

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 247
February
2016

"I'm afraid the songs
aren't that jolly,
so my voice
isn't that jolly
either."



Cameron A.G.

From sticksman to star in waiting
meet Oxford's finest young heartbreaker.

Also in this issue

Introducing **TOO MANY POETS**
Swim the Atlantic, The Shapes,
Cherokee, Reveller, Shaker Heights
and Other Dramas reviewed

plus

All your Oxford music news and six pages of
gigs for the month ahead.

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THE BULLINGDON

FEBRUARY 2016

Monday 1st February
Billy Walton Band

Doors: 8pm

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

Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 5th February
Aoife O'Donovan Trio

Doors: 7pm

Friday 5th February
Organised Fun:
Max Graef
Damiano Von Erkert

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 6th February
Soul Devotion
The Shapes
DJ Vinto

Doors: 8pm

Monday 8th February
The Sherlocks

Doors: 7pm

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

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 11th February
PINS

Doors: 7pm

Friday 12th February
SE10:
DJ Luck & MC Neat

Doors: 11pm

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

Doors: 11pm

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

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 18th February
Ryley Walker with
Danny Thompson

Doors: 7pm

Friday 19th February
20th Anniversary of
BACKROOM BOOGIE:
60s, 70s, Funk Soul Disco Night

Doors: 9pm

Saturday 20th February
Blossoms
The Vryll Society
Viola Beach

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th February
Simple:
Altern 8

Doors: 10pm

Monday 22nd February
Sam Kelly Band
feat. Gregor Hilden

Doors: 8pm

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

Doors: 8.30pm

Wednesday 24th February
Sundara Karma
Beach Baby

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 25th February
The Hip Drop
with the Tropics
Feat. Holly Lawson

Doors: 7pm

Friday 26th February
Carousel Playhouse
DJ Emoticon
Catjam
C@ in the H@

Doors: 10pm

Monday 29th February
Eric Bell Thin Lizzy

Doors: 8pm

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

Doors: 8.30pm

Friday 4th March
Submotion Orchestra

Doors: 9pm

Saturday 5th March
Keep Hush Presents LEAN:
Part 3. Innamind Recordings
Gorgon Sound
Las vs Karma
Kursk vs Quest
Host: Sun of Selah

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 8th March
Jazz at the Bullingdon:
Heavy Dexters

Doors: 8.30pm

Thursday 10th March
Ringo Deathstarr

Doors: 7pm

Friday 11th March
Will Johns
Malaya Blue

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 12th March
Simple:
Shanti Celeste

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 13th March
Martin Harley
& Daniel Kimbro

Doors: 7pm

Monday 14th March
Tradgedy:
All Metal Tribute to
the Bee Gees & Beyond

Doors: 7pm

Friday 18th March
CC Smugglers

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 19th March
The Total Who Show

Doors: 7pm

Monday 21st March
Ben Poole
Stevie Nimmo

Doors: 8pm

Wednesday 23rd March
October Drift

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 24th March
Girls Names

Doors: 7pm

Friday 25th March
While She Sleeps

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 31st March
Better Than Never
Coast to Coast
Catch Fire
One State Drive
The Last to Leave

Doors: 7pm

Friday 1st April
Kiran Leonard

Doors: 7pm

Monday 4th April
J W Jones

Doors: 7.30pm

Wednesday 6th April
High Tyde

Doors: 7pm

Friday 8th April
Hot Club of Cowtown

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 14th April
Rob Tognoni

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

Wednesday 27th April
Laurence Jones

Doors: 8pm

Friday 6th May
Cale Tyson Band
Loud Mountains

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 7th May
Desert Storm
Suns of Thunder
Welcome Back Delta

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 12th May
The Defiled
Forever Never

Doors: 7pm

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Fri 5th Feb • £7 adv
Uprising - BBC
Introducing Ft.

+ Pixel Fix
+ The Aureate Act
+ Rainbow Reservoir
+ Sam Martin
+ Who's Alice

Fri 5th Feb • £12 adv • 10:30pm
Fluid Ft TDQ Tour

+ Royal T.
+ Flava D
+ DJ Q
+ Elijah + Skilliam

Sat 6th Feb • £28 adv • 6.30pm
The Game
Documentary 2 Tour

Mon 8th Feb • £15 adv
Villagers
+ Aiden Knight

Tue 9th Feb • £16.50 adv
Gabrielle Aplin
+ Hudson Taylor
+ Hannah Grace

Wed 10th Feb • £13 adv
Tesseract
+ The Contortionist
+ Nordic Giants

Thu 11th Feb • £23.50 adv
An Evening With
Fun Lovin' Criminals

Thu 12th Feb • £22 adv • 6.30pm
John Grant
+ Soley

Fri 12th Feb • £10 adv • 11pm
SASASAS

Sat 13th Feb • £17 adv • 6.30pm
Lissie
+ The Travelling Band

Sun 14th Feb • SOLD OUT
Nathaniel Rateliff
& The Night Sweats

Mon 15th Feb • £12.50 adv
Ezra Furman
+ The Big Moon

Fri 19th Feb • £15 adv • 7pm
Chip & P Money

Fri 19th Feb • £8 adv • 6pm
Let The Lady Sing
Feat. Vienna Ditto
+ Crystallite
+ Callow Saints
+ Khamsina
+ Eyes fo Gertrude

Sat 20th Feb • SOLD OUT • 6pm
Little Comets
+ Hippo Campus

Thurs 25th Feb • £18.50 adv
Stiff Little Fingers

Fri 26th Feb • £11 adv • 6pm
CASH
(Payin' Respect to
the Man In Black)
With Full Live Band
+ Hannah Clapham

Fri 26th Feb • £13 adv • 9pm
Sonny Fodera
Presents
+ Leftwing & Kody
+ Martin Ikin
+ Go Jack
+ Dilly

Sat 27th Feb • £12 adv • 9pm
Big Narstie BDL Tour
Feat. Big Narstie &
Stylo G

Sun 28th Feb • £12 adv
Fat White Family

Fri 4th Mar • £12 adv • 11pm
Lobster Boy Tour
+ Mele + Mak & Pasteman
+ NYTA

Sat 5th Mar • £17.50 adv • 6pm
Reef

Thu 10th Mar • £14 adv • 6pm
Limehouse Lizzy

Fri 11th Mar • £14 adv • 6.30pm
Emmy The Great

Sun 13th Mar • SOLD OUT
Wolf Alice

Mon 14th Mar • £22 adv
Scott Bradlee's
Postmodern
Jukebox

Tue 15th Mar • £17.50 adv
The Coral

Fri 18th Mar • £12 adv • 10pm
What Hannah Wants

Fri 25th Mar • £20 adv • 6.30pm
Trivium

Sat 26th Mar • £10 adv • 11pm
White Magic Bash 7th
Anniversary
+ Young Guns + Natural
Affairs + Liv Sound + Worries
International + Platinum Lynx
+ 2xclusive Crew

Sat 9th Apr • £23.50 adv • 6.30pm
Ben Haenow

Mon 11th Apr • SOLD OUT
Jack Garratt

Wed 13th Apr • £21.50 adv
Newton Faulkner

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

Sat 16th Apr • £7 adv • 6.30pm
Alxndr

Fri 22nd April • £16 adv • 6.00pm
The Icicle Works

Fri 22nd April • £25 adv • 6.30pm
Billy Ocean -
"When The Going
Gets Tough" 30th
Anniversary Tour

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

Sun 1st May • £16.50 adv
Lethal Bizzle

Wed 4th May • £21 adv
The Bluetones

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

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

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

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

Mon 6th Jun • £27.50 adv
Public Image Ltd

Sat 18th Jun • £12 adv • 6.30pm
Stillmarillion

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

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

Sat 17th Dec • £12 adv
Leather at Christmas
Party



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NEWS

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email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



TRUCK FESTIVAL is expanding to a three-day event this year.

After selling out the last four years, the festival will now run over the weekend of **Friday 17th – Sunday 19th July** at Hill Farm in Steventon. Weekend tickets, priced £86.50, go on sale on Thursday 28th January at www.truckfestival.com, or from Truck Store on Cowley Road, Remade Guitars in Abingdon, and Steventon Co-Op.

Talking about the expansion to a three-day festival – the first time Truck has run over three days since 2011 – organiser Matt Harrap told *Nightshift*, “We’re excited to take Truck to three days. We’re, as always, very conscious to remain one of the most accessible festivals in country; we believe festivals should be available for everyone. As a result, we’ll keep the ticket price as affordable as possible. £86.50 means that Truckers get an extra day of partying for £7; that’s less than £29 a day!

“2016 sees Truck in a stronger position than ever before; as a team we’re totally tuned into how best to run the event and how to take it to the next step. The success of previous years has proved a real spring board from which to take Truck to the next level.”

The first line-up news for Truck is expected on the 3rd February. Check *Nightshift*’s Twitter and Facebook for updates.

THE LINE-UP FOR THE UNCOMMON STAGE AT COMMON PEOPLE FESTIVAL will be announced at the end of February exclusively in *Nightshift*. The dedicated local acts stage at the two-day event in South Park over the weekend of the 28th-29th May, is curated by *Nightshift* and features local 18 acts.

Common People, organised by the team behind Bestival and Camp

Bestival, runs concurrently with its sister event in Southampton, with the main stage line-ups switched between the two sites. Acts confirmed so far include Primal Scream, Public Enemy, Soul II Soul, Craig David’s TS5, Gaz Coombes, Ghostpoet, The Sugarhill Gang and Don Broco. Tickets, priced £27.50 per day (concessions and family tickets are available) are available from oxford.commonpeople.net.

THE OXFORD PUNT is still open for applications from local bands and acts wanting to play the event. The Punt takes place on **Wednesday 11th May**, featuring some 20 acts across five venues in the city centre.

Running since 1997, The Punt is the annual showcase of new Oxford music talent, providing early exposure for many of Oxford’s most successful bands. Venues this year are The Purple Turtle, The Cellar, The Wheatsheaf, Turl Street Kitchen and The White Rabbit.

To enter, simply send a link to your music to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk. Clearly mark your mail Punt. Acts must be from Oxfordshire and can’t have played the Punt previously. A **contact phone number is essential**. Deadline for entries is the 10th March.

As with previous years entry to each venue on the night will be £5 or free, with 100 all-venue passes, priced £8, on sale from Truck Store, on Cowley Road, Blackwell’s Music on Broad Street and online from Wegottickets.com, from the 1st February.

There is now a dedicated Punt page on Facebook – **Oxford Punt 2016**.

TRUCK STORE celebrates its fifth birthday this month. The independent music store on Cowley Road opened in February 2011 and, along with Blackwell’s Music on Broad Street, is the only surviving record and CD store left in Oxford, continuing to provide an outlet for local musicians’ releases



PIXEL FIX headline this month’s **Uprising** show at the **O2 Academy**. The local electro/indie band will play their biggest Oxford headline show yet on **Friday 5th February** as part of the O2’s regular local acts showcase in conjunction with **BBC Oxford Introducing**.

Pixel Fix, whose single, ‘I Want You the Same’, was premiered on Huw Stephens’ show on Radio last year, are set to support Lights on their UK tour in March.

The Banbury quartet are joined on the 5th by teenage prog starlets The Aureate Act; exuberant pop-punkers Rainbow Reservoir; acoustic blues singer Sam Martin and young alt.rockers Who’s Alice. Tickets for the gig are £7 adv from the O2 box office.

Acts wanting to play future Uprising shows should upload their songs via the BBC Uploader tool at bbc.co.uk/music/introducing/uploader. BBC Oxford Introducing is broadcast every Saturday on 95.2fm, from 8-9pm, featuring new tracks, sessions and interviews with local acts. The show is available to listen to online or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

as well as a wide range of national releases, and local gig and festival tickets.

To celebrate their half-decade anniversary, Truck host an evening of live music on Friday 12th February, with acts to be confirmed.

Truck also hosts a number of instore sets throughout February, from Turin Brakes (*Mon 1st*); Applewood Road (*Sun 14th*), and Austin Lucas (*Sun 21st*).

Visit truckmusicstore.co.uk for more details.



WILD SWIM have announced they are to split. The local electro/indie band, who were featured on the cover of *Nightshift* back in 2012, as well as featuring regularly in our end of year Top 25 lists and gigging regularly, including a sold-out headline show at The North Wall, had been in the studio recording a new EP, which will now be available

for free download. Guitarist and keyboard player Jamie Jay said, “All of us had so much fun, and we’d like to thank everyone who joined and supported us along the way. We met some wonderful people, learned a lot, played some fantastic gigs, and made some music that we’re all very proud of. We’ve decided to call it a day though, and we’re all happier for it. Unfortunately, there’s no drama to report; we’re all still great friends! To mark the end of this project, we thought we’d give away our ‘Untitled EP’, as we spent a really long time working away on it. We hope you enjoy listening to it as much as we enjoyed making it. Thanks so much to *Nightshift*, and all of you out there in the Oxford scene...you made all the difference from the very beginning.” The EP is available at soundcloud.com/wildswimmusic.

