

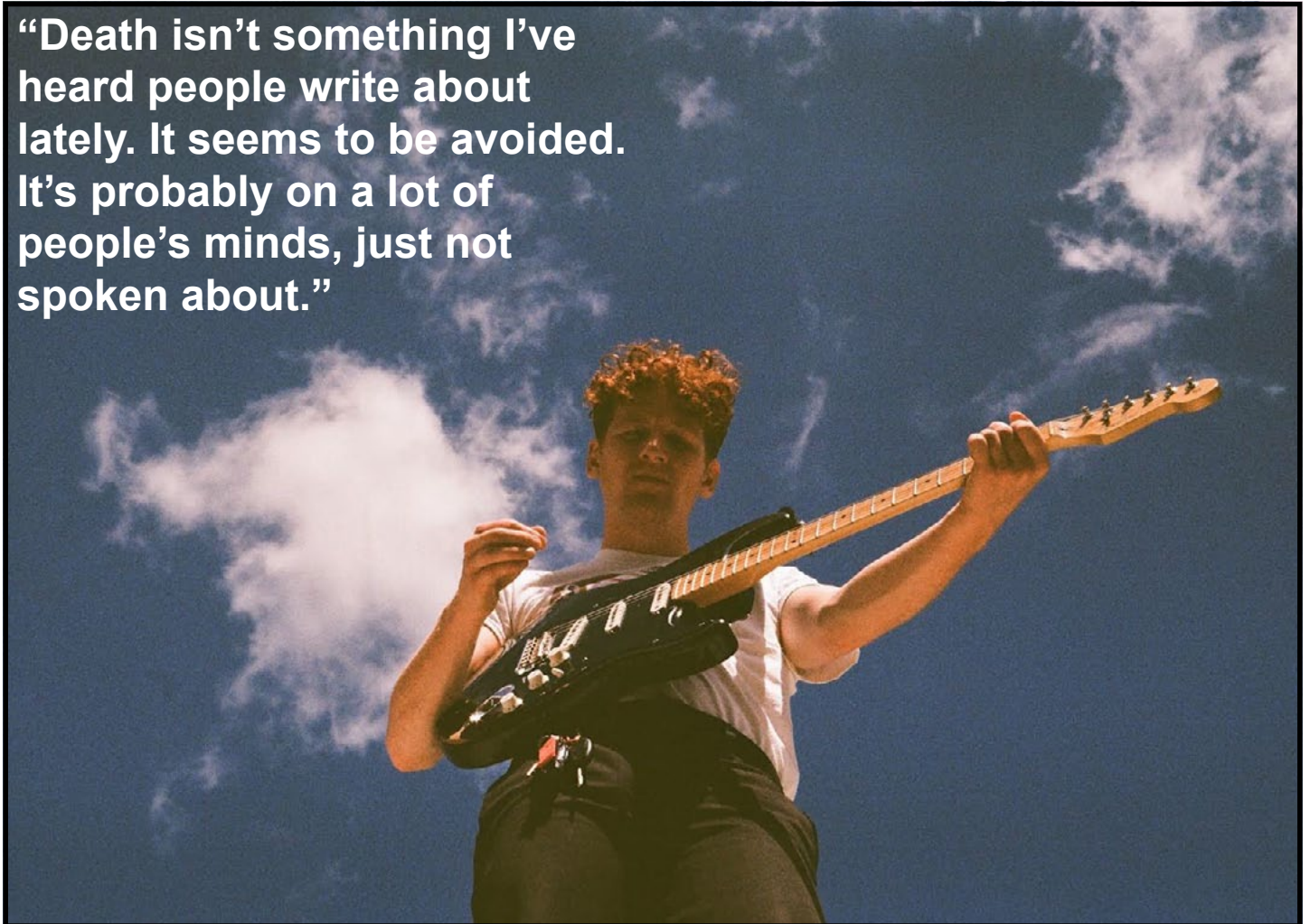


NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 282
January
2019**

“Death isn’t something I’ve heard people write about lately. It seems to be avoided. It’s probably on a lot of people’s minds, just not spoken about.”



Willie J Healey

The ever-touring troubadour talks mortality, melancholy and being mellow.

Also in this issue:

Introducing I Cried Wolf

The Cellar - planning for the future

plus:

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

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

THE BULLINGDON

JANUARY 2019 GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Monday 31st December

Cowley Road NYE Festival
Temple Funk Collective
Dutty Moonshine (DJ Set)
Count Skylarkin & Friends
Doors: 10pm

Friday 4th January

Backroom Boogie
Feat. 3 Amigos
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 5th January

K-Funkz
Doors: 11pm

Friday 11th January

Groove
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 12th January

Dr. Feelgood
Doors: 11pm

Friday 18th January

Basic
Jasper James
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 19th January

Musical Medicine
Mafalda
Doors: 11pm

Saturday 26th January

Mungos HIFI
Eva Lazarus
Parly B
DJ Binge
Count Skylarkin
Doors: 11pm

Monday 28th January

Dilly Dally
Doors: 7.30pm

Wednesday 30th January

The Vryll Society
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 31st January

Space Elevator
Doors: 7pm

Friday 1st February

Conjurer
Desert Storm
Drore
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 2nd February

Simple
DJ Seinfeld
Doors: 11pm

Friday 8th February

The Teskey Brothers
Geo
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 9th February

Basic
Ejeca & Eliot Adamson
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 10th February

England v France - 6 Nations
On the Big Screen!
Doors: 2pm

Monday 11th February

Laura Veirs
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 13th February

Ben Poole
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 14th February

Willie J Healey
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 16th February

Musical Medicine
Mr. Bongo
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 17th February

Sounds of the Sirens
Doors: 7pm

Monday 18th February

Art Brut
Cassels
Doors: 7pm

Tuesday 19th February

Another Sky
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 23rd February

Volume invites Bar:Rage
Hazard
Funsta, Power, Didz, Alman
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 24th February

Beans on Toast
Doors: 7pm

Monday 25th February

Psychedelic Porn Crumpets
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 27th February

Kris Barras
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 28th February

Dots Funk Odyssey
Doors: 7pm

Friday 1st March

She Drew the Gun
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 2nd March

Simple
Anastasia Kristensen
Object Blue
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 3rd March

The Orielles
Doors: 7pm

Monday 4th March

Seafret
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 9th March

Musical Medicine
Nick the Record
Tech Support
Doors: 11pm

Wednesday 13th March

Josh Smith - US
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 16th March

Basic
Big Miz
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 26th March

Sports Team
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 27th March

Erja Lyytinen
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 30th March

Rawdio
S.P.Y
MC Lowqui, Blunt, Captain Morgan
Deep Field, Sandman, Algar
Doors: 11pm

Tuesday 2nd April

Dream State
Doors: 7pm

Thursday 4th April

The Brews + Hell's Gazelles
Doors: 7pm

Saturday 6th April

Musical Medicine
Rhythm Sister
Doors: 11pm

Sunday 7th April

The Rock Project Oxford
Doors: 7pm

Wednesday 10th April

Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs
Doors: 7pm

NEWS

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Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



THE BEACH BOYS are the first headline act announced for this year's **Cornbury Festival**. The Mike Love-led incarnation of the 60s pop stars top the bill on the Sunday of the festival, which runs over the weekend of the 5th-7th July at Great Tew Country Park.

Earlybird tickets are now on sale for the festival, with various camping, camper-vanning, family and concession options on offer. 2018's Cornbury was headlined by Alanis Morissette, Squeeze and UB40. Info and tickets at cornburyfestival.com.

TEARS FOR FEARS will headline Blenheim Palace on Saturday 22nd June as part of the Nocturne Live festival. The 80s hitmakers are joined by White Lies and Scritti Politti at the palace for the four-day outdoor music extravaganza.

Kylie Minogue's show on Sunday 23rd, announced last month, has already sold out with headline acts for the Thursday and Friday still to be announced. Visit nocturnelive.com for details and tickets.

WOOD FESTIVAL won the Greener Festival Award at the UK Festival Awards in December, beating BST in Hyde Park, Boomtown and Cambridge Folk Festival among others for the title.

The eco festival, which takes place annually at Braziers Park in Ipsden, has long been a pioneer of environmentally-responsible festival organising, with live music powered by renewable energy and the use of compostable toilets, organic food and drink and recyclable cups, plates and utensils.

2019's WOOD runs over the weekend of the 17th-19th May. The event sells out in advance every year so book tickets early. Last year's festivals featured headline sets from Treetop Flyers, Grace Petrie and Yama Warashi. Visit Woodfestival.com for details.

TANDEM FESTIVAL returns over the weekend of the 21st-23rd June 2019 at Lower Farm in Ramsden. The volunteer-run eco festival celebrates world folk sounds and features talks, workshops, dance and vegan food alongside the live music.

Earlybird tickets are on sale now, priced £70 for adults, with concessions for group bookings and under-18s. Under-12s go free. Visit tandemfestival.com for full details.

THE DOLLYMOPS launch their third EP with a headline show at The Jericho Tavern on Thursday 28th February. The local indie-punk band have signed to Four Twenny Records and release their new record, the follow-up to last year's acclaimed 'Gap Year Tourists' EP on the 1st March. The band also play an instore show at Rapture in Witney on the 2nd March.

STARTING IN FEBRUARY'S *Nightshift* local mastering maestro **Tim Turan**, of Turan Audio, will be running a regular column dealing with the various aspects of producing and releasing music, aimed at local musicians, from mastering records and download issues to streaming, vinyl issues, metadata and CDs. "I get asked so many questions in the studio and online by bands and artists that I thought a column in *Nightshift* would be a good way to answer them," said Tim; "I was thinking about all the different things that bands need to think about when it comes to mastering records. It is a total minefield of hidden info out there and it's about artists and bands getting the optimum from their releases."

LUCY LEAVE have been named as *BBC Introducing in Oxford's* Band of the Year for 2018. The trio were unveiled as winners with a special show just before Christmas; the award comes at the end of a year when they released their debut album, 'Look/Listen'.

After talking BBC Introducing host Dave Gilyeat and playing some of their favourite local music on the show, the band told *Nightshift*: "it's just an incredible end to such an exciting year for us. We love being part of this scene and sharing ideas with all the creative, inspiring people



THE CELLAR won its first and most important battle in its survival campaign at the end of November when its crowdfunding campaign achieved – and then surpassed – the £80,000 needed to complete the renovations needed to make the venue viable.

As the campaign achieved national and international publicity, donations and bids rolled in and the mood among local gig goers was celebratory as soon as the £80k target was hit. Failure to raise the funds would have meant the Cellar would have closed its doors for the last time in December. In a statement issued the day the target was reached, The Cellar's manager Tim Hopkins said: "Wow, we are awestruck. Through the power of the people, thanks to you, we've now got the funding we need to save The Cellar. Thank you so, so much because without this, The Cellar would definitely have closed. It's been an incredible journey and one we hope also communicates to people out there just how crucial small venues are to our music and arts community."

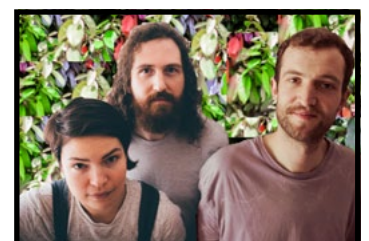
The next stage of the campaign to get the necessary fire escape building work completed.

