



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every

month

Issue 249

April

2016

"We went from having it all: band, album, live agent, label and distribution to half a band, in a two month period."

The Epstein

Oxford's folk-rock romantics on the road back from loss.

Also in this issue:

Introducing **HELL'S GAZELLES**
Common People local stage line-up revealed.

Oxford Punt line-up announced.

*plus all your Oxford music news and reviews
and six pages of local gigs for the month ahead.*

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THE BULLINGDON

APRIL 2016

Friday 1st April
**Kiran Leonard
Irma Vep
Salvation Bill**

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 2nd April
Donguralesko
Fa Mas, DJ War, Robsona, B.R.A.T
Widek 10, Esuw Solo, Defacto Group
Haryjson Joint & Magix

Doors: 7pm
Monday 4th April
J W Jones

Doors: 7.30pm
Tuesday 5th April
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited

Doors: 8.30pm
Wednesday 6th April
**High Tyde
Dive In
The Haze**

Doors: 7pm
Thursday 7th April
**The Epstein
The August List
A Reluctant Arrow**

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

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 9th April
**Little Brother Eli
Dead Dollar Days
Carl Mills
Jack Lester**

Doors: 7pm
Sunday 10th April
**Beaty Heart
Who's Alice?**

Doors: 7pm
Monday 11th April
**Bry
Oria Garland**

Doors: 7.30pm
Tuesday 12th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Guitar Summit

Doors: 8.30pm
Thursday 14th April
**Rob Tognoni
Man Make Fire**

Doors: 7pm
Friday 15th April
**Introducing
Play DJ Shadow's
'Endtroducing' LIVE**

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 16th April
**The Magic Gang
Vitamin**

Doors: 7pm
Monday 18th April
**Hidden Charms
Island
Valve Control**

Doors: 7pm
Tuesday 19th April
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Big Colours

Doors: 8.30pm
Wednesday 20th April
Gavin James

Doors: 7pm
Thursday 21st April
Richmond Fontaine

Doors: 7pm
Friday 22nd April
Mike Dignam

Doors: 7.30pm
Saturday 23rd April
**Tigertailz
Last Great Dreamers**

Doors: 7pm
Monday 25th April
**Beach Baby
Babeheaven**

Doors: 7.30pm
Tuesday 26th April
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Hugh Turner Band

Doors: 8.30pm
Wednesday 27th April
Laurence Jones

Doors: 8pm
Thursday 28th April
**New Faces Tour:
The Beach
Adam French
Rukhsana Merrise
Matt Woods**

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 30th April
**Simple:
Tama Suma**

Doors: 11pm
Tuesday 3rd May
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Stuart Henderson Quartet

Doors: 8.30pm
Thursday 5th May
**Stephen Dale Petit
Dull Knife**

Doors: 7pm
Friday 6th May
**Cale Tyson Band
Loud Mountains**

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 7th May
**Desert Storm
Suns of Thunder
Welcome Back Delta**

Doors: 7pm
Friday 13th May
**Treetop Flyers
The Shapes
Les Clochards**

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 14th May
Spring King

Doors: 7pm
Wednesday 18th May
**Courage My Love
Over**

Doors: 7.30pm
Thursday 19th May
Ryan McGarvey

Doors: 7pm
Friday 20th May
**John Metcalfe Band
Barney Morse-Brown**

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 21st May
Yak

Doors: 7pm
Monday 23rd May
Blaenavon

Doors: 7pm
Thursday 26th May
Baby Strange + White

Doors: 7pm
Wednesday 1st June
**Malcom Middleton
(Arab Strap)**

Doors: 7pm
Thursday 2nd June
The Hunna

Doors: 7pm
Monday 6th June
Lera Lynn

Doors: 7pm
Friday 10th June
Big Deal

Doors: 7pm
Saturday 11th June
Police Dog Hogan

Doors: 8pm
Saturday 18th June
The Cheeseegraters

Doors: 7pm
Wednesday 22nd June
The Deslondes

Doors: 7.30pm
Saturday 25th June
**Little Brother Eli
Nine Miles South**

Doors: 7pm
The Bullingdon
162 Cowley Road
Oxford, OX4 1UE
01865 244516
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Fri 1st Apr • £13 adv • 10pm
**Spring 2016 Tour Ft.
SASASAS, DJ Hype, Ms
Dynamite, Ghetts**

Sat 9th Apr • £7 adv • 6pm
Skeletor Ft Stiff Bizkit
+ Lest We Forget
+ Jabroni Sandwich
+ Bloodshot
+ Violence Is Golden

Sat 9th Apr • £8 adv • 9pm
**D-Vine Sounds
Feat. Sam Divine**

Mon 11th Apr • SOLD OUT
Jack Garratt
+ Kacy Hill

Wed 13th Apr • £21.50 adv
Newton Faulkner

Fri 15th Apr • £15 adv • 6.30pm
Space
+ Youth Club For Rich Kids

Fri 15th Apr • £5 adv • 11pm
Tracksuit and Trance

Sat 16th Apr • £7 adv • 6.30pm
ALXNDR
+ Homeplanetearth
+ Haze

Sun 17th Apr • £7 adv • 6pm
Crystallite & We Are Z
+ Storyteller
+ Who's Alice
+ Jack Little

Thu 21st Apr • £16 adv
The James Hunter Six

Fri 22nd April • £16 adv • 6pm
The Icicle Works

Fri 22nd April • £25 adv • 6.30pm
**Billy Ocean 30th
Anniversary Tour**
+ Yolanda Brown

Sat 23rd April • £12 adv • 6pm
**Benjamin Francis
Leftwich**

Fri 29th April • £12.50 adv
**The Hip Hop
Shakespeare Company
Presents Richard II**

Fri 29th April • £20 adv • 11pm
**Assassin (aka "Agent
Sasco") & Spice**
+ White Magic Sound
+ Smiling Man
+ Rudie Rich
+ 2Xclusive

Sun 1st May • £16.50 adv
Lethal Bizzle

Sun 1st May • £15 adv
**Chameleons Vox -
The Farewell Tour**

Mon 2nd May • £10 adv
The Treatment
+ The Amorettes

Wed 4th May • £21 adv
The Bluetones

Thu 5th May • £15 adv
Less Than Jake
+ Trash Boat
+ Kenneths

Fri 6th May • £10 adv
The Spitfires
+ Nick Corbin of New Street
Adventure (Solo)
+ Zurich

Sat 7th May • £8.50 adv
Leader EP Launch
+ A Way With Words
+ Dance a la Plage
+ Stick Figures

Wed 11th May • £18 adv • 6.30pm
Rend Collective
+ Urban Rescue

Fri 13th May • £8 adv • 6pm
**Church of the Heavy
Ft. Violence Is Golden**
+ Man Make Fire
+ Ways Across
+ Not Too Shabby
+ Social Discharge
+ Hope Burden

Sat 14th May • £22 adv • 6.30pm
Magnum

Sun 15th May • £11 adv
Andy Jordan

Wed 18th May • £7 adv
September Girls

Sat 21st May • £16 adv • 6.30pm
**Mike Peters Presents
The Alarm - Declare
Your Strength Tour
2016**

Sun 22nd May • £15 adv
The Joy Formidable

Thu 26th May • £8 adv
Emma Pollock

Fri 27th May • £10 adv • 6.30pm
**Novana (Nirvana
Tribute) - Celebrating
the 25th Anniversary
of "Nevermind"**

Sat 28th May • £8 adv • 6.30pm
The Computers

Fri 3rd Jun • £11 adv • 6pm
Cancer Bats

Mon 6th Jun • £27.50 adv
Public Image Ltd

Fri 17th Jun • £26.50 adv
Nelly - Live In Concert

Fri 17th Jun • £20 adv • 10pm
**Alkaline Live New
Unlock Tour**

Sat 29th Jun • £12 adv • 6.30pm
Stillmarillion

Wed 18th Jun • £10 adv
Will and The People

Sat 16th Jul • £10 adv • 6.30pm
**The Southmartins
(Tribute To The
Beautiful South &
The Housemartins)**

Tue 16th Aug • £15 adv • 7.30pm
Hayseed Dixie

Wed 31st Aug • £10 adv • 7pm
Sticky Fingers

Fri 2nd Sep • £8 adv • 6.30pm
**Elvana - The World's
Finest Elvis Fronted
Tribute to Nirvana**

Fri 23rd Sep • £8 adv • 6.30pm
G2 Definitive Genesis

Sat 8th Oct • £22.50 adv • 6.30pm
From The Jam

Tue 11th Oct • £12 adv
AURORA

Fri 14th Oct • £18 adv • 6.30pm
Little Brother Eli

Sat 15th Oct • £12 adv • 6.30pm
**The Smyths - The
Queen is Dead 30th
Anniversary Tour**

Fri 21st Oct • £11 adv • 6.30pm
Guns 2 Roses

Sat 22nd Oct • £22.50 adv • 6.30pm
Buzzcocks

Fri 28th Oct • £20 adv • 6pm
The Christians

Fri 28th Oct • £10 adv • 6.30pm
Gentleman's Dub Club

Fri 18th Nov • £8 adv • 6.30pm
Little Red

Sat 19th Nov • £11 adv • 6pm
**Definitely Mightbe
(Oasis Tribute)**

Sat 19th Nov • £8 adv • 6.30pm
**Saedly Dorus And The
Hoolie Band**

Sat 26th Nov • £21 adv • 6.30pm
Turin Breaks

Fri 9th Dec • £14 adv • 6.30pm
**Absolute Bowie
(Tribute) - Celebrating
the life of David
Bowie**

Sat 17th Dec • £12 adv
**Leatherat Christmas
Party**

ticketweb

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CONVULSIVE LIFE Knight Frank

NEWS

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THE LINE-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT has been announced. The annual showcase of up and coming local bands takes place on **Wednesday 11th May** and features 20 acts across five venues in Oxford city centre. The full punt line-up is:
The Purple Turtle: Moogieman & the Masochists; The Aureate Act; Being Eugene; Dror (*pictured*).
The Cellar: Great Western Tears; Slate Hearts; Kanadia; STEM.
The Wheatsheaf: The Beckoning Fair Ones; Cherokee; Crystallite; Too Many Poets.
Turl Street Kitchen: Charlie Leavy; Coldredlight; Little Red; Cradle.
The White Rabbit: Kanchol; These Are Our Demands; Lucy Leave; Brown Glove.
 The Punt kicks off at 7pm at The Purple Turtle with Moogieman and finishes at midnight at The White Rabbit with Brown Glove.
 A limited number (100) **all-venue Punt passes** are on sale now, priced £8, online at wegottickets.com, or from **Truck Store** on Cowley Road and **Blackwell's Music** on Broad Street. Entry to individual gigs on the night is £5, though Turl Street Kitchen and The White Rabbit are free.

Profits from The Punt will once again be divided between **Tiggywinkles** wildlife hospital in Haddenham, and the **Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre**. Check out the **Oxford Punt 2016** page on **Facebook** for updated news.

MARK RONSON, KAISER CHIEFS AND ROISIN MURPHY are among the first batch of names to be announced for this year's Big Feastival Festival. The annual music and food extravaganza, hosted by Jamie Oliver and Blur's Alex James, runs over the weekend of the 26th-28th August at Alex's Farm near Kingham in west Oxfordshire. Other acts confirmed include Ella Henderson; Foxes; DJ Fresh; Toots & the Maytals; The Proclaimers; Stereo MCs and Norman Jay. Raymond Blanc, Tom Kerridge and Jamie Oliver himself are amongst a cast of celebrity chefs due to appear over the weekend. More info and ticket at thebigfeastival.com.

TRUCK STORE, BLACKWELL'S MUSIC AND RAPTURE in Witney celebrate the annual Record Store Day this month with live music instore and a wealth of limited edition vinyl releases. RSD takes place on Saturday 16th April, and amongst acts putting out special releases are Foals, Ezra Furman, Florence & The Machine, Lush, Bastille, The Fall, Public Service Broadcasting, Iron Maiden, David Bowie, Flaming Lips and Justin Bieber. While Blackwell's

(continued overleaf...)



THE LINE-UP FOR THE UNCOMMON STAGE AT COMMON People has been announced. The dedicated local acts stage is curated by *Nightshift* and features 18 bands and artists from around the county over the weekend of the 28th-29th May in South Park. Saturday night sees a headline set from hot jazz, jump blues and vintage r'n'b ensemble **The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band** (*pictured*). They'll be joined by reggae outfit **Zaia**; eclectic indie starlets **Balloon Ascents**; electro-pop and r'n'b songstress **Esther Joy Lane**; uber-doom crew **Undersmile**; soulful multi-instrumentalist **Cameron A.G.**; swashbuckling rock'n'rollers **Peerless Pirates**; baroque-pop band **Death of the Maiden**, fronted by singer Tamara Parsons-Baker, and cello'n'loops maestro **Duotone**. Sunday's local line-up is topped by ska-flavoured eastern European folk-pop band **The Balkan Wanderers**; they're joined by electro instrumentalists **Maiians**; synthy voodoo-blues duo **Vienna Ditto**; dapper bluesmen **Little Brother Eli**; conscious hip hop collective **Inner Peace Records**; splenetic melodic punk brothers **Cassels**; backwoods porch duo **The August List**; **The Young Women's Music Project**, and melancholic singer-songwriter **Julia Meijer**. The Uncommon Stage gives those 18 local acts the opportunity to play to an expected crowd of over 20,000 at the festival, which is being organised by the team behind Bestival and Camp Bestival. In addition to the Uncommon Stage, a number of other local acts will be performing at Common People. Brazilian percussion and dance troupe **Sol Samba**; New Orleans-style brass band **Temple Funk Collective**, and street brass ensemble **Horns of Plenty** will all be playing, while there will be urban dance from **Dancin' Oxford**, and a youth theatre production from **Leys CDI**. The Disco Shed will also be in attendance, with sets from Count Skylarkin; Peepshow Paddy; Harvey K-Tel; Kerry & Casio; Del Gazebo, Simple's Em Williams and more. Other attractions announced include a wall of death display and a knitting tent hosted by The Drunken Knitwits. **DURAN DURAN** headline the main stage on the Saturday, with **Primal Scream** topping the bill on the Sunday. The line-up also features **Public Enemy**; **Katy B**; **Craig David's TS5**; **Gaz Coombes**; **Ghostpoet**; **The Sugarhill Gang**; **Soul II Soul**; **Jamie Lawson**; **Kurupt FM**; **David Rodigan**; **Chas & Dave** and more. Tickets for the weekend are on sale now, priced at £27.50 for adult day tickets, with weekend tickets as well as family and student concessions available. Visit oxford.commonpeople.net for full line-up and ticket details.



WOOD FESTIVAL returns in May with a line-up that includes **Sam Lee**, **Danny & the Champions of the World**, **The Owiny Sigoma Band** and **Emily Barker**. The award-winning eco festival runs over the weekend of the 20th-22nd May at **Braziers Park**, near Wallingford. Other acts on the bill include Hanna-Lou Lurait; The Dreaming Spires; Boo Seeka; Louis Berry; Edd Keene; Chantel Acda; President Sweetheart; Great Western Tears; Terra Lightfoot; Don Gallardo; Surf Dads; Paul McClure; Lewis & Lee; Jali Fily Cissokho; Water Pageant; Natureboy; Loud Mounains and Cassie Josephine & Gabriel Minnikin. Started by Truck Festival founders Robin and Joe Bennett in 2008, WOOD can rightly claim to be the greenest festival on the UK circuit, with everything from green fuel-powered stages, lighting and cinema, and compost toilets, to organic food and beer, as well as myriad environmental-themed workshops, talks and kids activities. In keeping with the annual wildlife theme, this year's WOOD will be The Year of The Red Kite, following celebrations of badgers and bees. More info and ticket details at woodfestival.tumblr.com and Facebook.com/woodfestival.

