

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 299
September
2021**



Gig, Interrupted

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The Bullingdon
15 Sept

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16 Sept

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O2 Academy
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RYAN MCMULLAN
Jericho Tavern
21 Sept

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
16 Oct (matinee)

WILLIE J HEALEY
Jericho Tavern
SOLD OUT

JOHN
The Bullingdon
19 Oct

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
04 Feb

THE NIGHT CAFE
O2 Academy
11 Feb

PALE WAVES
O2 Academy
26 Feb

MELT YOURSELF DOWN
The Bullingdon
11 Mar

NEWS

HELLO EVERYONE, and welcome to back to the world of *Nightshift*.

You all know what's been happening in the world, so there's not much point going over it all again but fair to say live music, and grassroots live music in particular, has been hit particularly hard by the Covid pandemic. Gigs were among the first things to be shut down back in March 2020 and they've been among the very last things to be allowed back, while the festival circuit has been decimated over the last two summers.

So here is, hopefully, where we begin rebuilding. Oxford has lost too many great music venues in recent times; with the closure of The Wheatsheaf – despite the withdrawal of the planning application to turn it into flats – Oxford city centre now no longer has a single regular grassroots venue, and despite the fact that so many commercial properties in the city centre are vacant, any chance of a new gig venue opening any time soon looks remote. Where once we had The Cellar, The Wheatsheaf, The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre and more now we have empty shells and the prospect of more student accommodation.

For those who missed it, *Nightshift* attempted to keep things ticking over during the pandemic on social media with regular news updates of local releases, virtual gigs and other news, and then through July we ran a Crowdfunder campaign with the aim of restarting the magazine in what will be ever-more straitened times. Globally successful Oxford bands like Radiohead, Foals, Supergrass, Ride, Glass Animals, Swervedriver, Stornoway and Young Knives all donated unique prizes, as did Truck

Festival, The O2 Academy, The Bullingdon, Truck Store and Fyrefly photography. The amount raised from thousands of people means the magazine is back and secure for at least the next couple of years.

So we can get to what we love most: championing new Oxford artists, challenging them to be the best they can be, encouraging more people to support live music in the city and beyond and making sure you know exactly what's going on where and when with the most comprehensive local gig guide around.

This won't be a quick or easy task though. It is going to be a very long and very hard road back to recovery for the local scene. Many people remain understandably nervous about going back into gig venues. So many dedicated people have left the live music industry over the past 18 months, some permanently as the insecurity of their work was laid bare. And we now have fewer venues than we have in decades. Oxford, the city that has produced so many world-famous musicians, will now struggle to host shows for the next generation of stars.

But we will live and work with what we have for now and there remain so, so many people who will give everything to regain what we've lost. So, without banging on any longer, or getting mawkish and sentimental, keep supporting grassroots music. Get back out to gigs when you are able to or feel comfortable doing so, give new music a chance and get behind any move to create new spaces for that music to thrive in.

Welcome back everyone. You won't find much has changed with *Nightshift* since we were last here; even Doctor Shotover's liver has survived. It's great to be back.



WHILE THE COVID PANDEMIC had a widespread impact on Oxford's live music scene, it's biggest casualty is **The Wheatsheaf**, which has ceased to operate as a gig venue after decades of hosting shows. Oxford city centre now longer has a single regular grassroots live music venue. The loss of the Wheatsheaf comes two years after the closure of The Cellar and a year after losing The Oxford Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre in St Ebbes.

The venue, above the Wheatsheaf pub off Oxford's High Street is now an empty shell after its owners withdrew their planning application to turn the room into student accommodation in the face of overwhelming public opposition, and decided to leave it empty. Property developer Glen de Unger, who owns much of the property between St Aldates and Alfred Street, has apparently had the upstairs venue re-rated so it can no longer operate as a business and can be left vacant until he reapplies to have it converted into flats. Over 1,000 people objected to the original planning application. The downstairs Wheatsheaf pub remains open. Meanwhile Oxford City Council have failed to respond to attempts by local music activists to have the venue listed as an asset of community value and a heritage asset.

Talking to *Nightshift* about the closure, Joal Shearing, who ran the venue for 20 years, said: "I would like to thank everyone who backed the campaign and the masses who sent messages of love and support. I'd especially like to big up Simon who managed the pub for over a decade. Without his vision and enthusiasm the venue would have closed a long time ago. I really hoped and wished the final outcome could have been different and the owners would have a change of heart but this wasn't to be and the redevelopment of the Wheatsheaf unfortunately looks inevitable."

FESTIVAL DATES. For those that missed, them, rearranged dates for this summer's cancelled festivals are: **Truck Festival:** 22nd – 24th July 2022 at Hill Far, Steventon. Info: truckfestival.com. Cornbury Festival: 8th – 10th July 2022 at Great Tew Country Park. Info: cornburyfestival.com.

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@getmwltngpot.co.uk

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.

MELTING POT, on Get Radio, are looking to play more new Oxford music on their fortnightly

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC has two part-time job opportunities open for anyone interested in working in live music promotion. They are looking for an event co-ordinator and a marketing co-ordinator. Both jobs are 16 hours per week. Deadline for applications is the 6th September. More info at www.ocmevents.org.

OXFORD GIGBOT provides a regular Oxford gig listing update on Twitter (@oxgigbot), bringing you new gigs as soon as they are announced. They also provide a free weekly listings email; just contact oxgigbot@datasalon.com.

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THE AUGUST LIST

have been talking to *Nightshift* about their new album. ‘**Wax Cat**’, the band’s third full album, is released on the 3rd September on All Will Be Well Records.

The band, centred around Kerraleigh and Martin Child, had written and recorded the majority of the album – the

follow-up to 2017’s ‘Ramshackle Tabernacle’, which featured that year’s *Nightshift* Number 1 track ‘Wilderness’ – before Covid-19 lockdown, but the pandemic delayed its release until now.

“Everything was done when Covid hit, apart from the bulk of lead guitar parts,” says Kerraleigh; “it wasn’t too bad having to wait a bit

as the whole process of recording had begun back in 2018 anyway; what’s a few more months! So, after the first lockdown we had a single session doing guitar and a couple of other small touches. We then spent the rest of 2020 with Roland Prytherch mixing in London, sending us tracks and having files going backwards and forwards.”

“It’s musically more robust than ‘Ramshackle Tabernacle’, continues Martin, explaining ‘Wax Cat’’s progression from its predecessor; “we’re not afraid to let tracks breathe more between lyrics. We wanted the whole band – Ryan, Tommy, Ben, Garry and us – to be equal in terms of coming up with parts and using everyone much more to express the songs. I think it takes what we started on ‘Ramshackle’ on tracks like ‘Old Rip’ and ‘Wilderness’, and builds on those forms. We also didn’t feel constrained by genre, so even though lyrically there are folk themes, the sound is drum loops, distorted guitar, synths and effects. “Thankfully nearly everything was all done by the point Covid came along; I dread to think what our Covid album would sound like, being as lyrically this one isn’t a barrel of laughs! Hopefully we’ll never get to find out.”

Given ‘Ramshackle Tabernacle’ was themed around hermits and isolation, and Kerraleigh and Martin found themselves living out the pandemic in the splendid isolation of rural Oxfordshire, was Covid a bit like life imitating art for them?

Kerraleigh: “Yeah, we all became hermits! ‘Wax Cat’ doesn’t have a pervading theme like ‘Tabernacle’,

but it calls upon some of our favourites and is bolder with them: love, death, nature, technology, underdog empathy and a fear of what humans are capable of. Lyrics jump between varied subjects within the course of a single song rather than between songs to seem more anxiety inducing.”

WHILE ALL GIGS WERE ON hold and the full August List band were unable to meet up over the course of the pandemic, Kerraleigh and Martin put their spare time to creative use, recording new songs under the name Squawk, a more stripped-back, garage-rock-tinged project.

Martin: “That was a direct result of being in lockdown and getting Logic Pro. A fatal combination. We wanted to have a creative outlet during that time and I wanted to start learning how to mix, so it was a really fun exercise. We’ll definitely do it again as it’s all done virtually apart from the singing, so we can do it on a whim with no real planning or thought. With ‘Wax Cat’ we’ve really tried to push what can be expected of our sound, but we still haven’t used a breakbeat. There is an unreleased Squark track that has a breakbeat, so side projects let you mess around to try stuff you wouldn’t normally.”

As well as continuing to write and record together, the couple enjoyed the arrival of their first child earlier this year – a happy event in difficult times, though one that means The August list are unlikely to be hitting the road to promote the new album anytime soon.

Kerraleigh: “At the moment, nothing is booked as far as an album launch gig is concerned. We have to think about Covid risks and being new parents, but it will happen when the stars align. The band hasn’t played together for over two years so there would need to be some serious rehearsal time first.”

Martin: “We wrote music while Kerraleigh was pregnant with Margot, and absolutely nothing since she’s been born! But it has only been a few months and we can see it slowly becoming doable on the far horizon. I think it will influence what we do creatively: it’s someone completely dependent on you, with you 24/7, you can’t help but see the world through their eyes and try to make sense of it. Or we might do a double album of dark children’s songs.”

‘Wax Cat’ is released on the 3rd September on All Will Be Well. Order your copy at allwillbewellrecords.bandcamp.com or from **Truck Store**.

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Pandemic’s People

THE COVID PANDEMIC HAS, IT’S FAIR to say, had a devastating effect on musicians, with tours and gigs cancelled, release schedules disrupted and bandmates too often unable to meet up to write, rehearse and record. Live music, where it has been performed, has been almost exclusively online, more often than not from the isolation of bedrooms or kitchens.

BUT THE MUSIC NEVER STOPPED, AND while bands in particular have suffered, the past 18 months has seen a new wave of artists emerge onto the Oxford music scene. Mostly, though not exclusively, solo, they have begun their fledgling musical lives in lockdown, making the most of social media and streaming services. And now, with the vaccine rollout being successfully rolled out across the UK and restrictions on shows being lifted, those artists are set to emerge, blinking into the light – or more likely into the gloom – of the live music arena. They’ve got the skills and they’ve got the songs, and now they’re getting the chance to show them off to live audiences for the first time.

IT’S BEEN NIGHTSHIFT’S pleasure over the course of the pandemic to keep championing those new artists on social media as they put their music into the public realm, and alongside BBC Introducing in Oxford, to help get their names out there and build their audience. So, as *Nightshift* returns after a long layoff, we thought it would be fun to get some of those new acts together to discuss how the past year and a half has been for them, how the pandemic affected their music; their hopes and fears for the future, playing live, and the effect of the internet on promoting new music. We chatted to six artists, separated in age by some three decades and stylistically from baroque pop to r’n’b via indie-folk, but all united in beginning their music careers without the chance to perform live: Erin Snape; Calÿpso Hetherington; Alexandra Hamer; Piripa; Chiika, and Barricane.

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD INDIE-FOLK singer Erin Snape was initially classically trained before developing an interest in songwriting and musical theatre; her songs are harmony heavy, airily layered and neatly orchestrated with ‘Happy’ the first song she put up on YouTube, having hit over 50k views. “I started putting my work on YouTube and I was lucky enough to get a mention in one of (music theory YouTuber and musician) Adam Neely’s videos, which meant that I had a sudden huge uptake in subscribers just as lockdown was starting. In many ways this was amazing – it gave me a chance to play around with different ways of recording and writing, with an overwhelmingly positive response, and meant that I had the time to put out music to a standard I was happy with on platforms like Bandcamp and Spotify. But it also came with the inevitable mundanity and limitations of writing, recording, editing and receiving feedback, all from my bedroom. The couple times I was on BBC Introducing was a chance to get a real-time discussion about my music, which was a wonderful way to break up the delayed feedback loop of YouTube

comments. “Especially at the start of lockdown the lack of social interaction and the sudden disruption of GCSEs and school more largely had quite a big impact on me. There was a real sense from me, and many of my friends, that the ‘sweet sixteen’ era of your life that is so idealised in pop culture was being taken away from us, fortnightly walks with a single friend being far from any John Hughes movie. Looking back at my album now, all the songs seem infused with that kind of eerily quiet summer and long dog walks. I wrote a song recently called ‘I Wanna Year of my Life Back’ all about this feeling, and the response was remarkable; this seems to be an experience universal to people across age groups.”

LIKE ERIN, CALÿPSO HETHERINGTON, 25 and living back in Oxford with her girlfriend having graduated from the university here after growing up in Salisbury, began playing music at an early age, her songs similarly treading a line between atmospheric acoustic pop and harmonised

“I’d been writing scraps of poetry for years and I figured that maybe I don’t have any sort of musical expertise, but nobody can stop me putting these words over a beat, so I did”

folk music (in her own words “sad-girl dirges, indie clap-backs at my ex and, more recently, upbeat 80s synth-pop, with depressing lyrics, of course”). “I started writing music when I was 11,” she says; “my mum had an old Spanish guitar my dad had bought her in the 70s, and it was just gathering dust in a corner, so I picked it up and started teaching myself. I learned piano, violin and double bass from a young age. Guitar was a different experience though, it felt more personal, less like hard work. “Live gigs weren’t an option, which I found really difficult. Like most musicians, I rely on the gig economy for money and, like most human beings, I rely on social connection to serve as inspiration and motivation for writing. My writer’s block has been the worst it’s ever been this year – I would spend months staring blankly at my computer screen, laying down track after track that just didn’t *feel* right. In some way I think the pandemic has been a secret boon to creatives; it’s far too easy to get stuck in a modus operandi you’re comfortable with. My writer’s block actually forced me out of my usual techniques, lyrics, melodies, and made me write stuff that wasn’t the usual slow, acoustic, double-depresso chugging songs.”

