

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 245
December
2015**



DESERT STORM

**Oxford's road warriors
keep it proper heavy.**

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Oxford's songs of the year
plus

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THE BULLINGDON

DECEMBER 2015

Tuesday 1st December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 4th December
OCF feat. Northern Mark
Kieran Alexis
Nathan Gould
Invisible
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 5th December
Mr B's Bullingdon Bash
Corky
Doors: 7.30pm

Saturday 5th December
Simple:
Boddika
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 6th December
Steamroller
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 8th December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
The Bullingdon Hot Club
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 11th December
Ospreys Pirate Soiree
& Xmas Party
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 12th December
Chad Valley
Oslo Parks
Maiians
Esther Joy Lane
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 12th December
Free Range Roots:
Channel One
Roots Guidance
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 15th December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 18th December
Little Brother Eli
The Factory Lights
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 19th December
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 20th December
Luisa Omielan
Am I Right Ladies
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 22nd December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Martin Pickett Organisation
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 24th December
Skylarkin Reggae XMAS:
Laid Blak Live!
Doors: 9.45pm

Tuesday 29th December
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 5th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 12th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 19th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 22nd January
The Indelicates
The Mechanisms
We are a Communist
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 23rd January
Bossaphonik:
Lokkhi Terra
Doors: 11.30pm

Monday 25th January
Jeremy Loops
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 26th January
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alan Barnes with
The Oxford Jazz Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 27th January
The Defiled
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 28th January
RavenEye
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 30th January
Dense & Pikka
Doors: 11pm

Monday 1st February
Billy Walton Band
Doors: 8pm

Tuesday 2nd February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Martin Pickett Organisation
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 5th February
Aoife O'Donovan Trio
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 9th February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 13th February
Free Range Roots:
Abi-Shanti
Roots Guidance
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 16th February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Rod Kelly Quartet
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 20th February
Blossoms
The Vryll Society
Viola Beach
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th February

Altern 8

Doors: 10pm

Monday 22nd February
Sam Kelly Band
feat. Gregor Hilden
Doors: 8pm

Tuesday 23rd February
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 24th February
Sundara Karma
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 1st March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 8th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Heavy Dexters
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 10th March
Fickle Friends
Doors: 7pm

Friday 11th March
Will Johns
Malaya Blue
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 15th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Band
Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 18th March
CC Smugglers
Doors: 7pm

Monday 21st March
Ben Poole
Stevie Nimmo
Doors: 8pm

Tuesday 22nd March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited
Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 4th April
J W Jones
Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 8th April
Hot Club of Cowtown
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 14th April
Rob Tognoni
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 23rd April
Tigertailz
Last Great Dreamers
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 27th April
Laurence Jones
Doors: 8pm

Friday 6th May
Cale Tyson Band
Doors: 7pm

Monday 25th July
Black Circles
Doors: 8pm

Wednesday 26th October
The Sunshine Underground
Doors: 7pm

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NEWS

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OXFORD IS SET TO HOST COMMON PEOPLE NEXT YEAR. The two-day music festival will take place in South Park over the weekend of the 28th – 29th May.

Common People is organised by the same team that runs Bestival on the Isle of Wight, and Camp Bestival in Dorset every year, consistently hailed as two of the best festivals in the UK.

The first Common People event took place in Southampton this year and will be twinned with the Oxford event in 2016, both events taking place simultaneously with the main stage line-ups, curated by DJ Rob da Bank, likely to be swapped between the cities. This year's event featured sets from Fat Boy Slim, Clean Bandit, Band of Skulls, De la Soul and Jaguar Skills, amongst others.

The South Park event, run in conjunction with Oxford City Council, will have a capacity of 30,000 and feature three stages, including a local bands stage, curated by *Nightshift*, and a DJ stage. It will be the largest music event to take place in South Park since Radiohead's homecoming show in 2001.

One of Bestival's directors involved in the organisation of Common People is Ben Turner, who grew up in Oxford, is familiar with the local music scene and is keen to make local acts an integral part of the event. Talking to *Nightshift* about the announcement of the festival he said, "With Common People, we're trying to support the smaller cities in the UK who contribute a huge amount to the music landscape but often get little back. Oxford has an incredible history with music on many levels and I've been lucky enough to have grown up in one of its most exciting eras –when hanging out at the Manic Hedgehog record store, going to the Co-Op Hall or Oxford Poly for gigs was as valuable as listening to John Peel or reading the *Melody Maker*, where I then went on to work and start my career in the music industry. I've been travelling and spreading my vision of music around the world for 20 plus years through various mediums, but our team's collective success and contribution with Bestival has been a high-point. We decided to do a metropolitan festival in Southampton with Common People and we all found the experience inspiring and rewarding, and when thinking of a second city, there was honestly only one option we considered: Oxford. A lot of this was subconsciously because of South Park, which I've been saying for many years is one of the best festival sites in the world. We all believe it is, and we hope to bring Oxfordshire together for our unique combination of fun and creativity."

Common People will be a non-camping event with tickets on sale for each day. Prices are set to be a bargain £27.50 per day, while everyone who signs up for the festival's mailing list will be put in a draw to get their ticket for just £10.

The first set of acts due to play will be announced in early December. To sign up to the mailing list and find out more, visit commonpeople.net.

COWLEY ROAD CARNIVAL is back again next year on Sunday 10th July. The annual celebration of east Oxford life, music, food, dance and more, attracted 45,000 people to Cowley Road this year. To get involved, volunteer or just find out more, go to www.cowleyroadcarnival.co.uk.

EARLYBIRD TICKETS FOR CORNBURY FESTIVAL 2016 are on sale for a limited time now. Next year's event takes place over the weekend of the 8th-10th July at Great Tew Estate. Adult camping tickets are £165, with discounts for under-16s and over-70s. You can also now become a Cornbury Friend, with an annual £100 standing order giving you a 30% discount on up to eight adult festival tickets, offering a potential saving of £480. To find out more and book your tickets, visit www.cornburyfestival.com.

RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL will take place over the weekend of the 23rd-24th July 2016. Oxfordshire's largest free music festival takes place on Mill Field in Charlbury, with two days of local bands across three stages. Stick it in your diary.

SUPERNORMAL is back again in 2016. The music and art festival returns to Braziers Park, near Wallingford, over the weekend of the 5th-7th August. The artist-curated, not-for-profit event is renowned for its leftfield line-up, with this year's sold-out event featuring sets from Trembling Bells, AR Kane, Charles Hayward and Necro Deathmort. Find out more at www.supernormalfestival.co.uk.

MARTIN CATHY will headline the **Oxford Folk Weekend** in 2016. The annual festival returns over the 15th-17th April, at venues in the city centre. Earlybird tickets are already on sale at www.folkweekendoxford.co.uk

UPRISING returns for a second outing this month. The unsigned bands showcase, run jointly between the O2 Academy and BBC Oxford Introducing, takes place on Friday 11th December at the O2 with sets from My Grey Horse, Tremorheart and The Fixation, with more acts to be added. Acts wanting to play future Uprising nights should upload their songs to the BBC Uploader at www.bbc.co.uk/music/introducing/uploader.

BAD COVER VERSION host their latest charity music quiz at The Big Society on Cowley Road on Tuesday 15th December. The multi-media quiz will raise money for Oxford Homeless Pathways and Aspire. It starts at 7.30pm.

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.

OXFORD GIGBOT provides a regular local gig listing update on Twitter ([@oxgigbot](https://twitter.com/oxgigbot)), bringing you new gigs as soon as they go live. They also provide a free weekly listings email. Just contact oxgigbot@datasalon.com to join.

Much as your bank / privatised utility company / phone provider are "experiencing a high volume of calls right now," here at *Nightshift* we're experiencing a high number of releases and demos by local acts. Which is great – don't get us wrong, this makes us very happy that you're busy making music. But it does mean we don't always have room to review everything as quickly as we'd like. If you are planning on releasing something please let us have it in plenty of time. If we get a release on deadline day with a note saying "this came out yesterday," you're pretty much buggered. Also, we reserve the right to decide if something is a release or a demo. A couple of tracks stuck up on Soundcloud is a demo, whether you think so or not. Oh, and the usual stuff – make sure you include a contact number with releases and demos, and make sure you stick enough stamps on the envelope if it's a CD. This will put us in a good mood before we start reviewing. And that's what you want, right?

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DESERT STORM



“I THINK WE’VE IMPROVED ON HYGIENE since the last tour. I don’t remember anybody urinating into a bottle whilst driving this time, or taking a slash out of the van whilst on the motorway. We stopped on hard shoulders and service stations this time.”

DESERT STORM’S ALL-CONQUERING road trip continues, taking the gospel of Oxford rock music to the world. But thankfully our very own noisy-bastard barbarians are honing their on-tour behaviour as well as their music. Last time we interviewed the band for the front cover, following the release of their second studio album, ‘Horizontal Life’, the quintet were enjoying some of the squalor and debauchery that life on the road brings, including the spectacle of their manager pissing out of the door of a moving van on the motorway.

featured them. “Last year we did an eighteen-date UK and Ireland tour with Karma To Burn, and a five-date UK tour with Nashville Pussy; this year we went out for a week in the UK with Hang The Bastard, and then a two-week headline tour where we played Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Poland. I think the highlights were the shows in Berlin and Oss; both were really well attended and we partied hard. The lowlight was when we missed the Nottingham show on the Nashville Pussy tour; we ran out of annual leave so were touring and working every day, which was brutal. We hit bad traffic and missed the show.”

“It’s becoming difficult to discern between all the tours, it all kind of rolls into one big party,” adds Matt Ryan, the lava’n’bourbon-voiced singer whose malevolent growl and startling lyrical imagery helps propel Desert Storm’s eclectic, heavyweight blend of stoner rock, old school metal, sludge, psychedelia and blues. “The magic of the Dover to Calais ferry has waned a little, and the crap ferry food has become something of a ritual. I think any night where we’ve had to sleep on a steering wheel or underneath a kitchen table after days on the road is a lowlight. Stand still traffic, stairs in venues and getting grilled by police is down there too. Also, every member of the band became ill at some point. But taking to the stage is always the highlight of any night, and you find that getting up there and blasting through a set is not only therapeutic but also helps to sweat out any cold you might have.”

WHILE LIFE ON THE ROAD, WITH THE freedom and potential for adventure, is the very essence of the rock and roll dream, it is rarely glamorous, particularly if you’ve got a day job to factor in – something that has prevented Desert Storm spending even more time out on tour over the last few years. The band (alongside Ryan and Matt are guitarist Chris White, bassist Chris Benoist and drummer – and Ryan’s twin brother – Elliot Cole) are no strangers to hard graft, ready and willing to put in the hours, and miles, that have, step by step, earned Desert Storm a reputation that extends far beyond their native Oxford.

ELLIOT: “None of us get enough holiday to be able to tour as much as we’d like. We still have to do some tours whilst working. In that case, we try to make sure all the dates are relatively close to Oxford so we don’t end up getting back at 4 or 5 in the morning before starting work.”

MATT: “It can be tough; we all have commitments in Oxford so inevitably have to return from whatever corner of the world we find ourselves in. Returning to work after late nights and exhaustion, as the post-tour blues begin to set in can be a bit depressing. All our annual leave goes on tours or recording, so it’s been a while since we got a holiday. This industry is notoriously difficult to get right, but hey, it’s a long way to the top if you want to rock and roll.”

MAYBE NOT AT THE SUMMIT YET, Desert Storm’s graft is paying dividends. In particular, their extensive European jaunt has won them a whole new army of fans.

RYAN: “Europe was a *lot* of fun. We’ve been to Antwerp, Oss and Berlin before and it was cool to

go back. It was great to visit Poland; Poznan is a beautiful city and incredibly cheap. Hard to pick a favourite. I guess out of all of the places we got to see more of Poznan and Oss, which was cool, but the best shows were Berlin, Oss and Antwerp.”

MATT: “Every night was a success, and the UK leg was just as fun. It was our first venture into Poland and it’s always exciting to play new cities. That said, returning to venues we’ve performed at before and seeing familiar faces after hours on the road is always a pleasure. It’s tough to pick a favourite when there are so many aspects to consider – turnout and crowd response; the venue itself; how we do on merch; how accommodating the promoters are; how much rock and roll is involved. Certain nights we can party and some we have to rest up for the long drives ahead. What I really liked was the variety of venues we are able to play: bars, cafes, halls, squats. Every night is a new adventure and a new experience as the bus pulls up outside an unfamiliar location.”

HAVING EARNED SO MUCH OF THEIR reputation supporting bigger names, we wonder if it felt daunting to go out – so far from home – as a headline act.

RYAN: “It was a bit daunting, but I think this last tour showed that we are building a profile and are able to headline shows now. It’s always great doing big supports as it usually means bigger venues and more people, and we love that, but we don’t want to be seen as a support band all the time.”

MATT: “It’s important to go it alone. You can find yourself in a ‘forever the bridesmaid, never the bride’ type situation if you don’t brave it and take the plunge on headline shows and tours. It’s important to get a balance really; festivals are important too. We’re just as capable of delivering the finale performance of an evening as the opening performance and we absolutely decimate the venue wherever we are on the bill.”

Did you find you’d won new fans from those previous tours?

ELLIOT: “Definitely; when we played in Antwerp and Oss we had a lot of people coming out to see us that had seen us on previous visits. In the UK I think we had built up quite a solid fan base from previous tours and high profile support slots.”

MATT: “That’s the purpose of going out on support tours: you’re out there in the hope that there may be a few fans of the headline band that dig what you’re doing. It’s like the difference between performing in familiar and unfamiliar territories. You play a new town and it’s a proving ground where maybe only a handful of people have listened to you online, and it’s an opportunity to make new fans out of everyone in the venue. Returning to play the same venues or towns is an opportunity to re-affirm your ability to deliver on stage, with at least one or two people to win over who have never heard you.”

OF COURSE THE BIG STEP UP FOR DESERT Storm came with the release of ‘Omniscient’ in January – the band’s most fully released album yet, staying true to their beastly stoner-rock sound while strengthening their melodic edge and burrowing deeper into the blues and psychedelic elements of their music.

It earned them a KKKK review in *Kerrang!* as well as excellent reviews in *Metal Hammer*, *Terrorizer* and *Zero Tolerance*.

RYAN: “It’s been great; the press has been good, lots of positive reviews and some radio play and a few features. ‘Horizontal Life’ was well received too but probably didn’t get quite as many reviews;

we probably did longer tours around the release of ‘Horizontal Life’ though, and shifted a lot of copies. ‘Omniscient’ was a bit slow at first; the tours weren’t in place really, but things are going better now we’ve been playing more shows again, and the vinyl really seems to sell well in Europe.”

Desert Storm never sit still for long, though. Despite so much time out on tour, they’re already thinking ahead to album number four, writing and playing new songs on recent dates.

ELLIOT: “We have plans to go back into the studio with Jamie Dodd in January. We have pretty much written most of the next album now, so it should all be ready to record come the New Year.”

MATT: “We’ve got new material which is lined up and is steadily being introduced into our sets, but we are jamming out tunes from ‘Omniscient’ as they are real crowd pleasers. It’ll be a while yet before we turn a new album out.”

How do you feel that might turn out?

ELLIOT: “We’re feeling confident with how it’s sounding. It’s definitely got a lot heavier and slightly more progressive. It still has that Desert Storm sound though, and carries on from where

“Any night where we’ve had to sleep on a steering wheel or underneath a kitchen table after days on the road is a lowlight. Stand still traffic, stairs in venues and getting grilled by police is down there too.”

‘Omniscient’ left off. We’ve been dropping a few of the new tracks into our live sets since the summer and they seem to be going down really well, which is a good sign.”

MATT: “We’re still slightly undecided on what format the next album will take, whether we should keep the same varied style with the genres all mixed, or separate our sounds on different releases, or multiple disks. We don’t want to pigeonhole ourselves because we love playing bluesy stuff, heavy stuff and riffy stuff, but it’s a question of how best to put it all out there.”

One of the absolute highlights of ‘Omniscient’ is the song ‘Home’, which, as with ‘Gaia’ on the previous album, shows a very different side to the band’s heavier, more stoner sound. It’s slow, acoustic, almost tender, closer to Leonard Cohen or Mark Lanegan in its dark, gravelly introspection. Could Desert Storm foresee maybe doing a full EP or mini album of songs in a similar style?

ELLIOT: “We do always like to drop at least one acoustic track onto our records, just to give the listener’s ears a rest from the brutality.”

MATT: “Never say never. I think this sort of harks back to the previous point about how best to release our mix of styles; if we start to dissect and pull apart all of our sounds we could end up with five or six albums. There’s a danger of stifling what we do, because we can’t have metal creeping in on the blues album, or stoner in on the folk. Look at a track like ‘The Void’ or ‘Sway of the Tides’, which both have softly sung and clean sections amongst the heavy. We’ve done a few acoustic shows in the past which have been interesting; it’s not quite as energetic or frantic but it’s more intimate and raw.”

