

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 309
July
2022

"I get to be on stage instead of just in the audience. One of the people I always thought was so cool as a kid!"

Heading home to
Truck Festival with

Aphra Taylor

Also in this issue:
Introducing **THE AUTUM SAINTS**
KITE FESTIVAL & WOOD
reviewed

At work with **MAC**
TRUCK & CORNBURY previewed

plus all your music news, previews,
reviews and gigs for July

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THE BULLINGDON

JULY 2022

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Friday 1st July
Barricane
London Craffiti
Doors: 7PM

Friday 1st July
Take me to the Deep
Bessasa (Zeitgeist Records)
Jay Love
Finest Wear
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 2nd July
Retro 90s Hits
Ovaproof & DJ Younlinx
DJ Sam
DJ Sec & Wonder
DJ Majikal
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 6th July
Woman's Euros 2022
England vs Austria
Doors: 8PM

Friday 8th July
Emma Hunter
The Peerless Pirates
Captiazn Kuppa T & The Zeppelin Crew
Doors: 7PM

Friday 8th July
Carnival Bounce
A Night of Old School
Garage Legends
Doors: 11PM

Monday 11th July
Woman's Euros 2022
England vs Norway
Doors: 8PM

Thursday 14th July
James Oliver
Doors: 7PM

Friday 15th July
Coth Present
Grudgewood
Underbelly
The Last Rites
Black Tish II
Doors: 7PM

Friday 15th July
Woman's Euros 2022
England vs Northern Ireland
Doors: 8PM

Sunday 17th July
The Rock Project Oxford
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 21st July
John O'Brien Experience
Hello Amnesia
Doors: 7PM

Friday 22nd July
Hurray for the Riff Raff
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 28th July
Open Mic Night FREE ENTRY
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 30th July
Terraforms
Nicky Blackmarket
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 6th August
Semi Detached
Wookie
Doors: 11PM

Friday 19th August
Luis Maldonalle Band
Oxb Band
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 20th August
Sticky Disco
D.A.V.E the Drummer
Bad Boy Pete
Jack Majic
Spaceface. Mr P
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 23rd August
Sports Team
Album Launch Show
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 25th August
Open Mic Night FREE ENTRY
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 25th August
Debbie Bond
Pete Boss & Friends
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 27th August
Terraforms DNB
Doors: 11PM

Friday 9th September
Noahfinnce
Doors: 7PM

Friday 10th September
DIY Class of 2022 Tour
Yard Act
English Teacher
Lime Garden
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 22nd September
Laurence Jones
Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd September
The 900
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 25th September
Jayde Adams:
Men, I Can Save You
Doors: 7PM

Friday 30th September
Katy J Pearson
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 5th October
Ben Poole
Doors: 7PM

Friday 7th October
Cut Capers
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 9th October
Elf Lyons
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th October
Jordan Brookes:
This is Just What Happens
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th October
Semi Detached
TBA
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 16th October
The Trials of Cato
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 20th October
Helen Bauer:
Madam Good Tit
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 20th October
So Fetch
2000s Party
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 23rd October
Rob Auton:
The Crowd Show
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 27th October
Mark Simmons:
Quip Off the Mark
Doors: 7PM

Friday 28th October
Harriet Kemsley:
Honeysuckle Island
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 2nd November
Jerry Sadowitz:
Not for Anyone
Doors: 7PM

Friday 4th November
The People Versus
Doors: 7PM

Monday 7th November
MC Hammersmith:
1 Man 8 Mile
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 10th November
Tankus the Henge
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 10th November
Call Me Maybe
2010s Party
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 16th November
Corky Laing
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 17th November
Tom McGuire & The Brassholes
Doors: 7PM

Monday 21st November
World Cup 2022
England vs Iran
Doors: 12PM

NEWS

Phone: 01865 372255
email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk
Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



SUPERNORMAL FESTIVAL have announced the first batch of names for this summer's event. The leftfield, experimental and underground music and arts festival takes place over the weekend of the **12th-14th August at Braziers Park** in Ipsden. An extensive list of artists announced includes: Adam Fairhill; Ailbhe Nic Oireachtaish; Alison Cotton; Bonne Humeur Provisoire; Bora; Comfort; Dan Johnson; Dischi; Erwan Keravec; Es (*pictured*); Hannah Silva; Helena Celle; Hesska; Human Leather; Imperial Triumphant; J Martin; Jooklo Duo; Kate Carr; Lacrima; Lo Egin; Matekoi; MC Yallah; Mr Lizard; Nightshift; Penance Stare; Pest Control; Prangers; Robert Ridley Shackleton; Secluded Bronte; Shovel Dance Collective; Simon Finn; Sinister Sci-Fi Octopus; Skullmask; Slagheap; Societe Etrange; The Shits; Thee Alcoholics; Tim Goss; Womb/Water, and Yol.

This year's Supernormal is all but sold out now with one final ticket lottery draw for registered fans set to take place, although volunteer roles are still available. More details at: supernormalfestival.co.uk.

