Spooky Men's Chorale. Tickets are on sale now, with adult weekend tickets at £90 and discounts for under-18s and children. Visit **www.towerseyfestival.com**

RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL takes place over the weekend of the **25th-26th July** at Mill Field in Charlbury. Oxfordshire's biggest free festival will feature over 30 acts over two stages. Organisers are currently looking for acoustic acts to perform on the festival's Fringe Stage. Solo acts, duos or trios can apply to play by emailing Alan Jenkins at **gandlasatal@gmail.com**. More festival news as it emerges at **www.riversidefestival.charlbury.com**.

TUFTHUNTER release their debut album this month, available as a free download. Tuft Hunter is a collaborative effort from former-Talulah Gosh and Heavenly guitarist Pete Momtchiloff – more recently a member of Les Clochards and Hot Hooves. The album features a different guest vocalist on each track, with contributions from ex-Gosh bandmate Amelia Fletcher, The Relationships' Richard Ramage and Les Clochards singers Ian Nixon and Karen Cleave. Sixteen tracks in all. Full review in May's issue. Get your copy for free at **tuft Hunter.co.uk**.

BALLOON ASCENTS play a benefit gig for Cowley Road Carnival at The Ultimate Picture palace this month. The rising local indie stars play the Jeune Street cinema on the 29th April, followed by a screening of classic rockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*.

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.

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

LOOK! KITTENS!

Not this time, sadly, but *Nightshift* does have a new email address. **editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk** Get used to it. Kittens next month - promise!

WOOD
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DUOTONE JOHN JOSEPH BRILL HANS CHEW
NICK COPE THE DREAMING SPIRES CO-PILGRIM
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WARD LULU JACK SAVORETTI
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HUNTER SIX JOANNE SHAW ONLY THE YOUNG STAXS
THE SHIRES TAYLOR MOULETTES HORNS OF PLENTY
CC SMUGGLERS POLICE DOG SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX
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ENGLAND'S MOST CIVILISED GATHERING

A quiet word with MARK GARDENER



Above: Mark, with drinking buddy Robin Guthrie. Opposite: the old gang back together again.

EVEN IF THE WORD LEGEND has become cheapened in recent times, it would be fair to say that Mark Gardener, along with his fellow Ride bandmates Andy Bell, Loz Colbert and Steve Queralt, has his place in the local music firmament set for all eternity.

Without Ride, Oxford's world-famous music scene probably wouldn't exist, at least not as we know it. Talulah Gosh might have put the key in the lock, but it was Ride that kicked the door open and announced to the world that Oxford had arrived. In their wake came Radiohead, Supergrass, Foals, Stornoway, Glass Animals and so many more. Suddenly local musical ambition didn't have to end at the ring road. You could be the biggest band on the planet.

In their seven years together Ride released four studio albums, including their epoch-making debut 'Nowhere', enjoyed a plethora of hit singles and EPs, toured the globe, and inspired a whole new generation of indie bands, inadvertently inventing the shoegaze genre along the way.

Ride split in 1996 but their legacy has remained, their legend has slowly but surely grown, and their long-awaited reunion at the end of last year was greeted with a fervour that took your breath away.

THE PAST 19 YEARS HAVE NOT seen Ride's former members idle. Andy of course formed Hurricane #1 and enjoyed some Britpop-era success before joining Oasis and subsequently Liam Gallagher's Beady Eye, while Loz has toured as part of

The Jesus and Mary Chain and latterly Gaz Coombes' band among others, as well as becoming a renowned drum tutor. After the short-lived but underrated The Animalhouse project with producer Sam Williams (and Loz), Mark has been less visible, but no less involved in music. He released a brace of solo albums last decade and toured, mostly in the States. He also opened his own recording studio, concentrating on production work in recent years, while keeping his hand in music making, collaborating with the likes of Adam Franklin of Swervedriver, New York's Dive Index and LA's Miranda Lee Richards, and adding guest vocals to French electronic funksters Rinoceros.

Some of this work will see the light of day later in the year, but this month Mark releases a new album with former-Cocteau Twins guitarist Robin Guthrie, his first album in a decade. 'Universal Road' has been over two years in the writing, recording and mixing, Mark, still living in Oxford, regularly commuting to Robin's studio in Brittany, but finally it's ready to be heard.

WHILE THE EXCITEMENT OF Ride's reformation is grabbing the headlines, the coming together of two indie pioneers is newsworthy in its own right.

The album is snow-soft and introspective in mood, Mark's voice reflective and full of longing over Robin's instantly recognisable shimmer and spangle, a world away from the cacophonous soundstorm of those early Ride records. It's delicately crafted as you'd expect

from two men with so much musical experience behind them, and as mellow and warm as that experience would suggest.

Right now Mark, who became a dad for the first time last year ("I'm even more focused now as time is more limited, and party time is pretty nonexistent. I did plenty of that back in the day so it's all good! Sleep deprivation can get pretty dreamy and trippy, though," he says) is spending every hour of every working day in a studio in London rehearsing with Ride, but despite the need for a good night's sleep, he chats to *Nightshift* about the new album and that impending reunion tour.

'UNIVERSAL ROAD' HAS BEEN two years in the making; how did it come together, especially with Robin living in France?

"Robin lives in in the rural wilds of Brittany. I jumped in the car and took a few overnight ferries to Le Havre so it wasn't too tricky getting everything done. The writing and recording process flowed very easily. Either Robin or I would come in with some initial chord progressions, loops or start of a song. We would then structure and write the bare bones of the song together normally with a scratch keyboard and guitar. "Once we were happy with the structure Robin would then get to work on the bass, guitars and drums, I would add my acoustic guitar but would mainly start thinking about lyrics and vocal ideas. By the time Robin had got his dreamy guitars, bass and drums in good shape I'd be ready towards the end of the day to

start throwing vocal ideas at the song. I love Robin's dreamy soundscapes; it was a very conducive environment for me to work out vocal ideas and melodies to go with Robin's. We were pretty much always together in the same room working out our parts and usually by the evening I would be ready to start singing and putting down some first idea vocals. We would also normally get the red wine flowing in the evening, which always works!"

How did the pair of you first get together?
"We crossed paths and met a few times back during the Ride and Cocteau Twins days in the early 90s. "We met again in a more sober way when Robin came to Oxford when he was touring a few Picture Houses, where he was combining music with visuals. We started talking about the idea of making some music together in a curry house opposite the Phoenix in Jericho where Robin played that night. We didn't really plan to make an album but we just thought it would be good to work together, so I went over to France shortly after that and that was when we wrote and recorded 'The Places We Go' single, which was released a few years ago. We were both happy with it so then we thought it would be great to make an album. "We were both really busy with our mixing and production work, so it took a while for us to both have some clear time at the same time. After I made another visit, where we recorded 'Dice' together, then a tour together around the UK I went back over to France. We thought we would record another four or five tunes but as everything happened pretty quickly I stayed on for another couple of weeks and then we ended up with ten tracks and the album."

Were you a fan of Cocteau Twins when you were getting into music?
"I was a *huge* fan of Cocteau Twins and This Mortal Coil. I would often listen to the Cocteau Twins on the tour bus when I was touring with Ride, along with other 4AD bands like Dead Can Dance. I loved all that music and still listen to it. Robin is a great guy. We became good friends so it wasn't daunting for me to work with him; it was inspirational. We're both competent and confident musicians in the studio, we both love the studio environment, books, guitars and musical gear. If we couldn't get into a creative flow together and make an album then something would have been seriously wrong."

Robin's always had of a reputation for a sense of humour - sharp, dry, sarcy - that seemed rather at odds

with Cocteau Twins' ethereal music; how did you find him as a person?
"Great sense of humour and irony. We had a lot of common ground and shared experiences with our band pasts. Robin and Kevin Shields are to me the godfathers of that guitar cathedral of sound. Both were in bands that were completely original, brilliant and unique that have totally stood the test of time. We get on very well. If we didn't we would have never made the album. It was all about us connecting and enjoying the experience, exchanging many anecdotes and enjoying some great French red wines together!"

Was Robin a fan of Ride?
"Yes, I think we passed the Guthrie test! However, I'm sure I listened to the Cocteau Twins a lot more than he would have listened to Ride!"

'Universal Road' feels very personal and reflective in mood.
"It is personal, reflective and atmospheric. The music and our collaboration demanded that honesty. We have lots of shared kind of mad band and general life experience to draw from."

AS MENTIONED, MOST OF Mark's musical time in recent years has been taken up by his own studio in west Oxford, seeing life from the other side of the mixing desk. Does he think that having been in a band and recorded with some of the best producers around, including Alan Moulder and John Leckie, he can bring something extra to the acts he records?
"I love being both sides of the mixing desk. It's all about passion and trying to make interesting records. That can be as a producer and mixer or as an artist. In the end I'm just a massive music fan. I love music. It's always been a life force for me. I love the natural chaos of the sound. I have no answers, I just wanna do the work channelling all musical sounds, pieces and fragments into some kind of forms which can hold the promises to be able to keep going and make more music. Some connects with a lot of people and some connects with less. That's the beauty. It's definitely not an exact science. The learning never stops. I'll never know or be sure. I'll always feel like a kid in a toyshop when I'm making music in a studio. I like it that way."
Who's been the best band you've worked with in the studio?
(Deapan) "Ride."

AH YES, RIDE. AT THE END of 2014 the news broke that Mark's old band were set to reform. It was news that so many fans around the world had dreamed of for almost two decades since the band split. Such hopes had lingered for so long many believed it was the reunion that would never happen, but with the demise of Beady Eye, Andy Bell was commitment free and the original

OX4 were set to ride again.
Was it daunting getting Ride back together; the band's legend and influence has grown and grown since the split.
"It's amazing; I love it. It's been amazing playing with Ride again. It's very heartening and incredible how the band's legend has grown. I now understand more than ever that we must have done something right! It was daunting thinking about some of the festival headlines until we got ourselves into the studio and got back into full-on rehearsals. Now I can't wait for the shows and to hit it again." How's it been in rehearsals - is the spirit and enthusiasm and camaraderie now much like it was back when you first started?
"We definitely crashed the car in the

"In the end I'm just a massive music fan. I love music. It's always been a life force for me. I love the natural chaos of the sound."

end in 1996. After some needed time apart we've all remained very good friends. When we started and it all happened it was sometimes hard to appreciate it as it was all we knew and it was kind of like being in a bubble and in the middle of a hurricane at the same time. You kind of naively feel that this is just going to go on forever and then... crash! Since then we've had lots of time working with lots of different groups and musicians and have all been free birds experiencing life's highs and lows. When you then get back into a room together you are immediately aware of that special chemistry and voodoo that only happens when we're in a room together. The spirit, enthusiasm and camaraderie has grown as the music and level of shows have."
How much do you think the fans at the comeback shows will be old fans and how much new kids who've got into you through other bands maybe?
"I'll tell you soon once we've played some shows! I think there will be

older fans but I think there will be many more curious new fans who would have been too young to have been at shows the first time around. I think the age demographic will be very wide."

WHILE RIDE'S FULL-ON reunion shows are set for the summer - including a headline set at Field Day and a show at The Roundhouse that sold out in a matter of seconds - Mark's first Ride-related foray back onstage came with a low-key unplugged show with Andy at the 100 Club in aid of the Warchild charity in February; how was that - good to be back on stage together?
"It was a special night. I'm still trying to get used to the fact that any show becomes a show for the world as they

all seem to be filmed and uploaded these days. I've watched back a few of the clips and I think we did a great gig under a fair bit of pressure with no noisy guitars to hide behind."
Ride, along with early-90s musical bedfellows like Chapterhouse, Slowdive and Lush are credited with pioneering what became known as shoegaze. While any act associated with the tag was understandably uncomfortable with it, the term has taken on a life of its own over the intervening years, becoming something far bigger than a cosy Thames Valley sub-scene, flourishing into a global concern, changing, mutating and leeching into other styles of music, from rock to electronica. Does Mark feel like Ride were the godfathers of it?
"It's definitely a more global concern now than it was back then; it's really flourished. I do kind of feel a part of the original godfather crew of that sound as I guess we were one of the first bands to hit the charts with that

more noisy 'sonic cathedral' sound. "We were influenced by the originators of that sound but we were also influenced by lots of other music from dub reggae to The Who. As I mentioned earlier I think the likes of Kevin Shields, Robin Guthrie, Sonic Youth, Loop and Spacemen 3 were the original godfathers of that sound." Back then the term 'indie' also seemed to have a genuine meaning - encompassing a host of bands and musical styles that stood against the musical mainstream in a time before the internet when major labels still dominated the landscape and anything alternative was exiled to the darkest reaches of Radio 1's late-night schedule. Do you think the term 'indie' has been cheapened or made redundant? And any thoughts on this year's roundly-criticized Reading Festival bill?
"I think indie changed when the likes of Oasis became massive along with the independent labels they were once signed to. I think 'indie' is still a term used to describe a kind of sound but like shoegaze I don't completely get what it all means anymore. "As for Reading... a re-run of Reading 92 with Ride and then Public Enemy closing the Saturday night would have been better than what I'm seeing now!"

LASTLY, IF THE LAST 20 YEARS have taught Mark one thing, what would it be, and what piece of advice would he give to a bunch of kids just starting out in a band in Oxford now?
"Just to keep on keeping on and enjoy it without too much expectation. It's only over when you stop playing music and give up. Until then you never know what could happen. It should be fun playing music. It doesn't have to be a career, but if it is then that's a bonus."

'Universal Road' is out now on Soliel Après Minuit. Buy it direct from markgardener.com and you'll also get a free limited edition CD of 'The Places We Go'. Ride play Field Day on Sunday 7th June.



RELEASED

STORNOWAY

‘Bonxie’

(Cooking Vinyl)

In a recent interview Johnny Marr was asked to “tell us something you’ve never told anyone before,” and responded by saying that The Smiths had planned to release a disco album before their split scuppered the idea.

He was either joking or it would have been the most unlikely left turn in music history. As unlikely as Stornoway revealing their difficult third album to be a hardcore gabba opus or hip hop concept album about gang-related violence in Glasgow. Of course it wasn’t going to happen and ‘Bonxie’ finds the quartet sticking firmly to the path they’ve followed so faithfully since ‘Zorbing’ revealed their romantic longing back in what now seems like the mists of time. As ‘The Road You Didn’t Take’ – the first track to be put online from the album’ – showed, Stornoway can look back at the life paths they might have taken, but they got to the top of the mountain by surefootedly making it the way they do best. And so ‘Bonxie’ – after the nickname for the great skua seabird – follows the winding coastal path with its breath-taking vistas and abundant wildlife, past epic metaphors for love and life, as often as not couched in the language of the wilderness. Opener ‘Between The Saltmarsh & the Sea’ uses the two parts of the natural world as a metaphor for two lovers, the song introduced by the sound of geese in flight, while the expansive, string-laden ‘Man On Wire’ reaches skywards to the accompaniment of gull calls.

