

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 260
March
2017**



"I can't imagine there are many better cities to be in a band. Our fans have remained unbelievably loyal. We are extremely proud to be an Oxford band."

farewell

STORNOWAY

**Their final show
Their final interview**

Also in this issue:

Introducing **THE GREAT WESTERN TEARS**

**TRUCK, COMMON PEOPLE,
CORNBURY** line-ups announced

plus All your Oxford music news and reviews, and six pages of local gigs for March

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THE BULLINGDON

MARCH 2017 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Thursday 2nd March

Tall Ships

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd March

King of the Ring Weigh In

Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd March

**Tracksuit & Trance
90's Rave**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 4th March

**Simple
Palms Trax**

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 5th March

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses**
K-Lacura
Trauma UK
The Hope Burden
1000 Chains
Force of Mortality

Doors: 7pm

Monday 6th March

Josefin Öhrn

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 7th March

**Seafret
Freddie Dickson**

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 8th March

Famelab 2017

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 9th March

Dots Funk Odyssey

Doors: 8pm

Friday 10th March

**Bedrock Presents: Tragedy
A Heavy Metal Tribute to the Bee Gees**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 11th March

**Freerange Roots
Iration Steppas & Channel One**

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 12th March

The Sherlocks

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 15th March

The Amazons

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 16th March

**Saiichi Sugiyama
Matt Edwards Band**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th March

Nine Below Zero

Doors: 7pm

Friday 17th March

**Bossaphonik
Nubian Twist**

Doors: 8pm

Saturday 18th March

Bass Escape

Doors: 8pm

Sunday 19th March

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses**
My Diablo
Rebel Station
Beaver Fuel
Echo 4 Echo
Raised by Hypocrites

Doors: 7pm

Monday 20th March

Idles

Doors: 7.30pm

Thursday 23rd March

**Will Johns & Friends
Jasmine Rodgers**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th March

American Aquarium

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th March

Straight Outta Cowley

Doors: 8pm

Saturday 25th March

**Volume #3
Taxman & Felon
Nicky Blackmarket
Foxy**

Doors: 8pm

Tuesday 28th March

Blaenavon

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 29th March

Krissy Matthews

Doors: 7pm

Friday 31st March

Bill Kirchen & Austin De Lone

Doors: 7pm

Friday 31st March

Tropic Popsicle

Doors: 8pm

Saturday 1st April

**Jizzy Pearl / Love / Hate
Bulletproof Rose**

Doors: 7pm

Sunday 2nd April

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses**

Doors: 7pm

Monday 3rd April

Alejandro Escovedo Band

Doors: 7pm

Friday 7th April

**Oxphwoard:
The Self Love Show**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 7th April

Throwing Shapes #001

Doors: 8pm

Monday 10th April

Giles Robson

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 11th April

Laetitia Sadier Source Ensemble

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 12th April

Pins

Doors: 7pm

Friday 14th April

**The Balkan Wanderers
The Shapes
Genevieve Miles**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 14th April

P.Y.T

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 15th April

**Old Skool Oxford
2 Bad Mice**

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 18th April

Laurence Jones

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 19th April

The Moonlandingz

Doors: 7pm

Friday 21st April

Palace

Doors: 7pm

Sunday 23rd April

**Bloodstock:
Metal to the Masses**

Doors: 7pm

Monday 24th April

Ben Poole

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 26th April

Jake Isaac

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 27th April

Jaws

Doors: 7pm

Friday 28th April

Lowws EP Launch

Doors: 7pm

Friday 28th April

Tropic Popsicle

Doors: 11pm

NEWS

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THE JACKSONS will play a show at **Blenheim Palace** this summer.

In celebration of their 50th anniversary, the legendary Motown supergroup will embark on a world tour that comes to Blenheim Palace on **Sunday June 18th** for a show as part of this year's Nocturne concert series. Brothers Jermaine, Tito, Jackie and Marlon's show promises to feature all of the brothers' hits, including 'I Want You Back', 'ABC' and 'Can You Feel It'. The concert is The Jackson's only confirmed headline show of the summer.

Support comes from r'n'b kings **Kool & The Gang**, who toured with The Jackson 5 in the 1970s, the band's funk-pop hits, including 'Get Down On It', 'Celebration', 'Ladies Night' and 'Jungle Boogie', making them the most sampled band in history.

The Nocturne concert series, which last year featured performances from Elton John, Jack Savoretti and The Corrs, runs from June 15th to 18th and The Jacksons and Kool & The Gang join composer Gregory Porter, Jamie Cullum and Corinne Bailey Rae at this year's series of shows.

Tickets start at £45 and are on sale from Ticketmaster and all other major ticket sites.

PMT launches its new superstore this month with special guests and live sets from local acts.

Gaz Coombes and Radiohead's **Colin Greenwood** will cut the ribbon on the new store, at the new site further along Cowley Road, on Saturday 4th March. The shop will be three times the size of its existing store, which has been a staple of the east Oxford music scene for 20 years, featuring expanded guitar, drum, keyboard and production space, as well as a dedicated piano showroom. Local acts, including Duotone, will be performing acoustic sets on the opening day, and the shop will be hosting special discounts, freebies, and giveaways to customers who visit over the weekend. Visit pmtonline.co.uk for more details.

OXFORD WILL BE AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD'S FIRST NATIONAL LIVE MUSIC CENSUS in March. Dubbed a *Springwatch* for Live Music, the census, coordinated by researchers at universities in Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow, hopes to measure live music's cultural and economic value, discover what challenges the industry is facing, and inform policy to help it flourish. The census will run for 24 hours from noon on Thursday 9th March, taking in Southampton, Glasgow, Newcastle, Oxford, Leeds, Birmingham and Brighton. Volunteers will be asked to record aspects of gigs including the musical genre, the venue, door charge and audience



SEAN PAUL AND PETE TONG'S HERITAGE ORCHESTRA will headline this year's Common People.

Jamaican dancehall star Paul tops the Saturday night bill at the 30,000-capacity event in **South Park** on the **27th May**, while Radio 1 DJ Tong joins forces with The Heritage Orchestra (*pictured*) and conductor Jules Buckley for an orchestral set of Ibiza dance classics on **Sunday 28th**. After last year's successful inaugural event, headlined by Duran Duran and Primal Scream, Common People makes a return to the heart of Oxford. Other acts so far confirmed to join the headliners are, on the Saturday, **Groove Armada DJs**; **Wild Beasts**; a **Foals DJ** set; **St Etienne**; **The Selecter vs The Beat**, and **Amy McDonald**, while Sunday features **Rag N Bone Man**; **Becky Hill**; **The Cuban Brothers** and Elvis impersonator-fronted Nirvana tribute **Elvana**. Additionally two Oxford acts have been selected to perform on the main stage, with **Lucy Leave** playing on Saturday and **Coldredlight** on Sunday.

The Uncommon stage will once again feature local acts selected by *Nightshift*. Saturday's line-up is topped by Zaia, who are joined by The Balkan Wanderers; Vienna Ditto; Leader; Jess Hall & Duotone; The Shapes; The Epstein; Little Red and The Pink Diamond Revue. Sunday's bill features a hometown return for rapper ShaoDow, alongside Kanadia; Death of Hi-Fi; Rhymeskeemz; Desert Storm; Low Island; The Young Women's Music Project; Catgod and Slate Hearts.

The Uncontained stage will again be a dance hub, with sets from My Nu Leng & M8s; Goldie; Novelist; Joy Orbison; Midland; Kornel Kovacs and Felix Dickinson, among others, while The Pig's Big Record Club stage is hosted by The Shellac Collective and features DJ sets from Shepdog; Count Skylarkin; Del Gazebo; Housewurk; Peepshow Paddy and Kerry & Casio vs Harvey K-Tel.

As per last year, further musical attractions around the site include Horns of Plenty and The Disco Shed.

Tickets for Common People are on sale at oxford.commonpeople.net. Sign up to their newsletter for news as it happens.

demographic, from street buskers to major concerts. A nationwide online survey for musicians, venues,

promoters and audiences will also go live on the 9th March and will be *Continued over...*

THE LIBERTINES, FRANZ FERDINAND AND THE VACCINES headline this year's **Truck Festival**.

This year's will the 20th Truck Festival, after starting life as a birthday party with local bands playing on a flatbed truck in 1998, and like last year, runs for three days over the weekend of the **21st-23rd July**, at **Hill Farm** in Stevenon. Among a host of other acts also announced are The Wombats; Slaves; Maximo Park; Nothing But Thieves; Hot 8 Brass Band; Loyle Carner; Jagwa Ma; Twin Atlantic; British Sea Power; Vant; Cabbage; Palace; The Magic Gang; Tom Grenan; All Them Witches; Jaws; Roam; Will Joseph Cook; Lawrence Taylor; Inheaven; Goat Girl; The Shimmer Band; Tigercub; Crows; Yonaka; Banfi; Willie J Healey; Slotface; Francobollo; Life; Abattoir Blues; Dead Pretties; Weirids; Husky Loops; Peaness; Leader and Pedder.

Truck organiser Matt Harrap announced the first wave of names for this year's event saying, "2017 is our 20th, so we were determined to pull out all the stops and deliver something incredible and I'm proud to say I think it's our best line-up yet. The bill is literally packed with some of the best talent from around the globe and our headliners are bona fide legends.

"With plenty more to announce in the coming weeks I think it's safe to say Truck Festival's 20th birthday party is going to be truly spectacular."

Tickets are £105, including booking fee, and you can get them and loads more info at www.truckfestival.com



THE BEST IN LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY

Saturday 4th March - 7pm

Mike Wilmot, Tanyalee Davis, Junior Simpson, Phil Jerrod

Saturday 11th March - 7pm

Glenn Wool, Andrew Bird, Allyson Smith, Vince Atta

Saturday 18th March - 7pm

David Morgan, Daliso Chaponda, Jen Brister

Saturday 25th March - 7pm

DRob Rouse, Jake Lambert, Archie Maddocks

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open until the 8th May. It will gather information about why people attend gigs, which venues are considered important, how much people spend and how far they will travel.

The project is being run in partnership with the Musicians' Union, Music Venue Trust and UK Music, and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Two

years ago the project team ran a pilot live music census in Edinburgh. Its findings were used to inform the city council's decision to change its policies about noise levels to the benefit of performers.

People can sign up to take part, help collect data and to be kept informed at the official website: www.uklivemusiccensus.org.

WILD WILLY BARRETT'S FRENCH CONNECTION

SATURDAY APRIL 22. OLD FIRE STATION. OXFORD. DOORS 7pm



Imagine stumbling across a smoky back street bar, late night jam. Django Reinhardt & the Pougues. Robert Johnson accompanies Edith Piaf. Bob Marley's jammin' with Stephanie Grappelli. Tom waits to join in. This is French Connection.

TICKETS | 01865263990 | WWW.OLDFIRESTATION.ORG

THE PRETENDERS AND KAISER CHIEFS will headline the **Cornbury Festival** in July.

Both bands will join **Bryan Adams**, who was announced in December, at the final ever Cornbury, which is bowing out after 14 years. The festival's last hurrah takes place over the weekend of the 7th-9th July at **Great Tew Country Park**. Kaiser Chiefs will top the bill on Friday, alongside **Jack Savoretti**; Canadian rock star Adams heads Saturday's line-up, with Keane singer **Tom Chaplain** also on the bill, while Chrissie Hynde's legendary band will close the third and final day of the event, with **Jools Holland's Rhythm & Blues Orchestra** also playing that day.

Other acts confirmed for the festival include the unofficial queen of Cornbury **Imelda May**; **Ward Thomas**; **Sophie Ellis Bextor**; **Scouting For Girls**; **Right Said Fred**; **Midge Ure**; **Nine Below Zero**; **Black Dylan**; **St. Paul & the Broken Bones**; **Tex Pistols** and **Police Dog Hogan**.

The number of acts making a return visit to Cornbury reflects organiser Hugh Phillimore's wish to bow out in the company of some of his favourite performers from his 14 years running what had become an integral part of the Oxfordshire festival calendar, nicknamed Poshstock for its regular cast of visiting politicians, film stars and celebs. Talking about the farewell event Hugh said, "When you're having a farewell party you want to be surrounded by people you really love, so we've invited artists we've known and enjoyed over the years and luckily they've all been keen to join us."

"We've had a fantastic run over the last fourteen years and are very proud of the lovely event we've created. This year we will end on a high. I know that every artist on the line-up will deliver an exceptional live show. Live performance is my great love and for me it's the essence of Cornbury."

Tickets for Cornbury are on sale now at www.cornburyfestival.com

WOMANITY returns on Wednesday 8th March as part of the celebrations for International Women's Day. The event, which runs from 5-10pm at the Pitt Rivers Museum, is being organised by The Young Women's Music Project and will feature live performances, debates and workshops revolving around gender and arts, including a session on songwriting and the music industry with Candy Says' Julia Walker, plus performances from Candy Says, Team Drum and Orchid. The event is free and open to all ages and genders. Advance booking is advised for all activities. Visit www.ywmp.org.uk for full details.

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC build up for their spring season with a relaunched website. Visit www.ocmevents.org to find out what they've got coming to town over the next few months, including this month's Audiograft festival, co-curated with Brookes University's Sonic Art Research Unit, hosting experimental music concerts at various venues across the city. The festival launches with a concert at OVADA on Tuesday 7th March. Check out more at www.sonicartresearch.co.uk.

TRUCK STORE build up to **Record Store Day** with a product list launch event on Tuesday 21st March. The local indie record store on Cowley Road will announce all the limited edition releases available for RSD on Saturday 15th April. There'll also be live music in-store and special offers on beer, from 6pm.

Also this month Truck hosts an evening of reggae and dub on Thursday 2nd with live bands, plus

DJ sets from Natty Mark and Tom Dred, while on Thursday 9th Catgod play an acoustic in-store set, and on the 16th James Cuning from Maiians and We Aeronauts plays a DJ set. Finally, author Rhian Jones will host a book reading, Q&A session and signing for his book *Triptych*, exploring The Manic Street Preachers' 'Holy Bible' album. Visit truckmusicstore.co.uk for more details.

THE OXFORD GUITAR ORCHESTRA's live performance of Rhys Chatham's no-wave classic 'Guitar Trio Pt2' has been released as a download album by Audioscope. The 20-minute piece was performed at last year's Audioscope Festival, featuring seven guitars, bass and drums and featuring members of Ride, Young Knives, Kancho!, Listing Ships, Suitable Case For Treatment, Kid Kin and Eeebleee. The album costs £3 and includes a remix by Karhide. All profits go to homeless charity Shelter. Get it at audioscope.bandcamp.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.

TRUCK FESTIVAL

21-23 JULY 2017 • HILL FARM, OXFORDSHIRE, OX13 6AB



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HOT 8 BRASS BAND • BRITISH SEA POWER

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TOM GRENNAN • ALL THEM WITCHES • JAWS • SUPERFOOD
ROAM • WILL JOSEPH COOK • LAWRENCE TAYLOR

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LAST TICKETS REMAINING

STORNOWAY



NIGHTSHIFT HAS A longstanding rule that no band gets to grace the front cover more than three times. Stornoway long ago used up their quota. But then what are rules for other than to be broken, especially on special occasions. This month is a special occasion. This month Stornoway play their farewell tour, culminating in a final ever hometown show at The New Theatre. It marks the end of a decade of world class music and global success for a band who came together at university in Oxford, earned their reputation playing the city’s bars and clubs, became synonymous with performing at unusual, innovative venues, and who bow out at the very top of their game.

IN PURELY COMMERCIAL terms Stornoway are one of the most successful bands to come out of Oxford. They released three chart albums, including 2010 debut ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’, which earned them a Silver disc; headlined festivals and toured the world. Musically and lyrically the band explored love’s great adventure through the filter of the natural world, seabirds, mountains, saltwater marshes and grand vistas the backdrop to songs of the heart, at their very best when soaring above the world on an oncoming storm of metaphors as on ‘The Cold Harbour Road’ (a *Nightshift* end of year Number 1), or reflecting on life with intimate, sepia-tinted nostalgia on the gorgeous ‘Fuel

Up’. They could be musically quirky (the deceptively strange ‘Zorbing’), and downright daft (early songs like ‘The Good Fish Guide’, which while well intentioned in its environmental message reduced one *Nightshift* reviewer to a paroxysm of rage), but mostly they were warm, romantic, cosy, expansive, ambitious and sometimes just the right kind of epic. They were a band who were easy to love, both for their music and for their decidedly unrockstar personalities, as well as their unstinting loyalty to Oxford and their hometown audience. New sets of songs were regularly debuted to local crowds, and it’s entirely fitting that, having played pretty much every venue in Oxford, from pub backrooms to historical theatres, they take their final bow with a long-since sold-out show at the biggest venue we have to offer: The New Theatre, on Sunday 12th March.