PROG FOR PEART returns this month with a two days of prog rock raising money for brain cancer research in memory of Rush drummer Neil Peart. The mini festival runs on **Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd July at The Northcourt** in Abingdon. Friday's bill features sets from Karangtaka; Red Baza; Also Eden; The Gift; The Paradox Twin; The Mighty Ra; Jump, and Shaven Primates. Saturday's line-up is headed by prog legends The Enid, who are joined by Tiger Moth Tales; Stuckfish; The Far Meadow; The Dame; Godsticks; 25 Yard Screamer, and Before We Fall. Tickets for the weekend are available from northcourtmusic.com. Weekend tickets are priced £60 with day tickets for both days available at £40 each; camping tickets are also available.

STORNOWAY's 'Songs From Terra Firma' was voted **Oxford's Greatest Album** in a poll run by **Truck Store** to mark Record Store Day in June. Stornoway's debut beat off competition

from Ride, Radiohead, and Supergrass to take the title. The band, who bowed out with an emotional sold-out show at The New Theatre in 2017 are set to play their first live show in five years when they appear at WOMAD later this summer, with their Twitter teasing possible more shows to come. The full Top 10 as voted for by local music fans was: 1. Stornoway – 'Songs From Terra Firma'; 2. Ride – 'Nowhere'; 3. Ride – 'Going Blank Again'; 4. Radiohead – 'OK Computer'; 5. Radiohead – 'The Bends'; 6. Supergrass – 'In It For the Money'; 7. Radiohead – 'Kid A'; 8. Radiohead – 'In Rainbows'; 9. Supergrass – 'I Should Coco'; 10. Swervedriver – 'Raise'.

OPUS KINK headline this year's **Rusty Bicycle Street Party**. The pub, on **Hurst Street**, hosts its annual free music festival on **Saturday 30th July**. Nice Swan Records signings Opus Kink are joined from midday by Prima Queen, The Pylons, Easter Island Statues, Daze, Tamara, Premium Leisure, Juniper Nights and more.

BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD, continues to showcase local music 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.

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

MELTING POT on Get Radio continue to showcase and celebrate Oxford music on their fortnightly Thursday night shows hosted by Rich and Deadly, as well as hosting regular In The Mix shows with playlists from Oxford music luminaries. Local acts can submit music to be played by emailing info@getmeltingpot.co.uk.

NIGHTSHIFT is always keen to hear from new contributors – reviewers or photographers. If you're enthusiastic about live and new music or feel your favourite stuff isn't being covered in the magazine, get in touch at editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

PLEASE NOTE: AUGUST'S NIGHTSHIFT will be online only due to a lack of gigs across the month and financial constraints. Back in print for September. Deadline for gigs listings for every issue remains the 20th of the month – no exceptions, no mercy.

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A quiet word with

Aphra Taylor



WHEN APHRA TAYLOR *steps on stage at Truck Festival this summer it will feel like a homecoming for her, despite the fact it'll be her Truck debut. Aphra, who turns 20 days before the festival takes place, has been to every Truck since she was born. The festival has shaped her love of music and inspired her to make her own and now she gets the chance to join all those stars she grew up dreaming of emulating.*

“**WHEN I WAS LITTLE I** wasn’t as excited about the music,” recalls Aphra, talking to *Nightshift* about her earliest childhood memories of Truck. “Me and Billy – my younger brother – would get excited about the donut van and circus tent and I remember buying a diabolo with my pocket money and just playing with it the whole weekend. It was also just nice to spend the weekend with my family camping in a field and pottering about to see different bands play. The food has also always been amazing and there are a few food vans from earlier Truck Fests that still go to this day. “I was one of those kids with the light up cowboy hat and blow up guitar; I liked to dress up and dance to the bands in the main field. I remember when my parents took me and my brother to a burlesque show at Truck and all of the people in the tent were like ‘oh god look

at these liberal parents taking their kids to inappropriate shows’. After that I started pole dancing on the poles that held up the tents because I thought it looked cool and was too innocent to know what the connotations of that were. I honestly think it was cool of my parents to take me to stuff like that because it was pretty tame and normalised nudity and self expression for me. “I started getting into the actual music when I was about 10. I remember Pete & The Pirates, who became Telemán, played and I really loved them. My parents bought the album and then we listened to it during car journeys that whole summer. I also remember seeing Public Service Broadcasting and the song ‘Everest’ just struck me and something clicked and I realised I was falling in love with live music.”

APHRA WAS BORN MOLLY Taylor in 2002; Aphra is actually her middle name. “I’ve always thought that it was a lot cooler and more unique than Molly so when I started making music as a solo act I thought it was the perfect name to use. Unluckily, there’s already a musician who goes by just Aphra so I shoved my last name on there to make it different. The name Aphra has been passed down through my Mum’s side for generations. My great grandma was called Aphra and I now own one of her necklaces that I wear almost

every day. It’s also biblical, meaning dust, and the name of the 1600s playwright and poet Aphra Behn. I’ve looked into the name a lot for imagery and metaphors in my songs and the name gets more interesting every time I find a new meaning behind it.”

