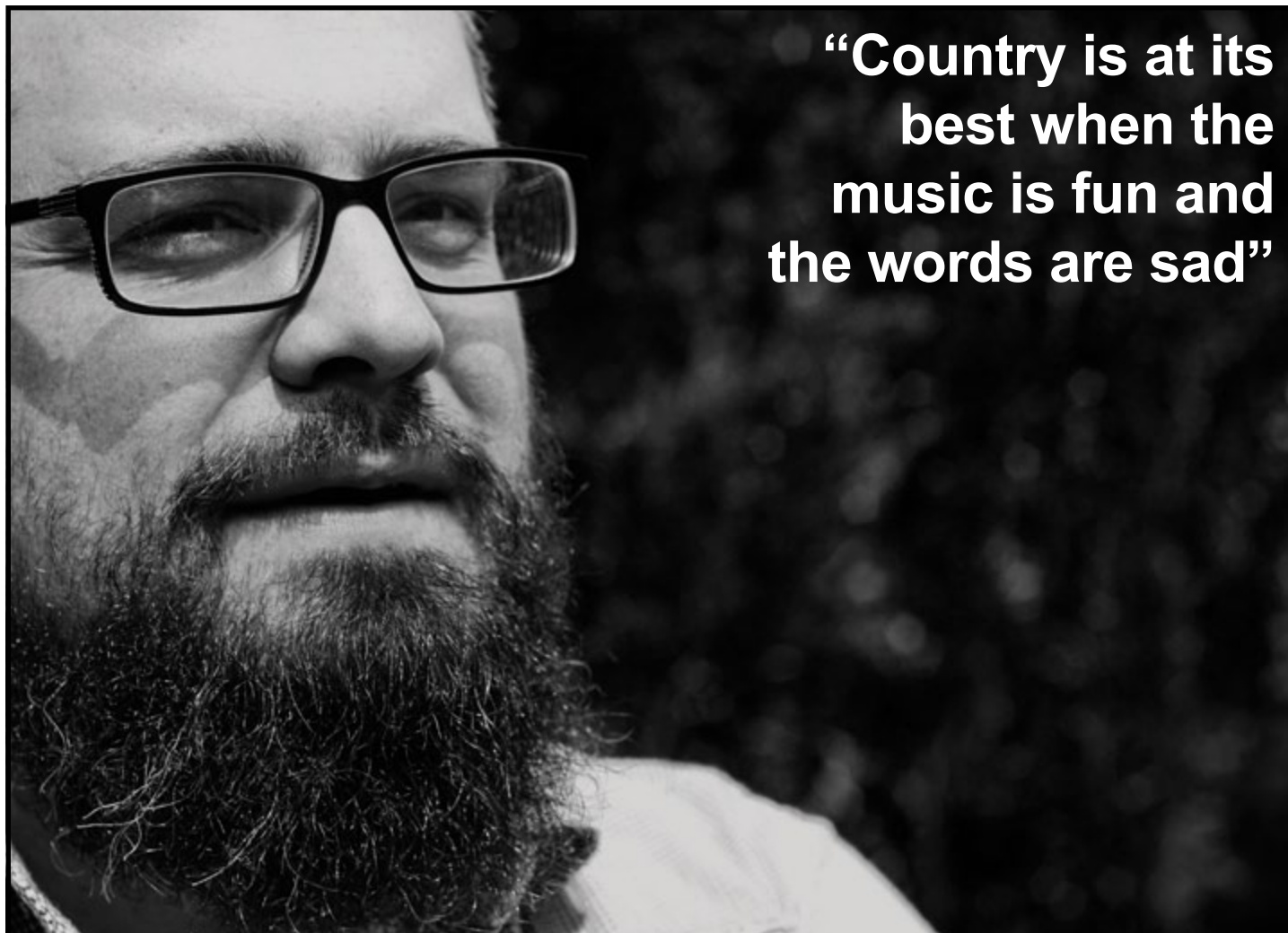


NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 259
February
2017**



**“Country is at its
best when the
music is fun and
the words are sad”**

AGS CONNOLLY

Talking outlaw music with Oxford's quintessentially English champion of American roots.

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Introducing 1000 CHAINS

Plus

All your Oxford music news, previews and reviews, and five pages of local gigs for February.

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FEBRUARY 2017 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Friday 3rd February
Dutty Moonshine
Big Band & Friends
Doors: 9pm

Saturday 4th February
Simple
Midland
Doors: 8pm

Sunday 5th February
Bloodstock
Metal to the Masses
Bloodshot
Promethean Reign
Shattered Compass
Violence is Golden
Lest we Forget
Doors: 7pm

Monday 6th February
Menace Beach
Van Zeller
Wolfs
Doors: 7.30pm

Thursday 9th February
The Brew
Hell's Gazelles
Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th February
Kanadia
Temper Cartel
The Pink Diamond Review
Doors: 6.30pm

Friday 10th February
Straight Outta Cowley
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 11th February
Fred Abbot
Anton Barbeau & Su Jordan
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 11th February
Freerange Roots
The Bug with Reggae Roast
Doors: 8pm

Sunday 12th February
Spring King
The Big Moon
Get Inuit
Doors: 7pm

Monday 13th February
Ben Watt
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 14th February
Chuck Prophet & Mission Express
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 15th February
Cabbage
The Shimmer Band
April
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 16th February
The Deadbeat Apostles
Country for Old Men
Dan McKean Band
Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th February
Mr B. The Gentleman Rhymer
Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 17th February
Organised Fun
Dan Shake (4HR Set)
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 18th February
Bass Escape
Launch Party
Doors: 8pm

Sunday 19th February
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
Silk Road
Her Despair
13 Burning
Chaos Theory
Molotov Sexbomb
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 23rd February
Pete Boss
Tom Ivey Band
Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th February
Karl Blau
Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th February
SEIO
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 25th February
Volume #2
Sub Zero & Evil B
Power & Funsta
Jayline & Alman
Doors: 8pm

Thursday 2nd March
Tall Ships
Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd March
Nigel Garage
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 4th March
Simple
Palms Trax
Doors: 8pm

Sunday 5th March
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
K-Lacura
Trauma UK
The Hope Burden
1000 Chains
Force of Mortality
Doors: 7pm

Monday 6th March
Josefin Öhrn
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 7th March
Seafret
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 8th March
Famelab 2017
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 9th March
Dots Funk Odyssey
Doors: 8pm

Friday 10th March
Tragedy
A Heavy Metal Tribute to the Bee Gees
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 11th March
Freerange Roots
Iration Steppas & Channel One
Doors: 8pm

Sunday 12th March
The Sherlocks
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 15th March
The Amazons
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 16th March
Saichi Sugiyama
Matt Edwards Band
Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th March
Nine Below Zero
Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th March
Bossaphonik
Vaudou Game
Doors: 8pm

Saturday 18th March
Bass Escape
Doors: 8pm

Sunday 19th March
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses
My Diablo
Rebel Station
Beaver Fuel
Echo 4 Echo
Raised by Hypocrites
Doors: 7pm

Monday 20th March
Idles
Doors: 7.30pm

Thursday 23rd March
Will Johns & Friends
Jasmine Rodgers
Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th March
American Aquarium
Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th March
Tropic Popsicle
Doors: 8pm

Tuesday 28th March
Blaenavon
Doors: 7pm

NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

Phone: 01865 372255

email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



TRUCK FESTIVAL will announce the first set of names for its 2017 line-up on Monday 6th February. This year's event once again runs across three days, over the weekend of the 21st-23rd July, at Hill Farm in Steventon. Be the first to find out who's playing on *Nightshift's* Facebook page and at www.truckfestival.com. Last year's Truck was headlined by Manic Street Preachers (*pictured*).

We're also expecting line-up news for **Common People** at the start of February. Again, we'll have it on Facebook and Twitter as soon as it's announced.

TRUCK STORE celebrates its sixth birthday with an evening of live music this month. The record store, on Cowley Road, hosts an instore show with **Coldredlight** and **Candy Says** on Friday 10th February, starting at 6pm and featuring competitions as well as a bar and coffee. Truck also host an instore album signing from rising London MC **Loyle Carner** at 1pm on Tuesday 7th February, ahead of his show at the O2 Academy, while on Thursday 2nd local Americana crew **Loud Mountains** launch their new EP with a set, at 6pm. Visit truckmusicstore.co.uk for more news.

SOFAR SOUNDS celebrate their 50th show in Oxford this month. The Oxford branch of the global pop-up gig movement was started up by Stornoway's Oli Steadman in September 2012 with the aim of promoting eclectic gig line-ups in unusual locations, with venue and line-up details only released to ticket holders two days before the show. The 50th gig takes place on Friday 24th February. Sofar's first show featured ToLiesel, The Qazi Experiment, Count Drachma and Sammy Jay; over the past four years they have

played host to the likes of Willie J Healey; Duotone; Esther Joy Lane; Wolf Alice; The Fusion Project and Kioko. Visit www.sofarsounds.com/oxford to find out more.

CATWEAZLE host a new series of monthly live music and spoken word events starting this month. Making A Scene takes place at The Oxford Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on the first Saturday of each month. The first event takes place on the 4th February with sets from Art Theefe, fronted by Catweazle host Matt Sage, plus Temper Cartel, Ed Pope, Steve Karlin, Xogara and Kira Millwood Hargrave, with subsequent events on the 4th March and 1st April. Tickets and info from www.catweazleclub.com.

AUDIOGRAFT returns in March. The annual festival of contemporary experimental music, co-promoted by the Sonic Art Research Unit at Brookes University and Oxford Contemporary Music, launches at OVADA on Tuesday 7th March and runs across various venues around Oxford until Sunday 19th. Full line-up of artists is yet to be confirmed but you can find out more about the festival at www.sonicartresearch.co.uk.

LOCAL RECORD LABEL ALL WILL BE WELL RECORDS are looking to recruit volunteers to assist in the day-to-day running of the not-for-profit outfit. From helping with social media coverage, writing reviews and features to collating the label's new newsletter; volunteers are asked to commit to two hours per week. For more information email Ian at allwillbewellrecords@yahoo.co.uk

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

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

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Saturday 18th February - 7pm
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Saturday 25th February - 7pm
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AGS CONNOLLY



“I TRY NOT TO WRITE THINGS as if I’m living in America. It’s just not real and people can see through that. It’s a balance, though; if I went too far with it I’d be thought of as a Wurzels tribute act.”

AGS CONNOLLY IS A BIG, affable bear of a bloke, with a proper woodsman’s beard. Exactly how you’d expect a dyed-in-the-wool, old-school American country music singer to look like. Except Ags comes from Witney, not Wyoming or West Virginia. And when he launches his new album this month, it’ll be at Fat Lil’s, not The Little Longhorn Saloon in Texas.

FOR A CHAP FROM WEST Oxfordshire singing traditional American music, the praise for Ags Connolly has been unequivocal. *Maverick* called his debut album, ‘How About Now’, “a masterpiece of English country”, while *Country Music People* hailed him as “An English Willie Nelson,” and *Record Collector* described him as “one of the most promising new talents on the British country scene.” Broadsheets like *The Guardian* and *The Independent on Sunday* joined a plethora of dedicated country music mags and blogs to hail the new homegrown hero of authentic roots music; on its 2014 release *Nightshift*

described ‘How About Now’ as “the most assured debut album out of Oxford in some time”. And yet, despite regular live shows, including gigs for Empty Room, supporting touring American acts, and a slot at The Punt in 2013, in his native county he remains a cult concern, beloved of a dedicated hardcore of old school country fans. Time for that to change.

AS AGS PREPARES TO release his new album, ‘Nothin’ Unexpected’, the follow-up to that acclaimed debut, *Nightshift* chats to the singer, and asks first, how a lad growing up in rural Oxfordshire got into traditional country music in the first place. “Well, I suppose if you grow up in a village there really isn’t much to do, so you have a lot of time to listen to music. I was into songwriters like Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan and Loudon Wainwright III and I slowly realised that what I loved was songs that said complex things in a simple way, and it dawned on me that country music was the home of such songwriting, so I went down the rabbit hole. Most British people who are into country were brought up on it by their parents but that wasn’t the case for me. That said, I was a huge Buddy Holly fan at a very early age, and he had his country leanings.” One of the pivotal moments in Ags’

nascent career was seeing the country and bluegrass singer James Hand live. “I was a big fan of Dale Watson and I was starting to learn a bit about country. Dale came over here on tour with James as support. It’s a very surreal experience watching him; I’ve always said it’s like he’s been transported from the 1940s or 50s to the present day and he doesn’t realise it. There’s nothing contrived about his performances. I remember some blokes – regulars, I assume – coming down the steps of The Borderline while he was playing and screwing up their faces as if to say ‘what’s this shit?’, which pissed me off and I knew then which side I was on.”

