

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 272
March
2018**

"When you're on a bill with Sean Paul, Foals and Groove Armada you have to be heavier and more brutal then you've ever been."



DESERT STORM

Oxford's rock beasts on getting heavier, and hitting the road again

Also in this issue:

COMMON PEOPLE, TRUCK, CORNBURY & NOCTURNE announce line-ups
Introducing **SELF HELP**

plus

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

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

THE BULLINGDON

MARCH 2018 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Thursday 1st March
Matt Edwards Band

Doors: 7pm

Friday 2nd March

Patrick Monahan:
Rewind Selector 90s

Doors: 7pm

Friday 2nd March

The Raving Trippy

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 3rd March

Simple Objekt

Doors: 11pm

Wednesday 7th March

Famelab Oxfordshire
Regional Final 2018

Doors: 7pm

Thursday & Friday 8th & 9th March

Youthmovies

Doors: 7pm

Friday 9th March

DNA Present: Gin & Juice

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 10th March

Sub Tropic
Dub Boy B2B ATK12
feat. MC Jonzey
Count Skylarklin

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 11th March

Simon Evans

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 14th March

Milk Teeth

Doors: 7.30pm

Thursday 15th March

Will Wilde Band

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 16th March
Rob Auton:
The Hair Show

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 17th March

Musical Medicine
Bradley Zero

Doors: 11pm

Thursday 22nd March

MT Wolf

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 23rd March

Gwenno

Doors: 7pm

Friday 23rd March

Diss Hand In

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 24th March

Skylarkin' Presents
Mungo's HI-FI: Full Soundsystem

Doors: 11pm

Monday 26th March

Joel Baker

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 27th March

The Outside
Lake Acacia
Max Blansjaar

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 28th March

Geoff Achison
& The Souldiggers

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 29th March

Noasis

Doors: 7pm

Friday 30th March

Oxpwhroad:
The Showtunes Show

Doors: 7.30pm

Friday 30th March
Prism / Spectrum
Kieran Alexis
Tim Aldiss
Marty P
Ben Mac

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 31st March

Rawdio: Metalheadz
Dillinja
DLR
Dubz
Blunt
Samas

Doors: 11pm

Sunday 1st April

Sabrina Benaim

Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 3rd April

Girli

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 4th April

Kris Barras Band

Doors: 7pm

Friday 6th April

Whitesnake UK

Doors: 11pm

Friday 6th April

Rascal
Boxia

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 7th April

Groove

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 11th April

Greg Coulson

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 12th April

John Robbins:
The Darkness of Robbins

Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 12th April

Church of the Heavy

Doors: 7pm

Saturday 14th April

Musical Medicine
Horse Meat Disco

Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 19th April

Shame

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th April

Craig Campbell - Easy Tiger

Doors: 7pm

Friday 20th April

Mystery Box

Doors: 11pm

Friday 27th April

Rascal
Chaos in the CBD
O'Flynn

Doors: 11pm

Saturday 28th April

Volume #10

Doors: 11pm

Monday 30th April

Simple
Saorise

Doors: 11pm

Wednesday 2nd May

Deep Dark Woods

Doors: 7pm

Thursday 3rd May

The Showshank Duo

Doors: 7pm

Friday 4th May

Nine Below Zero

Doors: 7pm

Friday 4th May

Tropic Popsicle

Doors: 11pm

NEWS

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Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



NILE RODGERS & CHIC, NOEL GALLAGHER AND ELVIS COSTELLO are the latest names to be added to **Blenheim Palace's Nocturne Live** series of concerts in June. legendary funk and disco band Chic, best known for hits like 'Le Freak', 'Good Times' and 'Everybody Dance', as well as Rodgers' collaborations with David Bowie, Diana Ross, Daft Punk and Madonna, open the four-night series of shows on **Thursday 14th June**. Support comes from Soul II Soul. The following night Noel Gallagher performs, while on Saturday 16th **Elvis Costello** is joined at the palace by **The Waterboys** and **Nick Lowe**. **Gary Barlow's** show on Sunday 17th has already sold out. Tickets at www.nocturnelive.com.

BROOKES UNIVERSITY hosts its day of academic discussion on *Nightshift* and the wider Oxford music scene on **Tuesday 27th March**. *Nightshift: Exploring Oxford's Music Magazine* is hosted by the university's Popular Music Research Unit 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 discussing local scenes, regional music media and demo reviews, finishing with a Q&A session with founder and editor Ronan Munro. Among those talking will be

Brookes' Dr Dai Griffiths; long-time *Nightshift* contributors Richard Ramage and Sam Shepherd; Professor Martin Clunes from Glasgow University; former *Sandman* editor Jan Webster; BBC Introducing in Oxford producer Liz Green; Irregular Folks organiser Vez Hoper, and musicians Mike Monaghan (drummer with Gaz Coombes, Willie Healey and St Etienne) and Mike Smith from Lucy Leave, who'll be discussing their previous demo reviews.

The day runs from 9.45am through til 4pm and is free and open to the public, although registration is required: visit pnrubrookes.wordpress.com/events for more details and to register.

SPARK SIDE OF THE MOON is back at **The Half Moon** on a fortnightly basis from this month. The long-running open mic night, hosted by veteran local musician **Sparky**, looked to have come to an end when management changes left the pub's future in doubt.

The music night, renamed Sparky's New Moon, will be relaunched on **Thursday 1st March** and runs on the first and third Thursday of the month. Sparky has been hosting open mic sessions across Oxford for 23 years now, including his weekly Sparky's Flying Circus at The James Street Tavern and a monthly bands showcase and jam session at The White House on Abingdon Road, called Sparky's Spontaneous Showcase & Spotlight Jam. Talking to *Nightshift* about the problems with The Half Moon, Sparky said: "The Half Moon has had a lengthy and legendary history of great music birthed from Irish and British folk which far pre-dates my

ALANIS MORRISSETTE will headline the Saturday night of **Cornbury Festival** in July.

Cornbury announced the line-up for the Saturday in the middle of February with a full bill of female and female-led acts that includes legendary gospel singer **Mavis Staples** alongside **Amy McDonald**; **Nina Nesbitt**; **Pixie Lott** and **PP Arnold**.

Completing the day's line-up are **Grainne Duffy**; **Megan McKenna**; **Southern Avenue**; **Kolars**; **Ten Millenia** and **The Adelaides**.

This year's Cornbury Festival runs over the weekend of the **13th-15th July** at **Great Tew Country Park**. Friday and Sunday's line-ups will be announced on Thursday 1st March, so check www.cornburyfestival.com and *Nightshift's* Facebook page for news, and until then hold off booking your holiday on the beach, boys and girls.



THE JACKSONS, THE NEW POWER GENERATION, JAMES AND RIDE are among the star names announced for this year's Common People.

The two-day festival returns to **South Park** for its third outing over the weekend of the **26th-27th May**.

The Jacksons head up a day of disco, funk, reggae and soul on the Saturday; the legendary family band are joined on the main stage by Prince's former backing band The New Power Generation, plus glam-pop/art-rock pioneers **Sparks**; British reggae and r'n'b heroes **Aswad**; 70s disco hitmakers **Boney M**; New York hip hop crew **Jungle Brothers**; ragga DJ **General Levy**, and Common People regulars **The Cuban Brothers**.

Sunday features joint headline sets from Manchester's indie darlings James and local shoegaze icons Ride, and they're joined by Newcastle alt.rockers **Maximo Park**; funk and soul party starter **Craig Charles**; **The London African Gospel Choir** performing Paul Simon's seminal 'Gracelands' album; Oxford electro-pop rising stars **Low Island**, and a return trip for Elvis-fronted Nirvana tribute act **Elvana**. More acts are set to be announced.

Beyond the main stage there's a strong local showing on the dance stage, with Simple's **Em Williams**; **Count Skylarkin**; **Burt Cope**; **Natty Mark** and **White Magic** among those on the decks.

And back again is the Uncommon Stage, curated by *Nightshift* and featuring 20 Oxford acts over the two days. Saturday features **Deadbeat Apostles**; **Inner Peace Records**; **Tiger Mendoza**; **The August List**; **Candy Says**; **Death of the Maiden**; **Earinade**; **Laima Bite**; **Premium Leisure**, and **Worry**. Sunday sees **Brickwork Lizards**; **The Great Western Tears**; **Dröre**; **MSRY**; **Lucy Leave**; **The Young Women's Music Project**; **Haze**; **31Hours**; **Ghosts in the Photographs**, and **Self Help** flying the flag for local music.

As ever there's plenty more going on beyond the main stages, with this year's Common People boasting the world's biggest disco ball onsite, which will doubtless compete with the world's biggest bouncy castle for pride of place.

Weekend and day tickets are on sale now at www.commonpeople.net as well as full line-up details.

16 years of tenure there. In 2001 Joe Ryan and myself reignited the fuse: Joe with the legendary folk sessions, myself the introduction of the Thursday open mics.

"The Moon recently fell between two stools; that is to say there was a vacuum between the departure of one manager and the arrival of another and hence temporarily there

was a rudderless ship and this great venue lost its way for a while. The new manager, Johnny, sought me out recently citing his great overriding desire for The Half Moon to eat, breath and live music, once again to embrace the nature of the beast and re-invigorate this fabulous and unique institution. Our twice monthly Thursday sessions will not only be open mic but also be promo sessions for smaller acts. An entirely authentic evening of ultra eclectic entertainment."

STEVE LAMACQ talks about his career in music with a one-man show at **The Jericho Tavern** on **Wednesday 9th May**. The 6Music DJ and former NME and Melody Maker journalist celebrates 25 years broadcasting for the BBC, having launched his DJ career presenting Radio 1's Evening Session for nine years in 2013 he... *continued over*



THE BEST IN LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY

Saturday 3rd March - 7pm
Jayde Adams, John Lynn, Andy Askins, Robin Morgan

Saturday 10th March - 7pm
JoJo Smith, Rudi Lickwood, Roger Monkhouse, Spencer Jones

Saturday 17th March - 7pm
Noel James, Carl Donnelly, Kate Lucas

Sunday 24th March - 7pm
Guz Khan, Rob Rouse, Tanyaalee Davis

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NEWS

was given a special lifetime achievement award at the Sony Radio Academy Awards, recognising his commitment to grassroots live music. There's more info and ticket details at going-deaf-for-a-living.com

TANDEM FESTIVAL returns for its fourth outing in the summer. The eco-friendly world music event runs over the weekend of the **22nd-24th June** at **Home Farm** in Oxford, with live music and dance across four stages, plus workshops, talks, films and a world food festival onsite. This year's headliners are Leeds' klezmer, Balkan beat and gypsy jazz ensemble Tantz, with more acts to be announced. The cycle-powered, volunteer-run festival encourages fans to arrive by bike or public transport, with an emphasis on environmental responsibility. Early bird tickets are on sale now, priced £70 for adults, £35 for under-18s and under-12s going free. Get yours at tandemcollective.org.

IRREGULAR FOLKS host their Summer Sessions 2018 over the weekend of the **7th and 8th July** at the **Toad Distillery** in Headington. The two-day event follows on from successful one-day festivals in recent years at venues like The Victoria Arms in Marston, The Perch in Binsey and Hogacre Eco Park, featuring artists such as Yorkston, Thorne & Khan, C. Duncan, Laura Moody and Waitress For the Bees. No line-up news as yet but it'll be brilliant, we're sure. Find out at more at www.irregularfolks.co.uk.

WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL returns for its twelfth year in August. The community-based festival, founded in memory of Jo Marie Foster, will host a variety of events across the spring and summer in the build-up to the

main festival, which features two weeks of gigs and events in Witney's pubs and clubs from **25th May to 9th June** and culminates in a weekend of live music at The Leys on the **17th-18th August**. Last year's festival was headlined by The Undertones. As ever, the vast majority of shows will be free, and organisers are looking for venues, sponsors and volunteers as well as bands to help host, organise and play. Find out how to get involved at witneymusicfestival.co.uk

THE O2 ACADEMY launches a new indie club night this month. Parker Monkeys launches at the Cowley Road venue on Saturday 10th March, playing Noughties indie hits and featuring a guest set from Babyshambles' Adam Ficek.

REMADE GUITARS has closed its shop in Abingdon but will be running a monthly pop-up repair session at Glasshouse Studios in Cumnor. Despite relocating to north Wales, Remade will be at Glasshouse on Saturday 10th March; 7th April, May 12th and June 16th, from 10am to 5pm.

MIKE MONAGHAN has an exhibition of his on-tour photos in Truck Store this month. The in-demand local drummer, who plays in Willie J Healey's band as well as with Gaz Coombes and Young Knives went on the road as part of St Etienne in 2017 and recorded the tour, which visited California, Asbury Park, Scandinavia, Europe and the UK, in photos and writing under the title *Forward Motion*. 16 of his pictures will be on show at Truck from the 2nd – 16th March, with a book of photos and writing, limited to 100 copies, released to coincide with the exhibition.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Saturday night between 8-9pm on



GEORGE EZRA, FRIENDLY FIRE AND PEACE are the first headline acts to be announced for this year's **Truck Festival**. The 21st Truck runs from the **19th-22nd July** at **Hill Farm** in Steventon and for the first time runs over four days. Peace will top the Thursday night bill, while Friendly Fires headline Friday night. Multi-million-selling, BRIT-nominated star George Ezra is Saturday's star turn, while Sunday's headliner is still to be announced. Other acts announced include **De La Soul; Jake Bugg; Everything Everthing; Circa Waves; Rat Boy; The Amazons; The Sherlocks; Mooseblood; We Are Scientists; Magic Gang; Marika Hackman; Coasts; Blaenavon; Pale Waves; HMLTD; Tom Walker; Gengahr; Jaws; Black Honey; Dream Wife**, and **The Orielles**. **Shy FX, Subfocus** and **Kurupt FM** will hosts club nights on the festival's Palm City stage. **Gaz Coombes** leads the list of local acts set to play; he's joined by **Low Island; Little Brother Eli; Leader** and **Kanadia**, with more acts to be picked via Truck's band app. Acts have until the 30th March to apply at truckfestival.com/contact/band-app. Last year's Truck was the biggest ever, and its first under the stewardship of new owners Global; despite bad weather and organisational issues, the weekend, headlined by The Libertines, Franz Ferdinand and The Vaccines, sold out. Festival manager Matt Harrap said of this year's line-up announcement, "Having artists of the calibre of George Ezra and Friendly Fires coming to headline the event after many years of asking is truly humbling and their sets will no doubt live long in the memory. Peace will be the perfect way to kick off the festival with our first ever Thursday headliners. Personally I'm really thrilled to have the legend that is Gaz Coombes back for the first time since 2013, as well as brilliant up and coming local talent such as Low Island, Little Brother Eli and Kanadia. Mix in De La Soul, Jake Bugg and Everything Everything and we've got a real party!" With early bird tickets already sold out, weekend tickets are on sale now priced £110. Thursday add-on passes are £25. Get them at truckfestival.com.