GROWING UP IN A MUSIC-mad house (her dad Mark worked for Ride for many years and still runs the fan Twitter account Ride, The Network), Molly was exposed to music from the off. “Apparently, as a toddler, my two favourite things were The Stranglers and the *Lazy Town* soundtrack. So many of my earliest memories of music were on road trips during the summer: the Of Monsters and Men debut; Arcade Fire’s ‘The Suburbs’; Maximo Park’s ‘Our Earthly Pleasures’, and I played ‘AM’ by The Arctic Monkeys to death on my iPod. Dolly Parton also featured heavily. “Embarrassingly, I think that the first CD I ever bought was Olly Murs’ ‘Right Place Right Time’ because to a 10 year old those songs were like crack. “In terms of major influences, I remember my dad gave me lots of free downloads from his iTunes and ‘If You Leave’ by Daughter was featured. That album changed my life. It is, however, the saddest collection of songs I have ever listened to, and lots of tears have

been shed over the track ‘Smother’ in particular. Courtney Barnett is another of my big influences and after I saw her perform at Glastonbury festival in 2015, the album ‘Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit’ was played non-stop by 13 year old me. She is the musician that made me want to play music seriously, not just as a hobby. Shortly after seeing her live I joined the Young Women’s Music Project and a year later I was playing Common People festival in a band formed within the project.”

APHRA WILL PLAY THE Veterans & Virgins stage at Truck this year having been picked by BBC Introducing in Oxford alongside several other new local acts, including The People Versus, Tilly Valentine, Slow Drift and Chloe August. Having been to every Truck since she was born, how did it feel when she found out she’d been picked to play?

“It felt amazing! Like, I get to be one of the people on stage instead of just the audience. One of the people on stage that I always thought was so cool as a kid! It also shows how far I have come in terms of confidence as I would never have dreamt of performing to even the smallest group of people when I was younger. I’m just super excited to be on stage at a festival that is basically home to me, and to play to hopefully a more varied audience than usual gigs.”

HAVING GROWN UP WITH Truck Festival, Aphra has myriad formative memories of the event, although not always the best kind. “Once when I was 14 a crowdsurfer fell on my head and my forehead hit the barrier and it cut it open. Blood fell down my face and the security handed me bottles of water to wash it off. I stayed and watched the whole set even though I was hurt because it was Neck Deep playing and I was very far into my pop punk phase at the time. I then went to the medical tent and got it glued up. It was a traumatic yet very fun night and I was in a seriously good mood for someone who had just cut their head open.” It was, however, an early introduction to the realities of festival-going and its associated fun, freedom and culture. “One year it was super muddy. Like

Glastonbury-level muddy. I slowly started giving up on trying to keep my clothes clean because it was so impossible. It was kind of fun to just let go and get smelly and dirty and only care about the next set I was going to see. Seeing my first moshpit also links to that feeling of completely losing control. I realised that adults were also just forgetting everything for that short weekend and living in the moment. It was terrifying seeing all of these grown men practically fighting but it was also very entertaining. “I remember when I saw Cassels play for the first time at Truck in 2019 and I was just blown away. I’ve seen them play loads of shows since then because it was such an amazing set. It was one of the first shows where I really listened to the lyrics while a band was playing. The Big Moon and Pins were good bands to see for a young woman just getting into playing gigs because they were just such cool, talented musicians who could really put on a show.”

PART OF APHRA’S OWN show this year will be a clutch of new songs she has been releasing ahead of Truck, including the excellent single ‘How You Live Your Life’ – the best song she has made so far, capturing the fragile, sleepy-eyed vocal style that brings her confessional songwriting to life so well. It is the follow-up to her debut EP released in 2020, just before lockdown brought her fledgling career to a halt. Those early songs, written when she was just 17 and recorded with family friend Nick Breakspear from the band The Black Hats, were bare-bones and promising; the new material shows a leap in both songwriting and production, this time all done by Aphra herself.

“It was so, so good to get complete creative control. I love Nick a lot and he was a massive help when he produced the first EP, but I think this recent release sounds more like me. I was able to just play around with Logic and learn how to produce over lockdown and it was a really healing experience for me.

“I’m super proud of all the work I put in and rather than rushing to get songs I’d written recorded over weekends, I was given this whole chunk of time to mull over different recordings and versions of the songs I’d written and see what I liked the sound of. I have always written in a very introspective way but this set of songs really focuses on that feeling of dwelling on the past and being utterly consumed by memories which are difficult to sit with. They’re less about how I felt in the moment I was writing them and more about a prolonged feeling that stayed with me through the majority of being stuck inside.”

WHILE THIS YEAR WILL BE Aphra’s Truck debut, she’s earned her spurs on the local live scene with numerous shows before and since Covid lockdown, including a prestigious support slot for Ride’s Andy Bell at The Jericho Tavern. As a young woman learning to play in Oxford and beginning gigging, what does she think the local scene has, and lacks, to help her and others coming through? “I always tell everyone whose only idea of Oxford is the University that it has such a rich music and arts scene. There’s such a sense of community in the Oxfordshire music scene and anyone that plays is really supported and looked after by all of the musicians and promoters. It makes me so sad that some of the great venues are being taken over by the university or being shut down.

