



# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every  
month  
Issue 271  
February  
2018**

**"The only other thing I  
wanted to do with my life was  
be a househusband, with a  
whole bunch of kids"**

**From Unbelievable Truth  
to Frank Turner's Sleeping  
Souls - Nigel Powell talks  
about his life in music,  
writing his own songs and  
the terror of  
being a frontman**

# the sad song co.

*Also in this issue:*

**Gaz Coombes returns  
Walter leaves Foals  
Truck store turns seven  
Introducing GIFT OF BLINDNESS**

*Plus*

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

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



# THE BULLINGDON

## FEBRUARY 2018 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

<p>Thursday 1st February <b>The Brew</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 2nd February <b>London Calling</b> <i>Play The Clash</i> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 2nd February <b>Straight Outta Cowley</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 3rd February <b>Simple</b> <i>DJ Stingway</i> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Sunday 4th February <b>Jesca Hoop</b> <i>The August List</i> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Thursday 8th February <b>Red Butler</b> Danny Giles Brent Hutchinson Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 9th February <b>Mr B The Gentleman Rhymer</b> Grace Savage Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 9th February <b>Nigel Garage</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 10th February <b>Gunfingers</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Sunday 10th February <b>John Robins:</b> <i>The Darkness of Robins</i> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 16th February <b>Fern Brady</b> 'Suffer Fools' Doors: 7pm</p>	<p>Friday 16th February <b>Fred Stripe</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 17th February <b>Musical Medicine</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Tuesday 20th February <b>Pete Boss &amp; The Bluehearts</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 23rd February <b>Daliso:</b> <i>'What the African Said...'</i> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 23rd February <b>Tracksuit &amp; Trance</b> <b>90s Rave</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 24th February <b>Volume #9</b> <i>Random Concept Origins</i> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Thursday 1st March <b>Matt Edwards Band</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 2nd March <b>Patrick Monahan:</b> <i>Rewind Selector 90s</i> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 2nd March <b>The Raving Trippy</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 3rd March <b>Simple</b> <i>Objekt</i> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Thursday &amp; Friday 6th &amp; 9th March <b>Youthmovies</b> Doors: 7pm</p>	<p>Friday 9th March <b>Off-Key</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 10th March <b>Sub Tropic</b> <b>Dub Boy B2B ATK12</b> feat. MC Jonzey Count Skylarkin Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Sunday 11th March <b>Simon Evans</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Wednesday 14th March <b>Milk Teeth</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Thursday 15th March <b>Will Wilde Band</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 16th March <b>Rob Auton:</b> <i>The Hair Show</i> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Saturday 17th March <b>Musical Medicine</b> <b>Bradley Zero</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Thursday 22nd March <b>MT Wolf</b> Doors: 7.30pm</p> <p>Friday 23rd March <b>Gwenno</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 23rd March <b>Diss Hand In</b> Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 24th March <b>Skylarkin' Presents</b> <b>Mungo's HI-FI: Full Soundsystem</b> Doors: 10pm</p>	<p>Wednesday 28th March <b>Geoff Achison</b> &amp; <b>The Souldiggers</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Thursday 29th March <b>Noasis</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 30th March <b>Prism / Spectrum</b> <b>Kieran Alexis</b> Tim Aldiss Marty P Ben Mac Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Saturday 31st March <b>Rawdio: Metalheadz</b> <b>Dillinja</b> DLR Dubz Blunt Samas Doors: 10pm</p> <p>Sunday 1st April <b>Sabrina Benaim</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Wednesday 4th April <b>Kris Barras Band</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Friday 6th April <b>Whitesnake UK</b> Doors: 6pm</p> <p>Saturday 7th April <b>Groove</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Thursday 12th April <b>John Robbins</b> Doors: 7pm</p> <p>Saturday 14th April <b>Musical Medicine</b> <b>Horse Meat Disco</b> Doors: 10pm</p>
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### THE BEST IN LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY

Saturday 2nd February - 7pm  
**Scott Capurro, Keith Farnan, George Zach**

Saturday 10th February - 7pm  
**Inel Tomlinson, Paul McCaffrey, Ian Stone**

Saturday 17th February - 7pm  
**Ben Norris, Ivo Graham, Angela Barnes, Emmanuel Sonubi**

Sunday 24th February - 7pm  
**Dave Johns, Jenny Collier, Andrew Watts, Mike Bubbins**

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# NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

Phone: 01865 372255

email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



**BRIAN BRIGGS** returns to Oxford for his first live show in the city since Stornoway's farewell gig at The New Theatre in March last year. Brian, now a nature warden in Wales, will perform a collaborative show under the name The Glass Aisle alongside poet Paul Henry at The Old Fire Station on Saturday 3rd March. Tickets, priced £14 and £12, are on sale now at [www.oldfirestation.org.uk](http://www.oldfirestation.org.uk)

**DESERT STORM** release their fourth album next month. 'Sentinels' is out on the 1st March and the band will play a hometown headline show at the O2 Academy on Saturday 24th March as part of an extensive European tour. 'Sentinels' is the follow-up to 2014's 'Omniscient'. The band celebrated their tenth anniversary in November. Find out more at [www.desertstormband.com](http://www.desertstormband.com).

**TRUCK FESTIVAL** are set to announce this year's line-up in the week starting the 5th February. Keep an eye out on [truckfestival.com](http://truckfestival.com) as well as *Nightshift's* Facebook and Twitter.

**SELF HELP** build up to the release of a new EP next

month with a download single, 'Daydreams' on February 9th. The rising indie/garage-rock quartet's EP, 'Birthdayboy', will be released on CD and download on the 16th March. The band launch the EP with a headline show at The Cellar on Friday 23rd March. There's more at [www.youneedselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.youneedselfhelp.co.uk).

**OXJAM** returns to Oxford in October as part of the nationwide network of shows raising money for anti-poverty charity Oxfam. After a series of successful fundraising all-dayers, Oxford didn't host a full Oxjam festival in 2017, with 14-year-old local music fan Max Blansjaar's show at Tap Social the only gig organised.

Oxjam 18 is looking for local festival organisers and gig runners to help set up a multi-venue event across the city. Anyone interested in helping can apply at [oxjam.org.uk/festival-managers](http://oxjam.org.uk/festival-managers)

**THE AUGUST LIST, TIGER MENDOZA AND VIENNA DITTO** fly the flag for Oxford music at this year's Are You Listening? festival in Reading. The multi-venue event takes place on Saturday 28th April. Organised by Heavy Pop, who recently took over the running of The Jericho Tavern's music programme, AYL? Features sets from Idles, Field Music, Plump DJs, Warm Digits, Yonaka and 6Music's Steve Lamacq among others. Tickets, priced £20 in advance, and full line-up details are at [www.areyoulistening.org.uk](http://www.areyoulistening.org.uk)



**GAZ COOMBES RETURNS WITH HIS THIRD SOLO ALBUM** in May. 'World's Strongest Man' is released on vinyl, CD and download on Hot Fruit on **May 4th**. It is the follow-up to Gaz's 2015 Mercury-nominated 'Matador' and is, in his own words, "inspired variously by Grayson Perry's *The Descent of Man*, Frank Ocean's 'Blonde', Californian weed, British woodlands, unchecked masculinity, Neu! and hip-hop." A lead track from the album, 'Deep Pockets' is released on the 23rd February.

Full tracklisting for 'World's Strongest Man' is: 'World's Strongest Man'; 'Deep Pockets'; 'Walk The Walk'; 'Sh\*t (I've Done It Again)'; 'Slow Motion Life'; 'Wounded Egos'; 'Oxygen Mask'; 'In Waves'; 'The Oaks'; 'Vanishing Act'; and 'Weird Dreams'. Gaz plays an initial live show at ULU on Wednesday 28th February, with a full UK tour expected to coincide with the album release.

**SAE OXFORD** is looking for local bands and solo artists to perform at their new Live Lounge sessions. The college, situated in Littlemore, offers degree courses in music, video and gaming technology as well as the music industry, is expanding the project started by its Liverpool campus; musicians work with students on every aspect of the performance and can take a video of their performance away with them. SAE audio production lecturer Mike Hill explained: "The live lounge offers local artists the chance to record their music in a way that genuinely represents the live performance. They can share the session with their fans and even send it to music promoters to help secure their next gig. The live lounge provides SAE students with an opportunity to

develop their skills, work as a part of a team, meet local creatives and develop a showreel of high quality content."

For more details email [d.bonventre@sae.edu](mailto:d.bonventre@sae.edu) with links to your music.

**RADIOHEAD, THE CANDYSKINS, DUSTBALL AND NIGHTSHIFT** are all namechecked in a debut novel by local writer JB Cameron released last month. *No Explosions* is a story of growing up in a music scene and trying to make it in a band, with parts of the story set in The Point and The Zodiac. *No Explosions* is available for download at Amazon.co.uk

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

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



**WALTER GERVERS HAS LEFT FOALS, IT HAS** been announced. Bassist Walter helped form Foals in 2006 having previously played in local band Face Meets Grill. Announcing his departure on social media on the 5th January, Foals, who are currently in the studio working on their fifth album, said, "To all our fans, sadly we have to announce that our mate Walter has decided to leave the band to pursue a new life. The parting has been sad but we remain firm friends. He'll always be our brother; we love him and wish him well in his future endeavours. We had 12 amazing years touring together, from a small postal van to the Pyramid Stage and beyond. It's the end of a chapter but not the end of the book. We are making new music and are working on the fifth LP. It's gonna be the best yet. Love Foals."



# NEWS

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Phone: 01865 372255

email: [editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk](mailto:editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk)

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NIGHTSHIFT is set to be the subject of a full day of discussion at **Brookes University** in March. The Popular Music Research Unit at Brookes will host the event, entitled *Nightshift: Exploring Oxford's Music Magazine* on **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March**. The day will run from 9:45am to 4pm at the Headington Hill site and will feature the history of *Nightshift* and the Oxford music scene going back to its origins as *Curfew* in the early 90s, as well as discussions local scenes and regional music media and demo reviews, as well as a Q&A session with founder and editor Ronan Munro. The day will be free and open to all, but registration will be required. Further details will be in next month's issue and posted on the PMRU website in due course at [pmrubrookes.wordpress.com/events](http://pmrubrookes.wordpress.com/events).



**DUE TO THE SHEER** amount of music we receive at *Nightshift*, we cannot always review stuff as soon as we get it, so please be patient.

The earlier we get stuff, the sooner it can be reviewed. We reserve the right to decide what is a release and what's a demo. Yes we do.



**TRUCK STORE** celebrates its seventh birthday this month. The independent record store on Cowley Road will celebrate its anniversary with a day of live music, special offers and cake on **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February**. The line-up for the day is yet to be finalised but store manager Carl Smithson talked to *Nightshift* about the store's latest milestone, which has seen it flourish in a difficult climate for independent shops and music stores in particular.

"As with most retail it's hard work these days," said Carl, "but we're driven by passion for music and genuinely care about what we're selling so that makes it easier to keep going. Being an independent gives us more flexibility and adaptability than bigger stores so we can react to changes, such as the huge increase in vinyl sales, much faster. With this in mind we're constantly endeavouring to improve the store and try new things, working with different people or groups and generally engaging with what's going on in the city."

Carl also sees Truck Store's place at the heart of the Oxford music as vital.

"For the local music scene we've always tried to be as supportive as possible, be it from stocking local band releases to hosting launch events where possible. We've also developed really strong relationships with local promoters and work hard on selling tickets and promoting live music in town. We've run a stage at Riverside festival for a few years, run stalls at lots of local festivals, held a screening at UPP, as well as being involved in events at Modern Art Oxford and the Ashmolean... all of these engagements have in some way incorporated support for the local scene and we'll keep trying new things as and when opportunities arise."

Visit [truckmusicstore.co.uk](http://truckmusicstore.co.uk) for more details of the day, and more importantly, keep visiting Truck Store to keep local independent music retail going.



**MOTHER**

THURSDAY 1ST FEBRUARY  
THE CELLAR



**JESCA HOOP**

SUNDAY 4TH FEBRUARY  
THE BULLINGDON



**THE LOVELY EGGS**

THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY  
THE CELLAR



**FICKLE FRIENDS**

MONDAY 12TH MARCH  
O2 ACADEMY OXFORD



**GWENNO**

FRIDAY 23RD MARCH  
THE BULLINGDON



**SELF HELP**

FRIDAY 23RD MARCH  
THE CELLAR

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# the sad song co.



