



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 239
June
2015**

Asher Dust

The maverick music-maker talks about his battles with the music biz and mental illness, and how age has made him more uncompromising

photo: Derek James

Also in this issue
Introducing **ESTHER JOY LANE**
The Oxford Punt reviewed
plus
All your Oxford music news,
previews and reviews, and
five pages of local gigs.

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THE BULLINGDON

JUNE 2015

Monday 1st June
Chameleons Vox
'What does Anything Mean? Basically' Tour
Doors: 7.30pm

Tuesday 2nd June
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Funk Bake** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 3rd June
An Evening with:
Chip Taylor
John Platania
Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 5th June
ZAIA
'Challenge 145' Launch Party
Doors: 10pm

Saturday 6th June
Marius Jampolskis
Doors: 8pm

Monday 8th June
Laurence Jones
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 9th June
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 11th June
Khamsina Single Launch
Oubliettes
Esther Joy Lane
Doors: 7pm

Friday 12th June
Homage to Led Zepplin
Denny Ilett & Company
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th June
Danny and the
Champions of the World
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th June
Simple & Playground:
Kowton & Peverelist
Doors: 11pm

Monday 15th June
Ryan McGarvey (US)
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 16th June
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Stuart Henderson Quartet** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 17th June
Functions on the Low
Doors: 11pm

Thursday 18th June
Well Hung Heart
Dave Arcari
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 18th June
Loveshy
Doors: 10pm

Friday 19th June
The Aureate Act
The Relationships
Lucy Leave
The Russian Cowboys
Doors: 7pm

Friday 19th June
Deep Cover:
Goldie feat. MC GQ
Om Unit
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 20th June
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
3rd Semi-Final
Empire Divided
Fallen from Grace
Silk Road
Fleisch
Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 20th June
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Monday 22nd June
Hamilton Loomis
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 23rd June
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Rory McInroy Band** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 30th June
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 1st July
Sarah Jane Scouten
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 2nd July
The Billy Walton Band
Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd July
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
The Final
Hells Gazelles
Evavoid
+ More TBA
Doors: 6.30pm

Saturday 4th July
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 7th July
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Heavy Dexters** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 11th July
The Sherlocks
Doors: 7pm

Monday 13th July
Moreland & Arbuckle
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 14th July
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Martin Pickett Organisation** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 20th July
Della Mae
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 21th July
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 23rd July
Lindsay Lou
& The Flatbellys
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 29th July
Angaleena Presley
Doors: 7pm

Friday 31st July
Sworn to Oath
I Cried Wolf
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 4th August
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Guitar Summit** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 11th August
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Hugh Turner Band** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 18th August
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Saturday 22nd August
Broken Chords
48 Hours
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 22nd August
Bedrock
Oxford's Rocking Club Night.
Release Your Inner Dinosaur!
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 25th August
Jazz at the Bullingdon: **Will Barnes Quartet** FREE
Doors: 8.30pm

Monday 7th September
Jon Amor & Joel Fisk
Doors: 7pm

Monday 14th September
Marcus Malone
Doors: 8.30pm

Sunday 20th September
One Gig Fresher
Doors: 2pm

Monday 21st September
Kirk Fletcher
Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 24th September
Cardboard Fox
Doors: 7pm

Monday 28th September
Grainne Duffy
Doors: 7pm

Friday 2nd October
Will and the People
Doors: 7pm

Monday 5th October
Katie Bradley Band
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 10th October
Gengahr
Doors: 7pm

Monday 12th October
Erja Lyytinen
Doors: 7pm

Monday 19th October
Mentulls
Doors: 7pm

Friday 23rd October
The Corn Potato
String Band
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 25th October
The Ruts DC
Doors: 7pm

Friday 30th October
Hollis Brown
Doors: 7pm

Friday 6th November
Keston Cobblers Club
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th November
Dedication 2015
Doors: 5.30pm

The Bullingdon
162 Cowley Road
Oxford, OX4 1UE
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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

Phone: 01865 372255

email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING, CLEAN BANDIT AND SHY FX are among the latest names to be added to this year's Truck Festival bill. Retro-talkie electro duo PSB join Basement Jaxx and Temples on the main stage on the Saturday, while 'Rather Be' hitmakers Clean Bandit join The Charlatans and Augustines on the Friday. Drum&bass stars Shy FX, meanwhile, host and headline a late night dance party in the Barn on Saturday night.

Meanwhile, the final 19 unsigned and local acts will be announced shortly. Over 1,000 applications have been whittled down and the lucky few will be chosen by BBC Introducing; Big Scary Monsters and Alcopop! Records; Clubhouse Records; Pulled Apart By Horses and Lucy Rose, and Truck themselves.

Truck runs over the weekend of the 17th-18th July at Hill Farm, Steventon. Visit www.truckfestival.com for all the news and ticket details.

RAWZ releases a new video EP on Youtube this month. The local MC's 'Freedom Styles Radio' is a three-track "video journey," filmed at home on a mobile phone using "an improvised selfie stick," and is intended to be "a short sampler to showcase myself as an artist. I wanted something more interesting than the multitude of uninspiring 'freestyle' videos dripping from the internet, typically featuring a rapper standing in front of a generic urban backdrop shouting at a camera."

Check out more of Rawz's music at [Facebook.com/RealRawz](https://www.facebook.com/RealRawz) or Rawz.bandcamp.com.

ZAIA launch their new EP 'Challenge 145' on Dub Politics this month. The local reggae/dub stars, who played the Punt in May, host a launch party at the Bullingdon on Friday 5th June, from 10pm-3am. Hear the band at www.zaiband.com.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT returns for its third annual outing on Friday 3rd July. The charity concert in the amphitheatre at the Said Business School, features sets from Ran Kan Kan, Balloon Ascents, The Dreaming Spires, Paul McLure, The Shapes, Loud Mountains, Lone Tree Quartet and Fifteen Strings. Ticket details to follow.

THE SWEATBOX youth club in Wantage is offering young musicians and DJs free workshops and rehearsals at their new Soundbox Sessions under the mentorship of local singer and musician Eloise Rees from this month. Sessions take place on Tuesday evenings from 7-9.30pm and will include professional local musicians offering advice and tutoring, as well as a jam session at the end of each evening. Talking about the new sessions, Eloise said, "I experienced what a massive impact Sweatbox music had on me and fellow musicians a decade ago and what a vibrant and successful local music scene it helped create. I want to resurrect these opportunities to enrich the lives of young Oxfordshire music makers of today"

The Sweatbox, based at King Alfred's Academy, is also bringing back its Friday night Soundbox Live gigs, aimed at providing young bands and musicians with a chance to play live. "We have an impressive stage set up and are able to provide quality in house backline, guitars, bass, drums, 4K PA system and a range of hi-tech sound, lighting and video making equipment. So if you want to perform, play, learn about recording, lighting or sound please get in touch, we'd love to help you out." Any acts, aged between 11-18 years old, interested should contact Eloise at hellosoundbox@gmail.com.

GLASSHOUSE STUDIOS opens this month after a year of major rebuilding and refitting. The rehearsal studio – on the site of the old Coldroom Studio in Cumnor – is one of Oxford's oldest and most historic rehearsal spaces and has been reopened by Jamie Hyatt, singer with The Family Machine. Glasshouse offers three practice rooms and is open all day, seven days a week. You can have a look at what they've done to the place, check out prices and available slots and book your session at glasshousetudios.org, or give Jamie a call on 07917 685 935.

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NEWS

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Produced by long-time fan and friend of the band Mark Taylor, the zine features 80 pages, and has loads of exclusive content including extensive interviews with all four band members and photos from their pre-production rehearsals, as well as the recent O2 Academy show. It's available now from Truck Store, priced £5, or £5 + £1.25 postage from www.ride.network. Regular Ride news updates are on their Twitter @ridethenetwork.

TURAN AUDIO have completely upgraded the computer side of their mastering studio in Cowley. Legendary local engineer Tim Turan now offers Pro-Tools HDX with full 64bit processing,

alongside original vintage analogue valve outboard equipment. "The new kit offers bigger and better capabilities with pristine sound quality, new output formats suitable for the major labels, unbelievably fast processing speeds and a Mac Pro which you could easily mistake for a plant pot," said Tim. Email tim@turanaudio.co.uk for a quote.



PAM AYRES AND STARGAZER have been added to the bill for this year's Cornbury Festival. Quirky west country poet Ayres is celebrating 40 years performing, while Stargazer (pictured) is the new band formed by actress Martine McCutcheon and her husband Jack McManus. Other new additions to the Cornbury bill include Nashville country act Striking Matches, and Glaswegian country stars Raintown.

Cornbury runs over the weekend of the 10th-12th July at Great Tew Estate. Headline acts are Tom Jones, Razorlight and Supertramp vocalist Roger Hodgson, as well as big name acts like Lulu, Martha Reeves, Blue and Chas n' Dave. Full line-up and tickets at www.cornburyfestival.com.

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

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

WIN CORNBURY TICKETS!

CORNBURY FESTIVAL! IT'S BACK!

AGAIN! Hurrah! And huzzah! Music and beer and music and sunshine and music all in a field together with some beer. Throw in the occasional prime minister, a swathe of TV presenters and some music and beer and you've got a recipe for a damned decent weekend in the countryside. Great Tew to be precise, a delightful corner of our beloved county.

Cornbury Festival is twelve years old this year, which means it's almost a teenager, but it's in little danger of getting all stropky and hormonal on our asses any time soon. No, Cornbury is the height of civilised when it comes to music festivals, and even though we here at Nightshift like a bit of hedonism and dirt under our fingernails, we'll happily decamp to the other side for three days camping and music and beer, with Cornbury's characteristic combination of big-name stars, cult heroes, regular favourites and pop fun.

This year's Cornbury Festival takes place over the weekend of the 10th-12th July in the grounds of the Great Tew Estate, which is well pretty.

Headlining this year's event are TOM JONES, Supertramp chap ROGER HODGSON and RAZORLIGHT. no, sorry we can't bring ourselves to type that out in full. It might summon a demon. But hey, Sir Tom Bloody Jones! Does Cornbury usually book stars of this calibre? Well, it's not unusual. A ha ha ha ha. Etc.

These table toppers will be joined over the three days by the likes of THE FRATELLIS, BLUE,



BILLY OCEAN, JOHN COOPER CLARKE (he's not a Sir like Tom Jones, but he is an honorary Doctor) HANK WANGFORD (who's an actual doctor, of the sort rarely mentioned in polite conversation), LULU, LARKIN POE, THE FELICE BROTHERS, WARD THOMAS, JACK SAVORETTI, POLICE DOG HOGAN and CHAS & DAVE. Chas & Dave! Go on, admit it, you love them. If you don't you have no concept of what fun means.

There's more besides, including a supergroup formed by legendary producer TREVOR HORN, who'll be playing all the hits from his esteemed career, including 'Video Killed the Radio Star', which is better than any other pop song of the last 20 years. Fact.

That's more than enough to keep you going across two stages for the weekend, but in case you want even more, how about a comedy tent featuring AISLING BEA, JOE LYCETT and KATHRYN RYAN? Or the Riverside Stage, featuring both local

and rising stars, and this year including returning favourites THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND, BRICKWORK LIZARDS and ALPHABET BACKWARDS, as well as DREAMING SPIRES, BRIGHTWORK and LES CLOCHARDS, amongst others.

Then of course there's the DISCO SHED, which is where Nightshift invariably ends each evening, dancing like a crazy thing. You should join us, just watch out for our elbows.

Tickets for Cornbury Festival are on sale now from the festival website (www.cornburyfestival.com) or the ticket hotline: 0844 338 0000. Adult weekend camping tickets are £183, with discounts for oldies and young'uns alike, plus the chance to VIP it up if fancy takes you. Day tickets are also available.

And thanks to our very good friends at Cornbury we've got a pair of adult weekend tickets to give away! Free! No, don't thank us. It's our pleasure.

To win, just tell us which of these acts has never headlined Cornbury Festival

A) BLONDIE; B) STATUS QUO; C) MOTORHEAD.

Email answers, clearly marked Cornbury Competition, to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk, or on a postcard to Cornbury Competition, Nightshift Magazine, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Please include full name, email address and a daytime phone number. The editor's decision is to sing 'Video Killed The Radio Star' really, really loudly all the way through Razorlight's set.

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A quiet word with

Asher Dust

photo: Derek James



“OTHER THAN THIS NEW album I have five other albums waiting to be uploaded; they are all compilations of ideas and songs I have recorded over the years, as well as at least two albums worth of really good tracks recorded with Farjedi for our Far//Dust and TickTock projects. I also have a forthcoming meditation, chakra ambient album recorded with local psychic medium Susie Woods, of which all proceeds will be going to Papyrus, Prevention of Young Suicide.”

IT’S FAIR TO SAY THAT

Andrew Jones, aka Asher Dust, aka Blankdread, aka one half of Far//Dust, aka the voice of a thousand collaborations, is Oxford’s most prolific music maker. Here at *Nightshift* we have virtually an entire shelf reserved for the man’s musical output – an output that stretches back to the 1980s. His personal musical history goes back further back than that of course. Aged just six years old, Jones sang on stage with his dad’s reggae sound system (one of the first in town), discovering his love of creating and performing music.

In a long and varied career, he’s played in numerous bands, collaborated with too many acts to mention here, been signed to ZTT and

EMI and worked with Trevor Horn and Paul Hardcastle. He’s enjoyed some serious highs and endured spectacular lows, and on more than a couple of occasions he’s given up on music altogether.

BUT THIS MONTH ANDREW

– under his Asher Dust moniker – releases his latest full album, ‘Righteous Boombbox’, proving that making music is in his blood and always will be. Proving too that the more disconnected he becomes from what might be perceived as the mainstream, the better he gets. ‘Righteous Boombbox’ is eclectic to say the least – a furiously busy mix and meld of hip hop, grime, electronica, jazz, reggae, ska, synth-pop and r’n’b informed by post-punk’s anything-goes attitude, and cut through by Jones’ striking voice that’s previously seen him compared to Seal and Terence Trent D’Arby and is one of the most instantly recognisable in Oxford. It’s a characteristically impossible-to-pigeonhole flurry of righteous politics (the album’s title track); social commentary (‘This Life’) and soul-bearing honesty (‘Junk Heart’), all reflecting the complex character of a man who’s been there and seen it all, walked away in disgust and then

returned to see it some more.