SINGER AND MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST Piripa, whose sweet’n’light acoustic soul-pop comes with a silver lining of Minnie Riperton is Oxfordshire born and bred and studied music at university in York, training as a classical and choral singer before exploring jazz, pop and r’n’b and starting to write her own material. She finished her degree as the pandemic took hold, and released the elegant, spangled single ‘Twisted’ in May this year. “It was scary because the kind of music I’ve been recording is different to any other music I’ve

made in the past. Most people who knew me as a singer prior to me releasing music knew me purely as a classical singer but it’s been great to have those people stay with me and my music as I’ve experimented with new sounds. “The pandemic came at the worst possible time for my career; it meant that nobody could perform live. Live performance has always been my biggest strength as a musician; I’m still new to the recording world. It’s also hard to find new listeners when your only tool is social media. The internet is so saturated with new music, and it can be hard to cut through the noise. The pandemic also made collaboration really difficult; at a time where I was stepping into uncharted territory, it was very hard to find other musicians to work with, particularly as I had suddenly moved back to Oxford after living away for three years and didn’t have many local connections. So basically, I was going it alone.”

CURRENTLY IN HER FINAL YEAR AT university, 22-year-old London-born, Abingdon-raised Chiika has released a brace of singles so far this year with a new song, ‘Natural Nicotine’ out this month. Her debut came with a late-night r’n’b vibe while she’s incorporated a more hip hop element to her newer songs, calling to mind the likes of Arlo Parks and Poppy Ajudha. Beyond performing in her Year 7 talent show she never had any formal musical training and began her musical life uploading cover versions to YouTube. “During the first lockdown, like many people who were living alone, I hit some new lows and I just started writing. I’d been writing little scraps of poetry for years and I figured that, hey, maybe I don’t have any sort of musical expertise, but nobody can stop me putting these words over a beat. So I did, and here we are a year later! “It was scary putting my music out at first. I’m continuously developing my sound and experimenting Despite this, people seem to be enjoying my music. At least my friends are, and when I do gigs people definitely vibe out, so that feels like a positive sign. I think that since I felt so isolated during the lockdowns especially, releasing music almost gave me an excuse to feel like I was connecting with people; that was really valuable to me. Like many artists, my mental health likes to take twists and turns anyway, and the pandemic really exacerbated that. In a way, it forced me to take even more responsibility over my health and develop stronger coping mechanisms, one of which has been the music; so although I wouldn’t say I’m grateful, I am glad I got the music out of it.”

WHILE CHIIKA IS TAKING HER FIRST steps into releasing music, Alexandra Hamer has experience in playing in a band in Oxford but over the past 18 months has begun releasing solo songs for the first time, a steady succession of gorgeous torch songs and baroque ballads both self-penned and a few exotic cover versions that have found her singing in Russian and Italian and proving she has one of the most beautiful voices in Oxford. “As far as starting to release music during the pandemic, the timing was coincidental. I was out of music for a while trying to transition and that took every piece of effort I could spare for a few

years. I went through some rejection over that and kind of lost confidence in performing, so I took a break from music for another few years to write a novel instead (*To Be A Girl* out now on Amazon). I was just getting started with music again and *boom!* – Covid. “I’m an introvert, so there was little change from my ordinary life. Well, until they closed Pret and and I had to learn how to make an oat milk latte. However, the first song I put out was about the people you miss during lockdown. Even introverts miss people. It was called ‘With My Eyes Closed’. People were lovely about it; someone even cried.”

WHILE ALL THESE ARTISTS ARE solo – so far at least – Barricane are set to be a full band. Formed by long-time friends Emily Green and Rosy Piper, initially as a way to sing together and escape the day-to-day pressures of work and family life, Barricane made a bold opening statement in March this year with a full-on album, ‘The Sky & Us’, recorded in summer 2020, produced by local music legend Mac and are currently recruiting a full backing band for future gigs. The record is ambitious in its scope, blending indie-folk, rock, electronica and trip-hop into a wonderfully atmospheric whole, all tied together with the pair’s intricate vocal harmonies. “We both have young kids and at the beginning were having to manage work and homeschooling. All that as well as having to manage our own emotions and our children’s emotions about not being able to see family or friends. Making and sharing our music during this time gave us a fantastic escape and something really positive and exciting to focus on. A lot of people commented on how impressed they were that we managed to release an album during with all that going on. Homeschooling young kids was probably the hardest thing we’ve ever had to do: achieving anything at all – even getting dressed – whilst trying to do that is an impressive feat. It’s nice that this was acknowledged. But actually it was kind of essential – an act of self love – we had to stay sane and music helps us to do that. “Our music has become more important than ever during the pandemic. It has always been a release and a blissful escape for both of us. Rosy is a senior cardiac nurse at the JR and was redeployed during the pandemic to the front line, training staff on ventilation equipment and providing vital emotional support to other frontline nurses. “We originally started singing together as a kind of therapy session for Emily because her baby daughter was severely ill. Now her daughter is doing much better but Covid presented a whole new set of stresses and risks. We really wanted to keep singing together, and needed to, so we would meet up, have a few glasses of wine and sing outdoors by the river, in the woods, in the park and when the weather was bad we discovered that Binsey Church is always open. There is no electricity and it’s really remote, so we would take candles down there and sing and play together into the night.”

HAVING HEARD ABOUT THEIR musical origins and how the Covid pandemic both fuelled and thwarted their fledgling

musical careers, we ask everyone what their plans are now that restrictions on gigs have lifted and whether they feel confident finally entering the live arena. Calÿpso: “I did a couple of virtual gigs during the pandemic, on Instagram and Tiktok, and I did one Zoom gig early on in the pandemic for the LGBTQ+ Society at Oxford Uni. They were fun, but they never live up to the real sense of connection and communication you get from playing live to an audience whose thoughts, feelings and reactions you can sense from the stage. I’m not massively worried about getting back into venues to be honest. Everyone has been careful with masks, distancing and so on, and there are plenty of tests and jabs available now. This pandemic has been devastating for so many people, and I hope I don’t have to experience another in my lifetime. With that in mind, everyone wants to get back to ‘normal’ and I think the demand for live music is higher than ever.” Piripa: “I’ve played a couple of virtual shows. Although they were pretty fun and I appreciated the opportunity to do any performing at all, it’s nothing like performing live. That relationship you have with the audience, and with the other musicians on stage is something that can’t be replicated over Zoom or Instagram. Also, it’s a bit of a mood killer when someone hasn’t put themselves on mute and you’re being accompanied by the sound of their microwave heating their dinner. “I’ll probably start playing live with open mics just because being very new to the Oxford scene still, I still have a lot of people to meet and connect with. Eventually, I’d love to be gigging with a full band but we’re probably some way off that yet. Covid safety has been something that’s put me off making bookings and turning up to open mics. I don’t want to do anything that’s unsafe or that puts me in an uncomfortable position. Also, I’ve experienced a lot of making and then having to cancel plans due to the ever-changing situation, so there’s a part of me that still isn’t quite sure how much of what’s being planned now will even go ahead. I am starting to gain a bit more confidence in this now, seeing the gigs that are starting to take place.” Chiika: “Man, I just want to live onstage. Being on stage is my safe space and comfort zone; it’s where I get to leave all of the anxiety and stress behind and just be and exist and perform in what feels like my truest form. Once I’m double-jabbed and also feeling a bit more confident I’m gonna start hitting up the open mics too. I really want to play The Bullingdon and O2, but honestly I’m also so excited about playing Broad Street in August – there’s something about just drawing in random people passing by that’s really fun and satisfying. I want to share the stage with as many local musicians as possible, from as many genres as possible, because I think having to match a vibe that is very different to yours whilst still maintaining your sound and style really makes you improve as an artist and performer. “During lockdown I got to play the virtual JoyRuckusClub 3, which features Asian musicians from around the world, and that was my first ever performance so it was a big deal to me. Although there were a good few



Chiika



Barricane



Erin Snape

Pandemic’s People

technical issues setting up, and performing to a camera instead of being able to feed off a crowd’s energy will always feel a bit weird, it was a good feeling to be a part of something even when we couldn’t physically be together.”

Barricane: “We are in the process of recruiting our band to play shows. We are extremely keen to get out there and play gigs. Safety is a concern, but we’re much more relaxed now that so many people are double vaccinated. Let’s hope the vaccine rollout continues apace and we can allow ourselves to enjoy things like gigs again.”

WHILE CALYPSO, PIRIPA, CHIIKA AND Barricane are champing at the bit to get up on stage, for Erin and Alexandra, things aren’t so straightforward.

Erin: “I’m not old enough to book a vaccine yet, so I am well aware that my age group are becoming some of the most at risk: though more from isolation than serious illness, it is something we are becoming more aware of. The worry of safety for me is more concerned with spreading the virus unknowingly, or the potential to miss out on school, rather than experiencing serious illness, fortunately. I’m hoping to play at some local pubs and events that friends have suggested. As part of a local musical theatre company that I’m part of, I started singing with my friend Naama Brittenden, and we’re planning on doing open mics or gigs together.”

Alexandra: “Some of the songs I’ve been working on are so technically difficult to sing – well, they are for me – that playing them live is kind of daunting. I also have no band so I’d have to use a backing track. Is that a thing nowadays? Or is it frowned-upon? Right now, I’m just wondering what the options might be.”

OF COURSE, ONE OF THE MOST notable things about so many of the artists who have emerged over the time of the pandemic is the number of female and non-binary musicians making their first moves. All the acts featured here are female. Many are from the LGBTQ+ community or are women of colour or both.

As such, *Nightshift* wonders if Covid offered new opportunities for these artists to be able to express themselves more easily and freely, particularly online, and looking forward, if there are still barriers to accessibility or acceptance on the live gig scene, in Oxford or beyond.

Calypso: “I’m a queer woman, and I have never felt that my sexuality has held me back from playing gigs or getting my music out there. At least, I have thankfully never encountered those barriers in Oxford or places like London. I think you mostly start to experience negativity in that regard when you gig in smaller places that are perhaps less open to diversity. The last gig I did was near my hometown in the countryside, and my girlfriend came with me for moral support. A middle-aged guy was talking to us and said, ‘So, are you friends...? Lesbians...?’ and went on to say that we could get a role at his firm because we would ‘fit the diversity quota’. Arsehole. Anyway, apart from these small incidents, I’ve been lucky enough to have never been denied an opportunity to work because of my gender or sexuality. It does happen,

however, and you hear about sexist, homophobic or transphobic and racist remarks getting thrown around a lot, which is totally unacceptable and, frankly, quite gross. At the end of 2019 I got a Tiktok account – initially it was mortifying and I felt far too old to be using a very Gen-Z orientated platform. However, due to the sheer Herculean strength of the algorithm, if you want to share your music and identify with other people, be they part of the LGBTQ+ community or musicians, or an overlap of the two, Tiktok does a lot of the hard work for you. I’ve gained practically all my fans through Tiktok. They are kind and fiercely dedicated people, and I want to keep making music to perpetuate the relationships I’ve cultivated with them so far. It’s been huge exposure.”

Chiika: “I think the internet is such a boon; I’m in a few groups for Asian artists and female artists and knowing other queer Asian second-gens has been really good for solidarity. Without those, I think I’d feel very unsteady, because there is a truly visible lack of artists who look like me on the scene. I know that being female lowers my chances of playing some big festivals; I know being Indian lowers my chances of succeeding in

“There’s an intoxicating energy you get from a live audience that you could only otherwise get from doing something epic, like slaying dragons”

music generally because I don’t ‘fit’ the standard/ expectation/whatever, and that some people who would be chill with my race perhaps wouldn’t be chill with my being queer. And on some days that feels really gross and hopeless. But also, I think the point of Gen Z is that we don’t conform to standards. So on some days, I just feel really, really determined to succeed and to be a person changing the visuals and vibe of this industry. Time will tell.”

Alexandra: “As a trans woman, being ‘out’ in a public space always carries a risk. I’m lucky in that I can blend in day to day no problem, but I might be trepidatious about being on stage and out at the same time, especially given the rampant, and growing transphobia in the UK right now: I’m tired of it, and a bit scared. The internet is physically safer, but also quite openly abusive at times.”

Piripa: “I’ve faced numerous barriers throughout my entire musical life. Although I’ve only been acting as a solo artist for a bit over a year now, I’ve been performing since I was a child so barriers that I’ve faced due to racism and sexism are not unfamiliar to me. It’s a well-known fact that sexism and misogynoir are huge issues in the music industry, from female musicians experiencing abhorrent sexism from fellow musicians whilst gigging, to female recording artists experiencing sexual harassment and the perpetrators not being held accountable. If anything, this makes me more determined to succeed. I know that I will continue to experience racism and sexism but I don’t let that deter me from what I want to achieve. I can’t control what others think of me, so I don’t give negativity from others any attention if I can help it. I know that other people have underestimated my abilities in the past but I’m very comfortable with who I am and I know what I’m capable of doing. If somebody doesn’t like something about me or doesn’t believe I can do something, that’s their

problem, not mine.