WHILE HE FELL IN LOVE with country music from afar, the draw of the southern states was too strong for Ags to resist, and he’s become a regular visitor, both as music fan and performer. “I’ve been to Austin, Texas many times and also Nashville. In February last year I went on a 16-date tour of Southern and South-Eastern states with the St. Louis artists Jack Grellé and Ryan Koenig, who is in Pokey LaFarge’s band. We also had Jack’s bass player and Pokey’s drummer. I find my music is much more readily accepted over there. People know country music and they are excited that a British bloke is playing it. Over

here I find people sometimes think I’m pretending to be American, or that they simply don’t know what country music is. It’s an indelible part of the American culture, whereas it has never been any real part of ours. It would be foolish not to consider moving there one day if I felt I’d hit a ceiling over here.”

Do you think there are close parallels between English traditional folk music and country music? Oxfordshire in particular is a hotbed of traditional folk music and its derivatives; do you think that makes it ripe for country music to thrive here? “Yes I do, but I don’t think those parallels are obvious to everyone. A lot of the cowboy songs which influenced the western and hillbilly music that evolved into country were directly based on English folk songs. And of course a lot of country artists are influenced by folk artists. However, I think folk generally see country as a bit cheesy. I gave up trying to get gigs at folk clubs a while ago. It’s difficult to change people’s way of thinking overnight”.

A STAND-OUT TRACK FROM ‘How About Now’ was the almost anthemic ‘When Country Was Proud’, which has become Ags’ signature tune since its release. It’s a song that rails against the commercialisation and commoditisation of traditional roots

music in recent decades, turning it into a polished, rhinestone-clad cliché, rather than the working class and rebel music it once was.

“Broadly speaking country was at its proudest in the 50s, 60s and 70s. The 80s was when the corporate machines began to see at as a branch of the mainstream to be exploited just like all other commercial pop music. The neo-traditional brand of country that came out then wasn’t at all bad, but it set the path for what would come and it increasingly marginalised the stuff that was arguably more real and authentic. These days, there is a small but growing group of artists trying to keep the traditions alive. A lot of these guys cross over into other genres to be more relevant, but a few of us are just happy to be old school.”

One of the chief forces towards the return of traditional country has been Austin singer Dale Watson’s Ameripolitan movement, of which Ags is a devotee, and seemingly an indirect descendent of the Bakersfield sound of the 1950s, which reacted to the then softening and overly-orchestrated mainstream country music scene.

“Ameripolitan was set up by Dale to shed light on the traditional-leaning artists who are being left behind by the mainstream. There is an awards ceremony in Austin each year, which I usually attend. The idea is that the word country has become so diluted and bastardised that it no longer has meaning. Ameripolitan is a movement to celebrate the more traditional artists – chiefly in the sub-genres of honky-tonk, outlaw, western swing and rockabilly – and give them a platform. The Bakersfield sound would certainly be part of that. The word itself doesn’t exactly roll off the tongue, but I think the movement is very positive.”

THERE’S BEEN A VERY strong Americana movement in Oxfordshire over the last couple of decades; Robin and Joe Bennett’s Goldrush arguably led the line and in the years they helmed Truck Festival it was a haven for country-flavoured bands both locally and from afar. It’s a local sub scene that’s only grown over time and these days acts like Great Western Tears, Dreaming Spires, The Epstein, The August List, Loud Mountains, et al are among the most popular bands in town. Does Ags feel any affinity with them and does their popularity help draw people towards what he’s doing? “I feel some affiliation for it, but mostly because I’ve played countless gigs with all those guys and it’s always fun to do stuff with them. The simple fact is though that I’m a straight up country artist and not an Americana artist. To me, Americana is typically rock or folk with a country element to it, and that’s not really me: I’m more of a traditionalist. So yes,

those acts have definitely helped to draw people towards my music, but at the same time I am different to them.” Mike Trotman, who runs the excellent Empty Room Promotions, has done a lot to bring American roots music to Oxford, and Ags has played a few gigs for him over the last few years; does that create some kind of a hub for that kind of music. “I think it does, yes. Mike is one of the best Americana promoters in the UK in terms of consistently booking quality acts. We’re very lucky here; a lot of bigger cities don’t have anything like that at all.”

WITH THE RELEASE OF ‘Nothin’ Unexpected’ on Brighton’s At The Helm Records this month, Ags’ star is set to rise yet further, revealing a poetic songwriter armed with a rich, soulful voice who follows in the lineage of greats such as Buck Owens, Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson and David Allan Coe. His songs tell of hurt and heartache, regret and

“I find my music is much more readily accepted in The States. People know country music and they are excited that a British bloke is playing it.”

whisky – the staples of great country music – which he claims are “95% autobiographical – I’m an egotist like that”. But there’s humour too. The opening line of the new album is “I hope you’re unhappy when you lay down at night,” (about a woman who’s left him for another) and Ags seems to fit Margo Price’s quote that country music is mostly “good time songs about bad times”. “I’d had the phrase ‘I Hope You’re Unhappy’ in my head for a while, and I couldn’t believe there wasn’t another country song already called that. And yes, Margo’s right that country is at its best when the music is fun and the words are sad. That particular song is supposed to be funny but it’s also supposed to be genuine.” The album title track is a real Saturn’s Return heartbreaker; it’s got something of the Bruce Springsteen about it as much as Willie Nelson; would you agree? And what’s the saddest song you’ve heard? “I hadn’t noticed the Springsteen element to it but I won’t complain... I saw it as a Tex-Mex style thing in the style of Tom Russell or Robert Earl Keen. It’s certainly the longest song I’ve written anyway. The saddest song? Dolly Parton has written some pretty brutal songs about child death. In the same vein, Hank Snow’s album ‘When Tragedy Struck’ has titles like ‘There’s a Little Box of Pine on the 7:29’. Doesn’t get much sadder than that.” Would you rather make people dance or cry?

“Both! When I was on tour with the band it was great to see everyone two-stepping on the dancefloor. But obviously most of my shows are solo so it’s also nice to play the poignant ones to a quiet room.” You cover ‘I Suppose’ on the album; is Loudon Wainwright a particular influence on you? “He’s probably my favourite songwriter. His lyrics are so direct and clear, and I’ve always wanted to emulate that in my writing. A lot of his songs lend themselves to country in my opinion, even though he’s considered a folk artist. As for future covers, I’m not sure. I’d still like to put a Ron Sexsmith song on an album sometime.”

WITH THE CRITICAL PRAISE heaped on ‘How About Now’ creating a firm platform for his next move, ‘Nothin’ Unexpected’ finds Ags staying on the straight and narrow, as you’d hope and expect; the subject matter of the songs, their arrangement

and the mood of the music is in keeping with his devotion to old time sounds and songs, but obviously expectations are now higher. “The new album was mostly written after the first one was recorded; one song, ‘When the Loner Gets Lonely’, was actually recorded for the first album but I left it off and did it slightly differently for the new one. Both this album and ‘How About Now’ were recorded and mixed in five days at Castlesound and Slate Room Studios just outside Edinburgh. This one was harder work because we set a certain standard with the first album and had to live up to it. The first time around we were basically winging it. This time we set out not to make the same album again and I think we managed that. I’d like to think ‘Nothin’ Unexpected’ is more mature than ‘How About Now’ in a lot of ways.” The line-up on ‘Nothin’ Unexpected’ is impressive, featuring as it does Michael Guerra from The Mavericks playing accordion and Eamon McLoughlin from the Grand Ole Opry on fiddle. How did they get involved? “The musicians on this album and the first one are mostly session players in Scotland. The link to them is that the Scottish singer-songwriter Dean Owens produced both albums. He got the guys together for ‘How About Now’ and I wanted to use them again, employing the old ‘if it ain’t broke’ logic. I also wanted some new textures on the record this time

and was keen to have accordion and fiddle. Dean has been friendly with the Mavericks guys for years so he got in touch with Michael. He also roped in Eamon, who is actually English. Both those guys recorded their parts remotely in the US, but they could’ve been in the room with us, so awesome were their contributions. The core musicians themselves are no slouches either, so it’s a great group of players.” The album is released on At The Helm Records. “At The Helm is co-owned by my manager James Walker, who I’ve been working with for a couple of years. There is limited scope for releasing country music in the UK, but of the labels who will consider it, At The Helm are one of the best. They have gained a fair amount of traction in the last year or so with releases from US acts like Austin Lucas and BJ Barham of American Aquarium, alongside a few UK artists, including the last album from Bap Kennedy.”

WHILE ‘NOTHIN’ UNEXPECTED’ is Ags Connolly’s second album of his own songs, he did release an album of traditional cowboy songs a while back, reinforcing his adherence to the real roots of country music. “That album was a limited self-release of purely traditional cowboy songs from the 19th and early 20th century. I’d been playing them for years so it was easy to do. I wasn’t sure how it would go over but people seemed to really like it. I love those simple, honest songs. I may do another album like that in future.” Do you think country will always be the true outsiders’ music? “I think the country music that I know and love possibly could be considered so. Country is a huge genre with many, many sub-genres, and as such it’s hard to pigeon-hole all of it, but I think old school country allows a certain lyrical freedom that other genres don’t. You can nail your colours to the mast more easily with it, maybe because the lyrics themselves are such a key component of the music.”

OLD SCHOOL HE MIGHT BE, but Ags Connolly is as much about the future of country music as he is its past, a singer and songwriter of which country really can be proud. Not bad for a lad from a village in Oxfordshire. We wonder, then, thinking of the late, great Merle Haggard, what might be the Oxfordshire equivalent of an Okie from Muskogee? “Ummm...an Oxford bloke from Noke? Can’t think of a place that rhymes with Oxonian.”

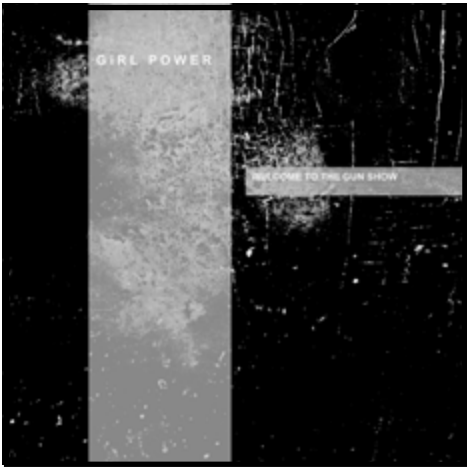
‘Nothin’ Unexpected’ is released on February 3rd on At the Helm Records. For gig dates and music visit agsconnolly.com

RELEASED

GIRL POWER

‘Welcome To the Gun Show’

(Richter Scale)
One of the best under-the-radar local music success stories of the last couple of years have been Smash Disco’s regular free shows at The Library on Cowley Road, hosting a series of touring American and European punk and hardcore bands, while providing a hub for local noise acts. At the heart of this are former *Nightshift* cover stars Girl Power, a three-person rage machine whose early mix and match of D-beat and 80s American hardcore has morphed into something more virulent and individual over the past two years, making lightning quick pit stops at Fugazi and Shellac among others. That full-pelt approach hasn’t let up, mind; songs fly out of the blocks, holler in your face,



give you a swift smack in the teeth and make way for the next one before you quite know what’s hit you, five of the seven tracks here barely leaving room for a sharp intake of breath

Dance’ sample is serenely atmospheric with an almost choral feel amid the psychedelic electro wanderings. While he’s got the voice for pure pop or r’n’b, such strangeness is where we’d love to see Thomas head more in the future. If there’s no place for Neverlnd in that future, that’s a real shame, but there were too many talented parts to the band for them to be lost for good.
Dale Kattack

WHO’S ALICE

‘Onethreefour’