JONES HAS LONG BEEN ONE

of *Nightshift*’s favourite interviewees – honest, experienced and opinionated (“I have an opinion on absolutely everything,” he claims). And with seemingly at least half a dozen projects and collaborations on the go at any one time, he’s never short of things to talk about. “I tend to have manic periods of creativity and then very little, unless I am approached for a collaboration,” he says, when *Nightshift* asks how much more music he’s got in the pipeline and if everything he records sees the light of day. “I spend a lot of time lyric writing or experimenting with sounds and beat making. I’d say only about 20 per cent of what I write or record is put out there. “At the moment all those ideas rarely keep me awake, but they certainly have done in the past, very much so. In the past I have got up to mumble or sing a melody or lyric into my mobile or a Dictaphone at ungodly hours.”

WHILE IT’S THREE YEARS

since we last interviewed him for the front cover, *Nightshift* emails Jones regularly to chat about music, particularly our shared love of those artists who defy convention or

categorisation, from Grace Jones, Kate Bush and Japan to Fucked Up, Congotronics and Sleaford Mods. While Andrew has turned us on to acts like Clippings and White Lung, *Nightshift* has lately converted him to the joys of Gary Numan.

IT’S FROM SUCH ECLECTIC,

adventurous tastes that the Asher Dust sound is formed. Much of the new album is diverse and restless enough to be near enough unclassifiable. Is this a case of pulling a track together and wanting to throw everything and a bit more into it, just to see what comes out the other end?

“I take that as a massive compliment; I’m not sure if I agree that it is unclassifiable. To me it sounds like, at best, forward-thinking, eclectic electronica. However it goes without saying that I would love it to be the case. I definitely think that in the past I was guilty of deliberately trying to be weird and consequently the tracks sounded forced and dishonest. I do tend to discard any tracks that sound as if they are going into too safe or bog standard musical territory. Still, a good song is a good song, hence the fact that I have started learning to play my acoustic guitar again as well as purchasing a Mac to up my production game. But

in answer to your question, I most definitely chuck ideas into a track to experiment and see what happens... why the fuck not?”

JONES’ FORMATIVE MUSICAL

years were spent around his dad’s soundsystem, and reggae is still part of the heart and soul of his Asher Dust and Blankdread music. Years of discovery have mutated that sound, though. “It totally began with my parents’ eclectic record collection and my father’s sound system, Sir Jones Hi-Fi, not to mention the regular parties at our house where I was allowed to stay up for, and I also, from a very young age, was a selector at the parties, picking out tunes to play. “Singing with the Addis Ababa Reggae Sound System and recording several dub plates; forming, writing and recording with my former bands like Big Speakers and Nortica; recording great rock songs with local sound engineer/musician Spike; roots reggae with Danny Dread: all had a massive impact on my musical development. Prior to my Asher Dust project there are a few albums that spring to mind that had a direct influence on me both sonically and in terms of inspiring me to be a little braver. Artists like Prince with his ‘Purple Rain’, ‘Parade’, ‘Sign of the Times’ and ‘Around the World in a Day’ albums. Also Massive Attack’s ‘Blue Lines’ was huge for me in terms of me trying to merge dub, soul, breakbeat and pop into a cohesive whole. Public Enemy, Grace Jones, The Slits, Kate Bush, Tom Waits, Tricky, Siouxsie & The Banshees, Wu Tang Clan, Lee Hazlewood, Kashif, The System are all people who inspired me, not just musically, but because they have always gone their own way. These people inspire me to be brave. Sometimes when I am wavering in my conviction to what I want musically, these type of artists are a reminder to me not to compromise my vision. Even if sometimes some of it sounds a bit ridiculous or shit. Asher Dust was almost certainly started on the back of hearing The Streets’ first album; I had been recording a lot of stuff and experimenting with a kind of spoken word, very English style of vocal. That first Streets album gave me the courage and inspiration to go for it. However, currently I listen to a lot of electronica of all styles, which has a huge bearing on the direction of the forthcoming Asher Dust album. Given the widespread influences working on his music, does Jones consciously differentiate between his Asher Dust and Blankdread personas? “I feel Asher Dust is more experimental electronica dancetripshoppopgrime based, whereas Blankdread is a more organic bastardised bluesjazzhiphoggospelpunk type

ting; my approach to both projects is markedly different, both lyrically and musically. Lyrically both projects are my personal experiences and observations, however Blankdread leans towards a conflicted anti-religious theme.”

DURING ONE OF OUR

correspondences a while back, Andrew declared he was going to retire from making music, give it over to the kids; his recent output suggests otherwise. What changed his mind? He’s quit before, so is there something that burns inside him that means he can never really stop? “Yeah, I’m afraid the old depression, mental health, cynicism and self pity do sometimes kick in and I turn into a grumpy old dickhead. However, the compromise for me was that I quit Soundcloud because I found that every time I logged in I was obsessing

“I definitely feel that in my old age I am becoming increasingly more uncompromising and experimental”

about stats, likes, plays etc... it kind of became disheartening when I would post up a track that I thought was killer and only get one or two plays a week and then I would find myself checking other people’s stats and getting angry because some shite track was getting a squillion likes. So now I just upload my tracks to Bandcamp. I don’t bother checking how many plays. Once it’s uploaded I leave it... and that suits my paranoid over-sensitive soul much better. “I do also accept that I can never stop making music. With both my Asher Dust and Blankdread projects, I definitely feel that in my old age I am becoming increasingly more uncompromising and experimental musically.”

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE

something AJ has spoken candidly about previously, and they are a feature of his music and lyrics. In what ways does he feel they have affected his music? “I feel it has massively affected my decision making process. Paranoid thoughts, self medicating through alcohol and drugs caused me to fall out with people and restricted me musically. I think it also caused me to stay working with people who were not positive or good to be around. I deleted a lot of good music from my hardrive because of unhelpful thinking and substance abuse. However, partly due to therapy via The Complex Needs Service and getting help and support from the staff at the The Mill drop-in centre, I most certainly feel much more able to cope and function as a relatively normal human being. I certainly feel

very much more confident about my creativity. For example I love my forthcoming album. I don’t beat myself up about it not being a great album; I am happy and acknowledge that for me personally it is a good album and one which I am proud of, whereas in the past I would have been comparing it unfavourably to other, far better albums. ‘Junk Heart’ in particular off the new album, touches on this. “Indeed it does; it was written during a very dark period in my life, where paranoid thoughts, substance abuse and in particular alcohol were fucking with my head. Writing a song like ‘Junk Heart’ is a form of musical exorcism for me.” There’s some righteous positivity in your words, but also much anger and some bitterness - ‘Fuck a Fake Friend’ in particular; do you feel you pour your emotions into your lyrics

completely, or do you have to edit parts of them out? “I very rarely edit parts out. It’s definitely ‘what you see is what you get’; I would say at least 80 per cent of my lyrics are autobiographical. Unfortunately at times there’s maybe a little too much lingering anger and bitterness; however via therapy and self-reflection I am slowly confronting and dealing with my shit; certainly ‘Fuck a Fake Friend’ is 100 per cent from the heart, no holds barred, but actually it was written from a good place and there is a lot of humour and closure in that track, despite the title. “My enthusiasm and confidence has been directly negatively influenced by people that I have worked with in the past, dealing with folk whose egos far outweigh their talent; shady people trying to rip you off. Dealing with major labels and music industry people in the 1980s was a contributory factor in my giving up music for a prolonged period in the late 80s and early 90s. A massive learning curve for me personally is realising that not everyone you spend time in the creative process with is a friend. Knowing the difference between friends and acquaintances is vital for self preservation.” Do you think your uncompromising attitude to music now is still shaped by your experiences with ZTT and in particular EMI? “Very much so; not only that but my complete lack of success in terms of getting gigs, selling my music etc. I definitely am in a better place creatively in that respect. With both ZTT and EMI I recorded really bad, derivative pop shit, just to appease the record label and because back then I

was desperate for fame and fortune. Over recent years, however, I am once again making music for my own ears. I actually love the music I make, both with my Asher Dust and Blankdread projects. Not in the way that I think that they are better than other acts, I just genuinely love the music I make and I feel that they fill a gap in my music collection.”

WHILE IN THE PAST THE

name Asher Dust was a regular feature on myriad other local artists’ releases – from Tiger Mendoza to Dubwiser – more recently Andrew has pulled back a bit from getting involved with so many other projects. A few bad experiences have made him pick and choose far more. Has that been particularly liberating? “Very much so, I love being a bit selfish creatively and just writing, recording what the hell I like. Sometimes I don’t want to spend hours on a fecking snare sound or whatever; I just want to get my ideas down, irrespective of the bass being too loud or the levels not being perfect. I think sometimes we need to listen to some dusty crusty old blues, bluegrass, punk or 1920s raw gospel, just for that rawness, just to remind ourselves that pristine, super clean ain’t always the way.” Which have been your favourite collaborators? “My current collaborators Farjedi, who I do the Far//Dust and TikkTock projects with, and Meef Chaloin are always my mainstays. I can’t imagine not working with those guys to be honest. Flooded Hallways and Tom O Hawk too. All are extremely talented in very different ways. Jonas Torrance from Dubwiser is another, and someone who I need to work with more.”

AS HE SAYS, JONES HAS AN

opinion on everything. If Asher Dust ruled the world, what would it be like? “Bullies and trolls would be treated with extreme harshness. More empathy and love would be the law; a Dutty B Line would be obligatory, three times a day. The usual... world peace, no poverty. But especially the Dutty B Line bit!” And, as a man who has been making music for longer than many local bands have been alive, along the way helping mentoring a new generation of musicians as part of the Ark-T Project for a while, how would he like to be remembered by the local music community? “I was going to say, ‘I don’t care,’ which is partly true. Primarily, because my musical endeavours have met with mass indifference, but to be remembered as ‘Someone Who Did His Own Thing Musically’ would suffice.”

‘Righteous Boombbox’ is available now at asherdust.bandcamp.com

RELEASED

MERMAID NOISES

‘Mermaid Noise’

(*Big Red Sky*)

As part of The Anyways, Lucky & the Losers and most recently Les Clochards, singer and multi-instrumentalist Karen Cleave’s life is wholly entwined with that of Oxford music over the last 30 years. In those bands she always seemed like a supporting character – particularly as a sweet-voiced backing singer. The question this debut solo album under the guise Mermaid Sounds throws up is, why in hell’s name hasn’t she taken centre stage before?

There’s a sense of playfulness that rides through the dozen songs here, clocking in at a compact 37 minutes and infused with an instinct for carefree pop that just can’t be learned. Given her past musical record, it’s a surprise to hear Karen’s songs based mostly on synths and electronic beats, recorded with Hot Hooves main man Mac, even going as far as sampling Tubeway Army’s ‘I Nearly Married a Human’ for the intro to ‘Stay Young Long’, while the rest of the track sounds borrowed from Numan’s existential hymn ‘M.E.’. Elsewhere you can hear fleeting echoes of Giorgio Moroder, Ladytron and Stereolab, while vocally Karen’s none-more-English, sweetly clipped voice reminds us of Young Marble Giants’ Alison Statton. In fact the album occasionally feels wonderfully like it’s a long-lost gem packed up and forgotten sometime around the turn of the 70s and 80s when bedroom-bound art students were allowing the freedoms bestowed by punk to take them into all manner of quirky, oddball pop music; a prime example is the chirpy ‘Gone Delinquent’, with its wired squiggle of synths and

FOCI’S LEFT

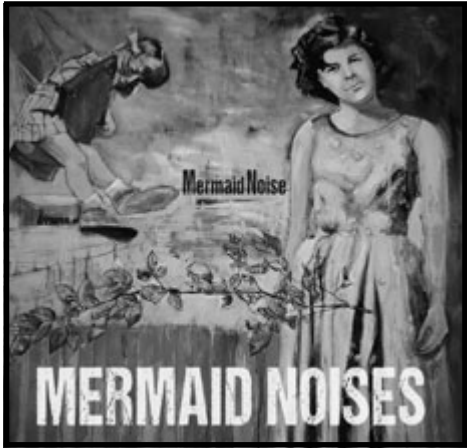
‘Nothing’

(*Self-released*)

If brevity is the soul of wit, it’s also the beating heart of great pop music. There’s plenty to be said for elongated musical journeys of different kinds, but a double CD album of ambient electronic noodling and minimalist pianism clocking in at well over two hours isn’t the sort of thing to get our pulses racing, if we’re honest.

A resolute lack of track listing, or even a hint as to which of the CDs is meant to be listened to first doesn’t help matters, and we’re left to plough on unguided through the shifting thought patterns of Mick Buckingham, who is Foci’s Left.

CD number 1 starts well – a lengthy piece of shivering Steve Reich-influenced electronica that creates an eerie atmosphere across some 16 minutes, followed by a briefer passage of gentle pianism that teeters on the edge of random. There’s primitive synthetic squiggles, wobbles and undulations on the third piece, which drifts along but with some sense of purpose, and the harsher tones that defy the soothing ambient washes on track 4 keep the album alive and alert. From here though, things unravel at speed, detuned piano plonking and cheap Casio stabs lack any kind of structure and quickly become an



breathless sense of hurry.

For all its playfulness and sparky outlook, there’s a spikiness about Karen’s lyrics – “hey, cloth-ears!” she snipes at one point, and more than once we’re reminded of Momus, but even here there’s a girlish sense of fun underlying everything. She even manages to rhyme spectrum with rectum at one point. Difficult to pick a single highlight from the album – from the carouselling ‘Stay Young’ to the clamouring waltz of ‘Weekend Sue’, but ‘Wrong Lifeboat’ maybe pips the lot with its elegantly fuzzy scramble of instruments and sisterly nod to Viv Albertine’s ‘Confessions of a MILF’. It’s an album, though, that rewards repeated listening; for all its surface simplicity there’s more going on in each three-minute journey into whimsy than most bands manage in an entire lifetime, and ‘Mermaid Noise’ is already set to be *Nightshift*’s favourite best kept secret of 2015.

Dale Kattack

irritant, recalling local experimental music maestro Jim ‘Spunkle’ Davies’ assertion that, yes, playing a detuned piano at the bottom of an abandoned mineshaft is experimental, but it’s also shit, and by the end of the CD everything’s degenerated into a mess of incoherent noise and we’ve lost all sense of patience.

CD 2 starts in similar fashion to 1, with a dirgy take on Coil’s dungeon-dark atmospherics lightened by some kosmische drifting, and a renewed feel for dynamics. This leads into possibly the album’s highlight, an easy if occasionally stumbling piano meander that owes plenty to Erik Satie. It’s the most melodic he gets. From here we’re off into scattershot ambient drum&bass, haunted music box creepy/sweetness and distorted, bleached-out lounge jazz, by way of Eno’s shifting sands. Again though, things begin to lose focus as the album wafts into generic ambient serenity and random plonking. Ultimately Foci’s Left are capable of interesting ideas, and capture and build a mood with a decent sense of nuance, but even this kind of ambient soundscaping needs self editing. A fifty-minute compendium of both CDs’ best bits would have made for a captivating journey. Instead, you’re left shouting “get a bloody move on!” at regular intervals. Even on the longer journeys a little brevity goes a long way.