“When it comes to me as an artist and the internet, I’ve had overwhelmingly positive experiences, mostly because I have a pretty modest sized platform so don’t really get exposed to trolling and I mainly connect with other artists who are similar to me and people who post content that I find affirming. There are great communities of female musicians, black musicians, and female producers on the internet, and I’ve really enjoyed becoming a part of those communities, supporting one another in our individual journeys.”

Barricane: “So far we have only had positive experiences with getting our music out there but then we’re white, straight and cis-gendered and don’t come up against some of the barriers that some of our LGBTQ+ sisters or sisters-of-colour do. I think that the two-female singer lead is unusual and gives us a bit of an interesting edge. Whilst this is good for us it does highlight that there are fewer female artists out there.

“It is noticeable that all of the exposure we have had – radio, reviews, plugs etc – and all the relationships that have formed through this project – musicians, designers, producers – have, bar one, all been from men.

“We both have young kids so juggling gigs, work and mummying is tricky but we both have very supportive husbands who do their full share of parenting, if not more. Travelling to play gigs would be difficult because of having young kids. I’d like to say that this would be the same for dads with young kids, but I think the reality is that it is harder for women. Unfortunately, we still have a society where it is more acceptable for the father to be away or to prioritise non-family responsibility.”

Erin: “The first video I ever put on YouTube was an entry to a song-writing competition hosted by the YouTuber Rob Scallon, and I remember realising that I was the only fully non-male entry that I could find. I know Adam Neely, in his series of viewer critiques, has put an emphasis on featuring women and people of colour, which is as step in the right direction. However, some of the backlash he has received to such a statement is indicative of the extent we still have left to go. I think the music – especially when leaning towards music theory – space on YouTube and the internet at large is incredibly male-dominated, and often female creators are shoehorned into the ‘indie girl, ukulele playing, bedroom singer’ stereotype. I’m certainly guilty of many of those traits, but I think to reduce artists of a specific age or gender into such a limited and dismissive category is harmful to creative development. I’m certainly scared that my music will be dismissed more readily due to those expectations and the abundance of similar creators on YouTube, yet the internet has also been instrumental to my development and in reaching and working with people far beyond a local scene.”

SOMETHING EVERYONE AGREES on is that the internet has been a huge boon for artists starting out during the pandemic, but can it ever replace playing a real life live gig?

Alexandra: “Because the internet is as big as the world, you can be heard in all kinds of previously inaccessible places. I have quite a few views for my videos in Kazakhstan – mainly because I did

a Dimash cover – but that’s different to live; there’s an intoxicating energy you get from a live audience that you could only otherwise get from doing something epic, like slaying dragons.”

Erin: “I really love performing live, however terrifying it may be without the crutch of editing and re-recording, and the immediate response you get to something you’ve created is such a unique experience. The reason I love theatre so much is that tangible connection between the art, the performer, and the audience, which is something that is lost entirely when you add in the barriers of cameras, screens and comments. However, I’ve managed to work with some amazing people from across the world on my music, and get in contact with people who wouldn’t have found me without the internet. In an ideal world, a balance is achieved between the two that I haven’t been able to experience yet, and it is one that I am excited to find.”

Piripa: “The biggest advantage of the internet is the potential reach that you have. Geographical boundaries are a thing of the past in many ways. It’s been great to see people from across Europe, the US and even Australia listening to my music. Hopefully, through growing my social media platforms and through future releases, I can just continue to grow my fanbase abroad and even travel to perform in some of those places someday. I don’t think anything will ever replace physical gigs, but I see no reason why fans can’t enjoy listening to music at home and going to gigs as separate forms of consuming music. I haven’t been able to see the majority of my favourite artists live but I still love listening to their music and of course, I’d go and see them live if I had the opportunity to. We can have it both ways!”

Chiika: “With talent scouts spending more time online where everything is at your fingertips, as opposed to loads of smaller gigs where you have to physically travel, there’s no doubt that social media is such a powerful tool. In a generation where ‘authenticity’ is valued above everything else, social media is also an easy way for fans to feel like they really ‘know’ their favourite artist and can literally have them in their homes, on their screens. At the same time, a screen is still a barrier; it can never replace the all-encompassing atmosphere of a live gig and audience, and I certainly enjoy live gigs – and think I do much better on stage – way more than I enjoy online ones.”

Calypso: “I don’t think anything can ever replace live performance. It’s a thrill, but it’s also much more than that – there is something invaluable about the moments in which you’re playing for people. Music is inherently personal, especially singing something you’ve written yourself about your own trials and tribulations. You’re taking out your diary and reading it to strangers, telling people you’ve never met about experiences you can’t convey through normal means. It’s a fascinating, weird, tender concoction of strength and weakness that ties your humanity to that of the next person. You can’t really weigh it up against online gigs – a face-to-face conversation will always offer more than a text.”

YOU LIVE IN HOPE THAT BOTH

Oxford, as a cosmopolitan, liberal-minded city, and the grassroots music scene with its love for diversity, creativity and the new and different, will provide a welcoming home to every new artists, regardless of their race, gender or sexual orientation, and though this isn’t always the case, everyone has positive feelings for their hometown and its music scene, which will hopefully nurture them in the coming months and years.

Barricane: “The best thing about starting out on the Oxford’s music scene is the incredibly supportive community that exists to help new musicians: Oxford is big enough to be interesting whilst still small enough to have a well connected network that isn’t overwhelming. That so many great bands have come out of Oxford, and are still here, is testament to the community that supports it.”

Erin: “I’ve lived here my whole life, and so I know many people in the community. My mum will occasionally tell me at the end of the day that so-and-so heard your songs and liked them, or that they know someone who knows someone who could pass on your name, and I’ve lined up a couple potential gigs that way. That’s a really nice element to the familiarity of Oxford as a place to start, and BBC Introducing in Oxford has also contributed to that.”

Calypso: “The BBC Introducing team here are legendary, and I have felt incredibly supported by Dave Gilyeat in particular. Salisbury pales in comparison – there’s nothing wrong with it *per se*, but it’s smaller and the demographic leans more towards the older end of the spectrum. I once sang a song about shagging people from Tinder to a pub occupied by four pensioners. They loved it. Or at least they would have had they known what Tinder is.”

Piripa: “The scene in Oxford strikes me as having similarities to York – fairly small but dedicated and close knit. I’m looking forward to getting to know those involved and getting familiar with the venues in the city.”

Chiika: “I don’t think I can claim to fully know or understand the Oxford scene yet: Covid has really limited my ability to get to know other local artists. I think the quality of music on the Oxford scene is so high though, and everyone genuinely seems to be interested and want to lift each other up. At the same time, from my experiences thus far, I think there’s always room for more diversity in sound and otherwise. Either way, I’m always going to be an Oxford girl, and that’s something I’m always going to be proud of.”

BEING AN OXFORD ARTIST is, indeed, something to be proud of, and Oxford should be proud of this new wave of artists. The local music scene faces a long, hard road back to anything resembling normality but Erin, Calypso, Alexandra, Piripa, Chiika, and Barricane are a big part of the future of this scene.

Being a new musician starting out is hard at the best of times and these artists have had it harder than most. Over the past year and more we’ve loved hearing their new songs, and we look forward to hearing more to come. More than that though, we cannot wait to see them playing live. Let’s drink to that and keep supporting our grassroots talent, everyone. Here are tomorrow’s stars today.



Calypso



Alexandra Hamer



RELEASED

THE AUGUST LIST

‘Wax Cat’

(All Will Be Well)

It’s been the best part of a decade since Kerraleigh and Martin Child sidled their way into the Oxford music scene as The August List. Now with two EPs and two long-players behind them their third LPs is here, and frankly, it’s bloody wonderful.

The original Appalachian folk sound that turned so many heads is still at the deep-rooted core but acoustic intimacy’s not the focus anymore. Instead? Well, Dylan has most certainly gone electric.

Lead single ‘God Is In A Wire’ is a reverb-drenched kraut-gaze masterpiece; slow fuzzy chords are blown apart but a massive drum sound and sound effects all sit perfectly under Kerraleigh’s enormous, ensnaring vocals, and opening track ‘Seams’ could easily be a lost recording from PJ Harvey circa-1994. But the real magic is when the acoustic dynamic comes back and joins the new fuller-band sound. ‘Puget Sound’ starts quiet and mournful, with a beautiful dressing of violin and electric guitar laid across the top, but somehow by the end, through songwriting prowess that can only come from a deal with him downstairs, the refrain is ringing in your ears from the crowd of thousands bellowing it back at the band, not making a dent in the stadium-sized arrangement.

The real magic of The August List has always



been having two vocalists; both have authentic Americana twangs – they couldn’t be further from the many, many naff pretenders to the genre over the past ten years. The best of both singers’ voices are always used exactly when the songs demand, close harmonies here and powerful leads as counterpoint just a moment later.

‘Wax Cat’ does not have an ounce of fat on it, every flourish of Ben Heaney’s effected and esoteric violin, every obscure guitar tuning, every rasp of a harmonica or twinkle of a synth is absolutely necessary to paint the astonishing whole. If this album isn’t heard by millions it will only be the fault of the impenetrable industry, because this album is simply brilliant, beginning to end.

Matt Chapman Jones



BRUNO MUERTE

‘Projections’

(All Will Be Well)

The title of Bruno Muerte’s third EP is surely no coincidence; the cinematic breadth and scope is vast.

We’re guessing the guitar/synth duo are more inspired by film composers than other bands, picturing them ensconced in an old fleapit cinema or poring over a dusty box of VHS tapes in a junk shop for inspiration.

Opening track ‘Eurozone’ is a case in point: sci-fi FX, a brooding thrum and niggling

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KID KIN

‘Discompose’

(Self released)

It’s now a decade or so since Kid Kin arrived on the local music scene. A one man multi-instrumentalist and keyboard maestro, his trajectory has developed from his early days as a representative of a local post rock scene that also involved the likes of Listing Ships and which drew on classic influences such as Mogwai and 65daysofstatic; through a visceral performance at the White Rabbit at the 2014 iteration of the Oxford Punt; via landmark releases such as the opening cut on his ‘New Day at Dusk’ LP, ‘Le Prieur Rockets’; true epic in the form of eight minute wonder ‘Masterclash’, and on to collaboration with The Bobo on ‘Sprinter (At Last)’ in early 2020. Late (mid?) period Kid Kin has tended to put the melody and cathedrals of sound before the brute noise and he has even dabbled with deploying his own vocals.

On this new EP the inventive new ideas have obviously been percolating like wildfire over the course of the pandemic. The Bobo repays the compliment of eighteen months before by lending vocals to ‘Control’, big hit single material and a recollection of Slowdive at their most soaring. A whole LP featuring these two would be nice but that’s not to denigrate the remaining tracks on ‘Discompose’, all of which are outstanding. ‘Under a Cloud of Fret’ builds, Sigur Rós style, to evoke mighty cliffs and looming icebergs, destined to soundtrack a BBC nature documentary of the future perhaps, while closer ‘Last Dance at the Nave’ starts more plaintively before thick synths provide a robust and emotional overlay to the sparkle of the beats.

But it’s on ‘Heron Sky’ that the music really breaks new ground – a six minute monument, it deploys classical stylings with the glitchy folktronica of Haiku Salut, a band that Kid Kin has supported before now, to build successively into a piece of real drama and one of the best things the artist has yet come up with. That is high praise indeed for one of Oxford’s most consistent musical performers.

Rob Langham



ALLY CRAIG

‘Digitally’

(Self-released)

If lockdown was hard for most musicians, it was more so for Ally Craig as he has spent the past 18 months shielding. Time well spent on the evidence of this really rather lovely new EP, which plays heavily into Ally’s love of classic cinema with a brace of songs here about vintage celluloid stars.

EP opener ‘The Bucket’ is the most urgent of the four tracks, jittery and run through with a sense of anxious urgency: austere, twitchy lo-fi robot pop that might be Robert Wyatt having

THE FACTORY LIGHTS

‘Keeping the Lights On’

(Self released)

“I was born and raised in Oxford / Not far from the dreaming spires / But the only life mapped out for me / Was on the line at Leyland cars.”

While the comparisons have been made often enough, Ant Kelly really is Oxford’s own Paul Heaton. With his band The Shapes and this semi side project, he has documented the lives and loves (and sometimes punch-ups) of a working class kid growing up in the city, his songs run through with a hang-dog sense of romance and melancholy while remaining essentially celebratory in nature. That opening line to ‘Ballad of a Cowley Boy’ sums him up and the song tells his tale, the son of an Irish immigrant “who never quite made it home” and a mother who was “illegitimate, to a father who was never known”, growing up learning everything he knew from reading the *NME* and becoming a musician. It’s a classic blue collar underdog story but over a neatly spangled indie guitar chime it’s all about victory and hope rather than being beaten down. The nostalgic tone continues on ‘Distant Childhood Memories’ – all football in the park and orange squash from a plastic cup – which deals with the aging process but with a twinkle in its eye and an almost country feel, and ‘Old Soldier’, which finds a veteran looking back on his life as The Factory Lights go a bit Pink Floyd.

It’s not all rose-tinted specs and teary reminisces though; Kelly has always been political and the anti-Brexit ‘Ultimate Prize’ is tailor-made for an after-hours snug bar singalong, while ‘Be My

a go at being Devo for the day. It bubbles and babbles in staccato fashion, busily stalking its confines while casting fretful glances at the world outside.