Tim updated *Nightshift* with the latest, saying: "It looks like we will be open in January as I can't see the work starting before then. Hopefully we can start work in February or March. We really need to be doing it then as this whole situation is killing us financially and creatively. "We have had meetings with the structural engineer and the builders who did the work upstairs so know the lay of the land the best and are going to do the work for us. Also our surveyors are in talks with the landlords' surveyors this week, so we hope to get a rent agreement sorted out very soon. "Once the Sstructural engineer has drawn up the calculations for the builders and we have agreed a new lease we are ready to start ordering the steels and other materials to start the work. I've asked the surveyors for the landlords when is the earliest we can get into the shop to alter their stairs and I'm waiting to hear back."

that make it work, including the BBC Introducing team, and *Nightshift* of course, so to be recognised like this is amazing. We're very proud of the album and have loved playing gigs for Divine Schism, Oxjam, If Not Now When, Smash Disco and Pulling Sickness and we really appreciate the support we've had from our fantastic audiences and promoters. We've been recording again this month, and we've got some super exciting things to announce for the spring, so we'll see you all very soon."

Last year's Band of the Year were Low Island; previous winners include

Stornoway, Glass Animals and The Young Women's Music Project. BBC Oxford Introducing is on air Saturday night between 8-9pm on 95.2fm and available to stream or download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/oxford.



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A Quiet Word With Willie J Healey



“TOURING WITH GAZ COOMBES WAS amazing. I mean, who wouldn’t wanna watch Gaz and the gang do their thing every night!”

SO SAYS WILLIE J HEALEY OF HIS support tour to Gaz Coombes back in October of 2018, a tour that took him around the UK, including dates in Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield.

While the tour was just another set of live dates to add to Willie’s seemingly never-ending gig schedule over the past few years, going back to early tours with the likes of Summer House and Beach Baby in 2016, this particular one was special for Healey, mixing it up with a bona fide hometown hero.

“There were no direct life lessons from Gaz,” he says, “though I learnt a lot from just being around that group of musicians. They’re all my heroes really, a testament to hard work and good taste. I was a little young to be a teenage Supergrass fan but I’m a fan of everything Gaz now.”

FOLLOWING THAT JAUNT WAS perhaps one of the more unusual touring pairings of the year, with Willie going out as support to Slaves on their extensive UK tour. The tour included a show at Alexander Palace,

Willie’s biggest show to date.

“Slaves were wicked, they were really great. As was the Ally Pally show. London can be miserable sometimes and I’d say it was one of the more deadpan audiences on the tour. It was a dream location, though.”

IT’S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE

Nightshift featured Willie on the front cover. Back then the young man from Carterton was making his first tentative steps into the wider world of touring, while releasing a series of well-received singles, including radio hit ‘Pipe Dreams’.

Since then he has released his full debut album – 2017’s ‘People & Their Dogs’ – on Columbia, and kept up a steady rate of gig dates. He’s also changed both manager and record label, for whom he recorded his most recent release, the ‘666 Kill’ EP, last autumn. “Wow, that last cover sure seems like a long time ago now,” says Willie as he talks to *Nightshift* again, finding time between writing and recording songs for his planned second album, and heading off on a headline UK tour, taking in a hometown show at The Bullingdon on Valentine’s Day, and culminating in a trip to Austin, Texas for the global music industry shindig SXSW.

“I’ve mainly just been writing recording and playing live since then. I’d say time spent writing and recording has outweighed the time I’ve spent playing live. I made a quick start on a new track a couple of weeks after the release of ‘People & Their Dogs’. The touring in between has all been wicked, though.”

‘PEOPLE & THEIR DOGS’ WAS WELL

received, with 6Music in particular playlisting songs from the album and lead single ‘Lazy Shade of Pink’ racking up over 40,000 Youtube views and making the number 2 slot in *Nightshift*’s end of year Top 25. How does Willie view the album now, looking back? “I’m really proud of the album. I wouldn’t change anything: maybe I’d have tried to speed the whole process up a little but, hey.”

WHILE ‘PEOPLE & THEIR DOGS’

found Willie enjoying the backing of a major record label, he’s since departed Columbia and found a new home with indie label Yala! Whose roster has included the likes of Magic Gang and Yak.

“Yeah, Yala! released the ‘666 Kill’ EP. It really worked out for me. I got to know Felix White, one half of the label, and he was really into the new recordings and offered to release

them. Simple, eh?

“They’re great to work with; I think their passion for the music they release really shines through. It feels like a rare setup to me: two friends who both work together to release music they love.”

You have new management too.

“Sometimes it’s good to mix things up, I guess. My old manager was more of a friend, which can be tricky a times. It’s working out well, thanks.”

THAT ‘666 KILL’ EP CAME OUT IN

the autumn and saw a subtle change of musical direction for Healey. Its six tracks were almost exclusively acoustic, Willie dropping the rockier end of his dreamily slacker sound while lyrically taking a turn for the darker. While previously comparisons were regularly made to the likes of Mac DeMarco and Kurt Vile, the weary vibe of the EP feels closer to Elliot Smith, while retaining Healey’s love for Neil Young. Does he see the EP as a departure?

“People asked me if I was okay when I first showed them ‘666 Kill’”

“I’ve always enjoyed writing songs like ‘666 Kill’ and the more acoustic style stuff, so I don’t feel like I’ve changed too much on that front. I suppose I’m more confident with my own taste and the things I like. It’s nice to follow musical instinct without worrying about what people will think; that’s where the good stuff comes from for me.”

‘666 Kill’’s title suggests something rather more aggressive than it is, musically – what’s the story behind the song and was there an awareness of the disparity between the music and its Satanic title? “The title split my brain in half, hit me like a steam train; I couldn’t avoid it. ‘666 Kill’ seemed like a nice way to sum the EP up, you know: soft music, heavy lyrics. I also find it funny; people asked me if I was okay when I first showed them the song. Those recordings lean so heavily on the vocal sound: no big guitar solos or stadium sized drum tones, nothing to compete with and nothing to hide behind. I really challenged myself not to filter the bleakness out.”

Likewise the title of ‘Guitar Music’ is ironic given it’s an almost jazzy, piano and sax-led number with no actual guitar on it. Was that intentional?

“Yes, funny, eh? Also genres and titles seem so vague and confusing these days.”

THE OVERALL MOOD OF THE EP

is decidedly melancholy; what prompted that? Will the next album see a change of mood, or are you still in an introspective place?

“I’m not sure, I must have felt downbeat

at the time. It was nice to just dive headfirst into it. It felt just as much like a concept than a personal mood.”

Previously there was a strong element of observational whimsy or wistfulness about your lyrics, while the EP dwells more on death, mortality and mystery. Why is that? “Well, death isn’t something I’ve heard people write about lately. I’m not sure how it came around! It’s a big subject. It seems to be avoided but it’s probably on a lot of people’s minds but not spoken about.”

It’s still all very mellow to listen to; do you think you’re as mellow a person as people might imagine from your songs? What things get you most riled?

“I’m not sure what people would expect me to be like; I’ve never seem myself as a mellow person but I am pretty relaxed. Loads of things get me angry! I’m not sure... mainly people.”

A second full album is due later in 2019; stylistically how different or similar is it to those recent songs?

“We don’t have a date yet, but probably

early in 2019 sometime. The songs are different again to previous stuff I’ve released but still drums, bass and geetars really.”

SOME OF THE GUITARS IN THAT

set-up come from Chris Barker, a long-time friend of Healey’s who leads his own band, Premium Leisure, who played Common People last May. In turn Willie plays bass in Premium Leisure. We wonder what’s it like for Willie to take more of a backseat and how much of each other’s writing rubs off on each other? “I really enjoy playing with Chris, I feel like I’ve learnt a lot through playing different instruments and learning other people’s music. It’s not something I’ve done much of in the past. Chris is a constant influence on me; I’m a huge fan of everything he plays and writes.” 2019 looks like being just as busy for Willie J Healey as the past three years, but with a new album due, new management and record label in place and a full headline tour imminent, life looks good and despite lyrical dwellings on mortality, he’s positive about the future.

And, having toured with and learned from his time on the road with Gaz Coombes, would Willie, with all the experiences under his belt, offer any sage advice to his younger self, just starting out?

“Hmmm... I’d probably just tell myself to keep listening to Neil Young and to keep writing songs.”

‘666 Kill’ is out now on Yala! Willie plays The Bullingdon on the 14th February.

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RELEASED

THE OVERLOAD

‘Radio For the Blind’

(Self released)

We’ve all been smitten by the rapid wildfire nature of The Overload’s serendipitous conception and reception, by how three high quality musicians, guitarist Jake Haydn, bassist Darren Hasson-Davis and drummer Raf al Dedynski, swiftly coalesced around the discovery of *wunderkind* Arthur Osofsky’s sublime socio-observational wordplay, lubricating his cascade of brilliant, sideways thinking one-liners. What’s followed has been a palpable must-see buzz that ran through Oxford’s venues after every one of Osofsky’s “tasered Ian Dury” punk performances. The fact that the final piece of good fortune, the capturing of this lightning in a bottle for all time, fell into the experienced hands of producer Osprey O’Brien, engineer Nick Moorbath and mastering engineer Tim Turan, is testament to the local scene’s depth that has such heavyweight minds who know that while punk’s ideals may prize attitude and eschew musical virtuosity and production, having all three can make a massive difference without any compromise to passion. ‘Radio For The Blind’ is ten tracks of poetry you can dance, strut, swoon and swagger to. Its collective strength lies in the blizzard of musical and semantic highlights that get better every time you play it: The Beastie Boy riffing



SUGAR DARLING

‘For Daily Use’

(Self released)

First there was Sugar Darling and a clutch of oddball demos. Then they became The George O’Connor Band for their eponymous debut album earlier this year. Except they was just a he really, the band being the work of George O’Connor himself. And it was something of a dog’s dinner. And now he is back to being Sugar Darling, possibly just to confuse us and get us to use up our word count before we have another chance to be rude about the actual music. Because this is an odd one, and not always in the sort of way we’d like it to be. George has an



through ‘Twat Next Door’s’ paeon to multi-culturalism; The funky Flowered Up ‘Weekender’ orgy of “what are the chances of getting chlamydia in a fivesome if two of them have it,” and the ‘Owner Of A Lonely Heart’ powerchords that skewer ‘Halitosister’s’ blaze out. You’d need another 1000 words to even begin to outline all the memorable lines, the subtle shading in ‘It’s The Weather, Man’ and ‘Thriving In Tel Aviv’, and the rock and rollercoaster ride through the Pistols, Stones and Johnny Greenwood whiteouts. It is this crash course in getting everything so very right, that makes ‘Radio For The Blind’ such a complete and breathtaking debut. **Paul Carrera**

obvious maverick spirit when it comes to making music, unafraid – or simply unselfconscious enough – to start a song in one musical country and then just let it wander of its own free will into another by way of somewhere unexpected. Which means a track like ‘Ammonite’ begins as novelty bubblegum pop cheese but ends up as a Toytown piano sonata, while ‘Good Health’ somehow manages to mingle Van Halen guitar bombast with Vangelis keyboard frippery, and the track ‘Sugar Darling’ is death metal and operatic soft rock at pretty much the same time. But, for all the overwrought bluster there’s precious little by way of theatre to be had. ‘The Fiendish Petal’ is a Brian Pern-like pastiche of pastoral 70s prog indulgence with an added dose of downright silliness, but feels like it’s trying far too desperately hard to be liked for all its daftness, while ‘Ave’ is little more than a half-arsed interlude with no sense of direction. Best of the bunch is ‘Tinkerbelle’, which might be an am-dram mash up of Elton John, The Who and Argent, but don’t go imagining it’s quite as out-there as you or he would like it to be. As the late and extremely great John Peel would occasionally say, “I’m glad someone’s making music like this, I just don’t want to have to listen to it.” A feeling we can relate to as George heads off into yet another strained soft rock saga, like a severely constipated Barry Manilow with dreams of joining Genesis. The album is called ‘For Daily Use’. Once in a lifetime and never again might have been more apt. **Dale Kattack**

