



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 258
January
2017**

"Making music and writing songs is the best way to deal with your anger and your sadness; it's the best catharsis"

coldredlight

**A darker kind of blues
with Oxford's red hot duo**

Also in this issue:

Introducing LOUD MOUNTAINS

plus

**All your Oxford music news, reviews
and previews, and three pages of
local gigs for January.**

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THE BULLINGDON

JANUARY 2017 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Saturday 21st December
Cowley Road NYE Festival
Ratpack
Simple
ZAIA
Skylarkin Soundsystem
Dub Politics

Doors: 9pm

Sunday 19th January
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses

Doors: 7pm

Friday 12th January
Church of the Heavy
Last Rites
Lest We Forget
Raised by Hypocrites
RepercussionsOfYesterday

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th January
Organised Fun
Moxie

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 17th January
Beth Rowley

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 18th January
The Cactus Blossoms

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th January
Margo Price

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th January
Disco Ma Non Troppo

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 21st January
Bossaphonik
K.O.G and the Zongo Brigade

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 22nd January
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 24th January
Black Peaks
Tigercub
Employed to Serve

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 25th January
Chatham County Line

Doors: 7pm

Friday 27th January
Mr Scruff - All Night Long

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 28th January
Rawdio
Emperor
Nausika
Blunt
D-Tox
Swyndia

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 29th January
C Duncan

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd February
Dutty Moonshine
Big Band & Friends

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 4th February
Simple
Midland

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 15th February
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses

Doors: 7pm

Monday 6th February
Menace Beach

Doors: 7.30pm

Thursday 9th February
The Brew
Hell's Gazelles

Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th February
Kanadia

Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th February
Vinyl Richie

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 18th February
Fred Abbot

Doors: 7pm

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

Friday 17th February
Organised Fun
Dan Shake (4HR Set)

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 19th February
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th February
Karl Blau

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th February
SEIO

Doors: 11pm

Thursday 2nd March
Tall Ships

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd March
Nigel Garage

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 4th March
Simple
Palms Trax

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 5th March
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 7th March
Seafret

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 8th March
Famelab 2017

Doors: 7pm

Friday 10th March
Tragedy
A Heavy Metal Tribute to the Bee Gees

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 12th March
The Sherlocks

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 15th March
The Amazons

Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th March
Nine Below Zero

Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th March
Bossaphonik
Vaudou Game

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 19th March
Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses

Doors: 7pm

Monday 20th March
Idles

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 24th March
American Aquarium

Doors: 7pm

NEWS

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KRAFTWERK play their first Oxford show in 36 years when they come to The New Theatre on the 6th June – the same venue the German electronic music legends performed at in 1981. Tickets for the show went on sale at midday on the 9th December with almost all of them snapped up within an hour. The Düsseldorf synth pioneers, still helmed by founder Ralf Hütter, are performing a 3-D show, described as a “Gesamtkunstwerk – a total work of art.” And yes, we are very excited.

INDEPENDENT VENUE WEEK returns this month, with a host of gigs set to take place across the UK to mark the annual celebration of small indie venues from the 23rd-29th January. Charlatans singer Tim Burgess has been named as this year’s IVW ambassador, following in the footsteps of Colin Greenwood and Frank Turner, among others. The Cellar and The Bullingdon are the Oxford venues taking part with The Cellar hosting Hudson Scott, Catgod and Coldredlight on Saturday 28th, and The Bully featuring Black Peaks on Tuesday 24th, Chatham County Line on the 25th, Mr Scruff on the 27th and C Duncan on Sunday 29th.

Before the Cellar show on the 28th, the venue will be hosting a discussion session entitled ‘The Do’s and Don’ts of Playing Live,’ which will be free and open to all bands, promoters and gig goers, with a panel featuring Chloe Brookes from Arts Council England; Steven Endersby from Wegottickets; promoter Simon Bailey from Future Perfect, and *Nightshift* editor Ronan Munro. The session runs from 2-4pm at The Cellar.

Here at *Nightshift* we say every

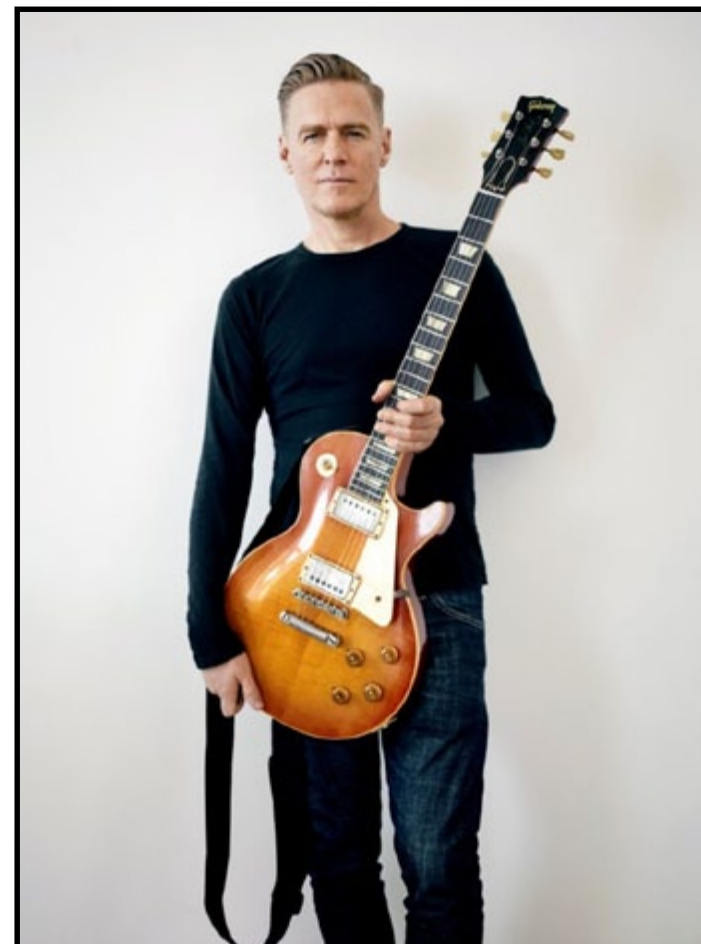
week should be Independent Venue Week.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES is adding an album length mix to Mixcloud each month, in the run up to the monthly live music club’s 15th anniversary in May. Each mix will feature tracks by acts that have performed over GTI’s long history. Have a listen at www.mixcloud.com/gappytoothindustries, where the 3rd mix has just gone up. Meanwhile GTI are on the lookout for local acts to play their shows. Visit them at www.gappytooth.com, or email artists@gappytooth.com.

PMT is on the move. After twenty years in the same location at the heart of Cowley Road the music store is moving up the road to a bigger site where Morrison’s was previously situated. The move will take place in February with the new store almost five times the size of the existing shop, which has long been Oxford’s leading musical instrument outlet.

NIGHTSHIFT CONTRIBUTOR RUSS BARKER has a new fanzine out, dedicated to 1980s alternative music. Russ describes the zine, Lunchtime For The Wild Youth, as “a fanzine about the music you leave behind with your youth. The zine takes a personal look back at albums I haven’t played for years and re-assesses them musically, along with personal anecdotes as to what the albums remind me of. As the music was all released in the 80s, it seemed fitting to type it up on a typewriter and cut and paste it old style. It was then illustrated by my daughter Robyn, producing her artistic interpretations of the album sleeves. Featuring acts from The Cult to The Mission and The Soup Dragons to The Darling Buds, all 80s life is here.”

Lunchtime For The Wild Youth is available for £1 at <https://goo.gl/AASRST>, while it will be available for free to everyone attending Gappy Tooth Industries’ gig at The Wheatshaf on Saturday 28th January.



BRYAN ADAMS will headline the final ever Cornbury Festival. The Canadian rocker will top the bill on the Saturday of the event, which runs over the weekend of the 7th-9th July at Great Tew Park.

Organiser Hugh Phillimore announced this year’s Cornbury, the 14th annual music gathering, would be the last, having played host to the likes of Bryan Ferry, Amy Winehouse, Blondie, Robert Plant and Paul Simon over the years. Tickets for the Fabulous Finale are on sale now at www.cornburyfestival.com

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

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

AND FINALLY: a very special bon voyage to *Nightshift* scribe Ben Woolhead who is moving to Cardiff with his family this month. Ben’s first review was of Emma Pollock at the Jericho Tavern in December 2007 and he’s been a regular contributor ever since, as well as hosting the excellent Sounding Bored podcast with fellow *Nightshifter* Rob Langham and Niall Kennedy. We’ll miss you, sir.



THE BEST IN LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY

Saturday 14th January - 7pm
Tom Allen, Marlon Davis, Ellie Taylor

Saturday 20th January - 7pm
Jamali Maddix, Steve Harris, Ivo Graham, Paul Tonkinson

Saturday 28th January - 7pm
Mike Gunn, Steve Williams, Rhys James, Damian Clark

Thursday 2nd February - 7pm
Nish Kumar - Glee Comedy Tour Show

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coldredlight

photo by Ian Wallman



“**MOST OF THE CHARACTERS** are quite awful really. I probably have a similar shamelessness and narcissism to Cersei Lannister, and I make a lot of bad decisions too,” says Gaby-Elise Monaghan, when *Nightshift* asks which *Game of Thrones* character she thinks she would be. “But that being said,” she continues, “I’d like to think I have the same loyalty and compassion as Davos. He’s my favourite character.”

BACK IN MAY 2016 GABY’S band, Coldredlight, were picked to play The Punt, *Nightshift’s* annual showcase of the best new music in Oxford. Asked to tell us a random fact about herself for the programme, Gaby admitted she could recite The Nights Watch Oath from *Game of Thrones* by heart; it seems fitting for someone studying Classics at the university.

GABY’S DECISION TO STUDY in Oxford now seems serendipitous, as the local music scene has taken to Coldredlight with an enthusiasm no one could have foreseen this time last year. In fact this time last year few beyond a handful of friends had even heard of Coldredlight; Gaby’s Punt performance, at Turl Street Kitchen, was the first time local gig goers had

caught sight of the young singer and guitarist who formed Coldredlight with guitarist and drummer Casper Miles in London in 2015, but that night was performing solo and rapidly winning a small army of devotees. Last month *Nightshift* writers voted the band’s debut single, ‘Little Scorpion’, the second best local song of the year, beaten only by Glass Animals’ world-conquering ‘Life Itself’, and beating Radiohead’s ‘Burn the Witch’ into third place. Not bad for a first year’s work.