WHILE DESERT STORM’S STAR continues to rise across the UK and Europe, their roots remain firmly in Oxford, both with their regular hometown shows, and with Ryan and Elliot’s fantastic Buried In Smoke Promotions shows, which bring some of the best underground

rock and metal bands to Oxford. Given their increasing success, do they ever feel like local scene leaders?

RYAN: “No, not at all; we do our thing and maybe venture out of town more than some local bands, but there are a lot of good bands here, it’s just a question of how hard they push themselves. We just have a lot of drive, passion and commitment and a lot of the opportunities Desert Storm have had have been because we’ve made them happen by organising tours etc.”

MATT: “Shows in Oxford are when we are in our element; it’s the familiarity of it all, it’s home. I wouldn’t say that we’re leaders as such, but young fans approaching the merch stand and telling you their favourite song or how long they’ve been listening to you is really rewarding. It gives us great pleasure to hear that we’ve been inspirations to people as we ourselves are influenced and inspired by artists out there.”

While metal and heavy rock has always been very popular in Oxfordshire, we don’t have a local band from the scene that can seriously pack out venues like the local indie scene does.

CHRIS W: “I don’t know, it is strange. It baffles me how a cool band like Undersmile can get loads of hype worldwide and play to big crowds at Roadburn festival, yet struggle in Oxford. We generally do pretty well in Oxford, like last time we headlined the O2 it was packed. But I think it helps when you play only a couple of times a year in this city. Indie is definitely more popular here. As for who might change things in Oxford, I’m not sure; there are plenty of cool bands but I’m not sure that will change any time soon.”

How differently do you feel Desert Storm are viewed outside of Oxford compared to in?

CHRIS W: “We have a lot of incredible fans from all over the UK, overseas too. I feel that our Oxford fans feel that we are representing them and the heritage of the Oxford scene whenever we play, which we are very proud to be able to do. People outside of Oxford maybe don’t have that same sense of ownership over the band. Until we play abroad of course, when we represent the UK!”

OXFORD SHOULD BE VERY, VERY PROUD to have Desert Storm representing us. And as the band climb closer and closer to that rock summit, the UK scene will equally learn to be proud of them. But for now we have to let the boys go – they’re off to another round of gigs, unsurprisingly. Dates with Mondo Generator and Atomic Bitchwax for starters, then a brace of shows with Orange Goblin, including that O2 show. And then it’s back over to Germany and The Netherlands before Christmas. Hey, hey, rock and roll will never die. It’s not getting much by way of sleep neither.

But lastly, if their poor, long-suffering tour van were to break down in an actual desert, which member of the band would survive the longest?

CHRIS W: “I don’t know who would survive, but Benoist would be the first to go; he would commit suicide due to not being able to take a shower.”

MATT: “If our bus broke down we could just siphon off the remaining petrol into a generator and set up on the sand and blow chunks out of the landscape with some crushing jams. We’d play until we were all dead but that sustain would last forever. I guess the sustain lasts the longest in that scenario.”

‘Omniscient’ is out now on Secret Law/Plastic head. Desert Storm support Orange Goblin at the O2 Academy on Monday 7th December. Visit www.desertstormband.com for more dates.

RELEASED

WATER PAGEANT

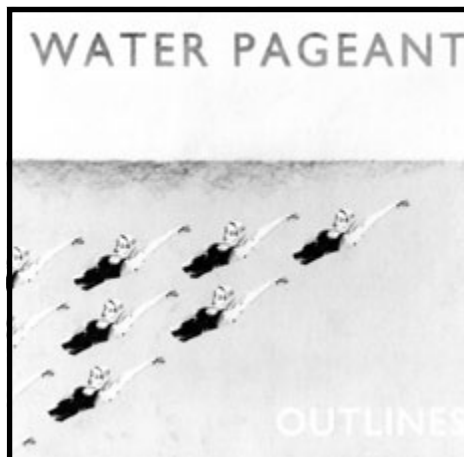
‘Outlines’

(Glide)

While there is a danger that this brand of plaintive, sensitive record can appear reedy and inconsequential, Water Pageant’s debut is a very fine album indeed. In common with the best of the genre – Sufjan Stevens, Bon Iver and Oxford’s own Liu Bei – there is a richness to the band’s sound, embellished by lush keyboards, elegant brass and ornate guitar patterns which, while far from rococo, lend real lushness, depth and body to the music.

Every track repays attention. ‘Patterns’ recalls the unfairly underrated oeuvre of mid-noughties band Joy Zipper; ‘Creatures of Your Thoughts’ is partly sung in French and, given its enveloping trumpet refrain, would have slotted in nicely into the most recent Beirut album, while ‘Wave is Due’ inevitably recalls Warpaint’s ‘Undertow’ before launching into a luscious sequence of baroque instrumentation that would not have disgraced Felt in their prime.

With ‘Layers’, Water Pageant vocalist Nick Tingay sings of forming layers to protect oneself and his voice, in a deeply affecting but never whining way, reaches that breaking point that stays just short of becoming over emotional. It’s a remarkable vocal performance



throughout and Lizzy McBain’s similar contribution to ‘Cavalry’ is up there with the best of them.

Lyricaly, there is also much to enjoy and ‘Furniture in the Road’ in particular resonates with me as a resident of Oxford’s East Avenue. Appearances at the recent Oxjam event as well as the most recent edition of the Punt have really served to bolster the band’s reputation. This outstanding album is a further breakthrough. On their website, they describe their predicament as “fragile”. It’s up to us to ensure that doesn’t remain the case.

Rob Langham



ESCHATON AND FOCI'S LEFT

‘Ultraviolet’

(Omni Music)

A visit to Omni Music’s website is a trip back to an era in the 90s of ambient electronics and drum&bass, with artist names like Cycom and Cavernous Space. The artwork is all gaudy new age and sci-fi imagery, with dozens of releases from seventy bands or individuals, all now so easy with internet distribution.

This album, a collaboration between the label’s boss Eschaton and local musician Foci’s Left, begins a little uncertainly, with a few tracks

sounding like soundtrack pieces to past science fiction films, though ‘Latitudes’ throws some lightweight drum&bass into the mix. Things then get glitchy and discordant and the album risks losing its way, ‘Upside Down Sea’ a series of sweeping chords that end up nowhere in particular. ‘Jack-O’-Lantern’ is little more than filler, another soundtrack to something you didn’t want to watch in the first place, but ‘Chameleon’ brings back the d&b, this time with a harder edge and some darting sub-bass that recalls the wonderful Omni Trio.

‘Haunted Canyon’ has a Celtic feel that brings to mind some of Van Morrison’s more esoteric excursions, but by now the album seems to have found some cohesion and purpose; ‘Jaime’ is the focal point, a fifteen-minute excursion immediately conjuring up a journey, with alluring rhythmic and percussive patterns mixed in and out and a sample reversing halfway through. With more sophisticated programming the whole piece could have come from the mind of Underground Resistance’s Robert Hood, though the lightness of the beats displays an almost pastoral side that stops short of actual techno.

That the album holds the attention for a full 67 minutes is the easiest but greatest plaudit to bestow. In an age where electronic music is created and shared in countless bedrooms every hour of every day it’s not difficult to spot genuine talent, and there’s more than enough here.

Art Lagun

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HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES

‘The Promised Land’

(Self released)

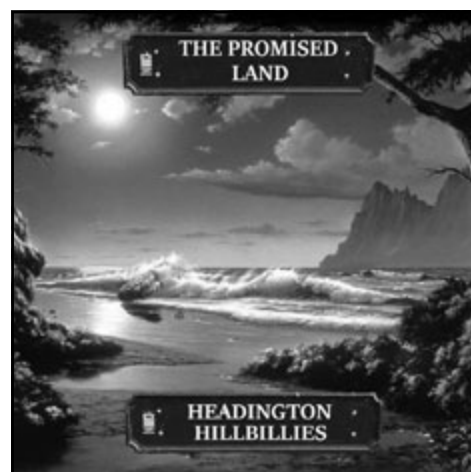
It’s almost beyond cliché nowadays for many folk, roots, jazz or even classical acts to claim they’re playing classic sounds with punk rock spirit. It’s as if they don’t have the courage of their convictions that traditional music can’t stand the test of time, or bring itself up to date in more inventive ways, particularly when almost invariably the result is as punk rock as a pair of crushed velvet flares.

We get it again with Headington Hillbillies, an eight-piece ensemble who’ve been bringing their own little piece of the bluegrass states to Oxford’s taverns for almost a decade now. Any link to punk is misleading, since these nine songs are as steeped in century-old tradition as it’s possible to get. Instead, they simply bring some Oxford referencing lyrics to their down-home folk in a similar way to The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band’s Shire r’n’b (incidentally, one of the few acts who really do bring some punk spirit to play), as well a hefty dose of Home Counties folk whimsy. In the former camp is ‘Cheat The Reaper of Jericho’, while in the latter is the twee ‘How Green Are You?’.

Where Headington Hillbillies could really do with a bit of punk rock energy is in the stilted ‘Rollin Down the Road’, which feels like a hoedown on slow down, with perhaps the least convincing “I say Whoa! I Say yeah” call and response we’ve heard. Thing is, while musically the band feel rootsy and vaguely authentic, lead singer Howard Taylor lacks the gritty authority to make this kind of tribute to the old ways work, and he’s often shown up by his backing vocalists, notably on album opener and highlight ‘The Promised Land’, with its distinct echoes of Gillian Welch and Alison Krauss, as well as the real star of the album, fiddler and banjo player Alan Fowler.

Overall, ‘The Promised Land’ is passable but far too polite; not sure polite was ever part of punk’s spirit.

Dale Kattack



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RELEASED

LITTLE RED

‘The Huntsman’ / ‘Teeth We Have’

(All Will Be Well)

Like fairytales, good music is best when a little darkness creeps into the story – Brothers Grimm rather than Walt Disney every time. Local folk trio Little Red don’t go the full gothic murder ballad hog, but there are shadows aplenty across these twin EPs.

‘The Huntsman’ is the band’s straight-ahead EP, four songs of black dogs, unfaithful boys, unseen dread and even a big bad wolf. The first of these is an obvious metaphor for depression and its ceaseless pursuit of the writer (“This black dog follows me home / This black dog is everywhere I go”), while the wolf equally sticks around to add a hint of menace to proceedings across two songs. The wonderful beauty-and-the-beast contrast between the female and male vocals (Hayley Bell and Ben Gosling plus guest Jack Cade for ‘Mr Wolf’) brings to mind both Tindersticks and Isobel Campbell’s albums with Mark Lanegan, and for all the songs’ sweet, limpid nature there are no sun-kissed meadows here, only dark, foreboding woods. The breathless ‘Chapters’ sings softly of something wicked this way coming, urging us to hide the children away, while the EP’s title track, nominally the lightest song here, quickly finds its opening couplet, “I once knew a boy with eyes of the sea / He loved me and gave me such jewels,” descending into a cursed life of sadness and drink as the boy is off in “other girls’ chambers.”

If ‘The Huntsman’ is folk-pop of an old world bent, ‘Teeth We Have’ is a set of electronic



mixes of Little Red’s songs, the best of which bring them blinking into the 21st Century but keep the darkness about them. Best of these are Tiger Mendoza’s two mixes, Ian de Quatros’ ear for a scene-setting soundtrack helping bring a nervy, cyborg edge to ‘The Huntsman’, while ‘Petals’ is a woozy Lemon Jelly-like trip, the song filtered through a lysergic haze. Foci’s Left’s take on ‘OTDG’ is heavy and disorientating but leaves too little of the original song in the mix.

When Little Red released their debut album last year we wondered if they were quite strong enough for a full album. These collections of songs prove just how far they’ve come on since then; their own material finds a neat balance between simple, traditional songwriting and darkness, while working with inventive producers like Tiger Mendoza shines a fresh light on their music. Or more appropriately, casts a starker shadow across them. A band well worth following. Just not into the woods.

Dale Kattack

DUBWISER

‘Dubwiser Dancehall EP II’

(Self released)

‘Dubwiser Dancehall EP II’ is the second in the stalwart Oxford reggae(ish) band’s DD releases. A self-release, this sonic initiative is notable both for providing a platform for young guest artists, and denoting a certain branching out from their traditional sound. The two are, of course, related. Depending on one’s perspective, this move is either to be expected by those acquainted with the band’s similarly experimental first EP, and previously rhythm driven – but not necessarily reggae based – excursions, or challenging and unexpected. In any case opener ‘Ready Steady Go, Yeah’, is a dubstep-esque, UK hip-hop/ grime style crossover offering; it has a moody, warmly threatening feel, and features funky newcomers Capt’n K and ARA. ‘Boom a Rang’, with veteran Killa Kela and Dubwiser drummer

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THE BALKAN WANDERERS

‘So It Goes’

(Tigmus)

As pointed out previously in *Nightshift*, it’s a mistake to pigeonhole this Balkan influenced/ gypsy/klezmer and ska/punk group as merely a high energy Balkan mash-up band. Balkan Wanderers’ instinct for an appealing tune, the wonderfully warm and sinuous clarinet of Clare Heaviside, and the nuanced voice of Antica Culina, whether singing Croatian or English, have all been cited as lifting the band out of the ordinary.

All these attractive elements and more are present along with some pulsating Balkan rhythm on this new five-song EP, ‘So It Goes’ (the title being perhaps a nod towards Kurt Vonnegut, or maybe The Verve, or Nick Lowe). Across the whole EP there’s pleasing variety and not a weak track. ‘I Fell For You’ has the band exploring unusual territory for them as its sparse, measured, almost minimalist setting is a break with the Balkan influence. Add Antica’s appealing, heavily-accented English vocal, clever lyrics and an earworm of a tune and you have a track which reels you in. Almost as engaging is the lovely, lilting ‘Jovano Jovanke’, a traditional folk song, on which Antica’s Croatian vocal and Clare’s clarinet duet beautifully.

Flair with lyrics is a feature of most tracks. ‘Land’ is a powerful and timely song opposing prejudice against migrants. Its seriousness contrasts with the droll, catchy, ska-influenced ‘Lost at Sea’, which proposes a Reggie Perrin-type solution to personal financial crisis. On both tracks Stu Wigby takes the lead vocal, providing a further twist to the band’s sound. This new release is a step up from the band’s debut EP. It’s a pity though that we need to strain to make out some of the vocal on opener ‘Clouds’, but if you require any reminder that we’re lucky that Balkan Wanderers found their way into the Oxford scene, just put on this classy EP.

Colin May



AFTER THE THOUGHT

‘Dregs’

(Self released)

I sometimes feel that I’d like post-rock-instrumental-indie-ambient types to either cheer up, lighten up or both. That’s not to suggest that Matt Chapman-Jones – aka After The Thought – is either down in the dumps or takes himself too seriously, but... an album called ‘Dregs’ wrapped in monochrome artwork, showing moodily burning embers just doesn’t scream “Hey! Colourful fun party time over here!” Should it? Not really. There’s nothing wrong with a bit of sullen navel-gazing. It’s not as if the eleven pieces that make up ‘Dregs’ are a downward spiral into darkness and despair. Indeed, while the album meanders along at a mellow pace, and although it features little in the way of boom-bap melodic shock and surprise, it’s a calming and engaging piece of work.

Opener ‘cr 2.0’ sets the scene: repeated waves of electronic sound given life and structure by simple drumbeats and subtle harmonic layers. It’s like minimal, relaxing IDM – music to wash over you rather than demand attention at every twist and turn. ‘hollow stars’ introduces guitar arpeggios to the mix; ‘tealeaves’ reduces things to more minimal washes of sound, while ‘fearless (the bells 2.0)’ is maybe the album’s most song-like piece, due to some contextually strident chord and structure progressions. The 76-second ‘string’ is another shifting tonal piece, leading into ‘looking down’, which reintroduces guitar and in doing so reminds me a little of The Workhouse. ‘antilles’, ‘#7’ and



‘river’ are a delicious (off-)centrepiece to the album: perhaps its highlight in their purity and clarity with a small number of carefully-chosen sounds. ‘samplistic’ picks up the pace and the mood as the most upbeat track on the album, before ‘the road goes over on’ seems designed to remind us that darkness and cold are endlessly around the corner.

In all, this is a nice-sounding album, albeit one that feels slightly unsure of its motives; does it want to be relaxing? Or tense? Or tuneful? Perhaps this lack of clarity is always going to be at the core of music that has no vocals or strongly traditional song structures, and that feels more often than not like blurred half-memories. Focussing on the *less* defined pieces, dropping some of the beats and melodies and moving into an even more pure, simplistic and meditative space could see After The Thought really shine.

Simon Minter

JULIA MEIJER

‘Ocean’ / ‘England’

(Self released)

Hailing from Sweden, Julia Meijer moved to Oxford a few years ago and has carved out an enviable reputation for herself, from playing the Punt to performing at the launch of the Andy Warhol and William Morris exhibition at Modern Art, as well as to a packed folk barn at Wilderness Festival.