95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring interviews and sessions with local acts. The show is available to stream or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

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

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MARCH

G4 LIVE!	Thu 1
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JAKE BUGG – SOLO ACOUSTIC TOUR	Fri 9
PAUL CARRACK	Sat 10
MERCURY: THE ULTIMATE QUEEN TRIBUTE	Thu 29
A VISION OF ELVIS	Fri 30

APRIL

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING	Thu 5
BETH HART	Wed 18
BARRY STEELE & FRIENDS – THE 30 SPECIAL THE ROY ORBISON STORY	Thu 19
MOTOWN'S GREATEST HITS: HOW SWEET IT IS	Wed 25
BRYAN FERRY	Fri 27

MAY

THE WATERBOYS	Sun 6
BEAUTIFUL – THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL	Tue 8 – Sat 12
THE ILLEGAL EAGLES	Thu 17
BOOT LED ZEPPELIN	Sun 20

JUNE

DAVID BYRNE – AMERICAN UTOPIA TOUR	Thu 14
LES MUSICALS	Sun 17

JULY

THE CARPENTERS STORY	Thu 05
ABBA MANIA	Sat 7



THE WATERBOYS
Sun 6 May



BEAUTIFUL – THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL
Tue 8 – Sat 12 May

JAKE BUGG – SOLO ACOUSTIC TOUR
Fri 9 Mar



AUDIOGRAFT returns this month with its annual mix of new experimental music and sound, exhibitions, artists' talks and workshops. The citywide event launches on Tuesday 6th March with an event at OVADA and runs until Sunday 18th. This year's festival, curated by Brookes University's Sonic Art Research Unit, and co-promoted by Oxford Contemporary Music, promises "to open your ears and eyes to more extraordinary and surprising performances and installations that will feature the sounds of digital dystopia, dismembered instruments, the contents of the average kitchen cupboard and other domestic sounds, walls of feedback, glitches, drones, loops and bracing amplification." At the heart of the festival is a group exhibition at **OVADA** featuring **Kathy Hinde** (pictured), **Simon Blackmore**, **Sally Ann McIntyre** and **Lance Austin Olsen**. The festival also features **Icebreaker's** System Restart programme with work by **Anna Meredith**, **Linda Buckley**, **Kerry Andrew**, **Jobina Tinnemans**, **Elizabeth Kelly** and **Kate Moore**. This year the festival will also be resident at **Fusion Arts**, featuring new work by **Renzo Spiteri**, **Brigitte Hart**, **Gary Charles** and **Sian Hutchings**, and will also mark the release of a double CD of interpretations of a graphic score by SARU practitioner **Thomas Martin Nutt**. For full festival details visit www.audiograft.co.uk

DESERT STORM



“IT’S CRAZY HOW FAST THE time has gone by. I think we always knew we would be together a long time though, as we’ve been friends since school and most importantly still enjoy making music and touring together.”

SO SAYS DESERT STORM guitarist Ryan Cole, contemplating his band’s recent celebration of ten years together. While band lifetimes frequently resemble those of mayflies, Desert Storm have weathered the sands of time like the monolithic edifice they are. This month they release their latest studio album, ‘Sentinels’, and their rock is heavier than ever, their metal denser and sharper. It’s an imposing beast of an album: ten tracks and fifty minutes of everything we’ve come to know and expect from Desert Storm – rolling, stoner grooves, sludgy riffs, monstrous beats and gravel-and-lava-coated vocals – but bigger, darker and more brutal.

THE QUINTET – RYAN JOINED by drummer and twin brother Elliot; singer Matt Ryan; guitarist

Chris White and bass player Chris Benoist – will celebrate the release of ‘Sentinels’ with a headline show at the O2 Academy on Saturday 24th March at the end of another extensive UK and European tour, the band members working half the year to finance their next road trip, which has seen them rise from promising local rock youngsters to one of the most hardworking and respected bands on the heavy rock circuit, touring with the likes of Karma To Burn, Orange Goblin and Nashville Pussy, as well as their own headline tours, playing at Bloodstock and Desertfest, and support Crowbar in Germany.

BEFORE THEY DEPARTED these shores once more, the band spoke to *Nightshift* – this is their fourth front cover feature, the first back in 2010 as part of our local metal special issue – about life on the road, becoming Oxford’s most successful rock export, and firstly about their tenth anniversary show at the end of last year. “It was awesome!” says Ryan, “really cool to see people travelling from all over the UK and overseas

to attend and be a part of something so special to us. The room was packed and the vibe was right, a great evening!” “It was also nice to be able to play songs from our whole catalogue too, as we don’t get to play a lot of them so much these days,” adds Elliot. Ryan: “We’ve had so many highlights over the past ten years. My personal favourites would be playing the Sophie Lancaster stage at Bloodstock to 2,000 people and sharing the bill with the likes of Slayer and Mastodon. Touring with bands like Orange Goblin and Karma To Burn was brilliant and also our own headline tours. There have been some insane moments too: playing on a boat after a dance pop band in Prague, playing a squat in Berlin and partying with the madman that is Nick Oliveri from Kyuss and Queens of the Stone-Age after our show with Mondo Generator in Spain.” Matt: “A personal highlight for me has to be when we first broke European soil. That virgin experience of packing the van and heading out into new territories is amazing. I’d

say getting to play the Bulldog Bash was pretty insane, but also great fun. A weekend of drag strips, custom bikes, boozing, and Motorhead!” It’s not all fun and adventure of course. Spending weeks on the road has its downsides too, with Matt citing “traffic jams, queues, and three flights of stairs whilst trying to load in” as the regular downside of long distance grassroots touring, while Elliot points to the personal financial sacrifices each band member endures to keep the machine rolling. “I don’t think many people realise how much it costs being in a band, both financially and on us as individuals; it really impacts on our personal lives at times.”

“Our annual leave is always used on tours,” explains Ryan. “Unfortunately work takes up most of the rest of our time; luckily none of our day jobs are too soul destroying.” Ten years of building the Desert Storm name and reputation is starting to reap dividends of course, and tours are starting to pay for themselves to a greater degree. Ryan: “I’d say on this upcoming tour the majority of the shows we have

fixed fees, but in the week there are some door deal splits. Sometimes these work out great and maybe even better financially. We all see touring as a holiday anyway, and sometimes we have to chip in a bit to cover fuel, or if we all fancy a hotel then we’ll pay ourselves. Occasionally we get sweet hotels from the promoters, which is perfect. On the whole I’d say we generally break even or are up slightly after a tour, which is cool.”

FINANCIAL ISSUES ASIDE, Desert Storm live for touring and all look forward to getting back on the road. “We all look forward to performing each night and making new fans,” says Ryan, “and also if it’s places we’ve been before, seeing people we’ve met previously come back out again is great. “I think although sometimes we don’t have as much time as we’d like, when we do it’s awesome getting to explore new cities in different countries. I guess the most dreaded part of heading out on tour are the long drives and sometimes shitty night sleep: Elliot and I both suffer from epilepsy so although we party, our seizures are more likely to be triggered from sleep deprivation and getting too intoxicated, so it’s quite hard as you can probably imagine trying to find the balance.”

Elliot: “I love touring and wish I could do it full time.” As ever, a significant chunk of the current tour takes Desert Storm back to mainland Europe – they’ll play dates in France, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and The Netherlands – where the band most enjoy their adventures. Ryan: “I don’t know about Europe being more receptive to us, but it is more exciting! Also more people buy merch, especially vinyl. I enjoy touring both UK and Europe, though. As for cities I’m looking forward to going back to, I’d definitely say Berlin; I love that place. And Eastern Europe; Kosice in Slovakia and Katowice in Poland are both beautiful. It’s amazing driving through those countries.

DESERT STORM’S HARD work on the road, and all the scrimping and saving that goes with it, has increasingly paid off for the boys. After the critical and commercial success of their last album, 2015’s ‘Omniscient’, there’s genuine hope that ‘Sentinels’ will push Desert Storm into the upper echelons of British rock and metal bands. “We’d like to think so,” says Elliot. “Before we recently announced the release date, we’d get people asking when the next album was going to be coming out and if we had a label. So yeah, I guess more and more

people are anticipating a new album from us, which is cool. “I just think the songs are stronger than a lot of our older material and also the flow of the album is really good. The track listing is also very important; we always try and think very hard about the flow. With this album we had to do two track listing orders as well because it had to run differently on vinyl due to the running time.” Having spent so long in the band together, do you find yourselves falling easily into step with each other in the studio, or are there times when you pull in different directions musically? Ryan: “I think on the whole Desert Storm works very well together in the studio and the rehearsal room. There are obviously at times some creative differences, and sometimes it can be difficult, but we have to compromise if we wish to resolve it. I guess it

“I don’t think many people realise how much it costs being in a band, both financially and on your personal life”

can be tough at times, but it always works itself out, and most of the time the chemistry the five of us have is great.” How much have your influences changed since the last record, and since you started out? Ryan: “I guess all our influences and listening pleasures have changed over the years. We all listen to a very wide variety of music – of course the love for metal and the sub genres like doom, stoner, sludge, punk, hardcore, post rock etc. is still very prominent and has been from day one, but I’d say there is a lot of stuff people probably wouldn’t expect us to like. Chris, for example, I know is very much into his folk, country and blues stuff, and Matt likes a lot of drum&bass and jungle. We all enjoy hip hop too. I’m listening to quite a lot of trip hop and ambient music these days as well as savage metal albums.”

FOR ALL THE BREADTH AND variety of their individual listening pleasures, Desert Storm remain, steadfastly, a pulverising heavy rock band, ‘Sentinels’ taking inspiration from classic pioneers like Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden and the titans of stoner, sludge and blues metal like Mastadon, Orange Goblin and Clutch, as well as nastier, gnarlier influences like Killing Joke. And the album boasts a proper heavy metal sleeve too: ghostly figures shrouded in thunderclouds standing watch over a city in flames. Elliot: “Ha ha, yes! We are so pleased with it. We all discussed the idea behind the illustration once we

had settled on the album name. After that it was a case of finding the right artist for the job. I remember me and Chris throwing around a few ideas, but none of us could really decide on who to use, until one day I stumbled across Mattias Frisk (Ghost, Trap Them). He’d designed this incredible oil painting for a band called Night. The illustration was of a ship on fire in the middle of the sea with lots of thick smoke blackening the sky. I remember thinking that his use of colour was incredible and would work perfectly for the kind of thing we were after. So, when I put it to the guys, luckily they were all just as blown away by it as I was. After that it was just a case of getting in touch and trying to portray our idea to him as clearly as possible.”

ANOTHER SIGN THAT DESERT Storm’s star is continuing to rise comes with the increase in

endorsements the band have. While Elliot is now sponsored by Soultone Cymbals Matt, whose raw goblin voice is a huge signature part of the band’s sound, has won official endorsement from Vocalzone, the go-to lozenge for throat-ripping rock singers for years. Matt: “Yeah, that’s right. I’ve been using Vocalzones for years now as they really do help me, they won’t suit everyone but I’ve certainly noticed improvements since I started using them. I lost it pretty much altogether only five or so days into an eighteen date tour back in 2014. As with any muscle in the body, once you’ve damaged your vocal folds, there is nothing worse for them than continued strain. By the end of the tour, my voice was a dry whisper because of the beating my box had taken.” How much strain does touring put on your voice, and how do you keep your voice from dying? Matt: “It’s a pretty frightful experience losing your voice midway through a tour. You have to learn to adjust and be adaptable depending on how much strain you’ll be putting on it. If you can achieve 99% of the sound by pushing your voice 50% of the strain, then it’s worth considering a compromise. Giving it my all and blowing, although not particularly good for you, is fine if it’s a one off show but you have to account for the fact that you’ll need to be back up on stage on subsequent nights doing further and further damage. I think a lot of the this is done off stage, so it’s simple things like not shouting along to lyrics of other bands, or trying to

be heard over your mates at the bar. I stopped smoking too around that time which, of course, dries the throat out. It just takes experience and discipline to find what works and how to avoid those things. I’ve tried the teas and honeys and all that stuff, but have found for me, that it’s more about how I use my voice.”

AS WE ONCE AGAIN BID Desert Storm a fond farewell and fun travels, it’s sobering to think that they remain Oxford’s only significant heavyweight success story of recent times. Undersmile were probably the only other act to come close in recent years and they are no more. Do the band see themselves as role models for up and coming Oxford heavy acts and how important do they think it is for local acts to have that kind of thing to aspire to? Ryan: “I don’t see ourselves as role models at all really. I guess it’s cool if bands do look up to us and admire what we do, but I don’t know if anyone does really. I know I always looked up to bands on the scene like Winnebago Deal and Sextodecimo and it’s a shame they aren’t around anymore and the same with the demise of Undersmile. We generally try to not play as much locally anymore either. I think really, though, any band wanting to break out just needs to put the work in and network and believe. That’s all we did... it’s all DIY. While their hometown shows are less regular than they once were Desert Storm’s local reputation was enhanced and expanded last year when they played Common People on *Nightshift*’s Uncommon stage where they used the opportunity to play the heaviest set we’ve heard from them, a genuine *tour de force*; was that intentional? Ryan: “Ha! Sort of... we were on a festival with the likes of Sean Paul, Foals and Groove Armada... the only heavy band, so we had to drag punters into our tent somehow! But also, like the new album, we’re a lot heavier and more brutal then we used to be. Not so much of the hard blues rock stuff in our set these days, so we kind of just played our normal set. I loved it though. I really enjoy playing to diverse audiences. Their set also coincided with the only part of the weekend when it felt it might rain; the skies definitely darkened as they took the stage. Are Desert Storm really heavy enough to affect the weather? Ryan: “Sure we are!”

See Desert Storm bring the sonic thunder at the O2 Academy on Saturday 24th March. ‘Sentinels’ is released on the 1st March. Visit www.desertstormband.com to order the album and see more tour dates.

RELEASED

DESERT STORM

‘Sentinels’

(APF)
You’d be forgiven for thinking that Oxford’s metal scene is marginal but the truth is some of our biggest successes have sprung from its heavy edge: Sevenchurch’s ‘Bleak Insight’, released in 1993, is one of the most influential doom albums of all time; following in their footsteps some years later, Undersmile’s achievements were not insignificant. Perhaps the biggest success came in the shape of The Club That Cannot Be Named, Alan Day’s metal friendly nights that started small and ended up drawing some of the biggest names in music. Over the past decade, Desert Storm have been establishing themselves as heavyweight behemoths but it’s fair to say that they’re a success story in metal circles well beyond the city walls. With European tours, festival appearances and serious critical acclaim already under their belt, the band’s hard work has really paid off, and this latest album finds the band upping the ante considerably.

As soon as ‘Journey’s End’ kicks the album off it’s clear that something has changed: Desert Storm have cranked up the heavy. As the album progresses the huge stoner riffs that defined their sound make an appearance, but as an opening statement, it’s like a sledgehammer blow. There is some seriously brutal weight to their sound now; sharing the stage with the likes of Crowbar has obviously had an effect. Matt Ryan’s gravelly vocals sometimes seemed to be almost too guttural and brutal for the band’s Sabbath-laden riffing, but now they’re in perfect union. ‘Too Far Gone’ is a perfect example with Ryan’s roar sounding like an aggressive throat oyster in attack mode; not for nothing do Desert Storm endorse Vocalzone throat pastilles. With Ryan pushing his vocals into darker and more



combative areas, the band has risen to meet him, and the result is an album that feels shot through with berserk energy. For those panicking that they’ve dispensed with the grooves and their keen ear for a hook, there’s still plenty of that here too: ‘Gearhead’ combines thunderous chugging riffs and Mastodon trickery with a surprisingly catchy chorus; Ryan might growl with the best of them but his range is greater and more impressive than he’s given credit for. When the chanted outro kicks in, there’s an obvious wink in the direction of Iron Maiden’s ‘Heaven Can Wait’. ‘Drifter’, meanwhile, possesses a snake-hipped, blues-tinted groove and enough punch to carry it off. It’s a tune Clutch would be proud of ‘Sentinels’ is an album that finds Desert Storm exploring new, darker territory, but crucially, they’ve not sacrificed any of their identity in making this move. If anything, they’re sharper, more focussed and sounding more professional than ever. It’s just possible that Desert Storm might have produced an album as important as ‘Bleak Insight’.