EVEN GABY’S APPLICATION to play The Punt, an event she previously knew nothing about, happened by accident. “I remember coming back from a ska gig at the Cellar and finding a copy of *Nightshift*, which I had never seen before,” she recalls. “I think Cameron A.G. was on the cover and flicking through I saw an ad for the Punt. I wasn’t really doing much with my life at the time and all I wanted to do was play music so I just thought fuck it, I probably won’t get it but let’s at least try. The show itself was a complete shock. I had trouble getting a few of my friends to come along, let alone an entire room full of people. By the time I started playing the room was crammed with people

and it was hot like a fucking sauna. But it was honestly one of the best shows I have ever played. When I think about it my memory is kind of fuzzy because I was so pumped with adrenaline. Never did I think that a scrawny little girl with a guitar and reverb pedal stuffed in a tiny sweaty room would get such a positive reaction, but I am eternally grateful for having that opportunity.”

SINCE THAT FATEFUL NIGHT, we’ve watched Coldredlight myriad times, and the magic shows no sign of diminishing. With Gaby studying in Oxford and Casper based in London, where he’s studying for his A-Levels this summer, Coldredlight gigs can often be solo shows for Gaby; when study commitments allow, they play as a duo, with Casper on drums, or guitar, or sometimes both at the same time, while they’ve also played as a three-piece with a bassist. While this lends a feeling that Coldredlight are a band still forming and finding what works best, it also adds variety and unpredictability to shows. Even they aren’t completely sure yet what works best. “For me it’s all about the sound,” explains Casper. “At the moment I feel like we’re experimenting with different line ups to see which one

sounds and feels the best on stage. Personally I’d love to see what we’d sound like with a full backing band. When we have played with a bass player I feel a lot freer with my playing and I think that would be the case even more so with more people. Having said that, I love playing just the two of us and it’s okay to play different gigs with different line ups because it keeps us interested and doesn’t limit us to certain boundaries.” “The great thing about recording in the studio is adding so many layers and sounds,” adds Gaby, “that’s when you can get really creative with a song and so we are really just experimenting as to how to bring that to a live setting. We don’t end up writing a song specifically so that it can be played as a duo; we write songs the way we want them to sound and don’t limit ourselves creatively.”

THE NEW FRUITS OF THIS studio work and experimenting will be heard later this month with the release of Coldredlight’s new single, the atmospheric, slow-burning ‘Bloom’, alongside ‘Little Scorpion’ an immediate highlight of their live set, both songs best displaying Gaby and Casper’s dark, emotional take on post-grunge blues, with its roots

in the classic sound of Howlin’ Wolf and BB King but updated and taken to somewhere darker by way of influences as diverse as Jeff Buckley, Alice In Chains and Irish songsmith Hozier, whose ‘To Be Alone’ they have covered. An early *Nightshift* review described the duo as “the sound of Mazzy Starr meeting Ry Cooder at The Crossroads, at midnight,” and “creating a wonderfully pensive atmosphere that suggests something lurking just beyond the horizon.” GABY: “‘Bloom’ was probably one of the first songs we wrote together and it had always been a favourite. I think that it builds on ‘Little Scorpion’ as it’s our first release that kind of establishes our sound as a full band. It’s layered and incorporates different soundscapes, but it also has a simplicity and soulfulness about it.”

GIVEN THE PAIR’S STILL tender years – Gaby turned 20 last month, while Casper is 18 – the sheer talent they display is little short of staggering, both in Casper’s polymath playing (when we say he plays guitar and drums at the same time, we mean at the same time – it’s quite a sight, though he’s keen to take things a step further: “I’ve only got two hands, but I’m working on it…”) and Gaby’s stark, beautiful voice, stretching from sleepy-eyed croon to banshee howl.

GABY AND CASPER MET while studying at music school together. (“We are both quite open minded people and what made us click in the first place was liking each other’s music and also having quite broad musical influences, so we kind of embrace our different ways of doing things and it just works,” says Casper). Both grew into music through their parents’ record collections, which still exert a driving influence. GABY: “My mum is a big Free and Bowie fan, so I sort of grew up listening to 70s music, but I kind of ‘rediscovered’ it when I was about 15 or 16, alongside the great blues artists like BB King and Howlin’ Wolf, which is the reason why I wanted to play an ES-335 in the first place. Paul Rodgers and Steve Marriott are huge influences on me simply because they are just really fucking great singers and masters of vocal melodies. Listen to any Humble Pie live performance and every time it is different. Marriott truly was a master of his craft. “As clichéd and embarrassing as it sounds I think watching a lot of Disney movies as a kid kind of inspired me to play music; *The Little Mermaid* was always my favourite. I first picked up the electric guitar at eight or nine and messed about for a few years but I think what really hit me musically was when I first heard ‘Grace’ by Jeff Buckley, who I kind

of stumbled upon when I was 14 or 15. Everything about it: his voice, his melodies, his lyrics, all of those things made me want to make music. Other artists that really affected the way I write are bands like A Perfect Circle and Alice In Chains; just the way the songs are composed and the layers upon layers of soundscapes they incorporate really inspires me.” CASPER: “My dad has a massive record collection and he was always playing music. And then when I started Year Three there was a list of instruments you could learn at school and I just thought, ‘oh, I’ll try drums.’ I remember my mum read them out to me and it was the last one. I started guitar the year after. My dad and primary school were the main influences; I had really great teachers who always encouraged me.” Gaby realised she could sing from an early age, a natural born talent that she’s honed into a potent weapon. “It is just something I have always done. I think the first time I played in front of an audience was when

‘Little Scorpion in particular channels those dark, insecure, hostile feelings into something astounding. GABY: “It was a song that just sort of fell into place and came so naturally, and then when we sat down and worked on it in the studio we were pretty much limitless in terms of the layers and sounds we could add. I’m not really sure what people like about it so much. Maybe because it is unapologetically angry and has a bittersweet venom about it. It came about when I felt like the choices I was making about my life were being underestimated. Just because you are quiet and shy doesn’t mean your opinion has no value and that you are not a powerful human in your own right. You have power in every choice you make. ‘Little Scorpion’ is basically me saying, ‘Hey, if you think I’m a bitch, it’s probably because I am, and that’s okay’.”

LIKE MANY BEFORE HER Gaby uses music, and lyrics, as a way of channelling thoughts and feelings

“*‘Little Scorpion’ is basically me saying, ‘Hey, if you think I’m a bitch, it’s probably because I am, and that’s okay’.*”

I was about 11 or 12. I had a black acoustic guitar and played a cover of a Demi Lovato song, I shudder to admit. As far as writing goes, I’ve always written, ever since I was a kid. I had diaries and would always be writing things down. I’m quite a shy and introverted person, so I think singing was just a way of expressing the things I couldn’t find the voice to speak aloud.” While Coldredlight are a blues band of a kind, they exist in a different universe to the clichéd “old guys playing Stevie Ray Vaughan riffs” set-up of too many blues acts, and even the new wave of young British blues acts that’s sprung up over the last few years. Their blues is more personal, more vulnerable, riddled with uncertainty and no little anger. CASPER: “The reason I think our music stands out from other blues orientated music is that it’s raw and natural, yet articulate and refined at the same time, giving us a more unique approach to the style and allowing for more dynamic arrangements and harmonic endeavours. I call it Nu Blues.” GABY: “The blues is so raw and natural, it was the first type of singer-songwriter music in a way; it was based on experience and experience alone. It wasn’t made for anyone except for the person playing and I think we take on a lot of that idea when we write. I like the songs we make to be honest and real, kind of like tearing your heart out of your chest and splattering it onto a piece of paper.”

that an innate shyness otherwise holds in. Moving to Oxford to study at university, how did she, a quiet, shy, person go about discovering the local music scene and becoming part of it? GABY: “I think when I first moved here I was very much in a bubble and didn’t know that Oxford had any venues, let alone a music scene. I think it’s great because coming from London it’s quite hard to find a specific music community to settle into, purely because it’s just such a huge city. I struggled a lot in my first year at university and having the opportunity to play music, and have people actually appreciate it, is the only thing that got me through to be honest.” Have you got to know more local musicians or bands since you started gigging regularly? GABY: “Yeah, I go to quite a lot of local gigs when I’m in town. Bands like Little Brother Eli and Slate Hearts are pretty great, and I especially love Esther Joy Lane. We’re also really fortunate to be good friends with Kanadia, who are just incredible; they just sound so huge and their live set is so tight. I think if anything watching other local bands is inspiring in that it makes me want to get my shit together and actually learn how to play my instrument in tune.” CASPER: “For me it’s the entire scene that I love. I like the fact that I don’t live there but I can sort of dip in and out of it, and even though I don’t live in Oxford I feel just as much a part of the scene as I would do if I did. And it is things like *Nightshift* and

BBC Introducing and the dedication of people that just want to see music that makes it all possible. Living in London all your life you kind of just don’t get the same thing. In London you’re either the biggest band in the world or you’re no one.” Studying Classics at Oxford University does seem to conjure images of rarefied cloisters far removed from the workaday realities of the world; has it been like that? GABY: “Oh dear, I was dreading a question about my studies. Classics is pretty much anything you want it to be that involves ancient shit: literature, philosophy, ancient history and archaeology etc. I love the literature side of it because it is just storytelling and that’s something that is so intrinsic to songwriting. *The Iliad* is the oldest piece of Western written literature we have, and it was actually sung and passed down orally through generations before it was eventually written down, so it just goes to show how sort of symbiotic literature and music is from its very origins. Why study something that seemingly has no relevance to the present day world? What can I say: I value the writings of decrepit old men in togas more than anyone else really.” Donna Tartt’s classic novel *The Secret History* involves a group of Classics students who end up murdering one of their classmates. Can you sympathise with that? GABY: “I think I can empathise with homicidal thoughts about one’s classmates, although I have met a lot of really incredible people too. I would say our songs often include a lot of venom, purely because being angry is something that inspires me to write. I feel like making music and writing songs is the best way to deal with your anger and your sadness; it’s the best catharsis. Plus angry/sad songs make the best songs.”

IF, AS JOHN LYDON SAID, anger is an energy, it’s one that’s currently carrying Coldredlight along on the crest of an unstoppable wave. Their haunting black sun is rising and 2017 is set to be an even more successful year for Gaby and Casper, who is putting thoughts of university after he finishes his A-Levels aside to concentrate on his chosen path in music. With the promise of more musical adventures in their sights, what darkness, if that ominous *Nightshift* review was correct, does lurk beyond the horizon? “Songs that’ll make Lucifer himself crawl out of his cage for a listen.” Go see Coldredlight; you’ll be in good company.

Coldredlight launch ‘Bloom’ b/w ‘Night’ on the 28th January at The Cellar as part of Independent Venue Week.

RELEASED

WANDERING WIRES

'Departures'

(Self released)

If writing about music is indeed like dancing about architecture, then Wandering Wires are well placed to provide an appropriate soundtrack to such an abstract concept.