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JORDAN O’SHEA

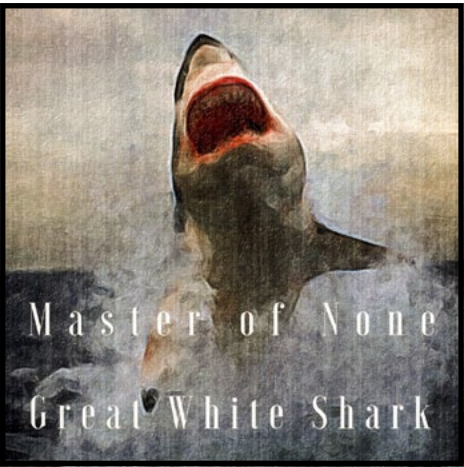
‘This Is Why We Can’t

Have Nice Things’

(Beanie Tapes)

Back in 2014 when he graced the front cover of *Nightshift* Jordan O’Shea was a lovelorn acoustic balladeer with his heart worn firmly, if slightly fragilely, on his sleeve. Since then he’s founded local label Bear on a Bicycle, fronted The Friday Night Film Club, been part of experimental act Paddox who released a record encased in a 3k concrete block, and run the sadly now closed Bear & Bean coffee house on Cowley Road. His last solo release was a 12-minute miniature symphony in four parts, so we expect the unexpected from this new cassette-only album. Anyone still expecting lovelorn acoustic balladeering will find those expectations confounded across these ten tracks, Jordan instead running a gamut of styles, from jaunty doo-wop to grunged-up synth pop. Album opener ‘Picture House, Cure Us’ sets the eclectic tone from the off, sounding like a more propulsive Beach Boys taking a pop at ‘La Bamba’ by way of a stray Joy Division bassline. From here we’re into doo-wop territory (‘The Moon In Her Blood’), weary jazz rock (‘Cathedrals’) and high-wired slacker-synth pop (‘Blood Money/Love Honey’). And it doesn’t stop there. ‘Aurelia’ is a sort of cheesy blues-tinged electro-pop take on ‘We Didn’t Start the Fire’, while ‘Horrorpop’ is somewhere between 70s funk-pop and prog, and ‘The Burning House’ is gruff, cracked and borderline hysterical.

The closest Jordan comes to himself of old is ‘Drunk When I Read’, but even here he brings a jazzy shuffle to the party. ‘Cactus’ might be slightly anonymous in its Paul Simon-lite jingle but album closer ‘Little We Have’ finds him heading off into early-80s Pink Floyd and if the songs occasionally feel a bit untidy around the edges, there are more than enough ideas chucked into each song to keep you engaged and the only question is, where does Jordan O’Shea go from here? Your guess is as good as ours, and we’ll likely both be wrong. **Sue Foreman**



MASTER OF NONE

‘Great White Shark’

(All Will Be Well)

Ian Mitchell’s debut album under his Master of None moniker was a patchy affair, perhaps trying to pack too many partly formed ideas in. This new five-song EP from the Little Red man is both more cohesive and more accomplished. For starters the scattershot approach to musical style of the album is replaced by a steadier concentration on dark, heavy electro-led rock, with the influence of The Horrors and Mark Lanegan to the fore. None more so than on the EP highlight, ‘This Animal’, with its swarming middle-distance synths and clattering beats, Ian’s cracked gothic croon reminiscent of The National’s Matt Berninger. ‘Wolf & Ram’ is gnarlier and grungier, militant machine rock with lupine teeth and a cyborg heart. If ‘Head Down’ feels hesitant, the unconvincing staccato vocals jarring with the sleek synthetics, ‘Tsunami’ marries the two sides far better, its propulsive rhythms and growly vocals confirming that Lanegan influence while equally reminding us of Springsteen’s debt to Suicide on ‘Nebraska’. With Little Red Mitchell captures the darkness of dreams, depression and folklore in the prettified net of harmony-heavy folk-pop; here he mines his psych deeper and wanders not through the dark woods but more claustrophobic corridors. There’s still a lo-fi bedroom feel to some of it but the best stuff here is very good indeed; we’d say it’s a harbinger of even brighter things to come, but frankly, brightness isn’t where this is headed. **Dale Kattack**

I CRIED WOLF

‘BRKN’

(Crooked Noise)

Banbury’s I Cried Wolf have shared a stage with MSRY and seemingly share a distrust of vowels, as well as a love for Cancer Bats – a band I Cried Wolf have also shared a stage with. Both bands like to get things done loudly, forcefully and at breakneck speed, ‘BRKN’ kicking off with an Iron Maiden-like gallop, reaching for some Faith No More epic and making a raw-throated metalcore mess all over the floor while it’s about it. Not sure it was wise of the band to wear all white for the video: the blood, beer and sweat stains won’t wash out so easily. Like the marines, I Cried Wolf are in and out as quickly swiftly as possible, explosions coming as standard and anything precious in the vicinity left, yes, brkn. **Ian Chesterton**

ZAIA

‘See All Those Smiles’

(Self released)

It seems a lifetime since Zaia first emerged in 2013 but having built up a considerable body of work in the interim, not least in the shape of their 2017 full length offering ‘Butterflies’, this late in the year follow up is a welcome addition to their catalogue. Spanning four tracks, the range of styles is impressive, the flourishes gorgeous. The strength of the band has always been its eclecticism; while reggae is the dominant style and the Caribbean the predominate vibe, there is an Englishness to their sound that is what Englishness should be – a multi-layered collage of the best things this country can offer and not the narrow-minded nonsense some organisations with three-digit acronyms might pedal. ‘Place Like Home’ is the highlight, twinkling Afro-pop guitar underscoring a vocal medley from across the band, with Amy MacKown taking a back step after crooning majestically through the EPs opening double salvo of ‘Can it be True?’ and ‘Fool’s Game’, Leo Petrokofsky’s trumpet sounding morosely. Then the instrument is put to equally good use in the Latin tinged ‘The Wolf’, MacKown sounding husky and persuasive, Charlie Cruickshank’s saxophone bringing the quartet of tunes to a spluttering end. As a seven piece, Zaia can bring a plethora of options into play and they do it with aplomb. **Rob Langham**



THE SHAPES

‘Oh You’

(Self released)

While they’re unashamedly a band steeped in musical and lyrical nostalgia, one whose central aim in life is to get a room up and dancing, The Shapes are also steeped in working class politics and on ‘Oh You’ chief songwriter Ant Kelly deals with the confusion he, a lifelong Labour supporter, feels in an era of Brexit, Trump, Putin et al. The song is, he says, his attempt to write a ‘Ghost Town’ for today, but true to form he eschews polemic for reflection, pondering the cultural and constitutional mess we find ourselves in. It’s a brassy lament for social unity sprinkled with samples of Nigel Farage backtracking on broken Brexit promises that feels more like a love letter to an uncaring ex. ‘Comeback Days’ and ‘Number 68’ find The



BAD BLOOD

RECOVERY

‘Silver Shroud’

(Future Noise)

Bad Blood Recovery cite Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf as inspirations for their “heavy raw blues”. What they may lack in the swagger of the former, and the ripped reality of the latter, is compensated for with a hefty, grinding, stalking seriousness that blends a meaty take on Dr John’s mystic stealth with murky, modern rock’n’roll in the various veins of Clutch, Melvins, Black Keys, or perhaps the lighter end of sludge rock acts like Neurosis or Oxford’s own Desert Storm and Undersmile. ‘Silver Shroud’, the band’s debut single, opens with a chunky, repeating guitar riff, sharing space with gliding slide guitar. The pace is relaxed but the mood is slightly intimidating, and within a rather standard kind of song construction, there’s a decent grasp of dynamics, moods, and an overall feeling that this five-piece are absolutely adept at making the sounds that they mean to. The lyrics refer to singer Sean (formerly of Domes of Silence)’s battle with cancer, which is serious stuff alright, and that’s reflected in an irony-and-jokes-free approach to this track; it arrives, makes its point strongly and commandingly, chucks in a game-raising middle eight and gets out while the going’s good. Roll on the band’s debut EP which I hope will bring more of the same. **Simon Minter**

Shapes on more familiar territory, looking wistfully back on days long past, Ant’s simultaneously doleful and puppydog croon mingling with Alix Champ’s sweet, understated soul singing, again the warm brass arrangements lifting everything above simple misty-eyed rumination. Alix then gets full centre stage for the ‘Stars in Her Eyes’, a soft-hearted sideswipe at no-hope *X-Factor* contestants that can’t quite bring itself to stamp on their dreams. And that’s The Shapes all over: they’ve lived through upheavals and wild parties, loved and lost and still care deeply, but deep down, all they want is to get everyone to put aside their differences and dance the night away. “So let’s have another drink / Because that’s what we like to do,” sings Ant the end of ‘Number 68’ and you wonder if perhaps The Shapes ran the world it would be a far better place. **Dale Kattack**

G I G G U I D E

TUESDAY 1st
Happy New Year. What will the bastards do to mess everything up and grind us down even further this time?

Saturday 5th
GWENIFER RAYMOND / LAUGHING LAMB / FAITH ELLIOTT: The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre

Early January is traditionally a bleak time for gig addicts, so kudos to Divine Schism for bringing us a treat of this quality so soon into the New Year. Born and bred in Wales but resident in Brighton, Gwenifer Raymond has a PhD in astrophysics and designs computer games for a living, but when it comes to music she’s proper old school, lost in the American Primitive tradition. Having been given a Nirvana cassette by her mum when she was eight, Raymond asked for a guitar for Christmas and, inspired by their cover of Lead Belly’s ‘Where Did You Sleep Last Night?’, went off to explore Mississippi John Hurt, Roscoe Holcomb and Skip James, before discovering John Fahey through a blues guitar teacher. So authentic is her approach to old world Americana you’d never know it was played by a young British musician as she gets into the gut and soul of Delta and Appalachian traditional sounds and instruments, playing it variously haunted or frantic on guitar, banjo and violin, her instrumental journeys drawing in Indian ragas and drones and Arabic melodies along the way. So, a scientific genius and a musical virtuoso – some people hog all the talent. Support tonight comes from Lucy Leave drummer and singer Pete Smith’s acoustic jazz project Laughing Lamb and Edinburgh folk singer-songwriter Faith Elliott.