Sam Shepherd



SELF HELP

‘Birthdayboy’

(Self released)
The term pop-punk might bring to mind unpleasant thoughts of vacuity like Blink 182 and Green Day, so it could be an unfair one to

use to describe these five tracks from Self Help. It is, however, appropriate in pure sentiment, as these are songs that are, for the most part, both punk-ish and poppy. Maybe pop-post-punk would be slightly more accurate, albeit clunky, as tracks like ‘Hungover Jones’ and ‘Burk The Turk’ are more melodically and structurally inventive than the simpler strains of 1977 noise. The lineage of such music is inspirationally evident, too, as touches of Pixies, early ‘90s Sub-Pop, Ash, Supergrass, and even Blur fly around in this mix of good-natured, lyrically-rich and enjoyable noise.

Things sag slightly with ‘Daydreams’, which lowers the tempo, but apart from that this is a fun little ripper of an EP: high energy noisy guitar pop that’s given a unique stamp with a very particular vocal style, and a pleasingly timeless refusal to fit in to any particularly current musical trend.

As a little light relief in often turgid and self-serious indie music landscape, Self Help are a cheeky pick-me-up.

Simon Minter

Sponsored by



MOTHDROP

‘Mothdrop’

(Self released)
Having titled his previous EP ‘Valis’, after Phillip K Dick’s gnostic vision of one aspect of God, Mothdrop piques my fanboy interest. For him to then use a speech sample from the glorious genius that is the kids book *The Phantom Tollbooth* in the first track (“It started at sunset” – the part where Milo gets to meet Chroma the Great, the conductor who orchestrates the world’s colours), suggests their mindset is absolutely on point.

Ten tracks later Brendan Morgan, who records as Mothdrop, ties it all up in a neat bow with the equally superb come-down track ‘It ended At Sunrise’ (“what a beautiful f**king day!) and in between lets you feel just what it would be like to time travel back to the Ministry of Sound, circa the last five years of the 20th Century, with a mini disc of 21st Century cultural samples to mash up. If, like me, you have shelves full of Andrew Weatherall, DJ Harvey and David Holmes remixes, this will be right up your far out, psych-a-metaphysical alley.

Its hat tips a go-go to the likes of The Orb, Amalgamation of Soundz, and Eat Static, with the longer tracks like ‘Howl’, with its Banco de Gaia train rhythms laced with nocturnal calls of the wild, and ‘I’ll See You On The Net’ a modal homage to Project 2510 Ghost in the Shell allowing his ideas to expand and really breathe. But even shorter, squelchingly diverse tribal pieces like ‘Summermelts’, ‘Wintermute’ and the industrial growl of ‘Bohemian Grove’ coalesce effortlessly with the mega-phonied gospel-rap of ‘Dance & Die’ and the cackling cockney women samples in ‘Afterglow’ to billow into a wonderful suite.

This is a classy album from someone who at every stage has complete control and understanding of the progressive electronica genre. Whether you bliss out to William Orbit’s ‘Strange Cargo Series’, or if Plaid, A.D.N.Y. and Forms Puls Fiction are how you get your spiritual highs ‘Mothdrop’ will go a long way to proving there is a God.

Paul Carrera



DEATH OF THE MAIDEN

‘Soldier’

(Self released)
Almost a year after making their live debut, Death of the Maiden present their first single: war and madness as a metaphor for love over a strident marching snare beat and a slide guitar that ramps up the tension as the song goes along. Tamara Parsons-Baker is indisputably one of the best singers Oxford has ever produced and here she uses her voice to stunning effect, bringing an almost Brecht-like sense of drama to the song, possessed of a clean, soulful clarity with an edge of sorrow that might draw comparisons to Anna Calvi but equally to the sublime talent that is The Mekons’ Sally Timms, a woman who could wring the emotional trauma out of a telephone directory.

Really, this is a simply fantastic opening gambit from Death of the Maiden. Not a death, the birth of something very special indeed.

Dale Kattack

LOW ISLAND

‘The Other Life’ EP

(Self released)
I’ve heard of “jumping on the hype train”, but in Low Island’s case I’m chasing after it and tripping over the sleepers. The quartet have graced these pages, and those of every hip music publication you’d care to name, on a regular basis over the past 15 months, and yet in writing this review is my first time hearing them. My immediate impression is that of very deliberate and considered band; every beat and chord progression is perfectly-judged but rarely easy to predict. Repeat listens bring even greater rewards.

Low Island are well known for not tying themselves down to one genre, and this collection really shows that off; ‘The Whole World Tucked Away’ is infectious but subdued indie pop; ‘I Know You’ shifts from minimal electronica to a slow acoustic-led groove, and ‘The Lines’ is straight-up classic house. The absolute highlight is the closing track ‘Tomorrow’, borne along on delicate piano chords in the mood of ‘Pictures At An Exhibition’ while lo-fi vocals and strings swirl around, dream-like.

ROBOT SWANS

‘Stranger Swans’

(Self released)
Since their 2016 debut album, Robot Swans have been reduced to a duo of Matt Bradshaw and Laura Theis, but it doesn’t seem to have damaged them too much on the strength of this four-song EP, which retains most of the hallmarks of their downbeat, ramshackle electro/indie-pop: an alternately dolorous and dreamy delivery, with Laura’s sweet-natured voice the element that constantly stands out amid twinkling keyboards, rudimentary beats and sporadic outbursts of guitar noise. Her duets with Matt have a feel of a DIY electro-pop Lee & Nancy at times with the serenely solemn ‘Weird’ and the lullaby-like ‘Crayons’ the highlights of the EP. ‘Big Blue’ lifts the mood for its brief two-minute lifespan, cheery and cheesy in a deadpan glum kind of way, but throughout the pair retain a childlike simplicity that allows their slender but winsome songs to, if not soar, then hover prettily like so much dandelion fluff.

Sue Foreman



DOLLY MAVIES

‘My Buoy’

(Self released)
Given Dolly Mavies is the musical nom de plume of Molly Davies (did you see what she did there?), it shouldn’t come as too much surprise she’s happy to pun on buoys and boys, on this new single using the object of her affections as a buoyancy aid in the fight against drowning in the deep, unforgiving waters of romance and stuff. Mood wise it ain’t ‘My Boy Lollipop’, Molly/Dolly doing well to conjure the image of her alone and adrift alone on an endless ocean, a weary air of melancholy her only companion. Her voice is high set but still richly soulful, allowing her to bring out the longing of the song without sounding overwrought, the nature-as-metaphor-for-love coupled with the solemn strings recalling Nick Drake’s ‘Northern Sky’ to some extent. The sort of song best listened to late at night while armed with enough Rioja to sink a small boat and thoughts of sad kittens running through your mind, which is pretty much every night round *Nightshift*’s house.

Dale Kattack

THE GREAT WESTERN TEARS

‘Shadowcast’

(Self released)
A new one-track single ahead of the band’s second full album, currently being recorded and due late in 2018, ‘Shadowcast’ finds The Great Western Tears seemingly no more optimistic or disposed to the sunny side than their previous efforts, heartache and sorrow still chief driving forces, alongside singer Dava Waterhouse’s gloriously husky voice, perfect for conveying the emotion he’s feeling in this ode to a friend who was killed while travelling with Dava in 2016. It’s a simple, solemn song, acoustic guitar, harmonium and swooping violin creating an almost drone-like vibe over which Dava, all smoke and whisky and bitter experience, comes to term with grief and trauma and his place in the universe. It sounds like Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan and American Aquarium’s BJ Barham all rolled into one; as an exercise in existential contemplation it’s sorrowful and questioning but with an edge of positivity about it. Purely as a tune, it’s really quite lovely.

Dale Kattack

RELEASED

SPANK HAIR

‘Stop Talking’

(Self released)

Call us old fashioned but didn’t side projects and supergroups used to be the preserve of international rock stars letting off a bit of creative steam in between stadium tours and platinum-selling albums? Self Help, Daisy and Holy Moments are barely out of short trousers in the musical career stakes yet here are various members of each joining forces under the Spank Hair moniker. And frankly, they shouldn’t have bothered.

Whatever charms each of those acts have – and they have many – must have been left at home when this album was made. It starts off in messily rudimentary bratpop fashion with ‘Minor Altercation’ but almost immediately loses even that modicum of attitude and energy, sinking first into twinkly fidgeting on ‘Just Cos’, which spends two minutes going nowhere clumsily, before stumbling through the sort of low-rent, melody-free indie pop that makes The Pastels sound like U2 in their 90s pomp.

‘I Wanna See’ is seemingly the trio’s sensitive number and comes without even a semblance of a facade of musical appeal, just pointless, ramshackle whimsy, and by the time they’ve picked themselves up off the floor and decided to get down and dirty on ‘Crazy Dreams’ it’s much too little far too late to save a mercifully brief eleven-song collection that is, frankly,

irredeemable shit. Back to the day jobs, Spank Hair: don’t make us come round and give you a smack bottom.

Dale Kattack



THE GEORGE O’CONNOR BAND

‘The George O’Connor Band’

(Self released)

The George O’Connor Band used to be called Sugar Darling, which is a way better name. Why they changed it we don’t know but this debut album suggests sensible choices aren’t their forte.

We say ‘they’ but aside from a few guest drum tracks this is all the work of George himself.

Maybe some kind of stabilising force alongside him might have helped as he ranges from lopsided piano pop on opener ‘Gaia Pop’, all slipshod, out of tune jauntiness and high-pitched harmonies that’s like Randy Newman meeting The Beach Boys in a remake of Bambi on Ice.

The ivory tinkling and forced castrato continues until, as if a Dementor had appeared, all the joy is sucked out of the room for the appalling, sluggish ‘Clear the View’. A brief flurry of surf rock on ‘Mercury’ offers respite but is crushed by the tuneless pub rock shouting dumped on top of it and things become increasingly disjointed from here. ‘Dog Bones’ might as well be called ‘Dog’s Dinner’ and everything reaches a nadir with ‘Locker Room’, an atrocious, glum piano ballad with for-the-hell-of-it soft rock guitar soloing that must surely have been recorded simply to test our will to live.

Thing is, there are some decent moments, when George’s sense of musical idiocy works in the right way: the bubbly, trebly electro-funk of ‘Flicky Leabone’ is silly in the right kind of way while album closer ‘Treehouse Game’ is two parts Status Quo cheese to one part Motley Crue hair metal bombast and one part ZZ Top boogie. It’s like a final two-fingered salute to critical sensibilities but actually the one time George comes close to making his warped and wobbly musical vision actually entertaining.

“Needs to make more sensible choices” is a well-used school report code for “needs to stop acting like a total arse”. Nothing wrong with acting the arse when you’re a musician of course, but George, in future, at least try and be a funny, entertaining arse.

Dale Kattack



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G I G G U I D E

THURSDAY 1st

HUSKY LOOPS: The Cellar – Uptight post-punk funk and harmony pop from the Italian ex-pats on tour – *see main preview*

MATT EDWARDS BAND: The Bullingdon – Blues rocking from the local singer and guitarist and band at tonight’s Haven Club show.

G4: The New Theatre – Smug, smooth *a capella* sliminess from the former *X Factor* irritants, somehow still unearthing an audience ready and willing to tolerate their aural bilge, like hogs snuffling in the mud for truffles.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Wheatsheaf – Free show in the downstairs bar from the veteran local partystarters, mixing blues, funk, ska and rock’n’roll into their lively sound.

GOODNESS: The Cellar – House, techno and disco club night, with house veteran Marquis Hawkes on the decks, alongside Disco Ma Non Troppo and Goodness DJs.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest running open club night continues to showcase

Thursday 1st

HUSKY LOOPS: The Cellar

An invigorating start to the month with a band whose name makes them sound like a brand of sugary breakfast cereal but are in fact a band rapidly earning a reputation as one of the most energetic acts around. Formed at school in Bologna in Italy, Husky Loops relocated to the UK when the trio – Danio, Pietro and Tommaso – came to study music at London’s Royal College of Art. A debut single, ‘Dead’, pricked up the right ears and they earned support slots with The Kills, Sunflower Bean, Yak and Estrons, while a full EP on Alcopop! cemented their reputation as ones top watch as well as a tour support to Placebo at the end of 2017. The records are pretty decent, but it’s live where they come into their own, years of jamming together making them a tight, fluid unit who mix up stadium pop stomp, hardcore energy, post-punk starkness and sunshine pop melodies and harmonies, meaty riffs, rigid, urgent beats and prominent Jah Wobble-styled funk bass combining to make something if not ferocious, then formidable



MARCH

local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers, performance artists and more every week.

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

SPARKY’S NEW MOON: The Half Moon – Sparky’s open mic session returns to The Half Moon, running first and third Thursday of every month.

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

SAM KELLY & THE LOST BOYS: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Cornwall’s BBC Folk Award winner Sam Kelly comes to Didcot’s arts centre with his band to perform traditional and original tunes from his already extensive catalogue.

FRIDAY 2nd

BOSSAPHONIK with CAMO CLAVE: The Cellar – Afrobeat, dancefloor Latin, Balkan bangers and nu-jazz club night, hosted by Dan Ofer and tonight featuring a live set from Camo Clave with their electro-tropical take on Latin dance, bringing a contemporary electronic-laced interpretation of traditional cumbia and salsa.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with PEERLESS PIRATES + LIME + PUPPET MECHANIC + STEEVO NUISSIER: The Wheatsheaf – Characteristically upbeat mixed bag of acts at Klub Kakofanney’s monthly shindig, tonight headlined by Peerless Pirates, whose roustabout mix of 80s indie, rockabilly, surf, spaghetti western soundtracks and sea shanties has seen them play Glastonbury twice as well as earn support slots to The Monochrome Set, Big Country and My Life Story. Support from alt.folk and indie crew Puppet Mechanic and dark synth-pop and post-punk chap Steevo.

ART THEEFE + RICHARD NEUBERG: Modern Art Oxford – Matt Sage’s soul, funk and surf-rock outfit launch their new single ‘I Trained A Spy’, mixing darker rock tones into their breezy 60-inspired pop.

THE RAVING TRIPPY: The Bullingdon – Psychedelic house and techno club night.

SATURDAY 3rd

THE BLOCKHEADS + CHASING DAYLIGHT: O2 Academy – Ian Dury’s former backing band keep the funk going and the hits alive – *see main preview*

EYRE LLEW + KID KIN + GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS: The Cellar – Epic, Sigur Ros-styled sounds from Eyre Llew, back in town after their excellent set at Ritual Union back in October. They’re out on an extensive European tour to promote new album ‘Atelo’

and joined tonight by two of Oxford’s best ambient/post-rock acts, Kid Kin and Ghosts in the Photographs.

FREERANGE: The Cellar – UK garage, grime and bassline club night with Caspa, Youngsta, Nomine and SP:MC.

THE GLASS AISLE: The Old Fire Station – Brian Briggs plays his first Oxford show since Stornoway’s farewell show at The New Theatre last year, putting poet Paul Henry’s long poem to music alongside readings from Henry’s collections *The Brittle Sea* and *Boy Running*.

SIMPLE featuring OBJEKT: The Bullingdon – Oxford’s long-running house and techno night hosts Berlin’s much-lauded producer Objekt, whose eclectic and sometimes experimental approach to club music harks back to 90s Warp Records and Autechre, through early dubstep and onto contemporary techno.