(Self released)
“I had a dream we never met,” croons Who’s Alice singer Adam Baker on ‘Forget About Tomorrow’, the lead song on this new release, in a voice so tremulous and plaintive if you made it flesh it’d be a shivering newborn lamb. Hang about, though, barely a minute later he’s swearing like a right’un: “You get on with my mates / They all say you’re fucking great.” So maybe not the timid wee beastie we first imagined. And from there things get proper angry. We know thing are angry because Adam starts shouting in a pleading kind of fashion, the guitar spangles just a bit more forcefully and the drummer hits everything harder, especially the snare, which everyone knows is the angriest of all drums. And from here everything crests along, consuming the previously pretty melody, which might be appropriate given it’s about a bitter love affair and you can point to the moment it all goes pear-shaped, although there’s a sense of hope in its resigned coda; it’s a brittle but decently crafted song, like a soft-hearted Arctic Monkeys if they hadn’t seen so many bad things when they were growing up. Second song here ‘Brainface’ starts almost exactly the same, a gently spangled guitar, some plaintive crooning and then “I really don’t have a fucking clue” thrust in your face like an unexpected slap with a slice of buttered bread. Again, all a bit soft-centred but with the seed of something better hopefully set to germinate

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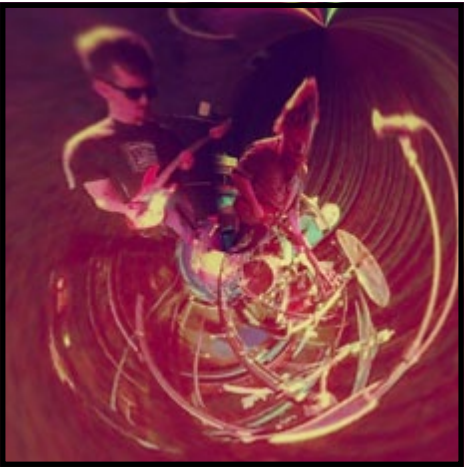
before the two-minute mark. But they pack plenty of neat ideas into those compact outbursts, opener ‘Holes in the Wall’ an ogreish cluster bomb of clattering velocity beats, feedback and supercharged guitar noise. No rest and no remorse as they blitz through the likes of ‘Suicide or Revolution’ and the magnificently malevolent ‘Pleaser’. The EP’s high point, though, comes with the relatively lengthy (over three minutes!) closer ‘Anti’, which reins in speed in favour of a crunk and grind that’s something like the musical equivalent of pouring corrosive acid on sheet metal and watching it froth and burn. In an age where emotionally stunted clothes horses describe themselves as “post-hardcore” (as opposed to “insipid sub-emo shit”), Girl Power are a ferociously timely reminder of what hardcore means. To paraphrase an old election slogan: it hurts; it works.
Dale Kattack

sometime soon.
Dale Kattack

ZAIA

‘Simple Tune’

(Self released)
Given the long, rich history of reggae in Oxford it’s shocking how few local reggae bands there are around at the moment, particularly with scene godfathers Dubwiser more of a part-time project now and Mackating seemingly out of action in the wake of Dave Norland’s sad passing. Which leaves Zaia as sole flag-bearers as far as bands go. Quality not quantity, though as far as they’re concerned, with this primer for their debut album in the summer living up to its title, all loping, dubby groove, sharp horns and fresh vibes. What makes it though is Amy MacKown’s gorgeously honey-dripping sing-song vocal, which sounds like liquid sunshine over the rich, easy canter of the music. She’s the heart and soul of the song, and as long as we have her and Zaia around, local reggae is in rude health. Feels like summer already.
Dale Kattack



SHOTGUN SIX

Shotgun Six

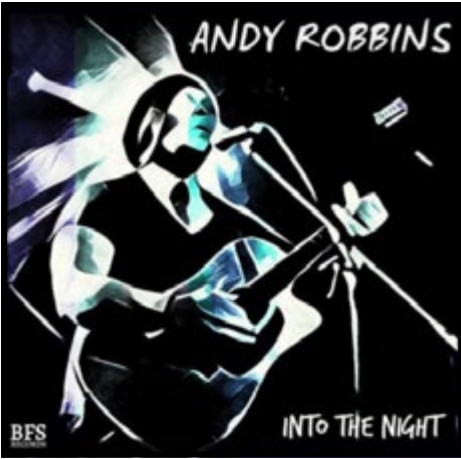
(Self released)
Oxford three-piece Shotgun Six sound like they’ve been drinking deep from the same moody, dark waters as Six By Seven: long, languorous songs based around a monochromatic drone core, and even, steady vocals delivered with careful precision. The opener on this debut album, ‘Away From Here’, sets out the band’s stall with a slow-motion snapshot: rolling, repetitive, faintly psychedelic rock, and undulating guitar squalls rising and falling around a sullen bassline. At almost ten minutes in length, it’s a fine piece of work, and one that’s wise enough not to stray from a pure blackened musical heart. Between this track and the similarly lengthy

album closer ‘Run’ – which adds some Doors-esque, perhaps Spiritualized-like blues elements to Shotgun Six’s mix – are four shorter songs. These continue along the same lines in terms of tempo, rhythm and style, which somewhat leads to hoping that this band has it in them to divert from such a solid blueprint as they move from track to track. ‘Step A Little Closer’ brings up the pace a little, and in doing so feels less threatening; ‘Between The Lines’ is a fuzzier affair, sounding demo-like in comparison to the other tracks here, and it reminds us strongly of previous Oxford moodists Harry Angel. Shotgun Six have an attractive, subtly ill-tempered thing going on, and although this release sounds at times too comfortable working within a limited sonic palette, it’s difficult not to succumb to its mysterious charms.
Simon Minter

ANDY ROBBINS

(Self released)
You might need a mop and bucket after listening to Andy Robbins’ new EP; there’s a lot of blood in it and most of it is splattered over the floors, walls and furniture. On ‘Premonition Blues’ he sings “Blood on the chair / Blood all over the walls / Blood in the kitchen / Blood all over the floor,” while on ‘Back Again’, we learn the subject of the song “Put the barrel in her mouth / Then blew her mind away”. Gore aside, this is a generally gentle natured affair, Andy’s mostly acoustic bluesy pop closer to Sam Smith than Cannibal Corpse, but there’s

little room for sunshine and happiness as he dwells on unrequited love, addiction, desperation and murderous revenge. ‘Premonition Blues’ is almost a pastiche of the genre with its overwrought tale of a murderous cuckold, but elsewhere Andy’s softly husky voice teases sweetness from his sadness, particularly on ‘On Another Morning’, where he switches from breathless optimism to despair tinged with faint hope as the object of his desire fails to materialise. His best tune comes right at the end with the almost folkly ‘Promises Declined’, where he lets his voice relax a bit more and sink into the melody rather than trying to be too intense. Even here though, there’s little light at the end of the tunnel. Having found himself in the Demo Dumper a few years back, Andy’s steady improvement suggests his future might be brighter than his songs suggest.
Dale Kattack



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G I G G U I D E

WEDNESDAY 1st

SARAH JAROSZ: St. Barnabas, Jericho – Empty Room Promotions welcome back Texan-born, New York resident singer Sarah Jarosz after her show here with Aiofe O’Donovan and Sara Watkins as I’m With Her. A Grammy-nominated virtuoso multi-instrumentalist, particularly on mandolin and banjo, she’s recently graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music and now heads back to Europe for a tour to promote fourth album ‘Undercurrent’. **GANG + KANCHOL: The Wheatheaf** – Idiot King host an Oxford debut for Brighton’s sludgy doom-punk crew Gang, with support from sheet-metal hardcore scrappers Kancho!

THURSDAY 2nd

LOUD MOUNTAINS: Truck Store (6pm) – EP

Monday 6th

THE MASTERSONS / ANTHONY D’AMATA:

Fat Lil’s, Witney

Yet another in a seemingly never-ending tide of great Americana from Empty Room, tonight bringing Austin, Texas duo The Mastersons to Witney’s pleasingly dark and compact Fat Lil’s. Married couple Chris and Eleanor Masterson have made their name individually and together as renowned session musicians. Their resume includes Dian Ross, Son Volt, Regina Spektor and Jack Ingram, but it’s as ongoing members of Steve Earle’s band The Dukes they’re best known (“Chris is the best guitarist I’ve had in the band and Eleanor is a better musician than any of us,” says Earle). After releasing a collection of songs written seperately but recorded together, ‘Birds Fly South’, the pair have written together for its follow-up, ‘Good Luck Charm’, an album deeply rooted in southern states country but full of soul and an easy indie touch. As an extra bonus tonight’s support is Omaha songsmith Anthony D’Amata, a musically ambitious country-rocker whose new album, ‘Cold Snap’, was recorded with neighbours Bright Eyes, The Faint and Cursive. Inspired by Springsteen and Dylan as well as Josh Ritter, his warm, rich tales of working class life have earned him plenty of love beyond the country press, and it’s more than worth the bus journey out to Witney to see this double bill in a suitably intimate setting.



FEBRUARY

launch instore for the Americana faves, mixing up Whiskeytown’s lively country rock with Bright Eyes’ more considered American folk. **LA PHOOKA + TIM IVEY BAND + MISSING PERSIANS + SEVEN O’CLOCK JUNKIES: The Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music local bands showcase. **GLUE: The Cellar** – Techno, disco and house club night with Arizona’s rising star Avalon Emerson playing a set of synth, soul-infused techno alongside Glue residents. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** – Oxford’s longest running open club night heads into another new year, showcasing local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more every week. **THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatheaf** – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the local funk-psych-blues-pop veterans. **SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon** – Weekly open mic club. **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** – Weekly unplugged open session. **BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford** – Open blues jam.

FRIDAY 3rd

BOSSAPHONIK with ME & MY FRIENDS: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, global grooves, Balkan beats and nu jazz club night hosted by Dan Ofer, tonight with a live set from soulful Afro-funk outfit Me & My Friends, taking in influences of Afrobeat, hi-life, roots reggae and delta blues. **KLUB KAKOFANNEY with CRYSTALLITE + ANTON BARBEAU + MAMZER + CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE: The Wheatheaf** – Klub Kak’s monthly party tonight welcomes grungy rockers Crystallite alongside psych-pop songsmith Anton Barbeau, the Californian singer, inspired by the likes of Syd Barrett and Robyn Hitchcock, back in his spiritual second home of Oxford for the first time in a long while and tonight backed by Charms Against the Evil Eye. **THREE CANE WHALE + DUOTONE: Friends Meeting House, St. Giles** – Intricate, intimate and inventive instrumentals from Bristol’s trio Three Cane Whale, who between them play 21 different instruments on new album ‘Palimpsest’, their first to be recorded in a studio, after previous sessions in abandoned railway stations and churches. Helmed by Alex Van from Spiro, their mix of medieval music, contemporary classical, jazz and folk brings to mind a more haunting and playful Penguin Café Orchestra. Local polymath Duotone supports, Barney Morse-Brown’s emotive virtuoso compositions brought brilliantly to life on stage as he utilises loops to augment his guitar and cello compositions. **DUTTY MOONSHINE BIG BAND: The Bullingdon** – Big band swing and modern bass

from Bristol/Oxford collective Dutty Moonshine, helmed by DJ and producer Michael Rack and mixing classic swing and Vaudeville with garage, grime, funk and drum&bass. **SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: The James Street Tavern** – Sparky hosts his monthly bands and jam night, tonight with Rad Brother John, Firegazers and The Nightwreckers. **WHYTE LYLES: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Hometown show for Witney’s proggy rockers.

SATURDAY 4th

SIMPLE with MIDLAND: The Bullingdon – The long-running house club night plays host to versatile producer and DJ Harry Agius, who goes out under the name Midland, switching from slick, stripped-back garage-flavoured pop to scuffed-up techno, disco and more and renowned for his marathon sets at his own All Night Long parties. Support from Simple residents Em Williams, James Weston and Maxquerade. **MAKING A SCENE: Oxford Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre** – Catweazle host the first of a monthly series of live music and spoken word shows at the OD&HOHC, tonight with sets from Catweazle host Matt Sage’s own 60s pop-inspired band Art Theefe, alongside Temper Cartel, Ed Pope, Steve Larkin, Xogara and Kiran Millwood Hargrave. **GLUEMAN + GOUL + SHOTGUN SIX + CPR: The Wheatheaf** – It’s All About the Music showcase night with heavy-duty psych-rocking in the vein of The Warlocks and Spacemen 3 from Shotgun Six. **BARCELONA FLAMENCO: The Cellar** – An evening of Flamenco with Barcelona’s Ariadne Molina (dancer); Ana Brenes (vocals) and Jero Ferec (guitar). **FREERANGE: The Cellar** – UK garage, grime and bassline club night. **THE AUTUMN SAINTS + MAD LARRY BAND: The Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music showcase with atmospheric Americana from The Autumn Saints and classic r’n’b from Mad Larry. **SHEPHERD’S PIE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Hard rock and metal covers, from Maiden and Metallica to Thin Lizzy and Black Sabbath. **NO HORSES: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon** – Goodtime southern blues-rock.