But it’s ‘Carole Lombard’ that steals your heart: a true story of the classic Hollywood actress who died in an air crash, alongside her mother and 15 US troops, on the way home from a war bond concert; her mother, terrified of flying, tossed a coin with her daughter over whether to take the flight and lost both the bet and all of them their lives. Musically it’s a wonderfully hushed electro-pop lullaby, all clockwork mechanics and sombre Kraftwerkian minimalism. More fragile still is ‘Theda Bara’, an ode to the pioneering silent movie star who gave up acting before the advent of sound cinema and most of whose early 20th Century films were lost in a fire. Ally brings a quavering tenderness to the song, giving Bara’s story real poignancy.

EP closer ‘It’s All Happening’ continues the hushed mood, a somnambulating landscape of starry, space station bleeps, whirrs and vows that again recalls Kraftwerk’s more contemplative explorations, although the overall effect is more akin to what we might have expected from the music in *Bagpuss* had Sandra Kerr and John Faulkner been a synth-pop duo rather than a pair of folkies, and that kind of childlike magical wonder is entirely fitting for a beautifully understated set of songs.

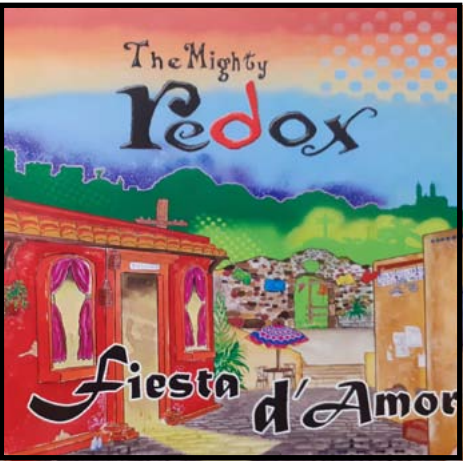
Dale Kattack



Lady Tonight’ is a positively chirpy pop song. The Factory Lights are a more insular band than The Shapes with their effusive brass section and there is a tendency to drift towards a middle of the road, mid-paced balladry at times but just as you fear your attention will wander they’ll pull something new out of the hat, Salma Craig’s vocals and a bit of harpsichord turning up on cue to bring a bit of jazzy chanson to ‘It’s All About You’, while characteristically Ant comes into his own best on the more boisterous ‘Jonny Marr’, the true story of playing a blinding set at Truck Festival while everyone is watching Marr on the main stage.

‘Keeping the Lights On’ could maybe have been cut down a couple of tracks or so without losing much, and it’s intention patently isn’t to kick down any musical doors but as a neatly scripted, highly personal document of a life lived in Oxford, it’s a record well worth hearing. The tales of the factory floors and terraced houses are as valid as those of those dreaming spires.

Dale Kattack



THE MIGHTY REDOX

‘Fiesta d’Amour’

(Self released)

Much as The Windmill Theatre in London boasted “we never closed” during WWII, The Mighty Redox continued to gig in any way they could during the various Covid lockdowns, taking up residency in pub gardens, there to continue feeding their famously loyal band of followers their staple cocktail of funky blues, ska-infused pop, folky psychedelia and the odd flamenco or calypso flourish.

It was typical of the band who have also acted as hosts of Klub Kakofanny over the past three decades – propelled by the free festival spirit of “let’s-make-the-party-right-here”.

This, their fourth album, rarely threatens to deviate from that enduring ideal, a brief, 35-minute, eight-song canter through feelgood vibes and lightweight dancey grooves, scattered over with hippy moon dust and the odd bit of politicking.

The likes of ‘The Funky’ find The Mighty Redox in jam band mode, Phil Freizinger’s airy flute lacing its way over and around the almost jazzy groove, Sue Smith chanting “Feel the funky tonight”; it’s easy stuff, fit for purpose for sunny festival afternoons. ‘Too Darn Rude 2’ is similarly amiable and easy, proving The Mighty Redox might not score highly in the sharp, succinct songwriting stakes but give them a groove and a yard of grass and they’ll lead people a merry dance.

Perhaps that’s why they’re less appealing when they try and play it harder, as on album closer ‘Sweet Zombie Horse’, a near-hysterical rock-out that is doubtless meant to be silly and fanciful but no more forgivable for that. Sue’s solemn intonations of “stuff that’s going on in the world” (“Refugee crisis / Legalised land grab / Black Lives Matter” etc.) during the otherwise new-greener-world positivity power play ‘Live It For Today’, meanwhile, strikes an incongruous tone while offering little insight.

Much more successful are those times where the band inject something a bit more exotic into proceedings, no more so than the Mariachi vibe of the album’s title track and the Caribbean-flavoured ‘Feeling Very Fine’.

The Mighty Redox remain a band for the good times: times they tried to keep alive during the worst of the pandemic, and hopefully more good times yet to come. May their well of optimism never run dry.

Dale Kattack

RELEASED



SEBASTIAN REYNOLDS

‘Crows’

(Faith & Industry)

Ever since he was a Nord-wielding nipper, Sebastian Reynolds has been adding keyboards and electronics to some of Oxford’s most adventurous bands. The likes of The Evenings, Keyboard Choir and Flights of Helios tempered their sonic expansiveness with a wry wink, perhaps even bordering on cabaret, but Reynolds’ work under his own name has been a more mature and muted affair, though retaining the joy in revelling in a great sound. This latest piece, split into two parts, might be his best work yet. The prelude is built on an introspective, snaking clarinet line, which sounds like Movietone’s Rachel Brook trying to capture the diaphanous breathiness of a shakuhachi, and under which Greig Stewart’s steady, insistent drums progress incessantly, bidding the image of a deep thinker wrestling with a koan whilst staring from a slow train at a mist-wreathed landscape. The track proper ups the tempo, leading a portamento party into an electrified cage, whilst an Underworld-like synth lasers semi-randomly around a root tone, in a fashion which recalls ‘Dead Cities’-era FSOL. Two remixes complete the package, Pradit Saengkrai turning the solid rhythm into an elastic-legged lope, whilst L’Etranger transmutes the melancholic mistiness into the sort of brash drama that could be a UFC champ’s walk-on fanfare. Forget the feel-good hit of the summer, this sinuous serving of emotional atmospherics could be the feel-conflicted hit of the autumn. Nights are drawing in, close the curtains and get this on your stereo.

David Murphy

SELF HELP

‘All Alone Again’

(Self released)

Self-help do noise. The long-time *Nightshift* favourite’s back catalogue is packed with angry, churning numbers that rattle and riot. Their take on a Summer 2021 anthem – their first release since a major line-up overhaul that has seen the departure of drummer Silke and bassist Lizzie and the arrival of Jake and Paddy from 31hours and Catgod respectively – stays

FOLKATRON SESSIONS

‘Home No More’

(Upcycled Sounds)

Folkatron Sessions are “a collective of eight folk, jazz and electronic musicians from England, Ireland and France who bonded over a love of genre-bending folk music”. For Oxford listeners, the collective features Hannah Jacobs, known for her work in Pecq and Upcycled Sounds, as well as fiddle player Lauren Spicely, and cellist Martha Wiltshire. While the ‘genre-bending’ term isn’t their own (it’s from Folk Radio UK), it is slightly off-target. Rather than a melange of styles this is more augmented folk music for the most part – traditional songs coated in a modern sheen of electronics and beats. The result keeps the often ethereal charm and simplicity of folk music at its best instead of stamping too much modernity on it.

The stand-out from these five songs is a reworking of the traditional Irish lament ‘An Bonnán Bui’ (‘The Yellow Bitten’), with its dense, circling strings and a soaring vocal lead from Jacobs, although ‘Flower of Magherally’ is similarly beautifully rendered – fragile and solemn, reminiscent of Vashti Bunyan. When Folkatron Sessions do go down a more genre-spanning and experimental path the result is the intoxicating ‘Juhan’s Night Train’, an almost Penguin Cafe Orchestra-like slice of dusky strings’n’electronics darkness that wouldn’t outstay its welcome at double or more its length. In fact what the ensemble do best is ever so softly pull you into their very subtly otherworldly orbit – somewhere not exactly strange as comfortingly dreamlike, and a place you’re reluctant to leave once the music is over.

Ian Chesterton



true to form. While it falls short of their usual offering of a good ol’ teenage racket, their timely paean to loneliness strips back the bass and lyrics to let noise take centre stage. Surly vocals meld with sun-soaked riffs to create a perfectly crafted pop song with something eerie bubbling below the surface. Moody and uneasy, yet toe-tappingly upbeat, ‘All Alone Again’ captures the spirit of the times, the pull between excitement and fear, the sunny weather and the storm clouds. With another single on the way and a slew of live slots reaching as far as Manchester, the young rockers once more look set to be crashing their way onto big things.

Charlotte Banks

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THEO B

‘Everyday’ / ‘Mistakes’

(Self released)

‘Everyday’ starts like a dreampop mashup of the *Casualty* theme and Roy Budd’s *Get Carter* theme. Make of that what you will; for me it’s kind of the highlight of this two-track set. Both pieces are Gaussian blurs of sound, with nothing approaching a rough edge: a less distinct take on Washed Out, or an echoed reflection of no end of synth-led indie outfits that have gone full-circle in their is-this-genuine-or-is-it-a-piss-take swooshing electronic mood-enhancing shufflemusic.

‘Everyday’ has a laid-back tempo, with barely perceptible rhythm bumping up against dinky-donking melodies in a snug woollen scarf of a song. The vocals are a distant reverberation of an echo-drenched heartfelt caterwaul approach to singing, as ably demonstrated by Foals on tracks like their ‘Mountain At My Gates’. ‘Mistakes’ ramps up the cutesy, skittering drum patterns a little, and it helps greatly to give the track some definition. Aside from that, and a slightly increased speed, there isn’t a whole lot to really distinguish between these two pieces. That’s not necessarily a problem – the sonic style Theo B generates lends itself to a blurry, stoned listening experience that cares not for notions of traditional structure.

An interesting couple of tracks, which to my mind, lack something to propel them into an area of sonic precision that would be very welcome. That something could be a sense of stridency, the faintest touch of abrasiveness, or the feeling that Theo B is really bothered whether you’re listening or not. Possibly, all of those things. For now, ‘Everyday’ / ‘Mistakes’ is like a decent demo, waiting to be sculpted further.

Simon Minter



KANADIA

‘Big Nothing’

(Self released)

If lockdown made people’s worlds smaller no-one told Kanadia. To them every room is an arena waiting to be conquered, every locked door a gateway to the big stage.

To say that Kanadia paint their rock music in bold colours is like saying the Atlantic Ocean is quite big. The band’s music comes in giant rolling waves rather than subtle eddies or ripples. The drums on EP highlight ‘Desert Song’ are positively thunderous as they gallop boldly beneath James Bettis’ big, echoing guitar lines and heroic, questing howl. It sounds like someone gave Muse a damn good shake, told them to stop playing prog-rock silly buggers and just get on with playing fun stadium anthems.

The nominally more introspective ‘Big Nothing’ shows there’s no hiding Kanadia’s adoration for ‘Pablo Honey’ and ‘Bends’-era Radiohead, but even here they want to ramp it all up to the max, kick down those walls, climb that lighting rig and pull down the sky.

That primary influence is worn proudly not just on sleeve but chest and forehead too, with recent single ‘Devoured’ adding a lustrous guitar chime that The Edge would be proud of. The song roles powerfully to its conclusion on another Atlantic-sized roller of a riff, off to see if there’s an even bigger world beyond the horizon. If you ordered your music understated or fragile, Kanadia aren’t for you and the truth is, you’re probably too small for them to hear you asking.

Ian Chesterton

PREMIUM LEISURE

‘Easy FM EP’

(Self released)

Rather than droves of lockdown miseries clogging up the release schedules as the UK opens up, it’s heartening to hear musical positivity winning the day. Chris Barker, who essentially is Premium Leisure, albeit abetted here by renowned drummer Mike Monaghan and longtime musical chum Willie J Healey among others, has always walked the sunny side of the street. Specifically one set sometimes in the late 60s / early 70s when Marc Bolan still had flowers in his hair. A woozy sense of psychedelia infuses these four songs, merrily funky boogie-time pop leaking out of an abandoned transistor radio

left in a summer meadow, its owner probably having decided to dance cosmically into an imagine dappled woodland glade to live with the sunbeams.

Like compadré Healey, Barker seems to see the world through a slightly stoned haze and his music reflects this – loping, carefree and full of bright tones. Last year’s single ‘Remedies’ gambols gently, akin to Ariel Pink’s Haunted Graffiti, but the organ-driven ‘Ready For Forever’ finds Premium Leisure at their melodic best, a slice of early-70s rocking that in another universe was a global hit.

While most of us would happily forget the last 18 months, Chris Barker seems to have dispensed with the last five decades entirely and in doing so conjured a strain of optimistic pop that might make the world smile once more.

