



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 242
September
2015



GIRL POWER

*"Too many bands in Oxford over-think things and try and play 'intelligent' music.
We just wanna play dumb fast punk"*

Oxford's hardcore heroes
keep it fast and furious

Also in this issue:

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SUPERNORMAL reviewed
Three pages of local releases
and
Five pages of local gigs

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THE BULLINGDON

SEPTEMBER 2015

Tuesday 1st September
**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit**

FREE

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 3rd September

Autobahn

Doors: 7pm

Friday 4th September

Hayes Carll

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 5th September

Funk Jugglers

Doors: 7pm

Sunday 6th September

Andrew Combs Trio

Doors: 7pm

Monday 7th September

Jon Amor & Joel Fisk

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 8th September

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Ewan Baird Group**

FREE

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 10th September

**The Formidable
Vegetable Sound System**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 11th September

**Flights of Helios
The Manacles of Acid**

Doors: 7.30pm

Monday 14th September

**Marcus Malone
Little Brother Eli**

Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 15th September

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Heavy Dexters**

FREE

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 17th September

Sasha McVeigh

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 19th September

Royal Pardon 2015

Doors: 3pm

Saturday 19th September

Bedrock

Oxford's Rocking Club Night.

Release Your Inner Dinosaur!

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 20th September

One Gig Fresher

Doors: 2pm

Monday 21st September

Kirk Fletcher

Doors: 8.30pm

Tuesday 22nd September

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

FREE

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 23rd September

Merz & Family Machine

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 24th September

Cardboard Fox

Doors: 7pm

Friday 25th September

Nonstop Tango (Front Bar)

Doors: 5pm

Saturday 26th September

Bronwyn Leonard

George Huxtable

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 26th September

**DUBKASM:
Roots Guidance**

Red-I meets Mighty Itals

Hosted by: Donovan Kingjay

**Powered by:
Roots Guidance Soundsystem**

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 27th September

Wlodi

Doors: 7pm

Monday 28th September

Grainne Duffy

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 29th September

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

FREE

Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 2nd October

Liu Bei

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 3rd October

The Pretty Things

Doors: 7pm

Sunday 4th October

The Japanese House

Doors: 7pm

Monday 5th October

Katie Bradley

Black Market III

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 6th October

**Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Blake's 7 Funk**

FREE

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 7th October

By the Rivers

Doors: 7pm

Friday 9th October

Treetop Flyers

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 10th October

Gengahr

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 10th October

Scuba

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 11th October

The Bohicas

Doors: 7pm

Monday 12th October

Erja Lyytinen

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 13th October

Palace

Doors: 7pm

Friday 16th October

Girls, Guns & Glory

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 17th October

Gentlemens Dub Club

Doors: 9pm

Sunday 18th October

Mielzky

Twardy Grunt

Doors: 7pm

Monday 19th October

Mentulls

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 22nd October

Echoic

Doors: 7pm

Friday 23rd October

The Corn Potato

String Band

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 24th October

Co-Pilgrim

The Shapes

Paul MacClure

Doors: 7pm

Sunday 25th October

The Ruts DC

Doors: 7pm

Monday 26th October

Bob Malone

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 28th October

Cattle & Cane

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 29th October

The Ordinary Boys

Doors: 7pm

Friday 30th October

Hollis Brown

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 31st October

Steve'N'Seagulls

Doors: 7pm

Monday 2nd November

The Brew

Doors: 8pm

Friday 6th November

Keston Cobblers Club

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 7th November

Levon Vincent

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 8th November

Titus Adronicus

Doors: 7pm

Monday 9th November

LUSTS

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 12th November

Grant Sharkey

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th November

Dedication 2015

Doors: 5.30pm

Sunday 15th November

Desmond Chancer

& the Long Memories

Doors: 7pm

Monday 16th November

The Coronas

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th November

Balkan Wanderers

Peerless Pirates

Tamara

Doors: 7pm

The Bullingdon

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NEWS

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ONE NOTE FOREVER host a series of gigs at Modern Art Oxford starting this month. The local record label and website have enticed rising indie-noise crew Sauna Youth to town for the first time on Friday 9th October, where they'll be joined by Mutes, Poledo and Telegrapher. Before that, you can see Lowws, Catalona and Kid Kin at MOA on Tuesday 1st September and James Blackshaw with Jali Fily Cissokho on Tuesday 22nd September. Advance tickets for all three shows at on sale now from www.modernartoxford.org.uk, with the Sauna Youth show likely to sell out quickly. Go to onenoteforever.com for more news on the gigs and loads more.

SWIM THE ATLANTIC are the latest Oxford band to hit the comeback trail. The local rock trio, led by Spike Holfield, who played bass for Sinéad O'Connor and currently works as on tour soundman for Newton Faulkner and Hudson Taylor, spit up in 1998 and also featured future Little Fish drummer Neil Greenaway in their line-up. They play a one-off charity show at The Wheatsheaf on Saturday 16th January next year to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of bass player Steve Gore with all proceeds going to Sobell House. No advance tickets as yet, but it's a fiver on the door.



Meanwhile, local splatter-metallers **Beelzebozo** reform for one show to support Black Candy at the sold-out reunion show at the Wheatsheaf on the 5th of September.

AGS CONNOLLY heads off on a co-headline tour of the UK and Ireland this month with Jack Grette. Witney's Ameripolitan songsmith has teamed up with Missouri 's country, folk and honky tonk musician Grette for the 18-date tour that kicks off in Ireland at the end of August before coming to England at the Cellar in Oxford on Saturday 5th and finishing with a hometown show at Fat Lil's in Witney on Thursday 17th. Find out more at agsconnolly.com.

VANGOFFEY'S show at the O2 Academy this month has been rearranged. The band, fronted by former Supergrass drummer Danny Goffey, come to town on Wednesday 2nd December. Tickets, priced £12, are on sale from the O2 box office.

AUDIOSCOPE returns for its fifteenth annual outing on Saturday 21st November. The one-day festival in aid of homeless charity Shelter marks its anniversary with a change of venue, taking place at the Bullingdon on Cowley Road. Last year's sold-out event featured sets from Public Service Broadcasting, psychedelic legends Silver Apples and Wrangler, the new band formed by Cabaret Voltaire's Stephen Mallinder. To hear line-up news as soon as its announced join the Audioscope mailing list at www.audioscope.co.uk.

KONE release a double a-side single this month. 'No Colour World' b/w 'Bauhaus Table' is the debut release from the three-piece band formed by former-Youthmovies drummer Graeme Murray alongside singer/guitarist Alice Ream and bassist Jonny Munday. The single was produced by Young Knives' Henry Dartnoll in his studio in Kirtlington. The band make their live Oxford debut with a gig at The Cellar on Friday 2nd October. Watch and here them at www.interkone.com



JOAL SHEARING celebrates 15 years promoting gigs at **THE WHEATSHEAF** this month and has been talking to *Nightshift* about his decade and a half running what has become one of the UK's best-loved small venues.

Joal is marking the occasion by hosting reunion shows with two of the local bands who helped make the venue's reputation back in the early-noughties. **BLACK CANDY** play an already sold-out show at the Sheaf on Saturday 5th September, with support from metallers **BEELZEBOZO**, who are also reforming for the event, while on Friday 18th, **SEXY BREAKFAST** reconvene for a one-off show.

"While I was studying in Nottingham my band at the time couldn't get gigs for love nor money," explains Joal on his decision to start promoting gigs, "so I decided to hire out a few venues and put on nights myself. When I moved to Oxford I fell into it again via Nick Moorbath of Zodiac fame, who trained me up and threw me into The Elm Tree.

"I started at The Sheaf in 2000 after The Elm Tree was closed down but have been promoting on and off for about 20 years now.

"The highlight for me is seeing the venue still going strong 15 years later. It was a crappy sports bar when I moved there and over the years I have managed to turn it into a thriving music venue. There have been too many great gigs here to pick a favourite, but among them would be Trans Am with early Foals; Frank Turner's two night sell out, and more recently Raging Speedhorn's reunion show. I tend to forget the bad gigs very quickly."

It hasn't all been plain sailing for Joal at the venue, which has regularly been under threat of closure or transformation into something else over the years, but he feels the Sheaf is now safer than it's ever been.

"We now have both an owner and a manager who understand the business and fully support live music, so as long as they are happy it will stay open. And I'll carry on promoting until the cider runs dry.

"Seeing both Black Candy and Sexy Breakfast again after so many years just about tops it for me. Black Candy sold out in a week and I'm expecting the same with Sexy Breakfast; both nights will be an absolute blast."

BLAKE REMIXED is a new original stage play from world record holding beatboxer and rapper Testament which comes to the North Wall in Summertown on Friday 2nd October. Made in collaboration with Scratch DJ world champion DJ Woody, the show mixes hip hop with the poetry of William Blake, incorporating live DJ-ing and interactive video. More info and tickets at www.thenorthwall.com

BLACKWELL'S host a special Halloween party on Saturday 31st October featuring a full quadraphonic play-back of Mike Oldfield's classic 'Tubular Bells' album. Tickets are £5 from Blackwell's in Broad Street. The event starts at 7pm and anyone in fancy dress gets half price beer all

evening, though they don't say if you're meant to go in Halloween fancy dress or in a Mike Oldfield costume.

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

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

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A Quiet Word With GIRL POWER



photo: Lomo Steve

“HARDCORE IS ONE OF THE few genres of music that hasn’t been co-opted into the mainstream and it never should be. I certainly hope that it stays on the margins; the margins have always produced some great music. It’s about the ethic not money.”

PETE MARLER, THE shaven headed, amply bearded, heavily tattooed and liberally pierced vocalist and bass player with Girl Power is setting out his band’s place in the world of music. Suffice to say, it’s some distance from the middle of any road or comfort zone. Girl Power are hardcore to, well, the core. No compromise, musically or lyrically from a band who approach complacency, privilege, prejudice and idiocy with all the due deference of Jeremy

Corbyn’s pet tomcat paying a visit to Margaret Thatcher’s grave. The band, formed by Pete with guitarist and singer Oli Hewett and drummer Steve Frame, stick close to the sound and spirit of hardcore punk’s originators from both sides of the Atlantic – UK pioneers and genre godfathers Discharge, and American bands like Halo of Flies, Black Flag, Dead Kennedys and Minor Threat. It’s fast and by god it’s furious. It can also, on occasion, be clever, with hints of Shellac and Fugazi and the nastier side of post-punk popping in to show their muscle before being carried along in the tide of D-beat mayhem on show.

LAST MONTH GIRL POWER released their eponymous new EP on Richter Scale Records. Five tracks clocking in at a cool,

no-nonsense seven minutes on glorious seven inch vinyl. Seven minutes in which they lay into gender stereotypes, social privilege, the hopelessness of the young and poor, the dumbing down of the media and plenty more in a non-stop tirade of utter fury and noise. Guitar solos and proggy musical diversions? They shit ‘em. The EP is Girl Power’s second release, following on from last year’s equally uncompromising debut single, ‘Consumers’, but while Girl Power is a relatively new name on the local scene, between the three of them they have one of the finest pedigrees in Oxford music. Pete’s band history takes in grunge-core heroes Underbelly, prog-jazz-blues-core tyrants A Suitable Case For Treatment, and more recently arch thrash merchants

Agness Pike. Oli was part of Sextodecimo – the heaviest band Oxford has ever produced – and also plays in quirky pop-punk starlets Rainbow Reservoir, while Steve fronted anarcho/crust punk-metallers Bersicker and prior to that drummed with Government Mule and Faith In Hate. The three have been friends for some time and with backgrounds like that they were seemingly destined to play hardcore punk rock with each other. So what initially prompted them to form Girl Power? Oli: “Steve and I were chatting for ages about doing something and at one stage I was going to join him in Bersicker, who were awesome. They were on hiatus though and at that point Sextodecimo were long gone, and we were twiddling our thumbs. So Steve twisted Pete’s arm and we got together and it worked.” Steve: “To be honest, I just wanted to play drums again. I had devoted so much energy to Bersicker and was ready to take more of a back seat – literally – and let someone else write lyrics and gob off at gigs.”

GIVEN THEIR COLLECTIVE backgrounds musically, involving bands with often far from straightforward approaches to heavy music, was there a determination to do something a bit more simple with Girl Power? Oli: “I think we just wanted to do something we were good at and that reflected what we listened to. All I was listening to was Gauze, Black Flag and grotty D-beat at the time. So we were talking about doing straight up hardcore, influenced particularly by fast 80s stuff from the USA and Japan, and D-beat and stuff. And we also chatted about the slower punk stuff like Flipper and bands on Amphetamine Reptile or Touch & Go in the 80s. So we put them in the mix. No fucking about, just hardcore punk.” Pete: “Despite being a lot more straightforward than some of our previous efforts, I think we still use those ideas of not doing the obvious; they’re scattered through our work. As far as hardcore is concerned we take influences from the whole spectrum and then throw in stuff from other genres we listen to. I like the fact that we can mix it

up; I wouldn’t want be in a straight down the line band.” Going back to that original question about hardcore’s apparently permanent place on music’s furthest margins, do Girl Power think this is inevitable? Oli: “I’m by no means an expert but I think punk or hardcore punk is an attitude or an ethic as opposed to a prescribed sound. And that ethic is DIY and anti-establishment. So no contracts, major labels, booking agents, no dickheads getting in the way trying to make money or take ownership. So if that’s what proper hardcore is, yeah it’ll always stay like that regardless of bands that ‘make it’ because it’s about having the ethic rather than sounding like whatever band you think is a real hardcore band. Though playing sloppy and fast and sounding crappy certainly helps.” Steve: “Of course hardcore should remain underground. When it doesn’t you get shite like Gallows and Fall Out Boy.”