SUNDAY 5th

BEARD OF DESTINY + SAM POPE + MOON LEOPARD + ANNELI: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free early evening of acoustic blues, folk and pop. **BLOODSTOCK – MUSIC FOR THE MASSES: The Bullingdon** – Rock and metal battle of the bands to win a place at this summer’s Bloodstock festival. Tonight’s heat features Bloodshot, Promethean Reign, Shattered Compass, Violence is Golden and Lest We Forget.

MONDAY 6th

MENACE BEACH + VAN ZELLER +

WOLFS: The Bullingdon – Grunged-up shoegaze, 90s indie and slacker pop in a similar vein to Joanna Gruesome and Yuck from Leeds’ Menace Beach, out on tour to promote new album ‘Lemon Memory’ on Memphis Industry, co-founders Ryan Needham – formerly of Komakino – and Liza Violet joined by an all-star Leeds cast including members of Hookworms, Sky Larkin and You Animals, while Mansun’s Paul Draper and Pulled Apart By Horses’ Robert Lee have also served along the way. **THE MASTERSONS + ANTHONY D’AMATA: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Austin’s leading country couple come to the Shire – *see main preview* **OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim** – Weekly open session. **JACKIE OATES + MEGAN HENWOOD: Nettlebed Folk Club** – The local folk luminaries team up once again for a home club show, featuring songs from Megan’s debut album, ‘Head, Heart, Hand’ and more.

TUESDAY 7th

LOYLE CARNER: O2 Academy – A swift return to Oxford for the rising south London MC after his sold-out show at the Bully in September, his sensitive, eloquent confessional hip hop, more old school than grime, having seen him working with Kate Tempest and Maverick Sabre, as well as supporting MF Doom and Joey Badass. The rapper will be signing copies of his new album in Truck Store at 1pm ahead of the show. **SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern** – Weekly open mic night. **OSPREY & FRIENDS: St. Aldates Tavern** – Fortnightly jam session with local blues veteran Osprey and chums.

WEDNESDAY 8th

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s hits, new wave, glam and synth-pop club night.

THURSDAY 9th

LITTLE COMETS: O2 Academy – Newcastle’s ebullient Afro-pop-flavoured indie rockers return to town, playing songs from their fourth album ‘Warhead’, 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. **AJ TRACEY: O2 Academy** – Fast rising west London grime MC Tracey comes to town having featured highly in every critics long list and shortlist for 2017, set to cross over big time on the back of a series of EPs, including his recent ‘Lil Tracey’. **THE BREW + HELL’S GAZELLES: The Bullingdon** – Rock’n’soul from Grimsby’s The Brew at tonight’s Haven Club show, the band out on tour to promote their new ‘Shake the Tree’ album, having previously toured with ZZ Top and Lynyrd Skynyrd, and shared stages with Jeff Back and Joe Bonamassa. Hard rocking support from Hell’s Gazelles, with a melodic metal mix of Guns’n’Roses and Judas Priest, kicked out in theatrical style. **RHYS LEWIS: The Cellar** – Oxford-born bluesman Rhys Lewis launches his new single, ‘Waking Up Without You’, with a soulful take on electric blues. **PATCHWORK: The Cellar** – House and techno club night. **MERCURY: The New Theatre** – Queen tribute

extravaganza. **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 10th

COLDREDLIGHT + CANDY SAYS: Truck Store – Oxford’s leading indie record store celebrates its sixth birthday with an evening of live music, including dark, post-grunge blues from last month’s *Nightshift* cover stars Coldredlight, and sunshine pop from Candy Says. **LOUD MOUNTAINS + LOW ISLAND + LUKE MAY + TILLY VALENTINE + STOLBY: O2 Academy** – The O2’s regular Uprising team-up with BBC Introducing in Oxford, hosts local Americana crew Loud Mountains – last month’s *Nightshift* Introducing feature – Connecticut-born brothers Sean and Kevin Duggan launching their new EP, ‘Love One Another’, and kicking it out in a rootsy fashion in the vein of Ryan Adams and Bright Eyes. They’re joined by ambient electro-pop newcomers Low Island, and more. **THOUGHT FORMS + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + EGRETS: The Cellar** – Dark-hearted shoegaze noise from the Wiltshire spanglers – *see main preview* **KANADIA + TEMPER CARTEL + THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE: The Bullingdon** – Big-hearted stadium indie from fast rising local starlets Kanadia, exploring the same wide-open musical landscapes at Radiohead, U2, Muse and Coldplay. Quality support from elegantly gothic indie rockers Temper Cartel and superb rockabilly/surf/acid house/dirgecore duo The Pink Diamond Revue. **BLACK BULLETS + PSYCHOLIES + DISCIPLES OF SIN: The Wheatheaf** – OxRox host a return to town for Basingstoke’s sleazy, tattoo-heavy rock’n’roll, punk and biker rock crew Black Bullets, with support from Italian industrial metal and dark-glam rockers Psycholies, kicking it out in the vein of Marilyn Manson and Rob Zombie. **THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + THE SHAPES + LES CLOCHARDS: The Jericho Tavern** – Local jump blues and hot jazz heroes TORFSB host a French Revolution party, which should get messy as soon as they get the guillotine out. Dress up in period costume and get down to their vintage 1930s speakeasy r’n’b, plus The Shapes’ soulful 60s pop and new wave, and Les Clochards’ warming French café pop and elegant rock’n’roll. **ETHOMETRIC MUSEUM: The Shed, Charlbury** – Oxford Contemporary Music host a live exhibition/demonstration of arcane and unusual electronic music and noise-making objects: part gig, part sound installation, part music science lecture, all very curious and strange. **THE STANDARD: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Rock covers.

SATURDAY 11th

NOISIA: O2 Academy – The Netherlands’ drum&bass kings come to town on the back of the release of their new ‘Outer Edges’ album, the highly-prolific Dutch trio’s extensive catalogue of EPs, singles and remixes has seen them take on Hybrid, Skrillex, Hadouken and The Prodigy as well as Visage and The Eurythmics, their harsh,



Friday 10th

THOUGHT FORMS

/ FLIGHTS OF

HELIOS / EGRETS:

The Cellar

While never entirely back in vogue, shoegaze remains a sweetly noisy, spectral presence in pop’s castle, and the likes of Wiltshire’s Thought Forms make sure it can’t be ignored. In fact they should be centre stage on the strength of 2013’s epic ‘Ghost Mountain’ album, which paid due homage to My Bloody Valentine in its song titles (‘Only Hollow’), and occasionally Slowdive in its shimmering guitar noise and slender, wraithlike vocals, while taking everything on a far heavier trip by way of Loop and Bark Psychosis on songs like ‘Landing’ and ‘Burn Me Clean’, all low-end noise and sludgy, psychedelia, and into Sonic Youth’s more sultry moments on ‘Sans Soleil’. More than just a heap of cool influences (but what influences!), they’re a variously brooding, pretty and ferocious noise machine, a musical spell to fall under and never awaken. Like Thought Forms, Flights of Helios can soar, their spaced-out electro-heavy ambient soundscapes at their best when evoking a trip round the sun, and mixing light and shade into an epic whole. Tonight’s openers Egrets feature members of Maiians, Winchell Riots, Listing Ships and We Aeronauts, which means they should be good – and they are, their shoegazey noise likely to make them one of the Oxford bands worth keeping an eye on this year.

heavy-duty D&B, dubstep and breakbeat style seeing them dubbed the Kings of Drum&bass. **CASH: O2 Academy** – Tribute to The Man in Black. **ESTRONS: The Cellar** – Pop-friendly punk and grunge fury from rising Welsh quartet Estrons, back in town after supporting Slaves at the Bully last year.

ROY WOOD: The New Theatre – Hits galore from the former Move and Electric Light Orchestra man, though probably forever destined to be best known for perennial festive fave ‘I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day’. His songs with The Move are utterly timeless, though, from ‘Blackberry Way’ and ‘Fire Brigade’ to ‘I Can Hear The Grass Grow’ and ‘Flowers In The Rain’ – the first song ever played on Radio 1. As he heads off on another major tour Wood is about to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame for his part in ELO, the band he formed with Move bandmate Jeff Lynne in 1970, so expect plenty of their old classics too. **FRED ABBOTT + ANTON BARBEAU + SU JORDAN: The Bullingdon** – Tom Petty-styled drive time rocking from the former Noah & the Whale guitarist and keyboard player, out on



Monday 13th
BEN WATT:
The Bullingdon

There were 31 years between Ben Watt’s debut solo album, ‘North Marine Drive’, in 1983, and its follow-up, 2014’s ‘Hendra’, but it’s not like he was slacking or suffering some kind of creative block. There were the 15 years he spent as one half of Everything But the Girl with long-time partner (and now wife) Tracey Thorn, which included two platinum albums and another eight gold ones, plus myriad chart singles. And then there were those years spent as a club DJ, remixer, label owner and club host, indulging his love of deep house in particular. And his lengthy battle with a life-threatening auto-immune disease. Oh, and a couple of autobiographies. So three decades probably flew by before he returned to his first love – 60s jazz-folk. On his first album he worked with Kevin Coyne and Robert Wyatt, while for ‘Hendra’ he teamed up with Suede’s Bernard Butler, and a mere two year after that, he was back again with last year’s ‘Fever Dream’, continuing his journey into rustic folk-rock (ironic given Thorn’s autobiography described how ETBG did everything in their power to avoid anything even remotely rock). Inspired by Pentangle, John Martyn and Crazy Horse, it’s soulful, bluesy and the right sort of ragged, his songs rooted in an almost mystical England of hills and fields, and if it does share one thing with his former band, it’s a sense of understated elegance.

tour to promote his solo debut album ‘Serious Poke’. Support from psychedelic troubadour and honorary Oxfordian Anton Barbeau, with his Syd Barrett/Robyn Hitchcock-inspired freak-pop, alongside Su Jordan.
FREERANGE ROOTS: The Bullingdon – Roots reggae and dub soundsystem with guests The Bug with Reggae Roast.
CROW’S REIGN + KILL FOR COMPANY + APE: The Wheatsheaf – Thrash and metalcore from local heavyweights Crow’s Reign, plus tech and progressive metal and thrash from Kill For Company in support.
REWS: Fusion Arts – Tigmus host London/Belfast duo Rews with their anthemic mix of garage pop and electro-tinged grunge.
KIERAN HALPIN + DAMIEN CLARKE: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club host veteran Irish singer-songwriter Kieran Halpin, out on tour to promote his 20th album, ‘The Devil & His Deals’, his intelligent, rough-hewn traditional folk songwriting having seen him covered by the likes of The Battlefield Band, Vin Garbutt and Dolores Keane, amongst a host of others, as well as being translated into German, Spanish and Finnish along the way.

SEVEN O’CLOCK JUNKIES: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Covers, from Elvis Costello to REM, plus originals from the local rockers.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Royal Standard, Headington – Goodtime blues rocking from the local veteran.
HOWLIN’ TAILDRAGGERS: The Old Anchor, Abingdon – Chicago-style electric blues.

SUNDAY 12th
TOM GRENNAN + CUCKOOLANDER: The Cellar – Soulful blues from Bedford singer Brennan, best known as the voice of Chase & Status’ ‘All Goes Wrong’. Following his inclusion in the BBC Sound of 2017 list, he’s on tour to promote his debut EP.
SPRING KING: The Bullingdon – Laddish garage rocking in the vein of Palma Violets, Vaccines et al from Manchester’s Spring Kings, back in town on tour to promote last year’s debut album ‘Tell Me If You Want To’.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The White Hart, Wolvercote (4-8pm) – Open session for singers, musicians, poets and more.

