

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 235
February
2015**

GAZ COOMBES

*"I love the idea of making a freaked out, psychedelic, f***-you record at some point"*

The Gaz Man on doing it all himself, the Ride reunion and finding his own voice.

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Introducing Liu Bei
plus

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THE BULLINGDON

FEBRUARY 2015

Friday 23rd January

Balloon Ascents Duotone

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 24th January

Matt Edwards Band Karma Free Diet The Damned and The Dirty

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 24th January

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

Doors: 11pm

Monday 26th January

Stark Invisible Vegas

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 27th January

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Guitar Summit

Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 30th January

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses Heat 1

Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 31st January

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses Heat 2

Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 31st January

A Nite of Music: White Magic Sound

Doors: 11pm

Monday 2nd February

The Haven Club: Jon Amor (The Hoax) Joel Fisk (UK)

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 3rd February

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Hugh Turner Band

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 5th February

Slow Club

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 7th February

Draw Holcomb (Duo)

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 7th February

Simple: Subb-an

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 10th February

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Heavy Dexters

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 12th February

Hidden Charms George Taylor Music Island

Doors: 7pm

Friday 13th February

Flight of the Helios The Neon Violets Kanchol! + DJ Krazi

Doors: 7pm

Friday 13th February

Cut Grass

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 14th February

Sons of Bill

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th February

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

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 17th February

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Stuart Henderson Quartet

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 18th February

Frontier Ruckus Les Clochards

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th February

The Dreaming Spires The Shapes

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th February

Loveshy

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 21st February

Space Heroes of the People The Long Insiders Hugh McManners

Doors: 7pm

Monday 23rd February

Giles Robson and the Dirty Aces

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 24th February

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited

Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 27th February

Keep-Hush presents: Walk Thru Pt 1 Last Japan Sillas & Snare Surgeon Phase 2 Pilgrim

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 28th February

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses Heat 3

Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 28th February

A Nite of Music: White Magic Sound

Doors: 11pm

Monday 2nd March

The Riotous Brothers

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 3rd March

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Guitar Summit

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 4th March

Aquilo

Doors: 7pm

Friday 6th March

Kim Churchill

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 6th March

Dr Syntax (UK Tour)

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 7th March

Police Dog Hogan

Doors: 7pm

Monday 9th March

Krissy Matthews New Album Launch

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 10th March

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Blakes 7 Funk Project

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 11th March

Tragedy - A Metal Tribute to The Bee Gees & Beyond

Doors: 7pm

Friday 13th March

Sivu

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th March

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses Heat 4

Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 14th March

Ben UFO

Doors: 11pm

Monday 16th March

The Haven Club: Stephen Dale Petit

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 17th March

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Stuart Henderson Quartet

Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 21st March

The Knights of Mentis Black Feathers The Shapes Trev Williams

Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 21st March

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

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 24th March

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Hugh Turner Band

Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 27th March

The Showhawk Duo

Doors: 7pm

Monday 30th March

The Haven Club: Ben Poole

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 31st March

Jazz at the Bullingdon: Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 8th April

Turbowolf

Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th April

Larkin Poe

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 11th April

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses Heat 5

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 13th April

Federal Charm

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 18th April

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

Doors: 11pm

Monday 20th April

The Haven Club: Earl Thomas

Doors: 7pm

Monday 27th April

The Haven Club: Girls with Guitars Blues Caravan

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 30th April

Simple: Pearson Sound

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 2nd May

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses 1st Semi-Final

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 18th May

The Haven Club: Virgil & the Accelerators

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 23rd May

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses 2nd Semi-Final

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 1st June

Chameleons Vox 'What does Anything Mean? Basically' Tour

Doors: 7.30pm

Monday 8th June

The Haven Club: Laurence Jones

Doors: 7pm

Monday 15th June

Ryan McGarvey (US)

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 18th June

Well Hung Heart Dave Arcari

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th June

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses 3rd Semi-Final

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 22nd June

Hamilton Loomis

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd July

Bloodstock: Metal to the Masses The Final

Doors: 6.30pm

Monday 13th July

Moreland & Arbuckle

Doors: 7pm

NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

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Online: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net



TRUCK STORE celebrates its fourth anniversary this month with an afternoon of live music. The independent music store on Cowley Road hosts a selection of local bands on **Sunday 8th February** from 4pm, including The August List and last month's *Nightshift* cover star Duotone. More acts are set to be added soon. Visit truckmusicstore.co.uk for news on the event.

Alongside Rapture in Witney, Truck is a rare beacon of musical goodness in the area, selling local releases and gig tickets alongside its extensive selection of CDs and vinyl. As ever, support small local businesses like this whenever you can rather than tax-dodging corporations like Amazon.

GLASS ANIMALS' hometown headline show at the O2 Academy in March has sold out. The Jericho-based band play their biggest Oxford headline show on Tuesday 3rd March. This latest success follows their award of Band of 2014 by BBC Oxford Introducing; 'Goosey' topping *Nightshift's* end of year Top 25 for 2014, and the inclusion of their song 'Toes' on the soundtrack of *Taken 3*, starring Liam Neeson. It's probably blowing our own trumpet a little too loudly to remind everyone that the band's first ever exposure was a Demo of the Month review in *Nightshift* back in March 2010, but we're going to do it anyway. We're extremely proud of their success so far and even greater things look likely in 2015.

THE OXFORD PUNT is still open for applications from local bands and musicians wanting to play the event. The Punt takes place on Wednesday 13th May featuring some 20 acts across five venues in the city centre.

Running since 1997, The Punt is the annual showcase of new Oxford music talent, providing early exposure for many of Oxford's most successful bands. Venues this year are The Purple Turtle, The Cellar, The Wheatshaf, The Turf Street Kitchen and The White Rabbit. To enter, simply send us a link to your music to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net.

Clearly mark your mail Punt. Acts must be from Oxfordshire and have some gigging experience. **A contact phone number is essential.**

A limited number (100) of all-venue Punt passes will be on sale from Truck Store on Cowley and Wegotickets.com from the beginning of February. Visit **Oxford Punt 2015** on Facebook for regularly updated news on the event.

THE PEGASUS hosts its annual showcase of young rock and pop acts on **Sunday 1st February**. 'Reigns' is run in conjunction with Oxfordshire Music Education Partnership and will feature young acts selected by Oxfordshire Music Service, Readipop, The Oxford Academy, BG Records, the Young Women's Music Project and Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership. Tickets for the event are £3 in advance/£4 door. More details at www.pegasustheatre.org.uk.

SUPERNORMAL FESTIVAL returns for its sixth outing this summer. The three-day celebration of leftfield and underground music and art takes place at Braziers Park, near Wallingford, over the weekend of the 7th-9th August. Despite last year's sold-out event, rumours had circulated that it was to be the last Supernormal, but the artist-curators have quelled such doubts and have invited acts to apply to play this year, stressing they're keen for an entire line-up of new acts to perform. Visit www.supernormalfestival.co.uk for details and updated festival news.

VIENNA DITTO release a new single this month. 'Hammer & Nail' will be the first single from the duo's forthcoming debut album, due in the summer. Have a listen at soundcloud.com/viennaditto.

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. Follow them. Do it now.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Saturday night between 8-9pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring interviews and sessions with local acts. The show is available to stream or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

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

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A quiet word with GAZ COOMBES



“IT HAS BEEN AMAZING. *I think during the making of the record I was just consumed with the ideas. I knew what was exciting me musically, but I didn’t know if everyone else would see it the same way. So there’s always that slightly strange battle between self doubt and inner confidence and there’s never really a winner. In the end you’ve just got to put it out there, see what happens. But the response has been amazing from the fans.”*

WITH CHARACTERISTIC ebullience, Gaz Coombes is considering the response so far to his second solo album, ‘Matador’. In particular a fantastic ‘Instant Classic’ 5-Star review in *MOJO*, the UK’s biggest-selling monthly music magazine. It isn’t the only 5-star review

the album has received either. The honesty that runs through ‘Matador’, the follow-up to Gaz’s inventive, sometimes experimental solo debut ‘Here Comes The Bombs’, has captivated reviewers across the board while the wonderfully woozy ‘20/20’, the second single to be taken from the new album, rarely seems to be off the radio. “The Supergrass scamp is shedding his youthful skin to emerge as a serious and fascinating artist,” raved veteran reviewer Pat Gilbert, while last month’s *Nightshift* review declared it “an album that is as open, honest and elegant, and still as fresh, as his teenage self would have wanted.”

IT’S REDEMPTIVE REWARD for the enduringly likeable singer who called time on his much-

loved band in 2010, during writing for what would have been their seventh studio album, bored and disillusioned with the band format and the creative rut he felt Supergrass had lapsed into after close to two decades together. Years in which they earned three platinum albums and won innumerable awards, including an Ivor Novello for ‘Alright’. A host of ‘Grass songs are now so embedded in the national consciousness they can never be removed and time will doubtless see the trio regarded in the same esteem as The Buzzcocks, Madness and Squeeze – quintessentially English bands with that rare knack of knocking out classic pop songs as if it’s the easiest thing on earth to do.

FOLLOWING SUCH SUCCESS would never be easy and music history is lined with failed post-band solo careers; for every Alex Chilton there’s ten Nick Heywards, so Gaz did exactly the right thing – he didn’t try to simply carry that Supergrass flame onwards. Instead he simply followed his instincts and made the music he wanted to, in his own time, more often than not entirely on his own, with the emphasis on spontaneity; it’s the polar opposite to the sometimes restrictive democratic environment of a band. Such an approach, which has carried through from ‘Here Come The Bombs’ into ‘Matador’, is something Gaz returns to when talking about his new album. Despite its moments of euphoria, and the motorik likes of album highlight ‘The English Ruse’,

overall ‘Matador’ feels much more reflective and introverted than ‘Bombs’, particularly tracks like ‘20/20’ and ‘The Girl Who Fell To Earth’; is that something Gaz was conscious of when he was writing and recording – a deliberate path to take, or simply a reflection of his mood while writing the new songs? “I don’t see it as introverted at all. In fact I feel like I was able to let go a lot more on this record and everything felt a lot clearer in terms of a direction. It was very much a case of getting ideas down in the most instinctive way, and I wasn’t afraid of being honest, direct and revealing lyrically... I guess just saying it as it is. It was very liberating to write in such a direct way.” After all the touring and promo work around ‘Bombs’ did being a solo artist going solo give you more time and room to yourself when it came to making ‘Matador’? “I pretty much came straight off the back of touring the first album and into the studio to start writing. It’s been an amazing couple of years since going solo and the songs have been coming thick and fast, so I really wanted to keep the momentum going. No time to relax, man!”

TRACKS LIKE ‘DETROIT’ and ‘The English Ruse’, meanwhile, continue that trip into Krautrock, electronica and Moroder-ish electronics that ‘Bombs’ first took us into; is that something that’s an increasing influence on you? “I guess all kinds of stuff creeps in subconsciously. Again, they’re all instinctive and spontaneous ideas that I try to record as quickly as I can, so I never work from direct influences as such.

“There are loads of new bands that I’ve been listening to and old bands doing new things as well. I really got into that Grizzly Bear record and there’s a mad band called Tobacco that I really liked. There’s plenty of classic influences as well. I’ve been listening to a lot of Iggy Pop.” ‘Seven Walls’, with its line “So let’s walk down to Jericho / Share a little smoke / Watch the paper burn,” feels like a grown-up rejoinder to ‘Caught By The Fuzz’ in a way – a more sombre take on sharing a spliff and hanging out with friends or a partner. “I guess it was based around a similar time in my life, but that song is more about a moment that two people share: sitting in a concrete car park sharing a joint and a can of beer, that at the time

seemed insignificant and mundane, but when you look back there’s a poignancy and gravitas to that moment... a moment that set off a chain of events that bring us to where we are now. I thought that was kinda beautiful to write about.” Talking of Jericho, you’ve always used geographical Oxford reference points in your lyrics; is the city and the surrounding area a big influence on you? “Yeah, I think you just feed off your environment, what’s happening around you, though not just geographically. But Oxford does have a special place in my heart. Which is why we decided to come back here after so much time living in other cities through my 20s.”

