



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 266
September
2017

photo: Chris Blizzard

The Shapes

"You're never too old, or young, to appreciate a good melody and fun gig."

Oxford's feelgood band of the summer talk ageism, making people dance and writing love songs to Oxford.

Also in this issue:

Introducing **ZEROWE TRUCK & SUPERNORMAL** reviewed plus

All your Oxford music news, reviews, previews and gigs for September

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NIGHTSHIFT: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Phone: 01865 372255

THE BULLINGDON

SEPTEMBER 2017 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Friday 1st September
Oxphwoard: B-Movies
Doors: 7pm

Friday 1st September
Throwing Shapes #003
Doors: 10pm

Saturday 2nd September
Groove
Doors: 10pm

Sunday 3rd September
We Are Your Friends #2
Chad Valley
Charlie Cunningham
Jack Goldstein
Egrets
Turbine Love
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 5th September
Rob Tognoni
Hell's Gazelles
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 6th September
Alvvays
Doors: 7pm

Friday 8th September
Poizon
Singer of Tigertailz - Rob Wylde
Doors: 9pm

Saturday 9th September
Old Skool Oxford
Easy Groove
Doors: 11pm

Monday 10th September
Blues Caravan
Doors: 7pm

Friday 15th September
Bossaphonik
The Destroyers
Doors: 10pm

Saturday 16th September
Musical Medicine
Doors: 10pm

Thursday 21st September
Earinade Album Launch
Doors: 7pm

Friday 22nd September
Danny & The Champions of the World
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 23rd September
David Rodigan & Dawn Penn
Doors: 10pm

Wednesday 27th September
King No-One
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 28th September
Micah P. Hinson
and The Holy Strangers
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 30th September
Volume vs P30
Deekline
Doors: 10pm

Sunday 1st October
Coasts This Life Tour
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 3rd October
Krautwerk
Harald Grosskopf & Eberhard Kranemann
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 4th October
The Skints
Nice Time Tour: Part 2
Doors: 7pm

Friday 6th October
Police Dog Hogan
Doors: 7pm

Monday 9th October
Yak
Doors: 7pm

Friday 13th October
The Dead Beat Apostles
The Shapes
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 16th October
Simple
Joy Orbison
Jon Rust
Doors: 10pm

Sunday 15th October
Inheaven
Doors: 7pm

Monday 16th October
Dream Wife
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 17th October
Clean Cut Kid
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 18th October
The Big Moon
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 21st October
Ritual Union Festival
Doors: 12pm

Saturday 21st October
Low Islands & Friends
Doors: 10pm

Monday 23rd October
Howie Payne
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 24th October
Skinny Molly
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 26th October
Miles Hunt & Erica Nockalls
(The Wonder Stuff)
Doors: 7pm

Friday 27th October
Gentlemen's Dub Club
Doors: 10pm

Sunday 29th October
Jane Weaver
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 1st November
Matthew E. White
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 2nd November
Eddie Martin Band
Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd November
Too Many T's
Doors: 7pm

Friday 3rd November
Simple
Levon Vincent
Doors: 10pm

Monday 6th November
CC Smugglers
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 7th November
Emily Barker Band
Doors: 7pm

Sunday 12th November
Toseland
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 14th November
Marika Hackman
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 15th November
Big Gilson & Blues Dynamite
Feat. Del Broham
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 16th November
The Stray Birds
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 23rd November
Mad Dog Mcree
Doors: 7pm

Monday 27th November
Pumarosa
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 29th November
Tom Russell
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 2nd December
Simple
Beatrice Dillon
Doors: 10pm

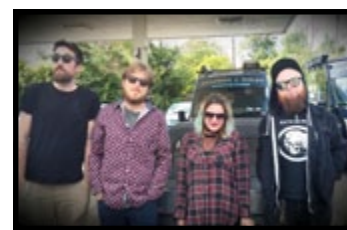
NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

Phone: 01865 372255

email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



DRORE release their second EP at the end of September. The band, formed by members of Undersmile and Crippled Black Phoenix, release 'Life Regrets' on the 18th September, featuring four new tracks: 'Novelty Tattoo Sleeve', 'Old Egg', 'Happy Accident' and 'New Skids on the Block'. If you read this in time the band play at Fat Lil's in Witney on Thursday 24th August, with support from Scumbag and Ghosts in the Photographs.

ESTHER JOY LANE releases a new EP this month. 'Psychic Tears' features five new tracks, including recent single 'Friendless Necessity'. Now based in London, electro-pop star Esther has recently been on tour with Charlie XCX. Hear the new record at soundcloud.com/estherjoylane.

TEMPER CARTEL have released a video for new single 'Babysitter'. The video, which features cameos from over 40 fans and friends, is on Youtube now. The song, produced by Ride's Mark Gardener, precedes the band's debut album, due for release later this year.

JAZZ AT ST. GILES kicks off its second autumn season this month. The series of jazz concerts at St. Giles Church runs through til December, raising money for War Child, Save the Children and Project 900. Opening the season is a tribute to jazz piano legend Hoagy Carmichael from The Chris Ingram Quartet on Saturday 30th September. Other dates in the season include Ben Meets Benny on the 28th October; Tommaso Starace on the 4th November; The Oxley Meier Guitar Project on the 18th November and Brickwork Lizards on the 9th December. All shows start at 7.30pm. Full details at www.jazzatstgiles.com.

THE OXFORD BEATLES celebrate the 50th anniversary of the release of 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' with a five-night run of shows at Simpkins Lee Theatre in Lady Margaret Hall from the 14th-18th September. The show, part of a play based on the life of Beatles manager Brian Epstein, written by local playwright Wayne Brown, will feature the band playing alongside a ten-piece orchestra as well as Indian musicians and guests including The Balkan Wanderers' Claire Heavyside on clarinet and Janan from the Fusion Project on tabla. They'll be playing the seminal album in its entirety alongside 'Strawberry Fields', 'Penny Lane' and 'All You Need is Love'. Tickets and more information on the Sgt Pepper Show Facebook page.

THE BECKONING FAIR ONES release a new EP this month. The local noise rockers' self-titled four-song EP is available as a free download at thebeckoningfairones.bandcamp.com

DONNINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL returns on Saturday 9th September. Now in its sixth year, the one-day event takes place at Donnington Community Centre in Townsend Square from 2-10pm. There's live music from Osprey; The String Project; Ras Brother John; Beard Of Destiny; The Riverside Voices; Delnavaz; Jeremy Hughes; Phil and Sue; Glendale Train; Mark Bosley & Pete Lock, and Elena Harris. The day is free with donations helping raise money for Donnington Doorstep and The Donnington Park Project. There'll also be family activities and food from Waste2Taste.

ALL TAMARA'S PARTIES Festival takes place on Sunday 27th August, not Monday 28th as listed in last month's gig guide. The All-day music event runs from 1pm through til 10.30 at Tap Social in Botley, featuring sets from Vienna Ditto; Catgod; Salvation Bill; The Diamond Family Archive and Lucy leave among others. Tickets,



CASSELS launch their debut album with a show at **The Cellar** on **Saturday 7th October**. 'Epithet' is released on Oxford's own Big Scary Monsters label on Friday 6th October. The band, formed by Chipping Norton brothers Jim and Loz Beck, have been handpicked to support London punk band Single Mothers on the UK tour in November. Support for the Cellar dates comes from Fancy Dress and Rats Eat Rats. Tickets, priced £7.15 (including booking fee) are on sale now from www.seetickets.com.

priced £15, are on sale from alltamarasparties.bandcamp.com or on the door.

acts. The show is available to stream or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

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

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

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Craig Murray, Joe Sutherland, George Egg, Paul Thorne

Saturday 9th September - 7pm
Michael Legge, Marlon Davis, Micky P Kerr, John Fothergill

Saturday 16th September - 7pm
Chris Kent, Mike Gunn, John Lynn, Stephen Carlin

Saturday 23rd September - 7pm
Steve Bugeja, Paul Thorne, Angela Barnes, Sean McLoughlin

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THE CELLAR

WHAT'S ON IN SEPTEMBER

Fri 1st
**BOSSAPHONIK
VAUDOU GAME**
10pm – 3am • £7 adv
£9 otd

Sat 2nd
**Future Perfect present...
NADIA REID +
GUESTS**
7:30pm • £9 adv • 16+

Sat 2nd
FREERANGE
UKG / Grime / Bassline
11pm – 3am
£5 all night

Wed 6th
DC HIP-HOP SESSIONS
Hip-Hop / Trap / Dancehall
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Thur 7th
**FLATLANDS + SLATE
HEARTS**
Indie / Rock / Punk /
Grunge
7:30pm – 10pm
£4 adv • £5 otd

Thurs 7th
**King Terrible Presents...
THE LORDS OF DISCO
WONDER**
Rock / Disco / 80s
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Fri 8th
**Future Perfect present...
BANFI + GUESTS**
7:30 – 10:30pm
£6 adv • 16+

Friday 8th
**Off-key
BURT COPE, FREDDIE
B, NIKZTAR B2B
SILAS, GILLY GILL**
Grime / Bassline /
Hip-Hop / DnB
11pm – 3am • £6

Sat 9th
**Musicians Against
Homelessness
THE TERRORSAURS +
WHO KILLED NANCY
JOHNSON? + REBEL
STATION**
7:15pm – 10pm • £5
adv • £10 otd (£5 conc.)

Tues 12th
INTRUSION
Goth / EBM / Industrial
*Dress Code: Goth /
Cyber / Dark Alternative*
8:30pm – 2am • £4 otd

Wed 13th
**Future Perfect present...
FANGCLUB + GUESTS**
7:30 – 10:30pm
£7 adv • 16+

Wed 13th
DC HIP-HOP SESSIONS
Hip-Hop / Rnb / Trap /
Dancehall
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Thurs 14th
**Future Perfect present...
SUPERGLUE + GUESTS**
7:30–10:30pm
£7 adv • 16+

Thurs 14th
**King Terrible Presents...
THE LORDS OF DISCO
WONDER**
Rock / Disco / 80s
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Fri 15th
**Future Perfect present...
JAMES YUILL +
GUESTS**
7:30pm – 10:30pm
£10 adv • 16+

Fri 15th
SOUL SESSIONS
Disco / Soul / Funk
11pm – 3am • £5 all night

Sat 16th
**Future Perfect present...
WESTERMAN + GUESTS**
7:30 – 10pm
£6.50 adv • 16+

Sat 16th
**Fluid's Opening party
BLAIR + HAMDI +
MASP + WISLA**
Bass / Grime / DNB
11pm–3am • £6 otd

Wed 20th
DC HIP-HOP SESSIONS
Hip-Hop / Rnb / Trap /
Dancehall
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Thurs 21st
**Future Perfect present...
JOY ROOM + GUESTS**
7:30pm – 10:30pm
£6 adv • 16+

Thurs 21st
**King Terrible Presents...
THE LORDS OF DISCO
WONDER**
Rock / Disco / 80s
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Fri 22nd
**Terraforms
DIGITAL + DJ LEE +
RICH RAW + SMOKEY +
MC KB + MC SANDMAN**
Drum & Bass
11pm – 3am • £5
£6 adv • MOTD

Sat 23rd
**Future Perfect present...
ANDREW O'NEIL'S
HISTORY OF HEAVY
METAL**
7:30pm – 10pm
£10 adv • £16+

Sat 23rd
**Move
UK BASS MUSIC**
11pm – 3am / £6

Tues 26th
**Future Perfect present...
BARNES COURTNEY
+ GUESTS**
7:30 – 10pm
£8.50 adv • 16 +

Wed 27th
ACS FRESHERS PARTY
RnB / Afrobeats /
Bashment / Hip Hop
10pm – 3am • £5

Thurs 28th
**King Terrible Presents...
THE LORDS OF DISCO
WONDER**
Rock / Disco / 80s
11pm – 3am • Free Entry!

Sat 29th
**SKYLARKIN
SOUNDSYSTEM**
11pm – 3am • £5

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Donnington Community Music Festival



Saturday 9th September 2 to 10PM
Donnington Community Centre, Townsend Square, OX4 4BB
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Music. Food. Drink. Children's activities

Music from Osprey, the String Project, Ras Brothers, John
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Lena Harris

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SEPTEMBER

PEACE TRAIN: THE CAT STEVENS STORY	TUE 12
TEXAS	WED 13
THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN	FRI 15
NIGHTS ON BROADWAY - THE BEE GEES STORY	SAT 16
ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS: LEE 'MEMPHIS' KING	FRI 29
ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN	SAT 30

OCTOBER

SUZANNE VEGA	MON 2
TOTALLY TINA	SAT 7
MARC ALMOND	SUN 15
MIDGE URE, THE CHRISTIANS, ALTERED IMAGES	TUE 17
THE PRETENDERS	WED 18
THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW	THU 19
SON OF A PREACHER MAN A NEW MUSICAL FEATURING THE SONGS OF DUSTY SPRINGFIELD	TUE 24 - SAT 28

NOVEMBER

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA	SUN 5
COLLABRO	MON 6
ALISON MOYET	TUE 7
JOHN MAYALL IN CONCERT	WED 8
WHITNEY - QUEEN OF THE NIGHT	THU 9
DR HOOK FEATURING DENNIS LOCORRIERE	FRI 10
MAMMA MIA! THE SMASH-HIT MUSICAL BASED ON THE SONGS OF ABBA	TUE 14 - SAT 25

DECEMBER

BANANARAMA	MON 4
THE SENSATIONAL 60'S EXPERIENCE	FRI 8
CHRIS REA	SAT 9

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ICONS OF THE 80'S – THU 18 JAN 2018

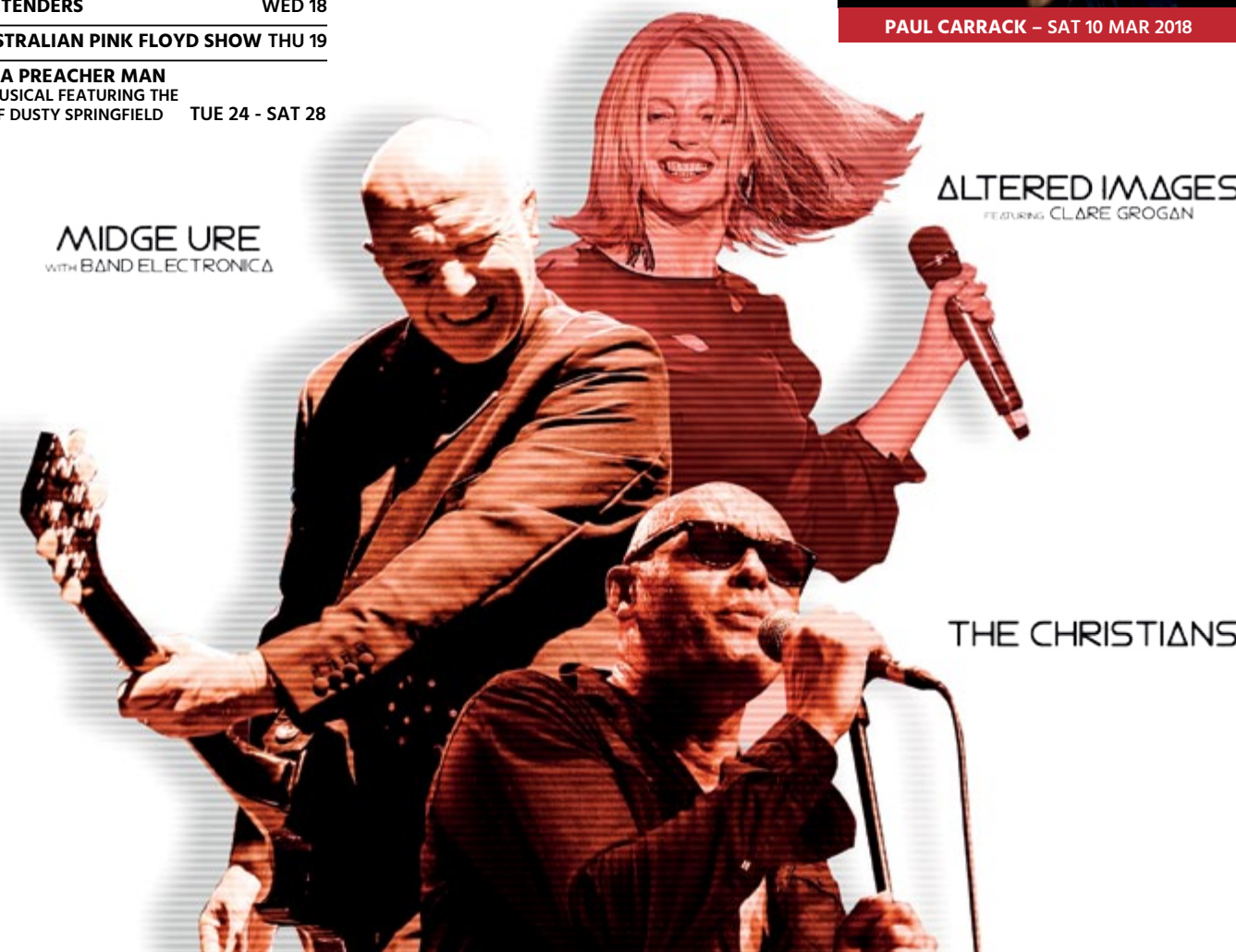
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MIDGE URE
WITH BAND ELECTRONICA

ALTERED IMAGES
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The Shapes

photo: Chris Blizard



“WHEN YOU GET TO MY AGE *you spend a lot of time assessing your life and looking back at the past,” says Ant Kelly, singer and guitarist with The Shapes, contemplating the fact that he and his bandmates are on the more mature side of the age coin compared to most bands in town. “When you get to a certain age though, you sort of think `sod it, who cares’ and just run with it,” he continues, warming to the theme, preferring to look to the positives of being an older musician, particular the lack of pressure to `make it’ that too often weighs down young bands.*

NOW 56, ANT CAME INTO songwriting quite late. While he’s played around Oxford since the early 1980s, most of his musical life has been spent playing in covers bands, notably Soul Devotion, with whom he played throughout the 90s, performing classic soul songs. The Shapes took shape in 2010 after a chance meeting with Truck Festival’s Robin Bennett in 2005 led to what Tony calls “an epiphany” as he watched Goldrush, Stornoway and The Epstein and was inspired to start writing his own songs. While attending his first Truck he also met another Tony – soundman and

local blues legend Jezzard. The pair formed an instant bond and along with guitarist Jez Bale, drummer Steve White and accordion player and trumpeter Ed Bresson started The Shapes – “playing original songs for no money after a decade getting well paid to do covers,” as Tony remembers.