THE MONOCHROME SET + THE WOULD-BE-GOODS TWO + THE COUNT OF THREE: Jericho Tavern – First gig in over five years for post-punk survivors The Monochrome Set, whose early embracing of lounge and surf pop, as well as an idiosyncratic approach to rhythms and melody, and an ironic, oblique lyricism set them apart from the leftfield rock of the late-70s. They’ve split up and reformed twice in their lifetime, founder Bid and long-term guitarist Andy Warren still helming the band as they tour their latest album, ‘Maisieworld’, which, characteristically brings Latin pop, bossa nova, Indian raga and chanson to its melting pot. Great support from longstanding indie-pop queen Jessica Griffin’s Would-Be-Goods, whose ranks have featured Andy and Bid from The Monochrome Set previously and currently feature Talulah Gosh and Heavenly guitarist Pete Momtchiloff. Pete also features in beat-pop openers The Count of Three.

BUDDY HOLLY & THE CRICKETERS with THE ENGLISH ROCK’N’ROLL ORCHESTRA: The New Theatre – Big stage tribute to Buddy Holly from the longstanding Cricketers, alongside The English Rock’n’Roll Orchestra.

METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf – Latest heat of the competition to win a slot at Bloodstock, tonight with a quality line-up featuring blackened metallers Promethean Reign and virulent hardcore crew Worry, alongside New Device.

DAY OF THE DEADBEATS 6: The Isis Farmhouse – The Deadbeat Apostles host their sixth Day of the Deadbeats, tonight featuring gypsy jazz duo Adrian & Noreen; a debut show from Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band frontman Stuart Macbeth and funk-pop outfit Papa Nui.

SPARKY’S SPONTANEOUS SHOWCASE & SPOTLIGHT JAM: The White House

– Sparky’s monthly band night and open jam session returns with sets from Jem Kid & Company, Franklin’s Tower and Storyteller.

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC: The Cornerstone, Didcot – ABBA Tribute night.

DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Big-hearted Americana and 60s country rocking in the vein of The Band, Big Star and Tom Petty from Danny and co.

IAN W BROWN + PETE WATKINS: The Swan Inn, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk Club hosts singing farmer Ian W Brown, last seen here supporting Chris Leslie in 2017. Having spent his adult life on the farm, he began writing under the name Tom Gilbert, and penned Sandi Thom’s ‘I Wish I Was a Punk Rocker’, earning an Ivor Novello nomination along the way; he’s since gone on to play alongside Julie Felix, Martin Simpson and Steve Harley, among a host of other folk luminaries.

SUNDAY 4th

SNAKES + MSRY + RESOLVE: The Wheatsheaf – Hometown show for virulent metalcore beasts MSRY, out on tour with London’s similarly brutal Snakes.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms FRANKLINS TOWER + JULES PENZO + BEARD OF DESTINY + THE JESTERS: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of unplugged music including Grateful Dead tribute Franklins Tower, and Delta-style blues from Beard of Destiny.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (4-6.30pm) – Rock and blues covers from the veteran local singer and guitarist.

MONDAY 5th

SAINT AGNES + THE OTHER DRAMAS + COUNTING CARDS: The Cellar – Seriously heavy-duty psychedelic blues-rocking from the east London quartet, out on tour to promote new single ‘Merry Mother of God Go Round’, channelling the classic 70s rock swagger of Led Zep, the dark blues of The Kills and the rumbling garage rock of Black Rebel Motorcycle Club. Pop-friendly garage rocking from local faves The Other Dramas in support.

DON’T BELIEVE THE HYPE: The Cellar – Indie, alternative and new-rave club night, tonight featuring a Strokes special and a live set from local indie rockers The Shades.

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

TUESDAY 6th

AUDIOGRAFT LAUNCH: OVADA – The annual festival of experimental music and sound returns with a fortnight of challenging, multi-media events across town. Tonight’s launch event features performances and installations from Kathy Hinde, Sally-Ann McIntyre, Austin Sherlaw-Johnson, Simon Blackmore and Sarah Hughes.

BAD RAP Pt.2: The Cellar – 90s and Noughties pop and club classics with Femi Williams et al.

REJJIE SNOW: O2 Academy – Laidback

hip hop in the vein of Earl Sweatshirt and Kendrick Lamar from Dublin rapper and producer Snow, out on tour to promote debut album ‘Dear Annie’, following on from early self-released hits ‘1992’ and ‘Lost in Empathy’.

SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern – Weekly open mic night.

STEVE KNIGHTLEY: Nettlebed Folk Club – A return to Nettlebed’s legendary folk club for Show of Hands frontman Knightley.

WEDNESDAY 7th

PAUL DRAPER: O2 Academy – The former Mansun frontman hits the solo comeback trail – *see main preview*

AUDIOGRAFT: Fusion Arts (5-7pm) – Opening event of the experimental music, sound and art festival, with performances and installations from Renzo Spiteri, Brigitte Hart, Gary Charles and Sian Hutchings.

ICEBREAKER – SYSTEM RESTART: Holywell Music Room – Part of Audiograft, with performances from Anna Meredith, Linda Buckley, Kerry Andrew, Jobina Tinnemans, Elizabeth Kelly and Kate Moore.

COTSWOLDS + JONNY RACE + WILD PHOENIX: The Wheatsheaf – It’s All About the Music showcase, featuring recent *Nightshift* Demo of the Monther Jonny Race with his gentle, atmospheric Radiohead-inspired pop.

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: The Cellar – Alternative 80s, glam, disco and synth-pop club night.

HAZEL O’CONNOR: The Cornerstone, Didcot – The 80s electro/punk star and actress-turned folk/pop singer performs classic hits like ‘Will You’ and Eighth Day’ alongside songs from her extensive career, including new album ‘See You Again’.

THURSDAY 8th

SPACE + THE SHAPES + CANDIDATES: O2 Academy – The filling in the 90s Britpop sandwich this week – *see main preview*

YOUTHMOVIES: The Bullingdon – First of a two-night stint at the Bully for the reformed local heroes – *see main preview*

SPHYNX: The Cellar – Glam rock stomp, funk and psych-pop from the Austin, Texas outfit, inspired by Queen and Prince as well as MGMT’s proggy electro-pop.

CHEMTRAILS + PROTECTION SPELLS: The Library – Exuberant garage-pop and Spector-esque noise from the London DIY stars – *see main preview*

AUDIOGRAFT: Holywell Music Room – Experimental sound and music from Jane Dickson and Sebastian Lexer; Tess Denman-Cleaver; Dominic Lash and Seth Cooke, and Straroula Kounadea.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure

BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

SWITCHBLADE CITY + ROCKSOLID + THE WICKED JACKALS + GIN ALLEY: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Northampton hard rockers Switchblade City return to the shire for tonight’s OxRox show, with support



Saturday 3rd

THE BLOCKHEADS:

O2 Academy

Even 18 years after his death it’s hard to think of The Blockheads without adding Ian Dury & to the name. They were his backing band of course but, like The Magic Band they’ve endured, and even prospered, since their late leader’s demise. Probably because their component parts were pretty incredible, and together they were as responsible for the music we know and love as the man who wrote the songs. Without The Blockheads driving his songs with their superb musicianship it’s possible that Ian Dury might have remained as little more than a footnote in musical history. After all, his other bands, Kilburn and The Highroads, and Ian Dury and The Music Students, are not exactly the most celebrated. Guitarists Chaz Jankel and John Turnbull, bassist Norman Watt-Russell, and organist Mick Gallagher are still the core of the fluid funk and r’n’b band, with Gilad Atzmon sporadically returning on sax duties. Derek Hussy these days tends to share vocal duties with Jankel and the band’s live set increasingly features music written since Dury’s death. It’s those classic, quintessentially English songs, that continue to dominate though: ‘Sex & Drugs & Rock’n’Roll’; ‘What a Waste’; ‘Billericay Dickie’; ‘Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick’; ‘Sweet Gene Vincent’; ‘I Want To Be Straight’ et al. Another opportunity to remember a one-off songsmith and his unique band. Suitably off-the-wall support from local rock eccentrics Chasing Daylight.

from Wicked Jackals, formerly Guns of Anarchy, with their mix of AC/DC, Aerosmith, Airbourne and Gun’n’Roses.

THE MOONRAKERS + THREE PRESSED MEN: The Unicorn, Abingdon – Lively trad folk with English, Irish and Scottish influences from local troupe The Moonrakers, alongside Trad English folk from Three Pressed Men.

FRIDAY 9th

JAKE BUGG: The New Theatre – The fiery teen rocker goes contemplative country – *see main preview*

YOUTHMOVIES: The Bullingdon – Second night of livewire post-rock action from the influential local stars – *see main preview*

YOUTHMOVIES AFTERPARTY: The Cellar – Following their sold-out reunion shows at the Bullingdon, Youthmovies host an aftershow with DJ sets from the band and guests.

MELLOW GANG + LE FEYE: Modern



Wednesday 7th
PAUL DRAPER

Friday 9th

SPACE

Saturday 10th

SLEEPER: O2 Academy

Three gigs in four nights that might make you question which decade we're living in. All these acts emerged from the Britpop era in various states of disrepair. Mansun split up acrimoniously and singer Paul Draper endured a battle with a rare strain of cancer but his emergence with new album 'Spooky Action' finds him reinvigorated, carrying his old band's expansively arty sound into his new record, with its baggy beats, electronics and prog edges, although his lyrics are more personal now, touching on the betrayals of his earlier career. Two nights later and fellow Liverpoolians Space return to town, having been a going concern since their 2011 reunion, and one of the late-90s scene's more adventurous acts, mixing ska, rockabilly, mariachi and spaghetti western soundtrack influences into an idiosyncratic, synthy form of indie. Already sold is Sleeper's return to action. Back when Radio 1 Sound City came to Oxford the band were at the peak of their powers, the star name on the bill and joined on stage by Zoë Ball. Hits like 'Inbetweeners', 'What Do I Do Now' and 'Sale of the Century' confirmed their place in the Britpop Premier League, while Louise Wener was a rare female beacon in a depressingly laddish landscape. After time living in the States working as a session musician and later as a music lecturer in Brighton, Wener reformed the band last year and her attitude as much as her music is as pertinent now as it was 20 years ago.

Art Oxford – Free show from swoonsome, seductive breeze-pop, psychedelia and synth-pop outfit Mellow Gang, back in Oxford following their showing at Ritual Union last year, led by the husky tenor of Harriet Joseph that has seen them compared to Lana Del Rey at times. Get there early for openers Le Feye - the musical reincarnation of Coldredlight's Gaby-Elise and Caspar.
AUDIOGRAFT: Old Fire Station – Experimental sounds from Dafne Vicente-Sandoval, Angharad Davies, Paul Dibley and Brett Gordon.

ASH LEWIS + DREAMSYNDROME + RAD ROACH: The Wheatsheaf – Folk-punk tales from south London troubadour Lewis, out on tour with a full band.
BON GIOVI: Fat Lil's, Witney – Bon Jovi tribute, in case the name didn't make it clear enough.

SATURDAY 10th

SLEEPER: O2 Academy – Louise Wener's reformed Britpoppers take this month's comeback crown with a sold-out show – *see main preview*
PARKA MONKEYS with ADAM FICEK: O2 Academy – Indie club with a guest set from Babyshambles' Adam Ficek on the decks.
PAUL CARRACK: The New Theatre – The blue-eyed soul singer returns to The New Theatre following his show here in 2016, the singer's song's having been covered by The Eagles, Diana Ross and Tom Jones, while he's served time alongside Elton John, Eric Clapton and BB King, among others.
SUBTROPICAL: The Bullingdon – Soca, dancehall and tropical vibes from club night Subtropical getting the summer Caribbean vibes going early, with Dub Boy b2b Atki2 ft MC Jonesy Wales, Count Skylarkin' and Checkmate.
RICHARD BARRET & ENSEMBLE STUDIO6: Wesley Memorial Church – Audiograft concert.
BEARD OF DESTINY + TWAT MONKEY + REAL COOL KILLERS + ENJOY ALL HUMANS: The Wheatsheaf – Acoustic and electric blues from Beard of Destiny at tonight's It's All About the Music showcase.
BLACK SHOT ROSE + CHAOS ASYLUM: The Cellar – Rock and metal covers from Black Shot Rose at tonight's OxRox show.
SONDER: The Cellar – New underground deep house club night, with Finest Wear (Nordic Trax); Damian Charles (Point Blank) and MC Si Franks from Audiobulllys.
JOSEPH J JONES + BETH THORNTON + ZOOFAN: The Jericho Tavern – Sonorous, imposing blues and soul in the vein of Rag'n'Bone Man from the singer-songwriter on the rise, touring his new single 'Crawl', having shared a stage with Jack Savoretti and Nathaniel Rateliff recently.
THE BRITPOP BOYS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Britpop – when boys were boys and girls were... invisible? ignored?

SUNDAY 11th

III GUERRA + THE DOMESTICS + DRORE + WORRY: The Library – Virulent DIY noise courtesy of Smash Disco, tonight featuring Mallorca's III Guerro, with their raw, reverb-heavy hardcore punk, joined by East Anglia's short, sharp sonic attack punks The Domestics, molten sludgcore from Drore, and militant melodic hardcore from rising local stars Worry.
FRANKLIN'S TOWER + THE FIREGAZERS + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + PHIL GARVEY & KAZ + MAEVE BAYTON: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm) – Klub Kakofanney host their monthly free afternoon in the Sheaf's downstairs bar,

including a set from Grateful Dead tribute Franklin's Tower.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms MONDAY 12th

FICKLE FRIENDS: O2 Academy – Bubbly indie-funk and summery, discofied electro-pop from Brighton's hardworking rising stars, coming in somewhere between Metronomy, London Grammar and Chvrches and out on a headline tour to promote new album 'You Are Someone Else'.
OXFORD CLASSIC JAZZ: The Harcourt Arms – Classic jazz and ragtime from the local ensemble, taking on Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Fats Domino et al.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim CRAOBH RUA: Nettlebed Folk Club – Nettlebed's long-running folk club celebrates St Patrick's Night early with some traditional Irish songs and tunes.

TUESDAY 13th

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Monthly goth,

Thursday 8th

CHEMTRAILS / PROTECTION SPELLS: The Library

Proving that lo-fi doesn't have to mean barely coherent or noisy, London's Chemtrails recorded their debut album in their living room but there's a rich Phil Spectro-like fullness to it as well as something of Joe Meek's thrift store invention. The band, helmed by singer/guitarists Mia Lust and Laura Orlova, are out on tour to promote 'Calf of the Sacred Cow', which comes in the wake of a slew of great singles and EPs that mix up garage rock, psychedelia and pop into a frothy, exuberant party mess of guitar noise, toytown synths and fx-heavy harmonies, like Pixies, My Bloody Valentine and Thee Oh Sees racing to see who can finish a Ronettes tribute the quickest. Mia's lyrics mix the personal and political, particularly from the viewpoint of a transgender woman, but it's mostly a joyous racket, even with eldritch titles like 'Ghosts Of My Dead Cats', 'Headless Pin Up Girls' and 'A Beautiful Cog in the Monolithic Death Machine', every inch of space filled with sound. Joining them for a superb double bill are regular visitors to town Protection Spells, a spooky, spectral, shamanic dream-folk three-piece who were recent support to Jane Weaver at the Bullingdon, channelling the spirits of Cocteau Twins and Julee Cruise at times.



industrial, ebm and alternative 80s club night with Doktor Joy and Bookhouse keeping it dark on the decks.
SPARKY'S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 14th

MILK TEETH: The Bullingdon – Raw and raucous grunge, garage rock, punk and hardcore noise from Gloucestershire's Milk Teeth.

