

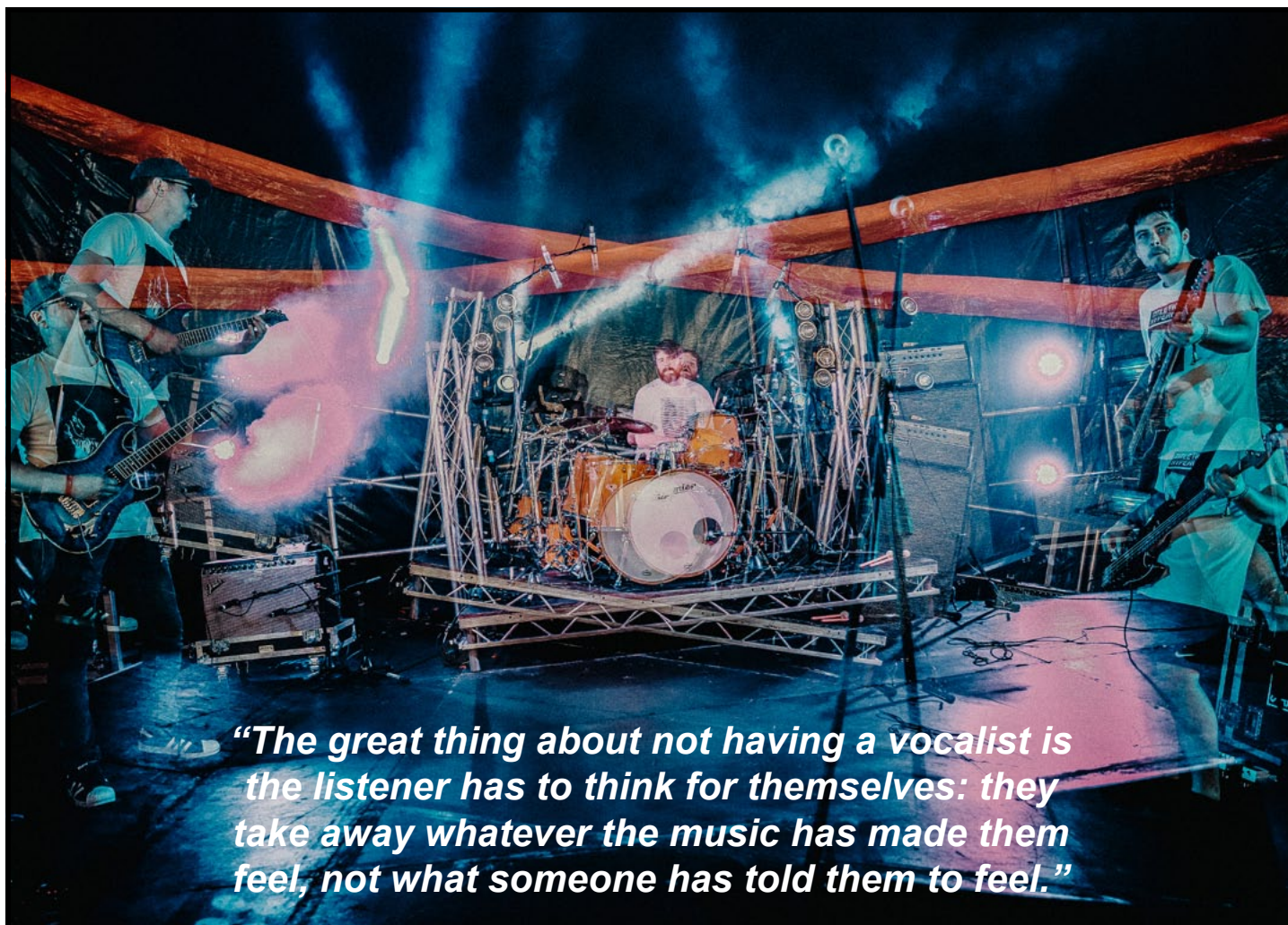


NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 277
August
2018**

photo: Helen Messenger



"The great thing about not having a vocalist is the listener has to think for themselves: they take away whatever the music has made them feel, not what someone has told them to feel."

Ghosts in the Photographs

Oxford's post-rock sound explorers talk terrifying auditions, music from outer space and playing in the dark.

Also in this issue:

THE CELLAR under threat again.
ALPHABET BACKWARDS return.
Introducing **THE DOLLYMOPS**
CORNBURY reviewed.

plus

All your Oxford music news, reviews and gigs for August

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

THE BULLINGDON

AUGUST 2018 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Friday 3rd August
K-Funkz: Looney + Hamdi

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 4th August
Musical Medicine & Friends

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 5th August
Unplugged Summer Showcase

Doors: 6pm

Saturday 11th August
**The Mancave
Document One
Deep Cover
Nazzpective
Sentz and Komply**

Doors: 11pm

Friday 17th August
Groove

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 18th August
DNA Events

Doors: 11pm

Monday 20th August
**Japanese Breakfast
Lucy Dakus**

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 23rd August
Mike Vernon & The Mighty Combo

Doors: 7pm

Friday 24th August
Hookworms

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 24th August
Rascal Present: Contrast

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 25th August
**Volume DnB #12 - The Payback
Nicky Blackmarket**

Didz, Snowy, Darkspark, Jaydee, RFY, Mac
Johne Bravo, Steady, P-Kay, Jwilz, Load B
Alman, DVZ, Drastik, Sandman, PKT, Biggs

Doors: 11pm

Wednesday 29th August
**Epic Beard Men
Sage Francis + B. Dolan**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 31st August
**Break Stuff
A Night of Nu-Metal Nostalgia**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 1st September
SummerVibes Can't Done

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 2nd September
**We Are Your Friends #3
Kelly Lee Owens
Dagga Domes
Despicable Zee**

Doors: 3pm

Wednesday 5th September
**Jolie Holland & Samantha Parton
(The Be Good Tanyas)**

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 9th September
Hamilton Loomis

Doors: 7pm

Friday 7th September
Who's Alice - EP Launch

Doors: 7pm

Friday 7th September
Saved by the 90s

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 9th September
**Plumbing the Death Star
Get Posh**

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 11th September
Willy Mason

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 20th September
Sikth

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 22nd September
**Musical Medicine
Jive Talk**

Doors: 11pm

Thursday 27th September
Sari Schorr

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 29th September
**Rawdio
Spectrasoul**

Doors: 11pm

Zero T

Ant TCI

DRS

Doors: 11pm

Thursday 4th October
Wildwood Kin

Doors: 7pm

Friday 5th October
**Gentleman's Dub Club
Gig Show**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 5th October
**Gentleman's Dub Club
Club Show**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 6th October
**Basic
Mella Dee**

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 7th October
**Jamali Maddix
Vape Lord**

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 11th October
Corky Laing

Doors: 7pm

Friday 12th October
Rhythm of the 90s

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 13th October
**Simple
Lena Wilkins
Juju & Jordash**

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 16th October
Clap Your Hands Say Yeah

Doors: 7pm

Friday 19th October
**Musical Medicine
Late Nite Tuff Guy**

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 20th October
Ritual Union 2018

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 20th October
**Official Ritual Union After Party
Fireshuffle w/ Steve Davis**

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 23rd October
Yellow Days

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 26th October
**Mike Ross
Troy Redfern
Jack Hutchinson**

Doors: 7pm

Friday 26th October
Tom Robinson Band

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 27th October
Volume DnB #13

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 28th October
We Are Scientists

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 30th October
BC Camplight

Doors: 7pm

NEWS

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Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



GLASS ANIMALS have been forced to cancel all shows planned for the rest of this year after drummer Joe Seaward was hospitalised with brain damage following a bike accident last month. The band announced the news on their Facebook page on the 12th July with singer Dave Bayley posting: “last Monday my best friend and our drummer Joe was hit by a truck while on his bike here in Dublin. His leg was broken on impact and he became tangled in the truck’s trailer where his skull suffered a complex fracture. Miraculously, and thankfully, he is alive. After a couple of long operations he is now on the road to recovery. It’s going to be a long, difficult, and winding road, but knowing how determined Joe is, and seeing how much his body has recovered already in the past ten days, I am so optimistic that he will make it back to his cheeky

old self.

“This past week Joe has been under general anaesthetic twice: first for neurosurgery and second for his leg. The neurosurgery consisted of reshaping part of his skull that had collapsed and been compressed into the brain by the weight of the truck’s trailer. The operation was successful, but the collapsed skull had bruised and damaged the area of the brain responsible for speech. As far as we know, no other areas of his brain are severely damaged like this. He can still wiggle his fingers and he still laughs at all my shit jokes. It wasn’t safe for him to go directly into his leg surgery after his brain op, but a couple days ago he was given the go-ahead by the consultants. He now has a titanium pin holding two halves of his femur together... basically he is now wolverine.

“We are very sorry to say that, because of all of this, we will be cancelling our remaining shows this year. Joe’s injuries are highly unlikely to heal in time to make any of them.” Glass Animals, whose second album, 2016’s ‘How To Be A Human being’ was shortlisted for the Mercury Prize, were in the middle of a world tour with festival dates in the States and mainland Europe planned for the rest of the summer. *Nightshift* sends our best wishes to Joe for a full and speedy recovery.



THE CELLAR faces another fight for its survival following a severe reduction of its capacity last month.

15,000 signed a petition to save the venue from closure last year when the building’s owners, the St Michael’s and All Saints charities put in an application to change the use of the building to retail storage. The plans, which would have ended live music at The Cellar after 40 years, were thrown out by Oxford City Council planning officers.

After the verdict the owners vowed to “consider their options” and a fire and safety inspection at the end of June decided the venue’s fire escape door was 30cm too narrow and reduced its capacity to just 60. Taking into account staff numbers, this meant gigs and club nights at the Cellar could only host 50 customers, making it financially unviable.

While no-one would deny the importance of safety limits, the timing of this inspection so soon after the verdict might be considered suspicious, especially as the venue has operated safely for so many years.

While the threat to The Cellar’s future is possibly even more severe than before, manager Tim Hopkins is hoping potential plans to turn the shop above the venue into a café and bar might help secure the venue’s future.

Speaking to *Nightshift* at the end of July he said: “We’re trying to write a business plan at the moment. I haven’t yet got the final price for the shop or the rates on it. I’ve had a structural engineer down to look at widening the existing fire exit stairs. It’s a really big job and not even 100% possible. Basically it’s just not a viable option.

“The plan is to submit a business proposal to the landlords to have the shop above The Cellar as a café in the day and bar in the evening. This would give The Cellar a presence on Cornmarket Street, and add another fire exit, making our fire regs problem disappear in the process. We hope to raise money through a crowdfunding campaign. We think we would run it as a not-for-profit organisation, and any profits we make will go back into the business.

“The centre of Oxford clearly needs to evolve now that the Westgate Shopping Centre has opened. There are a lot of hurdles: the landlords need to approve the idea, and we will also need to get change of usage approved. We need to raise the funds to make the venture a reality. It’s going to be a challenge but I still feel this could be possible.”

Stay updated on this story via *Nightshift*’s Facebook page – facebook.com/nightshiftmag



GAZ COOMBES has been announced as one of the co-headliners for this year’s **Ritual Union**. The Oxford star will play his only full-band hometown show of 2018 at the one-day, multi-venue festival on Cowley Road in October.

Gaz joins **Ghost Poet**, **Jane Weaver** and **Nadine Shah** at the event on **Saturday 20th October**. **Kiran Leonard** and **Madonnatron** have also been added to the line-up.

The one-day festival, organised by Future Perfect will takeover both rooms at the O2 Academy, plus The Bullingdon, The Library and Truck Store.

Other acts confirmed include **Suuns**; **The Lovely Eggs**; **Gnod**; **Boy Azooga**; **Warmduscher**; **Lice**; **Fontaines DC**; **The Homesick**; **Moon Duo**’s **Vive la Void**; **Cassels**; **Self Help**; **Haze**; **John**; **Lacuna Common**; **Le Feye**; **Catgod**; **Ghosts in the Photographs** and **Easter Island Statues**. Meanwhile, snooker legend **Steve Davis** will be playing a DJ set

Last year’s inaugural event featured sets from **Peace**, **Black Honey** and **Bo Ningen**.

Tickets for **Ritual Union** are on sale now, priced £25 from Seetickets and Truck Store. Follow all the latest news on Facebook at **Ritual Union 2018**.



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NEWS



OXJAM returns for a full Oxford takeover this autumn, with a host of local acts announced.

Oxjam Oxford takes place on Saturday 27th October with a full day of live music at The Bullingdon; The Library; Truck Store; Café Tarifa; The James Street Tavern and East Oxford Community Centre.

Acts confirmed include Inner Peace Records; Lucy Leave; Flatlands; Flights of Helios; MSRY; Drore (pictured); Ghosts in the Photographs; Little Red; The Cooling Pearls; Wolfs; Kid Kin; The Dollymops; Tiger Mendoza; Moogieman & the Masochists; Nightjar; Worry; Protection Spells; My Crooked Teeth; Max Blansjaar; Dan Rawle and Ciphers.

Last year Oxford's only Oxjam show was a gig at Tap Social organised by teenage musician Max Blansjaar, so it's great to see the full takeover back for 2018.

A limited number of early bird tickets are on sale now, priced £8, from Wegottickets.

Since its launch in 2006 the national network of Oxjam shows has raised over £2.8million for anti-poverty charity Oxfam.

RABIDFEST has been cancelled. The rock and metal festival, which was due to take place over the weekend of the 3rd – 4th August at Abingdon United's Northcourt venue, was called off at the start of July with organisers citing poor advance ticket sales. The weekend would have featured sets from Tragedy, Desert Storm and Divine Chaos amongst others and was intended to provide a focus for fans of heavy music which is too often overlooked by local festivals.

A statement on the festival website said, "It is with great sadness, regret and heartache that we have to announce that Rabidfest 2018 has been cancelled. Firstly, we would like to take this time to sincerely apologise to all our supporters and to everyone who's bought a ticket, to all the bands, crew, entertainers, traders, caterers, and especially RACPA UK for letting all of

you down, but we simply cannot continue this year. There is no blame being dealt to anyone at all, other than ourselves and we accept full responsibility.

"Secondly, Mark G, Mark C and I, along with our team, have put our heart, soul and life into Rabidfest. This is a decision that we have not taken lightly, but have had no choice but to take. Our main reason for our decision is a lack of pre-sales, we simply do not have enough to proceed. Rabidfest, as an event, receives very little funds outside of ticket sales, and whilst the two Marks and I are willing to bear some financial loss on this venture, our personal funds are not limitless. We have faced other issues along the way, but these are modest in comparison.

"Any existing ticket or merch purchases will be refunded in full as soon as possible."

CONAN AND WINNEBAGO DEAL headline Buried in Smoke's Christmas Weekender

in December. The local metal promoters host two full days of serious heaviosity over the weekend of the 1st and 2nd December at The Cellar and The Bullingdon.

Reformed local garage-rock duo Winnebago Deal top the bill on the Saturday and are joined by Desert Storm; Suns of Thunder; Battalions; My Diablo; Bad Blood Recovery and Done at The Cellar, while Conan headline the Sunday at The Bullingdon alongside Witchsorrow; Grave Lines; Crimson Throne; Indica Blues; Thuum; The Brothers Keg; The Grand Mal and Crimson Tusk.

