



# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every  
month  
Issue 300  
October  
2021**

photo: Jason Warner @ Fyrefly Studios



*"I really show who I am when I sing, in a way I don't at any other time"*

# EMMA HUNTER

Oxford's Flamenco Queen talks the Tarantella, David Lynch and following the White Rabbit.

Also in this issue:

Introducing **BEDD**

At work with **BIG SCARY MONSTERS**

**NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS** reviewed

plus

Oxford music news, previews and reviews and five pages of gigs for October

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# THE BULLINGDON

## OCTOBER 2021

Wednesday 22nd September  
**Drink and Jive**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 24th September  
**Megzz**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 24th September  
**Soul Sista**  
**Grand Theft Disco**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 25th September  
**Rawdio**  
**Benny Page** **22B Dope Ammo**  
**MC Fearless**  
**Jasmine Knight**  
**Riggamortiz Soundsystem**  
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 28th September  
**Yard Act**  
**Deep Tan**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 30th September  
**Marthagunn**  
**Nierra Creek**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 1st October  
**Do Nothing**  
**Folly Group**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 1st October  
**Drum N Bass**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 2nd October  
**Skylarkin**  
**Mungo's Hi Fi**  
**Dub Smugglers Soundsystem**  
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 5th October  
**Max Fosh: Social Butterfly**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 7th October  
**Garfunkel**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 8th October  
**The Style Councillors**  
**The Shapes**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 8th October  
**Raving Trippy**  
**Psychedelic Movement**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 9th October  
**Reggaeton Party**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 10th October  
**Katy J Pearson**  
**Premium Leisure**  
**Young Knives DJ**  
Doors: 7PM

Monday 11th October  
**The K's**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 12th October  
**Bo Ningen**  
**Lunch Money Life**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 14th October  
**Loyiso Gola: Pop Culture**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 14th October  
**So Fetch**  
**2000s Party**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 15th October  
**Salem**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 15th October  
**Soul Sista**  
**Disco Inferno**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 16th October  
**Simple**  
**Moxie & Shy One**  
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 19th October  
**John**  
**Odd Morris**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 21st October  
**Desert Storm Album Launch**  
**Undersmile**  
**Battalions**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 22nd October  
**Paul Foot: Swan Power**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 22nd October  
**Tracksuit & Trance**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 23rd October  
**Teleman**  
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 23rd October  
**Musical Medicine**  
**Prosumer & Raw Silk**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 24th October  
**Clearwater Creedence**  
**Revival**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 26th October  
**Coach Party**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 27th October  
**Tez Ilyas: The Vicked Tour**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 28th October  
**Ben Poole**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 28th October  
**Haute Mess**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 29th October  
**The White Lakes**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 29th October  
**Notorious**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 30th October  
**Rawdio**  
**Jungle Cakes:**  
**Halloween Takeover**  
**General Levy & Ray Kieth**  
**Ed Solo**  
**Zen Lewis**  
**Majesty**  
**Radini**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 31st October  
**Bloxx**  
**The Rills**  
**Emma McGrath**  
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 31st October  
**Dead Famous Disco**  
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 2nd November  
**Salad Fingers**  
**Episodes 1 - 11 followed by Q+A**  
**with Creator David Firth**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 3rd November  
**Kae Kurd:**  
**The Spoken Kurd Tour**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 4th November  
**Sara Barron:**  
**Enemies Closer**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 4th November  
**Semi Detached**  
**Conducta**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 5th November  
**3 Daft Monkeys**  
**Leatherat**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 5th November  
**Cut the Trap**  
**The Original Don**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th November  
**Rabidfest 2021**  
**Oslah, Blood Oath, Divine Chaos**  
**Bloodshot, K-Lacura, The Hope Burden**  
**Siderian, Severed Tongues, Arimea**  
**Weaponry, Sleeper, Odyseus**  
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 6th November  
**Simple**  
**Ben UFO & Batu**  
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 9th October  
**Pongo**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 11th November  
**Saint Raymond**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 11th November  
**Call Me Maybe**  
**2010s Party**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 12th November  
**Nine Below Zero**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 12th November  
**Bangerz and Lash**  
**FIFA Edition**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 13th November  
**Musical Medicine**  
**Dan Shake**  
**& Scarlett O'Malley**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 14th November  
**Luisa Omelian:**  
**God is a Woman**  
Doors: 7PM

Monday 15th November  
**Oxford City Festival**  
**So Long Space Girl**  
**Chika**  
**Christina Truman**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 18th November  
**Crystal Tides**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 19th November  
**Osprey & The OX4 Allstars**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 19th November  
**The HAU5 Party**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 20th November  
**Reggaeton Party**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 21st November  
**Oxford City Festival**  
**Papa Nui**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 23rd November  
**Fluorescent Adolescent**  
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 26th November  
**Chubby and the Gang**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 26th November  
**Digital Love!**  
**Daft Punk Tribute Act!**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 26th November  
**Soul Sista**  
**Lost in Disco**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 27th November  
**Terraforms DNB**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 28th November  
**Peat and Diesel**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 30th November  
**Porridge Radio**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 2nd December  
**Carl Hutchinson**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 2nd December  
**So Fetch: Xmas Special**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 3rd December  
**The Raving Trippy**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 4th December  
**Simple**  
**Shanti Celeste & Peach**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 5th December  
**Kawala**  
**Masterpiece**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 10th December  
**Make Friends**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 10th December  
**Hip Hop Home Malone**  
**Christmas Special**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 11th December  
**Musical Medicine**  
**Residents: All Night Long**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 12th December  
**John Otway & The Big Band**  
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 18th December  
**Old Skool Oxford**  
**DJ Faze**  
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 23rd December  
**Nang Tunes Presents Nangmas**  
**Emmy Bacharach**  
**Goe Shades**  
**Joe Boss**  
**JNK**  
**Shed**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 24th December  
**Skylarkin Soundsystem**  
**Reggae Xmas 2021**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 26th December  
**Deep Cover**  
**Boxing Day Bash**  
Doors: 11PM

## GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

# NEWS

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Online: [nightshiftmag.co.uk](http://nightshiftmag.co.uk)

## HELLO and welcome to the 300<sup>th</sup> issue of *Nightshift*.

Of course this landmark issue was due to have come out in July 2020 and would probably have involved all manner of self-aggrandising nostalgia, but as the Oxford music scene begins to rebuild after the ending of lockdown, all eyes need to be fully focussed on the future.

Because even the last few weeks have shown just how long and hard the road back to anything resembling normal is going to be. First and foremost, Oxford city centre desperately needs a new grassroots live venue that can cater to a wide range of genres. In the last three years we have lost The Cellar, The Wheatshaf and The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre. That the city that produced Radiohead, Supergrass, Foals, Ride, Glass Animals, Swervedriver, Stornoway and so many more doesn't have a single central venue catering for new artists is a scandal. Myriad small promoters who make it their mission to champion new artists from the very beginning, currently cannot find a home for their gig nights. Oxford city centre is awash with empty commercial properties but student accommodation is seen by property owners as more profitable and Oxford City Council lacks the power or resources to fight against this trend or locate and support a new venue. If you live within the OCC boundaries maybe think about contacting your councillor to ask what they are doing to support local live music, all communication is very welcome.

Beyond the desperate venue situation, many people are still, understandably, nervous about going back out to gigs when Covid remains an active threat. It will be many more months, even years, before full public confidence returns. Local venues and promoters have worked extremely hard to introduce safety measures to shows to reduce the risk of infection, and we would encourage everyone going to a gig to follow the rules and guidelines put in place for everyone's safety, and to always respect venue staff, artists and fellow gig goers. Further, this month's – admittedly impressive, given the circumstances – gig guide is notable by the lack of overseas acts coming to Oxford. Many American artists are unable to tour abroad due to current travel guidelines, while Brexit is another spanner in the works of an already difficult situation.

What this all boils down to is live music, particularly grassroots live music, faces a huge battle and needs everyone's support more than ever. Please support your local venues, promoters and musicians as much as you can and feel comfortable doing so. You've escaped a *Nightshift* nostalgia fest this time round, but let's not have nostalgia as the only thing left of Oxford's amazing music scene. Enjoy this first issue back in print since March 2020 and we hope you find some great gigs to go to.

**Ronan Munro - Editor**

**SUPERNORMAL FESTIVAL** will return in 2022. The leftfield music and arts festival held at Braziers Park, Ipsden, near Wallingford has been cancelled for the last two years but organisers have confirmed it will be back over the weekend of the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> August. Tickets are due to go on sale in spring next year. For news updates, follow them on Twitter [@SUPERNORMALFEST](https://twitter.com/SUPERNORMALFEST) or Facebook – [facebook.com/supernormalfest](https://facebook.com/supernormalfest).

HMV has returned to Oxford with the opening of a new store on Cornmarket Street. The new

shop takes over the unit previously occupied by Gap in the Clarendon Centre. The previous HMV store closed in 2014.

The new HMV opened its doors on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September, with manager Paul Williams telling *Nightshift*, "it's really exciting for myself and my team to be bringing back HMV to Oxford. We will be bringing with us an expanded vinyl range and pop culture products, such as t-shirts and exclusive franchise merchandise; we have teamed up with Henley Audio who are supplying the new store with turntables." Follow the new shop on Twitter at [@OxfordHmv](https://twitter.com/OxfordHmv).



Bryan Adams at Cornbury 2017. Photo: Ben Phillips

## BRYAN ADAMS has been confirmed as headline act for next year's **Cornbury Festival**.

Having been forced to cancel both the 2020 and 2021 events, Cornbury returns to Great Tew Country Park over the weekend of the **8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July 2022** and Canadian rocker Adams, who played the festival in 2017 and was due to return for this summer's event, will headline the Saturday night. More acts for next year's festival are due to be announced shortly. Tickets for Cornbury 2022 are on sale now at 2019 prices at [www.cornburyfestival.com](http://www.cornburyfestival.com)

**OXFORD CITY FESTIVAL** makes a return next month. The ninth annual multi-venue live music event organised by It's All About the Music takes place from the 15<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> November. Artists wanting to take part should send a message and music links to the OCF Facebook page.

**DIVINE SCHISM AND FREAK SCENE** have officially merged to become one single promoter. Having worked together in organising the various online RemOHte Community live stream shows during the pandemic the two promoters have decided to run all their future shows together under the Divine Schism name. These will include Cassels, McLusky, Deeper, and Pozi in the coming months, plus seven gigs this month, including Chemtrails, Virginia Wing, Julia Bardo, and Caroline. You can buy tickets for all their shows from [www.wegotickets.com/divineschism](https://www.wegotickets.com/divineschism) and in person at Truck Store

**CATWEAZLE CLUB** returns from this month. The long-running open night returns to its East Oxford Community Centre home every Thursday from October 7<sup>th</sup>, showcasing singers, musicians, poets, performance artists and storytellers. Catweazle, hosted by local musician Matt Sage, launched in 1994 and has played host to thousands of artists over the years, including early performances from Stornoway, and Yannis Philippakis from Foals. Get there early to book your slot.

**BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD**, which has showcased local music every week throughout the pandemic, continues to provide a solid hour of new Oxford music, interviews and news every Saturday night from 8-9pm on DAB and 95.2fm. The show, produced by Liz Green and presented by Dave Gilyeat, is available to stream and download at [bbc.co.uk](https://bbc.co.uk).

**MELTING POT**, on Get Radio, are looking to play more new Oxford music on their fortnightly Thursday night shows. The show, presented by Rich Craven and Dave Crabtree, features interviews with local music stars as well as local music past and present. Get in touch at [info@getmeltingpot.co.uk](mailto:info@getmeltingpot.co.uk).

**OXFORD GIGBOT** provides a regular Oxford gig listing update on Twitter ([@oxgigbot](https://twitter.com/oxgigbot)), bringing you new gigs as soon as they are announced. They also provide a free weekly listings email; just contact [oxgigbot@datasalon.com](mailto:oxgigbot@datasalon.com) to join.

**CANCELLATIONS:** with Covid still having a huge effect on live music, please check with promoters and artists to make sure your gig is going ahead. This is particularly important as far as overseas acts are concerned with travel restrictions causing a number of cancellations in the coming months.

Please email all news (and listings) to [editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk](mailto:editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk) by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month for inclusion. Please don't send news or listings via social media.

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A quiet word with

# EMMA HUNTER

photo: Jason Warner @ Fyrefly Studios



“I USED TO SIT IN THE footwell of my parents’ car and sing to myself and make up songs,” recalls Emma Hunter of her formative musical experiences. “I’m an only child and music has always been my constant companion. I remember singing a solo when I was five at an old folks home, and feeling this huge rush afterwards. I learnt to play the piano from the age of four and that was how the singing started really.”

**EMMA HUNTER HAS A VOICE** to die for. Seriously, it is a magical thing: a swooping, swooning bird of the night, one moment soaring and all-powerful, the next something smaller, more fragile. In Oxford, a city blessed with incredible singers, she is up there with the absolute best. To hear Emma sing is to be bewitched and intoxicated and led into the deepest, darkest forests. If you think we’re exaggerating you simply haven’t heard her yet.