**“WRITING ONLY COMES TO me when I’ve been stationary for a few weeks, and that just didn’t happen for a lot of years and I found myself being inspired by the music I was creating to finish it and try and convince people to listen to it,” declares Nigel Powell, the man behind Sad Song Co. and a musician whose career stretches back almost three decades and has, over the years, taken him all around the world and seen him performing to the sort of audiences most Oxford bands can barely start to dream of.**

**NIGEL IS TALKING ABOUT THE** making of his new album ‘Worth’, his fourth under the Sad Song Co. name and the second in just over a year following a nine year gap between solo records. ‘Worth’ is the follow-up to 2016’s ‘In Amber’, which in turn followed 2007’s ‘Poignant Device’ and his 2003 debut ‘Miseryguts’. The long gaps between his early releases were due to Nigel’s incessantly busy music career with other bands and the quick succession of his last two albums comes as a result of some rare downtime from touring the world as part of Frank Turner’s Sleeping Souls band.

**NIGHTSHIFT FIRST** encountered Nigel in the early 1990s playing keyboards in his brother Adrian’s band Freak! (our first review suggesting the overly-energetic Nigel should have his feet nailed to the

stage). Around the same time he was drumming in Abingdon pop-punk faves The Purple Rhinos, whose motto was “any gig, any time, any place”. Nigel’s first band, Illiterate Hands, was formed at school with classmates Jonny Greenwood and Andy Yorke. Later he would form Unbelievable Truth with Andy alongside lifelong frined Jason Moulster, sign to Virgin and enjoy some chart success before they disbanded. Following that adventure Nigel joined Dive Dive as drummer, another band with an enviable work ethic who built a substantial cult following and through whom he met Frank Turner, who recruited him, along with Dive Dive bandmates Tarrant Anderson and Ben Lloyd, to form his permanent backing band. Since 2007 Nigel has played on seven albums and countless tours with Turner, culminating in a set at the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony.

**SO NIGEL POWELL HAS** certainly seen the absolute highs, as well as some of the lows, of the music business and probably played most of the countries in the world where gigs happen. But for all the thrills that drumming in one of the most successful bands around brings, Nigel’s burning passion is for the songs he writes himself as Sad Song Co. Here is where his often bruised emotions and melancholic disposition are thrust into the light and the real Mr Powell reveals himself.

Sad Song Co. began as something of a prog-influenced side project but over the course of time the music has expanded in its musical reach and revealed ever greater depths of lyrical feel. Reviewing ‘In Amber’, *Nightshift* declared “The ultimate victory for the album is the way all the meticulous musicianship is never allowed to be anything more than a springboard for the strong melodies; emotion wins over technicality pretty much all the time. Sad songs indeed, but ones to make your heart swell.” ‘Worth’ is its equally emotive sequel, an album whose delicate, yet elaborate musicianship calls to mind the likes of The Blue Nile, Flaming Lips, Porcupine Tree, Steely Dan and Pure Reason Revolution, among others. Nigel’s proggy roots (he once played at Marillion’s fan annual convention in the Netherlands) haven’t disappeared altogether. “I do have this reputation amongst my friends of being a massive prog-head, but I really don’t think it’s so,” he muses. “I do really like some prog rock, but, like any of the music I listen to, it has to connect with me emotionally. So I love Genesis, but can’t stand Yes, or ELP, or any of those other fiddly ‘look at me so I can impress you while wearing a cape’ bands. I really enjoy some Porcupine Tree, but Dream Theater makes me want to smash my ears in with a hammer. There’s always elements of it in my music, though. The last album you had to dig for them, but ‘Worth’

ends with a nine-minute song that has four guitar solos in it – up from zero on the entirety of the previous album – so I haven’t abandoned my post just yet. And I did spend a couple of years drumming in a Genesis tribute band.”

**A HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED** multi-instrumentalist and singer, Nigel has complete control over Sad Song Co., a contrast to playing as a backing musicians for Turner or his brother, or as part of a songwriting partnership as with Unbelievable Truth and Dive Dive. He’s enjoyed a hell of a career as part of other bands, but The Sad Song Co. is the only one that places him centre stage. “I never felt frustrated creatively in Dive Dive because the music was the result of all of our input, even though Jamie was the main songwriter. From time to time with Frank I’ve felt disconnected from my own sense of art, but I think the reason I don’t write when I’m on tour with him is I suppress that side of me when I’m working with him, and it takes some time to come out of dormancy.” Conversely, playing someone else’s songs brings less pressure. “I really enjoy recording and touring with Frank. I’m much less nervous playing his songs, mostly because I’m drumming which is my main skill, but also it’s definitely less exposed. I love his songwriting, and contributing to it is an honour. I honestly believe he’s one of the very finest lyricists the world has ever produced.”

Turner has proved to be a master of building a fanbase from the ground up over the years; is that old-school approach of constant touring something Nigel still feel is important and relevant in today’s internet-led industry? “I don’t think it’s something any of us think about. Working in a hard and focused manner has always been a part of my makeup as well. Purple Rhinos had a reputation of playing anywhere at the drop of a hat, and when we met Frank Dive Dive were on an absolutely gruelling tour schedule, sometimes playing three shows a day. There is now and always has been a multitude of ways to break through and let people hear what you’re doing, and we seem to have drilled one of those approaches into the ground.” Nigel financed ‘In Amber’ through crowdfunding; did being part of Sleeping Souls help? “Undoubtedly. Frank’s fans are gorgeously committed, so a certain section of them were interested to know that I was doing something. My previous solo album was so long ago I don’t think most of them had any idea that I did anything like that on my own. And it was heartening to get messages from Unbelievable Truth fans saying they were excited to hear new stuff from me.”

**WHILE 2007’S ‘POIGNANT** Device’ was based around stories from an old people’s home and ‘In Amber’ dealt heavily with old age and death, ‘Worth’ finds Nigel’s lyrics even more personal. “When I was writing ‘In Amber’ I thought the next album was going to be about violence of various kinds. That triggered off a few songs, but in the end I let myself write whatever I wanted lyrically, rather than tie myself to a concept. It is more relationship-based than the previous albums. Three of the songs are rather close to experiences during the last couple of years, and when I’d finished the album and was looking at it it seemed to point at questioning the worth of things, of love, of myself, all led by ‘Worth My Bones’, which was written specifically probing my ambition to be a musician, and what that meant to my relationships with people, particularly my kids.” Unsurprisingly given the Sad Song Co. moniker there’s a downbeat, emotive drive to many, if not most, of Nigel’s songs; does he see himself as a melancholic songwriter or is there hope and light in the songs too? “I think there’s always been a mix of feelings on the albums. I skew towards the melancholy, hence the Ronseal band name, but on this album ‘I Don’t See It’ couldn’t really be more positive. It’s talking about feeling strong and clear and trying to help a friend in a dark place by being their link to all that’s bright

and great about the world. ‘Lonely Is A State Of Mind’ is about a joyous first night together, and ‘What You Make Of It’ is my very joyful take on atheism and what it means to me and empowerment in my life.” **NIGEL’S OLD UNBELIEVABLE** Truth bandmate Jason Moulster plays on the new album; it must be comforting for him to have such a close, long-standing musical partner. Being around the local scene for so long and making such close friends must provide a great foundation. “Sadly I have lost touch with the local scene from being on tour so very much for the last ten years. But absolutely my experiences in it have helped me get where I am, and some of my most cherished friendships have

***“I find solo shows terrifying. I can drum in all sorts of high pressure situations and feel calm and professional, but when I have to sing and play my songs every butterfly in the world takes up residence in my stomach.”***

sprung from it. I see Mac, who used to run the Jericho Tavern, from time to time; Jon Spira, who made *Anyone Can Play Guitar* and loads of videos for bands on the local scene, is still a close friend, and bumping into Tarrant from Dustball, as they were then, in the Oxford Music Central offices in 2000 was a life-changing moment, although I didn’t know it then. As far as inspiration goes, I would have to pick (American songser-songwriter and former Miracle Legion frontman) Mark Mulcahy. His talent and compassion are so immense. That’s something I definitely aspire to.” Looking back at some of the bands Nigel has played in, which were most fun and which, if he had to pick, would he most like to reform? “Dive Dive have never formally split up, it’s like a separation but we never got around to sorting out the divorce. I think being in Freak! with my brother was sometimes a little uncomfortable, because I would fall back into the little sibling role and feel a bit brow-beaten. I would love to do some more Unbelievable Truth music, except Andy, who is still my best friend, is very happy now not being involved in the music industry, and I wouldn’t want to put that on him.” With singer Jamie Stuart now living in the States can Nigel see Dive Dive ever making a comeback? They were a band who made a huge impact on the Oxford scene, an early inspiration for Foals’ Yannis Philippakis. “We haven’t counted it out. It’s an unusual situation, in that before Jamie left we finished another album, which I think could be our best. But with him gone we weren’t going to be able to play shows and promote it, so it was shelved. Tarrant though

was really impressed with the mix on ‘Worth’, which was done by a friend of ours in LA called Chris Kasych, who just happens to be a Grammy-winning engineer who’s worked with Adele, Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young. Tarrant suggested we ask him if he would like to mix the new Dive Dive record, which he seems interested in doing, so it’s moving forwards slowly.” Unbelievable Truth exposed you fully to the music industry at its best and worst; what particularly do you remember from that time and what lessons did you learn? “From the vantage point of nearly twenty years since our debut album I have mostly fond memories of that time. I loved the creative environment, and it was such a special

treat to be working with two people who I loved, and still do. I suppose I learned to accept that for anyone working in a record company, them keeping their job and being able to pay the mortgage next month was always their top priority, so you have to navigate a path that respects that while not compromising on your artistic instincts.” **BACK TO THE PRESENT DAY** and February sees The Sad Song Co. playing what is their first official hometown gig. It’s a prospect that still gives the gig-hardened Nigel an attack of nerves. “I was thinking about it, and it might possibly be my first proper hometown solo show ever. I did a low-key Sofar Sounds night in 2016 with ‘In Amber’, but I think that’s the only Oxford gig I’ve done. It’s exciting! “As far as solo gigs go, I find them terrifying, honestly. I can drum in all sorts of high pressure situations and feel calm and professional, but when I have to sing and play and it be my songs every single butterfly in the world takes up residence in my stomach. Live it’s just me, and occasionally Jason playing bass, so the gigs are very stripped back in comparison to the full arrangements of the records. I would love to work with a band, but I just can’t afford to pay people, and I wouldn’t take the piss by asking anyone to do it as a favour. I do enjoy getting to the empirical centre of the songs by myself though. It’s a different kind of challenge to make them stand like that. There’ll be something from all four albums, but I’m more comfortable and prouder of ‘In Amber’ and ‘Worth’, so it’ll focus more on those. I enjoy throwing

in some covers as well. On the ‘In Amber’ tour I played a different Ben Folds cover every night. I haven’t run out yet, so maybe I’ll trot some more of those out.” **HAVING BEEN LUCKY** enough to make a career in music for over 20 years, what, we wonder, might Nigel have done in life if that hadn’t worked out? “The only other thing I wanted to do with my life was to be a househusband, with a whole bunch of kids. Although that doesn’t count as a career, it bloody well should because bringing up children is a lot of work, that doesn’t usually get appreciated as it should. I was a teacher at Oxpens college on their music BND, and I found that fulfilling and enjoyable. Lately I’ve been thinking about training as a counsellor as well.” Having spent so much of his life involved in music and particularly on the road, it might come as a surprise to those who don’t know him that Nigel is a strict teetotaler; as such are there elements of life on the road with a rock band he’s ever felt uncomfortable with? “Not uncomfortable, as such, because it would be a miserable life if ten months of most years I was in a situation where I felt out of sorts. I tend to be a little more isolated from the tour party than everyone else because after a certain point of the evening there’s not much I can contribute. But we’re all very close, which is somewhat miraculous after a decade on a tour submarine, and we stay sensitive to each other’s needs, and make allowances for them.” **SO, AFTER SO LONG ON THE** road Nigel Powell, now resident in Kidlington, is coming home, for one night only. The Oxford show is part of an 18-date UK tour to promote the new record, but will he be able to take the album out on the road some more or is Frank going to be calling any day soon? “We’ve finished the seventh Frank Turner album which will be out in April. At that point it all starts again so there won’t be any time for another year after that to do anything else musically. As far as The Sad Song Co. goes, I don’t even know for sure if there’ll be another album. If I write something, then there will. I have some ideas for other projects, and hopefully the Dive Dive album will get finished and appear. And I have some sorting out of my personal life to do. After over thirty years in the area I’m thinking of moving to London and seeing how that works out. But from April onwards the diary is basically solid...”