REGULAR LOCAL GIGGING has earned Girl Power a small but loyal fanbase, but they remain on the margins as far as more mainstream gig audiences go. For a city that’s always harboured a strong heavyweight contingent among its bands Oxford has strangely never really taken to pure hardcore big time compared to metalcore or what’s labelled post-hardcore. Why do they think that is and can Girl Power change the way things are locally? Oli: “I do think many bands in Oxford have got a tendency to over-think things and try and play ‘intelligent’ music. I just wanna play dumb fast punk that isn’t overcomplicated and doesn’t try and be technical or smart or whatever – it just is what it is. Having said that there are some real good post-hardcore bands around. As for changing things? Hopefully, though we’re not trying – we just wanna do what we’re doing. We could definitely do with more punk bands in town, though. There *are* enough people in Oxford who are into it.” Are there other local bands you rate, or local bands who can seriously call themselves hardcore? Oli: “Hate-Filled Kids.” Pete: “Junkie Brush!” Steve: “No hardcore bands come to mind, but Black Skies Burn, Mother Corona, Undersmile, Beard of Zeus are my personal favourites.”

HAND IN HAND WITH THE rise of Girl Power has been the

emergence of monthly free club night Smash Disco, which takes place downstairs at The Library pub on Cowley Road and has hosted Girl Power regularly – a suitably dark and intimate venue for the band’s underground hardcore. Oli was instrumental in starting the club along with a bunch of friends who hankered for the genuine DIY gig scene so long associated with punk and hardcore. Smash Disco is tailor-made for a band like Girl Power. Do they think that kind of small-scale DIY type scene is something that’s been missing from the Oxford gig scene? Oli: “Yes, that’s why it started. There are others in Oxford doing good DIY stuff, but no one was putting on the DIY punk bands we wanted to see and there didn’t

seem to be a hub for what we wanted to do, and we wanted something so local bands can do gig-swaps. Also The Library pub is a perfect venue, and they’ve been a massive help. And it’s been great, we’ve had some awesome bands down from DIY scenes elsewhere, and we always try to promote new local like-minded artists who just want to have a blast. And we try and get the bands involved too; they’re part of it, we just tell them to bring their friends along to party at a free gig, and we give them the opportunity to bring their friends’ bands down from out of town if possible.” Pete: “You need somewhere like the Library and Smash Disco shows; other venues are good but you cannot get the same level of connectivity. Playing on the floor with people literally in your face, in a sweaty box of a room, you don’t get much more intimate than that without taking your clothes off! More bands should try it, it removes a lot of that ‘were the band, you’re the audience’ malarkey; it feels more whole.” Steve: “Smash Disco has been a breath of fresh air – or maybe that should be muggy, foetid air, given the venue. I consider the Library to be Girl Power’s home turf.”

THE LAST COUPLE OF GIRL Power shows *Nightshift* has witnessed seemed to indicate the moving towards a slightly more complex, angular style of hardcore

– Shellac and Fugazi-influenced – but their new EP is pure straight-ahead blitzkrieg. Why’s that? Oli: “I’d say we’re mainly a fast hardcore band, though we’ve always had elements of the slower stuff too, without overcomplicating it. Our next stuff will continue more of the same. We’ve got a ton of new fast songs and the odd slower one. I’d say our songs are getting less complicated – if that’s possible – but more slick.” Steve: “We deliberately selected our more brutal tracks for this release. No messing about – straight for the jugular!” Rage seems to be the pre-eminent mood of the EP; who are Girl Power’s prime targets and what personally drives you to the greatest extremes of anger in the world? Oli: “For me two main influences are feminism and situationism. People think the name is a total joke because we’re all men. But we’re only laughing at ourselves. So a lot of lyrics are about gender roles and what’s traditionally expected of men and women in society, and how people are oppressed and ostracised because of this. Personally I find it really unsettling. We also liked the idea of seeing a bunch of macho men – and punk can be a very macho genre – wearing Girl Power t-shirts. Also, consumerism, everyday banality, hating yourself, and any social convention that makes you or anyone feel worthless because of gender, sexuality, race, economic status, or whatever.” There’s a real No Future feel about the track ‘Buying Cigarettes For Kids’ from the EP. Are the younger generations in this country fucked? Oli: “No more so than any generation that preceded it. If you’re born into a shitty lifestyle, it’s easy to have no hope or opportunity and turn to quick-fixes and short term highs to make you feel better. We all know what it’s like to feel shit and have no hope, and we’ve all done shitty and destructive things when our needs aren’t being met.” The EP’s stand-out piece is ‘(We Are) White Goods’; it seems to carry an abstract anti-racism message. Oli: “That song is about misplaced

anger and not realising your privilege. Pete came up with the title ‘We Are White Goods’ and I came up with lyrics in response to people who blame foreigners for taking jobs. Perhaps they expect some sort of loyalty from national industry and government, and think being British gives them a privilege over outsiders. And undoubtedly they’re struggling. But the real reason they’re struggling is because the economic powers that be will do anything to make money more cheaply and use cheaper labour. So the fight should be against those in power putting everyone in that situation, not against those who are in the same boat – and probably actually have it worse – working their arses off to put food on the table.” Pete: “My original idea behind ‘White Goods’ was people defining themselves by what they own, but Oli took that and shifted it to where it is now, and it works better for it.” ‘Monday Sport’ seems to see an end time through a different lens. Oli: “It’s about being force-fed shit through popular media. We’re ticking all the angry righteous punk boxes, as you can tell!”

GIVEN THE UNRELENTING anger that drives their songs, *Nightshift* wonders if Girl Power believe people can people actually make a difference any more – provoke real change, rather than just clicking ‘like’ on yet another Facebook petition that no-one will take any notice of, or is that how the populace has finally been tamed? Oli: “Yes. Just keep sticking true to your values and speak out when you think something is wrong. Also, the more people become aware of the privileges they are born with, the better.” Steve : “I’m far too cynical to answer this question. Live your life – leave me alone.” Go on then, who is the most hardcore person ever? Steve: “Charlie Harper of the UK Subs. 71 years old and still singing “I don’t wanna be teenage” in clubs up and down the country.” Oli: “I can’t decide between the person who invented fireworks or the person who invented peanut butter.” Pete: “Peanut butter? Nah, whoever invented Marmite. That’s hardcore.”

‘Girlpower’ is out now on Richter Scale. The band support Blacklisters at The Wheatshaf on Friday 25th September. Hear them at girlpower.bandcamp.com.

RELEASED

FOALS

‘What Went Down’

(Warner Brothers/Transgressive)

A lot has been made of Foals’ decision to record their fourth album in Saint Remy-de-Provence, a place closely associated with Van Gogh’s incarceration as well as Nostradamus’s birthplace. Coupled with the naked aggression of its teaser title track we’ve been led to believe this is where Foals go off the rails and into the bullring, fists clenched, the smell of blood in their nostrils. If anything, it’s their mostly tightly controlled album to date.

They’ve always been restless, shaking off the fidgety indie disco of ‘Antidotes’ to head off into the desert for ‘Total Life Forever’ (“a dream of a dying eagle,” as Yannis described it), before muscling up big time for the rockier ‘Holy Fire’, showing off their well-earned stadium chops in the process. ‘What Went Down’ feels less like another sideways step as a more considered advance on ‘Holy Fire’, the beastly riffage, bulldozing groove and carefully channelled aggression of the title track marking it as a close cousin to ‘Holy Fire’s twin high points, ‘Inhaler’ and ‘Providence’.

Just like ‘Holy Fire’, ‘What Went Down’ finds Foals switching between the pent-up frustration and well-aimed firepower of their big rock numbers, and the fleet of foot and nimble-fingered funky, poppier pieces like ‘Albatross’ and ‘Birch Tree’. There’s room again too for far more personal songs where the often cryptic and contrary Yannis reveals his deeper emotions. ‘London Thunder’ finds the singer sat in a deserted airport departure lounge contemplating returning to a home and relationship that can’t ever be the same as they were before. Foals’ ongoing rise and rise to rock’s heady summit, coupled with Yannis’ impending thirtieth birthday seem to weigh heavily on him, and the song’s honesty is enhanced by its leaning



THE SHAKER HEIGHTS

‘Body’

(Skag Harry)



towards a style of 80s pop ballad that few are brave enough to consider heralding as cool even this far removed. With its swirling, shifting synthetic textures and twilit atmosphere it’s a stark contrast to the opening title track but its equal as an album highlight.

Without getting to bogged down in Yannis’ maturing emotional outlook, ‘What Went Down’ is an album that sounds like Foals are as comfortable with what they are now as they’ve ever been – willing and able to marry Stooges and Led Zep rocking to acid house exuberance (as on the searing climax of ‘Mountain At My Gates’), bubbling afro-flavoured pop, cocky jam-outs and a stadium-sized knack for a hook or singalong chorus.

Along the way, they’ve become one of the biggest and easily one of the best live bands on the planet, almost without anyone noticing. The raucous, celebratory nature of their gigs will always elevate their songs to a level above and beyond what you hear on record, but while it’s a tamer beast than we’ve come to expect of Foals on stage, ‘What Went Down’ sounds like an album tailor made for anything the big time has to offer.

Dale Kattack

It’s been close to three years since we last heard from The Shaker Heights and by the sounds of this new single they’ve spent that time finding a whole new musical path to rove down.

Where 2012’s ‘Little White Doll’ was Neil Young-inspired epic country rock, here they sound closer to Telemann’s repetitive rob-pop married to downbeat indie.

It’s slight but agreeable, the repetitive, minimalist groove helped along by an arty video from local singer and director Laima Bite, involving a balletic masked robot girl who looks like a cross between Hazel O’Connor in *Breaking Glass* and Leeloo from *The Fifth Element*.

And this being Youtube, when the video finishes the algorithms decide Shaker Heights and ‘Body’ should move us onto news footage about the jailing of a man for murdering a make-up artists in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Hopefully not the make-up artist from the video.

Sue Foreman

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AIRSTAR

‘Retrospect’

(Self-released)

Old Oxford bands are reforming or coming back out of the woodwork at quite a rate right now. The last *Nightshift* entry we have for Airstar is back in 2005, while their last demo was featured in the January 2003 issue, but, they tell us, they’ve finally finished their debut album. Don’t strain yourselves, kids.

The fact that the three songs that featured on that last demo make it on to the album suggests the band really haven’t put themselves out to write a hatful of new material. It’s also, sadly, symptomatic of how dated much of this sounds. Opening brightly enough with the jolly, summery ‘Wake Up’, with its Christian happy-clappy pop feel, all smiley harmonies and ooh-oohs (plus some incongruous scratching), it’s all harmless enough if nondescript, but a full album quickly becomes a trawl, ‘Beautiful Thing and ‘Still In Love’ nothing more than bland, non-descript 90s, possibly early-noughties, landfill indie, wandering into full-on boy band balladry at times. Is that a hint of The Levellers we hear? Or maybe Razorlight? Cast? Who knows, we underwent years of therapy to try and forget some of these bands.

They up it all a notch or two with ‘Chromium’, but sounding a bit like something Radiohead might have stuck on the end of ‘Pablo Honey’ is something even Muse left behind a decade ago. Thereafter we’re into more solid, vaguely anthemic indie rock that sounds a lot like someone else you can’t quite put your finger on. Possibly every guitar band to get a major label deal between 1995 and 2005. Or, in the case of ‘All For You’, Deacon Blue.

Ultimately ‘Retrospect’ is timeless in all the wrong ways: stuck in a place in pop history that’s been forgotten for good reason. If it had come out a decade ago maybe we could have been kinder (in fact that demo review credits Aistar with “some pleasantly aspiring pop”); offering it to the world now feels like a desperate gig promoter trying to flog an arena package tour featuring Bush, Ace of Base and Hootie & the Blowfish.

Ian Chesterton



FAMILY MACHINE

‘Houses That You Lived In’

(Beard Museum)

There’s a moment listening to the gorgeous ‘Quiet As A Mouse’ when we realise that it sounds like something from a vintage Oliver Postgate TV show.