JANUARY **WEDNESDAY 2nd**

THURSDAY 3rd
SPARKY’S NEW MOON: The Half Moon – Sparky hosts an open mic session on the first and third Thursday of every month.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running open night continues to showcase local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists every week.
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure – Weekly open night.
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Open blues jam.

FRIDAY 4th
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with STORYTELLER + THE SHAPES + FRANKLIN’S TOWER + HIRAETH: The Wheatsheaf – A new year but Klub Kakofanney remains a comforting constant in our gigging lives, heading into their 28th year with a characteristically eclectic mix of sounds, including funk, reggae and pop fusion outfit Storyteller; effervescently melancholy r’n’b stars The Shapes and Grateful Dead tribute Franklin’s Tower.
BACKROOM BOOGIE featuring THREE AMIGOS: The Bullingdon – One-off reunion for the long-running club night, playing classic soul, funk and disco.

SATURDAY 5th
GWENIFER RAYMOND + LAUGHING LAMB + FAITH ELLIOTT: The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre – Virtuoso American Primitive from the Welsh guitar genius to kick-start the musical year – *see main preview*
BLOODSTOCK METAL TO THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf – The first heat of this year’s BOTB to win a slot at Bloodstock features a heavyweight head-to-head-to-head of Elderseer, The Hope Burden and The Reaper.
K-FUNKZ: The Bullingdon – Bassline, drum&bass and hip hop club night.

SUNDAY 6th
FRANKLIN’S TOWER + OSPREY + BEARD OF DESTINY + PETE FRYER BAND + HIRAETH: Donnington Community Centre (6pm) – Free evening of unplugged live music with a Grateful Dead tribute from Franklin’s Tower, plus blues from Osprey and Beard of Destiny.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms – Weekly open session.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon – Weekly folk night.

MONDAY 7th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Castle – Weekly open night.

TUESDAY 8th
WEDNESDAY 9th
BLOODSTOCK METAL TO THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf – Second rock and metal heat with Cindermist, LJ Phoenix and AM Band.

THURSDAY 10th
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 11th
GROOVE: The Bullingdon – Disco and house club night.

SATURDAY 12th
YORE LAST RITES + OTTO + HYMN TO APOLLO: The Wheatsheaf – Old school metal in the vein of Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath and Stone Sour from Yore Last Rites at tonight’s heavy rock night.
WATERFAHL + FIVE FATHOMS DEEP: Harcourt Arms – Unplugged live bands night at the Harcourt with local folk, blues and pop duo Waterfahl and London folk and ceilidh ensemble Five Fathoms Deep.
DAY OF THE DEADBEATS BIRTHDAY SPECIAL: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Deadbeat Apostles host and headline their own birthday party, mixing up classic soul and r’n’b with country rock to make for one of the best live shows in town. Support comes from The Knights of Mentis and Ragged Charms.
DR FEELGOOD: The Bullingdon – Disco, afrobeat and house club night.

SUNDAY 13th
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (4-6.30pm) – Blues, rock, funk, psychedelia and ska from the local stalwarts.
A/WATTS: Black Swan (6pm) – 50s rock’n’roll from the local regulars.

MONDAY 14th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Castle

TUESDAY 15th
THE BOHMAN BROTHERS + OXFORD IMPROVISERS: Old Fire Station – Oxford Improvisers host veteran experimental siblings The Bohman Brothers, who’ve been playing together since the 1970s, eschewing traditional instruments for pre-prepared recordings, dislocated texts and non instruments. The local

Improv crew also play.

WEDNESDAY 16th
J MASCIS: O2 Academy – The Dinosaur Jr guitar godhead turns the amps down a few notches to explore his sensitive side – *see main preview*

THURSDAY 17th
MAD MARSTON HARES + A BIT OF NONSENSE: The Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon – Traditional music from England, Scotland and the States from acoustic trio Mad Marston Hares at the Unicorn’s first folk session of the year. Support from local folk duo A Bit of Nonsense.
SPARKY’S NEW MOON: The Half Moon
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 18th
FRACTURE + WHITE CLOUD FIRE +

Wednesday 16th
J MASCIS: O2 Academy
It’s close on a decade since J Mascis last came to Oxford, then with the full Dinosaur Jr shebang, but to a greater or lesser degree you know what you’re going to get from Mascis in whatever form he appears. Come on, the guy is a guitar godhead – a man whose sound helped define grunge, stoner rock and who pretty much became the template for what became known as slacker rock. Dinosaur Jr were a band for whom volume was king, fusing melody with bulldozing noise, and thankfully age (he’s well into his 50s now) doesn’t seem to have mellowed him much, though his solo work gives him time and space to explore the more melodic and tender edges of his music, while retaining his trademark fuzziness. New album ‘Elastic Days’ is a rumination on time and the passing of the years, where he appears at his most plaintive and vulnerable, aided along the way by Mark Mulcahy and Black Heart Procession’s Pall Jennings. Having cropped up in assorted Greatest Guitarists lists over the years, Mascis is probably a full-on rock treasure now (and having turned down invitations to join Nirvana twice, he played with the surviving members at their Rock’n’Roll Hall of Fame induction back in 2014) and live he still finds room for a few Dinosaur classics, including the sublime ‘Little Fury Things’, as well as covers of songs by The Cure and Mazzy Star. A living legend and no mistake.



SPILL THE RIVER: The Wheatsheaf – Local bands showcase, including Chili Peppers and Black Keys-inspired rockers Fracture.
FOOD OF LOVE: Old Fire Station – A night of music dedicated to and inspired by Shakespeare, presented in two acts. Act one features Brickwork Lizards, Flights of Helios, Joe Swarbrick and The Children of the Midnight Chimes performing songs mentioned or performed in Shakespeare’s plays, composed before or during Shakespeare’s lifetime. Act 2 then features Paul Lodge presenting a selection from ‘Shakespeare in the Alley’, a cycle of original songs written by Lodge in response to Shakespeare’s plays.
BASIC featuring JASPER JAMES: The Bullingdon – Disco and house club night with a guest set from Glasgow tastemaker Jasper James, whose heads-down approach to techno has taken him from Sub Club through Fabric to Phonox.

SATURDAY 19th
A NIGHT OF ‘CORE: The Wheatsheaf – Paladin Promotions host a night of hardcore, metalcore and more, with local mayhem metalcore heroes MSRY joined by guests to be announced.
MUSICAL MEDICINE: The Bullingdon – Disco, funk and disco-house club night.
THE PAUL McLURE TRIO + DOLLY MAVIES: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – English folk and American bluegrass from the veteran troubadour and storyteller, back at Wychwood Folk Club, with support from ethereal local folk-pop singer Dolly Mavies.

A/WATTS: Woodstock Social Club

SUNDAY 20th
EDWIN & THE KEEPERS + THE JESTERS + ADAM & ELVIS + FRANKLIN’S TOWER: The Wheatsheaf (3.30-7pm) – Free afternoon of unplugged live music from Klub Kakofanney.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon

MONDAY 21st
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Castle

TUESDAY 22nd
WEDNESDAY 23rd
BLOODSTOCK METAL TO THE MASSES: The Wheatsheaf – Third BOTB heat with Keyed Up, Circa Never and R.O.Y vying to earn a slot at Bloodstock.

SLOK + CAGEWORK + SALVATION BILL + MOOGIEMAN & THE MASOCHISTS: The Library – Effervescent, folky slacker-pop in the vein of Dinosaur Jr, Lach and Hammell on Trial from Bristol’s Slonk – the band moniker of Joe Sherrin – at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the band launching new single ‘Holidays’ on Breakfast Records. Support from Spiky indie rockers Cagework; darkly humorous indie blues from Salvation Bill and lo-fi electro-pop and post-punk strangeness and charm from recent *Nightshift* cover stars Moogieman & the Masochists.
THE WILD PONIES: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Emotive, harmony-heavy country and Americana from Nashville duo Doug and Telisha Williams at tonight’s Empty Room gig.



Saturday 26th
MUNGO’S HI-FI SOUNDSYSTEM with EVA LAZARUS The Bullingdon
With summer still both a distant memory and something intangible in the far future, what better time for Count Skylarkin’ to briefly resurrect his renowned reggae night in Oxford: a midwinter slice of sunshine and a great way to dance off any lingering post-festive blues. Tonight the Count hosts global reggae, dub and dancehall stars Mungo’s Hi-Fi, now coming up to their twentieth anniversary together, having been formed in Glasgow in 2000 by Tom Tattersall and Doug Paine and having expanded by increments ever since. The forward-thinking collective, inspired by King Tubby and Prince Jammy, have produced a slew of original albums over the last two decades on their own, knowingly named Scotch Bonnet label, including 2015’s ‘Serious Time’, as well as collaborating with the likes of Prince Fatty, Sugar Minott, Ranking Joe and Major Lazer. They’ll be bringing their legendary rig with them so expect everything to resonate deeply. Joining them on tonight’s bill is much-travelled reggae singer Eva Lazarus, a regular visitor to Oxford over the years, including with Dub Mafia and rapper Lil Rhys as well as a regular collaborator with Mungo’s themselves. Count Skylarkin is your host and decksman for the night, playing his trademark mix of roots, dub, dancehall, ska and more. Suddenly summer seems a little bit closer.

THURSDAY 24th
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ACOUSTIC THURSDAY: Jude the Obscure
BLUES JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

FRIDAY 25th
TIGRAN HAMAYSAN: St John the Evangelist – A solo performance from Armenian pianist and composer Hamaysan, currently in the UK touring his latest album, ‘An Ancient Observer’, his music inspired by the folk and sacred music traditions of his home country which he returned to after living in the States for a decade, infusing elements of hip hop rhythm and baroque music into the traditional sounds, which as seen him perform on *Later...* as well as WOMAD and the Gilles Peterson show.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Black Swan

SATURDAY 26th
THE VACCINES: O2 Academy – Already sold-out show from the West London indie rockers,



Monday 28th

**DILLY DALLY:
The Bullingdon**

If you’re going to get compared to one particular band over and over again then it’s best if that band is, well, the best. And so it is with Toronto’s Dilly Dally, whose name makes them sound like a cute, slightly clumsy kids TV character but whose animalistic, distortion-heavy rock and roll is something dirtier and more primal than CBeebies would ever allow. And yes, let’s get it out of the way early – the quartet owe a fair bit to Pixies, from the taut, feral guitar churn and thunder to singer Katie Monks’ voice: variously a sleepy-eyed drawl, a smoky rasp, a weary sigh and a guttural scream. She’s been compared to Frank Black, but she manages the Kim Deal bits all by herself too, as well as occasionally finding a meeting point between the two Courtneys – Love and Barnett. Formed by Monks and high school friend and guitarist Liz Ball, Dilly Dally released their debut album, ‘Sore’, in 2015, which won them plenty of critical acclaim and found them touring the globe, but also nearly finished them off as expectation gave way to exhaustion. Follow-up ‘Heaven’ packages up all the turmoil and frustration of that time and vomits it out in stylishly noisy bastard fashion. If Pixies at their most demonic appeals, don’t dilly dally, come and see... oh, you get the point.