“Ride at the Coop Hall in 1991 was pretty much the first gig I ever went to. It was an amazing show and without doubt had a big impact on me. As school kids they inspired us to grow our fringes, jump on a stage and believe we could have an impact, even if we came from a place where there wasn’t a big scene or movement. They totally put Oxford on the map musically.”

WHILE ‘BOMBS’ WAS produced by and part-written with Sam Williams, who produced Supergrass’s classic debut ‘I Should Coco’, ‘Matador’ is entirely self-written and produced. In fact, beyond a couple of drum tracks from Loz Colbert and keys from brother Charly, Gaz played every instrument on the album. Is that simply down to time constraints or wanting to be completely in control of everything after being in the democracy of a band for so long? “It was never a plan to play most stuff. It was more a case of what the track required. Quite often I’d go into the studio to demo an idea, a drum beat, a bass line or even try my hand at a bit of violin and I’d capture something really cool. And I felt there was no point trying to get someone else to play it again just like I played it, so I kept a lot of those first takes. That approach for me is really exciting and a huge part of this record, to capture an idea on tape at its very conception... don’t over think it... don’t nail the life out of it by playing it too much. I think inevitably not having a band, not having a drummer, you look to other ways of creating. It might

be creating mad beats, or working with loops or just trying different starting points for songs.” Do you feel you’re still finding your feet as a solo artist? “I felt a bit more comfortable in my own skin this time round. Just feeling that it wasn’t just a ‘rebound’ record after being in a band, it’s a new momentum-gathering thing. I’m trying to tap into how I write naturally. Writing in a band you write together but maybe I can sort of uncover how I naturally write on my own.” Are there any songs left over from the Matador recording sessions that might see the light of day, or do you tend to ditch anything and move on? Do you have a vision yet of what the next album might sound like?

“Yeah there’s quite a few outtakes floating around... I’m sure a few of them may surface at some point. But whether they’ll fit with what happens on album number three remains to be seen. But there’s a real feeling of momentum now so album three is definitely on the horizon, faintly calling me.” While ‘Matador’ won’t alienate die-hard Supergrass fans – Gaz’s voice is nothing if not instantly recognisable – the shift in musical and lyrical focus means his solo career isn’t anchored to his past, and, given his love for discovering new music and looking forward rather than back, can Gaz envisage a time in the future when he’s gone down the Scott Walker route of making completely crazed albums with no care for commercial appeal? “Well that’s the beauty of music. I don’t think there should be any boundaries or pressures to fit in to a particular perception. So yes, I love the idea of a freaked out, psychedelic, fuck-you record at some point... who knows.”

TALKING TO GAZ WHEN WE do – in the wake of Ride’s longed-for reunion – that band can’t go

unmentioned. There are such strong links between Oxford’s first big breakout band and the one that so closely followed them – from musical inspiration to the fact that Gaz now employs Ride’s stickman Loz Colbert in his own touring band. How important were they to Gaz when he was starting to get into music in Oxford and first starting out with The Jennifers, and does he think his musical story would have been very different without Ride’s influence and the focus their success brought on Oxford at the time? “Ride at the Coop Hall in 1991 was pretty much the first gig I ever went to. It was an amazing show and without doubt had a big impact on me, as it did for many people. As school kids they inspired us to grow our fringes, jump on a stage and believe we could have an impact, even if we came from a place where there wasn’t a big scene or movement, like there was in Manchester at the time. They totally put Oxford on the map musically. I can’t wait to see them perform this year.” Does this mean you’ll need to find a new drummer? “Ha! I hope not. Loz is definitely going to have a full-on year, though! But we’ve talked lots and I think managed to intertwine both projects beautifully.... famous last words? Nah it’s going to be a brilliant year for both of us, I’m sure.” In light of that particular reunion, do you anticipate questions about a Supergrass reformation around the release of ‘Matador’? “Yes. But there’s a quick and easy answer: no.”

WITH ‘MATADOR’ RELEASED on the 26th January, inevitably life is becoming increasingly hectic for Gaz Coombes. There’s the usual round of press and radio interviews before he and his band head off on a UK. His hometown show at the O2 Academy is on the 7th February; does it feel different playing in Oxford to other places; do you feel your Oxford fans in particular have grown up with you? “Yes it’s always really special. As it’s a hometown show there’s usually a bit of added tension and nerves mixed with a real buzz. But they’re perfect ingredients for a killer show. Bring it on!”

‘Matador’ is released on the 26th January on Hotfruit. Gaz plays the O2 Academy on Saturday 7th February. Visit www.gazcoombes.com for more news, music and gig dates.

RELEASED

STORNOWAY

‘The Road You Didn’t Take’

(Self released)
Last year Brian Briggs moved to The Gower in Wales to write Stornoway’s new album. Of course he did. It’s one of the UK’s few remaining wildernesses, a place of romantic desolation of the kind that has informed and infected Stornoway’s songs from the very beginning. What Stornoway might sound like if Brian shifted his family to a flat in Tower Hamlets is anyone’s guess. There’d probably be fewer cormorants and kittiwakes and more social deprivation and stuff about Millwall hooligans. And that just wouldn’t be Stornoway, would it.
No, it’s poetic longing and simple evocation steeped in the natural world where humanity rarely trespasses all the way on this first single to be taken from the forthcoming album, a song that takes its title from a 1916 poem by Robert Frost and uses climbing a mountain and looking down on the world as a metaphor for looking back at the paths you could have taken in life, evoking a similarly warm, sepia feel as



‘Farewell Appalachia’ or even ‘Fuel Up’. Brian’s voice, a pure, easy burr and a soothing balm “shivers under skies” atop the mountain as the song sweeps elegantly through you in a barely-there breeze.
Of course ‘The Road You Didn’t Take’ had to be written out in the wilds. It carries the simplicity of nature and is as casually vast as the landscape it seeks to reflect. Long may Stornoway exist in the wilderness.
Dale Kattack



THE DREAMING SPIRES

‘Searching For The Supertruth’

(Clubhouse)
December’s ‘Darkest Before the Dawn’ EP, a triptych of tales about an old friend fallen on hard times, was a triumphant statement of intent for The Dreaming Spires, a band formed by brothers Joe and Robin Bennett who together have flown the flag for Americana in various incarnations for far longer than it’s ever been cool. Following swiftly on, it’s interesting to see that none of that EP’s songs makes it onto their new album; a brave move or not, it’s a reminder of when more bands worked like that. Old school to the core, these boys.
Musically too their hearts and souls are in a place far older than the Oxford music scene. Their

primary influences remain The Band, Big Star, Buffalo Springfield and The Byrds, but there are hints and traces of so many old greats here, from the Beatlesy psychedelic backwards guitar wheeling on the album’s title track, to what might be The Who’s Pete Townsend guitaring on ‘All Kinds of People’, but with a gun to his head to stop him flying off on one. ‘Easy Rider’ is a full-on timeless country lament with its slide guitar and porch ambience, while the organ-driven ‘When The Magic Comes’ could almost be a tribute to Ian McLagan, the Small Faces legend who headlined the brothers’ Truck Festival almost decade ago and passed away last year.
But ‘Searching For the Supertruth’ is more than a portmanteau of rock and country greats. Because it has soul, a tender but resilient beating heart that gives it life. From the euphoric but sad-eyed opening flourish of album opener ‘Still Believe In You’, with lyrics like “These people aren’t your friends / Just roaches at the bitter end” signalling a false sense of positivity, to its decidedly downbeat denouement ‘So Pretty’, The Dreaming Spires sound less like cynical cherry pickers as eager kids gathering up flowers in a meadow to make lively, haphazard bouquets. And at the heart of it all is Robin’s endearingly keening voice, still sounding like a man who woke up one morning to find everything he ever knew and loved packed up and gone but wide-eyed and innocent enough to believe they’ll be back any minute.
“Some day / Some day...” repeats Robin over and again at the close of ‘So Pretty’, as if hoping deep in his heart that it’ll all work out fine in the end. With any luck ‘Searching For the Supertruth’ will make it so.
Dale Kattack



BALLOON ASCENTS

‘Balloon AscentsEP’

(Self-released)
Once upon a time, the height of ambition for teenage bands was generally to neck as much white cider as physically possible while sounding like Green Day. Either times have changed, or Balloon Ascents are scarily (and exhilaratingly) precocious.
The quintet have already stolen the show at last year’s Punt, graced the cover of *Nightshift*, played a short European tour, won the patronage of Wheatsheaf soundman Joal Shearing and Stornoway’s Oli Steadman, and, most recently, been profiled in the *Oxford Mail* as the city’s next bunch of most-likely-tos. And now they’ve released their first EP proper, with Steadman at the controls – and bratty, childish pop punk it most certainly ain’t.
Clichéd though it may be, the Radiohead comparisons are inevitable – and not only because they’re well-mannered boys who met at a local school and who have already been playing together for a number of years. Listen closely to the lyrics of opening track ‘Cutout’ and it’s like hearing a mash-up of Radiohead’s greatest hits; at one point Thomas Roberts echoes Yorke’s declaration “It wears me out” (‘Fake Plastic Trees’) before later borrowing the warning “Slow down” from ‘The Tourist’.

Musically, though, the careful construction, gorgeous yearning harmonies and exquisite grasp of nuance, subtlety and understatement exhibited by ‘Cutout’ and ‘Aberration’ mean that a more appropriate touchstone would be Grizzly Bear.
The third and fourth tracks here don’t quite match up to that standard (‘Out On The Ocean’ in particular allowed to drift too far off course into noodly boogie), but then in fairness the bar has been set very high indeed and, with time very much on their side, the report card reads not “Must do better” but “Will do better”. It’s a tantalising prospect that should help see us through these dark winter months and look forward to the year ahead – a year that could well have Balloon Ascents’ name written all over it.
Ben Woolhead



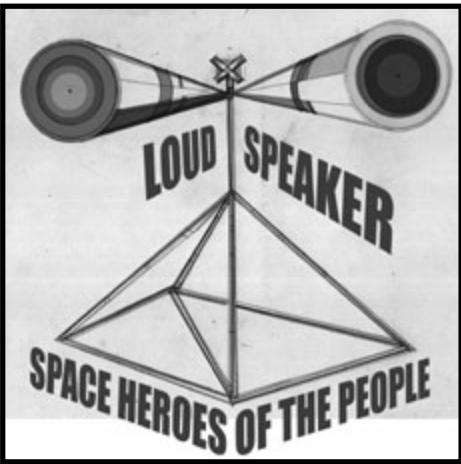
LIU BEI

‘Goodness’

(Museumgoer)
Oxford’s had a decent line in singer-songwriter types, seemingly forever, and for a city that’s never been shy to dole out fine quality musicianship by the well-formed arpeggioload, it maintains a surprisingly high level of quality and variety.
Richard Walters has been bubbling around in that musical soup for well over a decade now – and, indeed, done a bang-up job of developing a successful career, with soundtrack credits, multiple releases and Alison Moyet tour support slots – but with Liu Bei, he’s finally gone back to full-band mode for the first time since Theremin back in 2001, and this new outfit sees Walters backed up with four jaunty ruffians with, one presumes, the aim of both filling out and deepening songs which have thus far relied mostly on simple vocal and guitar.
The title track of the ‘Goodness’ EP is built around the charming and subtly earworm-creating lyric “All that matters is your goodness, for goodness’ sake”. In sonic comparison to Walters’ solo work, this music is evolution, not revolution; Walters’ exceptional voice



– crystal-clear, delicate yet strong, soft and rich – is intelligently mixed to the fore. An urgent bassline drives the song along, while subtle guitar and audio effects create a shifting series of soundswells. A trite description would be ‘mid-tempo epic indie’, but this deserves more than that. In a similar fashion to how the sorely-missed Fell City Girl created endlessly-unresolved tension and ever-heightening drama, Liu Bei don’t immediately sound as if they’re doing much, but are creating meaningful tracks



SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE

‘Loudspeaker’

(Self released)
When even BBC Sound of 2015 winners Years & Years are described as ‘synth pop’, you know the term has lost its value.
Thankfully there are acts who adhere to the sounds and ideals of the original pioneers – from Kraftwerk and Giorgio Moroder to OMD and The Human League. In fact over the years, as they’ve ploughed their solitary furrow on the local scene, Space Heroes of The People have occasioned to sound like a two-person musical incarnation of the Beeb’s classic *Synth Britannia* documentary, borrowing and mutating from those classic acts, mixing an experimental edge with full-on disco fun.
After a series of excellent demos stretching back over five years, and sporadic local gigs, Tim Day and Jo Edge finally deliver their debut album. It sounds, simultaneously, like the future and the increasingly distant past, or perhaps more what people in the increasingly

distant past imagined the music of the future would sound like once we’d all got jetpacks and hoverboards and personal robot servants. It’s laced with the sleek, silicon synth sounds of classic late-70s/early-80s electro-pop.
The chief influence on ‘Loudspeaker’ is OMD’s 1983 masterpiece ‘Dazzle Ships’, an album that was something of a commercial disaster at the time but is increasingly recognised as a pioneering piece of music with its experimentalism and samples sat alongside some of the most pure electronic pop committed to record. ‘Silver Paths’ in particular here carries echoes of that album, but its stately playfulness can be felt throughout. Similarly Moroder’s pioneering disco pulses – album highlight ‘Moroderhead’ pays due respect on all levels.
Between Tim’s sci-fi synthetics and Jo’s more organic bass and floor tom rhythms, Space Heroes of the People cry out to be a re-imagined soundtrack to ancient movie classics like *Metropolis*. The only occasional misfire is Tim’s vocals. Stuck through a Vocoder, or aping OMD’s Andy McClusky he fits the mould of the band fine, but lurching into near hysteria a couple of times (particularly on the Eurhythmics-like ‘Telescopes’) jars with the emotionally-detached nature of the music.
A minor quibble though, about a long-awaited album that, despite finding no room for old favourites like ‘Motorway To Moscow’ or ‘Groovy Dancer’, delivers on the often joyous promise they’ve shown for so long. This is synth-pop – accept no substitutes.
Dale Kattack

Next month:
Undersmile
Vienna Ditto
Bug Prentice
and more...

for hopeful lovers; with lyrical hooks destined for sun-kissed sing-alongs by ever-growing festival crowds. It’s simple, accessible music, in the best way.
The appearance of Slowdive’s Rachel Goswell on ‘Fields’ suggests a somewhat unresolved shoegaze interest or aim; in fact, her vocals are almost abstract in their ghostliness, and augment the semi-ambient shifting sands of the track in a way that, once again, encircles Walters’ vocal line as the core of this cinematic think-piece.
Finally, a remix of ‘Knotweed’ adds a moodier twist to things, moving Liu Bei in an almost ‘In Rainbows’-esque direction. Soft drum patterns bounce around building basslines and blurred sounds, with the whole once again connected up by vocals. The track suggests, one might hope, an urgency and experimental interest within Liu Bei that will lead to ever-more satisfying work.
In the transition from solo artist to bandleader, Walters has pulled off what many artists of several years’ standing wish to do. Without denying the quality of achievements of past work, suddenly things seem new and interesting again. A fresh band unit is breathing new life into something that we all already knew was worth paying more attention to.
Simon Minter

WE AERONAUTS

‘Boxing Day’

(Self released)
No, not a belated festive single, just a song called ‘Boxing Day’ because that’s when it was recorded, apparently. See, people, while you were sat on your arses stuffing Twiglets and Stilton down your neck, some people were *at work*. Hope you feel guilty.
Guilt being a not untypical emotion on Boxing Day as you contemplate your calorific intake. That and regret, and a general feeling of come down, all of which seem to seep into this song, We Aeronauts’ often tumbledown live sound here condensed into a slim but cohesive slice of indie-folk melancholy, just acoustic guitar, harmonica, cheap keyboard and sad-eyed vocals sat amid the crumpled piles of wrapping paper and dented hopes and dreams.
There’s a New Year ahead. Doubtless that will only bring further disappointment. Hopefully enough for a full album.
Dale Kattack



G I G G U I D E

SUNDAY 1st

BEARD OF DESTINY + MARK BOSLEY & PETE LOCK + MOON LEOPARD + SOUTH OXFORD BRASS: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free acoustic music session with bluesman Beard of Destiny, Moiety duo Pete Lock and Mark Bosley, and folk singer/host Jeremy Hughes in his Moon Leopard guise.
REIGNS: The Pegasus Theatre (6pm) - Annual showcase gig for young pop and rock acts from around Oxfordshire.

MONDAY 2nd

JON AMOR + JOEL FISK: The Bullingdon – The Hoax’s Jon Amor and guitarist Joel Fisk, who’s served time in LeVenore Rouge and

Thursday 5th

SLOW CLUB: The Bullingdon

Slow by name, slow by nature. Sheffield’s Slow Club’s music, career progress and musical evolution have all been done with a level of patience you probably thought was obsolete in this fast-moving world. For starters the pair – joint singers and multi-instrumentalists Rebecca Taylor and Charles Watson – started out together in 2006 and nine years and three albums later still gradually winning new fans and more enthusiastic reviews for music that never seems in any great hurry to get anywhere, preferring to dwell, just out of the shadows in a haze of raw yet gentle heartache. It’s music that *has* progressed over time, though, from the sweetly sinister folk-pop of 2009’s debut album ‘Yeah So’, through to the more soulful ‘Complete Surrender’, which found the duo casting off some of their early raggedness without polishing the edges of their songs too much. Songs like the lovely, sad-eyed ‘Everything Is New’, which finds both voices neatly intertwined. Along the way Slow Club have managed to reach the heady heights of playing Glastonbury and Latitude as well as supporting Mumford and Sons and Florence and the Machine but never quite taking the world by storm. Doubtless they prefer to be the soft, cool breeze that takes over the room without upending the furniture. Hopefully such a patient approach will get its reward sooner rather than later.



FEBRUARY

Hokie Joint, team up for an electric/acoustic blues get-together at tonight’s Haven Club show. The former spent the 90s touring with high-energy, volume-heavy blues outfit The Hoax who reformed a couple of years ago, previously compared to The Rolling Stones and Yardbirds. The latter grew up inspired by Eric Clapton, JJ Cale and BB King, being nominated for Best Guitarist in the annual Blues Awards twice.
RED DIRT SKINNERS: The Jericho Tavern – Rootsy Americana and blues from the Red Dirt Skinkers duo, who have toured with Paulo Nutini, at tonight’s Famous Monday Blues.
SALLY BARKER: Nettlebed Folk Club – Founding member of The Poozies, occasional collaborator with Show of Hands, and more recently a finalist on *The Voice*, Sally Barker gets back to her natural home of the folk clubs of the UK with this new solo tour

TUESDAY 3rd

LIU BEI: The Cellar – Richard Walters’ new band make their Oxford debut tonight, launching their second EP, ‘Goodness’, Richard’s angelic voice finding its new home amid the spangle and shimmer of Liu Bei’s Slowdive and This Mortal Coil-inspired shoegaze pop. *See Introducing feature*
JAZZ CLUB with THE HUGH TURNER BAND: The Bullingdon – Funky jazz from The Hugh Turner Band at the Bully’s free weekly jazz club.
SHATTERED SKIES + PERCEPTION + BEING EUGENE: The Wheatsheaf – Black Bullet Live show with Southend’s progressive metallers Shattered Skies out on tour to promote their debut album, ‘The World How We Used To Know’, following appearances at Bloodstock, Techfest and Germany’s Euroblast. Local tech support from Perception, inspired by Underoath and Architects, and groove/metalcore crew Being Eugene.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 4th

FREE RANGE UNITED NATIONS OF DUB WEEKENDER LAUNCH: The Cellar – The Cellar’s regular roots and dub club hosts a launch gig for this weekend’s United Nations of Dub with Red Bull Culture Clash champions and Notting Hill Carnival kings Channel One – *see main preview*
SALVAGE + PROLONG THE AGONY + EVAVOID: The Wheatsheaf – Metalcore in the vein of Killswitch, Lamb of God and In Flames from local crew Salvage, alongside Portsmouth’s metalcore outfit Prolong the Agony and local teens Evavoid.
KING CHARLES: O2 Academy – Wry, rootsy acoustic psychedelia and electro-pop from the hirsute west London dandy, inspired by Donovan, Syd Barrett and Marc Bolan and back in town ahead of the release of his second album.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Open acoustic session.

THURSDAY 5th

SLOW CLUB: The Bullingdon – Slow by name, slow by nature. But like the tortoise, they’ll win in the end – *see main preview*
SUPERMARKET: The Cellar – Pop, disco, UK garage and 90s house club night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free show in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar from the local swamp-blues and psychedelic funk stalwarts.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running, and best, open club night continues to provide space for singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more every week.
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst

FRIDAY 6th

SKYLARKIN’ SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’ monthly celebration of all things reggae, ska and dancehall, tonight featuring a return visit for ten-piece ska titans Intensified – *see main preview*
CHARLIE SIMPSON + EMMA BLACKERY + BLACKWELL + WILLOW ROBINSON: O2 Academy – The former-Busted boy band pin-up, turned Fightstar-fronting rocker, turned acoustic balladeer, takes to the road to plug his new solo album, ‘Long Road Home’.
SAXON + HELL + BEYOND THE BLACK: O2 Academy – Postponed from December after drummer Nigel Glocker was hospitalised, the Barnsley metal titans finally make it back to town, stars of the NWOBHM in the 70s and 80s, going on to sell some 15 million albums worldwide, including the genre classic ‘Wheels of Steel’.
Original singer Biff Byford and guitarist Paul Quinn still helm the rock and roll battleship, so expect all the big hits as well as tracks from their 2013 album, ‘Sacrifice’, the group’s twentieth.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with FRACTURE + THE TWAT DADDIES + CHARLY WOOD: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak’s monthly mixed bill of music, with grungey rockers Fracture and more.
ALEX LANYON + WILLIE J HEALEY + CAMERON A.G: The Jericho Tavern – Soulful acoustic rocking from Birmingham’s Alex Lanyon at Daisy Rodgers Music’s first show of 2015. He’s joined by local singer-songwriters Willie J Healey, with his laidback ‘rock’n’stroll’ acoustic pop, and last month’s *Nightshift* Demo of the Month winner Cameron A G with his solitary, introverted electro-acoustic lullabies.

SWITCH: O2 Academy – Solid basement house from self-mythologizing London duo Waze & Odyssey, who started their musical life together convincing assorted reviewers they were orphans raised by a kindly New York record shop owner, and continuing to cut a groove for themselves with their intricate and slick house.
SANCTUM: The Varsity Club – Rock and metal

club night.
DISCO MUTANTES: The Library – Classic disco, boogie and acid house club night.
MISSING PERSIANS: The James Street Tavern – Mellow blues-rocking.
STEAMROLLER: O’Neill’s – First of three local shows from the veteran blues-rockers, kicking it out in the style of Cream and Hendrix.

SATURDAY 7th

GAZ COOMBES: O2 Academy – The local rock hero launches his second solo album, ‘Matador’, with a hometown show – *see main interview feature*
THE DREW HOLCOMB DUO: The Bullingdon – Well-travelled Americana from the Tennessee songsmith – *see main preview*
SIMPLE with SUBB-AN: The Bullingdon –

Wednesday 4th

FREERANGE UNITED NATIONS OF DUB LAUNCH: The Cellar

Friday 6th

INTENSIFIED:

The Cellar

Proof, if it were ever needed, that The Cellar is the natural home of reggae in Oxford, its dark, subterranean walls ideal for containing those monster basslines. Two club shows in a week bring some quality roots, dub, dancehall and more to town. On the Wednesday the venue hosts a launch gig for the United Nations of Dub Weekender in north Wales, courtesy of the longstanding Freerange club night. Topping the bill will be Channel One, widely considered one of, if not *the* top soundsystem in the UK, previous champions of the Red Bull Culture Clash and kings of Notting Hill Carnival. They’re joined tonight by Mikey Dread and Ras Kayleb on a bill that also includes Roots Guidance, Red-I, Shere Khan and Leo Bowder.