This gem of a debut album is a successful experiment in the unification of the polar ends of the jazz spectrum into a satisfying white light. A corking example of this is the opener, 'What I Feel'; after a choppy dub rewind intro sets out a stabbing atonal piano riff and vocal loop foundation; it's built on by insistent Stax trumpet and on up fifty storeys with a florid sax solo from Ben Clapin. If you're thinking Vincent Herring meets Blue States meets Paul Bley, then you've been going to some cool parties.

This ghostly and clever cross-pollination goes on throughout the album; the diverse spectres of Miles Davis and Jon Hopkins appear in 'Sail' and 'Our Shifting Lives'; the sweet depths of avant discord are plumbed in '(Reset) All Connections', and if you hanker for a synthetic choral earworm, look no further than 'To Those



High Places'.

As a counter to all the instrumentals and electronica, singer Olivia Williams drips her sultry Sade-like vocals over two tracks, 'Boarding Alone' and 'Without You', as if Thievery Corporation and Tycho had made an angelic pact.

Wandering Wires contain some serious young talent, and calling this collection 'Departures' is entirely apt; they soon will be going places.

Paul Carrera

WILLIE J HEALEY

'Hey, Big Moon'

(National Anthem/Columbia)

As his sold-out show at The Bullingdon just before Christmas showed, Willie J Healey has moved well beyond his acoustic singer-songwriter roots, becoming something of a rock showman in the process, at his best a grunged-up Marc Bolan, with chunky slacker anthems like 'Pipedreams' in his growing armoury of songs.

After a steady succession of singles that earned him plenty of airplay and saw him draw comparisons with Kurt Vile and Ariel Pink, he's gone back to his roots with this new six-song EP, stripping back to acoustic guitar and bare beats, relying more on his voice in a supremely mellow set that sounds like it's lying on its back gazing at the stars after a hefty toking session.

'Satellite' typifies that cool midnight vibe, Willie's multi-tracked vocals adding a lysergic haze to a country-tinged guitar twang. 'Hey Big Moon' sounds like it's just got out of bed, like The Velvet Underground's 'Sunday Morning' stumbling through its waking moments in need of caffeine and a reminder of what it did last night, while best of the bunch is the sleepy, sorrowful love letter 'Best Friend's Sister' which catches Willie's way with both a simple tune and a lyrical edge that sounds strangely sarcastic even as it's contemplating unrequited love.

A brave move perhaps to follow those radio hits with such an understated EP, but as Willie J Healey here sounds like he's casting a dreamy gaze at the year ahead, it's a year that looks likely to see his star rise yet higher.

Dale Kattack

SPINNER FALL

'Permutations'

(Self released)

Fronted by former Skydrive and Callous guitarist Tim Darch, and featuring From Light to Sound's Andrew Thompson and Callous drummer Toby Coates, Spinner Fall have some excellent noise pedigree. This mini album is made up of recordings going back as far as 2011 and it shows how much the band has moved on in that time, earlier songs like 'Come Up Short' and 'Out of Town' more melodic, less aggressively hardcore. The former in particular is an urgent, trebly fuzz and frazzle reminiscent of early Wire, with a strong melodic vocal lead. Saying that, 'Blunt Instrument' from that same session is a move into more straight-up hardcore, though ironically given its title, lacks power.

By 2013's 'By Numbers' the trio have lurched more readily into 80s American-style punk, all rolling walls of guitar, sudden squalls, sheet metal serration and melodies, such as they are, buried in the onward tide, vocals now a hectoring bark.

What's encouraging though is that the best song here, 'Battle of Wills', is also the most recent, although recorded back in 2014. The call and response vocals add extra shades and you feel a more regular foil to Tim's lead would give the band a far sharper blade. Which would be great, because at a time when we most need some militant hardcore noise, Spinner Fall are one of very few Oxford acts sounding like they're ready and willing to man those barricades.

Ian Chesterton

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CATGOD

'Ready When You Are'

(Self released)

With Neverlnd on hiatus while various members head off to university, guitarist Robin Christensen-Marriot is taking his nebulous band up a notch or two, changing their name from the unwieldy and increasingly irrelevant Roberto y Amigos, to Catgod as their earlier Latin influences are ditched in favour of a more ambient jazz and electronica approach, a mix and match sound continuing Neverlnd's studiously eclectic approach to pop.

Robin's chief strength across these eleven tracks is in calling on a number of different vocalists, who either take the lead role or join him in duets and close harmony pieces. Best of these is Morgan Dawe, whose sultry, soulful voice brings warmth and delicacy to the mournful, bluesy jazz of 'Been Waiting', with its rich, sombre horns, and a playfulness to the almost Stax-y 'Gonna Do'. She's matched though by Somerset musician Evie Tarr on the delicate, jazzy lullaby that is 'Blood'. Robin's own voice can be variable; his close harmony work with his sister Cat on the album's twinkling opener 'Out on the Town' works well, although the glitchy electro wanderings of 'Edge Cheetah', with its wobbly, warped edge of euphoria and mildly disorientating atmosphere, is easily his strongest solo performance. At times, though, he can sound strangled, like he's trying too hard to force a tune out, as on the funky Afro-pop 'Down in the Dumps' and 'Home In Your Heart', which could do with a sense of urgency to match its bubbling Foals-y indie-funk temperament.

There's a tendency to be a bit too eclectic at times, which we remember from the early Roberto demos; the album's title track, for instance, has too many unconnected bits going on, including a completely pointless overwrought guitar solo, but you can't accuse the band of lacking ambition as they attempt to cover myriad musical bases while keeping things fresh, and in particular Robin's ability to pick the right singer for the job on so many occasions make Catgod worthy of exotic new pet band status in your life.

Dale Kattack



THE MULTI AWARD-WINNING HIT MUSICAL

SUNNY AFTERNOON

The KINKS

Music and Lyrics
RAY DAVIES

Book
JOE PENHALL

Original Story by
RAY DAVIES

Director
EDWARD HALL

LOLA

SUNNY AFTERNOON

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GET LIT



Friday 20th
THE MARGO PRICE BAND: The Bullingdon
Just when you think Empty Room Promotions have reached the zenith of bringing cult Americana performers to Oxford, they hit another peak. Tonight’s show is a real coup, with Nashville songstress Margo Price and her band over in the UK to tour her debut album ‘Midwest Farmer’s Daughter’, whose title is a succinct summary of its autobiographical content. And what an autobiography – from family bankruptcy to the death, due to a heart ailment, of her firstborn son and onto alcoholism and a weekend spent in jail – Price’s life would have finished lesser people, but as she says herself, after hitting the absolute low, she emerged with greater focus than ever. Having moved from her native Illinois to Nashville, she formed a band with bassist and later husband Jeremy Ivey and they released three albums before her career revitalised and her solo debut emerged – Price financing the recordings by pawning her wedding ring. Shunned by the Nashville country music establishment, despite the commercial and critical success of the album – released on Jack White’s Third Man label – Price has won fans well beyond traditional country circles, despite existing firmly in the lineage of Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton; her tales of sorrow are universal: good time songs about bad times, and she’s one of the very brightest stars to come out of American roots music in recent times. So make the most of her company in such intimate surroundings.

SUNDAY 1st
Come on, it can’t be worse than 2016. Can it?

MONDAY 2nd
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 3rd
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic night.

WEDNESDAY 4th
GET LIT: The Cellar – Bass and hip hop club night.

THURSDAY 5th
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running open club night heads into another new year.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon – Weekly open mic club.

JANUARY

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly unplugged open session.
KING TERRIBLE’S DISCO: The Cellar – Indie and rock classics.
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Open blues jam.

FRIDAY 6th
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with NEVERLND + THE SHAPES + MOON LEOPARD: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak head into another new year, hosting their monthly party with a return to action for eclectic indie stars Neverlnd, back in town from university, their mix of electro-pop, dub, funk, blues and glitchy rock always a treat. Support from 60s-styled r’n’b and New wave crew The Shapes, inspired by Van Morrison and Tom Petty as well as The Beautiful South and Elvis Costello.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, global grooves, Balkan beats and nu-jazz club night with host Dan Ofer joined by Kwassa Kwassa’s DJ Si on the decks.
SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: James Street Tavern – Open mic and jam night.

SATURDAY 7th
RATS EAT RATS + WOLFS + SOCIAL DISCHARGE + COMPULSORY PRIMAL RESPONSE: The Wheatsheaf – Quadruple bill of grunge and punk, including the excellently monikered Rats Eat Rats, and garage-pop duo Wolfs.
FREERANGE: The Cellar – Underground grime, UK garage and bassline club night.
MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Rocking slide and harp-driven blues and boogie in the vein of Rory Gallagher, RL Burnside and Jimi Hendrix.
PETE FRYER BAND: The Cricketers, Cowley

SUNDAY 8th
BLOODSTOCK – MUSIC TO THE MASSES: The Bullingdon – The first heat of the competition to win a place at this year’s Bloodstock festival.
MOONTOWER + SONG & SUPPER ROOMS + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + BEARD OF DESTINY: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of live acoustic music.

MONDAY 9th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 10th
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, ebm and industrial club night.
SPARK’S SIDE: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 11th
GET LIT: The Cellar

THURSDAY 12th
CATWEAZLE: East Oxford Community Centre
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford
KING TERRIBLE’S DISCO: The Cellar

FRIDAY 13th
RAYZO + BROWN GLOVE + DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES + OLD ERNIE: The Wheatsheaf – Eclectic and unusual array of musical mavericks tonight with folk, grunge, blues, shoegaze and country-influenced singer-songwriter Rayzo, alongside gothic/Weimar cabaret blues from Brown Glove, gutter drinking blues in the vein of Tom Waits from Desmond Chancer, and fractured, lo-fi doom and dirgecore from Old Ernie.
LAST RITES + LEST WE FORGET + RAISED BY HYPOCRITES + REPERCUSSIONS OF YESTERDAY: The Bullingdon – Heavy-duty goings on at tonight’s Church of the Heavy with Blues-metallers Last Rites back in action alongside metalcore merchants Lest We Forget, Witney

Wednesday 25th

BLUE AEROPLANES: The Cellar

Bristol’s Blue Aeroplanes are pretty much the living embodiment of artful indie music. Having been a going concern since 1981, the band, helmed since their inception by singer/poet Gerard Langley and his drummer brother John, began life playing the King Street Art Gallery in their hometown, and have maintained an air of arty intellectualism over the course of some 30 albums – including various compilations and live albums that are the result of a nomadic career that has found them signed to EMI and Chrysalis as well as Fire and Beggar’s Banquet, among others. Such leaning have found them invited to perform at the Hay on Wye Literary Festival, although in case you’re worried they’re a bunch of bookish fops, they also managed to get themselves banned from the Rainbow Lounge – Lemmy’s favourite hangout. Their career highlight came in 1990 with the release of ‘Swagger’, their most lauded and biggest selling album, and they’ve been credited as an influence on REM (who they toured with) and Radiohead, while various members went off to play with Suede, Placebo, Massive Attack and Goldfrapp over the years. Showing no sign of slowing down, 2016 found the band playing the 6Music Festival and they’ve just released a new album, ‘Welcome, Stranger’, to coincide with an extensive UK tour. If you know the band you’ll be here for this show; if you don’t but you like your indie on the arty and poetic side, come and discover the group that your favourite bands got their ideas from.



heavyweights Raised By Hypocrites and one-man doom army Repercussions of Yesterday.
FRAU DJs present MILKSHAKE: The Cellar – Club night celebrating female voices in r’n’b, soul and pop from the 90s onwards – playing everything from Aaliyah to Whitney Houston, via Grimes, J-Lo, Lauryn Hill and Sugababes.
GEORGE MONBIOT & EWAN McLENNAN: The North Wall, Summertown – Journalist and campaigner George Monbiot teams up with musician Ewan McLennan to produce a concert/lecture/talk ‘Breaking the Spell of Loneliness’ based on Monbiot’s article about the age of loneliness, with the writer narrating passages and McLennan putting the ideas into song.