HALFWAY TO 75 build up to this summer’s festival with a series of shows over the next few months. The one-day Americana and folk festival takes place at Isis Farmhouse near Iffley Lock on Saturday 30th July. This will be the festival’s fourth outing with the previous three all selling out. Before this the organisers host

acclaimed singer-songwriter Christopher Paul Stelling at The Jericho Tavern on Friday 19th February; Blair Dunlop on Saturday 23rd April, again at The Jericho, and Daniel Romano on Monday 30th May at The Bullingdon.

Line-up news and ticket details for Halway To 75 will be announced at the end of March at Halfwayto75.com.



ALL TAMARA’S PARTIES host a one-day festival at The Perch in Binsey on Saturday 2nd July. The event, set in the garden of the picturesque thatched pub just off Port Meadow and organised by local singer Tamara Parsons-Baker, features The Balkan Wanderers; The Epstein (*pictured*); Candy Says; Rainbow Reservoir; Black Casino & the Ghost; Caroline Bird; The August List; Luke Kennard, and Nia, as well as compère George Chopping. Visit All

Tamara’s Parties on Facebook for updates and ticket details.

SPARKY’S regular open mic and jam sessions around east Oxford get a slight overhaul from this month. The veteran local musician and genial music host’s Sparky’s Spotlight Jam and Spontaneous Showcase will now take place on the first Friday of every month at The James Street Tavern. Additionally Spark’s Side of the Moon takes place every Tuesday at The James Street Tavern, while Sparky’s Flying Circus comes to The Half Moon every Tuesday. All sessions are free and open to all musicians and punters.

OXFORD HAS A NEW DRUM SCHOOL from this month. Master Rhythm in Cowley boasts two practice booths as well as experienced drum tutors available. Give them a call on 07765 224245 or visit masterrhythm.co.uk.

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



MADNESS headline the opening night of this year’s **Cropredy Festival**. *The Two Tone legends top the bill on Thursday 11th August at Fairport Convention’s long-running annual gathering. The Bootleg Beatles are Friday night’s headline act, with Fairport themselves taking their traditional festival-closing place on the Saturday, as ever joined by a host of guests.*

This year’s Cropredy Festival runs over the weekend of the 11th-13th August, attracting over 20,000 fans to the tiny north Oxfordshire village. Other acts confirmed include Ralph McTell; Steeleye Span; Hayseed Dixie; Gilmore & Roberts; Lifesigns; Anthony John Clare & Dave Pegg; Sound of the Sirens; Willie & the Bandit, and Richard Digance. Weekend tickets are on sale now, priced £120, from www.fairportconvention.com

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MUSIC HISTORY BEGINS UNDERGROUND!

A Quiet Word With

Cameron A.G.

photo: ivphotographic.com



BACK IN DECEMBER 2002 *Nightshift* witnessed a gig downstairs at the old Zodiac featuring three unknown local bands which has subsequently gone down in local music folklore. The trio of teenage acts that night were Elizabeth, Gunnbunny and Warhen. Only 15 at the time and playing their first public gig, Elizabeth's Yannis Philippakis and Jack Bevan went on to form Foals and achieve global stardom. Bullish young grungers Jack Goldstein and Michael Thompson from Gunnbunny, fresh and furious out of Eynsham, would go on to form Fixers whose sunshine psych-pop star would shine briefly but brightly and could yet reignite. But what of punk-tinged rockers Warhen? None of that band went on to greater pop glory. At least until now.

BECAUSE IF THERE'S A NAME on a lot of people's lips as far as the next breakthrough act from Oxford goes, it's Cameron A.G. Cameron Groat was the drummer in Warhen back then and subsequently drummed for other young local hopefuls like The Quarter Finals and The Delta Frequency as well as temping for The Family Machine.

More recently he's sat behind the kit for pop-punk starlets Rainbow Reservoir. Probably because we've seen him drumming on so many bands over the last decade and a bit, we were unprepared for what a gem of a singer Cameron was when we first caught him in action, opening the bill at one of Smash Disco's free shows at The Library. Sure he'd briefly co-fronted punk band Vultures, but here, armed only with an acoustic guitar, and occasionally keyboards, his voice was gloriously fragile and pure, a tremulous tenor that came steeped in melancholy, sounding, at its best, utterly lost. No surprise then that Cameron's single, released last year, was titled 'Lost Direction'. It sounded like it had been spun from spiders' silk and felt as desolate and alone as a man cast adrift on a dark, vast ocean.

FROM PLAYING REGULAR support slots around town, both solo and increasingly with his own band, including last year's Oxford Punt, Cameron has started to attract attention well beyond Oxford, with labels, management and promoters drawn to songs and a

voice that shame bland, unit-shifting players like James Bay and Sam Smith. This month he launches a new four-song EP with his biggest hometown headline gig to date at The Cellar, promoted by Alan Day at Kilimanjaro – the local lad who went from putting on his own showcase gigs at local pub venues and now promotes some of the biggest bands in the world. So, 2016 looks like being quite a year for Cameron, and *Nightshift* talked to him about a couple of days after he returned to Oxford after a holiday in Costa Rica ("Lots of sun and iguanas. My two favourite things").

CAMERON WAS BORN IN Derby but moved to El Salvador aged six. Here his dad bought him his first drum kit. "I was always fascinated at an early age by watching drummers. I guess I was a fan of drums before I was a fan of music. I remember my parents playing Paul Simon's 'Graceland' when I was very young and I remember being fixated with the drumming."

CAMERON AND HIS FAMILY moved to Oxford when he was 10, at

which point his brother introduced him to Britpop. "For Christmas one year he got me 'I Should Coco' by Supergrass. I played it on repeat. He then told me they were from Oxford, which blew my mind. "I started taking the drums seriously when I moved to Oxford. I started having lessons with a jazz enthusiast called Trevor Benham. He was an incredible drummer, even at the age of 84 when he started teaching me. He had a drum room that was completely covered with drum memorabilia. There were kits stacked up all over the place and the walls were covered with gig posters and pictures of old jazz legends. I was completely taken aback. On my way to my first lesson I was picturing some boring classroom and that I would be playing some old grade pieces out of an old exercise book. This was the coolest classroom I had ever been in. And he was definitely the coolest person I'd ever met. "I first started playing in bands at secondary school when I was 13. A friend of mine called Stephen Treadwell and I decided to meet up at lunchtimes to try and write songs. Stephen invited his mate Matthew King. Matthew also played guitar; I guess he was quite cool for a year 9 as he was into Oasis and Supergrass. Matthew then invited his friend David Tomlinson to play bass. The only problem being David couldn't play, but his brother had a bass and he promised he'd learn how to play it. Sure enough he did and two weeks later we formed Warhen. "We had no idea what we were doing and had no idea about the local music scene. All we knew was Radiohead and Supergrass. We started rehearsing at The Ark-T Centre. They had just started a music project for young people and they employed a youth music worker called Stewart Ford. Stewart had just installed a recording studio at the centre and his plans were to record local bands and to start putting on monthly gigs. We recorded all our early demos there and played our first shows at the monthly gig nights. With the demos we recorded we managed to start to get gigs through local promoters and we started to find out more about the local music scene."

LOCAL MUSIC FANS WHO'VE followed Cameron's career through so many bands as a drummer will doubtless have been surprised to see

him as a singer and hear his music, which is quite a departure from the bands he's played in previously. When did he start to think about singing and doing his own thing? "I started to write my own songs when The Quarter Finals came to an end. We all went our separate ways musically but still stayed best friends. Matthew went on to become a drum&bass producer and he formed Document One. David was always very into his reggae and he formed the early incarnation of Zaia. I later pinched him back to play bass in Vultures. "I formed Vultures with a friend of mine called Chris Dawson. We co-wrote all the songs and shared the vocals. It was a lot more raw and punk driven than anything I'd done before. I loved it. However I never delved into my deepest feelings with Vultures. I guess that's all come out in the songs I've written recently. I think it has something to do with writing alone. When you write with a partner you get all excited and bounce ideas off of each other. Whereas now I sit, think, over think, and usually write a sad song."

FROM DRUM-THUMPING Britpop kids to sad-eyed, soul-bearing singer, was there one particular artist who inspired Cameron's change in direction? "My musical taste has changed over the years. I've been listening to a lot of Elliott Smith, Willy Mason and Bon Iver amongst other such artists. However it was Robert Stevenson from A Silent Film that steered me in a new direction. Robert had recorded all the Vultures stuff and a lot of The Quarter Finals tracks. I had all these new songs that I didn't know what to do with; I didn't want to form another band and I didn't want to start gigging without any material already recorded. He had a few days spare so we met up at his studio. He knew every band I'd ever been in and he knew every song I'd ever written so I think he knew exactly what direction to steer the songs. He recorded and produced the whole EP. And for that, I can't thank him enough."

Have you always wanted to be the singer or did you discover your voice late on? "I never grew up wanting to be a singer. I always wanted to drum. However, once The Quarter Finals called it a day I was a drummer with no band. There were no other bands I liked around looking for drummers at the time so I started to write my own songs. It never crossed my mind to sing in public until I played a song I'd written to my friend Kate Garrett. Kate is sadly no longer with us, but was one of the music workers at the Ark-T Centre and she'd helped The Quarter Finals out a lot. She was as gutted as I was when we split. I

told her I'd started writing my own songs and I asked her if she would give me some tips on singing. A lot of people in Oxford will know Kate was an exceptional musician and she had a fantastic voice. One of her other great talents was how she could help young musicians and singers find the confidence to perform and in my case, sing. If it wasn't for Kate, I would definitely not be writing or singing the songs I am today."

GIVEN HIS BACKGROUND IN rock and punk-inspired bands, the beauty and tenderness of Cameron's solo songs is as unexpected as it is welcome. The new EP, featuring 'Lost Alone', alongside three other live favourites: 'Way Back Home', 'Hold Your Crown', and 'Double Knot', which featured on last year's *Nightshift* Demo of the Month recording. Is he conscious of the sense of longing and of being lost in his songs? "When I was writing for a band I

"I guess I can express sadness in a song, but I haven't worked out how to express happiness yet. Maybe I should ask Pharrell."

felt I had to constantly keep writing, which meant I ended up writing about all sorts of sometimes pointless stuff. Now I'm writing for myself the songs all really mean something to me. I'm not saying meaningless songs aren't good, it's just as a solo artist it would feel a little bit odd to stand up and sing a song that has no meaning to me whatsoever. If I were in a band, I wouldn't mind at all. It's weird, I don't really understand it myself. These new songs do have deep feelings behind them, which I guess my singing has leant towards. Not consciously, it's just I'm afraid the songs aren't that jolly, so my voice isn't that jolly either."

Do you think you're a happy person generally, or prone to melancholy? "I would like to think I'm a happy person. I'd like to write a happy song one day. I guess when I'm happy I'm not thinking about writing songs. I'm just happy about being happy. I write when there's something on my mind that troubles me. I guess I can express sadness in a song, but I haven't worked out how to express happiness yet. Maybe I should ask Pharrell."

HOW MUCH DOES THE NEW EP reflect those deep feelings? "The EP is mainly about friendships, love and loneliness and trying to deal with those subjects. It's also about questioning them when you probably shouldn't question them. If something is good, maybe even great, you shouldn't have to question it. But for some reason I always do.

I guess it's all quite personal stuff, but I don't think I'm any different to most. We all have these feelings, it's just that for some reason I've decided to write about these personal things and tell everyone about them."

While the bands you've played with up til now have generally been well received, with your new songs, things really seem to be going to another level as far as acclaim goes; do you feel you've reached a higher level of writing? "I don't feel I've reached a higher level of writing, but the songs are more honest and personal than the songs I ever wrote for Vultures. It has been a surprise how these songs have been well received. It's always an odd but nice feeling when someone tells you that you've done something good. I remember feeling like that at school, if my teacher said I'd drawn a good picture. You kind of want to say, 'Shut up! But thanks'.

"It is a very humbling feeling when someone says they enjoy your music.

"I always enjoy going to see Duotone. I've known Barney Morse-Brown for a long time and we've worked together on various different projects over the years. I love the way he has managed to perform his songs and recreate his records by himself whilst still incorporating all the instrumentation. I think it's quite remarkable. He's a true pro and a great songwriter. "I'm also a big fan of Esther Joy Lane. She's also great live and, in a similar way to Duotone, it's quite astonishing how one person can create such a full sound but also a great sound. Anyone can layer up instruments on a loop pedal but to use it in the creative way they both do is quite something. "Gaz Coombes' new record is also outstanding. But you probably guessed I was going to say that."

A FAN OF THESE GREAT talents Cameron may be, but with his own songs he's in line to rival, even eclipse them, and the young man who has spent almost all of his musical life so far sat at the back is finally getting his time centre stage. If there's room in your heart for beautiful, sorrowful songs, and you haven't yet seen or heard him play, grab a copy of his EP as soon as you can, and get down to The Cellar for his launch show.