Tickets are yet to go on sale, and with the future of The Cellar still in doubt, it's worth keeping an eye on the Facebook event page – search out Xmas Weekender 2018.

LOKKI AND ZEROWE make their Oxford debuts next as part of the third annual **We Are Your Friends** all-dayer. The gig takes place at **The Bullingdon** on **Sunday 2nd September**. Lokki is the new musical project from Glass Animals' Drew McFarlane, who released his debut EP 'Cirrhi' in March and played his first live show in London in April. Zerowe, the solo project of ex-Balloon Ascents and Neverlnd singer Thomas Roberts, release their new mini-album 'Don't Be Evil' this month. Both acts join a line-up that features



ALPHABET BACKWARDS singer James Hitchman has been talking to *Nightshift* about his band's new album. '**Friends, Lovers & Empty Beds**' is Alphabet Backwards' second album and is released six years after their debut.

"We've had a few health issues in the band including a diagnosis of epilepsy for me but two other members were also affected by different issues with their health," said James. "This meant we had to take a little time away before getting back into playing live and starting to write for the EPs we put out in 2016.

"The new album was written and recorded during 2017 with the majority of the writing being completed at the recording stage. We had the bare bones of all the songs but as we were self-recording and producing this album we were able to give ourselves a little more time to write.

"For the studio we stumbled across a converted barn in Devon on a working farm; you can see it on our 'Fingertips' video on Youtube. It allowed us to live there, and with the kitchen and living area where we set up everything, we could also eat and drink together and bedrooms downstairs enabled us to sleep in comfort, which was vital as we only had one day per track."

As well as the recording process, James also talked about how his diagnosis with epilepsy affected the music.

"With the diagnosis it meant I now had different themes to write about and different emotions to learn to deal with – not something I was completely conscious of at the time but looking back I guess you can kind of hear this coming out in words.

"I find lyrics always assist me and enable me to mop up any negativity and fear that may have come my way; it enables you to begin cleansing the mind of any thought you may have, whether singing a tale of love and admiration or a song about self-loathing and anxiety. Both of these I think we all, at some point or other, fall foul of.

"Friends, Lovers and Empty Beds' is something I have been saying to wrap up the majority of practices for the past couple of years and it does have that contemplative quality that I enjoy. It's just something I believe to be true as at the end of the night we always go home to one of the three. I am not sure where it came from but the name of the album was decided way back. The theme of relationships does run through the album but the majority of these relationship stories allude to my relationship with epilepsy: in 'Elephants' there's a passage about speaking with my therapist and in 'Am Dram' the whole "keeping me up" chorus is about the fear of tomorrow and the fear of having more seizures. In turn this keeps you up as you overthink everything and can't stop worrying. I was lucky enough to get into a new relationship at the start of the writing period and that immediately offered another path of inspiration to work from and enabling closure on previous relationships, so all of the lyrics are written from a personal perspective and part of each story will always be "true".

Alphabet Backwards made a return to playing live at Truck Festival in July, followed by a series of shows around the UK. 'Friends, Lovers & Empty Beds' is released on the 31st July. Follow the band at [facebook.com/alphabackwards](https://www.facebook.com/alphabackwards).

Pitchfork favourite Kelly Lee Owens as well as Dagga Domes, the new band formed by Kit Monteith, who has played with Foals, Jonquil and Trophy Wife, and Zahra Tehrani's experimental beats and electronics project Despicable Zee. We Are Your Friends raises money for the Brain Tumour Charity - Michael Barry Fund in memory of local musician and promoter Michael who died in 2016. Search for WAYF#3 on Facebook.

CANALFEST returns in September with a weekend of live music and canal-based thrills. The main event takes place on Saturday 8th September at Aristotle Lane Park, between Woodstock Road and Port Meadow, as well as events along the towpath through Oxford. Among performers playing are Oxford-based Ugandan multi-instrumentalist Seby Ntege, who has played at WOMAD, Latitude and Cowley Road Carnival;

Bristol retro band The Hawkmen; The John Fletcher Trio; The Idle Women and The Jericho Singers. As well as the Saturday events, Friday night (7th) sees the festival launched with a jam session at The White Hart, led by local musician Ben Avison, while on Sunday evening (9th) Steph Pirrie, who heads The Jericho Singers has assembled a special band of canal musicians for a Big Canal Ceilidh in St Barnabas Church. Full festival details at www.oxfordcanalheritage.org

RABBIT HOLE FESTIVAL returns on Saturday 1st September

The annual family-friendly mini-fest takes place at **The Victoria Arms** in Old Marston, with a full day of live music, featuring sets from Lightspill; The Shapes; Oakland Road; Phoebe Rose; The Brass Funkeys; Zhana & Jane; Riaz Ahmad; Full Circle Blues and more. The day runs from 1.30 through to 10.45pm, followed by a firework display and an after-party at the pub with The Mad Marston Hares. As well as the music there are kids' activities and food. Tickets are £8.50 adults; £7 for under-16s and free for under-10s. More info and tickets at www.rabbitholemusicvents.co.uk.

HOWL MUSIC FESTIVAL

takes place next month, aiming to raise money for Wolvercote Young People's Centre. The one-day event takes place at The Wolvercote Young People's Centre on St. Peter's Road in Wolvercote, on Saturday 22nd September. Among the acts playing are 3peace; Catgod; Me & the Moon; Self Help; Flatlands; Autumn Saints; Daisy; Death of the Maiden; Easter Island Statues and Still Pigeon. The event runs from 1-10pm. Tickets, priced £15 for adults, £10 for under-16s and under-12s free, are on sale now via Wegottickets. com. Event page is: [facebook.com/wearehowlfestival](https://www.facebook.com/wearehowlfestival)

CAMERON AG, The Land Girls and Fancy Dress Party are among the latest set of names to be added to **If Not Now, When?** Festival in September. They join headliners Rolo Tomassi and Chad Valley at the all-dayer on Saturday 15th September across three venues at East Oxford Community Centre and Fusion Arts. Other new additions to the bill include Stef Ketteringham, Rosie Caldecott, Bug Prentice, Slumb Party and Salvation Bill. INN,W? have also teamed up

MARTIN HORSFALL (1964-2017)

Tributes have been paid to Martin Horsfall, trumpeter with The Original Rabbit foot Spasm Band, who has died following a battle with cancer. He was 53.

Martin, who was originally from Huddersfield, lived in Blewbury, near Didcot and joined the local jazz and r'n'b stars after meeting frontman Stuart Macbeth in 2007.

Talking about his friend and band mate, Stuart said: "Martin was a hard-nosed Yorkshireman but his heart was never at home in Huddersfield. It was firmly placed in New Orleans. That much was obvious as soon as I heard him play trumpet at Gladiator's Hall off Ilfley Road in September 2007. Sneaking up to share a fag with this unexpected hero I couldn't quite believe my ears. Because this absolute vandal on his instrument – and a singer with enough passion to truly smash an avocado – was as softly spoken in person as a baby's blanket. Martin became our comrade and friend. To us he's just sleeping, dreaming of that trip to New Orleans.



"Martin wasn't your conservatoire kind of trumpeter but he always kept pace with the best. He'd learned his craft the hard way: in northern brass bands. It's a coincidence but this just happens to have been the way Louis Armstrong and Nat Gonella learned their craft too.

"Last October we put on an Italian themed gig and we asked Martin to play 'Buona Sera', a tune played by Louis Prima and Acker Bilk. No rehearsal, obviously and man did he lay into that song! His trumpet ripped through the blue, into sunlit uplands. He owned that tune.

"It was the combination of speaking through his instrument combined with his knowledge of jazz, metal

and punk that made him such a wonder, because traditional jazz takes attitude. Martin probably should have played his last gig at the Royal Albert Hall or Ronnie Scott's; the reason he didn't was that he had faith in our mission to bring trad back to life: a deeply unfashionable idea.

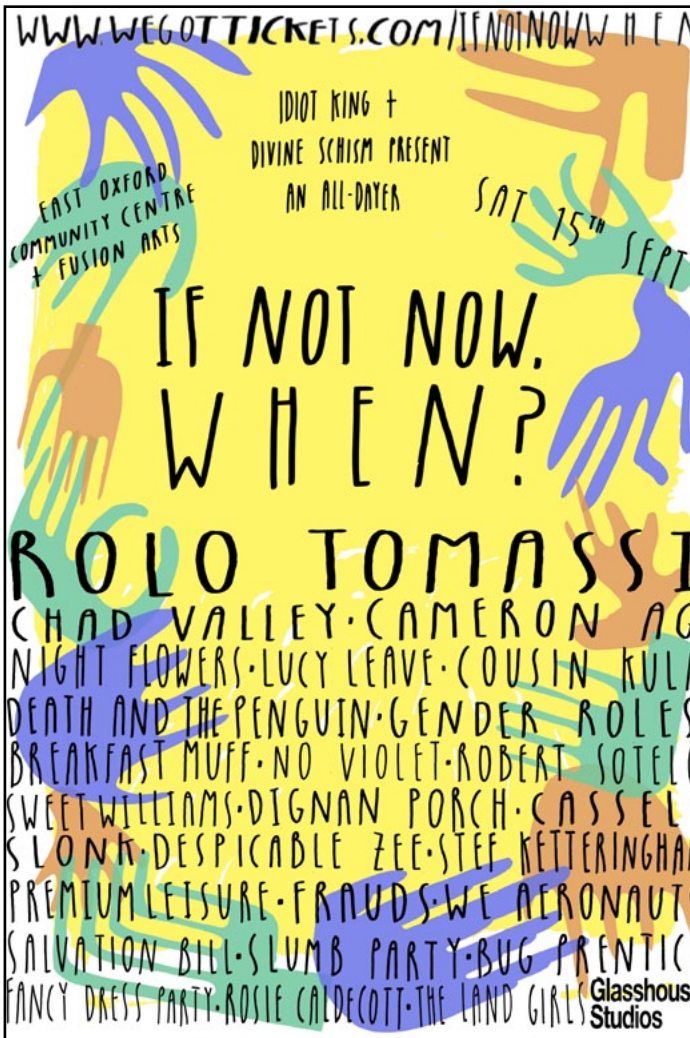
"We Rabbits are a band of brothers; what's missing now is Martin. We could throw in the towel but I think we'll all agree to keep the deeply unfashionable running. We'll do it for Martin." Martin is survived by his partner Audrey and children Naomi and Joseph. *Nightshift's* deepest sympathies go out to them all.

with Tap Social to launch their own pale ale, which will be on sale at The Library, Truck Store, East Oxford Community and Tap Social throughout the summer. Full line-up and ticket details for the festival at [facebook.com/ifnotnowhenoxford](https://www.facebook.com/ifnotnowhenoxford).

THE COOLING PEARLS

launch their new album next month. 'The Red Laugh' is the local band's first release since 2010's 'The Honoured Meal of the Stranger' and will be available via Bandcamp, Soundcloud, Spotify and CD on the 7th September. They play a headline show at The Library on Wednesday 19th September. Support comes from Glasgow's Lush Purr and Laughing Lamb, the new solo project from Lucy Leave drummer Pete Smith. More info at [facebook.com/coolingpearls](https://www.facebook.com/coolingpearls).

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



Ghosts in the Photographs



“IT WAS A TERRIFYING PLACE; *I’ve never felt so alone. It was certainly somewhere nobody would hear me scream. I remember phoning my partner and was seriously considering getting in my bright yellow Peugeot 106 and leaving. Glad I didn’t.*”

GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS drummer Brent Wade is recalling his first audition for the band, an occasion when, he admits, he genuinely wondered if he had been lured to his death. “Our rehearsal place was really creepy,” offers guitarist George Naylor by way of mitigation; “like a cross between Freddy Krueger’s digs and Chernobyl. We wouldn’t have blamed him if he turned right around and never came back.” Iain “He was either brave or stupid for meeting two strangers he met online, at night, in a sketchy industrial estate,” adds bassist Ian Deans; “we used to drive away from that place as quick as possible every time before a shadowy figure could appear in the rear view mirror. Real serial killer vibes going on up there.”

THE ORIGINS OF HOW Ghosts in the Photographs formed has become part of the band’s legend now, but its dread-filled fashion is perfectly suited to them given their chosen name, their music and even their gigs; this is a band who,

when *Nightshift* first witnessed them live, were performing in front of a projection of Hitchcock’s *The Birds*, and have since composed the soundtrack to a zombie movie.

WHILE GHOSTS IN THE Photographs formed in 2014, the trio have individual musical histories going back many years. Oxford born George has done time in a number of metal and hardcore acts, notably Kaowin (with singer Patrick Currier, who would go on to front DaysOfGrace and Lights Action); Vena Cava (with future Xmas Lights singer Marco Ruggiero) and Sky Burial with long-time friend and former Caravan of Whores drummer Jamie Gillett, where he first met Banbury-born Ian. When Sky Burial went their separate ways, George and Ian continued to jam together until they decided to put an ad out for a drummer, which was answered by Brent, even if he almost didn’t go through with the audition. For his part Brent, originally from Stockton-on-Tees, got his first taste of Oxford music as part of gothic power-pop outfit Vixens in 2009; the band toured around the UK before splitting; Brent worked with Engineers singer Simon Phipps for a couple of years before answering that ad. He stayed in touch with his former Vixens bandmates Dave and Danny who got Ghosts in the Photographs their first ever gig, at

The Wheatsheaf, supporting the pair’s new band Lowws. “Our first practice together consisted of jamming and bad-mouthing religion,” remembers Ian; “it was clear Brent was definitely the guy for us; a great person and great drummer who shared our passion for songwriting, he also brought a drive to the band that we had been missing. My favourite thing about writing with George and Brent is how we’re all different, as people and especially our music tastes, yet when we get together and create music it all happens very organically, we’re a cohesive unit; `greater than the sum of our parts’ is a motto that suits us well.” “We all come from varied musical backgrounds, which has significantly characterised our output,” adds George; “while we have a very productive musical relationship, our collective harmony is largely down to how well we all get on away from the music; we have to keep ourselves in check to ensure practices don’t slip into our natural comedy default, which can be easier said than done.”

THE FIRST FRUITS OF GHOSTS in the Photographs’ coming together was the ‘Our Memories Are Here To Haunt You’ EP in 2015. Its follow up, ‘A Murmur, A Charm, A Murder’, in 2017, cemented the trio’s reputation as purveyors of dark, dynamic instrumental post-rock, inspired

by titans of the genre: Mogwai, Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Explosions in the Sky, but possessed of a harder, dynamic edge that owed as much to Fugazi and Sonic Youth. “I’m glad that’s coming through,” says Ian; “I’m big into my hardcore and punk; Converge are my favourite band of all time. The three of us all have different musical tastes, so between us there’s such a big melting pot of influences to draw from. Ian MacKaye is a hero of mine, so I was real happy about the Fugazi comparison, that’s some high praise right there.”

MORE THAN ANYTHING though, Ghosts in the Photographs’ reputation has been made via almost constant gigging. There is barely a month goes by when their highly recognisable name doesn’t crop up in the gig guide – sometimes several times.