“When I was 14 a crowdsurfer fell on my head and my forehead hit the barrier and it cut it open. Blood fell down my face but I stayed and watched the whole set even though I was hurt because it was Neck Deep playing.”

“The Young Women’s Music Project and My Normal, run by Ark-T, were really helpful projects for me to go to as a young musician; not only did they give me a safe space to create music in, but they also gave me lots of performance opportunities! I really want to thank Zahra Tehrani, Mike Smith, and Hannah Bruce for being great mentors to me and supporters of any creative project I worked on at the start of it all. Divine Schism has also given me so many gig opportunities over the years and Aiden Cannaday has been endlessly supportive of my music so I want to thank him for being there from the start as well.

“I think the thing that the music scene lacks is funding; the projects and gig venues would be so much better if there was more money in the music scene. I also noticed, as a young person, that there aren’t many teenagers in the local scene, which made me feel more nervous to start playing shows. “I think in comparison to other places, though, it is a lot easier to get started in the Oxford music scene, playing gigs and getting to know other musicians. The gigs are smaller and the spaces are a lot less judgemental than in London.”

Andy Bell asked you to support him for his Space Station show at The Jericho Tavern; how was that and did he have any sage advice for you? “It was a really great show! I played a gig at the Jericho Tavern when I was like 16-17 and it went really badly because I was so nervous, but this time it was super chill and I felt

really supported by the audience. It was also relatively busy for me as the support act, which was cool. “Andy was also lovely and said that my songs sounded like something he would’ve written at 19. Can’t remember if he had any advice for me but he was very supportive of my music!

BACK TO APHRA’S forthcoming Truck set. Has she got anything special or different planned the occasion? And for anyone who’s never seen or heard her before, what can they expect? “I don’t really know yet to be honest with you. I’ll definitely be playing the new songs, which will all be released before I play the festival. I’ve played them before live but hopefully people would have listened to them before coming to see me so

they might know some of my set. “They can just expect a slightly awkward 20-year-old singer-songwriter who really cares about her lyrical content. I think the lyrics come across more powerfully live. There’s something about performing to and interacting with an audience that changes the way I deliver my vocals or certain sets of words to be more impactful. I like feeling the connection to other people. Some people will probably hate my set but they’ll just leave and go see someone else because that’s how festivals work. But I love it when I make eye contact with people and I can just see in their eyes that they get it.” And who on this year’s line-up are you most looking forward to seeing? “I’ve never seen The Murder Capital live before – I missed their 2019 Truck set – and I absolutely loved their debut. I remember listening to that album non-stop last year on holiday, so I’m really excited that they’re playing. I’ve also never seen Sorry or Yard Act play and I got really into them over the past year as well. “I recently played Are You Listening? festival in Reading and didn’t get to see Peaness play because they were on really late, so I’m glad I have another chance to catch their set.” Truck has changed a lot in so many ways since you began going; what are the biggest changes you’ve noticed? What changes do you think are for the best and anything from the olden days you’d like to see come back?

“I do miss the old Truck a lot as it used to be a tiny indie festival and now it is quite mainstream. I think there was a lot more new stuff to discover in the old days as there were more local musicians playing and a lot less famous acts. I like both versions of the festival though, they’re just different. “I guess I also miss the old stages that were made of Trucks, which is where the name comes from if people didn’t know. Also the shops and stalls used to be a lot more varied and a lot less mainstream festival-like. The crowds are still fun now but it used to be a lot less busy and grim in the camping areas, it was more family friendly back in the day, I would say. “I love Truck no matter what, though, and I am always so excited to go each summer. It made me so sad that I couldn’t go the last few years because of Covid, especially when the lineups have been so strong.”

AFTER TRUCK AND THE new EP release, what comes next for Aphra? She is currently studying for a Fine Arts degree in London. How hard is it to balance studies with writing and playing? “I haven’t written a full song in over a year. I’ve been having a bit of a music block because of how creatively demanding a fine art degree is. I feel as if all of my creativity is going into the visual arts rather than music, but hopefully during the summer I can have some time to recharge. I also love writing in my garden at home so it’ll be good to stay there for a few months and play guitar in the sun. “London can also be a bit of a creativity killer because it is such an exhausting place to live. However, I’ve also found a lot of inspiration in the opportunities to go to stuff there are in the big city. There are always exhibitions to see and gigs to go to, and I even went to see an opera this year. So I feel as if I have lots of material to play around with and I have filled three notebooks with words over this academic year; it’s just about finding the time to get it all written up in song form. My room at home is also probably a better recording space than noisy student accommodation!” And what next for you and Truck? Main stage next? “Well, I guess I have to continue the tradition of going every year now, so I’ll definitely be back! I would love it if my university mates could come with me next year as that would be really fun. Let’s see how my set goes, maybe I’ll be back to play again soon, who knows.”

Aphra plays the Truck Festival Veterans & Virgins stage on Friday at 1.30pm. Hear her at aphrataylor.bandcamp.com

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FOALS

‘Life Is Yours’

(Warner)

Rhythm is king on Foals’ seventh studio album, made in the wake of Edwin Congreave’s departure and the band’s stadium-sized rock opus ‘Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost’.