Friday features another quality reggae party in the company of Skylarkin’ Soundsystem. This month’s celebration of reggae, ska and dancehall sees a return to town for ten-piece ska titans Intensified (*pictured*), playing authentic 60s-style ska, rocksteady and reggae. The band have acquired near-legendary status across Europe over the past 25 years, providing backing to some of the most revered names in reggae, including the late, great Alton Ellis at the Zodiac back in 2007. On the decks, Count Skylarkin and Bam Bam Sound play vintage island treats into the wee small hours.



The Bully’s long-running house and techno club night hosts London producer Ashique Subhan, going under the name Subb-an, best known for his collaboration with Starving Yet Full, ‘Say No More’, blending sparse but punchy atmospheric house with more soulful moments and elements of garage and bass.
SKY:LARK + KIND EYES + MASIRO + ROUGH MUSIC: The Cellar – A night of noise courtesy of Idiot King Records, with Kent’s screaming math-core crew Sky:lark; noise duo Kind Eyes, and local math-rock monsters Masiro.
REIGN OF FURY + THE CRUSHING + RETRIBUTION: The Wheatsheaf – Classic thrash metal from the Midlands rockers, out on a headline tour ahead of a second album. Local support from thrash crazies The Crushing.
AURAL CANDY + WEBS & MARIONETTES KATY JACKSON: The Jericho Tavern – Strummer Room Project show with self-described “plinky plonk nonsense” act Aural Candy mixing up an eclectic blend of sounds, plus local rockers Webs and Marionettes.
RECKLESS SLEEPERS + A RELUCTANT ARROW + PURPLE MAY: The Hollybush, Osney – Psychedelic folk-rock from Reckless Sleepers, with influences as diverse as Midlake and Jefferson Airplane.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Marsh Harrier
THE WILL POUND BAND: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – The renowned harmonica player – who’s worked with Guy Chambers, Martin Simpson and Concerto Caledonia, brings his band to the Wychwood Folk Club.
HONOLULU COWBOYS: St Giles Church Hall (6pm) – Hawaiian tea party with live music from The Honolulu Cowboys.
SHEPHERD’S PIE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Classic heavy rock covers.
STEAMROLLER + THE DIRTY EARTH BAND + WOLFBAIT: Eynsham Social Club – Blues rocking from Steamroller, rock covers from the Dirty Earth Band and costumed covers theatrics from Wolfbait.

SUNDAY 8th

DUOTONE + THE AUGUST LIST: Truck Store (4pm) – The venerable Truck Store celebrates its fourth birthday, providing a vital sea of independence on the Cowley Road. A host of local acts will be on hand to help the party along, including two recent *Nightshift* cover stars – cellist and loopmeister Duotone, and backwoods porch-folk couple The August List. More to be added.
RAE MORRIS: O2 Academy – Blackpool’s sultry blues and jazz songstress returns to town to promote new album ‘Unguarded’, her smooth, emotive piano-based balladry recalling Joss Stone, Nerina Pallot and Edie Brickell at times.
PERKELT + LEWIS NEWCOMBE-JONES + BEARD OF DESTINY + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm) – Giddyup Music’s free acoustic session in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.

MONDAY 9th

JOHN SMITH: Holywell Music Room – Devon’s doleful folk troubadour returns to the Shire after his showing at Towersey Festival last year. He’s a much-travelled singer and musician, regularly touring round the globe, opening for John Martyn, Iron and Wine, Richard Hawley and Martin Carthy amongst a host of big names. He’s out on a headline tour to promote most



Sat 7th / Sat 14th / Wed 18th

EMPTY ROOM AMERICANA MONTH:

The Bullingdon

Over the past few years Empty Room Promotions – helmed by the genial Mike Trotman – has carved its very individual niche in the local scene, bringing a host of American cult stars to town, meaning you don’t have to travel to London, or even Nashville, to see them live. February finds three such acts over in Oxford, in the suitably intimate setting of the Bully’s backroom. On the 7th, it’s Tennessee songsmith **Drew Holcomb**, previously support to Police Dog Hogan here, and a man with some 2000 gigs under his belt, touring the highways and byways of the southern states with his lonesome, emotive folk, inspired as much by Radiohead as it is by The Jayhawks or Wilco. Great local support here too from **Bethany Weimers**. On Saturday 14th one of the highlights of last year, Virginia’s **Sons of Bill**, are back, brothers Sam, Abe and James Wilson mixing hushed, epic melancholy with bold blue-collar rock anthems, recalling Springsteen at times, Tom Petty at others. Rounding off a triptych of great Americana shows are Detroit’s bluegrass stars **Frontier Ruckus (pictured)** on Wednesday 18th, singer Matthew Milia’s poetic songs bringing to mind Palace Brothers and Sufjan Stevens at times. Three great gigs from one of Oxford’s best small promoters; it’s what makes this city’s music scene such a treat.





Friday 13th

THE STAVES: O2 Academy

Three sisters called Emily, Camilla and Jessica singing winsome, pristine close-harmony folk songs that occasionally tread close to Laura Marling might sound like something concocted in a major label marketing department in these post-Mumford days, but the fact is, the Staveley-Taylor siblings, all in their twenties, have been singing together since their teens, making their name in their native Watford by playing open-mic nights. The fact they look and sound like an A&R scout's perfect daydream is by the by. Occasionally polite their music may be, but at their best they're mesmerising, crystalline, graceful and often hypnotic, drawing a line between the English folk songs of Sandy Denny and its American Laurel Canyon cousin, while live the sisters are more playful and potty-mouthed than their double-barrelled surname might suggest. They've already toured the States several times, as well as supporting Bon Iver in the UK and Canada, and sang backing vocals for Fionn Regan, and the trio's debut album, 'Dead & Born & Gone', was helmed by legendary producers Glyn and Ethan Johns, two blokes who know a thing or two about genuine talent. With a new album, 'If I Was', out this month, the sisters are back on a UK tour and showing no sign of losing their winning sheen any time soon.

recent album 'The Great Lakes', his fourth, and performing in the suitably intimate old world setting of the Holywell. **MIRANDA SYKES & REX PRESTON: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Show Of Hands mainstay Sykes comes to the Nettlebed Folk Club, alongside Preston for some double bass and mandolin action.

TUESDAY 10th

HEAVY DEXTERS: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from Heavy Dexters, playing jazz-funk

covers and originals.

GORGON CITY: O2 Academy – North London production duo Gorgon City return to the O2 after their sold out show here back in October last year, the pair's smooth, soulful deep house anthem 'Ready For Your Love' having gone Top 5, followed by a top ten placing for debut album 'Sirens'. **GYPSY FIRE: St John the Evangelist** – Gypsy jazz from guitarists Stuart Carter and Will Barnes and chums. **INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Goth, industrial and ebm club night with regulars Doktor Joy and Bookhouse. **OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 11th

BLACK MIRRORS + KHAMSIMA + JENN THE GIANT PANDA: The Wheatsheaf – It's All About the Music gig with local rock duo Black Mirrors alongside Reading singer/keyboard player Khamsina, mixing up electronica, jazz and folk and drawing comparisons with Joan Baez and Kate McGarrigle. **BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar** – 80s, new wave, disco, synth-pop and glam club night.

THURSDAY 12th

HIDDEN CHARMS + GEORGE TAYLOR + ISLAND: The Bullingdon – Old-fashioned rocking blues and boogie from London's Hidden Charms. **DEEP COVER: The Cellar** – Hip hop club night with live acts. **BEWARE THIS BOY + SAFETY IN NUMBERS: The Bell Inn, Bicester** – Strummer Room Project show with local trad English folk-rockers Beware This Boy. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon** **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 13th

THE STAVES: O2 Academy – Sweet soul sisters – *see main preview* **SWITCH with HOSPITALITY: O2 Academy** – Sets from London Elekricity, Fred V & Grafix, Etherwood, Metrik and Krakota at this week's electro club night. **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + THE NEON VIOLETS + KANCHO! + LEE RILEY: The Bullingdon** – Pindrop's annual Grief-Fest brings a barrel-load of noise, topped by ambient prog-space-rock crew Flights of Helios, with their atmospheric starscapes. They're ably supported tonight by psych/groove merchants The Neon Violets, taking their noisy cue from Loop, Black

Angels, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and Spacemen 3. Lee Riley provides between-set drones. **DESECRATION + NECROSIS + SODOMIZED CADAVER + MUTAGENOCIDE: The Wheatsheaf** – Slave To The Grind present another night of musical ultraviolence, tonight featuring a return to town for Newport's Desecration, a band with two decades' worth of death-metal scandal-making under their belts. Back in 1993 their debut album 'Gore & Perversion' was seized by police and singer Ollie Jones arrested under obscenity laws. Since then they've

been upsetting civilised sensibilities with death-metal ditties like 'Raping The Corpse' and generally avoiding being picked as the nation's favourite cheeky pop scamps. **BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, tonight with Renegade Brass Band, Sheffield's jazz/hip hop collective, featuring eight horns, two percussionists, scratch DJ and MC, veterans of the European festival circuit. **CUT GRASS: The Bullingdon** – Valentine's Day disco party.

SATURDAY 14th

SONS OF BILL: The Bullingdon – Blue collar country-folk as part of Empty Room Promotions' Americana month – *see main preview* **DEF CON ONE + THE 8th BRIDGE + A HIGHER DEMISE: The Cellar** – Malevolent metalcore fury at tonight's OxRox show with Newcastle's Def Con One, piling in somewhere between Pantera, Machine Head and Slayer. They're joined by Cardiff's The 8th Bridge, describing themselves as "vegetarian progressive grindcore," but coming in on a more old school punk-metal tip. **THE OXFORD GAMELAN SOCIETY + LILA BHAWA DANCE COMPANY + CLIODNA SHANAHAN: St John the Evangelist** – Traditional Javanese gamelan at tonight's Pindrop show, plus interpretations of Ravel, Debussy and more. **TOM HINGLEY + MARK COPE: The Wheatsheaf** – Bluesy rocking from former-Inspiral Carpets frontman Tom Hingley tonight, with support from erstwhile Candyskins guitarist Mark Cope. **BEDROCK: The Bullingdon** – Skeletor's monthly rock and metal club night. **SYNTRONIX: Fat Lil's, Witney** – 80s synth-pop hits. **THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford**

SUNDAY 15th

HUDSON TAYLOR: O2 Academy – Dublin's musical brothers Harry and Alfie Hudson-Taylor head off on a headline tour to promote their debut album, due out this month, the folk-pop duo following up a tour support with Jake Bugg, having made their name busking on the streets of their hometown and reaching Number 1 in the Irish iTunes chart for their debut EP 'Battles'. **SAM BAILEY: The New Theatre** – The former *X Factor* winner continues to smash it, with dire consequences for decent pop music everywhere. Did we learn nothing from the trauma of Celine fucking Dion, people? **SONG & SUPPER CLUBS + SUPERLOOSE + MEGAN JOSEPHY + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm)** – Giddyup Music's free acoustic session in the Sheaf's downstairs bar.