**BUT NOW IS YOUR CHANCE.** Emma, along with drummer Tom Bruce – the pair taking Emma Hunter as their band name together – have just released their second EP, ‘Here I Go’, and will launch the new four-song collection with a headline show at The Jericho Tavern this month. That’s four songs of gothic flamenco, spaghetti western soundtrack atmospherics, surf rock and torch song drama and darkness, infected by strings and loops and a down-the-rabbit-hole sense of dreaminess and spellbinding intensity. It’s a simply stunning collection of songs that builds on the duo’s 2019 debut which

was just starting to get them noticed among Oxford gig goers before Covid shut up shop for them.

**NIGHTSHIFT WAS LUCKY** enough to catch Emma and Tom’s last live show before Covid hit, which found her in imperious form, able to hold the audience rapt with her voice alone but bolstered by the midnight surf twang of her guitar, Tom’s judiciously inventive drumming, and loops that take the songs into whole new dimensions. We promised then to get Emma Hunter on the front cover of *Nightshift* as soon as we could and now – only 18 months late – we get our chance. Like nearly all musicians, Covid hugely affected her plans and life in general. “The first lockdown happened about a week after we’d played our biggest ever gig at the O2 Academy! We’d just lined up a first gig in London so it felt like we were gaining some momentum. The pandemic really put a stop to that. The absence of live music hit hard, but we decided to, and were lucky enough, to be able to use that time to concentrate on recording the second EP. We played a couple of live streamed gigs, which were fun, but practices were impossible to do remotely and difficult even when Covid restrictions allowed. My life is rather busy; I’m a mum and teacher, so oddly the pandemic gave us the space to focus on the recording and to make our music videos. “Tom – who is an archaeologist – was able to work throughout all of the lockdowns but was down in Dorset during the week so it was tricky to make time to record,

practise or book studio time when we were allowed to.”

**EMMA HUNTER IS ONE OF** the most striking stars on the local scene and under her own name is a relative newcomer, but she hest some history in Oxford music as part of the bands AmberState and The Halcyons, back in the Noughties. “I started AmberState when I moved back to Oxford from London,” she explains; “I’d been performing solo in London but I wanted to work with other like-minded people. The boys in the band helped to open up the music scene in a way I hadn’t experienced before. My best memory was being chosen by Bob Harris to play at Truck; I was too nervous to go and say thank you to him and I really wish I had. We thought it might have been our big break but instead we went our separate ways. I remember singing the song ‘Ghosts’ at our last gig together, with tears streaming down my face. “Bands are like relationships; it’s devastating when they end. The Halcyons were a great band but our keyboard player moved away and that was that. More heartbreak. I felt empowered and then utterly powerless. It’s so hard when you build something, feel like you’re getting somewhere, and then it just stops. “My lack of guitar playing really frustrated me, so I took some time out and thought about the things I found difficult: the collaborating and compromising. I learnt to play the guitar and I immersed myself in the music I loved and I wrote a series of

songs on the guitar. I was solo for a while but knew that wasn’t for me. “I then had my son and gradually started gigging again using loops and a floor tom. A mutual friend introduced me to a real life Tom and that was that. He is an amazing drummer but he is more than that. He is unfalteringly honest, he is a true friend and when we are on stage we are in it together. If we make a mistake, we forgive and move on. Using the name of Emma Hunter is an insurance policy: I couldn’t bear the thought of starting another band, then losing the name and having to start all over again. I write the songs and the lyrics but Tom is great at giving an honest opinion and helping to develop the song structure. He is able to think about the dynamics and how he can add texture and timbre to each song through the drumming.” Taking a full-on lead role in songwriting has brought Emma’s immense musical talents properly to the fore where perhaps a band set-up never could. “I learnt so much by being in bands, but when there is more than one songwriter you need to compromise and trying to create ‘a sound’ can be more difficult with lots of different styles colliding. Now, I can explore different ideas and then work through them with Tom. I’m much more open now to discussing the songs and changing things, although I need to write songs alone; it can feel utterly exposing if someone else is present. I also try to write songs I like; if I don’t like it, what’s the point?”

**IF THE NAME ON THE FRONT** of the record says Emma Hunter for the reason mentioned, the singer is fulsome in her praise for drummer Tom and his contribution to their music. His musical background is in classical percussion, and the way he has learned to play is vital to how the pair’s music manifests. “A lot of our songs are very emotive and atmospheric and the drums need to be able to complement and not overpower them; Tom’s really good at doing that. Orchestral percussion is all about building and adding atmosphere to pieces, so his background definitely feeds into our music and is a big factor in our sound. He’s able to add little flourishes on the toms and cymbal rolls that help add drama to songs, and he thinks about the overall composition. He’s also familiar with lots of different musical styles, which means we can try lots of different things and switch between genres. We’re both aware that because

there’s just the two of us in the band we’re more exposed and there’s more space, but it’s important not to overcrowd things and Tom really respects the space in our songs.”

**AMID THE EXOTIC** ingredients that make up Emma Hunter’s music, flamenco is much to the fore. It is something that informed Emma’s singing before she even knew what it was, but something she has explored and immersed herself in for most of her life. “I remember someone hearing me sing as a child and asking if it was a flamenco song; at the time I didn’t know what that was. I really show who I am when I sing, in a way I don’t at any other time. “As a child we spent a lot of time in Greece. Traditional Greek music has a lot of similarities to flamenco. I really connected with it and I think I was always drawn to the minor chords and the Phrygian scale. I found out more about it later on in life after a trip to Spain in my twenties. I loved the element of the unpredictable rhythms and how the guitar, dance and voice all interconnected. There was something about the truly revealing, emotive element of the singing and hearing a masculine voice emot that was eye opening. They are songs of anguish after all. I have Jewish heritage but was raised a Roman Catholic. Finding out more about the rhythms and how they related back to Jewish cultures, that my ancestors may have made those same rhythms, really struck a chord with me. “I love how the dancer Carmen Amaya mastered the steps of the male dancers and so wore high waisted trousers and the traditional male clothing. She was once referred to as ‘feeling made flesh’ and I suppose the music for me is ‘feeling made music.’ “I can’t talk about Flamenco without talking about pizzica and ‘The Tarantella’. There are similarities between the two types of music. I remember the first time I listened to the entire piece of music, I was on a train and cried my eyes out. I went to Puglia in the south of Italy, to listen to the story of the Tarantella – a story about a spider bite. The folk dances tell the story of the epidemic that swept through Taranto in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Once bitten by a tarantula, the woman – they are always women, it would seem – falls into a state of heightened restlessness and then dies. The only cure was to engage in the frenzied dance of the tarantella. “The music makes you want to dance with abandon, cry and feel grateful to be alive, all at the same time. That sense of frenzied dancing alone fascinates me and appears a lot in our videos. That dancing alone is

a cure for the soul, the venom, the darkness somehow.”

**IT’S FAIR TO SAY THAT** Emma’s songs are awash with drama. Like Anna Calvi, Imogen Heap, PJ Harvey and Bat For Lashes, all influences on her music, Emma strikes that fine balance between tragic heroine and defiant warrior, a siren in command of the broiling musical sea around her. Is she similarly dramatic offstage? “I think I have learnt to present a Muppet-like front to the world. I am a positive person, but I think there is a darkness in me that is allowed to come to the front through singing. When on stage I flit between dark and intense to some bouncy puppy person. It’s okay to be both, but I’ve learnt to keep my inner goth in check. I am always drawn to dark, dramatic music. If a song has too many major

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**“Bowie was a beautiful person who played with his sense of gender; he performed all facets of himself. We all have those facets within us. Now I’m older I have accepted that it’s okay to be yourself.”**

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chords in it I’m not so keen. My love of David Bowie, Kate Bush, PJ Harvey and Dick Dale all comes from a place of trying to understand that which is dark.” Much of the darkness in Emma’s music derives from her love of composer Ennio Morricone’s spaghetti western soundtracks, and in particular the music of David Lynch’s films. The crepuscular blues and midnight blacks of the latter slather her songs in atmosphere. “My dad loves westerns and I think I remember watching them and thinking how bleak everything was. *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* came on and suddenly the music added this entirely new emotive element to the film. I remember thinking that the music had the power to add so much to the film and it really got me into the surf guitar sound. “I watched the first few episodes of *Twin Peaks* with my dad when I was probably too young to admit to. I think the strangeness and the freeness of the characters had me fascinated and scared in equal measure. His incredible use of imagery and his soundscapes are so provoking. You can’t help but feel something when you watch his work. *Twin Peaks* is still my favourite but I also love *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive*.” If Emma could be a character in any Lynch movie, who would she be? “It has to be the Log Lady; she is in touch with the other world but doesn’t get trapped anywhere. Lucy from *Twin Peaks* is also pretty

amazing, and has a lot of excellent jumpers. Tom would be Sting as FeydRautha in *Dune*, or maybe Paul Atreides – it’s the only David Lynch film he’s seen!”

**PERHAPS ONE MUSICIAN** above all that Emma loves is David Bowie. He’s maybe not an artist people would immediately point to as an influence on her sound but is there some of his elegance and theatricality that Emma feels leaks into her songs? “As a child I didn’t feel at all accepted in my primary school. It’s tough being the ‘weird’ kid. But then I discovered Bowie through my parents. I was transfixed. Every Saturday we would listen to him and then I discovered *Labyrinth*. I know that film word for word and why not! I loved that every song of his has a story to tell and that he truly was a master melody maker. That is

the thing I always try to take with me in my songwriting. Is this song different enough to the last and is the melody good enough? Personally I ask myself ‘what would Bowie do?’ That is my quiet mantra when I’m filled with self-doubt. Songs like ‘Five Years’ are filled with emotion and listening to it now you really think – what if we really do have five years to change things, to become a more sustainable planet? His voice towards the end of song is so raw and his honesty is something I strive for. He was very diverse with his styles of music, but he was always able to be dramatic and theatrical. I studied Drama and Performance Art at University and I think I’m drawn to him for these reasons too. He had so many collaborations and artistic endeavours. “Bowie was a beautiful person who played with his sense of gender; he performed all facets of himself. We all have those facets within us. Now I’m older I have accepted that it’s okay to be yourself.”

**PERHAPS THE MOST** unusual track on the new EP is ‘Treacle Well’, which finds Emma using those loops to their fullest to create a haunting, almost pagan folk-sounding song where a white rabbit is symbolic of chasing your dreams and where falling and being disorientated represent the fear of failure in that chase. It’s a startling piece of musical art, worthy of soundtracking a modern folk-horror film. “I’m totally obsessed with Imogen

Heap so her increasing use of technology to develop music fascinates me. I’m also really influenced by trip-hop and I think that has had an impact on the layering of the loops and the beats which come in later on. I find I can get truly lost in a Portishead song and I think a lot of it is about the darkness and the way they explored samples and looping. I liked the idea of exploring what the looper could do. Could we create a song with just a looper and drums and no other instruments? It’s nice to explore song structure in a different way. In this song, it’s about exploring the layers and building the loops, rather than using a more predictable pattern to the songs. It’s something we will return to I think. The other loop work we do is more about trying to fill out the sound and use vocals instead of more traditional instruments to create texture and a more dynamic sound. I love synths. I think they are how modern soul would sound if only they could sing. So maybe one day we will create a synth and vocal track.” The video that accompanies ‘Treacle Well’ is heavily inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*. Is the strangeness of children’s stories something Emma particularly enjoys? “I’m very driven by stories and I think the reading you do as a child can really shape your identity and view of the world. I must have read a lot of strange books as a kid! I am really drawn to the simplicity of children’s stories and have always loved *Alice in Wonderland*. Perhaps it’s something about that duality we all have. The face we present to the world and the thoughts we keep to ourselves. Children’s books tend to explore this dualistic world and the struggle faced: the real world and the imagined one. We also liked the idea of using Oxford as inspiration for once and worked with Matt Trevor-Roper using a snorricam set up to develop those themes in the video.” Given all that, a final question for Emma: she and Tom are lost in a haunted forest at night; what are their three essentials, what is their biggest fear, and who of the pair of them would most likely get out alive? “Tom would be afraid of the ghosts and the gathering darkness. He would get out alive, no doubt. I would probably make friends with the ghosts. My biggest fear would be getting sucked into a terrifying alternative dimension or some terrible devil creature appearing. We would bring an interdimensional iPhone, a flame thrower and a bottle of amaretto to soften the effects of the first two items failing.”

**‘Here I Go’ is out now at [emmahunter.bandcamp.com](http://emmahunter.bandcamp.com). Emma Hunter plays at The Jericho Tavern on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October.**







# GIG GUIDE

**FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**DO NOTHING: The Bullingdon** – Sharp’n’sleazy post-punk from Nottingham’s Do Nothing, finally in Oxford after missing their Ritual Union set here due to being stranded in France (pre-Brexit and Covid), the band touring their ‘Zero Dollar Bill’ and ‘Glueland’ EPs and channelling the awkward, boredom’n’anxiety-fuelled spirits of The Fall, Fat White Family and Blue Aeroplanes.

*Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>*  
**JULIA BARDO: Fusion Arts**  
Having upped sticks from her native Brescia in Italy and moved to Manchester where she managed to not complete three university courses, Julia Bardo initially joined Working Men’s Club on guitar before departing to pursue a solo career, one that, like so many artists, stalled in its infancy as soon as Covid hit. The pandemic hit home harder though, Bardo unable to return home due to travel restrictions and her grandfather succumbing to Covid in one of Italy’s worst-hit regions. Sadness, grief and isolation are the bedrock of her debut album, ‘Bauhaus L’Appartamento’, an absolutely gorgeous slice of folk-tinged indie-Americana that’s perfect for being along at night, either staring at the stars or the walls that surround you. Possessed of a stunning voice that stands comparison with such greats as Natalie Merchant, Tanya Donnelly and Kirsty MacColl, Bardo’s songs are full of longing and loneliness of the kind that many attempt but only a select few successfully convey so beautifully. The album follows her ‘Raw’ EP, released just before Covid, which saw her covering Fleetwood Mac, LCD Soundsystem and Silver Jews with easy grace and bringing her own duskiy emotive edge to each. The new album is her own songs and is a definite contender for album of the year, capturing the midnight hues of Cowboy Junkies, Angel Olsen and even June Tabor’s work with The Oysterband. After a long wait, her career is finally ready to bloom, and what a blossoming it will be.



## OCTOBER

**DRUM&BASS: The Bullingdon** – Club night.  
**THE INFLATABLES: O2 Academy** – Classic ska and Two Tone from the enduring local party band.  
**SWIFTAGEDDON: O2 Academy** – Taylor Swift-themed club night.  
**WHAT SHE SAID: St John’s College Auditorium** – Oxford Contemporary Music hosts an evening in the company of five female musicians from Bristol – Sara Colman; Katya Gorrie; Ruth Hammond; Rebecca Nash, and Tammy Payne – exploring the history of women in music who inspired them, from the big bands of the 1930s onwards, and individually picking one performance to reinterpret alongside their own songs, with tributes paid to Joni Mitchell, The Eurythmics, Teena Marie and Ann Ronell.  
**JERRY JOSEPH: The Listening Room, Cross Keys, Thame** – A first ever appearance in the Shire for Portland, Oregon’s master singer, songwriter and storyteller Jerry Joseph at tonight’s Empty Room show, Joseph beloved of Richmond Fontaine, who took him on tour, and Jason Isbell and Well Patterson, who produced and played on his latest album, ‘The Beautiful Madness’. Raw, heavy ballads and upbeat alt. country tunes from the top drawer.

**SATURDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**SKYLARKIN with MUNGO’S HIFI X DUB SMUGGLER SOUNDSYSTEM: The Bullingdon** – Oxford’s reggae, and ska standard bearer returns to putting on the best dub nights in town with a head-to-head tonight from Glasgow’s legendary reggae, dub and dancehall crew Mungo’s Hi Fi up against Dub Smugglers.  
**JULIA BARDO + PET SEMATARY: Fusion Arts** – The Manchester singer-songwriter finally gets a chance to tour her debut album – *see main preview*  
**BLACK WATER COUNTY: O2 Academy** – Guinness’n’cider-fuelled folk, pop and Celtic punk from Black Water County, belatedly touring their second album, Comedies & Tragedies’, after touring with Flogging Molly, Less Than Jake and The Bronx.  
**SIMPLY DYLAN: O2 Academy** – Tribute to Bob.  
**DANIEL O’DONNELL: The New Theatre** – Return of the Night of the Nearly Dead as Eoin Love performs his new album, featuring traditional folk ballad reworkings of Throbbing Gristle’s ‘Second Annual Report’.  
**THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + MOOGIEMAN: South Moreton Boxing Club** – The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band take to the ring to fight all comers for the title of best hot jazz and jump blues band in Oxfordshire, Stuart Macbeth’s fighters still evoking the free spirit of 1920s speakeasies and gin bars. Electro DIY popster Moogiemán supports.

**WHOLE LOTTA DC: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – AC/DC tribute night.

**SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**LUTHER – A TRIBUTE: The New Theatre** – Tribute to Luther Vandross – The Velvet Voice – with Harry Cambridge and his band.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.30pm)** – Feelgood vibes from the veteran local party-starters, mixing up folk, blues, funk, psychedelia and ska.

**MONDAY 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**FARA: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Traditional and contemporary Highland and Island songs, piano ballads and fiddle tunes from the Orkney quartet, back in the Shire after their show at The North Wall in 2019.

**TUESDAY 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup>**  
**VIRGINIA WING + JULIA-SOPHIE + THE BOBO: Fusion Arts** – Divine Schism bring Manchester’s Virginia Wing back to town after their show here in 2018. Woozily euphoric electro-pop and off-funk post-punk from Alice Richards and Sam Pillay, plus new recruit Chris Duffin, out on tour to promote new album ‘Private Life’, Richards’ coolly detached style recalling Broadcast’s Trish Keenan at times, while the loping pop tunes, serene synths and sax skronks draw on the diverse influences of Talking Heads, John Coltrane, Madonna and The Slits. Top-drawer local support from atmospheric electro-pop stars Julia-Sophie and The Bobo.  
**PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon** – New club night from Progression Records.

**THURSDAY 7<sup>th</sup>**  
**THE SMYTHS: O2 Academy** – The pre-eminent Smiths tribute band celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ‘Meat is Murder’.  
**GARFUNKEL: The Bullingdon** – Funk and soul classics from the Oxford University covers band.  
**CATWEAZLE: East Oxford Community Centre** – Hurrah and huzzah! Oxford’s oldest and best open session returns post-pandemic to continue showcasing local singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more, every Thursday, with host Matt Sage.  
**OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon** – Weekly open session

**FRIDAY 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**STYLE COUNCILLORS + THE SHAPES: The Bullingdon** – Tribute to Paul Weller’s 80s soul-pop project, with support from local new wave, r’n’b and folk-punk stars The Shapes.  
**RAVING TRIPPY: The Bullingdon** – Psychedelic house and techno club night.

**CRUCAST OXFORD: O2 Academy** – Drum&bass club night from indie label Crucast on tour, with south London’s Skepsis and Nottingham’s Darksy among those on the decks.  
**SCOTT GORDON BAND: Tap Social** – Album launch show from the local stomp, slide and pick-blues-infused Americana crew.

**SATURDAY 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**MASON HILL + HOLLOWSTAR + EMPYRE: O2 Academy** – Hard rocking in the vein of Alter Bridge, Monster Truck and Nickleback from Glasgow’s Mason Hill, touring Crowdfunder-financed debut ‘Against the Wall’ album.  
**CRAIG CHARLES’ FUNK & SOUL CLUB: O2 Academy** – BBC Radio’s most infectiously enthusiastic DJ and space traveller brings his party-starting collection of soul, funk and rare grooves back to town.  
**REGGAETON PARTY: The Bullingdon** – Puerto Rican melange of hip hop and Latin American and Caribbean dance club night.  
**LUCILLE & THE LIGHTNING SOUL TRAIN: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Funk, soul and disco covers.  
**TREV WILLIAMS: The Bell, Faringdon** – Local songmeister Trev plays as part of the Folk Weekend on Tour.

**SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**KATY J PEARSON + PREMIUM LEISURE + YOUNG KNIVES DJs: The Bullingdon** – Sun-dappled Americana vibes from the Bristolian singer, touring her ‘Return’ debut – *see main preview*  
**THE SKINTS: O2 Academy** – A heady blend of ska, reggae, hip hop, dub and punk from east London’s ever-touring Skints, who have supported Sonic Boom Six, You Me At Six and Less Than Jake over the years on their way to becoming torchbearers for new UK reggae, touring 2019 album ‘Swimming Lessons’.  
**SPIERS & BODEN: Chipping Norton Theatre** – The two absolute stars of modern English folk reunite as a duo as they tour new album ‘Fallow Ground’, the squeezebox and melodeon maestro and fiddle and guitar genius bringing a huge slice of fun to songs and stories alongside their standard jigs and hornpipes.

**MONDAY 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**THE K’s: The Bullingdon** – Swaggering indie-punk rocking from the fast-rising Merseyside quartet, coming in somewhere between Arctic Monkeys and The Skids.  
**MAGIC GANG: O2 Academy** – Effervescent boys-next-door post-grunge pop in the vein of Weezer and Teenage Fanclub from Brighton’s Magic Gang, back in town after their sold-out show here in 2018.  
**ME LOST ME + NATHALIE STERN + JULIA MEIJER: The Library** – Atmospheric electronic explorations and stripped-back folky wanderings from Newcastle’s Jayne Dent – aka Me Lost Me – back in Oxford as a guest of Divine Schism and touring her new ‘Circle Dance’ EP.  
**SPIERS & BODEN: Nettlebed Folk Club** – The reunited folk duo follow up last night’s show in Chipping Norton with another home-county gig, tonight at the legendary Nettlebed Folk Club.

**TUESDAY 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**BO NINGEN + LUNCH MONEY LIFE: The Bullingdon** – Hell erupts and here’s the house band – *see main preview*  
**BECKY HILL: O2 Academy** – Already sold-out show from *The Voice* star whose subsequent career has seen her collaborate with Rudimental, Lil Simz and Tiento as well as enjoying hits with David Guetta, Sigala and Olive Heldens – her debut Number 1 single ‘Gecko’.  
**THE RHEINGANS SISTERS: The North Wall** – Sisters Rowan and Anna Rheingans return to town; Rowan, who has played here solo since the pair of them last visited, has previously been best known for her work as part of Lady Maisery and with Eliza Carthy and Karine Polwart in Songs of Separation. The sisters have recorded two albums together, fusing the folk sounds of their native Peak District with traditional influences from Scandinavia and France (where Anna lives and is an in-demand fiddle play); expect multi-instrumental virtuosity and close harmonies.

**WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup>**  
**CAROLINE + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + DEAR HAIKU: Fusion Arts** – Inventively off-kilter sounds from South London’s eight-strong collective Caroline at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the band, who released their nine-minute-long debut single ‘Dark Blue’ on Rough Trade and followed it up in the summer with ‘Skydiving Onto the Library Roof’, mixing expansive post-rock, minimalist modern classical music, electronics and Appalachian folk into something equally hypnotic and disorientating, like a strange fusion of Eno, Steve Reich, Stockhausen and Slint. Cosmic electro-psych-folk from Flights of Helios in support.  
**GENDER ROLES + SNAKE EYES + SPANK HAIR: The Jericho Tavern** – Pop-friendly slacker rock from Brighton’s Gender Roles at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the Big Scary Monsters-signed band touring the follow-up to 2019 debut ‘Prang’.  
**PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon**

**THURSDAY 14<sup>th</sup>**  
**EGYPTIAN BLUE: The Jericho Tavern** – Uptight post-punk militancy from Egyptian Blue, previously tour support to The Murder Capital, taking inspiration from Joy Division, Gang of Four and Shame.  
**THE PROFESSIONALS: O2 Academy** – Raucous punked-up power-pop from the band formed by Steve Jones and Paul Cook in the wake of the Sex Pistols’ split, Cook still behind the kit with Jones’ role up front now taken by Tom Spencer.  
**SO FETCH: The Bullingdon** – Noughties retro dance night.  
**CATWEAZLE: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**  
**FRIDAY 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**WILLIE J HEALEY: The Jericho Tavern** – First of a two-night (plus Saturday matinee) sold-out homecoming for local star Willie, finally able to tour full debut album ‘Twin Heavy’, keeping it sweetly lysergic on his hazily upbeat 60s and 70s-inspired songs.



*Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>*  
**KATY J PEARSON / PREMIUM LEISURE: The Bullingdon**  
Had things been different this gig would have been a perfect summer show from two acts tailor-made for sunshine and feeling positive about life. Bristolian singer-songwriter Katy J Pearson can write about heartache and make it feel like a Solstice shindig, or maybe a post-cider-apple harvest barn dance, given her very obvious love for American country and folk music. Everywhere she is “light as a feather” as her quavering voice warbles and chirrups over sparse, rootsy guitar twang. Like Julia Jacklin, Pearson brings Americana into more intimate indie circles but still allows it to kick up a sprinkling of dirt on the dancefloor as it gets on down to Fleetwood Mac. Her debut album, ‘Return’, is awash with playful, life-affirming wistfulness, its title a reference perhaps to a previous musical life where she and her brother suffered at the hands of a major label that stifled their creativity and career. No chance of that now; she’s signed to Heavenly and sounding free as a bird. Suitably sunshine dappled support from Premium Leisure, whose recent ‘Easy FM’ EP sounded like the spirit of 1960s Marc Bolan left to cavort in a flower meadow, getting a bit funky and a bit stoned as the decades melted away. An added bonus to tonight’s show is a DJ set from Young Knives, who might well poison the well with some serious industrial carnage or who equally might don their own flowery bonnet and lead us a merry dance – never wise to pre-guess them fellas. So yeah, summer at last.

**SALEM: The Bullingdon** – Not, sadly, Michigan’s awesome witch house trio Salem but the new band formed by Creeper’s Will Gould, whose passable post-grunge power-pop just can’t elicit the kind of nightmares their American namesakes conjure so brilliantly.  
**CASH: O2 Academy** – Tribute to The Man in Black’s prison albums.  
**KSI: O2 Academy** – Long-since sold-out show for the rapper, Youtuber, boxer, Celebrity Goggleboxer and general man-on-telly-and-everywhere-else, touring his most recent album ‘All Over the Place’ – which if you turn on your telly at pretty much any time and on any channel, is pretty much spot on.  
**GOOD LIFE with FOLAMOUR: O2 Academy** – Mixed-bag club night, playing everything from hip hop, disco, dancehall, garage, grime, drum&bass and beyond, tonight with French DJ Folamour.





*Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>*

## BO NINGEN: The Bullingdon

Do you believe Bo Ningen are the satanic masters of the spirit and soul of rock music and possibly the most exciting, terrifying live band around, or have you just not seen them yet? Because we have, four times now, and their impact never lessens. Few bands can boast they lose themselves to the storm quite as fully and ferociously as Bo Ningen. And they're a band who take you by stealth before the shock and awe kicks in. Their music is an almost witchy kind of noise-core that takes intricate, elaborate about-turns as the incantations begin, so you don't really notice the lever being thrust to max and all hell being let loose and singer/bassist Taigen Kawabe, a gurning, grimacing presence, tending to finish the set atop the barrier in front of the crowd, guitar aloft, shrieking hysterically into the ether as the rest of the band play merry hell, cataclysmic crescendos threatening to reach climax but forever piling on the pressure until they implode under their own mass. The first time we saw them we suggested they were the evil, impish offspring of Lemmy from Motorhead and Sadako from *Ring* and that description stands the test of time. But don't take our word for it – go and see for yourself. Just don't say we didn't warn you.

**SOUL SISTA: The Bullingdon** – Disco, soul and funk club night.

**BOSSAPHONIK: Cowley Workers Social Club** – World jazz dance from Bossaphonik, with folk, modal jazz and experimental grooves from Solana plus rumba reggae from the Globo Collective.

## SATURDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**WILLIE J HEALEY: The Jericho Tavern** – Second sold-out show of the weekend for oor Wullie, plus a similarly sold-out matinee show.

**RED RUM CLUB: O2 Academy** – Anthemic indie rock from the Liverpool sextet, back in Oxford after their show back in October last year, finally able to tour 2020 debut album 'Matador' after the pandemic postponement of their original dates.

**SWITCH featuring MOXIE + SHY ONE: The Bullingdon** – The long-running club night hosts Kiss FM and Rinse DJ and club favourite Moxie, playing her trademark mix of house, techno, disco and garage.

**TUGBOAT CAPTAIN + EB + ENJOYABLE LISTENS + DAZE: Fusion Arts** – Wistful psychedelia and string-laden indie pop from London's DIY champs, touring 2020's debut album 'Rut', recorded at Abbey Road and infusing a bit of The Beatles' late-60s grandiosity into their intimate songs. Electro-pop/rap/poetry

fun from EB in support, plus 80s-inspired electro-pop crooner Enjoyable Listens.

## SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**BILLY OCEAN: The New Theatre** – Back in the shire after his show here in 2018, the veteran pop and soul hitmaker heads out on tour, reliving hits like 'Caribbean Queen'; 'Get Out of My Car and Into My Dreams', and 'When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Going'.

**CHLOE FOY: The Jericho Tavern** – Wonderfully languid, sad-eyed, country-infused pop melancholy from Manchester's Chloe Foy, touring her ten-years-in-the-making debut album 'Where Shall We Begin', her near-ethereal roots-pop sound recalling Mazzy Star, Cowboy Junkies and Gillian Welch at times.

**BOBBY V's R&B ADDICTION: The Bullingdon** – The Atlanta r'n'b star hits the UK (travel restrictions allowing) on the back of a recently revitalised career that's seen him reunited with producer Tim Kelley on most recent album 'Electrik', as well as collaborating with Snoop Dogg.

## MONDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**KATHRYN TICKELL & THE DARKENING: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Northumbrian smallpipes and fiddle maestro Kathryn Tickell continues to explore the landscape, traditions and mythology of the north-east with her new band The Darkening on recent album 'Hollowbone'.

## TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**JOHN: The Bullingdon** – John and John bring the noise – *see main preview*

**ECHOBELLY: O2 Academy** – Britpop's best keep it poptastic – *see main preview*

**SEA GIRLS + BABY QUEEN: O2 Academy** – Sold out show from Lincolnshire's chipper'n'chirpy indie guitar popsters , in the vein of Magic Gang and Fickle Friends and back in town after their show here in 2019, and touring 2020 album 'Open Up Your Head'.

**STEVE HACKETT GENESIS REVISTED: The New Theatre** – Oh, the joy.

**PIZZA MIC: The Library** – Open mic session.

## WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**BASKERY + STEADY HABITS: The Jericho Tavern** – Great, Americana-infused folk rocking from Swedish sisters Greta, Stella and Sunniva Bondesson, finding a lively, inventive middle ground between The Dixie Chicks and Led Zeppelin on their downhome banjo-core.

**PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon**

## THURSDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**DESERT STORM: The Bullingdon** – Much delayed launch show for the band's 'Omens' album, not that Covid would mess with riffs this big and heavy, the local band – who recently bid a fond farewell to bassist Chris Benoist – still very much leading Oxford's heavy rock charge with their magnificently malignant blend of desert blues, stoner metal and full-pelt rock hell.

**AMBER RUN: O2 Academy** – The terrifying result of an experiment in a secret military laboratory to make a band from the sterile leftover body parts of every third-rate major label stadium pop group ever. Their last album was called 'Philophobia', but it's okay, there's

no bloody chance of us ever falling in love with them, not unless the Covid symptom of loss of taste extends to music.

**IN-FLIGHT MOVIE + RALEIGH GREEN + G-SQUARED + FOAM HEADS: The Jericho Tavern** – It's All About the Music local bands showcase.

**CATWEAZLE: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**

## FRIDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**FEROCIOUS DOG + TONY WRIGHT: O2 Academy** – Back on the road where they belong, Nottingham's folk-punk road warriors hit town

*Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup>*

## ECHOBELLY: O2 Academy

The answer to the old question, who's best, Blur or Oasis? was always and remains of course Pulp. But if you're asking who the real stars of the Britpop era were, then the smart money might be on Echobelly. Along with Pulp, Elastica, Lush and Sleeper, they provided an antidote to that most laddish of times. They also provided the era with some of its best tunes, notably the brilliant singles 'Insomniac'; 'King of the Kerb'; 'Great Things', and I Can't Imagine The World Without Me', all of which carried the exuberant escapism of the mid-90s (even before Cool Britannia became a thing) but buzzed, hovered and soared rather than simply swaggered, owing more to Blondie and The Smiths than the usual 60s subjects. Much of this was down to singer Sonya Madan, a pixie-ish pop star with a heart full of soul when it came to singing. She and guitarist Glenn Johansson, ably abetted by former-Curve bassist Debbie Smith among others, rode the usual route of indie bands in the 90s – an early independent release, positive press and then a deal with a major label imprint – in their case Rhythm King. If they didn't enjoy the massive commercial success of some of their peers, their songs have withstood the test of time better and Madan and Johansson kept standards up til 2004 when they split, only to reunite five years later. They released the hugely underrated 'Anarchy & Alchemy' in 2017 – their first album in 12 years – and really, they still got it long after the Gallaghers' music disappeared down that darkest of holes.



again after selling out this venue last time round 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 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.

**CHEMTRAILS + SELF HELP + 31HOURS: Florence Park Community Centre** – Exuberant party fuzz, joyous psychedelic pop and eldritch song titles from Chemtrails at tonight's Divine Schism show, Mia Lust and Laura Orlova sprinkling some Phil Spector and Joe Meek-like pop fairy dust on their spiky noise pop, out on tour to promote their album 'The Peculiar Smell of the Inevitable'. Militantly frothy and fuzzed-up pop-punk from Self Help in support alongside spangled electro-pop crew 31hours.

**SAIL + BROKEN EMPIRE + SHAVEN PRIMATES + GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS: The Jericho Tavern** – Melodic heaviosity from Sail at tonight's TAD Live show, the band, fresh from playing Bloodstock in the summer, releasing their tumultuous new single 'Flood' last month. They're joined by epic progsters Shaven Primates, channelling King Crimson, Pink Floyd and Tool, old school metallers Broken Empire and cinematic post-rock-cum-shoegaze soundscapists Ghosts in the Photographs.

**ROCK FOR HEROES: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Classic rock covers in aid of veterans charity Help For Heroes, with tributes to Queen, The Eagles, Toto, Bon Jovi, Guns N Roses, AC/DC, Dire Straits and more.

**TRACKSUITS & TRANCE: The Bullingdon** – Acid house and techno club night.

**LOVEGOD & THE CHAIRMEN + TIGER MENDOZA: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Funk and hip hop from newcomers Lovegod & the Chairmen, plus hip hop, drum&bass, industrial noise and heavy rocking from Tiger Mendoza.

## SATURDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**TELEMAN: The Bullingdon** – Electro-pop perfection from Tom Sanders and the gang – *see main preview*

**MUSICAL MEDICINE: The Bullingdon** – Disco, funk, house and Afro club night.

**MUSH: The Jericho Tavern** – Wobbly, off-kilter Beefheart-inspired psych/rock/funk/post-punk from Marc Riley faves Mush.

**MAD DOG McRAE: O2 Academy** – Folk-rock, bluegrass and gypsy jazz from Plymouth's acclaimed rootsman McRea.

**UNDERTONES: O2 Academy** – Belfast's punk legends – *sans* singer Fearghal Sharkey but still helmed by John and Damiann O'Neill – kicks out the hits – 'Wednesday Week'; 'Jimmy Jimmy'; 'My Perfect Cousin' and of course 'Teenage Kicks' plus many, many more.

**HAIRFORCE 5: Fat Lil's, Witney** – 80s hair metal covers.

## SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**BELINDA CARLISLE: The New Theatre** – The punk rock rebel girl-turned-pop megastar celebrates the reissue of a number of her solo albums as well as her old band The Go-Go's

induction into the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame, with a hits-strewn set that includes Number 1 pop behemoth 'Heaven is a Place on Earth', plus 'Circle in the Sand', 'Leave a Light On, (We Want) the Same Thing' and many more, plus a couple of those old Go-Go's classics.

**HENGE + LEIFMATHI: O2 Academy** – Whacked-out gonzoïd cosmic prog rocking from Manchester's funky, fancy dress aliens, kind of a magic mushroom-fuelled melange of Gong, Hawkwind, Funkadelic and Magma. Goo, Grok, Zpor and Nom are self-consciously silly but also musically entertaining as they switch from jazzy prog rock to funk-ed-up psych and glam-rock.

**CLEARWATER CREEDENCE REVIVAL: The Bullingdon** – Tribute to the 1970s southern rock legends.

**WASUREMONO: The Jericho Tavern** – Sunshine spirit psych-pop from the Wiltshire shed-core crew – *see main preview*

## MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**KING HANNAH: The Jericho Tavern** – Smoky, slow-burning gothic Americana from Liverpoolian duo Hannah Merrick and Craig Whittle, together conjuring the spirits of Lana del Ray, Mazzy Star and Kurt Vile in their dark, hypnotic sound. They kick out a mean version of Springsteen's 'State Trooper' too.

**JASON DONOVAN: The New Theatre** – The former star of *Neighbours* and the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* film series reprises his 'Sunshine Superman' hit alongside long-time musical partner Bouncer.

**MAROUF MAJIDI: The Covered Market** – Iranian-born, Helsinki-based composer and master tanbour player Marouf Majidi brings music from the Middle East and North Africa into the moody intimate alleyways of the Covered Market in conjunction with OCM.

**CHRIS WHILE & JULIE MATTHEWS: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Powerful harmony singing from the Albion Band and St Agnes Fountain duo and leading ladies of English folk, the highly prolific pair out on tour to promote their latest album together, 'Revolution Calls'.

## TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**GRUFF RHYS: O2 Academy** – Orchestral melancholy, unpredictable pop and gloriously skewed psychedelia from the Super Furry Animals man, serial collaborator, author, film maker and contender for the title of Greatest Living Welshman as he returns to Oxford after his show here at the end of 2018, touring his latest solo album 'Seeking New Gods', finding Rhys' trademark musical and lyrical eccentricity infused with influences of Jimmy Webb, Love's 'Forever Changes', and Neils Young and Diamond.

**COACH PARTY: The Bullingdon** – Playfully grungy indie rocking from the Isle of Wight quartet, signed to Chess Club Records, and who, alongside Wet Leg, are sparking a revival of the island's musical fortunes, too long besmirched by Level 42.

## WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**THE HOWL & THE HUM: The Jericho Tavern** – Various contemplative, epic and atmospheric indie rocking in the vein of Radiohead, James and Alt-J from York's The How, & The Hum, touring their debut album



*Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup>*

## JOHN: The Bullingdon

In the modern age giving yourself a virtually unsearchable online name is either the height of foolishness or a fuck-you statement of intent. Having witnessed John playing at The Library as part of 2018's Ritual Union and then again at The Wheatsheaf a year on, we'll go for the latter option as the south London duo's suffocating post-hardcore reflected the cramped conditions of the venues they filled with noise. However hard they try and make it for people to find them, theirs is a noise you should neither want nor try to avoid, and if they're best encountered up close and personal, they deserve the biggest stages available to humanity. They had a taste of bigger things before Covid, supporting the likes of Idles, USA Nails and Pulled Apart By Horses, kindred spirits all, and like kindred spirits Squid et al. they're helping make male punk and hardcore sound vital again after too long in the doldrums. Their music is tightly-wound, high-intensity noise rock that's all sinew, no fat or filler, shirt off, getting the job done hard and fast and doubtless leaving a few bloodstains in its wake. So, given how great they are, why have they lumbered themselves with a bandname it's so bloody hard to find online? Because they're both called John, that's why. Sometimes things are that straightforward and to the point. Like their music. And if you can't find them, maybe they'll come and find you. And then you're in trouble.