NEWS

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Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk

Music on Broad Street are tying their RSD offers in with The Oxford Folk Weekend, Truck and Rapture will have live music instore, with acts yet to be confirmed.

MAILIANS, ESTHER JOY LANE, DEATH OF HI-FI AND ASHER DUST are among a host of acts featured on **'We Do Not Have a Dinosaur Volume 2'**, next month. The album, released on Monday 2nd May, is a showcase of the best electronic music in Oxford and has been compiled by Tiger Mendoza's Ian de Quadros. It is the follow-up to the first **We Do Not...** album, released in 2011. Other acts on the album include After the Thought; Coloureds; David Griffiths; Half Decent; Kid Kin; Lee Riley; Meef Chaloin; Restructure; Space Heroes of the People; Tiger Mendoza and The Young Women's Music Project. As well as compiling the best local electronic music the album will raise funds for The Oxford Food Bank and Helen & Douglas House. A launch gig featuring some of the acts involved takes place at Truck Store on Friday 6th May. Get your copy at wedonothaveadinosaur.bandcamp.com from the 2nd May.

IRREGULAR FOLKS host their Summer Session on Saturday 2nd July. The eclectic folk-but-not-folk

club will be taking over Hogacre Eco Park near Hinksey for the day after receiving Arts Council funding for their acclaimed events.

Six acts have already been confirmed for the Summer Session: singer **Jessica Slighter**, who has recently toured with Jenny Hval; **Bastardgeist**; **Waitress For The Bees**; **Water Pageant**; **Whisky Moonface** and **Jess Hall**. Headline acts are still to be announced. There will also be a second stage, **The Odditorium**, hosted by the people behind Sing-Along-A-Wicker-Man, plus a very special host for the day. Tickets for the event, priced £15, are on sale at www.irregularfolk.co.uk.

REMOULD, DJ JUNO AND TIM SAMSARA reunite for a Mayday Eve free party this month. The DJs who were lynchpins of 90s club nights Transmission and Escape From Samsara, play at Audacity at East Oxford Community Centre on Saturday 30th April. Audacity, hosted by Audacity AI – aka live trance act Leftouterjoin – aims to recapture the spirit of the free raves that were a big part of Oxfordshire's music scene from the late 80s and through the 90s with a mix of hard trance, techno and acid house. The volunteer-run event is free; anyone who'd like to get involved can email audacityoxford@gmail.com



BALLOON ASCENTS have changed their name to **NEVERLND** and are planning to release a new song, free to download, each month for the foreseeable future.

The band announced the new name on Twitter on March 6th, simultaneously previewing a new song, 'Where Do I Start', on Soundcloud. They will make their live debut under the name Neverlnd with a show at the **Jacqueline du Pre Building** on **Friday 22nd April**.

Singer Thomas Roberts explained the name change to *Nightshift*. "A big part of the next few years is about making everything exist under one roof; for the themes and imagery to tie together. So it made sense for us to change, almost to announce to everyone – us included – that this is the start of one big idea. And while we don't want to abandon our past we didn't want it to be too much of a distraction.

"Musically we're still the same five guys with the same instruments, I just think we have a clearer idea of what we want the band to be. It's all about reflecting the world around us in everything we do, whether it's the sound or the lyrics or the way we release things."

Neverlnd will now release a new song each month as a gift to fans.

"We really want people to feel close to the band in terms of growing an idea that people can feel part of; we felt that releasing an album didn't make sense right now. There's no longer any distance between artists and fans and everything is instant and personal and we want to embody that idea. The aim is for everyone to live us and our 'album' every day through streaming and social media, for people to come along a journey with us, so in that sense, it doesn't have an end date. We want to see how far we can take this before we even start to think about a proper album.

"The show on the 22nd at the Jacqueline du Pre building should be fantastic. The space is seriously nice and quite intimate. It should be an awesome way to share all of our new material with everyone.

Neverlnd are one of 18 local acts picked to play the Uncommon Stage at Common People in South Park over the weekend of the 28th-29th May.

To hear the band's new songs first each month, join their mailing list at www.facebook.com/neverlndband. Tickets for the JdP show are available at tigmus.com.



TRIBUTES HAVE BEEN PAID TO MUSICIAN, DJ AND PROMOTER MICHAEL BARRY, who died in March, at the age of 35. Michael was one of the instigators of the club night Abort, Retry, Fail? between 2006-2008, whose Oxford gigs included some of the earliest shows by Foals, as well as local gigs for Friendly Fires and Youthmovies. He was also a member of local electro-pop band 100 Bullets Back.

Noel Pearson, who played in 100 Bullets Back as well as co-founding Abort, Retry Fail? with Michael, said of his friend, "Mike oozed charisma. We met after he watched one of our 100 Bullets Back gigs and two hours later he had not only joined the band, but we had set up our first club night at The Cellar which would become our second home for over two years. He brought energy, fun and the 'Michael dance' with him wherever he went. He embraced life, made people smile and will always be remembered."

Former Youthmovies frontman Andrew Mears said, "As a promoter and as a friend, Michael exuded a light that made him a total pleasure to be around. Everything he did he did without pretention and for the love of it. He came at life with an open heart and an invitation to dance; without him I would have never met many of the people that are my closest friends, and I would be poorer for it. His vibrant air and smiling fight remain as examples to live by."

Ady Foley, who ran the Vacuous Pop label and club nights, added, "Michael was someone of such great vitality whose sense of fun and incredible enthusiasm for life was totally infectious. We shared a strong passion for music which led to many an adventure. It was a pleasure and privilege to have known him, and he will be sorely missed."

Nightshift's thoughts go out to all of Michael's family and friends, and we toast his contribution to Oxford's music scene.

WATER PAGEANT officially launch their debut album this month with a show at Art Jericho on Friday 29th April. The local electro-folk-pop duo's 'Outlines' came out at the end of 2015. Find out more at facebook.com/waterpageant.

RAWZ, FLOODED HALWAYS AND TANG THE PILGRIM are amongst a host of local hip hop artists who have contributed to a new album by Italian electronica and hip hop producer Sabir. 'Killer Marvel' also features contributions from Deeq, N-zyme and Biscuit and is released on White Forest Records. More info at www.whiteforestrecords.com.



LEADER launch their eponymous debut EP on Saturday 7th May. The Witney quintet will headline the O2 Academy with support from *A Way With Words*, *Dance a la Plage* and *Stick Figures*. Tickets, priced £8.50adv are on sale from ticketweb.co.uk.

THE OXFORD SHAKESPEARE JUBILEE is celebrated in music this month with a series of concerts across the city curated by TMD and

Pindrop, as well as a compilation album of songs from the Shakespearean era. On Friday 22nd St John the Evangelist host an evening of music from the plays of Shakespeare, with music composed during or before the Bard's lifetime, reinterpreted by Dead Rat Orchestra; Rob St John; Thomas Truax; Nick Castell; Brickwork Lizards; Flights of Helios, and James Bell & Kirsty Law. On Wednesday 27th Arva perform Shakespearean Broadside ballad versions of Titus Andronicus and King Lear in the Oxford Castle crypt and courtyard. On Friday 29th The Hip Hop Shakespeare Company – set up by London rapper Akala – perform songs on the theme of Richard II, while the season is rounded off on Saturday 30th at Fusion Arts with The King's Arms Players performing sonnets to a soundtrack by The Children of the Midnight Chimes.

The album, 'The Food Of Love', features songs featured in the SJE show, performed by many of the artists performing at the show, plus Stornoway.

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.

MARTIN CARTHY is among the star names at this month's **Oxford Folk Weekend**. The award-winning English folk veteran tops the bill at the fifth annual festival over the weekend of the 15th-17th April.

Kathryn Roberts & Sean Lakeman, and **Emily Portman** are the event's other main headliners, and are joined by Coope, Boyes & Simpson; Rachel Newton; Hannah James' Jigdoll; Megson; The Simon Care Trio; Tobias Ben Jacobs & Lucas Drinkwater, and a host of local acts including Count Drachma; Tom Blackburn; Ben Avison; Small & Gold; Kismet; The Skeptics and Short Drag Roger.

Concerts will take place at The Wesley Memorial Church, St Barnabas, Blackwell's, The Pitt Rivers Museum, The Ashmolean and St Columbus' Church, while various celidhs, workshops, dance displays and free family events are also planned.

Weekend tickets are £62, with concessions and day tickets available. More information and ticket details at www.folkweekendoxford.co.uk.



BOOKER T is among the final names to be added to this year's **Cornbury Festival** line-up. The legendary Stax Records musician, producer and songwriter is joined by recently reformed girl group **All Saints** and acclaimed r'n'b singer **Corrine Bailey Rae** over the weekend of the 8th-10th July at Great Tew Country Park.

As previously announced, **Jamie Cullum**, **Bryan Ferry** and **Seal** will headline this year's Cornbury. Other acts already confirmed over the three days include r'n'b survivor **Wilko Johnson**; 80s acid-jazz crew **Soul II Soul**; ska hitmakers **The Beat**; pop balladeer **Gabrielle Aplin**; alt. country star **Lucinda Williams**; rising British country duo **The Shires**; indie-folksters **Turin Brakes**; folk newcomers **Cattle & Cane**; singer-songwriter **James Morrison**; quirky pop chap **Newton Faulkner**; 60s rock vets **The Zombies**; Cornbury perennials **STAXS**; Noah and the Whale guitarist **Fred Abbott** with his new band, and long-running ABBA tribute **Bjorn Again**.

Tickets for this year's Cornbury Festival are on sale now at www.cornburyfestival.com or on 0844 338 0000.

OXFORD GIGBOT provides a regular local gig listing update on Twitter (@oxgigbot), bringing you new gigs as soon as they go live.

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@NightshiftMag



Oxford Punt 2016

The Epstein



A SENSE OF LOSS IS INTRINSIC to the heart and soul of folk music and Americana. The Epstein have endured their fair share of loss in recent times, though perhaps not of the romantic sort you might imagine.

In the run-up to the release of their third album, ‘Burn The Branches’, this month, the band have lost two members, their booking agent, their record label and a lucrative advertising opportunity with BMW. Some of these have hit harder than others but The Epstein have endured and the new album – their first since ‘Murmurations’ in 2013 – sounds as big-hearted and euphoric as they ever have.

AFTER ALL, THIS ISN’T THE first time The Epstein have come close to crumbling as core members departed.

The last time we featured the band on the front cover was in 2011, around the time they released their magnum opus ‘I Held You Once’, they’d only just returned to live action after losing founder and guitarist Roland Prytherch and drummer Paul Denley. Various friends, including Stornoway’s Oli Steadman and The Dreaming Spires’ Joe Bennett, had filled in as singer and songwriter Olly Wills tried regroup his forces. Now, as *Nightshift* talks to Olly on the eve of the release of ‘Burning The

Branches’, he’s ruminating on the loss of two more compadres – keyboard player Seb Reynolds and long-term guitarist Jon Berry. How does he keep coming back from blows like that? “We had just about finished this album – and had done so in good time – when it became clear that John and Seb would not be around to release it and there is no doubt that it took a long time to get over that news. Seb had been with us through the whole finishing, release and touring of ‘Murmurations’ and John was *the* guitar sound of the band, so the impact on all of us was massive. Being in a cohesive band is all about momentum and we had really been on a roll so, suddenly, two wheels came off and we found ourselves grounded again. Thankfully we had recorded the vast majority of ‘Burn The Branches’ in a two month period before any of this happened so the album was there and had been done in a wonderful atmosphere of confidence and positivity. “In terms of keeping on after their departures it was really hard... but we had this album to finish and to release and we were determined not to waste all the work we had put into it, so we started playing with Billy Quarterman as our new axe man and gradually put the pieces back together over the last year or so until we were confident that our new line up could do justice to the

material that the band plays.”

‘BURN THE BRANCHES’ follows the path that ‘Murmurations’ set out on three years ago, detouring from The Epstein’s rootsy Americana into a grander, folk-rock place, drawing comparisons to The Waterboys at times, while Olly’s questing, tremulous voice remains dead centre of the songs. The album is self-released after the band were dumped by their record label. But a bigger blow was the loss of their trusted booking agent who’d been instrumental in organising gigs across Europe for The Epstein over the years. “*The* most important person you can ever have as a band is a good booking agent. Our agent had to take a career break because of exhaustion and our label took a break from us because we didn’t sell enough records! Truly gutting and almost ridiculous when you take into account our personnel situation at the time too. We went from a situation where we had all the balls lined up: band, albums, live agent, label and distribution to band, minus two members, in a two month period.” It wasn’t all doom and gloom though; in an age where few bands can survive on record sales, the opportunity for a money-spinning advert with BMW Mini popped up.

Of course, it was a classic case of so near and yet so far... “A local production company got in touch out of the blue and after a couple of meetings it really did seem that we were going to be going off to a festival in one of these Mini estates, playing some shows and then doing some camping too... all as part of an advert that would go all over the world. They were going to use the band name and a couple of our songs – ‘I Held You Once’ and ‘Calling Out’ – and it was all going to be a whole lot of fun and hopefully a massive push for us. They pulled it five days away from filming, which was gutting. “To be perfectly honest it was one of those weird things which at the time just seems way too good to be true and in the end was too good to be true!”

A BAD FEW MONTHS AT THE office then, but now is the time to put such trials behind them. ‘Burn The Branches’ is a serious statement of intent, with Olly’s warm, expansive songs taking you from the campfire to the stratosphere in the space of a few short minutes, as with long-time friends Stornoway, the wide open spaces of the world and its wildernesses forever an imposing presence. With most of the album recorded before the myriad upheavals, how

does Olly feel it compares to its predecessor, ‘Murmurations’? “I think this is a harder album both sonically and feel wise. It is certainly the closest we have ever got to recording a rock album. It is also a lot more ‘live’ than the last album in terms of the process of recording it; we took in ideas for songs and worked on them under pressure in the studio and recorded straight off the bat. Many of the songs were written in the studio and it’s the tension of this process that we hope comes through. “We were a different band recording this album to the band that made ‘Murmurations’ – still with John as the main melodic leader instrumentally – but the band dynamic was so different with keyboards also playing a major role and with Tommy [Longfellow – drums] and Huck [Humphrey Astley – bass] on the rhythm section, we were also a band that was extremely road tight, so this all lent itself to a positive creative spirit in the studio and a recording process that was a true joy.”

EQUALLY CENTRAL TO THE album were producer Richard Neuberg and mixer George Shilling. “Both Richard and George played a major role. George has his signature all over the album and we were thrilled to work with him and would do so again at a shot as he really is one of the best at what he does anywhere. Richard is one of the central pillars of the album, being the man who has guided, goaded, supported and criticised us throughout. “This is the second album that Richard has been with us for and the man is a legend. His energy, creativity and positivity make it all seem possible and he also speaks straight when things are not working, which saves so much time in the recording process. He also has a great sense of humour that is essential if you are all cooped up for 12-16 hours a day in a confined space!”

WITH ‘BURN THE BRANCHES’ The Epstein increasingly seem to have left their Americana roots behind in favour of a more epic, and folkier sound; is Olly conscious of that? “I think as the band has developed and changed over the years; we have certainly moved away from those roots both consciously and naturally... personnel dictates a lot of that and I think that we were ready to push in new directions for ourselves and for our music and that is probably one of the main reasons that we are still playing and making music.” The themes of love, loss and longing are still dominant; do you think you’re an incurable romantic? “I think that when you write songs these are the eternal themes that always predominate, even if you attempt to stay away from them.