Her debut single finds her casting a wistful eye over her homeland and her new home, ‘Ocean’, about Sweden, suitably elegant, Julia’s voice equally airy and pensive, with a simple, irresistible purity about it, managing to be simultaneously breathless, questing and something approaching playful – a difficult trick to pull off on a song that seems to question the singer’s very identity. But it’s ‘England’ that shows her at her best, her voice spreading its wings tentatively at first but with increasing confidence over a sparse, tidy bed of synth hums and slowly tumbling drums – unobtrusive quality from a band that features Guillemots’ Greig Stewart and Flights of Helios and Epstein synthmeister Seb Reynolds.

Perhaps unusually, a song about England feels darker than one about Scandinavia, but it’s a gentle, reflective darkness rather than ruminative. Like ‘Oceans’ it sounds like Julia is uncertain of her place in the world, but on the strength of this debut, we’ll happily claim her for Oxford. If she feels lost, that’s our gain.

Dale Kattack



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TRACKS OF OUR YEAR

*So we come to the end of yet another year in Oxford music, and while we’ve a tendency to say this every time, it has been a pretty fantastic year. On the one hand we’ve seen some of our favourite local bands of yore reform, not least Ride, the band who first put Oxford on the world’s musical map. On the other, there continues to be a groundswell of excellent new acts around who promise to keep local pride running high. And of course we have more than our fair share of genuine big name stars, taking Oxford music to the masses. Not least **Foals**, who recently won Best Act In The World at the Q Awards. If you’ve ever seen them live, you’ll know just why they deserve such an accolade. Their fourth album, ‘What Went Down’, saw them getting bigger and bolder and it’s no surprise that the title track from that album sits proudly atop this year’s Nightshift end of year Top 25. As is traditional we’ve compiled our favourite songs from local acts from 2015, to give you a snapshot of what’s been great and good over the past 12 months. Head over to the Nightshift Facebook page to offer your own suggestions. And maybe make it your mission to go out and discover some of these acts for yourself.*



1. FOALS ‘What Went Down’

What a beast of a band Foals have become. The taut, muscular figure of Yannis Phillipakis in the video for ‘What Went Down’ perfectly reflected the song, with its breathlessly tense build-up and sublimely violent explosion at the point the dam could no longer hold the building pressure. What ‘Inhaler’ and ‘Providence’ had started, ‘What Went Down’ piled in to finish, with interest. There’s no holding Foals back, and no standing in their way – you’ll only get hurt. And so, after a hat-trick of second places since ‘Hummer’ topped this list at the end of 2007, Foals find themselves back on top of the pile. It’s exactly where Oxford’s most consistently exciting band deserve to be.

2. DUOTONE ‘Little White Caravan’

Like the proverbial swan gliding on a lake, Duotone’s music is all elegance and serenity on the surface, but furiously busy paddling beneath. Barney Morse-Brown constructs his songs by himself from loops and live playing, but his virtuosity still plays second bow to the gorgeous, raw emotion of his songs, as this simply breath-taking ode to love, loss and hope demonstrates. As a tune ‘Little White Caravan’ is almost lullaby simple but within its multi-layered duvet of words and music is a song of stunning beauty.

3. ESTHER JOY LANE ‘You Know’

More beautiful sorrow, here from the brightest new star to shine in the local pop firmament in 2015. Esther takes a whole raft of conflicting emotions and makes the sound as pure as cut diamond on this highlight from her superb debut

EP. Putting a lie to any ideas that purely electronic music can’t fully convey emotion, she mixes the DIY invention of Grimes with Sade’s soft-as-silk soul and London Grammar’s misty atmospherics and conjures a gloriously sad-eyed anthem for late-night reflection and at least three bottles of wine.

4. GAZ COOMBES ‘The Girl Who Fell To Earth’

Freed from the increasingly constrained expectations of Supergrass, Gaz’s second solo album ‘Matador’ found him free to explore middle-aged reflection, dadhood and more, which mightn’t sound like a barrel of pop fun, but actually made for his best music in a decade, the album emerging from a haze of cigarette smoke and Oxford drizzle to lay the man’s soul bare. This ode to his daughter is a gently frazzled mix of electronic wow and flutter, woozy psychedelia and simple, soulful acoustic balladry and possibly Gaz’s finest vocal performance to date.

5. STORNOWAY ‘The Road You Didn’t Take’

Stornoway too found themselves looking back on this single from their third album, ‘Bonxie’. Again taking the natural world as a metaphor for life, Brian Briggs stands atop a mountain and looks down on the different paths he could have taken to the summit. As with much of ‘Bonxie’ the song paints humans and their concerns as something tiny amid the enormity of nature, but the sense of longing spreads as far and wide as the horizon.

6. UNDERSMILE ‘Emmenagogue’

If the universe moves slowly, Undersmile have always kept pace, as powerful and insistent as a lava flow. Second album ‘Anhedonia’ kept the stately pace, the haunted dolls house sense of menace and the outbreaks of sheer brutality, but also introduced a greater degree of nuance, subtlety and – whisper it (in a ghostly fashion) – tenderness, which made those moments of musical violence all the more terrifying. It’s an album that needs to be listened to in its entirety to fully absorb its power, but this particular highlight condenses everything that is glorious about Oxfordshire’s most uncompromising band into a (relatively) compact twelve minutes. Spellbinding.

7. MAIIANS ‘Sionara’

How do you follow a debut single as good as ‘Lemon’ – last year’s end of year runner-up? You keep on driving along that same highway is how. On ‘Sionara’ Maiians worked the classic layer-added-upon-layer-upon-delicate-layer dynamic, synth hums, guitar loops and disembodied vocal snatches repeated in almost idly rhythmic fashion, everything gradually morphing, becoming distorted, coruscating synths weaving around overdriven guitars, the intensity ratcheted up in increments until 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.

8. DESERT STORM ‘Queen Reefer’

And just in case you were worried this Top 25 was getting a bit maudlin or touchy-feely, here’s a band who’re only likely to touch you with a claw hammer, doubtless at full force on the back of your skull. With their third album ‘Omniscient’ helping them break through to major national press acclaim and a European headline tour (sponsored by *Terrorizer*) Desert Storm’s Cro-Magnon stoner-blues upped its ante a couple of notches with this rumble of rock thunder galloping over the horizon to carry you off on some wild, whisky-soaked adventure. Possibly involving Vikings.

9. CASSELS ‘Hating Is Easy’

Easy to hate the world and its wife when you’re a teenager living in Chipping Norton, a town that’s nowhere near as posh as Cameron, Brookes, Moss and co. might have you imagine. And so, brothers Jim and Loz Beck loaded all that bile

into a stripped-down, pissed-off, two-man double-barrelled bile attack that sounded like Drenge, Iceage and Slaves scrapping over who’s going to chuck the first petrol bomb and who necked the last can of Scrumpy Jack. They’ve lit the touchpaper, let’s hope 2016 sees them explode.

10. CAMERON A.G. ‘Lost Direction’

With a quavering, almost keening, voice, Cameron Grote sounds suitably lost at sea on this recent single, so simple and yet so strong you wonder if it wasn’t spun from spiders’ silk. Its sense of hopelessness – all plangent strings and piano – is offset by a melody as pretty and fragile as morning dew.

11. BALLOON ASCENTS ‘Someone’

Leading the charge of Oxford’s young generation, Balloon Ascents continue to mix and match styles and influences into an eclectic and intelligent form of not quite proggy electro-folk-pop, here, on the b-side of new single ‘Don’t Look Down’, sounding close to zonked on ketamine as Thomas Roberts’ dreamily questing voice floats amid sweet harmonies and electronic wows. Well sweet.

12. KONE ‘No Colour World’

Sparse, downbeat, monochrome post-punk pop from Kone, who, with this debut single, sounded like they’d stumbled through a fog of cigarette smoke from a studio where they’d just recorded a Peel session sometime around 1980, all set to head off on tour with The Passions or Young Marble Giants, heroically oblivious to the last three decades. Perfect shadowy music for dark autumnal evenings under an uncaring Tory government.

13. WATER PAGEANT ‘Cavalry’

Recognising the power of quietness and stillness in music, electronic folk-pop duo Water Pageant’s debut album ‘Outlines’ was perfectly timed for the onset of autumn, its melancholic reflection and insularity coming in amber and red shades like fallen leaves, Nick Tingay and Lizzie McBain’s delicate voices slowly and softly swirling around each other on this stark centrepiece. It’s simply gorgeous. Like a hug on a cold winter’s night.

14. A SILENT FILM ‘Paralyse’

Built for stadiums, it’s no surprise that A Silent Film are proper huge in the States, playing far bigger venues there than they ever can back in Blighty. Each and every song on their third, eponymous, album was an anthem, even the quiet ones, and not least this punchy electro rock slab of polished pop granite. It’s epic. Everything about A Silent Film is epic. Hands in the air, everyone. Lighters aloft. This one is going stratospheric.

15. SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE ‘Moroderhead’

Quality synth-pop in a world of insipid pretenders,

Space Heroes added that vital human element to their silicon pop dream, paying due homage to electro godfather Giorgio Moroder on this high point of their debut album, Tim Day’s cracked, almost plaintive voice a neat counterpoint to the song’s impassive incessant synth and bass pulse. The great man would doubtless approve.

16. VIENNA DITTO ‘Hammer & A Nail’

Vienna Ditto have a rare talent for chaotic finesse. They also have better songs than you and a singer, Hattie Taylor, who could be Oxford’s answer to Nina Simone. This slice of retro-futuristic sci-fi soul sounds like a torch song from a Mars colony jazz bar, sounding wonderfully like ‘House Of The Rising Sun’ through the dual lens of 19th Century bawdy French sing-songs and 21st Century post-everything muso culture.

17. MERMAID NOISES ‘Stay Young Long’

A Numan-sampling sunshiny synth-pop song about wasps? There is nothing here not to love, and with the combined classy talents of Karen Cleave from Les Clochards, and ATL?/Hot Hooves living legend Mac running the show, Mermaid Noises was always going to be a joy. ‘Mermaid Noise’ was one of Oxford’s most unassumingly great pop releases this year, packed with mischief, sweetness and just a little bit of bile. Discover them; love them.

18. ASHER DUST ‘This Life’

Oxford’s most consistently reliable musical maverick, Asher Dust’s restless imagination continues to give us genre-blending rough diamonds, his most recent album, ‘Righteous Boombox’, revealing his mercurial talent at its best, with this squelching, militantly ska-flavoured electronica bounce a particular favourite as we compiled this list. Ask us tomorrow and we’ll pick a different track. We’re just trying to keep up with the man himself, okay.

19. BUG PRENTICE ‘Nebraska Admiral’

With a gorgeous, dry, delicate voice, like the smoked-out ghost of Jeff Buckley, Ally Craig can make the most lopsided of songs feel like heartache’s sharpest arrow. On this particular highpoint of Bug Prentice’s album ‘The Way It Crumbles’, he conjures a beautiful, brooding lament that teeters on the edge of atonality and features unselfconsciously cornball rhyming couplets that could be a ghostly Kristin Hersh song rewritten by Ian Dury.

20. BEING EUGENE ‘The Desolation of a Place We Call Home’

Fucking great pummelling, nagging, stomping groove-core beastliness from Abingdon metalcore newcomers Being Eugene on their Demo of the Month-winning debut, the band packing some serious fury, which they tempered just right with a subtle, supple tech-metal edge. Not that there was much time to stand admire their skills, since you were too busy dodging each killer blow and merrily

breaking the furniture along to this splenetic wee belter of a tune.

21. DEATH OF H-FI ‘Swim Away’

As singer Lucy Cropper has taken a more prominent role in the band, Death Of Hi-Fi have delved deeper into their trip-hop side, as this swoonsome single displayed, Lucy’s appropriately breathless voice dreamily conjures images of drowning and being weightless amid a luxurious and languorous wash of ambient electronics and spaced-out guitars. Perfect chill-out music, just not while you’re having a bath – we’ll not be responsible for the consequences.

22. LITTLE BROTHER ELI ‘Who Do You’

From getting Demo Dumped for sounding like “Jamiroquai playing nursery rhymes” to topping the demo pile, being picked for the Punt and being declared one of the most fun live bands in town, Little Brother Eli certainly turned themselves round this year, casting a sartorially dapper figure across the city’s stages as they brought The Blues with an authenticity and freshness, not to mention some smart moves from singer Alex Grew. Here’s where Led Zep get jiggy with Red Hot Chili Peppers. Feel free to drink to excess and dance all night.

23. THE BIG SUN ‘Bruiser’

One of the many great things about the internet age is being able to discover stuff like this that’d you’d never find treading one of Oxford’s sticky pub stages, mainly because most of the band have never actually met each other. Out of Eynsham came young singer Berry Brown, her blossom and candyfloss voice melting into Dave Pemberton’s summery house production to make for a bittersweet slice of synth-pop that could be St Etienne dancing their sorrows away.

24. THE BALKAN WANDERERS ‘Pride’

Bringing a ray of eastern European folk-dance light to the local scene, Balkan Wanderers spread their cultural smorgasbord of sounds to take in influences from Russia and Turkey as much as the Balkans, and while they’re simply immense fun live, this highlight of their EP of the same name is a melancholic and righteous nod to Ukrainian tunesmithery and particularly poignant given current geopolitics. Fact: it is impossible to see The Balkan Wanderers live and not leave with a huge grin on your face.

25. VERA GRACE ‘Exposition’

And what better way to close this list than with some decidedly unfestive bile and fury, the like of which we’ve been rather blessed in Oxford this year. Witney’s Vera Grace have been kicking about for a while now but with new EP ‘Novella’ went national, displaying their versatility as they veered into industrial/gothic moodiness but never far from some seriously opulent metalcore mayhem as on this EP opener, reminding us rather splendidly of Fucked Up. Anything that reminds us of Fucked Up being A Very Good Thing Indeed.

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ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: **The Bullingdon** – Trad jazz, swing and bop from veteran clarinettist Alvin Roy and his Reeds.

Friday 4th
IRREGULAR FOLK CHRISTMAS SPECIAL:
St Barnabas Church
Such a shame Irregular Folk is no longer a regular gig club night (though how could it be regular with a name like that?), as those shows at The Cellar and beyond a couple of years ago really were a gateway into a very different world of music as well an intimate early introduction to future stars of folk music (Mercury Prize nominee C Duncan played for them not long ago). Organiser Vez Hoper still brings the night back to life for summer and winter specials though and tonight's pre-Christmas concert features one of our absolute favourite performers from those early shows, You Are Wolf, a band formed around the multifaceted talents of singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Kerry Andrew. Inspired by everything from Dolly Parton to Catalanian poetry, her songs, mostly about birds, often featuring birdsong, put her own and sometimes ancient traditional compositions through the technological mangler – all loops and electronic magic – to create genuinely spellbinding music. In particular her voice is something special – gorgeously pure, its various clicks, purrs, chirrups, whistles and tuts looped to create a murmur of sounds for the songs to fly within. And if that weren't enough, Kerry is also one of our favourite football writers. Joining You Are Wolf will be experimental vocalist Ben See and local folk/blues singer Claire le Master, while poet and wit George Chopping acts as compère for the evening. Lovely music in a lovely – and suitably irregular – setting. Pour yourself a large goblet of mulled wine and drink it all in.



DECEMBER

KARIMA FRANCIS + CHARLIE HOLE + ROBERTO Y JUAN: **The Library** – Tigmus host Blackpool singer Karima Francis' first Oxford show since her 2012 performance at Gathering Festival, out on tour to promote her third album, the follow-up to 'The Remedy', her striking voice having seen her compared to Damien Rice and Jeff Buckley as well as Tracy Chapman and Joni Mitchell. Support comes from Charlie Hole, which isn't a euphemism for a coke addict's nostril, but a heartfelt piano balladeer from Bournemouth, and Latin-pop-flavoured Balloon Ascents offshoot Roberto y Juan.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **The James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 2nd
THE EPSTEIN + GREAT WESTERN TEARS + ROBERT CHANEY: **The Handlebar, The Bike Zone, St Michael Street** – Two of Oxford's leading Americana lights launch singles from forthcoming albums at tonight's Pindrop show. Alt.country rockers The Epstein prepare to follow up their excellent 'Murmurations', continuing their widescreen Appalachian journey, while Great Western Tears' country folk is more intimate and bittersweet, a rootsy journey into some lost prairie saloon bar.
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: **The Cellar** – 80s, new wave, disco, synth-pop and glam club night, playing cool stuff, from Kate Bush and The Smiths to Madonna and Talking Heads.