Foals began life declaring themselves a disco band and here they prove it more than ever, big 80s-style production, funk rhythms and African beats making their way into the songs, which span influences as diverse and unexpected as Duran Duran, Talking Heads and Miami Sound Machine.

‘Wake Me Up’ could be hitting the dancefloor with Talking Heads circa ‘Remain In Light’ and Duran Duran circa ‘Notorious’; ‘2am’ is self doubting, lost but exuberantly funky and compact, while the choppy, uptight guitar on ‘2001’ is begging for a *Miami Vice* scene to soundtrack.

There are moments when you wonder if ‘Life Is Yours’ is simply a love letter to the mid-80s, notably on ‘Flutter’, which moves from its chip-tune opening to become a brassy funk-pop number is the vein of Thomas Dolby’s later work, while Hall & Oates or even Imagination loom over the likes of ‘Looking High’, but beneath the period-sounding big-time production, that fidgety Foals identity always

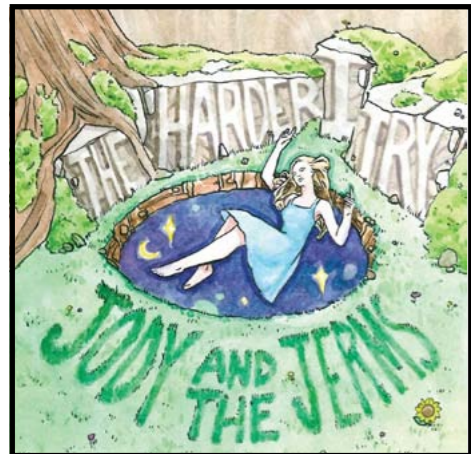


makes itself felt.

If ‘(summer sky)’ gets a bit lost in a funk jam, ‘Under The Radar’ is punchy and more electronic, while ‘The Sound’, perhaps self-consciously from its title, properly gets down and funky in the style of Miami Sound Machine.

‘Life Is Yours’ perhaps lacks the obvious anthems and sing-along moments that Foals’ previous albums have been consistently marked by but it is an album fit to dance to, and as we head into summer, maybe any festivals they are lined up to play could consider replacing mosh pits for neon-lit dancefloors and glitter balls.

Sue Foreman



JODY & THE JERMS

‘The Harder I Try’ /

‘Counting Dreams’

(Self released)

Hot on the heels of their recent second album ‘Shiver’, a brace of songs from Jody & the Jerms. If neither track matches the best of the album, both keep in the mood of that record, confirming the band’s place as top of the local unreconstructed indie jangle tree with the sweetly reserved ‘The Harder I Try’ pitched between the romantic folk-pop of Kirsty Maccoll and the spangle of The Sundays, while ‘Counting Dreams’ has an easier grace, the

guitars again gently dappled but Jody herself sounding more comfortable in her vocal skin and the whole thing bouncing along with a bit of sunshine in its step.

Dale Kattack

KANADIA

‘Wish Away My Time’

(Self released)

A taster single for a new EP in August, itself preceding a full album in November, ‘Wish Away My Time’ deals with the contemplation of time passing and your place in the world and as such it finds Kanadia at their most contemplative and musically restrained, all space and spangle to begin with – faint echoes of Foals’ ‘Spanish Sahara’ in fleeting moments – and holding fire when you expect them to ignite into the bulldozing stadium rock they’re so good at. Each time you think the dam might burst the song marches on at its stately pace, any heavier duty fuzz and bluster kept in the middle distance rather than rained down, and at over five minutes it can leave you feeling like something was meant to happen but didn’t quite arrive; it feels more like something that would work better in the middle-end of an album than a lead single. The deluge will hopefully come with the full EP next month.

Ian Chesterton

OCTAVIA FREUD

‘Land Ahoy’

(Self released)

Few would equate dancing at the Hacienda in its hedonistic acid house heyday with contemplating grief, middle age, long-term illness and the morals of the current prime minister, but that’s Octavia Freud for you. Martin Andrews enjoyed his formative music experiences at the legendary Manchester club and has brought that music into his today where he finds himself fifty, a father and furious with the Teflon-coated shyster with his hand on the country’s tiller.

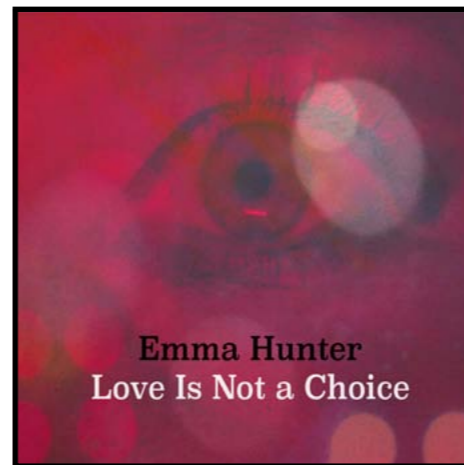
‘Land Ahoy’ is an album rich in variety, intelligence, wit and most importantly tunes that’ll worm their way into your head as you worm your way onto the dancefloor.