Sue Foreman



GIG GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st
AOIFE NESSA FRANCES: Fusion Arts – After keeping us entertained with their Remohte Community virtual mini-fests over the course of the pandemic, it’s an absolute pleasure to have the first gig listed in *Nightshift* be one of Divine Schism’s. And what a gig. Dublin singer and multi-instrumentalist Aoife Nessa Frances’ 2020 debut album, ‘Land of No Junction’ was a gorgeous mix of swoonsome folk-pop melody and dark moods, proof she hasn’t quite left the shoegazey textures of her old band Princess

Tuesday 14th
NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS: The New Theatre
Many years ago *Nightshift* attended a talk by Nick Cave where he explored his Biblical inspirations, claiming The Birthday Party were Old Testament, while his solo material tended more toward the New. That more vengeful deity is back with interest on Cave new album, the surprise lockdown-recorded ‘Carnage’, written and recorded without most of The Bad Seeds, just long-time sidekick (and all-round fantastic human being) Warren Ellis. After the grief-laden ‘Ghosteen’, ‘Carnage’ is another modern masterpiece of songwriting, with Cave threatening violence as only he can in lines about he’s going to “shoot you in the fuckin’ face, if you think about coming round here” while Ellis, in customary style, conjures vibes so dark they absorb all light in the room. Stripped down, raw and menacing, ‘Carnage’ occasionally harks back to those Grinderman albums where Cave previously conjured songs with more blood and grit under their nails. That said, it’s still a gorgeously elegant, often hymnal affair, particularly with Ellis’ taut string arrangements so dense and emotive you barely notice the usual Bad Seeds instrumentation isn’t there. Much of the grief of ‘Ghosteen’ remains, notably in ‘Carnage’’s questing title track, and at every turn Cave is *the* master of the bleakest kind of melancholy, but with lockdown condensing thoughts of escape and murder, the new record is the midnight listening equivalent of staring into the void and smiling beatifically as it stares right back into you. Two of music’s undeniable geniuses of songwriting and soundscaping, together at their peak. What a night this will be.



SEPTEMBER
behind even as she heads down a more organic, pastoral path. Dreamlike and occasionally disorientated, her songs have a campfire cosiness to them but owe as much to the dark, droning atmospherics of Broadcast. Fabulous stuff.

THURSDAY 2nd
MAXIMO PARK: O2 Academy – Truck Store continue where they left off pre-pandemic by hosting release-linked shows in town, in Maximo Park’s case, seventh studio album ‘Nature Always Wins’. The Newcastle indie survivors’ last appearance in Oxford was at 2018’s Common People in South Park but they’ve been through town a fair few times over the years and remain an enduringly entertaining act, not least for frontman Paul Smith’s quirky rock star quality, an action-packed, literate anti-hero in the vein of Morrissey or Jarvis Cocker whose onstage mania perfectly reflects the bug-eyed spikiness of the band’s best songs, songs like long-time favourite ‘Apply Some Pressure’, a bona fide indie disco anthem, all post-punk angles and restless pop energy. If they have an air of cult faves about them it’s easy to forget that 2007’s ‘Our Earthly Pleasures’ sold over two million copies, so that’s quite a big cult, and seven albums in, they’re not just surviving but thriving.
LEST WE FORGET + ARIMEA + 13 BURNING: The Bullingdon – Back-into-action for intricate local tech-metallers Lest We Forget at tonight’s Dancing Man promotion; they’re joined by fellow local heavyweights Arimea and 13Burning.
OPEN MIC: Tap Social – Fortnightly open session.
OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon – Weekly open session.

FRIDAY 3rd
THE WENDY JAMES BAND: O2 Academy – The one-time Transvision Vamp singer tours her most recent album, the expansive, eclectic ‘Queen High Straight’, a double opus that mixes up jazz, rock, psych-pop, soul, country and some of her old band’s indie glam, taking influences from the likes of Squeeze, Madness and The Stooges along the way and aided and abetted by former Oxford guitar genius James Sedwards. Expect a couple of TV hits along the way.
DARIUS SYNOSSIAN: O2 Academy – Heavy duty 90s-style house sounds from the veteran DJ and producer.
LOW ISLAND: The Jericho Tavern – Sold-out show from the local electro-pop quartet, finally out in the real world to be able to play their debut album ‘If You Could Have It All Again’ in full, the two-time *Nightshift* cover stars’ bubbling, club-friendly sound adding a house sheen to classic synth-pop.
MAKE EMO GREAT AGAIN: The Bullingdon – Emo club night.

THE BRITPOP BOYS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – 90s hits, from Blur and Oasis to all them other ones.
THE MAGPIES: Harwell Village Hall – Transatlantic folk trio The Magpies, only now being able to properly tour last year’s acclaimed album ‘Tidings’, the band featuring Celtic Connections Danny Kyle Award-winning singer, guitarist and banjo player Bella Gaffrey alongside claw hammer banjo player Kate Griffin and fiddler Holly Brandon, together their close-harmony singing bridging the gap between Americana and contemporary Celtic folk music.
SINGALONG BEATLES WITH TREV WILLIAMS: Rose Hill Community Centre (10am) – Kids singalong session.

SATURDAY 4th
WE ARE NOT DEVO: O2 Academy – Tribute to the Akron, Ohio pioneers, whose uptight, quirky mix of art-rock, electro-pop and post-punk has been hugely influential but whose sound remains unique. Expect fan faves – ‘Girl You Want’; ‘Whip It’; ‘Jocko Homo’ – as well as cult classics from their peerless catalogue.
SEMPER VERA + SHAVEN PRIMATES + STEVE WINCH: The Bullingdon – A night of local prog rock, including epic electronics’n’riff-heavy crew Shaven Primates, taking inspiration from Tool, King Crimson and Porcupine Tree.
BACK TO THE 80s: The Bullingdon – 80s retro club night.
KWASSA KWASSA DJs: Tap Social – Congolese-flavoured dance tunes.
CHRIS LESLIE + DOLLY MAVIS: Wychwood Folk Club – Fairport and Feast of Fiddles star Leslie brings his skillz to Wychwood Folk Club with support from local folk-pop singer/guitarist Dolly Mavis.

SUNDAY 5th
RAIL SALE FOR CHANGE: Tap Social (2-11.30pm) – A full day of live music and DJs, alongside a clothing sale in aid of refugees’ rights charity Safe Passage International, with soulful hip hop from Inner Peace Records’ Rawz and Tiecie; Cumbia, salsa, Afrobeat and European dance from recent Oxford arrival French Flavour; tribal house from Harrison; house jazz, techno and disco from Bristol’s Ramos, and Deep Cover DJs.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (4-6pm) – Classic rock and blues covers from the veteran local guitarist and his band.

MONDAY 6th
TUESDAY 7th
SLOWTHAI: The Bullingdon – Sold out show from the ‘Nothing Great About Britain’ grime and rap star, finally out on tour to showcase his more refined, often soulful Number 1 second album ‘Tyron’.

WEDNESDAY 8th

THURSDAY 9th
CONCORD DIVE: The Bullingdon
80s LIVE: The New Theatre – Big stage renditions of 80s hits, including Wham, Culture Club, Rick Astley, Madonna, Duran Duran, Soft Cell, The Human League, A-Ha, Tears for Fears and more
OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 10th
DUALERS: O2 Academy – Ska and reggae from Croydon’s enduring outfit, formed back in 1999 by brothers Tiber and Si Cranston, themselves sons of renowned 60s ska DJ Bill Cranston. After Top 40 hits in 2004 with ‘Truly Madly Deeply’ and ‘Kiss On the Lips’, they continue to tour, despite the departure of Si back in 2010.
CAVETOWN: The Bullingdon – Dreamy, gentle-natured indie pop and ukulele balladry from Cambridge bedroom artist and Youtube sensation Robin Skinner, touring his appropriately-titled ‘Sleepyhead’ album.
REGGAETON PARTY: The Bullingdon
KANDA BONGO MAN: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington – The Kwassa Kwassa

Friday 17th
HANDS OFF GRETTEL: The Bullingdon
Like so many other bands, Hands Off Gretel’s best laid plans were rent asunder by Covid, so this month sees the Barnsley-formed band finally touring 2020’s ‘Angry EP’ 18 months late after several rearrangements. More time for all that finely-honed fury to fully ferment, ready to be shaken up and showered on crowds across the country. Cos angry is what Hands Off Gretel are, from the splenetic ‘Don’t Touch’ to the raw and raucous ‘She Thinks She’s Punk Rock’n’Roll’, their songs are short, very sharp explosions of grunge-infused punk, the band equally colourful and caustic, venomous and vulnerable, singer/guitarist Lauren Tate a lava-throated one-woman storm as she takes on the themes of loneliness, sexism and womanhood head-on and with no prisoners taken. Mudhoney and Hole’s earlist and most aggressive songs might be a decent touchpoint, as might the mighty Babes in Toyland, but Tate’s voice and songs also call to mind the fabulous Daisy Chainsaw and even late-90s London grungers Cay. They also knockout a respectably riotous ‘Territorial Pissings’ and really, it’s all a bit by-the-by thinking about what’s come before or might come after when you’re in the eye of the storm. So just take your coat off and prepare to get soaked in the spirit of rock and roll.



King makes a return journey into the Oxfordshire countryside after his show in Uffington in 2016, the veteran Congolese showman having revitalised Congolese rumba through the 80s and 90s, become a firm favourite with John Peel and earned himself shows at WOMAD, Queen Elizabeth Hall and more before leaving these shores to live in South Africa. As a wise man once said, “if Kanda Bongo Man can’t make you dance, call an ambulance – you must be dead or dying.”

SATURDAY 11th
JODY & THE JERMS: The Jericho Tavern – Sunshiney, folk-tinged indie fuzz and jangle in the vein of Kirsty MacColl, Blondie and The Primitives from this month’s Introducing stars.
FRONT ROW FESTIVAL: Fritwell Playing Fields (11am-11pm) – The family-friendly all-dayer returns, with live music from Jack Fletcher; Jamie Felton; Little Strange; Frets & Strings; Graeme James; Two Revived; Stables; Maria Healey; Amber Kelland, and more.
COMMUNITY DAY & OPEN MIC: Rose Hill Community Centre (1-4pm) – Trev Williams hosts an open mic session as part of the community day.

SUNDAY 12th
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (4-6pm) – The local party-starting stars launch their new album ‘Fiesta d’Amor’, continuing to mix up blues, rock, ska, folk, calypso-pop, flamenco and funk into a heady brew.
FASTLOVE: The New Theatre – George Michael’s life and music on the big stage.

MONDAY 13th
BREABACH: Nettlebed Folk Club – After a year and a half of virtual gigs, Nettlebed’s legendary folk club settles back into its weekly routine with the return of the Scottish-flavoured folk dance outfit, winners of the 2016 Scottish Traditional Music Awards Best Folk Act and Album of the Year winners, playing songs, tunes and step dances from their ‘Astar’ album, on bagpipes, fiddle, flute and guitar.

TUESDAY 14th
NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS: The New Theatre – The Dark Lords of baroque musical bleakness perform recent joint album ‘Carnage’ and more – *see main preview*
FLYTE: The Bullingdon – Soft-centred indie rocking with its heart in 1970s California from London’s Flyte, previous tour support to Bombay Bicycle Club, and out on tour to promote new album ‘This Is Really Going To Hurt’, channelling the influences of Grizzly Bear, Bon Iver and Elliot Smith at times.

WEDNESDAY 15th
VACCINES ACOUSTIC: O2 Academy – Insert joke here about the band that saved not only rock and roll but the entirety of humanity. Truck Store host tonight’s acoustic show as the band celebrate the tenth anniversary of debut album, ‘What Did You Expect From the Vaccines’ and recent covers EP ‘Cosy Karaoke Volume 1’.
THE WANDERING HEARTS: The Bullingdon – Sometimes epic, sometimes intimate and emotive Americana from the British country/folk band whose recent self-titled album looks set



Saturday 25th
BEABADOOBEE: O2 Academy

It feels weird to think that it wasn’t even two years ago we saw Beabadoobee playing at the Bullingdon as part of a Dirty Hit Records package tour, but obviously there’s a been a bit of a barren spell gig-wise since that show. Not such barren times for Beatrice Kristi Laus, who to all intents and purposes *is* Beabadoobee though. For starters she’s been installed as BBC 6Music’s Artist in Residence, following in the esteemed footsteps of St Vincent; last year’s debut album ‘Fake It With Flowers’ hit the Top 10, and she now counts her Youtube views in the millions now rather than a few thousand. If all that isn’t enough, Harry Styles and Taylor Swift are fans and labelmate Matt Healey has leant a helping hand or two along the way. Born in 2000, Kristi capture the lo-fi pop magic of the 90s, falling into place somewhere between Pavement and Lush, with a fairy dusting of The Sundays on perfect moments like recent single ‘Last Day on Earth’. She claimed she wants to be the musician her 15-year-old self needed and her post-grunge confessionals speak to anyone enduring teenage trauma. Throw in plenty of shoegazey spangle and an unadulterated sense of wonder at the world and Beabadoobee are the pop band absolutely everyone needs. After the brightest of career starts was halted in its tracks, it’s time to watch Beabadoobee really soar.

to propel the band beyond the folk-roots scene as it adds elements of Fleetwood Mac and The Cranberries to their rustic sound, notably in recent single ‘Dolores’, an ode to the late Cranberries singer.