SO, BACK TO THAT GIG IN 2002 at The Zodiac. Does Cameron remember much about the night or what he thought of the bands at the time? And can he make it a hat-trick of future successes from that night with his own career now? "I do remember that night, very well in fact. It was one of Mac's gigs. I was and still am best buddies with Jack Goldstein. Gunnbunny were one of my favourite bands to go out and see back then; there was quite a scene emerging out of Eynsham of all places with the likes of Gunnbunny and Winnebago Deal. Gunnbunny were full of energy and they had an awesome drummer in Richard Partlett. The songs were strong and really well crafted; it was quite obvious Jack was going to have a successful career in music. I remember Yannis and Elizabeth being quite an experimental band even back then; they were pushing all sorts of boundaries we didn't even know existed. I guess looking back it was quite a night. As for making it a hat-trick? I don't know. You could look at it a little like the golden age of England football at the time. I guess Yannis would be David Beckham and Jack would be Michael Owen. I just hope I'm not Emile Heskey."

'Way Back Home' is released this month. Cameron plays The Cellar on Thursday 18th February. Hear him at soundcloud.com/cameronag

RELEASED

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS

`Brunski`

(Skag Harry)

The Shaker Heights have been loitering on the edges of the local scene for a fair few years now, putting out the occasional single or EP, sometimes disappearing for a year or two. You remember them, right? You'll know you're remembering them correctly if you can barely remember anything at all, such was the harmlessness of their light rock, filling gaps in midweek line-ups anonymously and efficiently like packing crate polystyrene nuggets.

And after all this time, has anything changed? Bloody right it has! This single is pretty damned great. Apparently, `Brunski` was inspired by Kafka and explores "the pressure of non-arrival", which sounds like nonsense and justifies a certain piece of Wheatseaf gents'



graffiti we shan't reproduce here, but this is the only negative thing we can say. `Brunski` opens with a coldly insistent drum machine goosestep, which is soon joined by skeletal fret-buzzing bass whilst some snide cyborg synth lines look askance from the shadows. Into this freeze-

THE OTHER DRAMAS

`Say It`

(Self released)

The Other Dramas exist in quaint, homely village between the towns of Pure Pop and Garage Rock on the evidence of this new EP. The duo – singer/guitarist Maria Ilett and drummer Richie Wildsmith – seem unwilling to commit fully to one or the other, and while the end result is still appealing, you wonder if there's untapped potential if they could steer more fully one way or the other.

Lead track `Say It` tumbles into the room on some big, gnarly grunge riffage before Maria's vocals introduce a sweeter strain of indie, verging on 60s girl band pop. The song has an endearingly clumsy feel about it, which should be taken as a compliment, keeping it a few steps removed from so much bland, ad-friendly rock, but there's a feeling the pair could ramp up the noise a couple of notches and turn it into a real belter without damaging the core tune.

`House of Cards` is softer and poppier, again Maria's girlish, singsong voice providing the focal point, while `Feeling Bad` is bubblegum 60s pop with a garage edge. It's final track `Dog`, though, that provides the EP's highlight, an acoustic number with just the softest of touches on the drums and a brief trumpet flourish trumpet at the end to distract from a sweet, simple pop lullaby with just the right emotional tug.

In fact each track reveals the innate pop appeal of The Other Dramas; all they need to do is realise you *can* explore the outer reaches of your musical lands and still retain that vital essence that defines your character.

Dale Kattack

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dried goth diorama drift Robyn Cooper's sad-eyed vocals, before the whole thing is lifted to a warmer place by a chorus recalling Tears For Fears. It lasts brief seconds though, before we're back in step with the melancholy march. This is chilly music to turn a collar up against, bleak pop to make you blow onto your hands. B-side `Sick And Weird` is a simpler acoustic ditty made special by the gaunt hollowness of the keyboards, sickly sonic mistrals blowing through the melody. It's like they took the sparsest track on Prefab Sprout's `Protest Songs` and made it five times more miserable, without losing the prettiness of Cooper's voice. *Nightshift* spends a lot of time telling grown-up bands to stop being so sensible, get blitzed and try to capture some childish magic, but if The Shaker Heights are anything to go by, take time out. Have kids. Get a mortgage. Become a quantity surveyor. Do anything, basically, if it improves your music this much.

David Murphy

LUCY MAIR

`Naïve`

(BFS)

`Naïve` is the new EP release from Lucy Mair, which follows on from the relative success of her September single, `The Fool`, an intricate and lyrically stylish slice of pop, that makes this something of a disappointment.

Throughout the EP there's far too much going on. Each track ebbs and flows awkwardly; EP opener `I Will Wait` moves from a jarring acoustic guitar into a richer chorus and back again at breakneck speed. The verse feels slightly out of place, seemingly done for musical effect, whilst the lush chorus is far more interesting. After a few verse-chorus transitions the track then dives head first into a handclapped breakdown, and then into another chorus, with each transition getting more and more frantic. The shifts between each section are uncomfortable, and the syncopations of the rhythm section are clunky, leading to a prickly listen.

There are a few things that lift the EP: Mair's elegant vocals, and her talent in writing a song for starters, and it's lyrically interesting, with sophisticated vocal lines. Too often it's the production, and the way the instrumental lines interweave that let the EP down. Many of the problems could be fixed by stripping each song down to its basics and completely redoing the production.

This is evident in EP centrepiece, `The Sixties`, which is a piano based ballad with no unwieldy syncopation or hasty transitions between song sections; it shows the best of Mair's music and her song writing skills.

Hannah Mylrea Hemmings

REVELLER

`Drown`

(Self released)

Reveller have been a feature of the Oxford metal scene for over a year now and new single `Drown` showcases a sound that has been given the time to develop and mature.

`Drown` sounds as if Reveller have taken inspiration from the newly emerging mainstream of British metal, spearheaded by bands like Bring Me the Horizon, who have brought heavier sounds to a wider audience in recent years. The song couples big, catchy, melodic hooks with metalcore riffs and moshpit-friendly breakdowns, creating a sound that is undeniably metal, but should also be surprisingly palatable to a casual listener less acquainted with the metal underground. However, Reveller's guitar work suggests a band with an intimate knowledge of both the mainstream and the underground, taking cues from the recent tech metal boom with some intricate riffery.

While this influence is a breath of fresh air that elevates `Drown` above generic, and the song demonstrates that both of Reveller's guitarists, John Gould and Dan Ashby, are undeniably talented, the lead work leans a little too far into the realm of mindless technical showmanship for my tastes. Meanwhile, vocalist Matt Winchester should be familiar figure to followers of local metal from his time with Prospekt, 13Burning and more, and his voice lends a welcome symphonic touch to proceedings.

All in all, `Drown` sounds like a band who have found their feet; no small achievement for a new band, and that alone makes Reveller an exciting prospect for the Oxford metal scene.

Tal Fineman



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G I G G U I D E

MONDAY 1st

TURIN BRAKES: Truck Store – Instore show from the indie/folk rockers, promoting their seventh studio album, ‘Lost Property’.

THE BILLY WALTON BAND: The Bullingdon – Blues-rock in the vein of Hendrix, Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughan from the New Jersey guitarist, who has played around his local scene since his early teens, jamming with Springsteen, Gary US Bonds and Double Trouble along the way.

TALISK: Nettlebed Folk Club – Lively traditional Celtic folk from the Glaswegian trio who won the BBC Young Folk Award and the Danny Kyle Award at Celtic Connections, tonight playing an intimate show at Nettlebed’s

Friday 5th

THE AOIFE O’DONOVAN TRIO: The Bullingdon

A welcome return to Oxford courtesy of Empty Room promotions for country/folk/ bluegrass artist Aoife O’Donovan, the singer having become a regular in town over the last few years. Having made her name as lead singer with progressive bluegrass band Crooked Still, O’Donovan’s musical reach extends far and wide, with myriad collaborations under her belt – including with Goat Rodeo Sessions and Punch Brothers, as well as with Sarah Jarosz and Nickel Creek’s Sara Watkins, with whom she last came to Oxford – as well as writing a hit single, ‘Lay My Burden Down’, for Alison Krauss – a neat turnaround given Krauss’s influence on Aoife’s own music. Her mellow, almost ethereal vocal style in her recent solo work has taken her down a different road from Crooked Still, steeped in the southern blues and folk traditions – despite her roots in Massachusetts. There are dark murder ballads but also plenty of lighter, almost poppy songs, all coated in a soothing soulfulness that’s suited to intimate venues like the Bully. Having played solo here previously, this tour – to promote new album ‘In the Magic Hour’ (featuring guest turns by both Watkins and Jarosz among others) – sees her with a band, to more fully realise the intricate sounds of her recorded work.



FEBRUARY

renowned folk club after festival performances at Cropredy, Cambridge and Celtic Connections last summer.

TUESDAY 2nd

THE MARTIN PICKETT ORGANISATION: The Bullingdon – The Bully’s free weekly jazz club plays host to the Martin Pickett Organisation.

GLUE: The Cellar – Detroit house, UK warehouse, Italo house and space disco from the crew behind Treehouse, with Inigo Val, Mr Wong and Ferrero.

SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic night, hosted by Sparky.

WEDNESDAY 3rd

DISCO MA NON TROPPO: The Cellar – House, disco, dub/, afrobeat ad cosmic weirdness with DJ Closed Stack, Mallard Hotlines, DJ Mangrove and Virtual DJ.

ECHOPRAXIS + ArA feat. DUBWISER DANCEHALL + ALL IS WORTH: The Library – Pindrop show with elegant new local pop outfit Echopraxis, plus nu-soul from ArA and folk-pop from All Is Well.

THURSDAY 4th

SEAN TAYLOR: The Old Fire Station – Brooding blues ballads and folky blues-rocking from the rising young London singer, pianist, guitarist and harmonica player, who’s been compared to John Martyn, now out on tour to promote last year’s ‘The Only Good Addiction Is Love’, recorded in Texas with producer Mark Hallman, and featuring contributions from Danny Thompson.

JONNY PAYNE + SYLVA KAY: The Library – Acoustic blues from Carterton singer-songwriter Jonny Payne at tonight’s Pindrop show, plus new young acoustic pop talent Sylva Kay, regularly seen busking in the city centre.

T-REXY + TANNERS POOL + MOMENTO + WATERFAHL + OUT OF THE VILLAGE: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music gig with T-Rex tribute band T-Rexy; bluesy rockers Tanners Pool; worldly folksters Momento, and acoustic blues, pop and swing duo Waterfahl.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s oldest and best open club night hosts singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more every week.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the veteran local swamp-rock, funk, ska and psychedelic pop faves.

SYNERGY: The Cellar – Isis Magazine hosts a night of Afrobeat, funk and reggae.

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon – Weekly open mic night, hosted by local veteran Sparky.

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure –

Weekly unplugged open session.

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Weekly open jam session.

FRIDAY 5th

AOIFE O’DONOVAN TRIO: The Bullingdon – Soulful, sultry southern folk and bluegrass from the Crooked Still singer – *see main preview*

ORGANISED FUN with MAX GRAEF & DAMIANO VON ERCKERT: The Bullingdon – A collaborative effort from two of Oxford’s most popular student club nights, Bloody Knuckles and Cut Grass.

FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + KONE + EGRETS: The Cellar – Psychedelic electro soundscaping and griefy space rock from Flights of Helios, set to release their debut album later this spring. They’re joined by sparse post-punk trio Kone, leaning towards the xx and Young Marble Giants scheme of things.

UPRISING with PIXEL FIX + THE AUREATE ACT + RAINBOW RESERVOIR + SAM MARTIN + WHO’S ALICE: O2 Academy – The O2’s new acts showcase in conjunction with BBC Oxford Introducing lines up an impressive bill, with Banbury’s chilled, Ibiza-flavoured indie-electro outfit Pixel Fix having been touring nationally before coming back for this their biggest Oxford show so far, leaning towards the Toro Y Moi, Chad Valley and Glass Animals style of things. They’re joined by young electro-prog crew The Aureate Act, unafraid to mix up Genesis and King Crimson with Radiohead and Boards of Canada; spiky pop-punk from Rainbow Reservoir, acoustic blues-pop chap Sam Martin and rockers Who’s Alice.

FLUID: O2 Academy – Bass, grime and UK garage club night, with a three-hour b2b2b from Royal T, DJ Q and Flava D, plus grime from Elijah and Skilliam, making their Fluid debut, and resident Masp.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with CRYSTALLITE + THE LOST ART + MONKFISH + CLAIRE LeMASTER: The Wheatsheaf – Good cheer, party vibes and a inclusive music policy from the monthly Klub Kak, this month with old school melodic rockers Crystallite; acoustic jazz, folk, indie and blues-pop from The Lost Art; gothic country rocking from Monkfish and folk and blues from A Reluctant Arrow singer Claire LeMaster.

SPARKY’S SPOTLIGHT JAM & SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE: The James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic and jam session, tonight with sets from Tony Batey, Tom Ivey and Cosmosis.