While the subject matter is often heavy – remembering a friend who died too young on ‘I Find This Hard’; facing middle age and self worth on ‘50’, and skewering Boris Johnson on ‘Boris Can Dance’ – the music often rises against; this is a party first and foremost. There is room for more abrasive, industrial-heavy electronic noise (album opener ‘Circle of Light’), but it’s tempered with full-on disco fun (‘Hot Nights’) and effervescent yet cynical synth-pop (the Younger Younger 28s-styled ‘Straight To the Top, featuring Mila Todd on joint vocals).

The last of those provides perhaps the album’s high point both musically as well as mood wise, but everyone will have a personal favourite, from the Happy Mondays-go-darkwave sci-fi swagger-funk of ‘Long Hauler’, to ‘50’ where Where Underworld meets Yard Act via John Cooper Clarke.

The title ‘Land Ahoy’ references Martin coming to terms with life and it’s a set of songs that perfectly balances reflection with buoyancy. Last month’s front cover feature revealed a man with a story to tell and that comes across well here, but the album also reveals a man who you’d be happy to spend a mad night out clubbing with. ‘Land Ahoy’ maybe but let’s hope the Octavia Freud ship has many more seas to sail before it finally settles into port.

Bekti Manish



EMMA HUNTER

‘Love Is Not a Choice’

(Self released)

Love, as the song title goes, is not a choice, although bigotry very much is and as we make our merry way through the 21st Century even in the supposedly most liberal, liberated corners of the world, people continue to be bullied, judged, excluded or silenced simply for the object of their affection, with the religious right,

with its hand so often firmly on the tiller of power, particularly guilty of fuelling hatred and intolerance.

Emma Hunter releases ‘Love Is Not a Choice’ in the wake of Pride month by way of a celebration of the free path of love as well as a statement of defiance. And like the manifold forms of love in the world, the song has no clear or obvious direction, changing shape as it goes, from its Indian-flavoured opening, all soaring melisma and impassioned siren call with a driving guitar line that is almost Led Zeppelin-esque in its simple insistency, to an abrupt stop and left turn into more of a Latin flourish, back to the eastern promise of its earlier form, skating the distance twixt desert and the surf, and then carouselling through its “I won’t let you down, this love is not a choice” mantra and generally sounding like Trembling Bells at their most imperious taking the Sheila Chandra songbook for a spin along a winding road at top speed. It’s simpler than all that maybe makes it sound and ultimately it’s great fun. Love might not always be simple but whatever form it takes, it is great fun, as well as incredibly precious, and don’t let anyone ever tell you different.

Dale Kattack

THE AUTUMN SAINTS

‘Wind Burn & Broken

Oak’

(Man In The Moon)

‘I Am The Gaffly’, the second track on The Autumn Saint’s debut album, has a title that looks like it belongs to a 300-year-old folk tune, and a guitar part that bears a strong – though almost certainly coincidental – resemblance to lesser-known Fall song ‘Green Eyed Loco-Man’. It’s a strange contrast, but one which sums up the band’s unique sound, which might best be described as a good-natured tussle between windswept Americana and the mournfully literate end of early-80s indie and post-punk. This is embodied in frontman Britt Strickland, whose doleful North Carolinian vocal sounds as though it should be hollering a lament from an Appalachian foothill, but whose reverby 8-string bass resembles Adam Clayton auditioning for Bauhaus.

The twelve tracks of this recording offer some prime examples of their approach, from ‘Up In Rags’, which sounds like something from folk melancholia classic ‘Fables Of The Reconstruction’ by fellow Southern gothic poets R.E.M. as played by Simple Minds at the world’s biggest stadium, to heavy-set paean to simple traditions ‘Greenhorn’ (though your cloth-eared and somewhat peckish reviewer heard it as “cream horn”). There are also hints of 50s balladry on tracks like ‘She Wanders Out’ and ‘Too Late Tonight’ which give a dewy-eyed nod to the likes of Dion and Del Shannon, rock’n’roll’s original sadbois. The only track that doesn’t quite gel is ‘The Lieutenant’, an awkward plod which doesn’t seem sure whether it wants to start a hoedown at a barn dance or sport a back-comb at The Batcave, but this is the exception on a very strong album, which doesn’t sound quite like anything previously



released in the history of Oxford. Or possibly anywhere.

David Murphy

SELF HELP

‘Bamboo’

(Self released)

It looked for a while that Self Help were running low on energy in the wake of their scene-stealing ‘Get On With It’ single, which topped *Nightshift’s* end-of-year Top 25 back in 2018, with songs like ‘Milkshake’ suggesting a band looking for a fresh direction, but a major line-up overhaul finds the band, now five-strong, back to their best with ‘Bamboo’, a song that opens with an almost country-shoegaze guitar twang and a lolling two-step gait that opens itself up fully mid-song, the introduction of electronics bolstering the coruscating guitar shimmer and fuzz as the band build momentum and, particularly in the final minute, really let themselves rip, Danny Jeffries’ steely vocals capturing relationship ennui and frustration. A timely return to form as the band head into the studio to record their debut album.