***‘Worth’ is released on the 9<sup>th</sup> February. The Sad Song Co. play Modern Art Oxford on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February.***



# RELEASED

## FLIGHTS OF HELIOS

### ‘Endings’

(Self released)

It’s hard to believe that this is Flights Of Helios’ debut album, as they’ve been around long enough to have an extensive back catalogue. Yet here we are with ‘Endings’, a title that hopefully is not an indication of the band’s intentions following this album’s long overdue release. Anyone who has caught the band live will know that when they’re at their best, they can be truly transcendental. Despite finding themselves defined as space rock, the truth is that Flights Of Helios take from an array of influences and fuse them into compositions that often straddle genres with ease. That said, ‘Endings’ opens with a sprawling, cosmic epic in the shape of ‘Donalogue’ that after a few minutes of undulating scene setting reaches its climax with vocalist Chris Beard repeatedly crooning the line “Sun, moon and stars”. In their repurposing of a traditional Irish folk ballad Flights Of Helios take in jazz breaks, eerie drones, and throw in a fair amount of pop *nous* for good measure. So yes, it’s space rock captain, but not as you know it. There are a fair amount of straightforward pop hooks throughout the album, notably when the band are at their most direct: ‘Factory’ skips along with the same new wave energy that infused The Strokes in their earliest days, before blunting those sharpened guitar riffs with waves of blurring reverb. ‘Funeral’, meanwhile, hints at the folkier aspects of Led Zep and the dark and brooding atmosphere of Nick Cave’s more unsettling work, but its most overriding influence seems to come from The Doors’ ‘Crystal Ship’. That may be down to a threatening, seething



## THE REAPER

### ‘Intoxicated’

(Self released)

‘Intoxicated’ is an appropriate title for The Reaper’s new EP; after years of kicking out the jams across the UK most of the band are finally old enough to drink in the clubs they’ve been playing since their early teens. Over 160 gigs in that time has seen them tour



organ and the chanted backing vocals which sound like the ruminations of a crew of damned sailors, but the song’s distinctly nautical theme only goes to further the connection. The album finishes up with ‘Cartographer’, a cover taken from Bleeding Heart Narrative’s ‘Tongue Tangled Hair’ album. It’s a shimmering epic that not only showcases Chris Beard’s wonderful vocal capabilities, but also Flights Of Helios’ flexibility. Those that still miss Stornoway will find plenty to love here as the band toy with dynamics and beautiful melodies throughout. It might be a cover but in this form it takes on a new life, as it veers from abstraction to sharp focus before sprawling out once again like an apparently endless summer afternoon. ‘Endings’ is a fine beginning, however delayed, and it’ll be interesting to see where Flights Of Helios go from here. On this evidence, the sun moon and stars are well within reach. **Sam Shepherd**

with Toseland and Kobra & The Lotus as well as support Fearless Vampire Killers, Tragedy and Rival States among myriad others. Musically adept from an early age, these five tracks are slickly recorded but see the band moving ever further from their metal roots to a more straight-up classic rock sound, less Judas Priest, more Stone Sour, blood, guts and thunder displaced by some almost funky grooves and choppy guitar riffs. The EP’s title track is a chest-beating stomp and scurry that just about keeps the grit and gravel under its fingernails but maybe needs an extra punch to it. ‘The Others’ ups the game a bit, the riffs meatier, singer Joey Kenny’s voice less forced and more authoritative, the whole thing a bit ballsier all round in a Queens of the Stone-Age kinda way, while closer ‘All She Wanted’ opts for the slow burn approach while keeping the riffage simmering at a steady intensity. It’s a solid enough set of songs, but only ‘The Others’ really stands out above and beyond standard melodic hard rocking in a heavily congested market. They might be all grown up now but it’d be a shame to see The Reaper lose their youthful zest to those arch enemies of rock and roll fun: proficiency and maturity. **Dale Kattack**

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## THE SAD SONG CO.

### ‘Worth’

(Self released)

This never less than interesting fourth album from Frank Turner & the Sleeping Souls drummer – and former member of Unbelievable Truth and Dive Dive – Nigel Powell manages to conjure up memories of some of the more literate quarters of 80s pop – Prefab Sprout and The The are touchstones and it’s a release where Powell has clearly agonised over his lyrics, striving to emerge from the shadow of more famous collaborators and contemporaries. ‘I Don’t See It’ recalls the oeuvre of Paddy McAloon’s band of Geordies while ‘Einmal ist Keinmal’ is pure Radiohead, perhaps unsurprisingly given that the paw prints of that band’s engineer, Graeme Stewart, were deployed in the album’s making. But where Powell hasn’t been able to help himself is with his predilection for an overblown guitar solo – ‘Lonely is a State of Mind’, an 80-style chugger with an overly simplistic chorus that would make Eric Clapton blush, while nine minute closer ‘Wounded Lion’ repeats the dose, only for a longer period of time. ‘Worth My Bones’, perhaps the most instantly catchy track on the LP, also dredges up memories of that benighted decade, recalling the white soul bands of the time attempting to keep it real. It’s the kind of trick that Cliff Richard might have tried to pull off; none of which is surprising given that ‘Worth’ is accompanied by a press release that veers so far into Alan Partridge territory that you’d expect Powell to be taking up residence at the Travelodge on Abingdon Road. Which is a shame because lead single ‘What You Make Of It’ is very good indeed; it recalls Talk Talk both musically and lyrically, perhaps obviously given that band once recorded a song called ‘Life’s What You Make it’, while ‘The Body Beautiful’ also supplies more than a nod to the legacy of Mark Hollis’s outfit only to once again head towards histrionics in its guitar foggery. A curate’s egg of an album then, with some genuine high points to match the ill-advised explorations. None of this might prevent ‘Worth My Bones’ becoming a massive hit with a fair wind, mind. **Rob Langham**



## ADAM BARNES

### ‘Vacancy at NASA’

(Wild Native)

If he’s been largely absent from the local scene of late Adam Barnes has hardly been idle, a recent tour of Germany, Austria and Switzerland adding to the 500-odd gigs he’s played since he began his musical adventures, inspired as a teenager by fellow Oxford songsmith (and later tourmate) Richard Walters. He’s also been recording this new album, the follow-up to 2014’s impressive debut ‘The Land, The Sea and Everything Lost Beneath’. If you were a fan of that opus, you won’t be disappointed by ‘Vacancy At NASA’, which revels in a similarly uplifting form of musical and poetic melancholy; it’s a collection of songs rich in reflection, longing and occasional sorrow, but also one capable of something approaching euphoria with epic flights of soul-bearing that fly in the same airspace as Elliot Smith, Damien Rice and Ray Lamontagne. Early highlight ‘Everything’ reaffirms the belief that Adam is best when he keeps things



## RAINBOW RESERVOIR

### ‘Channel Hanna’

(Odd Box)

Rainbow Reservoir might be an actual place, in Connecticut, but it really sounds like some My Little Pony SodaStream knock off. That’s fitting, because this album, whilst ostensibly punk, is embellished with the hairclips and dimpled grins of vintage twee pop, and for every buzzsaw guitar rasp and declamatory shout of norm-slapping individuality, there’s toyshop chintziness and cutesy melody. It could be the soundtrack to the advert for Riot Grrrl’s World. Despite a dip too far into cloying infantilism on ‘Blue Crab’ and ‘Big Bunny’, which sound like a six year old making up songs in the night to stave off a fear of the dark, ‘Channel Hanna’ is an exciting, energising record, and one that refreshingly doesn’t mistake unilateral hatred for pointed criticism. Whilst The Pistols bluntly stated the Queen “ain’t no human being”, Rainbow Reservoir’s ‘Brenda’ is a little more kind, observing that whilst ER might be very nice, she’s kind of pointless. No hard feelings, but how about the dissolution of the monarchy, ma’am? Similarly, ‘Podium Girls’ resembles Voodoo Queens’ ‘Supermodel Superficial’, but lets the glossy airheads down gently. As balance, ‘Gold Star

simple, the “I want to fall in love with her again” message as old as lyricism itself but given wings by Adam’s plaintive, occasionally dramatic, but rarely over-adorned voice which frequently bears a striking resemblance to his old friend Mr Walters. Similarly the heartstring-tugging ‘Lovely Navigator’, with its shadowy strings hovering at its edges and Adam’s voice at its emotionally wracked best, conjures a wonderfully starlit image of love as a spaceward trip. If there’s a fault with the album it’s its steadfastness of mood and message; Barnes is never going to reinvent the musical wheel but a couple of the more mid-paced tracks merge into each other in the memory, while lines like “I’ve got a fire burning in my soul” wouldn’t test the most basic of boyband lyricists. Then again “I always seek the worst in everything / It’s served me okay up to now / I think you’re better off without” suggests more



than a little self-awareness and one of his many strengths is in not tying himself up into too many lyrical knots. Like his music and voice, his words are best when they’re kept sweet and simple. Adam Barnes’ world isn’t the sunniest place to live, but the world is definitely a better place for having him and his music in it. **Sue Foreman**

## LITTLE BROTHER

### ELI

### ‘Tooth’

(Self released)

When one of the most reliably entertaining bands in town, one rooted in blues and funk traditions, inform you they’re ditching all that in favour of a more electronic, disco-inspired direction, you worry we’re heading for a Spinal Tap ‘Jazz Odyssey’ moment. Heck, they’ve even got rid of the waistcoats, apparently. Thankfully new single ‘Tooth’, the first of a series of singles planned for this year, isn’t such a radical departure as they lead us to believe, Alex Grew’s vocals are an instantly recognisable touchstone, while Jos Regal’s bass still comes coated in some nicely dirty funk. The beats are more regimented though, and the guitars come augmented by more prominent keyboard sounds. Overall it sounds like a spruced-up version of the band we know rather than a complete overhaul, as if they’ve swapped their Black Keys records for Glass Animals, but haven’t got round to taking the former to the charity shop yet – just in case. We’ll miss the waistcoats but as long as Little Brother Eli haven’t thrown the live energy baby out with the blues rock bathwater, we’ll still love them. **Dale Kattack**









# GRINGUIDE

## THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**THE BREW: The Bullingdon** – Loud and heavy rock’n’soul, influenced by Led Zep and Cream from Grimsby’s The Brew at tonight’s Haven Club show, the band out on tour to promote their new ‘Shake the Tree’ album, having previously toured with ZZ Top and Lynyrd Skynyrd, and shared stages with Jeff Beck and Joe Bonamassa.  
**MOTHER: The Cellar** – Grunged-up indie rocking in the vein of The Strokes, Spring

*Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>*

## COURTNEY MARIE ANDREWS:

### St. Barnabas Church

Courtney Marie Andrews has spent almost her entire adult life on the road. Raised in Arizona, at the age of 16 she headed off on her first tour: playing any bar or café that would have her along the West Coast. And when she finished that she took a Greyhound bus to New York and did the same along the East Coast. And when that was done, she spent the following decade touring as guitarist and backing singer with some 40 different acts, including Jimmy Eatworld and Damien Jurado, as well as Belgian band Milow, whose members in turn became her backing band on the EP she recorded over there. Eventually homesickness caught up with her and she went home and worked in a bar. Here she used the stories she heard from customers – farmers, construction workers, waitresses – alongside her own experiences to write and record the album ‘Honest Life’, her sixth (not bad given she’s still only 26 and has rarely been off the road long enough to record). The album uses that life on the road as a framework to explore youth, maturity, dreams of escape and the cost of that escape, longing and redemption in a classic, unfussy country roots style that recalls Gram Parsons, Emylou Harris and the 70s Laurel Canyon sound. It has the unhurried, assured feel of a seasoned artist, which she very much is, despite still being so young, so best catch her here before she’s whisked off again by the call of the road.



## FEBRUARY

King and Temples from the recent *Nightshift* Introducing stars, launching their new EP ‘Remnants of a Wasted Dream’.  
**FOOTNOTE: The Cellar** – House and techno club night with resident DJs.  
**THE SPIN with TIM WHITEHEAD: The Wheatsheaf** – The weekly jazz club hosts tenor saxophonist Whitehead, playing alongside the club’s in-house band.  
**THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW: The New Theatre** – Big stage tribute to The Man In Black.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf** – first of a fair few shows this month for the veteran local party starters, mixing up swamp blues, funk, ska, pop and psychedelia in the downstairs bar.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** – Oxford’s longest running open night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more every week.  
**ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure** – Weekly unplugged open mic session.  
**BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford** – Open blues jam.

## FRIDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**NATALIE IMBRUGLIA: O2 Academy** – First Oxford show in almost a decade for the one-time *Neighbours* star turned multi-million selling pop icon, best known for international hit ‘Torn’, and out on tour to promote 2015 album ‘Male’ as well as her long list of hits.  
**BOSSAPHONIK with SOOTHSAYERS: The Cellar** – Latin dance, global grooves, Balkan beats, Afrobeat and nu-jazz club night, hosted by Dan Ofer and tonight featuring a live set from London’s veteran Afrobeat ensemble Soothsayers, whose horn section featured in *Fela – The Musical*, as well as collaborating with Dele Sosimi Afrobeat Orchestra among a host of others.  
**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with FRACTURE + RESTRUCTURE + BE STILL + THE SCISSORS: The Wheatsheaf** – Characteristically mixed bag of fun from Klub Kakofanney again tonight with blues and funk-inflected rockers Fracture; punk-rap-rave hoolies Restructure; pop-punkers Be Still and more.  
**LONDON CALLING: The Bullingdon** – Tribute to The Clash, celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ‘Give ‘Em Enough Rope’.  
**SIMON & GARFUNKEL THROUGH THE YEARS: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Career-spanning tribute to the mega-selling duo.

## SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**COURTNEY MARIE ANDREWS: St. Barnabas Church** – Stories from the road and from behind the bar from the much-travelled singer and guitarist – *see main preview*  
**THE SHERLOCKS: O2 Academy** – Anthemic, Arctic Monkeys-style rocking from Sheffield’s Sherlocks, back in town after their show here last year, on another headline tour to coincide with new single ‘Chasing Shadows’, ahead of a spring tour supporting Liam Gallagher, the band having previously toured with The Libertines, Scouting For Girls, Reverend & the Makers and The Enemy.  
**SKEPSIS: O2 Academy** – South London bassman Skepsis returns to town after his set here as part of the Crucast label tour in November.  
**METAL TO THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf** – The latest heat in the battle to win a place at this summer’s Bloodstock, tonight with Imminent Annihilation, Honour in Ashes and Ape.  
**FRANKLY SINATRA: The New Theatre** – Big stage tribute to Ol’ Blue Eyes.  
**SIMPLE with DJ STINGRAY: The Bullingdon** – House and techno at the long running local club night, tonight hosting Detroit’s globetrotting DJ and producer Sherard Ingram, who’s worked with Carl Craig, Anthony Shakir and Kenny Dixon as well as releasing club hits under the name Urban Tribe as well as his DJ Stingray alias.  
**FREERANGE: The Cellar** – UK garage, grime and bassline club night.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX + TALC DEMONS + THE JESTERS: The Whitehouse**  
**THE INFLATABLES: The Wig & Pen** – Classic ska, reggae and Two-Tone tunes from the longstanding local party faves.  
**PHIL BEER: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – The former Albion Band and Show of Hands folk veteran comes to the Wychwood Folk Club, the singer and multi-instrumentalist backed by his new band.

## SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**JESCA HOOP + THE AUGUST LIST: The Bullingdon** – Haunted folk-pop from the much-loved Ms Hoop – *see main preview*  
**COFFEE BREATH + FANCY DRESS PARTY + NIGHT SWIMMING + SUPER LEMON DAYS: The Library** – Math/emo rocking in the vein of American Football, Tubelord and TTNG from Birmingham’s Coffee Breath, alongside local Sunny Day Real Estate-influenced indie sulkers Fancy Dress Party, and shoegazers Night Swimming.  
**BEARD OF DESTINY + DES BARKUS + ANNEI + FRANKLIN’S TOWER: Donnington Community Centre (6pm)** – Free evening of acoustic music, including Delta blues from Beard of Destiny and a tribute to

The Grateful Dead from Franklin’s Tower.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms** – Weekly open session.  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (4-6.30pm)** – Rock and blues covers from the veteran local singer and guitarist.

## MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**SHOPPING + KONE + DESPICABLE ZEE: The Cellar** – Post punk goes to the Hi-Life disco with the busy, busy Rachel Aggs and chums – *see main preview*  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Royal Blenheim** – Weekly open session.  
**MARTIN SIMPSON: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Masterful traditional folk songsmithery from the veteran acoustic and slide guitarist, back at Nettlebed.

## TUESDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: James Street Tavern** – Weekly open mic night.  
**INDUSTRY: The Cellar** – Techno and disco club night.

## WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**ROCKSOC NIGHT: The Wheatsheaf** – Live rock from the student music society.  
**BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar** – 80s, synth-pop, glam and disco club night.  
**AMIR + AKA GEORGE + THE KINGS PARADE + ERICA: The Jericho Tavern**

## THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**REDFACES: The Cellar** – Sheffield’s harmony-heavy 60s r’n’b-influenced indie rockers head back to town after their show here back in October, following supports to Courteeners and Strypes and an appearance at last summer’s Truck Festival.  
**NEW GENERATION BLUES SHOWCASE: The Bullingdon** – The fifth showcase tour of rising British blues talent brings Danny Giles’ full-blooded blues-rock, gospel and soul to town, joined by ever-gigging guitarist Brent Hutchinson, inspired by Hendrix, Gary Moore, Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughan. There’s also dynamic rocking blues from duo Red Butler.  
**CLUBBERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY: The Cellar** – House, disco and soul club night with renowned selector Laurence Guy, plus DJ Villemin.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure**  
**BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

## FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**UPRISING with CASSELS + CHEROKII + EASTER ISLAND STATUES + FLATLANDS: O2 Academy** – Quality line-up of local talent at the O2’s team-up with BBC Introducing in Oxford. Wiry, uptight post-hardcore brothers Cassels unleash their poetic ire alongside thunderous beats’n’riffs duo Cherokii, heroic indie/folk-rock starlets Easter Island Statues and fluffy pop crew Flatlands.  
**WE ARE NOT DEVO: The Cellar** – They

blummin well aren’t, but also they are – *see main preview*

**MR B THE GENTLEMAN RHYMER + GRACE SAVAGE: The Bullingdon** – Straight outta Surrey, Bespectacled, besuited and elegantly moustachioed chap-rapper Mr B, gives hip hop a run through with the Queen’s English, coming in at that point where De la Soul meets Noel Coward and Flanders & Swann. Or maybe NWA if they’d grown up in Hove and been more interested in cricket and fine tea.  
**SILK ROAD + YORE ONLY RITES + ORCA + THE DEMOISELLES: The Wheatsheaf** – Swaggering hard rock and blues from Silk Crew at tonight’s local bands showcase.  
**MICHAEL BOLTON: The New Theatre** – Walk to the North Pole in just our underwear; go head to head with a pack of ravenous wolves; free dive into the Miarana Trench; call Adebayo Akinfenwa rude names to his face: these are all things *Nightshift* would willingly do before we’d listen to Michael Bolton ever again. And, dear God, that haircut...

**TERRAFORMS: The Cellar** – The long-running local drum&bass club night enters its tenth year, tonight with guest Phil Tangent on the decks, alongside Greencode & Bolo, Magnum, Swyndla, MC KB and MC Sandman.

**NIGEL GARAGE: The Bullingdon** - Puntastic garage club night.  
**THE RONNIE SCOTT’S SOHO SONGBOOK: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – The Ronnie Scott’s Allstars run through classics from the world-famous London jazz club.

## SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**DREAM STATE + CHAPTER & VERSE: The Cellar** – Technical post-hardcore from south Wales quintet Dream State, out on a headline tour in the wake of the huge success of last year’s anthemic ‘White Lies’ single, clocking up over a million Spotify plays and 3.5 million Youtube plays. Support from London alt-rockers Chapter and Verse.  
**CASH: O2 Academy** – Second Johnny Cash tribute show of the month.  
**SYKKO DOLLZ + SAINTS OF SIN + SPYDER BYTE: The Wheatsheaf** – Triple dose of hard rock courtesy of OxRox tonight, with sleaze rock and glam-punkers Sykko Dollz headlining over hard rockers Saints of Sin and sleaze-metallers Spyder Byte.  
**SOMEWHERE LIKE YOU – THE ADELE SONGBOOK: The New Theatre** – Tribute to the billion-selling singer.  
**MOVE: The Cellar** – UK bass and drum&bass club night with a guest set from Hedex, one of the hottest names in jump up.  
**GUNFINGERS: The Bullingdon** – Grime, r’n’b and bassline club night  
**BANDICOOT + CLAYTORIDE: The Jericho Tavern** – Indie rocking from Swansea’s Bandicoot.  
**PSYCHEDELIC TEATIME: Magic Café, Magdalen Road (3-4.30pm)** – Electro-psych rockers Flights of Helios play an acoustic set in the East Oxford veggie café as they launch their long-awaited debut album this month.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Red Lion,**



*Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>*

## JESCA HOOP / THE AUGUST LIST: The Bullingdon

Two things always tend to get brought up in any article about Jesca Hoop before her music is even mentioned: she’s a former Mormon, and she was previously nanny to Tom Waits’ kids. So, there. Got that out the way now. Both have a bearing on her music though: lyrically she can be scouring about religion, including her former faith, and Waits was an important mentor to Hoop early in her career, describing her music as “like swimming in a lake at midnight”. Hoop’ picked up a fair few influential friends along the course of her five-album career: Elbow’s Guy Garvey persuaded her to move from her native California, where she’d been working as a wilderness guide, and the pair have collaborated regularly, while in 2016 she recorded an album of duets with Iron & Wine’s Sam Beam. Her new album, ‘Memories Are Now’, released on Subpop, reflects her folk roots as well as her restless spirit: songs can be sparse, simple and acoustic, or percussion and loop heavy, densely orchestrated and full of ideas. She can be self-consciously kooky at times, musically and lyrically, but more often she can be genuinely otherworldly and strange. Everything she does is understated and precise even while she’s singing about Greek mythology, the Bible, internet age anxiety and love in all its bitter forms. Superb local support tonight in the form of *Nightshift*’s Number 1 act of 2017, The August List.

Eynsham

## SUNDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**JORJA SMITH: O2 Academy** – Emotive and politicised r’n’b from the Walsall singer and Brit Critics Choice winner for 2018 – *see main preview*  
**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE FACTORY LIGHTS + TONY BATEY & SAL MOORE + CANUTE’S PLASTIC ARMY + MARK BOSLEY & PETE LOCK**





Monday 5<sup>th</sup>

SHOPPING / KONE /  
DESPICABLE ZEE:  
The Cellar

Rachel Aggs is a busy woman. When she’s not playing with Trash Kit with former Rock of Travolta and Electralane member Ros Murray, or touring with the sublime Sacred Paws, she’s usually working on a new Shopping record. They’ve released three in the last four years, which is some going. Aggs has also spent time in Golden Grrls and a few other bands but Shopping is up there with Sacred Paws as her best work: sparse dance-punk that keeps one eye on the party vibe and the other on social and political issues – particularly race and gender. The trio is steeped in the uptight funk of the late-70s/early-80s, inspired by The Raincoats, The Au Pairs, Gang of Four and The Delta 5, with Aggs’ West African hi-life-inspired guitar style always to the fore. Tonight’s gig, hosted by Divine Schism, is Shopping’s Oxford debut, the band out on tour to promote last year’s ‘The Official Body’ album, as fine a slice of post-punk pop as you’ll hear. And who else to share the stage with them than Oxford’s own post-punk-inspired trio Kone, mixing many of the same influences – particularly The Raincoats – with Young Marble Giants’ gently bubbling indie pop and The xx’s gothic understatement. Opening the show is Zahra Tehrani’s excellent, inventive solo beats project Despicable Zee.

+ MARK SOLLIS: **The Wheatsheaf** (3pm) – Klub Kakofanney host a free afternoon of live music in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.  
OPEN MIC SESSION: **Harcourt Arms**

MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

NEWTON FAULKNER: **O2 Academy** – The ever affable Mr Faulkner returns to town as part of a tour to promote new album ‘Hit the Ground Running’.  
WILLY MASON + NINA VIOLET: **The Jericho Tavern** – Rough-hewn rustic folk-pop, poetic sincerity, winsome charm and dusty hymns to moving on from the New York troubadour, back in Oxford for his first club show in almost a decade, already sold out.  
K-FUNKZ: **The Cellar** – Bassline, UK garage and drum&bass club night with Wheeto, Kryphon, Burt Cope and Xodos.  
OXFORD CLASSIC JAZZ: **Harcourt Arms** – Classic jazz and ragtime from the local ensemble, taking on Jelly Roll Morton, Louis

Armstrong, Fats Domino and more.  
OPEN MIC NIGHT: **The Royal Blenheim McGOLDRICK, McCUSKER & DOYLE: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Another chance to catch three of the contemporary folk scene’s leading lights together in an intimate setting, with the Transatlantic Sessions trio back at Nettlebed’s renowned weekly club – Michael McGoldrick plays flute, whistles and uilleann pipes, with John McCusker on fiddle and John Doyle on vocals and guitar for a run through of their combined catalogues and traditional numbers.

TUESDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

INTRUSION: **The Cellar** – Monthly goth, industrial, ebm and alternative 80s club night with Doktor Joy and Bookhouse keeping it dark on the decks.  
SAM BAKER: **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Dark-hearted, poetic Americana in the vein of Johnnny Cash, Townes Van Zandt and Steve Earle from Texan songsmith Sam Baker at tonight’s Empty Room show, the singer and guitarist over in the UK to promote ‘Land of Doubt’, his fifth album, recorded in Nashville and seeing Baker move towards a more electric sound.  
SPARK’S SIDE OF THE MOON: **James Street Tavern**

WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

JOHN: **The Cellar** – Seriously malign noise-rock from the hard-to-Google south London duo (both of whom are called John), slamming it out in the vein of Fucked Up, No Age and Idles, who they recently supported, as well as shows with Pulled Apart By Horses and USA Nails. They’re out on a headline tour to promote recent debut album ‘Godspeed in the National Limit’, and a perfectly beastly way to soundtrack Valentine’s Day.  
METAL TO THE MASSES: **The Wheatsheaf** – Tonight’s heat of the heavyweight battle of the bands features Violence is Golden, Confront the Carnage and Damaged Reich.

THURSDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

THE LOVELY EGGS: **The Cellar** – Magic onions and punked-up swearsy psychedelia from the Lancastrian pop superheroes – see main preview  
HAYSEED DIXIE: **O2 Academy** – Classic songs covered bluegrass style by the Stateside hillbilly crazies, renowned for taking on AC/DC, Queen, Motorhead, Led Zep, Sabbath, The Darkness and more, but with new album ‘Free Your Mind and Your Grass Will Follow’ expanding their palette to Bob Marley, Marvin Gaye, The Temptations and Elvis Costello, among others.  
SPIN with NIGEL PRICE: **The Wheatsheaf** – Breezy swing and blues-tinged jazz from the hard-working guitarist at tonight’s Spin.  
THE PETE FRYER BAND: **The Wheatsheaf** – Free gig in the downstairs bar.  
BIG BOY BLOATER + THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES: **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Classic r’n’b, rockabilly, blues and surf from singer, guitarist and radio DJ Big Boy Bloater and his band back in town, promoting recent album ‘Luxury Hobo’, having previously toured with Imelda May. Great country-tinged soul and

r’n’b from The Deadbeat Apostles in support.  
CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre**  
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: **Jude the Obscure**  
BLUES JAM: **The Catherine Wheel, Sandford**

FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

ITCH: **The Cellar** – The King Blues frontman heads out on another solo tour, this time reading from his new *101 Haikus* book of politicised poetry, as well as playing songs from his King Blues and solo career.  
THUNDER ON THE LEFT + SECOND IN LINE + ORDER #227: **The Wheatsheaf** – Nimble, angular and melodic indie-core from London’s Thunder on the Left back in town and coming in somewhere between Fugazi, Veruca Salt and The Breeders on new EP ‘The Age of Letting Go’. Support from Newbury’s melodic skatepunks Second in Line and Oxford’s virulent hardcore beasts Order#227  
ULYSSES WELLS + MELLOR + DAIS: **The**

Friday 9<sup>th</sup>

WE ARE NOT DEVO:  
The Cellar

Nightshift doesn’t, as a rule, go a big deal on tribute bands, mainly because the ones who come to town tend to be tributes to predictable granddad-rock acts, from Queen to Pink Floyd. Usually Pink Floyd. We’re always happy to wallow in a bit of nostalgia though if something interesting pops by and here we get the rare treat of a tribute to Devo, Akron, Ohio’s electro-pop/weird-rock freaks whose kitsch surrealism hid clever satire and astonishing musical invention. Debut album ‘Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!’ is a consistently under-appreciated electronic/post-punk masterpiece whose influence remains constant if mainly underground. Featuring two pairs of brothers – the Mothersbaughs and the Casales, Devo formed in 1974, inspired by the murder of student protesters at Kent university by National Guards, and the idea that American society was actually devolving (pretty prescient given recent events). They enjoyed only one hit in their time - ‘Whip It’, but the likes of ‘I Saw My Baby Getting Sloppy’, ‘Jocko Homo’, ‘Mongaloid’, ‘Girl You Want’ and their classic Stones cover ‘(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction’ are brilliantly weird. So yeah, *Nightshift* is taking a night off from championing new music and is indulging in musical comfort food. Join us; we’ll buy you a beer and maybe enjoy a bit of a (weirdly robotic) dance.



LOW ISLAND

The Cellar  
27.01.18 | SOLD OUT

DREAM STATE

The Cellar  
10.02.18 | £6

PALE WAVES

The Cellar  
26.02.18 | SOLD OUT

GWENNO

The Bullingdon  
23.03.18 | £10

THIS IS THE KIT

O2 Academy  
28.01.18 | £16

JOHN

The Cellar  
14.02.18 | £6

HUSKY LOOPS

The Cellar  
01.03.18 | £7

SELF HELP

The Cellar  
23.03.18 | £6

PETE FIJ &  
TERRY BICKERS

The Bullingdon  
29.01.18 | £8

THE LOVELY EGGS

The Cellar  
15.02.18 | £9

EYRE LLEW

The Cellar  
03.03.18 | £7

SUPER HANS

O2 Academy  
30.03.18 | £15

FLAMINGODS

The Cellar  
31.01.18 | £8

ITCH  
(THE KING BLUES)

The Cellar  
16.02.18 | £10

SAINT AGNES

The Cellar  
05.03.18 | £6.50

FIRESHUFFLE WITH  
STEVE DAVIS AND  
KAVUS TORABI

The Cellar  
31.03.18 | £8

MOTHER

The Cellar  
01.02.18 | £6

THE BLINDERS

The Cellar  
17.02.18 | £7

PAUL DRAPER

O2 Academy  
07.03.18 | £17.50

LITTLE COMETS

O2 Academy  
16.04.18 | £15

JESCA HOOP

The Bullingdon  
04.02.18 | £15

DEAD!

The Cellar  
19.02.18 | £8

FICKLE FRIENDS

O2 Academy  
12.03.18 | £10

CABBAGE

O2 Academy  
18.04.18 | £13

REDFACES

The Cellar  
08.02.18 £6

CATHOLIC ACTION

The Cellar  
21.02.18 | £7

PHOBOPHOBES

The Cellar  
22.03.18 | £7

SHAME

The Bullingdon  
19.04.18 | £8.50

WE ARE NOT DEVO

The Cellar  
09.02.18 | £8

DESERT MOUNTAIN  
TRIBE

The Cellar  
24.02.18 | £8

MT. WOLF

The Bullingdon  
22.03.18 | £9

THE ACADEMIC

The Cellar  
21.04.18 | £9

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TICKETS FROM SEETICKETS.COM





*Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>*

## JORJA SMITH: O2 Academy

For someone who started her music career singing Katy B songs with a mate at school, Jorja Smith has done okay for herself. Okay, rather more than okay – phenomenally well really. For starters she’s won the 2018 Brits Critics Choice Award, an honour previously bestowed on Adele, Sam Smith and most recently Rag’n Bone Man, and an almost sure-fire guarantee of commercial mega success. And then there was the MOBO Award nomination last year. And getting the chance to collaborate with and perform live with Drake. And being picked to open for Bruno Mars on last year’s US tour. Yeah, not a bad 18 months for the singer from Walsall whose debut album ‘11’ is finally released this year. It follows a debut single, ‘Blue Lights’, which was picked up by Skrillex and Stormzy; a club hit, ‘On My Mind’, with Preditah and million-streaming singles like ‘Where Did I Go’ and ‘Beautiful Little Fools’, the latter released on International Women’s Day and written by Smith about the women in *The Great Gatsby*. If her voice is sultry and soulful, her words carry plenty of bite, but what do you expect from someone who wrote an A Level dissertation entitled ‘Is Post-Colonialism Still Present in Grime?’. Musically her jazz-inflected r’n’b isn’t turning over any new stones, but her voice is worth any success she gets all by itself. Not surprising then that tonight’s show is already sold out; this time next year she’ll have far outgrown venues this size.

**Jericho Tavern** – Daisy Rodgers Music show with local rockers mixing up the influences of Royal Blood and Them Crooked Vultures, with support from Reading’s Libertines-inspired rockers Mellor and singer/songwriter Dais, coming in somewhere between KT Tunstall and Kate Nash.

**SILENT DISCO: O2 Academy**

## SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**THE SAD SONG CO.: Modern Art Oxford** – Nigel Powell plays his first hometown headline show to launch new album ‘Worth – *see main interview feature*.

**DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE: O2 Academy** – Manchester’s titan of scabrous wit and legendary punk poet JCC returns to Oxford after his sold-out show here in November, continuing to explore the gutter and the sky in his undiminished sardonic style, the godfather of slam poetry and a rhyming genius with few

peers on classic cuts like ‘Beasley Street’, ‘I Wanna Be Yours’, ‘Evidently Chickentown’ and ‘Twat’.

**TOM ZANETTI + K.O. KANE: O2 Academy** – Simple hosts the Leeds based rapper and producer, best known for his 2016 hit ‘You Want Me’ with Sadie Ama.

**THE BLINDERS + BRIXTONS + WATERFOOLS: The Cellar** – Barricade-manning, statue-kicking militant indie-punk and rock’n’roll in the vein of The Enemy, Arctic Monkeys and Shame from the Manchester band, out on tour.

**THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + SWITCH OUT + MÖBIUS: The Wheatsheaf** – Sweet, dark synth-pop and indie from The Shaker Heights, playing songs from last year’s excellent ‘Collapse’ album.

**MUSICAL MEDICINE: The Bullingdon GRAFFITI CLASSICS: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – The livewire string quartet mix up classical music with gypsy swing, folk-dance and comedy, pitching in somewhere between Beethoven, bluegrass, baroque, rock’n’roll and disco.

## SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**THE TANNAHILL WEAVERS: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Traditional Celtic ballads, lullabies, jigs and reels from the Scottish band.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms**

**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (4-6.30pm)**

## MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**DEAD!:** **The Cellar** – Melodic velocity grunge and punk fun from London’s Dead!, out on a headline tour to promote debut album ‘The Golden Age of Not Even Trying’, having supported Papa Roach at Brixton Academy at the end of 2017.

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Royal Blenheim CARA DILLON: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Traditional folk music from the multiple award-winning Irish singer, back at Nettlebed after her show here last year.

## TUESDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**PETE BOSS & THE BLUEHEARTS: The Bullingdon** – Slowhand electric blues from the local blues-rock veteran and former Elmores frontman at tonight’s Haven Club show.

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

## WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**CATHOLIC ACTION: The Cellar** – Glasgow’s indie rockers Catholic Action, led by Casual Sex drummer Chris McCrory, return to Oxford for a headline show after supporting Kagoule here last year.

**BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar**

**METAL TO THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf** – Stoner-blues heavyweights Crimson Tusk go up against Witney death metallers Bloodshot and punk veterans Trauma UK at tonight’s heat of the Bloodstock battle

of the bands.

## THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**FISHERMAN’S FRIEND: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – The veteran a capella shanty congregation play an already sold-out show at Wychwood Folk Club, keeping the timeless songs of the sea alive a quarter of a century on from their formation in Port Isaac, Cornwall, during which time they’ve played Glastonbury and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and released two Top 10 albums.

**SPIN with THE ALISON RAYNER**

**QUINTET: The Wheatsheaf** – Rhythmic jazz, Latin, funk and folk from bassist Rayner

*Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>*

## THE LOVELY EGGS: The Cellar

Despite describing themselves simply as “a punk rock band from northern England,” it’s fair to say there isn’t another band around anything like The Lovely Eggs. Formed by married couple Holly Ross and David Blackwell, the pair, from Lancaster, plough a singularly idiosyncratic furrow, bashing out gorgeously exuberant indie-thrash gems like ‘Allergies’ and ‘Goofin’ Around (In Lancashire)’ one minute, potty-mouthed grunge rants like ‘Don’t Look At Me (I Don’t Like It)’ and ‘People Are Twats’ the next, everything smothered in a quintessentially northern gravy of daft humour, oddball lyricism and Holly’s unrefined Lancastrian accent. On the one hand they’re so determinedly anti-commercial they released a single called ‘Fuck It’ on a bank holiday Monday so that DJs couldn’t play it and no-one could actually buy it, but on the other, pretty much everything they do comes tinged with pop magic. With new album ‘This Is Eggland’ the pair have recruited Dave Fridmann to coat everything in a rich albumen of psychedelic craziness, tracks like ‘Hello, I am Your Sun’ and ‘Wiggy Giggy’ keeping one hand on their northern lunacy while aiming spaceward and creating their most commercial music to date. *Night-shift* sometimes dreams that if we’re really good, when we die we’ll go to Heaven and The Lovely Eggs will be our new mum and dad. The afterlife would be a riot of colour and fun.



– former bandmate of Deirdre Cartwright in The Guest Stars – and her band at tonight’s Spin club.

**CIPHERS + CHALK + BREEZEWAX: The Jericho Tavern** – Daisy Rodgers Music Night with new local electro/indie glitchers Ciphers, taking a cue from Portishead and Explosions in the Sky, plus fidgety electro-pop from London outfit Chalk and woozy, electro, r’n’b and hip hop from Breezewax.

**FOOTNOTE: The Cellar**

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure**

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

## FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**SKYLARKIN’ SOUNDSYSTEM featuring KIOKO: The Cellar** – Count Skylarkin hosts his monthly reggae, dancehall and soca shindig, tonight featuring a live set from Birmingham’s Sioko, mixing up reggae, soca and Afrobeat into their pop-friendly tunes, winning fans in David Rodigan and Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry along the way.