AS STORNOWAY PREPARE TO say goodbye, *Nightshift* sat down with all four band members: Brian Briggs, Jonathan Ouin, and brothers Oli and Rob Steadman, who came together in 2005 as just another student band but leave us as *bona fide* Oxford music legends, and asked them first and foremost whether, when they started out they ever imagined they’d get as far as they did. Oli: “Certainly not! For the first six years of fun and hard slog it was just a joyful experience with no expectations, each new gig a total surprise. Even rehearsals for their

own sake were such a pleasure: we’d huddle in an icy shed to tinker with new musical ideas, taking breaks for TV and chips – it was one of these occasions that led to the sighting of Stornoway on the weather map, giving the band its name – and pile six of us into a two-seat van to reach gigs offered on MySpace. Actually that doesn’t sound very fun but it remains one of the happiest periods I can recall. As it became a professional endeavour, we had to work hard to keep that original inspiration in mind, and remind each other that it had started out as just a bit of an experiment.” What have been the chief highlights of your time together? Oli: “Many of our songs deal with travel and adventure and sure enough this is a big part of the story of the band. Being fortunate enough to see the world from the windows of tour buses and jumbo jets; travelling far and wide to make friends in faraway places; being introduced to a crazy planet of people in the most fun way imaginable. On the US tours we’d drive for hours through open country, listening to Brasstronaut or Real Estate or Comus, pressing on in the knowledge that at the end of the road a few folk with shared tastes would be gathering, to enjoy sounds together in a box for a few hours.” Rob: “Looking back, the early days feel like some of the biggest highlights: setting up for gigs at The Port Mahon, or slowly getting to know Jimmy [Hetherington] just a

little bit more each time we got to play at The Cellar. For me personally, always having dreamed of living in New York, as I do now, touring across the US was very special.” Brian: “Festivals have given us some truly magical highs and the biggest crowds we’ve ever played to. Our first Truck Festival in 2007 was so exciting; the festival was postponed last minute after flooding and we found ourselves backstage at a replacement gig in Oxford Brookes being confronted by an umbrella wielding psychopath called Anton Newcombe, singer of Brian Jonestown Massacre, who threatened to break our bones if we snooped in his stuff... or was that a lowlight?” Jon: “I think I have to put playing *Later with... Jools Holland* as a highlight, even if just thinking about the red camera light still makes me feel a bit nervous to this day. *Later...* was something I always watched as a kid whenever it was on, so it meant a great deal to me to do it in a muso kind of way. It was a blessing, and a slight curse in terms of nerves, to be encircled by assorted musical megastars in that millions more people watched it than otherwise would, and it would be dishonest to say it didn’t end up opening doors for us. I remember seeing from the corner of my eye Dave Grohl tapping his foot for at least a bar of one of our songs. I also enjoyed watching Jay-Z’s power handshake with Brian.” There must have been the odd lowlight along the way too.

Jon: “Seeing Steve Lamacq leaving a gig at the Dublin Castle in apparent disgust; I thought it was the end of the world; or David Bowie selfishly deciding to eclipse the entire music industry with his comeback ‘The Next Day’ on the week we released our second album; maybe Brian saying “Hello Wychwood!” onstage at Womad Festival to a mute audience; or being bottled at a festival in Stornoway; or falling off a stage somewhere in Euroland because I’m a bit blind. I love negative questions. Why don’t more interviewers ask negative questions?” Brian: “Supporting Rolf Harris and watching him sign the bell of Adam’s trumpet... or was that a highlight? Or trying to hold it together through the whole of ‘Fuel Up’ after an audience member shouted ‘GET YOUR COCK OUT!’ as I sang the opening line... no actually, that’s another highlight.”

INCREASINGLY IN RECENT times the members of Stornoway have concentrated more and more on their careers beyond the band. Brian, armed with a PhD in ecology and a well-known love for wildlife, particularly birds, works as a nature reserve warden for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in the Gower in south-west Wales, where he originally moved to write the band’s third and final album, ‘Bonxie’, and decided to stay. Oli promotes gigs locally and internationally under his Tigmus guise and will continue his musical journey with his other band, Count Drachma, as well as writing theatre scores; Rob, who now lives fulltime in New York, does graphic design work as well as playing in two bands, The Textiles and KT Mulholland, while Jon, who continues to live locally, makes soundtrack material for radio dramas, TV and theatre, and “songs for some imaginary band in the future...working in a shed in Oxford, but not getting the hint after all my bandmates have left town.” The fact a band like Stornoway got to the level they did and yet still had to do day jobs suggests it has become harder than it ever was to make a living from music. Oli: “I think every artist needs to start out with the full and sober expectation that it can only last so long: each band is just a start-up company and if the business isn’t looked after with the utmost care – committing and sticking to a budget; knowing how much time you want to put into it as the years pass; how much money you’re expecting to make back from what you put into it, then that’s not necessarily a terrible thing – it leaves more time for fun – but it means the project will be short-lived. Those rare bands that survive more than ten years are invariably taking sync deals; hiring the right people; looking after finances very carefully... This

is all pretty straightforward stuff, but often frowned upon by musicians. If your band can do these things and write great material, then you can be confident of a full-time career. “In some ways our move away from life as a full-time touring and recording band has been precipitated not by money, but simply by a love for what we each now do; for instance my gig booking, and Brian’s nature conservation work are things we’d have been doing anyway and were always going to come back and grab our interest again. We still each pursue something that totally possesses and enriches our lives; it just happens not to be the band anymore. At points every band will find they’re just waiting around, making the wrong kind of sacrifices, de-prioritising some of the most important things in life like friends and family. We’ve now each done a re-balancing act and we’re really happy with that.”

“Will there be tears at the end? I’m crying already!”

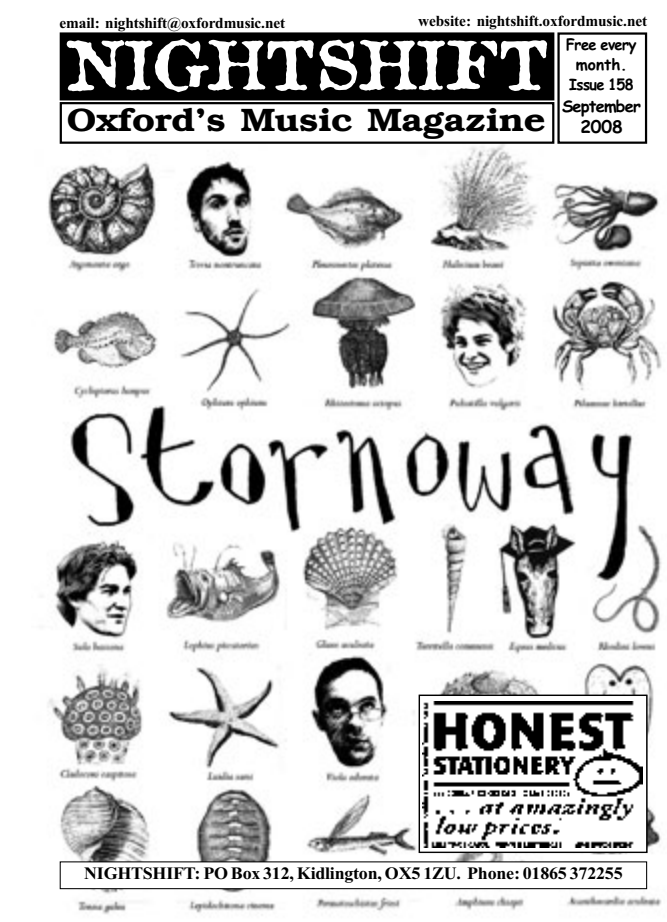
Brian: “You need to be business minded. There was this time when Ellie Goulding carved ‘I heart Stornoway’ into a marrow and gave it to Oli, before asking me whether Stornoway would like to collaborate with her; I turned her down. Say no more...” **STORNOWAY BECAME** synonymous with playing unusual venues both in Oxford and beyond, from greenhouses to wildlife sanctuaries to a natural history museum in The States; what first prompted them to branch out in that respect and which have been the most inspired, weird or funny venues they’ve played? Oli: “This was a bit of an ongoing obsession for us from the very earliest gigs, playing unusual spots like the Jacqueline du Pre; the Players Theatre in Thame; the first ever pop gig in the Sheldonian; a show in the Botanic Gardens, and even turning the A1 Pool Hall into a venue for the day to celebrate our signing to 4AD. We’d probably just run out of traditional spaces to play, having gigged for six years across every venue the city had to offer, so I didn’t think this was any more than one band’s quirky interest, but then in early 2012 I found myself in London, in somebody’s living room playing guest bass for Spring Offensive. The show had been explained to me as a top secret location with no other details, no idea who else would be on the bill. This turned out to be my first Sofar Sounds gig and is still one of the most moving gig experiences I’ve had. Sofar is now a worldwide concert movement and takes in some of the most unusual

venues; Stornoway have played quite a few. However some of the even stranger DIY-venue experiences we’ve arranged have been the tours of RSPB nature reserves. It was quite something to have birdsong mixed in with our own voices, and be joined in the pub by fans after for a round of trad folk tunes... that’s what booking your own venue can accomplish: you can end up engaging with more people on a deeper level than if you’re just playing a standard tour circuit making do with the same black boomy box night after night.” Brian: “The fact that we are able to play with minimal or even zero amplification has made it easier for us to have fun with gig venues: greenhouses, campervans, churches, museums, boats... you name it!” Jon: “One of my personal favourites from a couple of years ago was playing on, and staying the night on, Artangel’s boat installation, which is

gradually and naturally, and our fans have remained unbelievably loyal and supportive to us. We are also extremely proud to be an Oxford band and we can’t wait to see all the familiar faces that have aged ten years with us!” Oli: “Clearly we couldn’t actually book the rest of the tour til the Oxford date was sorted. It was tough deciding on the venue, because we really had played everywhere, but The New Theatre has stepped into the role perfectly. After 12th March, there will only really be one place left for us to try: the Kassam Stadium. That’ll be one reason for a reunion.” **SONGS LIKE ‘FUEL UP’; ‘THE Road You Didn’t Take’ and ‘Farewell Appalachia’** evoke images of journeys, reflections and farewells; has your entire songwriting arc been leading up to this final goodbye? Brian: “Eh? God no! That sounds way too much like forward planning...” Will there be tears at the end? Rob: “Definitely.” Brian: “I’m crying already!” Jon: “I’ll be laughing all the way to the bank.” **STORNOWAY ACHIEVED** more than most bands can ever hope to; looking forward to their chosen paths from here, what would they most like to achieve? Rob: “Making music that is as special to the number and variety of people that Stornoway’s music has been would be an honour.” Brian: “As a nature warden? It would have to be a *Nightshift* front cover featuring me holding a chainsaw in one hand and a beaver in the other.” And, having been there, done that and collected the Silver disc to prove it, what piece of advice would Stornoway give to a new young Oxford band, just starting out and hoping to emulate their success? Oli: “Do take your music seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously. Do your music proud by involving the right people, practising hard, and making long term plans, but don’t work with anyone who treats your songs and bandmates like anything other than the most precious thing in the world.” Rob: “Couldn’t have said it better.” Jon: “Try and write as many good songs as you can, and always ignore older bands’ advice without fail.” And of course, the question everyone wants answering: when can we expect the reunion? Brian: “When Ellie Goulding asks us if we’d like to collaborate with her...” Jon: “A couple of weeks after the tour, we’ll be renaming ourselves ‘Storn Away’ and just get on with making our next album. The name change will make it easier for everyone who preferred it spelt like that.”

STORNOWAY DAYS

Nightshift’s love for Stornoway goes right to the very start of the band’s story. Here we look back at some of the highlights of our coverage, while Brian, Oli, Jon and Rob pick the Stornoway songs that mean the most to them.



The first of Stornoway’s four Nightshift front covers, back in September 2008, to coincide with the relase of ‘On the Rocks’, with a neat concept cover collage.

RELEASED sponsored by SS20

STORNOWAY

‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’

(4AD)

I can’t remember being as excited at getting an album through the letterbox as this in ages. That Stornoway’s debut – the most highly-anticipated album by an Oxford band since Foals’ ‘Antidotes, if not longer – is released on 4AD is the icing on the cake really: a legendary label with a legacy of unstinting quality for over three decades now. It feels like confirmation of the love we’ve had for the band these last few years.

That virtually all of ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’ is already familiar does little to lessen the thrill of finally hearing it all laid out as a full story, a complete picture. This is an album without a single weak link, not an ounce of filler. All killer without being too far where Stornoway are concerned; they’re too gentle for such a description. Here instead is love and longing, a widescreen romanticism that transcends genre or geography.

Stornoway’s show at the Sheldonian Theatre last year, in itself an ambitious statement of intent, revealed a band who, having promised so much, delivered it all, and more, and reduced the audience to rapt awe. This album, even removed

from such a rarefied environment, is the acme of songwriting, performance and musicianship. Instrumentally there’s no point searching for ostentatious displays of virtuosity: arrangements are sparse and subtly orchestrated to allow the songs to breathe. It’s Brian Briggs’ voice that retains star billing – pure, powerful and magnificently restrained, from plaintive, almost hymnal solemnity to a rich, rounded burr – he carries every song, every line with masterful craftsmanship, and when he’s joined by the rest of the band, as on album opener ‘Zorbing’ or the sweetly oddball ode to technological enslavement, ‘We Are The Battery Human’, it’s with an inventiveness and ear for something slightly strange.

It’s difficult to pick out one song from another for particular praise but the sepia-tinted ‘Fuel Up’ and the magnificent, soaring ‘Goldharbour Road’ are obvious highlights. But then there’s the snaking country twang of ‘Here Comes The Blackout’ and the limpid, desolate ‘On The Rocks’, both songs that most bands would give their souls to have written. When Stornoway do



rock out a bit, on ‘Watching Birds’, it’s done with a wide-eyed simplicity that recalls Belle & Sebastian’s early outings.

Stornoway’s rise to this point in time has been steady and natural, allowing the band to develop into something genuinely special. Just how far that rise can take them is anyone’s guess, but if critical favour and commercial success does evade them, then I give up, because if music this good is to be wasted on the world, then the world isn’t worth bothering with.

Dale Kattack

An effusive review of debut album ‘Beachcomber’s Windowsill’ in May 2010 (Foals were that month’s cover stars)

JONQUIL / THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS / STORNOWAY / LITTLE COSMONAUT

The Cellar

New Year is always a good time to discover new bands. And to show off Christmas presents. We know what Stornoway got for Christmas, since they keep mentioning it: the book, Does Anything Eat Wasps? Oh, and a Stylophone, just one of many unusual instruments used across tonight’s gig.

So anyway, apparently spiders eat wasps, as does Stornoway’s singer’s goldfish, he informs us. Such whimsy is in keeping with the band’s occasional wackiness, as on ‘The Good Fish Guide’, but they’re far better when they beef things up, as on a song about catching the sun, like a heavier, rootsier Belle & Sebastian, while their opening track finds them switching between urgent funk-rock and scrawny ska skanking like a bug-eyed speed-freak. The restlessness that sticks with them throughout their set stands them in good stead.

Tonight’s openers Little Cosmonaut are twee beyond belief, a Korg synth resting precariously

doesn’t help that half their songs collapse amid nervous giggles.

This Town Needs Guns are tonight’s most traditional act, instrument-wise, one sax-led track the only break from their twin guitar attack. Made of sterner stuff than their recent EP, live TTNG manage to convey enough power, emotion and an occasional elaborate grasp of melody to suggest they could go on to better things, but you do sometimes wish they had a bit more simplicity and punch about them.

Conversely, Jonquil work better on CD: too much of their subtlety and wonky atmospherics get lost amid the clutter of a live band. Their faces painted like cats and armed with piano accordion, trumpet and upright bass, they’re hardly your common-or-garden indie rock band, and the ideas they have are obvious for all to hear: a mess of sea shanties, nursery rhymes and acid folk drones. But tonight they sound like snapshots rather than songs, rarely given time to breathe before

The band’s second ever live review. Nightshift cover star this issue (February 2007) was Richard Walters, who would go on to support Stornoway on tour in 2016

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8.15 MONDO CADA
9pm THE GULLIVERS
9.45pm STORNOWAY
10.30pm MILE HIGH YOUNG TEAM

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8pm FOXES!
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9.30pm MEPHISTO GRANDE

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On the Punt line-up in May 2007

STORNOWAY

The Sheldonian Theatre

Even by Stornoway’s ambitious standards, this is an *event*. Having performed at the Jacqueline du Pre Building and Oxford Botanical Gardens, tonight they become the first rock band ever to perform at the 340-year-old, Christopher Wren-designed University theatre. As such we get a brief lecture about the building’s history and what not to do (no food, no drinks, no chewing gum, you filthy pop-loving peasants), as well as a support set from the Oxford Millennium Orchestra, which features both Stornoway bassist Ollie Steadman and violinist Rahul Satija.

It feels strange watching a gig in such a rarefied environment, but amid such splendour Stornoway sound more magical than we’ve ever heard them before. Lit only by sparse footlights, set opener ‘Cold Harbour Road’ soars into the Sheldonian’s high ceiling like a cormorant above a bleak Hebridean beach: rich, powerful and tender, Brian Briggs’ delicate but majestic voice filling every inch of space in the expansive hall. New song ‘Fuel Up’ is a wide-eyed car journey through sepia-tinted memories and longing and tinged with a gorgeous sadness, Jon Quin swapping his keyboard for an Indian harmonium as Stornoway bring

a campfire intimacy to a setting more used to hosting full orchestras.