THE OXFORD UKULELE BIG BAND + PAPA NUI + SEA GREEN SINGERS: St Gregory the Great, Cowley – A fundraising gig for the Oxford City Farm, planned for the old playing field at St Gregory. Oxford Ukuleles go big for the occasion, alongside blues and reggae-tinged funksters Papa Nui and eco-groovers Sea Green Singers.

LUKE DANIELS: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Eclectic 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.

THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The Bell, Bicester – Classic rock’n’roll and blues.

SATURDAY 6th

THE GAME: O2 Academy – Bullets and beefs from the Compton rapper – *see main preview*

SOUL DEVOTION + THE SHAPES + DJ VINTO: The Bullingdon – Northern soul covers from the reformed local 90s favourites, running through classics like ‘Mustang Sally’, ‘Try a Little Tenderness’, ‘Mr Pitiful’, ‘Rescue Me’ and more, plus 60s-styled r’n’b, new wave pop and American college rock from The Shapes. DJ Vinto spins soul and funk on the decks.

BLACK STATE HIGHWAY + MEANSTEED + BULLETPROOF ROSE: The Cellar – Another night of quality riffage courtesy of OxRox, with Brighton’s multi-national rockers Black State Highway touring their ‘Lights of the City’ on Cherry Red Records, keeping it loud, raw and

Saturday 6th

THE GAME: O2 Academy

If you judge a man by the quality of his enemies, The Game is a serious heavyweight. In fact, over the course of his now decade and a bit long career, the abundantly-tattooed Compton-born drug dealer-turned-rapper born Jayceon Taylor, has seen his myriad beefs threaten to overshadow his music. Among those he’s dissed or physically battled are former G-Unit comrade 50 Cent, Lil Easy-E, Suge Knight, Jay-Z and 40 Glocc. Words, fists and bullets have been exchanged, all adding to the reputation of an MC who remains true to his street roots. Musically Game’s rhymes come straight from the same Compton corners as his heroes NWA – he was mentored early on by Dr Dre and has stayed onside with the beatmaker for the duration. It seems weird that his debut album, ‘The Documentary’, is now over ten years old, and last year he released a sequel of sorts, ‘The Documentary 2’, the tour for which brings him back to the UK. Anyone looking for conscious lyricism will be disappointed – here are unvarnished tales of guns, drugs and all the other trapping of rap that make America’s moral guardians froth at the mouth, and delivered with his brooding sense of menace, they are the words of a bloke you really don’t want to get on the wrong side of. In fact, watching Youtube videos of him dealing with hecklers at his gigs, you *really* don’t want to get on the wrong side of The Game.



bluesy in the vein of Clutch, Led Zep and Joe Bonamassa. Support from Harrow’s hard rockers Meansteed, touring their excellently titled debut album ‘Two Good Fists and a Deathwish’, inspired by Thin Lizzy, AC/DC and Metallica, plus Workington’s hard’n’fast crew Bulletproof Rose.

EXTRA CURRICULAR presents WHAT YOU CALL IT, GARAGE?: The Cellar – UK garage club night.

NO FORM + FICKLE TWIN + DRORE + GRUB: Fusion Arts – The very great Smash Disco people take a temporary break from The Library to bring Leeds’ darkly oppressive no wave/hardcore outfit No Form to town, the band, whose self-titled debut EP last year was record of the week in *Maximum Rock’n’Roll*, bringing the confrontational, claustrophobic carnage of The Birthday Party, Black Flag and SPK to the party. And it will be a party. Great noisy support from Derby’s raucous, Stooges-styled rockers Fickle Twin, local doom/crust behemoths Droke, and riff-heavy punks Grub. You’ll need a bath and probably some bandages for your ears afterwards but it will be worth it.

HAWAIIAN TEA DANCE: St Giles Church Hall (6.30pm) – Traditional Hawaiian music from The Honolulu Cowboys.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: Cricketers Arms, Cowley – Blues-rock from the local singer-guitarist and his band.

SUNDAY 7th

MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + BEARD OF DESTINY + MATT SEWELL + MOON LEOPARD: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free unplugged music session with sets from bluesman Beard of Destiny, psychedelic folkies Moon Leopard and more.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: Prince of Wales, Iffley

MONDAY 8th

VILLAGERS: O2 Academy – Songmeister Conor O’Brien and band return with their third album, ‘Darling Arithmetic’, following a brace of Mercury-nominated outings in the form of ‘{Awayland}’, and acclaimed debut ‘Becoming a Jackal’, the title track of which earned him an Ivor Novello award. The new album finds him in characteristically hushed and sensitive mood, with an earnest and confessional soul-searching. He remains as literary as ever, introducing his wistful, witty, worldly tales.

THE SHERLOCKS: The Bullingdon – Anthemc, Arctic Monkeys-style rocking from Sheffield’s Sherlocks, out on tour ahead of dates supporting The Libertines on their forthcoming arena tour, following supports to Scouting For Girls, Reverend & the Makers and The Enemy.

MCGOLDRICK, McCUSKER & DOYLE: Nettlebed Folk Club – A rare chance to catch three of the contemporary folk scene’s leading lights together in an intimate setting, with the Transatlantic Sessions trio at Nettlebed’s renowned weekly club – Michael McGoldrick plays flute, whistles and uilleann pipes, with John McCusker on fiddle and John Doyle on vocals and guitar for a run through of their combined catalogues and traditional numbers.

TUESDAY 9th

GABRIELLE APLIN: O2 Academy – Slickly-produced feather-soft pop balladry from Aplin, out on tour to promote her second album, ‘Light Up The Darkness’, the follow-up to Top 5 debut ‘English Rain’ and John Lewis ad-soundtracking



Thursday 11th

PINS: The Bullingdon

Pins are as old school indie pop as old school indie pop gets, but when what passes for indie these days tends towards the 3rd rate Oasis boy-gang scheme of things, the old ways increasingly seem like the best way forward. Pins could never be accused of being a boy gang. They’re a girl gang for starters, a Manchester quartet schooled in the mid-80s ways of Velvet Underground and Phil Spector-inspired fuzz, drone and pop purity. The band’s early songs sounded (wonderfully, it has to be said) like a generation-melding blend of Spacemen 3 and Dum Dum Girls, but on second album ‘Wild Nights’ they’ve roped in Queens of the Stone Age producer Dave Catching, who’s sharpened up the pop side of their sound, the 60s-styled garage rock subsumed to pin-tight melodies, Faith Holgate’s vocals brought more to the fore, rather than sounding like they were coming at you from a mist-shrouded dream. They remain glumly exuberant though, and slightly lost in musical time, relying on simplicity, both musically and lyrically, rather than cutting edge technology or slick genre-blending. No, this is great, classic indie pop, perfect for fans of Best Coast, Allo Darlin’ or Vivian Girls fans. The best kind of pop, basically.

mega hit ‘The Power of Love’. Can we go home now?

THE STUART HENDERSON BAND: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from trumpeter Stuart Henderson and band.

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial and ebm club night with Dr Joy and Bookhouse.

SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 10th

TESSERACT: O2 Academy – Atmospheric, polyrhythmic progressive metal from Milton Keynes’ djent pioneers, back on the road to promote third album ‘Polaris’, which saw Daniel Tomkins back on vocal duties and the band back on form, matching metal aggression with intricate melody and texture.

ONE STATE DRIVE + ONLY THE ZERO + SILVER RAVENS + DEAR HERO + BILLY HERKLOTS: The Bullingdon – Pop-punk in the vein of Blink 182 and Sum41 from One State Drive.

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s, new wave, glam, disco and synth-pop club night, from Bowie and Blondie to Talking Heads and Madonna.

THURSDAY 11th

FUN LOVIN’ CRIMINALS: O2 Academy – Return to town for Huey Morgan and chums



Friday 12th

JOHN GRANT: O2 Academy

Addiction. Suicide. Homophobia. Guilt. You’d imagine any gig dedicated almost wholly to such material would be unbearably dark and doom-laden. But that’s to ignore John Grant’s tender-hearted sense of euphoria and deadpan wit. With a voice as rich as his beard, the loveable bear of a man from Denver – now resident in Iceland – can turn the most desperate lyrical subject into a thing of absolute splendour. And he does it again and again and again. Anyone who thought that his 2010 debut album ‘Queen of Denmark’ would be unsurpassable has been proved wrong by both its successors - ‘Pale Green Ghosts’ and last year’s superb ‘Grey Tickles, Black Pressure’, which have seen Grant continue to expand his sonic palette while retaining all the warmth and romance of his opening gambit. Racked with guilt at his own homosexuality after a religious upbringing, Grant endured a turbulent early adult life, sinking into alcohol and cocaine addiction that provoked the split of his band The Czars, and it wasn’t until friends and fans persuaded him to record his new songs that he saw any worth in them. ‘Queen Of Denmark’ was a triumph, topping many critics’ end of year lists, while ‘Pale Green Ghosts’ was a more electronic piece, and cemented the man as one of the finest confessional singer-songwriters on the planet, the man’s honeyed tunes and velveteen voice wrapping everything in a warm blanket of musical wonder. When he sang “I am the greatest muthafucker you’re ever gonna meet / From the top of my head down to the tips of the toes on my feet” you realised that he maybe doesn’t take himself quite as seriously as his self-lacerating songs might sometimes suggest. Equally, Grant still doesn’t seem to comprehend just what a world-class talent he is. A singer and a songwriter to truly treasure.

after their last show here back in 2011, still documenting New York life twenty years on from their biggest UK hit, ‘Scooby Snacks. From hip hop, funk and rock, to lounge, there’s an endearingly gleeful satire entrenched in their crime and drug narratives and Huey’s innate star quality – currently getting more of an airing as a 6Music regular – always makes the band worth a visit.

PINS: The Bullingdon – Velvets/Spector-inspired indie of the old school from the Manchester girl gang – *see main preview*

PATCHWORK: The Cellar – House, acid and techno club night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half

Moon

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 12th

TRUCK STORE 5TH BIRTHDAY BASH:

Truck Store – The local indie record store celebrates five years bringing vinyl and more to the east Oxford masses, with live sets instore and more. Happy birthday, Truck Store people! Long may you thrive.

JOHN GRANT: O2 Academy – The big, bearded song bear returns to town – *see main preview*

SASASAS: O2 Academy – Underground drum&bass’s rising stars head out on a national tour.

DJ LUCK & MC NEAT: The Bullingdon – UK garage from veteran DJ/MC duo Joel Samuels and Michael Rose, seminal figures on the club scene after early chart hits with ‘A Little Bit of Luck’ and covers of ‘Master Blaster’ and ‘Ain’t No Stopping Us Now’ in the early noughties.

THE LONG INSIDERS + PAUL RONNEY ANGEL + GREAT WESTERN TEARS: The Jericho Tavern – Hot Gretsch rockabilly action from The Long Insiders, with rough’n’ready nods to The Cramps, Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard as well as a hefty pelvis bump in the direction of Sun-era Elvis. They’re joined by Urban Voodoo Machine frontman Paul Ronney Angel and his bourbon-soaked gypsy blues, bop and stroll, and contemplative rootsy Americana crew The Great Western Tears, watching life go by through the bottom of a whisky bottle.

C. DUNCAN: The Old Fire Station – Back in town after supporting Lucy Rose at the O2 in November, the Mercury-nominated classical/folk crossover composer and singer brings his choral blend of hushed folk lullabies, wistful harmonies and whistling to the OFS, that acclaimed debut album, ‘Architect’, drawing admiring comparisons to everyone from Fleet Foxes and Burt Bacharach to Bach and Ravel.

BOSSAPHONIK with GYPSY HILL: The Cellar – Latin dancefloor, Balkan beats, world grooves, Afro and nu-jazz at Bossaphonic’s monthly club night, tonight with a live set from eight-piece ensemble Gypsy Hill, kicking out a lively mix of Balkan brass, Mediterranean surf rock, ska and swing with horns, tuba, guitars, live and electronic beats and a scratch DJ.

KUIPER + BAWS + FACTORY LIGHTS + NEON TEEPEE: The Wheatsheaf – Funky rock from Kuiper at tonight’s It’s All About the Music how, alongside Baws, the new band fronted by ATL? and Hot Hooves man Mac and featuring former members of The Candyskins, Medal and Les Clochards, plus 60s-styled r’n’b and nostalgic observational pop Shapes side project Factory Lights.

ANDA UNION: St Barnabas, Jericho – A spectacular display of ancient Mongolian music, collected and reinterpreted by the nine-strong collective, back in Oxford after their first visit here in 2013, combining massed strings and percussion to evoke the traditions of their homeland.

MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: James Street Tavern – Blues and boogie in the vein of Seasick Steve and Rory Gallagher.

SKACIETY + TED DIBIASE & THE MILLION DOLLAR PUNK BAND: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Ska-punk from Kent’s Skaciety.