**BRIXTONS + RESTRUCTURE + THE RELATIONSHIPS + FUJI: The Wheatsheaf** – Indie rocking in an Arctic Monkey vein from Wantage’s Brixtons at tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase, and host Osprey’s birthday party. They’re joined by Rap/rave/punk duo Restructure, channelling The Streets through Sleaford Mods’ sense of disgust. There’s also a return to live action for tweedy psychedelic indie poets The Relationships, with tales of late-life melancholy riding on Byrds-like pop wings, and funky indie pop from Fuji.

**THE LAST DINOSAUR + SAM MARTIN: The Jericho Tavern** – Fragile, soul-bearing chamber-folk and country-tinged pop from Cambridge’s The Last Dinosaur, taking inspiration from Talk Talk, Sparklehorse and Penguin Café Orchestra.

**OWL LIGHT TRIO: Quaker Meeting House, St. Giles** – Instrumental experimental folk from local outfit Owl Light Trio, recent support to The Rheingans Sisters.

**TRACKSUIT & TRANCE: The Bullingdon** – Old skool house and techno.

**WHITE HORSE WHISPERERS + BOON, MEW & WOOSTER: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Traditional folk tunes and originals from Faringdon’s WHW at tonight’s pay-what-you-want bar show, alongside BMW’s easy bluegrass, trad folk and 60s pop.

**MAD LARRY: The Prince of Wales, Shippon** – Classic r’n’b, rock and blues from the veteran local singer and guitarist.

## SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**DESERT MOUNTAIN TRIBE: The Cellar** – Epic, opulent psych-rock from London/ Cologne trio Desert Mountain Tribe, taking Black Angel’s frazzled, dark-edged psych for a trip into U2-style stadium rock and prog, via Black Mountain and The Pretty Things.

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with LITTLE BROTHER ELI + QUARTERMELON + LUCY VEE: The Wheatsheaf** – Top-notch mixed bill from GTI

with local live faves Little Brother Eli back in action with a new disco-fied, electronic sound that still has its roots in funk-ed-up rock. They’re joined by promising new indie crew Quartermelon, mixing shades of shoegaze, soul and funk into their inventive sound, and Death of Hi-Fi singer Lucy Cropper’s new solo project Lucy Vee, marrying her sultry, soulful voice to funky beats and electronics.

**MAYA YOUSSEF: Holywell Music Room** – Traditional and experimental Syrian music from the acclaimed qanun virtuoso – *see main preview*

**FACTORY LIGHTS + CHRIS REEVES + MOIETY: Harcourt Arms** – Small Faces-style 60s r’n’b and Springsteen-influenced blue collar tales from Shapes offshoot Factory Lights, putting Oxford’s past to song in personal style.

## SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**SPINNING COIN + GREEN HANDS + SALVATION BILL: The Library** – Variouslly jangly and spiky indie of the old school from Glaswegian quintet Spinning Coin at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the band drawing inspiration from classic Scottish 80s bands like Josef K and The Pastels, on whose Geographic label their recent debut album ‘Permo’ was released.

**SUNDAY SESSION with MAN CHOIR + VALENTINO: Florence Park Community Centre (2-5pm)** – Family-friendly gig session with 30-strong community choir Man Choir performing an eclectic repertoire, plus local acid-jazz funk crew Valentino playing James Taylor Quartet songs.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms**

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Prince of Wales, Iffley (3-6pm)**

**TOM IVEY: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)** – Acoustic and electric blues covers and originals.

## MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**PALE WAVES + OUR GIRL + BLOXX: The Cellar** – Ethereal shoegazy spangle and electro-indie from Manchester’s Pale Waves, heading up this DIY Class of 2018 tour, the band having recently been long listed for the BBC Sound of 2018 award. Debut single ‘There’s a Honey’ was produced by The 1975 and they’ve previously been out on tour with Superfood.

**KING 810: O2 Academy** – Michigan’s brawling metalcore mob bring the brutality and darkness as they tour their most recent ‘La Letit Mort or a Conversation with God’ album, fronted by MMA fighter David Gunn, so probably not a band you’d want to heckle too much, at least without a nearby escape route.

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Royal Blenheim**

**BREABACH: Nettlebed Folk Club** –



*Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>*

## MAYA YOUSSEF: Holywell Music Room

Born in Damascus, virtuoso Syrian qanun player Maya Youssef moved to the UK after being given an Arts Council exceptional talent award in 2012, allowing her to launch a career that has subsequently seen her playing at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the Proms alongside Damon Albarn and won her an audience around the world. The qanun is a 78-stringed instrument akin to a plucked zither and is integral to traditional Syrian music. Youssef has taken those traditions, including using maqam scales, and fused them with elements of jazz and flamenco among other styles, on her debut album ‘Syrian Dreams’, a journey through and tribute to her battered homeland, dealing instrumentally with the war there, her music attempting to capture the sorrow and hope of the conflict and those caught up in it. Fans and critics have acclaimed her unique, innovative approach to the instrument and it’s fitting her first visit to Oxford, courtesy of Oxford Contemporary Music, takes place at the historic Holywell Music Room, which has hosted myriad musical explorers and traditionalists over the centuries. Youssef is joined by local cello virtuoso Barney Morse-Brown from Duotone, and percussionist Elizabeth Nott, who also played on the album.

Scottish-flavoured folk dance from the 2016 Scottish Traditional Music Awards Best Folk Act and Album of the Year winners, playing songs, tunes and step dances from their recent ‘Astar’ on bagpipes, fiddle, flute and guitar.

## TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**HAK BAKER: The Jericho Tavern** – Folk-reggae-indie-hip hop fusion from the London singer, touring his ‘Misfits’ EP.

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

## WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

*Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion is the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, no exceptions. Listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be used without permission.*





**THE CRIBS / PAWS**

**O2 Academy**

Being a support act can kind of suck sometimes. “We’ve come all the way from Glasgow,” complains Philip Taylor, lead singer of PAWS, “so

maybe come forward from the bar.” No one comes forward from the bar. The mood sours as the set continues. Eventually Taylor throws his guitar

at the drum kit and storms off. It’s an understandable reaction to playing to such a lacklustre crowd – the room’s almost empty at this

point in the evening – but that doesn’t make it any less pathetic and insulting. And it’s in stark contrast to the attitude of The Cribbs, a band who’ve headlined the second stage at the Reading and Leeds Festivals, and who play the upstairs room at the O2 Academy as though it’s the best night of their life. When they’re not taking requests from the crowd or reminiscing about their last time in the venue (2004, with Death Cab for Cutie), they’re playing seriously loud, seriously good rock music, with the sort of energy and enthusiasm most bands can only dream of. The set kicks off with ‘Our Bovine Public’, the opening track from ‘Men’s Needs, Women’s Needs, Whatever’, with its jerky, stabbing drum beat and anthemic chorus getting the crowd instantly on side – and it just keeps getting better from there. ‘Come On, Be a No-One’ drives things forward with its alt-rock bassline and angsty lyrics. ‘I’m a Realist’ gets an uproarious reception, helped along by some chanting from the audience. The newer tracks are good, if less well known but it’s the best tracks from ‘Men’s Needs...’, culminating in ‘Be Safe’ – accompanied by a giant video of Lee Ranaldo – and the Strokes-influenced title track, that stand out in a set that’s always blisteringly energetic, always bold and brash, pretty much always brilliant.

By the time The Cribbs leave the stage (no encore, just the loud hum of feedback that continues until a crew member comes onstage to unplug Ryan Jarman’s guitar), everyone seems a bit dazed. It’ll be another 24 hours before we can hear properly again, thanks to the bizarrely misadjusted levels at the O2, but it’ll be a lot longer before we clear our minds of the sheer vitality of that performance. And PAWS? Well – let’s just hope they get time to have a chat with the Jarmans about working a crowd. *Tom Kingsley*

**KNOW / MSRY / REPERCUSSIONS OF YESTERDAY**

**The Wheatsheaf**

A quick glance at Repercussions of Yesterday’s Facebook reveals that the one-man death/doom band has been releasing albums and EPs for over 12 years now. Tonight’s gig suggests the passing years haven’t done anything to mellow Roy’s mood as he churns out a portentous half hour of chain gang clang and demonic growls, sometimes rising from his lava flow dirge to crank up the death side of his sound. It can be a bit laboured at times but as far as lowering spirits goes, it does its job. After which MSRY are the musical equivalent of stepping on a hand grenade; everything is noise and bright lights and you momentarily feel like your innards are about to become your outtards. Pocket-sized human war machine Kyle Churcher, topless and tattooed, is immediately off the stage and in the audience’s face, screaming, bellowing, rasping and spittle flecking what might be his shopping list or the names of everyone who’s ever done him wrong and needs to die. Right now. His offstage antics mean you could miss guitarist Charlie Bishop’s gut-busting onstage performance, perpetual motion personified as he cranks out a hardcore storm that leaves any concessions to contemplation or clean in a chewed heap in a bin somewhere.

MSRY aren’t reinventing the wheel but they have kicked several of its struts to splinters.It’s relentless fun, if your idea of fun involves large-scale nuclear devastation. Never mind Trump, this is fire and fury. Tonight’s gig being part of the Metal To The Masses competition to win a place at Bloodstock, the running order has been drawn out of a hat, and it’s Know’s unfortunate task to follow MSRY onstage. Someone says they’re from Basingstoke; someone else thinks they’re from Berinsfield; their accents suggest somewhere just west of The Volga. Musically they’re somewhere just west of the 1980s, all hair and histrionics, a bit too cheesy for their own good and with a whiff of the Viper Room about them. Musically they’re a disjointed mess for the most part but the diminutive singer punches above her weight like a Sylvanian Klitschkow with a raw Joan Jett voice on her that carries the band along. Just as we’re about to give up on them they close with a belting death metal number that goes the full Cradle of Filth. Too little too late perhaps but hopefully a darker path they’ll want to follow in future as they make their way back to Basingstoke, or Berinsfield, or even Barnaul. *Dale Kattack*

**GO WEST / NIK KERSHAW / WANG CHUNG**

**The New Theatre**

What should be a routine retro run-through of three of the 1980s’ more forgettable mid-table pop acts (advertised under the rather hopeful banner ‘Icons of the 80s’) turns out to be a more unusual evening, as well as a reminder of that decades’ less appealing musical traits. For starters Cutting Crew have been forced to pull out of the gig because Nick Van Eede’s daughter is critically ill. Fellow one-hit-wonders (in the UK at least) Wang Chung are a late replacement and come with the added bonus of sharing at least one member. By way of tribute to Nick and his daughter, and doubtless to sate any disappointed punters, they play ‘I Just Died In Your Arms’, which is touching but perhaps not the most appropriate title given the circumstances. We wish her well for a full recovery, but we’re not sure we can forgive Wang Chung for their bombastic soft rock that edges too close to Dire Straits’ stadium pomp at times. Or their cover of Blur’s ‘Boys & Girls’, which is pub-rock proficient but utterly soulless. Still, ‘Dancehall Days’ is a tune, taking the band from aimless bluesy chug into funky electro-pop for four fun minutes. We should have guessed something was up when Go West turn up onstage alongside Nik Kershaw for his opening number, a cover of U2’s ‘Beautiful Day’. The height difference between Pete Cox and Kershaw is genuinely comical, which at least detracts from their demolition of

the song in question. But it quickly becomes apparent that the two acts are going to perform a joint set, with a brace from Go West and so on, like some kind of 80s pop penalty shoot-out. The best of Kershaw’s songs are the lightweight synth-pop of ‘I Won’t Let the Sun Go Down On Me’, and the anthemic ‘Wouldn’t It Be Good’, while Go West did have a couple of passable nuggets in the shape of ‘King of Wishful Thinking’, which has the entire crowd singing along, and the brassy electro-funk of ‘We Close Our Eyes’, both saved til last. There’s also some right old guff. The joint covers for starters: Eurythmics’ ‘Sweet Dreams’ is turned into mushy, MOR pulp, while their take on ‘Hungry Like the Wolf’ has our Duranie companion for the night rushing from the auditorium in panicked disgust. A set closing ‘Sex On Fire’ is both anomalous and godawful, but it’s the constant reliance on bombast and histrionics that really grates, both acts relying on overblown showboating instead of sticking to the tunes in hand – perhaps a realisation they don’t have as many hits as they’d like or need to keep a nostalgic audience happy for the duration. And that’s 80s chart music in a nutshell: some cracking tunes and a lot of polished pomp. You can see why many consider the 80s music’s worst decade; it wasn’t, but nights like this don’t do its cause too many favours. *Dale Kattack*

**THE SURFING MAGAZINES / ADAM AND ELVIS**

**The Jericho Tavern**

Five-piece Reading band Adam and Elvis have an endearing 70s pub-rock quality about them in an early Stiff Records vein, right down to the bassist’s highly unfashionable braces. The upbeat, reassuringly innocent air is aided by solid, unflashy songs and a nifty lead guitarist, as evidenced on the recent single ‘Hanging Tree’. Crucially, and in contrast to so many new bands, they don’t take themselves too seriously, which seems to be a Reading thing. The Surfing Magazines are possessed of some decent pedigree, comprised of two thirds of The Wave Pictures and half of Slow Club. While those bands share a certain late-night, dark nightclub vibe, tonight they surprise us with an opening song deep in debt to 1972-era Neil Young and Crazy Horse, before the untimely demise of Danny Whitten. This is followed by another, then another and so it goes till they break cover with a version of ‘Vampire Blues’ from Young’s classic ‘On The Beach’ album.