THIS SUMMER THE SHAPES cemented their ever-growing reputation as one of the most fun, and inclusive, live acts in Oxford with a series of shows at Common People, Truck Festival and Cowley Road Carnival. *Nightshift* declared them “the feelgood band of the summer” for their set at Common People in May where they played to a packed tent and an audience that ranged from teens upwards. They might be an older band, but their appeal is universal.

NOW EXPANDED TO A SEVEN piece, The Shapes feature bassist Gary Warmington, keyboard player Colin Henny and singer Alix Champ alongside the original members, bar Tony Jezzard, who died in 2013 and of whom more later. At 59 Ed is the oldest, while Alix, at 48, is the baby of the band. Together this line-up released their

latest EP, ‘Long Way Home’, in July, a four-track mix and match of everything they do so well – taking inspiration from Tom Petty, Van Morrison, The Pogues, Elvis Costello, The Beautiful South and a raft of 60s soul and r’n’b bands and mixing them into a whole that’s simultaneously exuberant and tinged with sadness. While The Shapes make you want to dance, Ant’s lyrics are deeply emotional, dealing with everything from addiction and anxiety to regret and separation.

IF YOU HAVEN’T CAUGHT The Shapes yet, you’ll get your chance on Friday 13th October, alongside kindred spirits The Deadbeat Apostles. A familiar and friendly ace on the local gig scene, Ant talked to *Nightshift* ahead of that show and explained first how daunting it was to dive into the world of songwriting after so many years playing covers. “I wrote a few tunes back in the 80s but I was either in awe of the songwriter or just lacked confidence. Also I’m not a great musician, but it’s only occurred to me later in life that it really doesn’t matter as long as you can find a melody, hook and structure to a song; from an early age I was always coming up with tunes

but never had the belief to play them. “Recently I read an article with Chrissie Hynde and she wrote that if you think you’ve got the songs but can’t play great, surround yourself with great musicians, which I think I have done, as Steve, Ed, Colin and more recently Gary are all wonderful musicians that really make it a lot easier for playing live and recording, as you can concentrate on your bit and not worry about what’s going on behind you.”

BEING AN OLDER BAND The Shapes initially found their path blocked as far as getting gigs went. “Early on ageism was definitely prevalent, with getting gigs and being taking seriously; hats off to Osprey from It’s All About the Music and Richard from Gappy Tooth Industries for giving us a chance back then, as other promoters wouldn’t touch us, but as the band has changed and grown together we’ve played bigger and better gigs, and also with *Nightshift* really getting behind us, it really doesn’t seem to matter now. “I have a few friends my age that play and write songs that have said to me that I have given them the confidence to come out of their bedrooms and play some open mics

etc. which I think is wonderful. Jez, our guitarist, didn’t start playing ‘til he was in his late 40s and in his first band at 50 and he has achieved so much, so if you’re still breathing, get out there and do it before it’s too late!” “Having songs that seem to appeal to all age groups is part of who The Shapes are,” adds Alix, whose rich, soulful voice, honed in Soul Devotion, is a magic ingredient in The Shapes’ sound; “you’re never too old or young to appreciate a good melody and fun gig.”

AS WELL AS BEING AN OLDER person in what is too commonly assumed to be a young person’s game, Ant stands out from many of Oxford’s best known bands for being a working class lad, born and bred in the city; does he feel the music scene here is skewed too much towards middle class musicians? “My Dad was an Irish Immigrant who came to Oxford looking for work back in the 50s and who had to put up with all the prejudice of the time, which was rampant. What was great back in the late 70s and early 80s was that you had so many working class bands and in general it was frowned upon in more middle class circles. But over the last 25 years it has turned full circle with public schools openly promoting being in a band as a career choice. Just look at places like St Edward’s and Magdalen with their practice rooms, recording studios etc; it’s no wonder so many of Oxford finest are ex public school boys. You read of bands that mum and dad have financed their music career and of course they can spend time recording and finding themselves and will always be bailed out; working class kids don’t have that option. But it’s really just a mirror of our society and will never change whilst we have public schools. On a positive note, there are lots more musicians from ethnic minorities and women playing music in bands these days.”

WITH THE SHAPES, AS WELL as his occasional side project The Factory Lights, Ant uses his hometown as a huge part of his songwriting. Many of his songs are love letters to Oxford: stories of growing up, growing old and looking back on life here. “‘Passing of the Years’ by The Shapes, and ‘The Old School Wall’ and ‘Ballad of a Cowley Boy’ by The Factory Lights were all songs written within a few months of each other. As I was going through the demise and death of my father and my mother slipping into dementia, and also coping with my own health issues, it just really makes you look inwards at your life and where you come from. When I first heard

‘Zorbing’ by Stornoway, with its Cowley references I thought, hold on here a minute, I grew up, fell in love, drank my first pint and fought in those streets, so I thought I have just as much to say as those that were just passing through. One of my favourite lines in ‘A Ballad Of A Cowley Boy’ is, ‘I was born and raised in Oxford, not far from the Dreaming Spires, but the only life that was mapped out for me was on the line of the Leyland Cars,’ which was so true back in the 70s, but now kids from every background have far more choices academically, which is a great and positive thing.”

AS MENTIONED, MEETING Truck Festival founder and Goldrush frontman Robin Bennett in 2005 was a significant moment for Ant, opening his eyes to a different world of music and laying the foundation for The Shapes. “Robin contacted me out of the blue one day to see if I could get his band some covers gig to help

“That gig at Truck after Tony died remains one of the best and emotionally charged I have ever played. To use a football analogy, we didn’t leave anything out there.”

finance Goldrush. I wasn’t that familiar back then with the Oxford scene but I went to see them and I was blown away. He mentioned Truck Festival to me and in 2005 I went along with a bunch of friends and was totally hooked. It was an epiphany and in the months that followed I found myself going to gig after gig watching local bands like The Epstein, The Long Insiders, Stornoway, Goldrush etc. I started to write songs and wanted to be a part of it. I’d finally found my home, albeit 30 years late.” You also met Tony Jezzard around then. “He was very important as he really gave me the confidence in my songwriting. I can remember when I played him ‘Baby, Your Strange’, the first song we ever recorded, he said it was really good and that he wanted to be a part of it. At the time some of the band members weren’t the best musicians in the world but he never ever berated anyone and always went out of his way to help and encourage them, which showed his class. “I have some great memories of going around his house in Horspath, drinking strong tea and avoiding the Huskies; he would say ‘why don’t you try this’ and we bounced ideas around. He really taught me a lot. I had a call from our old drummer Martin to tell me the news when he died. I was in total shock and to this day I still can’t quite believe it; I

think about him a lot.” Tony had done sound work at Truck Festival from its very beginnings, and ironically The Shapes found themselves playing the festival shortly after his death, a supremely emotional experience. “It was incredibly emotional; he had always done sound work at Truck since its inception but he told me he had never played Truck in a band so he was so looking forward to the gig. I can honestly say that that gig in the Saloon bar in 2013 remains one of the best and emotionally charged gigs I have ever played. To use a football analogy we didn’t leave anything out there. I was completely shattered and drained. God bless; him I still miss him terribly, one of nicest, brightest, talented fellas you will ever meet.”

THE SHAPES PLAYED TRUCK again this year. How much does Ant think the festival has changed and how did they cope with the mud? Ant: “This was our fifth Truck and one of the best. We had a massive

crowd, partly due to the rain outside, but there were many punters who came along to see us. There was a whole bunch that saw our set at Common People and made a special effort to catch us at Truck, which was lovely. “To me, modern Truck is like three different festivals in one and very rarely do they come together. With the Veterans and Virgins tent and the Saloon the old Truck is still alive but you have to know where to find it.

‘LONG WAY HOME’ IS THE Shapes’ strongest release to date, revealing their ever-improving songwriting chops, but it can’t quite capture the unfettered goodtime vibes of the band live, the band that has had festival crowds dancing and *Nightshift* describe them as “the feelgood band of the summer.” Getting people to have a good time is very much Ant’s aim for The Shapes. “I loved that comment. I’m really glad that’s how were perceived. I guess it’s a throwback to my covers band days as you’re always trying to get the punters dancing and having fun. The band are very lively on stage for an older bunch; we have Colin throwing his shapes and everyone else joining in. Also I guess you don’t have to take yourself too seriously; some bands are far to earnest for their own good.” “It’s a huge compliment, adds Alix, “but we just love that the audience

seem to enjoy the gigs as much as we do. I agree with Ant that we shouldn’t be taking things too seriously. I consider myself really lucky to be in a great band, with great musicians, having a fab time. If the crowd enjoy it too, all the better.”

PACKED TENTS AND DANCING crowds suggest The Shapes are succeeding in their mission, and yet beyond that feelgood factor, the songs are so often very sad. How do the band reconcile those two sides to their music? Ant: “I love that we are a feelgood band, but lyrically lots of my songs are introspective. Songs like ‘April Showers’ is about my anxiety, ‘Bringing Me Down’ is about addiction and ‘Mr Sandman’ is about midlife realisation. ‘Passing Of The Years’ of course is about lost years and longing. ‘A New Train’, a song we mostly end our set with, was originally written about the Arab spring but I have now adapted as it fits perfectly in with what is happening politically in Britain and the US and with Brexit. I love Paul Heaton’s’ songwriting as he is brilliant at mixing political and social commentary with bundles of irony and he dresses it all up with great feelgood melodies and harmonies and I guess that’s what I try and do.” Songs like ‘Passing of the Years’ in particular, could only come from an older songwriter. “It’s a lament to the Cowley Road, falling in love and for lost time. I grew up just off the Cowley Road; I met my wife Fran there. Back then Cowley Road was a very different place but it always had that magical side to it. Me and my mates would always go drinking down there as Oxford town centre was a horrible place at the time, with townie pubs that always attracted violence. I’ve always loved the diversity of east Oxford; I went to school at Oxford Boys, which was very interracial and cosmopolitan. I left school when I was 15 and became an apprentice printer at 16 at Nuffield Press in Cowley, so lots of who I am today was shaped in Cowley. Our gig at the Cowley Road Carnival this year was wonderful and a real pleasure, as it means so much to me. “It seems so much easier having been round the block a few times and have so much more to write about. Although an old mate of mine who was in bands years back said to me recently, ‘what on earth do you think to write about in your 50s, your prostate problems?’”

‘Long Way Home’ is out now. The Shapes play Tap Social in Botley on Saturday 16th September and at The Bullingdon on Friday 13th October. Visit www.shapesoxford.co.uk for more gig dates.

RELEASED

EARINADE ‘Musical & Personal Differences’

(Self released)
Let’s get formalities out of the way first. If you don’t know Earinade yet you almost certainly know some if not all of their moving parts. The band is helmed by Mac, former Jericho Tavern and Point promoter, who’s done more than most to build Oxford’s enviable gig scene and whose own musical career goes back to the 80s with The Hulas, Arthur Turner’s Lovechild and more. He’s joined by ex-Candyskins bassist Brett Gordon; former-Daisies and Medal guitarist Mark Willis, plus Les Clochards duo Karen Cleave and Gary Neville, Karen also serving time in local legends The Anyways. That pedigree is important since for a relatively new band (they briefly existed under the name Baws Inc. until late last year) this debut album is accomplished to a degree most local bands can only dream about. It opens in militant, almost military, style with the marching, staccato, blues-tinged ‘Drop the Bomb’, Mac’s instantly recognisable voice intoning sweet lines like “I’m the devil in the detail on the supermarket shelf,” while Karen adds an imposing piano rhythm and synth buzz to the procession. Her keyboard work is at the very heart of Earinade, adding new dimensions to songs like ‘The Bell Rock Rock’, with its laser-fire synths and a ‘She’s In Rainbows’-like flourish to the otherwise downbeat ‘Sharks Are Born Swimming’, where she also duets with Mac. At their best Earinade detour from their baseline post-punk / 70s rhythm’n’blues



ESTHER JOY LANE ‘Psychic Tears’

(Self released)
From *Metropolis*, through *Bladerunner* to *Ghost in the Shell* and *The Fifth Element* there’s an enduring sci-fi concept of a very human heart and soul lost or trapped inside a super-designed



into queasy, Fat White Family-like dirge, as on ‘How Evel Was Evel Knievel’, klezmer-inspired chanting (‘Hard Of Thinking’) and caustic, Fall-esque punk-punk (‘Dr. Ink’). ‘Cold, Skinny & Boring’ is a neat balance between guitar hysteria and vocal nonchalance, while ‘Science Hands’ is a gnarly, snarling garage-rock carousel. Only the clamouring mess that is ‘Payola La La’ misses its target, a mess of meaty chords and shouting with no sharp edges. Mac’s punk roots shine through – only two tracks clock in over four minutes with most barely scraping three and there’s a raw belligerence about the well-observed *bon mots* and self-consciously forced rhymes, but this is a group effort, the sound of a band hitting the ground running. And possibly heading straight for the nearest pub. Don’t worry, as soon as they’ve drunk their fill they’ll be back out on the street and ready for a scrap. Or at least a ferocious squabble. **Dale Kattack**

killing machine. It’s an image that readily springs to mind when we listen to Esther Joy Lane and the feeling is getting stronger with each new set of songs. This latest five-track EP comes in the wake of a global tour support to Charlie XCX and finds Esther’s beats getting harder, the synths heavier and her voice steelier, while retaining that vital vulnerability that’s always been her trademark. The glitchy wooziness she borrowed from Grimes on her earliest songs seems to be gone for the most part; ‘Franke’ is positively Numan-esque in its industrial crunch, the vocals an almost playful counterpoint alongside the skittering beats, while ‘Wealth’ is Esther at her most mechanical and atmospheric, like Nine Inch Nails duelling Jean Michel Jarre over a reprisal of the *X Files* theme tune. It’s ‘Friendless Necessity’ though that best reveals Esther’s still strong pop quality: future factory hiss and shimmer with almost anthemic intent, and at its core a voice that’s pure and soulful and sounds like it was tailor-made for the soundtrack of the forthcoming *Bladerunner* sequel. It’s killer robot pop, but behind the laser gun, it’s all heart. **Dale Kattack**



SPUNKLE ‘Delicate Chun’

(Self released)
In August 1997 Shifty Disco released ‘Lubetune’ by Spunkle as part of its monthly singles club. Described by *Melody Maker* at the time as “the sound of a BBC 32K computer game loading up a bat and ball game” it has since achieved notoriety because Shifty Disco chose to release it instead of what would have been Muse’s debut single.