As ever Stornoway are at the best when they conjure widescreen folk-rock anthems from near-orchestral arrangements and heavily-loaded harmonies. ‘We Were Giants’, for example, finds a couple gazing upon the curvature of the earth from their point of view above the clouds – the



intimacy of love set against the hugeness of nature again in Brian Briggs’ unsullied romantic world. Similarly the intricate arrangements within these big, questing melodies – the tinkling musical box beneath the heroic vocal lead of ‘The Road You Didn’t Take’ for example – reflects the way those vast landscapes are made up of a trillion tiny pieces of flora and fauna.

You won’t find too many surprises in ‘Bonxie’, but that doesn’t have to be a disappointment; you wouldn’t really want to discover a seven-storey towerblock in the middle of a woody glade, would you? Stornoway’s world comes with its fair share of melancholy and soulful reflection but it remains an unspoilt wilderness, one where Brian Briggs’ daydreams can take flight alongside those skuas and kittywakes. Of course it lacks gritty urban realism, but you’ve always got 24-hour news channels for that kind of stuff.

“This is the world we belong to,” sings Brian on ‘Sing With Our Senses’. It’s a world you can belong too, once you cast off the dirt and fumes of the city. Tell us it isn’t a better world.

Dale Kattack



MAIIANS

‘Sionara’

(Beard Museum)

When your first single was one of the most acclaimed debuts from an Oxford band of the last few years, putting out a follow-up is always going to be slightly daunting. Can Maiians equal

‘Lemon’, the woozily uplifting Krautrock-via-Ibiza electro road trip from late last year? Put bluntly, no, but ‘Sionara’ is no less hypnotic and compelling in its slow-release way, and, as with ‘Lemon’, when it finishes you wish it would keep on motoring for another twenty minutes at least.

‘Sionara’ follows the classic layer-added-upon-layer-upon-delicate-layer dynamic, synth hums, guitar loops and disembodied vocal snatches repeated in almost idly rhythmic fashion before the beat itself arrives, languid but determined, only gradually everything morphing, becoming distorted, coruscating synths weaving around overdriven guitars that lurk just beyond the middle distance, the intensity ratcheted up in increments until, there you go, you’re hooked. It’s musical heroin, lulling you into a becalmed, idyllic stupor from where you can only hope there’s more to come.

It’s a tease of course – six and a half minutes it lasts but feels half that length. And then you want more. So you go back to the beginning, only this time turned up louder.

And that, dear reader, is the sign of a class act.

Dale Kattack

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BALKAN WANDERERS

‘The Pride EP’

(Self-released)

The musical genre that is ‘Balkan’ is very liable to cause deep upset to the world’s geographers, denoting, as it tends to do, offerings from a very wide swathe of Central and Eastern Europe, some parts of which are a long way off from the mountains that originally gave the region its name. From St. Petersburg to Split; from Prague to Cappadocia, the church is broad.

Taking their lead from this, Balkan Wanderers have been working tirelessly for many months across the live scene, so the quartet of songs on their debut EP already feel familiar. It’s a strong series of tracks if ever there was one, impeccably produced and beautifully voiced by singer Antica Culina. Indeed, it’s that voice that elevates the band over a number of those they are influenced by - gravelly vocals to the point of parody are a mainstay of the genre and can be an acquired taste whereas Culina’s intonations are mellifluous.

The other major asset the Wanderers (as a football blogger, I almost described them as the Trotters in homage to Bolton Wanderers) possess is Clare Heaviside’s simply magnificent clarinet; she’ll have the spot for that instrument cornered should ever plans develop for an Oxford supergroup orchestra. With Heaviside providing mainline warmth to every track, influences do indeed range from across all points of the former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and beyond. Best known track ‘Cairo’ is inevitably middle-eastern in feel, almost to the point of vaudeville (one can imagine it soundtracking a film starring Peter Ustinov and Omar Sharif), while ‘Sleep Around’ is a foot stomper to recall the work of close cousins, the Forty Thieves Orkestar. Pick of the lot is opener and title track ‘Pride’ - an at turns melancholic and righteous nod to Ukrainian tunesmithery and poignant given current geopolitics.

In a live review of one of the band’s Wheatsheaf shows at the back end of last year, I made a plea that The Balkan Wanderers should not be ignored or pigeonholed due to the style of music they choose to purvey. They offer something essential and different, eschewing the straitjacket of Anglo-Saxon traditions; Culina’s Croatian inflections marking her out as one of the very best vocalists the city has to offer currently. See them live and buy the EP.

Robert Langham



DUOTONE

‘Let’s Get Low’

(Garrett Brown Music)

‘Let’s Get Low’ is the third album from Duotone, aka Barney Morse-Brown, cello player and session musician for the likes of The Imagined Village and Eliza Carthy.

While Morse-Brown’s multi-instrumental skills – vocals, cello, guitar and piano – are augmented there by other musicians, this ten-track album is very much a personal project. At its core is a deep sense of melancholy and sadness, albeit tempered by feelings of hope and of the beautiful things in the world.

Morse-Brown has experienced the most intense of personal and emotional tragedy in his life, and although this is an album shot through with loss and struggle, it remains a gloriously listenable set of songs that is far from difficult or overwrought.



Opener ‘Little White Caravan’ sets the scene with crisp, lonely vocals engulfed in an increasingly rich landscape of guitar, subtle electronics and

GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS

‘Our Memories Are Here To Haunt Us’

(Self-released)

For twenty years or so now, the genre loosely known as post-rock has captured our attention. Tortoise are arguably the originals while Mogwai and Godspeed You! Black Emperor have shown remarkable longevity in perpetuating the tradition. In Oxford 2014 was a somewhat disappointing year, due to the consistently excellent Listing Ships calling it a day, Kid Kin having assumed responsibility as the local standard bearer.

Like Kid Kin, Ghosts in the Photographs are effectively another one man operation with Jamie Morris responsible for recording, production and mixing, assisted by David Freeman. Having recently shared a bill with Kid Kin at the Wheatsheaf to launch this EP, the immediate impression is that the two acts occupy very much the same space – on record at least, the two men reflect the less thunderous, less deafening end of the spectrum and Morris’ style largely consists of the quiet bits in the ‘quiet/loud’ formula. (I’ll concede that Kid Kin can be blisteringly noisy live as evidenced by a searing performance at last year’s Oxford Punt.)

Opening track, ‘Gesturing Hands Seek Approval From an Empty Sky’, inevitably recalls Godspeed’s franglais ‘Levez vos Skinny Fists Comme Antennas to Heaven’ but the markedly less confrontational wording is reflected in the music which, initially at least, fails to arrest – it’s pleasant and just jarring enough to avoid the dreaded ‘background music’ tag, but only just.

A second listen, however, reveals greater texture, already detected on the release’s second, superior, track, ‘Fault Lines’ – again, it doesn’t exactly slam into the listener’s eardrums but there is a greater tendency on Morris’ part to let go, to push the audience to greater limits and the whole thing culminates in a crackly sample of J. Robert Oppenheimer channelling the Bhagavad Gita – ‘Now I Become Death... The Destroyer of Worlds’. That may be overstating Ghosts in the Photographs’ menace but the sentiment is appreciated.

Robert Langham

NUBIYAN TWIST

‘Nubiyan Twist’

(Wormfood)

Summer comes early in the form of this debut album from London/Leeds/Oxford twelve-strong collective Nubiyan Twist.

A fusion of myriad styles, it boils down to the soundtrack for long sultry summer nights and afternoons in the sun at whichever festival the ensemble will inevitably be playing.

After a woozily smooth sax solo intro, we’re into a land where jazz, hip hop, brassy funk, soul, Latin dance, tropical pop and dub mingle and exchange fluid dance grooves without a care for consequences. Luckily it’s a well-oiled party and everything slips easily into place. At the heart of everything are the delicious, honey-dripping vocals of Nubiya Brandon, part Etta James, part Ms Dynamite, occasionally part Sade as she takes on soulful jazz, rap and even blues, particularly on ‘Work House’, a song in three parts that hits its grooves best in the final third, horn skronks signalling Nubiya’s gear change into something harder and rawer.

The lively, dubby ‘Hypnotised’ is the album’s high point, one of those songs you feel you know the first time you hear it and never kets you go for the rest of the day, but ‘Straight Lines’, with its Afrobeat rhythms and meandering sax, is pure festival party fodder, ending on a Samba carnival note just as you’re wondering where it might be heading.

Capturing the energy of a live dance band in the studio, particularly one with so many working parts, isn’t easy, but the way Nubiyan Twist exude party vibes throughout this album suggests they’ve caught that magic down pat. If they’re even better live, then heaven help our poor dancing feet.

Sharon Eastmond

GIFT OF BLINDNESS

‘Gift of Blindness’

(Blindsight)

Anyone who follows Oxford’s heavy music scene should be familiar with the name Umair Chaudhry, a sound engineer who’s produced recent releases by local pioneers such as Undersmile and Girl

relaxed rhythms. “The table is set for two / And this candlelight shines for you” typifies the lyrical skill throughout ‘Let’s Get Low’ – truthful, but not mawkish; honest, but not needy. The affecting emotional pull of songs like ‘Silver & Gold’, which generates almost unbearable sadness, or ‘Our Lands’, which closes out the album with nothing more than pure vocals and strummed guitar, is balanced by, for example, the artful electronic squiggles wending through the album’s title track or the almost perky ‘Shoes Were Meant To Last’.

‘Let’s Get Low’ is an elegant, delicate album, and one that is at once an incredibly raw insight into personal sadness and a hopeful, inspirational demonstration of belief in the good to be found in a world that can throw cruel situations at us. As well as being a damned good set of songs, it goes far beyond what most musicians would be happy to share, and we should be appreciative of this.

Simon Minter

Power. Gift of Blindness is Chaudhry’s latest project, alongside his Abandon and Monday Morning Sun work, and this self-titled debut release is a monolithically heavy exercise in doomy post-metal. Droning, otherworldly, reverb-drenched dissonance is the name of the game here, and it sometimes makes for a challenging listen on tracks like ‘Watcher’, but sitting down to tackle the album in full is an extremely rewarding experience, enveloping the listener in waves of sound to create a dreamy, trancelike atmosphere. ‘Gift of Blindness’ meanders easily between doom and post-rock, with tracks like ‘Escape’ and ‘Martyr’ featuring experimental chord voicings and darkly uplifting vocal harmonies that call to mind bands like ISIS or earlier Intronaut. Slow, synth-heavy soundscapes give way to abrasive, misanthropic doom on opener ‘Automaton’ and lead track ‘Dynamitard’, which has more of a futuristic, almost industrial feel. Whilst vocals switch between low, monastic voices that call to mind Peter Steele or Mikael Akerfeldt, and harsh, haunting screams, instrumentation becomes obviously dominant, with fuzzed-out, soul crushing bass and abrasive synth parts used to drive home a dark and at times uncomfortable atmosphere. At its heaviest, the album descends into the anarchic, full-on noise of ‘Invisible’ and ‘Corroded’.

At no point is this album an easy listening experience. However, for fans of doom, post-metal, or indeed any kind of extreme heavy music, it’s well worth putting the time and effort into a series of full listens to acquaint yourself properly with music that gives no quarter.

Tal Fineman



G I G G U I D E

WEDNESDAY 1st

HELEN HIGHWATER STRING BAND + VALERIE VALE & HER AYLBSBURY AYLEVATORS: **The Bullingdon** – Bluegrass, blues, and string band fun from Nashville’s Helen Highwater, featuring fiddle, guitar, mandolin and upright bass. Hillbilly fiddle tunes and harmony-heavy Americana from Valerie Vale in support. **HODGEPODGE presents THE FEAST OF FOOLS:** **The Cellar** – Hodgepodge return to the Cellar for a night of hip hop and jungle, regulars Rhymeskeemz & Bungle and The Book Thieves joined by High Focus stalwarts Dead Players for an April Fools Day special.

THURSDAY 2nd

BUNTY + OKINA: **The Bullingdon** – Inventive and playfully oddball dub-infused electro-pop from former Resonators singer Bundy at tonight’s Tigmus show, the singer looping her voice via assorted made-up languages, while throwing all manner of toys, synths, ukuleles and more into a summery and infectious mix that occasionally sounds like a wonderful hybrid of Lily Allen and You Are Wolf. There’s a trippy visual accompaniment from VJ metaLunar. Local six-piece Okina mix up folk, jazz

Thursday 2nd

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with TROYKA: The Wheatsheaf

If the idea of taking jazz to the masses still feels like an alien concept, Troyka might just be the band to do it. Following in the footsteps of fellow London jazz scenesters Electric Ladyland and Polar Bear, the trio (Kit Downes – keyboards; Chris Montague – guitar, and drummer Joshua Blackmore) have been playing to ever larger crossover audiences since their eponymous 2009 debut album. New album ‘Ornithophobia’ finds them at their most lyrical and accessible, a simmering fusion pot that takes in clamouring prog rock; thrash-jazz (oh yes); blues; Hammond minimalism; spacious film soundtrack ambience; Latin grooves, and hip hop beats. Probably more besides. From mellow pulses and pianism to Zappa-like melodies and occasional discordant excursions, they don’t let their eclectic approach become a chore or too esoteric, and Downes in particular looks like becoming an unlikely poster boy for a new wave of jazz.



APRIL

and electronica with Greek influences for a lively, rootsy sound in support. **TROYKA:** **The Wheatsheaf** – Electro-jazz fusion from the rising stars of the London scene – *see main preview* **FLUID:** **The Cellar** – Bank Holiday special for the bassline, garage and house club night, Flava D rinsing the tunes out alongside Lazcru, Masp and Fluid residents. **THE AUREATE ACT + MYTHS + 31 HOURS + FLOURITE:** **The Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music local bands showcase with prog-rockers The Aureate Act. **CATWEAZLE CLUB:** **East Oxford Community** – Oxford’s longest-running and best open club night, with local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more every week. **OPEN MIC CLUB:** **The Half Moon** **BLUES JAM:** **Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst** – Weekly open blues jam. **THE FURROW COLLECTIVE:** **The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Traditional folk balladry from a quartet of folk luminaries – Rachel Newton, Lucy Farrell, Emily Portman and Alasdair Roberts. **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY:** **Jude the Obscure** – Weekly acoustic and open mic session, tonight with Anastasia Gorbunova.