THURSDAY 3rd
A RELUCTANT ARROW + THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE + NELSON & THE COLUMNS: **The Bullingdon** – It's All About the Music and All Will Be Well team up to bring together dark bluesy/folk-rock crew a Reluctant Arrow, Reading's superb acid-surf-psych people The Pink Diamond Revue and local folksters Nelson and the Columns.
WILLIE J HEALEY + GNARWHALS: **The Cellar** – Easy, loping "rock'n'stroll" from fast-rising local indie balladeer Willie, playing a hometown show to promote new single 'Saturday Night Feeling', and drawing comparisons to Jonathan Richman, War on Drugs and Jeff Healey.
PATCHWORK: **The Cellar** – Disco, house and techno club night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: **The Wheatsheaf** – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the swamp-blues, psych-funk and ska veterans.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre** – Oxford's longest running and best open club night, showcasing singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists every Thursday.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Half Moon**
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: **Jude the Obscure**
BLUES JAM: **The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

FRIDAY 4th
IRREGULAR FOLK WINTER SPECIAL: **St Barnabas Church** – You Are Wolf heads up this year's celebration of experimental folk and more – *see main preview*
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with UK:ID + PHYAL + SILK ROAD: **The Wheatsheaf** – Excellent rap-rave-electro-punk craziness from Glastonbury's UK:ID, back at tonight's Klub Kak after a storming set here in September, the festival regulars reminiscent of early-90s rave crossover acts like Senser and The Shaman. The local supporting cast includes longstanding grungers Phyal and new young heavy rockers Silk Road
THE MAGIC GANG: **The Bullingdon** – Psyche-tinged grunge-pop from Brighton's new indie hopefuls, coming in somewhere between Weezer, Peace and recent tourmates Wolf Alice.
THE RE-UP: **The Cellar** – Bass, grime and hip hop club night with DJs James Waddell, from *Isis* magazine, Oli C b2b MCB D, Dub Fusc and Fabian Fatodu.
TEN FÉ + SALVATION BILL + THE AUREATE ACT: **The Jericho Tavern** – Tigmus bring London duo Ten Fe to town for the first time, Ben Moorhouse and Leo Duncan having made their name playing a series of low-key shows in unusual settings – including a former industrial meat container – as well as relocating to Berlin for a year, that city's elegant electronica scene bringing itself to bear on their epic, orchestral pop. Following the acclaim accorded to summer single 'Make Me Better', they're set to release their debut album, produced by Ewan Pearson, who's worked with M83 and Jagwa Ma. Support from darkly humorous blues-pop man Salvation Bill, and inventive local electro-prog starlets The Aureate Act.
ROOTS RAMBLE: **East Oxford** – Francis Pugh & the Whisky Singers host another of their excellent travelling roots roadshows around assorted hostelrys in east oxford. Meet at The Half Moon at 8pm before heading off to hear Americana, folk and blues sets from The Whisky Singers, Great Western Tears, Swindlestock and The Knights of Mentis.
FLIGHTS OF HELIOS: **The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Spaced-out psychedelia, prog and shoegaze noise from the local faves, all set to release their debut album.
BON GIOVI: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – Bon Jovi tribute.
FIREGAZER + TONY BATEY + DUNCAN HARTLEY: **James Street Tavern** – CD launch gig for local Cajun-flavoured folk act Firegazer.
DISCO MUTANTES: **The Library** – Disco, funk, acid house and afrobeat club night.
STEAMROLLER: **Kidlington FC** – First of half a dozen shows around the county for the veteran local blues rockers, keeping the spirit of Hendrix and Cream alive.

SATURDAY 5th
MR B THE GENTLEMAN RHYMER + CORKY: **The Bullingdon** – Straight outta

Surrey, bespectacled, besuited and elegantly moustachioed chap-rapper Mr B gives hip hop a run through with the Queen's English, coming in at that point where De la Soul meets Noel Coward and Flanders & Swann. Or maybe NWA if they'd grown up in Hove and been more interested in cricket and fine tea.
SIMPLE with BODDIKA: **The Bullingdon** – House and techno club night with Boddika, the solo guise of Al Bleek, one half of drum&bass faves Instra:mental and head honcho of Nonplus Records.
DOORS ALIVE: **O2 Academy** – Tribute band.
DEF CON ONE + CRASHGATE + HIDDEN: **The Cellar** – OxRox host Newcastle's metal behemoths Def Con One, taking elements of thrash, metalcore and punk and sounding like a mash-up of Slayer, Pantera and Machine Head. Support from Kent's melodic hard rockers Crashgate, drawing on influences like Black Stone Cherry and Guns'n'Roses
EXTRA CURRICULAR: **The Cellar** – Techno club night with OBJEKT, Batu and Katiusha.
31HOURS + CHARMS AGAINST THE

Sunday 6th
ROBERT FORSTER:
Quaker Meeting House
For indie fans of a certain vintage, The Go-Betweens are as important as The Smiths or Buzzcocks, and their influence endures in myriad literate, heart-on-sleeve guitar-wielding romantics and dreamers. The band was formed in 1977 at the University of Queensland by Grant McLennan and Robert Forster and released six albums of increasingly glorious pop music until they disbanded in 1989, and another three in the noughties after briefly reforming. Sadly McLennan's death from a heart attack in 2006 put an end once and for all to the band but Forster remains a potent songwriter, a self-assured dandy who's both knowing and arch, and warmly romantic, both sides of his character coming out on new solo album 'Songs To Play' (sample song title: 'I Love Myself and I Always Have'), his voice still one of the most distinctive in indie. And while the man – who earlier this year was awarded an honorary degree by his alma mater – might easily have played a venue several times the size of this, he's chosen (courtesy of rejuvenated veteran promoters Swiss Concrete) somewhere both intimate and off the beaten track to perform. It's already sold out of course, but if you're not one of the lucky 100 or so who snapped up a ticket as soon as the gig was announced, go and buy the new album anyway. And if you never heard The Go-Betweens before, or you simply crave some joyously poetic pop, go and investigate their entire catalogue immediately.



EVIL EYE + ALAN JAGGS + SWEET PINK + FLEXI: **The Wheatsheaf** – It's All About the Music show with indie rockers 31Hours, psychedelic indie pop from Charms Against the Evil Eye, funky rock from Sweet Pink and more.
SHEPHERD'S PIE: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – Hard rock and metal covers, from Maiden and Metallica to Thin Lizzy and Black Sabbath.
PAUL McLURE + COLIN MacNEE: **The Swan, Ascot-under-Wychwood** – The Wychwood Folk club hosts Rutland troubadour Paul McClure, touring his new 'Smiling From the Floor Up' album.
THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: **The Three Horseshoes, Long Hanborough** – Blues and classic rock'n'roll.

SUNDAY 6th
HAPPY MONDAYS: **O2 Academy** – The Madchester reunion caravan continues to roll on, the original, and definitive, line-up of Manchester's baddest gang back round again to celebrate the 25th anniversary of 'Thrills'n'Pills and Bellyaches.
ROBERT FORSTER: **Friends Meeting House, St Giles** – The former Go-Betweens songmeister makes an intimate return to town – *see main preview*
STEAMROLLER: **The Bullingdon** – Heavy-duty blues-rock in the vein of Cream and Hendrix from the local survivors.
AFTER THE THOUGHT + KID KIN + LEE RILEY: **The Library** – Great triple bill of three of Oxford's leading electronic music protagonists, with atmospheric electronica, shoegaze and drone from After The Thought; alternately ambient and punishing electro-math-rock from Kid Kin and extreme drone-age from Lee Riley.
MONKEY FISTS + GEORGIE BIRD + DES BARKUS & FRIENDS + SINFICTION + COSMOSIS: **The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm)** – Klub Kakofanney host an afternoon of free live music in the Sheaf's downstairs bar.
ARTHUR + THE JESTERS + MOON LEOPARD + OXFORD UKULELES + RIVERSIDE VOICES + TONY BATEY: **Donnington Community Centre (5-9pm)** – Donnington Community Christmas party, with free live unplugged music from Donnington session regulars Jeremy Hughes with his Moon Leopard, alongside Ukulele orchestra Oxford Ukuleles, bluesman Tony Batey and more.
STRINGFEVER: **The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Inventive, genetically-modified string quartet, playing classical, pop and showtunes.

MONDAY 7th
ORANGE GOBLIN + DESERT STORM: **O2 Academy** – Riffs. Riffs as big as mountains – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 8th
JULIA MEIJER + KONE + WATER PAGEANT + RICHARD NEUBERG: **The Jericho Tavern** – Swedish ex-pat singer Julia Meijer returns to live action ahead of her new EP, her haunting, soulful acoustic pop drawing comparisons to Julia Holter and Vashti Bunyan. Top-drawer local support from sparse post-punk starlets Kone and luxuriantly intimate electro-folk-pop duo Water Pageant.
BULLINGDON HOT CLUB: **The Bullingdon** – Hot jazz and swing at the Bully's weekly jazz



Monday 7th
ORANGE GOBLIN / DESERT STORM:
O2 Academy
It's five years since Orange Goblin last came to Oxford, and it's been a quieter place for their absence, so it's good to have them back. *Nightshift's* ribcage needs a good shake-up. Orange Goblin have been cult heroes on the UK metal scene for 20 years now, continually ploughing a very singular path around the globe in that time while every couple of years finding time to unleash a new album of characteristically thunderous doom-laden metal. Inspired by Sabbath, Led Zep, Iron Maiden and Motorhead, they've taken forays into psychedelia, punk and thrash while always remaining at their core a sludgy doom-blues act, one that fits in bullishly alongside Monster Magnet, Kyuss and Clutch but that has continued to spread its wings with each new album. While the band are celebrating their twentieth anniversary this year, they almost didn't make it, the follow-up to 2007's critically-acclaimed 'Healing Through Fire' repeatedly stalled to the point the band looked like they might be finished, but 'A Eulogy For the Damned' saw the light of day in 2012 and last year they released the aptly- titled 'Back From the Abyss', which saw the band exploring a more soulful acoustic sound. Only kidding. It rocked like a bloody great bastard and has riffs as big as giant redwoods, "the definitive Orange Goblin album," according to frontman Ben Ward.

club.
INTRUSION: **The Cellar** – Monthly goth, industrial and ebm club night with Doktor Joy and Bookhouse.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **The James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 9th
BAD MANNERS + MAX SPLODGE: **The Cellar** – Super-heavyweight ska and punk from Buster Bloodvessel and chums – *see main preview*
WAY UP! **WEDNESDAY:** **The Cellar** – R'n'b, hip hop, reggae, UK garage and grime club night, with DJ Likkle Platinum and Young Linx.
THE SWEET + MUD 2 + THE RUBETTES: **The New Theatre** – It's Christmas! It's glam time! It's a blockbuster! – *see main preview*
RATTLE + WITCHING WAVES + ALNEGATOR: **The Wheatsheaf** – Quality noise as ever from Burn the Jukebox, tonight with Nottingham's stripped-back experimentalists



Wednesday 9th

THE SWEET / MUD 2 / THE RUBETTES: The New Theatre

“It’s *CHRISTMAS!*” bellows Noddy Holder by way of introduction to the festive season on Slade’s enduring Yuletide supermarket favourite ‘Merry Xmas, Everyone’, and since it really is that time of year again, let’s put aside any pretence of being cool and simply indulge our base instinct to eat, drink and be merry. And what better company to do so in than this trio of Slade’s contemporaries in 1970s glam-pop, going out under the Glitz, Blitz and 70s Hitz tour title. The Sweet, now helmed by original guitarist Andy Scott, sold 55million records in the 70s and enjoyed 34 number 1 singles across the world, including era-defining hits ‘Blockbuster’, ‘Ballroom Blitz’ and ‘Fox On the Run’, so it’s no surprise they’ve endured over five decades. This will be their final tour thought, as they’re hanging up their catsuits and stack heels, so make the most of them. They’re joined by Mud 2, still going a decade after singer Les Gray’s death, old faves like ‘Tiger Feet’ and ‘Lonely This Christmas’ a reminder that kitsch didn’t always mean crap. And completing this holy trinity of retro fun are The Rubettes, Alan Williams, alongside fellow original members John Richardson and Mick Clarke, veterans of over 30 million sales and timeless classic ‘Sugar Baby Love’. Even *Nightshift* can, for one night, forget extreme sludge-metal and minimal leftfield electro-pop and simply wallow in nostalgia, mulled wine and a little bit of glam rock silliness.

Rattles, mixing vocal harmonies with inventive percussion and featuring members of Fists and Kogumaza. They’re joined by indie punks Witching Waves and post-hardcore noisemakers Alnegator.
BELSHAZZA’S FEAST: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington – Best known as fiddle and oboe player with Bellowhead, Paul Sartin has been a staple on the English folk circuit for nigh on twenty years and together with accordion player Paul Hutchison makes up Belshazza’s Feast, bringing humour and

virtuosity to old English dance tunes, ballads, war poems and folk standards.

THURSDAY 10th

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the veteran local blues-rockers.
THE SHADES + TANNERS POOL + TRITONESUBS + THE MISSING PERSIANS + ANDY ROBBINS: The Jericho Tavern – 60s-styled r’n’b covers and originals from the local rockers, inspired by The Stones, early Beatles and Yardbirds.
HIP HOP CLUB NIGHT: The Cellar – Club night in aid of Syrian refugees.
BLAKE: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Yuletide songs from the classical male voice group and BRIT winners.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 11th

UPRISING with MY GREY HORSE + TREMORHEART + THE FIXATION: O2 Academy – The O2 showcase event in conjunction with BBC Oxford Introducing brings Stratford-upon-Avon’s My Grey Horse back to town, the band currently recording their second album with Supergrass producer Sam Williams and mixing up lo-fi American indie with Americana in the style of Swell and occasionally Pavement. There’s also 80s-fuelled pop in a similar style to Future Islands from Tremorheart and Oxford-London rockers The Fixation.
PEERLESS PIRATES + SKA MEISTERS + THE SHAPES + CHASING DAYLIGHT: The Bullingdon – It’s All About the Music present swashbuckling indie, rockabilly, Tex-Mex and spaghetti western-styled pop fun from Peerless Pirates, alongside ska crew Ska Meisters; eclectic r’n’b, 80s alt.rock and new wave popsters The Shapes and more.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, with a live set from London’s eight-piece fusion band Gypsy Butter, mixing up flamenco, jazz, Latin and gypsy jazz. Plus DJ sets from Giles Strother and club host Dan Ofer.
INVISIBLE VEGAS + TANNERS POOL: The Wheatsheaf – Americana, roadhouse rocking and blues from Invisible Vegas.
THE OXLEY-MEIER PROJECT: St John the Evangelist – Virtuoso guitar display from Nick Meier, from Jeff Beck’s band, and Pete Oxley, from world jazz group Curious Paradise, together playing music inspired by Turkish and Latin American sounds, on a variety of guitars.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: Mad Hatter’s CASH: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Johnny Cash tribute.

SATURDAY 12th

CHAD VALLEY + MAIANS + ESTHER JOY LANE + OSLO PARK: The Bullingdon – Homecoming gig for the local electro-pop star – *see main preview*
REIGN OF FURY + GEHTIKA + RETRIBUTION: The Wheatsheaf – Classic thrash in the vein of Nuclear Assault and Megadeth from West Midlands’ Reign of Fury, back in town to promote new album, ‘Death Be Thy Shepherd’. Black metal/thrash crossover

from Stratford’s Gehtika, coming in somewhere between Emperor and Lamb of God in support.
CHANNEL ONE + ROOTS GUIDANCE: The Bullingdon – Top-drawer roots reggae and dub with Channel One Soundsystem, run by legendary selector Mikey Dread and MC Ras Kayleb, and tonight joined by dub professor Roots Guidance.
UK FOO FIGHTERS: O2 Academy – Foos tribute.

ALL TAMARA’S PARTIES with CAMERON A.G. + CRANDLE + TAMARA + GEORGE CHOPPING: The Bear & The Bean, Cowley – Bleakly brilliant gothic balladeer Tamara Parsons-Baker rocks up at another off-the-beaten-track intimate venue, tonight with wonderfully lost’n’lonely songsmith Cameron AG, plus the sweetly quirky electro-acoustic Crandle, with master of ceremonies George Chopping.
RAN KAN KAN + DJ SI: Old Fire Station – Son Montuno and mambo classics from local Cuban big band Ran Kan Kan, plus Kwassa Kwassa’s DJ Si, playing African, Caribbean and Latin dance tunes into the night.
CALLOW SAINTS + CHEROKEE + BAWs + PHAT CARDINALS + PUPPET MECHANIC: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music night with Aylesbury’s soft rockers Callow Saints, garage-rock duo Cherokee and Baws, the new band fronted by ATL? and Hot Hooves man Mac.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – House and techno club night.
OXFORD GOSPEL CHOIR: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Traditional and contemporary gospel, pop and Christmas songs from the local choir.
SYNTRONIX: Fat Lil’s, Witney – 80s synth-pop hits, from Duran Duran and Human League to Depeche Mode and Gary Numan.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford

SUNDAY 13th

STEAMROLLER & FRIENDS: The Cellar – Charity Christmas show from the local blues-rock veterans, kicking out the jams in the vein of Cream and Hendrix. The band are joined by members of former Dolly faves Sunfly and Fraud Squad, with all profits going to the Oxford Food Bank.
NO HORSES + OSPREY + ADY DAVEY & SHAKIN’ LIPS + MEGAN JOSPEHY + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm) – Free afternoon of unplugged music from Giddyup Music in the downstairs bar.

MONDAY 14th

THE TEDDY WHITE BAND + GWYNN ASHTON + THE BLUE BISHOPS: The Jericho Tavern – The Famous Monday Blues Christmas party.