“I don’t think we’ve ever said no to a gig, it’s so much fun and we love playing,” says Brent; “the one time we had to say no, which is my biggest regret, was when we were asked to support the Nightingales but had to turn it down as we already had another Oxford gig that week.” Are Ghosts in the Photographs, then, Oxford music’s answer to Michael Caine – who famously never turns down a film role? George: “Now you mention it, Michael Caine was always our first choice as vocalist. That said we love gigging locally and have always been quite fortunate to be offered the chance to play with some great bands and musicians, which tends to be the reason we keep coming back and hopefully because people enjoy what we do.” GITP do seem to be a band who gets on well with other bands locally and, if purely instrumental onstage, are highly vocal in their online support and promotion for fellow local bands they love and have played alongside; it’s a support that’s regularly reciprocated. George: “We love the Oxford music scene and feel strongly about supporting our peers across all genres. Oxford has always felt like a musical hub; you only have to glimpse the prestigious history to appreciate the scales that are possible to achieve. With local artists like Year of the Kite; Kid Kin; Tiger Mendoza; Masiro; Death of the Maiden; Lucy Leave; Cherokii, and The Hope Burden, we feel that they have the same principled ethos that we share, and there is a real sense that everyone actively wants to encourage each other’s output.”

FOLLOWING THE **HUGELY** positive reception ‘A Murmur, a Charm, a Murder’ received, from fans, fellow bands and critics alike, Ghosts in the Photographs return to the studio next month to record a new single. George: “We’re going to be recording our fifteen-minute opus ‘Dyslexorcist’; it’s a song we’re all really proud of and get a lot of love for it when we play it live. It’s been the staple closer of our set for the past year so we’re really happy to be finally getting it down. We hope to retain the live feel of the song, whilst also flavouring it with some additional spice. We have so much material to get recorded but we have to be selective; we are finding ourselves writing much more dynamically since when we recorded the last EP.” “We were over the moon with the response we had for ‘A Murmur...’. Putting out something you are so deeply invested in is always going to generate a varied response, but to get such positive appraisal from our peers on the local scene means a lot.”

GIVEN GHOSTS IN THE Photographs’ instrumental set-up and atmospheric, cinematic sound, the comparisons to Mogwai and Explosions in the Sky have been hard to avoid, but they take them in their stride and take pride in the influence such iconic bands have had on them. George: “We take great stimulus from those bands but also by many more beyond. We enjoy the references but don’t feel burdened by it at all.” When venue specs allow it, Ghosts in the Photographs play backed by film projections, to enhance their music’s atmospheric nature; it’s something they feel is intrinsic to their performance. George: “When circumstances allow we like to try and introduce something different to shows and projections are a great way of marrying two separate mediums and creating a completely individual vibe. We are never sure how the footage will go down as we have often devised it in isolation from the music; utilising it live is often spontaneous but it does seem to work well. We are not anchored to this set-up, as we have also benefitted from the great lighting rigs at various different venues.” Are film soundtracks an influence on your music writing? George: “We all appreciate the symbiotic effect of music in film; we often discuss these elements when writing certain parts of our music as we can reflect on how certain sounds and themes are utilised for specific emotional or dynamic effect. We had the opportunity to put our own soundtracking prowess to the test by scoring that zombie flick.”

If you could have scored one film ever, which would it have been? George: “*The Shining*: just love how unsettling it feels throughout the film – those synths/strings/horns; the use of composers Penderecki and Ligeti is genius.” Iain: “*Irreversible*: the soundtrack for that film is nasty and rightly so given the content of the film. It makes me feel nauseous; it’s like anti music. I would love to write something that makes people feel physically ill.” Brent: “Something really dark, uneasy and catchy like *Suspiria*: that would be great.

WHILE THEY ARE AN instrumental band Ghosts in the

“When we’re testing visuals we like to switch off the lights to see how they go with the music. I didn’t mind until we put images from The Exorcist on there”

Photographs do use samples to add to their soundscapes. Their recent set at Common People featured snatches of what sounded like NASA communications laced into the music; would Ghosts in the Photographs make good music for space travel? George: “Actually, the sample is from military and air-traffic control communications on 9/11, but the effect is clearly similar. Music for space travel would be incredible though – and quite Eno-sounding – it could be a perfect marriage.” What do you think music from another planet might sound like? Is there anyone on earth making music that you think sounds alien? George: “I think it would be painfully exhilarating. Perhaps composers like Ligeti or Schoenberg, with their ethereal compositions but locally you need look no further than Lee Riley or Jamie Gillett to experience some otherworldly aural aesthetic.” Brent: “I know they’re not making music anymore, but Coil. I was introduced to them by *Nightshift* a couple of years back. It’s such a strange sound, but I cannot switch off once I’ve pressed play!” Coil certainly made some of the creepiest music *Nightshift* has ever heard, including an unreleased theme for *Hellraiser* that apparently made writer and director Clive Barker – presumably a man with a strong constitution – feel nauseous. Do GITP ever compose their music in the dark to capture a mood? George: “We have occasionally played around with our projections and different ambient lighting at practice; it’s always stimulating to change the environment from time to time. Although Brent is scared of

the dark.” Brent: “When we’re testing visuals we like to switch off the lights to see how they go with the music. I didn’t mind until we put images from *The Exorcist* on there”. **AWAY FROM THE BAND,** Ghosts in the Photographs, particularly George and Brent, are intensely politically engaged and highly vocal about their beliefs, be it anti racism, anti sexism or pro-Remain. Given that, we wonder if there’s ever a frustration that their instrumental music can’t project beliefs or messages they want to convey? George: “We are all political in our own ways; I know how much of our

everyday lives are entrenched in it. My day-to-day work is nursing in the NHS, something of great importance to me and also something of a current political boiling-pot, so politics is never too far away. Our music is an outlet to our collective thoughts and one that can be viewed in any manner, subjectively, by the listener. Our use of allusive song titles, samples and projected imagery will often give away a certain subject or point of view. Although sometimes we may like to contrast or contradict these, just to keep ourselves fresh and others on their toes. In the main we try and keep our personal opinions out of the band domain, but there are times when some things need to be said.” Brent: “I was once put on the band’s naughty step, for arguing with Paul Golding from Britain First and calling him a twat on our Twitter. I maybe should have done it on my personal account!” What messages or ideal do you feel your music does convey, or do you prefer to leave it to the listener to take what they want from the music? Or is it intended purely as escapism? George: “Music should always mean exactly what it says to the listener, however that may be interpreted. A single song can mean so many different things to so many people; even we get something different out of what we do. There is no specific ideal to convey, except for maybe people to feel that they have had their own personal journey, figuratively or emotionally, while listening to us. We always get off seeing people transfixed at our gigs and we often hear accounts of spine-tingling moments.” Iain: “For me creating music is a form of catharsis and escapism.

The great thing about not having a vocalist is the listener has to think for themselves: they take away whatever the music has made them feel, not what someone has told them to feel. It’s different for each individual as we always come away from a show with an array of compliments that I doubt we’d get if we had somebody preaching a message or crying about their ex. Sometimes it’s nice to not be shouted at and just let yourself get lost in music”

FANS OF GHOSTS IN THE Photographs will have another chance to get lost in music this month as the band play at The Jericho Tavern on the 9th August as part of a fundraising show for mental health charity MIND. Before they go though, *Nightshift* has been wondering about the origin of their name. At the end of the *Dr Who* story *Family of Blood*, the Doctor banishes one of the family – who wanted to live forever – into a mirror where she would be the ghost in every reflection; was that an influence on the band’s name, and have any of them ever seen a ghost? George: “That’s a great theory but our name is actually influenced by a Mogwai lyric! We liked the connotation that it could have many interpretations, much like our music. I’ve never knowingly seen a ghost but I’m certain there were times in the past when my younger more impressionable mind may have been more susceptible to such things.” Brent: “I love the *Dr Who* theory; my first ever crush was Sarah Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen) and I got to meet her at a *Dr Who* convention 1997. I thought I saw a ghost when I was younger and living in a creepy house.” Do you think ghosts really exist? Iain: “I’m sure there are many things in this life our eyes and brains cannot see or comprehend, so I’m reserving judgement until I’ve seen one for myself.” George: “I believe that all such happenings are conjured in the brain, like hallucinations or over-imagination. Doesn’t mean that it can’t feel real to the one experiencing it, but having read a bit around neurology there are a lot of biological explanations for such events.” Brent: “But if it wasn’t for ghosts and the paranormal we wouldn’t have clairvoyants, and boy have they given me a great deal of comedy material.”

Ghosts in the Photographs play The Jericho Tavern on Thursday 9th August. ‘Dyslexorcist’ will be released later this year. Follow the band at facebook.com/Ghostsinthephotos and hear ‘A Murmur, a Charm, a Murder’ at ghostsinthephotos.bandcamp.com.

RELEASED

MEEF CHALAIN & ASHER DUST

‘Star Dread Kill The Devil’

(Self released)
Ian Norris’ sleeve artwork for this collaboration is instantly reminiscent of classic Prince Jammy and Scientist albums and the similarities don’t end there. This is some serious dub from two of Oxford’s maverick music scene mainstays: producer Meef Chaloin and singer/sound explorer Asher Dust, here recording together for the first time since 2013’s more scattershot and experimental ‘Angels Make Fun’ album. Mercurial and multi-talented, Asher Dust is a serial collaborator; for someone with such a distinctive voice he fits in with whichever setting he finds himself in, never better than when things get heavy, like his showing with Tiger Mendoza at Common People in May. And ‘Star Dread Kill The Devil’ is heavy: wired and wigged-out industrial-strength dub of the sort that should be soundtracking carnival side streets or troubling the foundations of basement clubs. Album opener ‘Angry Soul’ might be renamed ‘Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry and the Upsetters meet Nine Inch Nails Downtown’ as dirty electronics snake and throb beneath Asher’s gothic soul. It also features our favourite lyric of the year so far: “Welcome to the fuckwits carnival.” It’s a beast of an opener and if things open up somewhat from here, becoming funkier and frothier on ‘Gripe’ or taking in African rhythms and squelching synths on ‘Akasha’, solid and heavy remain the guiding moods. From classic Jamaican dub, through 80s On-



FOLKATRON

‘Mais C’est Quoi Maman?’

(Upcycled Sounds)
An interesting concept from new local label Upcycled Sounds here: gather ten musicians from around Europe who have never met before



U-Sound vibes and The Orb’s tripped-out take on dub and onto Tricky’s trippy electronic experimentation, Meef’s beats and production are rich and intense, while Asher’s vocals are freewheeling, sometimes looped and spaced out, building momentum as the album progresses, so tracks like ‘Controlling My Mental’ feel like absolute bangers even as they mine decidedly party-unfriendly depths. The desire to freak out like on that previous collaboration is kept in check for the most part, the pair focussed on groove building and maintaining a fine balance between mellow, intense, heavy and free flowing vibes up to the nervy, slow-burn finale of ‘Care For You’. *Nightshift* doesn’t have a soundsystem big enough to do this album full justice; as a result our neighbours – for a mile or so in every direction – are missing out. Shame: this is a worthy contender for the title of album of the summer. **Dale Kattack**

in a studio for a week and get them to interpret a set of traditional folk songs and tunes. It’s part of the label’s ruling ethos of taking folk, jazz and acoustic music into new places and for the most part this EP gets it right, particularly the solemn, lilting ‘Dansen Ungdom’, a Swedish celebration of youth learned by French double bassist and guitarist Remi Allain, sung beautifully before it’s led into slightly more wayward, folk-drone territory. Elsewhere ‘Hares on the Mountain’ imagines how humans might flirt and fall in love if they were wild animals, sung in understated fashion by Suffolk guitarist Joe Woods and accordionist Hannah Jacobs, whose playful hums and ticks really make the song. The Oxford contingent here includes fiddle player Lauren Spicely, cellist Martha Wiltshire and guitarist Nicolas O’Brien, but it’s very much an international effort, both personnel and source material-wise, from Macedonian love songs to Irish reels, reflective of Oxford’s always outward-looking culture as well as its enduring love affair with traditional folk sounds. **Ian Chesterton**



ZEROWE

‘Don’t Be Evil’

(Self released)
Former Balloon Ascents/Neverlnd singer Thomas Roberts’ follow-up to last year’s ‘Shade of Blue’ EP is an eight-song mini-album written, played and produced by Thomas and lyrically dealing with “A.I, robots, submarines and love,” which sounds promising. Ultimately, like his last EP, it’s a bit of a mixed bag, the best ideas, and his natural vocal talent not always able to compensate for a lack of great songs. Balancing acoustic guitar with electronic beats and often lush synthetics, Roberts keeps the mood, as is customary for him, smooth, soulful and understated, the beats for the most part restrained, arrangements sparse, vocals plaintive and only ever discreetly histrionic. He’s at his best on the likes of album closer ‘Underwater’, where he captures a sub aquatic vibe and surfaces not far from Thom Yorke’s solo material. He ups the beats on ‘Good Song’ for a woozy r’n’b vibe, while ‘Don’t Blame Me’ finds him singing “I lost my way” as he lets the tune ramble off-piste and in doing so reveals a more lysergic edge to his sound that is more interesting than some of the more polished pop on the album. ‘This Deep’, for example, reminds us too much of unappealing 80s acts like Curiosity Killed the Cat or The Blow Monkeys, with a plastic soul feel about them, while throwing the production kitchen sink at ‘Flashing Amber’ can’t hide a lack of substance. The track that perhaps stands out most from the pack is ‘Fucking Robots’, which sounds like a down in the dumps Simon & Garfunkel trapped in a haunted cartoon fairground. It’s hardly Flaming Lips’ ‘Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots’ but it’s the song that keeps its melodic wits about it the most here.

As before Thomas’ talent is evident for all to see, particularly as a singer, but you feel he needs to be working with someone else to get the best out of himself – feeding off ideas and stamping his personality on them. He’s wasted on what is sometimes little more than ambient chill-out bar music. **Dale Kattack**



EMSEATEE

‘21.06.2014’

(Modularfield Records)
The first full-length collection from recent Demo of the Month winner Emseatee, an “alternative electronic producer hailing from the sleepy shire of Oxford” according to his Bandcamp page, follows a few single-track and remix releases, and is a coherent and steady-handed selection of dreamy, introspective, marginally-head-nodding electronica pieces.

Electronic music is a hugely wide description: Emseatee sits an audiological and conceptual corner where the echoey, navel-gazing whimsy of Boards of Canada meets the 1980s-tickling earlier work of Oneohtrix Point Never. ‘21.06.2014’ also has the feel of Constellation Records artists like Godspeed You Black Emperor or Eric Chenaux: not so much in terms of instrumentation or specific sound, but with a shared sense of loss, longing and thought. The eight tracks here tend individually towards a construction that’s based around a super-repeated melody, driven and pulled through warm, sleek, gentle, analogue-synth-esque tones. While it can sometimes tend towards the twee – for example with the advertisement-friendly piano notes of ‘Processing’, or the warped non-lyrical vocal sounds of ‘415’ – ‘21.06.2014’ is largely a satisfying headphones album, entirely right for losing oneself within. It’s clear that there’s a focus at work here, which can make the whole album feel slightly repetitive; but that said, there are enough points like the off-kilter rhythms of ‘Polestar’ or the dense, textured squall of ‘Maine’, to keep it all lifted into a good place. **Simon Minter**

KANADIA

‘LX’

(Self released)
While Radiohead began life as a rock band with a stadium-friendly sound, Oxford music has generally eschewed bombast or The Big Music, at least until more recently when the likes of Leader and Kanadia – and to a different degree Zurich – have worn their sky-searching songs proudly on their sleeves. Or perhaps as badges of honour on their chests, which they’re bullishly intent on puffing out and beating with heroic intent. And why not when those acts can ramp it all up like this – Kanadia going the full U2 on the first of a series of new singles set for release ahead of their full debut album early in 2019. This is the sound of U2 as they were on those call-to-arms first three albums, all driving bass and chiming guitars, James Bettis’ rough-hewn, almost bluesy voice all eyes-scrunched-closed intensity and plaintively heroic. It’s a billowing, sky-wide belter with anthemic intent that, at three and a half minutes, only disappoints by not ramping it up even more for twice the duration. **Ian Chesterton**

SPLEENWORT

‘The Strange Death of Decency’

(Self released)
If some of the previous output of Grant Baldwin, one of Oxfordshire’s more incomparable and inventive studio composers, has had his sonorous voice centre stage, like Tony Hadley taking a stab at Scott Walker, and on occasions sounding like he’d drawn blood, then this full album under the name Spleenwort is a marvellous leap up his evolutionary creative ladder, where he parks his vocals deeper into the phasing mix, making them eminently more approachable.