These feelings and emotions are the essence what it means to be human so they are the themes that the listener connects to too.” You sing about leaving this world behind on ‘Red Rocks’; where in the universe would you like to go? “When I was working in Wyoming many years ago the sky at night was like nothing I had ever experienced before and haven’t experienced since. The stars were so clear and so numerous and were there from horizon to horizon so that they were almost in touching distance. I was thinking of the stars when I was in Wyoming. Now I dream of Wyoming and those big skies.” You sing “Everyone’s getting married” on ‘Lay Me Down’ – is that a reaction to bandmates going off to get hitched and have kids? “It is a reflection of the stage of life that many of us have entered into in the last few years. The song is a take

“Skye was one of the best experiences of my life and we played one of the best shows we have ever done, next door to the Talisker Distillery, looking over the mountains and the sea.”

on the amazing experiences you have when you play live music and are lucky enough to tour and experience other countries and all the friends you make along the way whilst doing so. I guess its central message is one of savouring the special times that you have whilst playing in a band.” For your own part you’ve become a dad twice over since the last album; has that affected the way you work and write? “It affects the time I have to be actively creative and makes you appreciate all the opportunities that you get to be so. Being a parent is the most wonderful thing and I want to give the best of myself to my children, so you have to learn to preserve energy for writing and playing and go to your notebook and guitar late in the evening when all is peaceful.” Given the line-up issues, do you ever think, “fuck it, I’d be better off just doing all this solo”? “Certainly... but never for that long! Firstly I am not that good a guitar player, and secondly I love the scope that you have when performing as a band and the atmosphere you can create when you really get into the zone. I also love the camaraderie of being in a band and would certainly struggle to tour by myself.”

ON THE SUBJECT OF touring, The Epstein played a series of gigs on the Isle of Skye in 2014. The writer Neil Gaiman wrote that it was the strangest place he’d ever visited and that it stays with anyone who visits it for the rest of their lives. Would Olly agree?

“I would certainly agree on that. Our trip to Skye was one of the best experiences of my life and was a trip full of adventure and memories for the band. We played one of the best shows we have ever done in a venue right next door to the Talisker Distillery, looking over the mountains and the sea. We played one of the hardest shows we have ever done – the bar manager’s first question before our second show was ‘What covers do you guys do? 80s or 90s?’ We climbed and scrambled in the Cullins, saw sea otters and ate the best seafood I have ever eaten. We were also supported by a crazy crew of artists and creatives from Edinburgh, one of whom took to the stage in a full boiler suit for our second show and kept a hectic crowd at bay! “It’s a place I had been hoping to visit for many years and it didn’t disappoint at all. It is epic country and raw with nature. We hope to

bands out there at the minute and many of them, like Danny & The Champions, The Dreaming Spires, Loud Mountains, The August List and Ags Connolly, are well known and loved in Oxford. Americana is a music steeped in stories and how those stories are told in music and harmony will always be a draw to listeners.” “Bob Harris continues to be a great support to the scene and I believe he has a festival starting this year which will help even more. Mike Trotman from Empty Rooms Promotions continues to bring amazing acts over from the States, and Loose Records and Clubhouse Records seem to be a great home to the genre.” As something of a veteran of the Oxford scene now, what would you say is the single biggest change you’ve witnessed since The Epstein started out? “I still think that the biggest single change in live music over the last ten years was when smoking in venues was banned. Whether you are a smoker or not the experience of being at shows changed so much as a result of that in every way... I remember hardly being able to talk the next day after shows in crowded venues like The Cellar and The Jericho and I also recall how strange it was to be able to suddenly see the walls from the stage whilst playing! “In general terms though I think that the Oxford scene is remarkably resilient and continues to produce great bands, great albums, with a vibrant scene of promoters and producers all around the city. We are also blessed with lots of great local festivals and two fine top class record shops. There’s lots to be positive about with the Oxford scene.”

MUCH TO BE POSITIVE ABOUT indeed, and despite all they’ve loved and lost lately, The Epstein have plenty to be positive about. If what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger, Olly Wills and co. are set to go from strength to strength. Going back to the subject of losing band members, *Nightshift* asks Olly to picture this scene: The Epstein are in a hot air balloon on their way to their biggest show yet, but it’s losing height and they have to throw one of the members overboard to make the gig – who goes? “Tommy. Because I reckon he would survive the fall and make it to the show over land instead. Tommy is a pretty serious mountaineer and rock climber these days and he has all the necessary survival skills, unlike the rest of us. We wouldn’t survive any time out of the balloon and would struggle on directions even if we did!”

‘Burn The Branches is released this month. The Epstein play The Bullingdon on Thursday 7th April. Hear songs from the new album at www.theepstein.com

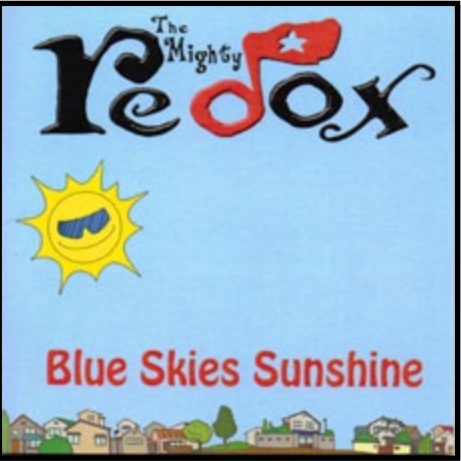
RELEASED

MASIRO ‘Technocologist Unknown’

(Self released)
When instrumental math-rock trio Masiro played in Witney just before Christmas their audience was made up entirely of Witney musos grinning from ear to ear. This will probably tell you as much as you need to know about the band. Perhaps too much.
But don’t let that image put you off – where so many math rock bands get it wrong (“Hey, let’s set π to music”), Masiro get it completely right. Sure, they’re showy, proggy, and even a little funky now with the addition of Chris Hutchinson (formerly of 50ft Panda and the criminally underrated Olid) on bass, but these elements are masterfully counterbalanced, creating a palpable tension throughout these six songs. For each spasmodic Hella-inspired outburst of technical prowess and bombast, there’s a nod to the relentless grind of Meshuggah, and just when things are about to go full King Crimson, Masiro hit you with an emotional sucker punch: a guitar lead that screams of nostalgia and longing.
That’s not to reduce Masiro to a list of their influences – it’s just that ‘Technocologist



Unknown’ is a veritable tornado of ideas that are hard to keep hold of, let alone document. At the centre of the maelstrom is ‘Miocene Dream’, the song which best demonstrates Masiro’s considerable range, but each of these six songs grabs you, spins you around and deposits you somewhere else altogether in their own way.
Pomp and flair in rock music is often derided for being bloated and masturbatory, but when it’s done this well you can’t help but grin from ear to ear.
Tom McKibbin



THE MIGHTY REDOX ‘Blue Skies Sunshine’

(Self released)
We’re pretty sure that Sue Smith and Phil Freizinger – the mainstays of both The Mighty Redox and the long-running Klub Kakofanney – hopefully wouldn’t mind us describing them as a couple of old hippies. Not in a derogatory way of course, but in the way they’ve retained a wide-eyed sense of optimism and inclusivity in everything they do. If Klub Kakofanney has long been a bastion of anything-goes encouragement for the sort acts who’d get short shrift in more self-consciously cool clubs, Mighty Redox are a band who similarly eschew

what’s in vogue or off-limits in the simple pursuit of getting everyone in a room dancing. And they do this day in, day out, the band one of the busiest gigging outfits in Oxford as well as making regular coach tours to the seaside with their small army of devotees.
A such, this, their third album in some 15 years, was never going to be called ‘Oh the Misery’, was it? Released with spring round the corner, its very title epitomises the band’s steadfast positivity. Within the first two songs we’ve had blues rock, afro-pop, Cossack folk and reggae. We’ve also had a whole heap of whoops and birdcalls and enough flute to sate an entire decade of free festivals. All of it bundled together into a bouncy whole that somehow doesn’t sound like they’re simply chucking everything at the wall in the hope some of it will stick. There is a feeling that some of the elements that go into The Mighty Redox’s cooking pot get watered down as they mingle with the other ingredients – the lightweight funk of ‘Summer’s Day’ for example – and they can slide into standard blues jamming on occasion, as on ‘Sands of Mars’, and there’s nothing as crazy or insanely catchy as ‘Bullaburra’ here, but when they get it right – as on the airy, flute-led ‘Bangra Beat’ and the reggae-flavoured ‘Flute Jam’, which remind us of great lost local folk-rock heroes Raindance – they’re great sunny summer’s afternoon fare. Just check your cool boots in at the gate.
Dale Kattack

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UNMAN Trinoform

UNMAN (their capitalisation, not mine) is Oxford sound artist Lee Riley along with Chris Pethers and Mike Bannard of math-rock band Masiro. They describe themselves as ‘noise explorers’ and that’s pretty accurate; the seven tracks of their debut ‘Trinoform’ (pleasingly named ‘alpha’ to ‘gamma’) represent a semi-improvised meander around the liminal spaces between abstraction and experimental guitar rock.
‘alpha’ is unfurling waves of drone feedback, held in structure by rolling, clattering drum patterns. Its increasingly tense squeaks and whistles lead into the more abstruse ‘beta’, which introduces a bold, repeating bass sound that brings to mind the cataclysmic honking of Leviathan in *Hellraiser II* before dissolving into a moody soundscape. ‘charlie’ and ‘delta’ continue in similar vein, teetering between completely formless noise and hyper-complex jazz-noise rhythms; the aptly-titled ‘echo’ acts as a quieter, almost accidental reflection of what has gone before. ‘foxtrot’ plunges us into a foreboding industrial pool of metallic rumble – *à la* much of the *Eraserhead* soundtrack. There’s a slight return to the relentless drums of the EP’s earlier tracks, gradually heightening tension and ultimately leading to the welcome relief of the final track. That track, ‘gamma’, is the most electronic in its sound; it feels like a treated reworking of sounds from the previous tracks, either intentionally or as a payoff for the free expression of those tracks.

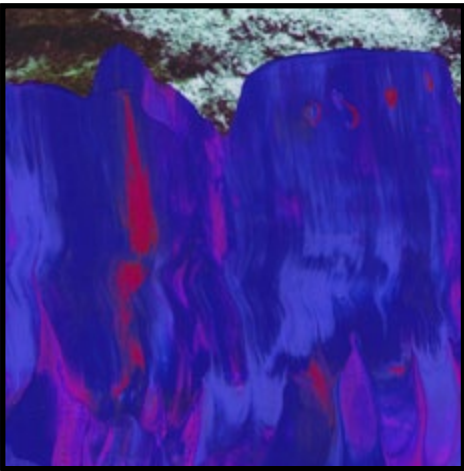
In a similar way to the band Hovercraft, who in the mid-90s smeared experimental rock abstraction across the grunge landscape of the time, UNMAN are intriguing and frustrating in equal measure, and welcome in their embracing of oddness. Although there’s a sense of a never-fulfilled buildup in these tracks, this in turn forces repeat listens. As a set of sounds, ‘Trinoform’ is a great listen; as a set of songs, it’s a great challenge.
Simon Minter



VARIOUS ARTISTS

‘All Will Be Well Records Sampler Vol.2’ *(All Will Be Well)*

Label compilations can be a mixed bag of quality, so it says a lot for the ear of Ian Mitchell, curator of AWBW Records, that these fifteen tracks are challengingly eclectic yet still worthy of their slot.
His own band, **Little Red**, gets an outing with the folksy ‘Huntsman’ having a solid electro remix by Tiger Mendoza, and further on bandmate **Ben Gosling** plays Dylan-esque blues harp around the nursery rhyme oddity of ‘Fred’, a song about his imaginary friend. From the get go good tracks march by trunk to tail, with **All is Worth**’s suitably atmospheric and cinematic ‘NYC’ leading into **Club Soda**’s ‘Market Town’, an upbeat Dream Academy doing for Abingdon what China Crisis did for Liverpool.
31 Hours’ ‘Like Wax Models’ doesn’t show off the amazing guitar interplay their live performances sparkle with, but instead they present a more subdued, stoned vibe and it takes **Moogie Man** with ‘I Left My Camera On The Moon’ to jolt me from a potential nap, as they take their cue from The



31HOURS ‘Like Wax Models’

(Self released)
A whirring soundscape of reverberating echoes and pizzicato interjections opens 31Hours’ debut EP ‘Like Wax Models’ before crashing into the stonking ‘Under the Influence’. The elegant production and seamless transitions, as heard in this opening bookend, are intelligent, and their sharp musical writing is a unifying figure throughout the whole EP.
‘Like Wax Models’ is noticeably cohesive, each track thematically linked by the elegant production laden with fidgeting guitars and fluid synthesisers. However, what it lacks, at times, is pace. Midway through the EP there’s a lull. It quietsens down, the energy dips, and the pleasant wooziness errs on the side of repetitive droning. Although each track is interesting and well crafted, it’s too much of the same, missing the vibrant spark that kicked off the EP.
This mid-EP trough is worth it though, for the last two tracks on the EP are simply brilliant. ‘Trees’ breaks the EP into a jittering gallop,

Human League with a neat slice of ‘Dare’-period electro pop. **Kanadia**’s ‘Pablo Honey’-era Radiohead-like ‘State of Mind’ works well next to **Ocean Ruin**’s ‘Hope’, with its quavering voals, reminiscent of Tracy Chapman and Joan Armatrading, before **The Midnight Ramblers**’ ‘Nightswimming’ bring us to the half way point of the album with their punchy and very tight, southern-fried rock.
The Lost Art give us ‘The Stage’, a yearning vocal/acoustic track from their five-star debut album, while **Flaming June**’s radio friendly ‘Pursuit of Happiness’ has hints of The Corrs about its merry dancing melody.
The prize for the compilation’s weirdest song is a tie between **The String Project**’s ‘Bicycle Song’, which starts out like a thousand cycle bells in a fitful dream waking up to a posh Ian Dury spoken word number, and **The Seasons in Shorthand**’s ‘Black Eyed Guilt’, which seems to be two different songs welded together, to rattle your conformity.
Minnie Birch brings back some sweet, bucolic,

awakening it from its slumber, and tearing away into a restless breakdown, adorned with glittering guitars and reverberating vocals, before it collapses into stunning closer ‘Pass the Time’, which opens with humming Björk styled electronics and purring hums, diffusing the agitation created by ‘Trees’. The juxtaposition of the two songs is fabulously constructed, and a testament to the young band’s song writing talent.
Bright, indulgent, if ever so slightly too long, ‘Like Wax Models’, is a promising debut from 31Hours, leaving no doubts that the band only have more to give.
Hannah Mylrea-Hemmings

SYLVA KAY ‘Heart of Stone’

(Indianna)
Reading through an artist’s list of influences on Facebook can provoke all manner of emotions, but seeing Galaxie 500 listed first is enough to set our hearts aflutter, and we’re soon tearing into Sylva Kay’s EP with a pair of scissors – not out of venomous rage but because it comes sealed in a foil sleeve that requires the sharpest of blades to reveal its inner treasure.
And was it worth the battle? Kind of, mostly, though you’d never guess Massachusetts’ gorgeous pop dreamers were a major source of inspiration. Instead it’s another of Sylva’s stated loves that most informs these four songs of simple, lovelorn indie-folk: Edie Brickell. There’s a similar stripped-back, country-tinged simplicity about Sylva’s songs, a purity in her voice with that vaguest of notions that she’s secretly smiling even while delivering sad stories.
The EP’s title track in particular visits



formality with ‘Until The Birds’, leaving the very youthful **EOT** (Except On Tuesday) to sign it all off with their female-fronted, fizzy pop-punk blast of ‘1000 Christmas Miles’.
So All Will Be Well Records continues to be a safe harbour for independently minded, creative acts, mainly drawn from Oxfordshire and north Berkshire, as they battle the rough seas of musical promotion. Long may they nurture and thrive.
Paul Carrera

that folk-with-a-flourish feel of Brickell’s music, Kay’s band doing just enough without imposing on her singing. ‘The First Shocks of Green’ is a hushed, almost jazzy meander that heads off on a flamenco trip towards the end, while ‘Supernatural’ is standard heart-on-sleeve confessional acoustic balladeering. Highlight of the songs here is EP closer ‘The Bend’, with its misty melancholy and Sylva’s voice close to cracking just enough to reveal the soul beneath the pop sheen. It’s always the fault lines in a voice that bring out its true character – *X-Factor*-style polish and perfection always serve to murder the magic, and Sylva Kay does just enough here to keep our interest and offer hope she can stand out from a well-populated pack.
Sue Foreman