At every fresh turn Stornoway reveal greater songwriting riches, from Brian’s mesmerising rustic and romantic solo turn, ‘November Song’, to the anthemic, banjo-led ‘We Are the Battery Human’. Only ‘Long Distance Lullaby’ trips along the way, cluttered and clumsy, perhaps as much due to the unusual acoustics of the venue as the fact one of the brass players only joined the previous day.

And at the end Stornoway are joined by the massed strings of the Millennium Orchestra for an “experimental” (Brian’s description) run through ‘On The Rocks’, and ‘Unfaithful’, with violins conjuring the sound of raindrops on the former, and a heroic sweep of sound on the latter, while ‘Zorbing’ is bold, hearty and faintly weird.

An audience that has sat in rapt silence throughout rises as one at the finale and Brian, a wholly reluctant star, returns to demand a massed Halloween scream from the 800-strong throng; a cathartic end to a unique evening. Gigs at the Sheldonian are rare occurrences. Bands like Stornoway are even more precious.

Dale Kattack

A suitably entranced review of their historic show at The Sheldonian in October 2009

Tracks of our Year

Ah yes, the end of another great year for Oxford music, and so it falls upon us once again to compile the essential Top 20 of locally-made tunes. 2009 was a year that saw the emergence or development of some fantastic local talent. In some respects it’s been an odd year for Oxford music with most of the local big guns holed up in the studio or touring far afield, which explains the absence of Radiohead, Supergrass, Foals, Young Knives, A Silent Film and Little Fish from the list. What it does highlight, though, is the incredible strength in depth we have in Oxford’s music scene. Whichever way you look at it, it’s been Stornoway’s year: from playing Glastonbury and Radio 1’s Big Weekend, to appearing on Later with... Jools Holland and that astonishing show at the Sheldonian, they have beguiled and bewitched us at every turn and seem to be everyone’s favourite band in town. Anyway, here’s the Top 20. It’s a corker.



1. STORNOWAY: ‘Cold Harbour Road’

What a year it was for Stornoway. They triumphed at every turn, creating challenges for themselves and cruising to victory, with no agenda or attitude, just the quiet, confident knowledge that they, not the Devil, had all the best tunes. Their two official releases this year, ‘Zorbing’ and ‘Unfaithful’, were reworkings of older songs, but even barring those, we were spoilt for choice: it could have been ‘We Are The Battery Human’, or ‘Fuel Up’, but this beautiful, bleak ballad is the killer. Brian Briggs’ stunning voice soars like the seabird of the lyrics, bringing to life the ocean and wilderness that surround the town from which they take their name. ‘Cold Harbour Road’ is the sound of longing and loneliness and love and a thousand other flowering emotions all condensed into four and half minutes of musical magic.

2. BORDERVILLE: ‘Flights’
A band who forever stand firm against the drudgery of grey indie rock, Borderville’s long-awaited debut album was everything we’d hoped for and more – a full-on concept album that explored humanity’s relationship with work, obsession and control, played out like an elaborate rock musical by virtuoso musicians whose imaginations simply won’t sit still and fancy themselves as Bowie’s A-side. Since album ‘Flights’ is the

3. KATE GARRETT: ‘King Of The Birds’
The death of Kate Garrett from cancer in the summer, at the age of 37, was a tragedy. As the founder of the Oxford Young Women’s Band Project she was an inspiration to scores of girls, but it’s for her stunning vocal talent that we’ll remember her, and her final release was her greatest: ‘King Of The Birds’ is an otherworldly folk-pop flight of fancy that could melt the heart of both worlds without losing

4. RICHARD WALTERS: ‘The Animal’
Many years we’ve waited for Richard to release his debut album and Oxford’s finest vocal talent delivered in typically emotive style, his tender, powerful voice adrift among the sparse acoustic arrangements, delivering unexpected lyrical hammer blows like this stark, brutal tale of domestic violence that is the album’s title track. The shocking subject matter is so much more potent for its delicate grace

5. MEPHISTO GRANDE: ‘Sea Life Part 2’
Any band featuring a man dressed in gold lame playing a saxophone and clarinet simultaneously while all around him freewheels chaotically to Hell’s own blues bar gets our vote. Mephisto Grande are that band and made this year’s most wayward rock’n’roll gospel-punk jazz-core noise, coming on like a particularly belligerent Tom Waits fronting The Magic Band in The Birthday Party’s subterranean hideout. ‘Sea Life Part 2’ was the clamouring, cathartic highlight of their startling ‘Seahorse Vs The Shrew’ album.

6. WINCHELL RIOTS: ‘Glasgow Space Flight’
‘Oceanic’, ‘glacial’. Winchell Riots seem to attract epic adjectives, and we often find ourselves watching them, imagining their intricately epic music soundtrack *Life On Earth* or, sometimes, as they tap into both Sigur Ros and Muse, taking the best of both worlds without losing their own identity about the seas.

Top of the pile in Nightshift’s end of year Top 25, December 2009



MY FAVOURITE STORNOWAY SONG... by Stornoway

Brian: “They’re all a bit like children to me; it might be ‘(A Belated) Invite to Eternity’. Written in Bernie, my old campervan, the song grew out of a huge amount of emotional energy and used everyone’s creative and musical talents to the utmost. I am excited and daunted by performing it on the farewell tour.”

Oli: “‘Hedonism’ was the very first song I jammed with Brian and Jon back in 2005, and evolved into something really special... but was ultimately ditched. A live version exists somewhere on YouTube, filmed on a shaky camcorder by the sole audience member who could be bothered to listen to us that day, at Grinning Spider’s summer party at the Talbot Inn. This is the only recording I know of.”

Rob: “‘Gondwanaland’ has always been very close to my heart. It was possibly the first demo I heard through the wall between mine and Oli’s bedrooms at home. That was in the first few months before I finally got to audition and Oli was bringing rough recordings home. Although the song has made intermittent appearances in our sets over the years, I’ve always made sure it’s been on my phone or laptop so I can listen to it when I get down.”

Jon: “‘I Never Thought of Home’ was one of the first of Brian’s songs – if not the first – that I heard, back when we were both students in north Oxford. It was very simply recorded on a four-track machine, and when he played it to me it blew my head off. Whenever I hear it, I am transported back to the very beginning of the whole Stornoway thing. Later on I think we put it out as a b-side to something – can’t remember what – and the released version is that demo just as it was. I’m pleased people got to hear it like that.”

THE SWAMIS / LOS DIABLOS / STORNOWAY

The Exeter Hall

If “unassuming” to you means “tedious and forgettable”, skip a paragraph now. Go on, there’s plenty for you later. The rest of us can discuss Stornoway, who are quiet, likable and unabloodyssuming enough to make Belle & Sebastian look like Count Grishnackh, proffering AOR melodicism and Snow Patrol-style vocals that just skirt *nasally whining* to arrive at *disarmingly lovely*. Unsurprisingly they’re sometimes overly polite, especially in nods towards castrated reggae rhythms, but high points delight, such as a tune allegedly written in a *boulangerie* that sounds like a fascinating cross between 10cc and The Proclaimers. They could do with letting go a bit, and dropping the worst jazz break ever, but Stornoway are exploring some interesting corners of the overstuffed acoustic rock foyer.

With Mark “Punkin’” Wilder on drums and Jonathan James on guitar, the band’s first ever review, from May 2006, by David Murphy

RELEASED

THE GREAT WESTERN TEARS

‘Tales From Tallows’

(Self released)

If we’ve learned anything from Margo Price’s recent show in Oxford and our interview with Ags Connolly in last month’s *Nightshift* it’s that country music is at its best when life is at its worst. Heartache, sorrow, loss and regret? Check, check, check and check again. Which should make The Great Western Tears’ debut album a masterpiece.

We’re barely moments into opening track ‘Hang My Hat’ when singer Dava Waterhouse croons the line “It’s hard not to let the pain show,” in a solemn, husky voice that sounds like it’s long since been worn down by love and whisky. Moments later, on ‘Mistakes’, he realises “I can’t go back to that place”. If he means a love affair that went wrong in every conceivable way, it could equally be a town where he’s burned all his bridges or a darker place inside his own head. Whichever it is, any good times that were had there are over for good. The music, though, still plays and it’s a fine tune. ‘Hang My Hat’ starts as a sparse acoustic guitar paean before swelling into an elegant waltz, full of pedal steel, fiddle and sweet backing vocals, while ‘Mistakes’ carries a warm campfire sense of solitude.

But we’re hardly even touching to surface of the sorrow with these opening gambits. Recent single ‘Misty’ is a rich porch song whose pang of loneliness reflects the troubled young couple of its lyrics, separated by a thousand miles and a literal and metaphorical fog. If you’re wondering if it’s an endless misery



ride, you couldn’t be more wrong. ‘Binky of the Bay’ is an easy barroom canter, while album closer ‘Blue Checks, White Cotton’ is a lively, gospel-tinged honky tonk ride that transport you fully into some country barroom where you can lose yourself and all your troubles in a bottle or the arms of a stranger.

The album’s high point though is an emotional low: ‘Bid Her Well’ is a gorgeous farewell, a starlit, pedal steel-led lament with a melodic hook that could sweep a rodeo steer clean off its feet. Dava’s voice is a limpid pool of sorrow from which you’ll want to drink ever deeper while possibly the band’s secret weapon is backing singer Fern Thornton, whose understated, almost ghostly sweetness sprinkles a little fairydust over every tune she touches.

Maybe a little bit of magic could vanish all the heartache here, but you have ask, when it sounds this good, why would you want to.

Dale Kattack

BLACK SKIES BURN / UK HATE GRIND

‘Brian Blessed Are The Sick’

(Grindscene)

I must admit that, having spent the majority of my life so far listening to indie-pop, various strands of psychedelia, and frustratingly obtuse experimental music, I’m slightly out of my depth here. However Oxfordshire’s Black Skies Burn – and their album-mates for this split release, Bristol’s UK Hate Grind – might describe what they do, it’s not something I’d normally be exposed to. Is it Death Grind? Grindcore? Thrash?

Both bands remind me of Napalm Death, Slayer and Babymetal, jammed in a rusty blender and poured into a bloody mess; they’re all throatbleed vocals, densely-packed ultraspeed guitar riffing, pummelling drums, and focussed rage. It’s pretty compelling: one of the attractions to me of both the best indie and experimental music is a dogged rejection of current trends or sounds, and an adherence to very particular styles or approaches. And that’s delivered with crushing efficiency here,

albeit in a wildly different genre. Don’t be wrong-footed by the fact that this release contains 20 tracks – it’s over in the blink of an eye, a relentless mix of finely-honed tunes (yes, tunes, even though they may be swamped in blood and grime), screaming lyrics, and tongue-in-cheek audio samples. The album’s name, and its song titles – BSB’s ‘The Heineken Manoeuvre’ and ‘Censorshit’, and UHG’s ‘Nun, So Vile’ and ‘Postmortem Pat’ for example – suggest there’s as much knowing comedy mixed in here as violent, noisy, nihilistic rejection of modern society. It’s all good. How it fits into what I presume to be a vast pantheon of similar music from the 1980s to the present day, I don’t know. In itself, and of this moment in time, it’s does everything that bands should do, but so few actually are – it’s focussed, direct, true to itself and (to these ears) blisteringly satisfying.

Simon Minter

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AGS CONNOLLY

‘Nothin’ Unexpected’

(Helm)

Any opinions you may have that old-school outlaw music is an agglomeration of worn tyre clichés, or that any honky tonk a man from road-less-travelled Finstock could ever manage would be at best pastiche, all go up in so much hickory smoke the minute Ags Connolly snaps into the opening lines of ‘I Hope You’re Unhappy’, that charts the wry but hopeful moment a man is left alone with his bruised ego, as his magnanimity trails off down the road alongside his cheating partner.

Sure, the familiar meows of Stuart Nisbet’s lap steel, the Tex-Mex huff of Michael Guerra’s accordion, and the Hibernian seagull swoop of Eamon McLoughlin’s violin all weave their spell throughout this stunning, five star collection of memorable songs, but what keeps you dragging the needle back to the start is Ags’ voice: the unique wide-palette baritone, comforting, assured and topped out with enough glottal tics and emotional cadence to carve the word “yearn” in fifty-foot-high letters on Mount Rushmore. It’s as if Mel Street, Willie Nelson and Don Williams had each donated Ags their best vocal chord.

There is a batch of different viewpoint songs on the staple of pubs and bars, in the toe tappers of ‘Neon Jail’ and ‘Haunts Like This’, along with poignant lines in ‘When The Loner Gets Lonely’ (“He won’t always be there when you turn around”), all of which are “pour me” rather than “poor me,” and each sufficiently masterful on their own to highlight any album. It’s when he turns his bear glare onto the subject of love that Ags fully floors you in the manner of a one-ton pillow fight. If listened to while in a reflective mood his cowboy take on the oh so elegant lyrics of Loudon Wainwright III cover ‘I Suppose’, followed by ‘Fifteen Years’, with its low, swooning slide, and the equally ceding ‘Slow Burner’, they will turn you into a flat-out puddle.

To paraphrase the droll old Bakersfield joke: there are two kinds of music: country and western Oxfordshire.

Paul Carrera



CHARLIE CUNNINGHAM

‘Lines’

(Dumont Dumont)

The UK’s strong folk music tradition has remained obvious in mainstream acoustic music for many years, from balladeers of previous centuries, through to Fairport Convention and their kin in the 1960s and 70s and on to modern indie/pop. North America also developed its own acoustic traditions, pulling from work songs and the cultural melting pot that was the new world. This evolved into blues, Dylan and the whole expanse of country and Americana which have crossed the pond in such a major way over the last decade. Americana twang and doleful lamentation have become ubiquitous in both the charts and grassroots scenes of late, which is why Charlie Cunningham’s debut album is a delightful reprieve.

Cunningham’s playing style is built on Iberian nylon string guitar: not something you hear in pop music very often. However, instead of the intricate solo noodlings you might imagine in a dimly-lit flamenco bar, this influence is used to underpin slow-burning acoustic pop. It’s not too distant from Ben Howard on the surface, but at every moment the guitar tries to stand apart from the minimal accompaniments as something to take notice of, a unique selling point, but in fact feels like an opportunity missed.

Cunningham’s voice is strong and could be left to stand alone with the most minimal or studio magic, but instead Charlie and his lone guitar are



mostly swamped in reverb and dark synth. By the time I’ve made it all the way through ‘Lines’ the guitar, which initially caught my attention, seems more of a production choice than the foundation of what separates Cunningham from the rest of his contemporaries.

Which isn’t meant to be disparaging necessarily, more a reflection of the journey this album takes you on. It’s not straightforward, quiet pop for dinner parties and chillout streaming playlists, and the few times the flamenco influences are allowed to shine through, they are all the more successful and exciting for being used sparingly. Perhaps Cunningham’s next album will be stripped back with no backing and we will get to hear every individual strum and flourish, but for now we’ve got an album most certainly worth taking the time to get to know, to find your way into its core.

Matt Chapman-Jones

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SAL PARA

‘Her’

(Tremor)

Sal Para started as a solo project by Ted Mair, but has now apparently expanded to a four-piece live band, which is a little surprising given the claustrophobic nature of ‘Her’, the lead song of their debut single, on new local label Tremor Recordings. This six-minute-long track presents itself neatly in three parts; in the first, a sparse, stuttery beat is overlaid by soft synth chords before the quiet, hesitant vocals float in and out; the second part fades in around a third of the way through as the tempo is doubled by a fuller set of drums; these depart two thirds in, leaving a single beat with a rather beautiful Jean Michel Jarre-esque arpeggiated sparkly synth melody for a while, before the pulsating chords return.

The vocals seem incongruously and disingenuously off-kilter and detached to begin with, but insinuate themselves subtly via Arcade Fire-like octave double-tracking and repetition; the apparently strophic single-line lyrics are given a slightly different character each time by what’s going on underneath, and the more you hear the refrain “I only think of you,” the more earnest, yet still mysterious, it comes across.

Oddly, when heard as a complement to the main event rather than an alternative, the Rancid Jazz remix of ‘Her’ seems to work better; at least to begin with, it presents the vocals – and sentiment – at the distance from the listener they feel they are intended to be, more hidden and lost than in the original.

Kirsten Etheridge

The Cellar
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Monday 6th
JOSEFIN ÖHRN + THE LIBERATION: The Bullingdon
Nightshift’s favourite album of 2016 was Josefin Öhrn + The Liberation’s ‘Mirage’, a shimmering, hypnotic slab of silicon synth-pop, krautrock, psychedelia and scuzzy art-pop that immersed itself in all the best bits of Stereolab, The Velvet Underground, Suicide, Neu!, Portishead and Ladytron. Seriously, if you’re going to print a list of influences, why not make it the best list of influences ever? But the Stockholm-based singer and her band go well beyond such influences on ‘Mirage’, her second album for the very excellent Rocket label (home too to Hills and Goat, with whom Öhrn has toured). Across the album she creates a dreamlike atmosphere with guitars and electronics and a voice that’s on the seductive side of sultry, while propelling everything along on motorik grooves. While she’s been nominated for a Grammy in her native Sweden and played major festivals like Roskilde, she’s only just getting a name for herself in the UK and this is her first major headline tour and her Oxford debut – courtesy of Future Perfect, who are making a habit of bringing the best rising acts to town. New or not, ‘Mirage’ has practically been glued to *Nightshift*’s record deck since it came out last year and we’re so far beyond excited about this we actually started queuing up a month ago as soon as it was announced. Sometimes the very best music is worth such efforts.