Listen to that wiltingly simple vocal melody and those urbanely bucolic drizzles of guitar, and couldn’t this be what Gabriel the Toad might sing if he had to explain something intangibly complex like regret or melancholy, instead of hot air balloons and sharing. What makes this album beautiful is not just the lovely sound – although the sound *is* lovely, from the 60s soundtrack horns and Bacharach bass of ‘Long Way From Home’ to the Golden Syrup ‘Abbey Road’ warmth of ‘Morning Song’ – but the way that the deftly constructed miniature songs seem to say a lot about huge topics in very few words, like indie folk as written by Saki. Or Yoda.

The key concept that resurfaces throughout the records is home, whether as welcoming shelter after a hard journey, or as mute witness to painful absence; the title track could easily be a rewriting of Philip Larkin’s ‘Home Is So Sad’ over a melancholic melody that somewhat recalls early 90s R.E.M. It’s not always easy to hone in on what specifically these allusive little songs mean, especially ‘We Ain’t Going Home’, which simply repeats its title in reverberant harmony like the world’s most elegant footie chant, but perhaps they are not supposed to be tied down. Most great pop music is brash and cocksure, but The Family Machine’s intimate intricacies are more haiku than high kick, and should be cherished as amongst the county’s very best.

David Murphy

VERA GRACE

‘Novella’

(Self released)

We’re not making this a dedicated hardcore issue of *Nightshift* a la the recent reggae issue, but in the same month we stamp Girl Power forceful on the front cover, this splendidly splenetic offering arrives in our inbox, sets about kicking the shit out of all the other emails and frankly makes most of the other local releases in the pile sound a bit, well, wimpy.

We reviewed Vera Grace in the demo pages a few months ago and marvelled at their unbridled rage – a spittle-flecked, spasming noise storm fronted by a singer whose personal ferocity dial seemed to be stuck at 11.

And this new EP suggests they’ve got even better. And angrier. At least on the strength of opener ‘Exposition’, an opulent slab of metalcore that manages the near Herculean task of reminding us of Fucked Up at times with its dense, shifting sea of guitars and rasping vocal. In fact the production here is excellent, bringing the songs into stark focus while piling on the pressure layer by brutal layer.

But what’s equally impressive about the band is their attention to texture and nuance, leaving the onward rush into battle aside when necessary to explore darker worlds, as on the oblique, industrial/gothic ‘Act II’ and the sombre, growling ‘Griever’ that reminds us of the much missed Xmas Lights in parts and which blossoms gloriously into something seriously epic. It all ends in a boiling pit of rage of course, with ‘Catharsis’, spleens vented as Vera Grace spread their wings and bare their teeth and set out their claim to the local hardcore throne with extreme prejudice.

Ian Chesterton



ZURICH

‘Small Wars’

(Self released)

Formed by three-quarters of promising local starlets The Scholars (and possibly now renamed due to the moderate success of a similarly monikered but considerably less appealing band) Banbury’s Zurich offer no huge sideways leap from their old sound. In fact their new name reinforces their leaning towards a stately form of Europop with its roots in the early 80s.

‘Small Wars’ also continues the band’s apparent ambition to fill giant stadiums with dark pop noise, Adrian Banks’ rich, sombre vocals alternately recalling Neil Hannon and Matt Berninger as he switches from arch to portentous.

Zurich’s music matches him at every step: lush, fulsomely-produced synth-heavy new wave that leans unabashedly but spiritedly towards Editors and Killers.

Songs like ‘Alone’ radiate an almost gothic elegance while keeping their feet firmly in pop territory, while the EP’s title track is easier, with its fleet piano lead, more like a sullen cousin to The Divine Comedy who’d quite like to invite Andrew Eldritch round for tea and snakebites.

As the song saunters enigmatically along before rising through a dashing string crescendo, you get a good view of Zurich’s grand plan and even grander ambitions, and if you worry this breed of pop might be yesterday’s news, there’s also the reassurance that existentially uncertain, black-clad youths will forever crave such darkly-proportioned poetry and pomp and, sure as the sun sets in the west, the dark will rise again.

Ian Chesterton

FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS

‘A Place Back West’

(Self released)

Not so much formed as gradually coming together over a number of late-night pub sessions, gathering new members as they went along, local bluegrass sextet Francis Pugh & the Whisky Singers have made a name for themselves as hosts of the regular Roots Ramble events, taking rootsy Americana for pub crawls around parts of the city alongside fellow

travellers like Great Western Tears and Ags Connolly. This EP finds them doing what they do best – bringing some of Tom Waits’ gutter blues to old-time bluegrass, giving Hank Williams’ ‘I Saw the Light’ a quick brush down along the way.

Lead track ‘A Place Back West’ is steeped in bitter-sweet down-home jollity – jaunty banjo

plucking, swaying fiddle and dreams of a place called home. The banjo becomes positively infectious on ‘I Saw the Light’, a sparky counterpoint to the edge of regret that lines each song here.

If there’s a criticism to be made it’s that James Robson’s voice tends to sounds less like Tom Waits and more like *Horrible Histories’* take on Henry XIII, but since *Horrible Histories’* is just about the only thing worth watching on telly these days, we’ll let that slide and simply pour ourselves another two fingers of sourmash.

Dale Kattack

RELEASED

LITTLE BLOOD

‘Ancient Enchantment’

(Q Thing)

When Val Doonican passed away in July the old jokes about rocking, but gently, resurfaced, but truth is the man left a greater legacy than many would care to admit. There are legions of men (always men) for whom the life of a soft-hearted crooner appeals more than the dangerous, turbulent waters of proper rock and roll.

The genial spectre of dear old Val hovers in the peripheries of our hearing throughout this second album from Little Blood, a band formed by Mike Allen, Paul Quarterman and Giles Farley, who each share vocal duties, but which also features Ride’s Mark Gardener on bass and backing vocals, and mighty beatmeister Tim Turan on drums. As such you’d hope there’d be a bit more get up and go about ‘Ancient Enchantments’; instead it settles down with its mug of cocoa and



comfy slippers from the very first track and rarely even suggests it’s up for a walk down to the pub for six pints of Stella and a punch-up in the car park.

The overwhelming feel of the album is wistful

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reflection, tidily arranged and polished neat as a pin, but struggling to pull you into its world. Quarterman’s songs in particular, like ‘All Those Moments’, sound like Richard Hawley’s street-walking ballads, but without the rain and poetry. It’s pretty at times, but there’s a certain soul missing. Elsewhere you sense echoes of Elvis Costello’s more doleful ruminations and the soft night-time jazz of Steely Dan, but while songs like ‘All Those Moments’ might be heartfelt and the shimmering ‘Bleeding Life’ displays an occasional ability to create something better, you long for a bit of dirt, or dust or some sense of deeper hurt.

While we’re not suggesting for a minute that every band should sound like The Ramones’ Tartrazine-addled kid brothers and sisters, such relentlessly soporific fare fails to ignite even a spark of excitement as it somnambulates across eleven tracks and forty minutes of rocking. But, of course, very, very gently.

Dale Kattack

POLEDO

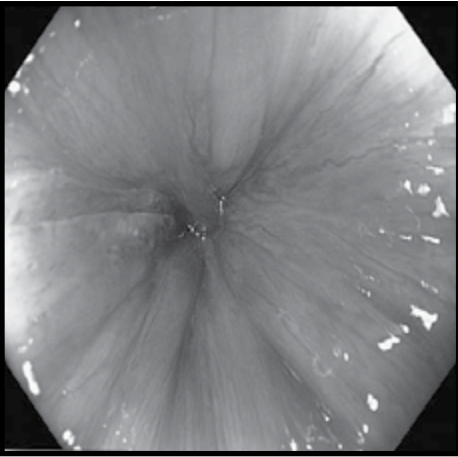
‘Egg Ccun Catpil Butfli’

(Deadbeat And Down)

Four tracks of neo-grunge fuzzpop from Poledo, who eschew precision and sheen, and instead splurge up gloriously messy melodic noise that’s a ton of fun to sprawl wasted on the floor to.

With less of a nod to Pavement and Sebadoh – more of a delighted and delightful mossy headbang – what we have here is a paean to the simple life of mid-90s America-skewed indie rock. ‘Ultimate Fearing Champion’ kicks its post-rock introductory bars to the curb with a riff leading effortlessly to several minutes of ‘Slanted And Enchanted’ guitar squiggling and curious vocals; ‘Phoenix Fire Protection’ is half moody grumble, half hopeful grasp, wrapped in an almost Th’Faith Healers-esque rhythmic shuffle. ‘Comfortable Life’ switches back up to Urusei Yatsura / Built To Spill mode – it’s the best track here, a journey of melodies and feedback barely held together by a panoply of guitar effects. Finally, ‘Loser’ (they had to have a track called ‘Loser’, obviously) introduces a touch of Sonic Youth ‘Goo’-style guitar glide to energising effect. ‘Egg Ccun Catpil Butfli’ is righteously available on splatter vinyl 12”. Slackers never went away, they just take their time.

Simon Minter



THE WATSON FAMILY SINGERS

‘Dulverton Fair’

(Topsy Bodger Records)

Will we ever – can we ever – be set free from the sounds and colours that continue to besumber our senses like the baritone chuckle of a filthy-minded bearded furniture maker? Onward friends to Dulverton Fair! But as the light fades and we fear we shall be forced to camp, a broad-shouldered former innkeeper is at first seduced then later tied down by gothic witches, his splayed form tormented, yay tortured, by waxy exfoliant before the desolate, despairing eyes of pale pre-pubescent boys. Now hairless, the evening unfolds before him in an orgy of boxed wine and stilton wheels.

Darker still the butler’s room: dank and foreboding, despite the Vim under the sink and both bars on. Up the back passage traipse doomed maidens, heads lightened and senses dulled by cheap Pinot Grigiot – into the clutches of the low chuckling carpenter, emerging, minds torn asunder by base double entendres and tales of Windsor Chairs. The salty tang of indeterminate blue cheese upon their tongues, forever. Escape! To Denton Hill! Too late? To let? Toilet.

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LIU BEI

‘Mind Over Matter’

(Famous Friends)

More heartache, fragility and delicately crafted musical snowfall from Richard Walters and his fellow travellers in gentle grief. ‘Mind Over Matter’ comes on 7” vinyl on Famous Friends, the new label set up by three fifths of Spring Offensive, Liu Bei’s sparse tumbling beats, starlit guitar twinkle and distant buzzing electronics a shifting backdrop to a voice so pure you could probably use it to wash away all the sins of the world. There’s something almost uplifting about it all, as if Walters is convincing himself that life ain’t so bad after all, but at its core that sense of desolation remains resolute and unshakable.

The b-side, ‘Philip Seymour Hoffman’, is a rarefied eulogy to the late, great actor, with Richard reflecting “Who’s gonna play me now?” It’s too good to be a b-side in truth, but even if it were the lead track, and even if it did somehow accidentally end up being played on the breakfast show, it’d be banned immediately for sending a nation back to bed to weep softly into their pillows. If you want to know what a symphony of broken hearts sounds like, listen no further.

Victoria Waterfield



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G I G G U I D E

TUESDAY 1st

GUITAR SUMMIT: The Bullingdon – Guitar jazz at the Bully’s free weekly jazz club night.

LOWWS + CATALANO + KID KIN: Modern Art Oxford – First of One Note Forever’s residency at Modern Art, kicking off with fidgety local electro-tinged indie popsters Lowws. They’re joined by dense, atmospheric post-rock and electronica chap Kid Kin, and psych/krautrock crew Catalano.

BASS NATION: The Cellar – Weekly trap, US and UK hip hop, garage and house club night, with DJ Platinum.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 2nd

CALLOW SAINTS + FACTORY LIGHTS + CHARLIE LEAVY: Fat Lil’s, Witney –

Thursday 3rd

AUTOBAHN:

The Bullingdon

Given their chosen name you’d expect Autobahn to be all sleek, linear synth grooves and man-machine sterility, but the Leeds quintet sound more like the post-industrial landscapes of Yorkshire and Lancashire than Dusseldorf or Cologne. Formed in 2013, an early support to Merchandise won them a deal with indie label Tough Love and a couple of well-received EPs. Their debut album, ‘Dissemble’, is released this month. Given their origins it’s no surprise to hear echoes of classic goth in their stark, urgent post-punk noise, but there’s a heavy Manchester-influenced feel to them too, with Joy Division, Magazine and The Chameleons an obvious inspiration. All reverbed to buggery guitars and fronted by Craig Johnson’s hollowed-out baritone, they were the perfect choice of band to support Eagulls on tour last autumn. His lyrics dwell on the darker side of bleak, with death, frustration and ennui chief among his favourite topics. There’s a rabble-rousing punk side to the band too, with hints of The Clash and even The Ruts about them at times but mostly it’s a journey into the black heart of oblivion along this particular autobahn.



SEPTEMBER

Strummerroom Project show with Aylesbury rockers Callow Saints, Ant Kelly from The Shapes’ new side project Factory Lights, and north Oxfordshire’s rising young singer-songwriter Charlie Leavy.