SATURDAY 14th
SILK ROAD + CRIMSON TUSK + GET LOOSE: The Wheatsheaf – Heavyweight triple bill with heavy rockers Silk Road; beastly stoner/sludge riffmeisters Crimson Tusk, and heavy blues rocking from Get Loose.
GENERACION SUICIDA + SCRAP BRAIN + COWLEY CHAINSAW: The Library – Smash Disco kick their 2017 off in suitably DIY style with an Oxford debut from south Los Angeles Latino street punks Generacion Suicida, whose urgent, melodic style recalls The Ramones and Killed By Death. They’re joined by lo-fi riot grrl acolytes Scrap Brain, and delinquent puke-punkers Cowley Chainsaw.
ORGANISED FUN with MOXIE: The Bullingdon – Dance club night with Kiss FM and Rinse DJ Moxie playing her trademark mix of house, techno, disco and garage.
MAD FLEMENCO + PAPA NUI + CORNWALLIS GOODTIME BAND: Florence Park Community Centre – Benefit gig for next summer’s FloFest in Florence Park, with live flamenco, funk-pop and high-energy covers.
THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The Old Anchor, Abingdon – Blues and rock’n’roll.

SUNDAY 15th
MARK SOLLIS + DAWN RAISERS + THE FIREGAZERS + LES CLOCHARDS: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the downstairs bar.

MONDAY 16th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 17th
BETH ROWLEY: The Bullingdon – Spiritual soul, gospel, jazz and blues from the Bristolian singer-songwriter, out on tour ahead of the release of her long-awaited second album, a follow-up to BRIT-nominated, Top 10 debut ‘Little Dreamer’, the daughter of a missionary couple drawing inspiration from Emmylou Harris, Ron Sexsmith and Mahalia Jackson.
GUN FINGERS: The Cellar – Grime, drum&bass and bassline club night with DJ Don Lou Lou and Femi Williams.
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 18th
THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS: The Bullingdon – Authentic early country and western swing from Minneapolis duo The Cactus Blossoms – Jack Torrey and Page Burkum, over in the UK to tour new album

‘Live At The Turf Club’.

THURSDAY 19th
PATCHWORK: The Cellar – House and techno club night.

FRIDAY 20th
MARGO PRICE: The Bullingdon – Nashville’s uncrowned queen of heartache tours her acclaimed debut ‘Midwest Farmer’s Daughter’ – *see main preview*
DISCO MA NON TROPPO: The Bullingdon – House, disco, dub, afrobeat and cosmic weirdness with DJ Closed Stack, Mallard Hotlines, DJ Mangrove and Virtual DJ.
ECHO4FOUR + MIKE LEE BAND + BAD BLOOD RECOVERY + MY DIABLO: The Wheatsheaf – Sabbath-inspired rockers Echo4four headline, with ex-Mother Corona groovers My Diablo and super-heavyweight rockers Bad Blood Recovery, featuring former members of Komrad and Domes of Silence.
SOUL SESSIONS: The Cellar – Classic soul, funk and disco club night.
THE HOWLIN’ TAILDRAGGERS: Red Hot Blues, Didcot – Classic blues covers.

SATURDAY 21st
BOSSAPHONIK with K.O.G. & THE ZONGO BRIGADE: The Bullingdon – Latin dancefloor, Balkan beats, world grooves and nu-jazz club night, hosted by DJ Dan Ofer and tonight featuring a live set from acclaimed Ghanaian-via-Sheffield nine-piece ensemble K.O.G. & the Zongo Brigade with their energetic, horn-led fusion of Ghanaian hi-life, hip hop, reggae and jazz.
GUTLOCKER + K-LACURA + BLOODSHOT + VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN: The Wheatsheaf – Heavyweight charity fundraiser in aid of the Abolição Trust, helping young people in the poorest parts of the world, with a headline set from Woking’s groove/sludge crew Gutlocker, plus Didcot’s ferocious thrash merchants K-Lacura, Witney’s groove metallers Bloodshot and metal and southern rock starlets Violence is Golden.
BARRY STEEL & FRIENDS: The New Theatre – Big stage tribute to Roy Orbison.
OXFORD SOUL TRAIN: O2 Academy – Classic soul, funk, disco and Motown tune across two rooms at the quarterly extravaganza.
MOVE: The Cellar – Bassline, house and garage club night.
RADIO DAYS BIG BAND: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Sixteen-piece big band swing from Radio Days in aid of The British Heart Foundation, with classics from the 1930s to 60s, including Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Arte Shaw and Glenn Miller.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Black Swan
MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The George Inn, Littlemore

SUNDAY 22nd
BLOODSTOCK – MUSIC TO THE MASSES: The Bullingdon

MONDAY 23rd
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 24th
BLACK PEAKS + TIGERCUB + EMPLOYED TO SERVE: The Bullingdon – Back in the Shire after flying the flag for heaviosity at last summer’s Truck Festival, Brighton’s Black Peaks bring progressive

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hardcore, post-rock and classic thrash metal, all fronted by frontman Will Gardner’s harried screams and guttural growls. Raw and raucous nu-grunge support from Brighton’s Tigerclub, heavily inspired by Nirvana and Queens of the Stone-Age.
REDFACES: The Cellar – Free show from Sheffield indie rockers Redfaces, out on a headline tour following supports to Courteeners and Strypes.
PRESS: The Cellar – Acid, techno and Detroit house.
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James St Tav

WEDNESDAY 25th
THE HUNNA: O2 Academy – Sold-out show from the post-grunge rockers on the rise – *see main preview*
CHATHAM COUNTY LINE: The Bullingdon – Exuberant alt.country and bluegrass from North Carolina’s Chatham County Line, the Raleigh-based quartet over in Europe for sixth album ‘Tightrope’ and renowned for their spontaneity as they bring American roots music up to date via Bob Dylan and REM.
THE BLUE AEROPLANES: The Cellar – Indie cult heroes continue to fly – *see main preview*
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s, new wave, disco, glam and synthpop club night.

THURSDAY 26th
JONNY PAYNE & THE THUNDER: The Cellar – Whitney’s bluesy Americana storyteller and former Deer Chicago frontman Jonny Payne launches his new EP.
BLUE HOUSE + DEERFUL + RAINBOW RESERVOIR: The Library – First Oxford show from London promoters Beautiful Freaks, bringing dreamy/cutesy indie duo Blue House to town, alongside cute, sad synth-popper Deerful. They’re

Wednesday 25th
THE HUNNA: O2 Academy
Once upon a time rock bands were rock bands and boy bands were boy bands and never the twain should meet. You can put it down to the collapse of genre boundaries or record company marketing execs getting smart, but half the acts that now describe themselves as indie these days sound like Syco auditionees who’ve been locked in a room with a pile of Nirvana and Foals records and told they’re not allowed out until they’ve learned to play their guitars and work out some neat dance moves. All of which is doubtless unfair on Hertfordshire’s The Hunna, who formed at college together and have been doing the legwork of touring the nation’s provincial venues on their unstoppable way to inevitable festival headline status, including a tour support to Coasts. But go and watch their video for anthemic single ‘Bonfire’ and tell us no-one involved ever saw the vid for ‘Smells Like Teenage Spirit’, while singer Ryan Potter looks like a prettified Kurt Cobain (not that Kurt needed any prettifying). Anyway, they’ve got the tats and ripped jeans and a bit of the Kings of Leon about them in parts, but they also have nice clean harmonies and an unthreatening way with a post-grunge tune and if Potter is heard to sing ‘‘We don’t know which way is home,’’ tonight’s long-since sold-out show suggests there’s only one way they’re going – up.



joined by ebullient post-riot grrl pop crew Rainbow Reservoir, coming in somewhere between Le Tigre and Moldy Peaches.
HOPE & SOCIAL: Old Fire Station – Uplifting blues, country and soul-rock from Yorkshire’s blue-suited sextet, compared to The E Street Band.
AGS CONNOLLY + BILLY LEVIN: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Album launch show for the Witney Ameripolitan country roots man.

FRIDAY 27th
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with MUNGOS HI-FI: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin’ hosts Glasgow’s global reggae and dancehall stars Mungo’s Hi-Fi at his monthly club night, the forward-thinking collective, inspired by King Tubby and Prince Jammy, producing a slew of original albums over the last decade, including 2015’s ‘Serious Time’, as well as collaborating with the likes of Sugar Minott, Ranking Joe and Major Lazer.
MR SCRUFF: The Bullingdon – A characteristically marathon set from Manchester’s tea-drinking master of eclecticism and quirky mixology Andy Carthy, his last studio album, ‘Friendly Bacteria’, bass-heavy blend of deep house, electro-funk, afrobeat, soul, hip hop and dubstep, though he’s happy to delve into whatever else takes his fancy, while retaining a sense of fun about his sets.
31HOURS + SLEEPERS DOME + SELF HELP + DAISY: The Wheatsheaf – Spangled electro-indie from 31Hours, plus thrashy garage-pop from Self Help and emo-ish guitar pop from former Vagueworld singer Luke Allmond’s new band Daisy.
SOFAR SOUNDS: The Ashmoleon – Oxford’s leading pop-up promoters host a music stage at the Ashmoleon’s free Linguamania festival.
THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW: The New Theatre – Big stage tribute to The Man In Black.
HACKNEY COLLIERY BAND: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Brass and beats from the east London collective, back after their show here in March, fusing Balkan folk, contemporary jazz, soul, hip hop, rock and afrobeat to make for a lively concoction that’s seen them play alongside the late Amy Winehouse as well as the London 2012 Closing Ceremony.
TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE: Mad Hatter, Iffley Road – Local acts pay tribute to the Starman.