'Human Contact'.

**BILLY BRAGG: The New Theatre** – His radical flame still burning brightly after over four decades leading the fight at the barricades, the Bard of Barking finds himself as relevant as ever as we find ourselves governed by greedy, grasping, morally and financially corrupt Tories, just as we were back in the 80s when he first emerged with his guitar and a heart full of righteous anger and empathy. Of course Billy's a bona fide national treasure now, not to mention a

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huge inspiration on everyone from Frank Turner to Kate Tempest, but he remains a champion of the underdog, as well as new radical musical talent and maybe, just as we thought back in the dark days of Thatcherism, it might be worth giving him a go in Number 10.

**EVIL SCARECROW: O2 Academy** – Return of Nottingham’s theatrical, semi-parody heavyweights Evil Scarecrow, led by Dr Rabad Hell, taking inspiration from Slayer, Cradle of Filth, Iron Maiden and more, their fun live show having them seen them play Download as well as the main stage at Bloodstock.

**TÊTE DE POIS: Tap Social** – Upcycled Sounds and Tandem Festival co-host Leeds’ seven-piece jazz fusion collective, incorporating Latin and Afrobeat influences into a sound inspired by Fela Kuti, Airtro Moreira and Nubiyen Twist.

**THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**EMMA HUNTER + PEARL DIVER + CHRISTINA TRUMAN + CHIIKA: The Jericho Tavern** – This month’s cover stars officially launches their new EP ‘Here I Go’ – see main interview feature  
**HRVY: O2 Academy** – Polished pop, sensitive

*Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>* -  
**TELEMAN: The Bullingdon**  
Teleman’s last headline show in Oxford, at The O2 in 2018, was one of those gigs where every song felt like a hit single and, three albums into their near-faultless career, you wondered what kind of global injustice was stopping them from being the biggest pop band on earth. But that’s the way the world is – the best bands rarely get all the glory, so we get to keep enjoying them in venues far more intimate than they deserve. Their last album, ‘Family of Aliens’, was a contender for album of 2018, all propulsive beats and Human League-like synth-pop warmth and simplicity. But Teleman seem incapable of writing a song that doesn’t feel like it should be a chart hit, a dancefloor favourite and an indie anthem all at once. They can mix sleek silicon synth-pop with grunge when it suits, get funky when the mood takes and in singer Thomas Sanders, they have one of modern pop’s finest singers, his voice pure and light, as displayed on last year’s solo album, ‘Only Magic’. If tonight’s show is at a smaller venue than last time, it’s more a regrouping post-pandemic than a break in their commercial and creative upward trajectory, so make the most of such an intimate opportunity. They’re just bloody great and if you’re not of a sensitive disposition you might catch sight of *Nightshift* doing a wobbly robot dance down the front tonight. For which we won’t be apologising anytime soon.



balladry and hip hop-lite from former CBBC and *Friday Download* presenter Harvey Cantwell, out on a headline tour after previously supporting Little Mix and The Vamps. Not sure this is aimed at *Nightshift*’s demographic.

**KENNY THOMAS: O2 Academy** – Return of the 90s r’n’b singer playing hits ‘Outstanding’, ‘Thinking About Your Love’, ‘Best of You’ and ‘Projekt Misanthropia’.

**BEN POOLE: The Bullingdon** – A return to town for the rising UK blues-rock guitarist at tonight’s Haven Club relaunch show, Poole drawing comparisons to Joe Satriani and Joe Bonamassa, winning fans in Bernie Torme and the late Gary Moore along the way.

**HAUTE MESS: The Bullingdon** – Drag night and disco.

**CATWEAZLE: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**

**FRIDAY 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**CLANNAD: The New Theatre** – Donegal’s most famous family band celebrate 50 years (postponed for a year, obviously) of bringing Irish folk and folk-rock to global attention – 15 million album sales and counting – with a career-spanning anthology, ‘In a Lifetime’, tracking their evolution from traditional, Gaelic-voiced folk tunes to the later more electronic sounds of their breakthrough success.

**HOLDING ABSENCE: O2 Academy** – Cardiff’s bombastic empty vessels tour second album ‘The Greatest Mistake Of My Life’, which conveniently writes its own review.

**NEWTON FAULKNER: O2 Academy** – The affable and genuinely rather funny troubadour returns, touring new album ‘Interference (of Light)’, his seventh, almost a decade and a half on from his Number 1 debut, ‘Handbuilt By Robots’.

**THE WHITE LAKES: The Bullingdon** – Indie rocking in the vein of Circa Waves and Two Door Cinema Club from local outfit The White Lakes.

**FAUX FIGHTERS: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Tribute to the Foos.

**SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup>**  
**DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE: The New Theatre** – Manchester’s titan of scabrous wit and legendary punk poet JCC returns to Oxford, continuing to explore the gutter and the sky in his undiminished sardonic style, the godfather of slam poetry and a rhyming genius with few peers on classic cuts like ‘Beasley Street’, ‘I Wanna Be Yours’, ‘Evidently Chickentown’ and ‘Twat’.

**DUB PISTOLS: O2 Academy** – Wall-to-wall festival-sized bangers from Barry Ashworth’s enduring electro/dub/big/beat/jungle/hip hop stars, keeping true to their tried and tested formula on most recent album, ‘Addict’, the follow-up to 2017’s acclaimed ‘Crazy Diamonds’, featuring guest turns from Ragga Twins, Cutty Ranks and Too Many T’s.

**DISCHARGE + WALL + BASIC DICKS + DRAMA KIDS: The Jericho Tavern** – The band who to all intents and purposes invented hardcore thrash-punk, and inspired everyone from Metallica and Anthrax to Sepultura and Machine Head along the way, as well as spawning the entire D-beat sub-genre, make a noisily welcome return to Oxford, hosted by



*Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>*  
**WASUREMONO: The Jericho Tavern**  
William Southward spent a lot of lockdown in his shed in the heart of Wiltshire, but instead of re-potting plants, carving wooden animals or moping over old copies of National Geographic, he was writing and recording songs. Lots of songs. And if he was doing any moping, he turned it on its head so his band’s new album, ‘Let’s Talk Pt.1’ is as summery and exuberant as lockdown was glum. Southward helms the quartet Wasuremono, based in the town of Bradford-on-Avon, and listening to ‘Let’s Talk...’ it’s hard to believe it was recorded in such humble surroundings; it sounds lush and expansive, an ebullient mix of lysergic motorik pop and sun-dappled psychedelia, like a Toytown Clinic getting a bit gospel with Arcade Fire. No wonder they’ve been on tour with Flaming Lips and Phosphorescent already while attracting the attention of Steve Lamacq and Lauren Lavern. The name Wasuremono means something lost or left behind in Japanese, while the album deals with mental health, but rather than loss, longing or introspection, it’s a fresh sunburst of good vibes and easy-on-the-ear melodies with titles like ‘Big Big Smiles’ and ‘I Feel Fine (Hallelujah)’ that sound like they come from a decidedly untroubled dream state. A good way to keep the spirit of summer bubbling a little longer.

Buried in Smoke. The importance of the Stoke-on-Trent band in the development of politicised ultra-noise music can’t be overstated and after tonight’s blitzkrieg show feel free to go and set fire to McDonald’s. Monstrous riffs’n’beats instrumental support from WALL and anarcho-punk fun from Basic Dicks.

**SUNDAY 31<sup>st</sup>**  
**BLOXX: The Bullingdon** – Indie grunge from the Uxbridge quartet on tour.

**PETE & BAS: O2 Academy** – Highest quality musical treats with septuagenarian grime duo Pete and Bas, best known for their viral hit ‘Shut Your Mouth’, coming on like a spoof of an imagined Guy Ritchie musical and... sorry, we can’t do this anymore. You’re on your own.

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

**THE BLINDERS**  
O2 Academy2  
25 Sept

**YARD ACT**  
The Bullingdon  
28 Sept

**JAMIE CULLUM**  
New Theatre  
**SOLD OUT**

**DO NOTHING**  
The Bullingdon  
01 Oct

**KATY J PEARSON**  
The Bullingdon  
10 Oct

**BO NINGEN**  
The Bullingdon  
12 Oct

**FAR CASPIAN**  
Jericho Tavern  
12 Oct

**WILLIE J HEALEY**  
Jericho Tavern  
**SOLD OUT**

**WILLIE J HEALEY**  
Jericho Tavern  
**SOLD OUT** (matinee show)

**WILLIE J HEALEY**  
Jericho Tavern  
**SOLD OUT**

**TELEMAN**  
The Bullingdon  
23 Oct

**WASUREMONO**  
Jericho Tavern  
24 Oct

**KING HANNAH**  
Jericho Tavern  
25 Oct

**GRUFF RHYS**  
O2 Academy2  
26 Oct

**THE HOWL AND THE HUM**  
Jericho Tavern  
27 Oct

**BLOXX**  
The Bullingdon  
31 Oct

**LAETITIA SADIER (STEREOLAB)**  
Jericho Tavern  
02 Nov

**PONGO**  
The Bullingdon  
09 Nov

**SETH LAKEMAN**  
SJE Arts Centre  
09 Nov

**SAINT RAYMOND**  
The Bullingdon  
11 Nov

**PAUL WELLER**  
New Theatre  
**SOLD OUT**

**SORRY**  
Jericho Tavern  
19 Nov

**PORRIDGE RADIO**  
The Bullingdon  
30 Nov

**BESS ATWELL**  
Jericho Tavern  
01 Dec

**RATS ON RAFTS**  
Jericho Tavern  
03 Dec

**KAWALA**  
The Bullingdon  
05 Dec

**LLOYD COLE**  
SJE Arts Centre  
**SOLD OUT**

**THE NIGHT CAFE**  
O2 Academy2  
**SOLD OUT**

**PALE WAVES**  
O2 Academy  
26 Feb ‘22

**MELT YOURSELF DOWN**  
The Bullingdon  
02 March ‘22

**WARMDUSCHER**  
The Bullingdon  
**SOLD OUT** 22

**ENOLA GAY**  
Jericho Tavern  
29 March ‘22

**BAMBARA**  
Jericho Tavern  
25 April ‘22

**LARKIN POE**  
O2 Academy  
26 April ‘22

**ROLLING BLACKOUTS COASTAL FEVER**  
O2 Academy  
24 May ‘22

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## NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS

### The New Theatre

“Sit down; what do you think this is, a rock show?” says Nick Cave, not unkindly, to a pair of latecomers trying to find their seats. It’s forty years almost to the month since Cave brought his band The Birthday Party to Oxford and it’s fair to say tonight isn’t that kind of rock show. Instead it’s more like a religious experience, and not just for the fervency of the fans here. Cave is a brooding, stage-stalking lounge lizard-cum-debonair stick insect, a poet, a preacher and a showman all

rolled into one, his observational, devotional songs awash with strange imagery, passionate invocations and tender, sometimes desolate, ruminations. And little wonder since this tour showcases Cave’s last two albums: ‘Ghosteen’, with The Bad Seeds, which finds him struggling to come to terms with the loss of his son Arthur, who died in a tragic accident in 2015, and this year’s ‘Carnage’, a lockdown opus written and recorded with long-term friend

and musical foil Warren Ellis. There are diversions along the way: a delicate take on T-Rex’s ‘Cosmic Dancer’, classic Cave moments ‘God is in the House’ and ‘Henry Lee’, and Grinderman’s ‘Palaces of Montezuma’, but mostly it’s an immersion in the waters of Cave and Ellis’ recent work. And it is an immersion: Ellis, an avuncular wildman figure curled around his keyboard for the most part, is a master of texture and atmosphere with few peers, bringing delicacy

and power to the songs, most notably in the frankly incredible ‘Ghosteen’, with its swells of synthetic noise around Cave’s hymnal, fairytale words. In fact tonight’s band are universally fantastic: Cave and Ellis joined by multi-instrumentalist Johnny Hostile and a trio of backing singers, T Jae Cole, Janet Rasmus and Wendi Rose, the six of them conjuring enough noise for a full orchestra and choir. Those singers bring an almost celestial radiance to the gothic gospel but really come into their own on ‘Lavender Fields’, as Cave searches for hope, truth or answers in the midst of emotional trauma, and ‘Bright Horses’, a song so full of desperate beauty it’s hard not to simply crumble in its presence. So intense is the emotional impact of these songs there are moments you wonder how Cave himself makes it through, the repeated “Just breathe!” coda to ‘I Need You’ feeling like a panic attack made song.

Similarly ‘Into My Arms’, which takes on a whole new meaning these days, Cave alone behind his piano, his words, his life, his love, his belief and his doubts laid utterly bare.