TUESDAY 15th

JAWS: O2 Academy – Back in the neighbourhood after their showing at Truck, Birmingham’s now slimmed-down Jaws temper their Madchester grooves with considered shoegaze and Foals-y fidget-pop.
HUGH TURNER QUARTET: The Bullingdon – Funky jazz from Turner and chums at the Bully’s free weekly jazz club.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 16th

CRYSTALLITE + KHAMsINA + MYTHS + LOUISE PETIT: The Wheatsheaf – Let the Lady Sings showcase show for female-fronted acts, with old-school soft rockers Crystallite, electro and piano pop from Khamkina, and more.
WAY UP! WEDNESDAY: The Cellar – R’n’b, hip hop, reggae and more.
SPARKY’S JAM NIGHT: James Street Tavern – Open mic and jam night.

THURSDAY 17th

THE QUENTINS + RUSSIAN COWBOYS + ESTHER JOY LANE + STRIKE ONE: O2 Academy – Fidgety guitar pop and indie funk from newcomers The Quentins, plus funk-pop from Russian Cowboys and heart-melting electro-pop and r’n’b from Esther Joy Lane at tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase.
STORYTELLER + PAPA NUI: The Cellar – Funky rock and reggae from Storyteller at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

Wednesday 9th

BAD MANNERS / MAX SPLODGE: The Cellar

Seems tonight really is the night for abandoning all vestiges of cool and getting fully into the festive spirit. While glam veterans The Sweet and co. are rocking the New Theatre, down in The Cellar, there’ll be some serious moonstomping going on with ska-punk heavyweights Bad Manners bringing skanking good cheer to town for their first visit in some years. Led by larger than life (though lately slimmed-down) singer Buster Bloodvessel, the band were part of the early-80s ska revival alongside The Specials, Madness and Selecter, and very much the jokers in the pack with their covers of ‘My Girl Lollipop’ and ‘The Can Can’, as well as hits like ‘Special Brew’ and ‘Lip Up Fatty’. Although never signed to Two Tone, they were very much part of that scene and have similarly endured even while the hits long ago dried up. There’s suitably irreverent support from Max Splodge, sometime frontman of punk loons Splodgenessabounds – alongside the likes of Peter and the Test Tube Babies, part of the so-called punk pathetique scene, providing the boozy, irreverent flipside to much of the genre’s political message. Expect cult classics like ‘Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps’ and ‘Michael Booth’s Talking Bum’.



OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 18th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with BALLOON ASCENTS + ZURICH + THE JON COHEN EXPERIMENTAL + AFTER THE THOUGHT: The Wheatsheaf – Celebrating the end of another year of going where few other promoters dare to tread, GTI collect four of their favourite acts from the last few months. Headliners Balloon Ascents should need little introduction to Oxford audiences now – just read the bloody review, okay. Great support from Banbury’s dark-minded indie-electro-pop crew Zurich, inspired by Editors, Killers and The National, plus Montreal’s one-man psychedelic pop and loop-based experimentalist Jon Cohen, and electronica soundscapist and beatmaker After the Thought.
THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + BALKAN WANDERERS + THE KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + BANG TAIL FEATHERS: O2 Academy – The Rabbits host their traditional Christmas jazz riot – *see main preview*
CRAIG CHARLES’ FUNK & SOUL CLUB: O2 Academy – BBC Radio’s most infectiously enthusiastic DJ brings his party-starting collection of soul, funk and rare grooves back to town, including a live set from local funksters The Temple Funk Collective and DJ sets from Tony Nanton and Count Skylarkin’.
LITTLE BROTHER ELI + FACTORY LIGHTS: The Bullingdon – Soulful blues-rockers Little Brother Eli round off a successful year, breaking through to become one of Oxford’s favourite young live bands, bringing a fresh approach to classic blues in the vein of White Denim and White Stripes, married to a funky Red Hot Chili Peppers vibe. Surf-pop from Shapes side project Factory Lights in support.
DOLLY MAVIES + MATT CARTER + SAM MARTIN: The Cellar – Intimate acoustic pop from local singer Dolly Mavies, launching her debut single.
MOVE CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Cellar – House, garage and grime club night, with garage and bass breakthrough star Royal T, plus Lazcru and B-III.
OSPREY: The Marsh Harrier – Christmas songs and jollity from the veteran local singer and promoter.
DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Classic and contemporary rock and pop covers.
THE MIGHTY CADILLACS + GET LOOSE: Red Hot Blues Club, Didcot
STEAMROLLER: Kidlington FC

SATURDAY 19th
THE DARKNESS: O2 Academy – If it’s nearly Christmas, it must be time for another Darkness tour, the old-school rockers continuing their reunion travels having kissed and made up a few years back, singer Justin Hawkins having undergone rehab following a bit too much on tour fun following the mega success of debut album ‘Permission To Land’ and its accompanying hit single, ‘I Believe In A Thing Called Love’. Supports to Robbie Williams and more recently Lady Gaga point to their pop-friendly appeal and they bring a little bit of panto fun to their classic Led Zep, AC/DC and Queen influences.



Saturday 12th

CHAD VALLEY / MAIANS / ESTHER JOY LANE / OSLO PARK: The Bullingdon

As far as local electronic music goes, tonight’s gig is as unmissable as unmissable gets. Chiefly it’s a rare hometown show for Chad Valley, aka Hugo Manuel of Jonquil in his solo tropical house guise, coming to the end of a major American and European tour to promote second album ‘Entirely New Blue’. The album’s honed his blend of 80s pop, r’n’b, introverted house and fidgety sunshine flavours into a more commercial sound, particularly with its increased leaning towards autotuned vocals. Like kindred Oxford spirit Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaur, it’s understated club music, more suited to early-hours comedown and emotional break-up as hitting the dancefloor. Like Chad Valley, Maians’ origins lie in Ibiza, but while the former is as reflective as sunset at a beachfront café, the latter is a hazy, motorik drive into dawn by way of some sleek, linear Krautrock highway, lush, hypnotic synth swells and melodies powered by some serious double-drummer rhythms. Any worries that electronic instrumental music might be a sterile live experience are blown out of the water with extreme prejudice. Sterility is something that doesn’t register on Esther Joy Lane’s horizon either, her sultry, introspective synth-pop and r’n’b packing soul to spare as she’s revealed herself to be one of the brightest young talents Oxford has produced in recent times. Completing a quality bill are Brighton’s bright and breezy electro-pop/alt.rock crew Oslo Park.

OXROX CHRISTMAS PARTY / DOLLY REUNION: The Cellar – Rocking through til the wee small hours with OxRox reviving The Cellar’s rock legacy with live sets from Terminus, playing classic heavy rock covers and Hard Rock Highway to Hell band competition winners Big foot, plus DJ John Chadwick.
FLUID: The Cellar – Bassline, garage and grime club night with Murlo, Masp, VLVT and Zyclon Sound.
RED HOT CHICKEN DIPPERS: The Wheatsheaf –Local psychedelic rockers Jabroni’s Sandwich play Chili Peppers songs under their alter-ego.
BEDROCK: The Bullingdon – Skeletor’s monthly rock and metal club night.
FUSED: Fat Lil’s, Witney – 90s and noughties alt.rock covers, from Weezer and Kings of Leon to Killers and Chili Peppers.
THE HUT PEOPLE + SETH BYE & KATIE GRIFFIN: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-

Wychwood – Wychwood Folk club host world folk duo The Hut People, accordionist Sam Pirt, who’s played alongside Kathryn Tickell and Sharon Shannon as well his band 422, and percussionist Gary Hammond, best known for being part of The Beautiful South, as well as working with Nina Simone, together playing a lively instrumental form of folk music, informed by British, Nordic and south European traditions. **THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The Swan, Eynsham**
STEAMROLLER: Shepherd’s Hat, Ewelme

SUNDAY 20th
PETE LOCK & MARK BOSLEY + THE ILLUMINATI + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + CALLOW SAINTS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Klub Kakofanney host an afternoon of free unplugged music in the downstairs bar, with Moiety duo Pete and Mark, and more.
AGNESS PIKE + DRORE + ROBERT SHACKLETON: The Library – Smash Disco’s

Friday 18th
THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND / BALKAN WANDERERS / THE KNIGHTS OF MENTIS: O2 Academy
The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band crack open the port, the whisky, the advocaat, the gin, the wine and anything else they can find at the back of the drinks cabinet for their traditional Christmas speakeasy hoedown. Since they emerged, drunken and riotously entertaining on the local scene, with a show-stealing headline set at the Punt back in 2009, with their blend of classic 1920s and 30s jump blues, r’n’b and hot jazz given a bit of punk rock vim and vigour and some delicious Oxfordshire flavouring, they’ve undoubtedly become the best party band in town, with singer and pianist (and increasingly an Oxford historian of note) Stuart MacBeth the Louis Armstrong / Cab Calloway-like host with the most. And if the band themselves aren’t as drunk as the audience these days, it hasn’t diminished their desire or ability to get the joint seriously rocking. They’re joined by spiky, sparky eastern European folk dance-cum-indie crew The Balkan Wanderers, one of the most enjoyable new bands to emerge on the local scene in 2015, plus Americana ensemble The Knights of Mentis and soul, rock&roll, swing, blues and smooch from Bicester’s Bang Tail Feathers.



anti-Christmas party brings you more quality free noise, with theatrical thrash merchants Agness Pike; doomy crust-punk from Undersmile/ Mutagenocide/Girl Power offshoot Drore, and no-wave/gutter electro chap Robert Shackleton.

MONDAY 21st
TUESDAY 22nd
THE MARTIN PICKETT ORGANISATION: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz.
PMT CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Library – Live music and more, courtesy of your friendly neighbourhood music store.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 23rd
THE AUREATE ACT + 3IHOURS + LUKE ALLMOND: The Jericho Tavern – Atmospheric prog-rock and electronic soundscaping from rising starlets The Aureate Act.
WAY UP! WEDNESDAY: The Cellar

THURSDAY 24th
OXFORD REGGAE CHRISTMAS: The Bullingdon – Skank into Christmas morning with Laid Blak, Count Skylarkin’ and co. – *see main preview*
STEAMROLLER: Three Horseshoes, Long Hanborough

FRIDAY 25th
Merry Christmas everyone. If you’re stuck for what to get us this year, we’d quite like a cat that looks like a llama. Thanks.



SATURDAY 26th
THE PETE FRYER BAND: Seacourt Bridge Inn – Local blues veteran Pete plays his traditional Boxing Day show at his local boozer.

SUNDAY 27th
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney

MONDAY 28th

TUESDAY 29th
STUART HENDERSON: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson and band.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 30th

THURSDAY 31st
Amateur Drinkers Night returns once again for more late-night enforced jollity, self-loathing and

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Thursday 24th
OXFORD’S REGGAE CHRISTMAS: The Bullingdon
Reggae might have a reputation in the UK as summertime music, but really it’s here to warm the cockles of your heart all year round. And one of Oxford music’s great longstanding traditions has been the Christmas Eve reggae party. It ran at the Zodiac and later the Academy for almost 20 years and now it’s moved just down the Cowley Road to The Bully, but the idea is the same – to welcome Santa and the Yuletide spirit to town with good vibes and some serious bass. Tonight there’s a live set from Bristol’s seven-strong party reggae outfit Laid Blak, who have earned themselves a reputation as one of, if not *the*, best live reggae band in Europe. Smash hits like ‘Bristol Love’ and the near-anthem ‘My Eyes Are Red’ have raised their profile yet higher, while they’ve shared stages with The Wailers, Massive Attack, John Legend and Julian Marley along the way. They’re joined by some of the best DJs in the area, including Desta*Nation, Oxford’s original rebel sound system; Count Skylarkin’ – Trojan Selector, Wailers warm-up, Disco Shed creator and curator of Skylarkin’ Soundsystem and The Big Ten Inch, and DJ Bunjy & MC Joe Peng, founding members of Laid Blak. Two rooms of serious roots, rocksteady, dancehall and dub riddims and tunes for you to skank into Christmas with. And remember – reggae isn’t just for Christmas either – it’ll be here to keep you partying all through 2016 too.

sudden, overwhelming moments of profound loneliness. Don’t worry, the professionals will be back on the town again just as soon as the vomit and silly string have been swept up.
SWITCH with SHY FX: O2 Academy – Into 2016 with drum&bass and jungle maestro Shy FX, back in the shire after hosting Truck Festival’s dance barn in the summer.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + DES BARKUS + CHEROKEE + BILBO BAGGINS SOUND SYSTEM: The Wheatsheaf – Local swamp blues-psych-funk veterans The Mighty Redox host their traditional NYE party, with stalwart local bluesman Pete Fryer and more along for company.
FREE RANGE: The Cellar – New Year’s Eve party club night with Charris and Dubloke, Zyklon Sound & VLVT, Baughty Nath and Oli C – hosted by Macular, Fio and Sandman.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The White Hart, Old Headington – NYE party gig with the local Americana crew.



Gazelle Twin photo by Sam Shepherd

AUDIOSCOPE The Bullingdon

It’s bitterly appropriate that this year’s Audioscope coincides with the first arctic blast of cold of winter. It’s freezing out there; who’d be homeless on a day like this? Plenty of people sadly, thousands condemned to inadequate (or no) housing while the property portfolio parasites get richer by the day. Since its inception 14 years ago, Audioscope has raised in excess of £35,000 for homeless charity Shelter, in the process bringing some genuine musical legends to town for its annual one-day mini-festival.
After **KONE**’s sweetly lo-fi post-punk opening set, The Oscillation’s **DEMIAN CASTELLANOS** brings his set of drone-based guitar instrumentals to the party, his deep, brooding textures conjured from myriad pedals to produce something unexpectedly pastoral, as if John Renbourn had been born forty years later and grown up listening to Explosions in the Sky.
Drones of a far darker hue fro **TAMAN SHUD**, a band who describe themselves as “necro-psych” and don’t disappoint on that score. In fact they’re astonishing: haunting incantations hovering above metronomic beats, scouring synths and dark wells of gothic guitar noise, variously reminding us of Hawkwind, Clinic, Evil Blizzard and Hookworms, but more than that sounding like a call to prayer in a land far beyond redemption. Within minutes of their set ending they’ve sold out of albums and they’re so good we wonder if Audioscope hasn’t peaked too early today. We’re more than happy to be proved wrong later.
KOGUMAZA’s sludgy, slow-mo dronescapes keep things dirty in a La Dusseldorf sort of way, but lack the impetus to take them from engaging

to truly compelling, while in an abrupt left turn in mood for the day so far **MARCONI UNION**, who claim to have written the most relaxing piece of music ever, drift through genteel *Kosmiche* before discovering a heartbeat rhythm and becoming gently but irresistibly hypnotic.
As frontman for psych-grunge rockers Arbouretum **DAVE HEUMANN** has headlined Audioscope before but now cast adrift from his band, and joined today by members of Trembling Bells, he looks, and often sounds, like he’s dropped in from a Grateful Dead gig somewhere around 1972, his West Coast country rock tinged with a touch of English folk and psychedelia, nudging into blues at times, and even if he tends to wander too far from the melodic core of his songs on occasions, his voice – pure and quavering – wraps everything in a warm blanket of wistful reverie.
The last time they were in Oxford – back in 2006 – **PART CHIMP** earned themselves a reputation as the loudest band ever to visit town, so plenty of the packed crowd have come armed with earplugs. Not *Nightshift* of course – we welcome tinnitus like an old friend – and we needn’t have worried, for they remain just about within the realms of decency volume-wise, while reminding us of what a superbly orchestrated noise machine they are – molten, supercharged riff after riff flows from the stage, a sense of something weird and trippy underpinning it all, in a similar way to how Butthole Surfers toyed with Black Sabbath’s tower of sound, and having suffered a stinking cold for most of the week, afterwards we feel scoured and cleansed. Really, it doesn’t get better than this.
Except it does. In the form of **GAZELLE TWIN**

– the musical incarnation of Brighton singer and musician Elizabeth Bernholz, tonight, alongside her anonymous electronics operator, dressed in a hoodie, her facial features blanked out by a skin-coloured stocking to macabre effect. Stripped of identifiable human characteristics and expressions, she stalks the stage like an unnaturally limbed feline, her music a queasy, discordant form of mutant hip hop and synth-pop, a sort of evil-urban soundtrack that might be The Knife’s twisted sister, or Björk ripped from her Icelandic idyll and into a bad acid trip in some nightmarish high rise sprawl. Amid all this, her voice remains an eye of purity, even sweetness, while retaining a hint of outright evil. Did we mention it’s probably the most astonishing forty minutes of music we’ve witnessed all year? Best to just come out and say it: Gazelle Twin is a genius.
So credit to headliners **PLAID** for following that and coming out triumphant: two guys sat behind laptops might not initially seem much to sing – or dance – about, but once they introduce some guitar into proceedings and up the beats, they’re off into full-on Orbital territory by way of Autchre and even a bit of Jean Michel Jarre, providing a rousing finale to the day.
Ten hours of live music without a duff act, and three that are genuine world beaters, now seems to be par for the course for Audioscope, which should surely be an essential date in every local music lover’s calendar. That it’s in aid of such an essential cause makes it all the more special, and as we stand shivering at the bus stop we consider ourselves lucky to have a warm house to go home to as much as we’re thankful to have music like this brought to our doorstep.
Dale Kattack

photo: Jonny Moto



**BALLOON ASCENTS / ESTHER JOY LANE /
LITTLE BROTHER ELI / LOUD MOUNTAINS
O2 Academy**

Does Oxford need another Americana act? Probably not, but given that Loud Mountains are actually American (brothers Sean and Kevin Duggan) we'll let them off. They're too likable to cast aside anyway, eschewing the alt. bit of

alt.country to give us a short set of good ol' boy country rock that's pitched partway between The Eagles and Bob Dylan. Characteristically dapper in their waistcoats and suits, Little Brother Eli look born for the big