MONDAY 13th
OHHMS + MAMMOTH WEED WIZARD BASTARD: The Cellar – Stoner/sludge/doom beast war double bill devastation ahoy – *see main preview*
BEN WATT: The Bullingdon – Back to his rustic jazz/folk-rock roots for the Everything But the Girl chap – *see main preview*
KATE NASH: O2 Academy – Return of the north London singer-songwriter, out on tour to promote what will likely be the release of her fourth album – a follow-up to 2013’s ‘Girl Talk’, having survived the backlash against her following the success of 2007’s debut ‘Made of Bricks’ and its associated hits ‘Foundations’ and ‘Caroline is a Victim’, which drew her up alongside Arctic Monkeys and Jamie T as a pop-friendly documenter of the mundane, with tales of crap boyfriends, pubs, kitchens and the top decks of buses. Her songwriting strength – including for Rita Ora recently – and dedicated, low-level activism and fundraising has kept her going and earned her an enduring fanbase.
JACKSON LIVE: The New Theatre – Big stage Michael Jackson tribute.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim McGOLDRICK, McCUSKER & DOYLE: Nettlebed Folk Club – Another chance to catch three of the contemporary folk scene’s leading lights together in an intimate setting, with the Transatlantic Sessions trio back 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 14th
LADYHAWKE: O2 Academy – The pop lady flies again – *see main preview*
CHUCK PROPHET & THE MISSION EXPRESS: The Bullingdon – A return to town for cult Americana hero and former-Green On Red frontman Chuck Prophet at tonight’s Empty Room show, the Telecaster master having played alongside Jonathan Richman, Warren Zevon and Lucinda Williams since going solo, earning critical praise rather more than commercial success for his unwillingness to play it safe, while mixing up blues, country, rock’n’roll, punk

and hip hop at times, and earning favourable comparisons to Ray Davies, Tom Petty and Alex Chilton along the way.
BREABACH: The North Wall, Summertown – Scottish-flavoured folk dance from the 2016 Scottish Traditional Music Awards Best Folk Act and Album of the Year winners, playing songs, tunes and step dances from their recent ‘Astar’ on bagpipes, fiddle, flute and guitar.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Monthly goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 15th
CABBAGE + THE SHIMMER BAND + APRIL: The Bullingdon – Sun-baiting indie militants on the rise – *see main preview*
MUNCIE GIRLS + CASSELS: The Cellar – Politically-charged indie-punk in the vein of Alvrays and Allo Darlin’ from Exeter’s Muncie Girls, out on tour to promote debut album ‘From Caplan To Belize’, and joined tonight by local guitar warriors Cassels.
GALACTIC EMPIRE: O2 Academy – Re-arranged from December - Heavy metal from the

Monday 13th
OHHMS /
MAMMOTH WEED
WIZARD BASTARD:
The Cellar

Forget *Robot Wars*; forget Jaegers vs Kaiju in *Pacific Rim*; tonight sees one serious heavyweight head-to-head as Canterbury’s OHHMS roll out on a joint tour with Wrexham’s Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard (*pictured*). OHHMS mix of prog, doom, sludge and stoner noise has its roots in classic 60s and 70s heavy rock but is inventively updated on their debut album ‘Bloom’ and follow-up EP ‘Cold’ - both two-track behemoths with titles like ‘Dawn of the Swarm’, that pummel, grind and groove somewhere in the vast canyons between Isis, Mastodon, Pink Floyd and Torche – stylish and confident and inventive enough to escape the intense gravity of those influences. Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard (recommended to us last year by Emilie at Truck Store) are the best thing to come out of their home town since Joey Jones and musically are a fair reflection of their name: they’re huge; they exist in a dense stoner haze; there’s magic in their dark fairytales and they rock. Like bastards. Recent album ‘Y Proffwyd Dwyll’ (The False Prophet) is dark and sludgy, hypnotic and relentless and the band use strings and synths to take it down several notches from standard stoner/doom noise, with the influence of John Carpenter, Hawkwind and even Prokofiev apparent amid the unrelenting riffage. So do yourself a favour and give your ears the punishment they deserve.



Dark Side (isn’t it all?) with *Star Wars*-costumed riffmongers.
SOMEONE LIKE YOU: The New Theatre – Tribute to Adele.

THURSDAY 16th
UNION J: O2 Academy – After coming fourth in the 2012 series of *X-Factor*, Union J looked like following in One Direction’s footsteps, but even the indefinite hiatus of that group hasn’t helped steer JJ, Josh, Jaymi and, latterly, Casey (who replaced George after he left following his stint on *I’m a Celebrity*) to the pinnacle of the pop tree, and recent times have found them supporting The Vamps on tour as well as a summer tour of Butlin’s and a recent intimate Audience With tour that brought them to the Bullingdon last time in town. They’re still big news though, and with their third album due this month, the boys are out on the road again, good time boy band pop and r’n’b mixed in with big ballads and cute looks.
DEADBEAT APOSTLES + COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + THE DAN MCKEAN BAND: The Bullingdon – EP launch show from this month’s Demo of the Month winners with their big-hearted, country-tinged 60s-styled soul.
MARY BENDYTOY + DAWN RAISERS: The Jericho Tavern – Industrial gothic rocking from Mary Bendytoy at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show.
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 17th
NEARLY NOEL GALLAGHER’S HIGH FLYIN’ BIRDZ: O2 Academy – A tribute to Noel Gallagher’s High Flyin’ Birds. Hold that though in your head for a moment, dear reader. Then proceed to the edge of the nearest cliff and hurl yourself into blissful oblivion.
HIDDEN CHARMS: The Cellar – Bluesy psychedelic pop with a heavy 60s and early 70s vibe from London’s Hidden Charms, out on tour in the wake of their new single ‘Cannonball’.
MR B THE GENTLEMAN RHYMER: The Bullingdon – Straight outta Surrey, bespectacled, besuited and elegantly moustachioed chap-rapper Mr B, gives hip hop a run through with the Queen’s English, coming in at that point where De la Soul meets Noel Coward and Flanders and Swann. Or maybe NWA if they’d grown up in Hove and been more interested in cricket and fine tea.

THE OUTSIDE + KUIPER + FREEMANTLE + KHAMSIANA: The Wheatsheaf – It’s All About the Music local bands showcase.
GROAK + DRORE + SCUMBAG: The Library – Fantastically dark-hearted sludge, doom and crust noise from Leeds’ Groak at tonight’s Smash Disco show, their harrowing, slow-burning downtuned demon-core perfectly suited to The Library’s confined, underground space. Brilliantly virulent doom/crust noise from Drore in support.
SOUL SESSIONS: The Cellar – Classic soul, funk and disco club night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Mad Hatter
DAMN GOOD REASON: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers.
HOWLIN’ TAILDRAGGERS: Red Hot Blues, Didcot

SATURDAY 18th
100 CHAINS + MY DIABLO + TRAUMA UK + A NIGHTMARE UPON US: The Cellar – Church of the Heavy riff-fest, with this month’s Introducing featured band 1000 Chains mixing up classic thrash, djent, nu-metal and early 80s metal. Heavy-duty groove-metal from My Diablo in support, plus punk from Trauma UK.
VOODOO VEGAS + KIKAMORA + HAXAN: The Wheatsheaf – Classic rock, melodic metal and glam in the vein of Led Zep, Alter Bridge and Guns’n’Roses from south coast rockers Voodoo Vegas at tonight’s OxRox show, the band back in Oxford after their headline show here last year and previously supporting Y&T, as well as going out on tour with Status Quo, Uriah Heap and The Answer, out on a headline tour to promote debut album ‘The Rise of Jimmy Silver’
HOLLY REDFORD JONES: Fusion Arts – Soulful acoustic jazz-pop from university student Holly, launching her new EP ‘The Future’ tonight, inspired by Nina Simone, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell.
FLUID: The Cellar – Bass, grime and drum&bass club night.
U2 BABY: Fat Lil’s, Witney – U2 covers for newborns.

SUNDAY 19th
BLOODSTOCK – MUSIC FOR THE MASSES: The Bullingdon – Rock and metal battle of the bands to win a place at this summer’s Bloodstock festival. Tonight’s heat features Silk Road, Her Despair, 13 Burning, Chaos Theory and Molotov Sexbomb.
SELF HELP + ADAM & ELVIS + CORA PEARL + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + ASTEROX: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Klub Kakofanny host a free afternoon of live music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.

MONDAY 20th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim
STEVE KNIGHTLEY: Nettlebed Folk Club – Intimate show at Nettlebed’s legendary folk club for Show of Hands frontman Knightley.

TUESDAY 21st
ALPINES: The Cellar – Shrill, anodyne electro-pop and r’n’b from the Kingston-upon-Thames duo, out on tour to promote new album ‘Another River’, following previous tour supports to Emilie Sandé and Florence and the Machine.
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern
OSPREY & FRIENDS: St. Aldates Tavern – Fortnightly jam session with local blues veteran Osprey and chums.

WEDNESDAY 22nd
NEON WALTZ: The Cellar – Elegant indie rock in the vein of Elbow, The Coral and Shack from Neon Waltz, probably the Britain’s northernmost pop band, hailing from Thurso.
RATS EAT RATS + ROSE SEGAL + SAMUEL EDWARDS: The Wheatsheaf – Euphoric grunge rocking from newcomers Rats Eat Rats at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show.

THURSDAY 23rd
PETE BOSS + THE TOM IVEY BAND: The Bullingdon – Slowhand blues from Clapton-inspired local



Tuesday 14th
LADYHAWKE:
O2 Academy

Looking like a young Stevie Nicks after a rock’n’roll makeover courtesy of Joan Jett, Ladyhawke – Pip Brown to her mum – might not do OTT style but she more than makes up for it in the big pop song stakes. That’s big pop songs with simply enormous choruses; in fact, such is Ladyhawke’s way with a pop hook, there are probably millions of folk out there who could whistle a handful of her singles without even being able to tell you who Ladyhawke is. Early singles like ‘Paris Is Burning’ (produced by Peaches), ‘My Delirium’ and ‘From Dusk Til Dawn’ sound like they might have escaped from an early-1980s radio playlist, recalling everyone from Kim Wilde and Bananarama to Cyndi Lauper and Gary Numan, but stamped with Brown’s own emotional identity. Having grown up in New Zealand, playing in a series of grunge bands before decamping to Australia and making her way into synthier territory, she found herself lauded at the Australian music awards before wider stardom beckoned. Following her exceptional eponymous debut and 2012’s ‘Anxiety’, she re-emerged last year with third album, the exuberantly poppy and unashamedly 80s-flavoured ‘Wild Things’, and if she takes her time between releases, each one is worth waiting for.

guitar veteran Pete Boss at tonight’s Haven club, alongside funky bluesman Tom Ivey.
THE BEAT BOUDOIR: The Library – New retro 50s and 60s r’n’b club night with live music from local vintage garage rockers The Count of Three, featuring former Talulah Gosh/Heavenly man Peter Momthchiloff and Les Clochards’ Ian Nixon.
CRYSTALLITE + ANDY WRIGHT + EASTER ISLAND STATUES: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music night.
BIG BOY BLOATER: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Classic r’n’b, rockabilly, blues and surf from

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Wednesday 15th

CABBAGE / THE SHIMMER BAND / APRIL: The Bullingdon

If you can judge a person by their enemies then the same can be said of bands. We’ve loved Cabbage since we heard their ‘Uber Capitalist Death Trade’ single last year, sounding like a pissed-off mash-up of Dead Kennedys and Butthole Surfers, but our regard for them went up several notches when they responded to being tipped as one of the bands to watch by The Sun at the start of the year. “Don’t buy *The Sun*; don’t even walk past it without burning it or spitting on it,” was one of their more considered statements on Murdoch’s hate rag. Like Fat White Family, Cabbage are a band fuelled by disgust, and have a similarly queasy feel about them, particularly the sublimely grim ‘Dinner Lady’, as they sing about Tony Blair, Jimmy Saville, North Korea and wanking into quiche in a public school. The hype about the outspoken Mossley quintet has been growing over the course of four EPs in the space of 12 months and after a showing at Future Perfect’s What Became of Us? Mini-festival at the Bully in November, they’re back for a headline show. Remember: Cabbage is good for you, if not something the establishment tends to indulge in too often. Support comes from Bristol’s psych-rockers The Shimmer Band, who spent last summer playing every festival going, including Reading and Leeds, Isle of Wight and The Great Escape, while south midlands indie-noise crew April bring some classic Baggy/ Britpop to open the show.

singer, guitarist and radio DJ Big Boy Bloater and his band, out to promote new album ‘Luxury Hobo’, having previously toured with Imelda May.
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 MIGHTY DISCO BISCUITS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Classic soul, funk and disco covers.