Jim Davies, the man behind Spunkle, was once described by *Nightshift* as “the only person we’ve called a genius and not regretted it in the morning” and to mark the 20th anniversary of that release, and following a period of personal reflection following the death of long-time friend and collaborator Adam Warne, aka Phagus, he releases this new three-track EP, proving if nothing else that age hasn’t mellowed him or pushed him any closer towards concepts like melody. ‘Delicate Chun’ is an eight-minute journey through the sounds made by the electrical components of a car, as received by an AM radio – rather than a microphone – and is a hellish dysfunctional drone that could be a recording of a Cyberman’s indigestion. ‘False Celadon’ takes the concept further, again an AM radio recording, this time of a washing machine, but stuck through vocoders and the 90-minute cycle split across three tracks and reduced to eight minutes, which is strangely serene compared to the opener, a white noise hum and buzz that’s equally claustrophobic and hypnotically soothing. ‘Adam’, meanwhile, is a tribute to his late friend, and as a percussionist, features three unrelated rhythmic elements, including a sampled loop of Adam playing drums; it’s nicely relentless in an understated way although it’s the least satisfying of the three pieces, without that hint of eerie menace. Still, it’s great to have Spunkle back. As he acknowledges himself, his fanbase now is so miniscule he’s limited this release to 20 copies. And as one of the people responsible for passing up Muse for that original release, it remains one of my proudest achievements and a decision I’ll forever stick by. **Dale Kattack**



CATGOD ‘Someone Love EP’

(Self released)
Coincidentally released in the same month as Zerowe’s new EP, it’s hard not to compare and



JACK GOLDSTEIN ‘Sandwiches’

(Attracted Vinyl)
As I listen to ‘Sandwiches’, an unexpected downpour clears, to be replaced with bright sunshine, which feels appropriate. Fixers frontman Jack Goldstein’s latest solo release is an intriguing mess, a glorious conglomeration

LITTLE RED ‘Siren Song’

(All Will Be Well)
Starting the build-up to the release of a full-length album early next year, Little Red offer this slender slice of pagan folk-cum-bluegrass, more a chant than a song, like the meeting point between the soundtracks to *The Wicker Man* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; Hayley Bell’s limpid old-world folk voice in particular reminiscent of Alison Krauss and Gillian Welch. It’s short but effective and sits well alongside the b-side, a live, stripped-back take on ‘Mr Wolf’, with the band continuing to gently conjure the feeling something dark is lurking on the periphery of their rural idyll.

contrast the former Neverlnd bandmates’ new works. While singer Thomas Roberts has gone the full electro-pop/r’n’b, Robin Christensen-Marriot and co. invest their energy in complex rhythms and trippy atmospherics. Rhythm really is king here, from the overlapping patterns of ‘Blurry Days’, with crashing cymbals mixed with handclaps and what might even be the sound of someone cracking their knuckles looped into a beat, to the slinky, breathless skitter of ‘I’m Innocent’, where jazzy afropop finds itself competing with a chiming doorbell. Everything’s simultaneously busy and lazy, Massive Attack’s crepuscular vibe given a strong mug of coffee and taken down the local Afro-jazz club to sit fidgeting on its stool. Robin’s voice is neatly tempered by sister Cat’s vocals which come into their own best on ‘Blurry Days’, making it, unsurprisingly, the highlight of an EP that, like the band’s debut album, make Catgod an elegantly unusual act on the local scene. **Dale Kattack**

of genres, a (hopefully) heartfelt series of inward-looking extrovert mantras, and a rollickin’ decent time of a listen. As evidenced by his time in Fixers, it’s clear that Goldstein is nifty with melody, and rather obsessed with pop in its purest sense and with utilising a layered approach to music-making. That’s all stretched to the nth degree across the eleven tracks that comprise ‘Sandwiches’. A chuck-in-the-kitchen-sink-why-not production approach lends an extraordinarily high fidelity to this music; it sounds confident, polished and rich. While it can suffer a little at a macro level – almost collapsing under its own weight of invention, which can feel so overloaded as to become questionable – at a micro level there’s much to admire. Think Animal Collective, Grandaddy, Simon Dupree and the Big Sound, musique concrete, and in particular Beach Boys circa-‘Smile’, then flip everything in the air and see how it lands. Possibly genius, a little flawed; probably due to be uncovered in around twenty years as something that should have been more appreciated. **Simon Minter**



Sue Foreman



ZEROWE ‘Shade of Blue EP’

(Self released)
Hell isn’t really good enough for internet search engine optimisers and following on from the debatable decision to rechristen the excellently named Balloon Ascents as Neverlnd a couple of years back, local face Thomas Roberts is back with more music under his Zerowe moniker (presumably pronounced ‘Zero’, following on from the well-received ‘Bad at This’ which appeared just a few short months ago). Unfortunately, the result is a disappointment: for all the occasional display of ability with a babbling keyboard squiggle and astute use of a sample – the shipping forecast and a few seagulls included – this EP is a mood piece over its six tracks and rarely morphs beyond background music. If you’re being particularly unkind you might imagine it’s music tailor-made to soundtrack drinking £12 Moscow Mules in The Duke of Cambridge. At times, we’re tempted to send out a search party for the songs, so anodyne is the music. ‘Heart Away’ and ‘Littleboyblue’ are especially vapid, the latter attempting Beach Boys style harmonies but instead sounding like Perry Como on a comeback tour with Loose Ends as a backing band. The major musical influence here would appear to be a Starbucks toffee nut latte but perhaps the issue is the need for a good songwriter – one that would take care of that side of business with Roberts applying his talents to the performance aspects of things – he does after all croon emotively. Lead track ‘Easy’ is better: warm thuds in the background keeping the listener interested while an acoustic guitar is wheeled out for closer ‘The Painter Slowly Going Blind’, the influence of another local artist, Cameron AG, apparent. All of which brings us to fellow Balloon Ascents successor band Catgod, the creative output of which is bringing a whole lot more to the table. Balloon Ascents were one of the best bands to emerge from Oxford in the past few years, every bit the equal of the more heavily backed Glass Animals, and it’s a pity that project wasn’t persevered with. Despite this misfire, Roberts surely still has it in him to turn up something significant in the future. **Rob Langham**



G I G G U I D E

FRIDAY 1st

BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford – Wallingford’s annual free music and beer festival returns, taking over a dozen venues in the town, from pubs to a boat, as well as the festival’s main stage. The focus is on folk and blues, with today’s main stage line-up including Roving Crows, Sam Green & the Midnight Heist and Carthorse.

FLORALYN GEORGE: O2 Academy – A bewitching blend of classical music, torch songs and electro-pop from Bulgarian-born harpist and singer George, out on a tour to raise money for a host of charities, including MacMillan Cancer Care, The Blue Cross and Marie Curie Trust, playing songs from her debut EP, ‘When Light Falls Asleep’ as well as covers of tracks like Chris Issac’s ‘Wicked Game’.

BOSSAPHONIC with VAUDOU GAME: The

Saturday 2nd

NADIA REID: The Cellar

Amid all the melancholy, all the spectral, acoustic moments, all the lovelorn folksiness and all the reflectiveness of her new album, there’s some neat caustic fuck-yous to be had from Nadia Reid. ‘Preservation’, the young New Zealand singer-songwriter’s follow-up to 2015 debut ‘Listen To The Formation, Look For The Signs’, is an ode to self worth and empowerment in the wake of a relationship breakdown, but while it might be introspective and ethereal for the most part it’s got plenty of dirt under its fingernails and comes with an intellectual edge that tempers much of its heart-on-sleeve mood. Very much in the vein of Martha Wainwright and Laura Marling, there’s room too for some Stevie Nicks-inspired spook pop and the narcotic, late-night emotional turbulence of Cowboy Junkies, while the sometimes lush arrangements and Reid’s pensive vocal performance keep everything on the edge, rather than let it sink into generic confessional acoustic pop. The battle between self doubt and a struggle for identity and a determination not to be a victim all adds to the drama and as Reid embarks on a mammoth European tour that sees her perform at End of the Road and Green Man, ‘Preservation’ looks increasingly likely to be a dark horse contender to feature in plenty of end of year best album round-ups.



SEPTEMBER

Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, global grooves, Balkan beats, Afro-pop and nu-jazz club night with host Dan Ofer on the decks. Tonight’s live set comes from Lyon’s hard-hitting Afro-funk outfit Vaudou Game, led by Togo-born Peter Solo, bringing sacred songs from Togo and Benin’s vaudou culture and marrying them to 70s-style funk and r’n’b, inspired by James Brown and Wilson Pickett.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with PEERLESS PIRATES + DEMOISELLES + GENETIC REVOLUTION + THE KITES: The Wheatsheaf – After their August break Klub Kakofanney get back into the saddle for another night of anything-goes fun and good vibes. Tonight sees a return to local live action for the recently revamped Peerless Pirates, Captain Cliff Adams still steering his buccaneering indie/rockabilly crew through a swashbuckling set of songs of derring do and romance.

THROWING SHAPES: The Bullingdon – House and disco club night.

OCTANE SPRING: Tap Social, Botley – Classic rock covers.

RADIO DAYS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Punk, new wave and synth-pop covers, from The Damned, Stooges and Buzzcocks, to Bowie, Magazine, Numan and Kraftwerk.

SATURDAY 2nd

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?: East Oxford Community Centre / Fusion Arts (2pm-2am) – Twelve hours, three rooms, 30 acts – it’s a festival! But indoors! Get in! – *see main preview*

THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES + GREAT WESTERN TEARS + THE EPSTEIN: Isis Tavern (6pm) – Country-tinged classic soul from Deadbeat Apostles, hosting their second Day of the Deadbeats event, a little bit of Willie Nelson twang bringing a rootsy edge to their Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge and Al Green-inspired sound. They’re joined by wistful alt. country romantics Great Western Tears and expansive folk rockers The Epstein.

THE WHOLLS + LITTLE BROTHER ELI: O2 Academy – Blues and funk-tinged rocking in the vein of Arctic Monkeys from Bedford’s Wholls, touring their eponymous debut album after their recent support to Kaiser Chiefs. Great local blues/funk/rock support from Little Brother Eli, partying in the vein of Black Keys, White Stripes and White Denim.

NADIA REID: The Cellar – Defiant break-up acoustica from the Kiwi singer over on a European tour – *see main preview*

FREERANGE: The Cellar – UK garage, grime and bassline club night playing the best new underground tunes.

CRIMSON TUSK + BLACK EMERALD + RATS EAT RATS + WOLFS: The Wheatsheaf – Heavy-duty stoner-metal and sludge blues from Crimson Tusk, joined by Reading’s Stoner/prog trio Black Emerald, rising local grunge

crew Rats Eat Rats and garage-rock duo Wolfs.

GROOVE: The Bullingdon – House, funk and disco club night.

SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: The White House – Sparky’s monthly bands and jam night, with sets from Richard Brotherton, Mudslide Morris & the Revelators and Storyteller.

STEVE TILSTON + LAPHOOKA: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Veteran singer and guitarist Steve Tilston comes to the Wychwood Folk Club, the man having written songs for Fairport Convention among others and collaborated with Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Maartin Allcock and Ralph McTell over the years as he mixes up traditional English and Irish folk with elements of classical music.

BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford – Canadian folksters Le Vent headline the main stage, joined by Brooklyn’s Kenny Young & the Eggplants, plus Rusty Shackie, Dave Fidler & the Corvettes and The Honkin’ Hepcats, while The Mighty Redox play their traditional late night set at The Dolphin.

MARACUTAYA: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Latin-flavoured rock and funk.

SUNDAY 3rd

WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS #2: The Bullingdon (2pm) – Celebrating the life of musician and promoter Michael Barry and raising money for the Brain Tumour Charity with Chad Valley and more – *see main preview*

DANCE A LA PLAGE + VICTORY + WHO’S ALICE + SAM MARTIN: O2 Academy – Pop-friendly indie funk from Banbury’s Dance a la Plage.

BUNKFEST: Various venues, Wallingford – Rounding off the three day festival are Talisman, Hope & Social, Cecil and Jody Wyatt on the main stage.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms – Weekly open mic night.

DUOTONE + CONNEMARA + THE SATELLITE VINES + THE MIRACLE PIERS: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Benefit gig for Cancer Research UK with cello’n’loops maestro Duotone mixing up experimental virtuosity and soulful, heartaching melodies. He’s joined by Brighton popsters The Satellite Vines and local acoustic dream-pop duo The Miracle Piers, featuring former-Fell City Girl guitarist Joe Gibbons.

MONDAY 4th

STRUM WHAT YA BRUNG: The Black Swan – Fortnightly open mic session.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim – Weekly open mic session.

TUESDAY 5th

ROB TOGNONI + HELL’S GAZELLES: The Bullingdon – The Tasmanian blues devil returns to the Haven Club, displaying the powerful and versatile electric style that’s served him well in his 30-plus years on the road, his powerful

electric style owing much to Hendrix, Van Halen and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Melodic hard rocking with a punk attitude in the vein of Guns’n’Roses, Judas Priest and Led Zep from local stars Hell’s Gazelles.

SPARKY’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic session.

Saturday 2nd

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?: East Oxford Community Centre / Fusion Arts

Just because summer’s over doesn’t mean festival season has to be – it’s just moving indoors. Today’s perfectly-formed celebration of the musical underground comes courtesy of two of Oxford’s best indie promoters, Divine Schism and Idiot King, and features some 30 acts and DJs across three rooms over 12 hours, with the emphasis on the noisy, the lo-fi and the inventive. Headliners are Wrexham’s **GALLOPS**, mixing swooning post-rock with fidgety electro-pop, and they’re joined over the course of the day by Edinburgh’s **SPOOK SCHOOL** with their raucous indie-punk and militant but tender identity politics; London’s Blondie and Television-inspired post-punk **TIGERCAT**; Cardiff’s lo-fi anti-folk crew **OH PEAS**; warmly atmospheric electro torch singer **GRACE LIGHTMAN**; Dalston’s ferocious noise/punk/hardcore beats **DEATH PEDALS**, fresh from slaying Supernormal; Husker Du-influenced alt.rockers **FLEMMINGS**; Max ‘King of Cats’ Levy’s tumbletdown Ween-esque creep-pop crew **GARDEN CENTRE**; baroque folk singer **JOHANNA GLAZA**; shimmering shoegazers **FEVER DREAM**; mayhemic instrumentalists **ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY**, and lo-fi junk-pop types **PORRIDGE RADIO**. There’s also a strong local contingent in the form of hushed, xx and Young Marble Giants-inspired post-punkers **KONE**; melodic grunge tigers **SLATE HEARTS**; symphonic electro/post-rock fellow **KID KIN**; grungy garage rockers **WOLFS**; proggy synth soundscapists **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS**, and idiosyncratic troubadour **SALVATION BILL**. East Oxford Community Centre and Fusion Arts was made for events like this with each room literally a few seconds walk from the others, so you don’t have to miss a thing. What better way to get back into the indoor gigging scheme of things while still feeling you’re at a busy festival. To quote Lou Reed, it’s such a perfect day.



WEDNESDAY 6th

ALVVAYS: The Bullingdon – Pure pop from the Canadian indie dreamers, touring their second album – *see main preview*

DC HIP HOP SESSIONS: The Cellar – Deep Cover hosts a hip hop, r’n’b, trap, grime and dancehall party with resident DJs.

THURSDAY 7th

FLATLANDS + SLATE HEARTS: The Cellar – Polished guitar pop from Flatlands alongside molten, melodic grungers Slate Hearts.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free gig in the downstairs bar from the swamp-blues, ska, funk and psychedelic pop regulars.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running and most eclectic open night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists every Thursday.

KING TERRIBLPRESENTS LORDS OF DISCO WONDER: The Cellar – Rock, disco and 80s hits every Thursday.

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: The Half Moon – Sparky hosts his weekly open mic session.

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly open mic night.

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Open blues jam.

FRIDAY 8th

RODDY WOOMBLE: O2 Academy – The Idlewild singer tours his new solo album, ‘The Deluder’, able to take a more tender, insular musical path to his band’s often epic songscapes; Woombles’ rich, dolorous voice continues to shine through though, his previous collaborations with the likes of Kate Rusby, Karine Polwart and Kris Drever and John McCusker feeding into his solo work.

BANFI: The Cellar – Grunge-folk, soulful pop and a little bit of r’n’b from east London’s Banfi, fronted by Cheshire singer-songwriter Joe Banfi, out on tour to promote their debut album on Communion, following acclaimed single ‘Happy When You’re Gone’ and supports to Nathaniel Rateliffe and Bear’s Den, Banfi himself compared to the likes of Jeff Buckley, Ben Howard and Paulo Nutini.

SLEAZY DOES IT with POIZON + BLACK BULLETS + NASTY HIGH + CHASING IMMORTALITY: The Bullingdon – OxRox launch their new sleaze-rock club night with a headline set from Poison tribute act Poizon, fronted by Tigertailz singer Rob Wylde. They’re joined by Basingstoke’s biker rock crew Black Bullets and Nottingham rockers Nasty High. Dig out your leather and lycra, back-comb your hair and get ready to get down and depraved.