**HOLLIS BROWN / BRUCE SUDANO
The Bullingdon**

Just a few doors up the road at the Academy tonight Killing Joke, punk legends now in their mid-50s, are brutalising their audience's ears and senses. Here at the Backroom a man a decade older, and also a legend, is enthralling his audience in rather more gentle fashion. Bruce Sudano, singer, songwriter, record producer, arranger and the spouse of Donna Summer for 32 years until her death in 2012, is on stage. He has co-written songs for Dolly Parton and Jermaine and Michael Jackson amongst others but tonight he sits with an acoustic guitar and friends to sing songs of faith and personal crisis. It's just the beginning of another great night for Empty Rooms Promotions, as Sudano is followed by New York's Hollis Brown. The band, named after a Bob Dylan track, class themselves as an indie rock band but are far more than that. They are a tight band who can move easily between indie, pop, rock, Americana, blues and sweet acoustic, with songs

stage, particularly singer Alex Grew, possessed of a phenomenal soul voice and a stage presence that suggests he's no shrinking violet on the dancefloor at weddings. The band's sound is rooted in Led Zeppelin's take on the blues, but while thousands of old gits hack out BB King riffs in pub corners the world over, Little Brother Eli ooze freshness and festival-size potential. If Grew occasionally looks and sounds like he'd fit a little too comfortably on *X-Factor*, and the band tread dangerously (albeit rarely) close to Jamiroquai territory, mostly they're infectious fun, and when Grew hollers "Grab me by the shoulders / We can dance all night," you're in no mood to refuse. Esther Joy Lane – alone on stage bar a bank of electronic gadgetry – might be a comedown after that but she's similarly soulful, and she manages to turn her performance into a breathless flurry of button pushing as she coaxes her songs completely live from her synths and loops. If Little Brother Eli are going to keep you up all night dancing, Esther's going to sit you down and break your heart, the rust and silk sultriness of her voice plucking heartstrings with dark night of the soul intensity, and if there's an overwhelming air of sadness about set highlight 'You Know', we'd die happy if we could write a song half as good. The O2 is packed by the time Balloon Ascents arrive on stage to headline their own party, launching new single 'Don't Look Down'. Thomas Roberts, in a dazzling shiny shirt, contorts himself around the stage in a manner that'd shame Future Islands' Samuel T Herring even as his band drift through the languid groove of early set highlight 'Cutout'. He's a great, natural frontman, equal parts Marc Bolan, Jonny Greenwood, Gary Numan and Harry Styles, and his presence turns each song into a rock drama, allowing the band to get on with the task of creating deceptively catchy pop songs from shifting patterns and textures. There are still a few rough edges about the band, moments when the set threatens to run aground, but easy to forget the band are still so young and have been together barely two years, and with each gig they seem to move up a few notches. The increasing strength of their songs is evident in the new single, a fidgeting electro-pop clamour, and its more airy b-side, 'Someone'. Already they're moving above and beyond the promise of those early shows. **Dale Kattack**

full of melody, each telling a story. Having recently supported Counting Crows and now on the road for over four months it's their turn to headline. Lead singer Mike Montali resembling, in looks at least, a young Elvis Costello, opens the set with vignettes of love lost and found, all with accompanying harmonies from the bassist Mike Wosczyk. They then ramp things up with songs from their new, fourth album '3 Shots', such as album opener 'Cathedral' and the title track, a comment on youth violence in America from the perspective of a young teenager. Their set continues with Lou Reed covers 'Train Round The Bend' and 'Sweet Jane', with a Neil Young song thrown in for good measure. None of the covers feels out of place amongst their own material, and tonight's show is as musically uplifting as the gig up the road is apocalyptic. Fantastic. No Joke. **Brett Silver**

**TWENTY ONE PILOTS
O2 Academy**

Live pop music is nothing without screaming and explosions. Twenty One Pilots have both by the bucketload at tonight's sold-out show, from the hysterical chorus that welcomes the Ohio duo onstage, to the spectacular smoke geysers that create a momentarily impenetrable fog at the front of the stage at regular intervals. This is pure pop theatre from start to finish, one carried off with a surfeit of class by two versatile musicians and professional show-offs currently enjoying a seemingly unstoppable skyward ride to stadium-sized glory on the back of their fourth album, 'Blurryface', a US Number 1 – even in these straightened times, a serious achievement. It's easy to see why they're so successful and yet so critically acclaimed; within the first two numbers - 'Dirtyheavysoul' and 'Stressed Out', we've gone from crushing bass to loping reggae groove by way of some almost Numanesque electro, rapid-fire rap and giddy stadium pop, singer and pianist Tyler Joseph throwing himself acrobatically

around the stage while dressed in full skeleton costume. The duo's balancing of boy band melody and choreography and something altogether harder and cooler is one neat trick, but it's been well earned, with years of touring under their belts. So 'Tear In My Heart' is that place where One Direction meets So-Cal pop-punk, while elsewhere songs are stretched between Keane and Skrillex, or lead into cheesy, hands-in-the-air cabaret that wouldn't shame Elton John. Other than an unforgivable – though thankfully brief – cover of 'Can't Help Falling In Love', the only moments when the set dips are on those occasional full-on piano ballads or semi-acoustic songs, like 'The Judge'. Highlight of the set is a beefed-up 'Lane Boy' from 'Blurryface', and a spectacular finale to 'Trees' that sees Tyler and drummer Josh Dun stop atop the front few rows hammering out a tattoo on a pair of floor toms before an explosion of confetti cannons. Followed, of course, by plenty more screaming. Next stop Wembley, surely. **Dale Kattack**

**BEWARETHISBOY / 150 FRIENDS
CLUB / LUKE KEEGAN
The Wheatsheaf**

A subdued Gappy Tooth Industries gig night, as MC Richard proclaims it "an anti-Halloween party," and we happily leave all the skeletons and ghouls in tricorn hats to un-live it up in the bar and alley below. Luke Keegan, erstwhile bassist for Robot Swans, is making his own bid for troubadour limelight, and has the crowd warming to Neil Finn chord changes and an excellent Paul Simon rolling pick technique (think 'Kathy's Song') during his solo acoustic set. What I'm not sensing is any stardust despite his strong voice, as he brings us songs from his debut album 'Conker & The Wheel', while the woven CSN&Y vibe leads me to want to see him set up a duo or trio. We definitely need more acoustic male trios in this world. Someone who already has a band in 150 Friends Club but tonight is going solo is David Goo, from Finsbury Park, who's vaulting cabaret style of rock riff Spanish guitar and Jonathan Richman-style wryness utilises 150FC's humorous raga-dub songs. He has much

of the Depp-like charisma that Luke Keegan doesn't, as we are unfailingly amused by songs like 'Sluts R Us' and 'I Don't Believe in Atheists', and his idea for a Reverse Kickstarter is a Spinal Tap hoot, where he'd use his own money to create an album, then people can donate a set amount of money to receive it. ("I'll leave that with you a moment"). Talking of doing stuff in reverse, Bewaretheboy seem to be pushing for stardom after they've retired from work. Forming in 2014, an album due out in 2015 and a UK tour and festivals booked for 2016, they are setting their sights for the toppermost of the OAP poppermost. There's a broad element of Billy Bragg joining the Dubliners in their un-Celtic Celticness, and live they do have a twinkling roustaboutness that belies their age, as Sue Mallet's fine violin swoops and follows the melodies with uncanny grace and emotion. On the night of the undead, zombie ceilidh could well be a new genre. **Paul Carrera**

THE CELLAR WHAT'S ON!

TUES 1ST – DOT'S FUNK ODYSSEY
FUNK/SOUL/LATIN | 9:30PM - 2AM

WED 2ND – BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE
80S / NEW WAVE / DISCO / SYNTHPOP / GLAM | 10PM - 3AM

THUR 3RD – WILLIE J HEALEY & THE GNARWHALS
SURF/ SLACKER/ SKATE/ SLIME | 7:30PM-10:30PM.

THURS 3RD – PATCHWORK X-MAS PARTY!
A JOURNEY THROUGH DISCO, HOUSE, TECHNO AND BEYOND | 11PM-3AM

FRI 4TH – BLACKOUT PRESENTS: THE REUP
BASS / GRIME / HIP-HOP | 10PM-3AM

SAT 5TH – OXROX PRESENTS... DEF CON ONE + CRASHGATE + HIDDEN
METAL/METAL/METAL | 7PM-10:30PM

SAT 5TH – EXTRA CURRICULAR FT TURF X TIMEDANCE OBJEKT + BATU + KATIUSHA | TECHNO | 11PM-3AM

TUES 8TH – INTRUSION
GOTH / EBM / INDUSTRIAL | 9PM-2AM

WED 9TH – BAD MANNERS + MAX SPLUDGE
SKA / PUNK | 7PM - 10:30PM

WED 9TH – WAY UP! WEDNESDAYS
DJ LIKKLE PLATINUM & YOUNG LINX + GUESTS
R&B / HIP HOP / REGGAE / UKG & GRIME | 11PM-3AM. FREE ENTRY

THURS 10TH – HAND IN HAND FOR SYRIA FUNDRAISER
ZAIA, BAGUL, EVADE
LIVE REGGAE/HIP HOP/BREAKS/JUNGLE/RIDDIMS | 10PM-3AM

FRI 11TH – BOSSAPHONIK FEAT. GYPSY BUTTER
DANCEFLOOR LATIN / AFROBEAT / BALKAN BEATS / GLOBAL GROOVES / NU JAZZ BIZNIZ | 10PM-3AM

SAT 12TH – EXTRA CURRICULAR
HOUSE MUSIC | 11PM-3AM

SUN 13TH – OXROX PRESENTS... CHRISTMAS CHARITY GIG FOR CEF FOODBANKS, OXFORD – STEAMROLLER AND FRIENDS (JOHN & EDDIE OF SUNFLY) BLUES/ROCK | 7PM -10:30PM

WED 16TH – WAY UP! WEDNESDAYS
DJ LIKKLE PLATINUM & YOUNG LINX + GUESTS
R&B / HIP HOP / REGGAE / UKG & GRIME + MORE | 11PM-3AM / FREE ENTRY

THURS 17TH – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC PRESENTS:
STORYTELLER X MAS PARTY (LIVE FUNK/SOUL/REGGAE INDIE BAND) + SUPPORT | 7PM-10:30PM

FRI 18TH – DOLLY MAVIES + MATT CARTER + SAM MARTIN
SOUL / FOLK / ACOUSTIC | 7:30PM-10:30PM

FRI 18TH – MOVE CHRISTMAS PARTY
ROYAL T - LAZCRU - B-ILL | HOUSE / GARAGE / GRIME | 11PM-3AM

SAT 19TH | OXROX CHRISTMAS PARTY (AND DOLLY REUNION) TERMINUS + BIGFOOT + DJ JOHN 'JC' CHADWICK
ROCK / ROCK | 7PM - 10:30PM

SAT 19TH – FLUID'S CHRISTMAS PARTY
MURLO + MASP + VLVT + ZYKLON SOUND
BASSLINE / GARAGE / GRIME | 11PM-3AM

WED 23RD – WAY UP! WEDNESDAYS
DJ LIKKLE PLATINUM & YOUNG LINX + GUESTS
R&B / HIP HOP / REGGAE / UKG & GRIME + MORE | 11PM-3AM / FREE ENTRY

SUN 27TH – SOUL SESSIONS
FUNK / SOUL / DISCO | 10PM-3AM

WED 30TH – WAY UP! WEDNESDAYS
DJ LIKKLE PLATINUM & YOUNG LINX + GUESTS
R&B / HIP HOP / REGGAE / UKG & GRIME + MORE | 11PM-3AM

THURS 31ST – FREERANGE NYE
GARAGE / GRIME / UK BASS | 10PM-4AM

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TITUS ANDRONICUS / WASHINGTON IRVING The Bullingdon

One look at tonight’s line-up on paper suggests a literary festival rather than a gig, but judging by the massed amps on the backline, everything seems to be in order.

Washington Irving have been making a name for themselves recently, drawing comparisons to The Sex Pistols, The Clash, and, er, Mumford And Sons; evidently they’re a hard act to pin down. If anything, they sound like the earliest incarnation of Idlewild, when their blend of rock and folk was at its most potent. There’s no doubting that there’s an element of Celtic folk to their songs and they possess a fine pop sensibility that is evident on the storming ‘We Are All Going To Die’, a

song that manages to deal with grief and loss whilst also sounding like bloody minded triumph in adversity. There’s a strange kind of polite aggression entwined in their songs, so while Washingtom Irving might well spill your pint, it’ll only be because you’re dancing about a bit too much.

As if naming themselves after a Shakespearean tragedy wasn’t enough, Titus Andronicus’ latest album is a triple vinyl rock opera that skirts around fact and fiction, and toys with the band’s own back catalogue. It’s fair to say Titus Andronicus have the potential to be the most pretentious band in existence, yet in a live

arena there’s nothing to them beyond being a phenomenal rock band.

If there’s a story here, it’s simply that music, when played with this level of passion and intensity, can make the soul soar. Frontman Patrick Stickles is a ball of energy; sometimes he’s a damaged soul, at others a firebrand preacher or a rambling barroom raconteur. The common theme is a series of songs that crackle with belief and the force of will.

There’s little in the way of subtlety tonight; ‘Fatal Flaw’ hints at Springsteen, ‘Stranded’ flails like New York Dolls at their most inebriated, and the bug-eyed ‘Dimed Out’ roars with barely contained anger. There’s no pretention here at all, just abandonment in the majesty and history of passionate rock and roll.

Sam Shepherd

HANG THE BASTARD / DESERT STORM / DRORE The Wheatsheaf

The night before this gig a gang of sick maniacs from some perverted death cult had murdered 130 people in Paris, including 90 at an Eagles of Death Metal gig in the city. There’s a quiet realisation among the audience for tonight’s Buried In Smoke show that any of us could have been any of them – people killed simply for going out and enjoying live music, the unifying enjoyment of which is anathema to twisted zealots of all persuasions. As such Drore’s debut performance feels suitably defiant: a sludgy, doom-laden outpouring of beastly riffage and gnarly vocals. Made up of two parts Undersmile, one part Mutagenocide and one part Girl Power, the quartet’s pedigree is indisputable and they don’t disappoint, Taz Corona-Brown and Tom Greenaway leading a line that veers into crust-punk at times and at its best sounds like Dinosaur Jr’s ‘Don’t’ re-imagined with Linda Blair from *The Exorcist* on leads vocals. Stick that up your arse ISIS, and fuck off while you’re about it.

With Desert Storm drummer Elliot Cole due to fly to Paris the next day for a Marilyn Manson gig, you might forgive a few nerves but this is a bravura performance from a band at the top of their game, reflecting their months

on the road in recent times. They’re both brutal and instantly accessible: classic rock influences from Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin forming the base upon which they spread a thick layer of sludgy stoner tar and brutish blues. There’s an Iron Maiden-like gallop about ‘Outlander’, while ‘Queen Reefer’ – a stand-outtrack from most recent album ‘Omniscient’ – allows Matt Ryan ample room to unleash his ogreish growl. Hang The Bastard up the brutality while dispensing with Desert Storm’s sense of melody. Their death-grind burrows into the earth down similarly dark tunnels to Eyehategod and Iron Monkey at times, while it can be easy to compare them to Oxford’s own masters of grinding glory Sextodecimo, and if they can’t match that band’s bleak majesty you can hope that their unrelenting noise terror follows that pathetic gang of killers into the very bowels of Hell and sticks around to torment them for all eternity. Because it doesn’t matter what vile, miserable doctrine they choose try to inflict on everyone else, they’ll never kill rock and roll. It’s bigger and better and badder than they’ll ever be, and it *will* crush them.

Dale Kattack

COLTSBLOOD / FROM THE BOGS OF AUGHISKA / CHAINSAW ENEMA

The Wheatsheaf

There’s plenty of scope for debate as to what’s the bleakest time of the year – when the clocks go back and it’s suddenly dark before teatime; Christmas for those not blessed with a happy home or family to call their own; the post-festive period when panto and pudding is but a memory and there’s still two months of winter to come. But there can be no denying tonight’s gig is the bleakest show in Oxford this year.