FRIDAY 24th
KANADIA + DIRTY ORANGE + BEAVER FUEL: The **Wheatsheaf** – Intricately anthemic indie rocking from rising local stars Kanadia at tonight’s OxRox show, alongside London’s indie-grungers Dirty Orange and punk-pop poets Beaver Fuel.
KARL BLAU: The **Bullingdon** – Halfway to 75 host a rare opportunity to catch Washington State’s maverick folk and country veteran, over in the UK to promote new album ‘Introducing

Karl Blau’ – his 21st, and ironically an album of covers of songs by the likes of Waylon Jennings, Link Wray and Tom T Hall. Blau’s singularly eclectic and idiosyncratic approach to American roots music sees him taking influences from Philly soul, grunge and surf rock as well as classic r’n’b and campfire folk, while his rich, soothing voice has been compared to Glenn Campbell and Charlie Rich.
CLONE ROSES: O2 Academy – Stone Roses tribute.
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with THE MAJESTIC: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’s monthly reggae, dancehall and roots club night welcomes London roots crew The Majestic to the party, the quintet formed in the 1980s by Tony Alli and Faada Ras and now enjoying a resurgence in popularity thanks to acclaimed sets at Boomtown and a new album. On the decks Skylarkin plays a party-hearty mix of calypso, ska, rocksteady, dancehall and jungle.
CHARIOTS + TILLY VALENTINE + WEDNESDAY’S WOLVES: The Jericho Tavern – Daisy Rodgers Music night with local electro-pop, indie and r’n’b chap Tom Read going out in his Chariots guise, alongside Witney’s trippy jazz-pop singer and musician Tilly Valentine, plus twinkling indie-folk duo Wednesday’s Wolves.
SOFAR SOUNDS: Venue TBC – Sofar Oxford reach their 50th gig, continuing to put on evenings of eclectic live music in unusual venues, with gig locations and line-ups announced two days beforehand to ticket holders.
SE10: The Bullingdon – Garage and grime club night.

SATURDAY 25th
WHITE LIES: O2 Academy – Euphoric electro-indie rock from White Lies, out on tour to promote last year’s ‘Friends’ album, and making their first visit to Oxfordshire since headlining Truck in 2014.
DUSKY LIVE: O2 Academy – Eclectic club night set from the London EDM duo, plugging long-awaited second album ‘Outer’, the follow-up to 2011’s award-winning ‘Stick By This’, their wide-ranging take on house and techno taking in old school progressive house, Belgian techno and ambient electronica as well as jazz and classical.
LAST RITES + ECHO4FOUR + RAISED BY HYPOCRITES + LEST WE FORGET: O2 Academy – Local rock and metal night at the O2 with old school metal and hard rockers Last Rites, plus Sabbath-inspired rockers Echo4Four, Witney heavyweights Raised by Hypocrites and metalcore merchants Lest We Forget.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with GRUB + DOWNWARD + OLD ERNIE: The Wheatsheaf – Mixed bag of fun sounds at this month’s GTI with Grub’s big fat mess of superfuzzed riffage and grungy garage rock re

calling The MC5 and Mudhoney. They’re joined by Bristol’s punishing, distorted noise rock and maths-y strangeness, Downward, plus decidedly offbeat weirdo noisemakers Old Ernie.
BROADSIDE BALLADS: Holywell Music Room – A trip back in time through five centuries of broadsides – single sheet, low-cost songsheets, produced from the 16th Century onwards – in the company of three of Britain’s most acclaimed contemporary folk artists: singer and fiddle player Lisa Knapp; singer and song collector, and regular visitor to Oxfordshire, Sam Lee, and experimental composer and sound artist Nathaniel Mann, the trio having explored the Bodleian’s archives to unearth lost songs and melodies, which will be re-arranged and revitalised tonight in the suitably historic setting of Europe’s oldest purpose-built concert venue.
THE EPSTEIN + SEAN TAYLOR: The Old Fire Station – Epic folk-rock and Americana from the longstanding local faves.
OSPREY + BEARD OF DESTINY + EARINADE + TEMPER CARTEL + THE SHAPES + ASH LEWIS: The Cellar – Local promoter and bluesman Osprey celebrates his birthday in fine musical company, including blues crew Beard of Destiny; drunk rockers Earinade; elegant indie rock from Temper Cartel and goodtime 60s-flavoured r’n’b from The Shapes.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The Whitehouse – Bluegrass and Americana from the local regulars.
FREEFALL: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers.
THE BITE: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Classic rock covers from the local power trio.

SUNDAY 26th
NO HORSES + TONY BATEY & SAL MOORE + PURPLE MAY + TOM IVEY + MARK BOSLEY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-8.30pm) – Giddyup Music host a free afternoon of live music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar
THE BAND OF HOPE + THE MIGHTY REDOX: Florence Park Community Centre (2-5pm) – The monthly Sunday Sessions hosts an afternoon of family-friendly live music, this month with spiritual Americana crew The Band of Hope, plus veteran blues, ska, psychedelia and funk party-starters The Mighty Redox.

MONDAY 27th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim CARA DILLON: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional folk music from the multiple award-winning Irish singer.

TUESDAY 28th
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern
PRESS: The Cellar – Techno, acid and Detroit house club night.



THE BULLINGDON

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GENERACION SUICIDA / SCRAP BRAIN / TENTH LISTEN / COWLEY CHAINSAWS

The Library

The wonderfully named Cowley Chainsaws kick off another great Smash Disco night with a theme of DIY punk (two bands are selling cassettes), and a grateful Library is packed to the gills. They neatly revive the 1977 era when punk had moved on from radical novelty but before it had factionalised and split into the bands willing

to compromise to the corporate dollar and those taking the more purist, nihilistic route. The Chainsaws are compromising to no-one, a dense jungle of amphetamine-fuelled riffs and strangled vocals, with chords changing several times a second. While difficult to judge their true worth at least it's more coherent than the tape, which

GILAD ATZMON, SAUL RUBIN AND YARON STAVI

The Albion Beatnik

Bookstore

Albion Beatnik Bookshop's proprietor, the genial Dennis, has joined the ranks of Oxford's independent promoters by putting on regular jazz nights, and though it's a cold, dank January night, one of Oxford's more unusual and homely music venues is packed. They've come to hear London-based Israeli sax player Gilad Atzmon, with his regular double bassist Yaron Stavi, who are frequent visitors to the city. This time they've brought with them guitarist Saul Rubin, a veteran of the New York grassroots scene from which he's emerged from time to time to play in the high-profile bands of Roy Hargrove and Sonny Rollins. Atzmon characteristically plays runs with masses of notes very fast, and at times bends over the seated Rubin as if goading him on. But it is his beautifully languid, liquid sound when he picks up his soprano sax to play a ballad that we love most about his playing. Stavri has a couple of beguilingly sinuous double bass solos but largely confines himself to being the rhythm section to avoid his strings clashing with Rubin's guitar. It is Rubin who turns out to be the star of the night; he is clearly still in love with playing and exploring the guitar and comes up with some surprising twists. Above all he has a wonderful touch; this is a player who can make his guitar talk.

The three perform two sets mostly of classic jazz numbers with the exception of a soulful rendition

of Atzmon's 'Gaza Mon Amour'. They start the second set with a fine version of Thelonious Monk's 'Round Midnight', which seems to fine tune them for the rest of half which consists mainly of ballads; in particular their playing 'Central Park' has a compelling calm beauty. While the pastiche made of their final number is rather out-of-tune with what has gone before and a bit of a let-down, this is classic jazz in a setting that can hardly have been more suitable and a great advert for jazz at the Albion Bookshop. *Colin May*

LET LOOSE / CRIMSON TUSK / SILK ROAD

The Wheatsheaf

It's often said that you can have too much of a good thing. The truth is you can have too much of a thing, whether it is good or not. What unites these diverse bands tonight, beyond a desire to rock out is that they could do with learning to quit when they're ahead. Each of them make their mark and then push it just a little too far. Less really can be more.

Let Loose's take on blues is fairly generic, but is played with a degree of energy and force that elevates them above being just another band working around 12 golden bars that are fast losing their lustre. Their cover of 'Lucille' is particularly roaring; they manage to blow up their amp for a start, and their bass player's ominous rumble almost (but not quite) pulls them into a strange land inhabited by both MC5 and Melvins. Then, inexplicably, the bass and drum solos start, a time in any set where stopping would be a good idea.

takes lo-fi to a quite literal conclusion.

Tenth Listen are in no mood to take things too seriously. Singer and Dave Gahan lookalike Jonny Robbo lies down and plays dead over his set list when I try to sneak a photo of it, while the drummer spends most of the set throwing sticks at the errant guitarist. The punk influence is still evident, though this is more in the Damned style of catchy melodies latched on to high velocity songs, confrontational and loosely played but with an endearing degree of maturity.

If we thought things couldn't get any angrier and more punk Scrap Brain are only too happy to prove us wrong, rumbling, grungy guitar and ramshackle playing accompany lyrics delivered as an urgent, desperate manifesto, while the drummer appears to play with her eyes shut throughout. Lyrical content is about as bleak as can be, summed up in "Take a sad song and make it hardcore". What makes them stand out is the feeling that they actually mean it, unlike the hordes of bands who casually play around with nihilism and self-loathing as nothing more than a half-hearted stance.

Generacion Suicida have come all the way from LA, and south central LA at that, living in what was once the dividing line between Bloods and Crips territory. A proudly Latino punk band singing exclusively in Spanish, the breathlessly fast, bouncy bass and drums confirm their love of The Ramones, while the guitar has a lighter, spectral edge with touches of goth and Mexican folk traditions. If only the songwriting lived up to this intriguing premise we would have a band truly to be reckoned with. As things stand we can only hope that they can turn out some killer tunes to bring them the recognition they surely deserve. *Art Lagun*

Should Desert Storm ever blow themselves out, Crimson Tusk would be more than able to take over their stoner rock mantle. Theirs is a world filled with gore-toothed mammoths, clouds of weed smoke, Wizard Bastards (probably) and gigantic riffs pulled directly from the Iommi Book Of The Dead (Heavy). The relentless tide of low slung heavily-grooved sludge that explodes from the stage is thrilling and all enveloping, as are the band's obvious Sabbath and Clutch influences. But Crimson Tusk doesn't sound like a band aping their heroes but instead cutting its own rut. When is an EP launch not an EP launch? When there aren't any EPs at the EP launch gig. When an EP falls in the forest, and there's nobody there to hear it, does it make a sound? A further riddle is how Silk Road aren't a stoner band; Crimson Tusk must have been expecting to score tonight once they'd seen the headliner. No drop-tuned primal swamp riffs here, instead they're a classic rock band, the likes of which haven't been seen since the late 80s. They've got a guitarist that solos with the indulgence/virtuosity (delete as you see fit) of Eddie Van Halen; their vocalist is filled with a swagger that would be horrific if it didn't fit the band so well. There's a moment where he coos along with a guitar part in a Percy/Page manner that should be ludicrous, but somehow isn't. When they've got their foot to the floor and let rip, Silk Road are a curiously exciting prospect, sounding like the pre-Pearl Jam glamour pussies Mother Love Bone. The problem is that they can't sustain their inventiveness over the course of an hour and end up flailing around with some quite forgettable mid-paced pomp that fails to impress. Still, the EP that doesn't exist and the song with no name should be worth checking out.

Sam Shepherd

HAZE

The Bullingdon

If Oxford gig crowds have a reputation for being reserved, no-one told Haze's fans. From the off they're a pogo-ing, pulsating moshpit, all limbs and excess energy, a mess of giddy youthful enthusiasm that neatly reflects the band's music.

Unearthing a new young band you feel you could pin your dreams to is one of the ineffable pleasures of going out to review gigs every other night, and Haze, for all their still rough edges, are a shiny bauble of a band in the typically bleak festive period gig calendar.

They're something of an old indie git's trainspotter dream too: within the first three numbers we're thinking REM if they'd gone down the trash-pop route; Arctic Monkeys if they'd decided to be Motörhead's impish lovechildren, and a refurbished take on The Wonderstuff's early ebullient indie thrash. At times they have the irresistible abrasiveness of The Replacements, at others the stubborn pop brilliance of That Petrol Emotion, at which point we have to stop and remind ourselves none of Haze were even born when those

bands were (mis)shaping alternative rock into exciting new shapes.

Not that Haze are an easy paint-by-numbers amalgam of cool influences they probably won't even recognise. They've got a directness and urgency about them that carefully avoids sliding down the punk-pop path most travelled, coupled with an often abstract approach to melody that makes them far harder to second guess than you might imagine.