ECHO4FOUR + REPERCUSSIONS OF YESTERDAY: The Wheatsheaf – Sabbath-esque rocking from Echo4Four at tonight’s Church of the Heavy show.

OFF-KEY: The Cellar – Trap, grime, hip hop, bassline and drum&bass club night with Burt Cope, Freddie B, Nikztar B2B Silas, and Gilly Gill.

FIREGAZER + CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE + TONY BATEY: James Street Tavern – Dark-hearted traditional English folk from Firegazer, alongside psychedelic pop from Charms Against the Evil Eye, and veteran local bluesman Tony Batey.

ATTILA THE STOCKBROKER + MICK GREANEY + OLIVER COLLINS: The



Sunday 3rd

WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS #2: The Bullingdon

Back for its second year, a special daytime charity gig and party in memory of the late Michael Barry, who passed away last year. In the spirit of the Abort, Retry, Fail? club nights he helped run, the afternoon features a mix of live music and DJ sets with all proceeds going to the Brain Tumour Charity – Michael Barry Fund. This year’s headliners are **CHAD VALLEY**, Hugo Manuel’s electro-pop act, making their first hometown appearance in two years. Last year, while on tour in the States, their van was broken into and all their equipment stolen, meaning they’ve been out of action for much of the last year. Thankfully back now though, at his best his woozy, wowsoy electro-pop and r’n’b is luxurious and seductive, euphoric set-pieces touching base with Ryuichi Sakamoto, Arthur Russell and even Future Sound of London, with more recent autotune-heavy r’n’b numbers taking him closer to George Michael. He’s joined today by flamenco-folk songmeister **CHARLIE CUNNINGHAM**; Fixers frontman and psych-pop master **JACK GOLDSTEIN**, set to release his new album, ‘Sandwiches’; indie crew **EGRETS**, and **TURBINE LOVE**, the new band from former-Jonquil and Trophy Wife chap Jody Prewett. Kompakt’s Lake Turner, Al English from Youthmovies, plus assorted Abort, Retry, Fail? DJs are on the decks and it’s a great way to remember a sadly departed star of the local scene as well as helping future generations. It all kicks off at 3pm.

White Hart, Eynsham – Bringing a taste of the revolution to the Shire in the form of the living legend that is punk poet and folk singer Attila the Stockbroker, social commentator, satirist, surrealist and Tory baiter extraordinaire for over 40 years, originally earning his reputation playing support to punk bands – including The Jam and The Alarm – as well as touring the former Easter Bloc countries before becoming a spiky institution and poet in residence at his beloved Brighton & Hove Albion. 3,500 gigs and counting – he will not stop until those statues are toppled.

D-FEST: The Red Lion, Drayton – Drayton’s annual D-Fest expands across three days this year, kicking off tonight with sets from punk, new wave and electro-pop covers band Radio Days, plus Declan Dorm, Cat’n’Fiddle and Otto.

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

SATURDAY 9th

RABBITHOLE FESTIVAL: Victoria Arms, Old Marston (12 noon – 11.30pm) – The



Wednesday 6th

ALVVAYS: The Bullingdon

Surf-rocking, sugar-coated sadness is something that never fails to get *Nightshift* feeling a bit giddy, so it was inevitable we’d fall madly in love with Toronto’s Alvways the moment we heard them back in 2014. Any band that reminded us, even a teensy little bit, of The Shop Assistants had to be great, right? Right! If you haven’t heard the band’s sublime early single ‘Archie, Marry Me’, then you’re undoubtedly missing out in life. There was a brief period when we even considered changing our name to Archie, just so we could imagine Molly Rankin was proposing to us. It’s a song to make you think of sunshine and ice cream and love and kittens. It’s just lovely. We still play it every day to keep the clouds and the dark evenings at bay. Because, like musical close relations Camera Obscura and The Vivian Girls, Alvways manage to convey biting melancholy while sounding absolutely joyous. Their compact, self-titled debut album was a prefect blend of froth, fear and frivolity: a timeless indie sound – all jangle and shimmer and Rankin’s gorgeous, yearning voice – but it’s a timeless sound for a good reason, one the band haven’t tried to fix or move on from on follow-up ‘Antisocialites’, released this month, and Alvways remain a reminder that great pop music simply will never die.

annual family-friendly mini-fest returns for its fourth outing, hosting fourteen acts across two stages, with soulful reggae stars Zaia headlining alongside Paves; Faith I Branko; Lucy Mair; Zhang & Janes; A Little Bit Country; Elephantasy; The Abingdon Community Choir and more.

DONNINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL:
Donnington Community Centre (2-10pm) – Donnington’s annual charity festival returns for its sixth year with live music from Osprey, The String Project, Ras Brother John, Beard Of Destiny, The Riverside Voices, Delnavaz, Jeremy Hughes, Phil and Sue, Glendale Train, Mark Bosley & Pete Lock, and Elena Harris, alongside kids activities and food from anti food waste caterers Waste2Taste.

TERRORSAURS + WHO KILLED NANCY JOHNSON + REBEL STATION: **The Cellar** – Musicians Against Homelessness show in aid of Crisis. Birmingham rockers Terrorsaurs join Reading punk act Who Killed Nancy Johnson and Gloucester rockers Rebel Station as part of a nationwide series of gigs co-ordinated by MAH patron Alan McGee.

OLD SCHOOL OXFORD – EASY GROOVE:
The Bullingdon

JOHNNY’S SEXUAL KITCHEN: **The Brewery Tap, Abingdon** – Classic rock covers.

D-FEST: The Red Lion, Drayton – Sets today from Osprey & Friends; Boon, Mew & Wooster; Jamie Page; Easter Island Statues; Purple May, and Superloose.

SUNDAY 10th

PURPLE MAY + RICHARD BROTHERTON + SPOON THEORY + JUNIPER NIGHTS:
The Wheatsheaf (3.30-8.30pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the downstairs bar, hosted by Giddyup Music.

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS + THE LENE LOVICH BAND: **O2 Academy** – The 80s post-punk stars head out on a Greatest Hits tour – *see main preview*

D-FEST: The Red Lion, Drayton – Third and final day of D-Fest with sets from The Steve Morris Band; Song & Supperrooms; Mark Bosley, and Ady Davey.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms

WATERFAHL: **The Brewery Tap, Abingdon** – Acoustic blues, folk and pop from the local duo.

MONDAY 11th

BLUES CARAVAN: **The Bullingdon** – The Haven Club hosts Ruf Records’ annual touring blues revue, the seasoned Blues Caravan band, this time round featuring guitarist Laura Chavez alongside the seasoned rhythm section, joined by North Carolina blues, roots and folk singer and storyteller Big Daddy Wilson; fast-rising Philly singer and saxophonist Vanessa Collier, and London soulman Si Cranstoun.

OXFORD CLASSIC JAZZ: **The Harcourt Arms**

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 12th

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

ZAC-JAK: **The Old Fire Station** – Oxford Improvisers host Philadelphia duo Jack Wright and Zachary Darrup, mixing up saxophones, guitars and found sounds.

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

WEDNESDAY 13th

TEXAS: **The New Theatre** – Back in touring action and with a new album, ‘Jump Onboard’ –their ninth – following the recovery of founding guitarist Ally McErlaine from a brain aneurysm in 2010, Sharleen Spiteri’s pop/rock hitmakers play the big hits from their 80s/90s commercial peak, including ‘I Don’t Want A Lover’, ‘Summer Son’, ‘Say What You Want’ and ‘In Our Lifetime’, as well as songs from the new album.

FANGCLUB: **The Cellar** – Grunge, garage-rock and pop-punk in the vein of Foo Fighters from Dublin trio Fangclub, touring their debut album.

DC HIP HOP SESSIONS: **The Cellar**

THURSDAY 14th

ZAIA: **Truck Store (6pm)** – Instore set from the soulful local reggae and dub stars.

SUPERGLU: **The Cellar** – Slacker garage-pop from Suffolk’s rising starlets, touring new single ‘Welcome Home’, following their Huw Stephens BBC Intruding Recommendation of the Week endorsement back in April.

THE SGT. PEPPER SHOW: **Simpkins**

Lee Theatre – Opening night of a week-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Beatles’ landmark album, with a play centering on the life of Brian Epstein featuring songs from the album performed by The Oxford Beatles and guests. Runs through til the 18th.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre**

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: **The Half Moon**

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: **Jude the Obscure**

BLUES JAM: **The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

KING TERRIBLE PRESENTS LORDS OF DISCO WONDER: **The Cellar**

FRIDAY 15th

JAMES YUILL: **The Cellar** – A first visit to Oxford in almost a decade from the London folktronica artist, plugging his Pledgefunded new album ‘A Change in State’ on his own Happy Biscuit label after time spent on Moshi Moshi, the laptop troubadour following in the footsteps of Ben Esser and Jeremy Warmsley with his reflective acoustic ballads and digital beats that take inspiration from Nick Drake and Brian Eno as well as Aphex Twin.

SOUL SESSIONS: **The Cellar** – classic soul, funk and disco from the 60s, 70s and 80s.

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN: **The New Theatre** – Return to town for the big-stage tribute to the legendary label, featuring back to back classics from Marvin Gaye; Diana Ross; Stevie Wonder; The Temptations; The Supremes; The Four Tops; Martha Reeves; The Jackson 5; Lionel Richie; Smokey Robinson, and more.

CHAPTER & VERSE + WARS + PERCEPTION + LEST WE FORGET: **O2 Academy** – A night of hardcore and post-hardcore nose with London alt-rockers Chapter & Verse alongside Rugby’s Wars, with a double dose of local metalcore from Lest We Forget and full-throttle riff merchants Perception.

BOSSAPHONIK with the DESTROYERS:
The Bullingdon – Dancefloor Latin, Afrobeat, Balkan beats, global grooves and nu jazz club night, tonight with a live set from 13-strong Balkan and gypsy dance ensemble The Destroyers, plus host Dan Ofer on the decks.

THOMAS TRUAX: **The Old Fire Station** – Genuinely eccentric musical adventuring and invention from crackpot poet and boffin Truax, a regular visitor to town over the years and last seen in the Shire at last year’s Truckfest. Here he is back again with his oddly shaped songs and even more oddly shaped instruments, from a drum machine made of old bike wheels, to his (in)famous hornicator – a souped up gramophone rather than something you’d find in an adult catalogue.

BLUSHES + THE DEMOISELLES + THE SHADES + LOST DARREN: **The Wheatsheaf** – Alternately dark, contemplative and funky indie from Aylesbury’s Blushes at tonight’s new bands showcase.

WALKWAY: **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Hard rock.

HOWLIN’ TAILDRAGGERS: **Red Hot Blues, Didcot** – Chicago blues covers.

SATURDAY 16th

K-LACURA + OBZIDIAN + CONTEK: **The Wheatsheaf** – OxRox hosts a super-heavyweight night of riffage with local metalcore ragers K-Lacura alongside Stafford’s thrash merchants and ambient post-hardcore crew Contek.

MUSICAL MEDICINE: **The Bullingdon** – Moonshine Monty and Harry Reddick spin house

and techno.

WESTERMAN: **The Cellar** – Starlit folk-tinged psychedelic pop from the London singer-songwriter, mixing up influences of Nick Drake and John Martyn with Arthur Russell on recent single ‘Roads’.

FLUID: **The Cellar** – Bass, grime and drum&bass club night with Blair, Hamdi, Masp and Wissla.

TOM WILLIAMS + LITTLE RED + OLD SWING: **The Jericho** – Dark-hearted but soulful gothic blues and 70s American roots rock from the Kent songsmith, back in town after his showing at Common People in May and playing songs from his acclaimed new album ‘All Chance’.

Support from local darkwoods folk-popsters Little Red.

THE SHAPES + CHASING DAYLIGHT: **Tap Social, Botley** – Party-hearty soul, rock, folk and r’n’b from this month’s cover stars, alongside Blockheads and Kinks-inspired rockers Chasing Daylight.

Sunday 10th

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS / THE LENE LOVICH BAND: O2 Academy

Pretty in Pink was a mixed blessing for The Psychedelic Furs. While John Hughes’ movie gave the band their biggest hit with the song of the same name and made them global stars, it was an overly-polished take on the track and put mounting pressure on the band to go further in that direction. The album that followed, ‘Midnight To Midnight’, was, frankly, rubbish (or in the band’s own words, “hollow, vapid and weak”), and while ‘Pretty In Pink’ has doubtless kept them in royalties ever since, it’s a poor representation of what they were capable of. Formed amid the blossoming London post-punk scene by brothers Richard and Tim Butler, the first Psychedelic Furs album was brilliantly austere, while follow-ups ‘Talk Talk Talk’, ‘Forever Now’ and ‘Mirror Moves’ provided a slew of minor hits, becoming increasingly melodic without letting standards slip. By the mid-80s they were major league stars in the States but, like Simple Minds, record label-influenced polish had taken much of their identity away and they split in 1992. They reformed in 2000 though and tonight’s show is part of a Greatest Hits tour, so we’ll get everything from ‘Heaven’, ‘The Ghost in You’ and ‘President Gas’ to ‘Love My Way’, ‘India’ and hopefully the original version of ‘Pretty in Pink’ and be able to remember what an awesome band they were at their peak. Great support tonight from 80s freak-pop siren Lene Lovich, best known for her hit ‘Lucky Number’.



THE PETE FRYER BAND: **The Cricketers Arms, Cowley** – Blues and rock covers from the veteran singer and guitarist.

BIG AZZA & THE JUKESTERS: **The Brewery Tap, Abingdon** – Jump, jive, funk and swing.

SUNDAY 17th

SOLO COLLECTIVE: **Jacqueline du Pre Music Room** – Local piano wiz and improv chap Seb Reynolds teams up with cellist Anne Müller and violin player Alex Stolze, plus an ensemble of local musicians, for a concert of solo and collaborative sets, with Stolze and Müller joining Reynolds for workings of his compositions, inspired by Steve Reich, Brian Eno and Arvo Pärt. Tonight’s piano-led concert comes ahead of a collaborative album release later this year and a more electronics-led show at The Cellar in November.

MONKEY FISTS + BEARD OF DESTINY + BROWN GLOVE + DUOCANE + THE KITES: **The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm)** – Klub Kakofanny host a free afternoon of live music in the downstairs bar.

OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Harcourt Arms**

MONDAY 18th

STRUM WHAT YA BRUNG: **The Black Swan**

OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Royal Blenheim**

TUESDAY 19th

FLUID: **The Cellar** – Bass-heavy club night in aid of local homeless charity Oxford Homeless Pathway.

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

WEDNESDAY 20th

SOFAR SOUNDS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL: **Museum of Natural History** – The Oxford branch of the global pop-up gig movement joins with Sofar promoters across 300 cities around the world today to host a show in aid of Amnesty International. Legendary folk protest singer Peggy Seeger, rising local electro-pop stars Low Island and emotive singer-songwriter Lewis Watson will perform in the grand environs of the museum. Apply to attend at sofarsounds.com/giveahome before the 10th September.

PARTING GIFT + MERCIA: **The Wheatsheaf** – Post-grunge rock Manchester’s Parting Gift on tour.

DC HIP HOP SESSIONS: **The Cellar**

THURSDAY 21st

THE LAST DINOSAUR: **Truck Store (6.30pm)** – Fragile, soul-bearing chamber-folk and country-tinged pop from Cambridge’s The Last Dinosaur, taking inspiration from Talk Talk, Sparklehorse and Penguin Café Orchestra.

KIRAN LEONARD: **St. Barnabas Church** – Oldham’s eclectic DIY troubadour returns to town – *see main preview*

NEW FOUND GLORY + ROAM: **O2 Academy** – Florida’s pop-punk veterans celebrate 20 years together, alongside Blink 182 helping to cement the genre and inspiring subsequent generations of bands like The Wonder Years, tonight playing songs from early albums ‘Sticks & Stones’ and ‘Nothing Gold Can Stay’, as well as tracks from new album ‘Makes Me Sick’.