back in Oxford for the first time since headlining Truck Festival in 2017, touring fourth album ‘Combat Sports’, having come a long, long way since playing the Jericho Tavern back in 2010. **MUNGO’S HI-FI + EVA LAZARUS + DJ BINGE + COUNT SKYLARKIN: The Bullingdon** – Count Skylarkin’ hosts Glasgow’s global reggae and dancehall stars – *see main preview*
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRY with THE OVERLOAD + HATEPENNY + THE PHAT CARDINALS: The Wheatsheaf – Stylishly bolshy poetic post-punk from local stars on the rise The Overload at tonight’s GTI, the band mixing up the funky swagger of early Happy Mondays with the snark of Sleaford Mods, The Fall’s motorik grooves and Crass’s punk attitude. They’re joined by Mangled hardcore ragers Hatepenny and punked-up surf rockers The Phat Cardinals.
FACTORY LIGHTS: Harcourt Arms – Oxford nostalgia and romantic melancholy set to a sweet, introverted 60s r’n’b and French café folk

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soundtrack from Ant Kelly’s Shapes offshoot.
RESTRUCTURE + DJ FRED UGLY: The Jericho Tavern – Birthday gig for local hoolie-rave duo Restructure, both of whom celebrate becoming another year older and still up for the fight, channelling Sleaford Mods, acid house, 80s terrace culture and anarcho-punk in their witty aggro-pop. They’re supported for the occasion by Restructure’s own Fred Ugly is on the decks.
A/WATTS: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon

SUNDAY 27th

BOOTLEG BLONDIE featuring CLEM BURKE: O2 Academy – A tribute band with a difference as Bootleg Blondie not only pay tribute to the greatest pop band that ever existed (FACT), but feature actual Blondie drummer Clem Burke in their ranks, the legendary sticksman also having served time alongside Joan Jett, Nancy Sinatra, Hugh Cornwell and Earl Slick. All the hits: ‘Heart of Glass’; ‘Atomic’; ‘Denis’; ‘Union City Blues’; ‘Sunday Girl’; ‘One Way or Another’; ‘Dreaming... plus a 40th anniversary celebration of ‘Parallel Lines’. Just the greatest.
DON’T WORRY + WORRY + CODY NOON + SVEN: The Library – Mixed messages at tonight’s Snuggle Dice Records show; are we supposed to worry or not? Either way, some noisy fun in store as Essex’s Don’t Worry tour their debut album ‘Who Cares Anyway?’ following a tour support to Mom Jeans and Just Friends, keeping it noisy but melodic in the vein of Weezer and Modern Baseball. Local hardcore tigers Worry support, alongside Reading’s post-rockers Cody Noon and Portsmouth’s grungy emo crew Sven.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm) – Open blues session.

MONDAY 28th

DILLY DALLY: The Bullingdon – Molten, feral Pixies inspired noise from Toronto’s malevolent rockers – *see main preview*
THE WAVE PICTURES: The Jericho Tavern – Back in town once again after their show here in June last year, David Tattersall’s seedily romantic, elegantly dour and scarily prolific rockers continue to epitomise enduring heroic indie underachievement as well as consistent quality, channelling the 70s sounds of Lou Reed, Tom Verlaine and Jonathan Richman. They’re touring once more to promote new album ‘Look Inside Your Heart’, one of two albums they released in 2018. They’re a band with “cult favourites” stamped all over them, though as is so often the case, they should be more widely loved.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Castle

TUESDAY 29th

HOLLIS LOMAX + SCOTT LAVENE + FIRST RESERVES + KNOBBLEHEAD: The Wheatsheaf – Jazz, funk and rock fusion from Hollis Lomax at tonight’s showcase gig.
FREE CAKE FOR EVERY CREATURE + GARDEN CENTRE + JEFF + SPANK HAIR: The Library – Sweetly lo-fi, ramshackle pop and folky indie jangle from Philly singer-songwriter Katie Bennett at tonight’s Divine Schism

show, channelling Cat Power, Mo Tucker and Sparklehorse as she goes. Cartoonishly sinister creep-pop from Max Levy’s Garden Centre in support.

WEDNESDAY 30th

VRYLL SOCIETY: The Bullingdon – Spaced-out psych-pop from Liverpool’s blissed-out groovers – *see main preview*

THURSDAY 31st

SPACE ELEVATOR: The Bullingdon – Polished 80s-style stadium rocking and glam from the band formed by guitarist David Young from the *We Will Rock You* West End musical, unsurprisingly inspired by Queen as well as The Darkness, Heart and Fleetwood Mac and back at The Haven Club after their show there back in May.
THE EAST POINTERS: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington – Back in the Shire after their sold-out show here last year are Prince Edward Island trio The East Pointers, whose family music roots go back seven generations, drawing on traditional Scottish and Irish traditions as they mix banjo and fiddle melodies with stomp box rhythms.

Wednesday 30th

**VRYLL SOCIETY:
The Bullingdon**

While the best underground rock music these past few years has tended to fall under the psychedelia banner, it’s a broad church and while Liverpool’s Vryll Society definitely come under that umbrella, they exist on the opposite end of the psych scale to, say, Hookworms or Radar Men From the Moon. Instead of scouring guitars and motorik rhythms, they waft in on a warm, breeze of almost jazzy space rock, a bit of easy funk and a fair few understated prog tendencies. Back in Oxford after playing Ritual Union in October, the band are touring last summer’s debut album ‘Course of the Satellite’ having built their reputation via well received sets at Glastonbury and SXSW in 2017. The album shows off their eclectic set of influences – from Steely Dan, Aphrodite’s Child and Pink Floyd in one corner and Tame Impala, Purescence and Mew in the other, while singer Mike Ellis can even tend towards Jon Anderson at times as he counters the band’s big pop choruses and extended spaced-out guitar wandering with vulnerability, both tonally and lyrically. They’re a band you can imagine making a field full of long-haired flower children dance at any point in time since the late 1960s but equally they could be appreciated half dozing in a deck chair in the sun.



THE VACCINES
Waterside Theatre
Aylesbury
26.01.19

THE VACCINES
O2 Academy
Oxford
SOLD OUT

DILLY DALLY
The Bullingdon
Oxford
28.01.19

THE VRYLL SOCIETY
The Bullingdon
Oxford
30.01.19

...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD
O2 Academy 2
Oxford
08.02.19

LAURA VEIRS
The Bullingdon
Oxford
11.02.19

WILLIE J HEALEY
The Bullingdon
Oxford
14.02.19

SEAN MGOWAN
The Jericho Tavern
Oxford
16.02.19

SOUND OF THE SIRENS
The Bullingdon
Oxford
17.02.19

ART BRUT
The Bullingdon
Oxford
18.02.19

ALLUSINLOVE
The Jericho Tavern
Oxford
18.02.19

ANOTHER SKY
The Bullingdon
Oxford
19.02.19

PSYCHEDELIC PORN CRUMPETS
The Bullingdon
Oxford
25.02.19

SHE DREW THE GUN
The Bullingdon
Oxford
01.03.19

THE ORIELLES
The Bullingdon
Oxford
03.03.19

SPORTS TEAM
The Bullingdon
Oxford
26.03.19

FUN LOVIN’ CRIMINALS
O2 Academy
Oxford
28.03.19

LOW ISLAND
South Street Arts
Reading
29.03.19

DREAM STATE
The Bullingdon
Oxford
02.04.19

YAK
O2 Academy2
Oxford
02.04.19

PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS
The Bullingdon
Oxford
10.04.19

KING NO-ONE
O2 Academy2
Oxford
10.04.19

BLUE ROSE CODE
The Bullingdon
Oxford
11.04.19

PENELOPE ISLES
The Jericho Tavern
Oxford
16.04.19

JOSEFIN OHRN + THE LIBERATION
The Bullingdon
Oxford
23.04.19

SLEAFORD MODS
Sub 89
Reading
26.04.19

SLEAFORD MODS
O2 Academy
Oxford
27.04.19

SOAK
O2 Academy2
Oxford
15.05.19

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BEAK> / TVAM

O2 Academy

TVAM was in Oxford for Ritual Union back in October but we like to imagine that set never ended and he’s spent the past two months ploughing that singular of purpose noise furrow

without pause for air or food. He’s a lanky fella, so maybe sustenance isn’t high on his priority list and his music lets in little air or light as he feeds his guitar through several thousand

NOTHING / SUBURBAN LIVING

The Bullingdon

Two bands from Philadelphia tonight, both in thrall to British indie music of different strains and with varying degrees of success. Suburban Living seem to have played their set back to front, kicking off with their best, most incendiary number, which reminds us of awesome Canadian post-punkers Viet Cong (though more recently renamed as Preoccupations after upsetting rightwing snowflakes in the States), all swarming synths and cascading guitar glissando. From here they tumble elegantly into mid-80s Cure, the bassist wearing his guitar slung so low it’s almost at his knees. Appropriately they take a detour into New Order’s synth-led power pop and resurface somewhere in the middle of Sarah Records’ back catalogue. Oddly the leave us with their most contemplative number, albeit with a sting in its tail. “This is our first time in the UK, and we love it,” proclaims the singer. To a crowd barely numbering 20, while outside it’s pissing it down. They deserve so much better. Nothing singer Domenic Palermo doesn’t look like a brawler (even less so bespectacled bassist Aaron Heard), but he has history, including time

pedals, all doubtless with apocalyptic names, to distil motorik, superfuzzed drone-rock into its purest form: stark Suicide-inspired rhythms and the kind of elegant distortion that could make Kevin Shields weep with envy. His lyrics are indecipherable but they flash up on the TV screen beside him, his only companion on stage, showing footage of crash test dummies and jet fighters in bleak, brutal action. ‘Narcissus’ is Spacemen 3 cranked up to the max by way of The Jesus & Mary Chain, while set closer ‘Total Immersion’ moves on from John Carpenter-like synth doom to perfectly reflect its title: a magnificent, all-consuming noise storm. There’s a hint or two of Carpenter’s pioneering synthscaping about Beak> too, notably the intro to their opening number, ‘The Brazilian’, a gloomy trip into somewhere subterranean and foreboding before its blossoms like a black orchid into a lysergic krautrock-infused jazz journey, its way lit by the banks of old-school lightboxes that adorn the stage (“A hundred quid off ebay, but that’s not reflected in the ticket price,” notes singer and bassist Billy Fuller drily). The song and its aftermath perfectly showcase the two sides of Beak>, often considered Geoff Barrow’s psychedelic indulgence outside of Portishead but really so much more. He, Fuller and keyboard player Will Young trade brilliantly barbed banter throughout the set, whether it’s about Young’s name, coconuts with ringpulls, Fuller being a gypsy or, inevitably, Brexit, and you feel you could simply sit and enjoy them mock each other in their rich West Country burr all night. But the other side of the band is something far more serious, even glorious. From the urgent, angular, off-kilter ‘The Meader’ to the warped, wonderful space-cake wobbliness of ‘Brean Down’, they put their heads down and head off on a trip, one you feel compelled to follow them on. They peak on ‘Allé Sauvage’, from a wow and flutter intro into sleek sci-fi electro-pop and then into something far dirtier and groovier, reaching a euphoric plateau by way of some seriously heavy-duty Numan-esque synths. They make more diversions than TVAM, but like him Beak> are singular of purpose and tonight is just one more show to add to a dizzying list of potential gigs of the year. Funny as hell, but seriously incredible. **Dale Kattack**

spent in jail for assault and attempted murder, and the band’s latest album deals with that period of his life and its long-term consequences, which include degenerative brain damage sustained when he was attacked outside a venue. Anyone expecting raging hardcore, all spittle-flecked vitriol and calls to arms, is in for a surprise though. Nothing’s music seems to be more an equal and opposite reaction to violence – graceful, if powerful, shoegaze, what has become known as cathedrals of sound with their roots in My Bloody Valentine, Ride and Slowdive. All this, in turn, is filtered through a Sebadoh-like prism and, like many American touring bands, they can’t resist the temptation to simply rock out when the desire takes them. Mostly though they’re all big, overdriven washes of effects-heavy guitar over powerhouse rhythms. Which are pleasing as far as they go, but you wonder if Nothing bring anything new to their well-worn tropes. Palermo’s slurred words at times might be the result of his injuries, or equally down to the band having spent all evening drinking in the Black Swan round the corner, but whatever, they seem to be enjoying life on the road while it lasts. Whther they have the chops to enjoy it in front of a bigger crowd in future is open to debate. **Dale Kattack**