Their multi-way vocal interaction is cleverly utilised and the drummer has the power to carry everything over the line with energy to spare. Set highlights include a seriously dirgy T-Rex-style boogie and a finale that sounds like someone took 'Killing in the Name Of' apart to see how it worked, then deliberately put it back together the wrong way. If they're not a sleek, well-honed pop machine quite yet, Haze are at least aimed in that direction. The fun part is watching them get there via a less than direct route. If you're in any doubt, just ask one of the sweaty, grinning kids emerging from the moshpit. They know.

Dale Kattack

RATS EAT RATS / CAMCORDER / WOLFS / COMPULSORY PRIMAL RESPONSE

The Wheatsheaf

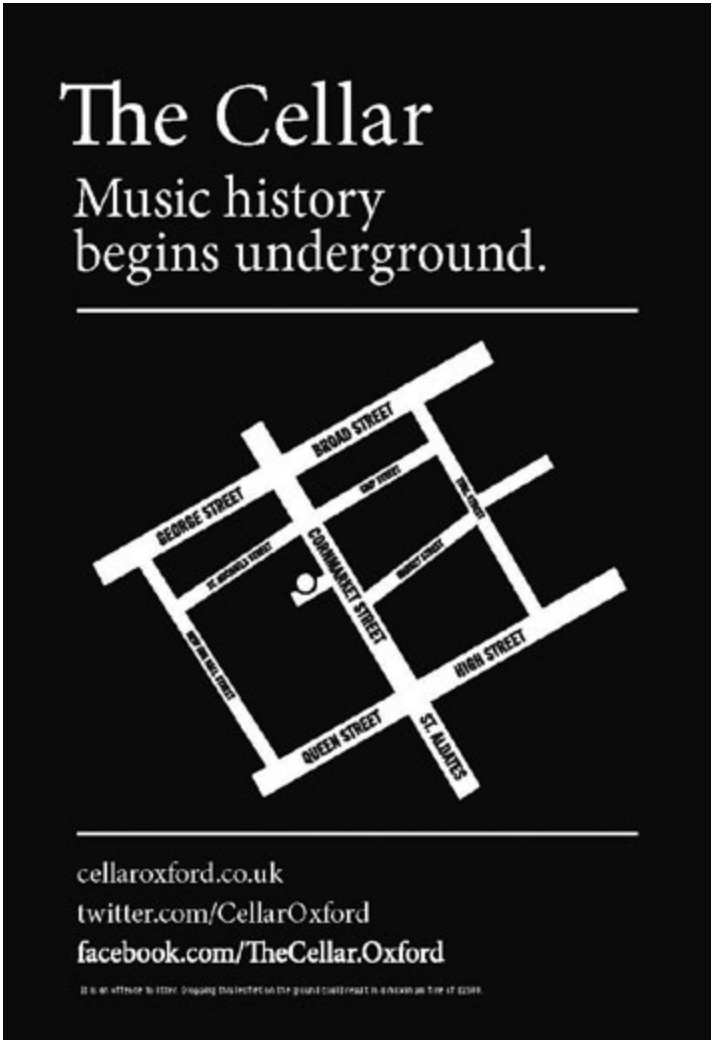
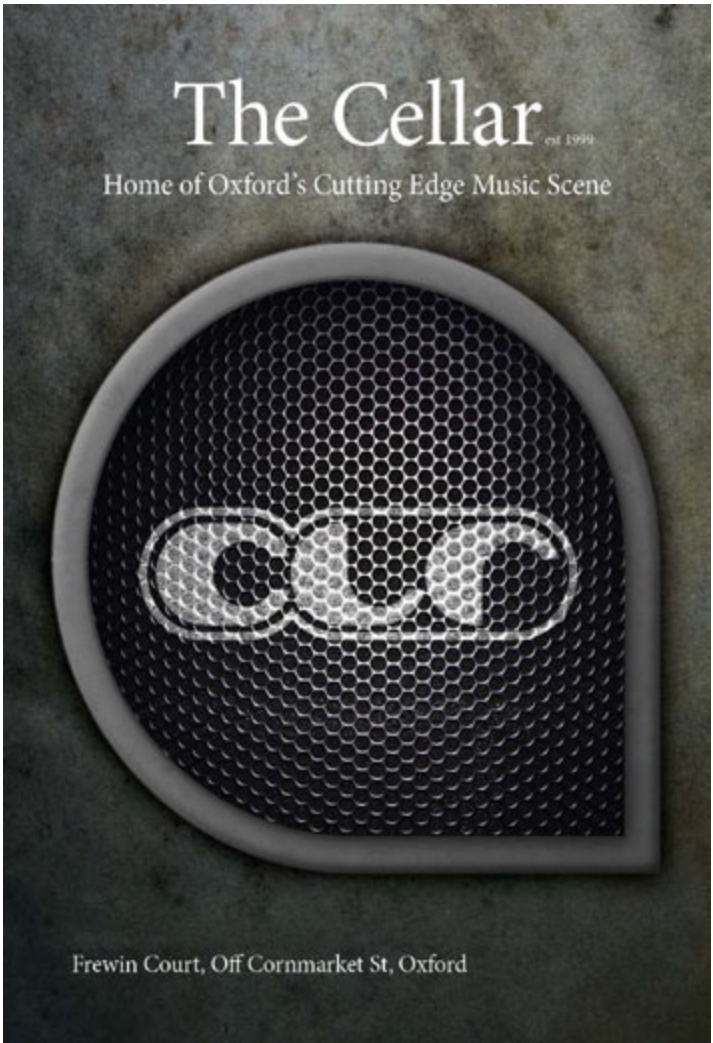
Imagine if Rob Newman hadn't gone away and quietly become an erudite political activist, but had instead followed the "comedy is the new rock'n'roll" ethos to its logical conclusion by living off speedballs and sandwiches for the past 20 years, and you've imagined Compulsory Primal Response's drummer. With a song called 'Fuck The Government' and another called 'Dave's Gone For A Piss', this scrappy punk trio's watches permanently read half-past-give-a-shit, and their joyfully inept set could have come from absolutely any year since 1978: History Today. "We are Wolf; I mean Wolves; I mean Wolfs": proof that Google-friendly band names can seem less clever when you have to pronounce them onstage (at least Wolfs has got some bloody vowels). Dubious plurals aside, they're a fresh, crisp drums/guitar duo, with a strong melodic sense and some lithe and sprightly tunes, which nod towards the smiley scuzz of Smudge and early Lemonheads, but they're at their best with straight-up rockers like the LA slum glam of 'Mirror' and dumbass Kiss pastiche 'We Came Here To Rock'. If this promising young band can relax and be a little less studied, they could

raise some roof; we mean rooves; we mean roofs.

There's a marked increase in polish and experience with Woking's Camcorder, songs suddenly sounding rehearsed, arranged and generally nurtured, their set a tidy parade of crunchy distortion and chunky choruses, as if The Foo Fighters were signed to Fat Wreck Chords. We'll confess we get a little bored half way through, but they get a deservedly appreciative reception.

Nothing like Rats Eat Rats' reception, though; it's not often we see a sizable, bouncing crowd chanting a band's name at their first gig. It takes more than a claque of beery mates to make a debut, of course, and Rats Eat Rats prove to be pretty great, taking the self-conscious, awkwardly euphoric end of early grunge and laddling out a brackish stew of 'Bleach' and 'Gish'. There's the odd rhythmic sloppiness, and the two guitars can muddy the sound, but there's a wired attractive insouciance about the band (especially the vocalist, who looks like Julian Rhind-Tutt reliving Thom Yorke's earliest press shots), and we expect them to be local favourites before 2017's out.

David Murphy





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THE WHEATSHEAF

Wednesday 1st February – IDIOT KING

GANG KANCHO 7:45pm

Friday 3rd February – KLUB KAKOFANNEY

CRYSTALLITE

ANTON BARBEAU + MAMSEN + CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE 7:45pm

Saturday 4th February – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

GLUEMAN SHOTGUN SIX + GOUL + CPR 7:45pm

Friday 10th February – OXROX

THE BLACK BULLETS

PSYCHOLIES + DISCIPLES OF SIN 7:45pm

Saturday 11th February – TWO FACE PROMOTIONS

CROW'S REIGN KILL FOR COMPANY 7:45pm

Friday 17th February – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

THE OUTSIDE KUIPER + FREEMANTLE + KHAMISINA 7:45pm

Saturday 18th February – OXROX

VOODOO VEGAS KIKAMORA + HAXAN 7:45pm

Wednesday 22nd February – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

RATS EAT RATS ROSE SEGAL + SAMUEL EDWARDS 7:45pm

Friday 24th February – OXROX

KANADIA DIRTY ORANGE + FLOWERPOT + BEAVER FUEL 7:45pm


Saturday 25th February – GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES

OLD ERNIE DOWNARD + GRUB 7:45pm

The Wheatsheaf 129 High Street, Oxford OX1 4DF / www.facebook.com/wheatsheaf.oxford

Dr SHOTOVER: Street Life

Ah, there you are, Winthorpe. A warm East Indies Club bar welcome to you AND your retro tartan wallet on this dreich old Burns Night. Congratulations, wee man, it's your round - for the foreseeable future. Or at least until I say stop. Mine's a quadruple Loch Peatie with neeps, tatties, an Aberdeen rowie and a fried Curly Wurly in batter on the side. Slàinte! You will, I am sure, have had your own tea... Now, where were we? Oh yes, investigating 'Roads of Rock' in East Oxford. We've already noted The Slade, Nick Cave Street and Bryan Ferry Road. That's right, Winthorpe, the obvious ones. Getting slightly more left-field... Wendy James Street... Giant Sandfield Road... The Plain Jayn. Very good. Kings of Leon Close...? OK, why not. The Artist Formerly Known As PRINCE's Street – yes, I see what you did there, Winthorpe. [Regally] You MAY get another round in. Nick Mason's Road and Lisa Stansfield Close? Yup, we'll allow 'em. Don Henley Street? No, I don't think so, Winthorpe. Just get the drinks in, line 'em up and collect your coat. The rest of you - cheers! Down the proverbial Hollow Way!
Next month:
Ron Wood Farm



Bryan: 'I'm just sooo pleased to have a road in East Oxford named after me. I cannot ask for... more than this'.

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

1000 Chains

Who are they?

1000 Chains are a melodic rock metal band from Oxfordshire featuring former members of local heavyweight heroes Black Candy, Mindsurfer, Days of Grace and Near Life Experience. They are Dave Todd (*vocals*); Jonny McNeil (*guitar*); Luke Rickett (*guitar*); Derek Clementson-Mobbs (*bass*) and Sam Howitt (*drums* – currently out of action due to injury, his place temporarily taken by Chris Brown). Jonny, Sammy and Luke got together a few years ago and started jamming, with the intention of being heavy but melodic. As such they “took our time auditioning singers, rather than shouters and screamers, as the perfect counterpoint to our sound.” Regular gigging around Oxford was followed by an eponymous debut EP at the end of 2016.
What do they sound like?
As they say themselves, heavy but melodic. There are recognisable elements of all their former acts in the band's sound, which joins the dots between classic thrash, djent, nu-metal and early 80s metal and heavy rock, while the emphasis on melody and vocal harmonies, combined with a strong technical edge and all-out riffage gives them a strong identity of their own.
What inspires them?
“The energy of a live performance, feeding back from the crowd, creating and playing music. Most of our lyrics are inspired by injustice in society and a need to change things for the better.”
Their career highlight so far:
“Supporting Desert Storm at a hometown show.”
And the lowlight:
“Turning up to a gig to discover the sound man had done a runner with the PA system.”
Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“There are lots of great bands of many genres in Oxfordshire, but our current favourite is Desert Storm. Some of us have known those guys for years and really respect what they do. They have a great sound, a real groove, a mix of



heaviness, an old school stoner-rock vibe with some classic edged riffing!”
If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“Faith No More: `The Real Thing`. This was a tough one; Faith No More was a name that came up most when we discussed it, although the album was harder to choose. It's Mike Patton's first album with the band; collectively we love the mix of styles, heaviness and melodic textures.”
When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?
“18th of February at The Cellar. Expect heavy, melodic riffage, soaring vocals and debauchery! Oh, and a chance to buy our EP and T-shirts.”
Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
“The diverse range of music available to go and see live in the city, and the hard working promoters are our favourite thing. Our least favourite is hearing people complain fact that they have to *pay* to see live music.”
You might love them if you love:
Alter Bridge; Tool; Mastodon; Black Sabbath; Iron Maiden; Faith No More.
Hear them here:
Soundcloud.com/1000chains or 1000chainsuk.bandcamp.com.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

20 YEARS AGO

Following on from its successful launch in January with **Dustball's** ‘Senor Nacho’, **Shifty Disco's** singles club followed it up with **The Unbelievable Truth's** debut single, ‘Building’, the band fronted by **Andy Yorke** going on to sign a deal with Virgin and hit the charts with their album ‘Almost Here’ in 1998.
In the days before we took BBC Introducing in Oxford for granted, **Oxygen FM** became the first university radio station in the country to be awarded a permanent FM license and promising local music with its weekly **Super 8** show, presented by **Andy Clyde** and **Pete Vickerman**.
A proper legend was in town this month with **Peter Green's** visit to **The Zodiac**, the former Fleetwood Mac man backed by his Splinter Group. Legend in waiting **PJ Harvey** was at **The Playhouse**, performing Dancehall at Louse Point with long-time collaborator **John Parish** and choreographer **Mark Bruce**.