SATURDAY 28th
HUDSON SCOTT + CATGOD + COLDREDLIGHT: The Cellar – The Cellar celebrates Independent Venue Week with a pocket battleship show featuring former-Youthmovies man and sometime Foals trumpeter Hudson Scott, with his 80s funk-inspired indie, plus atmospheric electro-jazz from Catgod, and stark, dark blues from this month’s *Nightshift* cover stars Coldredlight, launching their new single, ‘Bloom’.
SWITCH with SIGMA & NADIA ROLL: O2 Academy – London drum&bass duo Cameron Edwards and Joseph Lenzie return to town, riding high on the back of a slew of big hits, including chart toppers ‘Nobody to Love’ and ‘Changing’, featuring Paloma Faith, plus more recent chart hits ‘Cry’ – with Take That – and ‘Find Me’, featuring Birdy, as well as remixing Ellie Goulding, Groove Armada and Skepta.
RAWDIO: The Bullingdon – Jungle and drum&bass soundsystem.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with HOLY MOMENTS + LE PUB + FREDDY LE CRAGG: The Wheatsheaf – As they head towards their 15th anniversary in May, GTI host their first monthly show of 2017, tonight’s characteristic mixed bag topped by punky, grunge-spattered power-pop newcomers Holy Moments, taking in the influence of Sebadoh and Sugar. They’re joined by no-nonsense boozy pub-rockers Le Pub, and stripped-down blues, ballads and rock’n’roll from Freddy le Cragg.



Sunday 29th
C DUNCAN: The Bullingdon
As far removed from the black painted walls and sticky-floored spirit of rock and roll mayhem as it’s possible to be without actually be a nun, you can imagine Christopher Duncan’s music being played in church. There’s an almost hymnal quality about his warm, somnambulating dream pop that lends itself to ancient and elaborate architecture and the reverential hush of a place of worship. His complex choral arrangements only add to the spiritual feel of his records: 2015’s Mercury-nominated debut ‘Architect’, and this year’s follow-up ‘Midnight Sun’. Unsurprising coming from a classically-trained multi-instrumentalist who plays everything on his albums, self produces and even designs the sleeve artwork. Perhaps this is what gives Duncan’s music its gentle, insularity, like nothing in the real world imposed upon its making. He’s been described as electro-pop, folk-pop and neo-classical, but none of those really fit with a sound that owes as much to Bach and Burt Bacharach as it does to Fleet Foxes, Air and The Cocteau Twins. It’s hauntingly pretty and intricately arranged and best enjoyed with your eyes shut, imagining pristine glacial landscapes, idyllic meadows or floating among the stars with God and stuff. Without a doubt this month’s gig least likely to provoke a moshpit.

ROBERT NESTA DUB: O2 Academy – Celebration of Bob Marley with a night of reggae, roots and dub from Ras Keith; Zaia; Tom Dred; King Lloyd; Dan-I; Jah Paul and Tony Dread.

SUNDAY 29th
C DUNCAN: The Bullingdon – Hush now, Christopher is singing – *see main preview*
SUPERLOOSE + MOJO DEMON + PURPLE MAY + GLENDALE TRAIN + JULES PENZO: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-8.30pm) – Free afternoon and early evening of live music in the downstairs bar from Giddyup Music.
SUNDAY SESSION with CATGOD + TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE: Florence Park Community Centre (2-5pm) – Family friendly live music session, with jazzy electro-pop ensemble Catgod, plus Hammond-led jazz groovers Time is of the Essence.

MONDAY 30th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 31st
SUNNY AFTERNOON: The New Theatre – Opening night of the Kinks musical, penned by Ray Davies himself and directed by Edward Hall, featuring all the band’s classics, from ‘Waterloo Sunset’ and ‘Days’ to ‘Sunny Afternoon’ and ‘You Really Got Me’. Runs until the 4th February.
TWO DOORS DOWN: The Cellar
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James St.Tavern



THE BULLINGDON		
MR SCRUFF 27.01.17 £15	TALL SHIPS 02.03.17 £10	BLAENAVON 28.03.16 £8
C DUNCAN 29.01.17 £10	JOSEFIN ÖHRN + THE LIBERATION 06.03 £7	PINS 12.04.17 £9
MENACE BEACH 06.02.17 £7.50	THE SHERLOCKS 12.03.17 £9	PALACE 21.04.17 £11
BEN WATT 13.02.17 £15	THE AMAZONS 15.03.17 £8	JAWS 27.04.17 £11
CABBAGE 15.02.17 £8	IDLES 20.03.17 £7	THE RIFLES UNPLUGGED 25.05.17 £15

THE CELLAR		
REDFACES 24.01 FREE ENTRY	TOM GRENNAN 12.02.17 £6	NEON WALTZ 22.02.17 £6
JONNY PAYNE & THE THUNDER 26.01.17 £5	OHHMS / MAMMOTH WEED WIZARD BASTARD 13.02.17 £8	EZIO 04.03.17 £12.50
RHYS LEWIS 09.02.17 £6	HIDDEN CHARMS 17.02.17 £8	DEVON SPOULE 24.03.17 £10
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THE JESUS & MARY CHAIN 02.04.17 £27.50	
THE JAPANESE HOUSE 09.05.17 £10	



CATE LE BON The Bullingdon

Cate le Bon’s music has always been a balance between awkwardness bordering on ramshackle, and the sweetest melodies you can imagine, her voice, a thing of strange wonder in itself, the magic ingredient that sprinkles even her most oddball moments with musical fairy dust. It can be as warm, rich and homely as a hearth, but simultaneously as unearthly as a siren song. Seriously, she could sing the Welsh phone book and make it sound like a love letter from the gods.

That balance has shifted further towards awkwardness with each album – and reached its peak on the Drinks album, her collaboration with Tim Presley, her support tonight – and there are times we wonder if she’s testing to see how far she can push her growing fanbase, as songs veer off at odd angles into almost Captain Beefheart territory, all queasy guitar tunings and melodies that sound like they’re drowning, like on the meandering ‘I Was Born on the Wrong Day’, with its strange, almost honky tonk feel.

Lyrics like “I want to be a motion picture / I want to be a ten pin bowl” add to the feeling you’re watching

someone whose thought trains don’t run along everyday tracks, but for all that, Le Bon can’t help conjuring irresistible pop gems out of bits and pieces that shouldn’t really fit together. The joyous bounce of ‘I Can’t Help You’ for starters, or the sugar sweet clarion call that is ‘Are You With Me Now’. It’s a shame she’s now abandoned all the songs from her gorgeous debut album, ‘Me Oh My’, and any of the Welsh language songs she began her career with, but it’s obvious she’s a musician who plays to her own tune and no-one else’s, however deviant that tune might sometimes be. The wholly unexpected treat at the close of tonight’s set is a cover of Wham’s ‘Last Christmas’ that detours through snatches of ‘Jingle Bells’ and more, while sounding like a Toytown take on The Velvet Underground’s ‘Sister Ray’, equally playful and jarring and, you have admit, borderline genius in its wayward execution. Where she goes from here is something only she knows, but however challenging the journey, you know at the end there’ll be a prize worth having.

Dale Kattack

PRIMAL SCREAM O2 Academy

It’s an unwritten rule that you haven’t been to a Primal Scream gig unless you leave perspiring, partially deafened, covered in beer and yet with faith strangely renewed in the revitalising power of rock’n’roll, whatever that means in this day and age.

Starting with traditional opener: ‘Screamadelica’ s ‘Moving on Up’, and crashing to a ragged close with ‘Give Out...’ s ‘Rocks’, this is vintage Scream, despite the presence of new tracks in the set and a newish band member (long term bassist Mani having since re-joined his baggy brothers The Stone Roses, to be replaced in 2012 by the rather less grizzled Simone Butler). Apparently clean and serene these days (although, perhaps a little bleary eyed, with the constant touring and late night travelling surely takes its toll) Bobby Gillespie is still the Scream Team’s heart and soul, and it’s hard to imagine him ever being replaced. He is seemingly indestructible, every inch the classic stick-thin front man, all shiny silver jacket, pipe-like limbs clinging on to the mic-stand, grown out Mick Jagger-style bowl cut, with his trans-Atlantic yelp still intact. Indeed, it’s tempting to think there’s a picture of a bloated, balding, wrinkly mess in some Glasgow attic and Gillispie does very little to dissuade

such wistful associations, informing us that it’s Jim Morrison’s birthday today, he was Scottish and that all the best poets were Scots.

Tonight’s set is full of up-tempo numbers, with the exception of a wistful ‘Cry Myself Blind’ and a reassuringly psychedelic ‘Higher Than The Sun’. Always happy to wear their influences proudly, the gloriously ramshackle ‘Country Girl’ is really just the Stones’s ‘Sweet Virginia’ speeded up and with punkier guitar, and ‘Shoot Speed, Kill Light’ is full of Velvet Underground-style pounding piano and droned vocals. But they have always made each musical direction very much their own, dipping into electro dance for ‘Swastika Eyes’, while the new songs display an active interest in 80s style synth sounds. The tracks from ‘Chaosmosis’ don’t, perhaps, have the same anthemic quality of their old classics, but give them time. Now into their fourth decade together, Primal Scream are not in any real danger of breaking new ground sonically, but that was never their purpose. “Are ye havan a goo’ taeym?” Bobby drawls blankly, swaying behind the mic stand before the magnificent ‘Loaded’ finally comes on. “Cuz thaht’s whaey weee’re heeere...; to gie’ ye a goo’ taeym...”. Indeed.

Leo Bowder

LANTERNS ON THE LAKE / CIARAN LAVERY

The Bullingdon

Armed with a single acoustic guitar and striking voice Irish singer-songwriter Ciaran Lavery delivers a both emotionally stirring and acutely intimate performance. His set includes the radio-favourite ‘Shame’, its lyric, “Would you light me up / Really set me on fire / And be there when I’m burning out?” tenderly lingering in our hearts long after the song is finished. A cover of Nirvana’s ‘All Apologies’ comes as a surprise but sweeps people off their feet as Lavery showcases his comfortingly husky vocals and lets them swarm all over the audience and envelop them. ‘Return to Form’ and ‘Blood Red Fist’, meanwhile, have a hazy, enticing atmosphere, with a dash of emotional maturity. When he sings, Lavery sounds almost defeated, as if he is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders, yet his performance radiates warmth and exceptional brilliance.

Out on tour in the wake of their 2015 album ‘Beings’, Newcastle’s Lanterns on the Lake lead tonight’s set with ‘Of Dust & Matter’, a beautifully euphoric track taken

from the album. Singer Hazel Wilde is sitting by the piano, vulnerable vocals floating through the air as she croons “Last night I passed out / On the kitchen floor”. Things lighten things up a bit with ‘Another Tale From Another English Town’, where the band have the whole audience bopping to a solo that is packed with high energy before leaving us in a meditative trance when whispering the closing, stirring lines; “We don’t wanna fight / We want the quiet life.”