Sue Foreman

JACK GOLDSTEIN

‘The World Is Ending & I Love U’

(Beanie Tapes)

In some kind of inversion of the classic Mark Hollis quote “Before you play two notes learn how to play one note, and don’t play one note unless you’ve got a reason to play it,” Jack Goldstein’s maxim seems to be, why cram five different, sometimes contradictory ideas into a single song when you could cram ten. Maybe he just got very bored during lockdown, though more likely it’s his relentlessly restless nature coming to the fore again on this new album – a double cassette, no less – with song titles like ‘(((((SAILIN))))))’ and ‘LASSO’ that are as sensible and understated as the music itself.

Much like his most recent live shows, ‘The World Is Ending & I Love U’ (forgive the lack of emojis that actually make up the title), is a wildly eclectic ride through the shifting platforms of Jack’s imagination. It’s ADHD in album form: from euphoric psychedelic pop, not so far removed from his old band Fixers’ remodelling of Animal Collective’s space-pop-opera, through Meatloaf, Madonna, Vivaldi, Butthole Surfers, Hank Williams, Stravinsky and Brian Wilson. Sometimes, though not always, all at the same time, or at least in quick succession.

Pristine sunshine pop pirouettes before it melts and mutates, forgets what it came into the room for, wanders off somewhere else, once in a while returns to the original task in hand, or simply moves on without a care in the world. It’s equally scattergun and meticulously orchestrated – it genuinely takes a special talent to make all this mayhem fit together and sound like it was all part of the same jigsaw rather than pieces from a dozen different puzzles hammered forcefully into one picture.

While prolonged exposure to ‘The World Is Ending...’ might leave you needing a fistful of Nitrazepam to restore some kind of karmic balance in your brain, what else the album needs is a full-on rock opera video to bring it yet further to larger-than-life (think The Who’s *Tommy* gene-spliced with The Monkees’ *Head* and, hell, why not, a dash or two of *The Rocky Horror Show*). And a room full of sugar-crazed toddlers each promised a puppy if they can dance like no-one’s watching for an hour. Yep, that should just about do it.

Dale Kattack



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THE SHAPES

'Right From the Start'

(Self released)

The Shapes have long been about romantic nostalgia – for place, for time, for people – but this latest single is an out-an-out, unapologetic ode to unrequited love; whether it's deserving of reciprocation from the object of its affection is open to debate as the song drifts gently on warm horns and Anthony Kelly's handdog vocals which give it a bullishly country feel. There's a clumsiness about the lyrics at times ("Unrequited Love is so hard, as the days and the weeks and the months fly past, then you walked right by me, hand in hand with a guy, then I cry") that makes you want to shake him and tell him to snap out of that self pity rather than offer a comforting shoulder to cry on and it's only really when Alix Champ's vocals join in that we find it in our hearts to offer some love back, although even here the song remains airy rather than euphoric as you might hope for.

Ian Chesterton

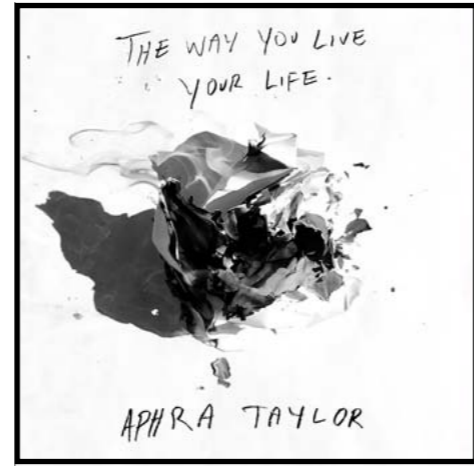
THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND

'Vine Street'

(Serious Types)

Something you probably don't expect from The original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band is reggae but then band leader Stuart Macbeth probably didn't expect to find himself in Abingdon police station when he wrote 'Vine Street'. While the song is carried along on a nicely crackly loping dubby groove, you can hear the music's roots trailing back to the more vintage form of r'n'b that is TORFSB's more usual stock-in-trade. With Deadbeat Apostles singer Michelle Mayes on lead vocal duties, this is a distant cousin of hot jazz and jump blues, more Black Ark than Cotton Club, yet similarly feels like it comes from days of antiquity. The Rabbits' forthcoming album 'Victoria' has been due for a long while now but if this taster is anything to go by, it'll be full of surprises and worth the wait.

Dale Kattack



APHRA TAYLOR

'The Way You Live Your Life' / 'Insomnia'

(Self released)

While this month's *Nightshift* cover star's story – playing Truck Festival aged 19 having been to every Truck since she was born – is fun enough, it's a well-earned place on the line-up for a singer and songwriter who has stepped up at least another gear on this new single, the sleepy-eyed, fragile tone of 'The Way You Live Your Life' in keeping with her debut EP but now with fuller texture, thanks to judicious use of electronics, and a simply gorgeous, sad-eyed song dealing with the fall-out of an emotionally abusive friendship. Aphra now sounds more poised and – ironically given the nature of the lyrics – more confident even as each note is picked so carefully from the psychological rubble.