MARCH

THURSDAY 2nd
TALL SHIPS: The Bullingdon – Brighton’s Tall Ships set sail again, this time to promote second album ‘Impression’, their supercharged sonic tide of krautrock, post-rock, indie-funk and mathsy fidgeting drawing comparisons with Foals, Friendly Fires and Battles.
THE BOWIE EXPERIENCE: The New Theatre – Career-spanning, costume-changing big stage tribute to the late and very great Mr Bowie.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – First gig of the month for the prolific local swamp-rock, blues, funk and ska-pop veterans.
GREAT APE + DAISY + THE SHANTICS + FREEMANTLE: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music new bands showcase.
NATTY MARK & TOM DRED: Truck Store – An evening of reggae and dub instore at Truck, with DJs and bands.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running open club night, with local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers ad performance artists every week.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon – Weekly open mic night.
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly open mic night.
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Open blues jam.

FRIDAY 3rd
BOSSAPHONIK with YAABA FUNK: The Cellar – Latin dancefloor, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, tonight with a live set from Brixton’s eight-piece Afrobeat, funk and psychedelic hi-life ensemble Yaaba Funk, touring second album ‘My Vote Dey Count’, inspired by Fela Kuti, Funkadelic, James Brown and Ebo Taylor.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with SMILEY & THE UNDERCLASS + STOLBY + ASH LEWIS + RESTRUCTURE: The Wheatsheaf – Rootsy hip hop, reggae, rock and punk mash-up from London’s Smiley & the Underclass at this month’s Klub Kak party, plus sweet, seductive acoustic folk-pop newcomers Stolby.
AMY WINEHOUSE EXPERIENCE: O2 Academy – Tribute to the late singer.
NIGHT DANCE FANTASY: The Ashmoleon – Guitarist Nick Fowler, part of Gaz Coombes’ touring band, performs an interpretation of composer Robert Saxton’s 1987 piece ‘Nice Dance’.
TRACKSUIT & TRANCE: The Bullingdon – 90s rave club night.
SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: James Street Tavern – Monthly bands and jam night hosted by Sparky, tonight featuring classic r’n’b from The Mad

Larry Band, funky blues from Tom Ivey, and Jesters.
LUNA SEA + THE MATT CHANARIN BAND: The Taproom Social, Hinksey – Tribute to prog-rockers Camel.
WHOLE LOTTA DC: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute to AC/DC.

SATURDAY 4th
EVAROSE + VERIDIAN + A WAY WITH WORDS: O2 Academy – Banbury’s alt.rock / pop-punk outfit head off on their Invisible Monsters tour alongside Reading’s Incubus/ Young Guns-inspired rockers Veridian and grungy rockers A Way With Words.
SOLARDO SESSIONS: O2 Academy – Cutting edge house and techno from Manchester duo Mark Richards and James Eliot.
SIMPLE with PALMS TRAX: The Bullingdon – Smooth, melodic, synth-heavy house in the vein of Legowelts, John Heckle and Trevor Howard from Berlin-based DJ and producer Palms Trax at tonight’s Simple club night.

EZIO: The Cellar – Bluesy acoustic folk from Cambridge’s enduring duo, best known for their song ‘Cancel Today’ being one of Tony Blair’s Desert Island Discs picks, out again on tour after the release of their ninth studio album, ‘Daylight Moon’.
FREERANGE: The Cellar – UK garage, grime and bass club night, playing new, underground sounds.
SAM BAILEY + NIKKI LOY: The New Theatre – The former *X Factor* winner continues to exist and continues to smash it, with dire consequences for decent pop music everywhere. She’s got a new album out called ‘Sing My Heart Out’, which should prove messy, and very likely fatal. Still, anything to keep the wheels of fame rolling, eh. Local singer-songwriter Nikki Loy provides tour support, promoting her new album.
DIRT A GOGO + 1968 + CRIMSON TUSK: The Wheatsheaf – Raw, raucous metal riffage, stoner grooves and rockabilly rhythms from Dutch heavyweights Dirt a GoGo at tonight’s Buried in Smoke show, joined by Cheshire’s Sabbath, Blue Cheer and Mountain-inspired riffbeasts 1968 and local stoner-blues stars Crimson Tusk.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Black Swan
BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute band. Take a guess.
JAMES HITCHMAN + NARDA NARDA + ALEX MATTHEWS + BIRDS OF A FEATHER + THE RACE: The Swan, Wantage – Charity gig in aid of The Children’s Trust, with Alphabet Backwards singer James Hitchman, plus reformed indie rockers The Race.

SUNDAY 5th
BLOODSTOCK – MUSIC TO THE MASSES: The Bullingdon – Five more local heavy rock, metal and punk bands go head to

head for the chance to win a slot at this year’s Bloodstock Festival. Tonight’s combatants are K-Lacura; Trauma UK; 1000 Chains; Force of Mortality and The Hope Burden.
VANT: O2 Academy – London’s garage-rockers return to town after supporting You Me At Six here in October, the band kicking it out in the vein of The Strokes, Pixies and Vines as they plug debut album ‘Dumb Blood’, out on Parlophone.
MIKE & THE MECHANICS: The New Theatre – The press release comes with the headline “Mike & the Mechanics present a night full of hits”. Think they got the letters in that last word muddled up slightly.
FRANKLIN’S TOWER + FIREGAZER + THE JESTERS + JULES PENZO: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of live acoustic folk, blues and more, including Grateful Dead tribute act Franklin’s Tower.
BEARD OF DESTINY + PURPLE MAY + JACOB MARCH + SAMMY POPE & SARAH GRAY + PHIL GARVEY: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-8.30pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the downstairs bar, hosted by Giddyup Music.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms – Weekly open session.
MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The Bell, Wantage – Footstomping boogie from the local crew.

MONDAY 6th
JOSEFIN ÖHRN + THE LIBERATION: The Bullingdon – Seductive psych-pop wonder from *Nightshift*’s current fave rave – *see main preview*
OYSTERS 3: Nettlebed Folk Club – John Jones, Alan Prosser and Ian Telfer from pioneering British folk-rock veterans Oyster Band perform an intimate, stripped down set from across the band’s extensive career.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 7th
SEAFRET + FREDDIE DICKSON: The Bullingdon – Breezily emotive acoustic folk-pop from Bridlington duo Seafret, back in town for the first time since their showing here on the New Faces Acoustic tour. Tonight’s show is already sold out, a triumph for a band who’ve made a mission of staying below the hype radar even as debut album ‘Tell Me It’s Real’ picked up a slew of rave reviews, capturing the airy romanticism of the North Sea mists the band is named after.
CHRIS WOOD + OWEN COLLINS: Old Fire Station – Traditional folk with a decidedly contemporary lyrical edge from singer Chris Wood at tonight’s Glovebox show, mixing English folk with traditional Appalachian sounds and singing about modern political issues as well as more personal songs about fatherhood and alienation. Performance poet Owen Collins supports.
BANG TANGO + LAST GREAT DREAMERS + THE BLACK BULLETS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – LA’s veteran hard rock / glam metal outfit come to the Shire, still fronted by original singer Joe Lesté and now joined by former Dio guitarist Rowan Robertson as the band celebrate their 25th anniversary. Support at tonight’s OxRox show comes from reformed 90s glam-rockers Last Great Dreamers with their suitably sleazy take on Hanoi Rocks and

Dogs D’Amour’s power-pop, recent tour support to Tigertailz as well as The Runaways’ Cherie Currie.
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern
SE-10: The Cellar – Grime, garage and jungle club night.
OSPREY & FRIENDS: St. Aldates Tavern – Free fortnightly jam session with bluesman Osprey and chums.

WEDNESDAY 8th
DUTCH UNCLES: O2 Academy – Inventive pop sounds from Manchester’s enduring outsiders – *see main preview*
SOFAR SOUNDS: Venue TBC – Sofar Sounds’ regular series of gigs in secret, unusual venues continues, tonight celebrating International Women’s Day, featuring a selection of Oxford’s best female artists in a venue that will be revealed to ticket holders the day before.
BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – 80s pop, new wave, disco, glam and synth-pop club night.

THURSDAY 9th
ASHANTI: O2 Academy – An Oxford debut, we think, for the r’n’b superstar whose eponymous 2002 debut became the fastest selling debut album by a female r’n’b singer ever. While her star shone brightly for a few years, and included collaborations with everyone from Notorious BIG and Ja Rule to Busta Rhymes and R Kelly, her music career has taken second place to acting in recent years, though she teamed up with Michelle Obama a couple of years back for the release of a single promoting drinking water. Her sixth studio album is due out, a follow-up to the disappointing ‘Braveheart’, and expect all the hits, including ‘Happy’.
WHITE KITE: The Cellar – Debut Oxford show from east London newcomers White Kite, touring their debut single ‘Swan’, mixing ambient synth-pop with rich, woozy indie-funk.
DOT’S FUNKY ODYSSEY: The Bullingdon – Soulful tunes, Latin vibes and funky grooves from the local funk and soul band, playing Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye and Michael Jackson among other classics and originals.
MASIRO + THE HOPE BURDEN + GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + LEE RILEY: The Jericho Tavern – Heavy-duty musical adventures at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show, with visceral mathcore noise from Masiro; instrumental post-rock and metal from The Hope Burden; atmospheric post-rock soundscaping from GITP and oppressive drones from Lee Riley.
FLATLANDS + SLATE HEARTS + SELF HELP + HIGH TIDE ROYALS: The Library – EP launch show for former- Aureate Act crew Flatlands, leaving the expansive, convoluted prog explorations behind in favour of upbeat indie rocking in the vein of Ash and The View. Ferocious grunge noise from Slate Hearts in support.

CATGOD: Truck Store – Acoustic instore set from the local electro-jazz/pop crew.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford



Wednesday 8th
DUTCH UNCLES: O2 Academy
Dutch Uncles have never sat comfortably in the UK music scene. Right from the beginning the band, from Marple in Greater Manchester, found it easier to release records in Germany than here, and it’s only with the release of their fifth album, ‘Big Balloon’, that they’ve started picking up airplay beyond the confines of late night 6Music. They’re a band to whom tags like ‘complex’ and ‘oddball’ are regularly, and lazily, applied, just because their take on 80s pop music doesn’t fit neatly into expectations. Their glossy, sometimes awkward funk and electro-pop takes its influences from Steely Dan, Fleetwood Mac and Scritti Politti as much as it does Prince, Sparks and XTC, with previous tourmates Wild Beasts and Sunderland’s Field Music among their few contemporaries. 2015’s ‘O Shudder’ saw the band shift from their early skittish, angular indie to a more solidly funky and atmospheric sound, which continues onto the new record, singer Duncan Wallis’ nervous, androgynous falsetto guiding the listener through his personal neuroses, whether they be health scares or sexual dysfunction. So, yeah, out of the ordinary, eccentric and maybe a bit off-kilter, Dutch Uncles are also intricate, intelligent and, most importantly, thoughtfully melodic. In a country where Catfish & the Bottlemen and Circa Waves get star billing, maybe such attributes mean their future fame and fortune still lie further afield.

FRIDAY 10th
USA NAILS + SNOB + GIRL POWER + BASIC DICKS: The Wheatsheaf – Quality noise courtesy of Idiot King tonight with noise-rock supergroup USA Nails – featuring members of Future of the Left; Oceansize, Kong and Silent Front – mixing incendiary walls of abrasive noise with motorik Krautrock and sheer, blinding volume. Get in. Great hardcore punk support from London’s Snot, plus a return to live action with a new drummer for local hardcore and D-beat wreckers of civilisation Girl Power, and vegan-core punk from Basic Dicks.
TRAGEDY + TWISTED STATE OF MIND + CHEROKII: The Bullingdon – return to town for the heavy metal tribute to The Bee Gees, with energetic, melodic thrash and heavy rock from Twisted State of Mind, and riffs’n’beats action from thunderous duo Cherokii.
LEWIS & LEIGH: St. John the Evangelist – Raw, elegant, emotive Americana in the vein of Wilco, Gillian Welch and Whiskeytown from Welshman Al Lewis and Mississippi’s Alva



Monday 13th
LAURA MARLING: O2 Academy

Laura Marling is an absolute gem of a singer and musician and anyone who disagrees can bugger off back to their bedroom to listen to the honking foghorn that is Adele until we decide they’ve been punished enough. Marling’s voice has way more variety and depth than other more commercially successful singers, light and airy one minute, playful and seductive the next, dark and conversational the next. It’s kept her fresh across six albums, the most recent of which, ‘Semper Femina’, recorded in LA and produced by Blake Mills, is out this month and explores themes of womanhood and feminine relationships with poetic, philosophical insightfulness, inspired by the work of psychoanalyst Lou Andreas-Salome. It follows on from her podcast series, *Reversal of the Muse*, which explored femininity and creativity with A-List guests like Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris. The lead track from the new album, ‘Soothing’, a slinky, serpentine song, finds Marling moving into almost jazz territory, although she’ll always be seen as the queen bee of the nu-folk movement, having made her name aged just 18 with her debut album ‘Alas, I Cannot Swim’. She’s got a catalogue of classic songs under her belt now - ‘Rambling Man’; ‘Sophia’; ‘Hope in the Air’ and the gorgeous ‘Goodbye England (All Covered In Snow)’ among them, and three Mercury Prize nominations is testament to her enduring star quality – a star quality that should see her playing Wembley, but tonight’s show, as part of a major UK tour, will be sold out well in advance, as it should be.

Leigh, at tonight’s Empty Room promotion, the pair out on a headline tour to promote debut album ‘Ghost’ after touring with local boys The Dreaming Spires and being nominated for two gongs at the inaugural UK Americana Awards last year.

GUNS’N’ROSES EXPERIENCE UK: Fat Lil’s, Witney

SATURDAY 11th
GENRES feat. DJ GUV & EKSMAN: O2 Academy – Drum&bass club night from Brighton’s Genres, tonight with sets from DJ Guv

and MC Eksman, plus A.M.C and Phantom MC, Humaz and a jungle set from Voltage.

FREERANGE ROOTS with IRATION STEPPAS & CHANNEL ONE: The Bullingdon – The monthly roots and dub club hosts Leeds’ club leaders Iration Steppers for some heavy duty dub.

VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN + SILK ROAD: The Wheatsheaf – Metal and southern rock from Violence is Golden, plus swaggering hard rock and blues riffage from Silk Road.

GREEK MUSIC PATHWAYS: The Cellar – Traditional Greek music with MuSaicon.

PANGAEA: The Cellar – Late club night.

HAZEY JANE + ROSIE CALDERCOTT: The Jericho Tavern – Indie-folk from Hackney’s Hazezy Jane, out on tour to promote their debut EP.

THE OXFORD BEATLES: The Harcourt Arms – Tribute to the Fab Four.

SALLY BARKER + KADIA: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Founding member of The Poozies, occasional collaborator with Show of Hands, and more recently a finalist on *The Voice*, Sally Barker gets back to her natural home of the folk clubs of the UK with a solo tour, tonight at the Wychwood Folk Club.

BREEZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock’n’roll party covers.

JOHNNY’S SEXUAL KITCHEN: The Old Anchor, Abingdon – Classic rock and blues covers.

SUNDAY 12th
STORNOWAY: The New Theatre – So, it’s thank you and good night from the local folk-pop heroes, bowing out in style with a long-since sold-out show at Oxford’s biggest live music theatre, after over a decade of performing shows at some of the more unusual venues around the world, including a history-making show at The Sheldonian. A genuine star-quality band who will go down as one of the greatest Oxford ever produced. We’ll miss them – *see main interview feature*

THE SHERLOCKS: The Bullingdon – Anthemic, Arctic Monkeys-style rocking from Sheffield’s Sherlocks, back out on tour following dates supporting The Libertines on last year’s arena tour’, and having previously supported Scouting For Girls, Reverend & the Makers and The Enemy.

MAEVE BAYTON + BEAR BOZEMAN + ROSE DEGAL + MONKEY FISTS + PUPPET MECHANIC: The Wheatsheaf (2.30pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar, hosted by Klub Kakofanney.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms

MONDAY 13th
LAURA MARLING: O2 Academy – The Queen of stately pop understatement returns – *see main preview*

OXFORD CLASSIC JAZZ: The Harcourt Arms

CRAOBH RUA: Nettlebed Folk Club – Nettlebed’s long-running folk club celebrates St Patrick’s Night early with some traditional Irish songs and tunes.