They also play some of their newest songs, including ‘Faultlines’ and ‘The Crawl’, which remain just as mysteriously fragile as they are on the album, while Wilde’s commanding vocals make her presence on the stage seem almost untouchable. Lanterns on the Lake deliver a performance that complements each of the band members’ unique qualities, and establishes a strong connection with the audience who can only stand there dumbfounded, utterly captivated.

Edit Paksi

STEVE TILSTON AND JEZ LOWE Nettlebed Folk Club

While collaborations are a consistent feature of the folk scene, and Steve Tilston and Jez Lowe have been involved in other collaborations in their forty year careers, when two such singular solo singer songwriter talents from the folk/acoustic scene get together it is something of an event.

The pair have not gone and transformed themselves into a duo though, as what comes over tonight is the presence of two very individual talents, even though the songs on the album they have recently released together are said to have been written jointly. Lowe is akin to a griot for his native County Durham, known for writing songs about the industrial history and culture of the area. Tilston pitches his songs at a more individual level, and his writing is much the more poetic.

Together their songs range from a Geordie in exile in Welwyn Garden City (‘Jack Common’s Anthem’), the end of shipbuilding (‘Taking On Men’) and the decline of steel making (‘Wagga Moon’), all the way to the mysterious effect of the moon on the tides on ‘Sovereign of Tides’, with guitar maestro Tilston bending notes hauntingly.

Much of tonight’s gig is like being invited to listen in while these two unsung heroes of the singer songwriter genre swapping songs. When it comes to the new, jointly written songs, the most impressive

are those boldly tackling the biggest contemporary issues: ‘Lucky Sami’, about a stranded child refugee; ‘Crosses, Crescents and Stars’, taking a swipe at religious war, and ‘Torn and Tattered’, a state of the nation song about how we are not in good shape. No surprise then that in ‘Leaving for Spain’ Tilston has a young woman leaving Blackpool, hoping for better opportunities elsewhere.

It is disconcerting, but in a good way, that often the darkest lyrics are accompanied by the most beguiling tunes and playing, like Lowe’s mandolin (or possibly a cittern?) dancing an elegant *pas de deux* with Tilston’s guitar on ‘Little Sami’, which somehow makes the lyrics even more powerful.

Even though this is a gig primarily about social injustice and dark times past and present, there are lighter moments too with the music hall-influenced ‘Mrs Einstein’, very much a Lowe song; a tribute to fellow folk scene stalwart Whizz Jones: ‘The Guitar That Whizz Once Strummed’, and a cover of ‘A Fool Such As I’, which allows Tilston to display his stunning early blues guitar technique.

Steve Tilston and Jez Lowe will probably never get the recognition they deserve for having “sold (their) soul(s) to the crossroads devil” a long time ago, but we are pleased they did.

Colin May

UTE / LUCY LEAVE / SLATE HEARTS

The Cellar

Sometimes, a band and a venue just click together. We’ve seen Slate Hearts a number of times in 2016, but the two most immersive experiences have been here at the Cellar, their dense slabs of grunge just seeming to fit the low ceilinged room (and the engineer – we can’t see but imagine that Jimmy Evil, the resident Lord Fader, is nodding approvingly throughout). With lackadaisical inter-song mumbling, the band gives the impression of being slapdash stoners, and two-thirds of them dress as if they spend their downtime wrestlin’ swine for nickels, but there’s proper pop *nous* evident in the songwriting.

Slate Hearts are a sonic Richard Serra sculpture: huge, monumental and weighty, but rather less rough-hewn than they at first appear.

Lucy Leave gigs are always exciting. The band builds songs from snatches of vintage pop styles (psychedelia, garage, even reggae) and melodic micro-mantras, leaving plenty of room for improvisation, but without slipping into the clunky slide carousel of solos that the majority of jazz and psych falls back on. It’s as if the band is waiting to see what will lift each song to ecstatic heights – a sudden clattering drum fill, a tickly ‘Eight Miles

High’ guitar scribble, an ultra-rubato vocal stretch. This means that some tracks, and occasionally whole gigs, can go by without catching fire, but also means that moments of glory surprise every time. Tonight it’s ‘40 Years’, kicking us down a Teardrop Explodes mudslide towards a krautrock skinny dip.

Ignoring a little acoustic session, Ute haven’t played a gig in Oxford for five years, and they still sound like Radiohead’s less bombastic songs dusted with hi-life and calypso guitar, while the drums stutter out an inventive desiccated funk and a proper fat rock bass knocks on the back door.

If the vocals sound oversqueezed, like they’re the last smear of toothpaste in the tube, Ute knock us sideways like never before. Perhaps it’s the crammed room, the boozy Bakhtinian carnival atmosphere and the hilarious raffle that precedes the set that reduces us to grinning putty, but when the band run offstage during ‘An Innocent Tailor’ and the crowd howls like pissed-up police sirens and a man in a medieval bascinet takes their place with a glitter cannon, we don’t know what’s going on any more, except that it’s good. It’s very good.

David Murphy

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FICKLE FRIENDS / HUNTAR / 31 HOURS

The Bullingdon

Local hopefuls 31Hours are very young, clearly inexperienced and apparently under-rehearsed, which can sometimes be a good thing. The rather introverted singer, hunched over his mic, picks at his guitar as if to convince us this is all very personal and confessional, but the various elements clatter away without really coming together. The African influences in the guitar and song structures, blended with maybe a hint of Gomez, are (for now) too ambitious and they earn no points with that tired trick of finishing songs with two lines sung *a capella*. Cambridge boy Hunter is accompanied by nothing more than a backing track, so we’re fortunate that he’s a reasonably competent dancer. Simply constructed, undemanding electronic pop with an early 90s feel and a strong vocal delivery makes for a mildly entertaining half-hour, though he resorts to another modern cliché: the hushed vocal, a second or two of silence then delivery of the big, bombastic hook. Endless evenings spent in rooms painted black, watching bands troop on and off stage is all made

worth it when a band like Fickle Friends comes along. A relentless work ethic has seen the Brighton five-piece plough through the last three years, playing fifty-three festivals in just two, the reward finally coming with a Polydor deal and a forthcoming album produced in LA by Mike Crossey (The 1975, Wolf Alice). What sets them apart is the infectiously upbeat, summery vibe and solid song writing, with singer Natti Shiner’s emotive vocals and energetic stage presence leading them on. The unashamedly 80s influence works beautifully, succeeding where so many current bands fall flat on their faces; more Blow Monkeys and less Kajagoogoo. To prove the point their glorious anthem ‘Swim’ is kept back to the end, and it’s hard to think of an indie single in the last five years that beats it for pure innocent exuberance. Though it’s heartening to see a queue outside before the doors even opened, let’s hope Polydor have the foresight to stick with them if the album doesn’t go platinum on week one. They really are worth it. *Art Lagun*

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MINOR VICTORIES / ULRIKA SPACEK

O2 Academy

Ulrika Spacek know that the twin sonic weapons of volume and repetition never lose their burnish. From their opening three-guitar salvo, recalling Loop’s late-80s psych-drone trip, they excel when they simply groove it out bass heavy and unflinchingly loud. When Kurt-alike singer Rhys Edwards takes to the mic he takes the music to a lighter, prettier place and while it’s not an unpleasant place, it lacks the sheer black hole gravity and metronomic insistency of their best moments, like the extended spiralling finale. Supergroups can go any which way, more often than not into the big bin marked ‘self-indulgent toss’. But that was never going to be an option for a band who draw their members from Mogwai, Slowdive and Editors (and on record, The Gaslight Anthem). Mogwai guitarist Stuart Braithwiate in particular has a keen inbuilt bullshit detector, and the band – formed online before the members had ever met – is pretty much a perfect triangulation of their composite parts, from Editors’ glowering, electro-heavy 80s indie, through Rachel Goswell’s alternately ethereal and strident vocal performance, to Braithwaite’s searing crescendos and fx-heavy firestorms. *Dale Kattack*

THE AUGUST LIST / LITTLE RED

The Library

In fairytales, fantasy and folklore, forests are where bad things lurk, where every shadow carries a threat. The things that lurk in Little Red’s forest – Mr Wolf; a black dog – are menaces of the mind though, metaphors for depression that hound songwriter Ian Mitchell – Little Red guitarist and the man behind All Will Be Well Records – at every turn. But taken on face value, the songs are dark but playful tales couched in the warm, harmony-heavy folk of the 1960s and right back to the sounds of 19th Century taverns. Vocals are shared three ways, but it’s Hayley Bell who is the band’s magic ingredient, the way her voice plays off Ian’s and fellow guitarist Ben Gosling’s creates an almost childlike feeling of innocence about songs even as she’s warning “don’t go into the woods,” and “that’s what they say; the couple were never seen again.” Dig even a little way into the words and you’re lost in a crepuscular mist of haunted hopelessness (“This black dog is everywhere I go”), but Little Red have turned their black dog into something almost cuddly – a beast well worth your time and your love. From the forest into the wide-open dustbowl, and The August List’s pure, stark country folk. At the forefront of all things Americana in Oxfordshire for the last few years, Kerraleigh and Martin Childs can still spring surprises on their new songs, like the huge, balletic duet of ‘Old Rip’, or a cover of Kevin Morby’s ‘I Have Been To The Mountain’ that is a tour de force from Kerraleigh, whose powerful, high-pitched voice, akin to Loretta Lynn or a young Dolly Parton, stands at odds with her sweetly measured speaking voice between songs. A glorious ‘Wooden Trunk Blues’ makes way for the drones and pretty harmonies of ‘Wilderness’ and for forty minutes you forget you’re in a basement bar on Cowley Road as you’re transported to the wide open skies of Appalachia or a moonshine shack bar on the banks of the Mississippi. Oxford’s most unassuming musical couple have the magic. *Dale Kattack*