GIG GUIDE

FRIDAY 1st

KIRAN LEONARD: The Bullingdon – Oldham’s eclectic DIY troubadour makes his Oxford debut – *see main preview*
HE WAS EATEN BY OWLS + 31HOURS + DEMCATS: The Cellar – Wayward jazz-infected math-rock from London’s excellently-named He Was Eaten By Owls, out on tour to promote their debut album on Fu Inle Records. They describe themselves as a “polyrhythmic post-punk, queer-math chamber-jazz ensemble” and they’re almost certainly correct. Support from fidgety, funky

Friday 1st

KIRAN LEONARD: The Bullingdon
While the BBC Sound Of Awards dish up yet another watered-down glorified busker in a long line of such splendours, Kiran Leonard continues to evade the major label-approved, corporate advert-friendly spotlight. In a fair and just world – one with significantly better musical taste – he’d be the young man up there accepting the awards and grabbing headlines. He’s only 20 but already has an enviable catalogue of DIY releases under his belt. His 2012 debut ‘Bowler Hat Soup’ found the then teenage troubadour playing over 20 instruments as he melded proggy pop, breezy indie folk, psychedelic cabaret, grunge and baroque show-tunes in a style that simultaneously recalled Frank Zappa, Van Dyke Parks, Radiohead, Aerial Pink, Sonic Youth and Ed Harcourt, and if he’s lately found himself fronting a more standard four-piece band, his eccentricity and inventiveness isn’t letting up. Recent single ‘Pink Fruit’, from new album ‘Grapefruit’, is a sixteen minute tale of a squid inside a woman’s body as a metaphor for emotional freedom and body image issues (can you imagine Sam Smith or Jack Garratt doing anything similar?), while he’s equally adept at skewering the cruelty of stopping benefits for disabled army veterans in song. Hailing from Oldham, Kiran’s currently studying here at university, so tonight’s Oxford debut is almost a hometown show for him. More than ever music needs wobbly-headed mavericks or people who are happy to let their fevered imaginations get the better of them.



APRIL

ambient electro-indie, recent *Nightshift* Demo of the Monthers 31Hours.
KRIS DREVER: The Old Fire Station – Songs of the Highlands and islands from the Scottish folk star – *see main preview*
OUTRIGHT RESISTANCE + EMPIRE DIVIDED + K-LACURA: The Wheatsheaf – Heavyweight fun of the heaviest order tonight at the Sheaf with Stevenage’s metal terrors Outright Resistance kicking out a noise inspired by Chimaira, Lamb of God and Machine Head, with local support from brutal death-core crew Empire Divided and thrash merchants K-Lacura.
FLIGHT BRIGADE + LITTLE RED + ROSIE CALDICOTT: The Jericho Tavern – Expansive orchestral pop from the Hampshire family band – *see main preview*
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with FUZZY LOGIC + VIENNA DITTO + MAD LARRY + SIMON DAVIES: The Wheatsheaf – Ska, punk, afro-pop and reggae fusion pop from Fuzzy Logic at tonight’s Klub Kakofanney, with support from brilliantly chaotic electro-surf-blues stars Vienna Ditto, and classic r’n’b from veteran guitarist and singer Mad Larry.
SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: The James Street Tavern – Sparky’s monthly band and jam night features sets from bluesman Beard of Destiny, folk act Jesters, and Joint Decisions.
BELLA HARDY: The Cornerstone, Didcot – The 2014 BBC Folk Singer of the Year winner tours her new album, ‘With The Dawn’, a musical diary of life as a touring musician, mixing pop elements into her traditional folk ballads, her soaring voice offset by haunting fiddle and brass elements.
STEAMROLLER + THUNDERBIRDS: Kidlington FC – Riff-heavy blues rocking in the vein of Cream and Hendrix from the local veterans at tonight’s Live and Kicking show.

SATURDAY 2nd

DONGURALESKO: The Bullingdon – Hip hop Polish style from Poznan’s prolific veteran rapper.
AUROCHS + NACHTHEXEN + EGRETS: The Library – Smash Disco present a night of bands to give the most ambitious spellchecker a coronary. Sheffield’s Aurochs spit out raw hardcore in the vein of Black Flag, Scratch Acid and The Jesus Lizard, while steel city neighbours Nachthexen take frantic synth-pop for a trip down riot grl central. Local shoegaze/hardcore newcomers Egrets open tonight’s free show.
FREE RANGE: The Cellar – UK garage club night.
MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The New Inn, Witney – Slide and harp-driven blues and boogie in the vein of Seasick Steve and Rory Gallagher.

HAWAIIAN TEA DANCE: St Giles Church Hall (6.30pm) – With the Honolulu Cowboys.
PETER KNIGHT’S GIGSPANNER: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club hosts recently departed Steeleye Spanner fiddle player Peter Knight, now concentrating on his Gigsbanner band, giving a modern folk twist to traditional songs on recent album ‘Layers of Ages’.
THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The Evenlode, Eynsham – Blues and rock’n’roll.

SUNDAY 3rd

BEARD OF DESTINY + MOON LEOPARD + DES BARKUS + JOHNNY HINKS: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of acoustic music, with bluesman Beard of Destiny, psychedelic folkies Moon Leopard and more.

MONDAY 4th

JW JONES: The Bullingdon – The Haven Club plays host to one of Canada’s star bluesmen of the past decade, Ottawa-born JW Jones, a multi-award-winning singer and guitarist, who’s played and recorded with The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Little Charlie Batey, Junior Watson and Howlin’ Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin along the way, releasing eight albums under his own name, his livewire mix of blues, rock’n’roll, swing and bop inspired by T-Bone Walker, Johnny ‘Guitar’ Watson and Jimmy Vaughan. Dan Aykroyd – a man who knows a thing or two about the blues – is a big fan and it’s a rare treat to see him play in Oxford as he tours his new album, ‘Belmont Boulevard’.
THE MICK PINI BAND: The Jericho Tavern – UK blues guitarist and singer, acclaimed as the true successor to Peter Green by none other than Eric Clapton. Using tone and dynamics rather than complex arrangements he creates dreamy, atmospheric blues rock that mixes up 60s-style British blues with Chicago r’n’b.

TUESDAY 5th

TELLISON + MUNCIE GIRLS + THE BECKONING FAIR ONES: The Wheatsheaf – Tellison, London’s consistently best-kept-secret indie crew return to Oxford courtesy of Idiot King, the band’s intelligent, catchy blend of early emo in the vein of Get Up Kids and Jimmy Eatworld, militant funk and Foals-y trilling having seen them support Get Cape, Wear Cape, Fly in the past. Support from Exeter’s sprightly Elastica and Sleeper-style indie types Muncie Girls, and local noise-pop outfit The Beckoning Fair Ones.
ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, swing and bop from clarinetist Alvin Roy and his band at the Bully’s free weekly jazz club.
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic night, hosted by Sparky.
TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE: The Half Moon – Modern groove-led jazz from the monthly residents.

WEDNESDAY 6th

HIGH TYDE: The Bullingdon – Lively indie rocking from Brighton’s rising stars, out on tour to promote new Annie Mac-endorsed single ‘Dark Love’, kicking it out in the style of Foals, Two Door Cinema Club and The 1975.
CLAIRE LE MASTER + BEAR & THE WOODS + ALL IS WORTH + STUART CLARK & SARAH GATES: The Library – Launching their second label compilation All Will Be Well Records present A Reluctant Arrow singer Claire LeMaster with her dark, bluesy folk, plus Reading’s trad-leaning folk-rockers and Nathan Allsworth’s atmospheric electro-folk.
WAY UP! WEDNESDAY: The Cellar – R’n’b, hip hop, reggae, UK garage and grime club night.

THURSDAY 7th

THE EPSTEIN + THE AUGUST LIST + A RELUCTANT ARROW: The Bullingdon – This month’s *Nightshift* cover stars launch their new album, ‘Burn the Branches’, with support from gothic porch-folk duo The August List and dark blues crew A Reluctant Arrow – *see main*

Friday 1st

FLIGHT BRIGADE / LITTLE RED / ROSIE CALDECOTT: The Jericho Tavern

The back-story to Hampshire folk-rock outfit Flight Brigade may or may not be true but it’s great story anyway – singer Ollie Baines’ dad picked up a hitch-hiking couple in 1975 who turned out to be husband and wife folk duo Mask, who played the first Glastonbury and toured with Roxy Music and Hawkwind. They stayed in touch with each other and many years later ended up near neighbours with their kids forming the band together, Ollie even going so far as to marry one of Mask’s daughters, Miriam. The expansive ensemble’s music reflects such a romantic tale: strings and keys augmenting Ollie’s haunting, contemplative songs, the band’s dark, orchestral folk-rock earning them supports with Turin Brakes and Dry the River as well as slots at Glastonbury, Bestival and The Great Escape while drawing admiring comparisons to early Arcade Fire, though they’re probably closer to The Decemberists with their darker leanings. Either way, they’re great and should fill a venue this size to the brim musically. Suitably deep, dark woods folk-pop support from Oxford’s own Little Red, picked to play this year’s Oxford Punt, with echoes of Mark Lanegan and Isobel Campbell, The Staves and even Nick Cave, and rising young local singer-songwriter Rosie Caldecott at tonight’s Tigmus-curated show.



interview feature

RODNEY QUAKES + MEREDITH BAKER + SARAH DE WARREN + JOSEPH MCCORRISTON + DAVID KAY: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music acoustic club night, with local folkster Rodney Quakes and more.
DEEP COVER: The Cellar
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s oldest and best open club night showcases singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more ever Thursday.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon – Weekly open mic night, hosted by Sparky.
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly unplugged open mic session.
BLUES JAM: Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Open blues jam.

FRIDAY 8th

HOT CLUB OF COWTOWN: The Bullingdon – Exuberant western swing, bluegrass, hot jazz and country rocking from the veteran festival faves, back in town for tonight’s Empty Room Promotions show, playing material from 2013’s ‘Rendezvous in Rhythm’ album, an acoustic collection of gypsy songs and standards from the American songbook, paying tribute to the likes of Stephane Grappelli and Django Reinhardt.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin dancefloor, Balkan beats, global grooves, Afrobeat and nu-jazz at this month’s Bossaphonik. Tonight’s guests are riotous gypsy and celtic-folk outfit Ushti Baba, utilising human beatbox to underpin their mix of accordion, banjo, guitar, darbouka, trumpet and violin to create what they dub “turbo folkstep”. Bossaphonik host Dan Ofer is on the decks.
SLAM CARTEL + HELL’S GAZELLES + ONE LAST RUN + CLOSED CIRCUIT: The Wheatsheaf – Growly, blues-tinged hard rocking from London’s Slam Cartel, drawing a line between Guns’n’Roses, Nirvana and Soundgarden on their new album ‘Worldstarlove’. Support comes from local rising rockers Hell’s Gazelle’s, mixing old-school classic rock riffage with NWBHM and a touch of 80s glam-rock – see this month’s Introducing feature – plus Warrington’s power rockers One last Run.
OSPREY + LA PHOOKA + BEARD OF DESTINY + MARIA ILETT + ADY DAVEY: The Marsh Harrier
BREEZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Mixed bag of rock, pop and indie covers.
WATERFAHL: The Angel Inn, Witney – First of a host of gigs around the county this month for the acoustic blues duo.

SATURDAY 9th

LIMB + VODUN: The Wheatsheaf – Riff-fest a-go-go – *see main preview*
LITTLE BROTHER ELI + DEAD DOLLAR DAYS + CARL MILLS & JACK LESTER: The Bullingdon – Ahead of the release of their debut album, the dapper local blues rockers play a hometown headline show in aid of Oxjam, their energetic blend of White Denim, Jack White, Chili Peppers et al making them one of the most entertaining live bands in town right now.
CHEROKEE + ONE STATE DRIVE + HOLY MOMENTS: The Cellar – Molten stoner-blues riffage, punk attitude and classic 70s rock from rising local duo Cherokee at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show, plus pop-punk in a Blink



Friday 1st

KRIS DREVER: The Old Fire Station
Kris Drever is a musician probably better known for his guitar work with other artists than in his own right, but he really is one of the finest voices in modern folk music. Born and raised in Orkney, Drever made his initial break into the Scottish folk scene as a session musician in and around Edinburgh before he formed the band Lau with Martin Green and Aidan O’Rourke. The band have released five albums so far, taking folk music into progressive new places. Alongside that he’s played with the likes of Kate Rusby, Roddy Woomble, Eddie Reader and John McCusker, as well as less obvious collaborations with Tinariwen and Joan As Policewoman, and he never really considered a solo career until fellow musicians persuaded him. The result of this persuasion was 2006’s ‘Black Water’, an absolutely gorgeous set of songs, including a sublime cover of Boo Hewerdine’s ‘Harvest Gypsies’ that has become his best known solo work. Work with Lau and others still seems to take precedence and this month sees Drever release only his third solo album, ‘If Wishes Were Horses’, his first in six years. He’s moved back north again now, this time to The Shetlands, and the beauty and isolation of the islands is reflected in his lyrics and his fantastic voice. He’s a busy man, but a solo show is a relatively rare event, so make the most of one of the finest living folk artists in a suitably intimate setting.

182 and Sum 41 vein from One State Drive, and grungy rocking from Holy Moments.
STIFF BIZKIT + LEST WE FORGET + JABRONI SANDWICH + BLOODSHOT + VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN: O2 Academy – Skeletor’s monthly heavyweight showcase tonight features UK Limp Bizkit tribute band Stiff Bizkit, plus a local support cast, including metalcore merchants Lest We Forget, psych-groove rockers Jabroni Sandwich, Lamb of God-inspired heavyweights Bloodshot, and southern-fried metallers Violence Is Golden.
D-VINE SOUNDS feat. SAM DIVINE: O2 Academy – House and techno extravaganza across two rooms with Defected Records’ Sam Divine bringing her own label tour to town. Room one features Sam herself, plus Dale Howard, Curtis Gabriel, Jess Bays, Gojack, Mxqurade and Dilli, while room two, hosted by Housewurk, features sets from Able, Super T, and Tony Nanton, amongst others.

FOLK CONEXIONS: The North Wall – Oxford Contemporary Music continue to go the extra mile to bring esoteric musical treats to town, tonight hosting a collaboration between viola player Garth Knox, singer Unni Lóvlið and visual artist Tord Knudsen, bringing a contemporary jazz



Saturday 9th

LIMB / VODUN: The Wheatsheaf

Great to see Buried In Smoke back in the promotion saddle after a bit of a hiatus, particularly when they’re bringing tours like this to Oxford. London’s Limb are promoting their new album ‘Terminal’, a beastly mix of classic 70s rock, stoner grooves and a hefty dose of doom, snarling vocals and relentlessly chugging riffs drawing comparisons with Monster Magnet and Orange Goblin, as well as, inevitably, Black Sabbath. Giant riffs played at ludicrous volume? There are few things better in life. Even better are Vodun, who have just released their superb new album ‘Possession’, a heady mix of psychedelic groove rock, sludge, Afro-futurism and a whole lotta soul. Basing their entire existence on the ancient west African religion Vodun go the whole concept album hog on ‘Possession’ while sounding something like Aretha Franklin fronting Royal Blood on a mescaline trip. Singer Oya has one hell of a set of pipes on her, and anyone who remembers her fronting expansive soul-rock crew Do Me Bad Things back in the mid-noughties will remember just how powerful a soul voice she has. All in all tonight is going to be a big, beautiful beast of a gig.

edge to traditional Norwegian folk music. **BEDROCK: The Bullingdon** – Skeletor’s rock and metal club night returns, playing heavyweight classics and new releases from across the rock spectrum. **DISCO BISCUITS: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Disco and funk covers. **KING B: Woodstock Social Club** – Blues rock. **STEAMROLLER: The Yeoman, Freeland**

SUNDAY 10th

TREMBLING BELLS: The Cellar – The Glaswegian folksters take the psychedelic path into the deep, dark woods – *see main preview* **NO HORSES + TOM IVEY + JINJA COOZE + WATERFAHL + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30pm)** – Free afternoon of live music in the downstairs bar from Giddyup Music. **HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: Prince of Wales, Iffley (3pm)** – Afternoon Americana session from the local regulars.