CUTS with SHOGUN ASSASSIN: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 14th
BONAFIDA: O2 Academy – Denim-clad bad-

ass rocking from Malmo’s Bonafide, out on a UK tour having made their name supporting the likes of Status Quo and Deep Purple, their old school blues-rock and r’n’b in the lineage of ZZ Top, Van Halen and Skid Row, while their song ‘Fill Your Head With Rock’ is something everyone can agree with, right?

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Monthly goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night, with residents Doktor Joy and Bookhouse keeping it dark on the decks.

SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 15th
THE AMAZONS: The Bullingdon – Reading’s anthemic power-pop crew The Amazons return to town following their Best Breakthrough Act nomination from Q magazine and a Hottest Record in the World endorsement from Annie Mac for new record ‘Little Something’.

Monday 20th
IDLES: The Bullingdon
The greatest opening couplet of any song ever is “I am angry, I am ill and I’m as ugly as sin / My irritability keeps me alive and kicking,” from Magazine’s ‘Song From Under the Floorboards’. It’s a sentiment that applies to an ever growing number of bands faced with turbulent social and political times: Fat White Family; Sleaford Mods; Cabbage, and none more so than Bristol’s Idles. Rage, disgust and bleak humour are their driving forces and they make an ugly, caustic, mirthful music to reflect that fucked-off-with-the-world attitude. Born in Bristol’s underground music scene the band have been a round a fair while but after a lengthy hiatus they came back last year with a set of new songs that have finally started to attract the right sort of attention, notably from Huw Stephens and Steve Lamacq, who have championed recent singles ‘Well Done’ and ‘Stendhal Syndrome’. The first sounds like a pumped-up pitbull take on something Art Brut might have made, with lines like “Why haven’t you got a medal? / Even Mary Berry has a medal”, while the latter is a celebration of art and individuality disguised as a hectoring rant about modern art. And then there’s tracks like ‘Divide & Conquer’, a beast-like dirge that takes aim at the dismantling of the NHS and sounds like Killing Joke in one of their more tribal moments. If Idles’ scuzzy noise-pop and barnstorming garage rock is too confrontational for mainstream audiences, at least they’re fighting back in musical form. You’d do well to join their army.



LUCY SPRAGGAN: O2 Academy – Whimsical hip hop-infused acoustic pop from the former *X-Factor* contestant, best known for her song ‘Tea & Toast’, back in town as part of a tour to promote her fourth album ‘I Hope You Don’t Mind Me Writing’.

THURSDAY 16th
SAIICHI SUGIYAMA + MATT EDWARDS BAND: The Bullingdon – Classic British blues Japanese style from Tokyo-born guitarist and singer Saiichi Sugiyama, a long-time collaborator with Cream’s Pete Brown, and regularly dubbed The Japanese Clapton for his 60s-inspired British blues style. He’s drawn admiring comparisons to Peter Green along the way too while over the years he’s worked with Zoot Money and members of Bad Company and Hot Chocolate as well as playing guitar in Shana Morrison’s band. Local blues rock support from guitarist and singer Matt Edwards and his band.

THE BLACK DELTA MOVEMENT + PSYENCE + THE NEON VIOLETS: The Cellar – Heavy-duty psychedelic garage rocking from Hull’s Black Delta Movement, out on a headline tour after supports to The Jesus & Mary Chain, Temples and Drengé, the band’s bluesy rocking inspired by Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, The Brian Jonestown Massacre, Humble Pie and Spacemen 3. Great local psych-groove rocking from The Neon Violets and 60s-inspired psychedelic rockers Psyence.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Lively, eccentric blues rocking from the veteran singer and guitarist, well into his sixth decade of gigging.

THE CORSAIRS + GHOUL + THIN WIRE FENCE: The Jericho Tavern – Psychobilly and rock’n’roll from The Corsairs at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show, plus horror-punk from local newcomers Ghoul.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 17th
NINE BELOW ZERO: The Bullingdon – The near-legendary r’n’b pioneers return to Oxfordshire, founding singer and guitarist Dennis Greaves still leading the band’s high-energy blues charge alongside fellow 9BZ veterans Mark Feltham and Brian Bethall. Having hit a creative and commercial peak in the early-80s with albums ‘Live At The Marquee’ and ‘Don’t Point Your Finger’, it’s always been live that the band have made their reputation.

BOSSAPHONIK with NUBIAN TWIST The Bullingdon – Latin dance, global grooves, Balkan beats and nu-jazz dance club night with a live set from Leeds/London twelve-piece Nubian Twist, fusing dub, hip hop and afrobeat with jazz improvisation, inspired by King Tubby, Fela Kuti and Herbie Hancock.

SUPERFOOD + KING NUN + PALE WAVES: O2 Academy – Dirty Hit label tour with Birmingham’s Britpop-inspired rockers Superfood repackaging the sounds of Blur, Oasis and Supergrass into pop-friendly new shapes. They’re joined by abrasive teen-grungers King Nun, getting loud and bolshy in a Queens of the

Stone-Age kind of way, and ethereal electro-indie starlets Pale Waves.

DAISY RODGERS MUSIC with CATGOD + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + CLUB SODA: The Cellar – Indie promoters DRM host rising local electro-jazz outfit Catgod, mixing ambient electro-pop, cocktail jazz, afro-pop, indie funk and glitchy electronica into a sweet, atmospheric whole. They’re joined by ambient space-pop crew Flight of Helios and 80s pop-influenced people Club Soda.

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

CRYSTALLITE + CALLOW SAINTS + NEON TEEPEE + REAL KOOL KILLER: The Wheatsheaf – It’s All About the Music show with grungy stadium rockers Crystallite, Aylesbury rockers Callow Saints and more.

SOPRANO SUMMIT LEGACY BAND: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Soprano saxophonists Alvin Roy and Mike Wills pay tribute to 70s band Soprano Summit backed by piano, guitar, bass and percussion.

W.A.M: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Ska-punk covers.

SATURDAY 18th
HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT: O2 Academy – Nigel Blackwell is surely due some kind of recognition as one of the country’s greatest poets. The lad from the Wirral, and arguably Tranmere Rovers’ most famous fan, has been writing caustic, surreal observations of the mundane and ridiculous since his band’s wonderous 80s debut, ‘Trumpton Riots’. Back in town for the first time in five years, his timeless, brilliantly observed songs about obscure footballers and celebs and the idiocy of humanity, particularly musicians, remain a treasure.

HOLY MOMENTS + THE PHAT CARDINALS + FREDDY LE CRAGG: The Wheatsheaf – First leg of Leon ‘Dancing man’ Stiles’ annual birthday celebrations, Oxford’s most enthusiastic regular gig goes partying in the company of pop-punkers Holy Moments, who come in somewhere between Green Day and Rancid, and surf-rockers The Phat Cardinals.

RICK ASTLEY: The New Theatre – The improbably rejuvenated 80s popster is never gonna give it up, so get rickrolling along to ‘Together Forever’, ‘When I Fall In Love’ and songs from his recent number 1 album ‘50’. Oh, and ‘Never Gonna Give You Up’, obviously.

BASS ESCAPE: The Bullingdon – Upbeat house and commercial drum&bass at the new monthly club night.

RAN KAN KAN + LAKUTA: Old Fire Station – Local Cubanista collective Ran Kan Kan bring their classic son montuno and mambo party tunes to the OFS, alongside Brighton afrobeat, funk, soul and Latin dance eight-piece Lakuta, bringing their collective roots in Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Malaysia and mainland Europe to play in their mix of traditional and contemporary dance tunes.

DEADBEAT APOSTLES + THE AUTUMN SAINTS + COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + PAPA NUI: The Cellar – Rich, expansive, country-tinged classic soul from Deadbeat Apostles, taking Wilson Pickett and Percy Sledge for a few whiskies down at Willie Nelson’s favourite drinking hole. They’re joined at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show by atmospheric Americana trio The Autumn Saints, bluesy country rockers Country For Old Men,



Monday 20th
GOLDFRAPP: O2 Academy

Although she never really got the credit for it, Goldfrapp were one of the most influential artists of the last decade, influencing everyone from Madonna and Bat For Lashes to Florence & the Machine, with singer Alison Goldfrapp becoming an iconic pop figure along the way. At their best their trick was to take the best ideas from the musical underground and turn them into pop gold, like the techno-glam boogie of ‘Strict Machine’ or the sultry disco pulse of ‘Ride a White Horse’. The career-defining ‘Black Cherry’ was close to modern day electro-pop perfection, while 2008’s ‘Seventh Tree’ took a complete stylistic about-turn and brought a dreamy electro-pop sheen to spooky pagan folk music, inspired by *The Wicker Man*. That untarnished sheen took a bit of a dive with 2010’s ‘Head First’, with Goldfrapp and pop partner Will Gregory coming on all kitsch and 80s pastiche, sounding like followers rather than innovators, stealing the euphoric pomp of ELO, Giorgio Moroder and Fleetwood Mac. 2014’s ‘Tales of Us’ was a return to form, launched with a brace of grandiose shows backed by a full orchestra, and this month the pair release their seventh album, ‘Silver Eye’. Given the peerless music on her best albums we have high hopes. Whatever, with the band’s love of Weimer cabaret and theatre, every show is an event and Alison has rare star quality in modern mainstream pop music.

and funk-popsters Papa Nui.

FLUID: The Cellar – Bass, grime and drum&bass club night.

MUDSLIDE MORRIS & THE REVELATORS: The Dolphin, Wallingford

THE BRITPOP BOYS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – What, no Elastica, Echobelly or Sleeper?

DRIVIN’ SIDEWAYS: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Harmonica-led blues.

SUNDAY 19th
BLOODSTOCK – METAL TO THE MASSES: The Bullingdon – Latest heat of the battle of the bands competition to win a place at this summer’s Bloodstock, with My Diablo, Rebel Station, Beaver Fuel, Echo 4 Four and Raised by Hypocrites.

HOLDING ABSENCE: The Cellar – Intense, atmospheric melodic hardcore and metalcore from Cardiff’s fast-rising noise bringers,



Friday 24th

AMERICAN AQUARIUM: The Bullingdon

There’s some neat irony at work when a band release what is intended as their final album, filled with reflections on not making it, and such is the critical and commercial reaction that it becomes the album that makes them. So it was with Raleigh, North Carolina outfit American Aquarium and their 2012 album, ‘Burn. Flicker. Die’, the result of years of touring, partying and eating up the road miles while never really getting anywhere, and something of a clarion call for artistic integrity in the face of failure. Produced by Drive-By Truckers’ Jason Isbell, it revealed them to be one of the best underground country-rock bands in the States and singer BJ Barnum as a poetic lyricist in the mould of Springsteen and Richmond Fontaine’s Willy Vlautin, his lived-in voice perfect to convey tales of hurt, heartache and hangovers. Acclaim finally accorded, the band – named after a line in a Wilco song – followed that album with 2015’s ‘Wolves’, their eighth in ten years and possibly an even better set of songs, demons faced down, decades of disappointment and desperation shrugged off, the twang of pedal steel mixing with the drunken swagger of early-70s Rolling Stones. And who else to bring such heroes of the American underground to Oxford than Empty Room Promotions. Empty rooms being something American Aquarium are long since done facing. Accord them the heroes welcome they deserve – it’s been well earned.

out on tour to promote towering new single ‘Permanent’.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms

MONDAY 20th

GOLDFRAPP: O2 Academy – Return of the synth-pop queen – *see main preview*
IDLES: The Bullingdon – Caustic rage and wit from Bristol’s post-punk agitators – *see main preview*
SAM KELLY & JAMIE FRANCIS: Nettlebed Folk Club – BBC Folk Award winner Sam Kelly comes to Nettlebed’s weekly folk club, joined by banjo player Jamie Francis for an evening of traditional folk tales and songs.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 21st

DECLAN McKENNA: O2 Academy –

Socially astute guitar pop from the 2015 Glastonbury Emerging Talent winner and recent BBC Sound Of nominee, best known for his debut single ‘Brazil’, tackling corruption in FIFA and written when he was just 16.

THE WAILERS: O2 Academy – Rescheduled from November, another return to town for the legendary Jamaican band, or what’s left of the original line-up (only Aston ‘Family Man’ Barrett remains from Marley’s classic band), once again performing ‘Legend’ in its entirety. Barrett’s joined by former-Upsetter and renowned reggae session man Keith Sterling as well as his son Aston Barrett Jr. Dwayne Anglin continues to take on vocal duties, providing a pretty authentic Marley vocal style to the old classics.

THE RHEINGANS SISTERS + OWL LIGHT TRIO: Holywell Music Room – Sisters Rowan and Anna Rheingans team up for a concert in the historic Holywell Music Room; Rowan has previously been best known for her work as part of Lady Maisery and with Eliza Carthy and Karine Polwart in Songs of Separation. The sisters have recorded two albums together, fusing the folk sounds of their native Peak District with traditional influences from Scandinavia and France (where Anna lives and is an in-demand fiddle play); expect multi-instrumental virtuosity and close harmonies. Support from local instrumental group Owl Light Trio.
OSPREY & FRIUENDS: St. Aldates Tavern
SPARKY’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 22nd

SCOTT BRADLEY’S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX: O2 Academy – Iconic hits given an ironic makeover by pianist and arranger Scott Bradlee and his big band, remodelling songs by everyone from Radiohead and The Cure to Lorde, Meghan Trainor and Miley Cyrus into vintage 20s jazz standards, Irish folk ballads, classic cabaret numbers and 50s doo-wop.
COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + THE AUTUMN SAINTS + LAIMA BITE: The Wheatsheaf – Second leg of Dancing Man’s birthday bash, with Americana crews Country For Old Men and The Autumn Saints, plus songstress Laima.

THURSDAY 23rd

BEAR’S DEN: O2 Academy – Plaintive folk-pop in the vein of Snow Patrol and Mumford and Sons from Communion signings Bear’s Den, who’ve been out on tour with the Mumfords and now head out as headliners to promote last year’s album ‘Red Earth & Pouring Rain’.
WILL JOHNS & FRIENDS + JASMINE RODGERS: The Bullingdon – Rootsy blues rocking from Brighton’s British Blues Award nominee Will Johns, touring his recent ‘Hooks & Lines’ album.
THE SHADES + CHALK + THE ROSE SEGAL BAND: The Jericho Tavern – Mod-influenced rocking from The Shades and lightweight guitar pop from Chalk at tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 24th

SONIC BOOM SIX: O2 Academy – Manchester’s hard-gigging punk, hip hop and ska veterans return to town having previously supported Hadouken and Reel Big Fish in the past. This time out they’re headlining, on the road to promote latest album, ‘The F Bomb’.
AMERICAN AQUARIUM: The Bullingdon – Hurt, heartache and hangovers from the phoenix-like country-rock stars – *see main preview*
DEVON SPROULE: The Cellar – Canadian-American songstress Devon Sproule returns with her eighth album, ‘The Gold String’, fusing elements of jazz and blues into her hazy Americana, her airy, conversational style telling tales of rural bliss, reflecting her idyllic upbringing on a Virginian commune as well as a globetrotting existence that’s seen her living in Berlin and most recently Texas.
DEEP COVER: The Cellar – Bass club night.
GET LOOSE + SLAM CARTEL + REDWIRE: The Wheatsheaf – Stomping blues rock from Get Loose, with support from London rockers Slam Cartel and Redwire.
FIREGAZER + TONY BATEY + DUNCAN HARTLEY: James Street Tavern – Rootsy, campfire folk from singer and accordion player Alan Foulkes’s Firegazer.
CRYSTALLITE + ANDY BENNETT + THE RAMPS + JOE HOLIC: Ex Services Club, Bicester – Benefit gig for the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals Charitable Fund with local grunge rock outfit Crystallite joined by Ocean Colour Scene’s Andy Bennett and more.
FAUX FIGHTERS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Someone’s been making fake Dave Grohls. He’s a nice guy, he’ll forgive them.

SATURDAY 25th

CIRCA WAVES: O2 Academy – Buoyant, lightweight indie-grunge from Liverpool’s Circa Waves, back in town after their showing at Truck Festival last summer, touring new album ‘Different Creatures’, the follow-up to 2015’s debut album ‘Young Chasers’, the band having made their name supporting The Libertines and 1975 on tour. Can we go home now?
1000 CHAINS + MY DIABLO + BAD BLOOD RECOVERY + AUDIOCHEMISTRY: O2 Academy – Church of the Heavy takes to the O2’s big stage for a heavy-duty bill featuring eclectic melodic metallers 1000 Chains, mixing up classic hard rock with thrash, NWOBHM and tech-metal, plus stoner/groove metal in a Sabbath/QOTSA from former Mother Corona crew My Diablo, and sludgy blues noise from Bad Blood Recovery, formed by former members of Suitable Case For Treatment and Domes of Silence.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with A RELUCTANT ARROW + DEATHSEX BLOODBATH + SELF HELP: The Wheatsheaf – Quality mixed bag at the monthly GTI, with local blues-rock crew A Reluctant Arrow keeping it dark and lupine, while Coventry’s pop degenerates Deathsex Bloodbath promise “music inspired by meaningless sexual encounters, self-loathing, murderous intentions and asphyxiwanking,” which is certainly a

damn sight more fun sounding than trying to be The 1975. Trashy garage-pop from Self Help, opening the show.
VOLUME #3 with TAXMAN & FELON: The Bullingdon
THE GREAT WESTERN TEARS: The Harcourt Arms – Emotive, rootsy country music from the local stars launching their debut album, ‘Tales From Tallows’ – *see Introducing feature*
STORYTELLER: The Black Swan – rock, funk, reggae and soul fusion from the local outfit.
MAETLOAF: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute to the big lad.
THE HOWLIN’ TAILDRAGGERS: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Chicago blues and boogie.