Dale Kattack

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DEADLY ORGONE

RADIATION

‘Power Trips’

(*Copepod Records*)

There’s a powerful set of connections bound up in this six-track album of complex, aggressive, guitar-heavy free noise. Drummer Weasel Walter founded Chicago’s noisy instrumentalists The Flying Luttenbachers, has played and worked with Jim O’Rourke and Harry Pussy, and his production credits include Coachwhips and Glenn Branca.

Guitarist and Oxford connection #1 James Sedwards has played with Nought, Guapo, The Devil and Chrome Hoof, and is now a key part of Thurston Moore’s band along with Moore’s Sonic Youth drummer Steve Shelley and My Bloody Valentine’s Deb Goode. Guitarist/ alto sax player and Oxford connection #2 Alex Ward is the Copepod label owner and a roving improviser who has worked and performed with Eugene Chadbourne and Derek Bailey, among scores of others.

So far, so many names dropped, but what does this power trio do? Sedwards’ tone and style – familiar through Nought’s labyrinthine structures and textures – is inextricably bound up with his fellow players’ equally (and relentlessly) complex music; ‘Power Trips’ is Nought’s template of controlled guitar noise workouts extended into endless free jazz-meets-indie-noise areas of experiment.

Chaos, however, this is not. Amongst the barrage of frenzied, shifting blocks of maxed-out EQ is artistry; guitars complement one another, drums weave a cerebral breadcrumb trail across both individual tracks and the album as a whole. During moments like ‘Commission The Cutthroat’, the intensity is lessened and a spidery, thundering structure that underlies more enraged tracks here is laid bare. The introduction of alto sax in ‘Oversized Cupid’ lends a Contortions-esque feel to the track, and this reference – perhaps unconscious to the band – circles Deadly Orgone Radiation right back around to New York’s late 1970s No Wave scene, for an intriguing, rewarding album wherein Art + Guitars + Musicality = Noise.

Simon Minter



THE TROPHY CABINET

‘Mesmerise’

(*Self-released*)

Time passes slowly in The Trophy Cabinet’s world, where The Go-Betweens are still very much top of the pops, and why not; that lush, elegant and light-to-the-touch approach to guitar pop never really dates, plaintive vocals and sweet female backing as appealing as when it was

KENAN KHAZENDAR

‘Without You EP’

(*Self-released*)

Repressed childhood trauma is a terrible thing. As we grow we bury those bad things as deep as our brains can dig so as not to forever believe the world is an incurably terrible place. Each of us carries a terrible memory with us, mostly forgotten until a trigger unleashes its horror once more and we – adults – are left whimpering behind the sofa with our thumb in our mouth.

For *Nightshift* it’s 80s jazz-funk shitmeisters Shakatak, a band we’d pretty much forgotten ever existed, even on *Top of the Pops 2* re-runs. But mere seconds into Kenan Khazendar’s EP, we’re cast back to a time of sinisterly tinkling electric piano and supine lounge grooves. Those bastards were omnipresent in the early-80s, every song the same, every one the soundtrack to white suit jackets with the sleeves rolled up or a reversible jacket from C&A.

NON-STOP TANGO

‘Unnatural Selection’

(*Self-released*)

Nonstop Tango describe themselves as “an Oxford-based Anglo-Greek-Polish anarcho-situationist Morton Feldman/Funkadelic mash-up flash-mob collective”, although what that actually means is not at all clear. New album ‘Unnatural Selection’ is a concept album about their “vox-poptrix and lyric disassembler” Stavroula Kounadea taking a walk from The Plain to Divinity Road. Favourite landmarks such as The Star receive shout outs but this familiarity does make it feel very inward focused, especially because most of the band is mentioned by name. The band have appeared to take inspiration from a wide range of musicians and genres which results in an inharmonious listening experience because, frequently, the songs bear very little resemblance to each other. For example, it moves from ‘Erik Laments Ms Valadon With The Help of Miles

Robert Forster who was seemingly at the end of his emotional tether back in the early 80s. ‘Charm Offender’ carries that slightly lispy sense of urgency of Belle & Sebastian’s early vignettes, the song kicking off on the top deck of the bus before motoring home by way of Heartache-on-the-Hill, the musical personification of sweetness and light.

‘Handing Back the Keys’ is slower, darker, almost country-ish stroll down The Avenue of Wistful Memories, but ‘Ms Svengali’ positively rattles along on rolling toms and organ buzz; Fewtrell’s highly-strung voice is the constant and the core of each song though, and when he sings “This is the last goodbye,” heartstrings are undeniably tugged.

While it’s easy to compare their sound to that of bands from over 30 years ago, The Trophy Cabinet originally formed back in the early 80s before university pulled the members away from each other. They reformed a few years ago, but you can imagine if they’d been able to release songs of this calibre back in their original lifespan, maybe they’d be a benchmark now for such classic pop, alongside The Go-Betweens and Aztec Camera. As it is, they remain an unassumingly classy act.

Dale Kattack

We guess Kenan would call it r’n’b, some kind of missing link between Pharrell, Jamie Cullum and Ed Sheeran, but even we’ll admit those three monuments to sterile soullessness posses a modicum of poetic sensibility between them. Not Kenan.

“Let me bite your ear / While I feel your lemons” he pants sexily on EP opener ‘Tonight (Love Is In The Room)’ as a nation of love-hungry young ladies swoon on their beds and the heady mix of soft focus electric piano and upright bass curdles slowly in the middle distance.

“Tonight love is in the room / How about we seize it now / On the bed / We’ll make love and sleep the night away,” croons Kenan suggestively. Sleep the night away? So basically you’re saying it’ll all be over in five minutes before you roll over and start snoring? Truly sir, you are the heir to Barry White’s Love Throne. As for *Nightshift*, there’s no fucking way we’re sleeping the night away after this – our dreams will be haunted by the ghost of Shakatak for months to come. Really, thanks.

Dale Kattack

And Frederic’, which is an electronic, beat-heavy number, to ‘When Marilyn Met Caligula’, which simultaneously sounds like the sort of reggae you might hear in a lift and a really, really bad trip. One of the tracks that stands out is ‘Guitar Song’ with its clear sexual overtones. Kounadea, with a breathy moan, just lists various types of guitars and squeals suggestively. Safe to say, Birkin and Gainsbourg shouldn’t worry about competition for the sexiest song.

The last track, ‘Beautiful Song’, sounds rather like a reworking of ‘We Are Family’, but with less funk. It provides an upbeat ending to the album but it doesn’t seem to really fit. The lyrics are trite and while they try and say a lot (“I found myself inside the superstore that people like me and people like you like to call, Grotesco”), in fact they aren’t saying anything at all. The band cite Erik Satie, John Cage and William Burroughs as their inspirations. These men were innovative in their time. Doing a similar thing half a century later is not experimental and ground breaking, it’s clichéd. **Claire Vainker**

JON SEAGOATT &

IAN STAPLES with

BOBBIE WATSON

‘Deathless’

(*Self-Released*)

It’s doubtful whether any local band release will be as mired in blood as this one. Its inspiration is the Minotaur myth as re-imagined by Steven Sherrill in his novel *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break*, which has the Minotaur escaping the Labyrinth and living in a down-at heal trailer park having suppressed his appetite for a diet of Athenian virgins.

So we’ve got the original legend, Sherrill’s re-telling and Seagroatt and Staples’ take on that re-telling. The pair are renowned improvising musicians, so there’s free improv which is then manipulated and mixed until there are more layers than William and Kate’s wedding cake. You’ve also got a CD that can pose questions about compassion, redemption and forgiveness. Or you can forget about all this and just enjoy the music.

What Seagroatt and Staples have created is an album of instrumental and manipulated sound without any obvious tunes or hooks. It’s bookended by a couple of short vocal pieces, beautifully sung by Bobbie Watson, which describe and comment on Astereon the Minotaur’s situation. On most of the ten tracks in between Seagroatt’s magnificently lugubrious and pure soprano sax, bass clarinet and flute dominate. There’s almost none of the high-speed parping associated with free jazz, not even on the track ‘The Minotaur Sits Exhausted, Knuckles Skinless,

Toes Sticky With Blood, Head In Hands’, a title which seems heaven sent for a bit of parping. Instead Seagroatt, like the late great fellow multi-reeds player Eric Dolphy, dazzles with plaintive lines which he never lets become the musical equivalent of limp soggy lettuce.

Seagroatt’s reeds and Staples’ sparse but richly atmospheric guitar are integrated with an ominously echoing, rumbling drone soundscape which, like Ariadne’s thread in the Labyrinth, runs through the CD. On a casual listen tracks might be seem to be samey, though this would be to ignore the nuances and how the atmosphere builds track by track. To get the max out of this album you probably need to get the headphones on and close your eyes.

This clearly been a labour of love, and Jon Seagroatt has created something that in its way is magnificent in conception and execution, and perhaps unique in the local music landscape.

Colin May



GET UP 1 D E

MONDAY 1st
CHAMELEONS VOX: The Bullingdon – Manchester’s cult post-punk heroes play their ‘What Does Anything Mean? Basically’ album – *see main preview*
YEARS & YEARS: O2 Academy – They won a prize; we voted for the other guys – *see main preview*
THE JACKIE OATES BAND + MEGAN

Monday 1st
CHAMELEONS VOX: The Bullingdon
In their time The Chameleons were probably the most underrated band ever to come out of Manchester, and that’s saying something. Formed back in 1981 around the singing and songwriting talent of Mark Burgess and the slyly epic guitar playing of Reg Smithies, they were contemporaries of Echo & the Bunnymen and Gang of Four in style and outlook, but never made the breakthrough into the mainstream. Debut album ‘Script of the Bridge’ stands up as a classic of early-80s post-punk – a meeting point of goth and chiming pop – but they split after the relatively disappointing ‘Strange Times and the death of their manager. Subsequently they were hailed as an influence by Noel Gallagher and The Edge, while The Horrors nicked much of their sound wholesale. In fact The Chameleons’ sound has influenced much of modern indie’s darker side, and they remain a cult concern, regularly aired to great enthusiasm on 6Music, particularly in the later hours. Burgess reformed the band in 2000, and again in 2009 as ChameleonsVox, with himself as the sole original member. They’ve made sporadic releases but tonight sees them reliving classic second album, ‘What Does Anything Mean? Basically’. A chance to relive those glory days, or alternatively, hear where half your favourite bands got their ideas from.



JUNE

HENWOOD: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional English folk from the local singer and Nettlebed club resident, out on tour to promote her new album, ‘The Spyglass & The Herringbone’.
OLIVER COATES & ELAINE MITCHENER: OVADA Warehouse – OCM present a collaboration between Oliver Coates and Elaine Mitchener, together exploring “industrial intimacy”. Cellist Coates has been called the Thurston Moore of the cello for his experimental approach to the instrument, which has seen him working with Jonny Greenwood, Micachu and Mira Calix, while singer Mitchener’s ability to range from gospel and jazz to classical singing and free improv has taken her into the orbit of Aphex Twin and Goldie.

TUESDAY 2nd
YOUNG FATHERS: O2 Academy – Multi-national offbeat hip hop from the Edinburgh trio – *see main preview*
JAZZ CLUB with FUNK BAKE: The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz at the Bully, tonight with easy funk-jazz outfit Funk Bake.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 3rd
CHIP TAYLOR: The Bullingdon – Cult Americana and the man behind ‘Wild Thing’ and ‘Angel of the Morning’ – *see main preview*
ELVIS COSTELLO: The New Theatre – Punk poet and all-round living legend comes back to town – *see main preview*
1000 CHAINS + K-LACURA + HELL’S GAZELLES: The Wheatsheaf – Debut gig for local melodic rock and metal outfit 1000 Chains, plus a return to action for thrash merchants K-Lacura, and High Wycombe’s teen rockers Hell’s Gazelle’s in support.
JAMES HILL & ANNE JANELLE: The Holywell Music Room – Award-winning ukulele and cello duo.
DAVID TUDOR: The Library – Emotive acoustic pop from the local singer-songwriter.

THURSDAY 4th
PINEY GIR + RAINBOW RESERVOIR: The Cellar – Kansas’ Piney Gir returns to the venue where she played her first ever UK gig before going on to be a Truck Festival regular and cult favourite on the UK indie and country scene. She’s back over here to plug new album, ‘Mr Hyde’s Wild Ride’, combining Grandaddy’s idiosyncratic alt.country, 60s girl band pop and St Etienne’s sleek, playful synth-pop. Support act Rainbow Reservoir are

in some way’s spiritual kin to Piney, fronted by American ex-pat Angela Space and taking punk, indie and electro-pop for a playful bike ride down the park, recalling Moldy Peaches and Le Tigre along the way.
THE DRIFTERS: The New Theatre – Doo-wop, r’n’b and soul from the legendary vocal group, who have employed some 65 different members in their 70-year history.
ATOMIC KITTEN: O2 Academy – Oh dear, all that money from the Iceland adverts run out, did it?
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running and best open club night, with local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more each week.
THE PETER FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar from the veteran local bluesman.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst

FRIDAY 5th
ZAIA: The Bullingdon – Fresh from their excellent set at the Punt in May, the soulful local reggae and dub troupe launch their new EP, ‘Challenge 145’.
SKYLARKIN’S SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’ hosts his monthly reggae, dancehall and ska party, tonight with a live set from acclaimed singer/songwriter Ed Rome and his band, playing tracks from his ‘Snapshot: Dubs and Subs’ album, paying homage to the classic sounds of 60s and 70s Jamaican music, taking in vintage ska, reggae, rocksteady and soul.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with BALLOON ASCENTS + GRANDMA’S HANDS + MOIETY + FEMINISM: The Wheatsheaf – Another fun mixed bag of sounds at this month’s Klub Kak, including rising local indie starlets Balloon Ascents, alongside folk-pop newcomers Grandma’s Hands and eclectic acoustic pop types Moiety.
HIDDEN ORCHESTRA: O2 Academy – Cinematic, percussive fusion of jazz, classical, drum&bass, rock and hip hop from Edinburgh’s Hidden Orchestra.
CARA DILLON: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Traditional folk music from the multiple award-winning Irish singer.
TIM SAYS NO: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Modern rock covers, from Foo Fighters and Arctic Monkeys to Kings of Leon and Royal Blood.
SANCTUM: The Varsity Club – Monthly metal club night, tonight with a sci-fi and fantasy fancy dress theme among the heavyweight classics and new cult hits.