FRIDAY 3rd

TREMORHEART: **The Bullingdon** – 80s-fuelled pop in the vein of Future Islands from the local newcomers. **KLUB KAKOFANNEY with FUZZY LOGIC BABY + PUNCHDRUNK MONKEY CLUB + AFTER THE THOUGHT:** **The Wheatsheaf** – This month’s Klub Kakofanney throws up the usual mixed bag of musical goodies, with fusion-pop crew Fuzzy Logic Baby mixing up funk, hip hop, reggae and ska with grungy rocking for some horn-fuelled fun. They’re joined by indie rockers PDMC, and densely-textured techno soundscapist After the Thought. **SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM:** **The Cellar** – Count Skylarkin’ monthly reggae, ska and soul party, with 60s-style ska act The Nine-Ton Peanut Smugglers playing live while Skylarkin’ himself spins calypso, ska and vintage island treats. **TRUST FUND + ROBOT SWANS + TWO WHITE CRANES:** **Modern Art Oxford** – Divine Schism hosts a night of quintessentially indie noise, with Bristol’s quirky lo-fi crew Trust Fund clattering, jangling and making mopey and merry in decidedly old-school style. They’re supported by ramshackle indie-popsters Robot Swans and Two White Cranes, the solo musical incarnation of Roxy from Mountain Parade. **HI ON MAIDEN:** **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Iron Maiden tribute. **SANCTUM:** **The Varsity Club** – Monthly metal club night with classics and new releases from

across the genre.

SATURDAY 4th

HOMEPLANETEARTH + ECHOIC + ESTHER JOY LANE: **The Bullingdon** – Tigmus play host to former-Kites siblings Homeplanetearth with their electro-acoustic mash-up, joined by alt. rockers Echoic – recent support to Fatherson – and local newcomer Esther Joy Lane, already causing a stir on the local gig scene for her alternately ambient and striking electro-soul, that’s drawn comparisons to Grimes, Jessie Ware and Sade. **FERRYMAN + IN SEARCH OF SUN + CHILDREN LOST IN TIME:** **The Cellar** – Oxrox hosts a weekend of heaviosity, kicking off tonight with Brit rock vocalist Andy Jones’s classic melodic hard rock band from Germany, Ferryman, releasing their debut album ‘What Is Mine’ after supports to Axxis and House of Lords. **ABADDON INCARNATE + BASEMENT TORTURE KILLINGS + BLACK SKIES BURN + OH DAITH + STRIKE OFFENSIVE:** **The Wheatsheaf** – Another quality night of death and grind from Slave to the Grind, with Irish death/grind veterans Abaddon Incarnate making a rare visit to town, taking inspiration from Carcass and Possessed. Support comes from gore-obsessed, serial-killer-worshipping grindcore crew Basement Torture Killings; local deathcore stalwarts Black Skies Burn and more. **HEADCOUNT + PDMC + CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:** **The Jericho Tavern** – Heavyweight melodic punk/metal of the old school from Headcount, back in action for the first time since the release of 2013’s ‘Lullabies For Dogs’ album, fusing Killing Joke’s *sturm und drang*, Therapy?’s bullish alt.rock and The Banshees dark post-punk noise with a bellicose political edge. Banbury’s indie rockers Punchdrunk Monkey Club support, alongside rustic, romantic folkies Civil Disobedience. **WOLF ALICE:** **O2 Academy** – Grungy, ethereal pop somewhere between Hole and Mazzy Star from the London outfit, on tour to promote forthcoming debut album ‘My Love Is Cool’ ahead of a summer of festival appearances. **DESTA*NATION:** **The Bullingdon** – Roots and dub from the long-standing local soundsystem. **RED MOON ROAD:** **Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – Harmony-heavy folk from Canada’s enduring trio at tonight’s Wychwood Folk Club show. **DIRTY EARTH BAND:** **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Rock covers.

MONDAY 6th

MÜLLTÜTE + CIANURO: **The Library** – Quality noise at tonight’s Smash Disco show,

hosting Berlin’s thrash-punk duo Mulltute, playing the route one game in the style of Discharge and Crass, plus spindly, splenetic hardcore thrash fighters Cianuro. Did we mention it’s free? It’s loud and nasty and free. Like wrestling with a gang of delinquent tigers. But even more fun. **SHARPEES:** **The Jericho Tavern** – Classic r’n’b in the vein of Dr Feelgood, The Rolling Stones and George Thorogood at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.

TUESDAY 7th

BLUE: **The New Theatre** – Inexplicably still popular boyband return to town after 2013’s sold-out show at the Academy, Anthony, Duncan, Lee, Daphne, Thelma and Shaggy knocking out all the old classics, from ‘Too Close’ and ‘If You Come Back’ to ‘Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word’ and ‘Altar of Scum’. **PAT THOMAS:** **The Old Fire Station** – Virtuoso improv from the keyboard wizard and founding member of Oxford Improvisers, tonight back in his home town to play solo and alongside fellow Ox Imps. **THE GWILYM SIMCOCK JAZZ QUARTET:** **St John the Evangelist** – Jazz interpretations of Sebastian Bach’s Harpsichord concerto in D minor, Oboe concerto in F minor, and Air from 3rd Suite.

JAZZ CLUB with BULLINGDON HOT

Wednesday 8th

TURBOWOLF / DOLOMITE MINOR: The Bullingdon

Coming off the back of their support to Royal Blood at the Academy in November you’d hope Turbowolf’s return to town for a headline show will pull the crowd the band have long deserved. It was a brave move to get the Bristol-based rock wrecking crew to open for them – few would want to follow their no-prisoners, high-velocity barrage of stoner riffs, punk venom and psychedelic grooving which takes Sabbath, Led Zep and AC/DC as its starting point and doesn’t so much run with it as rampage down the street with sword and flaming torch in hand. Since their inception in 2008 the quartet have toured with Pulled Apart By Horses, The Eighties Matchbox B-Line Disaster, Dinosaur Pile-Up and Death From Above 1979, so despite their adherence to The Riff, they’re not bogged down in metal traditions – a covers EP found them tackling MGMT, Lightning Bolt and Jefferson Airplane, while the addition of scuzzy synths add to the depth of their sound while taking them to all manner of musical corners with suitably feral energy. Great support from Southampton’s moody, monolithic noisemongers Dolomite Minor.



CLUB: **The Bullingdon**
MY CROOKED TEETH: **The Old Fire Station** – Emotive acoustic pop from ToLiesel frontman Jack Olchawski.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 8th

TURBOWOLF: **The Bullingdon** – Heads down, no-nonsense scuzz-boogie from the Bristol rockers – *see main preview* **STEREO KICKS:** **O2 Academy** – Oh Christ. Oh Jesus Christ. Why? How? And what the actual effing fuck? If you go to this gig and you are over the age of 12 you are a quarter-witted gullible fool who will burn in Hell’s hottest fires for all eternity – and we got that direct from the big man upstairs as soon as he saw this eight-headed pop hydra were out on tour. Eight of them. Eight times absolutely fuck all. That’s one big old talent vacuum you got there, Mr Walsh, you *WANKER*. **LUCY LEAVE + BEL ESPRIT + LAKE OF KINGS + ELLIOT VANDERHYDE:** **The Wheatsheaf** – It’s All About the Music new local bands showcase. **MILENNIAL:** **The Cellar** – Showcasing Oxford’s urban talent, including, tonight, DJ Simpy, G-Trotsky MC, Frith and Gonzo.

THURSDAY 9th

BIPOLAR SUNSHINE: **O2 Academy** – Sweetly woozy, joyous soul, pop and hip hop fusion from former Kid British frontman Adis Marchant, back in town with his solo project, coming in somewhere between Damon Albarn and Bill Withers, having supported Phoenix, Bastille and Haim on tour. Rearranged from last November. **BRIGHT WORKS + ROBOT SWANS + SUPER SQUARECLOUD:** **The Cellar** – Afro-pop infected indie dance from local regulars Bright Works, alongside electro-indie shamblers Robot Swans at tonight’s Tigmus show. **ARCANE + BLAME FATE + AFTER THE THOUGHT + GRAHAM HOOPER:** **The Bell, Bicester** – The Strummerroom hosts a free night of live music. **CATWEAZLE CLUB:** **East Oxford Community** **OPEN MIC CLUB:** **The Half Moon** **BLUES JAM:** **Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst** **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY:** **Jude the Obscure** – Weekly acoustic and open mic session, tonight with Sanne Daal.

FRIDAY 10th

LARKIN POE + JESS MORGAN: **The Bullingdon** – Slick country blues and southern spirituals from the Atlanta sisters – *see main preview* **BOSSAPHONIK:** **The Cellar** – Latin dancefloor, Afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu jazz club night, tonight featuring a live set from drummer, percussionist, composer and bandleader Dave Betts and his sextet, playing jazz dance, funk and Latin grooves. **LOWER THAN ATLANTIS:** **O2 Academy** – Melodic post-hardcore from the Watford rockers, back out on tour to promote their eponymous fourth album, their first for Sony, and *Rocksound*’s album of 2014. **CROW’S REIGN + ICONS + COLOUR BY NUMBERS + LAST RITES:** **The Wheatsheaf** – Local bands metal night, with thrash and metalcore from Crow’s Reign, and old-school metal from Last Rites. **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS:** **Modern Art Oxford** – Local ambient space-rock ensemble perform their



Friday 10th

LARKIN POE: The Bullingdon

Having begun their musical careers in their teens playing in elder sister Jessica’s bluegrass band The Lovell Sisters, Rebecca and Megan Lovell are very much in the tradition of folk family bands. And when Jessica called time on the band after four years and two acclaimed albums, the younger siblings went it alone, branching out into a rockier sound as Larkin Poe – the name taken from a great-great-great grandfather who was related to horror writer Edgar Allan Poe. Much of that old roots sound remains but the band’s sound is slicker now and more bluesy, with electric guitar riffage dominating lap steel. They’ve been dubbed ‘The Allman Brothers’ kid sisters’ for their southern-fried take on blues and country rock, but they’re at the best when they go back to those roots more fully for fiddle and mandolin-led numbers, piano ballads and spirituals which showcase their harmony singing best. Musical virtuosity is very much order of the day, the pair having backed up Conor Oberst and Elvis Costello in between Larkin Poe tours, and it’s an assured badge of quality that’s tonight’s gig is hosted by Empty Room Promotions.

soundtrack to ‘The Adventures of Prince Achmed’ at tonight’s Divine Schism show. Opening the night will be an open talk / discussion about music videos and their relevance, with a host of local film makers, artists and musicians **THE FUTURE RAYS:** **The Jericho Tavern** – Alternately jangly and poetic, and jauntily blokey indie rocking from the local newcomers. **PLAY-ALONG-A-SILENT-FILM:** **OVADA, Botley** – Bring along a musical instrument of your choice and play along to the screening of a classic silent film. *Nightshift* is bringing bagpipes. **MANIC STREET CREATURES:** **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Tribute band. **FIREFLY BURNING:** **Quaker Meeting House, St Giles**

SATURDAY 11th

LEE ‘SCRATCH’ PERRY: **O2 Academy** – A welcome return to town for the dub legend, whose production credits is a list of the greats of Jamaican music – Bob Marley; Junior Murvin; King Tubby; Sir Coxson; The Heptones; Max Romeo; The Congos – mostly back in the 1960s and 70s at his home-built Black Ark studio where he helped develop reggae and practically invented dub while pioneering sampling among other studio techniques. Now 79 years old, Perry’s importance in the history of Jamaican music is irrefutable. His often lunatic onstage persona means that, like other eccentric performers, what you get at any gig can range from the sharpest dub grooves known to



Thursday 16th

GEORGE CLINTON: O2 Academy

Singer, musician, bandleader, producer, legend. George Clinton is all of these, but legend probably suits him best. Only James Brown and Sly Stone can really be considered his equals when it comes to the defining and refining of funk, in particular P-Funk, which Clinton pioneered in the 60s and 70s with Parliament and Funkadelic, fusing soul and r'n'b with the heavyweight noise of Cream and Hendrix to create some of the dirtiest, sexiest grooves ever made. Grooves that remain the standard for everyone who's come since. Throughout the 70s he enjoyed unparalleled success, including 40 hit singles and three Platinum albums, but the 1980s brought trouble and eventual destitution as contractual issues, addiction and the cost of running his empire threatened to gut his astonishing career. As you'd expect from such a formidable character, he overcame every obstacle and resurrected his musical career, going on to be acclaimed by everyone from Afrika Baambaata, Dr Dre and Ice Cube to Red Hot Chili Peppers as an untouchable innovator. He's 73 now but age can surely mellow the man no more than Canute could turn back the tides. Tonight promises all your Funkadelic/Parliament faves and more. Like we say, a legend.

man, or some nutter gibbering wildly for his own amusement. What's never in doubt is that Perry's live band is spot-on in a set littered with classics like 'War In A Babylon', amid more obscure cuts and jams, so whatever lyrical detours the main man takes, the music remains high quality.

BRETT DENNEN: O2 Academy – Because an another acoustic singer-songwriter who sounds like a cross between Paul Simon and James Blunt and has a haircut like your granny's is exactly what music needs to save it right now. **BLOODSTOCK METAL TO THE MASSES HEAT 5: The Bullingdon** – Fifth heat of the metal battle of the bands to win a slot at this year's Bloodstock Festival. **ALPHABET BACKWARDS + ROB GREEN + GEORGE CHOPPING: The Wheatshaeaf** – Local shiny synth-popsters Alphabet Backwards return to action with their big-hearted tales of love and Primark and polar bears. And just in time for summer.

THE STEVE GIFFORD BAND + SCREAMING HOUSE MADRIGALS: The Cellar – Soft centred classic acoustic rock from Milton Keynes guitarist Steve Gifford and band, inspired by the likes of Crowded House, James Taylor, Cat Stevens and Don McLean. **TOM BROSSAU + DOUG TIELLI: Art**

Jericho – Intimate bookstore show from North Dakota folk singer Tom Brosseau, over in the UK to promote his new John Parish-produced album 'Perfect Abandon', having previously played with Bonnie Raitt, Susan Orlean and Patrick Marber, as well as being awarded the keys to the North Dakota city of Two Forks for his album of the same name, recounting the floods of 97 that engulfed the city. He's joined tonight by Toronto singer Doug Tielli, a well-known figure in that city's underground scene for his time playing drums in a number of bands. His new album 'Keresley' takes in African hi-life, folk, free improv and Brazilian spirituals along its way. **RECKLESS SLEEPERS + FIREGAZERS + DES BARKUS: James Street Tavern** **FREEFALL: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic rock covers.