MONDAY 11th

JACK GARRATT + KACY HILL: O2 Academy – Like homeopathy, The BBC Sound Of Poll feels like an annual watering down of the already diluted talent that came before. If Sam Smith and James Bay are a bit too full-on and edgy for your tastes, the maybe the seemingly ubiquitous Jack Garratt will sate your cravings

for earnest, be-hatted electro-soul of a non-threatening persuasion. We say ubiquitous since if there’s a BBC award for anything on offer, the likelihood is Jack will win it – BBC Introducing Act of the Year – check; BBC Sound Of Award – check; Great British Bake-Off – check. Okay, we lied about that last one. If Jack baked a cake it’d be an insipid, tasteless gloop without any chocolate chips in. Tonight’s gig will inevitably be a sell-out. Eat up. We’re off down the canal with a load of bricks in our coat pockets. **BRY: The Bullingdon** – Amiable acoustic guitar pop from Belfast’s star on the rise Bry, currently 61 nations into his stated aim of playing live in every country in the world. With his debut album out this month and produced by Greg Wells, whose previous credits include 21 Pilots, One Republic and Mika, that goal might just prove achievable.

TUESDAY 12th

SAM OUTLAW: The Jericho Tavern – Southern Californian country music and honky tonk from LA singer-songwriter Sam Outlaw, over in the UK to promote his debut album ‘Angeleno’, produced by Ry Cooder and his son Joachim, Outlaw having quit his job in advertising aged 30 to become a singer. He’s doing pretty well so far – sharing a stage with Bonnie Raitt, Brandi Carlile and Jack Ingram at the recent tribute concert to Glenn Frey, and later this year joining the Stagecoach Country Music Festival in Indio, California. **GUITAR SUMMIT: The Bullingdon** - Guitar jazz at the Bully’s free weekly session. **INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Monthly goth, industrial and ebm club night with residents Doktor Joy and Bookhouse keeping it dark on the decks. **SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 13th

NEWTON FAULKNER: O2 Academy – All pop stars should have the middle name Battenberg – *see main preview* **PIPELINE + ONE STATE DRIVE + ONLY THE ZERO: The Wheatsheaf** – Indie rock of the Libertines, Dodgy and Madchester-inspired kind from Pipeline, plus pop-punk from One State Drive. **WAY UP! WEDNESDAY: The Cellar**

THURSDAY 14th

ROB TOGNONI: The Bullingdon – The Tasmanian blues devil returns to the Haven Club club, displaying the powerful and versatile electric style that’s served him well in his 30-plus years on the road, his powerful electric style owing much to Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. **TANNERS POOL + ECHOPRAXIS + THE SHADES + ZANDER SHARP: The Jericho Tavern** – Bluesy rocking from Tanners Pool, plus support. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon** **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** **BLUES JAM: Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

FRIDAY 15th

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND: Various venues – This year’s Folk Weekend branches out across town, featuring concerts at The Wesley Memorial

Church, St Barnabas, Blackwell’s, The Pitt Rivers Museum, The Ashmoleon and St Columbus’ Church. Headlining the festival is English folk veteran Martin Carthy, while other stars include Kathryn Roberts and Sean Lakeman, The Emily Portman Trio, and Coope, Boyes & Simpson. **SPACE: O2 Academy** – The 90s electro-tinged Britpop hitmakers return to town, playing hits like ‘Female Of The Species, ‘Neighbourhood’ and ‘The Ballad Of Tom Jones’ alongside songs from new album ‘Give Me Your Future’. **INTRODUCING: The Bullingdon** - The live interpretation of DJ Shadow’s classic ‘Entroducing’ album returns to town. **CAMERON AG: The Old Fire Station** – Recent *Nightshift* cover star Cameron plays a hometown headline show ahead of his appearance at Common People. **CLUB SODA + MOOGIEMAN & THE MASOCHISTS + THE LOST ART: The Cellar** – All Will Be Well Records showcase with 80s-flavoured popsters Club Soda; witty, philosophical, oddball electro-indie pop from Moogiemann and soulful acoustic duo The Lost Art. **STEAMROLLER & GUESTS: Kidlington FC** **LOOSE LIPS X DEEP COVER: The Cellar** **RETT RUSSELL: The New Inn, Middleton Cheney** – Contemporary and acoustic country.

SATURDAY 16th

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND: Various venues – Folk concerts, ceilidhs, workshops and plenty of ale. **ALXNDR + THE HAZE + HOMEPLANETEARTH: O2 Academy** – Nwعتl’s bybnd Alxnrd dspnc wth splfls vwls in prst of Bstd’s sechrn pp drn on dbt EP ‘Rwnd’. **THE MAGIC GANG + VITAMIN: The Bullingdon** – Psyche-tinged grunge-pop from Brighton’s indie hopefuls, back in town after their gig here in December, coming in somewhere between Weezer, Peace and recent tourmates Wolf Alice. **FAHRAN + FREEWAY MAD + IMMENSION: The Cellar** – OxRox host Nottingham’s hard rock crew Fahrnan, who have recently toured with Heaven’s Basement, UFO and The Answer, as well as making appearances at Bloodstock, Download and Hard Rock Hell, kicking it out in the vein of AC/DC and Guns’n’Roses. **BEHOLDER + THE CRUSHING + BOSS KELOID + BLACK SKIES BURN: The Wheatsheaf** – East Midlands prog-metal juggernauts Beholder come to town as they tour new album ‘Reflections’ – a not entirely apposite title for an album that fuses big chunks of Meshuggah, Opeth and Gogjira riffage and djent with some classic Dio-style melodic metal. Local super-heavyweights The Crushing come out of reclusion to support, a new set of recordings apparently imminent. Ferocious grindcore from Black Skies Burn to open the show. **DAVE & PHIL ALVIN + THE GUILTY ONES: The North Wall** – Famously combative brothers Dave and Phil Alvin return to town, the pair having reunited in 2014 for their first studio album together since 1985, an album of covers of Big Bill Broozy songs. Back in the 80s they were helming renowned Californian roots-rockers The Blasters, mixing up blues, rockabilly, r’n’b and punk. Alvin left at the band’s peak to pursue a solo career that saw him playing with the likes of The Gun Club as well as making his own records, but, as Dave said, “We argue, but never about Big

Bill Broozy’, and so they got back together to breathe new life into the legendary pre-war blues man’s songbook. They’ve somehow managed to stick together since, without sticking one on each other and tonight, as guests of the very excellent Empty Room promotions, they play songs from that album as well as new collaboration ‘Lost Time’, a collection of songs by the likes of James Brown, The Rev. Thomas A Dorsy and in particular Big Joe Turner. **PITCH BLACK: The Cellar** – The techno club night welcomes fast rising star Dax J to The Cellar. The London-born, Berlin-based artist has recently performed across the world including Berlin’s Berghain; Dommune in Japan; Exit Festival in Serbia, and Cocoliche in Argentina. His techno sound reflects his early roots of pirate radio and underground raves listening to UK jungle, drum&bass and garage. **THE SKALETRICS: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Two-Tone covers.

Sunday 10th

TREMBLING BELLS / ART THEEFE:

The Cellar

If you judge a band by the company they keep, Glasgow’s Trembling Bells are modern day folk royalty. In recent times they’ve supported The Unthanks and Deep Dark Woods, played back-up to Mike Heron and collaborated extensively with Will Oldham. Their next recording will, apparently, be in collaboration with comedian and ATP curator Stewart Lee. Originally fêted as torch-bearers for a new wave of psychedelic folk music, they’ve never been easy ones to pin down. Drummer, singer and chief songwriter Alex Neilson comes from a free jazz and improv background while lead singer Lavinia Blackwell is classically trained and has a voice that can touch on the operatic if not downright banshee-like at times. Together Trembling Bells bring elements of psych and jazz to a traditional folk setting, and if they’ve gradually moved towards a folk-rock mainstream with time – particularly on 2011’s ‘The Constant Pageant’ – their quirky edge remains, folk legends from Scotland and northern England delivered by way of medieval song or sea shanties as well as a powerful folk-rock style that owes as much to The Doors and Jefferson Airplane as it does Pentangle or The Incredible String Band. Last year’s ‘The Sovereign Self’ was a spectacular success, garnering album of the year plaudits amongst select writers and DJs, and featuring possibly their finest six minutes to date – the soaring ‘I Is Someone Else’. Support tonight comes from Art Theefe, the band fronted by Catwezle Club host Matt Sage, exploring classic 60s pop, folk and psychedelia.



KELLY OLIVER + UNDER THE WYCHWOOD: The Swan Inn, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Indie-inclined folk from the acoustic singer-songwriter who’s toured with Thea Gilmore as well as supporting CC Smugglers and Cara Dillon at tonight’s Wychwood Folk Club. **THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The White House** **STEAMROLLER: Millennium Hall, Horton-cum-Studley**

SUNDAY 17th

OXFORD FOLK WEEKEND: Various venues **EIGHT DAYS + GLASS HARBOUR + REVELLER: The Cellar** – A night of hardcore and punk from OxRox, with Kent’s virulent punk/metal noisemakers Eight Days, Middlesbrough’s melodic hardcore crew Glass Harbour and local metalcore merchants Reveller. **MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The Prince of Wales, Iffley (3-6pm)** **WATERFAHL: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)** **THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The Bell, Wantage (5pm)**

MONDAY 18th

THE ANT LAW TRIO: Warneford Chapel – OCM present renowned jazz guitarist Ant Law, playing an intimate show with a stripped-down three-piece band, backed by bass player Conor Chaplin and drummer Asaf Sirkis, playing a highly rhythmic style of jazz inspired by south Indian traditions. **ZURICH + ASHER DUST: The Library** – Tigmus host Banbury’s dark and shiny new wave outfit Zurich, their post-gothic electro-indie drawing influences from The National, Killers, Interpol et al. Great support from Asher Dust, making a rare live appearance, the maverick producer and singer’s eclectic mix of hip hop, dub, jazz, punk and more making him one of the most enduringly unique voices on the local scene.

TUESDAY 19th

BIG COLOURS: The Bullingdon – Big band jazz.

WEDNESDAY 20th

GAVIN JAMES: The Bullingdon – Your first, and probably last, chance to see Dublin songsmith James in an intimate Oxford setting as he tours his debut album ‘Bitter Pill’. From learning his trade playing his hometown pubs, he’s gone on to hang out and play with Ed Sheeran, tour the States with Sam Smith and record his album with Adele’s producers. It’s all here: puppy dog eyes, plaintive vocals and radio-friendly balladry. Can you serious pass up this once in a lifetime chance? **CHURCH OF THE HEAVY with GRUB + HOPE BURDON + IN AIR: The Wheatsheaf** – It’s All About the Music’s monthly heavyweight sessions welcomes promising new psych-fuzz-grunge crew Grub and more. **WAY UP! WEDNESDAY: The Cellar**

THURSDAY 21st

THE JAMES HUNTER SIX: O2 Academy – Classic r’n’b and soul from Essex’s answer to Sam Cooke, the veteran singer has been championed by Van Morrison, with whom he’s also recorded and toured, and he was personally invited to support Aretha Franklin in the States as



Wednesday 13th

NEWTON FAULKNER:

O2 Academy

Newton Faulkner is one of those pop people who, if we succumbed to first impressions and followed our prejudices, we wouldn’t like very much at all. No sir. It’s not so much the beard and the ginger waist-length dreadlocks and whole “questing folk troubadour” thing, as the fact the first thing we ever heard by him was his astonishingly awful cover of Massive Attack’s glorious ‘Teardrop’, and the fact his debut album got shoved in our face every time we turned the telly on back in the day. But then we actually saw him live – at Cornbury Festival – and found ourselves, to our astonishment, really rather enjoying him. For starters he’s a pretty affable and often very funny bloke, self-effacing and, beyond the cheesy cover versions, possessed of a whole load of decent tunes beyond the big hit, ‘Dream Catch Me’. He’s talented too, with a subtle touch and a fine sense of the ridiculous, and might be the most unlikely proper pop star of recent times – debut album ‘Handbuilt By Robots’ hit Number 1 and its follow-up ‘Rebuilt By Humans’, recorded in the wake of a career-threatening injury to his wrist, went Top 5 before he hit top spot again with 2012’s ‘Write It On Your Skin’. Last year’s ‘Human Love’ fared less well but even if the albums aren’t for you, you’ll struggle not to be charmed by the man live; quite simply he’s a genuinely excellent entertainer.

he captures the authentic flavour of 60s r’n’b. He out on a headline UK tour to promote new album ‘Hold On!’. **RICHMOND FONTAINE: The Bullingdon** – Bidding a fond farewell to Portland’s poets of poverty and regret – *see main preview* **LUKE DANIELS + FINLAY LESLIE + SKUNK BOY PROJECT: The Cellar** – Intense, poetic music making from multi-instrumentalist Daniels, who, as well as guitar, melodeon and piano, creates music on a polyphon machine, a 19th Century mechanical music device on which he’s made a concert’s worth of 100-second compositions. Inspired by the likes of Dick Gaughan, Martin Carthy and Nic Jones, he’s played alongside Ian Anderson and Lau as well as the London Philharmonic orchestra, tonight bringing his eclectic brand of traditional folk to town for Tigmus’s intimate show. He’s joined by Dover’s teenage singer Finlay Leslie, playing acoustic covers of The 1975, Killers, and Taylor Swift amongst others. **CRYSTALLITE + CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE + AMORAL COMPASS + PEIRQUIN: The Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music night with good-time grunge,



Thursday 21st

RICHMOND FONTAINE:

The Bullingdon

All good things must come to an end and so, after twenty years and ten albums, Portland, Oregon's enduring cult heroes Richmond Fontaine are bowing out with a farewell tour and an album titled 'You Can't Go Back If There's Nothing To Go Back To', with appropriate finality. Lucky then that those reliably excellent champions of quality Americana, Empty Room Promotions have tempted the band back to town five years on since their last show here. Richmond Fontaine, more than even The Hold Steady or Springsteen himself, have captured the often desolate underbelly of a twilight blue-collar American underbelly. Over the course of those ten albums singer and lyricist Willy Vlautin has documented life as one long losing steak, one populated by beaten wives, hapless gamblers and drunks and washed-up losers, set in situations that are simultaneously everyday but hidden from view. If Springsteen's characters are born to run, Vlautin's simply have nowhere to run to. Having been a cult concern on the Pacific Northwest circuit for years, it was only after 2003's 'Winnemucca', and in particular 2004's masterpiece 'Post To Wire', that wider exposure came Richmond Fontaine's way. A deal with Decca cemented their growing popularity and Vlautin has been hailed as a writer in the mould of Raymond Carver and Charles Bukowski. Musically the band would be in good company alongside Uncle Tupelo, Green On Red, American Music Club and The Replacements but, like the subjects of their beautifully romantic and tragic songs, they'd never get too comfortable.