SATURDAY 6th
BLACK RAINBOWS + OLD MAN

LIZARD: The Wheatsheaf – Monster dope-core at tonight’s Buried In Smoke gig – *see main preview*
MARIUS JAMPOLSKIS: The Bullingdon FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND: O2 Academy – Bridgend’s emo heroes return to their youthful bloodletting musical roots after a years of stadium rock success and a revolving door approach to members, only guitarist Kris Coombs remaining from their original line-up.
RIFF RAFF: The Cellar – In tribute to Malcolm Young – diagnosed with dementia last year – Riff Raff perform two hours of AC/DC classics in aid of Dementia UK at tonight’s OxRox-hosted show.
WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar – Garage, bass and grime club night.
MUGENKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Dynamic traditional Japanese Taiko drumming spectacular.
THE BEATROOTS + THE ULTRASOUNDS: The Old Fire Station
RORKE’S DRIFT: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford

Monday 1st
YEARS & YEARS: O2 Academy
The BBC Sound Of Awards, that kite mark of quality, deals another ace with Years & Years. As if Sam Smith wasn’t a thrilling enough rock’n’roll rollercoaster ride, London trio Years & Years’ triumph in the Sound of 2015 vote proved that boundaries are still there to be broken, statues still ready to be kicked over. Come on, James Bay came second and won the Critics’ Award, whatever that is. Move over Iggy Pop, stand aside James Brown – here are the 21st Century’s pioneers and showmen. To be honest, *Nightshift* did get mildly excited for about 30 seconds when we read that the award had gone to a “synth-pop band”. And then of course we went and actually listened to them and started to wonder at what point an insipid beige gloop of 90s r’n’b and boy band balladry shared the same universe as The Human League or Ladytron. And it doesn’t. The band’s Number 1 hit ‘King’ could be any offcut from the last One Direction album, while there’s more than a hint of Disclosure about the band’s sound. Such award winning is, these days, a self-fulfilling prophesy when it comes to commercial success, but that’s because the people who vote for these things have a vested interested in their unit shifting and maintaining the stale status quo. Shit music for idiots, and there’s no shortage of those.



SUNDAY 7th
TELLISON + BAD IDEAS + CASSELS: The Wheatsheaf – London’s consistently best-kept-secret indie crew Tellison re-emerge for a rare Oxford show courtesy of Idiot King, the band’s intelligent, catchy blend of early emo in the vein of Get Up Kids and Jimmy Eatworld, militant funk and Foals-y trilling having seen them support Get Cape, Wear Cape, Fly in the past. Support from Lincoln’s indie-punks Bad Ideas and emerging local teen starlets Cassels, with their bellicose blend of Drenge, Slaves and Iceage noise-pop.
LUKE ALLMOND + ASTEROX + MATT SEWELL & JULES MOSS + COSMOSIS + CALLOW SAINTS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30-7pm) – Free afternoon of unplugged music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar, hosted by Klub Kakofanney.
THE BIG BAND with FIVE STAR SWING: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Classic swing numbers from Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Glenn Miller and Count Basie.
MOON LEOPARD + BEARD OF DESTINY + MATT SEWELL + TONY BATEY: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of acoustic music hosted by Moon Leopard’s Jeremy Hughes and featuring local bluesmen Beard of Destiny and Tony Batey as well as arch acoustic indie chap Matt Sewell.

MONDAY 8th
LAURENCE JONES: The Bullingdon – Stratford’s rising young blues guitarist Laurence Jones returns to town at the Haven Club, likened to Peter Green and Joe Bonamassa.
JOHN JONES & THE RELUCTANT RAMBLERS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Oysterband singer Jones completes his tour of the Ridgeway with his Reluctant Ramblers side project, joined by fellow Oysterband chap Al Scott, as well as Bellowhead’s string player Benji Kirkpatrick

TUESDAY 9th
JAZZ CLUB with ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, bop and swing with veteran clarinettist Alvin Roy and his Reeds Unlimited at tonight’s weekly jazz club.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Long-running monthly goth and industrial club night with residents Doktor Joy and Bookhouse keeping it dark.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 10th
THE WILL GREGORY MOOG ENSEMBLE: St John the Evangelist – Synthesizers! Farsends of ‘em! – *see main preview*
THE MIGHTY DISCO BISCUITS: The Wheatsheaf – Seven-piece disco and funk band playing classic from the 70s onwards.
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s, new wave, disco, synth-pop and glam club night, playing everything from Kate Bush and The Smiths to Madonna and Talking Heads.



Tuesday 2nd
YOUNG FATHERS: O2 Academy
At the point when they won the Mercury Prize last year, Young Fathers’ ‘Dead’ had sold just over 2,000 copies, which made it one of the prize’s more unexpected winners. Unsurprisingly it’s gone on to sell a fair few more than that since. Little surprise the Edinburgh-based trio who boast Scottish, Liberian and Nigerian heritage, had remained under the radar until that particular triumph. Hip hop acts from Edinburgh are like hens’ teeth and Young Fathers’ particular brand of hip hop doesn’t really fit in most expected tropes of the genre. There’s rapping, but also plenty of singing, with three distinct voices in the mix. Add in some big pop hooks, plenty of old-school electronica and a hefty dose of African tribal rhythm and chanting and you’ve got a magpie sound that refuses to lie easily in any bed you try and tuck it into. They’re been compared to Massive Attack, Tricky, Neneh Cherry, MIA and even TV On the Radio, but their restless global fusion stands in its own wee field. They’ve not sat on their Mercury laurels neither, releasing a follow-up to ‘Dead’ already in the form of ‘White Men Are Black Men Too’, a political statement that sticks to its guns while refusing to simplify racial politics. A one-off band, then, and one who’ll no longer struggle to shift a few units in future.

NIKKI LOY & PHIL HEARD: The Cotswold Arms, Burford – Jazz-pop piano balladry and stomping soul belters from the local singer-songwriter.

THURSDAY 11th
KHAMSINA + ESTHER JOY LANE: The Bullingdon – Reading singer/keyboard player Khamsina mixes up electronica, jazz and folk,





Wednesday 3rd

CHIP TAYLOR with JOHN PLATANIA: The Bullingdon

Empty Room continues to bring top-notch Americana cult legends to town. Chip Taylor – brother of actor John Voight, uncle to Angelina Jolie – will forever be known as the man who wrote ‘Wild Thing’ and ‘Angel of the Morning’, but beyond those two standards, he spent the 1960s penning songs made famous by Aretha Franklin, Frank Sinatra, Janis Joplin and Dusty Springfield before entering the 70s as one of the pivotal figures in the emergence of country rock; his 1973 album ‘Last Chance’ remains a classic of the genre. Ranging across the musical spectrum, from pop and rock to country and r’n’b, Taylor refused to pander to the Nashville establishment and retired from music in the 1980s to become a professional gambler. He returned, though, in 1996 and has released an album pretty much every year since, now rightly regarded as an elder statesman of the American roots scene, held by many in as high esteem as the likes of Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash, whose voice his sometimes resembles, and like whom he is deserving of discovery by a new generation of Americana fans. With his ‘Little Prayers’ trilogy just released, Taylor’s visit to the UK – accompanied by regular collaborator Platania, who’s also part of Van Morrison’s band – will give local fans a chance to do just that.

drawing comparisons with Joan Baez and Kate McGarrigle. Great local support from Esther Joy Lane, fresh from her showing at The Punt with a mix of r’n’b and electronic pop somewhere between Grimes and London Grammar. **VIENNA DITTO + 31 HOURS + MYTHS + ALIAS: The Jericho Tavern** – Album launch show for psychotic synthabilly blues duo Vienna Ditto, plus spacey afro-pop crew 31 Hours. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **THE CADBURY SISTERS + MIRIAM JONES: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Harmony-heavy traditional folk in the vein of First Aid Kit and Fleet Foxes from the great, great granddaughters of chocolate legend William Cadbury. **THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf** – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the swamp-rock favourites.

SUPERMARKET: The Cellar – Student club night playing pop, disco, UK garage and 90s house. **OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon** **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 12th

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Monthly celebration of world dance, from Dancefloor Latin and Afrobeat to Balkan beats and nu-jazz. Tonight’s party features a live set from Tumbaito, exploring Latin jazz and house as well as acid jazz, led by Venezuelan conga player Williams Cumberbatche, who has played with Bjork and Pulp amongst others. Jazz dance tunes before and after from host Dan Ofer and guest DJ Giles Strother. **DENNY ILETT & CO. - A TRIBUTE TO LED ZEPPELIN: The Bullingdon** – Local guitar veteran Denny gathers a selection of chums, including Ady Davey, Jerry Soffe and Andy Crowdy, to play classic Led Zep songs. **INVISIBLE VEGAS + SWEET PINK + ECHOPRAXIS: The Wheatsheaf** – Roadhouse blouse and Americana from Invisible Vegas, plus funky 80s-influenced rocking from student band Sweet Pink. **THE YOUNG ‘UNS: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Traditional harmony singing, social commentary and humour from the folk act. **BAD MONKEY: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Blues and rock classics.

SATURDAY 13th

WITTSTOCK: The Railway Inn, Culham – First day of the free charity festival with sets from Mary Bendytoy, Agness Pike, Spinner Fall, Peerless Pirates, Man Make Fire, Laima Bite, Puppet Mechanic, Trev Williams, Reckless Sleepers and more – *see main preview* **DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: The Bullingdon** – Uplifting Americana and country-rocking in the vein of Tom Petty, Neil Young and The Band from Danny George Wilson and gang, back in town to promote their recent ‘Live Champs’ album. **SIMPLE with KOWTON & PEVERELIST: The Bullingdon** – Simple goes West Country with two of the leading lights of the Bristol dance scene together tonight. Producer Kowton has been building his reputation on the back of his tough, grime-inspired take on traditional techno and house, while Peverelist – aka Tom Ford – has been a lynchpin of the Bristol electronic music scene for years, founding Punchdrunk Records as well as hosting the Dubloaded club night. **LAST RITES + HIDDEN RIVETS + LEPER KING + TWISTED STATE OF MIND: The Cellar** – Church of the Heavy rock and metal night with Oxford/Reading classic metallers Last Rites up alongside Bucks’ melodic rockers Hidden Rivets, Banbury’s stoner rockers Leper King, and young teenage thrash urchins Twisted State of Mind. **TONY VISCONTI , WOODY WOODMANSEY & GLENN GREGORY with MARC ALMOND: O2 Academy** – A celebration of Bowie’s classic ‘The Man Who Sold the World’ album, with the record’s producer Tony Visconti, and Spiders From Mars

drummer Woody Woodmansey teaming up with Heaven 17’s Glenn Gregory and Marc Almond for a full run-through of the man’s first great album, from ‘The Width of a Circle’ to ‘The Supermen’. **GEMMA MOSS + NUDY BRONQUE + PIPPA MORAN: The Wheatsheaf** – Oddball, sometimes startling and confrontational blend of burlesque, cabaret and punk from Gemma Moss, alongside Swindon’s dapper indie crew Nudy Bronque. **THE SUGAR SISTERS: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Colourful mix of 1940s swing, 90s r’n’b and calypso from the swing out sisters. **SUDDEN GUNFIRE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Classic and modern rock covers.

SUNDAY 14th

WITTSTOCK: The Railway Inn, Culham – Second day of the free charity festival with The Matt Edwards Band, Mad Larry, Monkfish, The Shapes, Beaverfuel, Les Clochards, Amy Bee, Space Heroes of the People and many more – *see main preview* **THE MOODY BLUES: The New Theatre** – Justin Hayward, John Lodge and Graeme Edge continue their symphonic soft-rock odyssey.

MONDAY 15th

RYAN MCGARVEY: The Bullingdon – Delta slide blues and heavy rocking from guitarist Ryan McGarvey at the Haven Club tonight, McGarvey having recently been voted best new talent by *Guitar Player Magazine* and now out on a headline tour of the UK having previously played alongside Eric Clapton, BB King and Jeff Beck. **PETER KNIGHT’S GIGSPANNER: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Feast of Fiddles and Fairport fiddler Knight teams up with guitarist Roger Flack and percussionist Vincent Salzfaas for a night of intimate and innovative folk music.

TUESDAY 16th

SAMSARA BLUES EXPERIMENT + MOTHER CORONA + INDICA BLUES: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke host German psych-blues beasts Samsara Blues Experiment, incorporating Indian raga into their psychedelic blend of stoner rock, thrash and blues. Local support from Didcot’s groove-core monsters Mother Corona and recent Punt stars Indica Blues with their riffastic update on Blue Cheer’s heavy-duty rocking. **JAZZ CLUB with THE STUART HENDERSON QUARTET: The Bullingdon** – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson and band.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 17th

FUNCTIONS ON THE LOW: The Bullingdon – Underground hip hop club night. **OUT OF THE BLUE: The New Theatre** – Enduring university *a capella* troupe continue to give classic and contemporary pop tunes the slightly smug and knowing treatment. **SPARKY’S JAM NIGHT: James Street Tavern** – Open mic and jam session. **BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar**

THURSDAY 18th

WELL HUNG HEART + DAVE ARCARI: The Bullingdon – Raw and dirty blues-punk and garage rocking from California’s Well Hung Heart, out on tour to promote new album ‘Go Forth and Multiply’, adding a bit of Missy Elliot sass into Stooges and Kills riffage by way of Greta Valenti’s seriously rocking vocal lead. **LOVESHY: The Bullingdon** **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon** **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** **BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst**

FRIDAY 19th

THE AUREATE ACT + THE RELATIONSHIPS + LUCY LEAVE + THE RUSSIAN COWBOYS + FLUORITE: The Bullingdon – Intricate and elaborate prog rocking from local youngsters The Aureate Act, playing alongside local scene godfathers The Relationships, giving their lovely, sepia-tinted

Wednesday 3rd

ELVIS COSTELLO: The New Theatre

A musical legend, no doubt about it, from his earliest incarnation in a youthful folk act to his groundbreaking 1977 debut for Stiff Records, ‘My Aim Is True’, to his current status of Grammy-winning elder statesman, Costello has covered pretty much every style of music – from new wave, country, acoustic pop and soul to jazz, classical and opera – and collaborated with everyone from Paul McCartney and Bruce Springsteen to Burt Bacharach and even Fall Out Boy. Singer, songwriter and producer (notably for The Specials), he’s done it all and with style to spare. If his vast canon of work hasn’t always been consistent, it’s probably because he set himself such high standards from the very beginning, but over 40 years writing and performing, in his characteristically literary style, he’s never lost credibility and now 60 years old remains an artist who defies both genre and fashion. His last appearance in Oxfordshire was a show-stealing headline set at Cornbury back in 2013. Expect a typically a-typical set of songs tonight, mixing classic hits – from ‘Oliver’s Army’ and ‘Alison to ‘Watching the Detectives and ‘(I Don’t Want To Go To) Chelsea’ to obscurities from across his extensive career, and unexpected covers. Never forget, this is the man who wrote ‘Shipbuilding’, simply one of the most astonishing songs ever penned.



twoedy psychedelia a rare live outing. **DEEP COVER with GOLDIE feat. MC GQ + OM UNIT + ZYKLON SOUND: The Bullingdon** – Deep Cover celebrates it second birthday in the estimable company of jungle and drum&bass godfather Goldie, the head Metalhead playing classic tracks from the 90s onwards. He’s joined by progressive bass types Om Unit and local dancefloor destroyer Zyklon Sound, while residents VLVT and Pilgrim spin garage, grime, hip hop and techno. **STONEGHOST + FURY + CHILDREN LOST IN TIME + SECOND RATE ANGELS: The Wheatsheaf** – OxRox gig night with south London’s Stoneghost mixing the old gods of Black Sabbath and Led Zep with more contemporary influences like Tool, Clutch and Pantera for a ferocious tech-death-core storm. **TANDEM FESTIVAL: Hill End Centre** – The European-ranging environmentally-friendly festival returns for its second annual outing, featuring some 100 acts over 3 days as well as workshops, storytelling and more. Acts like Me & My Friends, Okina, The Turbans, Balloon Ascents, Tribe of Tinkers, Art Theefe and Bossaphonik’s Dan Ofer provide a mix of folk, jazz, afrobeat, Balkan brass, indie and experimental music, while 50-piece orchestra Sinfonia Gaia make a rare festival appearance. Festival-goers are encouraged to arrive by bike. Visit tandemfestival.com for full line-up and ticket details. **THE MIGHTY REDOX + DES BARKUS: James Street Tavern** – Swamp blues, funk, ska and goodtime mayhem from The Mighty Redox, alongside rock’n’roll veteran Barkus. **BLURD + NOASIS: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Tribute to Blur. Tribute to Oasis.