SATURDAY 13th

LISSIE: O2 Academy – Lush, low-key Americana and folk-pop from the Iowa singer, whose recent relocation from California back to her childhood home informs her new album ‘My Wild West’, a more personal but more confident record than 2013’s ‘Back to Forever’, leaving behind much of the tendency to drop into Sheryl Crow-like MOR country-pop for a rootsier sound.

FREERANGE ROOTS presents ABI SHANTI ROOTS GUIDANCE: The Bullingdon – Roots reggae from the long-running sound system.

IDIOT KING ALL-DAYER: Modern Art Oxford – Local label/promoters Idiot King host a day-night show, with a free daytime session featuring sets from dronelord Lee Riley, post-punk drifters Kone, an audiovisual set from Nunchi Music (Dan Pollard and Ollie Thomas) and more. The evening features Big Scary Monsters’ smash-rock instrumentalists Axes, plus Three Trapped Tigers, Goldie and Heritage Orchestra drummer Adam Betts playing a solo set, and Brighton’s six-piece electro-jazz outfit Luo.

TURF X FEELINGS HORIZON FESTIVAL LAUNCH: The Cellar – Festival launch night from London club crews Turf and Feelings, with sets from The Menendez Brothers, Cropper, Hector Pinner, and Remi & Napper.

BLACKTHORN + THE BALKAN WANDERERS + BEWARETHISBOY: The Old Fire Station – Traditional English folk from Blackthorn, with ska and indie-infused eastern European folk from The Balkan Wanderers in support.

GORDIE MacKEEMA & HIS RHYTHM BOYS + THE EAST POINTERS: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington – Old-time roots music from Canadian fiddler MacKeeman and his outfit at tonight’s Prince Edward Island takeover of Uffington, with traditional Celtic tunes from neighbours East Pointers.

SPECIAL KINDA MADNESS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute to The Specials and Madness.

STEAMROLLER: The Wheatsheaf, Didcot – Blues rocking from the local veterans.

SUNDAY 14th

APPLEWOOD ROAD: Truck Store (3pm) – Intimate Americana and bluegrass from Emily Barker’s new band, featuring sweet three-part harmonies and minimalist acoustic instrumentation.

NATHANIEL RATELIFFE & THE NIGHT SWEATS: O2 Academy – Having moved on from the sparse, earnest Americana of his early music, Denver singer-songwriter Rateliffe is reborn as a fully-blown soul man on his eponymous new album, released last year. Released on Stax, the six-piece Night Sweats band now strut their stuff – bluesy guitars, piano, horns and all – alongside Jackie Wilson, Otis Redding and Van Morrison. Unsurprisingly Jools Holland has taken to them big time and their appearance on *Later...* has helped make tonight’s show a sell-out long in advance.

MAD LARRY + ADY DAVEY & SHAKIN’ LIPS + LEE VALENTINE + SAMMY POPE + PURPLE MAY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7.30pm) – Blues and r’n’b from Mad Larry and Ady Davey at this afternoon’s Giddyup Music free gig in the downstairs bar.

KANADIA + PERFECT PRISONS: The Library – Alternately epic and grungy prog-tinged rock from Abingdon’s Kanadia.

STEAMROLLER: The Bell, Wantage

MONDAY 15th

EZRA FURMAN: O2 Academy – Skinny boy angst gets the fun pop funnel treatment with splendid results – *see main preview*

JOHN KIRKPATRICK & MARTIN CATHY: Nettlebed Folk Club – A rare collaborative concert from two of the leading interpreters of English folk traditions, though the pair have a long history of working together, with Pentangle and Brass Monkey.

TUESDAY 16th

THE ROD KELLY QUARTET: The Bullingdon – Piano jazz and blues at tonight’s free jazz club.

DIALOG: The Cellar – House, techno, disco and world music club night.

SPARKY’S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 17th

SILENT FRONT + DRORE + UNMAN: The Wheatsheaf – Another night of quality

Monday 15th

EZRA FURMAN: O2 Academy

A cross-dressing, gender-fluid observant Jewish lad from Chicago, with a history of depression, Ezra Furman was always going to be an outsider looking in, and all this and more seeps copiously into his raw, untutored music – music that’s at once simple and accessible, and elastic enough to take in everything from early blues and country, garage rock and punk to Stax soul, doo-wop and piano pop. For all his angst (and there’s plenty of that) he’s as far from the clichéd white boy balladeer as you can get and there’s no chance of him pushing the listener away with self-pity as he switches from wracked Frank Black-style scream to ‘Diamond Dogs’-era Bowie snarl via whole heap of influences that take in The Violent Femmes, The Velvet Underground, New York Dolls, The E Street Band, Stiff Little Fingers and Phil Spector (but hey, feel free to add a load more of your favourite names to that list while you’re about it). Furman’s done the outsider rock and roll wretch thing so well he’s gone from Kickstarter-financed albums to a deal with Bella Union and appearances on *Later... with Jools Holland* in a short pace of time while earning a reputation – along with his band The Boy-Friends – as one of the best live acts on the circuit. And when he sings “They’ll never pin me down in the pages like a bug” on new album ‘Perpetual Motion People’, he sounds like someone who’s stumbled upon success and acclaim against every intention.



noise terror courtesy of Burn the Jukebox, with London’s vicious noise-punk trio Silent Front taking Fugazi and At the Drive-In’s angular post-hardcore and sticking a rocket up its posterior. Great local support from Undersmile/Girl Power/Mutagenocide side project Drove, giving doomcore a crust-punk shake up, and droney noisemakers Unman, Lee Riley’s new project with Masiro’s Chris Pethers and Mike Bannard.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE II – SKIN DEEP: The Cellar – Funk, soul and reggae club night with sets from Dot’s Funky Odyssey, The Fusion Project and Maluka.

A RELUCTANT ARROW: The Library – Dark bluesy rock and folk.

THURSDAY 18th

CAMERON A.G. + ESTHER JOY LANE: The Cellar – Gorgeous lost-at-sea pop from the rising local star – *see main interview feature*

RYLEY WALKER & DANNY THOMPSON: The Bullingdon – The 1960s jazz-folk revolution viewed through a psychedelic weed haze from rising folk starlet Walker alongside veteran bassist Thompson – *see main preview*

THE QUENTINS + LUCY LEAVE + EASTER ISLAND STATUES + SOCIAL DISCHARGE: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music showcase with fidgety guitar pop and indie funk from The Quentins, plus noisy indie-grunge from Lucy Leave.

THE SEASONS IN SHORTHAND + SIAN MAGILL + LITTLE RED: Old Fire Station – Introspective alt.folk from Reading’s Seasons in Shorthand, plus Oxford’s excellent dark-folk/pop starlets Little Red.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the local blues-rock veteran.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

THE GRAND MAL + HUSK: The Bell, Bicester – Heavyweight stoner rock from Desert Storm/Mother Corona team-up The Grand Mal at tonight’s OxRox show.

FRIDAY 19th

YORKSTON, THORN & KHAN + LAURA MOODY: St. Barnabas, Jericho – World styles collide at Irregular Folk’s supergroup spectacular – *see main preview*

VIENNA DITTO + CRYSTALLITE + CALLOW SAINTS + KHAMSIANA: O2 Academy – It’s All About the Music’s monthly Let The Lady Sing showcase of local female musicians and singers comes to the O2’s big stage with reliably chaotic, effervescent and generally brilliant 21st Century sci-fi blues duo Vienna Ditto alongside melodic rockers Crystallite and Callow Saints, and electro and piano pop from Khamsina.

LITTLE BROTHER ELI + ECHOPRAXIS + ANDRE CHAVES: The Wheatsheaf – Lively bluesy rocking and funk from the rising local stars, in the vein of White Stripes, White Denim and Red Hot Chili Peppers.

BACKROOM BOOGIE 20th ANNIVERSARY REUNION: The Bullingdon – Funk, soul, boogie and house at a special one-off reigniting of the long-running Friday night club night, which ran at the Bully through the 90s and noughties.



Thursday 18th

RYLEY WALKER & DANNY THOMPSON: The Bullingdon

Folk music has never been afraid to bridge the generations, with family bands a staple of the genre’s long and rich history. So it’s no surprise to see one of the contemporary British folk scene’s rising stars – singer and guitarist Ryley Walker – teaming up with one of the grand old men of folk, double bass player Danny Thompson. As a founding member of Pentangle Thompson played a big part of the rebirth of folk in the 1960s, introducing a new lyrical, jazz-flecked astral version of the form to the world and influencing subsequent generations for over 50 years – not least Walker. Thompson has also played with Richard Thompson, Nick Drake, Tim Buckley and John Martyn amongst others, so his pedigree is beyond any doubt. This tour will be the first time he’s performed live with Walker, whose second album, ‘Primrose Green’, has seen the twenty-something singer enthusiastically compared to Bert Jansch, Tim Buckley, John Fahey and Van Morrison for his mix of jazz looseness, rustic picking, full-blooded blues and lysergic leanings. If the album can feel like a full-on period piece at times, it’s a lush, verdant place to get lost in, the primrose green of the title a strain of weed rather than some rustic idyll, the music reflecting its hazy effects perfectly.

SOUL SESSIONS #13: The Cellar – Classic disco, funk and soul club night.

CHRISTOPHER PAUL STELLING: The Jericho Tavern – Soulful, gothic American folk from troubadour Stelling at tonight’s gig, organised by Halfway to 75 Festival, the singer/guitarist’s southern-style folk storytelling equally earthy and full of biblical darkness as he comes to Oxford at the end of a European tour to promote new album ‘Labor Against Waste’.

A TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE: The Mad Hatter – Local musicians pay tribute to the great man.

PARAMORE OR LESS + GREENISH DAY: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Double tribute band action.

DRIVIN’ SIDEWAYS: Red Hot Blues, Didcot

STEAMROLLER + THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: Kidlington FC – Rocking blues inspired by Hendrix and Cream from veteran local crew Steamroller.

SATURDAY 20th

BLOSSOMS + THE VRYLL SOCIETY + VIOLA BEACH: The Bullingdon – This month’s most likely to be an “I was there” gig in the months to come, with Stockport’s indie rockers snuggled near the top of pretty much every ones-to-watch list for 2016. With actual



Friday 19th

YORKSTON, THORN & KHAN / LAURA MOODY: St. Barnabas

After their triumphant Christmas special here with You Are Wolf, the very excellent Irregular Folk up the ante with tonight's show, hosting the Oxford leg of Yorkston, Thorne and Khan's tour to promote their debut collaborative album 'Everything Sacred'. The trio is made up of James Yorkston – part of The Fence Collective with King Creosote before finding a home at Domino Records, and a mainstay of the contemporary Scottish folk scene – award-winning sarangi player and classical Indian singer Suhail Yusuf Khan, and double bass player Jon Thorne, part of electro/jazz act Lamb. Together they bridge the gap between their very different musical worlds with ease and with often idiosyncratic results, notably a cover version of Ivor Cutler's 'Little Black Buzzer'. Joining them on tour is Irregular Folk regular Laura Moody, one of the most original cellists we've witnessed over the years, as at home charming a tent full of folkies as she is enthralling more esoterically-minded gig goers at Audioscope, variously hitting her face with her bow to create odd rhythms, to yodelling and caterwauling in disconcertingly witchy fashion as she attacks her instrument in inventive ways. One quarter of The Elysian Quartet, she's he's a striking proposition, patently mad as a goat but you'd expect nothing else from a woman who records string quartet compositions in a fleet of helicopters. In fact, calling her a cellist is a bit like describing Heston Blumenthal as a chef; it's correct, but tells you less than half the story.

bands still a bit out of fashion even in indie circles, they tick plenty of the right boxes, being both chart-ready popstastic and suitably gobby in classic Manchester indie style. Musically they have one foot in post-Arctic Monkeys guitar-pop and one in something more exotic and slightly lysergic, with strong hints of Suede, The Stones Roses and The Coral about songs like the highly infectious 'Charlemagne', a radio hit as well as an iTunes Alternative chart Number 1. So see them here in their natural environmental – a small, dark backroom, before bigger venues, and the festival circuit, steals them forever. **SIMPLE with ALTERN-8: The Bullingdon** – House and techno club night with veteran 90s acid house duo Altern-8 guesting, the duo having reformed in 2004 after their early-90s success

with bass-heavy, sample-strewn party bangers like 'Activ-8 (Come With Me)'.

LITTLE COMETS: O2 Academy – Newcastle's ebullient Afro-pop-flavoured indie rockers return to town, playing songs from their recent 'Hope Is Just A State of Mind' album, having originally made their name playing guerrilla gigs in university lecture halls and call centres as well as supporting the likes of Noisettes, The Twang and Biffy Clyro. **THE TEXAS FLOOD + TOADSTOOL + GET LOOSE: The Wheatsheaf** – Melodic hard rock, blues and boogie in the vein of Guns'n'Roses, Quo and ZZ Top from south Wales rockers The Texas Flood at tonight's OxRox show, with support from Gloucester's Toadstool, rocking out in the vein of Led Zep, Wolfmother and Rush. **ALEXANDER HAWKINS ENSEMBLE: The North Wall, Summertown** – A rare hometown show for renowned jazz pianist and organist Hawkins and his Ensemble, who's also found acclaim for his Convergence Quartet project alongside local bassist Dominic Lash, as well as his Hammond-based band Decoy. Inspired by the likes of Art Tatum, Fats Waller, Thelonius Monk, Bud Powell and 70s avant-jazz, Hawkins' concentration on rhythm, particularly the urgency of early free jazz, has made him a star of the national jazz scene over the last decade.