THURSDAY 15th

ART THEEFE: Truck Store (6pm) – The local 60s-inspired soul, rock and pop trio launch their new surf-styled single, 'I Trained a Spy'.
WILL WILDE BAND: The Bullingdon – A return to town for the renowned singer and blues harpist at tonight's Haven Club show, Wilde's soulful, funky take on the blues having seen him win Best Harmonica Player at the British Blues Awards. He's out on a UK tour this month to promote his new album, following on from his debut Italian tour.
KENNY FOSTER + AGS CONNOLLY: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Rootsy country balladeering inspired by Garth Brooks, James Taylor and the Ozark Mountain Daredevils from Minnesota songsmith Kenny Foster at the suitably rustic Isis Farmhouse tonight, joined by local Ameripolitan star Ags Connolly.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Free show in the downstairs bar.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
SPARKY'S NEW MOON: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 16th

ALABAMA 3: O2 Academy – Larry Love and the Very Reverend Dr D Wayne Love return once more with another dose of acid house blues and country medicine, riding the rough highway between Hank Williams and Happy Mondays, spreading a little bit of worldly wit and chemically-enhanced joy as they go.
THE AMY WINEHOUSE EXPERIENCE: O2 Academy – Tribute night.
OTTO + ALBOA + CRYSTALLITE + WEBS & MARIONETTES: The Wheatsheaf – It's All About the Music showcase with grungy jazz'n'blues and rock'n'roll crew Otto and more.
SOUL SESSIONS: The Cellar – Classic 60s and 70s funk, soul and disco hits.
TIM FREARS & THE MERCENARIES: The Jericho Tavern
THE DOORS ALIVE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Still tribute night.

SATURDAY 17th

FEROCIOUS DOG + NOBLE JACKS: O2 Academy – Nottingham's folk-punk road warriors hit town after selling out the Bully last year and following a tour support to The Levellers. Having become the first

unsigned band to sell out their hometown's 2,000-capacity Rock City venue, they played on the Leftfield stage at Glastonbury in June and are earning a reputation as one of the most hard working and entertaining live bands in the country, drawing on the punk spirit of The Clash and Celtic folk traditions; they're in the traditions of bands like The Men They Couldn't Hang, Tansads and Flogging Molly: angry and uplifting in equal measures.
RAGHU DIXIT: Old Fire Station – India's finest export since the onion bhajee plays his first local show in a decade – *see main preview*
WHITE LAKES: The Cellar – Raucous indie rocking in the vein of Catfish & the Bottlemen and Amazons from the local crew.
FLUID: The Cellar – Bassline, bass and house club night with Cause & Effect alongside local stars Burt Cope, Masp & Friends, Sound Affect and XODOS.
MUSICAL MEDICINE with BRADLEY ZERO: The Bullingdon – The monthly club night celebrates St Patrick's Night with a guest set from Rhythm Section star Bradley Zero.
RYDERS CREEK + THE WICKED JACKALS + HOLLOWSTAR: The Wheatsheaf – Epic, bluesy hard rock from Staffordshire's Ryders Creek at tonight's OxRox show, the band channelling Led Zep, AC/DC and Audioslave in their 70s-inspired sound.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: Amplethorpe Arms, Risinghurst – St. Patrick's Night hoedown from the local bluegrass and folk outfit at the recently re-opened Amplethorpe.
THE STANDARD: Fat Lil's, Witney – Party covers.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The White Hart, Eynsham

SUNDAY 18th

THE AC/DC EXPERIENCE: O2 Academy – Tribute night. Once more.
ROBOT SWANS + BIRDS OF HELL + KNIGHT KNIGHT: The Library – EP launch for downbeat indie/synth-pop duo Robot Swans with their winsomely melancholy new record 'Stranger Swans'.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (4-6.30pm)

MONDAY 19th

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim
PETER KNIGHT & JOHN SPIERS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Steeleye Span, Feast of Fiddles and Gigspanner star Knight continues his collaboration with former Bellowhead mainstay Spiers after the pair's impromptu festival set together in 2016, playing trad folk tunes, ballads and songs from their respective careers.

TUESDAY 20th

RAE MORRIS: O2 Academy – Blackpool's sultry blues and jazz songstress returns to town to promote new album 'Someone Out There', her smooth, emotive piano-based balladry



Thursday 8th / Friday 9th

YOUTHMOVIES:

The Bullingdon

Once described by *Nightshift* as "the most influential band in Oxford" Youthmovies' return from the musical grave for a one-off show caused a sizeable wave of excitement when it was announced in October. So much so that the one-off, which sold out in a matter of minutes, had to become a two-off, with a second show being added. You can be assured that among the throng of eager fans will be a sizeable number of local musicians, either those inspired by Youthmovies first time round or those who've heard about their visceral live shows second hand. Twice *Nightshift* cover stars Youthmovies were explorers as well as an out-and-out rock band, taking elements of post-rock, electronica, emo, post-hardcore and math-rock to make for a highly dextrous sound that owed something to Shellac and Sweep the Leg Johnny and shared some common ground with early Foals, who nominal frontman Andrew Mears was a founding member of. The band split back in 2010 with Mears going on to form Pet Moon as well as lead the Blessing Force collective, leaving an extensive catalogue of releases, all of which were made free to download last year, but it was always live that they came into their own: a band that other bands would gaze upon in envy. The shows that brought the quartet back together are in aid of the Michael Barry Trust, which raises money for brain tumour research and treatment, Barry himself one of Youthmovies' earliest champions. It'll be emotional, but it'll also be a reminder of the possibilities of rock music. Beg, borrow or steal for a ticket.





Friday 9th

JAKE BUGG: The New Theatre

Six years and four albums into his career and Jake Bugg is still only just 24. It all happened very early for him, his 2012 debut album hitting the Number 1 spot and going double platinum after the teenage troubadour from Nottingham had first made his name on the BBC Introducing stage at Glastonbury the summer before. That debut somehow managed to unite the *MOJO*-reading massive with their kids, bringing the spirit of Lonnie Donegan to modern day council estates – skiffle-infused tales of pillied-up nights out. Chuck in a whole heap of vintage rockabilly, beatnik folk and a dash of country, drawing a line from Woody Guthrie to Lee Mavericks, via Bob Dylan and you had the phenomenon that was teenage Jake. Fast forward to 2017 and he released ‘Hearts That Strain’, a largely acoustic, country-hued record produced by Black Keys’ Dan Auebach, featuring a cast of musicians who played with Elvis and Wilson Pickett that has more in common with Glenn Campbell and comes in the wake of the musical misstep that was ‘On My One’, with its incongruous dance beats. The new record has a world weariness about it, as if Jake’s already seen and done too much. Sales figures are significantly down too, if that counts for anything, but fans will be hoping he can still crank out an acerbic ‘Trouble Town’ or ‘Two Fingers’ or vigorous pop blast of ‘Lightning Bolt’. It’s what he did best and hopefully time and experience hasn’t worn him down too much.

recalling Emiliana Torrini, Ellie Goulding, Sade and Bjork at times.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS: James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 21st
CHRIS DIFFORD & BOO HEWERDINE: St. John the Evangelist – A great double dose of two of the most acclaimed songwriters of recent times at tonight’s Empty Room show. Squeeze frontman Chris Difford was responsible, alongside Glenn Tilbrook, for classics like ‘Pulling Mussels From a Shell’, ‘Take Me I’m Yours’ and ‘Up the Junction’, in the lineage of Ray Davies and a major influence on Pete Doherty. Tonight he joins forces with former-Bible frontman and renowned Ivor Novello-nominated songwriter Boo Hewerdine who, after enjoying some minor chart success

with his band in the 1980s, went on to write for and play alongside Richard Thompson, Eddie Reader, Martha Wainwright, Kris Drever and John McCusker, amongst others, author of cult classics like ‘Harvest Gypsies’, and a literate songsmith in the lineage of Nick Drake and JJ Cale.
METAL TO THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf – Final heat of the Bloodstock battle of the bands, with a wildcard night from previous heat runners-up.

THURSDAY 22nd
MT. WOLF: The Bullingdon – Epic electronic soundscapes, folktronica and string-heavy pop from Sebastian Fox’s reformed outfit.
PHOBOPHOBES: The Cellar – Having previously supported Fat White Family at their infamous Bullingdon gig back in 2014, Phobophobes make their way back to town, with their understatedly hypnotic mess of psychedelia, drone, gothic garage rock, surf and a hazy funk undercurrent, sounding rather splendidly like a cross between Wooden Shjips, Joe Meek and lost 80s rockers Wall of Voodoo.
SUBCULTURE: The Cellar – New drum&bass, jungle and dub night launch, playing underground club sounds, with J.Kenzo and more.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 23rd
GWENNO: The Bullingdon – Welsh language sci-fi and synth-pop from the former Pipettes singer – *see main preview*
DISS HAND IN: The Bullingdon
SELF HELP: The Cellar – Melodic fuzzgun punk-pop and garage rock from the fast-rising local starlets, launching their new EP – *see Introducing feature*
DEMOCRATUS + DAMAGED REICH: The Wheatsheaf – Melodic death metal outta Wales from Democratus, the band’s progressive brutality inspired by Amon Amarth, Opeth and At the Gates.
31HOURS + ZURICH + DAISY: The Jericho Tavern – Atmospheric electro-pop from 31Hours, taking Radiohead for a starlit stroll through trilling indie-funk, alongside dark-hearted synth-rockers Zurich, taking inspiration from Editors, The National and Interpol. Ghoulish emo from Daisy to open the show.

SATURDAY 24th
SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with **MUNGO’S HI-FI:** The Bullingdon – Count Skylarkin’ once again hosts Glasgow’s global reggae and dancehall stars Mungo’s Hi-Fi at his monthly club night, the forward-thinking collective, inspired by King Tubby and Prince Jammy, producing a slew of original albums over the last decade, including 2015’s ‘Serious Time’, as well as collaborating with the likes of Sugar Minott, Ranking Joe and Major Lazer.
TURIN BRAKES: O2 Academy – The indie folk-rockers return to town after their show

here last year, touring seventh album ‘Lost Property’.
DESERT STORM + HELL’S GAZELLES + THE HOROLOGIST + NEVER FOUND + CRIMSON TUSK: O2 Academy - Local metal behemoths Desert Storm launch their new album, ‘Sentinels’ - *see main interview feature*
DOGSFLESH + TRAUMA UK: The Cellar – Thrash-punk, metal and hardcore in the vein of GBH, Discharge and Motorhead from Teeside’s reformed rock ragers at tonight’s OxRox show, plus support from Witney’s old-school punk-metallers Trauma UK.
LACH: The Harcourt Arms – After the cancellation of his show at The Cellar in January, the New York singer-songwriter brings his Dylan-esque antifolk and beat poetry to town, having previously supported Neil Halstead on tour.

Saturday 17th

RAGHU DIXIT: The Old Fire Station

Against some serious competition, the finest set *Nightshift* has ever seen at Cornbury Festival was by Indian singer and guitarist Raghu Dixit and his band back in 2010, when they defied the rain to get half the festival site on its feet and dancing – no mean feat given they were playing on the Riverside stage, tucked away from the main arena. Back then he was making his first foray into Europe and barely known, even back home; nowadays he’s one of India’s biggest stars and a renowned Bollywood composer. Born into a conservative family and banned from listeing to western music, Dixit earned a degree in microbiology and went to work in Belgium where his landlord overheard him singing and put him onto a radio station. He’s never looked back, going on to play Glastonbury and the Royal Festival Hall as well as become artist in residence at the South Bank. Musically he’s as inventive as he is charismatic as a performer, mixing traditional Indian classical and folk music with funk, pop, rock and hip hop, even veering into African hi-life at times, and when we say he’s a great festival act we mean it as the highest compliment, a joyous experience that will make you dance, however hard you try and resist, and by thunder, *Nightshift* is always one to try and resist having fun. We failed and so will you.



ECHO4FOUR + BAD BLOOD RECOVERY + RITCHIE STIX & THE BRAINMEN + MARK SOLLIS: The Wheatsheaf – Sabbath-styled groove rocking and heaviosity from Echo4four.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: Cricketers Arms, Cowley
MIKE SILVER + LINDA WATKINS: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwoof – English trad folk fused with blues, country and rock from the veteran Uffington singer and guitarist at tonight’s Wychwood Folk Club.

SUNDAY 25th
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3-7pm) – Open blues jam.

MONDAY 26th
JOEL BAKER: The Bullingdon – Hip hop meets soulful acoustic pop in London rapper Joel Baker’s world, inspired as much by Nizlopi and Bob Dylan as by Kendrick and Kanye.
PAUL DOWNES & PHIL BEER: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional English folk tunes from the longstanding compadres, back at Nettlebed for the first time together since 2014.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Royal Blenheim

TUESDAY 27th
THE OUTSIDE + LAKE ACACIA + MAX BLANSJAAR: The Bullingdon – Chirpy indie rocking from The Outside, back in action, alongside Banbury’s Lake Acacia and lo-fi indie trouser Max Blansjaar.
SPARKY’S FLYING CIRCUS:James Street Tavern

WEDNESDAY 28th
GEOFF ACHISON & THE SOULDIGGERS: The Bullingdon – The Melbourne-based blues-rocker and previous winner of the prestigious Albert King Award for most promising young blues guitarist comes to the Haven Club, excelling at both electric and acoustic blues styles, adding jazz and funk improvisations into his traditional repertoire.
TREV WILLIAMS: The Mad Hatter – Local songsmith Trev heads off on a short UK tour to plug his recent ‘Starting Line’ album, mixing soulful introspection with musical atmospherics and social commentary.

THURSDAY 29th
RAINBOW RESERVOIR: Truck Store (6pm) – Instore album launch set from the local indie-pop/riot grrl faves.
NOASIS: The Bullingdon – Tribute night, you say?
FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + DAMP HOUSE +



DEAR MICHELLE: The Jericho Tavern – Epic, elaborate electro-heavy psychedelia in the vein of Arcade Fire, Nick Cave, The Doors and Spiritualised from Flights of Helios, playing songs from their debut album, ‘Endings’, plus Brighton’s indie pop newcomers Damp House, and more.
HOLY THURSDAY: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin hosts a night of reggae, dancehall, dubstep, jungle, garage and hip hop.
MERCURY – A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN: The New Theatre – Tributes – farsands of ‘em.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 30th
SUPER HANS: O2 Academy – Peepshow’s beloved drug-addled maniac brings his party to town.
WHITE MAGIC featuring SEANI B: O2 Academy – Reggae, dancehall, hip hop and r’n’b club night, tonight celebrating its birthday in the company of 1Xtra’s Seani B.
PRISM / SPECTRUM featuring KIERAN ALEXIS: The Bullingdon – Classic techno and acid house at tonight’s reunion club night, raving like the 90s once more.
WRONG JOVI + BREAKING WAVES: The Wheatsheaf – Tribute night.
THE MIGHTY CADILLACS: The Prince of Wales, Shippon – Blues and rock covers from the 50s through to the 80s.