SATURDAY 20th

BLOODSTOCK MUSIC TO THE MASSES SEMI-FINAL III: The Bullingdon – Third semi-final in the contest to win a slot at Bloodstock Festival, tonight with Empire Divided, Fallen From Grace, Silk Road and Fleisch. **BEDROCK: The Bullingdon** – Skeletor’s monthly rock and metal club night, playing classic hits and new releases from across the genre. **KID KIN + GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + THE BECKONING FAIR ONES + COSMOSIS: The Wheatsheaf** – Post-rock/math-rock/electro noisemaker Kid Kin plays his first headline show, his lithe, volume-heavy soundscapes nodding to Mogwai, The Album Leaf and Tall Ships. He’s joined by recent Punt stars Ghosts in the Photographs with their heavy-duty post-rock in the vein of Godspeed and Explosions in the Sky. There’s also a debut gig from The Beckoning Fair Ones, the new group formed by former members of Dallas Don’t and Deer Chicago, plus electro-acoustic rockers Cosmosis. **FAHRAN + SUDDEN GUNFIRE: The Cellar** – OxRox gig night with heavyweights Fahrhan, who have toured with UFO, The Answer and Heaven’s Basement amongst others. **TANDEM FESTIVAL: Hill End Centre** – Music from Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, the



Saturday 6th

BLACK RAINBOWS / OLD MAN LIZARD: The Wheatsheaf

It’s one of the unbreakable laws of rock and roll that bands with the word Black in their name are invariably great: Sabbath, Uhuru, Rebel Motorcycle Club, Mountain, Angels, Box Recorder – all mighty in myriad ways. To that list, please add Rome’s Black Rainbows, a band who could only ever be of the heavy, psychedelic variety with a moniker like that. That the trio’s latest album is called ‘Hawkdope’ probably brings thing into even sharper focus. Here’s a band who – surprise! – take Black Sabbath as a starting point and take it for a ride on the back of a motorbike along the scuzziest dirt tracks, calling in on MC5, Hawkwind, Fu Manchu and Monster Magnet for a few beers and smokes along the way. They’re a gnarly mix-up of classic 70s rock and 90s stoner groove, with some seriously dirty guitar noise in their dope-fuelled space explorations. They got riffs, and their riffs reach the sky. Great support from Suffolk’s Old Man Lizard – fronted by Meadows drummer Jack Newnham – bringing a bluegrass rootsiness to Kyuss, Neurosis and Clutch-inspired stoner/sludge noise. Another seriously quality night courtesy of Buried In Smoke.

Balkans and Oxford at the eco-fest. **DAMN GOOD REASON: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Classic rock covers. **EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar** – House and techno club night. **THE JIGANTICS + KIRSTY BROMLEY: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – Country, folk, Cajun and blues gumbo from The Jigantics at tonight’s Wychwood Folk Club show.

SUNDAY 21st

TANDEM FESTIVAL: Hill End Centre – Third and final day of the international eco festival. **MAD LARRY + SPOON THEORY + TWIZZ TWANGLE + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm)** – Unplugged afternoon of music down stairs in the Sheaf with veteran country and bluesman Mad Larry, and madcap music maker Twizz Twangle.

MONDAY 22nd

HAMILTON LOOMIS: The Bullingdon – Soulful, Texan-flavoured blues from the singer, guitarist and blues harpist at tonight’s Haven Club night.

MARTIN SIMPSON, ANDY CUTTING & NANCY KERR: Nettlebed Folk Club – Three of British folk music’s pre-eminent interpreters of traditional songs and tunes join forces for an intimate session at Nettlebed’s famous folk club.

TUESDAY 23rd
MARMOZETS: O2 Academy – Splenetic post-hardcore from West Yorkshire’s sibling-heavy screamers, back in Oxford to promote Top 40 debut album ‘The Weird and Wonderful Marmozets’, after being nominated for Best Newcomers at the *Kerrang!* awards.
JAZZ CLUB with THE RORY McINROY BAND: The Bullingdon – Veteran jazz pianist Rory McInroy and his band play live at the Bully’s weekly jazz club.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 24th
BEL ESPRIT + SCOUT KILLERS: The Wheatsheaf – Double bill of rock from Southampton’s Bel Esprit and Bristol’s Scout Killers.

THURSDAY 25th
THE BIG BLUES NIGHT OUT: The Cellar – It’s All About the Music’s monthly blues

Wednesday 10th
THE WILL GREGORY MOOG ENSEMBLE: St John the Evangelist
Nightshift likes synthesizers. A lot. And when we think of synthesizers we think of the name Robert Moog, whose early modular synths were integral to the popularising of electronic music, from prog to funk to film soundtracks and the first wave of synth-pop. Tonight’s concert, jointly presented by Oxford Contemporary Music and Pindrop Performances, is a journey through all those words, led by Will Gregory – best known as one half of Goldfrapp, and a long-term Moog aficionado – and joined by a stellar band that includes Portishead’s Adrian Utley, who has an enviable catalogue of experimental electronic music to his name, and composer Graham Fitkin. Together the ensemble will be performing original compositions as well as reinterpretations of classic pieces from Bach, John Carpenter, Burt Bacharach, Oliver Messiaen and Wendy Carlos. It’s a trip into a world when electronic music was new and felt genuinely otherworldly. Just look at that picture. That’s a lot of synthesizers you’ve got there. But, as the sign above the *Nightshift* office door says, you can never have too many synthesizers.



blow-out, tonight featuring The Autumn Saints and recent Punt stars Little Brother Eli, with their raw, rootsy mix of White Denim, Jack White and Black Keys.
ROUGH MUSIC + BELLYEYESMILE + KANCHO!: The Library – Smash Disco and Idiot King present a free night of noise, with Cardiff’s raw post-punk and hardcore crew Rough Music launching their new EP, with support from Reading’s post-punk prog-dance types Bellyeyesmile, and noisy bass and drums duo Kancho!.
THE HAZE + BLAME FATE + AMORAL COMPASS: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music gig night with Witney’s teenage soft rockers The Haze, and lo-fi gothic dirge-core pop from Amoral Compass.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst

FRIDAY 26th
STORYTELLER + THE OTHER DRAMAS + A RELUCTANT ARROW: The Wheatsheaf – It’s All About the Music gig night with jazz and ska-inflected rockers Storyteller, plus garage pop duo The Other Dramas.
ABBA MANIA: The New Theatre – Big stage Abba tribute.
NEVER THE BRIDE: The Northcourt, Abingdon – Nikki Lambourn belts it out in the style of Janis Joplin and Tina Turner with her band at Abingdon’s new live music venue in the grounds of Abingdon Utd.
THE HAZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney

SATURDAY 27th
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with 31 HOURS + UNKNOWN SOLDIERS + SYLVA KAY: The Wheatsheaf – GTI celebrate their 13th birthday with another mixed bag of music, tonight featuring fidgety, slightly proggy afropop-flavoured crew 31Hours, alongside Gosport’s airily doomy Unknown Soldiers, and American ex-pat Sylva Kay, inspired by The Breeders, Belly and Buzzcocks.
THE OVERTONES: The New Theatre – Barbershop quartet dressed by the Nation of Islam, classic *a capella* covers, and an exquisite sense of the grotesque, some of which is intentional.
ALPHABET BACKWARDS + GET LOOSE: Appleton Village Hall – Benefit gig for Appleton Primary School with sunshiny synth-popsters Alphabet Backwards, back in action with new single ‘Fingertips’, plus bluesy rockers Get Loose.
EYECON: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Mod and Britpop covers, from The Who and Small Faces to Blur and Oasis.
EXTRA-CURRICULAR: The Cellar

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Saturday 13th – Sunday 14th
WITTSTOCK: The Railway Inn, Culham
The nomadic annual free festival, now into its second decade on the local gig calendar, returns to The Railway Inn, making the trip out from town much easier – it’s right next to Culham station, so you can pop down on the train. As ever the event provides a two-day selection of local bands and solo artists, while raising money for charity through raffles and the like, with The Young Women’s Music Project and OXSRAD this year’s beneficiaries.
Saturday’s line-up features industrial-goth crew **Mary Bendytoy**, alongside theatrical thrash merchants **Agness Pike (pictured)**; post-punk noisenicks **Spinner Fall**; darkly soulful songstress **Laima Bite**; psych-folkies **Reckless Sleepers**, and acoustic music from the likes of **Trev Williams, Mark Bosley, Purple May** and **Puppet Mechanic**. Moving onto Sunday and there’s rocking blues from **The Matt Edwards Band**; country blues from **Mad Larry**; swashbuckling indie and rockabilly from **Peerless Pirates**; country-gothsters **Monkfish**; new wave and r’n’b from **The Shapes**; acid house and synth-pop from **Space Heroes of the People**; Francophile rock’n’rollers **Les Clochards** and post-punk indie rocking from **White Beam**, amongst a host of others. Free music in a good cause – well worth the trip out of town.

SUNDAY 28th
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm) – Open blues jam.

MONDAY 29th
BRASS MONKEY: Nettlebed Folk Club – John Kirkpatrick and Martin Carthy team up for one last tour of their classic English folk music.

TUESDAY 30th
JAZZ CLUB with ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, bop and swing with veteran clarinettist Alvin Roy and his Reeds Unlimited at tonight’s weekly jazz club.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern




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LIVE

THE PUNT

Various venues

The stage at the Purple Turtle is dedicated to the late sound engineer, blues fan, musician, husky owner and huskier singer, Tony Jezzard. If his spirit dropped by tonight, it would certainly appreciate the volume levels on display, but more likely his spectre would smile wryly at the tales of a locked venue, a PA shoved together at break-neck speed, and an electrocuted soundman. After such a start to the proceedings, it seems churlish to moan about the stage running late when James Serjeant has had the national grid pumped through his skinny frame, so we start our night at the Cellar, with only the most cursory grumble... just for the sake of form, you understand.

There, **Balkan Wanderers** are kick-starting the night with more crackling energy than James Serjeant's first pee of the night (yes, yes, we'll stop now), buoying the crowd with spicy East European pop, and inspiring some surprisingly early hedonistic dancing, considering it's Oxford on a Wednesday and most of us are still digesting our burritos. Superficially they resemble gypsy punk rabble rousers Gogol Bordello, but listen beyond the thumping drums and shoutalong choruses, and you'll find that Balkan Wanderers have replaced the wild aggression with chirpy, quirky mid-80s indie pop, in the vein of Grab, Grab The Haddock, or even Stump. This allows the band's secret weapon, the conversational intimacy of Claire Heaviside's clarinet, to slowly steal the show. In what will become a leitmotif throughout the evening, we overhear someone saying the band should have finished the Punt.

Back at the PT, **The Shapes** have now taken the stage, offering a breezy cocktail of Radio 2 melodies and light rock styles. They have a track that resembles The Beautiful South; they have a tune that sounds like Tom Petty; they even have a song called 'Tom Petty' that sounds a wee bit like 10cc and a wee-er bit like Darts. In many hands this would all be pretty generic fluff, but there's a mercurial, alchemical sensibility at work that keeps the music interesting; take 'Mr Sandman', a mash-up of The Beatles' 'Something' and Pink Floyd's 'Brain Damage', with keyboard player Colin Henney throwing properly loopy jazz-dance poses as he doles out elegant fruity chords.

Entering The Wheatsheaf you

can really tell that this is the only Punt venue that exists solely for listening to live rock, such is the room's dinginess, the cosy crush of the crowd, and the full-fat glory of the sound. It's a sound that suits **Ghosts In The Photographs**, who open the dam to wave upon wave of Explosions In The Sky-styled guitar noise. Perhaps we've come across this tumescent post-rock business before, and Ghosts do nothing new, but who ever complained that a sunset was unoriginal. Imposing, impressive stuff.

From imposing to intimate and **My Crooked Teeth**, the first act at Turl Street Kitchen, which remains both packed and respectfully quiet for each performer. "I mean everything to someone," sings Jack Olchawski, as if trying to convince himself more than anyone of the fact. He reminds us of Evan Dando at times, which is handy as he then introduces a song called 'Evan Dando', bringing a little of his other band, ToLiesel's drama to his solo set.

Volume levels increase appropriately for the Punt's heaviest act this year, **Indica Blues**, dispensing with any niceties, interludes or lulls and simply channelling Blue Cheer riffs straight into your brain. The songs are like runaway steamrollers and we don't envy anyone – band members, soundmen, structural engineers – who have to try to put the brakes on. We swear they announce one song as 'Feed Me Pie', and hope we heard right as that's a fantastic title for a stoner-metal track, as well as neatly reflecting their meaty riffs and gravy-like bass fluidity. Certainly they'd flatten **Cameron AG** and his slight, brittle tunes, which, particularly on the strength of the poignant piano ballad with which he ends, would be a crying shame. The Youth Lagoon comparisons are apt, and one wonders whether, like Trevor Powers, he might be tempted to scale up for live performances and whether that might actually diminish his lovely, heartbroken music's effectiveness.