SUNDAY 12th
RECKLESS SLEEPERS + DES BARKUS + MOON LEOPARD + RICHARD BROTHERTON: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of acoustic live music with psychedelic folkies Reckless Sleepers, rock'n'roll vet Des Barkus and host Jeremy Hughes' Moon Leopard. **TOM IVEY BAND + SAL & TONY + MARK BOSLEY + JULES PENZO + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatshaeaf (3.30pm)** – Free afternoon of unplugged music in the Sheaf's downstairs bar.

MONDAY 13th
FEDERAL CHARM: The Bullingdon – Riff-heavy blues-rocking from Manchester's Federal Charm at tonight's Haven Club show, the band inspired by Golden Earring and The Black Crowes, who they supported on tour. **BABAJACK: The Jericho Tavern** – Powerful blues, roots and folk fusion from Babajack at tonight's Famous Monday Blues. **ANDY IRVINE: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Classic Irish folk from the former Planxty and Patrick Street singer.

TUESDAY 14th
LEISURE SOCIETY: O2 Academy – Gorgeously sombre folk-pop from Leisure Society, the band centred around singer Nick Hemming, once a member of psychedelic noise rockers The Telescopes and a former bandmate of Shane Meadows and Paddy Considine (he wrote soundtrack music for *A Room For Romeo Brass* and *Dead Man's Shoes*). Compared to Grizzly Bear and Fleet Foxes, Leisure Society are a peculiarly English take on Americana, wistful regret and an air of menace hanging around their dreamily bucolic songs. **JAZZ CLUB with THE MARTIN PICKETT ORGANISATION: The Bullingdon** – The Bully's free weekly jazz club plays host to the Martin Pickett Organisation. **INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Oxford's long-running monthly goth and industrial club night keeps it dark with DJs Doktor Joy and Bookhouse. **OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 15th
GIRL POWER + HIGH FIGHTER + SUNNATA + AGNESS PIKE: The Wheatshaeaf – If, dear reader, you can feel an ominous rumbling in your ribcage as you read this, it's likely the advance pressure ripples from tonight's gig creating a shockwave through the very fabric of time. Local hardcore tyrants Girl Power

mix d-beat and classic Amphetamine Reptile hardcore with a suitcase full of Sementex, alongside Hamburg's monstrosly heavyweight stoner-blues riffmongers High Fighter, Warsaw's downtuned psych-doom behemoths and disconcertingly camp thrash merchants Agness Pike. This is gonna be loud. This is gonna be heavy. This is gonna fuckin' rule.

WOMBATS: O2 Academy – Catchy indie guitar pop hooks hide singer Matthew Murphy's inner bleakness in The Wombats' on-the-surface-cheery musical world, the band out on tour to promote new album 'Glitterbug', the follow-up to 2011's 'The Modern Glitch'. **SPARKY'S JAM NIGHT: James Street Tavern** – Jam and open mic night.

THURSDAY 16th
GEORGE CLINTON: O2 Academy –Dr Funkenstein in da house! – *see main preview* **COVER ME with THE MIGHTY DISCO BISCUITS + WHITE SWAN: The Jericho Tavern** – It's All About the Music present a night of cover versions. **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** – Weekly acoustic and open mic session, tonight with The String Project. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community** **OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon** **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 17th
MAIIANS + KAYLA PAINTER: The Bullingdon – Fast-rising local electro instrumentalists launch their new EP on Beard Museum Records, the recent *Nightshift* cover stars taking a double drummer-propelled trip along the Ibiza coast by way of Kraftwerk's Autobahn, taking in influences like Fuck Buttons and Banco de Gaia along the way. Enjoy this trip. And it is a trip. They're joined by Bristolian musician, producer and visual artist Kayla Painter, with her layered techno, garage and post-dub soundscapes taking the bass sounds of her native city into exotic new terrains.

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND: The Old Fire Station – Opening day of the now annual Folk Weekend, which took over from the Oxford Folk Festival. Three days of live music in the Old Fire Station, as well as the Story Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum and St Barnabas Church, featuring over fifty acts plus ceilidhs, workshops and a village fete. Today's line-up includes sets from Fabian Holland, Jenkinson's Folly, Man Choir, Oxford University Ceilidh Band, Threepenny Bit, Kismet and Gordon Potts. Full festival line-up can be found at www.folkweekendoxford.co.uk. **SWINDLESTOCK + LITTLE BROTHER ELI + BILLY T'RIVERS & THE WILD WEST RETIREMENT HOME: The Wheatshaeaf** – Daisy Rodgers Music night with bluesy Americana crew Swindlestock bringing rootsy party and whisky town vibes to the Sheaf. They're joined by rough-hewn blues and soul crew Little Brother Eli, and alt.country types Billy T'Rivers. **DEMOB HAPPY: The Jericho Tavern** – Unkempt grunge-garage from Brighton's riotous rockers – *see main preview* **THE FUREYS & DAVEY ARTHUR: St John the Evangelist** – Coinciding with this year's Oxford Folk Festival, a return to town for the Irish folk stalwarts, their first visit to town since 2011's show at the Town Hall. The Fureys & Davey Arthur have over 30 years of experience behind them, including, for an Irish folk band, a rare UK

chart hit with 'When You Were Sweet Sixteen'. Dublin brothers George and Eddy Furey, along with Davey Arthur have toured the world, playing their takes on classic Irish folk songs and tonight's show should include all the favourites, including the immortal 'Green Fields Of France'. **DEEP COVER: The Cellar** – Hip hop, bass and electro club night. **GREENISH DAY: Fat Lil's, Witney** – a different hue of Green Day hits.

SATURDAY 18th
RECORD STORE DAY with STORNOWAY: Truck Store (5pm) – Celebrating record stores across the world, Truck hosts an afternoon of live music, limited editions and special offers, including an intimate in-shop set from local heroes Stornoway, playing songs from their new album, 'Bonxie'. **LOUD MOUNTAINS + JONNY PAYNE + STEVIE RAY LATHAM + PHOUSA + BLACK FEATHERS: Rapture, Witney** – Live music all afternoon instore as part of Record Store Day, with Rapture opening their new upstairs vinyl emporium and venue. **ZOUNDS + YORKSHIRE RATS + SPINNER FALL: The Cellar** – One for seriously old-school punks tonight as Reading's original anarcho-punk scrappers Zounds come to town, the band, fronted by Steve Lake, forming in 1977 and going on to team up with Crass and The Poison Girls, releasing their debut record on Crass Records and becoming heavily involved in the squat and

Friday 17th

DEMOB HAPPY:

The Jericho Tavern
Beneath the clamour of debate around whether Royal Blood are the saviours of rock music or a two-man production line of ripped-off classic rock riffs, a growing army of new untidy and decidedly noisy new rock bands are emerging to refertilise the rock landscape that has been pretty barren for a few years. Among their ranks are Brighton's unkempt grunge/garage crew Demob Happy, loud and unapologetically brash in their dedication to sludgy, sleazy garage rock which tends to hurtle along at quite a pace, stopping off to pay due respect to The Stooges, Queens of the Stone-Age and even Beck in his more slacker moments. Melodies peek out from under a welter of distortion and screaming on songs like 'Succubus' and 'Suffer You', as well as an unexpected cover of Technohead's 'I Wanna Be A Hippie', and if all that doesn't sound wildly original, it don't really matter too much when you're crammed into a small sweaty venue with a few bodies flying above your head and the band kicking it out raw and ramped up. So stop *thinking* and just dance.



free festival scene before splitting in 1982. Lake continued to make music while drummer Josef Porta formed The Mob and Blyth Power. Zounds reformed in 2007, continuing to fight the good fight and releasing new album 'The Redemption of Zounds'. Support comes from hooligan punk crew Yorkshire Rats, previous support to Rancid, and local post-punk noisemakers Spinner Fall. Followed by house club night Extra Curricular. **BELLOWHEAD: The New Theatre** – One of *Nightshift's* many eulogies to Bellowhead, simply surmised that it's impossible to leave one of their gigs without having had a good time. And that's the most important thing you need to know about the band – a massed ensemble formed by Oxfordshire folk scene veterans John Spiers and Jon Boden with the intention of reviving several centuries of traditional folk music and reforming them into a frenzy of theatre and dance. From their live debut at Oxford Folk Festival in 2004, to their now legendary Truck Festival show in 2010 and onwards to international fame and acclaim via a succession of BBC Folk awards for Best Live Band, Bellowhead are first and foremost entertainers. While their love and respect for everything from Napoleonic ballads and Jacques Brel to classic English folk dance is core to their appeal, they're far from po-paced custodians of a by-gone age, taking in New Orleans jazz, township jive and even a hint of punk as they cartwheel through the centuries, gay abandon an equal partner to musical virtuosity. Spiers will be playing a solo set earlier in the day as part of his role of patron of the Oxford Folk Weekend.

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND: The Old Fire Station – Continuing the folkie festivities, today's round of shows includes sets from Lady Maisery, Ninebarrow, Wednesday's Wolves, Patsy Reid, The August List, Rheingans Sisters and a special solo set from festival patron John Spiers ahead of Bellowhead's show at the New Theatre this evening. **THE DEPUTEES + NUDYBRONQUE + MARK COPE + SLATE HEARTS: The Wheatshaeaf** – Meaty blues-tinged rocking from The Deputees, debonair indie rock from Swindon's Nudy Bronque and lachrymose acoustic musings from Mark Cope at tonight's show. **THE SHIRES: O2 Academy** – Authentic Nashville-style country out of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire with duo Ben Earle and Crissie Rhodes becoming the first British country act to sign to a major Nashville record label, releasing their debut album, 'Brave', earlier this year, and out on tour ahead of a summer of festivals, including Cornbury. **MONKFISH + RECKLESS SLEEPERS: The Bullingdon** – One Gig Closer to Wittstock with gothic country rockers Monkfish and psychedelic folkies Reckless Sleepers.

BEDROCK: The Bullingdon – Skeletor's monthly rock club night, with heavy, heavy sounds from across the decades. **OSPREY + MARIA ILETT + ADY DAVEY + SHAKIN' LIPS: The Marsh Harrier, Temple Cowley** – Unplugged sets from the local scene stalwarts. **THREE PRESSED MEN: The Swan Inn, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – English folk of the old school at tonight's Wychwood Folk Club gig, with a capella harmonies, ballads and dance tunes played on concertina, melodeon, harmonica and hammer dulcimer. **STANDARD: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic and contemporary pop hits. **STEAMROLLER: The Millennium Hall, Horton-cum-Staley** – Classic blues-rocking in the



Friday 24th

LAURA MOODY

/ ALABASTER

DE PLUME: The

Norrington Rooms,

Blackwell's

A show in The Norrington Rooms is not just a gig in a bookshop; the place has an atmosphere all of its own, set inside Blackwell's bookstore and extending under Trinity College, creating an atmosphere of scholarly grandeur. In a similar way, Laura Moody is so much more than a girl with a cello, variously hitting her face with her bow to create odd rhythms, to yodelling and caterwauling in disconcertingly witchy fashion as she attacks her instrument in inventive ways. One quarter of The Elysian Quartet, she's he's a striking proposition, patently mad as a goat but you'd expect nothing else from a woman who records string quartet compositions in a fleet of helicopters. In fact, calling her a cellist is a bit like describing Heston Blumenthal as a chef; it's correct, but tells you less than half the story. This evening's show is hosted by the reliably eclectic and inventive Irregular Folk, and is part of Laura's first proper solo tour, to promote new album 'Acrobats', taking in cafes, bike sheds and a launderette as well as this book shop. Intimate and highly inventive support from Manchester's Alabaster de Plume, touring his 'Copernicus' album, its almost hymnal nature cut through with a highly individual sense of humour.

style of Cream and Hendrix.

SUNDAY 19th

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND: The Old Fire Station – Third and final day of the weekender, today featuring Chris Wood, Boldwood, Benjamin Folke Thomas and Jess Hall among a host of live acts and more. **JAMES BAY: O2 Academy** – Ladies and gentlemen, we have arrived at the bottom of the barrel, feel free to start scraping. **MONDAY 20th**
EARL THOMAS: The Bullingdon – Powerful gospel and soul-influenced blues-rock from the Tennessee singer at tonight's Haven Club show.

BIG BOY BLOATER: The Jericho Tavern – Swamp blues, swing and rocking r’n’b from the acclaimed guitarist at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.
ARTISAN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Close-harmony singing from the reformed folk band at tonight’s Nettlebed Folk Club session.

TUESDAY 21st
JAZZ CLUB with THE STUART HENDERSON QUARTET: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson and band.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 22nd
CREEPER: The Bullingdon – Green Day-style punk rocking action from Southampton’s Creeper out on tour.
THE INTERRUPTERS: O2 Academy – LA’s ska-punk crew visit Blighty, mixing the classic Two Tone skank of The Selecter and The Specials

Friday 24th
FRNKIERO ANDTHE CELLABRATION: O2 Academy
After Gerard Way’s visit to town in November last year, we get some more of the fall-out from My Chemical Romance’s split this month in the form of guitarist and co-singer Frank Iero’s new band, the confusingly monikered Frnkiero andthe Cellabration. It’s sort of a reflection of the band’s lo-fi sound, which (as with Way’s 80s-influenced solo work) is a radical departure from My Chemical Romance and even his Leathermouth project. Out goes slick, stadium-friendly punk-pop, in comes a noisy, joyous garage-pop cacophony, as on tracks like debut single ‘Weighted’, and you can already imagine a packed venue going ape to this racket (which it undoubtedly will, since tonight’s show is long-since sold out). MCR drummer Jarrod Alexander guested on Frank’s new album ‘Stomachaches’, but beyond that he played everything himself and that rough-edged DIY charm shines through. After tours with Taking Back Sunday, The Used and Mallory Knox, it’s time for a headline tour. Sounds like the guy’s out to have some serious fun.



with Rancid’s melodic punk.
ROBERT LANYON + SAM EDWARDS + PHOUSA T + DAVIS TUDOR + DANDY CAVALIERS + PHIL WICKER: The Wheatsheaf – Singer-songwriters night.
WILLIE J HEALEY: Truck Store – Laidback, soulful acoustic pop from the local singer-songwriter.