THURSDAY 3rd

AUTOBAHN: The Bullingdon – Post-industrial post-punk bleakness from Leeds’ rising harbingers of doom – *see main preview*
SINFICTION + IAGO: The Wheatsheaf – Funky, grungy rocking from Sinfiction at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show.
THE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN: The New Theatre – The UK’s longest-surviving and best known Uke orchestra comes round again, with their massed mini-string arrangements of classic pop, punk, jazz, soundtrack and classical interpretations.
THROWBACK THURSDAY: The Cellar – Weekly funk, hip hop, r’n’b and garage club night with 80s, 90s and noughties classics.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’ longest running, and best, open club night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more every week.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free unplugged show in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar from the local swamp-rock/blues/ska/funk stalwarts.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

FRIDAY 4th

HAYES CARLL: The Bullingdon – Redneck-baiting classic country from the Texan troubadour – *see main preview*
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with UK:ID + COSMOSIS + GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + CHEROKEE: The Wheatsheaf – Excellent rap-rave-electro-punk craziness from Glastonbury’s UK:ID at tonight’s Klub Kak, the festival regulars reminiscent of early-90s rave crossover acts like Sensor and The Shaman at times. Heavy-duty rocking from Cosmosis in support, alongside epic post-rock noise from GITP.
EDGE MICHAEL: The Cellar – Classic roots reggae from Pete Tosh’s nephew Edge Michael, out on tour to promote the legalisation of cannabis, joined for the duration by trumpeter Frank Aird.
CITY OF THE RED NIGHT: Joe Perk’s, St Clement’s – New club night playing EBM, cold wave, electro, future rock, post-punk industrial disco and dystopian psychedelic sounds.

SATURDAY 5th

BLACK CANDY + BEELZEBOZO: The Wheatsheaf – Oxford’s early-noughties metal heroes reform for a one-off show – *see main preview*
AGS CONNOLLY + JACK GRELE: The Cellar – Witney’s Ameripolitan singer Ags Connolly heads out on a co-headline tour of the UK and Ireland with Missouri’s Jack Grele, the pair taking country music back to its raw, earthy roots, away from the sheen and bright lights of Nashville.
THE POLYPHONIC SPREE: O2 Academy – Celebrating fifteen years since their inception, Tim DeLaughter’s choral-rock ensemble return to the UK, the occasionally 20-strong troupe’s euphoric orchestral pop inspired by The Beatles, Beach Boys and ELO and making them a mainstay of film soundtracks, ad campaigns (particularly ‘Light & Day’), American football games and even a Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. To mark their fifteenth anniversary they’ll be playing debut album ‘The Beginning Stages of The Polyphonic Spree’ in its entirety.
FUNK JUGGLERS: The Bullingdon
CHRIS LESLIE + MARK HARRISON: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club hosts an evening with Fairport Convention’s Chris Leslie, a singer and multi instrumentalist but best known for his fiddle playing, which has also found him playing with The Albion Band, Feast of Fiddles, Julie Matthews, Ian Anderson and Whippersnapper over the years.
BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL: The Perch, Binsey – Live music all day as part of the picturesque pub’s festival, including local duo Greg and Gordo.
WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar – Garage club night
BREEZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford – Eccentric electric blues-rock from the ever-gigging local veteran.

SUNDAY 6th

THE ANDREW COMBS TRIO + BARN HOWARD: The Bullingdon – A darker shade of Americana from Nashville songwriter Andrew Coombs at tonight’s Empty Room show, the singer touring his second album, his mix of American folk, country and r’n’b having drawn comparisons to Paul Simon, Jackson Browne and The Eagles.
MOJITOS + SINFICTION + THE LOST ART + CALLOW SAINTS: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) –Free afternoon of unplugged live music hosted by Klub Kakofanney in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.
BEARD OF DESTINY + MOON LEOPARD + THE FIREGAZERS + SONG AND SUPPER ROOMS: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of acoustic blues,

folk and more, hosted by Moon Leopard’s Jeremy Hughes.

MONDAY 7th

JON AMOR & JOEL FISK: The Bullingdon – The Hoax’s Jon Amor and guitarist Joel Fisk, who’s served time in LeVenore Rouge and Hokie Joint, return to The Haven Club for an electric/acoustic blues get-together. The former spent the 90s touring with high-energy, volume-heavy blues outfit The Hoax who reformed a couple of years ago, previously compared to The Rolling Stones and Yardbirds. The latter grew up inspired by Eric Clapton, JJ Cale and BB King, being nominated for Best Guitarist in the annual Blues Awards twice.

TUESDAY 8th

THE EWAN BAIRD GROUP: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz at the Bully’s weekly club, tonight with local saxophonist Ewan Baird and his band.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Monthly goth, industrial and ebm club night with residents Bookhouse and Doktor Joy on the decks of doom.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 9th

BASS NATION: The Cellar

THURSDAY 10th

FORMIDABLE VEGETABLE SOUND SYSTEM: The Bullingdon – Ukulele-based eco-tainment from Western Australia’s FVS, plying what they call ukulele electro-swing, with a planet-saving message. Speakeasy swing, glitchy uke wonk and big horn sounds, spreading the world-saving message by way of dance music. Oh yes.
THE HAZE + THE STRING PROJECT + MUDSLIDE MORRIS: The Bell, Bicester – Strummerroom show with teen rockers The Haze, strings’n’electronics ensemble The String Project, and blues and boogie man Mudslide Morris.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar from the local blues veteran.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THROWBACK THURSDAY: The Cellar
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

FRIDAY 11th

WHITE NOISE SOUND + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + MANACLES OF ACID: The Bullingdon – First trip to town in half a decade from Swansea’s White Noise Sound, with the emphasis on the word trip, because the band’s pulsating, blissed-out wall of sound owes a huge debt to gods of psych-drone rock Spacemen 3 – Sonic Boom even produced their last album, while they’ve played live with him, as well as Mark Gardener, The

Warlocks and Super Furry Animals. Suitably lysergic support from space-rockers Flights of Helios, plus an ambient set from acid house meister Manacles of Acid. In the words of Jarvis Cocker – what if we never come down?
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, hosted by DJ Dan Ofer. Tonight’s live set comes from Belgium-based outfit Black Flower, reinventing the Ethio-jazz sounds of Ethiopia of the 60s and 70s, adding psychedelic funk to the mix for a trippy, exotic groove ride.
ORANGE VISION + FOX CHAPEL + V2’s: The Wheatsheaf – Post-punk and indie rock from Orange Vision.
MOGMATIC + THE AUTUMN SAINTS + THE AUREATE ACT + COSMOSIS: The Jericho Tavern – Blues-rocking from Mogmatic and Autumn Saints at tonight’s It’s All About the Music gig, plus inventive prog from The Aureate Act.
CONTEK + SLATE HEARTS + TOO MANY POETS + BREEZE + PUNCHDRUNK MONKEY CLUB: O2 Academy – Metalcore and post-hardcore from Contek, heading up tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: James Street Tavern –Americana and bluegrass from the local regulars.
THE GUNS’N’ROSES EXPERIENCE UK: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute act.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + PUPPET MECHANIC: The Black Swan

SATURDAY 12th

OXFORD RABBIT HOLE FESTIVAL: The General Eliot, South Hinksey (1pm) – Free all-day festival in aid of local charities Hog Acre Common and Oxford Friend (it’s free to get in but donations welcome). Quality local line-up with Folksy indie/electro/dub starlets Balloon Ascents, widescreen country rockers The Epstein playing a rare hometown show, quirky singer-songwriter Matt Winkworth, emotive country-folksters Great Western Tears, Brazilian dance from Ran Kan Kan offshoot The Illustrious Sambisters, Chicago-style blues-rockers The Howling Taildraggers and a late, indoor set from string folk ensemble The String Project. The acoustic stage features Charlie Leavy, Matt Chanarin, Adam McMillan and Susi Illingworth among others, plus there’s an open mic stage.
BAD BEHAVIOUR + HELL’S GAZELLE’S: The Cellar – OxRox host a tribute night to 70s glam, with Preston’s glam-rock extravaganza act Bad Behaviour, plus support from local rockers Hell’s Gazelles taking their own trip back in time after their showing at Bloodstock Festival.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – House, garage, drum&bass and techno club night.
RORKE’S DRIFT: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock and metal covers.

SUNDAY 13th

MONDAY 14th

MARCUS MALONE + LITTLE BROTHER ELI: The Bullingdon



Friday 4th

HAYES CARLL:

The Bullingdon

Great satirists are often misunderstood, particularly by those they’re mocking. You only have to see the lads who see Sid the Sexist as a role model rather than a piss-take, or bands who seem to think *This Is Spinal Tap* is an instruction documentary to realise as much. And so it is that Texan songwriter Hayes Carll’s ‘She Left Me For Jesus’ and ‘Another Like You’ have become singalong anthems for the small-minded rednecks they so succinctly skewer. As traditionally Texan as they come, Carll is a bundle of contradictions – a literate slacker history graduate whose lyrics are influenced by Kerouac as much as Bob Dylan, his music steeped in traditional country while poking fun at its entrenched attitudes, a big favourite in country clubs but also at SXSW. His early self-released records attracted the attention of Lost Highway – home to Lucinda Williams and Ryan Adams – and he’s gone on to garner some serious critical acclaim, ‘Another...’ winning the 2011 American Songwriters top spot. His album ‘KMAG YOYO’ was the Americana Music Association’s Number 1 album, while *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times* have similarly lauded him. He’s a serious artist, then, but one out to skewer pomposity, hypocrisy and small-minded attitudes and tonight’s Empty Room show is a great chance to see him in his natural environment – a cosy backroom venue.

– Detroit guitarist Marcus Malone returns to town for a show at The Haven Club, kicking out a hard-rocking form of blues and soul that borders on metal at times, having made his name on the UK and European blues circuit in recent years. Fabulous local support from recent Punt stars Little Brother Eli, taking White Stripes and White Denim down to the banks of the Mississippi for a party with Red Hot Chili





Saturday 5th

BLACK CANDY: The Wheatsheaf

Friday 18th

SEXY BREAKFAST: The Wheatsheaf

Oxford music sees to be going through a bit of a nostalgia boom right now following the reformation of Ride. We’ve already had Sextodecimo’s awesome reunion show this year and this month two of the late-90s/early-noughties local favourites are coming back for one night only. On the 5th it’s Black Candy, one-time leaders of Oxford’s metal revolution and, along with the mighty JOR, a band synonymous with the legendary Club That Cannot Be Named. Combining elements of 90s nu-metal, grunge and even rap, they had rage and riffage and even some funk to spare and played one of the great early Truck Festival shows. They could also pack out any local venue you fancied to mention, and will do once again, tonight’s gig already sold out, hopefully with slightly less carnage than was the norm back then.

Later in the month the less brutal but no less spectacular return of Sexy Breakfast, the teenage mutant electro-pop turtles whose genius reworking of Aled Jones’ ‘Walking in the Air’ remains one of Oxford music’s great lost high points. A band whose complex, idiosyncratic melding of synth-pop, prog, dub and stadium rock grandiosity constantly felt like it was on the verge of collapse, their local gigs were frenzied fan fests full of hysterical girls, and boys, and there’ll likely be a few tears shed and underwear dampened in the suitably sweaty Sheaf’s packed confines tonight.

Peppers and several kegs of classy cool.

NIGEL KENNEDY PLAYS HENDRIX: The New Theatre – The rebel string plucker takes on the greatest string-mangler of them all.

TUESDAY 15th

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

covers and originals.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 16th

BASS NATION: The Cellar

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

THURSDAY 17th

SASHA McVEIGH: The Bullingdon –

Classic Nashville-style country from the rising young UK singer who’s been doing the country music equivalent of taking coals to Newcastle by wowing Stateside fans with her sweet, smooth take on trad sounds. Blooded in Nashville bars like The Rutledge and The Bluebird, she’s gone on to perform at the 40,000-capacity Country Jam Festival and the prestigious Academy of Country Music Kick Off Party in L.A. Having released her Kickstarter-funded debut album ‘I Stand Alone’ earlier in the summer, she’s off on her biggest UK tour to date. Catch her before America claims her for its own.

THE WOAHNOWS + SHIT PRESENT + TENTH LISTEN + RAINBOW

RESERVOIR: The Library – More punk rock action for free courtesy of Smash Disco, tonight with Big Scary Monsters-signed angular indie punks The Woahnows, plus Exeter’s pop-core trio Shit Present, local skate-punk scrappers Tenth Listen and pop-punk anti-folk faves Rainbow Reservoir. **AGS CONNOLLY + JACK GRELE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Final night of the co-headline tour from local Ameripolitan songsmith Ags and Missouri troubadour Jack.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

THROWBACK THURSDAY: The Cellar

FRIDAY 18th

SEXY BREAKFAST + WHITE BEAM + CAMERON AG: The Wheatsheaf – Reunion show for the former local electro/prog/pop heroes – *see main preview*

MAD LARRY + VINCENT WHITE BAND

+ GET LOOSE: The Cellar – OxRox does the blues, with classic r’n’b from Mad Larry.