MONDAY 16th

BEAR'S DEN: O2 Academy – Plaintive folk-pop in the vein of Snow Patrol and Mumford and Sons from Communion signings Bear's Den, who've been out on tour with the Mumfords and now head out as headliners to promote debut album 'Islands'. **CHAS & DAVE: The New Theatre** – The critical reappraisal of norf Laarndan duo Charles Hodges and David Peacock continues apace with suggestions in respectable quarters that if Blur

had written the likes of 'Ain't No Pleasing You', it'd be considered a pop masterpiece. Whatever, you can bet pretty much anyone you meet over the age of about 20 can sing most of one of their hits, from 'Gertcha' to 'Margate' to 'Rabbit', their mix of cheery, beery pub singalong, boogie woogie and music hall – dubbed rockney – has proved remarkably timeless and if they pledged back in 2011 that they were off on their farewell tour, that seems to have no end date either. **KENT DUCHAINE: The Jericho Tavern** – Return to the Famous Monday Blues for the veteran Louisiana bluesman and his trusty Leadbessie guitar. **CARA DILLON: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Traditional folk music from the multiple award-winning Irish singer.

TUESDAY 17th

THE USED: O2 Academy – Blimey, are they still going? Utah's one-time screamo heroes return with a new album, 'Imaginary Enemy', their sixth, a full decade and a half after their debut. Little's changed musically – they're still bombastic post-hardcore noisemakers with a vaguely poppish edge and just the occasional hint that if you nudged them too hard they'd keel over into Nickleback's lap. **JAZZ CLUB with THE STUART HENDERSON QUARTET: The Bullingdon** – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson's quartet at the Bully's weekly jazz club. **OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 18th

FRONTIER RUCKUS + LES CLOCHARDS: The Bullingdon – Continuing Empty Rooms Americana month, tonight with Michigan's bluegrass stars – *see main preview* **SPARKY'S JAM NIGHT: The James Street Tavern** – Open mic and open jam night.

THURSDAY 19th

36 CRAZYFISTS: O2 Academy – Alaska's uncompromising metalcore veterans head back to Europe, ahead of the release of new album 'Time & Trauma', the follow-up to 2010's 'Collisions & Castaways'. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **NIKKI LOY: Joe's Bar & Grill, Summertown** – Soulful acoustic pop from the local singer/songwriter. **OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon** **SUPERMARKET: The Cellar** **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 20th

THE DREAMING SPIRES + THE SHAPES: The Bullingdon – Local Americana pioneers Dreaming Spires launch their second album, 'Searching For The Supertruth', the follow up to 'Brothers in Brooklyn', the brothers Bennett having channelled the spirit of The Band, The Byrds, Buffalo Springfield and Big Star into a romantic, questing form of pop that marries traditional country with 60s folk-rock and psychedelia. They're joined by good-time rockers The Shapes, with hints of Pink Floyd and Tom Petty alongside Van Morrison and Elvis Costello. **JUNGLE + CLARENCE CLARITY: O2 Academy** – Groove is very much in the heart for the west London collective – *see main preview* **CASH: O2 Academy** – Johnny Cash tribute.

GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPH + CAPTIVES + KID KIN + TIGER MENDOZA: The Wheatsheaf – Ambient instrumental post-rock from Ghosts in the Photograph, alongside Reading's Captives; local electro-math-shoegaze soundscapist Kid Kin, and industrial-electro-hip hop from Tiger Mendoza. **NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK: The Cellar** – Motown, indie, new wave, ska and disco club night. **BG ON THE CORNER: Modern Art Oxford** – BG Records showcases local rhymers, wordsmiths and beatmakers at tonight's all-ages show. **FELL OUT BOY: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to punk-pop heroes Fall Out Boy. **STEAMROLLER: The Dolphin, Middleton-Cheney**

SATURDAY 21st

JOHNNY GREENWOOD & THE LONDON CONTEMPORARY ORCHESTRA PLAYERS: St John the Evangelist – Jonny and chums enjoy a campfire-style singalong – *see main preview* **SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + THE LONG INSIDERS + HUGH McMANNERS: The Bullingdon** – Electro-pop duo SHOTP launch their long-awaited debut album at tonight's One Gig Closer to Wittstock fundraiser, mixing the playful experimentation of 'Dazzle Ships'-era OMD with Moroder-style disco. Serious rockabilly action from The Long Insiders, punking Elvis and Eddie Cochran's classic rock'n'roll by way of The Cramps. **REEJAI + MERRICK'S TUSK + MYSHERA + LEWIS SCOTT: The Wheatsheaf** – It's All About the Music showcase with Witney's spiritual rap newcomer Reejai and more. **GET INUIT: The Cellar** – Idiot King gig night with Huw Stephens favourites and recent Alcopop! signings Get Inuit, taking influences like Vampire Weekend and Art Brut to make for a cheerfully dirty surf-flavoured indie pop. **JEFF WARNER: The Swan, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – Wychwood Folk Club with singer and banjo player Jeff Warner, playing his historic sea shanties, 18th Century hymns and traditional English and American folk songs.

EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – The house and techno club hosts Fresh Out The Box's Luv Jam. **FUSED: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Alt.rock covers. **THE PETE FRYER BAND: Cricketers Arms, Cowley**

SUNDAY 22nd

PEJA + GANDOZIOR + SLIWA: The Cellar – A night of Polish hip hop with award-winning veteran rapper PEJA, from Polish hip hop heroes Slum Attack, making his Oxford debut. **THE JESTERS + DES BARKUS + MAEVE BAYTON + PETE LOCK & MARK BOSLEY + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm)** – Klub Kakofanney host an afternoon of free unplugged music in the Sheaf's downstairs bar, with trad-folkies The Jesters; blues and folk singer Maeve Bayton, and Moiety duo Mark Bosley and Pete Lock. **SUNDAY SESSION: Florence Park Community Session (2-5pm)** – Family-friendly afternoon gig session, today with Turkobilly crew Brickwork Lizards mixing traditional middle eastern music with classic rock'n'roll. **RECKLESS SLEEPERS + ALAN JAGGS + JOSH JAMIES: The Angel & Greyhound (2.30pm)** – Acoustic afternoon of live music.



Friday 20th

JUNGLE: O2 Academy

Oddly, for a band whose self marketing from the very start – choosing a Google-unfriendly band name; hiding their identities behind simple initials (J and T); using breakdancers or rollerskaters in their videos; conducting all interviews by phone, and performing live shrouded in smoke – was very modern, Jungle's music is decidedly old-school. We mean, properly old-school. For a couple of west London private school-educated lads Josh Lloyd-Watson and Tom McFarlane (their secret had to come out eventually) sound like they just slid smoothly in from New York or San Francisco around 40 years ago. Their easy, loping funk grooves, disco, tropical pop and psychedelia fusion joins the dots between Studio 54, Chic, Can and Daft Punk, without a hint of jungle in the mix. While their eponymous debut album was Mercury shortlisted and choice cut 'Busy Earnin' became a radio hit, a stream of musical sunshine straight outta another age, the pair reinvented themselves as a seven-strong collective; their indie-pop past (as Born Blonde) was forgotten and they've earned an enviable reputation as a great live act. Little wonder tonight's show is already sold out. Time to dance like the last few decades were just a dream.

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm) – Open blues session.

MONDAY 23rd

GILES ROBSON & THE DIRTY ACES: The Bullingdon – Haven Club show for the UK bluesman, discovered playing back-up to Muddy Waters' son Mud Morganfield and rated as the best harmonica player on the European circuit, bringing a soulful blend of blues and r'n'b to town. **BREABACH: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Scottish-flavoured folk dance from the 2013 Scottish Traditional Music Awards Best Live Act winners, playing songs, tunes and steps on bagpipes, fiddle, flute and guitar.

TUESDAY 24th

JAZZ CLUB with ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, bop and swing with veteran clarinettist Alvin Roy and his Reeds Unlimited band at tonight's weekly jazz club. **RACHEL SERMANNI: St Barnabus Church, Jericho** – Honey-voiced Scottish folk singer in the vein of Laura Marling, hailing from the Highlands but blooded on the Glaswegian trad folk scene, Rachel Sermanni earned a break after jamming with Mumford & Sons, going on to play with Elvis Costello and Rumer amongst others, now out on tour to promote her second album, 'Tied To The Moon'.

2015 GIGS

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Saturday 23rd May
Steve Ignorant's Slice of Life + Myrrh Room

OPEN MIC SESSION: **James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 25th

MIRIAM JONES: The Wheatsheaf – Soulful folk and Americana from Canadian singer Miriam Jones, launching her new album, ‘Between Green and Gone’ as part of a UK tour.
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s, new wave, disco, synth-pop, glam club night.
DENNY ILETT Snr: The Library – Intimate show from the veteran local jazz guitarist.

THURSDAY 26th

TOLIESEL: O2 Academy – Warmly euphoric Americana from ToLiesel, playing their biggest headline show to date.
RAINBOW RESERVOIR: The Library – Kooky, jaunty piano-pop from the American ex-pat at tonight’s Smash Disco free show.
HUNTER & THE BEAR: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Sweet, rustic folk-rock and Americana from the Cornbury regulars, touring the UK ahead of a second EP release, inspired by Lynyrd Skynyrd,

Saturday 21st

JONNY GREENWOOD & THE LCO SOLOISTS:

St John the Evangelist
Given the elongated periods between albums, it’s easy to imagine the members of Radiohead spend most of their time sitting around counting their money, but in reality they’re constantly busy bunnies, particularly Thom, with his myriad projects, and Jonny, who’s earned himself a nice reputation as one of the best film soundtrack composers around, notably the wonderfully atmospheric score to *There Will Be Blood*, as well as *The Master* and *Norwegian Wood*. He’s just finished recording the soundtrack to a film adaptation of Thomas Pynchon’s novel *Inherent Vice* where his original compositions sit alongside music from Can, Neil Young and Minnie Riperton. Tonight is a very rare opportunity – curated by Beard Museum – to see Jonny perform parts of those soundtracks alongside works by Steve Reich, Xenakus, Purcell, Messiaen and Edmund Finnis, with the centrepiece being Reich’s ‘Electric Counterpoint’. Joined by members of LCO, Jonny will be playing guitar as well as tanpura and a rare ondes Martenot keyboard, continuing the man’s obsession with mastering new and unusual instruments. With Radiohead starting to write and record a new album, the follow-up to 2011’s ‘King of Limbs’, it’s likely Mr Greenwood will be out of live action for some time, so make the most of this occasion.



The Band and, in particular, Bruce Springsteen.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC CLUB: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst

FRIDAY 27th

NME AWARDS TOUR with PALMA VIOLETS + THE FAT WHITE FAMILY + AMAZING SNAKEHEADS + SLAVES: O2 Academy – Top-drawer showcase tour from the *NME* – see main preview
VIENNA DITTO + DECOVO + THE SEA THE SEA + THE AUREATE ACT + KID KIN + ALAN JAGGS: O2 Academy – 21st Century electro-blues, rockabilly, soul and synth mayhem from ace local duo Vienna Ditto at tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase. The pair are joined by Foals-y indie crew The Sea The Sea; elaborate prog crew The Aureate Act and one-man electro-shoegaze army Kid Kin.
RAM JAM: O2 Academy – The O2’s weekly Switch club goes dub and roots crazy with legendary reggae DJ David Rodigan on the decks, alongside Dub Phizix and Strategy.
LET’S TALK DAGGERS + GRINDHOUSE: The Wheatsheaf – Rampant math-rock, grunge and hardcore noise from Eastbourne’s Let’s Talk Daggers at tonight’s Black Bullet Live show.
TERRAFORMS PRESENTS: The Cellar – Terraforms host their seventh birthday with a drum&bass party featuring BCUK’s Bad Company, alongside Greencode, Bolo, Raw, Garvin Dan and MCs KB and Sandman.
KEEP HUSH: The Bullingdon HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + COMFORT ZONE: The James Street Tavern – Americana and bluegrass from the local country-folk troupe.
WOLF BAIT: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Costumed cover versions, from Dolly Parton to Queen.