FIGHTMILK / SUGGESTED FRIENDS / PET SEMATARY

The Jericho Tavern

If she gets the success she deserves it will doubtless be with a full band in tow, but we always enjoy Gaby-Elise Monaghan most in a stripped back format, like her Pet Sematary project. Tonight she is joined by a guitarist who bolsters her bewitching bluesghoul wails with picked notes enshrouded in misty reverb, or sheets of disquieting ambient noise, creating textures that recall Daniel Lanois or Angelo Badalamenti, but it’s the voice that commands your attention: sometimes frail and intimate, like Jeff Buckley without one eye constantly on the mirror, and sometimes sweeping epically one tumescent wave of sweet bleakness. Suggested Friends prove that, when it comes to pop music, a tight, sprightly band will always win out over mere good taste. They bombard us with a string of buzzing punked up versions of songs that would fit neatly into some drive time AM radio show in which Split Enz rub shoulderpads with late 80s Fleetwood Mac and Counting Crows lend some safely grizzled guitar licks to the bombast of post-reggae Police. But, as if to prove that the magic comes from the chef not the recipe, they play with such wonderfully taut abandon – especially the drummer, who just looks ecstatic to be alive and allowed to hit stuff – it is impossible not to find the whole experience intoxicating. New song ‘Turtle Taxi’ was written two days

ago and rehearsed once but sounds like the band have been playing it all their lives. It also sounds like Men At Work. Glorious. And slightly awful. But mostly glorious. We’re not often fond of the term frontperson, as most bands are a collaborative effort, and the one with the mic is no more important than the one with the sticks, but sometimes you see an act where the singer is so mesmerising, you couldn’t pick the rest of the musicians out of a police line-up ten minutes after the gig. Lily Rae from Fightmilk is just such a performer: a fizzing bomb of guitar-wrangling and yelping, her slightly prissy indie outfit making us think of a grown up version of Hermione Granger, or Rebecca and Enid from *Ghost World*, or perhaps even Wednesday Addams, mixing fearsome intelligence with astringent superciliousness, dishing out lyrical putdowns to ex-partners like a laconic teacher (and her request for those who want an LP to “see me afterwards” is just *too* perfect). Musically it’s all decent enough, a melange of the less theatrical end of the Britpop spectrum and Johnny Foreigner’s playground scrap pop, and although we’re hard pressed to recall much about the songs, we know we’ve witnessed the sort of unforced star quality that can only truly be experienced in a small live music venue. **David Murphy**

SUNFLOWER BEAN

The Bullingdon

Anyone coming into tonight’s gig knowing Sunflower Bean from their airy radio hit ‘I Was a Fool’ might be in for a surprise. Hopefully of the best kind. While that song is all Californian sunshine, good vibes and featherbed pop – ‘Rumours’-era Fleetwood Mac meets Alvways’ jangle pop – most of tonight’s song finds the New York trio (plus hidden keyboard player stage right) in full rock’n’roll mode, bassist and singer Julia Cumming vamping it up in unabashed Suzi Quatro style while beside her guitarist Nick Kivlen looks like he fell out of an episode of *Miami Vice* via a lost John Hughes movie. From opener ‘Burn It’ they’re all stomp and boogie, Led Zep and T-Rex more to the fore than those lovelorn harmonies. ‘Crisis Fest’ takes The Runaways’ anthemic garage rock and gives it a shot of pop botox, while ‘Come For Me’

almost goes the full ‘We Built This City on Rock’n’Roll’. That’s as cheesy as they get and the occasional dip back into that sweeter side of their nature, like ‘Only A Moment’, are a reminder that beyond the heroic stadium excess is a pop heart made of sunbeams and the odd teardrop, while Cumming has a voice that’s both pure and powerful. After a slightly mushy ‘Memoria’ for a first encore, that power and purity comes back in full force for ‘Wall Watcher’, perhaps the song that joins the dots between the two sides of Sunflower Bean the best: all swagger and sweetness, stomp and serenity rolled into one effervescent whole. It’s a fun and full-bloodied introduction to the band for Oxford, and if they’re not quite the band many are expecting, Sunflower Bean are more than welcome on our doorstep. **Ian Chesterton**

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photo: Giulia Biasibetti



THE AUGUST LIST / CATGOD / THE OTHER DRAMAS

The Bullingdon

On a night when the sheer breadth and depth of musical talent in Oxford is laid bare across a host of gigs, The Other Dramas still face a sizable crowd for their opening set and reward early birds with one of their best shows we’ve seen,

proving straight up and simple is sometime all you need, Maria Ilett and Richie Wildsmith’s loose harmonies adding the pop icing to their warm and fuzzy garage rock, all washes of reverbed guitar and glam stomp, at times coming on like

The Runaways getting sweet and summery with The Lovely Eggs. “I wish I was a mermaid” chirrups Maria, while looking like she might already be one, and if the festive ‘Last Christmas’ intro to the final number is a bit flat, they crank it up

Deap Vally style to finish on a high. If The Other Dramas hold the title for best hair in Oxford music, Catgod are surely looking at that throne with realistic ambitions. Brother and sister duo Robin and Cat Christensen-Marriott looking like they’re competing to be the new face of Timotei shampoo. It’s a lustrousness that leaks into their music; they take a brave or foolish wish by opening with their best song, ‘Heartbeat in My Hand’, but while they can lapse a little too far into pastoral folk-prog at times, all flute solos and elaborate whimsy, as soon as they cut loose and rock things up a bit they’re on another level, finding a sweet spot between The Carpenters and Curved Air. A feast of hair to be had with The August List too, Martin Child now sporting a moustache, sideburns and new romantic fringe combo, bookended by partner Kerraleigh’s raven-black mane and violinist Ben Heaney’s silver nest. At the end of a relatively quiet year for them, The August List remind us tonight just what a superb band they are, possessed of almost magical chemistry, particularly in Martin and Kerraleigh’s vocals, and able to conjure dense yet expansive atmosphere in their songs, like the howling storm of new single ‘Distorted Mountain’, Kerraleigh unleashing her inner witch as Ben’s violin ramps up the storm John Cale style. ‘Old Rip’ is less wild but maintains the intoxicating mood, and while Kerraleigh and Martin dispense with their band for a couple of more stripped back numbers mid set, a finale of ‘Wilderness’ sees distant rumbles of thunder become a glorious gothic country deluge, Kerraleigh’s soaring voice matching Ben’s swirling strings. After which, the only question left hanging is quite why The August List aren’t one of the biggest bands on the planet. They’re quite simply an astonishing talent.

Dale Kattack

STILL CORNERS / PSYCHIC MARKERS

O2 Academy

Psychic Markers are a Mancunian four-piece who deftly tip-toe across the modern indie spectrum between and within songs. Starting with light and breezy guitar they mentally locate you to the Pacific-Northwest scene but slowly, almost imperceptibly, they drift further and further in a uniquely moody brand of modern psych-rock. The vocals are monotone and dour, evoking Ian Curtis at times, but the effected guitars take centre stage; a wash of modulation and reverb soars over the rock-solid rhythm section. There has been a bit of a renaissance for this kind of sound of late, led by the likes of Ulrika Spacek, but where those bands commonly drive forward on krautrock-style bass, with frenetic guitar on top, Psychic Markers take an almost languid approach which is actually quite refreshing: freak-out music for a rainy Tuesday. Still Corners are the partnership of Greg Hughes and vocalist Tessa Murray, joined by a touring drummer. Theirs is a nocturnal, contemplative take on a familiar dream pop sound. Picture driving top-down along desert

roads at 2am, musing on pseudo-philosophical quandaries and you’re right there; you can ignore that they’re actually from London. It would be hard to claim that Still Corners are forging bold new paths but if you like your chords complex and your vocals drenched in melancholy and reverb then they do a pretty good job of it. It can be easy to find this kind of sound samey and that does become noticeable as the set progresses but just when it’s needed Hughes steps forward and lays out some glorious guitar work. Not blistering solos, but intense and emotive licks that elevate the occasionally stayed tone of the set as a whole. Over their four albums to date Still Corners have moved from a largely guitar-led sound through the neon fog of 80s synth reverie and, with this year’s ‘Slow Air’, move back towards the six-string sound of Cocteau Twins and their ilk. The result is that the set feels like a broad, embracing soundtrack for a film with a bit of an identity crisis.