The opening title track is a dreamy amniotic swim, with a disembodied female voice urging us “not to worry about it, and relax,” which then surfaces into the proactive ‘Acuya’, bringing to mind what it would be like if an antsy Ian Curtis had lived to front a rave, didgeri-drone dance band. This same vibe is revisited later in ‘Deep, Amorphous, Blind’ with increased indusrio-taiko stomp. It’s a surefooted, captivating start, with the skippy drum&bass, plus harp of ‘Gone’, complete with its scatological use of dead air coming back to sound a whole click louder, and the popstastic ‘Reigning in Reykjavik’ which clearly owes a great many of its genes to ‘When Smokey Sings’ by ABC, both showing how competent Grant has become, right down to the final six minute chill track ‘Perigrini’. ‘The Strange Death of Decency’ (the title a twist on George Dangerfield’s book *The Strange Death of Liberal England*) is the album you’d expect to be hearing over the speakers while you are sat next to the koi pond in the waiting room at the Pearly Gates: chock full of regretful tones; sinister yet friendly unreality; politically oblique lyricism; cathedral noises, and a gutsy mischief at the mixing desk, all of which, even if you are not listening to it in eternal silence, makes it rather splendid. **Paul Carrera**

LOW ISLAND

‘Holding It Down’

(Self released)
A re-release of last year’s single ahead of the band’s eleven-track vinyl compilation of all their releases so far at the end of September, ‘Holding It Down’ is the song that first grabbed the attention of myriad review sites and playlists, encapsulating the band’s airily atmospheric balance between Radiohead-style electro-glitch and Caribou’s more euphorically funky bubble and bounce; certainly Jamie Jay shares a similarly half-awake vocal style to Dan Snaith. Wild Swim’s steady drip feed of releases since the beginning of 2017, coupled with an increasingly confident live show has earned them a firm foothold on the rickety and unpredictable ladder that leads to pop glory. The forthcoming compendium gathers all that together neatly; where the next twelve months take them is in their hands: hands that have shown no sign of losing hold of the tiller so far. **Dale Kattack**



ALPHABET BACKWARDS

‘Friends, Lovers & Empty Beds’

(Self released)
It’s two years since Alphabet Backwards’ last EP release and six since the band released their debut album; in the meantime singer James Hitchman has endured serious health issues, so it’s little surprise that second album ‘Friends, Lovers & Empty Beds’ sounds like a band contemplating the trials of adult life after the youthful exuberance of their early songs. The band’s basic sound remains intact: sprightly folk-pop with a bubbly synth edge and with the vocal interaction between singers Hitchman and Steph Ward at the heart of it all, but hard realism understandably seems to have overtaken giddy idealism. The album’s title refers to what everyone goes home to at night, and there’s a hint of weariness in James’ voice on songs like ‘Settle Down’. Some of that childlike glee remains; opener ‘Elephant’ finds Hitchman singing “There’ll be butterflies turning upside down in your stomach”, while on ‘Oh Me, Oh My’, he’s making shadow puppets on the wall, and Steph forever brightens every song she touches with her sugar-sweet voice, together the pair still reminding us of Noah & The Whale’s earliest songs. ‘Fingertips’ is kinky-dink and bubbly, while ‘Television’ is near as dammit the same song but spikier. ‘Am Dram’’s soft-centred funk-pop is leavened by some cool synths, and ‘Broken Hands’ brings some jazz chops to the party. That more reflective side is more apparent on the autumnal, piano-led ‘Indian Summer’ and gentle acoustic ballad ‘Vice’, which closes the album. God only knows what they were thinking on instrumental intermission ‘Buckhouse’, which sounds like Klaus Wunderlich, or something from Radio 2’s *The Organist Entertains*. ‘Friends...’ retains enough of Alphabet Backwards’ innate pop sweetness to keep it bubbling along nicely, but harsh reality isn’t something that wholly suits a band of their nature. Where once they were trying to save the polar bears and shop in Primark and life’s complexities were easily solved with youthful spirit, now the possibility of coming home to an empty bed, or dealing with life-changing illness weighs more heavily and that’s reflected in a record that’s more contemplative and cautious than they once were. **Dale Kattack**

G I G G U I D E

WEDNESDAY 1st

DEEP COVER FREE PARTY: The Cellar – Weekly free club night through the month, playing hip hop and UK bass.

THURSDAY 2nd

PUPPY + GROVE STREET FAMILIES: The Cellar – Hook-heavy slacker metal from London’s genre-defying Puppy, out on tour

Tuesday 7th

DEAD KENNEDYS: O2 Academy

Despite myriad tours over the past decade without him, it’s difficult to consider Dead Kennedys without Jello Biafra, the band’s firebrand singer and one of America’s finest satirists of the last 40 years. But then, the band’s visits to Oxford in recent times – the last time back in 2014 – have seen the remaining core members joined by Ron ‘Skip’ Greer who has brought his own charms to play on their classic catalogue, while vocally doing a fair impression of Biafra’s distinctive sneering/whining/hectoring vocal delivery. It’s almost tragic that America’s finest punk band bar The Ramones descended into such bitter feuding, to the point where they could only communicate through lawyers, but their songs remain classics, scathing attacks on right wing Christian morality, government corruption, bigotry and war. The powers that be tried, and failed, to silence them, while taking a serious toll on the individual members of the band and those close to them, but listen to ‘California Uber Alles’; ‘Holiday in Cambodia’; ‘Chemical Warfare’; ‘Let’s Lynch the Landlord’ and ‘Kill the Poor’ and tell us you don’t feel the overwhelming urge to take to the streets, Molotov cocktail in hand, with rage and hope in your heart. Klaus Fluoride, East Bay Ray and DH Peligro might be getting on a bit now and the band have almost reached heritage status, but right now Dead Kennedys’ message is more relevant than ever, and even without Biafra, they still pack an almighty punch.



AUGUST

to promote their new album on Spinefarm Records, having made their name through Axe Hero as well as supporting Raging Speedhorn, Turbowolf and Kvelertak. They also turned up at this summer’s Download, their mix and match of influences from Metallica and Deftones to Pavement and Weezer winning fans in both the metal and indie camps. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** – Oxford’s longest running open club night showcases singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more every Thursday. **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** – Weekly open mic session. **BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford** – Open blues jam. **SPARKY’S NEW MOON: The Half Moon** – Sparky hosts an open mic session on the first and third Thursday of every month. **THE GUARDIAN + WINTER’S EDGE + SERPENTYNE + BROKEN EMPIRE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – OxRox hosts a double dose of female-fronted melodic metal acts tonight, with Belgium’s The Guardian bringing their classic 80s influences up to date alongside Chichester’s Winters Edge.

FRIDAY 3rd

ONE STATE DRIVE + YOU KNOW THE DRILL + SOMETHING SOMEDAY + SUBJECT TO CHANGE: O2 Academy – Pop punk in the vein of Blink 182, Better Than Never and A Day To Remember from local five-piece One State Drive, out on tour to promote their Chunk No Captain Chunk-produced EP. Birmingham’s similarly-inclined You Know the Drill support, alongside Witney rockers Something Someday. **K-FUNKZ with LOONEY & HAMDI: The Bullingdon** – Bassline, drum&bass and hip hop club night. **PEARL JAMM: The Jericho Tavern** – Pearl Jam tribute. **LEGOHEADS: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – 90s and Noughties indie covers, from Killers and Oasis to Arctic Monkeys and Strokes.

SATURDAY 4th

FREERANGE: The Cellar – UK garage, grime and bassline club night playing the best new underground tunes. **MUSICAL MEDICINE: The Bullingdon** – Summer house party hosted by the regular funk and disco club night. **SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: The White House** – Sparky hosts his monthly bands and jam night,

tonight with local blues-rock veterans The Mighty Redox, plus Des Barkus and Charms Against the Evil Eye. **LITTLE BROTHER ELI + NATALIE HOLMES: Magoos Bar, Henley-on-Thames** – Funked-up rock, blues and disco from the energetic local faves. **BREEZE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Rock covers.

SUNDAY 5th

UNPLUGGED SUMMER SESSIONS: The Bullingdon – Acoustic night. **OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms** – Weekly open mic session. **FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon** – Weekly open folk session.

MONDAY 6th

TUESDAY 7th

DEAD KENNEDYS: O2 Academy – Return to town for San Fran’s punk kings – *see main preview* **DIGIT4: The Cellar** – Bassline, grime and drum&bass club night.

WEDNESDAY 8th

NICHOLSON HEAL + DOM SALAD + LANGKAMER: The Library – Joint showcase from Breakfast Records and Magoos. **DEEP COVER FREE PARTY: The Cellar**

THURSDAY 9th

FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – The 397th Cropredy Festival kicks off in the north Oxfordshire village, folk-rock legends Fairport Convention’s annual gathering of the tribes once again mixing up trad folk with rock, blues and more. While Fairport themselves kick things off with their traditional acoustic set, the big draw is Beach Boys legend Brian Wilson performing the bands seminal ‘Pet Sounds’ album in its entirety. He’s joined on the day by Canterbury’s folk-rock veterans Oysterband, as well as suburban bluegrass faves Police Dog Hogan and more. **THE DOLLYMOPS + BE STILL + KID KIN + GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + DJ FUNKSOULSTU: The Jericho Tavern** – Local indie newcomers The Dollymops host a fundraiser for Oxford mental health charity MIND, their jangly indie pop drawing on classic 80s acts like Orange Juice, The Wedding Present and Mighty Mighty. They’re joined by a top drawer local cast that includes this month’s cover stars Ghosts in the Photographs; one-man post-rock army Kid Kin and Witney pop-punk

crew Be Still – *see main interview feature and Introducing piece* **LORDS OF DISCO WONDER: The Cellar** – Rock, disco, 80s and funk club night. **DESPICABLE ZEE: The Library** – Pulling Sickness host a benefit show for Young Women’s Music Project, with Zahra Tehrani’s electronics and beats project Despicable Zee and more. **CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** **BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

FRIDAY 10th

FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – The Levellers headline the second day of Fairport’s annual festival, joined by folk singer Kate Rusby, ex-Marillion man Fish, Canadian Quebecois ensemble Le Vent du Nord, and Rod Stewart tribute band Cregan & Co. **NO HOT ASHES: The Cellar** – Stockport’s funk-tinged indie rockers head off on tour to promote debut EP ‘Skint Kids Disco’ after

Wednesday 15th

OMNI: The Cellar

With so many rich and diverse seams to mine it’s no surprise that post punk continues to inspire generations of bands 40 years after its first flowering. Atlanta Georgia’s Omni sound like they’ve devoured every volume of the Post Punk Songbook, mixed and curdled every ingredient contained therein and baked a rather splendid soufflé out of them all. Amid the trio’s taught, wiry, herky-jerky new wave, with their uptight funk, robotic rhythms and simplistic guitar lines you’ll find hefty spoonfuls of Television, Devo and Wire, as well as smaller but still tasty scoops of Sparks, Roxy Music and Orange Juice. Ex Deerhunter guitarist Frankie Broyles’ chopping, chiming guitar defines Omni’s sound but singer Philip Frobos’ simultaneously world weary and playful vocals lead the line, recalling Jonathan Richman and even Elvis Costello at times as his lyrics find the alien in the mundane, not a million miles from David Byrne. Easy to think Omni are a simple hotchpotch of more cool influences than any band deserves, and to an extent they are, but what cool influences they are, and when dished out with infectiously nervous energy and sharp-elbowed melodies, which they’ve been refining since 2016’s debut album ‘Deluxe’, they’re equal to the task. Their soufflé is very much on the rise.



supports to Spring King, Blossoms, Amazons and Prides.

SATURDAY 11th

FAIRPORT’S CROPREDY CONVENTION: Cropredy – In a surprise twist, Fairport Convention headline their own annual festival for the 67th year in a row, joined by assorted friends and former members for a marathon run through their extensive catalogue, ending with the traditional mass singalong tribute to Britain’s disappearing independent butchers’ shops, ‘Meat on the Ledge’. They’re joined by Al ‘Stewpot’ Stewart, Afrocelt Sound System, Sam Kelly & the Lost Boys, Will Varley and Richard Digance. **ETHAN JOHNS: Truck Store (6pm)** – The BRIT Award-winning producer, who’s worked with The Vaccines, Kaiser Chiefs, Laura Marling, Tom Jones and Kings of Leon among many, many others, as well as playing with Ryan Adams and Rufus Wainwright, launches his new album, ‘Anamnesis’, with a tour of the UK’s best independent record stores, plying a suitably intimate form of campfire country and American folk music. **THE MANCAVE: The Bullingdon** – A night of hip hop, grime and drum&bass hosted by local barbers The Mancave, celebrating their first birthday, with Document One, Deep Cover and Sentz & Komply. **MOVE: The Cellar** – UK bass club night. **THE FOLLYS: Stanford in the Vale FC** – Reunion gig for the local band, featuring local stalwart Trev Williams. **THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Whitehouse** – Classic blues and rock covers from the veteran local singer and guitarist. **WOLFBAIT: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Rock and pop covers. **DIRTY WORK: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon** – rock’n’roll originals and covers. **THE A/WATTS: Wagon & Horses, Southmoor** – Classic 50s and 60s rock’n’roll.

SUNDAY 12th

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms **FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon** **THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (4-6.30pm)**

MONDAY 13th

OXFORD CLASSIC JAZZ: The Harcourt Arms – Classic jazz and ragtime from the local ensemble, playing Jellyroll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Fats Domino and more.