Even the recently reformed Chainsaw Enema’s scatological punk won’t hold the later darkness at bay. If middle-aged men shouting stuff about poo over buzzsaw guitars is your idea of musical heaven, here’s the band for you. Only the most p-faced puritan couldn’t love a Beatles tribute number called ‘Front To Back Wiper’, and the discarded copy of *Viz* on the merch table seems an appropriate substitute for any CDs. From The Bogs of Aughiska’s last visit to the Sheaf was a majestic masterclass in bleakness. Since then the band, from western Ireland, have expanded to a three-piece, taking in heftier elements of black metal – a genre they’ve never sat easily with – but their sound remains resolutely desolate – as desolate as the monochrome footage of rugged cliff faces, ruined churches and doomed wildlife that play out behind them. And for the most part it’s still magnificent – monstrous industrial drones, tales of banshees and faeries, and barely-there death rasps reflecting the claustrophobic brutality of the landscapes behind them. But then technical issues come into play: the video

player stops working and we get a semi comedic view of a computer screen error menu before it’s finally turned off, leaving the band in appropriate darkness. It breaks a spell that they’ve so adeptly woven, though finale ‘Aod Si’, which sees the trio stood stock still as their drones loom ominously around them, redresses the balance. People around us seeing them for the first time are suitably awestruck. Even on a difficult night, From the Bogs of Aughiska are bleakly brilliant.

Coltsblood bring the bleak in a very different fashion, an endless, onward dirge that’s equal parts black metal and sheer sonic terror, Jemma McNulty casually unleashing hell from her guitar, while bassist John McNulty growls, rasps and bawls in tormented syncopation with the galley-slave beats. That they have tracks entitled ‘Valhalla Awaits’ and ‘Abyss of Aching Insanity’ suggests they have a keen awareness of black metal’s preposterousness, and they look nothing like the genre’s clichéd corpse paint clowns, but they’re still utterly astonishing – intense and unrelenting, their forty-minute set played out as a single piece of music, sludgy, molten riffs oozing from the PA at terrifying volume to the point where when they finally finish you involuntarily stagger forward a step: the sheer brute force of the music having kept you upright.

And then of course, as we step out into the night it’s dark, and cold. It’s nowhere near midwinter yet, but the bleakness is well and truly upon us.

Dale Kattack

THE BREW The Bullingdon

Led Zeppelin were one of the greatest groups that rock music has ever seen, exhibiting levels of intuitive ensemble playing generally only found in the very best classical and jazz outfits, whilst retaining an air of unhurried looseness and still sounding like Satan’s convoy delivering juggernaut-loads of haunted pig iron direct to your eardrums. Trouble is, they were also not that bright, and so many classic rock acts get the good mixed up with the bad, proffering chunky riffs and elegant licks alongside all that shit about hobbits and big willies and sex with schoolgirls.

Grimsby trio The Brew are clearly heavily influenced by vintage Zep and Cream, and for the most part are outstanding, but they do come with a side salad of cliché. There are little things like the drummer’s obsession with holding one stick in the air, like he’s acting out the poster for *Star Wars IV*, or the singer and guitarist’s loose neckerchief, which is probably supposed to conjure Jimi or Jimmy but mostly resembles Fred from *Scooby-Doo*, and some more serious niggles, like a singing voice that is too thin to last 90 minutes of chest-beating rock action. Amusingly, the

vocals are in such a “cummawn airboddih!” panto drawl, that when asked to sing along to one tune nobody can make out the words (we alternated between ‘I’ve seen your face’ and ‘I, Semen Place’).

But, that’s the bad side, and as we say, this comes with the territory to a certain extent, like greed in hip hop, homophobia in reggae, and horrible bloody hairclips in indie. The fact is that The Brew are a hugely enjoyable band, with gallons of talent and a fair few ideas bubbling through. And energy. Blimey, you don’t see a band, grown-up classic rock or otherwise, having this much fun onstage too often, leaping about like loons and infectiously buoying up the quiet Monday night Haven Club crowd: we wouldn’t be surprised if there was a reverse phantom power set-up, and the band were actually powering the venue. Plus there are addictive grooves, from double-ply Deep Purple stomps to elastic mid-era Floyd landscapes, in which you can easily lose ten minutes. The Brew might be too frivolous for some desiccated old *Mojo* readers, and too traditional for cutting edge kids, but if you relish old-fashioned rock music, volume and fun, then you could hardly do better.

David Murphy

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THE ETHICAL DEBATING SOCIETY / THE BECKONING FAIR ONES / TAULARD / JULIET & THE RAGING ROMEOS

The Library

Juliet and the Raging Romeos’ frontwoman moves her body aggressively across the stage in awkwardly jagged movements. Her voice is a well-developed carrier of angry words that draws more people off the cold Cowley Road into the Library’s basement room. By the time the band clear the stage for Taulard it’s already physically impossible for any more people to squash into the small packed room, new audience members instead cheerfully sitting on the stairs before the entrance and trying to translate this energetic French synth-punk and catch a glimpse of the action past the tattooed arms of the person the next step down. Having made a reputation for putting on free punk, noise and generally alternative acts Smash Disco nights are bound to be well-attended, but its tight organisation and exciting selection of new bands from all over are a massive draw. The Beckoning Fair Ones are playing one of their first gigs

PRIDES

O2 Academy

There’s a lot to be said for the publicity a television appearance can give musicians. Following the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Prides performed ‘Messiah’ at the Closing Ceremony, and were thus exposed to thousands of new fans across the globe. Fifteen months on, the band have released their debut album, ‘The Way Back Up’, and have a song featured on the coveted FIFA 15 soundtrack. Not bad for just over a year’s work. Tonight’s Oxford show is one in a string of 23 dates around the UK, but they show no signs of flagging anytime soon. Bounding onstage after an introduction by the way of ‘I Just Can’t Wait To Be King’ from *The Lion King*, the trio have energy levels turned up from the get go. Launching into ‘Higher Love’ they set the tone for the entire evening with an exuberant, uplifting chorus and whirring electronics. Their short set is scattered with awkward on stage banter, including robot imitations and the declaration that “there’s no reason you can’t write a sexy song about breaking

tonight, but their set is so fluid and confident that no-one would guess. Creating beautiful harmonies off his guitar strings with a screwdriver, frontman Niall is a magnetic presence in a room that barely fits his full height. Caressing the ceiling, he sings out over aching yet driven post-punk structures of synth, bass and drums. Their music has yet to be released into harsh wilds of the internet so their next outing should be eagerly anticipated. The Ethical Debating Society are a colourfully dressed trio of Londoners with a riot grrrrl heart who call out various forms of bullshit for twenty minutes of loud, angry DIY pop. Jagged guitars and frenzied drums underscore their loud narratives as the crowd sweats from head-banging and polite apologies are swapped for the coats trampled underfoot. It seems something special is stirring in Oxford’s loudest Library. *Celina MacDonald*

your heart.” Where Prides really shine live is in the glistening production and the interweaving jittering guitar and synth lines. Although sometimes it feels like the members are out of kilter, when they pull it back together they show what a polished machine they are. Highlights came in a cover of Ellie Goulding’s ‘On My Mind’, where guitar riffs are allowed to fly free over humming synths, and when they strip the music down for tracks like the spectacular ‘I Should Know You Better By Now’. With such production-heavy music bands sometimes disguise scruffy songwriting and pitchy vocals, but by including this in their set Prides quash such suspicions, demonstrating bucketloads of genuine talent. Closing with the track that catapulted theme into the spotlight, ‘Messiah’, you leave assured that Prides are trying hard to make sure they’re not just a flash in the pan, and doing a damned good job at ensuring they’re a name to remember. *Hannah Mylrea Hemmings*

TEETH OF THE SEA / YOUNG CONSERVATIVE / LEE RILEY

Modern Art Oxford

In a poorly lit former-industrial basement tonight’s aural spectacular unravels first with Lee Riley. Accompanied by the opening scenes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* Riley’s enveloping drones take a more sinister turn. He’s taken a more delicate approach to his usual practice of torturing defenceless guitars for this outing and it’s all the more powerful for it. At times he creates what could be an intentional Foley track for the horror depicted behind him, at others he seemingly renders the fear and panic of the film’s characters into an organic dronescape. I may never sleep again, but I sure will have a pleasant ringing in my ears. More horror soundtracking from Young Conservative. If you have ever seen an 80s Hollywood horror film, you know what YC sounds like. Every trope is there: minor chord organ, *Terminator* pulsing synth bass and artificial drum sounds like those on your Fisher Price ‘My First Keyboard’. YC’s set isn’t bad; in fact as a homage to those lauded soundtracks it’s near flawless, but without the matching slasher movie and ill-fated high school stereotypes it’s a little naff, and not the nostalgia it’s aiming for.

STRIKING MATCHES

O2 Academy

Country music and the Academy don’t usually mix so it’s pleasing to see the upstairs room venue looking like it’s at capacity. The PR wagon has obviously been successfully rolling off the back of Striking Matches’ songwriting credits on Nashville and their appearances at C2C Festival, capitalising on the UK’s burgeoning country and roots scene. Having seen them blow Martina McBride out of the water with their CMA Songwriters Circle performance in London last year I was really looking forward to more of the same. Take away all the commercial success with the Nashville songwriting credits and they are genuinely superb guitarists and musicians, not country-pop wannabes struggling to master more than three chords and a bit of a strum. Part of the excitement at seeing them live again is that inevitably

Headliners at tonight’s Burn the Jukebox show Teeth Of The Sea are an assault of cacophony and artistry that is equal measures krautrock, Fucked Up and Fuck Buttons. Epic concepts are rendered in distorted waves that build and crash like the tide in a storm. The psychedelic tones of the guitar and trumpet float and weave through indeterminate walls of noise that are occasionally punctuated by screaming vocals of such ferocity that I am glad of the fuzz pedal between me and the singer. Teeth of the Sea are a band that have changed dramatically over the years, but all their elements come together into one continuous tapestry that even without (intelligible) lyrics conveys some idea of narrative and intention. There are quiet post-rock-y moments that draw the audience closer but for every one of those there is a section that could easily be described as happy hardcore from hell. They’re hugely enjoyable, if a little baffling at times. Bands this noisy and obtuse don’t usually vary their sound this much but if you have broad horizons and want something decidedly different, you really should try Teeth Of The Sea. *Matt Chapman Jones*

when an artist is so good in that arena it’s hard to bring it across on studio recordings, and I can’t help but feel a bit let down with their debut album on that basis (probably unfairly). It didn’t feel like the duo I’d seen almost a year before, and herein also lies the problem with their show tonight. When you’ve got a really accomplished live acoustic act you want to enjoy the quality but it’s severely degraded when the sound system is seemingly set up to blow ear-drums with loud pop and rock acts. Usually I’d be moaning that they only played a short set, which acts as a sort of whirlwind tour of their debut album supplemented with covers of Fleetwood Mac’s ‘Never Going Back Again’ and Robert Johnson/Cream’s ‘Crossroads’, but in this case I’ll be glad and stick to being selective about where I see them next time. *Jo Cox*

KILLING JOKE

O2 Academy

It doesn’t matter how many times you witness Killing Joke live, nothing will ever fully prepare you for just how awesome they are. Where many of their old punk contemporaries are cuddly national treasures, Killing Joke remain dangerous outsiders. Where irony has done its best to ruin rock music, Jaz Coleman and co. still believe the apocalypse is imminent and are acting accordingly. But while such singular vision might have shunted them to the margins, their popularity, and influence, have grown lately – tonight’s gig is in the O2’s larger downstairs venue following their two previous visits upstairs, while new album ‘Pylon’ is their highest chart placing for over 20 years. If you imagine such renewed success would make them happy, you obviously don’t know Killing Joke. The original line-up – Jaz, alongside Youth, Geordie and ‘Big’ Paul Ferguson – are all in their mid-50s now, but age will never mellow them. They slam into their set with the force and intent of a tank through a house, with ‘The Wait’ from their seminal debut album, and things rarely let up from there. Perhaps Killing Joke’s greatest strength

KESTON COBBLERS CLUB

The Bullingdon

One of the joys of going to a live performance is that you get a clear glimpse of what it is, truly, that informs an artist’s sound. Seeing The Wytches for the first time, for example, asserted their carnal, volatile tendencies, proving their real strength emanates from their sheer force, while Foxygen earlier this year emphasised their wild psychedelic inclinations in place of their more restrained aesthetic on record. Expressing neither of the above sentiments, Keston Cobblers Club tonight instead reinforce that, for all of the pop and indie finding a place on their most recent album, ‘Wildfire’, their roots lie are firmly in folk, and all the joyous eccentricities that genre brings with it. Such a defined area of influence doesn’t dampen tonight’s proceedings, however. Rather, it informs the vitality and excitement that’s ingrained in everything Keston Cobblers Club do. Fittingly supported by Wildflowers, who sport a more traditional, Americana-inspired form of folk, Keston Cobblers Club initiate an atmosphere of joviality seemingly with total ease. From the upbeat, exuberant aesthetic of ‘Contrails’, which could have sat comfortably on the last Fun record, to the excitable ‘lift-off’ competition among crowd members, the band successfully adopt the atmosphere within the Bullingdon, and transform it into their own ecstatic Cobblers party. To purely describe this evening as a wild

has always been the wonderfully euphoric sense of melody that underpins even their most brutal moment, so ‘I Am the Virus’, the rasping, driving high point of ‘Pylon’ becomes something of a singalong incantation, while their biggest hit, ‘Love Like Blood’, a rare moment of respite from the oncoming storm, feels as delicate in this company as the rose in full bloom of its lyrics. There are unexpected treats in the set, not least ‘Exorcism’, from their last Top 20 album, ‘Pandemonium’, but it’s ‘War Dance’, ‘Eighties’ and ‘Pssyche’ that fuel the moshpit’s fire and fury the most; from Nirvana and Nine Inch Nails to Metallica, Killing Joke’s molten industrial noise has captured the imaginations of rock music’s finest savages and still sounds irresistible. Peerless amid even these though is ‘Requiem’, a majestic hymn to the end of days and a song that sounds like nuclear conflagration warming up for its big finale. One day, inevitably, Killing Joke will die. But they will never fade away. This is one band that is going out in a blaze of glory, brighter than a thousand suns. *Dale Kattack*

jolly, however, would be to do the band a severe injustice. Tracks such as ‘Lazy Days’, taken from 2012’s ‘One, For Words’, is a more subdued affair than the majority of the set, offering a moment of respite and reflecting the band’s more nuanced side. ‘Won’t Look Back’, on the other hand, forcefully showcases Matthew Lowe’s vocal talents, proving preferable to his harmonising with his sister Julia, and giving the performance a polished and well-practised kick. It is the songs featured from their newest release which feel the strongest, aside from, oddly, the title track, ‘Wildfire’, which disintegrates into little more than a blunted sing-a-long. Maybe it’s suited to a larger venue, but regardless, it betrays the considered melodies which typically exist at the heart of everything the band do, and doesn’t do them any justice on this occasion. Thankfully, such an oversight is rare, as the band prove themselves more than adept at relaying their spirited brand of folk to this evening’s audience. Closing amid a rousing rendition of ‘Toto Africa’, in which both Keston Cobblers Club and Wildflowers form a circle within the belly of the crowd to perform, the night ends as effortlessly jubilant as it had begun. The Cobblers are indeed no one trick pony, though they are a true folk band. And when it’s this much fun, why would they ever choose to deviate. *Ben Lynch*

MY CROOKED TEETH /

THE AUGUST LIST

The Jericho Tavern

Reflecting the hushed atmosphere of the room, The August List’s opener could hardly be more stark or insular, and the enthusiastic applause that follows it feels oddly incongruous. Straight after, though, they into ‘Forty Rod of Lightning’, a rollicking, bordering on rockabilly, country stomp, and a reminder of why they’re increasingly a lot of people’s favourite local band. The contrasting yet complementary singing and playing styles of married couple Kerraleigh and Martin Childs is what makes them an often magical experience. That and the simple but carefully considered arrangements of songs, where even the shake of a tambourine evokes images of rattlesnakes as they reflect the desoltauion of the American dustbowl on songs like ‘High Town Crow’. Martin’s dulcet voice plays off Kerraleigh’s sharper tones, while his light-fingered acoustic strumming heightens the quiet menace of her drone box. When Martin announces a cover of a 1930s country gospel number, “because we want to to keep up with what the kids are listening to,” it’s a self-depracating appreciation that The August List are lost in their own world. That they allow us to peep into it at times is a privilege. Self-deprecation is something Jack Olchawski – aka My Crooked Teeth – similarly specialises in, and in doing so avoids the self-pity that marks out too many solo acoustic songsmiths. He even apologises for playing a love song – “falling in love can do terrible things to songwriters,” he notes, but when he sings the lines “I mean everything to someone,” you’re right there on his side. Jack’s at his best when he cranks things up a notch though; his opener about a road trip that he didn’t go on finds his voice dancing over the guitar melody, and he can be passionate without being overwrought, altogether an engaging performer. Even when he does slip into the tropes of too many acoustic artists, his voice just about carries him through, and we’ll always have time for anyone who sings songs about the fear of one day becoming an inanimate object, without dipping into trite observational comedy. *Dale Kattack*



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DR SHOTOVER: Christmas Stockings

Well hell-EAU, my dear young lady, and welcome to the East Indies Club bar. I say, warm in here, isn't it? Pull up a PHEW. [*Dr S runs a finger round his collar in the manner of Kenneth Connor in Carry On Ogling, while leaving his other hand just a little too long on the barstool in question*]. Oops, SO sorry, ah-ha-ha... silly me. Comfy now? Are those stockings or tights? Good, good – thought so. Just checking. Now, what can I get you to drink, you luscious little peach princess...? A festive Madeira, m'dear? Or will you join me in a tumbler of Chateau Starkers with some powdered rhino horn on the side? Bedingfield, I say BEDINGFIELD, bring Miss Popsy a stiff drink while I adjust my clothing. Ahh, that's better. Say what, Bedingfield? Why are you looking so f***ing gormless? What do you mean, *Dr Shotover never, ever buys anyone a drink???* How dare you, you insolent snivelling bar-steward? Just for that, I shall buy a round for every f***er in the bar! Oh hang on - chiz, CURSES, *what am I saying???* Quick, Gleeson, help me create a diversion! Um, ah, I say... isn't that *Thom Yorke* over there playing darts with *Bono*? [*Heads turn... Dr S hastily dons an ill-fitting Santa Claus onesie and legs it out of the back door, leaving Miss Popsy looking sultry at the East Indies Club bar...* *meanwhile The Aureate Act appear dressed as festive elves and launch into a cover of Greg Lake's I Believe In Father Christmas... fake snow falls... all is right with the world*].
Next month: Bing Sings. Walt Disnae.