SATURDAY 31st
FIRESHUFFLE with **STEVE DAVIS & KAVUS TORABI:** The Cellar – An eclectic musical journey through prog, psychedelia, experimental electronica and more in the company of snooker legend-turned-DJ Davis.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with **LITTLE RED + KIVA + A DIFFERENT THREAD:** The Wheatsheaf – Characteristically mixed bag of sounds from monthly gig club GTI, tonight with darkwoods indie-folksters Little Red conjuring black dogs and bad wolves in songs inspired by Nick Cave, Gillian Welch and *The Wicker Man*. They’re joined by folk, pop, indie-rock, and classical music duo Kiva, and blues, country and Americana outfit A Different Thread.
LACUNA COMMON: The Cellar – dirty, energetic, bluesy garage-rock riffery in the vein of Parquet Courts and Shame from the local newcomers.
MAHA JEFFEREY’S BLUES TRIO: The

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Friday 23rd

GWENNO: The Bullingdon

When you’re the daughter of a Cornish language poet and a Welsh language choir singer and political activist who went to prison for defacing the Welsh Office, grew up attending picket line protests before joining a doo-wop girl band and subsequently went on tour as Elton John’s keyboard player you have a few more interesting tales to tell than the average pop person. And when you then go and release a Welsh language synth-pop album based on a cult 1976 Welsh language sci-fi novel about brain-invading aliens who are unable to understand and therefore control anyone who speaks Welsh, you probably have plenty to talk about. Former Pipettes singer Gwenno Saunders’ ‘Y Dydd Olaf’ was *Nightshift*’s album of the year for 2015, a gorgeous, shimmering mix of lush electronics, lo-fi pop and her seductively impenetrable vocals that owed something to Stereolab, Broadcast and Ladytron, and something else to the proudly Welsh-sung sounds of Cate le Bon and myriad traditional singers. It’s just a stunning record; anyone who understands the language will hear hymns about globalisation, media manipulation, patriarchy and the decline in minority languages; everyone else will just hear perfect pop. It was part protest album, part concept album, and tonight she makes her solo Oxford debut as part of a tour to promote its follow up – the equally exotic, Cornish language, ‘Le Kov’. Gorgeous, brilliant pop music with so much to say, even to those of us who don’t understand the language.

Harcourt Arms – Acoustic blues-jazz from the former TMJB frontman.
STEAMROLLER: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon – Classic 60s r’n’b in the vein of Hendrix and Cream from the local veterans.

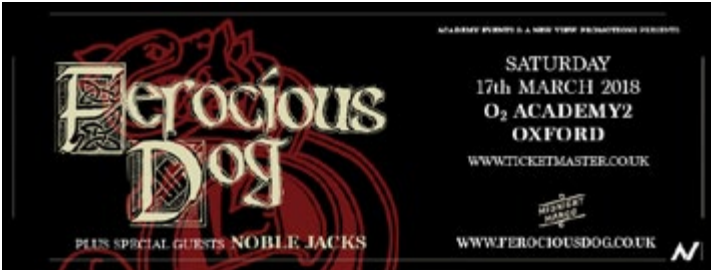


photo: Fiona Lehridge



LOW ISLAND

The Cellar

Some local bands appear to be circumnavigating the evolutionary development process we have in place here in Oxford. We all know it goes: poorly attended open mic night in Botley; first on with a Dire Straights tribute act; the drummer leaves to study Graphic Design at Aberystwyth; headline show at The Jericho playing to the few loyal mates who didn’t have anything better to do; a few more underwhelming support slots; a couple of middling reviews in *Nightshift* and then, through perseverance as much as talent,

the muted acclaim you’ve always dreamed of. However, bands such as Glass Animals, and more recently Low Island, have taken a fast-track route, their experience of dispiriting Tuesday-night showcase gigs fleeting and rapidly forgotten: unforgivable! And so, back to right the wrongs of their apparent disregard for The Oxford Way, Low Island tonight play a show which will be remembered as an “I was there” occasion. Low Island, are a band that may have slipped under many local gig

goers’ radar but are the absolute pinnacle of Oxford music right now. Having the shape shifting ability to move through soulful and dextrous indie rock, into ambient, lo-fi electronica and out the other end with subtle but enthralling hooks, they not only create unforgettable music but a show that has a narrative which contorts, meanders and challenges its audience to join them on their journey. The delicate and ghostly vocal lines sit in amongst complex and dissident ideology, creating a otherworldly and nuanced soundscape which drifts

through The Cellar like an apparition. Such is the sedative but engaging tone that Low Island set, the night quickly becomes a sumptuous show from a band whose ethos is to provoke but in the most musically rich and lavish manner. As hushed but animated punters file out at the end of a hauntingly memorable performance, there is indeed that unmistakable feeling of having been witness to something which promises to grow and mutate into one of our most beloved acts. Any music lover not already on the Low Island bandwagon should probably jump on asap as these boys surely have a most exciting career ahead. **Richard Brabin**

takes the lead on ‘I’ll Be Yours’, the title track of their new album, but the song is still a slightly overwrought rocker and the ballads are epic in scope and delivery. Any worry the band are getting too bombastic or indulgent is quickly dispersed by a brace of short, sharp railroad blues numbers that edge towards Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis territory and as they head towards the close of the set we get a cover of Otis Jackson’s gorgeous gospel classic ‘Tell Me Where You Like Mr Roosevelt’, which turns out to the emotional high point of the show. “That’s our ‘there are still good Americans in the world’ song,” announces Ferris, barely needing to mention the current, rather less beloved president. Of course there are: there’s a bunch of them up on stage tonight and these ones are more than welcome in the UK.

Dale Kattack

THE AMERICANS / KASHENA SAMPSON

The Bullingdon

Tonight is Kashena Sampson’s UK debut and she only met guitarist Chris Hillman – last seen in town as part of Billy Bragg’s band – a few hours beforehand, but she doesn’t seem the sort to be fazed by much if anything, possessed of a brassy attitude and voice that you can imagine silencing the rowdiest of blues bars back home in Las Vegas. When she really lets her tonsils go to town there’s more than a hint of Dolly Parton about her, but it’s her softer side, closer to Joan Baez, that really stands out. Like Sampson, The Americans are heading to the UK Americana Awards the night after, where there’s little danger of them going down anything less than the proverbial storm. Having made themselves known internationally as

part of the documentary series *American Epic*, as well as playing on *The Late Show with Letterman*, tonight’s confident show reveals a band well schooled in the art of wringing every ounce of energy out of a show. From the steel twang of set opener ‘Nevada’ and the barroom boogie of ‘Stateline’ they take the influence of Steve Earle, particularly in Patrick Ferris’ gruff, bluesy delivery, and settle in for a night of good time country rocking, where even moments of melancholy like ‘Last Chance’ are dealt with with an easy lope. The band are in Oxford fresh from playing Celtic Connections and Ferris mentions their acoustic roots but tonight they’re rarely anything less than the full electric; the banjo

MOTHER / LACUNA COMMON / SEMI URBAN FOX

The Cellar

An impressively packed venue greets all three bands at tonight’s launch gig for Mother’s debut EP, the throng down the front gently warmed up by openers Semi Urban Fox, whose proficient, energetic indie rocking struggles to escape its Libertines/Arctic Monkey shackles, although the guitarist and bassist do earn bonus cheese points for going the full Status Quo back-to-back soloing on the final song. On the face of it Lacuna Common’s raucous guitar pop doesn’t come from such a different place as Semi Urban Fox: all messy, dirty, energetic, bluesy garage-rock riffery and blokey vocals, but it’s a division higher by dint of having some punk grit about it and a bit of dirt under its nails – perhaps not surprising given the band were formerly known as Filth. At their best there’s a bit of Shame’s belligerence about them and if the token slow song threatens to derail their short set, the wiry closing number pulls it back, with more than a hint of Parquet Courts about it. Mother’s portentous intro tape heralds what turns out to be a surprisingly epic, sometimes OTT set from the band who recorded their new EP with Ride’s Mark Gardener. They spend much of their set trying, and often succeeding, in matching its bombast. On record the band play well-crafted post-Britpop and noughties post-grunge, sort of a meeting point between Space and The Strokes, but tonight, with everything swathed in an ocean of reverb and songs cranked out with maximum theatricality, it regularly billows into more Muse-like progginess, notably on early highlight ‘Potent Prophecy’, taking in wandering funk basslines and an elaborate galloping rhythm. The ambitious scope of the songs doesn’t always shine through the busy arrangements,

JESCA HOOP

The Bullingdon

I used to wonder what singers do when they get the hiccups before a gig. The human voice is more fragile than a guitar, and singing for a crowd means taking a risk. Jesc Hoop reminds me of that, partly because she occasionally struggles with her voice, but more so because of the intimacy of her show at The Bullingdon. After her first song, Hoop tells us an emotional story about her late mother and being raised a Mormon. Religion is a recurring theme: the Jesus-doubting song ‘The Coming’ (“And the coming never came”) is a highlight of tonight’s set. Nevertheless, Hoop keeps the atmosphere light with her sharp and unexpectedly witty remarks. And she is not just telling us stories; she is asking questions, too. This leads to a few genuine exchanges between crowd and artist, such as when she presumes Oxford doesn’t have much homelessness, only to

be corrected by the locals. Such a mutual exchange is rare even at a smaller-sized gig. The set itself gets better as it goes on, with some of the strongest tracks – ‘Memories Are Now’, ‘The Coming’, ‘The Lost Sky’ – close to the end, although on the downside, ‘Memories Are Now’, unfortunately, does not have the same drive as the album version. Surprisingly, Hoop doesn’t play much off her last record, missing tunes such as ‘Simon Says’ or ‘Cut Connection’. But that does mean she plays a few of her older gems, of which the delirious ‘Angel Mom’ is the most beautiful. The lyrics of Hoop’s encore ‘Storms Make Grey the Sea’, “You sit out there / Did you know what you were in for? / The change in air / When I stepped to the floor,” might as well describe tonight’s gig: engaging throughout and thoroughly personal. **Caspar Jacobs**



photo: Daniele Longo

while the constant reverb, particularly on Josh Alden’s vocals, give the whole set a bilious, gothic feel that at best promises to tip over into Hawkind-like space-rock, but can wander perilously close to Spinal Tap’s Stonehenge moment. ‘The Saboteur’ finds them at their most glowering and gothic, while ‘LA’ provides an

almost psychedelic grunge edge and for all the occasional clumsiness and ostentatiousness, there’s a feeling that if Mother could maybe ramp the musical theatricality up even further, they might be the band Oxford has been missing since Borderville called it a day. **Dale Kattack**

WILLY MASON

The Jericho Tavern

Never heard of Willy Mason? You might be on your own. The newly refurbished Jericho Tavern is sold out weeks before this gig and so are his other 29 dates around the UK and Ireland. A purveyor of American folk pop, from Martha’s Vineyard, Willy Mason was hailed as a star in the making at 19. Now in his mid-thirties he’s back in Oxford for the first time in nearly a decade and there’s a real sense of expectation in the room. On stage he delivers songs lyrically rich with political and dark social messages in a strong, clear voice, now supported by a full band. His fans listen in rapt silence – a rarity these days – and the warmth coming from the audience is palpable. Not the most prolific of singer-songwriters, with only three studio albums to his name over the last decade, each song is beautifully crafted and receives reverential applause. Tonight, though, the

set is mixed up with a number of new songs as poetic and thought provoking as his published works. The audience don’t want the evening to end and neither does Mason, who declares at the end of his set that he will perform “a few more – requests or covers”. A request for his own ‘When the Leaves Have Fallen’ from his 2007 album ‘If the Ocean Gets Rough’ gets one of the biggest cheers of the evening. Launching into it Willy stops halfway through, unable to remember the third verse, but only endearing himself even more to the faithful: his fallibility mirroring those of the characters in his songs. To extricate himself from the embarrassment, his final song is ‘Oxygen’, released when he was 19, and the crowd mouth the words respectfully, applaud fulsomely and happily file out of the room together. They had heard of Willy Mason and he didn’t disappoint. **Brett Silver**



THIS IS THE KIT

O2 Academy

Folk music often has a problem when its artists reach a certain level of popularity in that on most levels it’s a particularly intimate form of music, best enjoyed in small, snug bars and clubs. This Is The Kit face tonight’s sold-out show on the back of the breakthrough success of fourth

album ‘Moonshine Freeze’, and while band leader Kate Stables is obviously in ebullient mood at the end of her most successful tour to date, too often tonight her sweet, delicate songs get lost. Never more so than when she plays solo, as on ‘Easy On The Thieves’, which reveals her voice as something to

get lost in. Comparisons with Laura Marling are unavoidable on the sombre, introspective ‘Bulletproof’, while the more expansive, upbeat tracks like ‘Magic Spell’, played with full band including the excellent Rozi Plain and a nicely understated horn section, with more prominent vocal harmonies, share

some space with The Unthanks and even Radiohead if you listen closely to the guitar curlicues. There is lyrical whimsy and delicate spangle aplenty, with recent single ‘My Demon Eye’ taking Stables most fully into old-world folk singing. On the other end of her musical scale is ‘Moonshine Freeze’ with its butterfly-light indie-pop feel, Stables’ voice positively dancing atop the melody. But elsewhere there are songs that, if not exactly dragging, seem unwilling or unable to impose themselves: underplayed and too quiet, even with such a respectful audience hanging silently on every note. Sometimes you just wish you could be sat a table or two away from Kate as she plucks her banjo and conjures romantic poetry. Even an encore of ‘Greasy Goose’ sounds slightly hesitant when it could be a triumphant finale for an artist who’s finally getting her commercial as well as critical dues. And perhaps that’s the real issue here: Stables and her band might not yet have had time to adjust their dynamic to fit these bigger venues and crowds. You wouldn’t want to lose an ounce of the delicacy of This Is The Kit’s music, but perhaps something more expansive might allow it to make its presence felt a bit better. **Dale Kattack**

THE LOVELY EGGS / PORKY THE POET

The Cellar

Orwell’s 1984 was published 35 years in advance of the year it predicted; it’s only months until we’re the same distance the other side. Similarly, Porky The Poet’s piece ‘They’ve All Grown Up In The Beano’ is now nearly as old as that venerable schoolyard staple was when he wrote it. If his script is you and me, Time likes to shove in a little call-back gag every now and then. Ironically, whilst Time has had no debilitating effect on Phil Jupitus’s comedy skills despite the vintage of some of his material – the initials SPG and DHSS will be as meaningless to your average gig-goer as tape-to-tape dubbing or MS-DOS commands – the poet has become visibly less porky. That Time: he gets you one way or another. We’ve seen The Lovely Eggs a fair few times in Oxford since the first, a decade ago opening at The Wheatshaeaf, and the turnout has steadily grown until this, a richly deserved Cellar sell-out. Time, of course, is waiting in the wings to take the edge off, and maybe larger crowds have pushed the band towards beery singalongs and reduced dynamics (or perhaps it’s the other way round).