EXTRA CURRICULAR: The Cellar – Techno and house club night. **THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Marsh Harrier** **TANNAHILL WEAVERS: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Traditional Celtic ballads, lullabies, jigs and reels. **THE STANDARD: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Party rock and pop covers. **MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The Red Lion, Witney**

SUNDAY 21st

AUSTIN LUCAS & ADAM FAUCETT: Truck Store (5.30pm) – Country-folk from the Indiana songsmith, previously part of the Revival Tour alongside Frank Turner, Chuck Ragan and Brian Fallon. **PUNCHING SWANS + THE BECKONING FAIR ONES + TOO MANY POETS: The Library** – Free gig from Smash Disco with Kent hardcore / post-punk crew Punching Swans out on tour to promote new album 'Nesting', kicking in somewhere between Fugazi and McLusky. Local support from post-punk / kraut-pop crew Beckoning Fair Ones, featuring ex members of Dallas Don't and Big Tropics, and this month's Introducing band Too Many Poets and their gothic grunge noise. **BEARD OF DESTINY + SONGS & SUPPER ROOMS + PETE LOCK & MARK BOSLEY + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + PUPPET MECHANIC: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm)** – Klub Kakofanny host an afternoon of free unplugged music in the Sheaf's downstairs bar.

MONDAY 22nd

THE SAM KELLY BAND featuring GREGOR HILDEN: The Bullingdon – The Haven Club hosts the renowned London drummer and his band, the sticksman having played for Robert Plant, Chaka Khan, Ben E King, Dr John and Billy Ocean amongst others. For his new tour he's joined by German guitarist Gregor Hilden. **BREABACH: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Scottish-flavoured folk dance from the 2013 Scottish Traditional Music Awards Best Live Act winners,

playing songs, tunes and step dance on bagpipes, fiddle, flute and guitar.

TUESDAY 23rd

ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon – Trad jazz, swing and bop from veteran clarinettist Roy and his reeds band at the Bully's free weekly jazz club. **SPARK'S SIDE OF THE MOON: The James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 24th

SUNDARA KARMA + BEACH BABY: The Bullingdon – Reading rockers out on tour. **FAINTEST IDEA + THE BALKAN WANDERERS + BETTER THAN NEVER: The Cellar** – Battling ska-punk in the vein of Rancid and Less Than Jake from Kings Lynn's Faintest Idea, alongside local eastern European folk, ska and indie crew The Balkan Wanderers. **ECHO4FOUR + VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN + NO DICE GRANDMA + INFURIOUS: The Wheatsheaf** – Church of the Heavy night with Sabbath-inspired rockers Echo4four, Metal and

Sunday 28th

FAT WHITE FAMILY: O2 Academy

Fat White Family's Oxford debut at the Bullingdon in 2014 was one of the most incredible gigs of recent times, not just an outlandish display of rock and roll behaviour that featured nudity, baby oil, amphetamine-fuelled lunacy and a genuinely disturbed audience, but an incredible musical performance that rendered pretty much everything else we saw that year lame by comparison – a queasy form of rock music driven by rage and disgust, led by the enigmatically unhinged Lias Saoudi. Perhaps predictably (particularly given the band had to foot the bill for a wrecked PA system at the Bully) the band's subsequent returns to town – as part of the *NME* Awards tour and at Truck Festival last summer – haven't quite lived up to that first encounter. Despite that, they still stomp, with disgusted relish, on pretty much any other touring rock band you'll catch over the next few months, their dark, deviant blues, gothic surf-rock and narcotic post-punk a reminder that music can still sound like it just crawled out of the sewers. New single 'Whitest Boy on the Beach', recorded by what seems to be a recently depleted line-up, pays homage to Throbbing Gristle, both in sound as well as visuals, and you know that when they title their second album 'Songs For Your Mother', there'll be no mawkish sentimentality or soft centre for several miles around. Just rock and roll as the Devil intended.



southern rock crew Violence is Golden and Noise rock and post-hardcore from Witney's No Dice Grandma.

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar

THURSDAY 25th

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS: O2 Academy – Jake Burns' enduring Belfast punk rockers come back for another outing of classic hits 'Alternative Ulster', 'Suspect Device' and more. **THE HIP DROP: The Bullingdon** – 60s and 70s soul, funk and jazz tunes. **CASE HARDIN: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Roots and Americana from the Pete Gow-fronted band, touring their fourth album, 'Colours Simple'. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon** **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** **BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

FRIDAY 26th

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with DJ VAKIM: The Cellar – DJ Vadim makes his Skylarkin' Soundsystem debut off the back of his hugely acclaimed Dubcatcher series of LPs. One of the hardest working and most respected DJs and producers in the game, his is a wild ride through classic roots music, 80s digital, bashment, original UK 2 step soul, bass culture and boom bap rap. He's aided on the mic by Unit 137 and Tru Thoughts vocalist Jago and joined on the turntables by fellow reggaeholic Count Skylarkin and Destiny FM's Garvin Dan. **CASH: O2 Academy** – Johnny Cash tribute with full band.

THE CORSAIRS + HEADSTONE HORRORS + STRIKE ONE: The Wheatsheaf – Psychobilly, punk, ska and retro rocking from The Corsairs at tonight's It's All About the Music show, plus Nottingham's horror punks Headstone Horrors. **BEARD OF DESTINY + THE ILLUMINATI + SONGS & SUPPER ROOMS: The Jericho Tavern** – It's All About the Music showcase with one-man blues army Beard of Destiny and more. **CAROUSEL PLAYHOUSE: The Bullingdon** **HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: James Street Tavern** – Local Americana ensemble play their monthly residency show. **THE BOWIE EXPERIENCE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute act to the late and very, very great man.

WHITE HORSE WHISPERERS: The Cornerstone, Didcot

SATURDAY 27th

DENDERA + IDESTROY + REBEL STATION: The Cellar – Epic riffage in the vein of Iron Maiden and Judas Priest from Portsmouth's NWOBHM-inspired heavyweights at tonight's OxRox show, the band having supported UFO, Saxon, Skindred and Orange Goblin along the way. Great punk/garage rocking in the style of The Runaways and New York Dolls from Idestroy.

PITCH BLACK: The Cellar – Techno club night with Infrastructure NY founder Function.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE PASTEL FRONTIER + SHRINKING VIOLETS + AMORAL COMPASS: The Wheatsheaf – Goodly mixed bag of music at GTI's monthly gig night, with Brookes' grunge rockers onstage alongside Redditch's psych-pop and rock'n'soul crew Shrinking Violets, and great lo-fi post-goth industrial dirge-core people Amoral Compass.

SEETHING AKIRA + IN DEEP: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Heavy rock from Portsmouth's Seething Akira. **SHEPHERD'S PIE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Hard rock and metal covers, from Maiden and Metallica to Thin Lizzy and Black Sabbath.

SUNDAY 28th

FAT WHITE FAMILY: O2 Academy – Rock music from the sewer, where all good rock music should come from – *see main preview* **PAPA NUI + CASSINI: Florence Park Community Centre (2-5pm)** – The monthly Sunday Session brings live music to a family-friendly setting, with local funk act Papa Nui.

MONDAY 29th

ERIC BELL: The Bullingdon – Blues rock from an old master at tonight's Haven Club show, with original Thin Lizzy guitarist Eric Bell back in town with his band. After serving time with Van Morrison in a late incarnation of Them, Bell formed Lizzy with Phil Lynott, leaving in tumultuous fashion in 1973 but rejoining for their final tour in 83. In between he played in Noel Redding's band and has spent the last few decades touring with his own band. **CARA DILLON: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Traditional folk music from the multiple award-winning Irish singer.

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THE SHAPES / THE STRING PROJECT

The Wheatsheaf

“Klub Kakofanney! First Friday of every month!” shouts club host Phil Freizinger from the stage at the end of tonight’s gig, before quickly adding, “Except this month, which is the second Friday.” But then that’s Klub Kakofanney for you in a nutshell – they don’t go big on following rules, not even their own. The monthly club has been running for a quarter of a century now, providing a haven for all manner of musical acts, many of whom would be dismissed elsewhere as weird, wonky or simply “bloody hippies”. It’s less a gig night, more a noisy house party with an open door policy and an indulgence of oddball behaviour. As such we find ourselves indulging Moon Leopard’s early set, which might otherwise be described as an unholy, directionless mess. It’s frontman Jeremy Hughes’ birthday after all, and as one of Oxford’s most dedicated gig goers

(and down-the-front dancers) he’s entitled to star at his own party, even if it involves more ukulele jamming than is entirely decent. The String Project we’re faced with on stage tonight is rather different to the one we watched on Youtube beforehand, featuring rather less string quartet-with-human-beatbox and more arcane electro-prog and instrument swapping. Half their set borders on something genuinely strange and potentially great – the beatboxer is solid and a slightly cheesy take on ‘The Liquidator’ aside, it sounds, and in particular looks, like a bunch of computer science lecturers from the Open University circa-1975 had formed their own version of the BBC Radiophonic Orchestra. An impression helped immensely by an occasional singer who looks like something out of *Michael Bentine’s Potty Time*. The problem is they shift places so much

they lose any loose grasp of focus they might have had and their good ideas get lost in the resultant mess. A more coherent set of ideas might not be what they’re aiming for but it would help define them better. The Shapes suffer no such confusion, their immensely likeable mix of r’n’b, soulful pop and new wave making them a band who’ll never tear down walls but can unite a room full of tipsy party goers like few others in town. Ant Kelly’s tender vocal sparring with Alix Cornhill steers them close to The Beautiful South gone Parisian café folk at times, but they can wander off into a ska or reggae groove without any awkward about turns, and when they hit their stride, as on the honky tonk blues of ‘Tom Petty’ or the Van Morrison-styled ‘The Sunshine Song’, they’re a inclusive force of the sort that Klub Kakofanney so cherishes. So yeah, first Friday of the month. Well, most months. Make it a date. **Dale Kattack**

CHEROKEE

The Bullingdon

If we are past the point of peak beard, surely we’re similarly past the point where we need another two-piece band armed only with bass guitar, drums and some enormous amps. Cherokee are a two-piece armed with just bass guitar and drums. They also have beards. Bassist and singer Jack Harkey Bourne also has an impressive pedalboard, allowing him to wrench as much from his instrument as possible, and is possessed of an impressively versatile voice. His ability to actually sing as well as roar and bellow when circumstances require it immediately elevates Cherokee above many similarly proportioned bands. Drummer Felix Bartlett is equally wide-ranging in his skill set, a powerhouse sticksman who knows when to soften the blows and can keep the beat going even when he’s stood on top of his kit. The duo’s short set barrels in on thunderous riffs, Jack’s hysterical yelp

setting a scene that switches from dark, claustrophobic New York basement to rundown southern state roadhouse blues shack – the classic 70s template bent and battered by body parts of Royal Blood and even Lightning Bolt at times. A heightened sense of melody keeps each new song fresh, while Jack’s jovial between-song chat adds warmth to the music, and a mid-song rant about how most people don’t know how to make a cup of tea properly is a daft diversion. Saying that they’re most fun when they go full-throttle on songs like the fantastically foul-mouthed ‘Shit Brown’, reminding you that there are few sights and sounds more invigorating than a no-nonsense rock band in full flow. Having already been picked out as ones to watch by several local promoters, Cherokee, barely six months old, seem to have hit the ground running, and on tonight’s evidence there’s not much that’ll stop them. So, another two-piece band with beards? Absolutely, shift over and make room. **Dale Kattack**

DAUGHTER / PIXX

O2 Academy

PIXX (Hannah Rogers to her friends) is the latest signing to 4AD and like tonight’s headliner there are many elements of her sound that hark back to the bands that made 4AD so famous. Her first song is almost entirely acoustic but from then on Rogers and her two accompanists move towards down-tempo, dreamy electro pop. Their set is certainly not without its charms but feels samey and restrained; there’s often no obvious structure to the songs and almost no dynamic variation. In isolation each tune is pretty good: sounding how you would imagine Lorde sounding if she’d grown up on Cocteau Twins and Bauhaus, but end on end I find myself losing interest. With tonight’s show unsurprisingly sold out, Daughter take the stage to enthusiastic applause; it’s perhaps a little over-zealous for the performance we’re about to see. Let me get this straight: I like Daughter. I like Daughter a lot. I was intrigued when their early EPs arrived and gutted when I sadly missed out on their Town Hall show last time round in Oxford. That said, tonight they simply feel flat. The band’s new album, ‘Not To Disappear’, was released just a day before this gig and is a really interesting step forward from their debut whilst still holding onto their core sound. They build sparse guitar, Laura Marling-esque laments and post-rock explosions all into one very pleasing and widely accessible package. But on stage tonight all I could detect was a competent rendition rather than power or a dynamic performance. When you build to epic crescendos I want to see that the musicians are feeling the power as much as I am (or hope to be), and that’s exactly not what we get. Maybe the PA wasn’t cranked up to 11 as the loudest peaks deserved, but really, Daughter tonight feel like a band who have been off the road for a while and haven’t quite got their sea-legs back yet. **Matt Chapman-Jones**