TUESDAY 14th

ARI ROAR + MY CROOKED TEETH: The Jericho Tavern – Green Man Festival warm-up for Texan singer-songwriter Ari Roar, playing songs from his new album, ‘Calm Down’, on Bella Union, taking a strumbledown, airy slacker pop trip to the top. **INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Monthly goth, industrial, death-rock and ebm club night with



Thursday 23rd

MIKE VERNON & THE MIGHTY COMBO:

The Bullingdon

After a mere 55 years in the music business and at the tender age of 73, Mike Vernon decided it was time to release his debut album. And why not. After all, he’d been the man behind more records than even he can probably remember, both as producer and record label exec, so why not step out from behind the desk and get up on stage. Vernon’s illustrious career has seen him producing records for the likes of David Bowie, Fleetwood Mac, The Bluesbreakers; Eric Clapton; Pete Green; Ten Years After; Chicken Shack and Dusty Bennett, while he’s possible even better known for starting up Blue Horizon Records, the label that spearheaded the British blues revival in the 1960s. Along the way he’s worked for Decca, Polydor and CBS and in 2013 was awarded a BASCA Gold Badge for services to music. Even after retiring at the turn of the Millennium he couldn’t keep away, leaving his Spanish home to produce albums for Oli Brown and Dani Wile, among others. Now, though, he’s up front with his own band, paying homage to 40s and 50s r’n’b, mixing up classic covers of Johnny Guitar Watson, Fats Domino and Leiber & Stoller alongside his own material. He has some form as a vocalist: he was previously a member of The Olympic Runners in the 70s and Rocky Sharpe and the Replays in the 80s, but now he’s the main man, and where better to catch such a seminal figure in blues music than The Haven Club.

residents Doktor Joy and Bookhouse keeping it dark on the decks.

WEDNESDAY 15th

OMNI: The Cellar – Uptight post-punk pop in the vein of Devo, Television and Wire from the Atlanta, Georgia rising stars – *see main preview* **ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR + IOTA: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Symphonic melodic hard rock and thrash from Philadelphia’s Illusions of Grandeur out on a European tour at tonight’s OxRox show. **DEEP COVER FREE PARTY: The Cellar**

THURSDAY 16th

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre **ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** **BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**



Friday 24th

HOOKWORMS: The Bullingdon

The first time *Nightshift* saw Hookworms live – five years ago at Supernormal – we were forced to concede that our critical faculties had deserted us. They were that good: a scouring, soul-cleansing worldstorm of psychedelia and noise rock where pensive build-ups gave way to terrifyingly intense kraut-psych drone-core spirals punctured by reverbed-to-buggery screams and eviscerating keyboards. On the evidence of their new album, ‘Microshift, the Leeds-based quintet have got even better since then. They are the undisputed leaders of the current psych-rock revival, with a sound that harks back to Spacemen 3, Loop and Six By Seven at times. We’re lucky the new album was even made given the band’s studio was destroyed in a flood and frontman Matthew Johnson has openly talked about his struggle with mental health issues, but it’s out there and a contender for album of the year, Hookworms reining in some of their old distortion in favour of a sharper melodic edge that’s made tracks like ‘Negative Space’ and ‘Ullswater’ 6Music staples, alongside a more upfront electronic edge and beats and Johnson’s voice more prominent. Lyrically his struggle to cope is laid bare, which adds more emotional depth to Hookworms than ever before and the most unwilling of frontmen should take comfort from his rich vocal talents. It’s a frankly brilliant record though live Hookworms continue to transcend their recordings. No wonder tonight’s gig is already sold out. By all that’s holy, tonight is going to be awesome. Critical faculties might once desert us.

SPARKY’S NEW MOON: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 17th

WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL: The Leys, Witney – First day of Witney’s annual free music extravaganza main event, with an evening of covers, including Noasis and ChangesTwoBowie alongside local covers act The Standard.
GROOVE: The Bullingdon – Disco, funk and house club night.
SOUL SESSIONS: The Cellar – Disco, funk, soul and house club night, tonight with Come Up Records’ George Kerr alongside local regulars Oli Richardson and DJ Voytech.

SATURDAY 18th

THE NUDE PARTY: O2 Academy – 60s garage rock, psychedelia and country rocking from North Carolina sextet The Nude Party, inspired by The Kinks, The Velvet Underground and Jonathan Richman and over in the UK to promote their self-titled debut album, produced by Black Lips’ Oakley Munson.
WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL: The Leys, Witney – 90s hitmakers The Farm bring their groovy train to Witney’s annual music festival and are joined on the Leys by former Specials toaster Neville Staple and his band, plus local anthemic rockers Leader; melodic thrash crew Twisted State of Mind; folk rockers La Phooka; New Orleans-style street jazz ensemble Horns of Plenty; chirpy indie starlets Quartermelon and more.
AURALCANDY: The Harcourt Arms – Eclectic, self-described ramshackle pop from the local outfit.
DNA: The Bullingdon – R’n’b, garage, Afrobeat and hip hop club night.
MASP & FRIENDS: The Cellar – Bassline, drum&bass and house club night.
ELDER STUBBS FESTIVAL: Elder Stubbs Allotments (midday-6pm) – The annual community festival in aid of RESTORE returns with sets from Steamroller and Trev Williams among others. This year’s event has a rainforest theme.
WOODSTOCK ACOUSTIC CLUB: Woodstock Social Club – Unplugged session with sets from LA singer-songwriter Anny Celsi; Brian Wilson’s percussionist Nelson Bragg, and Ireland’s Duncan Maitland.
THE A/WATTS: Brewery Tap, Abingdon

SUNDAY 19th

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
TOM IVEY: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm) – Funky electric and acoustic blues.

MONDAY 20th

TUESDAY 21st

DEEP COVER FREE PARTY: The Cellar
CHERYM + JEFF: The Library

WEDNESDAY 22nd

LIMPET SPACE RACE: Tap Social, Botley – EP launch gig for the Upcycled Sounds signings, mixing folk, jazz and pop with glitchy rhythms on their new record; tonight’s gig is a collaborative installation with videographer Siobhán Cox.

THURSDAY 23rd

GOMEZ: O2 Academy – Southport’s bluesy indie rockers celebrate the 20th anniversary of their Mercury Prize-winning debut ‘Bring It On’, reprising 90s hits ‘Whippin’ Piccadilly’, ‘Get Myself Arrested’ and ‘78 Stone Wobble’, as well as songs from across their career.

MIKE VERNON & THE MIGHTY COMBO: The Bullingdon – The legendary face behind Blue Horizon Records steps out from behind the mixing desk and into the spotlight – *see main preview*
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with JUNIPER NIGHTS + THRUST + GOOD CANARY: The Library – While The Wheatsheaf is closed for building work, GTI moves its monthly club night up to The Library, as ever providing a mixed bag of sounds, with local indie rockers Juniper Nights mixing influences of Radiohead, Alt.j and Elbow into their alternately sombre and grungy rock. They’re joined by Thrust, the new project from veteran cult psych-pop hero Anton Barbeau along with Charms Against the Evil Eye, together fusing classic Brit-psych influences like Julian Cope, The Bevis Frond and Robyn

Friday 24th

THE MENSTRUAL CRAMPS / KISS ME, KILLER / DEATH OF THE MAIDEN:

The Jericho Tavern

“Oh bondage, up yours!” hollered Poly Styrene, and with a name that falls into the lineage of great fem-punk bands over the years – Period Pains, Toxic Shock Syndrome, Tampasm – The Menstrual Cramps are a band who aren’t going to play like nice little girls: seen and not heard. Militant and witty and full-on DIY, the band, from London via Bristol, have plenty of targets in their sight – from environmental issues (‘Frack Off’), to sexism (‘This Isn’t What You Expected’) to body taboos (‘Let My Bush Be Free’) – on splendidly-titled debut album ‘We’re Not Ovaryacting’. Their ire is righteous but tracks like ‘I Like That Top’ are infused with deadpan, cynical humour as much as rage and their lo-fi punk scramble can be playful as well as splenetic – one part Fuzzbox to three parts Bikini Kill. A proper punk racket it is though, and if you don’t like that then, in The Menstrual Cramps’ own words: fuck you. Support at tonight’s show, part of All Tamara’s Parties’ No Tolerance series of gigs showcasing the best underground female talent, comes from Bristol’s garage rockers Kiss Me Killer, mixing up riot grrl noise with 60s psychedelia and garage rock, classic punk and old-school metal, plus bleakly emotive baroque rockers Death of the Maiden.



Hitchcock with Krautrock. There’s also gallows humour piano pop from Good Canary, in the vein of Tori Amos, Regina Spector and PJ Harvey.
LORDS OF DISCO WONDER: The Cellar
APOSTILE: The Library – One-man bedroom synth-pop from Apostile at tonight’s Smash Disco free show.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 24th

HOOKWORMS: The Bullingdon – Leeds’ motorik noise-drone heroes lead the psych charge – *see main preview*
THE MENSTRUAL CRAMPS + KISS ME, KILLER + DEATH OF THE MAIDEN: The Jericho Tavern – Feminist agit-pop from the London/Bristol punkers at tonight’s All Tamara’s Parties – *see main preview*
JULIA MEIJER + WATER PAGEANT: Modern Art Oxford – A return to action for two Oxford starlets tonight as Swedish ex-pat Julia Meijer launches her new single, ‘Fall Into Place’, her solemn folk-pop recalling Kristin Hersh and His Name is Alive, while atmospheric electronic folk-pop duo Water Pageant draw on The Low Anthem; Bon Iver and Beach House.
RASCAL presents CONTRAST: The Bullingdon – Eclectic mix of techno, house, electro and drum&bass from Rascal.
TOTAL LIFE FOREVER: The Cellar – Indie club night.
THE BIG FESTIVAL: Alex James’ Farm, Shitsville – Cheese.

SATURDAY 25th

VOLUME DNB #12: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night with Nicky Blackmarket, Didz, Snowy, Darksparkle and Jaydee.
PITCH BLACK BANK HOLIDAY TECHNO PARTY: The Cellar – Techno from start to finish into the bank holiday with Stav, JGP and John Swede.
RESTORE BENEFIT: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (midday-11pm) – All-day benefit gig for local mental health charity Restore, with sets from Alphabet Backwards; Flatlands; Adam Matthews; Dan Rawle; Very Long; Managh; Jack Lester, and Andy Robbins.
F.U.D: The Prince of Wales, Shippon – Classic rock covers.

SUNDAY 26th

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3-7pm) – Open jam session.
THE BITE: The Prince of Wales, Shippon – Classic rock covers.

MONDAY 27th

TUESDAY 28th

WEDNESDAY 29th

EPIC BEARD MEN: The Bullingdon – Indie rap from Sage Francis and B Dolan out on a joint tour.
GALICIAN SESSION: James Street Tavern – Traditional music from northern Spain.
DEEP COVER FREE PARTY: The Cellar

THURSDAY 30th

PANDAPOPALYPSE + MOOGIEMAN & THE MASOCHISTS + OCEAN RUINS + SEASONS IN SHORTHAND + CIPHERS: The Library – All Will Be Well Records night, featuring a live debut from Balkan Wanderers offshoot Pandapocalypse, taking a more electro-pop direction. They’re joined by idiosyncratic pop storytellers and historical obscurists crew Moogiemán and more.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 31st

JAKE CLEMONS: O2 Academy – E Street Band saxophonist, multi-instrumentalist and bandleader Jake Clemons – nephew of the late, great Clarence – leads his own band on a European tour to promote his solo album ‘Fear & Love’.
BREAK STUFF: The Bullingdon – Nu metal retro club night.
RUBIX & FRIENDS: The Cellar – House, tech-house, drum&bass and jungle club night.
DRIVIN’ SIDEWAYS: The Prince of Wales, Shippon – Harmonica-led rocking blues.



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CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Great Tew Country Park

So, in the end, football didn’t come home, but at least England’s heartbreaking World Cup defeat to Croatia saved Cornbury Festival the hassle of erecting giant screens to show the final. The possibility of such a thing happening had vexed the Cornbury Facebook page for the week leading up to the event with one particularly uptight poster terrified that people watching the game half a mile away on the other side of the site might ruin her enjoyment of Deacon Blue, when really, Deacon Blue are more than capable of doing that by themselves.

Something that was, if not coming home, was coming to Oxford was bellicose braggart Donald Trump whose billion-dollar dinner party at Blenheim meant anyone heading to Cornbury on Thursday evening was delayed by security overkill chaos, which probably swelled donations to Momentum from upright members of Middle England no end.

Once they’d finally made it to Great Tew, Cornbury goers enjoyed three days of the sort of unrelenting heat that climate change will make the norm once Trump has overturned every piece of legislation designed to halt it.

To borrow another World Cup cliché, they thought it was all over. Last year’s Cornbury was meant to be its fabulous farewell, but a triumphant, sold-out weekend persuaded genial organiser Hugh Phillimore to keep it going and if this year’s line-up sometimes makes previous years look like a dangerous day out at Desertfest (and the weather’s made the normally verdant Great Tew Park look very much like a desert), there are enough treats to tempt even *Nightshift*-level cynics out of the shady corners of the site, with a couple of genuine star turns along the way.

The first of these is **THE EPSTEIN**, no strangers to local gig goers and whose yearning, wide-skied folk-rock is pretty much perfect for this weather and setting, particularly when they finish with ‘I Held You Once’ and ‘Leave a Light On’, the two finest moments from their extensive career. Another regular on the local circuit is Ant Kelly, usually found leading The Shapes but here this weekend with his other project, **THE FACTORY LIGHTS**, a more considered, sometimes melancholy prospect, all introspection and nostalgia, touching on Steve Harley but with the added accordion, leaning casually into French café folk. As if on cue we get a smattering, nay, a slight spit, of rain. For once at a festival, the prospect of a deluge seems quite appealing.

Instead, the sun returns and fully in keeping with the weather are **THE TWO TONE ALL SKAS**, who appear to have their own Cornbury residence these days. Fully deserved as they unflinching get the crowd moving; not only have they completely mastered the Two Tone sound, they’ve also got the most convincing Buster Bloodvessel upfront we’ve ever seen (and there’s a fair few larger, balder gentleman around this weekend who could throw their hats in the ring – if they had the energy). Naturally, it’s the perfect set to get the weekend properly off on a party footing: feel good tunes, tight ska rhythms, and just to put the icing on the cake, someone decides to propose during their set. Clearly the heat got to them.

Cover versions are all well and good, but sometimes you need the real deal and **JIMMY CLIFF** is most certainly a true original. He takes to the stage dressed like a South American dictator and leads the audience through a hypnotic rendition of ‘Bongo Man’. It’s a strange start, but from there, it’s hit after hit with ‘Wonderful World’, ‘Beautiful People’, ‘The Harder They Come’ and ‘You Can Get It If You Really Want’ all getting an airing. There have been a few classic sets at Cornbury over the years, and Jimmy Cliff might just be the most inspired booking they’ve ever made.

From sun-kissed ska to introspective Americana might be something of a leap, but **THE AUGUST LIST** make the transition feel perfectly natural. After singing their praises so often, it’s hard to find new superlatives to do them justice. They’ve honed their craft so perfectly that their songs are as at home here in a slowly simmering field as they are being illuminated by a neon light in a flea pit bar. Kerraleigh Child’s vocals absolutely soar today, and we’re once again reminded of why they’re one of the most emotionally affecting bands that Oxford has ever produced.

We’re not sure who booked **GLENN MATLOCK** but they obviously didn’t make things clear to the punk legend, who’s due to play on the Jack FM stage but – apparently – turns up, takes one look at the tiny tent and flounces back out again. Punk attitude or grumpy old man syndrome? The same thing will happen again later in the weekend when we turn up to see **MARCELLA DETROIT** only to find she too isn’t playing. At least that time we all get given a free Jack FM baseball cap by way of scant compensation.