Whilst we may never again witness a wistful skip through ‘Oh, The Stars’ or a grinning lope through ‘Watermelons’, that’s a small price to pay for a packed room led in a lusty chorus of ‘Fuck It’ by what looks like a pair of kids’ TV presenters gone feral (they’ve all grown up on *Blue Peter*, and it went brilliantly wrong). Despite one or two punky thumpers that aren’t hugely memorable, The Lovely Eggs still have a uniquely British take on shabby psychedelia, ‘Magic Onion’ especially sounding like a Monkees song repurposed as a skipping rhyme by absurdist urchins. The sneering spirit of Mark E Smith seems to have inhabited Holly Ross on newer songs like ‘I Shouldn’t Have Said That’, and his death reminds us that one day even the most driven originals will leave the stage, so don’t miss out the next time The Lovely Eggs come to town, and indeed keep ensuring capacity crowds at The Cellar, and other small venues, lest you live to regret it. Meanwhile, Time takes a cigarette, but now has to slink out to the alleyway to smoke it. Even he’s not immune to change. So fuck it, oh yeah. **David Murphy**

JOHN COOPER CLARKE

O2 Academy

I do miss the days, before fame blew its second wind across John Cooper Clarke’s career, when he used to turn up to gigs on his own and would always be up for a pint and a chat afterwards. One time he took me to the Marathon Bar, the famous illegal drinking club behind a fish and chip shop in north London; another time we got so wrecked in The Zodiac cocktail bar that he insisted on buying me a veggie burger in the Kebab Kid, only to promptly drive off with it in his taxi. These days of course JCC’s star is firmly back in the ascendant, partly thanks to the BBC, The Arctic Monkeys and those *Sopranos*. Clarke has survived early fame in the punk years, through serious drug addiction and on to recovery and a new generation of fans, a radio show and even a poem on the National Curriculum. His classic albums from 1978 to 1982 are notable for featuring the only musical compositions by legendary producer Martin Hannett. Gigs can be unpredictable affairs but tonight he’s on particularly sharp form, mixing up poems, jokes and his trademark surreal diversions that can go on for an age. In contrast to the early days

modern audiences politely hang on every word, many here appearing to be first-timers. Especially pleasing to diehard fans are a clutch of new poems including ‘Shave Off’; ‘I Moustache You A Question’; ‘Get Back On Drugs You Fat Fuck’, and the very brief ‘Necrophilia’: “Fed up with foreplay and all that palaver? ‘Ave a cadaver”. His interest in sex is probably best described as unreconstructed, though this limerick gets a big laugh: “Two ugly sisters from Fordham / Took a walk one day out of boredom / On the way back / A sex maniac / Jumped out of a bush and ignored ‘em”. True to form, older works get minor updates; 1980’s ‘Beesley Street’ now featuring mentions of The Duke of Edinburgh and Mister Magoo. The set is more workmanlike than previous visits, possibly evidence of less pre-show refreshments, finishing with ‘Evidently Chickentown’, probably his most famous work and eerily prophetic of modern Britain. After the demise of Mark E Smith it’s cheering to see the other great Northern voice of the punk years still on top of their game and making no concessions to anyone. **Art Lagun**

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AK/DK / VIENAA DITTO / TIGER MENDOZA

The Jericho Tavern

We’re not sure whether Ian De Quadros’ tiger mask is intended to be menacing or fun in a Frosties kind of way but his music is more likely to have children weeping at the nightmares it brings than singing cheerily along. Performing mostly solo tonight the voices that graced his recent ‘Old Ideas 1’ EP are present in digital ghost form only, Pierquinn’s narrative on ‘Dark’ shrouded in a glowering witch house gloom, while Luke Allmond’s vocals on ‘Process’ get crushed by Deftones-style guitar and Nine Inch Nails machinery. After Asher Dust’s frantic scurry against

De Quadros’ electronic belligerence on ‘Natural Beat’, Vienna Ditto’s Nigel Firth takes to the stage to add some improivised guitar crunch to the militant industrial beats and oppressive electronic hums and somehow it sounds almost celebratory even as their duo create a hellish cacophony. It’s an intense, riveting start to what turns out to be an early contender for gig of the year. Vienna Ditto never fail to entertain, careering with trademark ramshackle glee and cheesy grins from chaotic jazzabilly, through Suicide pulse and onto voodoo lounge blues, at one point sounding

like Giorgio Moroder doing a gothic reworking of ‘My Boy Lollipop’. Seduction, silliness and synthetic serility hug and party together as Hattie Taylor sings “I’m feeling good” like Alison Goldfrapp reincarnated as Marilyn Monroe. Given tonight is Brighton duo AK/DK’s Oxford debut and they’re hardly a household name the anticipation from the crowd packed in front of the stage is more than encouraging, and it’s amply rewarded with a visceral set of clattering, propulsive electro-garage-rave noise that seems to possess a hypnotic power over the

relentlessly nodding heads before it. AK/DK work to a formula, but it’s a highly effective formula – songs are more like intense jam sessions between the apir, both sat behind drum kits, tinkering with synths and sequencers as they go. Tracks build to a peak, subtly break down and then kick back in with unstoppable force, sounding like Silver Apples, Neu! and Trans Am gone raving together with extreme prejudice, vocals, such as they are, often sounding like Murray Walker commentating on Hawkwind’s first mission to Mars. It’s an absolute trip of a show with that edge-of calamity DIY vibe about it that makes the best live music so thrilling. *Dale Kattack*

THE BLINDERS / BRIXTONS / WATERFOOL

The Cellar

Two guys making a big punk rock noise with just guitar, drums and the right effects pedals is no longer something new but done right it can still be effective. Waterfool are all fuzz and clatter, teetering on the line between Nirvana and White Stripes and make a decent stab at giving tonight’s gig an early kick up the backside. Stand-out tracks are hard to spot until their final number, a ballsy grunge pummel that takes them up a level, leaving a decent impression. Wantage’s Brixtons sound northern. In fact they sound like they’re from Sheffield. Okay, they sound exactly like Arctic Monkeys, right down

to a cover of ‘Still Take You Home’ and some less than subtle steals from various Monkeys songs. Nothing wrong with aping your heroes we guess, but in a world of exotic musical treats to pick from, expanding your horizons is essential. If you’ve a thing for the Steel City, maybe investigate Cabaret Voltaire or Rolo Tomassi; for now, given there’s already an Antarctic Monkeys, maybe we can dub Brixtons The Temperate Thames Valley Monkeys. Temperate isn’t a word you could throw at The Blinders, who take to the stage to a theatrically bombastic opening track, the singer’s distressed

greasepaint make-up making him look like Jaz Coleman accidentally recruited into Kiss, intoning “There is no hope” as the band crank out a dark, dense, sludgy post-punk noise that touches on Killing Joke’s militant industrial rock, but later swaggers into Glitterstomp, some psychedelic swirl and even some dirty Cramps-like gothabilly. There are moments in the set where the band’s more laddish edge comes to the fore, they touch base with The Enemy and lose that bite, but only for odd moments, and mostly there’s a real snarl about them, even when they try some Joy Division on for size: a lesson perhaps to the support acts on taking influences and making them your own. The Blinders, then: not a blinding new dawn quite yet, but packed with the heat of a black sun on the rise. *Dale Kattack*

JORJA SMITH

O2 Academy

The 2018 Brits Critics’ Choice Award recipient, 20-year-old Walsall-bred Jorja Smith, started writing songs at school – some of which form the backbone of her set tonight – but you can’t help but celebrate rather than begrudge her precociousness. Of the seventeen tracks performed, one (Frank Ocean’s ‘Lost’) is a cover and seven are as yet unreleased: bold, given that she is yet to release her debut album, but less of a risk now that live videos of the latter are already on YouTube and many in the audience already know the words. On ‘Teenage Fantasy’ and ‘Imperfect Circle’ Jorja’s smooth, vibrato-tinged R&B voice and traditional keyboard/guitar/bass/ drums backing setup calls to mind early-90s new jack swing; she doesn’t need star producers like Teddy Riley or Jam & Lewis to give her charisma, though. She has a good stab at making her vocals sound semi-improvised, especially on the empowering ‘Beautiful Little Fools’, but a lot of effort must go

into making this all so effortless and laid-back. She excels when her voice is brought to the fore – by a single guitar on ‘Goodbyes’, piano on ‘Don’t Watch Me Cry’, and a skilful instrumental arrangement on the emotive, string-heavy, Adele-recalling ‘Let Me Down’ – and when she takes advantage of the top of her range, though on occasion her riff intervals could do with more variety. Jorja doesn’t just sing, though: she talk-raps a critique of the government on the feisty extended metaphor ‘Lifeboats’ and scat-sings on ‘Blue Lights’, which is the highlight of the night both performance- and reception-wise: a Dizzee Rascal-sampling plaintive semi-ballad that counsels “There’s no need to run / If you’ve done nothing wrong”. Jorja’s wisdom-beyond-her-years is here underlined by an Air-esque glockenspiel-like synth, giving an innocent, music-box edge to the heavy lyrical material, and this sums up the night: playful yet accomplished. *Kirsten Etheridge*

SHOPPING / KONE /

DESPICABLE ZEE

The Cellar

If there’s a frequent feeling tonight that we’ve landed in the middle of a lost John Peel show circa-1980, we mean that in the very best way. All three acts possess that spirit of independence that once seemed lost when the major labels stole it, polished it and sold it back to us as sterile stodge in the late 90s. With the busy studiosness of a sci-fi school teacher, Despicable Zee’s Zahra Tehrani scrabbles together collages of loops, industrial drones, hip hop beats and heavily-treated vocals to create soundscapes that are alternatively soulful and abstract, at her best sounding like a mash-up of Gazelle Twin’s queasy electronica and M.I.A.’s militant pop-hop. Throw in some Middle Eastern motifs and a sense of unease and Zahra might well be Oxford’s very own Cosey Fanni Tutti. It’s a wonderful opening set. Which is quickly equalled by Kone, who initially belie the monochrome, downbeat minimalism of their records with some deliciously uptight funk bass, steely guitar lines and very slightly off-tune vocals that remind us of The Raincoats and The Au Pairs. As the set progresses they stretch the sound, make it starker, songs like ‘For John Heartfield’ more

sparsely populated with and edge of The Fall creeping in. Making their Oxford debut to a pleasingly packed Cellar, Shopping too have their roots in post-punk’s creative flowering and we spend much of the set picking out snatches of influences here and there – from a Certain Ratio’s trilling indie-funk and The Cure’s ‘Killing An Arab’-era fidget-pop, through some glorious meandering PiL-style noise, to more unexpected Two Tone vibes and some brassy synth-pop. Rachell Aggs, with her ebullient mess of hair and vivacious stage presence, is a superb frontwoman, but Billy Easter is as much a star of the show with her militantly staccato bass rhythms driving songs along, neatly counterpointing Aggs’ party-hearty afropop guitar to make for a set that’s genuinely euphoric at times. And when the pair of them trade harmonies they could be a lo-fi B52’s, all pop zip and zing and good feelings. It’s music that harks back to a golden era of musical invention but never sounds dated, instead, even on a cold Monday night in February, leaving everyone here with a warm feeling inside and a spring in their step. *Dale Kattack*

THE CELLAR

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INTRODUCING....

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

SELF HELP

Who are they?

Oxford punk/pop/garage-rock quartet Self Help are Danny Jeffries (*vocals/guitar*); Silke Blansjaar (*drums*); Lizzie Couves (*bass*), and Sean Cousins (*guitar*). Danny and Silke met on joinmyband.com in 2016. The duo were originally called Din Twins before recruiting Silke's friend Jakob on bass. When he left to study in Denmark they met Sean at a recording session at S.A.E. Lizzie joined in January 2017 after posting an appeal on Facebook. Since then the band have gigged relentlessly locally and beyond and released two EPs, the most recent of which, 'Birthdayboy', is out this month.

What do they sound like?

Barrelling punk-pop and garage rock that's both ferocious and merry. They're a highly melodic but also very noisy band with the raucous vibe of early Supergrass about them and, crucially, big, bold tunes to back it up, possessed of a rough-edged naivety and spirited freshness. In their own words they are "trashy, tongue-in-cheek and a lot of fun."

What inspires them?


"We're lucky to have such an active music scene in Oxford; the thing that drives us to keep getting better is all the incredible friends we've made, not only in the ridiculous amount of talented bands here but also all the dedicated punters and people behind the scenes."

Their career highlight so far:

"Finding out Steve Lamacq had seen us play in London and was going to play our single at the time on his 6Music show. Also, organising Slate Hearts' last show and getting kicked in the face by a crowd surfer."

And the lowlight:

"We're honestly hard pressed to think of anything that could be considered a lowlight."



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Just one is impossible, so hopefully we are allowed to say that our favourite non-band is Slate Hearts, and Easter Island Statues are our favourite still-a-band."

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

"Is This It?" by The Strokes."

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

"The Cellar on the 23rd of March to celebrate the release of our new EP 'Birthdayboy'. Expect a half-naked Sean freaking out people in the crowd."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite is the enigma that is Alan D, and our least favourite thing is not being able to find him on Facebook."

You might love them if you love:

Supergrass; The Strokes; Ash; Slaves; The Sonics; The Kinks; The Adverts.

Hear them here:

Youneedselfhelp.bandcamp.com or Facebook.com/youneedselfhelp

THE WHEATSHEAF

Friday 2nd March – KLUB KAKOFANNEY 10PM / £3
PEERLESS PIRATES
LIME / PUPPET MECHANIC / STEEVO NUISSIER

Saturday 3rd March – METAL TO THE MASSES 7:30PM / £1
PROMETHEAN REIGN / WORRY / NEW DEVICE

Sunday 4th March – OXCORE 7:30PM / £3
MSRY / SNAKES / RESOLVE

Wednesday 7th March – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC 7:30PM / £1
COTSWOLDS / JONNY RACE / WILD PHOENIX

Friday 9th March – JAM CITY 7:30PM / £3
ASH LEWIS
DREAMSYNDROM / RAD ROACH / LOST DARREN

Saturday 10th March – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC 7:30PM / £1
BEARD OF DESTINY / TWAT MONKEY
REAL COOL KILLERS / ENJOY ALL HUMANS

Friday 16th March – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC 7:30PM / £1
OTTO / ALBOA / CRYSTALLITE

Saturday 17th March – OXROX 7:30PM / £10
RYDER\$ CREED
THE WICKED JACKALS / HOLLOWSTAR

Wednesday 21st March – METAL TO THE MASSES 7:30PM / £1
WILD CARD NIGHT

Friday 23rd March – OXROX 7:30PM / £10
DEMOCRATUS
INDICA BLUES / DAMAGED REICH / EVEREST QUEEN

Saturday 24th March 7:30PM / £3
ECHO4FOUR
BAD BLOOD RECOVERY / RICHIE STIX

Friday 30th March - OXROX 7:30PM / £10
WRONG JOVI / BREAKING WAVES


Saturday 31st March – GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES 10PM / £15.00
LITTLE RED / KIVA / A DIFFERENT THREAD

The Wheatsheaf 129 High Street, Oxford OX1 4DF / www.facebook.com/wheatsheaf.oxford

DR SHOTOVER: Days of Future P*ssed

Ah, there you are, Pilkington. Sit down. Take the weight off, and, while you're at it... hur, hur... lose some of that unsightly *wallet weight* by buying us all a futuristic cocktail. Mine's a 'Nuclear Armageddon on the Beach' – but tell Bedingfield to go easy on the aniseed. So, what *did* happen to those jet-packs we were promised? Our East Indies Club archivist, Harold Sherpa-Tensing, recently unearthed a document from 1976 which outlines the developments predicted at the time for the Oxford Music Scene. Yes, handwritten by a club member in 1976, using an Osmiroid calligraphy pen in a commemorative Princess Anne-Captain Mark Phillips Wedding notebook. Here are some selected quotes: 1) *Guitars are on their way out, guys. It's all going to be synths, synths, synths from now on! No more Fender, no more Gibson in 1977! 2) Black is sooo UNTRENDY. Bands of the future aren't going to wear black. No way! Start saving up NOW for your silver threads, Future Rockers! 3) Beards onstage? Don't make me laugh! They're about as NOW as big sidies and Brylcreem! 4) Vinyl records are set to get BIGGER, as the need increases for more grooves, to deal with those Moog, Korg and ARP soundwaves! Mark my words – 15" discs are on their way – and hifi systems to match! 5) Punk rock? What's THAT? Etc etc...* Yes, yes, ridiculous, isn't it? What say, Pilkington? *Who wrote it?* I have, erm, NO IDEA. What do you mean, it looks like my handwriting?!? Ahem. Time for another round, I think, don't you? [Dr S scuttles to the bar]. Bedingfield, I say BEDINGFIELD! More futuristic cocktails... [whispers] and put them on Pilkington's tab, there's a good chap. He won't mind paying for them... sometime in the future.

Next month: Home Computers Will Never Catch On



'Now, where did I put my Dymo tape?' - Dr S wigs out in Retro-Future 1976

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

The legacy of **Radio 1 Sound City** continued to be felt in Oxford in March 1998 with the news that **Brookes University Union** had been given a full public licence for its Headington Hill venue. Following on from its temporary licence for Sound City, the licence allowed it to host up to twelve gigs a year, making it the second largest venue in Oxford, after **The New Theatre** with a capacity of 1,100. The venue went on to enjoy some memorable shows over the next few years so it's sad to see the place fall into disuse in recent years.