"Money is the devil's pie." Did **Rhymeskeemz** really just say that? Is there a pie theme going on tonight, or is the beer we've consumed so far creating Freudian slips in our heads? Ah, now, he certainly *did* just slip "I'm sick of my dad's impressions" into a litany of politico-social criticisms, which we like a lot. Yes,

there's a lot to enjoy about this rapper, who has a vibrant wit that keeps his bars the right side of cliché, and a nice rhythmic variation.

Outside The White Rabbit, a Morris troupe is giving it the full hanky. Considering it's as close as we can get to a native Cotswold music style, there really should be some Morris on the Punt bill one day. Get your applications in for 2016, chaps! Inside, **White Beam**, featuring local band veteran Jeremy Leggett, are impressive with shimmering, driving guitars rocking the house Chameleons style while the punters snack on dough balls and slices of pizza. Plenty of older Punters feel a warm glow of the post-Ride Oxford sound displayed here, and the fact it's so packed in the pub it's nigh on impossible to see anything of the band, tells you all you need to know about their broad appeal.

Over at the Turl Street Kitchen, 18 year old **Katy Jackson** is pulling the carpet from those over twice her age with some delicately tuneful acoustic ditties. The first impression is of Joni Mitchell without the paranoia and patchouli, but it soon becomes clear that there's a sardonic side to Katy, as if she's looking askance at her melodies and raising her eyebrows at her own undoubted ability. Our next reference point is the smooth cynicism of Evan Dando, and before we know it we've spotted a Lou Reed influence in the vocal delivery. A downbeat acoustic cover of Outkast's 'Hey Ya' seals the deal – it shouldn't work, but it does, to quite magical effect.

Back at the Purple Turtle for another very young act, fraternal duo **Cassels**, who take the flea-bitten sneer of early Sebadoh and weld it messily onto the fuzzy tuneful surge of The Pixies. They've got the flu today, and if so, we're quite excited to see them at peak fitness. Apparently, we hear, if they were feeling better, They Could Have Closed The Punt (mark 2).

At every Punt there's one act that ends up with a crowd that's just a little too large. Sometimes it's a band that just proves too big a draw, as anyone who stood craning at the doorway to see The Young Knives or Little Fish in earlier years will attest, but often it's a quieter act who can't battle past the increasingly, *ahem*, relaxed crowd. Whilst **Water Pageant** might not have been quite as up against it in the volume stakes as The August List a few years ago, we can't really hear anything from the back of the White Rabbit but some pleasant vocal fragments and what sounds like a mellotron. A couple of tasty ingredients, doubtless, but we can't really judge the dish.

Little Brother Eli provide one of

the most rapturously received and best populated sets of the night in the Wheatsheaf and plenty of bands could learn a little from them when it comes to stage presence, even if Marty Pellow is the obvious comparison. The band tear up the Sheaf with classic riffs, sounding like they're straight from the British blues revival of the 60s and 70s. Those riffs sounded great back then and age hasn't withered them any – this Little Bro is growing up fast.

Peerless Pirates of course are in no hurry to grow up – and why should they when dressing up as a pirate and singing songs about drinking tequila is so much fun. They start loud and fast and just get louder and faster as their set progresses. By the finale it's not just their coterie of similarly-attired fans who are considering attaching rigging to the Cellar's bar and sailing it – bottles of rum and all – out into the wide ocean. Sensible hats back on we opt instead for **Wardens**, last on at the Turtle. A week previously we'd seen them play a ramshackle, out-of-tune set at a near-empty Wheatsheaf and worried what we'd let ourselves in at the Punt, but everything that was wrong that night is spot on tonight, a solid wall of heavy rock cut through with a little bite and guile, like Queens of the Stone-Age taking tips from Franz Ferdinand. Despite the venue's air-con being set to 'Arctic' they also play to a sizeable crowd, so we reckon it's a victory on every level.

Sometimes we worry that the Turl Street Kitchen is too refined for the maelstrom of spilt pints and tinnitus that is The Punt. In three minutes flat **Despicable Zee** has destroyed that notion by calling the audience grumpy, and starting a good natured argument. Then again, Zahra Tehrani probably starts an argument at every rehearsal. And she's the only band member. Beyond acting like a surly drumming Jack Dee, her music stretches from drunken clockwork electro in the style of Plone, through MIA-flavoured attitude pop and a kind of Capitol K home-made doodling, to a beery hip hop barn dance featuring various local MC luminaries... some of whom may have even known how the track goes. This is messy, abusive, unfinished music, of the sort that dodges every traditional indicator of quality. It's almost certainly the best set we see all night.

Zaia and **Maiians** on at the same time? Don't the timetable planner realise how confused we are by this point? How about some other vowels to help us get our bearings? The former are a phenomenally slick reggae band, with plenty of juicy bass and stabbing brass, who sound wonderful in the Cellar's resonant gig space. Strictly, this is the sort of

band you want to listen to at a festival, in a set long enough to allow you to take all the substances, read a book, fall in love, start a political party with a stranger and still have time to nip to the cake stall a few times, but our brief exposure tonight leave us impressed.

Maiians are equally dancefloor-focused, but a little more ornate, with their excellent cross-rhythms and organic kraut-electronica keyboard lines. Songs like 'Lemon' gradually take shape and stir themselves into lithe, loose-limbed action, propelled inexorably towards climax by inventive percussion. Post-rock can be a dour, earnest, oppressive affair, played by people who look like they've only ever seen the inside of their own bedrooms, never mind the inside of a club. But you get the impression that Maiians exist to translate the feeling of dazed euphoria that comes with waking up at sunrise on a beach in Ibiza into a form that even chin-stroking Mogwai fans can understand. And, incidentally, we hear they both Could Have Closed The Punt.

Like Cassels, **Esther Joy Lane** has apparently climbed from her sick bed to play for us. Seriously, we'd never have known. The trick of unfurling rich reverbed vocal melodies over freeze-dried beats suggests a strong Grimes influence (as does the T-shirt Esther wears on her Soundcloud page), but there's a sultry steeliness to the delivery that contrasts with Grimes' pastel comedown haze. If this set might have been suited to a PA bigger than what could be squeezed into the corner of a city pub, in quality it cuts easily through sonic paucity. A moment of calm before the climax then, with **Adam Barnes**, who, as we enter the room, is indulging his less sorrowful side with a rousing cover of 'Hit Me Baby One More Time', and his intimate, seemingly effortlessly soulful set is only slightly marred by the realisation the Turl Street Kitchen have closed the bar.

Rainbow Reservoir back at The White Rabbit. The trio play a punky pepped-up pop racket, with a devil take the hindmost insouciance, but without any vestige of aggression. In this sense the band reflects the singer's American roots, harking back to US college keg parties rather than British commuter town basements, red cups hoisted rather than glasses in the face. The wordy songs sound a bit like Kim Deal reading out her PhD, while the best of the tunes are packed with fire, fun and energy. So much so, we think the band Could Have Closed The Punt. Oh, wait a minute. They did. Right, is the bar still open?

Words: David Murphy, Colin May, Ben Woolhead, Stuart Fowkes, Sue Foreman, Rob Langham.



photos: Sam Shepherd and Giulia Biasibetti

BUNTY / ESTHER JOY LANE

The Bullingdon

Last month’s Punt star Esther Joy Lane entrances tonight’s modest audience with her deep voice and poignant vignettes, sung over sparse digital soundscapes. Echoes of The xx and London Grammar serve as reference points, hopefully just to launch off deeper into territory of her own. ‘Travelling Light’ is simply gorgeous, and would make the perfect soundtrack to a cinematic nighttime road trip. Bundy is Brighton-based experimental musician Kassia Zermon, also active in three other bands in the city’s Beatabet collective. Tonight’s show is an immersive experience with multimedia elements throughout. Various costumed collaborators infiltrate the audience and wind the way to the stage, notably two extra vocalists helping her realize and project the complex songs, using great harmonies, invented languages and other challenging elements. Sounds are created then looped using foot pedals to make pieces based on songs but unique to every performance. There’s some kind of theme

DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA

The North Wall

Tonight is not a conventional gig but it is a concept that Dead Rat Orchestra are more than at home with. The drone-folk trio provide a live soundtrack to the 1920s documentary *Nanook Of The North*. For those who don’t know, this film is a touchstone of early cinematic cultural anthropology, studying the still mostly untouched Inuit communities who dwell high in the Arctic circle. The film was made so long ago that it didn’t come with any kind of conventional soundtrack; up step Dead Rat Orchestra. Of course, our ears, after years of being exposed to Hollywood’s output have expectations of what a film score and foleys sound like. Dead Rat Orchestra do take that on board but their attitude is to take the ‘expected’ foley sounds and incorporate them into the fabric of the music. Splashing water, rattling to match kayaks being readied and others beside become just more instruments for DRO - and I would guess they have near 100 on stage with them tonight. A lot of the music is long, sweeping drones of strings and organs building to crescendos that aren’t necessarily implied by the visuals

involving the collection of seven special powers, though it never becomes clear quite how we’re supposed to participate. Good use of video helps us enter into her rather strange world and a distinct Japanese element starts to emerge. This comes partly from a strong visual use of colour, down to Day-Glo eyelashes, and musically with 80s festival favourites The Frank Chickens springing to mind; a more recent signpost could be Cornelius, Japan’s most consistently intriguing musical figure. Refracting cardboard specs are handed out, turning the Bully’s lights into rainbow shards, and by the end she has the whole crowd dancing a conga round the floor. All this leaves us heading for the exit with wide smiles, but ultimately her work is still in progress. Listening to the ‘Multimos’ album later fails to recreate the atmosphere, coming across as a little too willfully wacky. A forthcoming showcase gig at The Jazz Café is a brave move, and will depend on enough people buying into her charming if somewhat confusing universe. *Art Lagun*

KAIROS 4TET WITH EMILIA

MARTENSSON

St John The Evangelist

On the surface Kairos 4tet are a jazz band: keys, bass, drums and saxophone, with some vocals. But to sum them up in such simple terms does them a disservice. Scratch the surface and you begin to see a huge range of influences that are brought together elegantly to make a highly compelling whole. Across the course of their set you can pick out elements of contemporary classical sounds in the vein of Nils Frahm; the stark repetitive motions of Reich and his contemporaries; r’n’b beats that reflect their MOBO Award-driven rise to fame, as well as some perhaps more traditional jazz sounds of Dave Brubeck. None of these are present to showcase any one idea but just are part of the makeup of the cohesive whole. Their set is largely long jams around central themes found on their recorded material, with each instrumentalist given their rightful chance to show off every so often.

ORANGE VISION / P/R/P/E /

REUBEN’S ROCKET

The Wheatsheaf

Some nights it all comes together, when the bands are as hungry as they are talented. Some nights the expectations may have been dampened by the heavy rain everyone travelled through to get there, yet each successive act at tonight’s Gappy Tooth Industries show spurs the following one to a personal best, which in turn stokes the audience into bellowing cheers and forgetting their wet socks. Reuben’s Rocket, the lead off in this joyous cavalcade, is the alter-ego of Ollie Base, tonight *sans* band, and with Henry Batten sat on top of his percussion box. He seems younger than Sainsbury’s economy brandy, yet is still able to reflect between songs that, “you realise as you get older how lame your lyrics used to be,” as he launches into the highlight of his new EP, ‘Let Me Be’, with his to die for killer vocal, somewhere between Nick Drake and Colin Blunstone’s sanded down phrasing, leading to the first of this evening’s ovations. P/R/P/E (Punk/Rock/Pop/Electronic), a musical pseudonym of Bristolian Finlay Shakespeare, picks up the challenge, in his sixth form white shirt, his low-slung guitar pushed to one side, as he fires up the obligatory one man

band computer-keyboard gadget. He looks so uncool he is utterly cool, and quickly morphs into Carter USM with a nice line in Paul Weller-esque brutal syntax, (“read all the pamphlets and watch all the tapes”), sweating like a young Lou Reed, and raising the ante as he picks up on the audience’s enthusiasm for the occasion. Orange Vision storm the stage, keen not to let the reverberations leave the room, and show from the off they have become stadium sized and appropriately musically tight. With their theatrical front man Edmund Quigley, they have the look and feel of great 90s bands like Pulp and Kula Shaker, but with galloping doses of The Horrors and The Cure thrown in the mix. They intro with The Sundays-like jangle of ‘Force Field’ before going on to seize the room by the throat with unbelievably epic new song ‘The Dark Around The Eyes’. If that is their fresh direction they could become quite something. Tonight isn’t about Soundcloud or Bandcamp or downloads; it’s full-blooded, live music at its very best, reaching the parts that tinny, compressed digital playback cannot reach. Go out in the rain, and *feel* it. *Paul Carrera*

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UNDERSMILE / EARTHMASS / D GWALIA

The Wheatsheaf

Despite the label, there’s something rather uplifting about doom. Tonight’s show encapsulates varying levels of the genre, but not once does it ever feel like the kind of soundtrack that might accompany hopelessly staring into the abyss.

D. Gwalia’s albums ‘The Iodine Trade’ and ‘In Puget Sound’ are both understated gems, packed with raw emotion delivered via the medium of bleak, wonky folk. In a live setting, his songs are stripped back and rougher, and possess a slightly more aggressive quality. Pitched somewhere between Mark Lanegan’s gravelly whisky drawl and Bleeding Heart Narrative’s gothic tales, his spellbinding performance is both fragile and defiant.

Earthmass’ approach to the void is one that

requires vast quantities of pharmaceutical assistance. Huge stoner riffs and psychedelic overtones are their approach, and whilst there’s nothing here that’s particularly original, there’s no doubting that they pack a real punch.

But tonight is really all about a rare hometown performance from Undersmile. On an audience level they’ve been rather unappreciated in Oxford, but after a lot of hard work, a Roadburn appearance, and the recent release of ‘Anhedonia’ (rightfully considered one of the best albums to be produced by an Oxford band in recent years) the tide seems to be turning judging by the large, enthusiastic turnout.

Tonight’s set concentrates on the band’s newer material, their expanded sonic palette and

impressive evolution in clear evidence.

Opening with ‘Sky Burial’, it’s clear to see that the band is operating on a different level. The twin vocals of Taz Corona Brown and Hel Sterne twist around each other perfectly; their peculiar harmonies switch between resigned croon, haunted whisper and raw screams with a curious elegance. Musically, these labyrinthine songs feel almost like intuitive improvisations switching through emotional gears at will, and always finding a resonance. No longer relying on bombast alone, the likes of ‘Song Of Stones’ and ‘Atacama Sunburn’ prove that Undersmile are writing songs that are both heavy, and delicate; doom never sounded this good. Undersmile sound like nobody else, on a local or international level, we’re very lucky to have them.