SATURDAY 28th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with MONKFISH + RUTH THEODORE + SUPERLOOSE: The Wheatsheaf – With barely a fanfare, Gappy Tooth Industries reach their 150th gig, heroically holding the fort for consciously eclectic mixed bills and a no-returns policy, making every show a mini adventure into sound. Tonight’s quality bill features gothic blues and dark country-rocking crew Monkfish, leaning towards the Thin White Rope and Lee Hazlewood side of grizzled growliness. They’re joined by breathlessly angular and eccentric songstress Ruth Theodore, who’s drawn comparisons to Ani DiFranco and Martha Wainwright, and Abingdon’s ramshackle folk-blues, Americana and bluegrass people Superloose.
LAST GREAT DREAMERS + GET LOOSE: The Cellar – OxRox host reformed 90s glam-rockers Last Great Dreamers with their suitably sleazy take on Hanoi Rocks and Dogs D’Amour’s power-pop.
ROOM 94: O2 Academy – Like Ebola, Room 94 just won’t go away. Tour supports to Lawson

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Friday 27th


NME AWARDS TOUR: O2 Academy

NME tours can be a mixed bag at the best of times as the sole surviving music weekly struggles to keep picking winners, but this latest Awards package tour looks like being one of its strongest ever. Not a duff name in sight as the reliably ebullient **Palma Violets** make another return trip to town – the band more than capable of selling out shows in their own right with a ramshackle rampage of decidedly old school indie punk that had A&R types salivating about The New Libertines, when really they sounded closer to The Strokes and even the likes of Teardrop Explodes and Bauhaus at times. **Fat White Family** (*pictured*)’s PA-wrecking show at the Bully last year will go down in local legend for those who witnessed the lunacy and carnage, singer Lias Saoudi performing naked throughout the set, oiled up and covered in flour. Not that they need such gimmicks, given their splendidly grimy mutant post-punk funk and rockabilly, taking a scalpel to The Fall’s DNA and making music that’s genuinely dank and dirty. It’s a dirt matched by **Amazing Snakeheads**, a band embroiled in violence and death and darkness, inspired by The Birthday Party and intent on evoking a sense of dread in the listener, something they succeed admirably in. Finally Kent duo **Slaves** – not to be confused with the sappy American band of the same name – kick out a right old racket, quintessentially English in its humorous ire and lyrical detail. Quality from start to finish, thrills, sweat and nakedness guaranteed.

and Union J cemented their reputation as dangerous rock buccaneers at the cutting edge of musical mayhem. And here they are. Again. Back to drain a little more of our will to live as they launch, not a new album, but a new clothing line. Three of them have the surname Lemon, and a bunch of lemons they most certainly are. **BLOODSTOCK MUSIC 2 THE MASSES HEAT 3: The Bullingdon** – Third heart of the heavyweight battle of the bands for a place at this year’s Bloodstock festival.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The James Street Tavern – Party-starting blues and funk rocking from the local veterans.

The Cellar

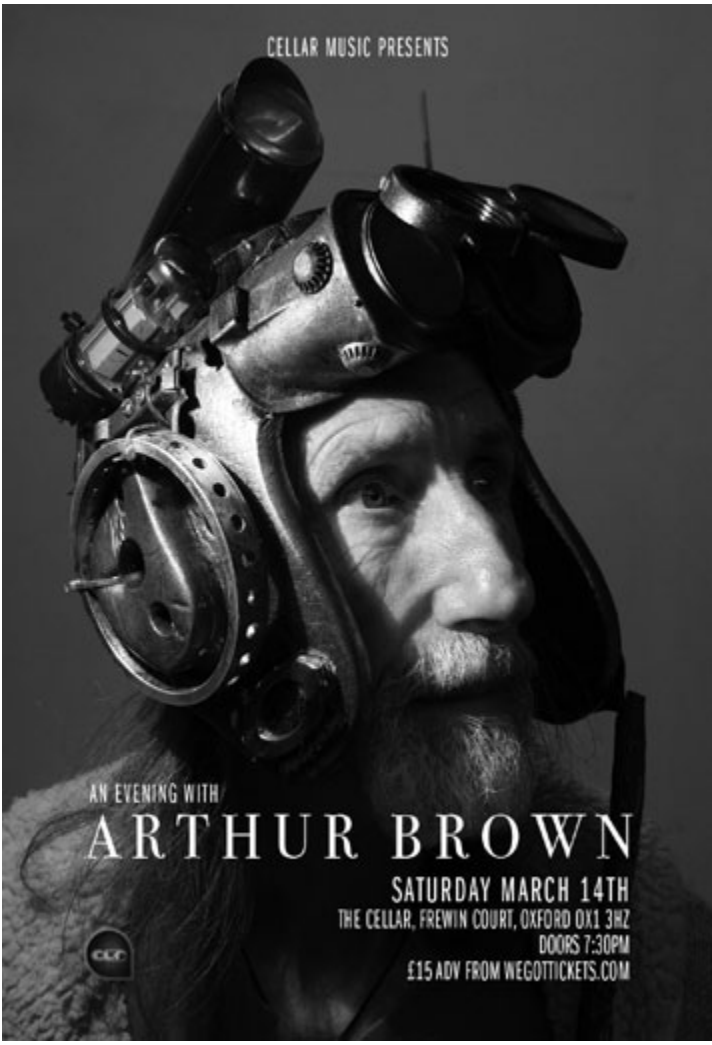
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PEERLESS PIRATES / OUI LEGIONNAIRES

The Wheatsheaf

It's hard to know what to say about Cheltenham's Oui Legionnaires. On one hand their twitchy post-rock flavoured emoting feels unexceptional and a good few years out of date, yet on the other they play with ability and passion that demands attention. On one hand their angsty US yelps sound like Doogie Howser getting snarky with his ISP, yet on the other the insistent cubist guitar parts give them a Cap'n Jazz intensity that keeps them interesting. On one hand their final off-mic refrain chanting undershoots its mark and falls awkwardly flat, yet on the other their toes inwards, balls of the feet, nervous tic meek-core energy is infectious. It's fifty-fifty; we'll let them play the advantage and see if they can score in future. Like Post-It notes and selfie sticks, Peerless Pirates' main idea is so beautifully simple you're annoyed you didn't think of it yourself: The Smiths without the egos. They've taken some of Britain's greatest pop music, and stripped away not only Morrissey's passive-aggressive poetics, but also Marr's penchant for guitar hero classic rock chop-

wankery; it's as if the rhythm section ruled The Smiths, and they were always the best ones (smack notwithstanding). And the true stroke of genius? They've filled the void with pirates. Pirates are synonymous with fun, where childhood abandon meets hard liquor and entry level cosplay, and pretty much make most things in life more enjoyable. Over the years Peerless Pirates have become as tight as well-kept rigging and as solid as a hundred year old capstan, and slowly, unobtrusively their indie-shanty schtick has become one of the best nights out in Oxford. Barring the odd dashes of Tex-Mex hot sauce, their sound has not noticeably developed, but their focus has, and we defy anyone to leave a set like this without a big silly-arse grin. Plus, because Peerless Pirates were on our radar first, we're able to dismiss a certain syndicalism and winkie obsessed comedian as a mere sartorial copyist of lead singer Cliff Adams. Revolution? Maybe later; for now there's a rum keg to be tapped. **David Murphy**

ALEXANDER O'NEAL

O2 Academy

It's great to see local DJ Darrell 'Funk Box' Steaman, probably the most soulful man in Abingdon, warming up the crowd for tonight's post-Christmas party. He makes way for the support act, a gentle duo from Glasgow whose name eludes us, using just a female vocal and an acoustic guitar to mesmerise the crowd with original material and a version of 'Is This Love' that is pure soul.

Alexander O'Neal was of course a huge star in mid to late 80s, with a number of hit singles and the huge selling (particularly in the UK) 'Hearsay' album. Though firmly in the R&B / funk tradition, the LP could often be found alongside On-U Sound and Factory releases in the collections of white fans, successfully crossing over where many others failed. This was partly down to the flawless production of Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, former compatriots in Prince protégés The Time. The duo will always have unsurpassable cred for turning down a request from Michael Jackson because they were desperate to produce The Human League's 'Crash'.

Tonight O'Neal emerges in a sharp suit and several pounds lighter than we remember him but instantly

recognisable, frequently wiping his brow with a linen handkerchief. Backed by three singers, a drummer and three keyboard players (one alternating with some fine bass and guitar licks), things start well enough, though we try not to notice that some of the band look a bit bored and his voice is a little raspy and thin. It's the hits we're here for, and it's not long before they start coming. The duet 'Saturday Love' takes the crowd, many of whom are clearly not Academy regulars, back to younger days of fashion choices best forgotten, a backing singer making great work of Cherrelle's part. A pedestrian 'Fake' lacks the punch of the record, though 'Criticize' is still a towering funk statement and a reminder that in the end it's great song writing that makes a singer a star, and these two at least stand up as timeless classics, unlike so much produced in the era.

As the crowd disperse and the merchandise man waves his 'Meet Alexander O'Neal - £20' sign none of us knew the man would pop up a few days later on *Celebrity Big Brother*. Despite the rough edges tonight is a far better tribute to someone with a well-deserved place in musical history.

Art Lagun

REVELLER / INDICA BLUES / REPERCUSSIONS OF YESTERDAY

The Wheatsheaf

An Oxford drumming drought foreshadows this mid-January showcasing of talent at the heavier end of the spectrum, with Leper King forced to pull out due to a lack of a man with cymbals. Hence, the muscular presence of Carl M. Bangay, aka Repercussions of Yesterday, takes the stage and songs with titles such as 'Epitaph' and 'Hollow' provide a hint of what's to come. Abbreviated to R.O.Y., Bangay's demonic growl is more Keane than Hattersley, although unexpected synths temper the guitar onslaught, if not the subject matter, which includes the tale of a man who cheated on his wife and contracted AIDS. Across just four songs, it's an unapologetically uncommercial exercise in doom. Enter, Indica Blues with frontman Tom Pilsworth joined by a band of no mean talent, the band's style like a roughneck version of Smashing Pumpkins fed through a stoner cheese grater. Storms of feedback bejewel the set and we are reminded of the guitar heroes of the 1970s. Although traditional in feel, there

is a feint whiff of experimentalism that might just recall Hookworms or Wooden Shjips from more recent times and following on from the airing of some excellent tracks on Dave Gilyeat's BBC Introducing show in 2014, the band are certainly a more than welcome addition to the Oxford music scape. We are satisfied by what has gone before and the antics of headliner Reveller's diminutive front man Kial Churcher lends real electricity to the room, screeching like a good 'un and espousing good humouredly between the songs from a position in front of the stage at the level of the punters. The legend 'Slipknot' on the back of an audience member's hoodie hints where this is going but Reveller, formerly I, the Deceiver, are far less cartoonish and take themselves far less seriously than those particular comedians. Like the Duracell Bunny, Ready Brek Man and lead character from the film, *The Selfish Giant* rolled into one, Churcher's energy is infectious, even if the hardcore genre has its limitations. **Robert Langham**

ROYAL BLOOD / TURBOWOLF

O2 Academy

"I'm not sure where you learnt to dance" Turbowolf's Chris Georgiadis sulks at the rabble's less than enthusiastic attempt at following his orders. Despite his failure to incite partner-dancing, the lead singer and crew are setting a good mood for the night. Strewn with good old-fashioned rock key-words like "devil" and "voodoo" their set is persuasively energetic, and even the most lethargic members of the audience soon get involved in the four-piece's psychedelia-tinged musical world. Urgent, high-pitched vocal samples and a frantic, Muse-esque bassline make 'Solid Gold' a stand-out; even if its lyrics might lend themselves to under-analysis ("This snake is wrapped around my neck: solid gold!").

Royal Blood's trademark heavy riffing and tightly-orchestrated co-operation merge in a sound that's had everyone from Dave Grohl to Jimmy Page singing their praises. They burst into tonight's show with the compelling intro of 'Come on Over,' the first lone drumbeat creating a collective spine-tingle.