THURSDAY 23rd
BIG BLUES NIGHT OUT with NO HORSES + ADY DAVEY & SHAKY LIPS + ANDY ROBINS: The Cellar – Live blues.
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly acoustic and open mic session, tonight with Scott Gordon.
CALE TYSON + AGS CONNOLLY: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Country music of the old school tonight from Empty Room Promotions, Nashville’s heart-on-sleeve balladeer Cale Tyson singing songs of romantic woe and heartache in the tradition of Hank Williams Sr and Gram Parsons, with support from Witney’s very own country songsmith Ags Connolly, digging back to those classic roots sounds, following the lead of Dale Watson’s Ameripolitan movement.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst

FRIDAY 24th
NEW FACES TOUR with FRANCES + TENTERHOOK + CHARLOTTE OC + FREDDIE DICKSON: The Bullingdon SLY & THE FAMILY DRONE: The Wheatsheaf – Dissonant craziness from the freeform ensemble who blur the boundaries between band and audience, and abstract noise and random aural carnage.
LAURA MOODY + ALABASTER DE PLUME: The Norrington Rooms – Cello-based wizardry and maybe even witchery from the Elysian Quartet virtuoso – *see main preview*
FRNKIERO AND THE CELLABRATION: O2 Academy – Another former My Chemical Romancer goes free range, with pleasingly raucous results – *see main preview*
THE STRING PROJECT + EKO COLLECTIVE + JULIA TURNER + ISOLDE: The Cellar – Oxford string collective The String Project team up with Bristol’s Eko Collective for a night of improvised experimentalism involving live strings, a capella harmonies, beatboxing, found sounds and loops. Folktronica artist Isolde opens the show.

FREERANGE: The Cellar – Jungle Junction night with classic jungle and drum&bass from DJ Fu playing a set of tunes from 98-2002, alongside Wyatt Noise’s Rich Raw, D-Ranged and Dremz. Hosted by Macular and Sandman.
BALLOON ASCENTS: Truck Store – Instore show from the local indie faves.
AUDACITY: East Oxford Community Centre – Setting out to recapture the spirit of Oxford’s 1990s free rave scene in the (entirely legal) confines of the East Oxford Community Centre, Audacity features a live set from Audacity AI, mixing classic 60s and 70s hits together via some acid house craziness and live instrumentation from Alan Brown, Fi McFall, Bert Audebert, Osprey, Moose Taykor and more, plus a main DJ set from Tom Samsara, veteran of the original free rave scene.
KATHRYN ROBERTS & SEAN LAKEMAN: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Husband and wife

duo Kathryn and Sean return to playing and recording with each other with their album ‘Hidden People’, mixing tender folk ballads with stomping acoustic rock, having previously formed Equation with Kate Rusby and Sean’s brother Seth.
DURAN DURAN EXPERIENCE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Experience Duran Duran! Or something a bit like them! Not really them! Experience it! Experience it now!

SATURDAY 25th
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with ORANGE VISION + P/R/P/E + REUBEN’S ROCKET: The Wheatsheaf – Another inviting mixed grill of a gig from Gappy Tooth, this month mixing up Orange Vision’s sizzling indie rock in the vein of The Cribs and Palma Violets with Gloucester’s one-man sonic adventuring sausage P/R/P/E blending guitars, drum machine, tape loops and short wave radio samples, and warm, acoustic folk-pop fillet Reuben’s Rocket, coming in somewhere between Ben Howard and Newton Faulkner. Steak around, you might like it.
GOIN’ LOUD + TOO MANY POETS + CRIME + ECHOIC + THE FIXATION + ALAN JAGGS: The Bullingdon – New bands showcase with blues rock in the vein of the Jeff Healey Band from Didcot’s Goin’ Loud; proggy indie rocking from Too Many Poets, and polished pop in the vein of Room 94 and Lawson from The Fixation.

CLOUDBUSTING: O2 Academy – Kate Bush tribute, probably playing more of the ones you actually want to hear than Kate herself did, and for a fraction of the cost.
THE SELF-TITLED + ALEXA DE STRANGE + SECOND RATE ANGELS: The Cellar – Oxrox continue to keep life heavy, tonight with prolific UK rock/metal crew The Self Titled, who reformed in 2010 and have supported Gene Simmons, Breed 77 and Zico Chain as well numerous biker festivals along the way. Followed by Extra Curricular club night.
ONE WING LEFT: The Jericho Tavern – Drama-laden epic rocking from the local outfit.
MAETLOAF: Fat Lil’s, Witney – A matier, not meatier, version of Meatloaf. Meat on the ledge. Tasty.
TRUE RUMOUR + HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + THE REVALATORS: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst
STEAMROLLER: The Three Horseshoes, Long Hanborough

SUNDAY 26th
HENRY CLUNEY + ADY DAVEY & SHAKIN’ LIPS + THE CORSAIRS + SCOTT GORDON + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30pm) – Free afternoon of unplugged music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar, today with a special guest appearance from original Stiff Little Fingers guitarist Henry Clune, who played on all the band’s big hits before moving Stateside and going on to support The Damned and The Alarm on tour as well as forming X-SLF with Jim Reilly. He’s joined by local rock veteran Ady Davey and classic rock’n’rollers The Corsairs.
SIMPLE MINDS: The New Theatre – Jim Kerr and co. return with their Big Music – *see main preview*
UGLY DUCKLING: The Bullingdon – Golden Age-inspired hip hop from the Californian cult heroes – *see main preview*
LAST GREAT DREAMERS + HELL’S GAZELLS + BEAVER FUEL: The Wheatsheaf

– Reformed 90s glam-rockers Last Great Dreamers return to town after their gig here in February with their suitably sleazy take on Hanoi Rocks and Dogs D’Amour’s power-pop.
AMBER RUN: O2 Academy – Nottingham’s epic soft rockers Amber Run return to town after playing last year’s New Faces package tour alongside Pixel Fix.
LOWLY HOUNDS: The Cellar – Blues and country-flavoured rocking from the London newcomers, influenced by White Denim and Alabama Shakes.
THE ALLEN FAMILY BAND: The Three Horseshoes, Towersey – Guitar picking and harmony singing from the family folk band.
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm) – Open blues jam.

MONDAY 27th
RUF RECORDS BLUES CARAVAN – GIRLS WITH GUITARS: The Bullingdon – The idea of female rock guitarists shouldn’t really still be considered a novelty in any sense, and the Girls With Guitars tag doesn’t help, but the latest Ruf Records Blues caravan tour brings together three of the leading female lights of world blues to at least show the blues scene isn’t just tedious old blokes with a Stevie Ray Vaughan fetish. Singer and guitarist Eliana Cargnelutti, inspired by Bonnie Raitt, Ana Popovic and Joe Bonamassa, is

Sunday 26th
SIMPLE MINDS: The New Theatre
Back in town after their sold-out show here back in 2013 and last year’s show-stealing headline set at Cornbury, Jim Kerr and co. head out on tour to promote last year’s ‘Big Music’ album. For those that know Simple Minds only for bombastic stadium-pop hits like ‘Alive & Kicking’ and ‘Don’t You Forget About Me’ it can come as a surprise that they were, for their first five albums, one of the coolest bands to emerge from the post-punk era, initially fusing that movement’s arty leanings with the glam of Bowie and Roxy Music, before becoming a near-perfect electro-pop force with ‘Empires & Dance’ and ‘Sons & Fascination’. The band hit the big time with 1982’s still excellent ‘New Gold Dream’, before they became a staple soundtrack to Bratpack movies and a stadium-filling rock act often compared (unfavourably) to U2. Times change though and nowadays it’s increasingly Simple Minds’ fantastic early work that is heralded for its prescience. What was never in doubt, even when they were releasing pompous hogwash like ‘Belfast Child’, was what a powerful live band Simple Minds were and the chance to hear classic tunes like ‘The American’, ‘I Travel’ and ‘Love Song’ live alongside the big hits and newer material is something not to pass over.



a big name in her native Italy’s blues scene and has collaborated with Scott Henderson amongst others. Sadie Johnson, from Indiana is just 18 years old and the youngest player to tour as part of the Blues Caravan, but she can mix up old-time country blues in the style of Robert Johnson with Clapton-esque blues rocking. Mississippi’s Heather Cross, meanwhile, is a full-blooded soul’n’blues maestro, with a voice akin to Big Mama Thornton and Etta James, that’s earned her support slots with Robert Plant and BB King.
STEVE KNIGHTLY: Nettlebed Folk Club – Show of Hands singer plays solo, with his strong storytelling style.

TUESDAY 28th
JAZZ CLUB with ALVIN ROY’S REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, bop and swing with veteran clarinetist Alvin Roy and his Reeds Unlimited band at tonight’s weekly jazz club.
WILD AND NOUGHTIE: The Cellar – Hip hop, r’n’b and pop from the noughties, from R Kelly to Destiny’s Child.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 29th
DUOTONE: The North Wall, Summertown – Cello’n’loops master Barney Morse-Brown launches his frankly gorgeous new album, ‘Let’s Get Low’, in the suitably intimate and rarefied setting of the North Wall, his busy onstage virtuosity belying the stark, emotional beauty of his music. Seriously, go and watch him in action and feel humbled and inadequate in your own puny musical abilities.
I’M WITH HER with SARAH JAROSZ + AIOFE O’DONOVAN + SARA WATKINS: St John the Evangelist – Empty Room Promotions hosts a coming together of three stars of the American folk-roots scene, the trio having performed an impromptu jam together at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival last year. Californian singer and fiddle player Sara Watkins is best known as part of Nickel Creek as well as playing fiddle for The Decemberists. At only 23 years of age, Texan-born singer and multi-instrumentalist Sarah Jarosz is rather less of a veteran but has already released three albums, earning herself a brace of Grammy nominations, while ethereal New England singer Aoife O’Donovan has previously collaborated with Alison Krauss, the three of them together exploring the rich roots heritage of their different strands of traditional folk music.

ONLY REAL: The Jericho Tavern – Slacker rap-pop with a grungy underbelly from west London chap Niall Galvin, owing a little to Best Coast and Real Estate.
BALLOON ASCENTS: Ultimate Picture Palace –A benefit gig for this summer’s Cowley Road Carnival with rising local indie darlings Balloon Ascents mixing up electro-pop, blues, dub, folk-rock and more into an eclectic blend somewhere between Radiohead, Stornoway and King Tubby. Followed by a screening of cult classic rockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*.

THURSDAY 30th
CC SMUGGLERS: The Bullingdon – Rough’n’ready roots ramblin’ from Bedfordshire’s

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Sunday 26th
UGLY DUCKLING: The Bullingdon

With decent hip hop gigs still an all too rare treat in Oxford, it’s great to be able to welcome Long Beach, California trio Ugly Duckling back to town for their first gig here since 2010. DJ Young Einstein and MCs Dizzy Dustin and Andy Cooper grew up surrounded by gangsta rap but their brand of hip hop is far removed from that genre, heavily referencing classic old school acts like The Beastie Boys, A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul and Eric B & Rakim, preferring the old school way of sampled rather than self-created beats, just DJ and two MCs, stripped back beats, call-and-response vocals and a whole heap of catchy hooks. They’re also adept at lampooning contemporary mainstream hip hop’s excesses, particularly the machismo and beef. Live the emphasis is on interactive fun and their relentlessly upbeat outlook, frequent biblical references and lyrical sharp rapping has made them enduring cult stars, playing festivals across the globe, including Coachella, Reading and Australia’s Pyramid Rock, while releasing a succession of albums, with a follow-up to 2011’s ‘Moving at Breakneck Speed’ hopefully due to coincide with these UK dates.

busking ensemble, starting a bluesy bluegrass barn dance wherever they do roam.
SIMPLE featuring PEARSON SOUND: The Bullingdon – House and techno club night with minimal-man Pearson Sound, one third of the Hesse Audio label, and the man behind Leeds’ vinyl-only club night Acetate. He’s remixed Radiohead, The xx and MIA along the way and this month releases his eponymous new album on Hesse.
SUPERMARKET: The Cellar – Pop, disco, UK garage and 90s house club night.
YES PLEASE + RADIOGRASS + THE OXFORD BEATLES: The Jericho Tavern – Covers night.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly acoustic and open mic session, tonight with Takeshi.

*New email address:
editor@nightshift.co.uk*



PALMA VIOLETS / FAT WHITE FAMILY / SLAVES

O2 Academy

If, as reports suggest, *NME* is on its last legs, no-one seems to have told the crowd for tonight’s Awards tour, which is the most up for it we’ve seen in ages. Lively doesn’t even start to describe a capacity throng that celebrates each act tonight with hedonistic abandon.

The loss of Amazing Snakeheads from the bill after they split on the eve of the tour is a shame, and their replacements, Wytches, are on so

early we miss their set completely, but Slaves are in no mood to ease us into the evening gently. Like Royal Blood there’s just the two of them – drummer and guitarist – but Slaves are the punk to Royal Blood’s classic rock, eschewing subtlety for mercilessly yobbish rabble-rousing shout-alongs that are as mindless as they are fun. Every song goes bang bang bang stop, no internal intricacies, no particular

message, just a rampant assault of noise and shouting, like Crass or Sham 69 filleted of political consciousness and infected with the most rudimentary of Home Counties hip hop sensibilities. ‘Beauty Quest’ sums their route-one approach perfectly but it’s the oddly anthemic ‘Where’s the Car Debbie’ that raises the threat level to riot mode. Fat White Family’s gig at the Bullingdon last year remains

a benchmark for reckless rock and roll entertainment, to such a degree that anything less than utter carnage is going to feel like a disappointment tonight. At least one young lady of our acquaintance is here just to see if Lias Saoudi will get his willy out. He doesn’t, performing topless but no more, his hand creeping into his pants a couple of times, like a toddler that barely realises what they’re doing, the band’s mutant rockabilly throbbing and spasming like a giant wounded alien insect at times. For some reason they’re so consumed by reverb it’s often difficult to hear what’s going on, a marked contrast to the scratchy, stark clarity of that Bullingdon show. And so ‘Cream of the Young’ loses much of its sleaziness, while ‘Is It Raining In Your Mouth’ becomes little more than a wall of discordant noise. ‘I Am Mark E Smith’, though, is a towering brute of a song that punches out of that veil of reverb to go toe to toe with The Fall’s own ‘I Am Damo Suzuki’. A local punk veteran passes us as he heads for the exit in disgust. We’ll consider that a victory on Fat White Family’s part. Palma Violets’ set is as much about the crowd as the band, as beer and bodies, even the odd pair of trousers, go flying above the bobbing, seething mass of heads. At one point someone lights a purple smoke bomb , which fills the room with exotic colour and an acrid smell, intensifying the crazy atmosphere in the venue. Musically Palma Violets are little more than generic post-punk indie rock – heirs to The Crib’s ‘up-for-the-fight pop blunderbuss, and without such a fanatical following to make the show a spectacle, their mix and match of bits of The Stranglers and the Clash might fall by the wayside with so many other wannabes and chancers. But in the end it is a spectacle, and if *NME* is on death’s door, it’s patently obvious that rock and roll resolutely isn’t.