Miss Popsy: 'Sorry, Mr Lee, not interested. I'm awaiting ...The Return of Dr Shotover'.

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

WATER PAGEANT

Who are they?
Electro-folk-pop duo Water Pageant are Nick Tingay (*vocals / guitar*), and Lizzy McBain (*keyboards / vocals*). The band began as Nick's solo act in 2012, playing low-key gigs in and around Oxford. Tiring of the solitary musician life, he expanded to a three-piece with Lizzy and drummer Mike Monnaghan from The Ralfe Band, though "austerity measures" have since lead to them downsizing to their current two-piece format. 2015 was the year the band finally came into their own, being played on BBC Introducing, 6Music and Radio 3's Late Junction, being picked to play The Punt, Truck Festival and Oxjam, playing at the O2 Academy and this month releasing their debut album, 'Outlines'.

What do they sound like?
Pensive, haunting, atmospheric electronic folk-pop to which such poncy music journo words like ethereal and rarefied might aptly be applied. Nick's sweet, almost keening voice mixes with Lizzie's gentle harmonies and subtle keyboard hums and swirls and it's deceptively passionate for all its innate stillness. In Nick's own words, "we specialise in a realm that lurks somewhere between alt-folk and 80s synth dreamscape."

What inspires them?
"From a writing perspective I'm often pulling on ideas surrounding Enlightenment era science as well as meteorological and agricultural themes. The idea behind 'Catchpenny Tides' was inspired by a Seamus Heaney poem combined with a visit to a retro amusement arcade on Southwold pier; very quirky."

Career highlight so far:
"Being played on Radio 3's *Late Junction* last month....twice!"

And lowlight:
"Playing to zero people at a local gig. A few years ago, thankfully."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
"Charlie Cunningham. We helped put his first gig on at a pop-up art/music



event at Fusion Arts – a hidden gem of a venue. Two years later he has played The Royal Albert Hall. We take no responsibility for that."

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
"‘Hounds of Love’ by Kate Bush. ‘The Ninth Wave’ is probably the most varied, yet conceptually complete piece of music I’ve encountered. It takes up the whole of the second side of the album and I never tire of it."

When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?
"Tuesday the 8th December, supporting Julia Meijer’s single launch at the Jericho Tavern. Expect a minimalistic approach to begin with – essentially, silence – followed by a bit of sound, then a bit more sound, gradually swelling into sumptuous soundscapes that fill horizon and heart with rainbow-like glee."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
"Favourite thing: its intimacy. Least favourite: its intimacy."

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ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

20 YEARS AGO

All good things must come to an end, and so it was that in a press release from Creation Records just before Christmas in 1995, **Ride** announced they were to split up after the release of their fourth album, 'Tarantula'. Tensions between **Mark Gardener** and **Andy Bell** has been simmering for a while over the direction of the band's sound, with Mark having been working with dance producer Paul Oakenfold, and came to a head when neither would allow their songs to be mixed in alongside the other's on the forthcoming album. It spelled the end for the band that first took Oxford music to the global stage, although we now know the story has a happy ending, with the quartet's reformation exactly a year ago. This being December *Nightshift* compiled its traditional end of year Top Tracks, topped this time round by **Radiohead**'s awesome 'Street Spirit (Fade Out)' – "monumentally chilling," according to the write-up. Pipped to the post was **The Mystics**' 'Star', followed by 'Mrs Hoover' by **The Candyskins**; 'Ulcer' by **Skydrive**; 'Desert' by **Wonderland**; 'I'd Like to Know' by **Supergrass**; 'Miss Pritchard' by **The Bigger the God**; 'Arc Weld' by **Blue Kite** and 'Yeah' by **Dustball**, alongside entries for **Ether**, **Arthur Turner's Lovechild?**, **Dubwiser**, **Thurman**, **Beaker** and **Pretend Friends**. With the local venue scene back on the up after months of issues, notable gigs this month including synth-pop stars **The Human League** at **The Apollo** (as it was then); Welsh psych-pop heroes **Gorky's Zygotic Myncei** at **The Zodiac**, and leading UK straight-edge hardcore bruisers **Understand** at

10 YEARS AGO

More farewells from bands who would later come back in December 2005; this time it was **Sexy Breakfast**, bowing out with a final hurrah at The Zodiac, the quintet making their reunion return last month with a sold-out show at **The Wheatsheaf**. A band we'd dearly love to see just one more time are **Fell City Girl**, whose 'Weaker Light' topped *Nightshift*'s end of year Top 20, sitting majestically atop a pile that included **Harry Angel**'s 'Death Valley of the Dolls'; **Young Knives**' 'Coastguard'; **The Relationships**' 'English Blues' and **The Factory**'s 'Servant's Hand', as well as entries for **Supergrass**, **Junkie Brush**, **Dive Dive**, **Deguello**, **Big Speakers**, **Nervous Testpilot**, **Sextodecimo**, **Holiday Stabbings**, **The Walk Off**, **Twizz**, **Twangle & Patsy Decline**, **The Mighty Redox**, **Asher Dust**, **Eliot** and **The Evenings**. Wall-to-wall quality, innit? In a light month for news, it was announced that **Elton John** would play a show at **The Kassam Stadium** next summer, while highlights of a relatively quiet gigging month included **Opeth** up at **Brookes Union**, **Skunk Anansie**'s **Skin** at The Zodiac, as well as **Skindred** at the same venue. Meanwhile, who remembers **Corvids**, **The Green**, **Bombshoe**, **Chinese Finger Trap**, **20/20 Vision** and **The Mon\$shots**? Suffice to say, we do. Even if we

5 YEARS AGO

Sticking with end of year Top 20 thingies, 2005's was a controversial, close-call, with the *Nightshift* editor's favourite, 'Spanish Sahara' by **Foals**, beaten by the writing team's popular choice, 'Heroin Dance' by **Little Fish**. In truth it was something of a vintage year with **Stornoway**'s 'Fuel Up' in third place, and top 10 placings for **The Epstein** ('Held You Once'); **Fixers** ('Amsterdam'); **Dead Jerichos** ('She Says the Word'); **The Winchell Riots** ('These Young Arms'); **Black Hats** ('Just Fall'); **Dial F For Frankenstein** ('Wes Vega'), and **Trophy Wife** ('Microlite'). Plenty of big names in town this month, with indie veterans **Echo & the Bunnymen** and **The Wedding Present** at the **O2 Academy**, along with **Neville Staples** and **Hawkwind**, while **Frank Turner** and **Martha & the Vandellas** were at **The Regal**, giving it one last go at being Oxford's largest dedicated music venue before it would become a Christian Life centre. Amid all this glamour, *Nightshift*'s abiding memory of the month was the doomed **Gappy Tooth Industries** Winter Warmer weekend, which saw the heaviest snowfall in the county for over a decade, and involved a six-mile trudge back home to Kidlington through the white-out after all the buses were cancelled and only three of the booked acts could make it to the venue. We did, however, have a small bottle of brandy for company and the walk along Queen's Lane was a bit like being in a Dickens novel for fifteen minutes



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DEMO OF THE MONTH

TOO MANY POETS

Was it only last month we reviewed Too Many Poets' one-song demo and said it was okay if nothing wildly special? Well here's a more fulsome follow-up, and it's a far darker and shinier beast. TMP are a band who do seem to provoke a fervent reaction one way or another for some strange reason – a good friend of ours whose opinion we respect described them as her favourite live band in Oxford, while one scribe of this parish was so reviled by them he could only describe them by using the foulest of toilet language. We guess much of what you make of them depends on whether you like portentous, gothy indie-rock. Regular readers will remember we tend to feel fondly towards such stuff, particularly at this time of year when it's dark before dinner time and we've got so much red wine in our bloodstream we're in a state of perma drunk-depression. Which makes demo opener 'Immobile' here something of a jump around the office anthem, an overwrought gothic scowl of a song that could be The Twilight Sad with the Scottish accent replaced by some Stentorian groan and a heady sense of despair. Did we say "jump around the office"? We meant "collapse into a quivering, weeping heap." 'The Worst Intention', meanwhile is nominally lighter, but only in the way that Echo & the Bunnymen are lighter than Bauhaus. It's still the middle of the night music-wise. Talking of which, there's goblets of blood-red wine to be drunk and howling at the moon to be done. Cheers to Too Many Poets for providing a suitably witchy soundtrack.

BRIGHT YOUNG NOTHING

And hey, since we're feeling so wintry and midnighty, let's keep the gothic mood going with this elegantly forlorn offering from a chap called Rob Mead, a fellow who, having obviously neglected to read the instructions at the bottom of the page properly has forgotten to include a contact number with his CD, and then compounded his mistake by failing to put enough postage on the envelope, so we're forced to pay £1.11 for the privilege of listening to his music. Some poor fucker landed in the Demo Dumper last month for similar

Demo of the Month wins a free half day at Soundworks studio in Oxford, courtesy of Umair Chaudhry. Visit www.umairchaudhry.co.uk/nightshift

crimes, so you're damn lucky you haven't suffered the same fate, Rob, old chap. And the only reason you haven't is because we really rather like this. Musically it's lushly-orchestrated homebaked semi-acoustic goth-pop but when he starts singing it all goes a bit Ian Curtis, and we're almost tempted to use the word Stentorian for a second time in a single demo page. It takes some skill to come over all SERIOUS and GRIEFY and GOTHIC and still sound poetic and have great tunes and not be in any way pompous, but it's something Rob carries off for the most part, particularly on the quite gorgeous 'Bottom Of The Glass', a song you could almost imagine Andrew Eldritch coming up with on an old acoustic guitar and a small choir of banshees in his kitchen after a long night on the Shiraz. In fact, the whole five-song demo is so impressive that *Nightshift's* new kitten, Martha McSqueak, sits serenely next to the speaker for its entirety, a look of wistful contemplation on her normally impish face. So anyway, Bright Young Nothing. Maybe not all that bright when it comes to following simple instructions, but on this rare occasion we're prepared to forgive and forget, because you've made us very happy, in a sad kind of way. We'd still like our £1.11 back, though.

THE NEW YOUTH

"A hardcore band based in Yarnton and New York City" isn't something you read very often, the mid-Oxfordshire metropolis hardly renowned for its thriving punk scene in the same way America's bustling east coast township is. Even more intriguing is the fact that guitarist Patrick Alexander – who seems to be the Yarnton connection here – briefly played in The Wedding Present. That band seems to be a bit of an influence on this set of songs, The New Youth's punk more in line with the noisier end of 90s indie noise than anything too militant or terrifying. There's a bit of Ramones in 'Bikinis Not Bras (It's The Summer)' but even here it tends more towards the gruffly melodic than a speedfreak rampage, while you might even detect a hint of Half Man Half Biscuit about their genially rough-hewn pop thrash, or Idlewild in their occasionally doleful demeanour. Truth be told you'd probably never guess they were American if you'd not been told, and we like the idea of a gang of Shire-born indie kids pitching up in the Big Apple and teaching the city's pierced and tattooed hardcore crowd about tea-drinking etiquette and how complaining about the weather is as valid as railing against The System. Take it from us, twenty years from now there'll be a six-lane sky

bridge connecting New York and Yarnton.

SAMUEL EDWARDS

Did we briefly mention it was all getting a bit dark a few minutes ago? Well, hey, right on time here's a young fellow with a song called 'Darkness'. The wintry gothic splendour just keeps coming. Erm, except it doesn't. This is less bleak, icy beauty, more sullen, drizzle-soaked trudge. "Never sleeps / Has no feelings, never sleeps / Feeds on young souls / Loves the theory of black holes," mumbles Samuel in an ode to something that's, like, really bad, right? This thing, or person, or indeterminate force, has "got pain in his right hand / Sorrow in his left." So, like, be careful out there, kids. It's all an insipid, torpid drone, truth be told, about a trillionth as meaningful or intense as we imagine it's meant to be. But let's not dwell on this initial misfire, but move swiftly on to some more of Daniels songs. Come on, there's approximately 120 of them to choose from on his Reversionation page. 120 songs! We could be here all night, and into tomorrow. But surely at least one of them must be good, right? And it's our, frankly Herculean, task to unearth that diamond in the rough. But where to start? Where to finish? And what happens if Daniel goes and adds more songs while we're in the middle of listening to all these ones? What if it never ends? You know when you're a kid and you get told to tidy your bedroom but it's such a filthy midden that you simply don't know where to begin? That's how we feel. So we're going to go and lie down for a bit instead and hope it all goes away by the time we come back.

LOFTY

Being in a good band does not and never will excuse shit, patience-testing side projects. Particularly shit, patience-testing side projects that involve ambient jazz-funk. Henry Soothill, the chap behind Lofty, plays guitar in Balloon Ascents, for which we thank him and admire him. But left alone for only a few hours by his bandmates Henry turns into Mr Bontempi Funk Beast, something that mustn't be allowed to continue. Having previously sent us a solo instrumental demo of glitchy ambient electronica in need of a suitably eerie horror film to soundtrack, we'd hoped for far better than this collection of stultifyingly sterile noodling. Opener 'Bag For Life In A Bin' is vaguely passable, even if it sounds like a bedroom-bound attempt to ape Goldie's mid-90s ambient drum&bass, but thereafter we're into soporific jazz-funk wandering of the sort you people know *Nightshift* absolutely fucking adores. He's even got a track called 'Mindless Groove', as if he's deliberately taunting us, pushing us to a breaking point where we'd gladly

hurl Martha the new *Nightshift* kitten (who's taken to chewing on the speaker cable, perhaps as a way to make it all go away) out of the office window if it would make it all stop just for a few minutes. Instead it goes on. And on. And fucking on. For hours. Days. Years. Mountain ranges rise and fall. Ancient species of crustaceans develop sentience and depart for Mars. Oxford United finally get promotion to League 1 and still it goes on, noodling away like a twat. Actually, we jest; it finished long before Oxford United got anywhere near promotion. And Henry, we've rung the rest of the band and they've agreed that at least one of them will always stay with you from now on, just to make sure this kind of thing never happens again.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE WRONG WAY BACK

Christ Alfuckingmighty, is some fucker deliberately trying to take advantage of our pre-Christmas good cheer and feelings of goodwill to all men? It's the only explanation we can think of for getting sent *two* demos of bedroom-made ambient jazz-funk in the same month. As with Henry previously, we know Rob Mitchell – the man behind this and a vaguely near neighbour of ours – to be a fine fellow, one who's played in some decent bands previously, but we also remember he's sent us some music before that ended up in the Demo Dumper, and he's fully aware of our unbending loathing for this sort of musical filth, so he's got no excuses and we feel no need to apologise to him for landing him in the review toilet once again as he first attempts some kind of half-arsed 'Theme From Shaft' abomination, vaguely crossed with some even more half-arsed Herbie Hancock kind of electro-jazz, before going the full James Taylor Quartet Monty, polishing off any last semblance of dirt the funk might have under its fingernails and replacing it with a photo of Mary Whitehouse's idea of a nice quiet Sunday afternoon. Imagine the most inane, unnatural thing you might ever see for sale – kale yogurt, or hessian scatter cushions or a *Rosemary & Thyme* DVD boxset. Yeah? Well this is the soundtrack music for the advert for all of them. All at once. And if you tolerate this, you're getting all of those things for Christmas, while we get a six-litre bottle of vintage port and a fucking huge straw to drink it through. The resulting hangover can't be anywhere near as painful as having to sit through those last two demos again.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk, 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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