HONEYBLOOD

The Bullingdon

It still amazes me how much noise two people can make. Since Honeyblood last played Oxford, two years ago, a lot has changed; drummer Shona McVicar has been replaced by Cat Myers, the new duo have released a second album, ‘Babes Never Die’, and generally Honeyblood’s star has been rising. But the most important things have stayed the same; they’re still playing edgy, angry garage pop tunes with fury and vigour. Tonight is no exception. The pair open strongly with new banger ‘Ready For the Magic’ and old hit ‘Choker’, after which they venture into lesser-known territory, playing the entirety of the new album; it’s an admirable gamble, but the sheer strength of their songwriting makes it work out well. What’s up with the crowd, though? After a lukewarm response to the first few songs guitarist/singer Stina Marie even comments that we’re always so polite in Oxford (“It’s because of the dictionary,” replies Myers). Turns out we’re not polite after all. The first time some guy shouts “shut up and play songs” – after an admittedly rehearsed bit of band banter – Stina decides to let it slide, even though her face reveals her fury. The second time though she calls out the rudeness, pretending

to cut the show short. Luckily for us she doesn’t, even though they would’ve been more than right to walk away; so-called rock stars have done it for far less. In yet another act of verbal abuse, another bloke from the crowd demands the duo “speak English” in response to their discussion of selkies, creatures from Scottish folklore. And no, this isn’t just one guy, and yes, they are all guys. With that kind of atmosphere it’s unsurprising there are almost no women here. What’s the point of ‘Babes Never Die’ (the band’s unofficial slogan as well as the album title) then? It’s on us, who come to these shows, to create an environment that’s welcoming to everyone. So please, next time you’re standing next to someone shouting abuse, call them out, or let a member of staff know. And if that guy was you: fuck off and never attend another gig. Honeyblood end the gig with a run of amazing songs: a fiery rendition of old-timer ‘All Dragged Up’; an improvised serenade to merchandise seller Hazel; the infectious album title track, and ‘Super Rat’ and ‘Killer Bangs’ to close, the two highlights from their debut. By now everyone’s convinced: Honeyblood will never die. *Caspar Jacobs*

MUTUAL BENEFIT

The Bullingdon

The last Friday in November and Oxford’s already entirely mulled: the Christmas lights are up, the tinsel’s out, and people move where the tide of drink is flowing. It’s this time of year where the thank-God-its-Friday-let’s-get-pissed feeling is more urgent than the ambulances trying to get through the streets. Mutual Benefit remind us, with pride, that they’re what’s standing between us and a riotous club night. Lead singer Jordan Lee speaks delicately and with consideration, a stark contrast to the drum&bass DJ to come. Tonight is the last stop on Mutual Benefit’s European tour and, boy, has a lot happened since they left Brooklyn. As you’d expect, their tone is completive. They’re giving away merch for “as much as you can pay” and a Black Lives Matter banner hangs limply over an amp. More than merely starting and finishing songs, Mutual Benefit build a landscape with their sound. ‘Fire Escape’s’ shimmering cymbals and flute set the scene: a serene garden, where all the birds are beginning to wake up. There

are four band members in total, each with their own style but all very much in place, and while Lee is their originator, Mutual Benefit make too much sense as a group to be a result of just one person’s vision. ‘Let’s Play’/‘Statue of a Man’ stands out from the moment it begins. Where “On a train from the mid-West, (Lee) was trying to get reborn”, Lee’s understated climax exposes how truly trivial the human psyche can be. This idea translates nicely in ‘Passenger’, where “people seem so ordinary viewed from a fast speed”, but less so when drummer Dillan hovers for thirty seconds to change the tempo by 5BMP. Despite this, the pace of night is, for the most part, perfect. Mutual Benefit prove that Friday nights can be more satisfying when we slow down our personal clocks and contemplate. Instead of it being the blowout end to a fast week, a climax can, and sometimes actually should be, a far more subtle thing. It can feel like the beginning to a new day. *Eva Hibbs*

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INTRODUCING.... LOUD MOUNTAINS

Who are they?
Loud Mountains are an Americana band from Connecticut, living in Oxford. Brothers Sean and Kevin Duggan (*both vocals and guitars*) began writing songs in their parents’ basement before moving to Oxford in 2011 and playing in a band called Empty White Circles. When they split up, the pair formed Loud Mountains, joined by Fish Thompson (*drums*); David Thompson (*guitar/keyboard*) and Craig Doran (*bass*). “It’s more in the direction of the music that we listened to growing up,” says Sean. Meeting DJ Bob Harris at one of their early gigs opened up opportunities to get on board the UK’s burgeoning Americana scene, including a set at Country2Country at the O2 in London, which in turn helped us to gain exposure to book shows with bands like Danny & the Champions of the World; Cale Tyson; The Stray Birds and a showcase at the Americana Music Association Awards. Last month they released their debut EP, ‘Love One Another’, on Clubhouse Records.

What do they sound like?
Authentic rootsy Americana, as you’d hope from two brothers raised in Connecticut. The band’s full-on roadhouse country-blues blast, all big harmonies and harmonica, comes packed with good vibes, while more considered moments, like EP highlight ‘Eloise’ carries a down-home weariness reminiscent of Conor Oberst.

What inspires them?
“When it comes to songwriting, we tend to be inspired by our relationships with those around us, reckless behaviour and anything that Jason Isbell or Tom Petty have ever released.”

Career highlight so far:
“Truck Festival last year was our all-time favourite moment. Playing our songs in a hot, sweaty wooden box packed to the brim with people singing along to our songs. It was short and sweet.”

And the lowlight:

“Countryfile Live at Blenheim was something else. We were so thankful that BBC Introducing had asked us to play, but it was slightly awkward playing to a crowd of people more interested in watching sheep shearing on the stage next to ours.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“We’ve had the pleasure of working with and listening to Jonny Payne and the Thunder over the years. His unapologetic songwriting and cutting guitar skills are something we still hold onto in our sound.”

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“Bright Eyes: ‘I’m Wide Awake, It’s Morning’.

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?
“February 10th at the O2 Academy. Newcomers can expect an energetic live show, a big-ass ruckus, and a few soft spots.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
“Favourite: there’s plenty of talent around the city. Least favourite: There’s not much we can complain about; we guess one area we could maybe work on is an integration between artists and genres. From our experience of music scenes in the States, it feels like all good music scenes begin with everyone coming together to play gigs and share ideas.”

You might love them if you love:
Ryan Adams; Drive-By Truckers; Bright Eyes; Whiskeytown; Bob Dylan.

Hear them here:
‘Love One Another’ is available on iTunes, Spotify and Soudcloud.



THE WHEATSHEAF

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Saturday 7th January – *TWO FACE PROMOTIONS*

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Friday 13th January – *GET IN THE BOX*

OLD ERNIE

DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES

RAYZO + BROWN GLOVE 7:45pm

Saturday 14th January – *JAM CITY*

SILK ROAD

CRIMSON TUSK + GET LOOSE 7:45pm

Friday 20th January – *IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC*

ECHO4FOUR

MIKE LEE BAND + BAD BLOOD RECOVERY 7:45pm

Saturday 21st January – *ABOLITION 2017*

GUTLOCKER

K-LACURA + BLOODSHOT + VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN 8pm

Friday 27th January

31HOURS

SLEEPERS DOME + SELF HELP + DAISY 7:45pm

Saturday 28th January – *GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES*

HOLY MOMENTS

LE PUB + FREDDY LE GRAGG 7:45pm

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DR SHOTOVER: Space Hopper/Chopper Crash

Wotcher, Mush. Welcome to the Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club. And, while we’re at it, welcome back to the 1970s. Adopt a manly stance at the bar in your best flared jeans (unless you’d rather pull up a floral settee or a pouffe), buy us all a pint of Watney’s Red Barrel and let’s have a game of darts, bar billiards or possibly KerPlunk. Once we get ‘pie-eyed’ we can start leering at the ladies in hot pants in the saloon bar, saying ‘I would’ and/or ‘Don’t fancy yours much’ while nudging each other. Yes, it’s a Man’s World in the 1970s. What’s that, Spalding? Why all the 1970s references? Well, it’s obvious, innit? Just look around you. We’ve got the strikes. We’ve got the Rolling Stones releasing a new album. Cold War with Russia. Elton John on tour. Snooker still over-running and wrecking the TV schedules, just like it always did. We’ve got the facial hair. We’ve got the ongoing Star Wars phenomenon. (Including Mr Spira’s marvellous Elstree 1976). We’ve got the dodgy US President Elect with a criminal past. We’ve got The 1975. (Actually, scrub that – they’re shite, and bear about as much resemblance to the 1970s as Boris Johnson does to a real statesman). We’ve got the Enoch Powell apologists in the red-tops still promoting casual racism and writing ‘Crikey, forget those left-wing poofers... just look at this posh bird in her swimsuit!’ We’ve got... What’s that? Oh come ON, Spalding, you total WALLY – it’s your round. Mine’s a light and bitter, and what about a half of lager and lime for the lady? Cheers! Down the hatch, then it’s all back to mine with some take-outs for The Old Grey Whistle Test! Who’s on? Why, the Rolling Stones and Elton John of course!

Next month:
Absolute Berks
in Berkshire



Dr Shotover: ‘Actually, I rather LIKE the 1970s’

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

January 1997 saw the build-up to **Radio 1 Sound City** begin in earnest with a debut Oxford gig from ex-**Ride** guitarist **Andy Bell**’s new band **Hurricane #1** (just called Hurricane back then), Andy having teamed up with Scottish singer Alex Lowe and already signed to Creation and set to release their first single, ‘Step Into My World’ in April. The band played a Sound City launch gig at a sold-out **Zodiac**, with support from **Unbelievable Truth**. With two of Oxford’s most-likely-to bands on the same bill, the venue was awash with fellow local musicians, the review declaring that “if you dropped a bomb on the Zodiac tonight, bang goes half the local music scene, along with **Alan McGee**”. On the plus side, we’d never have had to hear the second Hurricane #1 album.

Meanwhile, **Dustball** were packing out **HMV** on Cornmarket for the launch of their debut single, ‘Senor Nachos’, and the start of **Shifty Disco**’s monthly singles club. Later in the evening they played another sold out gig, this time at The Point. Another local classic came out this month: **The Candyskins**’ ‘Monday Morning’, which saw the band break into the Top 40 for the first and only time before the death of a certain princess put paid to their rise to pop glory in the summer.

While **Pavement** and **Mad Professor**’s visits to The Zodiac were the big gig draws of the month, another local band, **The Nicotines**, were signing a record deal, with Jealous, a subsidiary of London Records. The local indie rockers headed off on tour with feloow Britpoppers **Mansun** with their

debut single due out shortly. Any information on their current whereabouts gratefully received.

10 YEARS AGO

Funny who you find turning up in your local venue. Back in January 2007 **Robyn Hitchcock** was back in town – a frequent visitor over the years – this time at The Zodiac, backed by his band The Venus 3, featuring **Peter Buck**. The **REM** guitarist was happy to play second fiddle to the former Soft Boys singer, but come the encore and up from the audience popped **Michael Stipe** and **Mike Mills**, who joined in on a version of their own ‘Electrolite’ and ‘I’m Gonna DJ’, as well as Hitchcock’s cult classic ‘Listening to the Higsons’, finishing with The Byrds’ ‘Eight Miles High’, while assorted members of **Radiohead** cheered them on in the front row. An unsuspecting half-capacity crowd naturally went wild and now have a tale to tell their grandchildren.

In other local music news **Dive Dive** announced the release of their second album, ‘Revenge of the Mechanical Dog’, while the future of music at **The Wheatsheaf** was seemingly assured with the purchase of the pub by Admiral Taverns. Sadly Cowley Road lost **Polar Bear Records**, which meant there was no dedicated record store on the road until **Truck Store** arrived in 2011.