rock and blues crew Crystallite, psychedelic indie popsters Charms Against the Evil Eye, gothic lo-fi dirge-core folks Amoral Compass and acoustic singer/guitarist Pierquinn. **HATTIE BRIGGS: The Library** – Winsome acoustic folk-pop from Gloucestershire singer Hattie Briggs and her band – which often features Barney Morse-brown from Duotone – out on tour to promote her debut album 'Red & Gold', inspired by the likes of James Taylor, Eva Cassidy and Katie Melua. **AGS CONNOLLY + JOHNNY PAYNE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Witney's own Ameripolitan maestro returns to live action, taking country back to its roots in the style of Dale Watson; Johnny Paycheck and Willie Nelson. Fellow Witney songsmith Johnny Payne supports. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 22nd

THE ICICLE WORKS: O2 Academy – Elegant neo-psych pop from Liverpool's cult heroes – *see main preview*
BILLY OCEAN: O2 Academy – Back in the shire after his star showing at Cornbury last summer, the veteran pop and soul hitmaker heads out on tour, reliving hits like 'Caribbean Queen'; 'Get Out of My Car and Into My Dreams', and 'When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Going'.
MIKE DIGNAM: The Bullingdon – Polished acoustic pop from the Preston singer-songwriter who's previously provided tour support for Gabrielle Aplin, Elliot Minor, Roachford and most recently Scouting For Girls.
MOULETTES + WATER PAGEANT + BANDICOOT: The Cellar – Traditional English folk given an inventively orchestral, almost prog makeover from Glastonbury's Moulettes, originally part of Mystery Jets' Eel Pie Island set and whose members have gone on to join Mumford & Sons, Laura Marling and The Holloways, while the band themselves have played alongside The Mumfords, John Paul Jones and Seasick Steve, among others. Led by singer, guitarist and cellist Hannah Miller and singer, bassoonist and autoharp player Ruth Skipper, their playful, unpredictable vocal harmonies and instrumentation has drawn comparisons to everyone from Pentangle and Jethro Tull to Kate Bush. Support for tonight's quality Tigmus show are local electro-folk-pop duo Water Pageant.
NEVERLND: Jacqueline du Pre Building – Balloon Ascents are reborn as Neverlnd ahead of a monthly series of free online releases as well as an appearance at Common People Festival in May. Tonight's show in the suitably ambitious setting of the JdP is their first under their new name.
THE MUSIC OF SHAKESPEARE: St John the Evangelist – Songs from Shakespeare's lifetime reinterpreted by the likes of Dead Rat Orchestra; Rob St John; Thomas Truax; Nick Castell; Brickwork Lizards and Flights of Helios, as part of the Oxford Shakespeare Jubilee season and tying in with new compilation album, 'The Food Of Love'.
THE AUTUMN SAINTS + KANADIA + FACTORY LIGHTS + DAN McKEAN: The Wheatsheaf – It's All About the Music sow with bluesy rockers Autumn Saints, plus prog-tinged newcomers Kanadia.
MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: James Street Tavern
TERRAFORMS: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night with Bryan G.
REDWING + RORY EVANS: Woodstock Social Club – Woodstock Acoustic Club session.

SATURDAY 23rd

BENJAMIN FRANCIS LEFTWICH: O2 Academy – Wistful melancholy and a heart full of yearning from the romantic poet troubadour, back in town after his last show here at the Town Hall in 2012. This time round he's promoting new album 'After the Rain', the overdue follow-up to acclaimed debut 'Last Smoke Before the Snowstorm', his wide-eyed vulnerability and

delicate, intimate songs about God, love and being lost at sea having earned him a devoted following who will hopefully have survived the long wait for new songs.
TIGERTAILZ + LAST GREAT DREAMERS + THE BLACK BULLETS: The Bullingdon – Cardiff's veteran glam-rockers come to town in their latest incarnation, singer Jay Pepper now the only original member in the line-up after the death of bassist Pepsi Tate from cancer in 2007 and drummer Ace Finchum's departure in 2013. Having enjoyed chart success in the late-80s and early 90s, notably with Top 40 album 'Bezerk', they split in 1996, reforming in 2005 and subsequently releasing a slew of new albums as well as supporting Kiss's Ace Frehley on tour. Support at tonight's OxRox show comes from reformed 90s glam-rockers Last Great Dreamers with their suitably sleazy take on Hanoi Rocks and Dogs D'Amour's power-pop, recent tour support to The Runaways' Cherie Currie.
TIGER MENDOZA + DAVE GRIFFITHS + LUCY LEAVE: Fusion Arts – Daisy Rodgers Music hosts the official launch gig for Tiger Mendoza and Dave Griffiths' joint album 'The Shadow', electronic producer Ian de Quadros' atmospheric synth soundscapes taking him from club-friendly techno, through trippy Massive Attack and U.N.K.L.E. territory into punishing Nine Inch Nails-like industrial grind, while former Witches and eeebleee frontman Griffiths' vocals add a stately melodic edge to proceedings. Together the pair have made what is likely to be a contender for best Oxford album of the year. Great noise-pop support from Lucy Leave.
BLAIR DUNLOP: The Jericho Tavern – Rootsy acoustic pop, 60s-style folk and murder ballads from singer/guitarist Blair Dunlop, son of Fairport Convention's Ashley Hutchings and a former winner of the BBC Folk Awards Horizon Award, as well as playing a young Willy Wonka on film. He's out on tour ahead of the release of his third album 'Gilded', the follow-up to 2014's 'House of Jacks', tonight performing as part of the run up to Halfway To 75 festival.
DUOTONE: Kirtlington Village Hall – Cello'n'loops magic and lovely, lovelorn balladry from the local maestro.
RORKE'S DRIFT: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: Red Lion, Eynsham – Blues rocking from the veteran local singer and guitarist.
GET LOOSE: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon
SOUL SESSIONS: The Cellar – Soul, funk and disco club night.

SUNDAY 24th

ASH LEWIS + OH LEE RECORDS + THE JESTERS + THE ILLUMINATI + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + DAN McKEAN BAND: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the Sheaf's downstairs bar, hosted by Klub Kakofanny.
WATERFAHL: The Prince of Wales, Ifley (3pm)

MONDAY 25th

BEACH BABY + BABEHEAVEN: The Bullingdon – Shoegaze, grungy indie and jangly psych-pop from London's Beach Baby, mixing it up sweetly somewhere between The Cure, Stone Roses, Weezer and Pavement. Great support from woozy, ethereal fellow Londoners Babeheaven.

TUESDAY 26th

DIZRAELI + JAKABOWSKI + ASHER DUST: The Jericho Tavern – Hip hop with a twist of English folk music from Bristol-born, Brighton-resident rapper Dizraeli, taking the trippy atmospherics of his old home town's finest exports for a ride through unexpectedly rustic places, his poetic rapping, slam poetry and folk singing taking aim at seaside towns, *X-Factor* and myriad other targets along the way. Moody rap-noir from Jakabowski in support, plus eclectic hip hop, dub, electro, punk and r'n'b mash-up from local MC and producer Asher Dust.
THE HUGH TURNER BAND: The Bullingdon – Funky, groove-led jazz from the Bully's weekly club regular.
SPARK'S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 27th

LAURENCE JONES: The Bullingdon – Stratford's rising young blues guitarist Laurence Jones returns to town at the Haven Club, likened to Peter Green and Joe Bonamassa.
NYX + DEADBEAT APOSTLES + MARY LOUISE JAMES: The Wheatsheaf – It's All About the Music's Let The Lady Sing celebration of female singers and bands.
SE10: The Cellar – Garage and grime club night.
ARVA: Oxford Castle – Shakespearean Broadside ballad versions of Titus Andronicus and King Lear in the Oxford Castle crypt and courtyard.
THE TRISH ELPHINSTONE QUINTET: The Half Moon – Monthly residency from eclectic jazz saxophonist Trish Elphinstone and her band, the alto and soprano sax player's much-travelled career bringing elements of pop, blues, hip hop and more to her music.

THURSDAY 28th

COMMUNION NEW FACES TOUR with THE BEACH + ADAM FRENCH + RUKHSANA MERRISE + MATT WOODS: The Bullingdon – Package tour of rising new singer-songwriters.
LOUIE/LOUISE + ALL ABOUT FRANK + DOG DAY TOWN: The Cellar
DAN GOLLARDO + THE ROSELLOS + DANNI NICHOLLS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rootsy American folk from the North Carolina-born, Nashville-resident singer-songwriter out on a European tour ahead of the release of his fourth album.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 29th

CLUB MILK: The Bullingdon – A new live music and club night from the Bully and Future Perfect promotions, tonight featuring a secret live appearance from a band who have sold out the O2 on their last three visits to town, so keep an eye on announcements, or just get your ticket now in preparation.
SKYLARKIN' SOUND SYSTEM: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin's monthly celebration of reggae, dancehall and roots, tonight with north London's General Roots, whose party brew of dancehall, heavy dub and sweet lovers rock has

seen them playing at Boomtown, Secret Garden party and Soundwave festivals. On the decks the Count selects classic tunes into the wee small hours.
THE HIP HOP SHAKESPEARE COMPANY: O2 Academy – The educational theatre charity, founded by London rapper Akala – himself a keen fan of the Bard – brings their production of Richard II to the O2, as part of the Music of Shakespeare season, putting the tale in a contemporary hip hop setting.
ASSASSIN + SPICE: O2 Academy – White Noise Sound host a night of dancehall with Jamaican DJ Assassin, aka Agent Sasco, plus White Magic Sound DJs, Smiling Man, Rudie Rich, 2Xclusive, Platnum Lynx and Allan Brando.
CLEFT + KIND EYES + KANCHO!: The Wheatsheaf – Turbo-prog inspired by The Mars Volta, Oceansize and Talons from Manchester's two-piece rinky-dink noise machine Cleft at tonight's Idiot King show, with support from Margate's emo-ish post-hardcore people Kind Eyes, and frenetic lo-fi hardcore from local two-piece Kancho!.
WATER PAGEANT: Art Jericho – The atmospheric electro-folk duo officially launch their superb debut album, 'Outlines', the pair's pensive, haunting songs recalling the rarefied likes of The Low Anthem, Bon Iver, Beach House and Joyzipper at times.
GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + NEON TEEPEE + DEAR HERO + STOLBY: The Jericho Tavern – Elegant post-rock inspired by Mogwai and Explosions in the Sky from Ghosts in the Photographs at tonight's It's All About the Music show.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: James Street Tavern – Americana from the local regulars.
RETT RUSSELL: The Castle, Edgehill, nr Banbury

SATURDAY 30th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SLATE HEARTS + DEAD PHEASANTS + ROBERTO Y JUAN: The Wheatsheaf – Quality mixed bag of sounds as we've come to expect from the monthly GTI club night. Tonight features recent *Nightshift* Demo of the Monthers Slate Hearts, ahead of their Punt showing in May, with a righteous, riotous grunge noise that's equal parts Nirvana and Fugazi. They're joined by Chippenham's politically-charged ska-punk-folk crew Dead Pheasants, and Neverlnd offshoot Roberto y Juan, with their Latin-flavoured glitch-pop, inspired by Rodrigo y Gabriela, Pentangle and John Martyn.
SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Long-running house and techno club Simple celebrate May Day Eve in style with an already sold-out show featuring Berlin's Panorama Bar resident Tama Sumo.
AUDACITY: East Oxford Community Centre – Celebrating May Morning Eve in the spirit of the free rave parties of the late-80s and through the 90s. Featuring a line-up of near-legendary local DJs, including Transmission's DJ Juno, with her hard trance and stomping techno, and



Friday 22nd

THE ICICLE

WORKS: O2 Academy

When the history of the early-80s Liverpool music scene is remembered, The Icicle Works seem destined for little more than footnote status, but it shouldn't be so. The band, fronted by singer and guitarist Ian McNabb, emerged as part of the neo-psychedelic wave alongside Echo & the Bunnymen and The Teardrop Explodes, and initially at least, enjoyed reasonable commercial success and critical acclaim, 1983 hit 'Love Is A Wonderful Colour' and US chart success 'Whisper To A Scream (Birds Fly)' their best remembered songs. But after the success of their eponymous debut album McNabb took the band away from their new wave beginnings and into more straight-up rock, Motown-flavoured pop and folk-rock, gradually eroding the goodwill they'd built up. They retained a cult following until their split in 1991 and later songs like 'Hollow Horse' and 'Evangeline' capture what they did best – creating elegant, euphoric guitar pop that shared a universe with The Bunnymen and Teardrops as well as the likes of The Associates and Orange Juice. After pursuing a solo career, McNabb reformed The Icicles Works in 2006 with himself as the only original member (drummer Chris Sharrock having gone on the play with The La's, Robbie Williams and of course Oasis and Beady Eye) and as he celebrates the band's 35th anniversary, time to relive and reappraise those songs – songs that haven't just survived the test of time but now sound even prescient.

Remould, who will be flying in from Spain for tonight's reunion. They're joined by Audacity Al – aka Leftouterjoin – and his acid disco, plus Tim Samsara from 90s megaclub Escape From Samsara.
MAYDAY, SUMMER IS A COMING PARTY: The Cellar – Mayday Eve party with Shades of Rhythm and Count Skylarkin, playing a jungle set. Running through til May Morning at 6am.
MAD LARRY: The Dolphin, Wallingford
STEAMROLLER: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon

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LIVE

RINGO DEATHSTARR / THE NEON VIOLETS / KANCHO!

The Bullingdon

For a band boasting an excellent ditty about living your life according to the contents of fortune cookies, fate has dealt Kancho! a bad hand tonight, forced to open proceedings to a near-empty room. It means that the article offering advice on how to better engage with your audience that Mike Chilcott (bass/shouting) recently read online is largely redundant – though such advice is frankly unnecessary anyway when you sound like Rage Against The Machine and ‘In Utero’ filtered through Lightning Bolt and have a drummer intent on showcasing an impressive repertoire of sex faces. Even if you’d never heard The Neon Violets before, you’d be able to hazard a guess as to what they might be like before they play a note simply by virtue of the onstage props that act as visual clues: patterned sheet, chimes, skull on amp. Sure enough, a game of psychedelic/stoner rock bingo ensues. The trio are perhaps most reminiscent of The Warlocks, but also occasionally The Doors, had they got lost on their peyote-taking trip out in the desert and stumbled across one of Josh Homme’s generator sessions taking place on the set of a spaghetti western. Entertaining enough, but they don’t properly cut loose until the last song. After two British bands trying to sound American come Ringo Deathstarr, an American band trying to sound British. With that choice of

name, they hardly seemed destined for longevity – more a stellar debut EP (tick), a decent first album (tick) and an underwhelming follow-up full-length (tick) before being dropped and disbanding – but six years have now elapsed since their first visit to Oxford and they’re still going strong. Opening with ‘Starssha’ from that debut EP might perhaps be a strategy calculated to underline how far they’ve come in the intervening period, but in truth the band’s dilemma remains much the same as it was when they pitched up at the Jericho Tavern in 2009: how to pay homage to their heroes (principally My Bloody Valentine and – as Elliott Fraizer’s curly William Reid-esque mop-top would suggest – The Jesus & Mary Chain) while simultaneously establishing their own identity. The solution, it appears, is to attack their material with punky vigour rather than to deliver it in the statuesque style synonymous with shoegaze, and on occasion to dip a toe in hard rock waters to unexpected but not entirely unwelcome effect. Allotted an hour and a quarter, their set barely scrapes 50 minutes. There are no complaints, though; the swoonsome ‘Summertime’, which forms a single-song encore, hints at an awareness that melody and tunefulness can only be obliterated for so long (albeit to rousing effect) before tinnitus and exhaustion set in. **Ben Woolhead**