BEN OTTEWELL: O2 Academy – The Gomez frontman returns to town in his solo guise to promote his recent album ‘Rattlebag’, his deep, soulful voice bringing rootsy life to his blues and folk songs and doubtless a few Gomez favourites.

JESS HALL: Mallam’s Auctioneers,

Abingdon – Well there’s a thing – a local musician playing at an auctioneers. In the case of the lovely Jess Hall and her serene, angelic songs of true love and the sea, there can be no bid high enough. She’s priceless.

ZURICH: aka, Banbury – Banbury’s dark’n’shiny indie/electro rockers, taking influences from Editors, Killers and Interpol, launch their new EP, ‘Small Wars’, kicking off a 13-date UK tour.

SATURDAY 19th

ROYAL PARDON 2015: The Bullingdon

– All-day local bands showcase with sets from grandiose indie-electro rockers Zurich, industrial hip hop and electronic soundscaping from Tiger Mendoza; samba and afropop from Duchess; post-rock and electronica from Kid Kin, plus 31 Hours, Bel Esprit, Pipeline and more.

ALPHABET BACKWARDS + WATER

PAGEANT + FELIX: The Cellar – Sweet and sunshiny electro-indie pop from Alphabet Backwards, launching their new EP, ‘A Book About Foxes’, alongside harmonious folk-rockers Water Pageant and nu-folkster Felix, leaning towards the Laura Marling, Ben Howard and Stornoway school of nice things.

CHURCH OF THE HEAVY with

VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN + LAST RITES

+ 1000 CHAINS: The Wheatsheaf – Heavy rock and metal gig night from It’s All About the Music.

FALLEN FROM GRACE + AMBUSH AT DAWN + A NIGHTMARE UPON US + CHASING IMMORTALITY: O2 Academy

– Back after a summer break, Skeletor bring the noise once again with a showcase of local metal, heavy rock and metalcore bands.

BEDROCK: The Bullingdon – Skeletor’s monthly rock and metal club night plays classic and new releases from across the heavyweight spectrum.

OXFORD BEARD FESTIVAL: The James

Street Tavern – A day of music and more in celebration of facial hair, with live sets from Americana outfit Superloose, electro crew STEM, Burlesque troupe Scarlet Vixens and, of course, local bluesman Beard of Destiny, among others, plus competitions for best beard, moustache, facial hair and even best ladies’ beard, plus beer and cider festival, all in aid of Prostate Cancer UK.

BENDRIX: The Cornerstone, Didcot –

Bellowhead and Faustus man Benji Kirkpatrick plays Hendrix on bouzouki, banjo, mandolin and acoustic guitar, taking those classic psychedelic blues riffs on a rootsy journey.

MOVE: The Cellar – House, garage and grime club night.

SUNDAY 20th

JAH WOBBLE’S INVADERS OF THE

HEART: O2 Academy – Bass legend John

Wardle brings the dub – *see main preview*

ONE GIG FRESHER: The Bullingdon (2-

10pm) – One Gig Closer To Wittstock hosts a Freshers special all-dayer in aid of the annual free festival. Bluesman Beard of Destiny, heavy rockers Cosmosis and emotive acoustic singer-songwriter Trevor Williams all play, alongside surf-rockers Phat Cardinals, acoustic metal duo Kyle and Glenda and more.

MONDAY 21st

KIRK FLETCHER: The Bullingdon – a

Return to the Haven Club from renowned blues guitarist Fletcher, previously part of The Fabulous Thunderbirds as well as performing with blues supergroup The Mannish Boys. From his earliest days, playing guitar at his father’s church, he’s made the blues his life,

brought up on gospel before discovering jazz, then Hendrix and Steely Dan. A meeting with singer Al Blake of the Hollywood Fats Band led to an introduction to the Thunderbirds’ Kim Wilson, which in turn led Fletcher to play with Charlie Musselwhite and Pinetop Perkins amongst others. As leader of his own band he’s released five albums, and earned himself four Blues Music Award nominations.

THE BLUE SWAMP BAND: The Jericho

Tavern – Ex-Animals man Jonny Guitar

Williamson comes to The Famous Monday Blues.

TUESDAY 22nd

STUART HENDERSON BAND: The

Bullingdon – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson and band.

Sunday 20th

JAH WOBBLE’S INVADERS OF THE HEART: O2 Academy

When Jah Wobble turned down the chance to rejoin PiL, the band he formed with childhood friend John Lydon, in 2010, it was reported that he wanted too much money. He’s never denied it but possibly more important to him was his own restless creativity, a character trait that means he simply never looks back. Equally he’s been a leader in his own bands for too long to go back to being a sidekick to anyone. Wobble (born John Wardle, allegedly nicknamed Jah Wobble by a drunken Sid Vicious) has led an eventful life, almost replacing Glenn Matlock in the Pistols before forming PiL and then going seriously off the rails in the early-80s, which led to him quitting music for years before sobering up and going on to collaborate with a vast array of musicians from around the world, including Brian Eno and Can’s Holger Czukay, his reputation and influence growing with each new project and passing year. In particular his exploration of myriad styles of music from around the world, right back to his Invaders of The Heart band in the 1980s, preceded many of his peers’ interest in world music. Having played with The Chinese Dub Orchestra in 2009, he last came to Oxford with The Nippon Dub Ensemble, fusing his beloved dub with the traditional sounds of Japan. Going out this time as Invaders of the Heart suggests a return to some of his older material, but with Wobble, you simply never know what you’re going to get, and that’s the real mark of the man as a musical pioneer.



JAMES BLACKSHAW + JALI FILY

CISSOKHO: Modern Art Oxford – Inventive fusion sounds from renowned twelve-string acoustic guitarist James Blackshaw at tonight’s One Note Forever gig, mixing folk, minimalism and classical sounds, inspired by John Fahey amongst others. Locally-based Senegalese kora player and griot Jali Fily Cissokho supports.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 23rd

MERZ + THE FAMILY MACHINE: The

Bullingdon – Last month’s *Nightshift* cover stars Family Machine officially launch their second album, ‘Houses That You Lived In’, alongside Merz, the work of singer and multi-instrumentalist Conrad Lambert, out of self-imposed musical exile to promote his new album, the follow-up to ‘No Compass Will Find Home’.

THE HAZE + GEE BIRD + DANIEL

EAGLE + ALAN JAGGS: Fat Lil’s, Witney

– Strummerroom showcase night with teenage rockers The Haze and more.

BASS NATION: The Cellar

THURSDAY 24th

GZA: O2 Academy – Solo show and science lesson from the lyrical Wu Tang man – *see main preview*

CARDBOARD FOX: The Bullingdon – Folk and bluegrass from the Bath-based quartet.

COVER ME with REG BERRY & THE

CHERRIES + SUDDEN GUNFIRE: The

Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music covers night.

THE BIG BLUES NIGHT OUT: The Cellar – Live blues.

EMILY SMITH: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Scottish singer and actress Smith tours her fifth album, ‘Echoes’.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel,

Sandford

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

THROWBACK THURSDAY: The Cellar

FRIDAY 25th

BLACKLISTERS + GIRL POWER: The

Wheatsheaf – Blacklisters have come to wreck everything and ruin your life. God sent them – *see main preview*

VIENNA DITTO + GO ON, DO IT, JUMP

+ EASTER ISLAND STATUES + KUIPER

+ WE HAVE A DUTCH FRIEND: The

Bullingdon – It’s All About the Music show

with synth-crazed voodoo blues duo Vienna Ditto, plus fidgety indie pop from Go Ahead, Do It, Jump and more.

NONSTOP TANGO: The Bullingdon – Front bar gig from the experimental jazz/electro improv outfit.

UPRISING with ORANGE VISION +

HAULA + HOME PLANET EARTH

+ LEADER + WATER PAGEANT: O2

Academy – The O2 resurrects its showcase team-up with BBC Introducing, now renamed Uprising (because, like, the acts involved are rising, like, upwards. *Obviously*). Heading up



Thursday 24th

GZA: O2 Academy

One of the most literate and lyrical rappers on the planet, it shouldn’t come as too much of a surprise that GZA’s latest album, ‘Dark Matter’, is a concept album about a science-heavy journey through time and space. Here’s the man, after all, who recorded an album, ‘Grandmasters’, about chess as a metaphor for the hip hop game. The man born Gary Grice, and sometimes known simply as The Genius, has had hip hop in his blood since he attended block parties back in the 1970s with his cousins RZA and Ol’Dirty Bastard, with whom he went on to form Wu Tang Clan. Sometimes considered the spiritual godfather of the group, he’s enjoyed more solo success and acclaim than most of his compadres, while continuing to collaborate with most of them over the years. Arguably his finest moment was his 1995 solo album ‘Liquid Swords’, though he’s maintained a high standard all along the way. He’s also continued to defy expectations of a big name rapper, with a collaboration with Devendra Banhart, disowning profanity in rap as “unnecessary” and teaming up with Mogwai for their All Tomorrow’s Parties this summer. Given his love for science it’s also no surprise that he’s set up a partnership to help improve science teaching in New York schools and colleges. So expect to be educated as well as entertained, and maybe slightly awed, at tonight’s show.

tonight’s opening bill are fast-improving local post-punk/indie rock crew Orange Vision, and they’re joined by London-based Ugandan r’n’b singer Haula, fresh from her acclaimed showing at Truck Fest; funky, folky popsters Homeplanet Earth; slick stadium-pop types Leader and rather lovely folk-rockers Water Pageant.

DUOTONE + SIMON DAVIES & COLIN

FLETCHER + STEPH WEST: Albion

Beatnik Bookstore – Amnesty Acoustic evening with virtuoso cellist and loopmeister Duotone joined by folk duo Davies and Fletcher among others, all in aid of Amnesty International.

RURA: The Cornerstone, Didcot –

Barnstorming traditional Scottish folk dance from the Highland quintet, out on tour after a summer of festival appearances.

LUKE PICKETT + ELOISE REES: The

Cape of Good Hope – Electro-acoustic pop and r’n’b from London singer Pickett, plus

local acoustic singer-songwriter Eloise Rees.
DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock and indie covers.

SATURDAY 26th
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + NEUROHARP + FOCI'S LEFT: The Wheatsheaf – Top-notch local post-rock noise from Ghosts in the Photographs at tonight's GTI show, the band channelling the influence of Godspeed and Explosions in the Sky to fine effect. Cerebro-drone from Brighton's Neuroharp, featuring Caravan of Whores' astonishing former drummer and kicking out seriously heavy stoner jams. Atmospheric, occasionally abstract minimalist electronica and pianism from Foci's Left making a rare live showing.
BRONWYN LEONARD & GEORGE HUXTABLE: The Bullingdon – Smooth and sultry jazz, blues and soul in the old school vein of Billy Holiday from Bristol singer Bronwyn Leonard.

Friday 25th
BLACKLISTERS / GIRL POWER: The Wheatsheaf
Take a rusting, serrated barrel of classic 80s and 90s American hardcore and coat it in Yorkshire soot and grime and you'll get an idea what Leeds' Blacklisters sound like. They sound nasty. Wipe your hand along their shrapnel-sharp edges and your fingers will fall off and you'll contract tetanus. They are snarling, sneering, sullen and seriously brutal, a clanging metal-into-flesh industrial melting pot of Shellac, The Jesus Lizard and Pissed Jeans – confrontational and angular but possessed of a dark humour. Formed back in 2008 they've remained firmly under the radar of all but the most devoted hardcore underground fans, though they have earned themselves tour supports to Pulled Apart By Horses and Kong along the way, as well as gigs with kindred spirits Melt Banana and Rolo Tomassi, and this summer they nabbed themselves some space on the BBC Introducing Stages at Reading and Leeds Festival. Seeing them live at the Sheaf will be like deliriously throwing yourself onto barbed wire while high on crystal meth. And if that don't sound like fun, you're a giant marshmallow softie and no friend of ours. Awesomely brutal blitzkrieg support from *Nightshift* cover stars Girl Power, launching their new eponymous EP.



DUBKASM: The Bullingdon – Bristol's long-standing roots and dub duo Digitiser and DJ Stryda play a club set, mixing live instrumentation and lo-fi dubwise textures for a tasty rasta roots vibe.
THE TEXAS FLOOD + SKY VALLEY MISTRESS + HELL'S GAZELLES: The Cellar – OxRox rock night with south Wales' balls-to-the-wall rockers The Texas Flood.
BETA BLOCKER & THE BODY CLOCK + KITSCH + ESTHER JOY LANE: The Jericho Tavern – Daisy Rodgers Music celebrate their sixth birthday with a night of quality local noise. There's lo-fi slacker squall and baggy psych-pop grooves from Beta Blocker and the Body Clock; delicate indie noise from Kitsch, plus trippy, soulful r'n'b and electro-pop from Esther Joy Lane.
EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar EYECON: Fat Lil's, Witney – Classic mod and Britpop covers.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford

SUNDAY 27th
WLODI: The Bullingdon – Fancy a bit of Polish rap? Well here you go – in the form of Warsaw's Wlodi, making a rare trip over to the UK.
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm) – Open blues session.