Matt Chapman Jones

THE DAMNED / JOHNNY MOPED

O2 Academy

Johnny Moped are one of several less remembered bands of the original punk era whose current function seems to be supporting the bigger figures from that scene on tours such as this. Still featuring three original members, they make a pleasantly authentic punk noise, with the glaring exception of the drums. Punk may have rehashed a load of guitar riffs from earlier heavy rock bands then simplified and sped them up, but the drummers could never have been accused of the same crime. Here the half-hearted breaks and fills tell us emphatically that this is not 1976. And so to The Damned, famously said to be the British punk band that did things first and worst: the first to release a single, then an album, tour the States, break up and then reform, all between July ’76 and April ’79. Of course while the ‘first’ part is true they were never the worst at anything, moving on to reinvent themselves and effectively launch the whole goth genre with LPs like ‘The Black Album’, represented here by the epic ‘Curtain Call’, though not the full seventeen minutes. This current version sees original singer Dave Vanian and guitarist Captain Sensible reunited with

bassist Paul Gray who goes back to 1980, along with some very decent keyboard and drums accompaniment. A run through selections from new album ‘Evil Spirits’, recently breaching the UK top ten, shows they’ve lost nothing of their energy or wildness, Vanian’s baritone delivery cutting through the loudest guitar riffs like forty-two years have never passed at all. New single ‘Standing On the Edge of Tomorrow’ is worthy mid-period Damned: playful and catchy with elements of a choir subtly mixed in with the vocals. Sensible produces an incredible amount of notes, well displayed on a thundering run through Love’s ‘Alone Again Or’. The audience, pleasingly comprising a broad range of ages, stand in appreciation with no gobbing to complete the ’76 experience, but we’re all patiently awaiting the inevitable slew of old classics. ‘New Rose’ and ‘Neat Neat Neat’ warm us up for ‘Love Song’, the true highlight of the show, Sensible expertly squeezing some new riffs into what to many is a precious part of our youth. The encore of ‘Smash It Up’ is almost as sublime, with parts of the crowd almost breaking into a pogo.



photo: Sizzie Kane

With so many bands currently trying to recreate past glory only to fall embarrassingly on their faces it’s heartening beyond words to see one

revelling in that glory and taking it to new heights. First and worst? More like last and best. Art Lagun

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THE WHEATSHEAF

Friday 4th January – *KLUB KAKOFANNY* 7:45pm / E6

STORYTELLER / THE SHAPES
FRANKIN'S TOWER / HIRAETH

Saturday 5th January – *M2TM - HEAT 1* 7:45pm

ELDERSEER
THE HOPE BURDEN / THE REAPER

Wednesday 9th January – *M2TM - HEAT 2* 7:45pm

CINDERMIST / L.J PHOENIX / AM BAND

Saturday 12th January – *IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC* 7:45pm / E7

YORE LAST RIGHTS
OTTO / HYMN TO APPOLO

Friday 18th January – *IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC* 7:45pm / E7

FRACTURE
WHITE CLOUD FIRE / SPILL THE RIVER

Wednesday 23rd January – *M2TM HEAT 3* 7:45pm

KEYED UP / CIRCA NEVER / R.O.Y

Saturday 26th January – *GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES* 7:45pm

THE OVERLOAD
HATEPENNY / PHAT CARDINALS

Tuesday 29th January 7:30pm / E7

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Dr SHOTOVER: Furniture Music

Ah, there you are. Welcome to the East Indies Club Bar'n'Grill. Full English Brexit? Ha ha, I do not think so. Pull up a Tory and take a parliamentary seat. Personally I'm sitting on David Davis. Yes, quite comfy – as full of hot air as most of 'em, but slightly less likely to stab one in the lower back than the Gove model. The Rees-Mogg and the BoJo? Both withdrawn - for biting too many unwary sitters in the buttocks. (putting the 'eat' in 'Etonian'). The less said about the 'super-resilient' folding Treeza deckchair, the better. And so to serious matters – it's your round, Newbie. Monsieur Bedingfield our cosmopolitan bar steward still accepts Euros... for now. So, make mine a pint of Glühwein, with some Gorgonzola-topped Brussels sprouts on the side. Yum, festive, *and* tasty. Now, where were we? Ah yes, discussing forthcoming government initiatives to generate funds, post-Brexsh*t, through the privatization of all bands. In the New Year, expect such treats as SSE-Club Seven, The NPower Generation, Boney Emirates, The SecuriCorrs, and of course The Thames Waterboys. Hmm, wonder which of these will headline at the Star-Trucks Festival? Or Cornflakebury...? Sponsorship – it's the modern way. Cheers! Down the Brands Hatch!

Next Month:
Santander – *Abraxas*



TORY UPDATE - Support for the Prime Minister had never been better!

INTRODUCING....

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

I CRIED WOLF

Who are they?

I Cried Wolf are an alt.rock / metalcore band from Banbury made up of Harry Davies (*vocals*); Alexander Gibbons (*guitar/vocals*); Louie Hodgson (*guitar/vocals*); Jacob Rudman (*bass*) and Oli Hampshire (*drums*). The band came together in 2015 from various previous bands on the local scene. They released their first EP in September of that year, while 2016 saw them play a 17-date UK tour as well as supporting Moose Blood; Mallory Knox; Carcer City; Bleed From Within; Cancer Bats and Turbowolf, among others. New single 'BRKN' was released in December.

What do they sound like?

Raw but melodic metalcore with its roots in classic heavy metal, as shown by 'BRKN's galloping rhythms. There's something of Faith No More's epic intent in there too but at heart it's heavy-duty good-time rock music designed for moshing and breaking stuff. Or, in their own words: "a rhapsody of energy, tension, and preposterous musicality, with lyrics."

What inspires them?

"A diverse selection of individual influences but collectively we all agree on bands like Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes, Bring Me The Horizon, Architects and Black Peaks.

Career highlight so far:

"Back in 2015 we jumped on an opening spot at The Camden Underworld supporting Area 11 and Myth City. The show was sold out which was the first time we'd played to that size crowd. The pure positivity that the crowd gave off was amazing. It was safe to assume that the audience had no idea who we were but they just exploded!"

And the lowlight:

"We went through some troubles in 2017 so maybe that entire year. We recorded a bunch of new material over the summer, then had to re-record the majority of everything we'd done again. A right palaver. Elsewhere, in the real world: career changes, home moves, break-ups, broken bones – you name it, it happened, but we're still here!"



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"It'd be great to put down all of our friends' bands, but the obvious choice is Radiohead. We joined the party pretty late but been hooked ever since."

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

"Bring Me The Horizon's 'Sempiternal'. It's our most-played album on tour and just doesn't get old. Plus, it has *the* best drop of the C-bomb going."

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

"We have two lined up, one in Witney with Wars, and a secret show in Oxford with Lastelle. We've put a lot of work into our stage showrecently so come prepared for a charged, energetic, and eclectic performance with the theatrics that helps make much larger bands so much fun to see."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite is the sheer quality and hard work being put in; we have bands like MSRY, Worry, The Hope Burden and Lastelle keeping Oxfordshire music on the map, and great promoters like Jake at the O2, Future Perfect, and venues like the Sheaf and The Bullingdon. Least favourite is that it seems to have become trendy to slate the Oxford music scene or call it dead and for all the reasons above it just doesn't seem fair."

You might love them if you love:

Letlive; Every Time I Die; Don Broco; Faith No More; Bring Me the Horizon.

Hear them here:

The video for 'BRKN' is on Youtube now.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

January is traditionally quiet on the live music front and 1998 was no different. A glance through the sparse gig guide throws up few obvious highlights beyond *NME's* then traditional Awards tour, which this time round featured **UNKLE**, alongside **Idlewild**, plus **Delakota** (anyone?) and **The Llama Farmers** (oh come on, you remember them, surely?). The package tour was up at **Brookes Union**, as were **Mansun**, though in what way, shape or form they constitute a highlight is anyone's guess. Otherwise it was left to the local contingent to sate our appetites for live music. Among the names now possibly lost to time and tide were **Suriki**; **Chamfer**; **Flume**; **Loopy**; **High & Mighty**; **Plastiscene**; **Die Pretty**, and **Borgnine**. **The Relationships** were also playing – at least they've had the decency to stick around. This being the start of another bright and shiny new year, *Nightshift* offered up its suggestions for new bands to keep an eye out for, including **Marine Research**; **The Four Storeys**; **The Workhouse** and **Scribble**. Marine Research's Amelia and Rob still exist as **The Catenary Wires**, while guitarist Pete plays in assorted bands including **The Would Be Goods** and **The Count of Three**. The Four Storeys are now better known as **The Long Insiders** and sound completely different; The Workhouse still exist, while Dolly's singer, Julia, was on the cover of *Nightshift* only a couple of months back, fronting the very mighty **Candy Says**. Staying power you see – you can't keep talent down.

10 YEARS AGO

"Get happy!" demanded the front cover of January 2009's *Nightshift*, introducing ebullient local electro-pop crew **Alphabet Backwards**. The band, who had yet to release anything beyond a couple of demos, were already being played by Huw Stephens and Steve Lamacq. The positivity of their music was reflected in their genial interview which found them simply declaring "We genuinely really enjoy playing, whether on stage or jamming together. We're all such good mates it helps make a nice atmosphere and if we're having a giggle, then chances are, other people will too." Good to know they're still with us, having released their latest album, 'Friends, Lovers & Empty Beds' a few months ago – not quite as cheery but still wonderfully poppy. Among highlights of a typically quiet January gig calendar was a young lad called **Frank Turner**, just starting to make a bit of an name for himself after leaving Million Dead, and already proclaimed an honorary Oxfordian for his regular appearances in town and at Truck Festival, as well as employing **Dive Dive** chaps Tarrant, Ben and Nigel in his backing band. Next stop the Olympic opening ceremony. Elsewhere **Duke Special**, **Bring Me The Horizon** and **Buzzcocks** were at **The Academy**, while **Little Fish** and **Black Hats** headed up Truck Festival's **Equitruck** event at the **Jericho Tavern**. Over in the demo pages, **Cyberwhores** were told in no uncertain terms to "fuck off." Who said the art of music criticism was dead?

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

5 YEARS AGO

January 2014's *Nightshift* was a hip hop special, **Leo Bowder** exploring the sometimes marginalised local scene's main players and future prospects, talking to producer **Astrosnare**, musician and BG Records honcho **Zahra Tehran** (whose **Despicable Zee** project was also the month's Introducing act) and ("up and coming MC") **Rhymeskeemz** about the joys and pitfalls of making hip hop in Oxford. "There's a lot of ability but it's so divided," said Zahra; "when you cross over Magdalen Bridge it all changes; it's like Narnia." The issue's front cover boasted stars of the scene, including **Death of Hi-Fi**; **Asher Dust**; **Zuby**; **Flooded Hallways**, and **Chima Anya**, as well as Oxford's most successful rap export – **ShaoDow**, while the interviewees' tips for the future included **Sonorous**; **Jack Stacks**; **Chukie**; **Joe Verdi** and **Knowledge**. "There are artists from the estates who have tremendous talent but won't go to gigs and would rather sit and watch their favourite artists on Youtube and are quick to diss each other and represent postcodes," bemoaned Zahra, while hailing "those who are trying to push boundaries, cultivate new, refreshing sounds, sell records, play shows and mash up genres." Beyond the hip hop, there were releases for **Smilex** ('La Petite Mort') **Peerless Pirates** ('Nelson's Folly'); **Hot Hooves** ('Nutricious Cascades') and **Tiger Mendoza** ('Monsters & Miracles'), while **Warpaint**, **Max Raptor**, **Dan le Sac vs Scroobius Pip** and **Aoife O'Donovan** helped cheer the gig guide up a bit in the bleak midwinter.

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TOP TRACKS

GOOD CANARY

In the season of festive good cheer, mawkish sentimentality and cosy conformity, it's always good to pick up something a bit off the wall. Good Canary here is the work of singer/pianist Frances Salter who few if any of you, herself included, might remember came runner up in *Nightshift's* Demo World Cup back in June (beaten to the title only by rapper Milver). Her spirit unbowed and seemingly not having lost her creative midfield in the wake of that narrow defeat, she returns with more flighty oddball piano pop, 'Being Sane in Insane Places' sounding not unlike Victoria Wood if she'd hung out with Tori Amos and Regina Spektor at the start of her career. She's got a quirky take both on lyrical observation and on jaunty jazz-infused tunes to the point you're not sure whether she's a giddy aunt high on too much sherry, or a woman about to go postal with the contents of the cutlery drawer. From opening lines about hiding her dad's keys so he can't total her sister's car, to keeping an eye on Donald Trump, it's kitchen sink soap opera global activism by way of lopsided musical adventuring. A bit like accidentally tuning into an experimental Czech animation on Channel 4 after Christmas Day spent dribbling in front of back-to-back repeats of *Location Location*, *Location* and *Eastenders*.