Talking of compensation, we’ve often considered hiring a lawyer to sue for the psychological damage long-term exposure to **UB40**’s version of ‘Red Red Wine’ has inflicted on us. The very idea of their set fills us with dread; sadly not the right kind of dread. For a band that encapsulated the grim state of a nation on their album ‘Signing Off’, they somehow became one of the most appallingly bland bands of all time. Tonight’s set is a stark reminder of how a politically charged band can, if they’re not careful, end up becoming the musical equivalent of a pair of slippers. We take the opening notes of ‘Red Red Wine’ as a serving suggestion and head to the campsite and drink enough to blot it all out.

For Saturday, Cornbury has taken the admirable route of booking an entirely female line-up, making what’s considered one of the safest festivals around one of the most radical and pioneering. The day features two bona fide r’n’b legends in **PP ARNOLD** and **MAVIS STAPLES**. Arnold has the tunes and the vocal chops for sure, from ‘The First Cut is the Deepest’, through the gorgeous ‘Angel of

the Morning’, to ‘River Deep, Mountain High’, and the former Milton-under-Wychwood resident certainly has the stories – hanging out with everyone from Jagger and Richards to Rod Stewart and The Faces – but these end up eating into her set and become increasingly self-aggrandising as she gets into the spirit of things. We’re not sure ‘You Can’t Always Get What You Want’ was actually written for her, however much she’d like to think so.

Lovely as her rich voice is, it’s a mere foothill to the mountain that is Mavis Staples’ – rich, raw and full of phlegm. It’s a filthy voice and with a range that’s almost Himalayan. We get Staples Sisters classics, like ‘Respect Yourself’ and ‘I’ll Take You There’, alongside unexpected covers; Talking Heads’ ‘Slippery People’ takes the original’s buttoned-down funk and takes it to church. Sets like this make listening to music a privilege. Eighty years old, Mavis Staples is a living legend in a way every other performer this weekend can only dream of being.

Today is also a reminder that female performers can be every bit as dull, worthy and indulgent as their male



counterparts, none more so than the interminably tedious **GRAINNE DUFFY**, whose soft-centred blues-rock makes Bonnie Raitt sound like Sister Rosetta Tharpe, or **THE ADELAIDES**, a sort of Dixie Chicks second eleven whose sugary, overly-polished country and choreographed moves make songs about being “a good girl gone bad” sound even more unconvincing.

ALANIS MORISSETTE’s headline set is an odd one. She hits the stage like a whirlwind, prompting complaints from a group near us that she’s moving around too much; perhaps they’d have preferred her to have delivered her set from a camp chair whilst cramming down a late lunch from The Hairy Bikers’ banquet tent. We’re not sure if it’s the sun or something more liquid, but she doesn’t seem quite... connected. To reality. Still, she bangs out the hits from ‘Jagged Little Pill’ and if she’s not the most memorable Cornbury headliner ever, she’s effervescent enough to win through on points. The day does, though, provide us with the best new discovery of the weekend in the form of **KOLARS**, a duo fronted by Rob Kolar, who happens to be the grandson of *Jaws*

star Robert Shaw, and the maniacally brilliant Lauren Brown, who tap dances on her kick drum while battering out a wild tattoo that drives the pair’s all-energy rock’n’roll show. They’re funny too and we can only hope they turn up in town again soon.

Come Sunday morning the heat has become so unrelenting and oppressive we’re forced to sit in the shade outside the Café Nero stage and stare lazily into the middle distance as a lounge-style jazz crooner serenades us with songs about coffee. He’s followed by an interchangeable cast of acoustic acts, none of whom appear to have a coffee bean of personality between them. We lump them all together as The Flat White Family and expect to see them pooping in on *Latte.. With Jools Holland* in the near future. We simply don’t have the energy to kill them or run away right now.

Surprise star turn of the weekend is **ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW**. Too often veteran performers whose commercial high was several decades previous tend to phone in their performance or indulge themselves with a set of extended blues workouts. We get one of those



early on but for the most part Andy is here to enjoy himself, knocking out his old hits – ‘Wide Eyed & Legless’ and Amen Corner classic ‘Bend Me, Shape Me’ among them – as well as some serious New Orleans-style ragtime and lively takes on ‘Tequila’, ‘Peter Gunn Theme’ and even ‘Apache’. What might have been heavy going or worthy is great fun, and as an added bonus, when he talks between songs, he sounds a bit like Frank Sidebottom.

Highlight of the entire festival comes in local form. 90s goth-pop band **WONDERLAND** split 20 years ago but here on the Riverside stage they roll back the years, Leigh’s voice still a crystalline thing of absolute wonder, the band’s spangle reminiscent of The Sundays at times while their darker moments are closer to Skeletal Family. The heavier, driving ‘Crushed’ is astonishing, the absolute zenith of this year’s Cornbury, and for half an hour we’re happy to be the children of the sun. Guitarist Martin Newton, renowned as Oxford’s grumpiest sound engineer (against stiff competition) even cracks a beatific smile on stage. It’s one of those truly magical moments. Wonderland: just

wonderful, and a much-needed shard of ice in the sweltering heat.

With Jools Holland apparently on a Cornbury sabbatical, it’s up to his ex-cohorts **SQUEEZE** to keep everyone on their toes. Occasionally over-indulgent, but with a set crammed with hits like ‘Cool For Cats’, ‘Pulling Mussels From A Shell’ and ‘Up The Junction’ they more than match Jools for feel good hits, but when they add a soprano vocalist into the mix, they take things to a level he could only dream of.

So, unlike the football Cornbury Festival came home, and from the official pronouncements we’ve heard, it’s coming home again in 2019. While it will always have its detractors, it’s a festival that has an identity so few these days still possess. We’d love to see a few more maverick acts next year; some of our favourite Cornbury memories have come from the likes of Raghu Dixit, Fisherman’s Friend; Half Man Half Biscuit and Katzenjammer. Oh, and a bit of cloud cover too if you don’t mind. Cheers.

Dale Kattack, Sam Shepherd

photos: Sam Shepherd



LIVE

THE KIEFER SUTHERLAND BAND

O2 Academy

Received wisdom has it that actors make lousy musicians; the bloated, indulgent vanity projects of Bruce Willis, Russell Crowe and Kevin Bacon outnumber rare, unexpected turns by Scarlett Johansson and a scant handful of others several to one. There’s no doubting Kiefer Sutherland is a superb actor but can he cut it as a grizzled country rocker? He grew up on a ranch and was an adept rodeo rider early in life, so he has the roots at least. His sturdy backing band launch into a bombastic intro and then there he is onstage: David Powers, Nelson Wright, Dr Daniel P Schreiber. Oh yeah, and Jack Bauer. The room goes mental. He’s dressed in leopard print jacket and wide brimmed hat, holding a glass of whisky aloft as he invites the crowd to drink along with him, and possessed

of a suitably grizzled and smoky baritone that suggest he’s a few drinking tales to tell. Right from the off it’s obvious Sutherland has some neat songs under his belt, not least the slide-heavy ‘Reckless’, which is either about himself or his old rodeo horse, and with a tendency toward the epic that touches on U2 at times. The likes of ‘Open Road’ don’t stray too far from Steve Earle territory, though Johnny Cash-like rockabilly drinking song ‘This Is How It’s Done’ ups the ante and reveals another side to his songwriting. Between songs he’s funny, self-deprecating and genuinely seems chuffed to be up onstage sharing his songs with fans, many of whom are doubtless less than au fait with country rock’s long and winding history. He covers Patty

KARMA TO BURN

The Cellar

Certain music demands certain meteorological conditions. Something about Sigur Rós demands a brumal, icy solemnity, while the music of a band like Hood grows in power when rain is beating down on the windows outside. So it is with Karma To Burn, whose whisky-soaked double-barrel instrumentals are perfectly matched to a sudoriferous, evilly-hot evening in The Cellar at the beginning of what turns out to be a month-long heatwave. Having recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of their formation, it’s little surprise that the band have worked their way through an almost Spíial Tap-esque number of bassists and drummers, some of whom may well have spontaneously combusted in the heat of a West Virginian summer. This time around, they’re bolstered by bassist Eric Clutter, who adds some delicate melodic augmentation alongside his bottom-end pulse, but there has to be a special word for Evan Devine, a Tasmanian Devil of a drummer who attacks every snare hit and cymbal crash with the unbridled joy of a puppy experiencing its first snow. Of course, the focal point of the band has always been guitarist William Mecum, whom the Victorians might have patented as some sort of perpetual motion machine, if only his seemingly limitless ability to produce blinding stoner riffs could have somehow been harnessed as kinetic energy. The result is an hour-long set of startlingly high-quality, paint-stripping riffs; the likes of Mastodon would have pulled teeth for the lock-tight central groove of set closer ‘Twenty’. The next day we hear the news that The Cellar may once again be under threat of closure; incandescent shows like this one prove once again that it is at the very heart of local live music, and that we must fight for it. *Stuart Fowkes*

Loveless’ ‘Blame It On Your Heart’, tells a story about meeting Merle Haggard before he runs through ‘The Bottle Let Me Down’, and draws the biggest laugh of the night when he reveals the first love song he ever wrote was to the bar on the corner of his street. There is some slightly turgid, run-of-the-mill country rock along the way, and his cover of ‘Knocking on Heaven’s Door’ is only one notch up from the busker on Cornmarket, but few here are too bothered; they’re revelling in being in the presence of a genuine A-Lister, and when it’s all over Kiefer’s down among them, shaking hands, posing for endless selfies and chatting amiably, like a down-home bar singer who’s just lucked upon his first taste of stardom. And while most Hollywood stars’ musical careers tick down quicker than a timer bomb on 24, Sutherland looks like he’s in it for the duration. Like the whisky, it’s in his blood. *Dale Kattack*

RALPH McTELL & WIZZ JONES

The North Wall

Ralph McTell, if known at all, is known to most for just one song: ‘Streets of London’, recorded in 1969, covered by over 200 artists and unfortunately still relevant right now. But at tonight’s gig with long-time mate Wizz Jones, he doesn’t play it; this show is all about songs the pair loved first back then and continue to love, plus others that have found a place with them along the way. As McTell tells us: “our roots are showing.” What is also showing in their relaxed interaction is their close relationship. Jones encouraged the young McTell to join him in Cornwall where Ralph says he “washed dishes in hotels and busked” and played Cornish folk clubs. Also, possibly it is where Jones “made” Ralph McTell, suggesting he change his name from Ralph May, for as McTell has said previously, “Most of my heroes were black, American, blind and dead country blues artists, like Blind Boy Fuller, Blind Willie McTell and the not blind Robert Johnson.” Appropriate, then, that finger picking blues, lovingly performed on their acoustic guitars, features large tonight. The pair are among those who introduced this American music over here and tonight play numbers by Blind Boy Fuller, Doc Watson and one of Robert Johnson’s lesser known songs, ‘When You’ve Got a Good Friend’. Additionally McTell performs his own tribute to Johnson, introducing it with

the story of once being given a Robert Johnson record in lieu of a fee for a gig. The duo feature the king of early American folk music, Woody Guthrie, too, perhaps because while being one of their roots, the songs still are very much of now: ‘Philadelphia Lawyer’ is about the establishment’s sharp dealing; ‘Do Re Mi’ is about lack of workers’ rights. We also get the Hank Williams classic, the tearful ‘I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry’, but Wizz Jones in particular comes up with some hidden contemporary gems in a couple of songs by Alan Tunbridge, and they play the wonderful ‘Touch Has a Memory’ by the unjustly neglected duo Pete Atkin & Clive James (yes, *that* Clive James). With McTell’s baritone and Jones’s tenor voices creating seductive harmonies, and them giving a masterclass in acoustic guitar, the occasional slip adds rather than detracts to the enjoyment. Though the set list is weighted towards the melancholy and the dark side, probably the song that best captures the evening’s vibe is their bouncy version of The Incredible String Band’s ‘How Happy I Am’. For McTell and Jones, the spell music cast on them in the 1960s is as strong as ever, and on this showing we hope it will continue to beguile them, and so allow them to beguile us, for a long time to come. *Colin May*

GREEN HANDS / SEEDS OF DOUBT / RODENTS / JEFF

The Library

Jeff are a new duo making an unhoneed punk clatter, a clarion for anyone who’s ever wanted to stick on a *Buffy* T-shirt and sing a noisy song about “not wanting to grow up”. Are they any good? Not really. Does it matter? Not a jot. Rodents pull off the trick of sounding taut and honed, whilst being as loose as twenty year old Y-fronts. They sometimes sound as though someone’s melting Tom Tom Club under a magnifying glass, and sometimes like a bunch of woozy, late September wasps doing the Blue Orchids on *Stars In Their Eyes*. There are moments of fizzing, Gedge-a-tronic guitar, but the high point in a set of pleasures comes with a slow, rubbery groove, as if Fat White Family had swapped all the sleaze for jobs at an owl sanctuary. Their vocalist exchanges his laconic, Country Teasers sneer to take the drum stool for Seeds Of Doubt. Their name sounds like the most disappointing *Dr Who* story of the 1970s, and lyrically they tend to paddle in the shallows of the underachiever, telling drab stories of

someone living on Hula Hoops, for whom the cafés at Harrods and Sainsbury’s are equally out of his social reach. The music is all mid-paced chiming guitar and mumbled vocals, a desiccated R.E.M. swapping southern gothic flourishes for a prosaic drift of gold-buyers’ leaflets at a bus stop. It’s good, but better appreciated on record, rather than in a sweat-drenched cellar. It’s nearly 11 when Green Hands go onstage, and we’ve lost about a quart of sweat. What we need now is something uplifting and energy-spiked; what we don’t need is something that moves from a slow, late-70s Dylan groove to the clunky horn-rimmed pop of a slipshod Lloyd Cole. There’s lots to like in their set, from a Neil Young spaciousness to melodically mournful vocal, but we’re not convinced. Then again, when people with such varied T-shirts as The Doors, Sleater-Kinney and Belgian techno pioneers R&S Records – not to mention our *Buffy*-clad friend – are clearly loving it, does it matter? Not a jot, we expect. *David Murphy*

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TANDEM FESTIVAL

Lower Farm, Ramsden

Tandem: a joining, a unit, a meld. Lower Farm in Ramsden is the host to this super-inclusive festival, now in its forth year. It's grown steadily: from a clan in the grasses of Hill End to almost 800 among this year's barns. In the grips of a heatwave, volunteers in orange waistcoats drip sweat on their walkie-talkies and groups collect in shady spots; everyone is welcomed and then, in turn, welcoming to this pocket of pastoral Eden three miles north of Witney.

Our first hour at the festival is spent wearing a VR headset provided by Greenpeace and dancing in a circle around a bowl of sacred water. From here the festival doesn't cease in its eclecticism. Given their eco-consciousness, it makes sense the Tandem organisers utilise what they have instead of making anew: out-of-use water silos are home to a workshop on the native Scanadanavian jioke; an old wooden door becomes the worktop for a masterclass on body scrub making.

And then there's the music. The Stone Barn hosts performances that benefit from an intimate, echoing atmosphere: a *capella* ensemble **RIVERS** and duo **PETER & KERRY** are a great fit for this space. The eleven-person Rivers harmonise a touching cover of London Grammar and their Whitney prompts a boogie.

Peter & Kerry meld electric with acoustic to create a richness of tone. They also render a memorable cover of Womack & Womack's 'Teardrops'.