MONDAY 28th
GRAINNE DUFFY: The Bullingdon – Powerful blues and soul from the County Monaghan singer, whose debut album, 'Out Of The Dark', was recorded with members of Sharon Shannon and Van Morrison's bands, her husky blues voice drawing comparisons to Bonnie Raitt. In her native Ireland she's supported everyone from Little Feat to Ocean Colour Scene and returns to the Haven Club to promote her 'Out of the Dark' album.

TUESDAY 29th
ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, swing and bop from veteran clarinetist Alvin Roy and his reeds band.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 30th
TOM RUSSELL: St John the Evangelist – Tex-Mex and traditional Texan country music from the el Paso-resident veteran, whose been covered by the likes of Johnny Cash, Nanci Griffith, Guy Clark and kd lang among many

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Friday 25th
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with LAID BLAK: The Cellar
So summer's over, as if it ever really began, and it's time to pack up your tent and slowly but surely let those festival memories fade into the ether. Alternatively you could say to hell with such talk and keep the carnival-flavoured party going a little bit longer. Tonight's monthly edition of Skylarkin's soundsystem club night sees everyone involved back inside after a summer playing to festival crowds. Club host Count Skylarkin has been here, there and everywhere with his Disco Shed, and tonight celebrates his birthday on the decks, playing his trademark mix of big and bouncy reggae, dancehall, hip hop and drum & bass till the small hours. He's joined once again by Bristol's seven-strong party reggae outfit Laid Blak, who have similarly spent much of the summer in assorted fields, earning themselves a reputation as one of, if not *the*, best live reggae band in Europe. Smash hits like 'Bristol Love' and the near-anthem 'My Eyes Are Red' have raised their profile yet higher, while they've shared stages with The Wailers, Massive Attack, John Legend and Julian Marley along the way. So whichever way you want to do this – pretend the summer's still here, or Christmas has come early – just keep those dancing shoes on a little longer.

others, tonight playing songs from his extensive back catalogue, including most recent album, 'Mesabi'.
31 HOUSE + SEVEN O'CLOCK JUNKIES + KID KIN: Fat Lil's, Witney – Spacey afro-pop from 31 Hours and mathsy electronica from Kid Kin at tonight's Strummerroom showcase.
BASS NATION: The Cellar

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A SILENT FILM

The Bullingdon

Tonight sees A Silent Film back playing on home turf for the first time in a long old while, slipping in Oxford and London shows around recording for their third full length album, which is due for release

later in the year. With this lengthy absence in mind, the Bully is packed to bursting with friends, family and a smattering of hardcore fans with video cameras, preserving what would now be considered rare

footage (presumably for Youtube).

Inevitably then the atmosphere is somewhat akin to a wedding; largely everyone is connected or knows someone else, save for a few random guests no one is ever quite sure who

invited. It’s cosy, but as the band’s loud anthemic rock bursts from the Bully’s refurbished back room, so it reminds us how they’ve outgrown most of Oxford’s venues. As lead singer Robert Stevenson points out, they played almost everywhere in the city in their early days and love to be back for a walk down memory lane, but now seem to have found a greater following and commercial viability for their music Stateside.

With a relatively short set and no encore, tonight is a succinct and fast-paced tour of their hits to date which includes ‘Anastasia’ and ends on a high with ‘Danny Dakota And The Wishing Well’. Despite this, and with the aforementioned new album in the offing, it’s little surprise that newer material features heavily in the set with all four tracks from their recently released ‘New Year’ EP getting an airing.

Stevenson throws himself about the stage as if he’s playing to an arena, as well he might be, leaving us to ponder how long it will be before the band return again. Having been drawn into their signature crashing drums and building synths the set feels all too short, much like their run of UK dates. We want more.

Jo Cox

gorgeous ‘You Know’, from a new EP due in October. So really, Esther, thank *you*. The pleasure was all ours.

Cameron A.G. is equally possessed of a voice to die for – captivating and run through with delicate but raw emotion that means his songs, played out simply on electric piano or acoustic guitar, simply don’t need any great adornment. They might appear slight, as if they’d fall apart in a stiff breeze, but their emotional depth and melodic strength shine through, and you wonder how James Blake can be playing arenas and winning industry awards while Cameron is playing to 40 punters in a basement bar. Such injustice can only fuel his heartache and songwriting fire, surely. Jack Goldstein has always seemed like a man who runs from commercial success however hard it tried to catch him. As soon as Fixers looked like making the big break he transformed them into a mutant improv beast before seemingly putting them to bed for good. His latest solo album, ‘Tonic of Wilderness’, is similarly wilful, with its mix of grandiosity and whimsy. Ranging from soft-centred 70s rock, through vintage synth-pop, onto airy psychedelia and raw garage rock, everything about Jack’s music feels restless if not exactly nervy. One minute he’s conjuring a singalong pop anthem, the next indulging in grungy lo-fi noise, to a point *Nightshift*’s notepad become a litter of fleeting reference points that veer from Beck, The Beta Band and Aerial Pink, to Todd Rundgren, Brian Wilson and Ty Segal. Typically though he leaves us with something sincere and utterly lovely, a pale, fragile cousin to Mercury Rev’s ‘Deserter’s Songs’. You see, it doesn’t matter how hard he tries, Jack Goldstein can’t help but write great pop songs. He can run all he likes, but one day fame and glory will find him.

Dale Kattack

D-FEST

Lockway, Drayton

Community and music will always make the happiest of bedfellows, and D-Fest organiser Craig Evans continues to bring his love of his home village and new up and coming music together, for the sixth annual D-Fest.

This year finds it in its expanded new home at Drayton Football Club, giving it space for a vast, flatbed trailer as a main stage, and acres of extra room for an acoustic tent, as well as a village hall doubling as the Ministry of Sound. The day gets off to a pacy start with local gruff-rockers, **The Illuminati**, whose own songs click well with the obscure Oasis numbers they cover. The bar is then immediately set even higher with **Three Empty Domes** becoming new ones to watch. Looking barely out of short trousers, and with the fabulous Esme Wright playing out of her jazz drumming skin, this smacks of quality musicianship and songwriting, mixing up the sonics of Jeniferever and Alt-J.

The excellence continues to multiply when we are caught between watching **Water Pagent**, with Nick Tingay’s pained, Nick Drake-meets-early-Neil Young vocals haunting the home penalty spot, and the even more astonishing, 12-year-old **Daisy West**, making jaws drop in the acoustic tent with her surreal Nina Simone-like baritone take on such songs as Massive Attack’s ‘Teardrop’ and Leadbelly’s ‘In The Pines’.

Ester Joy Lane bravely battles both the bright sunshine on her computer screen and the garrulous increase in beer-lubricated noise from the hundreds of wannabe after dinner speakers sprawled on the garden furniture and straw bales. Her beautiful Beth Orton-meets-Lilley Wood & The Prick sound is probably one to savour more closely in the intimate venues that abound in Oxford.

POLEDO / TENTH LISTEN / RADICAL BOY

The Library

Free gigs, like free juke boxes, can be a mixed blessing and The Library is doing a fair impersonation of a Northern Line train carriage with the lights dimmed for Poledo’s launch of their lavish vinyl release for the bafflingly named ‘Egg Ccun Catpil Butfli’ EP. Scalps connect with the ceiling, elbows jab into backs and punters murmur as stand-in support act Tenth Listen treat us to a fifteen minute burst of cartoonish skater punk, the singer’s t-shirt announcing the legend ‘Unabomber’. It’s a set delivered with about as much subtlety as that particular individual’s oeuvre and one is left to bemoan the late withdrawal of the Beckoning Fair Ones.

Earlier, Sheffield’s Radical Boy had provided a more than competent set of elongated punk bursts so by the time Poledo pronounce themselves fully content with the venue’s sound arrangements – a process that in all honesty takes a little too long as particularity and fussiness threaten to envelop the evening’s entertainment with a bout of lockjaw – it is with relief and a mood of ‘about flippin’

The rhubarb cider, and Pimm’s, is taking its hold on us too, as Reading’s **Palm Honey** seize the mid-afternoon slot and send everyone off the planet with their psychedelic phasing and faraway vocals; it’s pure summer loving, free festival gold, as we tune in and drop out, lying back to watch the Red Kites circling overhead.

In the acoustic tent **Boon Mew & Wooster**, with their fast running country and slick picking, spoon out honey-rich Everly Brothers-style harmonies over songs of love and breezy heartache, before **Beard of Destiny**’s Graham Barlow, brilliantly accompanied by Ian Carmichael on wooden percussion box, ramps up the psychobilly swamp blues, finishing with an odd song about a budgie called Keith being eaten by one called Ted.

Subjects, three girls out of east London, but hailing from Spain, Japan and Italy, send the wasps into a frenzy with their main stage blitz, somewhere between where The Ramones left off, and Sky Saxon took over. This is crowd whooping stuff, and there is little more amusing than the ironic sight of a gaggle of toddlers dancing to The Pleasure Seekers’ ‘What A Way To Die’.

The Fruit Tones are one of the exciting new wave of young acts currently proliferating in Manchester and they quickly set about plugging into the remaining Abjects buzz, with their reverb-heavy take on Richard Hell’s mid-70s CBGBs vibe. Weird moustaches and hungry hearts abound til



Abjectsphoto: Paul Carrera

finally the late running bumps up against the local licensing laws, leaving Reading’s **The Amazons** just half an hour to set out their stall of far-reaching indie pop, taking the best bits of Embrace mashed up with first-rate bands like Tame Impala and Pond. It’s a suitably epic resolution to a top bombing community event. Gossip is exchanged, bonhomie shared, and the music wraps it all up into a proper field day.

Paul Carrera

A RELUCTANT ARROW / THE LOST ART / HUCK

The Cellar

Given the southern gothic charm of his ‘Alexander the Great’ trilogy last year, we’d best simply brush off Huck’s showing tonight, which illicit the brief, disparaging notes “Kermit the Frog impersonating Morrissey” and “Chris Isaak having a strangelwank.” Simply an off night, we hope.

The Lost Art’s more tender approach to acoustic blues and soul marks a step up in quality, the duo’s fleet-footed jazz-pop, folk and occasional flamenco flourish revealing nimble fingers and close harmonies. They’re at their best in their more maudlin moments, reminding us of Mark Eitzel at one point, while a cover of Radiohead’s ‘Climbing Up the Walls’ is respectable enough. Their set does tend to drift into safe, easy busker pop at one point but they rouse themselves at the end with a taut, bluesy finale.

Tonight’s gig is a launch show for A Reluctant Arrow’s debut album and they’re obviously in the mood to enjoy themselves, singer Claire LeMaster exuding *bonhomie* and seemingly on first name terms with most of the crowd packed in front of

the stage. From the off it’s evident she has a very good voice, one that rightly dominates the band’s music as it bubbles between jangly folk-pop and darker blues rock. The set opener treads a similarly fine line between stridency and whimsy to Edie Brickell, before ‘Howl Like A Wolf’ edges them into more intimate, almost sultry lounge swing, Claire semi successfully trying to get the audience to howl along in the chorus.

There’s an occasional tendency towards innocuous balladry, like ‘The Silence’, where A Reluctant Arrow are inseparable from a trillion other bands and where only Claire’s voice holds them above water and they’re at their most engaging on the bitter, bitchy, blues numbers where her vocal talent really bites. At least they’re ready and willing to switch styles and when they close on a swampy surf piece with LeMaster ranting witchily over the top you wonder if maybe there’s a bit of star quality here just waiting for the right songs to make its presence fully felt.

Dale Kattack

TANGLED HAIR / ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY / 100 ONCES

The Cellar

Gawd bless the good eggs at Idiot King. Not only have they brought a taster of the forthcoming weekend’s ArcTanGent festival to Oxford for the benefit of those of us distraught at missing out on the likes of Deafheaven, Deerhoof and Blanck Mass, but they’ve done so in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.

Heading back to Bristol for a second consecutive year are 100 Ones, who kick the evening off with the sort of set that screams “Follow THIS!”. At first the duo come across like fellow LA natives No Age if they’d not skipped so much school to smoke pot, but later a discernible affection for the technicalities of thrash metal edges in. No bad thing, we assure you. When guitarist Barrett Tuttobene declares that it’s time to get serious and there should be no laughing or smiling, he’s fighting a losing battle.

If their name alone isn’t enough to recommend Alpha Male Tea Party (and let’s face it, it bloody well should be), then how’s about song titles like ‘I Haven’t Had A Lunch Break Since Windows Vista Came Out’? Revelling in the luxury of having both a sound engineer and a hotel for the night, the band may not need to worry about day jobs for much longer. They’re at their best when most uncompromising – a shame, then, that their thuggish, stomping instrumentals start to take unnecessary detours into the drearily epic with increasing frequency.