THURSDAY 16th
NUBIYAN TWIST: The Bullingdon – Summer party vibes from the twelve-strong London/Leeds/Oxford collective, mixing up jazz, hip hop, brassy funk, soul, Latin dance, tropical pop, samba, Afrobeat and dub, with singer Nubiya Brandon, channelling Etta James, Ms Dynamite and Sade.
BLACK WATER CONSPIRACY + THESE WICKED RIVERS: O2 Academy – Ireland’s heavy duty blues rockers head out on tour to promote new album ‘Two Tails & the Dirty Truth of Love & Revolution’, kicking out a classic rock and roll sound inspired by The Rolling Stones, The Faces and Black Crowes.
PALOMA FAITH: The New Theatre – Big-lunged retro-soul, breezy modern pop, political polemic and cheery onstage chat from the London singer, on tour to promote sixth album ‘Infinite Things’.
ELIZA CARTHY & RESTITUTION: The North Wall – The multi-award-winning star of the English folk scene returns to play songs from



Saturday 25th

THE BLINDERS:

The Bullingdon

Can't beat a bit of theatrical swagger in rock and roll and Blinders singer Thomas Haywood looks like the sort of bloke who's single handedly trying to fuse Jaz Coleman, Iggy Pop and Gene Simmons into a single entity in his quest to Make Rock Matter again. The band's debut Oxford show at The Cellar in 2018 revealed a band prepared to give it everything and a bit more in front of even the most sparsely populated venue. That's something they were already leaving behind before Covid got in their way with the band touring with with Cabbage and playing at Reading and Leeds Festivals, as well as regular radio play. The trio grew up in Doncaster and were inspired to form a band by semi-local heroes Arctic Monkeys but you'd barely notice it, their provincial upbringing simply fermenting the rage they now pour into songs like 'L'etat C'est Moi' and 'Swine' – with its "There is no hope" refrain. This is dished out in the form of dark, dense, sludgy punk rock that touches on Killing Joke's militant industrial rock, Glitterstomp, psychedelia and even some dirty Cramps-like gothabilly. With last year's 'Fantasies of a Stay at Home Psychopath' following their nominally concept debut album, 'Columbia', the band are finally allowed back out on another extensive UK tour, earning a reputation as one of the most intense live bands around.

her 2020 album 'Restitute', her first solo album of traditional songs in 14 years.

OPEN MIC: Tap Social

OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 17th

HANDS OFF GRETTEL: The Bullingdon – Fire up the Angrymobile – Barnsley's grunge warriors are coming to town – *see main preview*

FELL OUT BOY + THE BLACK CHARADE

+ WE AREN'T PARAMORE: O2 Academy

– Triple dose of rocking tribute action, with Fall Out Boy, My Chemical Romance and Paramour.

SATURDAY 18th

BILLIE MARTEN: The Jericho Tavern – Already sold-out show from North Yorkshire's Billie Marten, touring her third album, 'Flora Fauna', her husked vocals and fragile, understated musical style reflecting her love of Nick Drake, Joni Mitchell, Joan Armatrading and John Martyn.

MUSICAL MEDICINE: The Bullingdon – Nu-

disco, funk and disco house club night with Jive Talk.

PEERLESS PIRATES + CAPTAIN KUPPA-T & THE ZEPPELIN CREW: The Port Mahon

– Very welcome return to action for high seas rockers The Peerless Pirates with their timber-shivering blend of classic rockabilly, spaghetti western, 80s indie and more. A capella steampunk songsters Captain Kuppa-T support.

DAMN GOOD REASON: Fat Lil's, Witney – Heavy rock covers.

GREAT BARN FESTIVAL: Great Coxwell

– Live music, theatre and storytelling in aid of charity, including a set from The Factory Lights.

SUNDAY 19th

MONDAY 20th

TOM GRENNAN: O2 Academy – The likably laddish troubadour returns to tour this year's second album 'Evering Road', a lockdown Number 1, the Bedford born-and-raised singer an alternately weather-beaten and smoothly soulful crooner and hollerer who's been compared to Rag'N'Bone Man, Paolo Nutini and Jamie T in his short time so far – blokey and bluesy in equal measure. Having escaped his home town after being badly beaten up and moving to London, he's sung for Chase and Status, Charli XCX and grime MC Bugzy Malone on his way to becoming very much a star in his own right.

JOHN McCUSKER BAND: Nettlebed Folk Club – Renowned fiddle player McCusker returns to Nettlebed's legendary folk club with his own band, featuring Ian Carr, Sam Kelly, Helen McCabe and Toby Shaer, McCusker himself celebrating 30 years of making music this year.

TUESDAY 21st

RYAN McMULLAN: The Jericho Tavern – Northern Ireland's Ryan McMullan opened for Ed Sheeran on his 2017 European tour and if you like that kind of stuff, well, here you go, have some more.

WEDNESDAY 22nd

THURSDAY 23rd

CUT CAPERS + SHORT WAVE: O2 Academy – Vintage swing, brass, soul grooves, funk and hip hop from Bristol's nine-strong Cut Capers, out on tour to promote their album 'Metropolis' after the postponement of their 2020 shows.

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN: The New Theatre – Return to town for the big-stage tribute to the legendary label, featuring back to back classics from Marvin Gaye; Diana Ross; Stevie Wonder; The Temptations; The Supremes; The Four Tops; Martha Reeves; The Jackson 5; Lionel Richie; Smokey Robinson, and more.

OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 24th

SKINDRED + ROYAL REPUBLIC: O2 Academy – Newport's Skindred return to town after their headline show here in 2018, back then the band celebrating two decades together with the release of their seventh album, 'Big Tings', a UK Metal Chart Number 1, mashing up metal, punk, hip hop and reggae into an adrenaline rush party mix. World-wide they sold half a million copies of their first two albums, 'Babylon' and 'Roots Rock Riot', and toured with Korn, Gogol Bordello, Disturbed and Papa Roach, yet remain something of a cult concern. Live they are explosive and command a crowd like few other

bands around. Much of this is due to enigmatic frontman Benji Webb, an alternately genial and ferocious host. Obvious comparisons have thus been drawn to Bad Brains but Skindred really exist in that genre-jumping world of acts like Living Colour, Soulfly and System Of A Down, taking roots music into the realms of the heavy. **CATENARY WIRES + PETE ASTOR + EUROPEAN SUN: Fusion Arts** – Oxford indie legends Amelia Fletcher and Rob Pursey, whose time together in Talulah Gosh and Heavenly helped kickstart Oxford's music scene as we know it in the 80s and 90s, return to their spiritual home with their current band Catenary Wires, their latest album, 'Birling Gap', examining the spirit of Englishness in the wake of Brexit, the music still steeped in that classic indie jangle they first pioneered and taking inspiration from the likes of The Mamas & Papas, Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra and Broadcast, dreamy and idealistic but steeped in cynicism for the direction the country has moved in recent times. Support at tonight's Divine Schism show comes from another indie legend – Pete Astor, former frontman of The Loft and The Weather Prophets.

MEGZZ: The Bullingdon – jazzy r'n'b in the vein of Jorja Smith and Pip Millett from the local singer.

THE EPSTEIN + THE DEADBEAT

Thursday 30th

POM POKO:

The Jericho Tavern

Idiosyncratic, expectation-defying, wayward and weird. A few of the myriad attempts to capture the gleeful musical abandon that makes up Pom Poko's music. Frankly there's little in this world or the next that really comes close to Oslo's brightest, shiniest and most *fun* band. But maybe you could try frothing up the essences of Cardiacs, Deerhoof, John Coltrane and The Breeders, feeding it to a musical rainbow unicorn and trying that on for size. It wouldn't fit, because Pom Poko don't, but it'd be the best fun ever, right? Right! Having utterly charmed us with their 2019 debut 'Birthday', championed by Marc Riley, the band, led by gleeful glittery human bathbomb Ragnhild Fangel, Pom Poko have come back harder and even more unpredictable with new album 'Cheater': pop music that's childlike at heart but bloody damn clever at the same time. Music that stops on a sixpence, jaywalks into whatever genre stream it fancies and never loses sight of the idea that you should be singing the tunes in your head for days after, even if you tie your brain in knots doing so. What else do you expect from a band named after an animated raccoon dog? So get your jazz-grunge, art-pop, Afro-funky space-disco dancing boots on and wobble your head down to tonight's Divine Schism/Freak Scene joint promotion. You can be sensible and boring some other time, tonight is for serious fun.



APOSTLES: The Handle Bar – Local alt.folk heroes The Epstein come out of hibernation to make it widescreen and rustic alongside indefatigable country soul and rebel blues stars The Deadbeat Apostles. **BLOOD YOUTH: The Jericho Tavern** – Want to fully blow those lockdown cobwebs into the sea? Well here's your best bet, in the form of Yorkshire's belligerent bruisers Blood Youth, touring new single 'Cell', a serious escalation of their early material, a claustrophobic, cathartic bombardment of metalcore shock and awe that should find any ideas of social distancing lying face down on the Tavern's floor.

SOUL SISTA: The Bullingdon – Grand theft disco club night.

BOSSAPHONIK DJ: Tap Social – World jazz dance, from Latin to African via the Balkans and more.

SATURDAY 25th

BEABADOOBEE + MAC WETHA: O2 Academy – Bea Kristi brings her band back to town for an already sold-out show having played in town at The Bullingdon back in 2019 – *see main preview*

THE BLINDERS: O2 Academy – Theatrical rock fervour from the Yorkshire trio on tour – *see main preview*

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS: The New Theatre – Port Isaac's male voice singing group make a return trip to Oxford after their show at thePlayhouse in 2018. Formed in the north Cornwall fishing village in the mid-90s, the group have kept old, often ancient, shanties, sailors working songs and songs about the sea alive, bringing them to new generations and earning themselves a well deserved place in the contemporary folk scene, collaborating with Show of Hands among others along the way and inspiring a new generation of shanty singers.

GRAVID + CHALK HORSES + FIRE HEALER + MOTHDROP: The Jericho Tavern – A night of psychedelia in its myriad forms with psych-rock from Gravid; psychedelic EDM from Mothdrop, trippy folktronica from Chalk Horses and multi-instrumental improv from Fire Healer. **THE LIQUID ENGINEERS + THE MAN MACHINE: The Corn Exchange, Witney** – Double dose of synth-pop tribute action with Gary Numan tribute act The Liquid Engineers and Kraftwerk classics from The Man Machine.

HIDDEN SONGS: Broad Meadow – Liminal Creative team up with Oxford Contemporary Music for a music and art installation, bringing to live the sounds of nature amid a series of sculptures. Runs all day today and tomorrow, with free entry.

SUNDAY 26th

THE STAVES: O2 Academy – Sisters Emily, Camilla and Jessica Staveley-Taylor return to Oxford with their winsome, pristine close-harmony folk songs for the first time since 2016 as they tour new album 'Good Woman'. Occasionally polite their music may be, but at their best they're mesmerising, crystalline, graceful and often hypnotic, drawing a line between the English folk songs of Sandy Denny

and its American Laurel Canyon cousin, while live the sisters are more playful and potty-mouthed than their double-barrelled surname might suggest. **THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER vs WILLIAMS: The New Theatre** – The Manchester Concert Orchestra, conducted by Robert Emery, performs classic filmscore pieces from the titans of the art, including music from *Gladiator*; *Superman*; *Harry Potter*; *Jurassic Park*; *Star Wars*; *Indiana Jones* and *Inception*.

HIDDEN SONGS: Broad Meadow

MONDAY 27th

LONDON GRAMMAR: O2 Academy – Already sold-out show from the London trio, still walking their gloomy, glacial pop road on new album 'Californian Soil' with Hannah Reid's breathless balladry speckled with trip hop and trance glitter. **MIRANDA SYKES & HANNAH MARTIN: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Show of Hands singer and multi-instrumentalist Miranda Sykes returns to the folk club she is a patron of, teaming up with Edgelarks' Hannah Martin for a night of traditional and contemporary English folk songs.

TUESDAY 28th

YARD ACT: The Bullingdon – Brilliantly spiky and caustic post-punk and indie from Leeds' Yard Act, in the lineage of The Fall; Sultans of Ping FC; I, Ludicrous, and Stump.

WEDNESDAY 29th

JAMIE CULLUM: The New Theatre – For anyone worried that the return of gigs is a bit too exciting, remember there's always stuff like Jamie Cullum.

THURSDAY 30th

MARTHA GUNN + NIERRA CREEK: The Bullingdon – Drama-laden sleek-pop in the vein of 'Rumours'-era Fleetwood Mac from Brighton's Martha Gunn, touring new album 'Something Good Will Happen'. **POM POKO + MANDRAKE HANDSHAKE: The Jericho Tavern** – Superb sunbeam pop abstraction from Oslo's funky raccoon dogs – *see main preview* **EDDI READER: St. Barnabas Church** – The one-time Fairground Attraction singer and guitarist continues her journey into Celtic folk music, including 2014 Irish language album 'Vagabond'.

DAVID ESSEX: The New Theatre – Return of the enduring pop idol, once a teen pin-up, now more of an object of gentle desire for ladies of a certain age, but with a very decent catalogue of top hits behind him, including the timeless 'Silver Dream Machine' and the actually brilliant 'Oh What A Circus', though recent years have seen a shift into softer balladry. **OPEN MIC: Tap Social** **OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**

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TIGER MENDOZA / OCTAVIA FREUD / MEANS OF PRODUCTION / BRUNO MUERTE

The Bullingdon

Nightshift's first gig back since Covid first wiped out live music and it's appropriate that tonight's show features four electronic acts who could be soundtracking some post-apocalyptic movie.

Bruno Muerte's all-action guitar'n'synth gallop is made for chases over vast wastelands, pursued by rapacious alien hordes or charging through derelict neon-lit alleyways *a la* Arnie in *The Running Man*, Roberto Bini's squalling guitar journeys adding to the visceral thrill of it all, although keyboard guy Stefano Maio looks like he's having far too good a time on stage to be in mortal danger. "It's really great to be back!" he exclaims and the raucous cheer from the crowd is all the confirmation we need.