Three members take turn on lead vocals: David Tattersall from The Wave Pictures plays the part of Mr Young with some fairly impressive lead guitar, but sadly an annoyingly thin and shouty singing voice. Slow Club’s Charles Watson is the Danny Whitten figure, his mature rhythm guitar matching his broader, more measured singing style. But the finest voice comes from drummer Dominic Bridger, and his energetic playing is a welcome counterpoint to the laidback Californian 70s vibe. Possibly sensing where they’re going wrong the set eventually starts to go up a gear. ‘Peeping Dom’ from last year’s self-titled album provides some welcome relief and actually sounds like surfing music, but overall the curious clash of influences makes for a rather confusing experience, not aided by a poor sound mix. Ultimately the band leave an impression of playing more for their own pleasure than ours, but the enjoyable support band saves the evening from failure. *Art Lagun*

**MAIIANS / PORRIDGE RADIO / KID KIN / SHH! THE DEAF HAVE AIDS / GARDEN CENTRE**

**The Cellar**

It’s three nights before Christmas but tonight’s celebratory gig is less about the birth of Jesus, more about the return of one-time local musical messiahs Maiians, back onstage together for the first time in a year, having spread themselves across the globe in pursuit of work. The expansive bill, put together by Divine Schism, kicks off in festively freakish fashion with Garden Centre, former King of Cats man Max Levy conjuring The Velvet Underground’s ‘Afterhours’ as covered by Joe Pasquale, or maybe Happy Flowers if they’d decided to make a trad folk album in the style of Renaldo & the Loaf. Everything is gleefully, sinisterly childlike as he sings about finding porn mags under bridges and dead bodies in weirs. A real nightmare before Christmas. After Shh! The Deaf Have Aids’ glitchy electro that resolves into some pleasantly laidback acid house comedown and chilled beats, Kid Kin presents a more expansive set, featuring live drums, violin and vocals, starting in droning fashion before blossoming into something epic and exuberant and, yes, quite beautiful, like Sigur Ros consuming The Cure’s ‘Faith’ album and going the full gothic. A Christmas song breaks the set up a bit too much but they rise again at the end, as good as we’ve seen them.

If you picked out Porridge Radio’s myriad apparent influences you’d have one hell of a playlist, from which Lykke Li, The Slits, Young Marble Giants and Nadine Shah might be the prime picks; fuse them together somehow and you get an intriguing mix of sleepy-eyed chart pop, awkward post-punk noise, off-the-wall rock and a musical mix of determination and befuddlement that might fall apart any moment but stays the course in real style. It’s late and we’ve watched four bands already but Maiians have the packed room gripped from the off and for the duration, their twin live drummer powered pocket rave still as special as it was before they went on hiatus, spaced-out electro-pop and taut rhythms providing an ebb and flow dynamic that allows tension to build, flower and dissipate before building once again, Kraftwerk and Jean Michel Jarre dropping happy pills and heading off to Ibiza for a summer session. There are new tracks among old favourites like ‘Lemon’ and ‘Parasor’ and if you asked anyone tonight, they’d love to see Maiians back together for good; that won’t happen any time soon, but if they can make this reunion an annual event, Christmas will be even more of a reason to celebrate each year. *Sue Foreman*

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Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February – *OXROX*

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Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February – *THE SPIN JAZZ*

**NIGEL PRICE** 8pm

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February

**THUNDER ON THE LEFT**

**WORRY + SECOND IN LINE + ORDER#227** 7:45pm

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February

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Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February – *METAL TO THE MASSES*

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**Dr SHOTOVER: Licence to Kip**

*[Dr S snorts and smacks his lips, waking up at the East Indies Club bar].* Wha...? Huh? Who? Ah, there you are, Carruthers. Pull up a pew and get the breakfast martinis in. Word of warning, old boy: don't sit with your back to the belly-dancers – you never know when one of them might turn out to be an agent of SHAGG, with a miniature silenced dart-gun in her navel. Now, did I ever tell you about the time I nearly got the James Bond gig? It hasn't always been the charmless pug-ugly Daniel Craig, y'know. Yours Truly went for it in the early 70s, after Shir Shean Connery announced he was off to make more serious films (like, uh, *Zardoz*). My agent – you know Spanish Tony, don't you? – successfully pushed me to the front of the audition queue (mainly by introducing the competition to strong mind-expanding substances which put them out of the running). I had all the moves, I had the swagger, I had the cocktail shaker. I even had the ghostly white tuxedo. But after I'd said 'Shaken not shtirred' fifty times at the audition in a variety of poses and settings, I got the old 'Don't call us, we'll call you'... and later discovered they were after a female Bond. My first reaction was to send a F\*\*\* YOU telegram to 'Tubby' Broccoli. But he did me a good turn in a way. Because then I switched career to become drugs roadie for legendary Oxford progsters ELFLADE – and the rest is psychotropic history. Meanwhile a certain suave actor changed gender from Roger to Demi Moore and got the part. Well, got the part by, uh, LOSING the part, if you know what I mean. What's that? This was all a dream??? I don't think so, Carruthers, I don't think so. We'll discuss it over another vodkaini with a couple of these purple tablets dissolved in it. Yes, yes, freshly obtained from Spanish Tony. Absolutely harmlesssss. *[Dr S turns into a giant lizard and falls off his barstool].*

**Next month: Oh-Oh, (Shed) Seven**



*Tubby: 'This time with feeling, Miss Moore - The name's Blonde... Jane Blonde'*

*Demi: 'But what's my motivation, Mr Broccoli?'*

*Tubby: 'Two million dollars plus points'*

*Demi: 'OK'*

INTRODUCING....

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

**Gift of Blindness**

**Who are they?**

Gift Of Blindness were formed by Oxford sound engineer Umair Chaudhry and collaborator Simon Tierney, both former members of electro-metal band and twice *Nightshift* cover stars Xmas Lights. GoB started in 2013 and continues now as a personal project of Umair. He has released two albums on Blindsight Records and played a handful of gigs. The most recent album, the aptly-titled 'Wasteland', came out at the end of January, featuring music written over the past 12 years. Along the way he has collaborated with various bands including Fragment from France and Chuter from Cheltenham. Umair also records under the name Abandon.

**What do they sound like?**

Pain and the end of things, played out at crushing volume. With Gift of Blindness Umair heads into the darkest, noisiest corner of his musical explorations. It's heavy and malign, bleak and brutish, a musical hell that takes Godflesh as its starting point, sinks its teeth in and doesn't let go: a musical vision of Ragnarok played out at funereal pace.

**What inspires them?**

"Existentialism; mental illness; Hector and the Dynamitard robots from 80s sci-fi movies *Saturn 3* and *Annihilator*; snakes on crosses; *Mad Max 2*.

**Career highlight so far:**

"Being told to "turn down" at The Sanctuary in Basingstoke following a face smashing, beer-glass shuddering gig by Liverpool's Conan."


**And the lowlight:**

"The previous night's gig at The Lounge Bar in Alton, plagued by continuous technical problems."

**Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:**

"The last Oxford band I really liked was Undersmile."

**If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:**



"‘A Sun That Never Sets’ by Neurosis: the closest to a religious experience I’ve ever had.”

**When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?**

"I expect to have some gigs planned in February onwards to promote the new album; expect crushing atmospheric industrial tinged doom, swathed in dissonance with moments of harmony, distorted synths and down-tuned guitar and bass and crawling-pace drums, with sometimes sung sometimes shouted reverb drenched vocals.”

**Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:**

"I’ve always loved the fact that the Oxford scene is so diverse and there’s something for everyone out there. However something I miss is more dangerous and extreme music coming out of Oxford.”

**You might love them if you love:**

Godflesh; Swans; Undersmile; Conan; Neurosis; Nadja; Sunn O))).

**Hear him here:**

[www.blindsightrecords.co.uk](http://www.blindsightrecords.co.uk)

## ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

### 20 YEARS AGO

It must have been a quiet month for news and stuff happening in February 1998 since *Nightshift's* lead news story concerned **The Unbelievable Truth** dropping the The from their name. Theories as to the definite article's demise ranged from a lawsuit from The The to it being borrowed by Virgin labelmates Verve – themselves the subject of a lawsuit – so they could be rebranded as The Verve. There was also concern that by removing the The from the name, the band's artistic integrity could be compromised by allowing other Unbelievable Truths to exist. Record shops across the UK were foced to move the band from the T section, where they'd enjoyed the reflected glory of The Beatles, The Spice Girls and The Finlay Quaye to the U section, alongside Ultravox and Uriah Heap, the musical alphabetting equivalent of being sent to Uzbekistan. A few days later *The Oxford Mail* launched their own investigation into the affair, proving they were even more bored than us that week. Given such frivolity it came as a surprise to see there were actually some gigs happening this month with Mogwai's show at **The Zodiac** a highlight, alongside gigs by **Ultrasound** and **The Poozies**. Over at **The Point** a bunch of newcomers called **Snow Patrol** were starting out, and folk legend **June Tabor** was at **The Playhouse**.

### 10 YEARS AGO

**The Family Machine** were a leaping and a tumbling on the front cover of February 2008's front cover. Was that really ten years ago? Don't time fly when you're having fun. Something The

Family Machine most certainly were, even while they were singing songs about roadside tributes to fatal car accidents. Having been everyone's favourite cuddly pet dog of a local band for a while, the quartet were set to release their debut album, 'You Are The Family Machine', on **Alcopop!** this month, and we declared it time to stop taking the band for granted and give them a turn centre stage, since the album was, in our own words, "a belter." "It sounds like a cliché, but I've always believed that the song is the star," said eternally self-effacing frontman Jamie Hyatt, before admitting that secretly he'd "love to be remembered with loads of flowers" if he should ever be wiped out in a traffic accident. Elsewhere **The X** in Cowley closed down after landlady Alison lost a court battle with the PRS over unpaid live music royalties, depriving east Oxford of one of its most individual small venues. Also closing down was **Avid Records** near Gloucester Green which, at the time, left Oxford without a single independent record store. Big names in town this month were **Richard Hawley**, **Alison Moyet** and **Gabrielle** at **The New Theatre**; **Black Francis** at **Brookes Union** and **The Courteeners**, **Airborne**, **Art Brut**, **The Crips**, **Hot Chip**, **Metronomy** and **Dropkick Murphys** at **The Academy**.

### 5 YEARS AGO

It was all about **Stornoway** in February 2013. The local folk-pop heroes were on the front cover of *Nightshift* again (their third appearance), talking about new album 'Tales From Terra Firma', as well as a two-night homecoming at **Oxford Town**

### THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

**Hall**, and a special acoustic show at **The New Theatre** as part of the **Childish Things** fundraiser for Helen & Douglas House, also featuring **KT Tunstall**, **Newton Faulkner** and **Bug Prentice**. Singer Brian Briggs mused that the limit of his rock and roll lifestyle since the release of the band's previous album had amounted to learning balloon modelling and getting a new phone. Ollie Steadman declared his love of going on tour, not for its drunken escapades and riotous behaviour but because "the long drives – seventeen hours is a useful stretch – allow you to catch up on all the films and books you've missed out on, holed up in a studio." As the quartet's commercial star continued to rise, the famously academic group were glad they didn't have to contemplate a return to normal jobs any time soon. "I recently took a look at all my old chemistry papers stored on Google Drive and I almost fainted at the prospect of ever recalling what I meant by 'mechanical cleavage in the intradiol and extradiol catechol dioxygenases'. Please tell me there's session work out there!" said Oli. Another big local name were also on the move with **Foals** releasing 'Holy Fire' this month on Transgressive, while **This Town Needs Guns** released their '13.0.0.0.0' album, and **Candy Says**, **Junkie Brush** and rapper **Chima Anya** had EP releases out. A peak at the demo pages reveals Demo of the Month was the debut recording by a new couple to town going under the name **The August List**, who've since become a beloved part of the local musical furniture. "They sound like they come freshly pickled from the American backwoods rather than the Home Counties, full of grit and soul, fire and fog. Lovely stuff," concluded the review.