TOO MANY POETS / SLATE HEARTS / NO DICE GRANDMA

The Library

Over the last year Too Many Poets have developed a sound which saw them labelled here as providing “a suitably witchy soundtrack to dark winter nights” when they were awarded Demo Of the Month in December. But to words like raucous, abrasive and energetic, maybe they could maybe add an equally imperative adjective: finesse. Being loud and vigorous is all good and well, but there needs to be a sense of refinement to take it above standard noise. Frontman Pog dances and shrieks his way around The Library like a tortured Kurt Vile, bedraggled in a curtain of brown locks and wrapped up in his mic lead, while their thrashing, tightly-knit instrumentals constantly intrigue and engage throughout. The demonic forays of both guitarists are provided with a suitably dense set of drums and bass, as tracks such as ‘The Worst Intention’, from their new EP, embody the band’s own self-invented genre of graveyard grunge. Such a profound musical showing is similarly reflected in this evening’s first act, No Dice Grandma, who engage in an intense and enthralling form of post/math-rock. If at times a little anti-climactic, the three-piece nonetheless sound notably complete for a genre in which it is deceptively easy to over-indulge, and alongside other local acts such as Masiro, are central to a scene which has always found a home in Oxford. Where Too Many Poets do need to refine their act is exactly where the majority of their energy emanates from: frontman Pog. Throughout

SWIM THE ATLANTIC /

HELL’S GAZELLES

/ ECHO4FOUR

The Wheatsheaf

Echo4four, a four-piece with a Newbury connection, initially come across as slightly ramshackle Black Sabbath-style metal merchants, though a pleasantly loose but doughty approach and an eager, throaty singer keeps the interest raised. A song that seems to called ‘Phobia’ has the kind of simple hook that music of this degree of density needs to really work, and while it’s difficult to see them filling any stadiums soon they seem just right for our beloved ‘Sheaf. More 70s-style metal next courtesy of Hell’s Gazelles, though this time the clear reference point is Led Zeppelin, most evident in the considerable talents of their drummer and singer. The latter’s mohican may dampen the retro vibe visually but the whole package is a joyous riot of dirty guitar riffs, banshee wailing and thundering bass and drums. Tonight’s performance lacks the polish and depth of their new demo for ‘Shivers’, but with a new bassist and an EP out soon they just need to work at living up to the promise. Swim The Atlantic’s first gig for eighteen years is a tribute to their bass player Steve Gore, who died almost exactly ten years ago, and a benefit for the wonderful hospice Michael Sobell House in Headington. Well-known around town in the 90s for their mixture of metal riffs with a light, almost funky touch they could (at times) outdo The Red Hot Chili Peppers at their own game. Tonight’s show is an altogether heavier affair but the new line-up can explain that: drummer Neil Greenaway hasn’t played a gig for four year but anyone who remembers his earthquake-inducing contribution to Little Fish



photo by Paul Carrera

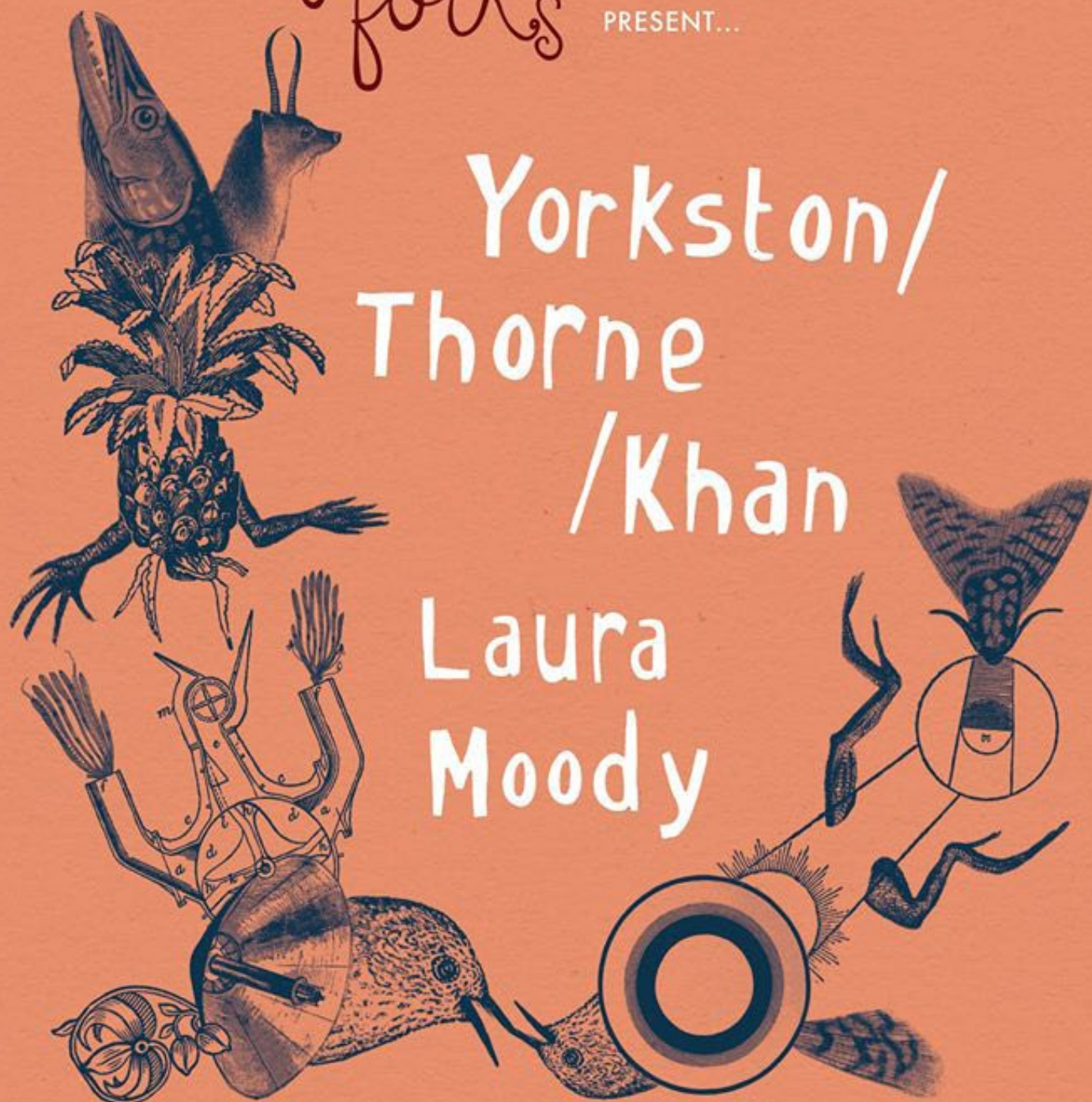
need read no further. Jimmy Hetherington’s guitar playing is also stuff of Oxford legend; a multi-faceted mix of blues and metal with a P-funk touch that has been key to some of the city’s best rock bands. Original singer and guitarist Spike Holifield is another figure with an extensive history; I remember him in 1981 with his band Exit, knocking out U2 covers at The Pennyfarthing with youthful abandon. Together Swim The Atlantic are re-invented as a band with metal at their core but with a maturity that only experience can bring, even with just three rehearsals in eighteen years. Fittingly they play two covers; ‘Rebel Rebel’ brings a warm response but nothing compared to the mayhem that a furious ‘Ace Of Spades’ produces, sending the mosh-shy running for cover. It’s not clear whether this particular reunion will continue, but everything about tonight was about as perfect as you could wish for. **Art Lagun**

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Dr Shotover: Identity Parade

Name: SHOTOVER. Gender: RED-BLOODED MALE. Age: MATURE. Occupation: LOAFING. Favourite bands: PROGLORDS, TIMMY HENDRIX EXPERIENCE. Favourite drink: ANYTHING. Favourite TV channel: YESTERDOPE. Home address: EAST INDIES CLUB, OXFORD. Hobbies: SNEERING, JEERING, LEERING. There you are, Officer - satisfied now? Hang on – you ARE a plain-clothes police officer, aren’t you? Oh no, now I put my *specs* on I see you are in fact a *really rather attractive* Young Lady, perched beside me at the bar! Heavens to Betsy, quelle surprise etc etc. Well, let me at least allow *you* to buy *me* a drink. (Yes, yes, once bitten twice shite and all that...). Really? How nice of you to ask, dear lady. Well, in that case I will have a small brandy... yes, just the teensy half-pint size. SLURP-O, SLURP-O. Now, did I ever tell you about my best ever witty put-down? Back in 1973, as I was leaving Fondles Nightclub dressed in crushed strawberry velvet cords, with shoulder-length hair and dandruff-speckled Afghan coat, a bloke held the door open for me... ‘Oh sorry, mate – thought you were a woman’, said he, sniggering like the rat-faced one in *On The Buses*. Quick as a flash I retorted, ‘That’s all right, “mate” – I thought you were a man’. Oh how we laughed. All except him and his pimply cohort of tank-top-clad pals. ‘I know Kung Fu’, said he. ‘I know Fuk Yu’, said I. Sadly I was bluffing, and he was telling the truth. This is why I stand before you now with only one buttock. Still, vengeance was ultimately mine. For, dear lady, I had contacts in the local chapter of the (all-female) Amphetamine Angels Motorcycle Club. They owed me a favour after I had supplied them with some particularly poky Nepalese Temple Ball... suffice it to say, Mr Kung Fu left his favourite nite-spot the following week via a first-floor window, and is now living VERY QUIETLY in Wantage. Cheers, and – quite literally - down the hatch!

Next month: Born to be Riled

*‘I hope Dr S is wearing his skin-tight loon pants today!’
‘Yes, let’s put on extra LIP GLOSS, just in case...!’*

INTRODUCING....
Nightshift’s monthly guide to the best local music bubbling under
TOO MANY POETS

Who are they?
Too Many Poets are Robbie and Joe Proudlove (*guitar and bass respectively*); Pog (*vocals*); Michael Spillane (*guitar*) and Callum Marinho (*drums*). Robbie, Callum and Mike had been jamming together at school since year 10. Pog joined the band a year ago, and Joe joined when Robbie “realised I had a brother that could play bass and also produce things. Don’t know how we missed that one.” The band played Truck last summer, before recording a demo, which earned them Demo of the Month in December’s *Nightshift* and attracted the attention of Liverpool label Elevent Records who released their debut EP, ‘Relying on Reflections’, last month: “We like them because they’re from Liverpool and they don’t bang on about The Beatles.” A second EP is recorded and due for release later in the spring.

What do they sound like?
Portentous, gothy indie rock perfect for cold, dark winter evenings. Their recent Demo of the Month review described them as sounding as “an overwrought scowl of a song that could be The Twilight Sad with the Scottish accent replaced by a Stentorian groan and a heady sense of despair,” but equally, “a jump around the office anthem.” In their own words they are “grunge, with lots of feedback, a lot of howls and sometimes the odd melody.”

What inspires them?
“Callum’s parents make us vegan cake sometimes when we practice, so that inspires us to continue doing what we’re doing. But musically we’re inspired by the vibe of post-punk because the country is currently looking a lot like it did in the 80s, with rich toffs getting away with anything they please and still somehow continuing to brainwash vulnerable people to vote for them.”

Career highlight so far:
“Playing a house party on Halloween. Don’t know if anyone else enjoyed it, but we had a great time.”

And the lowlight:
“Almost being late to Truck Festival. First decent opportunity and Pog was late. We drove through Witney to find him and he was running down the road with all his stuff in a shopping trolley. We threw him in the car, ditched the trolley and just made it.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“Cassels: seen them a lot of times now. Their music is so big for just two guys, and their lyrics will probably hold relevance for quite some time.”

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“WU LYF - ‘Go Tell Fire To The Mountain’. The vinyl costs like £100 because they only did this album then broke up and few were made, but we’re going to dip into the band funds soon and invest in it.”

When is their next local gig is and what can newcomers expect?
“Smash Disco’s night at The Library on the 21st February with Punching Swans. Expect a mic in your face from Pog in the crowd.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
“Our favourite things are the Smash Disco nights at The Library. We hate the fact that in Oxford, any new band that comes out is instantly compared to Radiohead, even if they sound nothing like them.”

You might love them if you love:
The Wytches; Bauhaus; The Horrors; Echo & the Bunnymen; The Twilight Sad.