SWINDLESTOCK / ALICE RUSSELL with NATUREBOY

Florence Park Community Centre

It's not often you get one of the best British soul singers playing a modest community centre in a double header with a good local band. No surprise then that December's edition of the Sunday Sessions (a monthly afternoon show aimed at allowing families to hear live music that isn't just 'The Wheels On The Bus') is sold out. These gigs are usually permeated by children's persistent chatter and clatter but not so today. Perhaps the little ones are as captivated as the adults by Alice Russell's beguiling voice. She doesn't go in for vocal pyrotechnics, yet effortlessly infuses the songs with emotion and sincerity. Just as impressive is her skill at phrasing, which she perhaps first learned in college days when she and Natureboy (Oxford's own Dave Noble) were a jazz duo. With Natureboy providing subtle jazz guitar, and regular band member Mike Simmond's sensitive violin playing, the three make for an accomplished and laidback trio, with Alice's charming natural personality adding to the relaxed mood. Only once, for a Donny Hathaway number, does Alice use the full power of her voice; her beautiful version of 'Don't Explain' is created using her exquisite phrasing. She also appears to be very aware with the inclusion of Roberta Flack's 'Tryin' Times',

A propelling feeling emerges from references to train journeys as the bass chugs towards squeals and contrasts Mike Kerr's vocals. On 'Ten Tonne Skeleton' drummer Ben Thatcher's hurried and primitive beats underscore another near-impossible-sounding bassline, typical of their delicate balance that has a less than delicate effect on eardrums. Beyond a few niceties the pair say little between songs and it's clear the audience don't need encouragement to get lost in the music. Before long it seems the night draws towards a close with 'Out of the Black,' the opening force of their debut album. Moody vocals and suspenseful drums lead to a final riotous chorus and they revel in riffing off of each other to this particular eager crowd once more.

Having headed fast and furiously into the world's attention, Royal Blood have not had time to write more than one album of material, but even a short set such as this packs a punch and by the time the two leave the stage even the ceiling is sweating. **Celina Macdonald**

MYCELIUM /JOHN JABAGGY & PAUL

MEDLEY / THE DEEP WHOLE TRIO /

THOMAS, LASH & CASSERLY

The White House & The Old Fire Station

If we need any confirmation that Oxford Improvisers are up there as one of the most innovative and boundary pushing promoters in the city, then these two events provide it.

First up at The White House are Thomas, Lash and Casserly. With the award winning Pat Thomas forsaking keyboards for theramini and Casserly on electronics, both chilled out, and Dominic Lash on double bass largely not disrupting this mood, it's like listening to a very mellow Radiophonic Workshop. We can forgive that it goes on a bit long, since at its best it's beguiling and a sound you're unlikely to hear anywhere else in Oxford.

The Deep Whole Trio, on their 30th anniversary tour, are just the latest big players on the free music scene – including Ken Vandermark and the truly magnificent Wadada Leo Smith – who the Improvisers have brought to Oxford. In complete contrast to what goes before Mark Saunders, on drums, and Paul Rogers, on custom-made seven-string double bass, go at it at a hundred miles an hour. It leaves you expecting them to be overwhelmed by their own frenetic virtuosity and spin out of control, but it never happens. Chief highlight is Saunders creating music very like the Zimbabwean mirba sound of water falling on rocks as the rain pours down outside. Into this maelstrom Paul Dunmall's short interjections on saxophones are a calming presence as he infuses a Coltrane-like lyricism into every note he plays. I'm not sure whether I'm disappointed or relieved – possibly both – that he doesn't have

his bagpipes with him. Being super critical, as the set goes on, it might benefit from more development, but the playing individually and collectively from all three is magnificent.

Back at the Old Fire Station, the latest unusual ad hoc combination the Improvisers conjure is a drum and sax/clarinet duo. John Jobaggy is good to watch as well as hear; it's unlikely that you'll see a drummer attack the skins with such energy when producing a beautiful soft sound. It's a bit weird and maybe an instance of cognitive dissonance. He also hits the skins pretty hard as well and benefits from Paul Medley on saxophone and clarinet's refined and sympathetic playing, which is never over-embellished.

Headliners Mycelium are less a group, more an event as some 14 string players, some from Bristol and London, in response to an invitation sent out by the Improvisers, turn up to play. This is the sort of high risk thing that they put on sometimes and the massed ranks of cellos, violins, violas, and double basses could have served up a disaster, but it works because the players are experienced at listening to each other. It's noticeable that whenever violinist Philip Wachsmann gets involved the level goes up a notch, as when he and three others coalesce into a sting quartet with the remaining players being a sting orchestra in the background. The Improvisers not only create never to be repeated music, they curate never to be repeated events. **Colin May**

MUSICIANS WANTED

Bass player wanted for Oxfordshire based rock and blues band, aged 18-30. Must have transport and own equipment. Playing originals and covers. Call Vincent on 07896878276.

Bass player wanted for Oxford based Neil Young / Creedence / Cash / Townes Van Zandt influenced band. Looking for someone can play with feel and simplicity - call Garry on 07730 982347

Drummer wanted for Oxfordshire band into Mogwai, Stereolab, Gang of Four, Hookworms, The Twilight Sad. Must have own gear and transport. Contact Niall on niallroderickkennedy@gmail.com

Dark indie rock band from Oxford seek bassist and drummer. Current line up is two vocals, two guitars, keyboards. Influences- Interpol, Blur, Editors, The Clash, Deftones. jeremyleggett@hotmail.com.

Drummer / Percussionist wanted. Folk trio Little Red are seeking a drummer to promote their debut album in 2015 and feature in video/recording. Contact Ian via allwillbewellrecords@yahoo.co.uk

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The Bullingdon, Saturday 14th February, 7pm

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The Bullingdon, Wednesday 18th February, 7.30pm

Frontier Ruckus
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The Bullingdon, Saturday 7th March, 7pm

Police Dog Hogan
+ support

Fat Lil's, Witney, Thursday 12th March, 7.30pm

Hannah Aldridge
+ support

Tingewick Village Hall, Saturday 14th March, 7.30pm

Bill Kirchen Band
+ support

The Bullingdon, Friday 10th April, 7pm

Larkin Poe
+ support

Fat Lil's, Witney, Thursday 23rd April, 7.30pm

Cale Tyson
+ Ags Connolly

St John the Evangelist, Wednesday 29th April, 7.30pm

Sara Watkins, Sarah Jarosz
and Aiofe O'Donovan

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THE WHEATSHEAF

Tuesday 3rd February – BLACK BULLET LIVE

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Wednesday 4th February – MD PROMOTIONS

SALVAGE
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Friday 6th February – KLUB KAKOFANNEY

FRACTURE
TWAT DADDIES + CHARLYWOOD + THE CALLOW SAINTS 8pm/£5

Saturday 7th February

REIGN OF FURY
THE CRUSHING + RETRIBUTION 8pm/£5

Wednesday 11th February – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

BLACK MIRRORS
KHAMISINA + JENN & THE GIANT PANDA + DONAL 8pm/£6

Friday 13th February – SLAVE TO THE GRIND

DESECRATION
NECROSIS + SODOMIZED CADAVER + MUTAGENOCIDE 8pm/£6

Saturday 14th February – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

TOM HINGLEY
MARK COPE 8pm/£6

Friday 20th February – MD PROMOTIONS

GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS
CAPTIVVES + KID KIN + TIGER MENDOZA 8pm/£5

Saturday 21st February – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

REEJAI
MERRICKS TUSK + KYSHERA + LEWIS SCOTT 8pm/£6

Wednesday 25th February – ALBUM LAUNCH PARTY

MIRIAM JONES
8pm/£7

Friday 27th February – BLACK BULLET LIVE

LET'S TALK DAGGERS
GRINDHOUSE 8pm/£5

Saturday 28th February – GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES

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DR SHOTOVER: Invasion of the Bodley Snatchers

Good evening book-lovers. Pull up a pew and buy me some of the finest wines which the East Indies Club bar has to offer. Ah, Chateau Gaviscon, my favourite... [*slurp-o, slurp-o*]... Now, if it is not too much of a frightful ‘bind’, let us ‘cover’ a few book-related topics. HA HA HARGHHH. Did I ever tell you about my first job, working as ink well boy in the old Bodleian Library? A thoroughly Dickensian experience. When I’d finished filling all the ink wells and sharpening all the dip pens, I’d be wrapped in gaffa tape and lowered into a flooded basement to save old manuscripts from water-damage. My supervisor, Mr Skellington, had a constant dew drop on the end of his nose and knees that went off like pistol shots as he strode along the squeaky lino of the corridors. Luckily this stopped him from catching us when we were writing revolutionary slogans on aeroplanes made of old sheets of blotting paper and launching them from the upper windows of the library. Then there were the golden years of Andy ‘Ride’ Bell’s dad being in charge... though this era did give rise to a document one had to sign promising not to play guitar solos on top of the Radcliffe Camera. Not that Brian May took any notice when he came a-looking for books on badgers... he was up on that neo-Palladian dome like a rat up a drain, strapping on the old axe, giving it *widdly*-this and *diddly*-that... Now, where was I? Ah yes, smoking drugs in the book-stack... HA HARGGHHH... Then the New Dark Ages arrived, and the place was overrun by 1980s-style Thatcherite managers. The Stepford Bods, I call them - you can spot them by their smart suits, smart phones and smart smiles. They’re here already! You’re next!! YOU’RE NEXT!!!

Next month: Bods and Rotters

‘Hell-oooo, we’re the management consultants. We’ve come to save you [whirr click]... save you [whirr click]... save you...’

INTRODUCING....

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

Liu Bei

Who are they?

Liu Bei are the new band formed by longstanding favourite Oxford son Richard Walters, a singer who has been a star of the local scene going back to the late1990s, both as a solo performer and as part of Theremin. He’s joined by Dan Joyce, Matthew Reynolds, Aaron Graham and PJP. Richard formed Liu Bei, named after an eight-foot-tall Chinese warlord with enormous ears, “after I got drunk and told some friends I couldn’t stomach the music industry anymore. They bought me another whiskey and asked me to reconsider. I wrote some new songs, bought an electric and we got together in the studio.” Since then the band have released an acclaimed debut single, ‘Infatuation’, via Transgressive Records and toured the UK. Their second EP, ‘Goodness’ is released on February 2nd.

What do they sound like?

Led by Richard’s gorgeous, heartbroken voice, they hark back to the shimmer and sparkle of early shoegaze and the rarefied spangle of 80s 4AD bands, the emotional desolation of songs like ‘Infatuation’ effortlessly graceful and sounding like they were stitched together from winter starlight.

What inspires them?

“Collaboration. I spent so many years recording and touring as a solo artist that I forgot how good working with other people, especially on stage, can be. When I left Oxford to move to London I really wanted to rethink how I made music, and just making connections with other musicians. I found myself getting really excited about writing and performing again.”

Career highlight so far:

“Supporting our friends Dry the River on their UK tour this autumn and finishing the run at a sold out Forum.Also, persuading Rachel Goswell from Slowdive to sing on our new EP.”

And the lowlight:

“It’s all good so far... the only thing we can really complain about is sharing hotel rooms. Five men in one Travelodge Family Room is not right.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Maiians; everything about that band excites me, and who can argue with two drummers on stage? I expect great things.”

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

“Probably something I’ve never heard before. I like surprises.”

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

“We’re playing our debut Oxford gig on February 3rd at The Cellar. If you’re aware of my solo output, it’ll be louder than you’re expecting... but in general terms, we hope to move you and make you very happy in equal measures.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Having grown up in a real golden age of Oxford music – around the time of Sound City – I love seeing so many dedicated and constant faces still working within the Oxford music scene, but I hate the fact that so many venues and promoters have gone. It’s an ever-evolving scene; having lived in a few other cities over the years, I can confirm nowhere has the same quality of music scene. Oxford is blessed.”

You might love them if you love:

Slowdive; Mazzy Star; Ride; Wild Beasts; This Mortal Coil; MONEY.