EARINADE + SPRUNG FROM CAGES: **The**



Thursday 21st

KIRAN LEONARD: St. Barnabas Church

After last year’s Oxford debut, at which point he was (only temporarily, sadly) an Oxford resident, studying at Brookes, Kiran Leonard returns to town for a very different concert, this time round playing his new album ‘Derevaun Seraun’, featuring five movements arranged for piano, strings and voice, inspired by five pieces of literature, including recent single ‘Living With Your Ailments’, based on Albert Camus’ philosophical tract The Myth of Sisyphus. So he’ll be joined for the show by a string trio to accompany himself on piano. Still only 21 Leonard already has an enviable catalogue of DIY releases under his belt; his 2012 debut, ‘Bowler Hat Soup’, found the then teenage troubadour playing over 20 instruments as he melded proggy pop, breezy indie folk, psychedelic cabaret, grunge and baroque show-tunes in a style that simultaneously recalled Frank Zappa, Van Dyke Parks, Radiohead, Aerial Pink, Sonic Youth and Ed Harcourt. ‘Pink Fruit’, from his last album, ‘Grapefruit’, meanwhile, was a sixteen-minute tale of a squid inside a woman’s body as a metaphor for emotional freedom and body image issues (can you imagine Ed Sheeran or Jack Garratt doing anything similar?), so eccentricity and inventiveness obviously runs deeply through his musical output, and more than ever music needs wobbly-headed mavericks or people who are happy to let their fevered imaginations get the better of them. BRIT Awards and BBC Sound Of acclaim will never be Kiran Leonard’s, but creatively victory is very much his.

Bullingdon – Album launch gig for the local supergroup, fronted by former Jericho Tavern and Point promoter and ATL? frontman Mac alongside members and ex members of The Daisies, Candyskins, Les Clochards and Anyways, together making caustic, sometimes queasy punk-inspired music that ranges from anthemic Skids-style rock to Fat White Family-like strangeness. Up-and-at-‘em punk-pop from teen rockers Sprung From Cages in support.

JOY ROOM: **The Cellar** – Punchy post-grunge alt.rock from west London risers Joy Room, out on a headline tour to promote new single ‘What’s Your Number’.

KING TERRIBLE PRESENTS LORDS OF DISCO WONDER: **The Cellar**

JERAMESA + TARPIT + FIREHEALER + THE ELEPHANT TRAP: **The Jericho Tavern** – A night of psychedelia, including dark, tripped-out noise from Jeramesa, partway between Spacemen 3, Pink Floyd and Swans, and voodoo psych-rockers Firehealer, bringing hypnotic Indian temple music into their trippy journeys.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: **The Wheatsheaf** – Free gig in the downstairs bar.



Tuesday 26th

LOWKEY: O2 Academy

A year or so ago we read an article in the *Oxford Mail* of all places where a couple of local folk musicians bemoaned the lack of protest songs in modern music, oblivious maybe to the fact things have moved on since the 1960s. Almost 60 years on from Dylan et al, and 40 on from punk, protest music is alive and very much kicking in the underground hip hop scene. Watch the video to Lowkey's 'Ghosts of Grenfell' – a collaboration with Mai Khalil – and try and deny there is burning anger (alongside deep emotion and empathy) at work. The Anglo-Iraqi rapper, born Kareen Dennis, has long been a voice for the dispossessed, an activist in the Stop the War Coalition as well as a vocal supporter of Jeremy Corbyn. Having returned to live action after an extended break, one of the UK's most militant conscious rappers comes to Oxford, armed with an arsenal of clever, informed rhymes that take aim at everything from the refugees crisis ('Ahmed') through Middle East politics ('Long Live Palestine') to issues closer to his London home. Lowkey ranks alongside Akala and Black the Ripper – with whom he's collaborated and performed live – as a leading light of homegrown hip hop activism, his time away seeing him bring a range of Arabic influences into his music. So to anyone bemoaning a lack of intelligent protesting voices in modern music, maybe you're looking in the wrong places – it's all here.

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 22nd

UPRISING with ZAIA + LOWWS + LAURA THEIS + CATGOD + THE WANDERING WIRES: O2 Academy – Quality local showcase from BBC Introducing in Oxford alongside the Academy. Soulful, pop-friendly reggae stars Zaia headline, following a successful summer of outdoor shows, including Common People. They're joined by indie-funk crew Lowws; Robot Swans singer Laura Thies; electro-jazz pop outfit Catgod, and sweetly atmospheric experimental jazz outfit The Wandering Wires. **DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD:** The Bullingdon – Big-hearted Americana and 60s country rocking in the vein of The Band, Big Star and Tom Petty from Danny and co.

MY DIABLO + K-LACURA: The Cellar – Stoner metal from My Diablo, formed from the ashes of Mother Corona, at tonight's Church of the Heavy, plus epic thrash and metalcore warriors K-Lacura.

TERRAFORMS: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night with local label Wyatt Noise celebrating their fifth birthday with DJs Lee and Digital, plus Rich Raw, Smokey, and MCs KB and Sandman.

GUNS OF ANARCHY + BETH BLADE & THE BEAUTIFUL DISASTERS: The Wheatsheaf – OxRox show with Watford's melodic hard rockers Guns of Anarchy back in town, having previously supported Gun'n'Roses and Meenstead, plus Cardiff's heavyweights Beth Blade, touring their debut album 'Bad Habit' after supporting Ricky Warwick on tour.

AUDACITY: East Oxford Community Centre – Audacity host another free night of acid house and techno fun, playing a Hi-NRG set of acid techno infused sing-along covers, plus guest DJs and more.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Black Swan
EMERGENCY BANTER: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock and indie covers.

SATURDAY 23rd

ELVANA + FIELD OF GIANTS + FREEMANTLE: O2 Academy – Back in town after their star turn at Common People the world's one and only Elvis tribute-fronted Nirvana tribute keep it meta and slightly silly. **SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM presents DAVID RODIGAN + DAWN PENN:** The Bullingdon – Legendary Oxford reggae champ Rodigan plays an intimate show at Count Skylarkin's reggae party, the Kidlington-born legend having championed Jamaican music for over 35 years now, playing at festivals from Glastonbury and Bestival to Common People and Outlook, but best experienced up close and personal. He's joined at tonight's unmissable reggae party by Jamaican singer Dawn Penn, best known for 90s hit 'You Don't Love Me (No, No, No)', plus a host of local acts, including Light Roots Soundsystem, Back For Good, Sir Sambo and of course Count Skylarkin' himself. **DAWN RAY'D + PROMETHEAN REIGN:** The Wheatsheaf – Intense, militant, violin-led black metal from Dawn Ray'd at tonight's Buried in Smoke show, with support from local death/black metallers Promethean Reign.

ANDREW O'NEILL'S HISTORY OF HEAVY METAL: The Cellar – Comedian Andrew O'Neill presents his loud and lunatic journey into the heart of heavy metal.

FLIGHTS OF HELIOS & GUESTS: Salter's Steamer, Folly Bridge – Ahead of the release of their debut album, the local psychedelic electro ensemble host their annual boat trip along the Thames, playing live alongside guests and joined by DJs from Progressively Less Elephant. **MAD LARRY:** The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – 60s-style rhythm'n'blues.

DAMNED GOOD REASON: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock'n'roll covers.

STEAMROLLER: Bletchington Sports & Social Club – Heavyweight blues-rocking in the vein of Cream and Hendrix from the local veterans.

SUNDAY 24th

FIREGAZERS + MOJO DEMON + BEARD OF DESTINY + FRANKLIN'S TOWER

+ **PURPLE MAY:** 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
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3-7pm)

MONDAY 25th

MAYDAY PARADE: O2 Academy – Somehow Florida's pop-punk inconsequentialities have made it to the tenth anniversary of their debut album without some publicly-minded citizen machine gunning them into mincemeat, so here's your chance to celebrate alongside them as they recall 'A Lesson In Romantics' in all its glory. Maybe A Lesson In Not Being Vapid, Lily-Livered Fucking Shit might be in order. **OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 26th

LOWKEY: O2 Academy – Politicised hip hop from the London rapper back in action – *see main preview*
BARNES COURTNEY: The Cellar – “Somewhere between Ed Sheeran and Mumford

Thursday 28th

DJ SHADOW: O2 Academy

Following up one of the most epoch-making albums of the past quarter century was never going to be easy, but 21 years on from 'Endtroducing', DJ Shadow remains a musical perfectionist, and if not the scene leader he once was, still a talent others aspire to emulate. The painstakingly-constructed 'Endtroducing' was the first wholly sampled album, a restless fusion of old skool hip hop, funk, soul, ambient electronica, jazz and film noir atmospherics and probably created a dozen other new genres all by itself. Having spent the intervening years collaborating with U.N.K.L.E, Cut Chemist and Dan the Automator among others, as well as continuing his solo work, the man born Josh Davis returned with his fifth album, 'The Mountain Will Fall', last year, a reliably inventive, atmospheric continuation of form that features collaborations with Run the Jewels and Nils Frahm. Live, he cuts a busy figure, hunched over his banks of technology, and despite the elaborate nature of his music, always looks like he's having fun, presenting revamps and rare remixes of classic tracks like 'Midnight in a Perfect World' and 'Building Steam From a Grain of Salt' alongside new material and backed by an inventive light show and projections for a spectacle that's equal parts vintage and sci-fi futuristic. It's over five years since he last played Oxford, although we had Introducing Entroducing in town last year, reworking that album wholly live, so make the most of another chance to witness a true one-off.



& Sons..." hmm, we'll just leave that with you for a moment. We're off... somewhere. Anywhere.

SPARKY'S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 27th KING NO-ONE: The Bullingdon

THURSDAY 28th

SLATE HEARTS: Truck Store (6.30pm) – Acoustic instore set from the local grunge rockers, launching their new 'Honey Roasted Henry' EP.

DJ SHADOW: O2 Academy – Chilled samplatronica, trip hop, jazz and hip hop from the master – *see main preview*

MICAH P HINSON: The Bullingdon – Having survived a religious upbringing and a turbulent teenage life that involved drug addiction, homelessness and jail, Texan songsmith Hinson has plenty to sing about, and he does it with a wonderfully gravelly voice that conveys all the tender sorrow in his grandiose country-rock and bluegrass songs, with occasional echoes of Smog's Bill Callahan. Having survived a car crash that nearly cost him the use of his arms, he returned with 2014's 'Micah P Hinson & the Nothing' and follows that with 'Micah P Hinson & The Holy Strangers', "a modern folk opera" that tells the story of a war time family, going from birth to love, to marriage and children, to war and betrayal, murder to suicide - the usual litany of darkness and beauty that continues to infect his songs.

VAN ZELLER: The Library – Vigorous indie-garage and punk noise from Bristol's Van Zeller, playing an already sold-out free headline show tonight after supporting Black Honey and Menace Beach in town recently.

WEBS & MARIONETTES + FUJI: The Jericho Tavern – It's All About the Music showcase.

KING TERRIBLE PRESENTS LORDS OF DISCO WONDER: The Cellar
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 29th

ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS: The New Theatre – There will undoubtedly be other nights of Elvis. Much like at any one time around the world there are 2000 thunderstorms happening, the same is true of Elvis tributes.

LET THE LADY SING: The Wheatsheaf – Female-led bands showcase from It's All About the Music, with sets from Ocean Ruins, Dream Syndrome and Daisy George.

DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil's,

Witney – Party rock covers.

SATURDAY 30th

ALLUSONDRUGS + RATS EAT RATS + SLATE HEARTS + THE KAOS: O2 Academy – Great night of grunge and grunge-inspired noise with headliners Allusondrugs back in town for the first time in over three years and playing their last show for a while, adding a trippy psychedelic edge to their riff-heavy grunge. They're joined by melodic grunge newcomers Rats Eat Rats and skewed Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins-inspired noisemakers Slate Hearts.

CARPET CRAWLERS: O2 Academy – Local Genesis tribute band Carpet Crawlers celebrate the 30th anniversary of 'Invisible Touch'. All your favourites from the 80s, including 'In Too Deep', 'Land of Confusion' and 'Phil Collins' Funky Sausage Song'.

DJ Q: O2 Academy – Marathon five-hour set of UK garage, grime, house and bassline from the high-endurance DJ.

ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN: The New Theatre – Big stage tribute to Queen. **GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SHOTGUN SIX + NO DICE GRANDMA + MIKE BARHAM:** The Wheatsheaf – Heavy-duty psych-rocking in the vein of Spacemen 3, The Warlocks and The Doors from Shotgun Six at tonight's GTI, alongside angular math-core from No Dice Grandma, back in live action, equal parts At The Drive-In, That Fucking Tank and Devizes songsmith Mike Barham, drawing inspiration from City and Colour, Frank Turner, Corey Taylor, Jamie Lenman.

SPINNER FALL + THE WORKHOUSE: Jericho Tavern – EP launch gig for local post-punk/shoegaze noisemakers Spinner Fall, mixing 80s American hardcore with some indie spangle. Support comes in the form of The Workhouse's first UK show in three years, the former-Oxford post-rock soundscapists' intricate cathedral of sound close to Explosions in the Sky at times.

THE CHRIS INGRAM QUARTET: St. Giles Church – Kicking off the new season of Jazz At St. Giles, pianist Chris Ingram and his band pay tribute to the genius of Hoagy Carmichael.

LAWRENCE CASSERLEY, VIV CORRINGHAM, AUDREY LAURO & YOKO MIUR: St. Columba's Reform Church – Oxford Improvisers present and night of collaborative electro improv. **WATERFAHL:** Harcourt Arms
MEGSON + THE WHITE HORSE WHISPERERS: All Saints Church, Faringdon – Teesside folk duo Stu and Debbie Hanna bring their harmony-heavy traditional sound to Farindon.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE FOS BROTHERS BAND: The Red Lion, Eynsham
THE BITE: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Classic rock covers.

SUNDAY 31st

OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms

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TRUCK FESTIVAL

FRIDAY

This year’s 20th Truck Festival brings significant changes to this cherished Oxfordshire institution. New organisers the Global group have redesigned the site with a bigger main stage in a new position, and moved the old Market Field into the single larger arena.

Truck founders Robin and Joe Bennett each curate a stage, keeping the local feel and familiar names but there’s no doubt that more business-like, corporate forces are also at work. Global have followed a familiar path of booking a huge number of acts while not paying enough attention to the infrastructure and history of the festival, leading to some dissatisfaction from long-term interested parties, while heavy rain soon turns the site fairly muddy but nothing like the quagmire of weekends like Glastonbury ’07, and virtually every band seems to be on the right stage at the right time, which is a significant achievement, particularly compared to other festivals this summer.

BAD SOUNDS from Bath display a nice line in early Seafood-style bouncy pop, showing off a few nifty dance moves in the process. Their strength lies in keeping the arrangements simple and understated, a rare find in the age of ever more sophisticated but affordable production methods. The singing brothers Ewan and Callum Merrett’s appealing voices perfectly compliment the playful bass, guitar and keyboards, with an almost nursery rhyme-like feel.

COLDREDLIGHT’s last ever gig is a bombastic affair, the duo aided by Robin from Neverlnd on bass, and they create an epic sound that deserves a grander send-off than the small Veterans and Virgins stage can provide. Their own songs have a bigger, manic feel and the take on ‘Just Be Good To Me’ gives the 1983 electro anthem a dark, almost sinister twist. They promise to return soon in another form and anyone catching them over the last year or so knows to expect something special, with Gaby-Elise’s huge, powerful voice making them an unmissable experience.

ROAM, meanwhile, make a mild punky racket in the style of a more polite Green Day, which makes sense considering they come from Eastbourne. Part of the shift back towards one-word band names, they’re big on jumping around and musical energy, rather lighter on

memorable tunes.

Formed in Brighton as a ‘fake girl band’ for an art exhibition, **DREAM WIFE** went down so well they became a real band and signed a deal with Enfer. The British-Icelandic outfit play sharp, well-crafted songs with a nod to Sleater-Kinney, with plenty of punch and edgy guitar, coming across as anything but fake. By stark contrast **JAXN** (the Manchester one, there’s at least two, maybe five) plays meandering songs on a guitar with some lo-fi electronic backing, like a very poor man’s James Blake. The breathy vocals and ponderous air make for an irritating half hour that we’ll never get back.

As their name suggests, **BRITISH SEA POWER** have become a national institution, even if one that’s not universally appreciated, possibly related to the persistent Springsteen elements clashing with more straightforward indie influences like The Cure. Though seventeen years into their career and with a stable line-up since 2008 they are another example of band forced to crowdfund the cost of making their last album. Tonight’s performance is solid enough and pleases the faithful, but the lack of surprises is unlikely to make them any new converts.

SLAVES are the first band of the weekend to bring a proper visual setup, and as night falls it starts to feel like a proper festival. Drummer Isaac Holman is a superb frontman, and he must shed thousands of calories during a show, standing up as his kit takes a merciless battering. With a wealth of banter between songs they’re much more fun live than on record, the best moments taking 70s punk forward into the modern age; ‘Cheer Up London’ would probably end up in a Carry On film if only they still made them.

Headliners **FRANZ FERDINAND** provide more comfortable listening – and viewing – part function band, part record company dream, enduring party hits ‘Matinee’ and ‘Do You Want To’ are perfect first night fodder and an uplifting start to the weekend.