Oxford City Council went further in their support or live music, hosting a music conference at the **Town Hall**, aiming to address issues facing the local music scene and give a clear perspective on its future direction.

Back in the day-to-day coalface of music, **The Zodiac** played host to **Courtney Pine**, **Audioweb**, **Coldcut**, **Asian Dub Foundation** and **Paul Oakenfold** this month, while **The Point** weighed in with shows by **Pram** and **The Montrose Avenue** as well as local faves **The Full Monty**, **Beaker**, **The Samurai Seven** and **Lynus**.

But the hottest ticket in town was for the debut gig by **The Animalhouse**, the new band formed by Ride's Mark Gardener and Loz Colbert alongside ex-Mystics frontman and Supergrass producer Sam Williams, at **The Bullingdon**, a packed house witnessing the celebratory opening salvo from Oxford's first supergroup.

10 YEARS AGO

With the news last month that Walter Gervers has left **Foals**, it's easy to forget how long he'd been with the band as March 2008 saw the local stars gracing the cover of *Nightshift* for the second time, having made their first appearance on the front page back in 2006. Such was their hectic schedule back then they were interviewed from New York where they had recently signed to Sub Pop. Their previous appearance in Oxford had been a riotous semi-secret show at the Cellar and things were going potty bonkers for them. "It's been fun and it's been a blur," they reflected from across the pond, "a lot's changed, but we're still the same smelly, obnoxious boys as we were before; we drink too much to remember much of what's happened but we have some photos." On arriving back home, the band were due to play an already sold-out headline show at the Academy, their biggest hometown gig yet, as part of a UK tour to promote debut album 'Antidotes'. **Youthmovies**, who had been a chief inspiration on Foals, and whose Andrew Mears had been a founding member, released their 'Good Nature' album on Drowned In Sound's own label this month. It was, said the awed *Nightshift* review, like the musical equivalent of a web spun by a drug-addled spider – "a puzzling, complex and fascinating tapestry of tangents, open spaces and pockets of highly condensed silk." Oh yes, we know a good bit of purple prose when we see it. Great to see the band back together this month as they reform for a two night sold out residency at The Bullingdon in aid of the Michael Barry Fun.

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Also out this month was **The Family Machine's** long-awaited 'You Are The Family Machine' debut album. **The Go! Team**, **Siouxsie Sioux**, **Duffy**, **Eels** and **Gary Numan** were highlights of the local gigging month.

5 YEARS AGO

Did we mention Lynus back there? Well fast forward fifteen years and who was on the cover of *Nightshift* but Grace Exley, once of those ramshackle rockers and now fronting the brilliant and bonkers **Goggenheim**, a band very much in a league of their own when it came to strange, subversive music that cherry-picked jazz, psychedelia, funk, punk, disco, Krautrock, pop and plenty more and who were the most flamboyantly fun band in town. "Genuinely unusual people have little concept of their own peculiarities, whereas self-proclaimed 'crazy' characters are often anything but," they wisely pointed out. "We have carved out a dimension where whatever we do, or think, or feel, is right, simply because we created it that way. It's about freedom." Seriously, what we'd give to see them reform, even if just for one show.

Talking of shows, among the highlights of the gig calendar were **Johnny Marr**, **Jessie Ware**, **Gabrielle Aplin**, **Palma Violets** and **Bastille**, all at **The O2 Academy**, while flying the flag for local music were **Deer Chicago**, **ToLiesel**, **X-1**, **Jordan O'Shea**, **Welcome To Peepworld** and the oddly-monikered **Who Put Bella In the Witch Elm?** Answers to that question and whatever happened to some of those others on a postcard, please.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

DUTCH-SARNIE

Dutch Sarnie turned up like a mashed-up, drug-laced lunchtime snack last year, armed with a lower than lo-fi musical aesthetic, some inventive Charles Bukowski and Gary Numan samples and the spirit of bedroom studio invention about it. Now he/she/it is back with even more of the same, complete with a neat spot-the-sample crossword puzzle (including some more Numan and even a spot of Stereolab), plus a tracklisting that seems to bear no relationship to what's on the actual CD. So, after an announcement that "Ladies and gentlemen, the show is about to begin," we get a nuclear attack warning, some Suicide-like synthabilly rhythm, some Black Panther declamation and a nice and gnarly post-punk guitar churn, all topped off with some more cheery atomic conflagration alerts. We're about two minutes in. Over the next quarter of an hour we get belligerent shoe-gaze, *vox humana*, explosions, vocal cut-ups, hip hop beats, acid-surf-punk frazzle, synth squiggles, dancehall bass lines, musical cheese, pizza cheese and what is almost certainly the most irritating intermission on any local release this year or next. It's a mess, an absolute disjointed bargain bucket mess, but it's also fun, inventive, restless, unconcerned with commercial potential and occasionally sounds like every thought you've had in the past week happening inside your head all at the same time. It's madness, but, as Bowie once sang, "I'd rather stay here with all the madmen."

WORRY

Ooh, this lot were so close to taking the title this month, the width of the crossbar denying them victory. Theirs is a different kind of madness to Dutch Sarnie. They're not loony mad, they're angry mad and you're in their crosshairs. They come out of the traps at full pelt and stay at full pelt until everything crashes and burns three tracks and nine minutes later, the spirits of Minor Threat, Black Flag and Discharge cheering them on. "I'm sick of everything" bellows singer Nathan Ball like a man who's just realised the futility of everything in the middle of a crowded shopping centre at the exact moment someone's spilled his last can of super strength cider and now he's going to burn and break everything. "I can't sleep at night, so I'll lay in my bed and think," he continues, not with the solemn self-pity of an unrequited lover but with the simmering despair and rage of someone who's had. It.

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

Up. To. Here with your bullshit. Stand back folks, he's gonna kick off again. None of yer namby-pamby post-hardcore nonsense, frippery or wimpiness here; this is yer actual 'arc-dore. Short, sharp, heavy and very, very cross indeed. The real star of this ferocious sound storm, though, is guitarist and bassist Hannah Watts who keeps up a steady blizzard of sludgy brutality for Nathan to bawl his hatred of the world over. "Everyone you love will die / Everything you know will end / For I am the Devil" comes the cheery conclusion, followed by a brief moment of silence as we contemplate the void, and then a sudden, farewell "Muthafucker!" We need to see Worry up close and personal at a gig very soon, and if we don't leave with blood pouring from our ears, nose and eye sockets, we'll just have to keep going back until we do.

SOLOMAN TRUMP

If Dutch-Sarnie's demo sounds like every thought you've had all at the same time, Soloman Trump's sounds like one single thought stretched out over 40 long minutes. And it's a dark thought: the one you had about stabbing the annoying person sat in front of you on the bus with a fish knife because they're sucking a boiled sweet too loudly while reading the *Daily Mail* and coughing sporadically without putting their hand in front of their mouth. That thought, when made into music – if we can indeed call this atonal electronic dirge music – is a buzz and rumble of dystopian future factory noise that could be the infernal ambience of David Lynch's *Eraserhead* put on an intense wash cycle in a bad tempered laundrette. Or alternatively what Controlled Bleeding's Dyson sounds like if they leave it on all night after playing Nurse With Wound to it all evening. Suffice to say it's a bit of a challenge.

MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS

And talking of Dysons, one of Mark Atherton's friends here is called Julie Dyson, who's pictured on the inside sleeve shaking a pair of maracas and looking for all the world like she's having the time of her life. Which is in nice contrast to Soloman Trump's dissonant, dystopian doom. Mark himself is pictured reclining on a sun-kissed lawn with a jaunty straw hat atop his head and a mandolin in his hands. Together he and all his friends make music that's as amiable and laidback as the pictures would suggest: a whimsical sort of folk-pop that borders on 1970s kids TV songs at times, particularly with Mark's simple, hello-trees-style lyrics that reaches its apotheosis with "The ball of fire will rise from the blue / The ball of fire is come to you / The ball of fire will pay its due / The ball of

fire will shine on through," which never quite threatens to usurp Nick Drake's awed wonder at love and the natural world. 'Dorchester Hill' does aim for something approaching romantic longing but truth be told it's all a bit too polite and pedestrian and while we don't expect every artist to sound like they're baring the darkest depths of their soul, neither do we want them to sound like the wistful recollections of a ramblers association parish newsletter column.

ORCHID

We do love Orchid here at *Nightshift*: first off because her first demo was written while she was off her noggin at Glastonbury, and secondly because she says our last review of her "made my life". See, be nice to us and we're like eager to please puppy dogs. We also love Orchid because she obviously has great taste in music. We know this since this latest one-song offering is a cover of Kylie's 2003 hit 'Slow', one of her finest moments with its minimalist synth-pop vibe, which Orchid replicates pretty well here, with just a slight twist to give it a more 21st Century r'n'b/Grimes vibe. Her voice is pitched slightly higher than Kylie's but she gets the playful/seductive approach close enough. All very nice and anything that reminds us of Kylie in a world of worthy but dull "authentic" music is a winner.

SI-RO

Some old-school house squelch from a chap called Simon Rowe here who we apparently reviewed once before and weren't keen on but liked his dancier stuff, which he's decided to concentrate on (see, we tell musicians what to do and they do it, because we are all powerful and know what's right for them). There's a bit of the Casio home studio autoplay about 'Xenomorph', but it passes muster in a shimmering DIY Toytown techno way with a decent sense of bubbly euphoria about it (although with a title like that we'd have liked it to have sounded like darkness and claustrophobia and imminent death all rolled into one). It's a style repeated on 'Sirens of Enceladus', right down to the sci-fi title whose darkness isn't matched by the music, which would be better suited to shiny, well-polished space ship scenes in optimistic futurist fiction (you know, the sort of stories where humans aren't complete selfish cocks who wreck everything nice in the universe). And then we get 'Dystopia' whose title makes us think Simon's teasing us because he knows we're a bunch of gloomy old goths who always want to see and hear the bleakness in everything, but by now he's taken the hint and it's a less cheery piece, the pulsing sequencers set to *Terminator* mode by way of Quatermass. Good stuff, everything worked out badly in the end, just as we like it.

JAMIE FELTON

"I always say 'if you like my music, God bless you; if you don't like my music, God

bless you'. Not that I'm a christian," says the sanguine and phlegmatic Mr Felton here, which is doubtless a clever ploy to make us feel like utter bloody bastards if we give him a critical kicking. Can't imagine that's likely though, given his Soundcloud promises "unique and unpredictable song concepts". A wild ride through Throbbing Gristle, Can and Prince is assured. So surely this dreadful, dreary acoustic wimp-pop can't be Jamie. Because this is predictable and very definitely not unique. It's earnest, lovelorn soft rock balladeering bordering on overwrought boy band emoting of the sort whose bones and viscera have been littering *Nightshift's* basement torture dungeon for more years than we can count. 'Kiss Me Goodnight' is strained sub-Boyzone sensitivity, Ronan Keating imagining he's Nick Drake, while the nominally more electro-pop 'Til The Stars Don't Shine' is sort of school drama society torch song meets failed *X-Factor* audition. But there is an unexpected, incongruous saxophone solo at the end of 'Hold My Hips and Sway', mind, which does at least tick one 'unpredictable' box. At least *Nightshift's* heavily-predicted descent into the seventh level of Hell upon our demise is no longer so certain now, although does Jamie's God bless us count if he isn't a christian? Hey, unlike us God's a nice guy. He'll doubtless realise our bitter, cynicism is just a front for some hopeless insecurities and it'll be honey, nectar and choirs of angels from closing time to eternity.

THE DEMO DUMPER

CELESTA

"Celesta are a duo who spread ourselves between Oxford and London," reads the introduction to this month's worst musical offering. And after sitting through 20-plus minutes of it might we suggest they spread themselves between the two cities by way of a lorryload of Semtex. While doubtless imagining themselves holding a jazz lounge audience rapt with their soulful ballads and sultry lyrics, what they actually sound like is a stumbling drunkard collapsing in a depressed heap on an electric piano and accidentally recording an EP of inept Jamie Cullum album fillers while wheezing disturbingly like a consumption-riddled ex chimney sweep trying to climb eight flights of stairs in search of an inhaler he accidentally left at the bottom two hours ago. This is soul crushing stuff, but not in a Eyehategod or Swans-style soulcrushing way, more like the will-to-live-sapping abject misery of a musical purgatory where everything is a middling shade of grey and the walls have a clammy mildew feel to them. "Anyone else been winning lately?" wheezes the singer on 'Lately'; "Anyone grit their teeth a lot lately?" Christ almighty, these reviews write themselves sometimes don't they, dear reader.

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Sat 24th Feb • £12 adv
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+ Courtesans + A Trust Unclean

Sat 3rd Mar • £20 adv • 6pm
The Blockheads
+ Chasing Daylight

Tues 6th Feb • £20 adv
Rejje Snow

Wed 7th Mar • £17.50 adv • 6.30pm
Paul Draper

Fri 9th Mar • £16 adv • 6.30pm
Space + The Shapes + Candidates

Sat 10th Mar • **SOLD OUT** • 6.00pm
Sleeper

Sat 10th Mar • £5 adv • 11pm
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(Babysambles) DJ Set

Mon 12th Mar • £12 adv
Fickle Friends

Fri 16th Mar • £20 adv • 6.30pm
Alabama 3

Fri 16th Mar • £14 adv • 6.30pm
The Amy Winehouse Experience ...A.K.A Lioness

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Ferocious Dog
+ Noble Jacks + Nick Parker

Sat 17th Mar • 11.00pm
Cirque Du Soul

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

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shot movement

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+ Sugary Staple + The AC30s
+ The Inflatables

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Sun 22nd Apr • 7.00pm
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+ Koo Koo Kanga Roo

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Heather Small -
The voice of M People

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Thu 3rd May • £16.50 adv
Lower Than Atlantis

Fri 4th May • £25 adv • 6.30pm
Wilko Johnson
+ Hugh Cornwell Band

Fri 4th May • 11.00pm
Mighty Crown Far East
Rulers

Sat 5th May • **SOLD OUT** • 6.00pm
Frank Turner & The Sleeping
Souls

Sun 6th May • £18 adv
Mallory Knox

Mon 7th May • £21 adv
The Bluetones

Wed 23rd May • 6.30pm
CoCot and the Butterfields

Fri 1st Jun • 7.00pm
Carcer City

Sat 2nd Jun • 7.00pm
OMYO

Thu 7th Jun • 7.00pm
The Wedding Present
"Tommy" 30th Anniversary Tour

Sat 9th Jun • 7.00pm
A Band Called Malice
The Definitive Tribute to The Jam

Fri 15th Jun • £16.50 adv • 6.30pm
Nick Heyward
+ Pugwash

Fri 22nd Jun • 7.00pm
Zodiac Reunion Party
Disques Voge, Sky Larkin, Transformation,
Osprey

Sat 22nd Sep • £15 adv • 6.30pm
Dressed To Kill - A Tribute
To KISS
+ Electric Circus (A Tribute to W.A.S.P)

Sat 6th Oct • £13 adv • 6.30pm
The Smyths - Unite and
Take Over Tour 2018

Fri 12th Oct • 6.30pm
Antarctic Monkeys

Sat 13th Oct • 6.30pm
Britpop Boys

Thu 18th Oct • 7.00pm
The Daniel Wakeford
Experience

Sat 27th Oct • 6.30pm
Guns 2 Roses

Sat 17th Nov • 6.30pm
Definitely Mightbe -
Oasis tribute

Tue 27th Nov • 7.00pm
Shame

Fri 7th Oct • £15 adv • 6.30pm
Pearl Jam UK

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