SUNDAY 26th

SCOTT GORDON BAND + BEAVER FUEL + PURPLE MAY + WATERFAHL + FREDDY LE CRAGG: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-8.30pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the downstairs bar, hosted by Giddyup Music.
GARDEN CENTRE + PORRIDGE RADIO + CHEAP DATE + FANCY DRESS PARTY: The Library – More free lo-fi fun from Smash Disco in Oxford’s most intimate venue. Tonight’s headliners are Garden Centre from Brighton, whose wonky funtime pop comes from a strange place where Devo share a playschool with Ween. They’re joined by lo-fi junk pop people Porridge Radio; bedroom synth-pop crew Cheap Date and gloomy indie-punks Fancy Dress Party, featuring members of Slate Hearts and Too Many Poets.
MARTIN HARLEY & DANIEL KIMBRO: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Top-notch blues, folk and Americana at the Cornerstone tonight with Woking singer and lap-slide player Martin Harley teaming up with upright bass player Daniel Kimbro, who’s worked with Larkin Poe and Jerry Douglas, the pair out on tour to promote their ‘Live At Southern Ground’ album, mixing Ry Cooder grooves with the earthy blues of Lead Belly and Tom Waits.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms

MONDAY 27th

BLACKBERRY SMOKE: O2 Academy – Heavy’n’hairly blues-rocking, country and southern rock in the vein of JJ Cale, The Band and The Allman Brothers from the Atlanta, Georgia outfit, over in the UK to tour sixth album ‘Like An Arrow’.
PULLED APART BY HORSES: O2 Academy – Art-metal, tightly-wound hardcore and belligerent, angular punk fury from Leeds’ ever-gigging PABH, back in the shire after their showing at Truck last year, the band having worked their way up the tour circuit by way of hard graft and unfettered, sweat-drenched rock showmanship, evoking the spirits of Nation of Ulysses and The Jesus Lizard on tracks like ‘I Punched a Lion in the Throat’.
SOFAR SOUNDS: Venue TBC – Artists and location to be revealed at Sofar’s intimate show.
JOHN KIRKPATRICK & MARTIN CARTHY: Nettlebed Folk Club – Another chance to catch a collaborative concert from two of the leading interpreters of English folk traditions, though the pair have a long history of working together, with Pentangle and Brass Monkey.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 28th

WARPAINT: O2 Academy – Moody groove-pop from the returning LA quartet – *see main preview*
BLAENAVON: The Bullingdon – Brighton’s bluesy garage rockers return to town again, out on a headline tour after recent tour supports to Bloc Party, The Sherlocks and Sundara Karma.
SPARKY’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 29th

THE KRISSY MATTHEWS BAND: The Bullingdon – Bicester’s young blues guitar talent returns to the Haven Club, his electric style inspired by Hendrix, Freddy King, Albert Collins and Joe Bonamassa.
MARY BENDYTOY + SPINNER FALL + ANDY WRIGHT: The Wheatsheaf – Industrial gothic pop from Mary Bendytoy at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show, plus 80s-styled hardcore, post-punk and shoegaze from Spinner Fall.

THURSDAY 30th

THE AC/DC EXPERIENCE: O2 Academy – Tribute to the heavy rock legends.
LEWIS WATSON: St. John the Evangelist – Soft-centred, heart-on-sleeve arena pop from Bicester singer-songwriter Lewis, back playing live to promote second album ‘Midnight’.
DAWSON REIGNS + THE RISING + GARY QUINN: The Cellar
JUNIPER NIGHTS + MOON DRIVE 71 + BEDFORD & BALHAM + MOMENTO: The Wheatsheaf
CHEROKII: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Fat, fast’n’heavy garage-groove rocking from the riffastic duo.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford
OXFORD JAZZ KITCHEN JAM SESSION: The White Hart, Wolvercote – Monthly jazz jam.

FRIDAY 31st

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with DADDY G + COUNT SKYLARKIN + MC KWASI: The Cellar – Skylarkin’ continues to be one of Oxford’s essential club nights, tonight featuring a return visit for Massive Attack founder Daddy G, last seen on the local decks helping Count Skylarkin celebrate his club’s third birthday back in 2015 alongside the legendary DJ Derek. Expect a floor-filling set of melodic dubby reggae, hip hop, soul, garage and block party gems that hark back to his 80s soundsystem days with The Wild Bunch.
BILL KIRCHEN & AUSTIN DE LONE: The Bullingdon – The “Titan of the Telecaster” shows no sign of giving up any time soon as he continues to tour, some 45 years after the success of ‘Lincoln Hotrod’, the hit he led as guitarist with Commander Cody’s Lost Planet Airmen. Versatile enough to cover everything from rockabilly and blues-rock to country, swing and boogie woogie,



Tuesday 28th

WARPAINT: O2 Academy

After over a decade together Warpaint were, by their own accounts, considering calling it a day. Their two albums – 2010’s ‘Fool’ and 2013’s eponymous follow-up – were well regarded but didn’t match the band’s far more propulsive live shows, and even they didn’t seem to know where they could go next. Luckily they worked it out and new album ‘Heads Up’, preceded by the almost disco-fied lead single ‘New Song’, is a far more coherent and upbeat record. Not that we didn’t love those earlier outings, with their lush, ethereal gothic textures and nods to The Cure and Cocteau Twins and the three-way vocal harmonies of Jenny Lee Lindberg, Emily Kokal and Theresa Wayman layered over heavily reverbed guitars and low-end basslines, but often the band seemed more concerned with creating moods and groove-led dirges than the great songs, like ‘Undertow’, they were obviously capable of. ‘New Song’ – with its sweet lyrics comparing new love to a song you can’t get out of your head – and the woozy, wandering lullaby ‘Whiteout’, are more focussed and closer to what they can do live, a result maybe of each member going off and doing other musical things, including, variously, work with Saul Williams, Kim Gordon, Hot Chip and folk musicians Paul Bergmann. Tonight’s gig is their third visit to town, and their first since 2014, and live is still where you really should start with Warpaint.

a hybrid style he’s dubbed ‘Dieselbilly’, Kirchen has played alongside Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello and Emmylou Harris among others.
TROPICLE POPSICLE: The Bullingdon – Tropical house club night.
TEMPER CARTEL + THE TOM IVEY BAND + THE OUTSIDE: O2 Academy – 60s beat pop and grungy Britpop from Temper Cartel, coming in somewhere between Pulp, Oasis and Space, plus funky blues from Tom Ivey and more.
ALL TAMARA’S PARTIES with DEATH OF THE MAIDEN + CATGOD: The Cellar – Gothic burlesque folk from Tamara Parsons-Baker’s DOTM band at her own ATP show tonight, plus ambient, atmospheric electro-jazz-pop from Catgod in support.
WHITE MAGIC SOUND: O2 Academy – Reggae, dancehall r’n’b and hip hop club night, tonight celebrating their birthday with a guest set from 1Xtra’s Seani B.

Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion is the 20th of each month - no exceptions. Email listings to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk. All listings are copyright Nightshift Magazine.



LADYHAWKE

O2 Academy

It seems hard to reconcile that Ladyhawke’s debut album was released nearly 10 years ago, especially when it’s clear from the reactions of the crowd that it’s the older number such as ‘My Delirium’ and ‘Magic’ which are the favourites of the night. However, to credit her only on the success of her debut denies her strength as a songwriter. Tonight she makes it clear that her power lies in her ability to merge the influences of her childhood with fresh sounds, creating both a vibrancy and sense of nostalgia.

Whilst songs such as ‘Paris is Burning’ are effortlessly able to create a sense of time and place, ‘Money to Burn’ displays the layers and textures she’s able to create around the vocals. At times this verges more towards the rock sound, and at others effortlessly channels more electro-pop vibes. Elsewhere ‘Wild Things’ and ‘A Love Song’ favour a melodic backing leaving Ladyhawke’s vocals to take centre stage, and it’s here her delicate intonation really shines through. What’s most apparent however is

Ladyhawke’s ability to subtly shift and change her sounds without departing away from her signature style. This is perhaps due to the significant absence of songs from her second album ‘Anxiety’ making the cut. Only ‘Blue Eyes’ makes the set, and whilst it gives a dose of needed variety to the night, the contrast to the other tracks feels stark by comparison. It’s clear then than Ladyhawke has rightfully returned to her roots with ‘Wild Things’ and tonight feels like a continuation of her journey. Ladyhawke herself described

‘Anxiety’ as a reflection on a mindset which is suggestive of the reason for it’s absence tonight, but she has also been vocal about her struggles with depression and alcohol prior to recording ‘Wild Things’, and tonight feels like a reawakening. It’s intricate and creative, but above all a celebration of an ability to carve meaningful songs in a playful style. Overall, tonight feels reflective of both the highs and the lows that Ladyhawke has experienced in the last decade, but the show is most definitely more of a high, reconfirming her sound and style as both meaningful and relevant.

Lisa Ward

ME AND MY FRIENDS

The Cellar

We’ve got used to bands with powerful horn sections belting out Afrobeat or Balkan beats at Bossaphonik nights, so a band fronted by a single clarinet and a cello along with semi acoustic guitar is something different for sure.

Me and My Friends have a gentle and sunny vibe at their heart , including rather sweet vocals and harmonies which stop short of becoming saccharine, except for one number when they succumb to an excess of ‘oh woo woos...’.

There’s some fine 1950s and 60s Congolese and West African-influenced guitar picking in the mix, but if there is a star it is the cello as it floats above and coalesces with a West African pulse, creating a truly eerie sound, then gets us believing there’s a wailing banshee in the house and later joins the clarinet in some rather fine twisted solos.

With an excellent drummer and a substitute bass player coming off the bench to play a blinder, they also possess a driving rhythm section, and with a strong funk number, another with a Bangra beat

and some clarinet madness, they have plenty to keep the most demanding of Bossaphonik global dance beat regulars happy too.

While still work in progress, as they bring sunshine with them Me and My Friends are likely to be favourites wherever they play.

Colin May

1000 CHAINS / TRAUMA UK / MY DIABLO

The Cellar

Church of the Heavy promise a riff fest tonight and My Diablo, formed from the ashes of Mother Corona, don’t disappoint. Proof that sometimes two members are all you need, they have all the power of a full band in the vein of Black Sabbath meets early Queens of the Stone Age. Crazy dexterity on tracks like ‘Addiction’ and ‘Fallen Man’ are an intense display of their longstanding synchronicity,

which appears effortless and the upcoming album will be a must. Throwing their drum sticks out into the audience at the end and then asking for them back just makes us like them even more.

Trauma UK are up next and the waving around of a bottle of Jack Daniels might seem promising but turns out to be more Father Jack than Lemmy. For a band that have been going on and off since 1995, the songs such as ‘Hail Hail’ and ‘Renegade’ are forgettable and the swagger strangely at odds with the content.

Headliners 1000 Chains are tipped as a supergroup, made up of former members of other heavyweight local bands. They are clearly all experienced players, flaunting it on tracks such as ‘There Can Only Be Pain’ and ‘8 Solid Years of Lead’ but unfortunately they seem a little pigeonholed in by the self-inflicted “melodic metal” tag. The vocalist brings an interesting potential twang of Faith No More/Tool, but they just don’t have the songs at the moment to back it up. Time will tell if their collective experience can bear fruit.

Karlyn King

PEYMAN HEYDARIAN

Holywell Music Room

The sheer variety of music that flows through Oxford remains a constant surprise. Peyman Heydarian plays the santur, the Iranian member of the hammer dulcimer family, and seeing and hearing it is a first for me.

The hand-eye co-ordination and concentration required as the small, delicate curved hammers strike a tune from the hundred strings stretched across the instrument’s body is amazing, and its intensity draws you into the music itself.

The opener is a rather beautiful tune composed or improvised by Heydrian but thereafter much of what follows is folk music from the region, as well as Crete. The themes, though, are universal as Heydrian’s santur expressively conveys yearning, love and loss as well as well as a lively folk dance or two.

It is difficult to describe the sound the santur makes, perhaps a xylophone merged with a strummed violin, or the homemade instruments used by Konono No.1 from the Congo merged with a mandolin or an oud. Whatever, Heydarian uses its full range to create quiet moments and soft pulses, shimmering mysterious sounds, and virtuosic storms of notes flying from the instrument at what seem to be quite impossible speeds.

Early on he and Ali Torshizi on the Kurdish drum work up a formidable groove for two people playing acoustic instruments but the highlight is four pieces which they play without a break, inadvertently perhaps making them into a single piece in which the ground constantly shifts with the changes in the rhythm, tune and timbre. They just might have created a rather fine contemporary classic for the santur, and that is something to treasure.

Colin May

GROAK / DRORE / SCUMBAG

The Library

Scumbag sound exactly as you’d expect with a name like that: loud, dishevelled, uncouth and possibly slightly rabid. They appear to have a flagrant disregard for song structure, their set mostly a hysterical vocal rasp over a slovenly mangled sludge-core avalanche. Obviously all of this is A Good Thing. Only an idiot would think otherwise. It’s the warm up for a solid evening of sludge, hosted by Smash Disco, topped by Leeds three-piece Groak, whose set would



photo: Helen Messenger

SARAH JAROSZ

St Barnabas

The last couple of times Sarah Jarosz has played in Oxford it was at St John the Evangelist, most recently on the I’m With Her trio tour with Sara Watkins and Aoife O’Donovan. This time she’s branched out in terms of Oxford churches to the “elaborate living room” which is St Barnabas in Jericho. The venue isn’t the only change; she’s no longer touring with Alex Hargreaves (violin) and Nate Smith (cello), as she did in the early days. Instead she’s accompanied by songwriter and guitarist Anthony da Costa and double bassist Jeff Picker.

It might have been easier for her to stay with the familiar, but it’s not her style. She chose to study music rather than going straight out into the world as a performer, and she’s pushed herself on each of the four albums she’s released in just six years. It shows. Listening again to the likes of ‘Annabelle Lee’, from her second album ‘Follow Me Down’, there’s something new to be found each and every time: a slight variation on the arrangement, new feeling in the lyric. She brings the same attention to detail in her covers, whether it’s the well-worn ‘Ring Them Bells’, Linda Ronstadt’s ‘High Sierra’ or the Tim O’Brien medley she weaves into the set.

Sarah Jarosz doesn’t rest on her laurels, and who wouldn’t admire that. No-one apparently: from tonight’s attentive audience to the Grammy board which just awarded her Best Folk Album and Best American Roots Performance, her acclaim is widespread. Empty Room Promotions have a knack for bringing some of the best quality country and bluegrass acts to Oxford, and they don’t come much better than this at the moment.

Jo Cox

make a suitably oppressive soundtrack to legendary monster movie *Godzilla vs The Smog Monster*, in that it’s very slightly silly despite all the sound of what might well be collapsing skyscrapers, overturned express trains and general sonic destruction. Mostly that’s due to a dual vocal attack that tends to evoke an image of an emotional pet dog left too long tied to a lamppost, when a nastier, dirtier delivery would complement the band’s scuzzy dirge better.

It’s still decent stuff, but honours in tonight’s three-way slugfest go to local noise titans Drore. Initially their sound is so muddy they sound like the build-up of tension before a dam bursts or a nuclear power plant goes into meltdown, all oppressive rumble and crunch, but as the miasma clears and Taz Corona-Brown’s spleen-threatening screams mix with Tom Greenway’s throat-ripping roar over an iron foundry clang and supersized shredded riffage, they stake their claim to be the biggest, baddest, building-stomping noise beasts for several blocks around. Who wouldn’t enjoy such musical malevolence? Only a fool.