Just as we start to think of crawling into a warm sleeping bag a wander to the Palm City tent brings the day’s unanticipated highlight. **IDRIS ELBA** may be best known as the actor behind cult heroes Stringer Bell and John Luther but he’s also clearly a DJ of formidable talent. Expertly managing the decks as well as the



Coldredlight

Photo: Art Lagun

crowd he plays a storming set of modern house with some old rave classics, including a remix of ABS’s ‘My House is Your House’, stripping things back then dropping beats like a true craftsman. Even so it is a bit incongruous seeing a man with an OBE pick up his mic and declare “fuckin’ bonkers in here, man”.

SATURDAY

Conditions underfoot have become almost comically treacherous, which divides festival goers into two distinct camps: those gingerly trying to keep their footing as they negotiate the trek between stages, or simply retreat to the relative sanctity of one of the tented stages, and those who seem to embrace the mud as an almost essential part of the festival experience. The weather will always have a significant impact on a festival atmosphere, but as with so many things, it’s not the hand that life deals you, it’s how you play it.

Reading four piece **PALM HONEY** are here via a public vote and their meaty, keyboard-led sound and sunny psychedelia make for a pleasant start to the day. However, the songs meander, only occasionally settling into a memorable groove; ‘Hot Simian Weather’ shows a more snarly, itchy side that looks promising for a change of direction.

The Market stage is offering upcoming bands a responsive platform to prove themselves and **KAGOULE** are one such act. We like them immediately because they sound like The Pixies meets Sonic Youth via Talking Heads. Stand-out tracks like ‘Gush’ are evocative of the Smashing Pumpkins circa-‘Siamese Dream’, and this, coupled with the bass player’s pop vocal and the guitarist’s Kevin Shields style utterings on ‘Glue’, make them truly interesting.

By way of a muddy, soggy beer or two, we head back to the market stage to see **PUMAROSA**, who *Nightshift*’s editor has been banging on about for the last couple of years. Initially, they sound like Portishead on opening track ‘Dragonfly’, which gets us a little excited. The restrained instrumentation places singer Isabel Munoz-Newsome’s voice centre stage, which coupled with her dancing on debut single ‘Priestess’, is reminiscent of Siouxsie Sioux at her most chilled.

Over at the main stage **THE NIGHT CAFÉ** give us a taste of the sound of young Liverpool. The jangly guitar, almost crooning vocal style and offbeat drum patterns are very redolent of that city, not to mention the rich song structures and classic 60s pop influences. They’re a bit easier to appreciate on record where



Slaves

Photo: Entirety Labs



Photo: Entirety Labs

the subtleties show through more successfully, but their low-key live presence is nevertheless highly watchable.

Down at The Barn **SHIFTY LAU** seem to have a taste for early 80s white funk such as Level 42, though they prefer to describe themselves as ‘alternative soul’. Not the most promising jumping off point but their youthful enthusiasm and talented guitarist make for a diverting set, if only the singer can knock the rapping on the head.

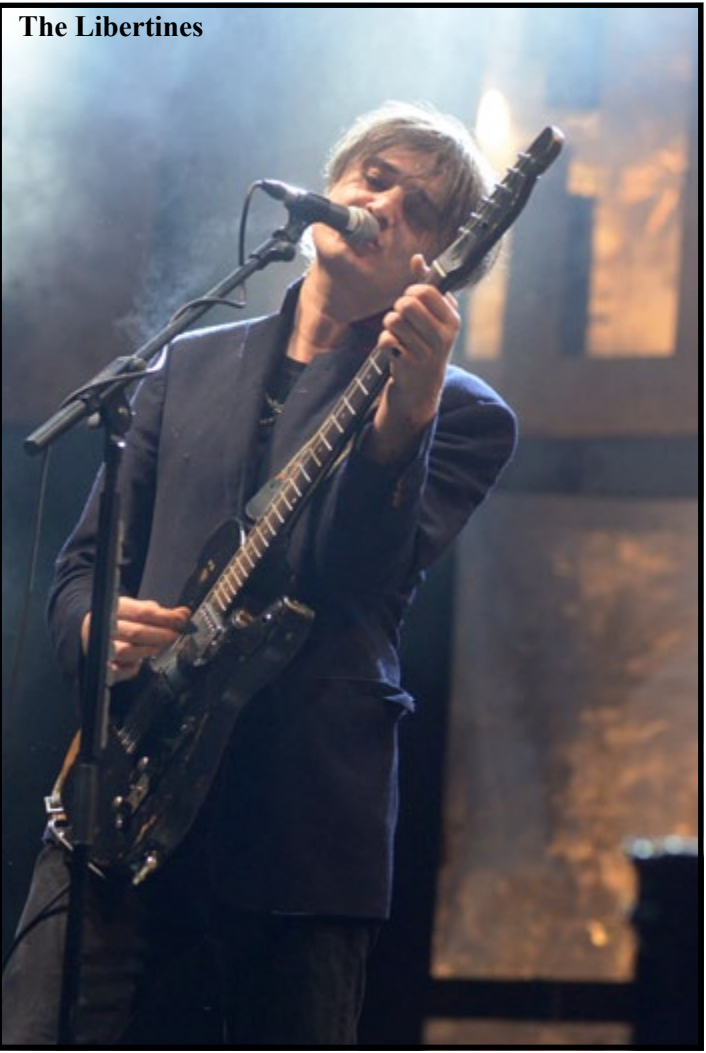
REDFACES are another band with 60s influences on clear display. The young Sheffield band combine r’n’b (in the original meaning of term, i.e. rhythm and blues) with more contemporary leanings, yet more jangly guitar at their heart. Just out of school, the lyrics lack the sophistication the music displays, with some great harmonies and all sorts of interesting key and time changes. The most promising act of the day so far. That mantle immediately passes to **LIFE**, a band from Hull who nail the punk-pop-with-a-modern-indie-twist formula down to a T. Another band featuring two brothers, they’re irreverent, fun and musically sophisticated all at once; ‘Popular Music’, with its endlessly repeated “Totally off my face I listen to popular music” is the most apt piece of social commentary of the

weekend. Reminiscent of Sonic Youth or Calvin Party in their unusual tunings and almost symphonic song structures, every song brings fresh unexpected depths and pleasures. A true find.

Back to the main stage we go, dragging destroyed shoes through a pool of mud, to catch Reading’s **SUNDARA KARMA**. In terms of a warm up for the headliners, they certainly deliver, sounding a bit like a Home Counties Killers. The audience’s sing-a-long efforts are testament to their (semi) local hero status; stand out tracks include ‘She Said’ and ‘Explore’, featuring confident vocal stylings *a la* Arcade Fire and we’re left impressed.

Accepting the incessant downpour we go for a wander and by some great fortune stumble upon a hip hop karaoke in the Rockin’ Chair stage featuring dodgy, drunken versions of Jay Z, Nicki Minaj and Kanye, with no shortage of participants. We’re tempted to get up and do our best Bey impression, but sadly refrain, heading instead into the dance tent to witness one little boy giving it his all on the stage next to a bored security guard. Ministry of Sound has nothing to worry about.

We hear **NOTHING BUT THIEVES** before we see them and



The Libertines

Photo: Marc West

are astonished by the androgyny of singer Conor Mason’s vocal. He could easily get all the votes on the *X Factor*, with a pitch perfect powerhouse of a wail. Having never heard of them before, the songs sound strangely familiar, classic arena anthems in the style of fellow truckers Twin Atlantic; thunderous bass and drums show the overlap with tour mates Muse, particularly Bellamy’s powerful warbling acrobatics influence, which is high on ‘Ban All The Music’.

After Dream Wife comes another fictional band made into reality. **THE MOONLANDINGZ** came into being as a one-off collaboration between Eccentric Research Council and Fat White Family, with Sean Lennon (yes, the actual) joining when they came to make a proper album. Fronted by the Fat White’s Lias Saoudi in his guise as Johnny Rocket it’s all a swirling psychedelic sandstorm of analogue synths, Hawkwind-style 70s rock jams and surly vocals. As everyone’s side project there’s a feeling that the pressure’s off and they can do what they like, and it all sounds sinister and fun in equal measure. No sign of Sean today nor, sadly, Phil Oakey and Yoko Ono joining the band to recreate their vocal contribution to the album’s closing track ‘The Cities Undone’, but you can’t have

everything.

Before headliners **THE LIBERTINES**, we manage to squeeze in a bit of **CHRIS T-T & THE HOODRATS** on the Virgins and Veterans stage. He informs us that he has been playing Truck for 10 years and has a vibe of Tenacious D meets Sleaford Mods. ‘Bury Me With A Scarab’ from his ninth album, ‘The Bear’, is a highlight, with ‘I’m Not As Dead As You Thought I’d Be’ going down a storm with an audience who really couldn’t care less for The Libertines. But duty dictates we must catch the biggest name on this weekend’s bill. We’ve never been big fans of the band but an excited youngster pulls us aside to show us her “Libertine” tattoo so they must excite someone. Alas, our opinion doesn’t change much after this set, with out of tune guitars and tedious pub tunes making us yearn for the Rockin’ Chair stage.

A late night wander past the silent disco and the Rockin’ Chair’s cocktail bar shows 80s pop classics are still very much in vogue, with ‘Livin’ On A Prayer’ the apparent tune *du jour* and we end the night there with the excellent Blue Rinse DJs and a couple of guys dressed as Scary Spice, all of which are more fun than The Libertines will ever be.

The Vaccines



SUNDAY

Sunday brings more mud underfoot but sunshine overhead at last. **THE OXFORD ORCHESTRA** may have wondered how a lunchtime classical interlude would go down, but their Abba medley gets one of the most enthusiastic receptions of the weekend, though they have less luck with a Beatles selection.

We're given a hot tip that **TOM GRENNAN**, vocalist on Chase & Status's 'All Goes Wrong', is doing a solo set on the Market stage that will be a must-see and we are indeed astounded at the power of his voice, like a cross between Rod Stewart and Paulo Nutini. He's even wearing a leopard print jacket like Rod. Luckily, there is no cover of 'Hot Legs' but awesome track 'Something in the Water' showcases the soulful power of his voice. 'Barb Wire' and 'Sail Away' are equally good and appear to be soothing a lot of hangovers.

London three piece **BANFI** have a similarly gentle, emotive feel, leaving plenty of space for the songs to wash over us in an entirely pleasing manner. The low, twangy guitar almost recalls the recently departed Glen Campbell, but they're not afraid to up the pace when the moment is right. The singer's unfashionably long, Miles Hunt-style hair does them no disservice whatsoever, and they're pretty much

a perfect choice for a sunny, if muddy, Sunday afternoon.

On the Market Stage, **GIRL RAY** are one of the most eagerly anticipated acts of the weekend. Beloved of Marc Riley, the Finchley band met at Ray Davies' old school and write similarly personal songs, often about breakups and insecurity. 'Trouble' is simply gorgeous, its C86 vibe and deceptively simple structure and harmonies proving once again that less is often more in crafting perfect pop moments. Their professed love of Todd Rundgren and Cate Le Bon provide clues to their approach, though they are clearly making their own path.

Over at the Veterans and Virgins, **HOO** are creating a Mogwai-like instrumental soundscape, though without the tiresome self-indulgence of the Scottish band. Refreshingly they have absolutely no internet presence whatsoever, so we only have the music as clues to who they are or why they're here. **PALACE** play psychedelia with a nod to bands like The Rain Parade, though they seem to have discovered Jimi Hendrix since last year's 'So Long Forever' LP. Though unfashionable in their musical leanings they make a rather appealing noise tonight, if no masters of subtlety.

JAMIE LENMAN of Reuben fame



Photos: Entirety Labs

is headlining the Nest and curiosity leads us there. He is now performing with a drummer as a two piece and it's a contender for one of the sets of the weekend. He's retained the fierce guitars and vocals and absolutely hammers the tiny stage with new track 'Mississippi'. The tent quickly fills up and we're treated to Reuben track 'Parties Break Hearts'. 2013's 'Muscle Memory' album is equally as brilliant, with 'All The Things You Hate About Me, I Hate Them Too' and 'I Ain't Your Boy' as stand-out live tracks. An unexpected cover of Queen's 'Fat Bottomed Girls', renamed 'Fat Bottomed Girls And Boys' by a very PC Lenman, gets everyone dancing, followed by Reuben favourite 'Blamethrower', while closer 'The Six Fingered Hand' fully knocks seven shades out of Truck.

Back in The Barn, **FUR**'s youth provides an excuse for sounding like a bit too much like early Arctic Monkeys. The singer has a fine, powerful voice and the songs sound familiar without being downright copies of anyone else's. Add to that they look rather cool and we could be watching stars in the making.

Truck is always a festival of surprises and the very last band in The Barn turn out to be the single most unexpected and jaw-droppingly great moment of the whole weekend. **THE ORIELLES** look impossibly

young, though one is a comparatively ancient 21. The Halifax three-piece play intricate pop shot through with influences from 60s bubblegum to 80s bands ranging from Orange Juice to The Pop Group, and they're much meatier and more substantial live than on record. Their secret weapon is Henry Wade, and it's genuinely frightening how effortlessly mature and sophisticated his guitar work sounds. The rhythm section, teenage sisters Sid and Esme Hand-Halford, are the perfect accompaniment, the whole unit being about as perfect as pop music can get.

The weekend closes with **THE VACCINES**, with highlights including 2011's 'Post Break-up Sex' and 'Teenage Icon'. Later tracks like 'Dream Lover' sound great but don't quite pack the punch of the earlier stuff. They are however a safe bet to close the festival on a crowd pleasing high. And so another Truck draws to a close. The weather has not been kind, we're forced to dump our shoes in the bin when we get home, and there are wider lessons the organisers can learn regarding what regulars cherish about the ethos and principles of a longstanding Oxfordshire institution. But no-one can claim that the music on offer has been anything less than plentiful, wide-ranging and often brilliant. Here's to next year.

Words: Art Lagun / Karlyn King

**PEACE
BLACK HONEY
PINKSHINYULTRABLAST
JOSEFIN OHRN + THE LIBERATION
THE VRYLL SOCIETY . TOY**

**TRAAMS . FLAMINGODS . ULRIKA SPACEK . LOW ISLAND
DEAD PRETTIES . BABA NAGA . HER'S**

**TRUDY & THE ROMANCE . BABY IN VAIN . TOM HICKOX
VAN ZELLER . MELLOW GANG . MAGIQUE
THE LIZARDS . THE AUGUST LIST . MELT DUNES
CANDY SAYS . CALVA LOUISE**

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SUPERNORMAL

Braziers Park

Four years ago we helped a man looking for a bus stop in Oxford. He’d come from the midlands to attend his first Supernormal, so we were in fact able to accompany him right to the festival gate. Within one hour of arriving at this year’s event, he barrels over and shakes our hand vigorously, just like the last two years. This tells you three things about Supernormal: it’s very small and intimate; it is more friendly than a Quaker meeting house made from MDMA; most people who attend once are instant converts, returning every year.

MATANA ROBERTS, in her excellent solo sax concert (part Coltrane spirit quest, part New Orleans gutbucket grit, with sententious spoken interjections a la Laurie Anderson) celebrates the event, noting the open-minded nature and the pleasing lack of security: “You’ve embraced the freedom but are recognising the boundaries”. Aside from a rumour that some toilets are closed because someone had made a s(h)ite specific artwork, having confused Pat McGeown with Cy Twombly, it appears that she was right: those people who believe anything goes are also those most likely to be considerate of their effect on others. And, as usual, the effect of Supernormal on us is joyous, disorienting and inspiring.

NOT SORRY admittedly ease us in gently, sounding like lackadaisical PG Tips chimps tired after a hard day moving wardrobes, playing half-speed Talking Heads lite-funk. **LUSH WORKER** soon ups the ante, with a landslide of guitar skree and gravel. Like the famous image of the duck/rabbit this is simultaneously blissfully soothing and aggressively coruscating, depending on how you squint your ears.

Just as the red kites swirling above the field were introduced to the area having nearly become extinct, Supernormal has managed to locate the last bleeding pair of infamous COUM Transmissions performers to perform some pieces for the first time in 40 years. **COUM FLAKES**’ first number consists of someone resembling *Transformers*-era Orson Welles doing a Tom Waits song, with the flatbed trucks and strippers replaced by Martin Bormann. Despite obtuse lyrics about torturing prisoners or advert voiceovers having a Barney, the music is pleasingly approachable, Gene Krupa tom tattoos underpinning warm chords that recall early Pink Floyd (more of them later).

Next in the Cthulhu cathedral structure called The Vortex, home of the multimedia immersion, **RAPID**

EYE ELECTRONICS LTD present a twisted government information film in which Black Dog electronica spooks itself in a hall of mirrors whilst convoluted regulations for duels are presented over images of vintage dancers. It’s like a paranormal Public Service Broadcasting featuring Elizabeth Price, with better beats.