But even in a set – all two hours twenty minutes of it – this incredible, two tracks stand out: the savage, primal ‘White Elephant’, with Cave the swaggering killer promising to “shoot you in the fucking face, just for fun” should you come round here, a song that would have felt totally at home on ‘From Her to Eternity’, and ‘Hand of God’, a hellfire sermon that finds Cave on his knees, like an evangelical preacher, chanting the chorus as the song rumbles ominously like son and hair to ‘Tupelo’.

“What doesn’t kill you just makes you crazier” sings Cave on ‘Balcony Man’, and the torment in his words is plain to hear, but the musical manifestation of his heartbreak is simply beautiful, and rock show or requiem, tonight proves that he is, without doubt, one of the greatest singers, musicians and performers of all time.

**Dale Kattack**

She has a great voice, it has to be said: a full-throated roar dipping into a rich snarl, lending a bit of necessary venom to songs like ‘Milk’ and ‘Don’t Touch’, although sometimes songs like ‘Kiss Me Girl’ tread a little too close to a Disney idea of grunge.

L7 and Nirvana are Hands Of Gretel’s main touchstones musically, the former’s sense of space and melody informing tonight’s poppier moments, while the band carry off a respectable cover of ‘Territorial Pissings’. Visually the quartet are a spectacle and it’s encouraging to see the throng of younger female fans down the front hopefully planning their own rock and roll adventures. Grunge purists will doubtless take issue with both the obviousness of the influences on show and the sheen of something like showbiz about them, but at their best Hands Off Gretel are making a racket that deserves to be heard from Yorkshire all the way to Yosemite.

**Bekti Vassar**

## DECLAN McKENNA / WET LEG

### O2 Academy

Decades of experience has taught us not to miss support acts even if you don’t know beforehand who they might be. Tonight’s extremely pleasant surprise is the Isle of Wight’s Wet Leg whose debut ‘Chaise Longue’ is surely the song of the summer just gone: a funky, slinky, spiky, sharp-toothed wee beast of a tune that’s so catch you barely notice how odd it is. The band leave it to last tonight and it goes down a storm with the Declan-adoring throng down the front, proof of its wide reach and appeal. Elsewhere the band are heavier than we expect – five-strong, there’s enough grunge in their almost Toytown-simple songs to rough them up but without losing that almost childlike effervescence. Lesson relearned – always get there early.

Declan McKenna might be the world’s most reluctant “spokesperson for a generation” (™ every article on him ever) but when you pen a song like ‘Brazil’ aged just 16 people can’t help sit up and notice these things. He followed that up with the likes of ‘British Bombs’ and ‘Paracetamol’, dealing with the UK’s role in the crisis in Yemen and transgender suicide respectively, although last year’s ‘Zeros’ saw him take a small step back from such overtly political songwriting.

As well as his political acumen, McKenna is a young songwriter fully aware of musical history; tonight’s warm-up music features plenty of Rolling Stones – a tribute doubtless to Charlie Watts who died today

– and McKenna’s own music is littered with references to the likes of Bowie and Bolan as well as more contemporary influences like MGMT and Supergrass. From opener ‘Beautiful Faces’, with its lysergic nod to ‘Sgt Pepper’ by way of a raucous arena anthem, through ‘Rapture’ – essentially 70s Bowie with added boyband bounce – to the Britpop-like barrelling of ‘Twice Your Size’, McKenna keeps everything safely in pop’s stable while proving his rock credentials.

The set can drift into generic MOR territory; early ballad ‘Emily’ signposts a tendency towards mawkishness. But he can turn even those tables as with main set closer ‘Be An Astronaut’, a wonderful glam-stomping piano piece that Elton John would be proud to call his own, while ‘Daniel, You’re Still a Child’ is a wonderfully wowsy synth-pop belter. The two faces of Declan McKenna are no better shown than with show finale ‘British Bombs’; the message is simple and damning, the music relentlessly cheery and irresistibly sing-along in a way that makes OMD’s similarly poised ‘Enola Gay’ sound like a funeral march.

Whether McKenna can shake off his unwanted spokesperson tag only time will tell; what tonight proves is that while he’s firmly in the mainstream and still exploring his musical identity, his starting base is dizzyingly high and he’s already showing he can fly.

**Sue Foreman**

## ENJOYABLE LISTENS / MOOGIEMAN / THE MAY

### The Port Mahon

We talk about musicians “playing” a gig, but it’s quite rare that this implies a childlike experimental glee. Crouched over an array of electronics that he admits he only partly understands, The May takes us down ludic alleyways of electronica, sometimes erudite in the vein of Orbital’s philosophy’n’bass classic ‘Are We Here?’, sometimes much dumbbasser with 90s beats and buzzing synthlines (one Covid-safe raver inadvertently giving us Altern8 flashbacks). There’s a witty wastrel edge to The May, recalling obscure Planet Mu signing Tim Exile’s “nuisance gabbarret lounge”, and the whole thing is as much fun to watch as it apparently is to create. The May’s bleepy gear even comes in a little wagon, like he’s Linus from Peanuts off to Megadog.

Seeing Moogiemano solo is rare nowadays, although that was how we first encountered him. Where he once wielded an acoustic and sang cheeky Radio 4 songs, he now has sparsely programmed electronics and intones sententiously. A huge improvement, in short. At times there’s a cosmic, consciousness-expanding feel to the words at odds with the deadpan delivery and

minimal sonics – think Wilhelm Reich recited by Laurie Anderson – and one piece is what we imagine a Scientology induction is like, but the beating pop heart of metaphysical rant ‘Mr Curator’ still shines through, the indie fanfare of the band version turned into a sleek melding of The Blue Aeroplanes and Suicide.

Enjoyable Listens is Luke Duffett, his phone, and several hogsheads of cabaret showmanship. He gyrates and sways like an animatronic Bryan Ferry, and croons his poetic balladry in the style of Lloyd Cole or Tony Hadley (and even, at times, early Vic Reeves). His songs are ostensibly simple fare to tug the hearts – and loins – of an audience raised on estate agent pop and John Hughes movies, but there’s an addictive passion to the performance, which takes place in the crowd as often as onstage, that reminds us of Jack Goldstein. We even end up singing along to a Bonnie Tyler cover, which is only a step away from pier-end schlock, but that step has been so elegantly taken you could easily miss how masterful Duffett’s performance is. That’s the total eclipse of the art.

**David Murphy**



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## MAXIMO PARK

### O2 Academy

You could be forgiven for believing the past 18 months have been nothing but a figment of your imagination as a packed out O2 Academy crowd assembles for Maximo Park’s album launch. The band open with ‘All of Me’, then segway into ‘Ardour’ without so much as a pause for breath, and the crowd hang on singer Paul Smith’s every word.

Whilst many of the songs on ‘Nature Always Wins’ speak to Smith’s status as a new parent, there are also multiple nods to living through a pandemic. ‘Baby, Sleep’ is arguably the most explicit of these, and it echoes some of the more politicised nature of the band’s later albums. This political nod is also reprised in ‘Why

Must a Building Burn’ which offers a heartfelt exploration of the Grenfell tragedy, and loss of the band’s merchandiser at the Bataclan concert hall attacks in 2015.

Though the band make their way through the majority of their new album, it quickly becomes clear that tonight’s crowd are long term fans, and the atmosphere in the venue palpably changes when the likes of ‘Books from Boxes’ and ‘What Equals Love’ make their way into the set. Though their sound has shifted away from the more angular guitars to a more electronic approach, their ability to fuse poetic musings about modern living, alongside rhythms that force the crowd to dance along

highlights that their ability to create rock anthems has not waned.

Though the band narrowly missed out on a Number 1 album spot with ‘Nature Always Wins’, it feels like Maximo Park’s most mature offering to date, and tonight’s show also reconfirms Smith’s position as one of the most charismatic frontmen in the UK indie rock scene. Closing with ‘Versions of You’ and ‘Apply Some Pressure’ they manage to whip the crowd into something of a frenzied pit of bodies. Any anxieties which may have existed about being in a crowded room amid a global pandemic seem to drift from memory as they surge forward toward the stage and move to the beat of the tracks, as if for an hour or two the pandemic really is nothing but a dystopian fever dream.

*Lisa Ward*

## LOW ISLAND

### The Jericho Tavern

After the exciting promise of their 2019 EP ‘Shut Out the Sun’, Low Island finally released their debut album, ‘If You Could Have It All Again’, in April. It was very much a DIY endeavour, as the band had no management, no label and no outside producer, recording it in a makeshift studio in France. This Jericho gig is their first headline show in two years, and a true homecoming, as a lot of the album was written just down the road.

They’ve obviously spent a while perfecting their performance of songs they’ve never played live before, as their show is as curated as the album. They start with its opener, the slow-building tribute to hope ‘Hey Man’, end with the last track, (‘What The Hell (Are You Gonna Do Now?)’, a sombre chronicle of hindsight and regret) and only briefly visit their

other, earlier material. However deliberate this is, it gives a picture of the band as an artist in the fullest sense of the word “art”: it’s apparent that Low Island are very good at creating and crafting moods.

Tonight’s repertoire quite effectively captures, for lack of a more appropriate cliché, the zeitgeist. Every song evokes a feeling, be it by way of the relentless drudgery of repetitive synth toplines and basslines, or fin-de-decade ennui of lyrics – coming to terms with the end of the 2010s, accepting the milestones that are inevitable with the onslaught of ageing, and even the relentless uncertainly we’ve all been through with Covid. The album is something of a concept piece – the narrator is a loose character looking back at the last decade – and through the sometimes rambling and disorientating layering of synths and guitars, each song is a chapter, and each chapter comes to a crescendo of nostalgia, confusion and – ultimately – redemption.

*Kirsten Etheridge*

## BILLIE MARTEN / CONCHÚR WHITE

### Jericho Tavern

Though tonight’s gig is sold out, safety considerations mean the crowd actually seems quite modest. Conchúr White makes fairly interesting emotive pop with big, bold arrangements on his EPs and singles, but here the only accompaniment is his acoustic guitar. This is good and bad in equal measure; his voice is fragile and technically impressive and the songs are well-made and pleasingly short, but they all start to roll into one after a while. An interesting cover of ‘Lungs’ by Townes Van Zandt and his own ‘Bikini Crops’ are clear exceptions, so all hope is not lost.

Billie Marten’s story is almost too familiar to relate: her own YouTube channel at age nine, posts a cover (Lucy Rose’s ‘Middle of the Bed’) that goes mildly viral, skip on a few years and next stop a record deal and radio support from Huw Stephens. Recent third album ‘Flora Fauna’ consolidates her position in the acoustic singer/songwriter canon but is chunkier and bolder than its predecessors. ‘Human Replacement’ is a case in point and wisely brought out early, its growling build-up and punchy hook a nice counterpoint to the more wistful material she’s better known

for. The band are as competent and low-key as you would expect, leaving plenty of room for her voice, which has an impressive range, swooping low then soaring into the air, like watching swifts against a summer sky.

There are clearly some proper fans here, hanging on her every word and note, the intimate surroundings of the Tavern being perfect for such an event. There’s little doubt that in times like these people are being drawn to calming, reflective music that lets you lose sight of all that’s going wrong in the world. Chatting with the audience about favourite songs she chooses ‘Aquarium’ as her own, the last track from the new album and one that highlights a country influence that keeps popping up throughout her work. In fact she looks and sounds considerably older than her twenty-years, leading to a nagging feeling that maybe finding yourself in the spotlight while still at school could distort what used to pass as a conventional musical career path in unhelpful ways. Not that the faithful here seem troubled by such matters; Billie Marten has caught a wave and, planned this way or not, it’s taking her into exciting waters.

*Art Lagun*

## PALOMA FAITH

### The New Theatre

“I wasn’t being a diva, there was a technical issue.” As Paloma Faith steps onto the stage 25 minutes later than advertised to a crowd who seem to be slowly losing patience, it’s not the start she could have hoped for on the first night of her tour. Nevertheless, it’s this candour with the audience that carries the night, perhaps best exemplified as she explains how she once called her mum in tears after a duet with Chaka Khan, who quipped “you can sing gal, but I need to teach you the lyrics”. Sadly, for Paloma, despite bringing her trusty book of lyrics to the stage, she once again fails to sing parts of ‘I’m Every Women’ and it becomes the lowlight of the set.

However, that’s perhaps the only criticism that can be waged in her direction, and though there’s also technical issues with the lighting, the rest of the show (for the most part) becomes a joyous celebration of life and living in a pandemic ridden world. From the

apt ‘Last Night on Earth’ where the crowd are encouraged to lose all inhibition and to dance and sing along, to the percussive ‘Gold’ which channels a sound similar to something Sia might have produced, it’s clear why Paloma has the sold-out show hanging on every word.

That being said, it’s not all a riotous party and the more harrowing ‘If This Is Goodbye’, which examines loss and grief, reduces everyone here to silence. Though the charts don’t reflect it, I have to agree with Paloma when she states that her most recent album is her strongest to date; it’s mature both lyrically and musically, and showcases her skills. Whilst favourites ‘Crybaby’ and ‘Only Love Can Hurt Like This’ are met with rapturous applause, tonight it’s in the more reflective likes of ‘Infinite Things’ that really highlight her ability to capture feeling and emotion in song.