The main barn – or Tandem Social – is where the majority of workshops are held and is home to acts with a more interactive approach. A passionate melody paired with sitar and subtle tabla makes the **KALATVA COLLECTIVE** mesmerising to watch. Here, the musicians ask questions and the singer/dancer answers. The next day, the collective host an Indian dance workshop, spreading the rhythm to many fresh pairs of feet.

Speaking of movement, one of the most original moments of the festival is the **DABKE LEVANTINE** dancing workshop, part of Saturday's main stage line up. Amongst book pages strewn between string, a couple mark out the steps to an Arab folk dance. It's native to the Levant Iranian sitar and is quite beautiful. It seems this festival is all about new forms of expression. We learn how to "call out with kindness" in response to pressure and prejudice, and laughter yoga might just be the new best way to start the day.

At the clearing for the Woodland Stage, love is in the air. **THE BOOKSHOP BAND** – couple Beth and Ben from Scotland's Wigtown

(town of books) – sing songs inspired by the seminal literature of our time. They evoke not just the sentiments but the atmosphere of novels such as Philip Pullman's *Book of Dust* and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. The next day, **ROSIE CALDECOTT**, who's been "living with her head between the pages of my diary" softens the gaze of dwellers atop the tree stump stools. She swells from one note to another, gradually building a soundscape so words like "thrill" and delicate "ooos" pleat on top of one another. Following her is the talented **ZANDER SHARP**, who's settling into the outdoors, electric guitar between his hands, naming songs as he plays them. He hasn't been with his band for long – this is all breaking new ground, as he puts it. Both acts record with eco-label Upcycled Sounds, who host the stage.

Late Saturday night, when the forest is lit with topsy-turvy lampshades, we see live in action one of the partnerships that is central to the festival. **LIMPET SPACE RACE** are jazz-folk-experimentalists: Hannah Jacob's demure voice to Niko O'Brien's rhythm. Like the festival itself, it's obvious this music comes from from the heart. The festival co-directors tell us they're about to go on a European tour without having released any records, then relax further into the moment.

This is the prevailing message of Tandem: a trusting in the union so the moment can deliver... and doing this sometimes requires a less contemporary mode of being. Someone who conveys this is Orkney-born **MELVYN DRIVER**, who sings about the natural environment, both its beauty and its destruction, and celebrates a culture long before his own. Melvyn is the workshop lead in teaching us how to joike. One would joike for people, but also for the elements, to celebrate the wind and summon the rains.

THE LASSES' harmonious folk also unfolds in a pattern close to the Celtic mould. There's an Americana-vibe to their songs too, which sit comfortably without accompaniment.

Tandem is a real cross-cultural celebration, where a new sound/instrument/language is brought to the stage every set. **RAKA**, who headline on Saturday night, are a nine-piece and take their name from a Bulgarian dance. The troupe – which features an accordion, violins, clarinet and tuba – burst with traditional Balkan blare that sends everyone spinning. It's during the scheduled midnight stargazing, however, that the group earn their title as the essential act of the weekend. There's nothing quite like feeling the warmth of fire on your cheek and hearing the merry wafting of a violin in your ear. All in tandem. *Eva Hibbs*

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SUTARI / DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA

Holywell Music Room

To say Dead Rat Orchestra are a three-piece folk band doesn't give you the whole picture. The trio constantly morph and reform as their set progresses. Every instrument takes on rhythm, melody and harmony roles and pretty much anything you can imagine can be an instrument. Tonight we see cleavers, whistles and speakers on strings spun at high velocity, and a 1950s children's hurdy gurdy, along with some more conventional objects

like violin and pump organ. They are definitely a folk band, but often you could mistake them for an acoustic post-rock act, such is their wide-angle scope and slow evolving composition style. Drones evolve into tales of canal builders which in turn shift into minimalist a capella arrangements. Towards the end of the set Dead Rat Orchestra are joined on 'Dods Banjo' by Sutari, who it turns out have been sat in the audience the whole time. The band move around

the room so we have six musicians spaced around the venue, which plays perfectly with the Holywell to make an astoundingly beautiful and immersive experience. After this introduction Sutari appear to be the perfect foil to DRO. Sutari are three women from Poland who have taken a similar approach to reinterpreting folk music, but in this case their native traditions, plus a few from Lithuania. They play primarily traditional stringed instruments but the arrangements

still explore experimentation at every turn and the close harmony vocals morph and interweave until you can't separate who is singing what; it is entrancing. The stories in the majority of Sutari's songs generally concern strong women and their relationships to lovers, with a wry tongue-in-cheek humour; you can't help but think of 'Matty Groves' and the like from British tradition. But these stories, passed down through generations, are from the perspective of women as the foundation of the community, as strong feminists who don't need to justify themselves to men just because they work in a kitchen. To hammer this idea home one song has an electric whisk used as a rhythm instrument: a pretty clear and inventive re-appropriation of gender roles for creative means if ever we saw one. Both acts tonight are phenomenally talented avant garde folk groups who have both taken the traditional music of their countries and done something new with it. Whether it is household objects as instruments, or ten-minute vocal arrangements of aphorisms passed down from mother-to-child, the results are endlessly fascinating and beautiful. *Matt Chapman Jones*

TREMBLING BELLS

The Cellar

Trembling Bells are no strangers to Oxford, previously declaring it to be "one of the eternal cities of the world" and even writing a song called 'Bells of Burford', though they've been on quite a journey since signing a record deal in 2009. That year's 'Carbeth' album could have arrived straight out of 1973, with its Fairport Convention and Maddy Prior influences worn proudly on its flared velvet sleeve. Each subsequent release has seen them move ever further from that reference point, with elements like 'Trout Mask Replica'-era Captain Beefheart coming into play. Latest release 'Dungeness' sees them move deeper into medieval indie territory, with continued lyrical obsessions with death, Christ, and ancient England. Check out the sleeve: it almost tells you all you need to know. Yet tonight's gig takes those songs and delivers them in full-on prog mode, coming across more like classic 70s Hawkwind or King Crimson, along with some echoes of Jane Weaver. Lavinia Blackwall's voice is the constant

and instantly recognisable force that drives the band, having formed the band with singing drummer Alex Neilson in Scotland a decade ago. Refreshingly untouched by current musical trends, they are truly timeless, almost existing outside time altogether. "To begin and never cease" runs the mantra from 'Christ's Entry Into Govan', as classic a Trembling Bells song title as you'll get and typically abandons the verse-chorus-middle eight format for something that more recalls the soundtrack for a midwinter medieval banquet. The band themselves are unremarkable to look out apart from the lead guitarist, who comes over as a court jester, hopping around with his long hair sticking out from under a French Resistance-style beret. New song 'I Am The King' is pure pomp but without the puffed-up self-indulgence that the first wave of prog bands brought in their wake. It's refreshing to find a band who so neatly blend the old and new to create something that is beyond either. *Art Lagun*

BIKINI DEATH RACE / THE OTHER DRAMAS / JACK LITTLE

The Bell, Bicester

Troubadour Jack Little warms up the crowd, performing his brand of folk with a humorous twist. A natural on stage, there's plenty of chat and laughter with songs like 'Tunnel Vision' and 'Zombies' flowing from his guitar with ease. Recent Nightshift cover stars The Other Dramas up the ante, flying through a six-song set with an abundance of sweet melodies, a barrage of grungy riffs and earworms aplenty. New single 'The Future is a Holiday' comes on all Wolf Alice, drifting on a sea of bliss with Richie Wildsmith's no nonsense drumming underpinning Maria Ilett's jagged guitar licks and honey-dipped vocals. It's no surprise they leave 'Money' til the end; it's beast of a song with razor sharp claws and a killer riff recalling grunge's heyday. If The Other Dramas aren't gracing bigger stages this time next year then I'll eat my threadbare plaid gigging shirt. Over from Rome for a mini tour of the UK, Bikini Death Race are resplendent in red apparel and cat and panda face masks. It's a basic

setup: Cat on vocals; Panda on bass and vocals, with beats supplied by a laptop. Minimalistic yet full in sound, the electroclash duo storm through debut album 'Party Animals' with metaphorical studded glow sticks aloft. Lyrically, conventional themes are cast aside to be replaced by comedies of the absurd. Visually compelling, Cat bounces around screaming into her mic and Panda adopts a wide stance, while treating his bass like a weapon. The euphoric blast of 'Oh Ooh' has the chutzpah to transform the most static bystander into a shape-throwing exhibitionist. Every dance/punk banger is torn through with a sense of fervour, topped off by a killer chorus and hooks aplenty, only emphasized by an enthused crowd clamouring for more and the party eventually ends with beaming smiles from our bemasked duo and the sight of Panda holding aloft an aubergine. Much like Bikini Death Race themselves, such a fruity parting gesture is as off-the-wall as it is genius. *Gary Davidson*

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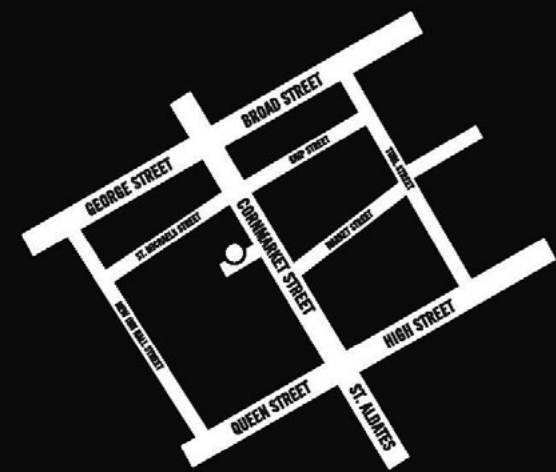
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INTRODUCING....

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

The Dollymops

Who are they?

The Dollymops are four-piece indie band from around Oxford who have been together for six months. The band – Sean Stevens (*vocals*); Tom Hadfield (*guitar / vocals*); Jacob Appleton (*bass*), and Simon Calver (*drums*) – formed via an online ad and have been gigging locally and in London, including outside Marks & Spencer's. Last month they released their debut EP 'Fields of Wheat'.

What do they sound like?

In many way, indie like it used to be made, before Oasis et al spoiled everything. While they quote The Libertines, Strokes and Courteeners as influences the spirit of early-80s Postcard Records infuses their EP as well as the NME's legendary C86 compilation – all chiming, splangling guitars and a charmingly shambling but propulsive approach to guitar pop.

What inspires them?

"Artists that evoke a sense of place and context: from 60s bands like The Kinks and The Velvet Underground, to 70s punk like The Clash and The Fall and stuff we grew up with like The Streets and Arctic Monkeys. The themes of the songs range from the usual stuff like love, death and a hatred for their jobs, and more specific grievances like that knuckle-dragging skinhead you encountered in the pub, or hypocritical class warrior on your Facebook feed."

Highlight of their career so far:

"Releasing 'Fields of Wheat' and all the positive feedback we've received from it including a play and interview on BBC Introducing Oxford with Dave Gilyeat. We're proud of the songs and looking forward to getting back into the studio to do the next one in August."

And the lowlight:

"A gig we did at the Fiddler's Elbow in London. The initial set was alright, but due to a band dropping out we had a far longer slot than expected. Instead of being sensible and leaving the stage, we tried to lap up the limelight with a load of half baked, unpractised cover efforts."



photo: Helen Messenger

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Supergrass. They're the Oxford band that have been most inspiring, especially growing up; they were a welcome relief from all the tiresome grunge bands dominating the local scene."

If they could only keep one album it would be:

"Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band"; not the most leftfield choice but just a beautiful and timeless classic."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"The 9th August at The Jericho Tavern, a fundraiser for MIND. There's a brilliant line up of local bands and DJs and we'll hopefully do the occasion justice with some frenetic renditions of our EP tracks."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxfordshire music are:

"The best thing is the relatively small network of musicians, creating a sense of community, which can make gigs feel friendly and familiar. The worst thing is the relatively small network of musicians, meaning you're likely to bump into anyone that you've had a 'situation' with in the past!"

You might love them if you love:

Orange Juice; The Wedding Present; The Brilliant Corners; Mighty Mighty; The Maccabees.

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ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, summer in Oxfordshire wasn't wall-to-wall (or weekend-to-weekend) festivals. In fact, August 1998 featured just the one – **Cropredy Festival**, an event with such extensive history it's probably mentioned in the Domesday Book. Just as with every other year since time immemorial **Fairport Convention** headlined the 20,000-capacity weekend, joined this year by **Roy Wood** and **Loudon Wainwright III**.

Elsewhere it was slim pickings for gig hounds, **The Supernaturals** and **Ron Sexsmith** popping by **The Zodiac**, while **The Point** played host to local faves **The Candyskins**, **The Relationships** and **The Samurai Seven** as well as **Manyeung** (supported by **Dolly**, the band fronted by **Candy Says** singer Julia Walker); **Mecca**; **Slipsta**; **Soul Beaver** and **Spirits 180**. Head over to the demo pages and you'd find more star names, from **The Prophets** ("mildly intriguing and a little bit strange"), **The Bruce Li Foundation** ("Trying to be a bit too clever but serious contenders on the local dance scene") and **Infinite Calm** ("Mr Sad Indie Schindie Man") to **Livid**, **Starfish** and **Polar**, the latter "an inoffensive indie trundle, the best bit of which is when they decide to turn into Shed Seven, which says it all."

10 YEARS AGO

As had now become almost traditional in Oxfordshire, the summer of 2008 was awash with local festivals. August's *Nightshift* featured

extensive reviews of **Truck**, **Cornbury** and **Wakestock**, while reporting that Zapfest, planned for South Park, had been cancelled due to money troubles.

With the gig calendar at its quietest, notable indoor gigs included local newcomers **Stornoway** supporting Edinburgh indie heroes **Ballboy** at **The X**, while **The Last Shadow Puppets** at **The New Theatre** and **MGMT**, and Greg Dulli and Mark Lanegan's **Gutter Twins** were the highlight of the month in music.

GTA featuring **Jada Pearl** were the Demo of the Month for their collaborative "funk-disco dancefloor filler that threatens to be Shakatak but struts around amid the glitz and mirror balls like a rapped-up Grooverider." At the other end of the pile **Red Valve** who had issued a ten-point manifesto for their own success, which included, at number 9, the statement that "They are always willing to try out new ideas," which seemed to manifest itself in a few rehashed AC/DC riffs and a load of attitude-free pub rock that "is so utterly devoid of character but goes on so long that listening to it is like trying to get an injunction against a faceless stalker who keeps reciting discarded Axl Rose lyrics down the phone to you for hours in a dull monotone." Fun times.

5 YEAR AGO

Ralfe Band graced the cover of *Nightshift* back in August 2013, **Oly Ralfe**'s near-as-dammit one-man-band having just released their third album, 'Son Be Wise'. Oly explaining that his nomadic lifestyle, including time spent living in Berlin,

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

meant that few people realised he was an Oxford musician.

While Oxfordshire was still stuck in festival mode for the most part, with **Noah & the Whale**, **Rodriguez** and **Michael Kiwanuka** the star turns at **Wilderness**; **Fairport Convention** unsurprisingly headlining their own **Cropredy Festival**, joined this time round by **Alice Cooper**, **10cc** and forgettable 80s mini-pop **Nik Kershaw**; **Supernormal**'s typically esoteric line-up featuring such treats as **Clinic**, **Shit & Shine**, **Hookworms**, **Terminal Cheesecake**, **Mugstar** and **Evil Blizzard** and basically confirming its title of best festival in the Shire, and **The Simple Weekender** giving clubbers a chance to dance in the fresh air, indoor treats were few and far between, chief highlight being **Eels** at **The O2 Academy**, where you could also catch **Bleed From Within** and **Pokey la Farge**.