Sam Shepherd

LITTLE RED / WATER PAGEANT / MIA de LANGE & DONAL HILL

The Jericho Tavern

There aren’t many times you can say a local gig trumps three years’ experience watching bands, and although those years may be lined with golden moments, there’s something inside all the acts tonight egging their souls on to higher realms of musical aptitude.

Newcomers to Oxford Mia De Lange and Donal Hill, originally from Norway and Ireland respectively, are no exception. Recalling June Tabor and Richard Ashcroft in vocal tone, their harmonies are well rehearsed and, in the case of one strikingly sombre violin torch song, as bittersweet as a chargrilled marshmallow. Theirs is a reinvention of rustic folk that tugs softly at the heartstrings and repents towards a higher, far-off plain.

The endless change of textural colour from Water Pageant, playing ahead of their Oxford Punt set, is a headrush as much as a questioning of the voices inside your own head. A fragmentation that for once feels warranted as these starlit elegiacs teeter against the crossover loop pedal, electric guitar and Moog

piano sample triggering, with wishes for the wind to blow the city into space. It’s a real trip of a sound, picking up where Chicagoans Zelenople left off and My Bloody Valentine signed the envelope with some spilled claret. There are no definites, only destinations ahead; let’s hope it’s not underwater OX4. Also red and in love with the crowd are folk trio Little Red. They exude a raw energy tonight with occasionally missed cues, but with a ballsy finish they end up potting many in evergreen holes. Their reshaping of much of the material from their debut ‘Sticks And Stones’ LP is a moss-covered picture, looking and feeling like an old re-enactment of a forgotten springtime mosaic with tracks like ‘Chapters’ (“Hide the books and heirlooms / Bury them away”) and the fragile ‘The Huntsman’, where Hayley Bell sings that she’ll never find true love. One thing that’s for certain is all the songs tonight are played from the heart, and sometimes you can’t ask for more than that.

Andy Poplin

THE THURSTON MOORE BAND

O2 Academy

In the interest of full disclosure, I should begin by confessing that when it comes to Thurston Moore, I’m a drooling, hopelessly smitten, weak-at-the-knees fanboy and have been ever since I first heard ‘Dirty’ in 1992. When Moore and Kim Gordon – the too-cool-for-school king and queen of alt-rock – announced their split in 2011, and Sonic Youth went on a hiatus that looks increasingly permanent, it was like a death in the family.

When friends break up, you don’t want to be seen to be taking sides – but, as intriguing as the arty, esoteric songs Gordon has recorded with Bill Nace as Body/Head are, it’s Moore’s post-split projects that have really won my affections. Gordon’s loss was very much the UK’s gain, with Moore now resident in Stoke Newington – which is where he met his latest musical partner-in-crime, Oxford’s very own guitar virtuoso James Sedwards.

The Thurston Moore Band are unfortunately named; if anything, that would have suited the short-lived Chelsea Light Moving better. Alongside Sedwards, the supergroup’s line-up also features trusty Sonic Youth tub-thumper Steve Shelley and My Bloody Valentine bassist Deb Googe, who, on the thunderous early evidence of ‘Forevermore’, have quickly formed a formidable rhythm section. Moore, meanwhile, duels with and frequently defers to Sedwards, whose

bombastic solo scrawled over ‘The Best Day’ vividly illustrates what he brings to the party. Sonic Youth were always about chemistry, a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts, and the same is true of this new incarnation.

‘Forevermore’ is swiftly followed by ‘Speak To The Wild’, two of the finest songs Moore’s ever written – loose, jammy, deftly constructed out of clanging and chiming guitar riffs and motifs that spiral off into dischord and chaos before returning comfortably back to where they started – though it’s arguably an elongated, deconstructed take on ‘Grace Lake’ that steals the show.

At 56, Moore may no longer be a sonic youth, but, with his metallic pendant, snazzy two-tone trousers, sharp brogues and relatively new short haircut, he still looks as boyish as ever, the lecturer for his lyric book the only concession to his advancing years.

This is Moore’s first visit to an O2 venue, the walls of which he feels should be covered with the work of local artists (“Black is so over”). A career in interior design awaits, perhaps – though, as the new, largely instrumental, songs (or “anti-right-wing protest poems”, as he would have it) aired tonight make manifest, musically speaking there’s still plenty of life left in the old dog yet.

Ben Woolhead

SLY & THE FAMILY DRONE / DJ YOUNG CONSERVATIVE / TELEGRAPHER

The Wheatsheaf

I spend the duration of Telegrapher’s set mentally placing them squarely in the city’s fine recent lineage of brutal rock duos – Winnebago Deal, Phantom Theory, 50ft Panda – only to overhear afterwards that they’re actually normally a threesome and that the guitarist is missing due to an injured hand. If they can make this much of an impression when they’re a man down, wielding sludgy bass riffs so meaty they’re unsuitable for vegetarians, you can only salivate at the thought of what they might do when at full strength.

Sounding like an act straight out of the club listings guide on Chris Morris’ *Bluejam*, DJ Young Conservative has – the merch table reveals – released both a split EP with the marvellously named Lonnie Bangford and an album boasting death metal-style artwork. All of which hardly prepares you for a strangely sinister and curiously compelling reinterpretation of prime 80s Pet Shop Boys by Vangelis and Public Service Broadcasting. He’s not much to look at on stage, pressing keys and tinkering with radio static, but has the distinction of being a Tory I’d actually vote for.

When headliners Sly & The Family Drone start setting up, it soon becomes apparent why the Wheatsheaf has felt even cosier than normal. Drums, pedals and electronic

gizmos, previously shrouded to the sides of the room, are wheeled into the centre of the floor, which is soon carpeted with a tangle of wires. The trio are a health and safety officer’s nightmare, as well as a major headache for ‘Sheaf soundman Joal Shearing.

A set that begins with the Walker Brothers’ ‘Make It Easy On Yourself’ wafting gently through the PA and an invitation to cluster around close (they don’t so much break the fourth wall as completely demolish it) ends in a chaotic racket, the communal bashing of countless drums and a short person with a paunch who’s wearing only his pants while screaming his lungs out. Some might say that, for the father of a two-year-old, this climax is something of a busman’s holiday. Not me, though – I’m too busy smiling and marvelling at the drummer’s ability to keep all of his accomplices for the evening (including local noisenik Lee Riley) vaguely in time, despite himself being distracted by a bloke who looks like Frank Zappa continually waving a camera on a selfie stick in his face.

London-based promoters Burn The Jukebox are relatively new to Oxford, but on this evidence they’re welcome back any time.

Ben Woolhead

WOOD FESTIVAL

Braziers Park

This family friendly and pioneering eco-friendly festival has now been going long enough for the sustainable powered stages, the kids charging about, the organic food and the compost toilets to seem routine. But it’s a delight to be back at Braziers, a perfect setting for a spring festival of music and nature.

This year the number of eco workshops and activities is possibly a record. It’s also the Year Of The Bee, so it’s a surprise it takes 24 hours before we spot our first adults in full bee costume. More disappointing is it takes only ten seconds to stumble over recyclable litter dropped by the main stage.

Of course music remains all important to WOOD. Having previously hosted some headliners who were absorbing but low key, organisers Robin and Joe Bennett this year aim for high energy and high noise finales every night on the main stage, and in their different ways all the headline bands oblige.

Friday’s headliners, **Treetop Flyers** get off to a less than flying start, but gradually the band’s performance grows along with the crowd and the atmosphere. The tipping point is Reed Morrison’s emotive all-out performance of his tribute to his late father, ‘St Andrew’s Cross’, backed only by harmonies and a single acoustic guitar, which gets a roar of approval and is easily the set highlight. The band finish in proper climatic rock style and seem genuinely surprised at the crowd calling them back for an encore in appreciation of a job well done.

Before Saturday’s headliners **Tuung** take to the main stage, we have already seen a couple of well received high-energy sets. First, **The Dreaming Spires** propel themselves and us through their take on Americana with the Bennett Brothers fulfilling their own brief by shrugging off any tiredness accumulated from organising the festival.

Next up, the fresh faced **CC Smugglers** play original songs inspired by (mainly American) old tunes and rhythms, predominately Texas swing and Cajun, and Appalachian hoe-downs. Their self-declared work ethic and desire to succeed shine through as they do everything with well rehearsed verve and panache, including their stage moves, and they rapidly get the crowd eating out of their collective hand.

So WOOD is already buzzing when folkatronic, psych-trance, and sometimes prog crew **Tuung** come on. Their staccato rhythms, spiky, restless guitar chords and chimes, bells, and melodica create an energy and excitement that is very different from their previous, unimpressive WOOD performance.

Sunday’s headliners **Songoy Blues** recently released their debut album ‘Music In Exile’, having come together in the Malian capital Bamako after three of the four members fled there when Islamist militants took over in much of the north of the country. They mix Songoy rhythms with aggressive, Jimmy Hendrix-style urban riffs. Live the band are tight, dynamic and well drilled, with a gem of a lead guitarist and a singer with a very attractive, rich, soulful baritone voice and a shoulder shaking, pelvic tilting dance routine of which Mick Jagger would be proud. Perhaps the most exciting WOOD set ever? Well because we like some rough edges we’d put Kaira Arby’s set of 2011 just ahead, but Songoy are extremely impressive. The other band we’ve looked forward to seeing for the first time are **Spiro**. Their violinist wears an amazing three-layered dress that could be a metaphor for their multilayered music, which brings together Celtic sounding riffs and Michael Nyman and Steve Reich-influenced pulses, while somehow continuing to sound thoroughly English. Their set consists of beautifully arranged and played instrumentals that tend to be a little understated but they come up with an exhilarating version of the traditional ‘Bobby Shafto’, transforming it into a boisterous romp.

Regular visitor to Oxfordshire **Thomas Truax**, brings out the darker side of ‘You Are My Sunshine’ and becomes a reluctant Pied Piper when he steps off the stage to sing among the crowd, finding himself being followed by a snake of 30 kids which he struggles to shake off.

The final mention goes to **Nature Boy**, both because his birthday is celebrated on stage and because he bucks the singer-songwriter miserablist tendency by being such an optimist, which, like WOOD, is always something worth celebrating.

Colin May

TELLING THE BEES / CHARLIE HENRY

Albion Beatnik Bookshop

With a smile in her voice as big as the one on her face, Charlie Henry’s winning personality is part of the appeal of her charming, quirky performance. She also has the considerable advantage of her ukulele and accordion being joined by Barney Morse-Brown’s cello, which fills out what might otherwise be a thin instrumental sound.

Barney joins Charlie and a narrowboat ‘Hieronymus Pepys’ who gently rocks her to sleep, and a noisy neighbour, ‘Sedge Warbler’, whose perspective Charlie takes as Sedge tries to get a female to join him for some fun. There’s a potential for serious cringe-making here, but both ‘characters’ are marvellously conjured up by Charlie and Barney without it going *Jackanory*. Charlie’s world is more knowing than first impressions imply and in a crammed market of worldly wise female singer-songwriters, it’s surely by continuing to play to her winsome self that she stands the best chance of standing out from the crowd.

Telling the Bees have always had songs with which they can rock out but are probably best heard when totally acoustic, as they are tonight for the home town launch of their third album, ‘Steer By The Stars’. It turns out many of the songs new to us are so good it makes picking a highlight

THE DESTROYERS
The Cellar

Halfway through their second track of the evening, ‘Kalinka’, the Destroyers treat us to a simple refrain of “Fuck the Tories”; it’s a perfectly judged sentiment on one of the bleakest days in recent history and one that the audience, packing the venue to the rafters for tonight’s Bossaphonik show, laps up and screams back with relish.

For this rumbustious thirteen person combo from Birmingham aren’t going to take the re-election of messrs Cameron, Osborne and company lying down and nor are they going to allow the news to sully their determination to have a good time. That this onlooker found himself singing along to the words of tracks despite hearing them for the first time is testament to the band’s magnificent live show, full of inventiveness and recalling the protest spirit of a quarter of a century ago and the determination to resist the Criminal Justice Bill.

The Destroyers recall acts as diverse as The Men They Couldn’t Hang and Madness but their primary spirit is that of the Balkans; ‘Trec Tzigane’

nigh on impossible, and makes us only a tad disappointed when they play hardly any old favourites.

Much of the credit for this goes to Andy Letcher’s songwriting skills. He draws on folklore, psychedelia, and protest music to produce multilayered lyrics, some of which can sound as if written a century or more ago while still conveying a message for our times. Then there’s the rest of the band who do not simply accompany Andy’s husky vocals but inhabit the songs with him. When Andy sings a line about dancing, Jim Penny’s concertina dances and in ‘St Kevin (yes, there’s a Kevin who’s a saint) & The Blackbird’, Jane Griffiths’ violin swoops and dives.

The band trade under the banner of “darkly crafted folk”, and it gets pretty dark with ‘I Fear These Tory Radicals’, based on the words of 19th Century poet John Clare. There’s plenty of light too, though. Like the celebratory *faux* folk number ‘Oxford May Song’, but we hope rhyming “dayo” with “mayo” was intended as a gently ironic take on the genre. ‘The Puppeteer Came To Town’ is a tale of dark into light, but the performance has a spine-tingling moment when master puppeteer Martin Brindle gives voice to a grotesque, manic-sounding Mr Punch.

Colin May

DUOTONE / RICHARD WALTERS / CAMERON A.G.
The North Wall

Splitting his set between electric organ and acoustic guitar Cameron A.G. gives us a set of well-crafted pop that openly carries and blends its influences to great effect. At times he could pass for a modern pop troubadour in the vein of Ed Sheeran (we mean no offence), while at others you can hear the freedom of 60s west coast folk revival. His lyrics find beauty in the mundane but are no less emotionally resonant. A great opening set.

Next up is the long-missed Richard Walters. This is his first solo set in two years (he is now working with two bands; Liu Bei and Parla) and it’s been way too long. Stripping away the production of his last album, ‘Regret Less’, truly shows the core of Walters’ musicianship: heart-wrenching vocals over deceptively simple arrangements. Live Walters is so engaging you can barely blink let alone look away or, woe betide, check your phone. Liu Bei are great, but I would be immensely sad if this is the last time I see Richard play solo.

After a brief rearrangement of gear and a chance to visit the real life ‘Little White Caravan’ Barney Morse Brown, the force behind Duotone,

takes to the stage. This is clearly his full vision, the more recent electronic additions to his set work brilliantly to form the dense arrangements of the new material. The heavy percussion on album title track ‘Let’s Get Low’ and the synth stabs on ‘Little White Caravan’ emphasise the new Duotone sound. Cello is still important, but the whole song is more so.