Dale Kattack

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KANADIA / TEMPER CARTEL / THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE

The Bullingdon

With his slicked hair, unnerving gaze and tight-fitting suit, Pink Diamond Revue frontman Tim Lane looks like the sort of bloke who ends uncomfortable conversations with a switchblade. Tonight, though, he channels any simmering discontent by continually harassing the legless mannequin on stage with him with his guitar, all the while crunching out relentless surfabilly dirges over the drummer’s metronomic beats, washes of industrial synths and disembodied vocal samples. It sounds like Dick Dale, Kraftwerk and Ministry dropped a bunch of mushrooms together and invented Death In Vegas twenty years

too early. It’s simple, highly effective and brilliantly hypnotic. Temper Cartel’s frontman, meanwhile, looks like he’s dropped in from an early incarnation of The Kinks, bypassing the last 50 years of pop music besides a stop-off at Britpop’s first flowering. The band can be a bit shouty at times when a subtler approach would help their songs better, but at their best they’re anthemic, even elegant: a little bit Oasis, a little bit Pulp and quite a bit Space. Anthemic is a musical state Kanadia very rarely drop below. Twenty seconds into tonight’s set they sound

like the climax of a U2 gig. The band, from Abingdon, have seemingly taken that mid-80s idea of The Big Music and run with it, so everything is built to be performed in stadiums. Singer James Bettis is a picture of nervous intensity as he hunches over his microphone throughout the set, channelling his inner Thom Yorke, while carving delicate guitar spangles and chimes that strive to escape the venue’s confines. At their funkiest, on ‘Ocean Blue’, there’s a hint of INXS about the, while the piledriving ‘Ugly Truth’, runs close to Muse’s epic intent. Set highlight remains ‘Into the Flames’,

gorgeously airy compared to the denser noise of much of the set, although a slow-building, as yet untitled new song with a touch of Six By Seven about it, runs it close. Only an overwrought number towards the end of the set falls flat, a dull shrug of a stadium ballad, but they close with ‘Meet the End’ with a jammed-out coda that’s close to majestic. They might wear their influences on their hearts and sleeves, but those influences are bands who count their sales in the tens of millions, and Kanadia’s musical scope and ambition suggests they might do too one day. *Dale Kattack*

VOODOO VEGAS / KIKAMORA / HAXAN

The Wheatsheaf

Back in 1991 when grunge appeared it seemed as if a cleansing tidal wave had swept across the planet and put an end to almost every single metal band that had even an inkling of classic rock pose or a faint whiff of hairspray about them. Most of the bands featured in *The Decline Of Western Civilisation Pt II* had disappeared overnight; the concept of having Nothin’ But A Good Time was replaced with mostly having a depressing time. That the flame was never extinguished however, and whilst the regular OxRox nights are not at Sunset Strip circa 1986 levels, there’s definitely a hint that bandanas and drinking Jack Daniels from a cowboy boot are making a comeback, and all three bands tonight possess a swagger that has largely been absent from rock for some time. Haxan make no bones about their influences and

it is no surprise that AC/DC’s ‘Whole Lotta Rosie’ weighs in at one point. At times the three-piece are a little ramshackle, but they’ve got strong vocals and hooks, and even manage to graft Queen Adreena’s unhinged melodic sensibility to Heart’s rock sheen. They might fall apart every now and then, but there’s something worth keeping an eye on. Kikamora promise much; after all, they’ve got a guitarist who must be 6’4”, is pipecleaner thin, and dressed in a pair of pinstripe bellbottom trousers and pointy white leather shoes. He looks like a three-day-week pimp. Musically, they’re an archaeological curiosity. It’s tempting to say that they don’t make them like this anymore, but evidently in Bristol, they do. Theirs is a head-down rock attack that flounders around, howling, but forgetting any actual tunes. There’s plenty of

cowbell, expansive guitars and a vocalist with a surfeit of pep, but despite swinging wildly, they never really hit the target. When they bring a saxophonist on for their last tune, it all goes a bit peculiar, rather than augmenting the song’s structure, it’s practically a sax solo which might work for Morphine, but here sounds like a good idea applied a little too liberally. Voodoo Vegas are perhaps the band Kikamora would like to be. They’ve got huge songs, two guitarists that clearly worship at the altars of Sambora and Slash, and in vocalist Lawrence Case, someone that sounds uncannily like a young Axl Rose. Ultimately, they’ve got a set of huge rock songs that they can tie the rock and roll attitude and technique to and it works. The likes of ‘King Without A Crown’ might not be clever or possess knowing nuance, but then sometimes all you need is a screamed chorus, a riff hammered out and a frilly shirt worn without irony. The revival is on. *Sam Shepherd*

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MUNCIE GIRLS / CASSELS / KANCHO!

The Cellar

A few years ago any hipster worth their rosemary-infused artisanal salt was in a bass and drums duo. That time has passed, perhaps because of fashion’s restless vicissitudes, or perhaps because people realised that economy of musical means demands increased precision, or at the very least a little effort put into arranging.

Kancho!’s two man tirade is built from crisp, incisive drums and rough blocks of bass granite, but they know that simply throwing everything in at once wouldn’t cut the triple strength septum-melting mustard for a full half hour, and have addressed their attentions to hooks, dynamics and slightly silly jokes. Not that

they’re preciously twiddly, any self-conscious mathy opening riff is just a disguise for old fashioned amp blasting, quickly discarded (“It is I, Leclerc; let’s rock!”). This is an excellent set, possibly the best we’ve witnessed by them... just in time for them to split up.

Not since The Cellar Family has any

Oxford-connected band brought the aesthetics of disgust to their music like Cassels. Another skins and strings duo, albeit one with more intricate fluidity to their pummelling, Cassels ricochet between splenetic ire, mordant humour and defeated resignation, wrestling global and personal politics into punk straitjackets. At their best, such as recent single “Flock Analogy”, a twitchy tattoo bolsters howled poetry and impassioned broadsides that reveal a burgeoning poetic sensibility. There are lyrical missteps – describing the world as a “Huxleyan nightmare” doesn’t sound any less sophomoric just because it’s now true – but Cassels are still something special.

Catch a few lyrics and you’ll realise that Exeter’s Muncie Girls are as politically charged as Cassels, but choose a less abrasive method of delivery. Their perky punk pop has its roots in C86 fizz, and borrows its fat amped attitude from that early 90s lacuna between grunge’s early influence and Britpop’s colourful trade fair. Their melodic vocals glide whilst the music canters in a way that resembles a less self-conscious Wedding Present, or even a souped up version of The Sundays (The Sundays Before Bank Holiday Monday, probably). It’s all good bouncy fun, and we can’t say a word against their opinions or general charm, but if Muncie Girls play a better set than Cassels, it’s the latter that have hooked our attention, and will drag us back for another visit.

David Murphy

THOUGHT FORMS / FLIGHTS OF HELIOS

The Cellar

Over the last few years, Flights of Helios have been one of the most satisfying-evolving bands in Oxford, moving from spacey but faintly formless nascent explorations to a band with an original voice. Their latest iteration, which sees the addition of a violinist as well as a new keyboard player, though not quite as tightly integrated as they’d perhaps like yet, turns them into a distinct proposition. Even as an expanded six piece, they have a graceful ability to leave space in their songs: at their most potent when they leave things unsaid, they use silence and sparsity the way a good photographer exploits negative space. If they can just find a few more rousing choruses like that of long-time standout ‘Star’, they could yet find their place in the firmament.

Where Flights of Helios are sometimes gaseous and hard to pin down, Thought Forms shows could come with Influence Bingo cards, as their songs flick through a deck of the most credible guitar bands from the last 20 years, zipping from Mudhoney’s sludge right through to Bardo Pond’s lysergic droning. At their strongest, with a repetitive, two-note bludgeon of a riff, they invoke the bloody violence of Unsane all too briefly.

And if there’s a problem with Thought Forms, it lies therein: while their live experience is entirely

satisfying, it’s also entirely predictable. They whip through a flurry of excellent reference points throwing out some bearish riffs, but there’s neither an element of surprise to keep us guessing where they might head next, nor is there enough intensity to make us gasp for air. I’d love to be able to say that a song sounds definitely like them and no-one else, but three albums in, they’re still finding their own (albeit very loud) voice. When they do, it’ll be thrilling.

Stuart Fowkes

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND

The Jericho Tavern

The Rabbits are back in town! After packing out a marquee at Common People last year, whilst Duran Duran were on, and threatening to steal their crowd, this is their first Oxford foray out of their burrow since. This is largely because Chief Bunny Stuart MacBeth moved to the south west, for reasons we cannot legally discuss. He will, he says, be taking a back seat for this, their sold out, French Revolution-themed return. But he doesn’t; he takes very much a front seat at the keyboards, when he is not on his feet, throwing flowers into the crowd, mishandling the mic, alternatively crooning then stridently bellowing into it, as only a passionate and inspired MacBeth can. Each

track announced with “*onetwothreefour!*” barked out, Ramones style, and occasional instructions as to the key it should be played in, and they’re off like hares.

Stalwart Martin ‘Watermelon’, their silver haired trumpet virtuoso, steps in to sing now and again, including *en Francais* (with tonight’s French theme, saxophonist ‘Red’ Wilkins has a string of onions round his neck, and the stage is festooned with tricolours); drummer John ‘Skippy’ Gannon also gives it a go for his song ‘Highway Man’. Ian Nixon from support act Les Clochards pops on for Georges Brassens’ ‘Les Copains D’abord’ and all is well and gloriously ramshackle in Spasmland. They play their breakneck party style classics ‘Shanghai Fanny’, ‘Pirates’ and ‘King of Wine’ (under duress, admittedly, but always a crowd pleaser), plus new tracks ‘Russian Dolls’, ‘Flatpack Land’ and ‘Frankie Fraser’ (about the late British gangster), plus standards ‘Cry Me a River’ (where they are joined by the extraordinarily talented Claire LeMaster), ‘Old Lang Syne’ and ‘Loch Lomond’. The packed crowd lap it up. Turbo-charged, jump-up rhythm and blues, swing, big band... they dislike being called a jazz band, but they have done to jazz what The Pogues did to traditional Irish music in the 1980s; pick it up by the scruff of the neck and shake it until its fillings fall out, then knock it off its feet with a rock steady beat. They have been missed. *La règle des lapins!* Legendary.

Leo Bowder

LOYLE CARNER

O2 Academy

With Chance the Rapper nabbing seven Grammy nominations; Kendrick Lamar’s ‘To Pimp A Butterfly’ vinyl being archived as a canon in the Harvard library, and Drake spending £500 in Nando’s, it’s an encouraging time to be an emerging hip-hop artist. Especially if you like chicken.

Tuesday night, Oxford’s O2 Academy, and Ben Coyle-Larner’s acting like hip-hop really does make the world go round. Carner’s a ripe 22-year-old touring off the back of his debut album, ‘Yesterday’s Gone’, and if he’s not a global name quite yet, he’s already selling out shows with ease.

He takes his time to appear onstage tonight but when he does emerge the crowd swoons; they hang on his every syllable, even his humble silence. “I’m lost for words,” he says, wrapping his dad’s old football shirt round his neck, “and that never happens.”

Popularity is something this guy should get used to, though. His heartfelt rhymes are already in favour with Joey Bada\$\$ and *The Guardian* reckons he’s taking hip-hop’s sentimentality to “a startling new place”. Accompanied by producer Rebel Kleff, he kicks off with latest single, ‘The Isle of Arran’. The track’s a perfect start: it rises with a choral ceremony; Loyle’s first word to the beat is “Look”. From here, he rolls deftly through his set, waving his dad’s shirt like it’s a flag, then stashing it over his neck like a weapon. ‘Mean It In The Morning’,

where he wishes he could love someone like he knows he could, leads to ‘Damselify’, which he dedicates to collaborator Tom Misch. Here, he rhymes about romance drying up: “I know everyone thinks I’m miserable,” he says, “but I’m really not. I’m here, doing this, with my best mate.” He gestures to Rebel Kleff, nodding over a laptop. “I’m a happy boy.”

‘Florence’ shows Carner’s lyricism at its sharpest; voice as strong as on the record, he’s already proving his endurance. He beams a smile as he raps, almost as excited as the crowd to hear the next poetic line. “I promised I wouldn’t cry in the first week of the tour,” he says to huge cheers. He performs in front of a projection of his friends and family (‘Yesterday’s Gone’ album cover), so there’s no denying he’s a sentimental person. He values the family unit, and when taking us back to his 2012 EP ‘A Little Late’, is unafraid to tell us “Of course I’m fucking sad / I miss my fucking dad.”

With a Black Keys-worthy riff, ‘No CD’ gets the entire room skanking like they were born to it, and then, though it’s felt like no time at all, he comes to the end of his set. He closes out with a genuine thank you as his mum comes to life in the projection. She recites a poem about him – earnest and proud – to a sea of whoops. Loyle Carner collaborates with his mum one day, and who knows? Maybe Jay Z the next.

Eva Hibbs

MENACE BEACH / VAN ZELLER / WOLFS

The Bullingdon

Brooding; creepy; expansive: all are adjectives I’m sure Menace Beach are used to having thrown their way. Their most recent record, ‘Lemon Memory’, is, after all, named after a “lemon curse” their front pairing Liza Violet and Ryan Needham believed was placed on their house, shedding some insight into the sense of superstition and occult that pervades both their recorded work and live show. Unfortunately, this sort of demonic dynamism is somewhat lost on openers Wolfs. An awkwardly endearing stage presence does no harm to their scuzzy pop-punk, though a couple of ill-judged inclusions do, most notably their signature joke song, ‘We Came Here To Rock’. An undoubted highlight is closer ‘Mirror’, a jagged, more rounded number not unlike an early Speedy Ortiz demo that bodes well for brighter things.

If a cultic theme is to undercut most of the evening then it’s somewhat fitting that Van Zeller’s lead singer bears a striking resemblance at times to both Nick Drake and Jim Morrison. As intense as the latter, though professionally excellent throughout, the four-piece take us through a set that at times harks back to the traditional rock/punk aesthetic early Kings of Leon fed off (‘All Or Nothing’); the everyman’s indie/garage rock of The View (‘The Coward’), as well as more contemporary sing-alongs in the

vein of The Lumineers (‘Hold Me Back’). A high-octane joyride from start to finish, the guys give everything and finish with more than one of us forging mental reminders to keep an extra eye out for them moving forward.

Taking to the stage like a person more entranced than possessed, Liza Violet’s guise and demeanour bless her with a presence not unlike a character from a Tim Burton film. Beguiling and, at times, rather intimidating, there’s little allusion to the sort of post-gig niceties to be experienced later at their merch stand. It’s not that they are off-putting; on the contrary, Needham partway through has to stop himself gushing, almost apologising in the process, by explaining how seven days of touring is making him sentimental. No, rather, just like their music, they consume and envelop in a manner that is utterly invigorating. Tracks such as ‘Can’t Get A Haircut’ and the exhilarating ‘Suck It Out’ sit them somewhere between the alt-rock orientation of Kagoule and the surfer-psych of Wavves. Orchestrated perfectly by Needham and Violet, it’s an exhibition in how to immerse an audience so completely, while proving without question that beyond all of the various descriptions available, Menace Beach are ultimately that most important thing: a tight, dedicated and important contemporary band.

Ben Lynch

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INTRODUCING....

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

THE GREAT WESTERN TEARS

Who are they?
The Great Western Tears are a folk-roots band from Oxford built around the songwriting partnership of Garry Richardson (*guitars*) and Dava Waterhouse (*vocals and harmonica*), initially as a side project to their band Swindlestock, but soon became their primary and then only project. The pair are joined in the band by Kurt Hamilton (*pedal steel*) Fern Thornton (*vocals*) and a rhythm section of Rich Jones and Ian Clark. They started gigging in summer 2015 with the release of an eponymous EP followed up with a double A-side single and this month they release their debut full album, 'Tales From Tallows'. The band regularly co host The Roots Ramble pub crawl and produce the Ridgeway Ramble video series.

What do they sound like?
Dava's rich, gravelly voice and lonesome harmonica evokes a darker, bluesier kind of country-folk, his songs often find him staring at the bottom of a whisky bottle, contemplating a life or a love that got away, with gambling as a metaphor for love, the Californian coastal fog a metaphorical barrier to lost lovers. Brilliant, sad stuff. In their own words they are, "rural roots with backbone, a genuine blend of country, folk and blues."

What inspires them?
"Travel; life, death and love on the road; friendship and camaraderie; the mountains; hard labour and the knowledge that through writing songs we can emotionally chart our lives and tap back in to that whenever we need to."

Career highlight so far:
"Country 2 Country at the 02 Arena last March. We were certainly out on a limb but it was an amazing insight in to the Nashville machine and how we have no interest in being part of it."

And the lowlight:
"Any 7pm support slot. No one's left their house by that time, have they?"

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
"Right now we're looking forward to the next August List album. We got to



sing backing vocals on a track and they returned the favour on 'Blue Checks, White Cotton'; those guys are definitely stretching their songwriting craft."

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
"David Crosby: 'If I Could Only Remember My Name'; it captures the collaborative spirit of the West Coast end of the 60s/ early 70s scene."

When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?
After an extended winter break in Tasmania we'll be at The Harcourt Arms in Jericho on March 25th. Expect to hear songs from the album and hopefully the live debut of Ben Heaney on fiddle! We're very excited by this as he brought so much to the songs he played on the record."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:
"The best thing is the opportunity offered to new bands to get out, gig and get experience; the worst is there's a limited audience for the music we play; you have to be very proactive in keeping things interesting."

You might love them if you love:
Bruce Springsteen; Neil Young; Creedence Clearwater Revival; Willie Nelson; The Willard Grant Conspiracy.