*Lisa Ward*

## JODY & THE JERMS

### The Jericho Tavern

Back in the mid-1980s the late, great John Peel coined the term ‘shambling’ to describe a wave of indie bands whose melodic pop prowess wasn’t matched by their technical abilities or production values. We’re instantly transported back to that era tonight as Jody & the Jerms occasionally teeter and tumble between pop perfection and chaos.

Less than a handful of gigs old, such rough edges are perfectly excusable, particularly when they have a song like ‘Spinning’ in their arsenal – an effervescent sugar-rush of a song, all giddy fuzz and jangle and singer Jody Jeger’s almost childlike sing-song voice, somewhere between Kirsty Maccoll and Amelia Fletcher. In fact Fletcher’s band Talulah Gosh are a regular touchstone for Jody & the Jerms tonight, both in their naïf approach to melody (simple, irresistibly catchy) and a feeling that the various members might have a general agreement as to which direction they’re all heading but sometimes they do it in their own good time and not necessarily everyone else’s. Only

when they attempt a ballad does the merry pop sheen lose its lustre.

There are at least four cover versions littered through the set tonight; the best of them is Strawberry Switchblade’s ‘Since Yesterday’, which is pitched well within The Jerms’ pop orbit, although their take on The Cure’s ‘Just Like Heaven’ starts off well enough before seemingly collapsing in a fuzzy muddle halfway through. A cover of Kirsty Maccoll’s ‘There’s a Guy Works Down the Chip Shop’ provides a roustabout finale though maybe lends the band a pub party band feel that’s slightly incongruous; maybe ‘Free World’ would be a better fit and Jody’s voice is well suited to tackling her songs.

Nitpicking though, and for all the edge-of-collapse feel to tonight’s set at times, Jody & the Jerms have more than enough about them on the tune front to make up for any technical failings, and if they’re not racing out of the blocks quite yet, they’re certainly shambling to brighter horizons.

*Dale Kattack*



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WHAT’S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it’s KEVIN DOUCH from BIG SCARY MONSTERS and he’s a RECORD LABEL BOSS.

What’s your name? Kevin Douch  
What’s your occupation? I run Big Scary Monsters Recording Company and co-own Big Scary Monsters Social Club on Cowley Road  
How long have you worked in this job? “I began the label while at Sixth Form at King Alfred’s in Wantage a startling 21 years ago, which is honestly horrible to see written down like that. The shop, on Cowley Road, opened somewhere between lockdown one and two last year”  
What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? “I once had to follow one of our artists around a grotty basement venue in London picking up bits of his mobile phone as he repeatedly smashed it after being dumped by his girlfriend.”  
What’s been the single biggest highlight of your career so far? “I’m unbelievably fortunate to be able to take a cop out answer here and say ‘there are too many to choose from’ but I’m gonna go with releasing a single by Andrew WK. From a speculative, drunken email to his manager to hanging out in New York, chatting about *Mr Bean* and paying for the vinyl pressing thanks to a fantasy football win, it was a rollercoaster of an experience and a person I’m honoured to have been able to spend some time with.”



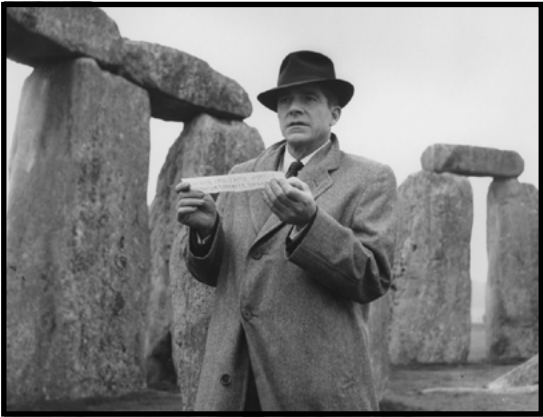
photo: Kaite Malcolmson

And the lowlight? “I try not to dwell on lowlights, to be honest. A few things spring to mind but let’s keep this one positive.”  
How much and how did Covid affect your job? “We got quite lucky actually. 2019 had been a super hectic one so we’d planned to keep things a little quieter on the label front for a bit, anyway. The lack of touring and festivals was tricky, both professionally and personally, but I found myself with a little more space than normal to get creative, which ultimately helped with the launch of our shop.”  
Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist? “Wingnut were one of my first loves; I had a summer fling of a crush on The Samurai Seven shortly after, before JOR really stole my heart. Marconi’s Voodoo were mad; Jonquil were brilliant; Richard Walters deserved to be huge, and I thought the Junk Whale album was

amazing. But I’m gonna – perhaps predictably – give the #1 spot to This Town Needs Guns.”  
What’s the single most important piece advice you’d give to someone wanting to do your job? “Don’t get too sad about the lows or too carried away by the highs; you’re gonna see plenty of both and they’re equally dangerous.”  
Who’s the most awkward person you’ve ever had to deal with in your job? “Myself.”  
When was the last time you heard genius? “This isn’t a musical answer but a while back I heard someone say ‘character isn’t what happens to you, it’s what you do next’, and I absolutely loved that.”  
Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work? “Sadly, I probably have. Although looking back I can think of more times when I didn’t but now wish I had, so I guess that’s a good thing!”  
Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what? “Nope. My job allows me to be creative, choose my own hours, travel the world, employ my friends and work with some of the most brilliant people I’ve ever met. Apart from a different answer to the below question, what more could I ask for?”  
Are you rich? “Not financially.”  
Do you consider your job glamorous? “Very occasionally. There’s a lot more boring, behind the scenes work involved than people probably realise, but there are definitely some very cool moments too.”  
What’s your favourite thing about Oxford’s music scene? “The people. We’re relatively few in number but there are some brilliant, hard working people who – despite the setbacks from Covid and venue closures – are going to help rebuild Oxford’s scene to be stronger than ever before.”

Dr SHOTOVER: Woodcraft Folk Horror

Ah, there you are, Young Jackfruit – you found the correct clearing, I see. Welcome to the East Indies Club Outdoor Bar and Pagan Breakout Zone. Step widdershins around the standing stones and pull up an intricately-carved pew. If you ring that rusty bell to attract the attention of Bedingfield our resident druid, he will surely pour you a measure of foaming mead. Either that or sacrifice you to the Antlered God of the Forest, hwaa-hwaagh. Funny, isn’t it, how ‘folk’ used to be associated with bores in sweaters while the rest of us were fighting the great psychedelic and punk wars... but now it’s made a reappearance, and it’s looking strangely sexy. (I suppose one always enjoyed the many incarnations of Fairport Convention... though the less said about my failed attempt to win a drinking competition with Sandy Denny, the better). Now, where was I? Ah yes... *Blood on Satan’s Claw*. *Dr Who* and *The Daemons*. *Ghost Stories for Christmas*. *Robin Redbreast*. Some might say that Folk Horror represents a response to uncertainties in modern urban society and perhaps a certain measure of wish-fulfilment... wouldn’t we all like to see Boris Johnson being burned alive in a large wicker effigy on a sunny Scottish island? But no time for academic chit-chat. Fire up some Comus on the ivy-wreathed jukebox, don your animal masks, and let the festivities commence. It’s your roundelay! Hey, nonny-nonny-no ice for me, thanks. Down the hatch – cheers!  
Next month: *Sheela Na Gig Guide*



‘I’m sure the East Indies Club bar is round here somewhere...’

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

Who are they?  
Bedd are a six piece band from Oxford, featuring Jamie Hyatt (*vocals / guitar*); Neil Durbridge (*guitar/keys/vocals*); Tom Sharp (*guitar/vocals*); Darren Fellerdale (*bass/synth/vocals*); Tim Midlen (*synths*), and Sam Spaceman (*drums*). Jamie, Neil and Darren previously played together in The Family Machine (previous to that Jamie fronted Polydor-signed local indie rockers Medal); Tom was formerly guitarist in Smilex, while Tim has played and DJ’d as Manacles of Acid for a number of years. “The band formed almost as an accident,” says Jamie. “I was pushing a few songs around at the studio and getting a few of the lads to play bits on them. After a while it felt like it would be nice to get more people involved. We started meeting once a week and working things out, doing a bit of recording or whatever. It was probably more about the coffee and having a social at that point.” Bedd played a show for Divine Schism in October 2019 before Covid. Their debut five-song EP ‘1½’ is out on Beanie Tapes this month. 1½ ips (inches per second) is the standard tape speed for a compact cassette.  
What do they sound like?  
Variously languidly downbeat, synth-infused slacker indie with its heart in the 90s, insular ballads, hushed, hymnal pop reveries and the occasional squelchy acid house diversion.  
What inspires them?  
“Sometimes I think music is silly and a waste of time, but then I’ll hear a song or just a turn of phrase or hook and I’m instantly sucked back in. I love how immediate music can be, it can take you straight to a place or feeling.”  
Their career highlight so far is:  
“In my previous bands, lunch with DJ Shadow whilst discussing collaborating on Psyence Fiction back in the 90s, or playing the main stage at Glastonbury. An aftershow with Kylie? Stupid pinch-yourself moments like that. Things that make you go ‘oh wow, look where we are, this is weird’.”  
And the lowlight:  
“Having stage fright and not having fun. In my past I let things get a bit out of hand and forgot why I was making music. That sense of panic is horrible.”



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:  
“Young Knives. Their last album ‘Barbarians’ is an absolute masterpiece; it goes all over the place. I love that sheer disregard for what you’re supposed to be or not supposed to be.”  
If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:  
“‘Disintegration’ by The Cure. It’s just an amazing, beautiful thing with some awesome songs. ‘Plain Song’ has to be the best opening to an album ever, I never tire of it.”  
When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?  
“Nothing booked at the moment. I hope people enjoy entering into our world when they see us live. Our material is quite dark and cinematic at times but we also enjoy stomping on the distortion and making some noise.”  
Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:  
“Favourite things: Great promoters like Divine Schism, Freak Scene; loads of great bands and artists across genres. There are loads of young bands coming through and I like that older bands continue to make music as well. There’s no cut off when it comes to creativity. Least favourite is the seemingly blasé attitude to music venues. Venues should be protected in some way. They are a really rich cultural treasure.”  
You might love them if you love:  
Teenage Fanclub; The Cure; Pavement; Dinosaur Jr; Bill Ryder Jones; Graham Coxon.  
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ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

October 2001 marked one of the lowest ever points in Oxford’s venue history as pub chain Six Continents finally pulled the plug on **The Point**, which under the stewardship of promoter **Mac**, had earned a reputation as one of the best grassroots venues in the UK, playing host to debut UK shows by **The Strokes** and **The White Stripes** as well as early gigs for the likes of **Muse**, **Coldplay** and **Catatonia**. The venue was set to be turned into an extension of the chain’s It’s a Scream theme bars, catering to braying imbeciles. In the company’s own words they received “hundreds of letters and emails” opposing the closure, while *Nightshift*, *The Oxford Mail* and *NME* led condemnation of the move. Six Continents has previously stopped live music at **The Fuggle & Firkin** in the city centre, home to the Monday Night Blues, and in their previous guise of Bass, has closed down **The Jericho Tavern** as a live music venue. Bunch of absolute cunts, basically.  
All this at the end of one of the most successful years for Oxford music with **Radiohead**’s legendary **South Park** show and the emergence of a new wave of local acts breaking musical boundaries, including **The Rock of Travolta**; **Six Ray Sun**; eeebleee: **Psychid**; **Theremin**, and **Meanwhile**, **Back In Communist Russia**. The Rock of Travolta and Psychid had opened for Radiohead in the summer, while MBICR ended October by supporting **Pulp** at Birmingham

Academy as part of Radio 1’s One Live festival. **Theremin**, fronted by singer **Richard Walters**, meanwhile, signed a deal with Warner Publishing. The last live show at The Point was a raucous, beyond-capacity Your Song, featuring myriad Oxford acts performing cover versions, culminating in a mass stage invasion during the last song – Sham 69’s ‘If the Kids Are Unied’, sung by **Mindsurfer**’s Steve Phelps. Afterwards the venue was left strewn with graffiti proclaiming local music fans’ feelings towards Six Continents and in particular area manager Rick Nicholls.

10 YEARS AGO

More risings and fallings on the local band front in October 2011. While psych-pop faves **Fixers** were announced as **BBC Oxford Introducing’s** Band of the Year; a former winner of the title, **Ute**, announced they were splitting up, as were another previous *Nightshift* front cover act **Keyboard Choir**. Meanwhile **Klub Kakofanney** celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a weekend of live music at The Wheatsheaf, with sets from **Vicars of Twiddly**, **Fuzzy Logic**, **The Relationships**, **Mary’s Garden**, **Space Heroes of the People** and **Twizz Twangle**, among others. A host of local releases included new records from **The Workhouse**, **Laima Bite**, **Trophy Wife**, **Duotone** and **Agness Pike**, while the month’s big gig was **Leylines Festival** on the Cowley Road, the one-day, multi-venue event boasting a line-up that featured **Jamie Woon**,

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

**Futures**, **The Big Pink**, **Toddla T** and **Little Fish**. **The Horrors**, **Ed Sheeran**, **Enter Shikuri**, **Bombay Bicycle Club** and **Benjamin Francis Leftwich** were among a host of big names playing the **O2 Academy**, all at a price normal people could afford back then.