Headliners Tangled Hair, meanwhile, should

dispense with the vocals. Actually, they should arguably dispense with the guitar and bass too. The stupendously talented James Trood, who also drums for former Colour bandmate George Reid in AlunaGeorge, is the undisputed star of the show. Little wonder that not one but two of his drumsticks feel so overworked as to give up the ghost, splintering and snapping mid-song. Collectively, Tangled Hair’s set is like being taught maths by a really cool supply teacher wearing a Dismemberment Plan T-shirt – ultimately, it’s still a maths lesson. This is music that, in its audacious time signatures and self-conscious complexity, is very easy to admire but rather harder to actually love.

Ben Woolhead

JACK GOLDSTEIN / CAMERON A.G. / ESTHER JOY LANE

The Library

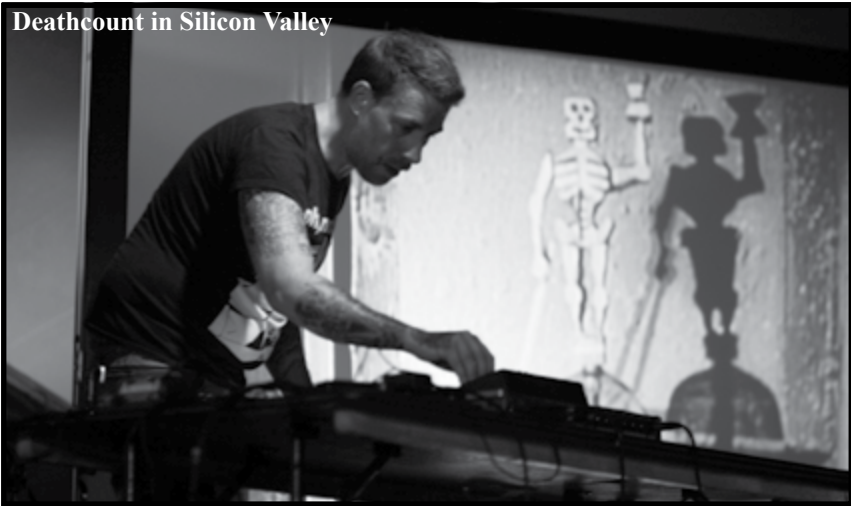
Esther Joy Lane’s punk crop and abundant tattoos can’t prepare you for her music, particularly her voice, which is as soft and welcoming – sultry even – as her appearance can initially seem confrontational. Equally her unassumingly cheery onstage persona that sees her coyly saying “thank you for being nice,” at the end of her set, as if she really hasn’t deserved such a warm reception. Musically her mix of glitchy synth pop and gossamer r’n’b isn’t quite what you expect to encounter in a non-more-intimate venue like The Library, sounding like Everything But The Girl’s sad-eyed soul filtered through FKA Twigs’ 21st Century invention. She closes with the absolutely



Ggu:ll



Spectres



Deathcount in Silicon Valley



Trembling Bells



Sturle Dagsland



Vicky Langan

SUPERNORMAL FESTIVAL

Braziers Park

At most festivals, on approaching any stage at random you can be pretty sure of what you’re about to see - some kind of band, most likely, playing instruments and all that boring stuff. At Supernormal, whether you’re entering the old barn or exploring the new Vortex tent, anything could happen. Sometimes what you see is little short of bonkers, like a performance by **VICKY LANGAN** combing her own hair over a bed of drones, accompanied on stage by what we assume is her daughter doing her homework as part of the performance. At other times, it’s sublime: **DEATHCOUNT IN SILICON VALLEY**’s live soundtrack for *Nosferatu* defies the near-30 degree heat outside to create a cold, threatening and hauntingly minimal backdrop to Murnau’s classic. Either way, it’s this sense of pure anything-goes exploration and freedom that makes Supernormal a unique proposition to be treasured.

Such is the spirit of freedom that one punter brings along two of his own sculptures of a giant hand and a pair of buried legs (we’d love to have seen him getting those onto the bus) and plonks them in front of the main stage, causing one of the more unusual security interventions of recent times (‘Oi mate, you can’t leave that sculpture of a demonic hand bursting forth from the earth there’). Later in the weekend, a different punter is seen unearthing one of these

sculptures and disappearing into the woods with it, cackling as he goes.

From its ramshackle, stages-held-together-by-Sellotape beginnings as an enclave of people going mental in the woods, Supernormal has slowly become more professional, higher profile and a bigger deal all round. The most notable addition this year is the replacement of the second stage by a dedicated audiovisual tent that becomes an imaginarium of some of the weekend’s most outlandish and inventive performances.

What come to be known as ‘happenings’ pop up all over the site - both official and unofficial. There’s a space deep in the woods dedicated to sinister synth washes and abstract film projections, planned events like drone yoga and unplanned madness like a man in a bear costume being led around by the neck by someone playing 8-bit chiptune from a Gameboy. By the end of the weekend, you’re not sure if a man sitting on a hay bale with a pint is just enjoying the sun or part of an elaborate cider-based performance piece.

Oh yes, there were some bands too, lest we forget. Friday’s highlight is perhaps the drum and Hammond duo **TRUMMOR & ORGEL**, playing driving, Jimmy Smith-style organ funk, transporting us back to the 1960s until we’re half-expecting ‘Papa’s Got A Brand New Bag’

to pop up. **TRASH KIT** are an energetic bundle of polyrhythms; if a little one-dimensional, they know how to get a crowd moving. We’re promised quite the opposite by **PAUL PURGAS**, who tempts us with the idea of ‘extreme time manipulation’, but what we get is some pretty basic 909 techno with one of the delay knobs turned up. But no matter, because the **EXPLODING CINEMA** is a hyperactive cabaret of audiovisual experimentation, whose short performances vary dramatically in quality but are arresting enough to keep you watching until an hour has passed without you realising it.

Supernormal headliners can be a variable bunch, quite often coming in the form of unearthed legends of experimental music’s long past, off-the-wall freakery or a mixture of the two. **ANONYMOUS BASH** are a loose collective of improvisers led by This Heat icon **CHARLES HAYWARD**. When they hit an instrumental, bass-led groove it’s diverting enough, but the frequent appearances by an outlandishly-clad, autotuned vocalist bellowing tunelessly to the skies mean it’s time to give it a miss and head into the woods, where doubtless there’s something more interesting going on.

Saturday’s first real treat is the hugely impressive **GUAPO**, a long-standing kraut/psych/math-rock outfit who previously counted Grumbling Fur’s Daniel O’Sullivan and Nought’s James Sedwards among their number.

They play a bewildering, exhilarating one-stop 45-minute set of repetition, complex interplay and head-down riffing along with some bagpipe loops for good measure. **TREMBLING BELLS**, who struggle to follow that, are almost a band with two heads. Half of their set is acceptable, psych-tinged sixties freakery; the other is a mawkish, limp slice of overly-polite folk with little to say for itself.

Bristol’s **SPECTRES**, though practically a pop band by Supernormal standards, give a brisk and stirring account of themselves, whisking up a mixture of ‘Evol’-era Sonic Youth with a shoegaze wall of guitar noise - perhaps the best main stage set of the weekend. Headliners **AR KANE** haven’t played a show for twenty years, and are boosted up to a seven-piece line-up, several of whom appear to have met for the first time tonight, so ramshackle is the performance. Even the band are self-aware enough to acknowledge that some of their songs “probably need a bit more work,” but really it feels like watching a rehearsal session from a band who haven’t quite clicked yet. A much finer end to the night is delivered by Dutch sludge-metallars **GGU:LL** (run that one through your spellcheck, *Nightshift* editor), sandblasting riffs flaying the skin off the front rows, while their Jeff-Bridges-alike frontman paints an

evocative guttural picture.

Sunday, and noted promoters Qu Junktions install an ambitious project called **PLAYPEN**, a live show/happening held in the round, with each performance blending into the next without a pause. From a straightforward Spectres mini-set to two men in orange suits auditioning for Eurovision to half the tent bursting into song, it’s a three-hour experience to behold. Likewise **STURLE DAGSLAND** on the main stage, who truly defies description. He eats lemons on stage. He plays an upside-down skateboard. He croons, gurns and shrieks his way through a set of solid-gold madness. Look him up on YouTube. Seriously. For any bands looking to earn their psychedelic stripes, you could do worse than taking a few tips from **BLOWN OUT**, who take a groove and submit themselves entirely to it, forever. In effect, they play three riffs over the course of 45 glorious minutes, a miasma of feedback and hypnotic noise that leaves the drummer exiting stage right, bolting across the grass and collapsing on his back halfway up the field, staring at the sky and gasping for air. After three days like this, we feel exactly the same. Long live Supernormal: a festival like no other. *Stuart Fowkes*

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DR SHOTOVER's niece takes over

Hullo, chums, and welcome to the Enid Blyton Room at the East Indies Club. Dr Shotover's niece Mandie here, holding the fort while my dear old uncle has a regimental reunion in Dungeness. I say, aren't the school hols such absolutely SMASHING fun?!? Here, have a big glass of warm lemonade, and take the last cream bun, go on, do! No, we couldn't possibly eat another thing - Dotty made an utter PIG of herself with the Shippams Paste sandwiches earlier and was S.I.C.K. on Pifco the dog. It'll take Mrs Bedingfield yonks to clean his fur - YUK! In a minute we're going to listen to records on the wind-up gramophone – all your favourite dishy crooners, like Perry Combover, Lena Prawne, Matt Tuxedo and His Margarine Minstrels. We might even practice dancing cheek-to-cheek with some of the fifth-form girls... though I want to see daylight, and plenty of it, between you two, Fliss and Bunty! [stern look]... What was that? Who do I have a pash on? [shrieks of delighted outrage]... Mind your own beeswax! You are the LIMIT, Wendy! The bar's open, you say? We-e-ell, perhaps I will have a small glass of Peardrax, as you're offering. And one of your Park Drive ciggies while you're at it. Oh, and let's treat ourselves to one of my 'special' diet pills... Mandrax, Peardrax – what's the difference? Though I might want to listen to some LOUD MODERN JAZZ and really shake my B.T.M. after that!



Next month: Abnormal service is resumed

'Mm, Coronation Cocktails with extra Sanatogen and just a dash of condensed milk – how scrummy!'

INTRODUCING....

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

VERA GRACE

Who are they?

Vera Grace are a metalcore/hardcore/prog-hardcore band from Witney, originally forming in 2011 and a constant gigging presence locally and beyond ever since. The idea to use the name Vera Grace was inspired by bands like Norma Jean and Gwen Stacy. “We honestly just thought it was cool.” A succession of demos and self-released EPs have gone alongside a tour support to prog-metallers The Sun Explodes as well as dates with 36 Crazyfists, Feed the Rhino and Devil Sold His Soul. Their new EP, ‘Novella’, is out this month with a tour to coincide.

What do they sound like?

On the one hand a splenetic, spittle-flecked rage machine that comes out the traps at 150mph with all guns blazing. On the other, a highly textured, atmospheric prog/goth/industrial metal beast that eyes you up menacingly before devouring you. Metalcore but with plenty more angles besides.

What inspires them?

“Just the thought of being able to play songs that we’ve written to people on stage is enough to keep us going. Hearing people come up to us after shows and honestly tell us that they really enjoyed what they’ve just watched and heard is very humbling. Musically we take a lot of influence from very chaotic metal and hardcore, as well as really atmospheric post-rock. We enjoy being able to create a cohesive contrast between the two. We’re all very fond of music that conjures an emotional connection between itself and the listener. We all love a good cry, y’know.”

Career highlight so far:

“Supporting 36 Crazyfists at the O2 Academy. It was the biggest gig we’ve done! Although Aaron couldn’t play the gig due to health issues, so we had to play without a bassist. We’ve been featured in *Metal Hammer* magazine this month and last, which is a big thing for us!

And the lowlight:

“Aaron not being able to play the 36 Crazyfists should probably be one, at



least for himself. But in all honestly, I don’t think we’ve had anything awful happen... yet.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Our friends in A Trust Unclean: they’re an absolute behemoth of a band. They’ve taken that deathcore sound and just moved it to the next level.”

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

“‘Lost In The Sound Of Separation’ by Underoath. Fantastic album; it really pushes the boundaries of the genre, whilst still ticking all the essential boxes.”

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

“We’re not too sure just yet! We’ve just played in Oxford. We might have one soon, depending where the tours we’ve got being sorted take us.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“The best is that there’s so much of it! Oxford seems to have a scene for almost every type of music. Least favourite would be that there just doesn’t seem to be that younger scene that was around when we were 13 or 14. Maybe that’s due to the lack of venues that cater to that age range, or that kids that age just aren’t into it as much.

You might love them if you love:

Devil Sold His Soul; Underoath; Defeater; Architects; Fucked Up; The Chariot.