Hear them here:
www.thegreatwesterntears.com. Buy the album on iTunes and Spotify

THE WHEATSHEAF

Wednesday 1st March – MOSHKA
MAN MAKE FIRE ORDER#227 + LITTLE SPARTA 7:45pm
Friday 3rd March – KLUB KAKOFANNEY
SMILEY & THE UNDERCLASS
STOLBY + ASH LEWIS + RESTRUCTURE 7:45pm
Saturday 4th March – BURIED IN SMOKE
DIRT-A-GOGO 1968 + CRIMSON TUSK 7:45pm
Wednesday 8th March – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC
JUNIPER NIGHTS EMPYRE + QUARTER MELON 7:45pm
Friday 10th March – IDIOT KING
USA NAILS SNOB + GIRL POWER + BASIC DICKS 7:45pm
Saturday 11th March – TWO FACE PROMOTIONS
VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN SILK ROAD 7:45pm
Friday 17th March – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC
CRYSTALLITE CALLOW SAINTS + NEON TEEPEE 7:45pm
Saturday 18th March
HOLY MOMENTS THE PHAT CARDINALS 7:45pm
Wednesday 22nd March
COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN AUTUMN SAINTS 7:45pm
Friday 24th March – OXROX
GET LOOSE SLAM CARTEL + REDWIRE 7:45pm
Saturday 25th March – GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES
A RELUCTANT ARROW
DEATHSEX BLOODBATH + SELF HELP 7:45pm
Wednesday 29th March - IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC
MARY BENDYTOY SPINNER FALL + ANDY WRIGHT 7:45pm
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Dr SHOTOVER: The Synths of the Fathers

Uh, ciao, Lord Yuppington, CIAO! Welcome to the East Indies Club bar – you AND your ridiculously hair-sprayed mullet. Yuh, yuh, put your Filofax away, take out your Burberry money-clip and buy us all a large Frascati, why don't you? We were just discussing the 80s synthpop duo I used to manage, IRONIC TORIES. Remember them? Yuh, yuh, we had a couple of singles and an album out on Milton Friedman Records – all in Thatcher-Blue vinyl. The 12" remix of *Trouser the Cash* was played once by John Peel – until he got bored and whisked it off halfway through the mixed percussion breakdown section. Yuh, rilly. Then Bettina the singer became the Face of Maison Worth-It, and she left the band, taking her super-wide shoulder pads with her. Another drink? Yuh, yuh, don't mind if I do. Make this one a Huang Chung on the Beach with extra sushi on the side. Uh, cheers! [*Slurp-o, slurp-o*]... After the demise of IRONIC TORIES, Jolyon the synth-player formed another band called IRONIX NOUVEAUX. They aligned themselves with the Kensington cadre of the SWP and moved into a very select squat (later used for the 'bohemian des-res' scenes in unscreened prequel *Notting Hill 2 : The Wine Bar Years*). Career highlights? A Rock Against Racism jazz'n'cocktails night at the LSE. A miners' benefit in Richmond Park , mistakenly billed as *Gold Not Dole*. Getting thrown off a tour with Billy Bragg for being [*Dr S uses 'air quotes'*] 'bogus Socialists with one foot in the Blitz Club and the other in the Monday Club'. Jolyon's arrest for dealing coke to debts at a Knightsbridge party, before being bailed out by his father, the Admiral. (Uh, no, NO, he really WAS an Admiral)... And of course last month's IRONIX NOUVEAUX reunion, with a fabulous guestie by lovely mother-of-four Bettina, singing a surprise encore of *Trouser the Cash* – at a Help For Heroes Falklands Fundraiser. What's that, Yuppington? 'Nother drink? Uh, yuh, yuh, why not? A crate of Sapporo Black Label with a side-order of poisonous pufferfish? Uh, lovely! Down the Thatch! Next month: The Eurythmics – A Warning From History



Bettina: 'I say, Jollers, who's that funny man in leg-warmers who keeps following us around?'
Jolyon: 'Don't make eye-contact, Bettina dear – that's our [air quotes] "manager", Dr Shotover!'

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

"**Supergrass** get their dick out!" proclaimed the front page of March 1997's *Nightshift*, a rather infantile headline to announce the release of new Supergrass single '**Richard III**', the precursor to new album '**In It For the Money**', recorded at Sawmills in Cornwall and the follow-up to their platinum-selling debut 'I Should Coco'. The band were also confirmed to be playing Glastonbury in the summer. "It's more emotionally ambitious and musically rounded than 'Coco,'" **Gaz Coombes** told *Nightshift*; "It's been three years since we wrote our first lot of songs and we spent a lot of time growing up, touring and being away from home, so it would be worrying if we hadn't grown up as musicians." Thankfully Supergrass never fully grew up, which is why we loved them so. This month also saw the release of '**Sunday Morning Fever**', **The Candyskins**' third album. "At their best The Candyskins get under your skin to such an extent they leave bruises. 'Sunday Morning Fever' is the most eagerly anticipated local release since 'I Should Coco' and it doesn't disappoint," concluded *Nightshift*'s excited review. Another local release we were very excited about was **Nought**'s debut single, '**Cough Cap Kitty Cat**', on the **Shifty Disco** singles club. "This record simply has to be listened to at a volume that will have your neighbours calling the police and your pets packing their bags and leaving home." We were less enamoured by the month's big-name gig, a double header of current *NME* darlings **Mansun** and **Travis**. Travis were described as "sludgy, half-speed sub-Beatles stodge, no

more than Oasis Reserves, devoid of charisma and no songs beyond watered-down versions of someone else's," while the much-lauded Mansun were "polished, soulless mid-table indie rock mediocrity. They're so ordinary, so very, very dull; they mean fuck all." Good to be on the right side of history again.

10 YEARS AGO

A hell of a month for local gigs in March 2007. While local heroes **Young Knives** played their biggest home town show to date at **Brookes Union**, that venue also played host to sold out shows for **Bright Eyes** and **Idlewild**, while down at **The Zodiac** – which was due to close soon after for a refurbishment ahead of reopening as the **Oxford Academy** – **Foals** were playing their own homecoming show, with support from **The Rock of Travolta** and **The Delta Frequency**. Velvet Underground legend **John Cale** was playing a solo show and there were also appearances from tap-dance-fuelled popstrels **Tilly & the Wall**, **Poison the Well**, **James Yorkston**, **Kate Nash**, **Charlotte Hatherly**, **The Twang**, and a two-night stint for **The Fall**. **Eliza Carthy** and **Spiers & Boden** were all set to headline this year's **Oxford Folk Festival**. In local music news, **The Sad Song Co.** released their second album; 'Poignant Device' was the second release for the band, the solo project of **Unbelievable Truth** and **Dive Dive** drummer **Nigel Powell**, now a part of **Frank Turner's Sleeping Souls**. There were also release for **Richard Walters**, **Loopy** and **Smilex**.

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

5 YEARS AGO

Can it really be five years since *Nightshift* celebrated its 200th issue? It certainly is, and looking back at that landmark moment we find **Spring Offensive** gracing the front cover, suitably holding a birthday cake and sporting balloons, bunting and glum expressions. They needn't have been so sad; they were about to release a new single, 'Worry Fill My Heart', the band fully ensconced as the most exciting new band in town on the back of some seriously livewire gigs and their hugely ambitious fourteen-minute concept single 'The First Of Many Dreams About Monsters', based on Swiss psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's grief cycle. "Nobody wants to make forgettable music; one day we think 'fuck it, we play straight-up indie pop', the next we worry that we're working on something too dirgy and self-involved. Maybe it's that confusion that people like," they mused. There was a host of other local releases this month with **Gunning For Tamar**, **Jonquil**, **The Brickwork Lizards**, **The Family Machine** and **Robots With Souls** among those putting out new music, while soul and r'n'b singer **Jada Pearl** was our Introducing artist. In local news it was announced there would be no **Cowley Road Carnival** this year, due to a lack of funding and a summer filled with celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and The Olympics. **The Oxford Folk Weekend**, though, was set to step into the void left by the cancelled Oxford Folk Festival, with a bill of mostly local folk acts due to perform at **The Old Fire Station**, **The Ashmolean** and **The Wesley Memorial Church** in April.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

MOTH DROP

If you want a headfuck far greater than pretty much any drug can offer, go and read a dozen or so Philip K Dick novels and then try and readjust to reality. One of his most mind-bending was *Valis*, a quasi-religious meditation on God and existence. It's also the basis of Moth Drop's debut recording, with each track titled according to the acronym: Vast Active Living Intelligence System. It's the work of Brendan Morgan, who also plays in noisy bastard garage rockers Grub, and if you're looking for a suitable soundtrack to shifting planes of reality (and maybe a dose of Can-D), look no further. Mixing up trippy ambient electronics, beats and samples (Bill Hicks; Baron Munchausen; children singing; seagulls), it's variously atmospheric, glitchy and playful, reminiscent of Higher Intelligence Agency, the KLF's more chilled moments, Lemon Jelly and even Bentley Rhythm Ace at times. It's got a retro charm about it while not sounding dated, and the quote from *The Tales of Baron Munchausen* about sitting back and pressing a button to kill people thousands of miles away so you don't have to see any of them die was remarkably prescient given nuclear and drone warfare. Fits in well with Dick's paranoid vision of future worlds, as does this inventive and engrossing set. Now, where did we leave our Perky Pat dolls...

GIANNI BARBRA

More electronica, though of a rather more beefed-up variety here from a guy called Gianni Barbra, mixing up smooth deep house with heavier, dirtier electronic sounds and beats, particularly the demo's title track 'Audiodrome', a slab of thumping electronic body music closer to Frontline Assembly or Front 242 than its other neighbour, Italian house, great, grungy synth bites and John Carpenter-style icicle drips creating a doomy but uplifting atmosphere and the perfect club scene soundtrack for some lost 90s cyberpunk film. He goes big on the Kraftwerk-inspired beats, keeping the trip going on 'Depletion', with its hypnotic 'Trans-Europe Express' rhythm, although closer 'Mountain With No Head', even with its bubbly 70s synth-pop pops and squiggles and industrial bass synths is too disjointed to keep the vintage rave vibe alive. Still, several pills of indeterminate origin later and we're still merrily nodding along and drooling slightly with the CD on constant repeat. Beats doing any actual work.

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

JERAMESA

Ooh, a cassette. We know cassette culture is a thing and all cool and stuff but anyone old enough to remember when cassettes were the mainstream format will tell you they were always a bit crap for so many reasons, not least the getting unwound in your tape player. *Nightshift*'s only surviving tape player is in our clapped out old car, and last time we had to sit out in the driveway with the engine running to be able to listen to a cassette demo a concerned neighbour thought we were trying to gas ourselves, which given the quality of some of the demos we get wouldn't be beyond the realms of possibility. Luckily, a little searching reveals this one is also available online, which is fortunate since if we played this loudly enough in the car said neighbour might think we were indulging in some strange pagan ritual, plus the clouds of bong smoke we'd feel compelled to create to fully complement the experience, might attract less welcome attention and we don't want anything distracting us from this trip, an eastern-inspired drone-rock workout that's part Indian temple raga, part pagan folk mantra, part psychedelic meditation. All the tracks here – with titles like 'Sunward', 'Voyager' and 'Plateau' – merge into each other and while there's some clumsy moments when the intended spell is broken and it tails off into mournful hippy folk rumination towards the end, at its best it's seriously indulgent fun. But yeah, drugs are the key. Seems to be a theme this month when reality is such a terrifying alternative.

KRUSOE

Oxford-via-Berlin electro-pop chap Krusoe at least tries to keep all that early narcotic-fuelled fun going with this one-song offering, a fluffily lysergic but ultimately slender electro-pop which vaguely hovers around the fringes of Glass Animals and Tame Impala's party, throwing big washes of synths over tika-taka beats and getting all soulful and swoony over the top. It's hardly come-down music, and it could feasibly keep the vibe alive for a little while longer, but it's not the spaceward head trip it possibly imagines itself to be. This month's song most likely to be heard soundtracking online ads for unnecessary electronic gadgets soon.

SEAMONSTER EYES

With a name like that we were perhaps expecting something a bit heavier from Seamonster Eyes, although they don't skimp too much on the rock riffage at various points along this demo. Mostly though they prefer to flit between styles to an almost ADHD degree. Opener 'Boat I Row' is nominally a woozy

psychedelic space-rock ramble that somehow veers from Dick Dale surf-rock rumble, through mid-period Pink Floyd, onto Go-Betweens sugar-coated indie pop and onwards into indie-noise flapping within six carefully orchestrated minutes. From there, 'Games' is heroic, almost orchestral rock that takes a flamenco detour before ending up rocking out at the Viper Lounge, while 'Simulator' is rather more quirky, an odd mix and match of Manic Street Preachers and Randy Newman. The band's musical ambition and vision is in no doubt and for the most part they execute their eclectic journeys well, though for every well-placed passage of close harmony singing, there'll be an elongated guitar solo, and occasionally they let songs wander on a bit too long. There's also a suspicion that what they possess in technique they lack slightly in heart and soul. A band that easy to admire but a little harder to love.

HAM NAPKIN

Ham Napkin? Seriously? Why don't you just call yourselves Value Pack Bumwipe, or Supermarket Own Brand Pot Noodle Substitute and really kill your career before it's started? Okay, okay, whatever, your choice; what have you got for us? Ooh, hmm, ah. Not bad. Not bad at all – some muscular but melodic grungy pop that could be a less ostentatious or ferocious Smashing Pumpkins or Placebo, maybe a bit of skewed Dinosaur Jr guitar bending – definitely a big late-80s/early-90s influence going on – or, closer to the 21st Century, Yuck. They've got the guitar noise bits sorted that's for sure, especially on the big, bolshy 'Domesticated', but the singer struggles a bit to carry a melody at times and lacks the character of Billy Corgan or Brian Molko. Get some sweet-natured backing vocals in behind him and they could really be onto something. Not with the name Ham Napkin, mind. Unlike the music, that is proper shit.

EPHEBE

The ability to laugh in the face of abject horror is, according to scientific research, a mark of superior intellect, so, given we're bloody geniuses here at *Nightshift*, it's hardly surprising we spend much of this set of songs failing dismally to stifle a fit of giggles. On the one hand there's something almost great about Ephebe – the work of singer Constantine Blintzios, who recorded this demo with local production legend Jimmy Hetherington. There's a delicate industrial throb about the beats and electronic washes, and his use of sparse acoustic guitar on tracks like 'Behind My Skull' conjures an atmosphere not far off Radiohead's 'Street Spirit'. But then he starts singing and we're casting slightly terrified glances at each other across the room while biting down hard on our own knuckles to stop the screams and howls of laughter from upsetting the neighbours. "Fear isn't pointless" wails Constantine, like a desperate, overwrought

hopeful at a gothic open mic session in downtown Cairo. Maybe not, but this here stick is – the one that's aimed directly at your kidneys if you don't tone it down a bit. He's not one to be put off though, is Mr Blintzios, and 'Elders' sounds like a severely constipated Jose Gonzalez sat on the loo after a dozen boiled eggs and a family-sized treacle tart, composing a dirge for his own funeral. There's a point where we're unsure if he's singing or if NHS cuts have hit so hard that someone's undergoing impromptu surgery without anaesthetic in the street outside *Nightshift*'s office. And don't get us started on the attempt at rapping. Still, laughter is good therapy and by the end we've given up on decorum and are snorting like hippos on a nitrous oxide binge. Laugh enough and it'll loosen you up a bit too, which might resolve that constipation problem. Worth a go, old chap.

THE DEMO DUMPER

PIQUED JACKS

There's an old Chinese curse that goes, "May you live in interesting times." And it looks like that curse is working a treat on us right now, what with Trump's ongoing lunacy; Brexit chaos; the rise of the far right; religious terrorism; the continuing existence of Piers Morgan, and a shortage of iceberg lettuces. So praise be to Piqued Jacks for delivering what the world needs right now: something so boring it could be used to lull rampaging hoards of jihadis into a childlike slumber. Piqued Jacks describe themselves as "a polychromatic alt/funk-rock band"; polychromatic meaning made up of two or more colours, in this case grey, beige and, erm, a slightly lighter shade of grey. They say that theirs is "a sound that's missing from the mainstream." Which we guess it is, at least since the mid-1980s which is when we think Journey, Foreigner and Kansas last got anywhere near the charts. Here is earnest, plodding, mid-paced, cliché-ridden soft rock (no funk to speak of, which may or may not be a blessing), pebbledashed with fake American accents and rather more wailing than even the Japanese fishing fleet would consider decent. Occasionally they veer into Foo Fighters territory, but if anyone here seriously imagines Foo Fighters are on the alt. side of rock, please pop round so we can insert a Fucked Up album into an orifice of our choosing. Which brings us to our absolute favourite thing about Piqued Jacks. Their biog states that the band formed "when the clumsy bassist crashed his bass on the ground, bending the jack in the input. Once pulled out, it looked like a boner." Ladies, we'll give you a few moments to digest that delicious image before you resume throwing your underwear at the stage. We're off to start a war. Or maybe just do a bit of sick in our mouths.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk, clearly marked Demos. IMPORTANT: no review without a contact phone number. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. We make no pretence to being fair, objective or open-minded and reserve the right to use juvenile insults while almost completely ignoring your music should we feel like it. Your Facebook friends are welcome to get all huffy on your behalf, but we'll laugh at them too.

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