Gracing this month’s *Nightshift* front cover were **Baby Gravy**: “part dog’s dinner, part dog’s bollocks; a sound engineer’s nightmare,” according to the description given of the band, all still in their mid-teens and set to release their debut single, ‘I Hate Your Girlfriend’. Drummer **Zahra**

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Tehrani went on to helm **The Young Women’s Music Project**, while singer **Iona Roisin** now releases tripped-out electro-soul under the guise **Vernahark**.

5 YEARS AGO

In a vaguely traditional sort of fashion January 2012 found *Nightshift* asking around myriad local promoters for their tips on which acts to look out for in the months ahead. **Yoof!** host Marc West plumped for **Glass Animals** and **Wild Swim**, putting him closest to hitting the nail firmly on the head, while other top picks included **Kill Murray** (Joal from **The Wheatsheaf**); **The Cellar Family** (Simon Minter from **Audioscope**); **Overlord**, **Refugees of Culture** and **Blasted** (Elliot and Ryan from **Buried in Smoke**); **Document One** (**Aidan ‘Count’ Skylarkin**); **Lewis Watson** (Isla Miskelly from **DHP**); **Jess Hall** (Autumn Neagle from **Coo Promotions**) and **Luke Keegan**, **Matt Chanarin** and **Laura Theis** (Matt Sage off of **Catweazle**).

The new generation of rock and metal stars were showcased by an compilation album released by **Skeletor**, ‘City of Screaming Spires’ featuring contributions from **Aethara**; **Taste My Eyes**; **Desert Storm**; **K-Lacura**; **Mother Corona**; **Unknown Flow**; **A Trust Unclean**; **Prospekt**; **Dedlok** and **Mutagenocide**, among others.

While there was no main cover star feature this month, **Tiger Mendoza** were our Introducing act, while coming to town this month were **The Horrors**, **M83** and **Babybird** (all at the **O2 Academy**); **Dopefight** at **The Cellar** and **Maria & the Mirrors** at **Modern Art**.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

R.O.W.A.N.

Conscious rap and poetry from South African born and raised but Oxford resident MC Rowan Groom, whose debut album 'Social Anxiety' a couple of years back showed a fledgling talent starting to grow his wings. This new collection finds him laying his rhymes over a purely acoustic backing – drums, acoustic guitar and wandering sax, which adds warmth and a jazzy vibe to his social commentary (Syria; terrorism; global poverty; human trafficking all come under his gaze, alongside plenty of self analysis), which is delivered in a downbeat, almost conversational style, his strong, clipped accent lending him a sense of bullish authority without sounding like he's pushing too hard. He does, as before, have a tendency to try and fit too many words into each line, meaning some get lost along the way, which is a shame since he's saying things worth hearing (best lines come in the marginally more upbeat 'Reflection': "Another conscious rap", where he mockingly apologises "I'm sorry if your attention span isn't healthy" and suggests "Maybe you could try reading some more books"). The music creates a woozy atmosphere and his poetic approach, coupled with a laidback delivery find him in a similar orbit to The Streets as well as local rapper/poet Rawz. Some doleful cello on 'Pedestrian' takes the mood even lower, but given the subject matter, there's little reason for good cheer. Plenty to cheer about a promising new rap talent in town, though.

HODAD

If you're gonna do punk rock it's best to go at it full pelt, get in and out as quick as possible and leave a whole heap of mess for some other poor sod to clear up. Hodad pretty much pass with flying colours on each of those scores, their flight-of-stairs-falling-down-a-flight-of-stairs garage rock refusing to stand on ceremony for the most part, kicking the door down, necking a can of Tennant's Super and fucking off back out again in a compact one minute nine seconds on their opening track, 'Sunny D', an ode to the sugar-heavy fruit juice substitute now only sold in run-down former pit towns in mid-Wales. Follow-up 'Hodad's Day At the Beach' clocks in at a whopping two minutes but does a similar job of making as much ramshackle noise as possible in the shortest allotted time, but they lose their focus a bit on the (relatively) slow-burning 'Real

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

Leather', a prog odyssey-length five-minutes of psych-noise that at its best could be a loose-limbed cousin of The Perfect Disaster, but blots its copybook by wandering off on an aimless guitar solo for half its length. Such indulgence done, they're back at what they do best with 'Vera 3', another one-minute garage-thrash blunderbuss, before singing off with the yobbish surf-punk twang of 'The Best Way of Life': a respectable two minutes. That's the way to do it: don't think too hard about it, just get the job done and then off down the pub and let some other bugger worry if it all falls down in the night.

HOLY MOMENTS

More punk rock, though of a more considered persuasion, from local newcomers Holy Moments, a trio who seem to have a bit more variety in their sonic armoury, while perhaps sometimes sounding unsure whether they're really cut out for this noise making lark. Things start off in reasonable style with 'Soft Hands' and its opening line, "I've got the softest hands you've ever seen / A feather bed's got nothing on me," before launching into a bellicose chorus of "I've never done a hard day's work in my life," which might serve as a succinct critique of half the rebel rockers on the planet. It's a neat, witty opening salvo, pitched partway between Green Day and Rancid, though 'Bug in the Brain', while sounding like it's creeping up in Cassels' slipstream, has an uncertainty about it, like it maybe doesn't want to get too much dirt under its fingernails – maybe they really do have soft hands. 'Gimme the Donut' is easily this month's best song title, despite the American spelling, which itself is appropriate as Holy Moments continue to plough their So-Cal pop-punk furrow, but by the end of the demo, with tracks like 'Cut It Out', they've built up a head of steam again and are displaying some of that early agitation, to the point where the singer's shouted himself hoarse and the band are barrelling down the road to pick on some softies. We're always saying you need a bit of guile with your bile and in their brightest bits Holy Moments sound like they're capable of moments to remember in the coming months.

FLATLANDS

A year ago plenty of people, ourselves included, were pointing to The Aureate Act as the new young band in town ready and waiting to stake a claim to the local prog-pop throne. Fast forward a few months and while they're still apparently a going concern they're barely visible on the local gig circuit and seem to have spawned at least one side project, Flatlands being the work of singer/

guitarist Nat Jones and chums, and where The Aureate Act are (were?) a clever and convoluted journey into the court of the Crimson King, via Talk Talk, Radiohead and Boards of Canada, this is simpler and sadly more pedestrian fare, an untidy conglomeration of Ash, The View and (gulp) The Wanted, with 'Ringin' Ears' a standard slab of teenage angst/party regret, while the more palatable 'Dirty Shoes' is a light-footed skitter and spangle that promises to be pretty but fails to exert enough character to take it beyond wallflower status. Not entirely unlikeable but hard to really love; please can we all get back to making imperious electro-prog epics again soon?

STEVE ADEY

Now here's an idea that's just perfect for 2016 with all its tragedies and traumas: take a bunch of songs by music's most notable misery guts, and perform them in a fashion that makes the originals sounds like right party bangers. That seems to be Steve Adey's modus operandi across these ten covers of acts like Morrissey, Nick Cave, Low, Smog and Portishead. And just to make sure there's no chance of any light creeping into proceedings, he's employed a six-strong choir to back him up in almost Gregorian fashion. By all that's holy this is a miserable trawl. But that, dear reader, doesn't mean it's an unpleasant experience. Far from it. For starters, Steve has a pretty decent voice for someone who sounds like their glass isn't so much half empty as down to the dregs and someone else got to drink it before he had the chance. He sounds a bit like This Mortal Coil contributor Dominic Appleton at times, and the decidedly funereal takes on 'God Is In The House' and Portishead's 'Over' unfold like wraiths from a dusty old shroud. In a tomb. Beneath a haunted well. In purgatory. We'll brush over the fact his version of 'Everyday Is Like Sunday' is borderline hilarious for all the wrong reasons; instead we'll waltz around the house with the ghosts of all our shattered dreams. In fact we're going to play this on a constant loop all day Christmas Day, or at least until the children start weeping tears of blood and the nut roast leaps out of the oven to hurl the CD player out of the window, before returning to cook itself to death.

SONG & SUPPER ROOMS

And of course what we need after that merry-go-round of mirth is something cheery and quirky and whimsical, right? Nice bit of cheeky chappie fun, yeah? Really, fuck off. Just leave us with our bottle of Laphroaig, our Michael Gira albums and our litany of regrets. Song & Supper Rooms is the bedroom (and occasionally live) project of singer and ukulele player John

Potter, alongside local prince of musical darkness Mark Bosley, who John tells us he's forced to play cheerful music. And a cajon player, which is basically a Peruvian wooden box. Rewind a bit there and you'll notice we said "singer and ukulele player". Yes, Song & Supper Rooms are the spiritual heirs to George Formby, but George Formby if he wrote self-consciously wry ditties about Emperor Claudius' wayward wife, WWII planes flying into mountainsides and prostitutes in 19th Century cinemas. There's a faint whiff of student footlights revue about it, and we can imagine them going down a storm on Radio 2's *Whimsy Hour*, if that's even something Radio 2 plays host to, alongside *The Organist Entertains* and *Jim Thirlwell's Fireside Favourites*. Yeah, we're sure someone will like it, but maybe, just maybe, *Nightshift* is not Song & Supper Rooms' target audience. For starters, our idea of a song is less an airily good-natured recreation of *Brief Encounter* and more an oppressive hour-long industrial hardcore dirge, and round our gaff supper involves rather less tea and fancy cakes and more supermarket own brand vodka than you could drown a Kraken in.

THE DEMO DUMPER

SOM VINTER

Som Vinter's name sounds like a cross between a Viking warrior king and someone who makes wine for a living, which basically should make him the craziest bastard rock god of the entire month, right? Wrong. What he actually is is a bedwetting pantywaist who seems to have an inordinate amount of stuff to get weepy and wistful about whilst simultaneously displaying a way with a catchy pop gem equal to, ooh, dunno, an unemptied dog waste bin. Over a swooning, near-comatose soft blanket of plangent piano and acoustic guitar Som emotes breathlessly, lines like "Tidal waves you sent me / A tenderness so hard to take / Self destructive are we," capturing the epic pain he's feeling because girls think he's a total fucking drip and he always gets picked last at football because last time he played the ball hit him in the face and he cried. Sorry, where were we? Oh yeah, self pitying floaty woaty inconsequentiality with a side order of boiled onions. Half the lines give up and become indecipherable as he's singing them and he ends up reduced to going "oooooh, ooooooh" for the most part, like a simpering simpleton attempting to communicate with a budgie. Still, he's probably got more chance of coping off with is gran's pet bird than he has wooing a human female anytime soon. Self destructive, did you say? Mate, don't let us stop you.

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Thu 23rd Mar • £16.50 adv • 7pm

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Fri 24th Mar • £8.50 adv • 6.30pm

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