Hear them here:

veragraceband.bandcamp.com.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Funny what turns up in the demo pages when you look back. In September 1995’s issue of *Nightshift* there’s a review of a band called **Dustbowl**, which states that the only redeeming features of the demo are that it comes on a C90 cassette (showing our age now, ain’t we), so we can reuse that to tape Mark Radcliffe’s show while we’re out getting pissed, and that the Royal Mail didn’t postmark the stamp, so we can reuse that too. The music, we’re informed, doesn’t bear thinking about. Dustbowl was actually a misspelling of **Dustball**, a band who would go onto become cult heroes in their home town and some way beyond before morphing into Dive Dive. But back in the very beginning, they were either absolute bobbins, or *Nightshift* had it spectacularly wrong. The latter option is unthinkable. Take heart, kids, no matter how bad that first review, greatness can still be yours.

Elsewhere **Radiohead** released their now-classic single ‘Just’ (“buy it immediately and make your life complete” ran the review), while **Thurman**’s ‘She’s A Man’ was also out (“Seems the T-Rex revival is in full flood and about time too”). At a time when the local venue scene was still picking itself up off the floor, highlights of the gigging month included welsh pop-punks **60ft Dolls** and local indie-pop faves **Heavenly at The Hobgoblin**; Zimbabwean chimurengan and pop stars **Bhundu Boys** at **Oxford Town Hall**, plus a selection of local heroes at the time – **Underbelly**, **The Bigger the God**, **Mackating**, **Cornflower Concept**, **Bubbleman** and **The Nubiles** playing The Hobgoblin, **The Wheatsheaf** and **The Elm Tree**.

10 YEARS AGO

Remember **Ash Verjee**? Or **The Cliffhangers**? Or **Zagu Zarr**? Or even **Sober Dave**? No? Well they all released CDs this month ten years ago. We have proof since they’re all reviewed in the September 2005 *Nightshift*. There was also a review of **Fell City Girl**’s sublime ‘Weaker Light’, which would go on to top our end of year Top 20. Released on pure, perfect 7” vinyl, the review stated that “with such an accomplished debut, and a song that deserves to become an indie anthem, Fell City Girl will eclipse any comparisons to Radiohead very soon.” Track that song down, dear reader, and weep at its sheer loveliness.

Sadly Fell City Girl didn’t last, but a band who are still going strong are **Elbow**, who ten years ago were coming to **The Zodiac**, the band spearheading the *en vogue* “quiet is the new loud” mini-movement. Sticking with loud is the new loud, **Corrosion of Conformity** were also at the Zod, as were Viking metallers **Dragonforce**, nu-prog hopefuls **Pure Reason Revolution**, and Frank Turner’s old band **Million Dead**.

In local music news **Young Knives** had been picked by Channel 4 and Virgin Mobile to play at **V Festival**, alongside Chemical Brothers, Kaiser Chiefs and Doves; the band were currently in the studio recording their forthcoming single ‘The Decision’ with Gang of Four’s Andy Gill. Ex-**Ride** (now back in Ride) man **Mark Gardener** released his solo debut album ‘These Beautiful Ghosts’ as a limited edition import, the singer on tour in the States with **Goldrush** as his backing band, while BBC Radio Oxford local music show **The Download** had been given the green light for an

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

indefinite run – ten years on, and now part of the BBC’s Introducing network, it’s still going strong.

5 YEARS AGO

And just five years later it was announced that the show’s founder, **Tim Bearder**, had stepped down to pursue a career bringing the Liberal Democrats to their knees. The ebullient presenter made way for his co-pilot **Dave Gilyeat** while leaving a legacy that we’re all still benefitting from. Cheers Tim!

In other local music news, **This Town Needs Guns** were off on tour with Oceansize, while **Huck & the Handsome Fee** were heading off on a six-week tour of the US. Meanwhile it was announced that **OX4** would return for a second outing in October, the one-day music fest across east Oxford set to host **Everything Everything** as well as **Scratch Perverts** and **Willy Mason**. A slew of local releases included **Desert Storm**’s beastly metal classic ‘Forked Tongues’ as well as **Winchell Riots**’ ‘Red Square EP’, **Dial F For Frankenstein**’s ‘USA’ and **Spring Offensive**’s fourteen-minute concept single ‘The First of Many Dreams About Monsters’.

Gigs going on included rock behemoths **Black Mountain** at the **O2 Academy**, classic girl group **The Like** at the **Jericho Tavern** and first lady of new folk **Kate Rusby** at the **New Theatre**, but it was a bunch of unknowns from Glasgow, **DIVORCE**, at the **Wheatsheaf** that will go down as one of the greatest shows we’ve seen in recent years. That they managed to blow Comanechi offstage is testament to just how scarily awesome they were. They just don’t make ‘em like that anymore, and if that means the world is a safer place, it’s also a far less exciting one.



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DEMOS

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Demo OF THE MONTH

KANCHO!

Coming back from a rare and well-earned holiday drinking vodka in the Mediterranean sunshine to discover our trusty old computer’s hard drive had gone and died was never going to put *Nightshift* in a good mood. Even a life-saving operation involving three bypasses and finally a full transplant can’t dispel the overwhelming feeling of what’s the fucking point given that the repair bill ate up our entire drinks budget for the month and we’re faced with catching up on two weeks’ worth of work in three days. What we need is more vodka and lots of shouting. In a distinctly underwhelming month for demos, at least Kancho! give us the shouting. Hey, even their band name is shouted. By all that’s holy this is a right flipping mess – a disjointed heap of angular lo-fi hardcore and completely out of tune vocal intensity, all of which adds up to what you imagine a gang of musically ignorant day release types might conjure up if their sole exposure to music was an old At The Drive-In record heard through an old Nokia phone. Exactly the sort of racket we want to hear right now, then. Yes it’s barely competent at times, yes it’s tinny and the singer keeps losing control of his larynx but it’s the sound of frustration and nervous tension and bad poetry and thus *HARDCORE*. And in a month when we celebrate Girl Power on the front cover and Vera Grace in the Introducing feature, let’s make it a full hardcore house by sticking this lot atop the demo pile. After the slightly stuttering but pleasingly hysterical ‘Suspension’, and the not-angry-enough ‘False Widow’, which ironically lacks a bit of bite, ‘Paper Boat’ puts the boot in far more firmly, an industrial clang and grind with the singer wired and shouting “you are an engineer!” in the same way we were shouting “why won’t you fucking work!” at our poorly PC only days previous. Stay angry and keep shouting chaps – shouting at stuff solves everything. And when it doesn’t kicking them repeatedly at least makes you feel better.

THE DRUNKEN RAMBLINGS

Sober Dave, as we have always known him and thus must believe is his real name,

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

seems to have been around the local scene for as long as we can remember now, formerly guitarist with Centre Negative, Two Thirty and Pistol Kixx before going solo and providing us with a regular stream of demos and EPs of variable degrees of dishevelment. His name, you see, seems to be ironic and in truth the guy likes the odd snifter or two. In fact, on the strength of this latest six song offering, a couple of stiff ones is how he starts his day before really going to town on the booze. Hence ‘Honour Oak Park’ and ‘Off Script’ have a similar gruff, blokey, swearsy, sarcy feel about them to some of Half Man Half Biscuit’s surlier offerings, ramshackle but coherent enough to work as boozy singalongs in campfire Wildhearts kind of way, while the shouty, almost punky ‘Saturday Morning’ is what Smilex might have sounded like if they stayed in bed all day and drank Buckfast instead of tea. Things tail off a bit towards the end as the punky chords are replaced with a more acoustic sound and Dave finishes on ‘Poetry From the Hedgerow’, possibly the one he fell into on the way home from another heavy session at The Wheatsheaf last Saturday.

OUR NAMELESS BOY

Another band who sound like they’ve been on the sauce, though in this case we think it’s unintentional, since post-hardcore noodling doesn’t tend to lend itself to overt displays of alcohol-fuelled merriment. It doesn’t stop demo opener ‘King’ blossoming from weary autumnal contemplation into what sounds like a student rugby club pub crawl attempting a communal bray-along of some forgotten Youthmovies track, though. ‘Won’, meanwhile, aims for stately glide but ends up as tipsy tip-toe initially before building a head of steam and bringing the noise more fully. They leave their best to last, the garbled hysteria and sharp, wayward elbows of ‘We Are As Ghosts In This’ shrugging off their earlier reticence and suggesting a few pints of Old Bastard might actually make decent scrappers out of them.

ROBERTO Y JUAN

Despite the exotic moniker Roberto y Juan aren’t a pair of Latino buskers recently decamped to Oxford to bring a bit of salsa exotica to Cornmarket Street, instead featuring Robin Christensen-Marriott from Balloon Ascents and chum plying an oddly understated acoustic pop with only

the merest hint of some flamenco madness about it. ‘Pick Up the Sack’ is positively glum, closer to a slightly strangled Thom Yorke sat in the corner of a Tex-Mex bar contemplating the futility of it all while drowning his sorrows with cactus juice than a wild night dancing the Tarantella atop tables strewn with the detritus of a heavy Sangria session. The enigmatically-titled ‘Blaaaah’ is better if no less maudlin, again a hint of Radiohead discovering an hitherto untapped Spanish bar element to their music, wandering airily through a haze of idle contemplation, more glitchy than swinging. Passable if ultimately too insubstantial to linger long in the mind, and not the party starter we’d maybe hoped for with that name. Also, we’re always a little wary of musicians going off to indulge side projects before their chief concern has really got going, and Balloon Ascents are a band we’d hate to see falter so early. Eye on the ball, fella, eye on the ball.

THUNDER ON THE LEFT

Not named, we presume, after Jeremy Corbyn’s storming of the Labour party leadership contest, Thunder On the Left are still old school rockers in the way Corbyn is old school Labour. They’ve got a strong, jagged post-grunge edge to their sound, preferring a staccato attack over big rolling chords, and initially at least they sound like a meaty old mash up of Therapy? and Hole, but let them carry on beyond that early short, sharp shock and they revert to classic rock easily enough, ‘Fact From Fiction’ overstaying its welcome by way of an elongated guitar solo/wigout that serves only to undo all the good work they’d done in the first two minutes of the song. ‘Pretty Little Victims’, meanwhile is more strident, particularly vocally, and if there’s an internal battle raging within the band for supremacy between those who want to be more Tairrie B and those who want to be Lita Ford, you worry that the balance is shifting towards the latter, when any sane person knows it’s better to be the former.

MOOGIEMAN

A reasonably regular visitor to the demo pages, Moogiemann’s latest offering comes on cassette, that benighted format that died an unmourned death shortly after the near demise of vinyl. But while vinyl was always a superior way of listening to music, cassettes were fiddly, prone to breaking and generally a bit crap, so why anyone thinks it’s cool and trendy to bring them back is anyone’s guess. Do we even have a tape player any longer? Luckily *Nightshift*’s shit heap of a car is old and decrepit enough to still have a deck, and

so we have to go and sit in the driveway to listen to this demo, even though it makes us look a bit weird to our neighbours, who already think we’re a bit odd because we spend our evenings sitting out in the garden drinking and talking to the cats and making the cats talk back in funny squeaky voices, which make us giggle like simpleton schoolgirls. So anyway, out into the car we go, where it’s warm and stuffy if not hot enough to kill a dog and Moogiemann’s trademark mix of self-consciously out of tune narratives, arch observational humour and general footlights wackiness unfurls once again, with tales about eating cold cucumber soup by the gallon and futile attempts to buy an ice-cream. There’s some nice squelchy synths on ‘Ice Cream Van’ but elsewhere Moogiemann shifts gears between barbers shop harmony singing, stumbling acoustic strumming and generally messy lo-fi arrangements. And then, after sitting in the car for half an hour attracting suspicious looks from passing parents with small kids, and the well-meaning enquiries of a good Samaritan who thought we were trying to gas ourselves, out of the cassette case slips a piece of paper with a Bandcamp download code on it. So we’ve sat here looking weird for no reason at all? “That’s right,” says a squeaky cat voice.

THE DEMO DUMPER

AMPLIFIRES

Hey, Amplifires – we saw what you did there. Like Amplifiers, but, like ON FIRE! Rock. And. Roll. And it gets better, because this one-song offering is called ‘What Is It Good For? (War)’. A bit like the old Edwin Starr classic, but, like, not that one at all. Something different. Something... a bit rubbish. At first we think maybe it isn’t completely rubbish because somewhere amid the middling, muddling mess of shuffling soft rock and sky-searching guitar is what sounds like Jefferson Airplane’s ‘Somebody To Love’. Except, as we quickly realise, Jefferson Airplane’s ‘Somebody To Love’ as belted out at some godawful pub karaoke session by a breathlessly overwrought woman making come-to-bed eyes at the old ham next to the stage who is playing the world’s most pointless guitar solo constantly over the whole song. It’s so tortuous we contemplate going back out to sit in the car a bit more since it doesn’t have internet access and therefore we won’t be able to hear the bastard thing. Far more than brown acid or an entire field of naked middle aged hippies, this is the sort of stuff that gives psychedelia a bad name.

*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 700 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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