Dale Kattack

GLASS ANIMALS

O2 Academy

In a little over two years, Glass Animals have gone from local enigma to international success story. Spurred on by last year’s impressively successful debut album ‘Zaba’ they’re steadfastly following in the footsteps of some of Oxford’s most successful musical exports, tonight’s hometown appearance forming part of a relentless four month world tour that’s taken them to the States and Australia. Hometown shows are special though, this one not least because frontman Dave Bayley’s mum is in the audience. “I want to impress her,” he announces, surprisingly on form considering the cancellation of yesterday’s Cambridge date due to an unplanned hospital admission. Indeed, he charms the crowd, bemoaning in between songs the fact they don’t play enough local gigs, and thanking everyone who’s “been with us from the start.”

The slightly stilted earnestness of these monologues is at stark contrast to what transpires when the band play. They exude cool. The words drip from Dave’s mouth and snake up to wind through staccato synth lines, intricately crafted and subtly placed. The crash of drums in ‘Black Mambo’

precedes the stripped-down minimalism of ‘Exxus’, the climax of which sends ethereal echoes swirling round the room. The honeyed resonance of (aptly named) ‘Goovey’’s lyrics throbs around surging guitar loops and the twinkling flow of ascending keys.

In keeping with the tone of the music, there’s something almost tribal about the crowd’s reaction; they appear to pulsate as one, moving in unison to the rhythmic shimmer of ‘Hazy’. The band announce the need for “something a little bit more chilled”, before slinking into the drawn out expanse of ‘Cocoa Hooves’, the song that arguably started it all, where, over the ripples of a softly distorted guitar phrase, shadowy waves of sound are punctuated methodically with echoing percussion.

After a brief respite, they reappear for an encore comprising a cover of Kanye’s ‘Love Lockdown’, in distinctively Glass Animals style, before they close the night with the tightly emphatic synchronisation of ‘Pools’, the rapturous applause of the crowd falling into rhythmic place, and extending the beat long after they’ve left the stage.

Caroline Corke

SLEAFORD MODS

O2 Academy

In recent weeks Noel Gallagher has both bemoaned the lack of working-class voices in contemporary music and dismissed Sleaford Mods as being like “Brown Bottle in *Viz* ... shouting about fucking cider and fucking shit chicken”. Make up your mind, O monobrowed one. Just because the latter don’t conform to your particular, very narrow idea of a working-class voice – namely, Richard Ashcroft or Bobby Gillespie. For their part, Sleaford Mods – Jason Williamson and Andrew Robert Lindsay Fearn – have branded Gallagher a “closet Tory” who sees music as an “instrument of social mobility”. That accusation certainly couldn’t be levelled at the duo themselves. As tonight’s gig proves, they’re very much in the gutter, but they’re not looking at the stars; on the contrary, they’re writhing around in the filth of everyday life, blind to any escape route. Their music – a lo-fi and distinctively British hip-hop/punk punch-up between The Streets and The Fall, peppered with profanity and fuelled by fury and disgust – is a perfect soundtrack for benefits offices, the top decks of buses and pub car park drug deals. Beatmaker Fearn – baseball cap, Run DMC T-shirt – has already done his work in the bedroom/studio, so is free to press play on his laptop, grin, dance and drink beer, happy to leave the limelight to his partner in crime. Williamson is testament to John Lydon’s declaration that anger is an energy, pacing about the stage like a caged tiger that occasionally morphs into a menacing gibbon,

KIM CHURCHILL

The Bullingdon

The one man band used to be a comic spectacle, reserved for the pages of the *Beano*, whenever they wanted to depict someone as a little eccentric (or he’d be deployed if someone’s slumbering father required waking up). Thanks to the joys of technology, the one man band no longer has to stomp up and down twanging at a banjo, cymbals on his knees, a bass drum on his back, a car horn under each foot and a hat full of bells adorning his whacky bonce. No, these days, the likes of Kim Churchill can do all of that sitting down.



photo: Sam Shepherd

swatting away invisible wasps, his words exploding over the mic in a shower of spittle. With his barely suppressed rage, wired eyes and East Midlands accent, he recalls Paddy Considine’s character in *Shane Meadows’* superlative revenge flick *Dead Man’s Shoes*. Little wonder that a firm request early on to turn up the PA is instantly obeyed. Williamson’s very first words may be “Bunch of cunts”, but his lyrics aren’t merely aggressive; there’s a wicked wit that elevates his diatribes above the rantings of your average white-cider-swigging denizen of the bus station. Signature song ‘Tied Up In Nottz’ starts with the extraordinary line “The smell of piss is so strong it smells like decent bacon”, while Williamson repeatedly and monotonously insisting “I’ve got a Brit Award” in ‘McFlurry’ raises a chuckle. But both are arguably trumped by the mock signing-on interview in ‘Jobseeker’, Williamson admitting he’d be tempted to steal from work because “I’ve got drugs to take and a mind to break”.

It’s not so much that Sleaford Mods have recently come to attention – more that attention has come to them. They certainly never courted it and you can be equally certain that they won’t give two shits when it’s gone. But, at a time when musical novelty usually equates to youthfulness rather than invention, it’s reassuring that a pair of fortysomethings can still receive recognition for being genuinely original.

Ben Woolhead

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RAGING SPEEDHORN

The Wheatsheaf

Corby, that decomposing steel town in the upper reaches of Northamptonshire, must have been the perfect breeding ground for Raging Speedhorn, a band who soar on wings of pure fury. It's fifteen years since *Nightshift* witnessed the band playing at the Bullingdon (alongside Medulla Nocte and Faith In Hate), ending the evening wearing most of our pint and waking the next morning with a large bruise covering most of our rib cage. While we're too sensible to want to repeat some of that carnage tonight, there's always

a slight worry when a band reforms that the old magic – or in this case rage and musical violence – will have died a little. Oh we of little faith. This isn't the original line-up of the band, but with Frank Regan and John Loughlin on dual vocals, a safe run-through of the old songs is never an option. "This one is a singalong," announces Frank at one point. In Hell maybe. Raging Speedhorn's sludgy, downtuned attack dog hardcore, a melting pot of Iron Monkey riffage and Black Flag fury, is in no hurry to get from

a to b, but it's going to get there causing the maximum amount of damage. Despite their years of touring, including last summer's festival appearances, there's still an untidiness about Raging Speedhorn, but this is a particular element of their monstrous magic, that feeling things could fall apart at any moment, doubtless leading to serious repercussions. The band have been on the piss big time in the build-up to tonight's set but the edge of onstage chaos manifests itself not as looseness but the

musical incarnation of that scene in *The Thing* where the alien beast infects all the huskies, turning them into a seething mass of howling, snapping viciousness. It's both threatening and infectious. "Come on Oxford," they bellow before the splenetic 'Halfway To Hell', "it's been a fucking long time since we played here," instantly provoking a moshpit worthy of such primal music. If bands reflect their geographical origins, Raging Speedhorn are the brutality of the foundries and factories of Corby made musical flesh. If you could bottle it, you could conquer the world. **Dale Kattack**

POLICE DOG HOGAN

The Bullingdon

"Come on Oxford, you don't want to be outdone by Honiton, do you?" Tonight's return to town for Police Dog Hogan is packed to capacity, and we're not sure if it's the allure of *Guardian* columnist Tim Dowling on banjo, or the band's untiring willingness to play the UK's most unfashionable outposts that's made their reputation. In the end it's a bit of both but mostly it's the simple fact they know how to entertain a crowd. Like all the best folk bands they balance humour and storytelling with deft musicianship and a party-hearty attitude than infects all before them and belies what looks like a motley collection of

musicians (eight of them in all). If they were ever a dad (and token mum) band that got out hand, it no longer shows. They've been described as 'suburban bluegrass' but Police Dog Hogan have more in common with the old folk traditions of Devon and Cornwall, with their idiosyncratic tales of Crackington and Westwood Ho!, and fiddle player Eddie Bishop is as much a star of tonight's show as lead singer and chief raconteur James Studholme, reminding us more than once of Devon's favourite son Seth Lakeman. The droll humour of middle-aged suburban

gentlemen shines though, whether on 'Man Needs A Shed' and the band's heroically daft 'Shitty White Wine' anthem (choice lines: "Shitty white wine / A kangaroo on the label is never a good sign / Breakfast in a bottle, £3.99"). It's not all jollity and drinking songs; there's heartache in a lament about a Galway girl, and the spirit of The Waterboys' 'Fisherman's Blues' dances around the more Irish-flavoured numbers, but when they whoop it up, finishing on a hoe-down cover of Hank Williams' 'I Saw The Light', their sense of fun is universal – whether it's Appalachia or Galway, Honiton or a back garden barbecue in Cheam, folks will always come back if there's fun to be had. **Dale Kattack**

MONKFISH / RUTH THEODORE / SUPERLOOSE

The Wheatsheaf

Tonight is Gappy Tooth Industries' 150th gig. Divided by twelve, that equals twelve and a half years, so makes that sometime in 2002 when Richard Catherall and co. were given the keys to the last Saturday of every month, originally at the Jericho Tavern, then the Zodiac and latterly at The Wheatsheaf. *Nightshift* doffs its cap in salute to such dedication and says thanks for all the music (given GTI's adherence to a no-return policy when it comes to acts, that's getting on for 500 different bands and artists in that time). Superloose, formed in 2007 out of the Skittle Alley club, are performing electric tonight with occasional banjo (humorous cries of "Judas!" from the back). A snapshot of their set sees Teardrop Explodes' 'Reward' and 'I Want To Be Like You' from *The Jungle Book*, two of my favourite songs, mauled and neutered without the necessary brass, but sandwiched in between, they harmonize and a cappella the best original song of the night, with the poignant coastal lament of 'We Are The Fishermen', a sublime moment where the room goes silent and you can hear the sound of goose bumps forming. More of this sort of thing, please! Ruth Theodore has been making big waves with her River Rat record label on her boat down in London E5, with favourable comparisons to Martha Wainwright and Ani DiFranco, but a

lifetime of first busking in Southampton and then surviving a few medical dramas has forged a more independent heart, and musically Ruth has moved on from Nashville to the deep south, and the vibe of old-time spirituals, last commercially glimpsed in Paul Simon's 'Loves Me Like a Rock', and his 'Graceland' album. By allying herself with three fabulous harmony singers – Eliot Jett on countertenor, Jigh Ejakpovi on tenor and percussion, and Wayne Thompson's baritone and drums – she has reinvented the whole soulful genre, without pastiche, to take venues by storm. 'Everyone's A Time Bomb' is a real icebreaker, and anyone who can out shred Ry Cooder and come up with the lyric "I'll tell you what I told the Police" ('Whistleblower') is going to sell a lot of records. You could use Monkfish singer Kev Riddle's voice to dig graves. It's a serious beast of a voice, pure southern gothic, and the band haul it out of the depths of the Delta swamps and give it a good going over, trawling every influence from country rock, Steppenwolf, gothic grunge, The Mission, and Jo Jo Gunne, but at every stage *that voice* demands that you are not leaving to go home. And with Gappy Tooth Industries continuing to put gigs of this quality, why would you want to. **Paul Carrera**

ALL TAMARA'S PARTIES

Wild Honey Organic Health Store

All Tamara's Parties celebrated its twentieth show and its aim of promoting more female musicians with a line-up that boasts an equal 50/50 split of female/male performers. In the wake of Reading Festival's widely criticised paucity of female acts, it's a small but important step in the right direction. Another trait of ATP has been its use of unusual local venues and the yoga studio of Wild Honey Organic Health Store on Magdalen Road ticks that box. There's not many shows which require the audience to sit on the floor with no shoes on and allow you to browse a selection of 'sacred room sprays' between acts. Aptly, the opening act **Nia** has a somewhat 60s type of protest approach to her music, albeit delivered with a staggering blues falsetto reminiscent of Joanna Newsom, matched with some hugely impressive ragtime guitar playing. The protest element comes across in songs about the EDL and Mark Duggan. Not an easy thing to do, but on balance Nia pulls off the right level of earnestness with these topical songs without eliciting sneering cynicism – although it could have been all the mellowing incense wafting through the air. **Tamara Parsons-Baker**, accompanied by Tommy Longfellow on percussion, plays a short set of songs from her forthcoming second album; her songs are finely crafted

and delivered with a voice that has as a wealth of emotional range to match its tonal range. Longstanding ATP compere and local poet **George Chopping** delivers a set of poetry which plays out like a well-choreographed train crash, veering between straight-laced delivery of his eclectic poems about decapitating rowers and odes to ham, to chastising the audience for not being able to guess what word he was going to use next. Clearly Chopping is a man who understands the power and benefit of not delivering poetry in the way that poetry is usually delivered. Headliners **The August List** seem to have a tricky balance to strike when it comes to their live shows. Although their debut album 'O Hinterland' showed their material in full fleshed out mode, they still appear at their best when they play smaller venues as a duo. They comfortably skip through all their standout tracks, with 'Cut Yr Teeth' in particular showcasing that they can convey their sweeping country sound *sans* rhythm section. By the time they finish there's an almost communal air in the yoga studio (and an air of old socks). Goes to show sticking people in a small room with some good music essentially leads to a pretty bloody good time. **Stephen Tuohy**

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LCO SOLOISTS & JONNY GREENWOOD

St John The Evangelist

There are a number of people who have taken the sometimes shaky walk between pop and classical but, whether they’re iconoclasts who rubbed against their new world (Zappa), surprising traditionalists (Lord; Sting) or vapid embarrassments (Klass), the popular star generally retains centre stage. Interestingly, neither Jonny Greenwood nor his promo people have over-publicised his recent compositions for concert hall or celluloid and, whilst this event probably sold out more quickly than your average contemporary music gig, it’s clear that serious (if not

necessarily austere) music is the sole focus tonight. Perhaps we should file Greenwood as “cross-under”. Tellingly, Jonny isn’t onstage that much, leaving the spotlight to the excellent London Contemporary Orchestra Soloists. His one solo showcase, Reich’s ‘Electric Counterpoint’, has surprisingly bluesy phrasing, as if yanking the airy serenity of Metheny’s famous version down from the clouds to dingy bars and city streets. As a composer his work is balanced and varied, highlights being ‘Miniature’, which adds to tambura drones a cold constellation of Satie piano notes

and aching violin that is positively Vaughan Williams, and ‘Future Markets’, a full throttle dirt-ride for strings like a cross between Bernard Herrmann and Can. Occasionally the soundtrack origins of much of the music can make it feel a little pat and guilty of emotive signposting, but the sound has a depth and mystery that makes it far more Penderecki than Korngold. Only ‘Self-Portrait With Seven Fingers’ disappoints, using the audience’s phone-triggered tinny plinks to create a Fisher-Price carillon: the aleatory concept is intriguing, but it’s mostly just annoying.