C JOYNES turns out not to be an operetta about Ernie Wise’s hairpiece – keep up at the back – but a fantastic solo guitarist, tangling English folk tunes into Fahey skeins and snaggles. An arrangement of the ‘Whittlesea Straw Bear Tune’ reminds us of walking folk guitar encyclopaedia Duck Baker’s trad revisions, whilst a snippy plucking technique has whiffs of stylists as varied as Davy Graham and James Blood Ulmer. A bird flies into the medieval barn in which we’re sitting, duetting with an intriguing arrangement of ‘Someone To Watch Over Me’, as if to flip the Venerable Bede’s analogy: life is short, but you can make some pretty amazing things while it happens.

You’d expect beautiful things from a father and daughter duo; instead **YEAH YOU** make an unsettlingelectronic noise: glitches mingle with guttural vocalisations that even Mark E Smith at his most incoherent would struggle to match. It’s a little like watching a child complete an ancient 8-bit game whilst her dad pukes up his lunch. Surprisingly, it’s rather moreish.

Acid Mother’s Temple’s **KAWABATA MAKOTO** and **AFRIRAMPOS PIKACHU** drench the Shed Stage in extended breakouts. They take the rock template, deconstruct it, and then reassemble it in strange and frightening shapes. ‘Purple Haze’, that most celebrated filthy guitar riff, emerges at one point before being engulfed by a wave of sonic violence. It’s an absolutely thrilling set, and whilst Pikachu’s kids’ gig in the Red Kite tent the following day is understandably not quite as mind bending, it’s certainly as much fun.

After such a frenetic offering, a little calming drone is in order. In the dark of the barn, illuminated only by her laptop screen **MARCIA BASSETT** – aka Zaimph – is conjuring earth shaking tracts of noise and deep bass pulses to make the gloom seem darker somehow. At times it feels oddly comforting and at others, deeply unsettling. Intense is a word that is often overused, but it is entirely appropriate here. Rarely has the line between panic attack and zen like state of transcendence been so

carefully traversed.

There’s often a patronising, belittling air when African music is described as raw – the noble savage myth doesn’t become any more palatable with added tape hiss – but sometimes *raw* is the only word that will serve, and Ghana’s **KING AYISOBA**’s set is as infectiously bludgeoning as the heaviest hardcore band to grace the Shed stage. On record Ayisoba dips into hip hop and hi-life, but here we just have mantric chanting, hammering riffs from the two string kologo, relentless percussion and some sort of transverse didgeridoo we can’t identify that sounds like God blowing his nose. Unstoppable.

ERIC CHENAU’s set opens with some abstract wah wah guitar, like the soundtrack to a Futurist porn film (“I’ve come to fix your washing machine and/or insane death device”), and it’s fascinating, but his voice floors us, a truly stunning, sweet soul croon made for serenading the dawn. With the seasick guitar underneath, it’s like listening to Marvin Gaye record the little known LP ‘No, Seriously, What The Actual Fuck Is Going On?’

Surprisingly, **WOLF EYES** leave the sonic excoriation behind, in favour of thoughtful vistas. Even so, it’s hard to work out where the sounds are coming from, with a sax that sounds like a synth, and crunchy guitar tones embracing the Lou Reed-style blasted poetry. The set is still shocking, though, because of the flagrant double denim.

TIRIKILATOPS’ colour-saturated Timmy Mallett mania is a little too much for the start of Sunday, so we locate a comfy set in the refined environs of Braziers House for **STEVE BERESFORD & COLIN WEBSTER**. Beresford is using the house piano, but spends most of his time plucking the innards, or playing with a portable Toys R Us device, although a few bars of random tango surprise us; Webster starts with rusty gate sax, before apparently exploring every tone - and detachable part - of his saxophone.

Just as a vindictive rain storm is followed in minutes by glorious cerulean sky, Supernormal can leap from the strangest sounds imaginable to straightforward rock. **WARGS** play honeyed indie in the style of Throwing Muses at their sleepest with some soothing pedal steel, while **AGGRESSIVE PREFECTOR** are a no messin’ meld of Motorhead and vintage thrash, with songs introduced in a voice that sounds like an aged Tony the Tiger in rehab after the Frosties money has run out.

Back in the house **LIZ MUIR &**

CAITLIN ALAIS CALLAHAN are trading sparse tension cues on cello and double bass, and it’s like the *Jaws* theme slowly decomposing in an abandoned potting shed. They also recite a Goethe poem over long vertiginous lines, which drifts into a pure, delightful performance of a Scottish folk tune: in 20 minutes, the set’s a microcosm of Supernormal’s rich variety.

At most festivals, soundbleed between stages is infuriating. Once Supernormal has recalibrated you, it can be exciting. While contrabassoon/low brass trio **ORE** are sharing hushed, funereal tones beneath a gnarled tree, the sounds of children playing on the nearly tyre swings, and snatches of **EVIL USSES** rattling away on the Shed stage make it seem all the more eerie. They conclude with what is essentially a monstrous doom riff played on a tuba. This is, of course, awesome; though if you hadn’t guessed as much, you probably shouldn’t have read this far, anyway.

Even by Supernormal standards the tiny BEEF Octopolis space is a hidden obscurity. Over the weekend we witness **GRAHAM DUNNING** DJing field recordings (surprisingly fascinating), **BRUCE MCCLURE & WOJTEK RUSIN**’s opera based on readings from a gardening magazine (surprisingly sinister, especially the terrifying phrase “Next, pesticides”), and Foul’s Daughter, a potted history of the foghorn continually interrupted by its own subject (surprisingly a highlight of the weeke-PAAARAAPP!!).

Supernormal may be a cavalcade of surprises to which one should not bring expectations, but we’d be disappointed if the bill didn’t include at least one ruthless hardcore pummelling. **BRUXA MARIA**’s slamming intensity clears a path through our consciousness like a Vogon constructor fleet, but can still turn on a sixpence at screaming harpy Gill Dread’s hand signal. Just exhilarating. Such a full-on assault should be hard to follow, but **BIG LAD** take everyone away from crushing metal assault and into a full-on hands in the air, dance frenzy. Their cover of Apex Twin’s ‘Come To Daddy’ briefly shows off their rock underbelly, but when the band formerly known as Shitwife concentrate on their own big beats and hooks it feels like an Ibiza party spirit has descended.

The Vortex might provide sensory overload, but also hosts one of the calmest, most thoughtful pieces of the festival, **THE DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA**’s ‘Tyburnia’ project, weaving folk songs from the area around what was once London’s execution hub into a single, 80-minute

tapestry, while a trio of crackly films are projected. Anti-capitalism rubs shoulders with William Blake, and the South Sea Bubble bursts in the nightmarishly melting face of Tony Blair. We intended to give this show ten minutes; we end up emerging blinking 80 minutes later to find that dusk has fallen and we’ve bought a CD and book set. The evening ends with **JAXON PAYNE**’s lithe V-drum solo, nodding towards Art Of Noise and Kraftwerk, and **KURO**’s windswept drones and eldritch folk vistas, a paranoid British take on fractured jazz we call Twin Peak District.

Sunday starts quietly, as Sundays should. **HAPSBURG BRAGANZA** is a solo electric guitar act, elegant, misty and minimal – think Papa M meets Roger Eno – and **PON PON** proffer softly malleted drums, subtle electronics, guitar and breathy vocals, as if someone had detuned a shy ghost. It’s pleasant, but perhaps too reticent, and may have fared better on one of the more intimate stages. **SHARRON KRAUS**’ extended treatments of dark, dark-hearted folk songs are also understated, but immediately captivating, proving once again that trad songwriting goes to eldritch places metal would never dare. Some soft, loamy recorder playing offers tiny fragments of light.

At Supernormal, you would expect a band called **DEATH PEDALS** to be stood in front of more effects units than an army of spiders could feasibly operate. As with St Deluxe, they’re actually a fairly straight ahead rock band, and there’s nothing wrong with that, if anything, being a fairly normal band at this point in the weekend is about as subversive as it gets. Their aggressive spiky rock is in the mould of Fugazi, if Fugazi had fully embraced pop dynamics.

The festival programme compares **SACRED PAWS** to B52s, which is justified; there’s some great spiky guitar riffs, an undeniable pop sensibility and a phenomenal summery vibe that runs throughout their set. If B52s ever return with a calypso flavoured album, it’d sound a bit like Sacred Paws. We called Bruxa Maria pummelling? Well, some parts of **CATTLE**’s performance are like sandpaper rubbed against the face by an angry Judoon, but unlike so many rock cudgellers, they know when the barrage must end, and space be found to give the songs shape. So, there is room for some electronics-benighted death sax, a chilling a cappella section for the howling vocalist, who appears to have been possessed by a constipated demon, and surprisingly funky business from the dual drummers, all made perfect by a summer school session of

Crowdsurfing For The Under Eights. **MARY OCHER** is notable for two reasons. One: she and her band are clad in what appear to be Earth, Wind & Fire stage outfits modelled from spaghetti. Two: her quirky, chirpily bouncy music is so varied, moving from a quiet synth opener to desiccated funk, via unhingedly jolly library music not a million miles away from Syd Dale, and some raven-stalking that’s come straight from ‘Venus In Furs’. All this with a delicately stentorian voice that makes us think of an anti-matter Nana Mouskouri. Jesus, we’ve not thought of Nana Mouskouri in thirty years; Supernormal does strange things to the mind.

OLIVIA NORRIS presents a short dance/mime piece, in which she contorts herself awkwardly across the barn in an unnerving white mask, before erupting into an unexpected drag club mime to barely remembered Britsoul pipsqueak Roachford – it’s like 80s child nightmare fodder Noseybonk scripted by a horny Beckett. Not all the extra-musical elements are worth the effort, though. **THE DREAM MACHINE** turns out to be an old van that we’re invited to paint, which works out as ugly and pointless as you’d expect, while **HAPPY BIRTHDAY PIG FACE CHRISTUS** is merely four people chanting the menu items from the catering vans in a pseudo-religious style and giggling smugly, and we should have woken them from their complacency with a chipotle enema.

A tribute band isn’t the usual Supernormal fare, but when it consists of songs from Pink Floyd’s ‘The Wall’ lovingly eviscerated in a style that recalls V/Vm, The Residents and Ween, it begins to make more sense. **THE STALLION** have horrifically pitch-shifted vocals, and the ugliest projections it is possible to make with a cracked copy of *Doom* and a Roger Waters mask. The slogan “you’re fucking with The Stallion - MANG” regularly flashes in queasy fluorescent text; we rather feel the opposite...

MXLX starts his cheaply insistent industrial set as John Carpenter playing Godflesh, and ends it as Alec Empire weeping incoherently outside his ex’s wedding reception, before being carried from the tent by a small throng of listeners. That’s the Supernormal experience all over, moving from the absurd to the dramatic, before ending in budget valediction. You should definitely get a ticket next year. Don’t hang about though, there is a big community of people already planning their 2018 visit. Not least two *Nightshift* writers and a nice man from the midlands.

Words: David Murphy / Sam Shepherd



photos: Sam Shepherd



photo: Pier Corona



WOVEN SKULL / GIFT OF BLINDNESS / OLD ERNIE

The Wheatsheaf

There are few things more frustrating than watching a brilliant band play to just a dozen or so punters, but conversely there’s something very special about being one of those hardy souls, all stood as close to the stage as possible to get the full effect of what they’re watching. You recognise most of the those stood around you: they’re the people who have made turning up to watch unknown bands on a hot Tuesday evening a mission in life, and tonight they’re amply rewarded.

Old Ernie, fronted by David Kahl and Gemma Moss, who are promoting tonight’s gig under their Inside the Box banner, are a storm of belligerent vocals, superfuzzed guitar and deliciously tom-heavy drumming, straight-up grunge put through the Alternative Tentacles mangle and pebble dashed with occasional mutant reggae grooves. At

their best they’re a thunderous, propulsive beast of a band, all rumble and scree, but the strange, gnarly bits that don’t seem to fit are what really mark them out from the pack.

Umair Chaudhry has been a one-man force for musical darkness for years now, from his time in Xmas Lights, through myriad solo projects that veer from bleakly atmospheric to brutish. Gift of Blindness is him at his most malign: alone on stage with a guitar, a floor full of pedals and a tiny rhythm box, he unleashes a misanthropic musical hell that takes Godflesh as its starting point, sinks its teeth in and doesn’t let up. Mining a singularly noisy groove while howling at his demons, Umair conjures a vision of Ragnarok played out at funeral pace. Three tracks in thirty minutes gives you an indication of the oppressive nature of his music; vengeance is a dish best served loud,

obviously.

Ireland’s Woven Skull are another level of magnificent blasted noise altogether, though. Distorted guitar, stripped-down drum kit, mandola and electric viola lock into a discordant mantra with an eastern edge, building and building and building and building some more, until you’re swept up in something truly transcendental, like Spacemen 3 at their most outré jamming with The Mahavishnu Orchestra, or maybe Pentangle if they were kidnapped by the Devil and held captive in a dungeon for months and made to listen to Faust, The Velvet Underground and Shit & Shine at extreme volume until their brains went weird. It’s absolutely fucking incredible, folk music at its most irregular, from the demonic mandola solo that flashes in and out of a wall of feedback, to the best drum solo ever played on just a floor tom and a cymbal. Set over, breath caught, those hardy few souls in the crowd surround the merch stall and buy everything they can get their hands on. We were there, you weren’t. We win.

Dale Kattack

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

ZEROWE

Who are?
Zerowe is the solo project of former-Balloon Ascents/Neverlnd frontman Thomas Roberts. “Things got a little boring and sticky with the band and so while some of the guys are in different places doing different things, I still feel a sense of unfinished business personally, but it’s less me having a point to prove and more that this is what I do and I what I’ve always wanted to do,” explains Thomas of the split and his new work. “I’m 21 now, trying to make sense of my computer and my head and I’m in my room making music.” He released his first EP ‘Beats and X-Rays’ in February (“I guess that was the sound of me trying to find me feet”), and this month releases follow-up ‘Shade of Blue’.

What do they sound like?
Synthed-up r’n’b, all bubbling, glitchy electronic beats and stripped-back textures interspersed over which Thomas keeps the vibe smooth and soulful. At his best his delicate, limpid voice is the serene heart of lush, tripped-out electro wanderings.

What inspires them?
“The extreme discomfort that comes over me if I don’t play the piano for a couple of days or write a song for a couple of weeks. I don’t think it’s quite the same thing as enjoying songwriting or playing the piano. I’m also bored by quite a lot of pop music and am naive enough to think that things can change and I can change them.”

Career highlight so far:
“My latest single ‘Easy’ has had over 40,000 streams in two weeks so that’s pretty cool. My music has ever reached that many people before. Getting on the cover of *Nightshift* with the band was a real peak too.”

And the lowlight:
“I once played a gig in a nursery with Balloon Ascents. And at a pub in Swindon: the gig was shit and the toilet walls were plastered with porn.”



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“Other than Radiohead, Esther Joy Lane and Low Island are awesome.”

If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:
“‘Sgt Pepper’. If anybody popular today wrote anything even half as interesting then we’d be well on our way to solving all our problems.”

When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?
“I’ve locked myself away writing for so long I’m worried I’ve forgotten how to sing live. I’m gonna start doing a few stripped back acoustic things in the autumn before I move on to anything more ambitious.”

Their favourite and least favourite thing about Oxford music are:
“Favourite thing is the history of the scene. It’s daunting but it’s also kinda reassuring. My mum would say ‘If they can do it then so can you.’ That’s the vibe of the whole town. You walk into the Wheatsheaf aged 17 and expect to be told to fuck off but instead somebody buys you a pint because you can sing. And that makes you feel like a rock star. Least favourite is The Jericho Tavern. It’s like, let’s sell expensive beer and overpriced food like everywhere else and stick a little plaque on the wall: ‘Radiohead once played here’. Kinda sums up the country at the moment, I reckon.”

You might love them if you love:
Frank Ocean; Christine & the Queens; D’Angelo; Lana Del Ray.

Hear them here:
Spotify, Apple Music, SoundCloud.