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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### JONNY RACE

“Too gentle for this world” we said of Jonny Race in his last demo review. And *Nightshift* wonders if we’re really cut out for the monthly battering of the senses that is the demo pile. Oh there are good months for sure: months where we’re left feeling buoyant and optimistic for the future of music in the face of the fun, energy, rage and invention we hear. Then there are months like this where we wonder whether Trump and Fat Lad’s nuclear pissing contest isn’t such a bad thing if it puts paid to the sort of soporific smorgasbord of shite laid feast-like before us. Perhaps some people’s creativity really would be better put towards novel ways of catching and cooking rats rather than etching odes to misery on a guitar. Still, Jonny here gives us some faith with his delicate brooding. The two songs here, ‘Always Let Me Go’ and ‘Are You Ready For Love’, have a discreet elegance about them, a chilled saxophone wandering over the chitter-chatter beats, piano runs and Jonny’s impassioned but understated vocals that, like last time, have more than a bit of the Thom Yorke about them. The sax counterpoints the urgency of the songs and makes them sound like Radiohead wandering off on a lazy jazz trip after a heavy smoking session. ‘Are You Ready For Love’ is the better of the two tracks, with a slightly darker edge, albeit one tempered by the immortal line “It will eat all your porridge” while warning of the pitfalls of that crazy little thing called love. Unless of course he means the overfed North Korean despot is looking for something to dunk his baked cockroaches in after he and President Fucknut have reduced everything to ash.

### WHITE LAKES

Unlike most of this month’s pile this lot at least sound like they’re alive and not stumbling to an overdue death by way of a terminal Temazepam haze and a virulent dose of Australian flu. That said, the one song here, ‘Call Me Up’, is a bit typical lad rock and they’d doubtless consider the chance to open for The Courteeners as a career boon rather than a decomposing albatross around their musical neck. It’s an up and at ‘em blast of blokey energy with some nice rinky dink guitars and a chiming, anthemic chorus that almost launches itself into epic shoe-gaze airspace towards the end. It’s passable enough as these things

*Demo of the Month wins a free half day at Soundworks studio in Oxford, courtesy of Umair Chaudhry. Visit [www.umairchaudhry.co.uk/nightshift](http://www.umairchaudhry.co.uk/nightshift)*

go in a sort of Amazons or Catfish & the Bottlemen fashion but in a world of exotic sonic wonders and exciting futuristic musical possibilities, another bunch of lads playing guitars together doesn’t really feel like something to get too giddy about.

### OK RUBY

If Jonny Race is too gentle for this cruel world, OK Ruby sounds like she’s in danger of wilting before its horrors but has dug deep into her emotional reserves and is crying “no more!” even while she stifles a sob. The debut recording of singer/songwriter Esme Garlake, this is a sweet, sometimes swoonsome swim through both jazzy ambient electro-folk and full-on acoustic jazz-pop, her clear, soulful voice partway between Sade and The Cardigans’ Nina Persson, with maybe just a hint of Minnie Riperton when it hits the high notes. The music’s maybe a tiny bit too smooth as it stands – though it’s well produced by Catgod’s Robin Christensen-Marriot – with an air of late night jazz lounge melancholy about it, but it’s seductively sleepy-eyed, with ‘All I Can Do’ wafting close to ‘Dream A Little Dream Of Me’ at times, and makes us think Esme here might have a very bright future indeed with a sharper set of songs.

### JERAMESA

When demos increasingly consist of a single track at least Jeramesa here gives value for money with his new song clocking in at eleven minutes. Which is actually a bit of a cop-out given it’s called ‘The Forever Trip’, which sounds like it should be the title of a rare Spacemen 3 bootleg. Trip is right though given Jeramesa’s psychedelic leanings. His previous offering, a full album, was a darkly wiggled out journey from Pink Floyd-like psych-pop into scowling Swans-inspired gothic rock but here he keeps it mostly acoustic, building an eastern-flavoured mantra on guitar and (what sounds like) sitar, his voice a lysergic, gravelly buzz that sounds more like a treated guitar than what usually passes for singing. It doubtless sounds best after a bit of pharmaceutical indulgence but never quite hits the levels of insistency we’d want to hear from something with a title like that. A trip maybe but one that doesn’t quite reach escape velocity.

### JUNIPER NIGHTS

Escape is a word that springs all to quickly to mind listening to this laboured slab of underfed mumblecore. We picture ourselves running free and unhindered through sunny meadows, or hanging out with the newly reformed classic line-up of

Motorhead in Hell’s own boozer, or at least sat on the sofa with the cat and a cup of tea and some biscuits – anything to get away from the responsibility of having to think of new and exciting ways of describing music of no discernible character, melody or lifeblood. It’s actually pretty decent to begin with, sounding (very vaguely) like a just-woke-up Bill Callaghan fronting a somnambulating Radiohead, all moonlit spangle and introspective crooning, but from there it goes... nowhere, just slumps and slumbers along on the same torpid track for its five minute duration, perhaps imagining it’s caught everyone up in its dark ambience when actually everyone’s actually slipped into a coma, lulled into unconsciousness by the innocuous background hum of inconsequentiality. We don’t expect wild rock and roll debauchery every time but in a world where Idles, Shame and Fat White Family exist, there’s no excuse for this kind of complacent lethargy.

### OH JOY

Oh joy indeed: because what we need right after that ode to torpor is another artist who sounds like they’d throw a (half hearted) hissy fit if their mum suggested they drag their sorry carcass out of bed before midday and maybe put their limbs to some kind of use. Poetic introspection is the heart and soul of so many great artists but glum navel-gazing is the death knell for great lyricism so lines like “Come over I’m doing nothing / By tomorrow I’ll be so tired / Tomorrow means nothing / Just like today did / I wonder what the ambitious people are doing / Can we stay here all day and do fucking nothing?” grumbled and groaned out over a by-rote indie stodgepot feel less like the clarion call of a heroic, tragic rock poet and more like the bleatings of someone who could do with a spell clearing landmines in Helmand Province to help concentrate his mind and work out life’s priorities.

### BE STILL

Oh thank the Lord, a bit of life. Just a sliver but enough to stay our hand on the gallows we’ve built in the *Nightshift* office over the last hour or so. We caught Be Still opening for Slowcoaches at The Cellar last year and wondered if they might inherit Dive Dive’s local pop-punk crown. This one song demo makes us think the same thought, the band’s Americanisms forcing things a bit as they open with the line “Rock ‘n’ roll isn’t dead, it’s just getting old” (and in the case of the previous couple of demos, incontinent and possibly senile), not quite hitting the sweet spot they came close to a few times live. At least they only sound like they maybe need an extra spoonful of sugar in their coffee rather than a full-on rocket up their arse but next time think fast and furious rather than mid-paced and slightly disgruntled, eh.

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

### NIGHTJAR

And then before we’ve barely had time to blink ourselves awake we’re back amid the sluggish drudgery, lethargy and what appears to be some kind of inspiration vacuum, with this lot pushing the irony meter into the red by naming themselves after a bird whose strange, haunting crepuscular thrum is far removed from their leaden dadrock, sounding like the result of a committee of dead-eyed marketing executives’ attempts to develop the perfect ad-friendly opening act for Liam Gallagher’s next tour but giving up halfway through when the already slim budget ran out before they got to the tunes and attitude stage. Surely a song called ‘Hapax Legomenon’ should be an acid-frazzled space rock odyssey, not a dull as ditchwater voyage to the bottom of a muddy puddle in Basingstoke? And surely anyone – anyone at all – embarking on a music-making journey should start out with the idea that music should be fun or thrilling or frightening or emotionally moving and not as worthy as a Fair Trade hessian sack and as appetising as a steaming pile of polished turds. Obviously not in Nightjar’s case.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### MARSHALL

But hey, whaddya know – this is even worse. Having spent much of our lives watching *Dr Who* we always imagined time travel to be exciting, if sometimes perilous, but then the TARDIS didn’t tend to materialise inside a mid-80s soft rock ballad where any peril to be had comes not in the form of rampaging Zygons but death by cloying tedium, or at least a nasty allergic reaction to MOR balladeering infused with tasteful electronics and overwrought vocal preening. We’d say it sounds like Cutting Crew, Foreigner and Styx got tanked up together and formed a discreetly pompous adult orientated rock supergroup together but the tanked up bit suggests there was some kind of fun or mischief or irresponsibility about the whole sorry affair. No, this is more like Cutting Crew, Foreigner and Styx were hooked up to a factory farm milking machine and had the very essence of their blandness sucked out of them, pasteurised to get rid of any risk of interesting stuff, then diluted like some hellish musical Homeopathy. The side effects of imbibing this distilled essence of pallid nothingness include nausea, a soul crushing belief that Lemmy, Iggy Pop, Patti Smith and James Brown ever existed and Michael Bolton actually created the world and all the music in it, and mostly an irresistible desire to slam your own head repeatedly in a steam press. Down in one, people; down in one.

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Sat 27th Jan • £5 adv • 9.00pm

## Two Icons Dub: Celebrating The Lives of Bob Marley and Dennis Brown

+ Ras Keith + ZAIA + TOKA  
+ Shumba Youth + More

Sat 27th Jan • £10 adv • 10pm

## SASASAS - Up Another Lvl

Sun 28th Jan • £16 adv

## This Is The Kit

+ Seamus Fogarty + Emma Gatrill

Fri 2nd Feb • £30 adv • 6.30pm

## Natalie Imbruglia

Sat 3rd Feb • £13.50 adv • 6.30pm

## The Sherlocks

+ Neon Waltz + Arcades

Fri 9th Feb • £8 adv

## Uprising - BBC Introducing Ft. Cassels

+ Cherokii + Easter Island Statues  
+ Flatlands

Sat 10th Feb • £12 adv • 6.30pm

## Cash - A Tribute To The Man in Black

+ Tony Goff & the Broken Colours  
+ Andy Robbins

Sun 11th Feb • **SOLD OUT**

## Jorja Smith + Mahalia

Mon 12th Feb • £22 adv

## Newton Faulkner

Thu 15th Feb • £17.50 adv

## Hayseed Dixie

+ Emma McGrath

Fri 16th Feb • £5 adv • 11pm

## Silent Disco by Silent Social

Sat 17th Feb • £22.50 adv • 6.30pm

## Dr John Cooper Clarke

Sat 17th Feb • £10 adv • 11pm

## Tom Zanetti & K.O Kane

Fri 23rd Feb • £8 adv • 11pm

## Dimension UK Tour

Sat 24th Feb • £12 adv

## KING 810

+ Courtesans + A Trust Unclean

Sat 3rd Mar • £20 adv • 6pm

## The Blockheads

+ Chasing Daylight

Tues 6th Feb • £20 adv

## Rejjie Snow

Wed 7th Mar • £17.50 ad • 6.30pm

## Paul Draper

Fri 9th March • £16 adv • 6.30pm

## Space + The Shapes + Candidates

Sat 10th Mar • **SOLD OUT** • 6.00pm

## Sleeper

Sat 10th Mar • £5 adv • 11pm

## Parka Monkeys (Indie Club Night) Ft. Adam Ficek (Babyshambles) DJ Set

Mon 12th Mar • £12 adv

## Fickle Friends

Fri 16th March • £20 adv • 6.30pm

## Alabama 3

Fri 16th March • £14 adv • 6.30pm

## The Amy Winehouse Experience ...A.K.A Lioness

Sat 17th March • £15 adv • 6.30pm

## Ferocious Dog + Noble Jacks



SATURDAY 17th MARCH 2018  
O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2 OXFORD

Sun 18th Mar • £13 adv

## The AC/DC Experience

Tue 20th Mar • £13 adv

## Rae Morris

Sat 24th Mar • £20 adv • 6.30pm

## Turin Brakes

Fri 30th Mar • £15 adv

## Super Hans

Sun 8th Apr • £20 adv

## 3 Generations of Ska

+ Stranger Cole + Neville Staple Band  
+ Sugary Staple + The AC30s  
+ The Inflatables

Sun 8th Apr • £10 adv • 11pm

## Darkzy UK Tour

Mon 16th Apr • £20 adv

## Little Comets

Thu 19th Apr • £16.50 adv

## The White Buffalo



Thu 26th Apr • £14 adv

## Will Heard

Fri 27th Apr • £28.50 adv • 6.30pm

## Heather Small - The voice of M People

Sat 28th Apr • £15 adv • 6.30pm

## UK Foo Fighters - Banging On the Ceiling Tour

Thu 3rd May • £16.50 adv

## Lower Than Atlantis



Fri 4th May • £25 adv • 6.30pm

## Wilko Johnson

+ Hugh Cornwell Band

Mon 7th May • £21 adv

## The Bluetones

Fri 15th Jun • £16.50 adv • 6.30pm

## Nick Heyward

Sat 22nd Sep • £15 adv • 6.30pm

## Dressed To kill - A Tribute To KISS

Sat 6th Oct • £13 adv • 6.30pm

## The Smyths - Unite and Take Over Tour 2018

Fri 7th Oct • £15 adv • 6.30pm

## Pearl Jam UK

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