Of course we do get older songs, like ‘You Don’t Need Church’, and crowd favourite ‘Greetings, Hello’, which sees Barney launch into a frenzy of loops and cello so intense that it could easily finish with a Townshend-esque smashing of his instrument (needless to say he doesn’t).

For an encore the whole room sings along with ‘These Towns’, a lament of the propagation of supermarkets (and some more subtle ideas too), and to close the night Richard Walters returns to the stage for beautiful if unexpected duet of Talk Talk’s ‘I Believe In You’. Tonight is a gig to remember for a very long time. If this is the new, fully formed Duotone, we can’t wait to see what comes next.

Matt Chapman-Jones

SARAH JAROSZ, SARA WATKINS & AOIFE O’DONOVAN
St John the Evangelist

Normally the phrase “I’m with her” conjures up a degree of picking sides but tonight’s I’m With Her tour featuring Sarah Jarosz, Sara Watkins, and Aoife O’Donovan makes it impossible to pick a winner. With solo numbers and group ensembles in equal measures they still manage to fuse as one, leaving the inattentive ear unable to decipher where one artist ends and another begins.

Tonight, though, it’s not just about showcasing their own songs, with a cover of John Hiatt’s ‘Crossing The Muddy Waters’, John Croce’s ‘Walking Back to Georgia’, and Andrew Stroud’s ‘Be My Husband’ all thrown into the mix. When their own songs do hit the spotlight it’s hard to pick between Jarosz’ ‘Build Me Up From Bones’, Watkins’ ‘Be There’, and O’Donvonan’s ‘Red and White and Blue and Gold’. Each song highlights the incredible power of the individual artist, and serves to confirm them as artists at the top of their game.


The instrument swapping which sees a feast of guitars, ukuleles, banjos, and fiddles hit the stage also goes a long way to highlight the dexterity of the trio, and proves

their ability to both compose and deliver intricate numbers filled with passion. Meanwhile, the finale of Emmylou Harris’ ‘The Darkest Hour Is Just Before Dawn’ from the balcony showcases how St John the Evangelist lends itself to the genre, the amplification of their harmonies bringing a beautiful ring to the end of the night. For me, however, it’s their cover of Gillian Welch’s ‘A Hundred Miles’ which is the pinnacle of the night, filled with both emotion and heartache.

Fusing bluegrass, Americana, folk, and at times a more traditional country sound, the trio span the genres in an effortless way that leaves each song bleeding into the next. With Watkins and O’Donovan finding previous fame in Nickel Creek and Crooked Still respectively, and Jarosz rarely found without her wingmen Nathaniel Smith and Alex Hargreaves, tonight stands to testify that all three are more than capable of commanding the crowd without extensive backing. Suffice to say, if I hadn’t been convinced before, by the end of the show I am indeed with her (and her, and her).

Lisa Ward

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As ever set in the intimate surroundings of **Hill Farm** in Steventon from the **17th-18th July**, Truck is very much the Oxfordshire music calendar centrepiece. This year's main stage headliners are **THE CHARLATANS** and **BASEMENT JAXX**. They're joined by an impressive supporting cast that includes **CLEAN BANDIT**, **TEMPLES**, **PUBLIC SERICE BROADCASTING**, **SAINT RAYMOND**, **SUMMER CAMP**, **DON BROCO**, **DEMOB HAPPY**, **KING PLEASURE & THE**

Beyond the main stage, **DARWIN DEEZ**, **GHOSTPOET**, **PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT** and **LUCY ROSE** head up the bill on the Market Stage, while *Nightshift's* regular Truck haunt of choice, the Barn, with its fragrant agricultural perfume, is once again a den of noisy brilliance in the form of **FAT WHITE FAMILY**, **PULLED APART BY HORSES**, **SLAVES**, **BO NINGEN**, **EAGULLS**, **TELLISON**, **THE WYTCHEs**, **BABY GODZILLA** and **BLOODY KNEES**, while late nights in the Barn will feature dance parties hosted by **DJ LUCK**.

Of course, that's just scratching the surface of Truck, and there'll also be a hefty local contingent of acts to see along the way. With music, comedy and kids activities running across half a dozen different stages, the main challenge of Truck Festival is, as ever, trying to see everything you want in just two days.

And thanks to our chums at Truck, *Nightshift* has a pair of weekend camping tickets to give away, completely and utterly free, in one of our splendidly generous competitions.

Email entries, clearly marked Truck Competition, to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk, or send entries on a postcard to **Truck Competition, Nightshift Magazine, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**. Please include full name, address and daytime phone number. Deadline for entries is the 21st June. The editor's decision is to sing along heroically but tunelessly to Augustines, much to the chagrin of everyone within a fifty-foot radius.

Ah there you are, and welcome to
The bar of the East Indies Club.
Unscrew your purse, pull up a pew,
And buy us all a beer, you schlub.
How did you find the Punt this year?
The cream of Oxford rock and roll,
The drinks, the drinks, the drinks, the drinks...
The head stuck down the toilet bowl.
Reviews on beer mats the next day -
Hung over, can't make out a thing.
'Uncompromising' does that say?
Oh no it's just 'unpromising'.
So come ye journos, one and all
Give us a toast and raise your glass:
Here's to the drinks, the drinks, the drinks.
Young People's music? Kiss my... !

A black and white portrait of a young man with long, light-colored hair. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic design that includes the word "GROW" and a skull. He has tattoos on his arms and is standing with his hands on his hips.

A slew of local releases this month included **Little Fish's** 'Am I Crazy?' single, and **The Delta Frequency's** 'Wisdom Walks Hand In Hand With Idiocy', as well as outings for **The Keyz**, **Clare Free**, **Domes of Silence** and **The Anydays**, while highlights of a sparse gigging month due to yet another disappointing World Cup, were **Goldfrapp**, **Brendan Perry** and **Band of Horses** at the **O2 Academy**, as well as **Elvis Costello's** visit to **The New Theatre**. He's back again this month. As we say, some things never change.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

LITTLE BROTHER ELI

We don't arf pick our days to review demos here at *Nightshift*. As we sit down with the pile this month it's emerged that a nation of imbeciles have just voted for a party full of bastards to rule over them for another five years. "Please master, will you beat me some more?" It's more than a little depressing, but we take solace in the thought that another half a decade of stomping on the poor and society's more vulnerable members might at least lead to some decent protest music in the next few years. Still, we can't really talk, since each month we're faced with a motley assortment of hapless hopefuls who prostrate themselves before our tender critical mercy, and like Ian Duncan Smith faced with a single mother trying to cope with the fallout of the bedroom tax, we're happy to pile on the pain.

And if we got the blues, it ain't nuttin compared to Little Brother Eli, a band who found themselves playing the Punt last month after previously ending up in the Demo Dumper with their first demo. You see, people, even in those darkest of hours there is the hope that things will get better. Get better being something Little Brother Eli have done with giant bells on. Where once was a band who reminded us of Jamiroquai singing nursery rhymes, is a rough-hewn gang of Delta roughnecks, rocking it up in a Mississippi shack after several bottle of moonshine. Having accidentally trashed their record player while dancing like loons to White Denim, they've set about trying to recreate those songs themselves, in the process making such a racket that Jack White, who lives six doors away, has popped round to see what all the kerfuffle is, and decided to stay and help out. Things are getting down and dirty now. A bit funky too after The Black Keys sweep round with an extra case of beers and plenty of good vibes. And even when energy levels have flagged just a tad in the wake of all that hollerin' and having it heavy, there's still time to get grandpappy's old slide guitar down from above the fireplace and really give it some blues. Little Brother Eli might sound like they could have leapt straight out of the 1960s or 70s blues-rock heyday but your puny Sam Smith-informed protestations are cast aside with riff-fuelled disdain

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

and some righteous gospel. And anyway, we rather like the 60s and 70s. That ham-faced poltroon Cameron wasn't ruling the country for starters.

CLUB SODA

After all that whisky and beer, a club soda's hardly going to keep the party going, is it? The name does, though, remind us of that 1980s drink of choice, the white wine spritzer, which is appropriate since Club Soda sound like they just tumbled out of a time machine that set off at roughly the same moment as Marty McFly's Delorean first disappeared into the past. Over a comfortable bed of discreet organ hum, gentle drum shuffle and soft rock guitar noodling, the singer emotes earnestly if unimposingly, and everything feels like it's happening somewhere just beyond the middle distance. If we're being kind they sound like Prefab Sprout's less engaging cousin, capturing all the thrills and spills of that mid-80s soft-centred soul-pop chart explosion. It's hardly Michael Gove-like in its ability to irritate or infuriate, but like a Tory parish councillor's handshake crossed with one of The Silence from *Dr Who*, it leaves no impression beyond a slightly innocuous, clammy feeling. And we remember that while the 1980s' seemingly endless Tory dominance did lead to some serious rabble-rousing protest pop, it also gave us a great grey ocean of fluff that sounded an awful lot like this.

JULIET & THE RAGING ROMEOS

This is a bit more like it – bit of noise, bit of attitude, bit of an 80s underground rock vibe. The Raging Romeos' clean-cut garage rock is far from threatening but it's slightly off-centre and it's got spirit and enough subtlety to slide into pop territory occasionally. It's singer Juliet, though, who gives the band their character, an alternately strident and sultry siren who, on demo opener 'Good Girl' reminds us of MIA and Penetration's Pauline Murray in equal measures. By the time they hit 'Venus', she's upped the tension enough to recall Hazel O'Connor as her band chugs with a meaty sense of pop-friendly punk purpose behind her. Probably not statue-kicking, barricade-manning musical fury, but the sort of thing you can imagine the late, great John Peel having in session back in the height of the Thatcher years, the great man enthusing loudly and effusively about their vim and vigour as he wondered

what the bloody blazes was happening to the country. And in Juliet the band have got a rock and roll star in the making.

MARTYRED FOR NOTHING

Now, this really is barricade-manning musical fury. A torrential cloudburst of blast beats, shredded riffage and splenetic raging of the kind that should be piped into the brains of everyone who voted for Cameron and cronies in the middle of the night, every night, to remind them of the bloody great fuck-up they made with that stubby wee pencil in the voting booth. Alongside the likes of Reveller and Being Eugene, Banbury's Martyred For Nothing are pumping some serious energy into metalcore locally at the moment, and on a day such as this, something that is basically a howl of rage into the void feels utterly fitting. The sound of a thousand militant malcontents vomiting up their spleens at the thought of five more years of Tory rule. Into battle, friends. Into battle!

LUCY LEAVE

We're suckers for lyrical genius here at *Nightshift*, and Lucy Leave can be proud that they are to be cut out and pinned on the Wall of Poetic Heroes in our office with their frankly marvellous "I like the friends / That I have in my life / Thank you, my friends / Thank you, my friends / La la la la la la." They'll need to be careful Sleaford Mods don't try and nick that particular gem for their next opus, 'Stella Artois Knife Fight Wanker'. We shouldn't mock them too much for that though, since on balance this is decent enough, if all a bit of a mess. Perched precariously atop an agricultural bassline seemingly half inches from Hawkwind, 'Friends' rumbles sternly along with the singer doing his best Robert Wyatt impression as he ponders all the stuff he's got in life, until it settles down in almost resigned fashion towards the end. 'Carry' is grungier and nastier, a lo-fi nod to Pavement and Beck in parts, still a bit untidy around the edges but more convincing as a statement of musical purpose and for all the faultlines here, there's something quite endearing about Lucy Leave; hopefully they'll emerge as something proper special in the coming months.

KHAMSINA

If there's anything we enjoy more than a lyrics sheet with a demo it's a video to point at and laugh. So thanks Khamsina for this moody mini epic of lost love and slightly overdone visual metaphors. We

open on a young couple having a row on a swing bench before each ups and goes their own way. Letters are written and tearily read; girl plays the piano, while boy necks vodka, smashes the glass dramatically on the floor and weeps as girl's letter begins "Are you scared of the future?" (probably yes if he's going to be reliant on the NHS, social services or the private rental sector). Girl leaves her piano lounge behind to emote atop a cliff as turbulent seas rage beneath (all those repressed desires and tensions, huh?). If we're not spoiling it all for you, it ends with girl sitting back on the swing bench alone. Until boy arrives and gives her a cuddle. Hurray for love! The world is not such a terrible place, the future is not a boot stamping on a human face forever. There is love. And overwrought power ballads. Oh yeah, the music. Sorry – much mention is made of Kate Bush in the reviews section of Khamsina's web page. This sounds like a cross between Evanescence and Beverly Craven. Still, vodka, tears and a swing bench – those are memories they can never take from us.

THE DEMO DUMPER

SAHARA SKIES

With the tragic demise of Beady Eye, what the country needs now, even more than five more years of austerity and the cynical punishment of society's more vulnerable elements, is another piss-poor Oasis tribute band. Sorry, that's a lazy comparison. Sahara Skies, with their half-hearted baggy beats, limply funky groove, wah wah pedals and over-extended vowels are more of a piss-poor tribute to The Twang. Hold that thought in your mind for a few seconds, dear reader. A tribute. To The Twang. A band who we'll freely admit had a bloody good tune or three to their name, but were only really of any consequence until the actual Stone Roses reformed, at which point they were reduced to a scampi-in-a-basket-style package tour with The Enemy. But now they have their own tribute band. And they've even brought a set of bongos with them, just in case all that sun-shееeine fake-Manc singing wasn't enough to thrill you to your very marrow. Apparently they've supported Happy Mondays and The 1975, so they recognise where their appeal might lie. Not really sure we can say any more, other than to perhaps ponder that if you thought 'The Second Coming' was a let-down after 'The Stones Roses', then this is what the rejected demos for the third album might have sounded like if the Roses hadn't done the decent thing and split up when they did.

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

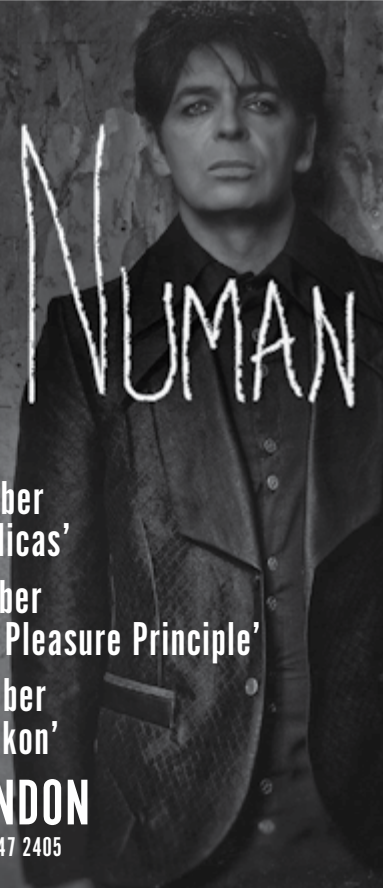
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