By comparison Means of Production are hiding out Armageddon underground, several feet of brutalist concrete between them and the horrors outside. Appropriately they open with 'Named Storms', dark but decidedly funky post-punk-laden electro-pop and we picture near-future Ballardian skyscrapers and underpasses. This is the soundtrack to the scene in *War of the Worlds* where our hero is hiding in the cellar as sinister red weed grows across the devastated land, though Jeremy Day's pylon projections over Tim Day's ravey electro-primitism evoke the eerie ambience of cult 70s sci-fi series *The Changes* as soundtracked by Cabaret Voltaire and Felix da Housecat.

A more 90s vibe about Octavia Freud who sound like the band you'd often see performing in the obligatory nightclub scene in a dystopian cyberpunk flick where everyone wears black leather and sunglasses indoors. Their meeting point of Happy Mondays and My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult gets us to wondering if there's such a things as Cyberbaggy before they lunge into something more Underworld and close with a spectacularly good remodelling of Spacemen 3's 'Revolution'.

Tiger Mendoza's host of collaborators could fill the Bullingdon but tonight most of their vocal contributions are hidden within his array of futuristic gadgets and synths. He does have

guests with him, not least Mila Todd whose epic, soulful vocal on fantastic drum&bass-heavy set closer 'Oppressor' is a tour de force performance from one of the best singers in town, while Deadbeat Apostles' Mike Ginger brings some serious blues hollerin' to 'Easy Tiger'. Infused with jazz exotics and hip hop, and Ian De Quadros' electronics bolstered by Dan Clear's driving metal guitar, this is music for vast cityscapes, gaudy advertising holograms throwing shards of light onto filthy streets, an industrial nightmare where the only escape is to dance.

And for all the darkness of much of the music tonight, the overriding feeling is one of celebration – the music is back. The apocalypse isn't over yet by any stretch, but the humans are fighting back, and they're winning – with the aid of some seriously heavy-duty machinery.

Dale Kattack

ARLO PARKS

O2 Academy

So here we are again. After 17 long months the O2 is very much back in action. Seeing the door staff smiling at everyone like a long-lost friend is one of the few signs that the dark days of lockdown ever happened. James are tuning up downstairs but up here a long sold-out crowd are here early to see arguably the biggest breakthrough act since things went weird last spring.

And Arlo Parks doesn't disappoint. She emerges to a huge roar and breezes around the stage in one of her trademark flowery shirts, clearly loving the limelight. The band are tight, complementing and developing the jazz-tinged feel of the album, except that the drummer isn't shy about giving his kit a good bashing. At first this comes as a welcome alternative to the LP's rather restrained production and drum sound, but as time goes on it occasionally overpowers the unshowy subtlety of her singing style.

But ultimately it's all about the songs, and how they've touched so many people as only great songs can. They ride that fine line between emotive and mawkish, cathartic and self-obsessed, always striking just the right balance. It's almost frightening that she's able to pull this off at only 21, and points the way to a stellar future. Signing with a label like Transgressive

that seems to put artistic integrity above commercial interests can only be positive.

'Black Dog' is maybe the best example of her songwriting skills and, of all the torrent of recent songs dealing with issues around mental health, stands out like a beacon by looking the subject right in the eyes: "It's so cruel, what your mind can do for no reason... At least I know that you are trying, but that's what makes it terrifying". Yet the song itself is beautiful, catchy and anything but depressing. The more upbeat 'Too Good' also sounds great, even without the multitracked vocals of the recorded version.

So what is it like to be back in the heat and cheek by jowl proximity of a proper gig? Really rather great is the answer. The experience of shared enjoyment and excitement of being a few feet from musicians you love is something we've all dreamt of returning to for far too long. So what if someone keeps standing on your toe, or the singing along threatens to drown out the person we've paid good money to listen to? Arlo puts it best herself in her introduction to 'Black Dog': "when you guys are having a moment and feeling low, remember this day when we're all singing and shouting together, and none of us were alone, we've got this community this little family that's so loving... remember this moment, you're not alone".

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WHAT’S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it’s AIDEN CANADAY from DIVINE SCHISM, and he’s an INDEPENDENT GIG PROMOTER

What’s your occupation? “Outside of working for WeGotTickets I run shows in Oxford under the name Divine Schism and I’ve started a small record label too. I run the label with James Cuning - it was us two and Andrew Grillo who originally started promoting gigs as Divine Schism in 2011. It’s mainly just me running the shows now although the three of us work together on the annual all dayer If Not Now, When?”

How long in the job? “10 years now but I think it started to feel more like a job from 2018 onwards as I ran about 80 shows over two years before lockdown. It feels like a very underpaid job to be honest, a beautiful hobby.”

What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? “It’s all pretty ordinary – constantly writing hundreds of emails. I make all the posters by hand and go round town popping them in shops and pubs that’ll have them.”

What’s been the biggest highlight so far? “Meeting people, making friends from all over the world and allowing people the freedom to perform! I cried with happiness when Damo Suzuki played in Oxford alongside members of Lucy Leave, Flights of Helios and the Cooling Pearls in 2019: a beautiful, heavenly 90 minutes.”

And the lowlight? “Seeing many venues close down, making it a lot harder to put shows on. The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre felt like our



spiritual home for 18 months and now it’s being turned into student digs. Fusion Arts is going soon as well and The Cellar and Wheatsheaf have gone recently. Though I do think these things allow us to prosper in other ways, find new spaces and such, so stay positive!”

How much and how did Covid affect your job? “I haven’t run a real show since 6th March 2020; the first one back is on the 1st September – Aoife Nessa Frances at Fusion Arts. I spent most of 2020 running monthly online shows with Freak Scene via our Instagram pages called RemOHte Community and raising funds for Young Women’s Music Project. That was super fun and now we’re edging back into the promoting world co-promoting all our shows together which is nice.”

Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist? “Lucy Leave! I moved to Oxford for Radiohead in my late teens but Lucy Leave have captured my musical heart. Such people! Such

ideas! Such minds! They’re the reason we started the Divine Schism label.”

What’s the single most important piece of advice you’d give to someone wanting to do your job? “Be nice, go your own way, sing your own songs and make your own posters and don’t be pushed about. We started promoting gigs to put on our own bands really and it’s grown from then so don’t be afraid to put on your own show.”

Who’s the most awkward person you’ve ever had to deal with in your job? “That would be telling, though they are getting more and more popular since I told myself I’d never work with them again.”

When was the last time you heard genius? “In Oxford it has to be Lucy Leave’s album ‘Everyone Is Doing So Well’ and on a wider scale, the Adrienne Lenker album ‘Songs & Instrumentals’ is a genuine life-long contender that you could keep in your pocket and rustle in your hands to keep you safe from anything.”

Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work? “I’d like to think not but I probably have.”

Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what? “I’m happy running shows on the side; if it was full time I may not love it so much. I’d love to be a full time ceramicist.”

Do you consider your job glamorous? “Not really. I love meeting people and watching live music but sweating in a venue basement and drinking three pints a night is far from glamorous.”

What’s your favourite thing about Oxford’s music scene? “The people and the community. That’s what I immediately missed with the lockdowns. Everyone feels different things from live music but it’s generally a fully positive feeling and when you’re at shows you can really feel it and it makes you more human.”

Dr SHOTOVER: Keeping up with the Steve Joneses

Ah, there you are, Young Jackfruit. Welcome back to the East Indies Club. Pull up a pew. Where am I? Way over here, out in the garden. You can probably see me through the mullioned windows of the saloon bar... I’m the one under the large Oxford AstraZeneca umbrella, in the middle of a rhododendron bush, wearing a tweed facemask. It’s all right, it has a hole in the business end so I can sip my drinks. What’s that? Oh, anything with a straw. Just an uncorked bottle of Chateau Gaviscon will be fine for now. Beddingfield will despatch one of his sanitised elves to bring it out. No, you simply pay the man and stay where you are. I gather you’ve been attending, erm, ‘gigs’ and, ah, ‘discos’ again. So, no need to get too close. How are things in Fondles Nightclub? Have they revived 70s Drug Night? I’ve been missing that one. Had to resort to various substances I found under the stairs in Shotover Towers during lockdown. Either historic samples acquired from Spanish Tony, my deal.. ahem, *personal trainer*, and/ or some good old-fashioned scouring powder. They certainly made watching telly more enjoyable... though I had to switch the box off every time Boorish Jobbson or any of his Tory cronies came on, to avoid a Sex Pistols/Bill Grundy moment. I mean, REALLY! Thank God the stupid arse isn’t in charge of the country. What’s that? He IS?? [Dr S runs inside and boots the East Indies Club TV out of the window]... Where was I? Oh yes, the shrubbery at the end of the croquet lawn. The reception’s much better out here. Cheers!

Next month: We’re so Pritti, oh so Pritti



‘This one doesn’t have Boris Johnson on it’... ‘I’ll take it!’

INTRODUCING....

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

Jody & the Jerms

Who are they?

Jody & the Jerms are a six-piece indie band from Oxford. Niall Jeger (*guitar & vocals*) and Alex Bridge (*drums & percussion*), who knew each other from 00s Oxford band The Anydays, recorded the bones of two songs in Safehouse Studios in August 2019 on an old Juno synth, some guitars and drums, and had a singer lined up who then got a big role in the West End instead, so he never actually joined the band. Instead Niall coerced his wife Jody into the studio who had never sung before, to put a guide vocal down in case another singer ever came along. She agreed but only if she could record ‘Never Going Home’, her favourite b-side from long-forgotten New York shoegazers The Belltower. Within weeks their new version was being played on national radio in Spain and BBC Introducing. The trio added Robert Anwood (*keyboards*) and David Meaden (*bass*), friends who had never been in a band or played much. Jody and the fledgling Jerms had a tour of Spain lined up and UK dates and festivals, but after a sole gig in February 2020 at The Wheatsheaf, Covid hit. Through lockdown, Niall and Jody continued to write, the other Jerms grew into their instruments, and before long the band had recorded an album at Woodworm Studio near Banbury called ‘Deeper’, released in September 2020. This was followed by a bunch of singles and an EP. Most recently West Country singer songwriter Peter James Millson, Niall’s old school buddy, joined on guitar and additional vocals.

What do they sound like?

Classic folk-tinged indie guitar pop of the old school, taking Blondie’s punky sparkle for a drive down sunlit country lanes, The Primitives, Kirsty MacColl and Darling Buds gamboling like spring lambs on the stereo. They sound like summer, innocence and a slightly angsty but carefree fuzziness.

What inspires them?

“Friendship – writing with and for long term friends. The fact that 50% of Jody & the Jerms have never done this before somehow keeps energy, excitement, creativity and fun-levels high.”

Their career highlight so far is:

“All our songs in 2021 have achieved national radio play on some great



shows on 6 Music, Radio X, RTE 1 in Ireland, BBC Wales and Sirius is the States, which has been massive for growing a fan base.”

And the lowlight:

“Cancelling all our shows in March last year was tough but the right thing.”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Ride – their Town Hall gig in 2019 was special.”

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

“‘Parallel Lines’ by Blondie.”

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

“The Jericho Tavern on September 11th. Expect A free glass of Blue Nun as it’s Oxford Wine Festival. And a bouncing, fast-paced set packed full of singles.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Favourite: there are still some really good venues and studios with a long heritage that support new music. Least favourite: ringroad traffic.”

You might love you if you love:

Kirsty MacColl; The Primitives; The Darling Buds; Beach Bunny; The GoGos; Best Coast; Blondie.

Hear them here:

“Spotify, Apple etc for our entire back catalogue of 30+ songs. We’ll have a new vinyl 7” out in October via Bandcamp and record stores too, or from jodyandthejerm.com

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

After 18 months lost to Covid, it’s oddly refreshing to look back 20 years and realise things have quite often been a bit shit.

September 2001 saw two of Oxford’s most popular bands of the era splitting up. **The Animalhouse** – the band formed by ex-Ride men Mark Gardener and Loz Colbert, alongside bassist Hari T and former **Mystics** frontman and Supergrass producer Sam Williams, called it a day as their label BMG delayed the release of their second album. The band’s debut album, ‘Ready To Recieve’ had enjoyed considerable success in Japan and they were a big cult hit in their hometown but once again the music industry lacked patience and foresight. Gone too were **Black Candy**, the local heavyweights who lead Oxford’s rock charge in the late-90s and early-Noughties, regularly playing **Truck Festival** as well as supporting **Rage Against the Machine** at their **Zodiac** show.

Meanwhile the first rumblings that **The Point** (the now legendary venue above the **Cape of Good Hope** on the Plain) was in trouble came with news that Six Continents wanted to turn the venue into a pool room. The place is now a burger grill. The place where **The Strokes**, **The White Stripes**, **Muse**, **Coldplay** and **Catatonia** played their earliest gigs is now a fucking burger grill. Nice one, wankers.

Talking of which, now defunct local commercial radio station **Fox FM** hosted their second, and last, **Party in the Park** in South Park this month featuring a cast of pop hopefuls including **Blue**, **A1**, **N-Trance**, **Honeyz** and **Tymes4** as well as **Right**

Said Fred for some reason, the band back then only derisory for being a novelty act who’d hung around too long rather than a bunch of Covid-denying anti-vaxxers. We await their covidiot co-headline tour with Laurence Fox with barely contained apathy.

10 YEARS AGO

In the wake of **Truck Festival** going into liquidation after its 2011 event, more bad news followed in September with the death of **Alan Cook**, from cancer at the age of 62. The founder of the Popular Music course at Cherwell Valley College was remembered fondly by, among others, **Dive Dive**’s **Nigel Powell**, who spoke of Alan’s “childlike enthusiasm for music”, and **Fixers**’ **Jack Goldstein**, who credited the lecturer as a pivotal figure in his music career.