BE STILL

Chirpiness of a more straightforward and noisy kind with Witney's fuzzgun popstrels Be Still, something of a staple on the local live scene in recent times, though probably shouldn't be confused with fellow local guitar-wielders' Be Good (we hope there's a third band in the triumvirate simply called Behave). They're an uncomplicated lot, which isn't always a bad thing, bouncing in merrily with 'Not Into You', sounding like Weezer with just the slightest of snarls in the singer's voice and a tune that naggingly reminds us of Wheatus' 'Teenage Dirtbag'. They definitely seem to imagine they're West Virginia rather than West Oxfordshire, chugging through post-grunge guitar pop with the kind of slacker zeal you associate from people who probably wear plaid shirts and thick-rimmed specs and

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

travel everywhere by skateboard. They're not going to be breaking any great new musical boundaries anytime soon but they fizz with energy and at the darkest point in the year there's something optimistic about them and if Magic Gang are short of a tour support next time out, they could do worse than give Be Still a shout.

MOLLY KARLOFF

Little by way of cheeky cheer from Molly Karloff. Instead we get back-to-basics, strong'n'stable rock riffage of an old school old enough to remember when it were all fields round here and the school was yet to be built. The chunky, chugging rifforama could be drawn from any epoch from the mid 70s til last week, while the sometimes overdramatic, sometimes slightly constipated vocals seem to be pitched partway between Bruce Dickinson and Eddie Vedder, while EP closer 'Hocus Pocus' goes the full Guns'n'Roses. Like a tractor or Sunday league centre half it's solid but unadventurous, lacking the sort of excitement heavy rock demands to validate its own existence. It's not too heavy, not too fast, not too slow, not too dark, it's just... middling. An unremarkable piece of functional machinery. It doesn't do anything wrong as such, it just doesn't thrill you. Rock music should be thrilling, or at least terrifying. You should come out the other end feeling battered and bruised, not reminded that you need to check the oil levels on the lawnmower.

ZANDER SHARP

Zander Sharp sounds to us like the kind of bloke who actually greets trees with a cheery "Good morning!" and shares his breakfast cereal with friendly local squirrels and butterflies, so it seems a bit odd to hear him singing about commuting to work on the tube on 'Underground'. The place obviously doesn't agree with him too much as he seems out of sorts and his rhyming has fallen by the wayside ("Packed in too tight / I'm already late / My boss will be angry / He'll look at my coffee and think / If he had time for that..."). Before long he's complaining about a lack of credit or signal on his mobile and while he retains his trademark rustic whimsy we're keen for him to return to the sort of rural idyll in which we like to imagine he actually exists. Thankfully 'Small Talk' does just that, a more hushed and atmospheric steal from Nick Drake featuring some neat picked guitar and a more natural sense of wistfulness. That wistfulness can teeter into airy fairness on

occasion and 'Play on Words' maybe has its head too far in the clouds, but Zander's too sweet natured to hold that against. Come on, he shares his breakfast with squirrels – the guy's virtually a saint.

PANGOLIN

Pangolins are, without doubt, even cuter than squirrels, being one of those animals, like platypuses and sloths, that make you wonder if God weren't a bit stoned by the time he finished making all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth and whatnot. We're wondering if Pangolin here might have partaken of the odd toke as they conjure an ode to Oxford, 'Dreaming Spires', that is an easy but simultaneously uneasy marriage of laidback piano jazz, conscious rap and 90s acid jazz that's equal parts Jamie Cullum, Nora Jones, Roots Manuva and The James Taylor Quartet. As fusion pieces go it hides the stitching well enough but it does feel a bit like a deliberate attempt to be worthy while convincing students they're listening to something edgy. Elsewhere 'Could Have Been' is an extended journey into easy cocktail bar jazz balladry that's sweet enough but more Bing Crosby than it probably hoped to be at various points, and while everyone here is quite obviously highly talented you wonder if, in an age of Kamasi Washington, Sons of Kemet, Moon Hooch, and locally, Wandering Wires, there's much room for this kind of polite background jazz, even with the rapping. Time to set yourselves free – and maybe get a tuba.

PORT IN A STORM

Blimey, Port in a Storm's email positively bristles with passive-aggressive resentment. Probably because we described their last demo offering as sounding like "a mid-70s minor chart hit for a bunch of former Butlin's house band functionaries with dreams of emulating Smokie or Sailor" rather than the roustabout high seas folk-rock rumble we'd perhaps erroneously hoped for. "We make no claims other than that we have a good laugh playing and performing and have found a lot of positive vibes at the variety of gigs we've performed at around the south this summer. We do get around a bit but mainly because we enjoy playing new places where nobody knows our songs and see the response, which is by and large fantastic!" they proclaim, and that's great but hey, you asked for an opinion, which is what we specialise in here at *Nightshift*, and when someone sings "Whatever happened to those crazy summer days?" in a style that sounds like a bluesy soft-rock balladeer who's got lost in Duran Duran's studio sometime around the 'Rio' sessions, we have to wonder what constitutes crazy for

some people. 'The Haunting' sounds more promising, given it shares a title with one of the greatest horror films of all time, but once the obligatory atmospheric sound effects have faded away, we're back into laboured, oddly synthed-up soft rock territory again. Still, at least we've moved on from the 70s and into the mid-80s. Next time round: Port in a Storm – the Britpop Years.

TOILET TRACKS

FULL CIRCLE BLUE

"We are a band based in Oxford playing 'Easy listen blues' music," begins Full Circle Blue's email. Sorry, give us a minute. Not sure if we're going to laugh, cry or vomit copiously all over the desk. Even allowing for the misspelling, you have to say 'easy listen blues' sounds like the absolute worst thing that's ever existed, including war, famine, plague and the thought that since he has six children, Jacob Rees-Mogg must have a sex life. But hey, here at *Nightshift* we're nothing if not open minded and we'll give anything a cha... Oh, who are we kidding? Being open minded is for hippies and people undergoing brain surgery. If we gave every fucker who came in here promising us easy listening blues the benefit of the doubt there'd be a queue of dull, earnest and drearily worthy musos out the door and all the way down the street before teatime and then what would happen – someone would end up getting run over by a bus. We know this because we'd be driving the bus. Really, really fucking fast. On the pavement. And we'd have glued massive fuck-off spikes to the front just to make sure it took more of the fuckers out. Good grief, this is tortuous. The singer's emotion-free monotone is almost a thing of wonder all by itself, it's that devoid of the spirit of the blues. He sounds like Sting if he'd had every ounce of personality scooped out with a ladle. Fuck it, he makes Sting sound like the lovechild of Howlin' Wolf and Mark Lanegan in the growlin', gravelly blue stakes. Musically it almost defies all laws of physics in having no substance whatsoever. It ambles, it plods, it lies prone and putrefying in a pool of diluted utter nothingness, a flavourless, featureless aural void. "I wonder what life would be like if we all got along / Danced to the beat and sang the same song," drones/groans the singer, oblivious to his lack of contribution to the cause of individuality or variety. "I wonder what life would be like without this sound," he continues. A whole lot better mate, a whole lot better. Jeez, it's only January and this is already the worst thing we will hear all fucking year.

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

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+ Imminent Annihilation

Fri 21st Dec • 6.30pm

Dreadzone

Fri 21st Dec • 6pm

Skindred

Sat 29th Dec • 11pm

**Robbo Ranx
Christmas Special
Dancehall & BBC
1xtra Legend**

Mon 31st Dec • 10pm

**Switch NYE
2018/19**

ft Andy C (Midnight Set)

Wed 16th Jan

J Mascis

Sat 26th Jan • 6.30pm • SOLD OUT

The Vaccines

Sun 27th Jan

**Clem Burke
& Bootleg Blondie**

Sat 2nd Feb • 6.30pm

Gangstagrass

Fri 8th Feb • 6.30pm

**...And You Will
Know Us by the
Trail of Dead**

Fri 8th Feb • 11pm

**The Oxford
Soul Train**

Sat 9th Feb • 6.30pm

Cash

Mon 11th Feb

Jimothy Lacoste

Thur 14th Feb

Alexander O'Neal

Fri 15th Feb • 6pm

Blue October

Sat 16th Feb • 5.30pm

**Buckcherry
& Hoobastank**

Sat 16th Feb • 6pm

**Omar
with Live Band**

Mon 18th Feb

Ruts DC

Fri 22nd Feb • 6.30pm

**Cypher16
& Lest We Forget**

Sat 23rd Feb • 6pm

Stone Broken

Sat 23rd Feb • 6.30pm

**Scott Bradlee's
Postmodern
Jukebox**

Mon 25th Feb

Sea Girls

Fri 1st Mar • 5.30pm

**P.O.D. &
Alien Ant Farm
+ '68**

Fri 1st Mar • 11pm

**My Nu Leng
& M8's**

Sat 2nd Mar • 6.30pm

**Kanadia
- Album Launch**

Sat 2nd Mar • 6.30pm

The Coral

Sat 9th Mar • 6pm

**U.F.O. - "Last
Orders" 50th
Anniversary Tour**

Thur 14th Mar

Hayseed Dixie

Mon 18th Mar

AJ Tracey

Wed 20th Mar • 6.30pm

Ady Suleiman

Thur 21st Mar

The Treatment

Fri 22nd Mar • 6.30pm

**CoCo and the
Butterfields**

Sat 23rd Mar • 6.30pm

Lene Lovich Band

Sun 24th Mar • 6.30pm

Bars and Melody

Tue 26th Mar

Gerry Cinnamon

Tue 26th Mar

**Skarlett Riot
+ Fahren + Sertraline**

Thur 28th Mar

**Fun Lovin'
Criminals**

Fri 29th Mar • 6.30pm

**Wille
& The Bandits
+ Rainbreakers**

Mon 1st Apr

**The Slow
Readers Club**

Tue 2nd Apr

Yak

Fri 5th Apr • 6.30pm

**Goldie
Lookin Chain**

Sat 6th Apr • 6.30pm

The Dualers

Wed 10th Apr • 6.30pm

KING NO-ONE

Sat 13th Apr • 6.30pm

Nilufer Yanya

Mon 15th Apr

Circa Waves

Thur 25th Apr

**Under The Apple
Tree – Live On Tour
with Wildwood Kin
+ Loud Mountains**

Sat 27th Apr • 6.30pm

Sleaford Mods

Sat 27th Apr • 6.30pm

**UK Foo Fighters
- Banging On The
Ceiling Tour**

Sat 4th May • 6.30pm

**The Wedding
Present...
Bizarro Tour**

Tue 14th May

Lucy Spraggan

Wed 15th May • 6.30pm

SOAK

Sat 18th May • 6.30pm

Samantha Fish

Wed 22nd May • 6.30pm

Sons of the East

Sat 29th Jun

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Experience - Who's
Got Big Balls**

Fri 20th Sep • 6.30pm

Boyzlife

Wed 27th Nov • 6.30pm

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