On the releases front, summer wasn't stopping local techno nutters **Coloureds** from banging out some bangers on their 'Pop Forlorn' EP, nor **Masiro** cranking out the mathematical hardcore on their EP. A pre-Death of the Maiden Tamara Parsons Baker released 'Get Him Out' under her **Tamara & the Martyrs** name and there were also releases for **After the Thought**; **Samuel Zasada**; **Luke Keegan**; **Echoboomer** and **King B**.

This month's Introducing piece featured pun-loving psychedelic garage rockers **The Graceful Slicks**, who had recently played The Punt and were set to release their debut single. Since when we've heard precisely bugger all with a side order of boiled onions from them. Anyone out there?

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Dr SHOTOVER Goes Scrumpy & Western

Yo, Lord Yeovil! Welcome to the East Indies Club bar. Mobilise a pew, and let the cider-drinking commence. Now then, old boy, given the approach of the Wilts, Somerset & Avon 'PLAY THOSE COVERS, MY LOVERS' competition, and your place on the panel, we thought we'd slide a suggestion your way. Lord Yetminster here and I have formed an REM tribute act, and – sick as we are of American culture – have chosen to add a thoroughly British, nay rural Oxfordshire, flavour to proceedings. So... OOH ARR EM, we are to be called. But it's not JUST about pandering to the Scrumpy Belt. Expect versions of *Can't Get There From Yere*, *It's the End of the 'Wolds as We Know 'em* (and *I Feel Fine*), yes, but also... *Isle of Man in the Moon*, (*Don't Go Back to*) *Rochdale*, *Losing My Ceredigion*, *Feeling O' Laverty's Pull*, *Shiny Happy Peebles* etc. We feel certain that you will want to help with the success of our endeavour, especially given the £600 cash prize for winning the competition... Should go nicely, three ways, don't you think, Yeovil? [Whispers] Buy him a drink, Yetminster... [more urgently] your round... [louder] YOUR ROUND, YETMINSTER... [shouting] NO, YOU'RE ROUND, YOU FAT CU... ahem... COUNT-ryman! Harrumph. Apologies, Yeovil. Here, finish my pint, why don't you, and enjoy this half-smoked cigar, while I chase Yetminster outside and turn him upside down for loose change. You'll soon be 'feeling gravity's pull', Yetminster you old muck-spreader!!!
Next month: Grumpy & Western



Yetminster: 'You the OOH ARR EM fanclub, then?'

Fan Girl #1: 'Arr. We be looking for Dr Shotoverr'.

Fan Girl #2: 'Old Shotty said him'd bring our shoes back... once him'd filled 'em with zider'.



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TRACKS

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TOP TRACKS

JERAMESA

After yet more World Cup heartbreak and amid an unrelenting heatwave, what *Nightshift* needs is a very large vodka and coke, on ice. And some cold, dark doom-drone punishment. And who better to deliver this cool, bleak aural feast than Jeramesa, a man who's waged a musical war on such concepts as cheery pop melody and brevity for the past few years, earning him a clutch of admiring reviews along the way. He's taking a break from his trademark prog-psych-folk in favour of some drone-doom metal, he tells us, but it's not such a mood switch, since we've previously had cause to compare him to Swans – not a band renowned for producing upbeat summer party bangers. This is quite the dirty, scuzzy sludge-fest: galley slave beats backing almost Sunn0))))-like distorted guitar dirge and funereal chants. And that's pretty much it: no chorus, middle-eights or rousing finale – just an onward slo-mo lava flow of bleakness. Much like living in Berinsfield, really. It's not quite on a par with Undersmile, but it does tend to block out the sun and if you play it on repeat while sat in your bedroom, there's a fair chance your parents will bring up the subject of drug addiction at some point over dinner.

LA STARVE

Well, whaddya know – you wait months for a one-track, eight-minute drone demo to come along and two arrive at the same time. Almost by its very nature this is good stuff, if not quite on the same level as Jeramesa. Entitled 'We Agnostics' it starts off with spangled guitars, rolling toms and almost ecclesiastical vocals before breaking down gently two minutes in and setting about rebuilding itself in its own image, but with an increasing sense of purpose and ever-more ethereal intent. It stops for a breather occasionally but mostly this is a song as a shroud, a slow-build enveloping mist that's partway between 60s psychedelia and more contemporary dream pop, or maybe a previously unimagined meeting point between Spoils of War and Purescence. If it had been recorded in 1984 it would have almost certainly have been signed to 4AD. It's like a fluffy ghost – soft and

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

enticing but cold to the touch and slightly otherworldly. Course we bloody well love it – have you not learned that about us after all these years?

BROKEN EMPIRE

Dark doesn't have to mean doomy or droney, it's also available at full pelt, as the history of heavy rock and metal since the late-60s onwards has amply demonstrated. Broken Empire, recent Metal to the Masses finalists, don't much go in for fanning about and slow builds; no, they're up and at it from the off, all galloping NWOBHM, thrash and almost symphonic metal on loud and shiny display. They're OTT almost to the point of camp and even without a video to accompany these tracks we imagine them long and windswept of hair, tight of Spandex and with feet firmly and proudly up on monitors. 'Broken Chains' is classic chest-beating heavy rock of the old school with just a touch of death-metal about it. With a strong melodic edge to their songs Alter Bridge would be the main reference point, but you could probably pick a few dozen bands of the past 25 years without searching too hard. Which isn't to put them down – they chug along hard, loud and sometimes fast and do it pretty well in an unreconstructed kind of way. Not world class maybe but stick 'em up front for a League 1 team this season and they'll do some damage in front of goal.

THIRD LUNG

More unreconstructed rocking here from Third Lung, who we think might be from Reading, where everything's a little bit less sophisticated than we're used to here in Oxford. The music is slightly surprisingly given the band claim they've been played on Steve Lamacq's 6Music show and he's hardly renowned for playing 80s hair metal, not even 80s hair metal that sounds a bit like Roy Orbison fronting Bon Jovi or Poison. For one song anyway, after which it simply sinks, like the big old rock it is, into the murky depths of the rock pond, there to hang out with the frogs and toads and bands who missed the interesting bits of metal's history since 1982. Tell you what, we might stick some netting over the pond, just to stop them all resurfacing. There's a soft rock ballad in here that sounds like fucking Nazareth, so it's probably best for all concerned. We might build a Trump-like wall across the A34 at Chieveley too to stop any more bands like this getting through.

DADA PARADOX

Good grief, they're coming at us from every direction. Third Lung have only schlepped up from Berkshire; Dada Paradox have flown all the way from New York, and made Oxford their home. If they're expecting a warm Limey reception, all cream teas and red pillar boxes, they're in for a shock. Any band that describes themselves as "progressive retro-pop" had better have something fucking special up their sleeve, else we'll point our poisoned quill at them. What is "progressive retro-pop" anyway? Might as well describe yourselves as "back to front sideways core". On the evidence of opener 'Bedtime For Donzo' it sounds like a slightly drunken discredited former kids TV presenter making barely coherent slacker pop with an anti-folk edge for the anti-Trump movement. Hard to tell fully when songs barely make it past the minute-and-a-half mark. Elsewhere it manifests as ramshackle, stoned and slightly sweary Weezer-ish rambling, replete with a kazoo solo ('Trouble Right Here') and half-cocked folktronica ('Propaganda Action Stations'). We're sure it's well intentioned and 'Horizon of Hope' does indeed offer hope for better things to come and we may even feel ready and able to invite it round for scones and tea at some point but for now it's neither as weird or wacky as it seems to think it is.

MANAN GUPTA

Manan describes himself as a "Percussive Finger-Style Acoustic Guitar Player and a Singer-Songwriter" (his capitalisation, lest you wondered when *Nightshift* had given up the rudiments of written English, and after listing pretty much every single show he's ever played, says he's looking forward to our "positive consideration," apparently ignorant of our unwavering dislike of 1. Musicians; 2. Music, and 3. The entire human race generally. Sweet daydreams of a people-free planet, where whales and dolphins swim unbutchered in the oceans, baby orang-utans swing free through thousands of miles of unmolested forest and lions lie down with lambs at least distract us from the aching tedium of Manan's song 'Stabilize', which possesses the appeal and tunefulness of a fly repeatedly buzzing against a window while you're trying to watch *Blue Planet* 2. "Some people are temporary but they change the way of life / Give some sweet memories to live and revive / I know this moment I am living now won't survive / Just wanna stay in this time with you and let it shine, it's so fine / I don't wanna move on to look back I just want it to Stabilize... Stabilize... Stabilize / I don't want it all to end, I want this moment to

Stabilize... Stabilize" go the lyrics. There's more but it doesn't start to make any more sense however far in your read, and frankly we're as likely to shove a live box jellyfish down our pants than give it another chance.

THE EULOGIES

Ah... that's a bit better. Like a slight breeze on a flyblown heatwave, The Eulogies offer scant relief, but relief nonetheless from the dirges that precede them, with a typically (for them) morose and ramshackle, almost Toytown form of lo-fi folk-pop that with singer Simon Veaney's glum vocal delivery and the occasional cheap keyboard remind us a bit of Tindersticks, Sparklehorse and Grandaddy. Alice Williams adds a little bright-eyed levity on 'Distant Trains' but Nick generally sounds as chirpy about life as *Nightshift* does about early mornings, jazz-fusion and marzipan, but there's a likable sense of grace about his slender, downbeat songs that he rather poetically describes as "the soundtrack to rainy midnight coach journeys from London – those moments where the orange car lights on the Westway blur into the smears on the window's glass. Simon, my boy, there's a whole tray of fresh scones and freshly brewed tea here if you want it; you sound like you belong in our world. Oh, and 'Dust' is proper sweet, if slightly clumsy. Like a newborn giraffe.

TOILET TRACKS

LONGY

The one song here is titled 'Auto Interwoven Minds', which would have been a better band name than Longy. In fact there's a lot that could have been better about this – like every single bit of it. Overwrought indie funk rock with a big brassy arrangement and bellowed-out bluesy vocals borrowed at knock-off rate from Black Keys. Amid the lathered-on message about turning off our screens is something about filling our minds with dreams. And we do. We dream of a world where music like this doesn't exist and it's all wine, kittens and industrial hardcore from here to the horizon. "Oh, your mobile phones – turn them off! / Oh, your TV screens – turn them off!" croak-shouts Mr Longy over a video with some kind of oblique symbolism about taking a sledgehammer to an old television (too clever and obscure for us to understand), which, after about four minutes of posing and fanning about, he finally does. We finally get the general gist of it and dutifully turn the song off. And now we reckon Longy had a point, because we feel instantly better about life.

Send tracks for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk, clearly marked Demos. IMPORTANT: no review without a contact phone number. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. Same goes for your stupid, over-sensitive mates.



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 + Something, Someday

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Sat 18th Aug
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Thur 23rd Aug
Gomez

Fri 31st Aug
Jake Clemons

Sat 1st Sep
Rhymeskeemz

Thur 6th Sep
Ben Miller Band

Fri 14th Sep • 6.00pm
Molotov Jukebox
 + Huw Eddy & the Carnival

Thur 20th Sep
Joyner Lucas
 + Dr Erbz

Fri 21st Sep • 7.30pm
Low Island

Sun 23rd Sep
The Daft Punk Orchestra

Tue 25th Sep
The Night Café
 + Chappaqua Wrestling + Plaza

Thur 27th Sep
Airways
 + Brixtons + TMA

Fri 28th Sep • 11.00pm
Parka Monkeys
 (Indie Club Night) ft.
 Circa Waves DJ Set

Sat 29th Sep • 6.30pm
Teleman

Sat 29th Sep
KickThePj

Thur 4th Oct
Mahalia

Fri 5th Oct • 6.00pm
Imperial Leisure
 + New Town Kings

Fri 5th Oct • 6.30pm
The Magic Gang

Sat 6th Oct • 6.30pm
The Smyths
 + Jon Hunt

Tue 9th Oct
Joanne Shaw Taylor

Fri 12th Oct • 6.30pm
Hollie Cook

Fri 12th Oct • 6.30pm
Antarctic Monkeys

Sat 13th Oct • 6.30pm
The Carpet Crawlers

Sat 13th Oct • 6.30pm
Britpop Boys

Sat 13th Oct • 11.00pm
90s - 00s ft. N-Trance

Sun 14th Oct
Dermot Kennedy

Mon 15th Oct
Get Cape Wear Cape Fly

Tue 16th Oct
Maribou State

Thur 18th Oct
Tom Grennan

Thur 18th Oct
The Daniel Wakeford Experience

Fri 19th Oct • 6.30pm
Boyzlife

Sat 20th Oct • 12.00pm
Ritual Union

Sun 21st Oct
Bugzy Malone

Mon 22nd Oct
Villagers

Thur 25th Oct
Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever

Fri 26th Oct • 6.30pm
Freya Ridings

Sat 27th Oct • 6.00pm
Luisa Omelian

Sat 27th Oct • 6.30pm
Guns 2 Roses

Sun 28th Oct
Ady Suleiman

Mon 29th Oct
IDLES

Tue 30th Oct
Superorganism

Thur 1st Nov
The Feeling

Fri 2nd Nov
Neil Hilborn

Sun 4th Nov
Hugh Cornwell Electric

Mon 5th Nov
Natty

Thur 8th Nov
Police Dog Hogan

Fri 9th Nov • 6.00pm
Dutty Moonshine

Fri 9th Nov • 11.00pm
Kurupt FM

Sat 10th Nov • 6.30pm
Dubioza Kolektiv

Sun 11th Nov
Gruff Rhys

Thur 15th Nov
Salad

Thur 15th Nov
Courtney Barnett

Fri 16th Nov • 6.30pm
Tide Lines

Fri 16th Nov • 6.30pm
Killing Joke

Sat 17th Nov • 6.30pm
Definitely Mightbe

Fri 23rd Nov • 6.30pm
The Dub Pistols

Sat 24th Nov • 6.30pm
Blur2 / Pulp'd
 Tributes to Blur & Pulp

Tue 27th Nov
Shame

Thur 29th Nov
Cast

Fri 30th • 6.30pm
Little Brother Eli

Sat 1st Dec • 6.30pm
The Damned

Sun 2nd Dec
Bjorn Again

Fri 7th Dec • 6.30pm
Pearl Jam UK

Sun 9th Dec
Fish

Thur 13th Dec • 6.00pm
Fireball – Fuelling The Fire Tour
 + Flogging Molly
 + Face To Face
 + Lost In Stereo + The Bronx

Fri 14th Dec • 6.30pm
Slade - 45 Years of Merry Christmas Everybody

Sat 15th Dec • 6.30pm
Reef

Fri 21st Dec • 6.30pm
Dreadzone

Sat 22nd Dec • 6.30pm
Faith
 – The George Michael Legacy

Mon 18th Feb 2019
Ruts DC

Thur 28th Mar 2019
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Sat 6th Apr 2019 • 6.30pm
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