Hear them here:
soundcloud.com/too-many-poets

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

After being shut for a month, the venue previously known as **The Hobgoblin** reopened on 2nd February 1996 as **The Point** with a gig by former Stranglers chap **Hugh Cornwell**. With an increased capacity of 220, The Point, under the captaincy of **Mac**, would go on to become one of the UK’s most legendary small venues, hosting the first UK shows by **The White Stripes** and **The Strokes**, as well as early gigs for **Coldplay**, **Muse** and **Catatonia** amongst others. This month’s chief highlight, though, was a double bill of **Super Furry Animals** and **Bis**, while local stars **Beaker**, **Bubbleman** and **The Egg** also trod the boards. Up the road at **The Zodiac**, meanwhile, **Stereolab**, **Credit to the Nation** and **Alex Patterson** were in town. Groove merchants **The Egg** found themselves signed to China Records this month too, having been tipped as *Nightshift*’s Ones To Watch in January. Already signed and taking the world by storm, **Supergrass** released a new single, ‘Going Out’, the first track to be taken from their forthcoming second album ‘In It For the Money’. To coincide the band played their biggest hometown show to date on the 26th February, at **The Apollo** (now The New Theatre), a charity gig in support of The Oxford Playbus Appeal and Trax. Gaz, Danny and Mickey were also nominated for three BRIT Awards this month, for Best Newcomers, Best Video (for ‘Alright’) and Best Single, the band winning the newcomer award. Neighbours and labelmates **Radiohead**, meanwhile, were up for four BRITs. More exciting news this month came with the announcement of a new local compilation album.

‘OXCD’, promising to showcase the cream of the local rising crop. More on that next month...

10 YEARS AGO

Supergrass’ star was yet to wane ten years on from their BRIT triumph, February 2006 seeing the band release a new single, ‘Fin’, from their ‘Road to Rouen’ album. It was one of a slew of local releases out this month, with **The Joff Winks Band**’s ‘Share My Blues’; **Blue Kite**’s ‘Ways of Knowing’; **Belarus**’ ‘Standing in the Right Place’ and ‘**Smilex** Vs Oxford’ all out. The latter was a remix album of tracks from Oxford’s premier trash rockers, with **Young Knives**, **Youthmovies**, **The Evenings**, **Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element** and **Boywithatoy** bending or bludgeoning the band into new shapes. Young Knives were on the cover of *Nightshift*, the trio back to chat about their forthcoming ‘Here Comes the Rumour Mill’ EP on Transgressive Records. Henry, Oliver and House had just quit their jobs to concentrate full time on the band and were enjoying their new-found freedom. “I was sick of gigging then turning up to work feeling like shit. Now I can go down to the rehearsal studio or sit in a meeting with our accountant feeling like shit. It’s so much more rock and roll,” said House. On the local gig front highlights of the month included shows at The Zodiac by **Julian Cope**, **Be Your Own Pet**, **Coldcut** and **Regina Spektor**, although they were also hosts so **The Kooks**, which kind of put a damper on everything. Down in the demo pages, a new young rapper in town by the name of **Zuby** was Demo of the Month, the university business studies student set

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD
MUSIC HISTORY

to go on to become one of Oxford’s most successful hip hop acts.

5 YEARS AGO

Of course, there’s no point releasing your own albums if there’s nowhere to sell them, and five years ago this month Oxford welcomed the opening of **Truck Store** on Cowley Road, a joint venture initially by **Truck Festival** and **Rapture** store in Witney. Set up within the old Videosyncratic store, finally the city had a decent outlet for records and CDs, with **HMV** in terminal decline for some time. It was well timed too with the likes of **Fixers** releasing their single ‘Iron Deer Dream’ this month, while **Blessing Force** chums **Jonquil** released ‘One Hundred Sons’, **The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band** released their debut album ‘Year of the Rabbit’ and **Komrad** put out ‘Cowley Necktie’. Jonquil graced the cover of this month’s *Nightshift*, talking about Blessing Force, the small community of musicians and artists centred around themselves, **Pet Moon** and others that was currently garnering column inches in *NME* and *The Guardian*, as well as singer Hugo Manuel’s new solo project **Chad Valley**, which was taking him into new chilled-out house and r’n’b territory. There was also a Blessing Force weekendender taking place this month, with Jonquil, Chad Valley and Pet Moon joined by **Coloureds**, **Fixers**, **Rhosyn**, **Sisterland** and more at the **Old Bookbinders** in east Oxford. Other highlights of the month included **Joan As Policewoman**, **The Go! Team**, **The Streets** and **Roll Deep** at the O2; the mighty **Mogwai** at **The Regal** and **Ray Lamontagne** at **The New Theatre**.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

So, David Bowie has died, and not long before him we lost Lemmy. If any two characters summed up musical creativity, vision and attitude it was them. Whither the next generation of maverick geniuses and rock'n'roll animals? Can we perhaps detect the first infant cries of some future pop god amongst this month's demo pile? What do you think, dear reader – shall we have a look?

31HOURS

Following two such musical colossi is nigh on impossible for any aspiring young act, but it's hints, seeds, of something special we're after here, not fully-grown brilliance, and of all the demos in this month's pile, maybe this lot would just about have earned Bowie's approval. The great man wasn't averse to nicking good ideas from other artists and making them his own, so perhaps 31Hours' borrowing of Glass Animals' hazy, fluid electro-pop and r'n'b fidgeting and Radiohead's glitchy dub meanderings will blossom into something bigger, better and more their own. They only furnish us with a single track here – 'Halflight' – but a live review in *Nightshift* last year suggested they're prone to eclecticism, and they create a woozy, almost ghostly atmosphere with star-gazing electronics and lazily trilling guitars, vocals lost in some pitch black middle-distance. They're in no hurry to go anywhere beyond the desolately ambient hinterland they start out in, but with time it'll hopefully be a hinterland worth making the journey upriver to discover more fully.

HOLY MOMENTS

Here's a demo that Lemmy might have just about approved of, a one-song offering called 'Agitated' that is little more than two and half minutes of gruff shouting of the sort that's not entirely unpleasant but makes little concession to anything resembling actual singing or an actual tune, instead being a prolonged bellow that sounds like a forty-a-day and ten-pints-of-Stella football hooligan attempting a spot of Dinosaur Jr karaoke. It possesses absolutely zero artistic value, but if you can't appreciate why it's still better than a lot of far more accomplished adventures into sound, you are dead to us.

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

VICES

Talking of which: "'Forest Floor' opens like a bull in a china shop, hitting everything in its path... there's something slightly unorthodox about the music, but its unpredictability and variety is fresh, exciting and enticing," runs the blurb on Vices' Bandcamp. Bullshit in a china shop, more like, we think at first as the band open less like a bull in a china shop and more like a budge trapped in a wet paper bag on 'Passenger's Window', all the promise of unorthodox musicality and jazz influences smothered by a damp flannel of by-rote Americanised pop-punk. Further in, and with repeated listens though, this seven-song demo does offer up something better, even if it tends too much towards the polished and soft-centred. The band are better on their more considered, almost autumnal numbers like 'Catholic Funeral' and 'Pavement', the spirit of latter-day Idlewild taking over from the apparent Good Charlotte influences, the singer's plaintive, romantic burr lifting the songs the right side of that particular boundary. 'Lungs', meanwhile, almost manages that promised bullish entry as its spangles in like House of Love before settling into a slightly snarly flurry of indie rock. 'Thieves' is made of brittle guitar sounds and feels stronger for it, hints of Therapy? even creeping in, and it's their strongest melody, while by final number 'Like Dogs, Not Gods' sees them branch out further, into some kind of gothic country-tinged rock and finally into jazz piano, that initial promise finally fulfilled. We'd like to hear Vices up the angry aggression a notch or two, and there are occasional moments where they threaten to lapse into boy band balladry, but they're brief enough to be forgivable and overall this retains a sense of freshness for most of its duration.

CAVER

Caver is the musical alias of Richard Brabin who has just moved to Oxford and tells us he's recorded us "a cheeky three track demo," which conjures up images of a bottle of jaunty young Beaujolais Nouveau, or perhaps some sub-Footlights kind of wordy junior common room folk-punk protest music. It's actually neither, which in the case of the bottle of wine is a shame but in the case of the folk-punk protest thing is definitely for the best, else we'd be looking at another music fatality. Nothing cheeky about it at all to be honest. Instead Richard's three tracks here are decidedly bereft of cheekiness, preferring some lightweight brooding and plenty of ethereal acoustic guitar spangle and choral vocals that might be the Magdalen College School choir trying to nab themselves a deal with

4AD Records sometime back in 1985. The likes of 'Nightfall' and 'Microcosm' (no, really) drift along with gossamer-like lack of purpose, like dandelion fluff on a gentle breeze and we suppose it's all very nice and stuff, but we can't help thinking that, were we sat here with Lemmy and a couple of bottles of JD, he'd be unlikely to be eulogising the soothing properties of barely-there ambient shoegaze.

PROJECT

After which, a bit of in-your-face hip hop is probably in order, and here's rapper Project with his home-recorded solo project, coming on all meta on 'Just Another Guy' with his story about wanting to be a rapper but wondering if he could ever do it as well as the American stars he is in thrall to. Chief amongst these would appear to be Eminem given his delivery and production. That delivery is confident if a little stilted at times, but comes with a degree of authority and avoids trying to ape an American accent or lapse too far into parochial tones or reference points, while the backing, all sweeping synthetic strings and piano, makes the whole thing feel full bodied with an undercurrent of home-baked cheapness. 'What Everybody Else Does' is his strongest track, vocally more steely, musically almost sumptuous, while '10.10.12' is weaker on every count, lurching into hackneyed Streets-y storytelling which requires a defter vocal and lyrical touch to work.

THE KAOS

Upping the energy levels even further are local pop-punkers The Kaos who, unlike Vices before them, can't escape the gravitational pull of those cornerstones of the genre, from Green Day through Blink 182 to every single Victory Records band after about 2002. 'Monster' has a decent hook and a singalong chorus but mostly the band feel fiddly and lightweight, apparently oblivious to the fact that pop-punk does actually need a modicum of punk about it to qualify for the label, and for all the vim on show, there'll precious little vigour and it's all a bit Busted if we're honest. When you remember that Lemmy pretty much invented a musical genre all of his own and stuck to it for life, while Bowie genre-hopped with sublime mastery, hearing any band content to trundle along in the slipstream of what are essentially third division acts by anyone's standards is frankly dispiriting. Come on lads – develop a dangerous whisky habit; become a transvestite glam act; start hanging out with Iggy Pop, anything, just at least make it look like you're making an effort.

THE SPITEFULS

Yeah! Here we go! The Spitefuls! Proper punk rock! Rage! Anarchy in the UK! Come on, the singer's called Andi Social! The

guitarist is called Danny Lager! The bassist is called Bobby Ignorant! The drummer's called, erm, Terry Toothpaste! Oh for fuck's sake... this is awful. Spite? This is less Johnny Rotten fuelled by speed and bile, more like Victor Meldrew sighing about the complicated choice of coffees in his local Costa. Instead of pumped-up punk, it's a grey droning litany of complaints, from pornography ruining children's innocence to missing buttons on shirts, lack of milk in a cup of tea and the weather. All doled out in a resigned monotone that might be Marvin the Paranoid Android reciting Squeeze's 'Cool For Cats' in a Valium haze. "Four geezers old enough to know better," reads the band's self-description. Four geezers old enough to have given up trying, more like. Lemmy was still knocking out 'Iron Fist' and 'Love Me Like A Reptile' aged 70; Bowie was mangling pop and avant-jazz with 'Blackstar' aged 69. There's absolutely no excuse for mellowing with age. Stop complaining, get yourselves down the pub and buy some Alice Coltrane, Crass and Beefheart albums on the way. Feel happy to be alive, people!

THE DEMO DUMPER

KENAN

KHAZENDAR

Although, on second thoughts, just kill us now. Our children will be orphans, Martha the *Nightshift* kitten will have no-one to play with during the day and the recipe for mushroom and fennel crumble will be lost forever, but it'd save us from ever having to listen to Kenan Khazendar again. Unless all those naughty thoughts we harboured about Natalie Portman are enough to condemn us to an eternity in Hell, in which case this will undoubtedly be the soundtrack to our rest of forever. Having believed Kenan fatally slain by his last review in these pages, we're shocked and not a little disturbed to see him back for more, armed with an acoustic guitar and a trio of songs that could curdle milk at fifty paces. In some parallel, marginally better universe this is loverman soul-pop inspired by those towering talents of pop beauty Ed Sheeran, Jamie Cullum and the whining sound of an unoiled hinge. In this world it's the diluted slurry left at the bottom of the barrel after the BBC Sound Of Awards were finished for another year. There's some real poetry amid the howling void where the music was meant to be, mind. "I'm lying on the turf / Drenched in sweat / The sky is bittersweet / And the stars are amber / Could it be a yellow dream?" croons Kenan, pain evident in his voice. A yellow dream? What... who... wha..... huh? Ah, we get it, Kenan just did a wee in his pyjamas. Finally, some rock and roll behaviour.

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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