Although the LCO musicians are a honed ensemble, the night’s highlights come from two solo pieces. Oliver Coates’s version of cello and effects piece ‘Love’ by Mica Levi takes the blasted romanticism of the original version and emphasises a cheap seasick awkwardness, until it resembles V/Vm tackling Nyman, and Anna Lapwood’s take on Messiaen’s Bachian boogie-woogie pile-up ‘Les Anges’ on the SJE’s organ perfectly mixes the twitchy intricacy with the devotional intent. That the applause for these two pieces is as warm as that for Jonny’s guitar spot speaks volumes about the quality of these performers, and the open-minds of the audience.

David Murphy

BUG PRENTICE / COGWHEEL / GREAT WESTERN TEARS

The Bullington

Tonight’s openers Great Western Tears are a late stand in after David Tudor failed to show. While I’ve had my fill of Americana in the Oxford context, the delivery is impressively authentic, helped along perhaps by a mouthful of Nobby’s Nuts from the train operator the band might just have taken their name from. Those tears are also a feature of that mode of travel of course. Rebecca Mosley’s Cogwheel are back from a half decade hiatus. Often wispy and faintly Kate Bush influenced, the songs are prone to ending too early and when the guy at the bar unpacking plastic cups is louder than the band, the soundman perhaps needs to sort it out. At this point in the evening, the total instrument count across two sets amounts to three while in keeping with the bar tender’s deliberations, one song, ‘Cress’ deals with doing the washing up and ‘Queues’ is a lengthier tune about the oppressiveness of London Town. All of which leaves us impatient for Bug Prentice and they are seriously worth

the wait. Guitar rips are interspersed with Slint-style intermissions, while singer Ally Craig slings his instrument across his lap and helps recall the Breeders at their most visceral. The chatter between songs is a cut above too – ‘Nebraska Admiral’ is a “deliciously pointless” tale while cinema forms a significant backcloth – both via new song ‘Nicholas Ray’ and a cover of Cat Stevens’ ‘Don’t Be Shy’, a centrepiece of cult classic *Harold and Maude*. Indeed, Craig admits to having purloined many of his lyrics from screenplays because he “couldn’t be bothered” to write his own – but the self-deprecation fools nobody. The flip side of the ‘Nicholas Ray’ single is the brooding ‘Spoons’, while Craig’s voice and Ruth Goller’s bass extend powerfully to all corners of the auditorium and James Madrin, standing in for Stephen Gilchrist on drums, provides impressive thumping. It’s a superb set by a must-see band.

Robert Langham

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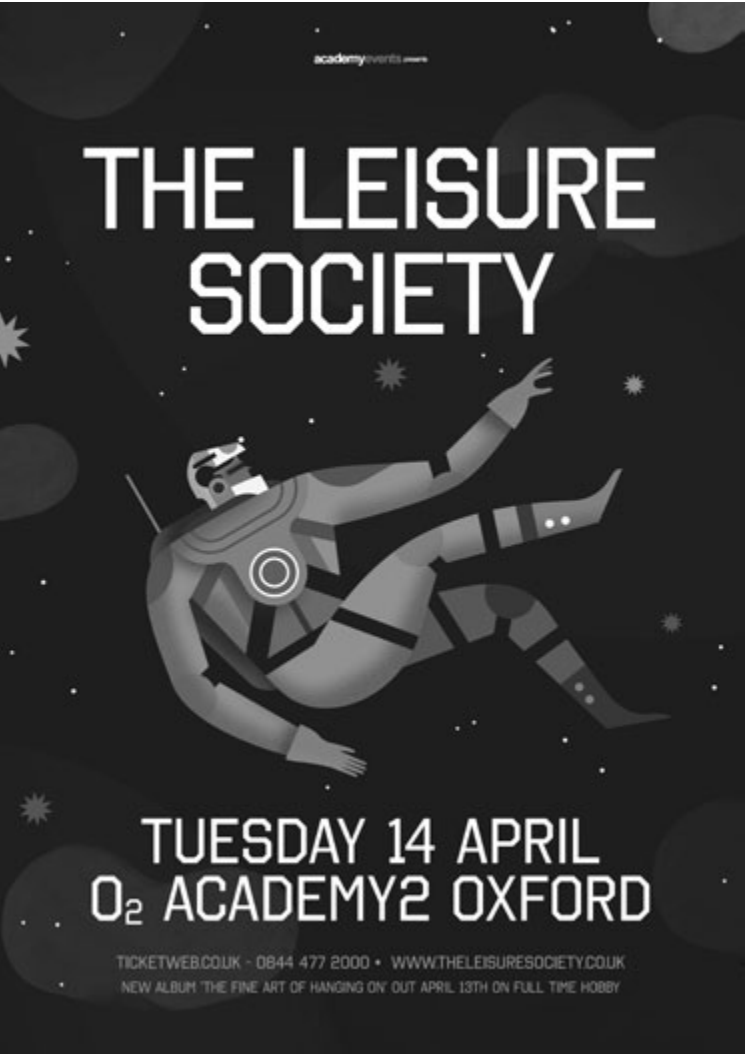
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AQUILO

The Bullington

Lancashire duo Aquilo expand to a four-piece live and create layers of gently haunting electronic loops and mellow, electric guitars. Slow, balladic keys and perfect vocal harmonies are showered with shimmering samples and their radio-friendly choruses are boosted with an appealing combination of electric and acoustic percussion and powerfully simple pop basslines.

"This is a song about where we're from," they announce as electronic drums lead us into a sonic wilderness, perhaps evocative of their home landscape, with muted clicking guitars and pan-pipe like keys. But then a heartbeat drum kicks in, underpinning the fluidity as a strong chorus sneaks up to capture their audience. Mid-set they unleash their Usher cover, originally played on Radio 1. From inside the circle of instruments that he alternates between rapidly Ben Fletcher admits he was "a little wary" of the song choice "but Tom convinced me." With organ keys and lulling vocals, it's a minimal

version of 'Climax' that sees both drummer and bassist practising the statue life.

'Human' shows that even three notes on Tom Higham's guitar are enough of a refrain to carry a song forwards. Often it's the way Aquilo use silence that makes their music work, carefully building up layer upon layer of sound and then demolishing it all suddenly at the perfect moment. Their final number sees a return to the epic pompom cymbal-rolls and muted, tribal-sounding guitar as Tom Higham's narrative lyrics and the pulsing bass guitar bring us back to the start. The show feels like one fluid movement rather than a set of songs and when the restrained heartache of 'Losing You' comes to an end they close the show with 'I Gave It All'. An irresistibly soulful and captivating song with a beautifully simple four-word chorus and a perfectly timed snare drum all wrapped up in an electric lullaby.

Celina Macdonald

TIM GARLAND
Holywell Music Room

There are times the local gig going public can get to benefit from the Oxford Colleges, and tonight is one of them with Oriel College inviting saxophone maestro and composer Tim Garland to be their musician in residence. Garland has a long association with jazz mega star Chick Corea, and his horizon stretches from small groups to symphony orchestras; his much praised latest album 'Songs to the Northern Sky' includes the strings of The Royal Northern Symphonia.

Tonight it's straight ahead accessible contemporary jazz with most of the set list Garland's own compositions and an emphasis on melody, with an undercurrent of flamenco riffs in some of the numbers. Alongside Garland are a couple of players who I've not seen him with before, both of whom are group leaders in their own right: Jason Rebello is a pianist who has seen the light and returned to jazz after several years playing first with Sting (we forgive him) and then Jeff Beck, while Ant Law is an innovative guitar player on the rise.

Garland gives both of them space to express themselves and the sound of Law on the twelve string and the intensity of Rebello, body hunched over the keyboard, are impressive. It's the versatile Garland's show though as he mixes atmospherics, lyricism and sax clout, not only as a player but as a composer.

The spiky restless 'Blues For Little Joe', shot through with a blast of rock, is an early highlight and is immediately followed by the very different 'A Brother's Gift', dedicated to Garland's brother, and a Jan Gabarek-meets-John Coltrane lyrical meditation. 'Tyne Song' is one of several tunes which my notes describe

simply as 'gorgeous', and following this we get a Chick Corea number laced with those engaging flamenco and Arabic riffs.

The optimistic 'Bright New Year' finds Law and Rebello laying down a cascade of notes over which Garland plays lyrical sax. When they play it again as the encore it's notable how different they make it sound by being bolder and more playful, making for an even more upbeat ending and sending both Town and Gown out into the night with a smile on their faces.

Colin May

THE LITTLE UNSAID /
WALTZ IN THE
SHALLOW END

The Cellar

Waltz In The Shallow End may feature Bear On A Bicycle founder member Jordan O'Shea alongside Kaye Dougall and Trenton Smith, but at first the trio's sunshiney (and, if truth be told, rather grating) twee-pop is some way removed from his lachrymose solo material.

However, while the grins and goofy banter remain throughout, the metaphorical storm clouds roll in with the more aggressive "Foxtrov Fitzgerald" and a lyric about "being better off dead", while the penultimate song's repeated refrain, "Are we madly in love with you?" is simple, resonant and beautifully harmonised. *Nightshift* may not be madly in love with them quite yet, but our initial frostiness is certainly melting away.

Thanking your audience for attending by reminding them that they “could be doing anything else”, such as “having a foot spa”, is

potentially risky, in that it may prompt some people to come to their senses and walk out. But John Elliott, the multi-instrumentalist behind The Little Unsaid, clearly feels there's no danger of that; not only does he have firm faith in his songs, he's also expecting us to share that faith. The band – Elliott accompanied by bassist, drummer and viola player – are in the midst of recording a new album, 'Fisher King', with local producer Graeme Stewart, and Elliott is asking for crowdfunding assistance to ensure it sees the light of day.

After the first song, I'm tempted to find the nearest cashpoint and withdraw my life savings, such is the whirlwind their amped-up indie folk kicks up. But after a while, I'm glad I resisted. Though there's a measure of anger and darkness in the lyrical content (the image of horses dragging bodies through the street is particularly memorable), things never get quite so bitter or bleak as to make the dubious endorsements they've received from Whispering Bob Harris and Jeff Buckley's mum seem improbable. Elliott has covered Nick Cave and at one point cites Tom Waits, but lacks their maverick spirit, offering little that would seriously unsettle a Radio 2 listener. Take 'Riot Song'. Despite that title, some crashing crescendos and the sounds of police sirens and lampposts going through windows sampled from YouTube footage of the London riots, it's all a bit too neat and well mannered – as though you're watching the violent tumult on TV in the comfort of your own living room, rather than first-hand on a street corner, with bricks whistling past your ears.

There's no denying that Elliott and accomplices are accomplished musicians, and that plenty of the gig-goers adding lusty vocals to set-closing sea shanty 'Lead The Way' would be happy to dip into their pockets, but personally I'd have preferred something a bit more raw and ragged.

Ben Woolhead



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DR SHOTOVER: Cowley Road Undressed

[Camera pans across the car park behind Tesco’s with super-imposed whirly psychedelic patterns... a tinny unlicensed instrumental version of Xanadu by Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich plays softly in the background... Dr Shotover strolls into shot wearing an Afghan coat, an over-stretched tie-dye t-shirt, crushed strawberry velvet loons and carpet slippers]. Ah, there you are, fellow-travellers. Welcome to the Mysterious East... of Oxford. The good folks at Yesteryear, formerly the *Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler Channel*, have commissioned this little curio to fill a blank spot in the schedule – in between endless re-runs of *The World At War*, *Hermann Goering’s Favourite Antiques*, *The New Seekers: A Warning From History*, and *My Grandad Flew A Spitfire*. I’ll be your host as we show some grainy footage of East Oxford in the 1960s, sepia at first, then colourised to make it look as though we were all having a good time. Someone, probably from little-known Kirtlington-based Shadows-copyists The Treble-Ohs, will say, ‘Everything was in black-and-white till the Beatles played at the Carfax Assembly Rooms... then it was like we started living in colour!’ Donovan will smile reflectively: ‘Yeah, I got spiked at a folk club in East Oxford once... or was it East Grinstead?’ No expense spent as the screen splits into four, showing extras in face paint and bellbottoms dancing around on Angel Meadow, plus footage of disgraced DJ and presenter Rufus ‘Quimbers’ Quimby-Saddleworth throwing money and Beatle wigs off Magdalen Tower to an adoring crowd of girls in miniskirts. The producers will open another can of generic Swinging 60s Hammond-organ music. A former model in a floral poncho will nod sadly and say, ‘Yes, but the drugs ruined it’ and/or ‘Yes, but then it got commercialised’. The End. At which point, dear friends, I will collect a large BOAC bag full of cash from our corporate sponsors and light an enormous Quimbers-cigar-sized reefer; then, going into my performer’s caravan, I will do a quick change into my baggy chalk-stripe demob suit, medals, a stick-on moustache and a beret, for *Dunkirk?* *FUN-kirk!*, a nostalgia-filled programme about how we were all much happier during the Second World War. Cheers – down in one! Here’s mud in your eye, Gladys!

Next Month: Strictly Come Blitzkrieg



SHOTOVER: ‘Which bloody programme am I presenting again?’

INTRODUCING....

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

The Balkan Wanderers

Who are they?
The Balkan Wanderers were formed by the songwriting partnership of Antica Culina (vocals/piano) and Stu Wigby (vocals/guitar) in late 2013. Antica is a classically trained pianist from Croatia, well-versed in traditional Balkan songs; Stu was previously in indie and folk-punk acts. The line-up is completed by Clare Heaviside (carinet) and Germans musicians Marc Witte (bass) and Rene Niehus (drums). The band began by performing covers of traditional Balkan songs at open mics, weddings and parties, and then decided to start writing their own material (“blending our respective influences and aiming to be both melodically infectious and highly danceable”). An early demo earned them airplay on 6Music, and BBC Oxford Introducing. Their debut EP, ‘The Pride’ is released this month. They play the Punt in May.