WOLF ALICE / SWIM DEEP / BLOODY KNEES

O2 Academy

From the first note of Bloody Knees’ stellar opening set the front third of the crowd are bouncing around like lunatics. It could almost be called a moshpit. Bloody Knees serve up excellent fuzzy riff-laden punk that blends The Distillers with the long-haired grunge of early Silverchair. Not every song is up-tempo as would be an easy choice for crowd-pleasing, but the set is better and more varied for it. Last time I heard anything of Swim Deep they were the current darlings of *NME* and had just released a fairly average indie-pop album. In answer to these preconceptions they offer a fairly average indie-pop performance, but now with a broader base of influence and a new multi-instrumentalist member. They sound a little bit like a chirpier version of The Horrors with Faris Badwan replaced with Neil Tennant doing a Sid Vicious impression. There’s nothing particularly wrong with Swim Deep, but that’s probably their greatest problem. Verse-chorus-verse-chorus pop music has been around for a long while now,

THE ALEXANDER HAWKINS ENSEMBLE

The North Wall

Alexander Hawkins begins tonight’s concert by pointing out it’s ten years since his last headline gig in the city he was born and still resides in. He seems to have used those years well as he’s now talked about as a leading light among his generation of contemporary jazz musicians, a position gained by being present on stage with leading figures from an older generation, like saxophonist John Surman, and by playing solo as well as with his trio and his ensemble, releasing a string of acclaimed albums along the way. Beyond this his website lists another four other projects as leader or co-leader, plus another seven as a sideman, including playing in the band of Ethiopian vibraphonist Mulatu Askantke. Indeed it’s as a sideman that we recall last seeing Hawkins in town, when, as part of the Nick Malcolm quartet, he stole the show. Then the notes cascaded from his piano, often at incredible speed and with perfect clarity, time and time again. Tonight is very different; it is much more about Hawkins the composer, and the ensemble, and though there are several brief pianistic darts, it’s well into the second half before Hawkins unleashes one of his surging extended solos. In the musical world of his ensemble, Hawkins brings together his fascination with composing for a group and his love of improv; he plays with some major figures from that genre, such as Even Parker, Lewis Moholo- Moholo and Joe McPhee. Indeed his compositions sound like improvisations, and sometimes fairly random improvisations at that, yet they

cohere often in defiance of musical logic. They have a capacity to leave the listener smiling quizzically and wondering ‘how did he do that?’ or even, in the best sense, ‘why did he do that?’ Enigmatic, sometimes dense, sometimes sparse, rhythmically sophisticated, fresh, vital: all these descriptions apply; while Hawkins’ compositional style has been called complex and cerebral, it’s also great fun just to go with the flow even when you have only the vaguest idea of what’s going on, or coming next. The beautiful ballad ‘So Very No’, and ‘Baobab Constellation’, with the ensemble’s improvisation (or is it all composed?) around a simple riff, are a counterbalance in this delightful Rubix cube of a musical universe. What is crystal clear is that in this version of his ensemble, Hawkins has surrounded himself with top musicians who use the space his compositions sometimes provide to spark off each other in pleasing understated ways. Though inappropriate to pick out anyone in particular, saxophonist Jason Yarde plays beautifully shaped lines, and double bassist Neil Charles constantly makes clever runs and creates little rhythmic experiments. But the night belongs to the multi-talented Hawkins who, while subordinating his pianism to the needs of the group, shines as composer and curator of his ensemble, and collectively they created something a little bit special. So let’s hope we don’t have to wait another ten years for his next hometown gig. **Colin May**

and what separates the best bands is the way they craft their image into that well-forged framework. This is what Wolf Alice excel at. On the surface they are an energetic female-fronted rock band channeling Smashing Pumpkins and Lush, and a damned fine racket that is too. But the longer their set goes on the subtleties of their musicianship better reveal themselves. There are big walls of shoegaze noise for all you Kevin Shields fans, but not enough to lose definition. There are crazy effects noises but they’re held back to where they can really add something, for example as haunting texture beneath the melancholic ‘Swallowtail’. Wolf Alice can do sing-along pop, they can leave your ears ringing with fuzzed-out feedback and they can make you want to listen again for the details you missed, the sort of details you only really notice on albums, all of which leaves me awestruck. Last time I saw Wolf Alice they were a brief whirlwind of noise and riffs in front of fifty or so punters; they only had about eight songs in their repertoire. Several years on they’ve hit their stride and focused their talent. They’re great on record, and even better live; their sound fills and moves the thousand people in front of them, though even here I suspect it’s the last time we’ll see them play to a crowd of this size. **Matt Chapman Jones**

CHEROKEE / GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS / MARY BENDYTOY

The Wheatsheaf

In their trademark matching black and white striped suits Mary Bendytoy look like a *Beetlejuice*-themed Halloween party, something that occasionally leaks into their music. There’s an edge of gothic camp to songs like ‘Starshine’, abrasive surf-punk that could be The Dead Kennedys gone *Rocky Horror*, while the ironically-titled ‘The Party’ takes things to a darker place, heavy and portentous in an early Sisters of Mercy way. They lose their way on ‘Let Me Out’ (“a love song – sort of”), which lacks the necessary spite, but a willowy follow-up brings things back round, heroically managing to rhyme vibrate, accelerate, agitate, fascinate, graduate and triangulate along the way, before they finish with what they do best, camping it up in gothic noise fashion with ‘Spider’, possibly the only song ever to confront the horror of trying to remove a large arachnid from a bathtub. Nothing camp about Ghosts in the Photographs, though the horror edge remains as they perform in front of manipulated excerpts from Hitchcock’s *The Birds*, which enhances their instrumental post-rock well. Taking cues from Mogawi and Explosions In The Sky, they move from spangled contemplation,

through turbulent crescendos to fiery climaxes with a firm grasp of dynamics and atmosphere, and if we’d like to hear them play their set as one single piece of music it’s only because it’d give us a chance to get lost more fully in their elegantly incendiary musical world. Back, albeit temporarily, to a bit of camp as Cherokee take to the stage in giant sombrero and native American headdress. Why? There’s no apparent deeper meaning to it all, but then there’s no deep meaning to their two-man all-out riffs’n’beats attack, and nor should there be. It’s simply exhilarating, cathartic fun at maximum volume and with no regard to a speedometer that’s in the red for the set’s duration. One song’s entire lyrical content boils down to the repeated yelling of “Yeah, yeah, oh yeah,” and it’s all you need. ‘Shit Brown’ is scabrous, scatological and possibly cruel, while singing bassist Jack Harkey Bourne’s tale of slicing a chunk of his finger off with a soldering iron concludes with the observation that we smell like bacon when we’re cooked. Everything is route one, almost primal, and it’s breathlessly brilliant. These boys are beasts. Make them your gods. **Dale Kattack**

SUNDARA KARMA / BLAENAVON

The Bullingdon

The Bullingdon is already surprisingly full by the time opening act Blaenavon take to the stage. Despite the Welsh-sounding name, the band hail from Brighton, where they’ve crafted a sound that blends post-Arctic Monkeys British indie rock with some of the trendier elements of garage and 1960s psychedelia. Musically, it’s all been done before but Blaenavon are clearly accomplished performers, and they power through an undeniably entertaining set without missing a single beat, all the while managing to incorporate an element of showmanship by way of a few alluring hair flips. The band have definitely perfected the melodic wall of noise sound, but their songwriting comes across as a little formulaic, lacking the structural complexity to really emphasise the appropriately powerful moments of crescendo. In addition, vocals are far from perfectly performed, but they give the set a rough around the edges feel that the band seem to own quite comfortably, and despite these minor criticisms, Blaenavon undoubtedly fulfil their role as a warm-up act, with the crowd fully engaged and getting into the spirit of things by the time their last song rolls around. It’s clear from the young, and impressively extensive, audience’s

reaction to Sundara Karma that the band has the potential to be one of the UK’s new indie rock favourites. It would be easy to criticise them for producing formulaic, chord-heavy indie, tinged with a hint of psychedelic influence, as is *a la mode* for emerging bands in recent years, but everything about tonight, from the crowd to the four good-looking, long-locked lads on stage, suggests a pop gig, and with this in mind, Sundara Karma’s catchy, well-harmonised vocals and simple, drone-based riffs absolutely hit the spot. On the other hand, we’re less enthused by their insistence on making a big entrance at the start of the set, and on leaving the stage so their adoring fans can cheer them back on for an encore – antics which, in a venue the size of The Bullingdon, come across as pretentious and ham-fisted. Ultimately, Sundara Karma may not be every seasoned muso’s new favourite tip-off, but the enthused and energetic reaction they receive is infectious, and it demonstrates that there’s an extensive and enthusiastic market for the kind of music this band are producing; while it’s unlikely to revolutionise rock music, it’s hard to deny that it is good fun. **Tal Fineman**



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LIVE

BLACK HONEY / VAN ZELLER

The Bullingdon

Fresh-faced Bristolians Van Zeller play with real freedom, the only downside their bassist’s rather vulgar moustache. This is the sound of young musicians loving what they’re doing; they’re hardly outstanding, but the songs are sharp and refreshingly free of artifice while between them they’re charming and self-deprecating and, as the lead singer barks forcefully and with unsettling composure over the churning of ‘She’s Moving Right’, there’s a welcome hint of The Damned about them. Black Honey’s singer Izzy Fraser is currently garnering comparisons to Lana Del Rey and, superficially, you can see why: that same retro, smeared-masacara haziness. But it’s a lazy comparison. Del Rey’s music is alluring because it’s so nerve-wrackingly unstable; the exhilaration is in waiting for everything to crack. Fraser is different: cunning and formidable. From the first moment, she has the Bullingdon on a string.

With flashes of Nancy Sinatra and Dusty Springfield, she drips mock-innocence in the winding intro to ‘Spinning Wheel’, leaving the music hanging in the air and, with perfect timing, rips the set open with a mariachi shriek. Musically the band are irreducibly dynamic, whether in the woozy verses of ‘Teenager’, the syncopation in the chorus of ‘Madonna’, or Chris Ostler’s terrific Dick Dale-style guitar in ‘Spinning Wheel’. But it’s Fraser who controls everything, as if by force of will sometimes, stopping ‘Mothership’ dead to deliver a rant about deceit; turning the irresistible ‘Corrine’ into a Sam Cooke-style sermon on love. It’s total, commanding showmanship. For the first few songs a couple of guys in the crowd gamely try to generate some confrontational camaraderie, heckling, retorting sarcastically to Fraser’s stage talk. They quickly gave up; frankly they never stood a chance. *James Dawson*

ANCHORSONG/ INFINITE SCALE

The Cellar

In techno, it’s not so much the individual musical elements that make a track work, but how they are layered and offset. Archetypal laptop huncher Infinite Scale creates interlocking nets of classic drum machine rhythms, airy *vox humana* wisps, pointillist digital plinks and spitting griddle hi-hats very convincingly. However, this is friendly, unassuming, well-worn music, rather than a synthesised new horizon, recalling the cosy Detroit gestures of Warp’s ‘Artificial Intelligence’ series. Imagine The Black Dog has got old and is now a faithful pet, lounging by the fireside: it won’t ever catch a rabbit, but that doesn’t mean it should be put down just yet. There is a breed of adept rock musician that spends a lot of energy playing bad music very well. We don’t want to hear another slowhand blues, slap bass breakdown or technical shred if it sounds ugly and hackneyed, no matter how tricky the fingering. The original impression Anchorsong gives is similar. Sure, he punching in drum patterns and melodic motifs, his fingers an elegant blur above his MPC,

as if he’s stubbornly proving that producers can do things live, but who cares if the music doesn’t deliver the dancefloor goods? The opening number has a shiff of Burial’s misty glitchiness, but mostly falls in with the chrome-plated high-end piffle of Bonobo, and we settle in to be politely bored by the politely boring. But, then, as the second track begins, Anchorsong’s natural flair for groove come to the fore, as 80s Herbie Hancock Rhodes riffs slalom across the sort of larded slinky boogie basslines French disco dons Voyage might have unleashed. Like Mu-Ziq alter-ego Jake Slazenger without the smug grin, Anchorsong continues to spin out taut grooves that extend from vintage Todd Terry ravescares to the well-heeled euphoria of a Shep Pettibone Madonna remix. Like e e cummings pretending he’s a Modernist firebrand simply by staying off the shift key, to call Anchorsong original because of his live technique would be misleading, but his infectious tunes are timeless where Infinite Scale’s are merely retro. *David Murphy*

LUCY LEAVE / THE MIGHTY

REDOX / 31HOURS

The Wheatsheaf

31Hours’ guitarists peer out from behind their fringes in a manner that reflects the band’s nervy set. They exude a naïve, geeky charm and there are moments of promise, but equally they tend towards the disjointed while Jo Griffin’s voice tends to over-dominate the more subtle elements of their sound. In fact, with their spaced-out electronica and trilling, funky guitar work we wonder if they mightn’t be better as an instrumental band, particularly as tonight’s highlight is ‘Halflight’, which sees the emphasis shift towards a more subdued, synth-dominated sound, bordering on trippy. 31Hours are just starting out and suggest they’re worth keeping an eye on, but as yet it hasn’t come together fully for them. No nerves or inexperience from The Mighty Redox as they launch their new album. They’re probably the hardest-gigging band in the county and one who merrily throw the world and its wife into their feelgood mix of ska, pop, blues, funk, jazz and rock. Laidback bluesy jams meander into loping reggae skanks before ukulele-led afro-pop

melodies emerge like springtime leverets to get the throng down the front bopping unselfconsciously, Sue Smith’s whoops and birdcalls a signal that this is no time for navel-gazing or chin-stroking. Together for almost two decades now The Mighty Redox’s *raison d’être* has always been to bring the party, and if you want to play it cool, you’re welcome to sit outside while they get on with having fun. If 31Hours’ live show doesn’t match their recordings, Lucy Leave’s easily surpasses their scrappy demos so far, brooding slabs of noise rock coalesce ever more firmly as their set progresses, Hawkwind grooves going up against rugged, ragged melodies borrowed and stripped down from Sonic Youth and The Pixies, pausing to pay tribute to Bowie. If it can all sound like a bloody mess at times that’s part of the pleasure of the band; suggesting they polish their sound would be as futile and counterproductive as asking a litter of kittens to tidy their bedroom. It ain’t gonna happen, so just enjoy the chaos. *Dale Kattack*

TORD GUSTAVSEN, SIMIN

TANDER, JARLE VESPESTAD

St John the Evangelist

Another fine offering from Oxford Contemporary Music tonight at Oxford’s home of challenging and esoteric music. Norway’s Tord Gustavsen has a history of working with trios and quartets to make intricate but mellow instrumental jazz, but his latest project sees him collaborate with Afghan-German vocalist Simin Tander and drummer Jarle Vespestad. Their new ECM album ‘What Was Said’ features original compositions alongside several traditional Norwegian hymns, translated into Pashto and English, Tander also singing verses taken from the 13th Century Persian mystic Rumi. This may sound rather like hard work but the result is richly rewarding once you realise that it demands of the listener almost as much as it offers. Gustavsen sits at a grand piano with an iPad and a small keyboard perched on top. Like drummer Vespestad he sports a shaven head and well-tailored black suit, counterpoints to Tander’s long, flowing red dress. The delicate piano lines overlaid with

touches of electronics start every piece, followed by vocals and a respectful wait before the drums come in, Vespestad using pieces of cloth to dampen the sound and playing with a variety of sticks and sometimes just his hands to get the effect needed. Anyone familiar with the album is in for a treat as many songs are extended to twelve or fifteen minutes, using the time to explore, leave then return to musical motifs. Rather than any hymn familiar to a Brit, some sound almost like torch songs from the Twenties, Tander’s extraordinary voice diving impossibly low at times before rising again, sometimes disposing of language altogether into pure vocal delivery. It works on so many levels, as jazz, as devotional music, as romantic expression, that it’s impossible to attach a label that holds any meaning. Like the finest art it’s some time after the event that the full effect hits you though, as Tander sings in her final line; ‘The source of now is here’. *Art Lagun*



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INTRODUCING....

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

Hell's Gazelles

Who are they?