Hear them here:

soundcloud.com/liubeiwins

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

The early part of 1995 really was the Oxford music scene’s Dark Ages. Following the closures of the Jericho Tavern, The Oxford Venue and The Hollybush, and the folding of Curfew magazine, the local gig calendar downsized severely, with The Elm Tree (now The Big Society), The Dolly (now The Cellar) and The Bullingdon (still The Bullingdon but before it was converted into a proper venue) heroically holding the fort. Local goth-pop heroes Wonderland were among those playing The Elm Tree, while Apes, Pigs and Spacemen came to town for a gig at The Dolly. Bubblemen played a show at Oxford Polytechnic (now Brookes) while Klub Kakofanney were keeping the flame alive at East Oxford Community Centre. There was also the small matter of a Radiohead show at The Apollo (now The New Theatre), ahead of the release of their seminal ‘The Bends’ album. The local heroes were supported by Supergrass and The Candyskins in what was a joyous celebration of Oxford music during its darkest hour. Having become a global success story on the back of ‘Creep’, few could have anticipated that the band would become one of the most important and influential acts in the world, but for one magical night, the woes of the local scene were forgotten, while some of the antics at the aftershow party at the Randolph Hotel really are better forgotten.

10 YEARS AGO

We were all so much younger back then of course, and some other people looking so much younger

5 YEARS AGO

More youngsters promising great things on the

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

cover of February 2010’s Nightshift – this time Dead Jerichos, a trio of teenage miscreants from Drayton who were singing about blood-spattered punch-ups at parties and the boredom of hanging around on street corners while still too young to play most of Oxford’s venues (they’d even found themselves slung out of a couple for attracting small armies of underage fans to the gigs they could get). “These songs are delivered with a tightly-wound mix of hooligan swagger and spangling, spidery art-pop subtlety. They fizz with steely intent and tell it like it is, but they’re danceable and fantastically catchy. Dead Jerichos rock with the bruising elan of The Jam and Arctic Monkeys but skip and skitter with the wiry, uptight funk of Foals,” we gushed. “At 14 years old Drayton became the place to be with all the local youngsters with their bottles of Strongbow, or if you didn’t have the money for that, a 3-litre bottle of Frosty Jacks. Nasty stuff. That’s where I got most of my songs from – the mayhem we did and saw,” said singer Craig Evans, now a top hairdresser in London.

One of Oxford’s greatest success stories beyond its famous bands was of course The Club That Cannot Be Named, started by friends Alan Day and Dave Hale to promote their favourite hardcore and metal bands. In February 2010 they celebrated their tenth anniversary with a show at The Wheatsheaf featuring the best of those local noise heroes, including Sextodecimo, Faith In Hate, Shouting Myke and of course JOR. Noses were broken, fun was had. Alan is now one of the UK’s leading promoters, in charge of booking Metallica and Sonisphere.



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DEMO OF THE MONTH

CITIZENS RADIO BAND

It’s mid-January, it’s grim, grey, wet and cold out there, and the day before we sit down to wade through the month’s demos a bunch of fucknutted stone-age-dwelling cowardly savages have taken it upon themselves to butcher a bunch of people doing nothing more than drawing a few satirical cartoons or doing their grocery shopping. So, yeah, we’re in a fine old mood, dear reader. Pull up a chair and share what remains of this bottle of Advocaat with us, why not? We need grim, ugly music to match this grim, ugly world. And right on cue, here are Citizens Radio Band, a duo consisting of a guy called Gary from Abingdon who previously won Demo of the Month under the name The Gwladys End, alongside a guy called Miquel, who records droney nastiness under the name Be My Friend In Exile. Together they sound like Joy Division if Joy Division had formed on a damp Tuesday evening in Scunthorpe, rather than under the bright lights and glorious sunshine of 1970s Manchester. Yeah, that glum. In fact CBR sound like they might have been first on the bill to Joy Division and Crispy Ambulance back in the day, or at least contributed to some Factory Records sampler compilation, tinny, lo-fi gothic drones, hymnal vocals and thumping drum machines capturing that post-punk sense of ennui that made just about everything outside of the charts between 1977 and 1980 sound bloody great, if equally bloody miserable. So anyway, we’re off to get our long overcoat out of the wardrobe and go for a walk in the rain and wind and biting cold. You’ll probably find us face-down in a puddle a couple of hours from now. It’s what we’d have wanted. It’s what Citizens Radio Band would have wanted. Tell them we did it for them.

DAVID MARX

Talking of religious fundamentalist bell-ends as we were, here at *Nightshift* we feel lucky that while we enjoy a bit of piss-taking occasionally the worst repercussions we have to deal with are swearsy insults on Twitter rather than armed massacres. David Marx here has a song called ‘Sicilian Satire’, which we like to think is about taking the piss out of violent Mafia mobsters (and probably ending up propping up a nearby new-build shopping complex for your troubles), and is probably his best song – a T-Rex boogie mixed up with an old rockabilly shuffle that’s retro but raw

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

enough to keep us onside for its duration. We can’t say the same about ‘Sweet Dreams’, which mark David down as a bollocks old blues-rock shouter from the venerable school of Sunday Lunchtime Market Town Boozier. Plodding, pedestrian and overwrought, without a grain of grit or growl in its voice and with a tediously predictable sub-Clapton/Knopfler guitar solo shoehorned into the middle of it just in case we haven’t fucked off to make a cup of tea or self-immolated by this point. Thankfully ‘Eleven Thousand Martyred Virgins’, after threatening more of the same, ups the ante significantly, a more tightly-wound pre-punk r’n’b in the vein of Larry Wallis’ cult gem ‘I’m a Police Car’ and with a bit of spunk about it that has us reaching for the Watney’s Red Barrel. Shame it all goes to shit straight after, mind, with ‘Your Love Is Killing Me’ going so far as to remind us of Phil Collins at one point. Nothing should ever remind of us of Phil Collins.

THE SHAPES

The Shapes are such a genial-sounding band you imagine this demo was recorded with the band wearing slippers in the studio while discussing matters of local interest over a mug of Horlicks, rather than beating each other up in a JD-fuelled rage after a row over the middle eight. They are a band, though, dedicated to having a good – but not too wild – time, singer Ant Kelly a songwriter with a tender heart and an apparent love for 70s r’n’b on songs like ‘Tom Petty (1980)’. Songs lope or shimmer onto the dancefloor with a confident casualness that comes with maturity (Ant’s been in local bands since the 1980s and the late, great scene veteran Tony Jezzard, to whom this CD is dedicated, was previously the band’s keyboard player), and if they sometimes feel a little too undemanding, Alix Cornhill’s sparsely-used backing vocals add a little soul and sweetness to proceedings. There’s some country-tinged surf shimmer on ‘I’m Not The Hurting Kind’, while ‘Mr Sandman’ sounds like Elvis Costello having a pop at Pink Floyd’s ‘Comfortably Numb’, with its over-egged organ sweep. About as likely to be the next big thing out of Oxford as Nigel Farage is to join Run The Jewels, The Shapes are, nonetheless, unimposingly likeable company for the time they hang around. And hey, they didn’t nick all the booze on the way out, neither.

THE INFAMOUS FLAPJACK AFFAIR

During our many, many years hanging around the local music scene like a creepy uncle at Christmas, we’ve been blessed enough to be asked to judge a few student band competitions, and while recent years have

seen an improvement in the general standard of music involved, we’re still haunted by the memory of hapless trustafarian jazz-funk bands called Tuna Chunks in Brine or “comedy” punk acts with hilarious names like The Riotous Cauliflowers. So just seeing the name The Infamous Flapjack Affair fills us with dread. Two minutes in and we’ve cast such fears aside with the casual contempt we’d usually reserve for a UKIP election leaflet. This is pretty good stuff: slightly rickety old-fashioned folk and bluegrass with just the slightest of pop and even classical edges and a shrill female lead vocal that makes the whole thing sound like Steeleye Span sitting down round a campfire in the Catskill Mountains for an all-night jam. Sometimes you get a big string flourish and you’re transported to Saturday night at Cropredy Festival with Julianne Regan or whoever standing in for Sandy Denny, while the male-led songs are softer, more contemplative, but warm-hearted. The mix of cello, fiddle, banjo and acoustic guitar gives everything a rich, rustic feel, while the interaction between the two singers ensures everything stays fresh. A bit of research reveals they’re a University-based quartet but have members drawn from Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Colorado, which would explain those authentic-sounding bluegrass bits. There’s the odd clumsy moment but mostly it’s impressive stuff and a more than pleasant surprise after our initial trepidation. Just ditch the name, please; no fucker’s going to take you seriously otherwise, and you deserve to be taken seriously.

THE RODEO

A one-song demo with very little info included, so we’re not even sure this is from Oxfordshire. We should, according to our notoriously strict rulebook, chuck it in the virtual bin and be done with it, but a teensy weensy bit of it draws us in. If you squint your ears and think happy thoughts about kittens and baby penguins, ‘Please Don’t Knock At My Door’ could be an old Tanya Donelly song, with its country-tinged indie bounce and sense of earthy worldliness. Mostly it’s actually just a well-produced, pleasant-enough, if unremarkable slice of country-tinged indie bounce, but, hey, you go making us think about Tanya Donelly even a tiny bit and we’ll always find something nice to say about you when folks come asking.

DECOVO

Decovo? Isn’t that a brand of eco-friendly washing up liquid? What’s that? Oh yeah, we’re thinking of Ecover. Though to be honest we might be better pouring some of that in the CD player rather than this. It’d make less of a mess and the sound of frothy bubbles quietly popping would be a soothing balm after the trauma of yet another band who so desperately want to be Foals but sound like what we imagine Bastille’s first ever rehearsal sounded like. (Bastille’s second rehearsal

mainly involving each member of the band enthusiastically fellating Satan in return for having their wretched boy band funk-pop thrust into the charts like a fart in a hospital operating theatre). Sorry, got carried away again. Decovo. They’ve got all the letters of Devo in their name with a couple to spare but since they have absolutely nothing in common with Devo beyond just about being of the same species, we can’t use that in their favour, so we’re really scrabbling in the dirt for positives, much as they’re scrabbling in it for a decent tune. The singer sounds like someone’s just nicked his lunch money and is now bending his fingers back more than should be natural, which at least conjures up an interesting image or two, and they can do that trilling guitar thing in time. By their second song they seem to have turned into a Poundshop Biffy Clyro by way of The Vamps. In a strange sort of way we’re almost impressed.

THE DEMO DUMPER

MIKEEY

Okay, right, that’s it. We’re off. Giving up. Retiring. What critical faculties we possess are rendered redundant in the face of something so far off the shit scale that an elongated stream of expletives followed by smearing a handful of excrement across the page by way of review couldn’t even start to convey just how bad this is. And it’s not even one of those “let’s make a shit demo for a laugh and see if those suckers fall for it and put us in the Dumper” efforts that we can see right through. This guy is deadly serious. Seriously being something we take the subject of domestic violence, which appears to be what ‘She Left With A Bruise’ is about. It’s sometimes hard, beyond Mikeey’s squeaky, breathless Michael Jackson piss-take voice and the horrible tinny home recording studio r’n’b and non-sequiturs and genuinely hilarious shouty pleading bits, to work out where Mikeey stands on the subject, but from where we’re standing he’s not coming out of it well. In fact, after four tracks of this sonic effluence Mikeey emerges with as much dignity and credibility as a pissed-up farmhand wading out of the silage pit he’s just collapsed into after trying to copulate with the livestock during a visit from a local school party. ‘Noir’, meanwhile, is meant to be a solemn condemnation of the evil exploitative nature of Hollywood, with its warning that “Hollywood is over / Hollywood is dead / You won’t get your starring role / Unless you’ve sold your body and soul,” but sounds like a delirious vagrant armed with an old Casio keyboard shouting conspiracy theories at passing traffic while inhaling helium. We’re not ones to mock the afflicted here at *Nightshift*, preferring bigger, more pompous targets, but Mikeey, dear boy, we don’t believe you know what the word ‘music’ actually means. No, don’t go looking it up Mikeey; you’ll only end up accidentally setting yourself on fire or something.

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



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