What do they sound like?
A male/female-fronted multinational quintet featuring members from Croatia and Germany as well as the UK was always going to be an eclectic and musically exotic affair and Balkan Wanderers’ trans-European dance express crosses musical borders between traditional Balkan folk and dance, punk, ska and indie with the ease you’d expect in modern European travel.

What inspires them?
“Sweat glistening on the brows of the audience; interspecies relationships; unrequited love; coastal landscapes and meteorology.

Career highlight so far:
“Supporting The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band at their Cold War Party last year. The Jericho Tavern was packed out and the crowd was awesome.”

And the lowlight:
“Playing with a concussed drummer. Rene got knocked unconscious playing football but insisted he was okay for the gig that night. We picked him up straight from hospital, arrived late and spent the performance glancing over our shoulders to check that he wasn’t about to collapse.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“Our good friend Shan, aka Moogieman, was instrumental in inspiring Stu to

dust off his guitar, and he introduced us to the Oxford music scene and hence the wealth of other great local artists.”

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“Asking us to pick just one album risks sparking a major international conflict, so we’ll plump for ‘Now That’s What I Call Music 26’. Something for everyone. It’s even got ‘Creep’ on it.

When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?
“Mayfest on May 4th at the James St Tavern, followed by the Punt on the 13th May. We demand action from the audience, so newcomers should know to wear dancing shoes and consume carbohydrates and plenty of fluids.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
“The Oxford scene really does punch well above its weight for a town of its size, so it’s a privilege to have easy access to lots of shows by brilliant local acts. On the flip side, it is not quite big enough to attract many international touring artists – they often seem to overlook it for bigger towns.”

You might love them if you love:
Manu Chao; Gogol Bordello; Supergrass; Xazzar; The Penny Black Remedy; Goran Bregović.

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ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

In March 1995 **Radiohead** released ‘The Bends’. In May **Supergrass** would release their debut album ‘I Should Coco’, but in between these two monumental local music events, came a rather less internationally celebrated event that nevertheless had equally far-reaching significance for the local scene as **The Hobgoblin** opened its doors to live music for the first time. The pub, on The Plain, that would soon undergo a major refurbishment to turn the upstairs venue into **The Point**, found former **Jericho Tavern** promoter **Mac** taking up residency. The venue would go on to be one of the greatest small venues the world has known, hosting early shows for **The White Stripes**, **The Strokes**, **Catatonia** and many more, but its opening month was very much an Oxford-centric affair. The opening night saw local favourites **The Daisies** alongside **August** – the band formed by former **Sevenchurch** members, minus singer Martin Spear, his place in the band taken by Robert Lawrence. August would soon rename themselves **Earth Machine**. Local faves **Thurman** also played a sold-out show at the Hob, fans, many of whom had travelled from London to see the rising Britpop stars, left bereft when they couldn’t get in, some weeping openly on the pub’s stairs. Elsewhere a still sparse local gig calendar saw goth-pop starlets **Wonderland** and hardcore tigers **Skydrive** playing the **Elm Tree**, the Cowley Road pub having been a heroic bastion of resistance amid the carnage of the previous few months’ venue closures.

10 YEARS AGO

In a busy month for local news, **Young Knives** announced a new EP on Transgressive Records, featuring ‘Coastguard’, ‘Kramer vs Kramer’, ‘Weekends and Bleak Days’ and ‘Trembling of the Tails’. The trio also announced a hometown headline show at the **Zodiac**. While **BBC Radio Oxford’s Download** show continued its trial eight-week run, this year’s Punt line-up was announced, featuring **Laima Bite**, **The Evenings**, **A Silent Film**, **Fell City Girl**, **The Half Rabbits**, **The Family Machine**, **Harry Angel**, **Big Speakers** and more. Local emo heroes **Days Of Grace** called it a day, while wannabe stadium rock gods **Nation** announced they would be the first Oxford band to headline **the New Theatre** since Supergrass. Whatever happened to them, eh? Sad news reached us that **Bob Woods**, the old landlord of the Jericho Tavern during its glory years had passed away. The characterful cockney and his family had facilitated the pub’s transformation into one of the UK’s best small venues with promoter Mac. They don’t make ‘em like that anymore. On the local release front, **Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element** released ‘Techno Self-Harm’, while also gracing the cover of *Nightshift*. “You make music because you can’t find the music you want in a record shop,” said guitarist Giles Borg, “and we’re not what you’d find in a record store. Unless you played ‘We Built This City On Rock and Roll’ by Starship and some Kraftwerk and Prolapse at the same time. That would be awesome. No idea how that fits into the question; it’s just a nice story.” Coming to town this month were **Editors**, **Asian**

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Dub Foundation, **James Blunt**, **Maximo Park**, **The Subways** and former Take That puppy **Mark Owen**, all at the **Zodiac**, while there was noisy noise aplenty at **the Wheatsheaf** with **65Daysofstatic**, **Billy Mahonie** and **Coma Kai**.

5 YEARS AGO

It being that time of year again, April 2010’s news pages were dominated by festival line-ups, with **Jackson Browne** and **David Gray** set for the then two-day **Cornbury Festival**, while **Truck** had **Esben & the Witch**, **Ms Dynamite** and **Lau** among their first batch of confirmations, local favourites **Stornoway**, **Little Fish** and **This Town Needs Guns** also set to play. Stornoway had just signed to **4AD** this month, joining a roster that included Bon Iver, Scott Walker and The Big Pink, and releasing a new single, ‘I Saw You Blink’, with a debut album to follow. A plethora of local releases saw **Foals’** classic ‘Spanish Sahara’ see the light of day, going on to top many end of year charts, while **The Half Rabbits**, **Phantom Theory**, **Gunning For Tamar** and **D Gwalia** also had new records out. Turn to the back of the back of this month’s *Nightshift* and you’d find sitting atop the demo pile an offering by a bunch of as-yet bedroom-bound experimenters called **Glass Animals**. “This was the last demo in the pile and we were just about to give up breathing,” read the review, “so you can thank Glass Animals for our continued existence. In a month when most of the competition makes us want to drink petrol Glass Animals are a welcome breath of fresh air.” Anyone know what happened to them?



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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

ABLU

Ablu is the musical moniker of Joel Scott-Halkes, Cornish born and bred but latterly an Oxford University graduate, and if that band name sounds a bit too much like the sound of a feverish tramp coughing up half a lung, don't be put off, this is as soft and inviting as a solitary fluffy white cloud on a spring afternoon. Languid electronic beats chatter amiably over twinkling synths with an underplayed oriental motif, while Joel sings with a whispered intensity and it sounds a lot like Grimes, particularly opener 'Hollows' with its woozy drifting ambience that can feel like you're hearing it through the tail end of a hazy dream. Those vocals do add a degree of urgency to proceedings, like someone gently trying to wake you from that reverie to tell you the house is on fire and you probably need to get up and go without breakfast this time. Kind of folktronica for a chillout bar on the island of the lotus eaters, where Toro Y Moi and Mount Kimbie hang out smoking endless spliffs and forgetting they have to be anywhere anytime in the next six months. Very nice, in other words.

THE FUTURE RAYS

The name The Future Rays feels like it belongs to a slightly precious, poetic early-80s indie band, perhaps a bunch of foppish young men who lounge around their bedrooms all day listening to Felt or The Loft, and initially at least it seems that impression might be borne out as the band, until recently known as Crows, enter the musical fray with 'Home' and a sense of epic intimacy, some shoegazy guitar runs and questing, slightly sorrowful vocals that cry out to passing girls, "I am a sensitive, bookish sort and need love!" And it's all rather sweet in its jangly way. Come 'Trust No One', though, and they've leapt forward a decade or so to mix it with the second wave of Britpop, jaunty yet plaintive indie rocking of the sort that once had Cast and The Bluetones garnering such critical bouquets (just kidding). Another song on and another decade forward with '47', which sounds rather like noughties hopefuls The Holloways, again a jaunty, slightly blokey jangle that feels like party-starting wild times for people who enjoy drinking Carlsberg in frequently refurbished chain pubs. And like those pubs, after all the refits everyone agrees The Future Rays were best before they tried to modernise.

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/

REUBENS ROCKET

By our calculations this is Reuben's Rocket's fourth demo and there's little sign they're going turn into an industrial grindcore band at time soon. The band is essentially the work of Ollie Base, who sounds like he should be a notorious local speed dealer rather than a gentle-hearted balladeer of the sort who makes Sam Smith sound like Guitar Wolf. Still in his teens despite his now long history of musical offerings, Ollie retains the same air of romantic, wistful soulfulness he did back in the beginning, but with every new offering he reveals more of his own character and less of his sometimes inadvisable influences. Best of the three songs here is 'Let Me Be', a full band effort, piano, drums and female backing vocals adding a whole ton of extra weight to a Nick Drake-like wander under the stars. It's still essentially a sensitive acoustic ballad, but the hint of a rough edge in Ollie's voice, and a neat hook in the melody make for a likeable if safe slice of timeless folk-pop. Importantly, Ollie now seems a little less earnest, a little more carefree, even as he contemplates the sadder aspects of life, and that, from a promising young man making music that could make middle aged ladies weep softly into their Pinot Grigio, is extremely encouraging.

HOMEPLANET EARTH

Homeplanetearth are part of the fallout for mildly promising local funk/blues pop outfit The Kites who decided to split up just as people were starting to say they were a decent band. This one song demo suggests a small step backwards from where they left off with the old band, what decent ideas they have still floundering around looking for other decent ideas to link up with. A bit funky, a bit folky, busy, almost jazzy arrangements shuffling along as the male/female vocals try to get a bit of chemistry going, the whole thing sort of floating in a void like the detritus of the Big Bang waiting for gravity to bring the bits together as a complete piece. Thing is, you can sort of see how it will all come together once it gets its bearings and a surer sense of direction. A single track isn't much to really judge them on, and if it doesn't sound like it's off anywhere thrilling right now, time and evolution should hopefully bring planet earth to life.

GET LOOSE

There's always a feeling of trepidation when a band describes themselves as blues. Are

we in for some mighty stoner blues grooves *a la* Indica Blues, or some monstrously malevolent groove metal bluesing in the style of Desert Storm. Perhaps the 21st Century sci-fi voodoo blues of Vienna Ditto. Or maybe a load of widdly wank from the school of We Wuv Stevie Ray Vaughan and his School of Wretched Tedium. At first Get Loose seem to be offering some of the former – gruff, ballsy blues-rocking riffage that doesn't smack you down with the force of Ver Storm et al but has enough gumption to at least stand in the shadow of Led Zeppelin. By the second song, though, 'Harm's Way', they've lapsed into Sunday boozier blues session cliché, sounding like a hamfisted Eric Clapton doing JJ Cale's 'Cocaine' on a tape loop. Is that a guitar solo we hear? Say it ain't so. This music couldn't be more male if it sprouted a beard and got its willy out. Which might at least add some kind of entertainment value to proceedings. They finished with 'Forgive Me', which might well be an old ZZ Top track. Beards again, you see. We're sure plenty of folks will forgive you, fellas, but in our heart of hearts, we're struggling. Can we go and listen to Lonelady's new album again, please?

VAGUEWORLD

If Vaguelworld were a place rather than a band, obviously nothing would ever quite be anything in particular, just a vague approximation of something people vaguely remember possibly being once upon a vague point in time. So, not starkly different to the band, then. Their first song is called 'The Morrissey the More I Like You', which is an awful pun of the kind The Moz himself might rather approve. And that's about as good as it gets really. Musically it sounds like a slick, slightly wimpy kid brother of Dive Dive's tigerish pop-punk – lively but lacking any kind of bite – punk rock for people who've never actually heard any punk music and think James Bay might once have been the lead singer of Black Flag because he wears a big hat and probably smoked cigarettes when he was a teenager. Seriously, threat levels are amber and rising. 'Why', meanwhile, might as well be a discarded One Direction ballad that some ponytailed prick of an A&R man suggested might be improved with the addition of the most cursory grunge guitar solo about two thirds of the way through, and if that doesn't work we'll give it to Union J or someone else who might need some filler for their destined-for-failure second album. It might be spring but after listening to Vaguelworld all the bunnies in the immediate vicinity just lost their libido.

REVELLER

Maybe we could get Reveller to pop round

to Vaguelworld's house and teach them what punk rock actually means. Or at least give them a right royal kicking to learn them to sound less like a bunch of pantywaists. Alongside Being Eugene – last month's Demo of the Monthers – and Hatemail, Reveller seem to be part of a small core of local bands reviving metalcore's original ideals before they got sucked dry and polished to buggery by simpering clothes horses describing themselves as 'post-hardcore' (because still calling yourself emo is just *sooo* uncool, right?). Reveller don't have Being Eugene's techy tricks or barrelling sense of unstoppable ferocity but they set about things with more than admirable vigour. "I don't give a fuck about you," spits the singer at the start of 'Buying Into a Sellout' before coughing up half his internal organs in the pursuit of really getting things off his chest. The riffage might not break new ground but it does the job, much as a sixth pint of Stella tastes exactly the same as the previous five but still makes you capable of taking on half of Thames Valley Police's finest of a Saturday night, and as the song careers towards its finale via some stoopidly fast double drumming, we swear we saw a kick drum pedal fly out of the speakers. You see, people, it doesn't have to be clever or complicated – just treat the world, and in particular your instruments, as your enemy and punk rock will course through your veins like a fine double brandy at breakfast.

THE DEMO DUMPER

COSMIC WILL

Talking of mislabelled post-hardcore, Cosmic Will here take not just the biscuit but a sizeable chunk of cake and the coffee table it was placed on. At what point did a watery guitar jangling, some cursory fuzz pedal misuse and someone mumbling in limp, out of tune fashion constitute anything anywhere close to hardcore? This is post-hardcore in as much as a giant, stinking poo is 'post-banquet'. The closest they get to making a bit of a racket is an innocuous middle-distance fizz that might as well be the spin cycle of a washing machine as heard from the other side of the house, but mostly Cosmic Will avoid even this pathetic droplet of musical malevolence, preferring to mope like a hungover teenager who's slept out in the rain in an oversized mohair jumper, finally rousing himself from self-pity enough to scrunch up his tiny fists like an enraged toddler shouting to be let out of his cot. This is less cosmic, more comic. And that's comic as in 'utterly fucking tragic'. Hey, Cosmic Will, "BOO!" Hah ha, look everyone, Cosmic Will just pooped their pants. Hardcore, my arse.

*Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, clearly marked Demos. **IMPORTANT:** no review without a contact address and phone number; no more than four tracks on a demo please. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. And don't fucking whine about your review on Twitter either, else we'll print a screenshot and make you look like a prize tit.*



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