More positively, local reggae veterans **Dubwiser** released their debut album, ‘A Crack In Paradise’, this month – a mere 20 years after they first started out. The band featured on the cover of *Nightshift* and talked about trying to escape the creative cul de sac that reggae had headed down over the years as well as music as a way of bringing people together and countering racism.

While the likes of **Ghostpoet**; **Richmond Fontaine** and **Toots & the Maytals** provided star quality on the month’s gig line-up, and **Stornoway** played a sold-out show in aid of The Sumatran Orangutan Trust at **The Regal**, it was the last-minute cancellation of **Summer Fayre Festival** in South Park that made the headlines. Organisers blamed a bad weather forecast for the cancellation

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

but in reality a weak line-up, and many acts cancelling over payment uncertainty, were the real reasons.

5 YEARS AGO

Given they released their third album during the pandemic, so we never got to review it, and in the process cemented their place among the elite of global pop, it’s uplifting to look at the cover of September 2016’s *Nightshift* and see **Glass Animals** looking all arty and moody, alongside a stepladder and a cactus. No pineapple, mind. The band were making their second *Nightshift* cover appearance, to coincide with the release of their second album, ‘How To Be A Human Being’, an album of songs written from stories they’d heard on their tours. They talked about touring with St. Vincent and sharing stages with Gruff Rhys and Warpaint, and being allowed to have a go on Paul McCartney’s equipment. With over 200million Spotify plays under their belts even then, Glass Animals had long outgrown The Wheatsheaf, now playing headline tour in the US. Five years on their star is even higher and still going up.

Gig highlights for the month included **Moon Hooch**; **Gary Numan**; **Wild Beasts**, and **The Magic Gang**, at the **O2 Academy**; **Loyle Carner**, **Inheaven** and **Pale Waves** at **The Bullingdon** and **Ulrika Spacek** at **The Cellar**.

In the Introducing section were weirdy pop wobblers **Lucy Leave**, soon to be front cover stars and waxing lyrical about “FX pedals, bassy sounds and painfully screechy trebly sounds”.

JODY

& THE JERMS

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TRACKS

TOP TRACK

CHIIKA

People keep talking about a new, kinder world post-Covid, but those people don't have the job of sifting through piles of Soundcloud links and self-made Youtube videos hoping to hear something that'll shake us out of a torpor brought about by 18 months of sitting on the sofa eating crisps and watching repeats of *A Place In The Sun* as some kind of substitute for actually going on holiday. A year and a half of listening to little beyond extreme experimental metal and Nordic goth-folk (or collaborations between the two) has maybe frazzled our tastebuds but is it too much to hope that the art of songwriting wasn't the chief casualty of the pandemic? Luckily among this month's pile – which includes a few submissions sent in a year ago – is this new nugget of goodness from current *Nightshift* cover star Chiika, one of a small wave of local artists born in pop solitude and only just allowing their music to see the light of day. And this is a properly bright light amid the gloom; 'Natural Nicotine' is a smoothly, smokily soulful slice of r'n'b with a sweet pop edge and enough of a snarl about it to give its demure poppiness some bite. Chiika remembers what too many others here forget – to give us a tune we can carry in our heads for the rest of the day, long after we've finished listening. With a breathless vocal scurry, she mixes pop, r'n'b and hip hop like it's really no effort at all, coming in somewhere around the meeting point of Arlo Parks and Poppy Ajudha and at a succinct two and a half minutes, leaving you wishing there was at least another verse and chorus to come.

PHILIP

MacCONNELL

Maybe that steady diet of noisy extremism – a pretty much perfect soundtrack to the absolute shitshow that has been the entire fucking world these last few aeons – has had a similar effect on us that eating nothing but Carolina Reaper chillies might – making all other food taste lacking in excitement. We crave heat and this song, entitled 'The Library', by singer-songwriter Philip MacConnell, thus feels a bit like, we dunno, Weetabix or budget instant noodles: filling enough but without frisson or fun. The best thing about it is that it keeps semi threatening to turn into Aztec Camera's 'Somewhere In My Heart', but as rendered by a slightly husky busker given free rein over a full recording studio. It doesn't pass the "can

we remember it fifteen minutes later?" test, sadly, and our chief takeaway from it really is that it somehow reminds us a bit of Rat Boy or maybe Gerry Cinnamon.

PALACE CATS

Bands describing their own music is a minefield of hilarity and what-the-fuckery for the most part with musicians somehow imaging they are at the cutting edge of the avant-noise movement when in reality their entire output barely amounts to a particularly rubbish Biffy Clyro b-side. Palace Cats describe themselves as psych-pop but we've listened through to this song, 'Sea Island Cotton', four times now and have failed to detect even a titbit of trippiness. There's a bit of arpeggiating organ in there so perhaps at a stretch they could pass for The Moody Blues from a safe distance but really, you'd have to take a shamanic dose of something serious psychoactive to mark this down as psychedelia. Instead it inhabits a place where smooth 70s yacht rock frots gently against some kind of jazzy r'n'b-tinged pop, all rough edges or sharp corners polished to a safe sheen. It'd be interesting to sit some musicians in front of a series of Rorschach blots and see what they see. Ferocious dragons or fluffy clouds? Come on guys, snap out of that daydream and give us danger!

JACQUARD LOOMS

Oh Christ, as Sergeant Neil Howie might once have exclaimed before agonisingly burning to death inside wicker man, what were we just saying about bands describing their own music? This lot don't just take the biscuit in those stakes, they nab the entire packet and a big slice of cream cake too. "We'd love for you to check this out and hear what you think... in fact we highly recommend that you do as, whilst you've no doubt heard this numerous times before, it really is like no music that's ever been created, and you have our individual words that it will blow your mind!!" Industrial deathcore mariachi marching band music perhaps? Martian future dub? Or maybe something that sound suspiciously like Lloyle Carner and several score other vaguely sensitive and soulful hip hop artists of the last half a decade? We'll leave it to you, dear listener, to decide what the reality is. Oh, it's well produced and actually pretty passably decent in a woozily late-night rap-pop kind of way, truth be told, but building yourself up like that is like taking to the stage to a bombastic soundtrack of Prokofiev's 'Dance of the Knights' before launching into a set of Sam Smith covers. Believe in yourselves

by all means but don't go proclaiming yourself masters of the universe when you're armed with a toy catapult a packet of stink bombs. "If it doesn't blow your minds we guarantee we will never bother you again," they sign off. In which case, it's been mildly pleasant knowing you, chaps.

DJ SPARADISE

We have no idea whatsoever how we got sent this for review since this appears to be a collaboration between Sparadise and now defunct Slovakian Eurovision entries TWiNS, but here we are, the *Nightshift* review pile is a strange place after lying dormant in a puddle of stale wine for the last year or so. We're hoping the vaguely vintage Eurovision connection will make for a bit of kitsch or cheesy but fun pop fun but in reality it's rather bland, overly manufactured house-lite that sounds like it was written for and rejected by Madonna in the early Noughties. It comes, it goes, it leaves no trace. We are neither enlightened nor spiritually diminished. We're just still here and it isn't and as long as that remains the case we're reasonably content.

SAVING CATHREN

Saving Cathren don't boast of being anything they aren't but we're not sure even we quite know what they are or are meant to be. The song, 'The Edge', comes with a lysergic video that mixes up stock photos of protests and general world horrors – Covid, Black Lives Matter and climate change protests etc – with film footage of clouds and waterfalls, so we're not sure if we're meant to be manning barricades and kicking down statues or lying in a hammock on a Goan beach. Musically it's equally muddled, Vocodered vocals and what sounds like a mix of eco-folk protest song, Ibiza house anthem and high street bank advert soundtrack. It's floaty, but a bit militant, but mostly middlingly uplifting, as if someone decided Enya and Snow Patrol should do something together to make everyone feel a bit better about the world. Saying that, it isn't nearly as bad as we've painted it and there's a catchy enough one-line chorus but it does have a habit of just hanging about in the middle distance as if it's waiting for an inspirational quote to soundtrack.

JOE JOE

Joe Joe – so good they named him twice. Or maybe his parents, Mr and Mrs Joe, were a bit lacking on the imagination front when it came to registering him. That could explain his slightly moody musical demeanour. A lo-fi fuzzy trudge

that could, with a few tweaks, be an airy walk in the snow but sounds more like a reluctant wander in the rain through litter-strewn streets. It does build reasonably well, adding layers of guitar fuzz like an old Flying Saucer Attack track, but takes just a tad too long doing so and comes across less like a song, more a mood piece that's summoning the energy to build a tune around itself. So-so from Joe Joe then, but with the hope it might go go in the very near future.

HOTEL

CONTINENTAL

Pandemic and its associated lockdowns has been terrible for bands, unable to meet up to rehearse and record, their places in the pop's playground taken by more nimble solo artists. But they'll be back and we're betting a lot of them will sound much like this lot – as if the government installed an industry standard to rock music by which everyone had to abide and not surpass nor fall beneath. So everyone sounds okay, passable, inoffensive: all those things great music should aspire to. Hotel Continental sound like Self Help if they were filleted of all their vim, vigour, attitude and melodic prowess. Neither spiky and spunky enough to be punk nor melodic enough to be pop. This song is called 'Well Fed', which is entirely appropriate as it just sounds too comfortable and complacent in its averageness and it makes us want to get back on the sofa and eat more crisps rather than head back into a moshpit any time soon.

TOILET TRACK

LOK STOCK

Remember when Pendulum were a thing? Lok Stock do, and aren't we the lucky ones they've decided to remind us of as much. They describe themselves as "an explosive new band" which is actually pretty accurate if you think of explosive in diarrhoea terms. This is is techno-drum'n'bass-hip-hop-stadium-rock fusion at its most bombastic and hollow – all club-friendly climaxes and beat drops that simply don't hit the spot hard or heavy enough. "The world is going crazy / The World is going insane" they repeatedly chant, the wisdom pouring out of them much like all that molten liquid ordure. Coming to a provincial festival near you soon. Don't worry, with any luck there'll be another lockdown and we can get back to our sofa, our crisps and our extreme gothic Nordic folk-metal. Safest for us, safest for bands like Lok Stock.

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Phone: Kate on 01235 845800

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A NEW VIEW **MUSIC** 2021-2022

FRI~20~AUG~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**GOLDIE
LOOKIN CHAIN**

MON~27~SEP~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD **SOLD OUT**

**LONDON
GRAMMAR**

SAT~23~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**MAD DOG
MCRAE**

SAT~13~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

**TANKUS THE
HENGE**

SUN~22~AUG~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

**TWIN
ATLANTIC**
& BLOXX

THU~30~SEP~21
THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD
MARTHAGUNN
& NIERRA CREEK

SUN~24~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
HENGE
& LEIFXMATHI

SUN~14~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
**LEE SCRATCH
PERRY**
& ZAIA
& COUNT SKYLARKIN

WED~25~AUG~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD **SOLD OUT**
IDLES

FRI~01~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**THE
INFLATABLES**
& KING HAMMOND

WED~27~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**EVIL
SCARECROW**

SUN~14~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
ISLANDMAN

THU~02~SEP~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**MAXIMO
PARK**
& PLUS GUESTS

SAT~09~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
**THE CRAIG
CHARLES FUNK
& SOUL CLUB**

FRI~29~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**HOLDING
ABSENCE**
& AS EVERYTHING UNFOLDS
& YOURS TRULY

FRI~19~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
BEARDYMAN
- SHEER VOLUME TOUR

FRI~03~SEP~21
THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD
THE 900
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER
SOUNDTRACK COVER BAND

SUN~10~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
THE SKINTS

SAT~30~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
DUB PISTOLS

TUE~30~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
YOU ME AT SIX

FRI~10~SEP~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
THE DUALERS

FRI~15~OCT~21
THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD
SALEM
& JAMES AND THE
COLD GUN

SAT~06~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**ULTIMATE
COLDPLAY**

FRI~10~DEC~21
THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD
MAKE FRIENDS

WED~15~SEP~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
**THE VACCINES
ACOUSTIC**

SAT~16~OCT~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**RED RUM
CLUB**

SUN~07~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**THE
UNDERCOVER
HIPPIE**

FRI~17~DEC~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**THE PEOPLE
VERSUS**
MATT OWENS (NOAH AND THE WHALE)
// WOUNDED BEAR

FRI~17~SEP~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
**FELL OUT BOY
& THE BLACK CHARADE**
& WE AREN'T PARAMORE

SUN~17~OCT~21
JERICHO TAVERN, OXFORD
CHLOE FOY

SUN~07~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
THE SNUTS
& PLUS GUESTS

SAT~16~APR~22
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**RHYTHM
OF THE 90S**

FRI~24~SEP~21
JERICHO TAVERN, OXFORD
BLOOD YOUTH
& DEATH BLOOMS
& LASTELLE
& LONESOME

FRI~22~SEP~21
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
**FEROCIOUS
DOG**
& TONY WRIGHT (TERRORVISION)
& JAKE MARTIN

THU~11~NOV~21
O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD
**SKINNY
LISTER**
& PLUS GUESTS

FRI~20~MAY~22
O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD
**DUTTY
MOONSHINE
BAND**
& FUNKE AND THE TWO
TONE BABY