THE WHEATSHEAF

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Friday 8th September – IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

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Saturday 9th September

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Friday 15th September – JAM CITY

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Saturday 16th September – OXROX

K-LACURA OBZIDIAN + CONTEK

Wednesday 20th September – PUNK POP TAKEOVER

PARTING GIFT MERCIA

Friday 22nd September – OXROX

GUNS OF ANARCHY

BETH BLADE & THE BEAUTIFUL DISASTERS

Saturday 23rd September – BUIED IN SMOKE

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Dr. SHOTOVER: Trumpton Riots

Ah, la vous etes. Soyez la bienvenue chez le Club <<East Indies>>. Quoi? What’s that? You’re not actually French? Oh well, never mind, dear lady, pull up a Union Jack pew and buy us all a stout pint of British Bulldog Beer. It was your stripy matelot top which confused me. I thought for a minute you might be Brigitte Bardot or one of those chaps. Not that I have anything against the French... though seeing you in that top, hnyuk hnyuk, I rather wish I did! Have. Something. Against. You. Nudge, nudge, wink wink. Ahem. So, where were we? Ah yes, Donald T. Rump and his reaction to the Charlottesville riots. It’s official, isn’t it? We now have a US President who is worse than Richard Milhous Nixon. Nazi apologist orange c***. I can’t decide which one is worse – him or that UKIP greaseball Nigel Fromage. Don’t get me started! Quick, nurse, the soothing music! Ahhh, a nice bit of Francoise Hardy. (But where are Freeman and Willis when you need ‘em?)... Meanwhile, another flagon of ale? Don’t mind if I do, ma cherie, don’t mind if I do.

Next month: More French accents, s’il vous plait



‘Bonjour Docteur Chateau Vert! Fancy a, ‘ow you say, deep?’

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Radio 1 Sound City was almost upon us in September 1997 with the UK music world focussed on Oxford as **Longpigs** launched the week-long, city-wide festival with a show at **Brookes University Union** – supported by **Strangelove** and local heroes **The Candyskins**. Earlier in the day Radio 1 DJs **John Peel** and **Steve Lamacq** had held a press conference to announce the full line-up for Sound City, which kicked off a month hence. **Spiritualized**, **DJ Shadow**, **Dubstar**, **The Lightning Seeds**, **Embrace**, **Sleeper** and **Bentley Rhythm Ace** were among the star names announced. A Sound City Fringe bill would see scores of Oxford acts performing around town, including a **Zodiac** fringe showcase featuring **Unbelievable Truth**, **Beaker**, **The Bigger the God** and **Dustball**. Unbelievable Truth, meanwhile, released their first single for Virgin this month, ‘Stone’. Other Oxford releases included the sublime ‘Simple’ by **Cody** on **Shifty Disco**’s singles club.

10 YEARS AGO

After being closed for a few months for a major rebuilding, **The Academy** opened its doors for the first time, taking over from the much-loved **Zodiac**. An opening night party featured **The Magic Numbers**, while the official first night saw electro-popsters **New Young Pony Club** headlining. **Little Fish** became the first Oxford act to play the new venue when they supported **Young Knives**, with Supergrass’ planned headline show cancelled after bassis Mick Quinn broke

two vertebrae falling from a window in France. “I hope the crazy fool gets back on his feet as soon as possible,” said bandmate Gaz Coombes, announcing the accident, “I’m sure he’ll pull through; he’s a tough cookie.” And so, thankfully, he proved to be. A Rescheduled **Truck Festival** took place in Stevenon after the original event was flooded off. **Idlewolf** and **The Brian Jonestown Massacre** headlined, although the most notable action of the weekend came from **Foals**, whose set had to be moved from the Trailerpark tent to the Barn stage after the crowd grew so big it threatened to bring the canvas down. Wallingford’s **Bunkfest** meanwhile, was cancelled due to lack of funding. September 2007’s *Nightshift* cover star was rising local rapper **Mr Shaodow**, whose debut single ‘Look Out, There’s A Black Man Coming’ had rapidly become a local anthem. Shaodow – real name Elliot Haslam – had taken the local gig scene by storm after moving to Oxford from London to study law and chatted about travelling to China as a teenager to study kung fu at a Shaolin temple in the mountains, how racism had inspired his rapping and how Oxford gave him the space to hone his rhyming craft. Ten years on, the man has gone on to sell over 25,000 records and returned to town to headline the Uncommon stage at Common People in May.

5 YEARS AGO

Shaodow also featured in September 2012’s issue of *Nightshift*, announcing the release of his new album, ‘Cut the Bullspit’, following a joint UK

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

tour with fellow former-Oxford rapper **Zuby**. Also set to release a new album were **Trophy Wife**, who previewed the release with a series of videos that made up a complete collage, while **ToLiesel**, **Yellow Fever** and **A Silent Film** also had new records out. Proving just how ephemeral this pop lark is, cover stars this month were indie troublemakers **Secret Rivals**, whose career to date had largely consisted of online – and occasionally physical – confrontations with other local bands and journos, while a steady steam of gigs had ranged from inspired to ramshackle. Their new single, ‘Everything I Lost’ was released as a free download this month and the band, formed by Liverpooldian singer/guitarist Jamie Corcoran and Chilean singer Claudia ‘Clouds’ Saez, admitted they had “a kill switch live” which added to the chaos, while on record they were perfect, feisty guitar pop, inspired equally by The Cribbs and the cure. But, having worked – and fought – so hard to find acceptance and acclaim in Oxford, they promptly disappeared. No announcements, no fanfare, and even online they seem to have vanished from the face of the earth. Get in touch if you know what became of them; it’s been very quiet since they disappeared. Also disappearing from view were **The Cellar Family**, who issued a denial they were splitting up as bassist Sam King departed to study in Italy. They’ve not been seen in action since. Highlights of the month’s gigs included **Alabama Shakes** and **The Fratellis** at **The O2 Academy** and **Ultravox** and **Dexys** at **The New Theatre**.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

DELTAVIOLIN

When he's not helping make The August List and Great Western Tears two of the best bands in Oxford, Ben Heaney does acoustic arrangements of early Texan psychedelia, and when that all gets a bit too mainstream, he picks up a 1958 Leo Fender first model electric violin and explores the outer reaches of the instrument's sounds, to the point it barely sounds like a violin at all. Instead, as on 'Ghost Notes', all eerie pulses, drones, swirls and a strange aural itching, it sounds like a coded distress call from a dying star, while the abrasive, atonal industrial dark ambience of 'Book of Quarts' might be Nash the Slash attempting a Steve Reich piece and deliberately getting it all mangled up. 'Viktoria', all minimalist wob, wob, wob throbbery, is perhaps too discreet to tick all our weird boxes, but 'Star Cell' is a creep back into the horror film soundtrack shadows. What's really remarkable though is that every sound you hear is created by the violin, everything looped and overlaid and presented as the background noise to all those dreams you have about being pursued by strange wraith-like aliens in an abandoned factory. Or have we just been reading too much Victoria Schwab again?

LITLEWING

Okay, if all that experimental journeying is too much for your delicate soul, how about this pure and simple slice of pop music – it's a got a tune and everything. We think Littlewing are from Buckinghamshire but they're welcome over the county border anytime with songs like this, all spangle and sparkle and singer Annie Needham's cosy sunshine voice. It's nothing wildly original but a good-hearted late-80s-flavoured piece of shoegazey folk-pop that sounds like it's descended from The Sundays, Belly and Edie Brickell, one of those sweet, simple songs that can make your day seem a few shades brighter, and given it's currently pissing down and Donald Trump has just promised to reign down fire and fury on North Korea with the rest of us caught in the middle, probably after watching too much *Game of Thrones*, we think that's something we could all do with right now.

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

ONE COLOUR SHORT

While *Nightshift* is as guilty as anyone of sticking bands in genre pigeonholes, the term 'alt.rock' must be up there alongside 'urban' as one of the most pointless descriptions around. Alternative to what, precisely? Music made with guitars and drums and riffs and singing and occasionally tunes? No, exactly. Actually more often than not it's used by bands who sound quite a lot like Foo Fighters and consider that the height of cutting edge music. One Colour Short here use it to describe themselves, going slightly further to include "alt.rock with strong female velvet vocals," which makes us think of luxury loo roll. Anyway, alt.rock in this case, as in so many others, tends to translate as "a bit grungy," as One Colour Short cook up a passable guitar chug, particularly on 'Breakdown', which could be L7 on a go-slow, but elsewhere 'Fluoxetine Nightmares', whose title alone should make it a rabid hymn to self hate, is a sluggish trawl that barely manages to drag its arse across three minutes of inchoate 90s dirge. And sadly those vocals are less strong and velvety and more angsty, slightly strangled and possibly hungover. Not completely terrible but it does sound like the first rehearsal of a Disney movie grunge band and that doesn't sound like a very alternative thing to be.

CUNTGASH

Seriously? Have you tried growing the fuck up?

TARPIT

Here's another band who'd probably describe themselves as alt.rock if they had any kind of online presence. Not sure this one song offering has any presence either, chugging anonymously and blokishly along, partway between common-or-garden 80s indie rock and common-or-garden 90s grunge. It starts, it carries on for three minutes and it finishes and we're struggling to tell you anything else about it other than it exists. Anyone who watched *Dr Who* over the last few years would (ironically) remember an alien religious cult called The Silence who people would forget the moment they'd seen them. Tarpit disappear from memory while you're actually listening to them. That in itself is some achievement. Sorry, where were we?

THE REAPER

The Reaper have never and would never describe themselves as alt.rock. No, they are rock, pure and simple and as God always intended it to be. Even their demo sleeve, featuring a creepy cartoon clown rendering of Donald Trump, looks like something from an 80s thrash metal album. Alternatively solid (as in they'd probably damage your car if they bumped into it) and ferocious (particularly the guitar solo on 'Close My Eyes'), they fizz and thunder with lock tight precision – still in their teens they've been together for a good five years at least – while singer Joey Kenny's Rob Halford-meets-Joan Jett vocals add an epic quality to songs like 'Building These Walls'. It's all completely unreconstructed, as if fads and fripperies like djent, metalcore and sludge never existed and the world is still at that point where Metallica and Megadeth are starting to take Judas Priest's blueprint into noisier waters, although 'Overcome' does threaten to wander into Bon Jovi territory. We're not sure we should be applauding bands who sound like music that existed 20 years before they were even born, but in The Reaper's case we'll make an exception, because they rock. No alt. about it.

SEX WITH YOUR X

Talking of unreconstructed, Sex With Your X are the musical equivalent of eight pints of heavy and a pork pie for lunch: no nonsense and slightly messy. Theirs is a grubby, pubby punk rumble with no pretensions and possibly little musical merit, but when the singer growls "What you see is what you get," like a beer-bellied bin man presenting himself in all his glory on Tinder, you have to admire the band's honesty. Their problem is they never really get out of second gear, stuck in a grungy blues rock rut, more Dumpty's Rusty Nuts than Motorhead. Get another round in, maybe a few Jaegerbombs, and let's see you really kick off.

SELF HELP

This lot sound like they've been on the fizzy pop for sure. While, like Sex With Your X, Self Help's roots lie in punk, they've remembered that life doesn't all have to be about growling and grumbling about stuff, preferring to take a rather more jaunty approach on songs like 'Fall Under the Table With Me', and on 'Won't You', evoking the eccentric spirits of Jilted John and Wreckless Eric. Best song here though is 'Gemma', pop-punk with the jagged edges left on, a decent grasp of melody, a good balance of tenderness and temerity and a bit of a twinkle in its eye – it sounds

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a bit like a less spiteful Cassels. Maybe they could pop to this next lot's house and offer them a bit of advice about counting your blessings or simply bucking your fucking ideas up.

FREEMANTLE

The first lyric we hear from Freemantle is "Feeling lonely / No-one knows me," after which things get properly depressing. This lot are as leaden as the skies before yet another downpour but this demo is more like a steady drizzle of self-pity: indie rock by numbers but with all the bright colours replaced by the same shade of beige, or maybe Prefab Sprout with all their delicacy and poetry filleted and replaced by a cup of lukewarm milky tea and an Asda value sausage roll. Guitars spangle and chime in polite, generic fashion while the singer swoons and sobs and etches his Year 9 poetry onto the park bench he's taken to sitting on, alone, in the cold, because he thinks the girls will look at him and fall in love with his tragic Byron-esque figure rather than point and laugh and ask him if it's been raining or if that's wee all down his jeans. There's a song here called 'She Doesn't Even Know My Name', which tries ever so hard to be portentous but is merely laborious and another called 'Twenty Three', which is the exact number of years this simpering stockpile of self-absorbed shite feels like it goes on for. Freemantle? Locked-up-in-a-dungeon-and-tortured-by-demonsmantle would be more fitting.

THE DEMO DUMPER

GARIANT

You think that was bad? Things get worse. Here is Garient, who describes himself as a singer/songwriter, although he seems to have forgotten the songwriter bit since this one-song demo is a cover version. Of Kings of Leon's 'Sex On Fire'. We're going to give you a moment to digest the utter fucking pointlessness of this exercise. Every fucking pub covers band on the entire fucking planet plays 'Sex on Fire', often twice a night since all the pissed-up people in the crowd who think they've got lucky need a suitable soundtrack to their furtive frothing. And how else to render this refugee from a 1975 edition of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* even more erotic than turn it into a strangled piano ballad. Although, hang on, maybe this is the epitome of alternative rock: music with no vim, no vigour, no balls or spirit. Actually, strike that last bit. This isn't without balls; it's an enormous steaming pile of them.

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The Carpet Crawlers

Sat 30th Sep • £8 adv • 6.30pm
Allusondrugs

Sat 30th Sep • £10 adv • 11pm
DJ Q - All Night Long

Wed 4th Oct • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 2

Thu 5th Oct • £15 adv • 6.30pm
The Dears

Thu 5th Oct • £15 adv
Mo Gilligan AKA
Mo the Comedian:
Coupla Cans Tour

Fri 6th Oct • £29.50 adv • 6.30pm
Gary Numan

Sat 7th Oct • £13 adv • 6.30pm
The Smyths:
Strangeways Here
We Come Tour

Sat 7th Oct • £14 adv • 6.30pm
Amber Run

Sun 8th Oct • £32 adv • 6pm
Perfect

Tue 10th Oct • £18.50 adv
Tom McRae

Wed 11th Oct • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 3

Thu 12th Oct • £12.50 adv
The Hoosiers: The
Trick To Life (10th
Anniversary Tour)

Fri 13th Oct • £12 adv • 6.30pm
Wille & The Bandits
+ Claude Hay

Fri 13th Oct • £7 adv • 11pm
The Oxford Soul Train

Wed 18th Oct • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 4

Thu 19th Oct • £18.50 adv
Lethal Bizzle

Fri 20th Oct • £22.50 adv • 6.30pm
The Alarm + Dave Sharp

Sat 21st Oct • 6pm
Ritual Union Festival

Wed 25th Oct • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 5

Fri 27th Oct • £12 adv • 6.30pm
Guns 2 Roses
+ Metallica Reloaded
+ Cosmosis + Empyre

Sat 28th Oct • £20 adv • 6pm
Roots Manuva
+ Chali 2na (Jurassic 5)
+ Krafty Kuts
+ Oscar Worldpeace

Sat 28th Oct • £16.50 adv • 6pm
Katchafire

Wed 1st Nov • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 6

Fri 3rd Nov • £23 adv • 6.30pm
From The Jam
"The Gift"
35th Anniversary

Fri 3rd Nov • £15 adv • 6pm
Ghostpoet

Sun 5th Nov • £12.50 adv
Intervals

Tue 7th Nov • £18.50 adv
Cradle of Filth

Tue 7th Nov • £15 adv
Bury Tomorrow

Wed 8th Nov • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 7

Fri 10th Nov • £14 adv • 6pm
Pearl Jam UK-Tribute

Fri 10th Nov • £22 adv • 6.30pm
Billy Bragg

Tue 14th Nov • £27.50 adv
Nelly

Wed 15th Nov • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 8

Fri 17th Nov • £12 adv • 6.30pm
Antarctic Monkeys
+ Ash Adams (With full band)

Sat 18th Nov • £12 adv • 6.30pm
Definitely Mightbe
+ The White Tips

Sun 19th Nov • £21 adv
Airbourne

Wed 22nd Nov • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 9

Fri 24th Nov • £15 adv • 6.30pm
Glasville

Fri 24th Nov • £22.50 adv • 6.30pm
Dr John Cooper
Clarke

Sat 25th Nov • £10 adv • 6.30pm
Saedly Dorus and
the Hoolie Band

Wed 29th Nov • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 10

Thurs 30th Nov • £22.50 adv
Scouting For Girls
Fri 1st Dec • £14 adv • 6.30pm
Jagged Little Pill
A Tribute to
Alanis Morissette's
Classic Album

Sat 2nd Dec • £12.50 adv • 6.30pm
The Prince Experience

Wed 6th Dec • £5 adv • 9.30pm
Fishies - Week 11

Fri 8th Dec • £15 adv • 6.30pm
Absolute Bowie

Fri 8th Dec • £21.25 adv
The Twang

Sat 9th Dec • £22.50 adv • 6.30pm
Mark Lanegan Band
+ Tenebrous Liar
+ Joe Cardamone



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