10 YEARS AGO

Angel-voiced local pop darling **Richard Walters** graced the cover of February 2007's *Nightshift*, at the time signed to Warner Chappell Publishing and Courtyard Management (who also looked after Radiohead and Supergrass), working with **Noel Hogan** of **The Cranberries**, and Bjork and Britney Spears producer **Guy Sigworth**. It had been a

5 YEARS AGO

We always enjoy a bit of good news here at *Nightshift*, and in February 2012 **Truck Store** was celebrating its first anniversary flying the

year of mixed fortunes for Richard, whose song ‘All At Sea’ was used on *CSI Miami* but who had also suffered an epileptic seizure just as he was about to play for an audience of record company execs in The States. As last year's ‘A.M.’ album, and the airplay afforded ‘Awards Night’ showed, the man's talent shows no sign of fading.
Chief among this month's gigs was the *NME* Awards Tour at **Brookes University**, with **Klaxons**, **CSS**, **Sunshine Underground Band** and **New Young Pony Club** the new acts we were ordered to love. **Jamie T** was also up at Brookes, while **Regina Spektor** was at the **Town Hall** and **Bat For Lashes**, **Alton Ellis** and **And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead** were all at **The Zodiac**.
In other local music action, **Goldrush**, **Chantelle Pike**, **Laima Bite** and **The Walk Off** all released new CDs, while top of the demo pile was **Umair Chaudhrey's Monday Morning Sun** project: “the musical equivalent of something nasty stalking darkened corridors,” according to the review. By contrast, **Wasted Potential** were dismissed as “the musical equivalent of tepid cabbage water. Wasted Potential? What fucking potential?”

flag for independent music retail on Cowley Road. The store – happily still with us today – hosted a weekend of live music, with sets from **Danny & the Champions of the World**; **Nick Cope**; **Spring Offensive**; **Jess Hall**; **Deer Chicago** and **Gunning For Tamar**, among others.
Talking of shops, this month's cover star was maverick MC and hip hop producer **Asher Dust**, pictured sat in a sweetie shop, which was a neat reflection of his pick'n'mix approach to electronic music. He talked about his childhood singing with his dad's pioneering sound system, being signed to EMI and ZTT, working with Trevor Horn and Paul Hardcastle and finding himself awarded *Nightshift's* Demo of the Month and being stuck in the Demo Dumper. “Both my parents are born again Christians now, so they believe I'm making the Devil's music,” he laughed, while proving the Devil really does have all the best tunes.
Five years on from his front cover feature, **Richard Walters** was back with a new EP, ‘Young Trees’, while there were releases for **Vienna Ditto** (‘Bells’); **Abandon** (‘Monsters’), and **Shaker Heights** (‘Sitting in the Fire’ / Poised As Robots’), a promo sticker for which still graces the wall of the gents loo at The Wheatsheaf, complete with defamatory graffiti. Big gig of the month was dubstep hero/hate figure **Skrillex** at the **O2 Academy**, while down in the demo pages, **Dallas Don't** topped the pile, making their presence felt for the first time.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES

Blimey. Due to the absence of much available online music until now we'd always had The Deadbeat Apostles down as a bluesy country act (what little we could ever find certainly was). This set of songs blows that early impression pretty clean out of the water. There is a distinct country element at play, notably in the slide guitar and twang of sultry opener 'I Can't Stop the Rain', but it's way more soulful than we're expecting, with some rich, gospel-flavoured backing vocals to lift it all up several levels. 'Pilgrim's Dreams' too is as much Nashville as it is Atlanta, with its loping gait and happy-feeling-sad vibe, but as it builds to a passionate conclusion, you're starting to get rather more Wilson Pickett or Al Green than Willie Nelson out of it. The real banger, though, is final track 'The Man Who Sold His Soul', which is real old school soul, leading in with a sweet, understated Percy Sledge feel before an epic lead vocal from Mike Ginger, coupled with some seriously heroic backing vocals, make it a night to remember. The arrangement and production are exceptional and while it's rare to get some genuine soul music in the pile, when it's this good, it makes the wait more than worthwhile.

THE HARRY MACINTYRE PROJECT

Good grief, it usually takes us about ten minutes of demos to start questioning why God and the universe has chosen to punish us so, but we're kicking off with two corkers this month. This might be top of the pile any other month but given they're from Newbury and Basingstoke rather than within the county borders, we're invoking Parochial Statute 3.1 or something. They boast some seriously impressive influences, from At the Drive-In and Cardiacs to Slint and The Jesus Lizard, and manage to live up to most of them at some point, the oddball, angular 'Devious Pillar', with its hysterical vocal lead bearing out those Cardiacs claims as well as demonstrating an

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

affinity with The Mars Volta's proggy hardcore explorations. They balance their hardcore and prog tendencies well, taking tight corners at pull pelt on the likes of 'Terminus Cafe' (The Fall's 'Totally Wired' strapped to the roof of At the Drive-In's souped-up camper van and taken for a drive round some hairpin bends in the Rockies), while they earn at least three extra bonus points on 'The Astronaut Died Smiling' for reminding us of lost 90s noise heroes Mint 400, all fizzing, fuzzing molten riffage and malicious intent. If they lose a bit of momentum towards the middle-end of the demo, they keep most of the invention and end on a high with 'Zouk Puma', and for the most part you're left clinging to their coat tails with ever whiter knuckles as thy career towards an unseen precipice, probably laughing in the face of imminent catastrophe.

ORDER#227

Mind you, The Harry MacIntyre Project might as well be Genesis compared to Order#227, the fall-out from the now sadly defunct Junkie Brush. Here's a band fronted by a guy called 'Rabid' and who claim The Exploited as a chief influence. It's fast, it's ferocious and it's the musical equivalent of a nutcase docker intent on downing sixteen pints of beer without stopping for a toilet break or anything resembling conversation. They get down to it from the off with 'Beadle's Dead' (Sample lyric: "Beadle's dead / Beadle's dead / Muthafucker's telling me that Beadle's dead") which sounds like The Ruts' 'Babylon's Burning' played at double speed with all the fancy reggae bits removed and replaced with extra rage, while 'Something In the Bag' ups the ire another notch with the catchy "Fuck you, corporate whores" chant-along chorus. Four tracks get it over and done with in seven minutes and then it's a final "You cunt!" and off out for more beer, coke and a fight with 'Pub Crawl', like Cockney Rejects never went away. It's like the early 1980s all over again, and if you look out of your window or at the news, it might as well be. Dangerous times breed fast, angry music; get used to it.

TREVOR WILLIAMS

Time was you couldn't stagger drunkenly into a gig or open mic session without catching Trevor Williams playing, but seemingly his guitar tuition work has taken precedence over performance, so all we get now are very occasional single-song demos like this. This particular

one, 'We Will Wake', is among his better efforts, a fuller arrangement, including some extravagant violin work and sweet, middle distance female backing adding darker shades of soul to his plaintive singing that always makes us think of a sweet-natured child who's just had his favourite Christmas present snatched away from him but instead of weeping and wailing, he's sad but hopeful it'll come back if he doesn't make a fuss. While highly recognisable, Trev's voice isn't particularly strong or wide-ranging, so his simpler, acoustic songs can lack a little something, but he's easily capable of the odd decent tune or two and this is well worked. See you again in another six months, fella.

DUTCH-SARNIE

The heart and soul of the demo pages has always been some bedroom-based dreamer cobbling something resembling a song together on a mess of cheap home recording equipment, with an ambition to do something that pleases them and possibly a few mates and a reviewer, rather than some grand plan to launch their own clothing range or soundtrack adverts for mobile phones. Which is where we find Dutch-Sarnie (don't ask us, we were scared to Google it in case it was some niche sexual peccadillo), a bloke who enjoys mixing stretched-out shoegazy/space-pop guitar journeys with low-rent samples of The Stones Roses, Schooly D and Jessie Jackson (and even gives us a little spot-the-sample quiz to do while we're listening to it). The latter's speeches feature heavily on 'Somebody', along with news footage of cop shootings in the US, while demo highlight 'Tommy Ducks Fight' sticks scattered fragments of Charles Bukowski reading over a somnambulating Slowdive-style guitar fog and a snare beat nicked from Tubeway Army. Best moment of the entire thing is a dreamy female vocal sample declaring "I'm off my fucking cake hole" over a woozy synth squelch. It's all a bit early-90s: slightly slipshod and unpolished, but that just makes it all the more appealing. Mr Sarnie hopefully addresses his CD to 'Demo of the Month', of which (against stiff opposition) he falls short, but in spirit, he's top of every demo pile of the past 25 years. Don't go getting too professional any time soon, y'hear.

KURT RILEY

Oh for god's sake. Do you fuckers actually want a review? You know, of your music? Or is there some secret musicians' masochism cult where wannabe stars do everything in their powers to make sure *Nightshift* can't even get to hear

their songs and are therefore reduced to hurling infantile insults at the perpetrators while they sit back and touch themselves intimately, getting off on the verbal violence? Kurt here sends us two Youtube links, neither of which work. Dedicated to our sometimes Herculean task, we track him down of Facebook and follow the link to his website and from there to his music. Which is all on fucking Spotify. Oh, and it comes accompanied by some elongated piffle about story arcs and tragedy all couched in some cod-philosophical sci-fi novella that would make L. Ron Hubbard blush, and his photo looks like Billy Corgan if he'd gone to a fancy dress party as Steve Strange from Visage. For fuck's sake, just send us a couple of songs and some wine and let us do our job; or is that too fucking easy? Kurt Riley? A cunt, really.

THE DEMO DUMPER

FUZZWALKER

Though of course it says a lot when some pretentious plonker whose music we can't even access finishes the demo pile-up above a band who made the fatal mistake of sending us a simple Soundcloud link so we can actually hear just how bad they are. We will never, ever apologise for despairing of blokey indie rock of the sort we imagined, and hoped, had died out with Shed Seven, The Stereophonics and Stegofuckingsaurus. Seemingly taking guitar cues from 'Be Here Now' and lyrical inspiration from Ride's 'Tarantula', Fuzzwalker are clichéd and trite. There's some nice big spangly guitar noise at the start of 'Continental Breakfast', but the moment the singer comes in with a nasally "Well shake it up now baby," like a cruise ship Liam Gallagher impersonator, we're reduced to wondering if Kurt Riley's space opera might actually be a fun alternative. It's not that it's technically inept – far from it – or that we don't enjoy the occasional Who or Kinks rip-off (admittedly very occasional) but this kind of retrowank rocking is the chief reason why the word 'indie' is now simultaneously devoid of actual meaning, and synonymous with musical stagnation. There's some right old bollocks in the pop charts but at least it's dressed up in shiny clothes, not faded denim and cheap leather jackets. Tellingly there's a post on the band's Facebook page where they ask friends and fans to decide who really was better – Blur or Oasis, 20 years after the question stopped having any relevance to modern society. The correct answer of course was always Pulp, and anyone who doesn't get that is destined to make music better suited to the Stone Age.

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 phone number. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. We make no pretence to being fair, objective or open-minded and reserve the right to use juvenile insults while almost completely ignoring your music should we feel like it. Your Facebook friends are welcome to get all huffy on your behalf, but we'll laugh at them too.

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