Hard rockers Hell's Gazelles are: Cole Bryant (*vocals*); Nath Dignam (*guitar*); Dan Podbury (*bass*), and Luke Evans (*drums*). Cole and Nath formed the first incarnation of the band at school aged 16. "We always wanted the band to go places, but we knew from the start that we'd have to be a lot older before anyone took us even remotely seriously," says Cole. "We got straight on to writing songs, and we've continued to develop, slowly honing everything down before we make any kind of big push. We've always stuck to our guns, and held on to our vision of how the band ought to be."

Constant gigging earned them a solid fanbase in Aylesbury and Wycombe but it's only in the last couple of years they've really broken into the Oxford gig scene, including a support to Liberty Lies and Plainview at The Bullingdon. This led to them entering the Oxford leg of Music 2 The Masses, which they won, earning them a slot at Bloodstock 2015. A debut EP is due soon.

What do they sound like.

Heavyweight melodic rock very much of the old school; Hell's Gazelle's mix of Rob Halford screams, AC/DC riffage, Quireboys strut and something a bit funky has a hint of glam kitsch about it but is a reminder of a time when heavy rock and the first wave of metal ruled the world.

What inspires them?

"All those big rock bands of the 70s and 80s. They didn't have the same level of live tech that a lot of acts use today, but those are the shows you wish you could have seen from the front row. They had raw talent and they played great music."

Career highlight so far:

"Our Metal 2 The Masses win, and subsequently playing Bloodstock 2015. It's great to get recognition for something when you put so much work into making it the best it can be. When we were asked to sign up we thought we'd be laughed off the stage, but here we are."



And the lowlight:

"Our line up changes. We joke sometimes that we're a bit like Spinal Tap: we've had five drummers! But change has been for the better in the end."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Evavoid: great performers, great musicians, great groove. They've taken a bit of a break as some of them are off up to university, but they're going to keep it going and come back to it."

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

"The Darkness – 'Permission To Land'. If it wasn't for that album we wouldn't exist; it got Nath into rock music all those years ago."

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

"April the 8th The Wheatsheaf. Expect us to get right up in your face and we'll expect you to sing back even if you don't know the words."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite: So much variety; there's bands of every flavour in Oxford if you take a look. Least favourite: parking for soundcheck is a nightmare."

You might love them if you love:

Judas Priest; Heaven's Basement; Guns'n'Roses; AC/DC; Iron Maiden; Airbourne; Van Halen; The Darkness.

Hear them here:

www.hellsgazelles.com/

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

It was all about 'OXCD' in Oxford on April 1st 1996. The local compilation album, featuring the likes of **The Candyskins**, **Thurman**, **The Mystics**, **Beaker**, **The Egg**, **Dustball**, **Heavenly** and many more, was launched with a full day of live music in HMV and the **Virgin Megastore** on opposite sides of Cornmarket Street. Hey, at least Cornmarket Street is still there. Live music continued into the night at **The Point** on The Plain. At least The Plain is still there. The release of the album was something of a watershed moment for Oxford music, gathering the pick of the pack of acts following in the footsteps of **Ride**, **Radiohead** and **Supergrass** at a time when the music industry eyes were firmly locked on Oxford. *Select* Magazine's Pat Reid guest reviewed the album for *Nightshift*; most of the bands involved went on to enjoy record deals or wider exposure and the release would prove to be the inspiration for **Shifty Disco Records** a year on.

Beyond this occasion, Oxford played host to visits from **The Bluetones**, **Ian McNabb**, **Asian Dub Foundation**, **Porcupine Tree**, **Coldcut** and **The Longpigs** (all at **The Zodiac**), as well as **ELO**, **David Essex**, **Mike and the Mechanics** and **The Fureys** (at **The Apollo**), and a cute bunch of newcomers at The Point called **Catatonian**, who were supported on the night by a another bunch of cute newcomers called **Space**. **Cerys Matthews** kissed us on the cheek that night "for being a sweetie." Needless to say we haven't washed since.

DR SHOTOVER Don't Ca-a-a-re

Ah here he comes, old Snottsworth –1970s character, dole-bludger and local New Wave artist of note. Used to sell models of the Radcliffe Camera made out of "authentic punk materials" to tourists, until the Health & Safety (Pin) Squad got to him. Anyway, Snotty was doing an interview about his life and work the other day, for the *THAT'S REALLY CHEAP OXFORD* TV channel. Refused to leave his usual seat in the East Indies Club bar, so they had to set the cameras up here – he claimed he'd got his bondage trousers caught up in his kilt and couldn't move. A few of us regulars sat in on the interview. "So Lord Snottsworth", asked the interviewer (all of twelve years old). "What is your main artistic influence?" Old Snotts took a pull on his pint of Merrydown and paused for a long moment. He just answered "PUB". There was a gap. Then he continued "LIC IMA-A-AGE" as THAT bassline started up, and we all chimed in with "'Ello, 'ello, 'ello, Hahahahaha". Not a dry seat in the house. A bit like the time he played the Oranges & Lemons in 1979 with his anarchist performance troupe. The **SQEZY Bottles**, they were called. They came onstage in Oxford's punkiest pub dressed as Teddy Boys and a huge fight broke out immediately, spreading out into the car park and across Angel Meadow. What's that, Steenburgen? You've never heard *Public Image* by Public Image Limited? Get a round in, immediately, as a penance. Mine's a Merrydown,

no, make it a Kerrydown – that means put a tin of Kestrel Lager in there too, doofus. Cheers! Punk not dead! Or is it? Down the hatch, anyway. GOODBYE. **Next month:** You never listened to a word that I said...



Lord Snottsworth leads the way as The **SQEZY Bottles** go for their pre-gig slash, but... 'Hang on, where are the flies on these outfits? **SNOTTSWORTH!**'

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

were Demo of the Pile, while emerging local hip hop acts **Flooded Hallways** and **GTA** – featuring **Chima Anya**, brother of Scottish international Ikechi – were close behind.

5 YEARS AGO

Young Knives graced the cover of April 2006's *Nightshift*, the band talking about their unabashedly 'pop' new album '**Ornaments From the Silver Arcade**'. "It wasn't a conscious decision to make a poppy record," said singer **Henry Dartnall**, "it was a conscious decision to make a joyful record." Asked if the band had enjoyed the debauched rock and roll lifestyle they'd been looking forward to the last time we'd interviewed them. "I think that has passed," he replied, "Getting wasted is fun for a bit but we are better musicians when we aren't drunk. We are definitely quite funny drunk, but I prefer being a musician to being a comedian." As well as Young Knives' album, there were releases for **Sharron Kraus** ('The Woody Nightshade'); **Spring Offensive** ('A Stutter and a Star'); **Richard Walters** ('Pacing') and **The Half Rabbits** ('The Optimist'), while in our Introducing section we were, er, introducing **Wild Swim**, who sadly called it a day last month. Acts in town this month included **Metronomy**, **Carl Barat**, **David Rodigan** and **Katy B** at the **O2 Academy**, while semi-local folk duo **Spiers and Boden** were playing an intimate show at **The North Wall**. Moving onto the demo pages, anyone remember **Stack of Hamsters**, **The Monkeyshines**, **Scratch Tuesday** and **Le Vens**? How quickly we forget.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

HUMMINGBIRD AND THE MESS

Spring on its way? Blossom on the trees? Well just in time for you to start dreaming of warm, chilled out evenings/nights/mornings spent on Ibiza beachfronts come singer/producer duo Hummingbird and the Mess. We like the idea of a singer simply called Hummingbird, particularly since the moniker suits her well, her voice as lightweight as the “white candy floss landscape / Cotton wool hills” she sings about on ‘Head In The Clouds’. Head in the clouds too is apt, since the softly trippy, minimalist musical backdrop here is as warm and comforting as an idle daydream (as long as your daydreams involve kittens or chocolate or unicorns and not nuclear conflagration or visions of drowning). We’re reminded a bit of Opus III’s reworking of Jane’s ‘It’s A Fine Day’ a couple of times, that utterly chilled vibe stretched across six songs here, from the laidback, woozy electronic folk-pop of ‘Time To Leave’, to the android lullaby of ‘About Not Knowing’, a perfect song to sing baby robots to sleep. The music is pitched just right to add depth and dynamics to the songs but never imposing on the vocals which reach their pure, limpid best on ‘Falling’. Twenty minutes in and we’re off with the fairies. As sweet, gentle and relaxing as a ball pit full of giant marshmallows and sea mist.

MINEOURARC

Odd isn’t it that one act inspired by Ibiza nights can sound like the soundtrack to the best ever summertime afternoon snooze, while another just sounds like something left behind in a DJ box sometime around the mid-90s. Mineourarc is the work of a guy called David Morrison who here offers a brace of ambient house tracks that suggest there’s been little or no musical evolution since those days. Nothing criminally wrong with that as such. Leaving your brain behind on a Balearic beach, to wander for all eternity in an MDMA comedown is probably better than what happened to *Nightshift*. We left ours behind at a Killing Joke gig in the late-80s and have been in a perpetual state of murderous rage ever since.

VERNAHARK

Ah, that’s better – something to soothe our souls and maybe haunt our dreams later.

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

Readers with a decent sense of musical taste will remember Iona Roisin as singer with now defunct electro-punk-hip-hop crew Baby Gravy and more recently Stray Dog. She’s back again here, fronting a new band, continuing that journey into darkly ambient electronic music, her increasingly rich and soulful voice acting as the beating human heart inside a trippy robot soundscape, sort of like the more nihilistic twin sister of Esther Joy Lane – one who’s forgotten what daylight and true love are, destined instead to sing a solemn siren song to the void. Apparently Vernahark is Armenian for loft or attic, the place where the band record their music. We’re off to Google Translate to find out what the Armenian for deep, dark cave in the black mountains is.

THE REAPER

Easy to forget, since we’ve been reviewing them for a few years now, that the members of The Reaper still only have an average age of 16. So whether it’s appropriate to talk about them maturing musically yet is open to question. They do seem to be solidifying into an ever more sturdy rock beast on the strength of this new recording, a song titled ‘Capsize’, that kicks in with the requisite amount of rock thunder before settling down into a mid-paced hard-rock churn that’s partway between early-80s thrash and the heavy melodic rock revivalism of Guns’n’Roses or even Black Stone Cherry. Singer Joey Kenny’s voice is beginning to mutate from a high-end Ronnie James Dio / Rob Halford squeal into an Axl Rose holler, while the band have resisted the temptation to use their technical abilities to take the band into anything too complex, preferring, if not route 1 rocking, then at least a solid, straightforward journey through riff central.

MOOGIEMAN

Rocking out in far more unexpected fashion, initially at least, is Moogiemán, a regular in these pages and a man who seems to exist, locally, in a genre of one, perched precariously between inventive, philosophical electro-pop and self-conscious smart-arse humour. ‘Your American Diner’ is possibly his most straightforward song to date, actual electric guitars imposing themselves on a two and a bit minute tale of, well, American diners, Moogiemán’s deadpan Stentorian narration sounding a little like it’s mocking your bemusement. From here he’s back into the bubbling electro-pop we know him better for, ‘Popper On Poppers’ using the laws of physics and snatches of financial advice advertising as metaphors for relationship break-up, and if you think that’s all a bit clever, he then renders the murder of Rosa Luxembourg in

1919 as a jaunty acoustic folk-pop number, even managing to mention Otto Runge, who infamously concussed poor Rosa with his rifle butt before her execution. And if that’s not an obscure enough reference, ‘It’s All Over Now’ is likely the only song ever written to mention Wolf-Rayet stars. Once upon a time, when we first encountered Moogiemán we tended to lump him in with university footlights types, flaunting their higher education with the sort of wit that’d get your head stoved in in any proper pub, but increasingly the man (whose real name is Shan Sriharan in case you were wondering) is making music that might be several academic leagues above most of us, but is pop music of a universal nature.

MIDNIGHT RUN

In the wake of every great band to come out of Oxford inevitably comes a flurry of others either inspired by their sound or simply keen to emulate their success. Safe to assume Midnight Run own a few Stornoway albums, at least on the evidence of demo opener ‘Explore the World’, whose title alone could have come from ‘Bonxie’. After a short trumpet fanfare, we’re off into breezy indie-folk and some close harmony singing with a questing feel about it all. They’re more wistful on ‘Her Story’, though the impressive lead singer could do without having to cope with some forced backing harmonies and it’s starting to feel a bit flat. A piano ballad, ‘Roulette’, does them few favours, a mournful, overlong dirge that’s far closer to Boyzone than we’re sure they’d ever admit, and when the next song is titled ‘Stay’, we’re genuinely worried it’ll be a Take That cover. Thankfully not; instead it’s rather better, starry-eyed campfire folk-pop that again shows their harmonies in a decent light, even if the overall feeling is too insular. It’s all decent enough for an early demo, and certainly inoffensive, but inoffensive is never something to aspire to, and compared to Stornoway there’s a distinct lack of strange musical invention, widescreen romantic poetry and that rare spark of magic that makes that band so very special.

THE PLASTIC OTHER

Good band name – sounds like a lost episode of *Sapphire & Steel*. Their Bandcamp comes with the tags “experimental, punk, Krautrock, noise and post-punk,” which again are highly promising. They could have saved themselves a couple of seconds by simply typing “utter fucking mess”. Some things are experimental and sound fantastic. Many more are experimental and are complete crap. Even more things are described as experimental and are nothing of the sort and are total bloody garbage. Can you see where this review is going, dear reader? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1

is a new song by Ben Haenow and 10 is the most fevered musical outpouring of Renaldo and the Loaf’s trippiest recording session, The Plastic Other are a nervous drunkard wandering into the first ever rehearsal of a surf rock band who can’t find the off switch for their reverb pedal. Or work out how to play their instruments. Or write anything that even vaguely exists in the same universe as a tune. So he mumbles and shouts something semi-coherent about the nine o’clock news while the band’s guitarist keeps whacking the tremolo bar and wondering why it isn’t dispensing cans of coke. Listening back they both agree it sounds like Mark E Smith fronting The Velvet Underground on a reimagining of ‘Sister Ray’, and frankly, we’re inclined to leave them to their dreams.

THE DEMO DUMPER

VANDERHYDE

We never thought it was possible to listen to music through our fingers, but here we are, halfway through Vanderhyde’s demo, squinting at his Soundcloud page as if it were one of David Brent’s more excruciating moments on *The Office*. It’s like a litany of pastiches of folk music styles from around the globe, each filtered through a worldview of hoarse, drunken sincerity. So ‘Spark of Dawn’ is a Zulu spiritual rendered by a drunken, forty-a-day busker armed with a banjo that makes random appearances throughout, until suddenly there’s incongruous bagpipes and everything’s turned into a Scottish sword dance with someone chanting “Jesus, he’s alive!” over the top. ‘Halloween Song’ is a traditional English folk tune interpreted by someone who imagined the genre was invented by Billy Bragg while he was shouting from atop a soapbox on Hyde Park Corner, and ‘Alien Boy’ is clodhopping, atonal bluegrass. More, you say? The superbly titled ‘Bog Snog’ might well be an Irish jig but it’s hard to tell when it sounds like it’s coming at you from the bottom of an abandoned well. It ends abruptly, seemingly halfway through the song, as if in a moment of glaring self-awareness it realised all this must stop, like a middle-aged dad dancing at a kids’ disco who’s realised it really isn’t cool, and if ‘Calm Down’ is intended as a knowing first-strike against exasperated reviewers, it doesn’t make up for the fact it sounds like the dying moans and wails of the aftermath of a medieval battlefield, while ‘Reel Potatoes’ is – yes – a reel. About potatoes. With someone bellowing “Potatoes, potatoes / You wash them, you squash them / I have a potato right under my nose.” There is, in all likelihood, a school of thought that would consider all this genius of a sort. In which case we’re calling Ofsted right now and having the school shut down with immediate effect.

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

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