5 YEARS AGO

October 2016’s *Nightshift* saw **Ally Craig** making his front cover debut in his **Bug Prentice** guise, Ally, alongside bassist Ruth Goller and drummer Stephen Gilchrist, having released a new set of songs succinctly titled ‘EP’. Ally talked about his love for Ivor Cutler (“One of the best things music can do is surprise me, and how could anyone predict an Ivor Cutler song?”) and vintage cinema and, as a wheelchair user, accessibility at gigs. “It’s not all about ramps and lifts, often it’s as much about attitudes,” he declared, “if accommodations aren’t made, or if staff are unhelpful and dismissive of people’s needs, it can leave us feeling very unwelcome. Renovations might be expensive but open minds aren’t.” As well as Bug Prentice’s ‘EP’, there were releases for **Richard Walters**; **Rainbow Reservoir**; **The Long Insiders**, and **Perception**, while among the month’s gig highlights were shows by **Wild Beasts**; **Michael Kiwanuka**; **Dead Kennedys**; **We Are Scientists**; **Beth Orton**, and **You Me At Six** (all **O2 Academy**), while Irish folk legend **Christy Moore** was at **The New Theatre**, and **Lovely Eggs** were at **The Cellar**.

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# TRACKS

## TOP TRACK

### SHATTERCONES

Let's be honest: Brexit and Covid are mere blink-of-an-eye pothole-like inconveniences in humanity's full-throttle race to planetary extinction, taking every other species bar cockroaches and seagulls with it. The seas are sewers and the forests are on fire; every part of the world is polluted with plastic and chemical residues. Bleak? Yeah, well here's Shattercones to provide the soundtrack. They've even provided a suitably grim video in case the message isn't getting through. Any band with a viola player in is going to get our vote and while this track – excellently titled 'The Man Who Ate Capitalism' – is so serious it's almost silly, with a level of self-conscious portent even Sisters of Mercy might find a bit OTT, it's mostly a splendidly sombre drone and drawl of black-hearted psychedelic blues that sounds a bit like Ry Cooder reimagining 'Venus in Furs' in the style of a chain gang lament. If that sounds like your bag of jollity, feel free to sing along while watching the footage of deforestation, ruined war zones, bullets, attack helicopters and oil drills silhouetted against nuclear skies. Yes folks, capitalism fucked the planet in its relentless pursuit of growth and profit. We're buggered and it's no good sitting on the sofa watching *Love Island* and *Bake Off* and hoping it'll all go away. You're as doomed as the dolphins. Here's the last disco on planet earth, and ain't it a jolly one.

### GSQUARED

Never mind, Gsquared are looking on the bright side. "It would be amazing to be featured in your iconic magazine" they begin, warming us to them faster than a forest fire warms a Californian farm. Overused word is iconic but we'll take it because it feeds our insatiable craving for approval and means we get a blue plaque nailed to whatever ruins remain of Oxford when the end comes, so at least in fifty thousand years when aliens visit they'll recognise how important *Nightshift* was. Anyway, Gsquared, flattery aside, seem reasonably pleased with their lot in life with their song here, 'Lovedown' a cheery, blues country rock shuffle of the sort that tends to please undiscerning Sunday lunchtime drinkers in provincial pubs across the land. It's as flavoursome and forgettable as a pint of budget brand lager, gone and unremembered in the two and a half minute time it takes to get from start to some kind of finish, leaving barely even a belch as a reminder it ever existed.

### SO LONG, SPACE GIRL

Good band name that. Makes us think about David Bowie, which is always a Good Thing. Doesn't sound anything like Bowie though, which would be a Bad Thing if the band weren't actually pretty decent. They describe themselves as "emo-tinged power pop", which turns out to be pretty accurate as they kick out some decent punky tunes with enough fuzzy gusto to keeps us interested well beyond the half dozen point. 'Voyager XVII' is all thunderous drums, grumbling bass and dense guitar fuzz, the singer possessed of an impressively fulsome tenor voice that carries the tune effortlessly. While the band do sometimes sound a bit like any manner of obvious American influences – notably My Chemical Romance – they're not too in thrall to them and they're as much Placebo as they are Green Day. Continuing the earlier cheery theme, So Long, Space Girl tell us their songs "touch on many themes, including isolation, depression, pressure, anxiety, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, insomnia, capitalism... the list goes on," and yet musically they seem to find ground for optimism. They even manage to make a decent power ballad, 'I'm Not Yours', that's nice and big and blousy and unabashedly showy. In the words of Stacker Pentecost in *Pacific Rim*: "We are cancelling the apocalypse!"

### NAKED BRUNCH

There is a point of view that if you give your band a name that sounds like a hipster café in Dalston, you deserve everything that's coming to you. That point of view is very much *Nightshift*'s point of view. There are two tracks here: 'Dani' (pronounced Dan-ay by the singer as if being shouted by one of the *Eastenders* cast during a desperate argument scene, where Dani storms out of the house in a fit of pique). Initially it seems like it's a song about a neglected/misunderstood child, but reading the lyrics it might equally be about annoying neighbours playing music at 3 in the morning. Either way it's all swooning, synthetic strings, tasteful classical guitar and plaintive John Lewis ad-style vocals and, sadly, a bit too syrupy for our tastes. But by all that's holy it's a beast compared to the other song here, 'Weird/Half Divine', which might superficially be another plaintive semi-acoustic ballad but is rendered by the male half of this duo like the hoarse, teary pleading of a semi-coherent husband stumbling home drunk from the pub at 2am and trying to excuse the fact he's blown the week's housekeeping on whisky. "Where you going baby? Where you going to?" he croaks. In the case of the song, nowhere in particular. In the case of his pissed-off other half, off down the disco to have some with her mates hopefully, leaving old groany guts here to wallow in his soiled underpants for

the rest of the day.

### CHRISTEL GEVERS

"Dear, I sent this song around a month ago. I recieved good comments but the general trend was that it sounded too dated in terms of sounds, arrangement and production. I've given it a decent overhaul and made it much more modern. Pimped up the chorus and added a rap part. Now the song has everything it needs to be a hit and hopefully you'll add it to the playlist."

This is our introduction to Christel Gevers, who can't even be bothered to stick a name in their address to us. Good to hear they're desperate enough to have modernised their song to fit in with what everyone else wants, rather than have some, we dunno, artistic integrity? And by modernising things they mean "making it sound like a mid-Noughties Madonna album filler". But, y'know, with a rap part, for that authentic 21<sup>st</sup> Century feel. This is almost the very definition of bland, commercial dance-pop music. Older readers might remember that Fatboy Slim was fucking in Heaven. Christel Gevers is fucking inconsequential.

### SABEL / ISOBEL

Bit of minor confusion here as to whether this one is by Sable or Isobel, although it seems the two are one and the same. It gets even more confusing when the track for review is called 'Maggie', adding another potential name to the mix. Sable, who is Isobel in whateer passes for her everyday life, is a former Oxford musician, originally from Manchester now living in Berlin, where we're guessing her more arty side has been allowed to blossom rather more given the video that accompanies 'Maggie', all choreographed bemasked ninja types cutting shapes in underpasses and tense stand-offs between strangers in streets. Is that a fight or a dance them two lads are having? Oh, no, it's someone's imagination. Or just a dream in the back of a taxi. Makes you think, innit. Anyway, musically this is just fine: rinky dink, ambient minimalist electro-pop in a Japanese House / Christine & the Queens kind of vein, all a bit sleepy-eyed and daydreamy. Oh look, some more dancing ninjas. Or. Are. We. Just. Dreaming? (*Nightshift* falls off the sofa, crushing a passing Victoria sponge and thus ruining our day far more than the approaching apocalypse ever could).

### MICHAEL IT'Z

"Hello guys, how are you? Hope you are well during this Covid time, my name is Michael Caria, I'm am a sperimental ambient / electronic composer," says Michael Caria who seemingly can't spell experimental and who we initially read as Mariah Carey, which we got mildly excited about. Michael also tells us he wants his album-length offering to be treated like an

abstract painting and that we should feel the music like art. And listening to these pieces of sound collage, which might well be our computer hard drive dying a slow and painful one, or a television with the aerial cable half unplugged, we wonder, as we sometimes do with modern art, whether a passing five year old might do better. You can't sing or hum along; you can't dance to it; you can't even close your eyes and nod gently or vigorously along to it. We must, as directed, listen to it in a different way. And so we do. By turning it off.

### PALACE CATS

Blimey, this lot were round here just last month, trying pass some soapy old yacht rock shite off as psychedelia. What are they selling this time and what is the horrifying reality? Well, on the bad side, we'd probably suggest that if you've had such a sore throat you can barely speak never mind sing, it's best to put the recording session on hold, else it sounds like a snuffled sick bed lament from beneath a thick tog duvet. Toddler-friendly polished pop is another no-no really, unless you are writing songs for a new Cbeebies show (although come on, if Nick Cope can write genuinely witty and emotionally engaging songs for kids, this sort of stuff really won't pass muster). On the plus side; nice marimba. Let's have more marimba in future, perhaps instead of all the other stuff. "Cover me in treacle and lock me out" croons the singer, somewhat throatily. Maybe he could translate some of that kind of pervy adventurousness to his music next time.

## TOILET TRACK

### JAYCHRONIC

Jaychronic's song 'Cry For Me', was, he tells us, inspired by his pain after a break-up. Well thanks for passing that pain onto us old chap. Proper generous. Oh fucking Jesus Christ bollocks fuck's sake shit, what is this? Autotuned-to-buggery asinine r'n'b that's so generic it might as well come stamped with a cartoon Acme logo. This is vacuous algorithm-made music of absolutely no merit whatsoever. "So sad to say it's over" bleats the autotuned autobot, any tiny vestige of emotion electronically stripped away to leave barely even a husk of a song, just a garbled stream of slick computer-generated aural vomit that won't wash off, even with bleach and nuclear weaponry. Jaychronic has split up with his girlfriend and somehow it's left us more depressed than Shattercones' hymn to the end-of-days. In fact, so dull and drawn out is this weeping sore of a song, we'd happily spend a fortnight lying in a toxic slurry of chemical waste with a heavy dose of Covid, pondering our impotent futility in the face of the cataclysm to come than listen to it again.

Send tracks, downloads or streaming links for review to [editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk](mailto:editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk). If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your music. Same goes for your stupid, over-sensitive mates. New Kinder World rules do not apply here, you bunch of hippies.

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**FRI~24~SEP~21**

JERICO TAVERN, OXFORD

**BLOOD YOUTH**

& DEATH BLOOMS  
& LASTELLE  
& LONESOME

**MON~27~SEP~21**

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**LONDON GRAMMAR**

**THU~30~SEP~21**

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

**MARTHAGUNN**

& NIERRA CREEK

**FRI~01~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**THE INFLATABLES**

& KING HAMMOND

**SAT~09~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**THE CRAIG CHARLES FUNK & SOUL CLUB**

**SUN~10~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**THE SKINTS**

**FRI~15~OCT~21**

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

**SALEM**

& JAMES AND THE COLD GUN

**SAT~16~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**RED RUM CLUB**

**SUN~17~OCT~21**

JERICO TAVERN, OXFORD

**CHLOE FOY**

**FRI~15~OCT~21**

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

**FEROCIOUS DOG**

& TONY WRIGHT (TERROVISION)  
& JAKE MARTIN

**SAT~23~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**MAD DOG MCRAE**

**SUN~24~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**HENGE**

& LEIFXMATHI

**WED~27~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**EVIL SCARECROW**

**FRI~29~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**HOLDING ABSENCE**

& AS EVERYTHING UNFOLDS  
& YOURS TRULY

**SAT~30~OCT~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**DUB PISTOLS**

**SAT~06~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**ULTIMATE COLDPLAY**

**SUN~07~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**THE UNDERCOVER HIPPIE**

**SUN~07~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**THE SNUTS**

& PLUS GUESTS

**THU~11~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**SKINNY LISTER**

& PLUS GUESTS

**SAT~13~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**TANKUS THE HENGE**

**SUN~14~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**ISLANDMAN**

**FRI~19~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**EVERYONE YOU KNOW**

& PLUS GUESTS

**TUE~30~NOV~21**

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**YOU ME AT SIX**

**FRI~10~DEC~21**

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

**MAKE FRIENDS**

**FRI~17~DEC~21**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**THE PEOPLE VERSUS**

MATT OWENS (NOAH AND THE WHALE)  
// WOUNDED BEAR

**SUN~6TH~FEB~22**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**THE RUMJACKS**

& SHANGAI TREASON  
& THE MISTAKES

**THU~24TH~MAR~22**

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**GENTLEMEN'S DUB CLUB**

& KIKO BUN

**SAT~16~APR~22**

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**RHYTHM OF THE 90S**

**FRI~20~MAY~22**

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**DUTTY MOONSHINE BAND**

& FUNKE AND THE TWO TONE BABY

**SUN~24~MAY~22**

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**THE PROTOMEN**

**TUE~26~MAY~22**

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