'Insomnia' follows a similar theme but through a soft mist of sleeplessness, capturing the feel of its title

Sue Foreman

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 KATY J PEARSON SOUND OF THE MORNING	 JACK WHITE ENTERING HEAVEN ALIVE	 LIZZO SPECIAL
 PAOLO NUTINI LAST NIGHT IN THE BITTERSWEET	 WARMDUSCHER AT THE HOTSPOT	 INTERPOL THE OTHER SIDE OF MAKE BELIEVE
 SPORTS TEAM GULP!	 BLACK MIDI HELLFIRE	 TOTALLY ENORMOUS EXTINCT DINOSAURS WHEN THE LIGHTS GO
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GIG GUIDE

JULY

FRIDAY 1st

BARRICANE + LONDON GRAFFITI + KOCKROACHEZ: The Bullingdon – Tripped-out psychedelic folk and harmony-laden pop from the local starlets.
JULIA SOPHIE + MARIA UZOR + OCTAVIA FREUD: Modern Art Oxford – Recent *Nightshift* cover star Julia Sophie officially launches her recent ‘It Feels Like Thunder’ EP, mixing hushed, highly emotive vocals with busy beats and electronics for a swoonsome synth-pop sound. Great support from Sink Ya Teeth’s Maria Uzor, playing her

new solo material, and last month’s *Nightshift* cover star Octavia Freud, mixing personal-political ruminations with acid house, big beat, synth-pop and post-punk.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY: Gladiator Club – The monthly shindig features a set from returning goth-tinged rockers Mary’s Garden, helmed by Laima Bite, alongside Delta blues crew Beard of Destiny and Asterox.
UKULELE TRIBUTE NIGHT: Harcourt Arms – Classics given the uke treatment.
BEAVER FUEL + NO HORSES + WILL COX: The Jericho Tavern – Caustic, absurdist punk-pop from Beaver Fuel at tonight’s It’s All About the Music show.
PROG FOR PEART: The Northcourt, Abingdon (midday) – First day of the weekend prog extravaganza in aid of brain cancer research in memory of Rush’s Neil Peart, today featuring sets from Karangtaka; Red Baza; Also Eden; The Gift; The Paradox Twin; The Mighty Ra; Jump, and Shaven Primates.
WITTFEST: The Plough, Long Wittenham (6pm) – first day of the free weekend charity festival in aid of Magic For Smiles, today featuring sets from Papa Nui; Hippyz; Doug Graves & The Sextons, and The Nick Hunt Band.
TRUE GOLD: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Spandau Ballet tribute.

SATURDAY 2nd

YAWNING MAN + DESERT STORM + INDICA BLUES: The Jericho Tavern – Buried In Smoke stoner/psych rock night.
THE BLACK PARADE: O2 Academy – Emo anthems club night.
PROG FOR PEART: The Northcourt, Abingdon (midday) – The Enid headline the second day of the prog weekender in aid of brain cancer research; they’re joined by Tiger Moth Tales; Stuckfish; The Far Meadow; The Dame; Godsticks; 25 Yard Screamer, and Before We Fall.
RETRO 90s HITS: The Bullingdon HIPSHAKIN’: Harcourt Arms – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul classics from Hipshakin’ DJs.
WITTFEST: The Plough, Long Wittenham (12 noon) – Second day of the free charity festival, with sets from Zen Lewis; Osprey & the OX4 Allstars; Ananas; Beard of Destiny; Catgod; Zen Zen; Superloose; Charms Against the Evil Eye; Mathew Jack & Ian Nixon, and Scott Gordon.

SUNDAY 3rd

WITTFEST: The Plough, Long Wittenham (12 noon) – Sets from Mary’s Garden; Radio Generation; The Mighty Redox acoustic; Rodney Quakes’ Bluesbusters and Sarah Knowles on the third day of the free charity festival.
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) – Free afternoon session in the front bar with sets from Dan Branigan, Mark Brandish, Lee Valentine, Arthur Osofsky and Gareth & Nick.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms – Weekly open night.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon – Weekly traditional Irish session.
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm) – Weekly open afternoon.
MARK CROFT: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm) – Funk and more from the guitarist.

MONDAY 4th

DOWNES & BEER: Nettlebed Folk Club – Singers, multi-instrumentalists and all-round folk scene stalwarts Paul Downes and Phill Beer team up for a night of traditional English folk songs.

TUESDAY 5th

WEDNESDAY 6th

DEREK GRIPPER: St. Mary’s Church, Headington – An acoustic recital from the guitar virtuoso, mixing up the influences of baroque classical with West African kora music.

THURSDAY 7th

STEPH PIRRIE JAZZ NIGHT: Harcourt Arms – Live jazz from the singer and trumpeter and her band.
SELF HELP + DOGMILK + THE BOOYAH SETTLEMENT: The Port Mahon – OMS magazine host the launch gig for Self Help’s new ‘Bamboo’ single, the band having undergone a major line-up rejig lately, the new single mixing up melodic noise rock with shoegaze fuzz. They’re joined by eclectic punk-funk, gothic pop and garage rock crew Dogmilk, formed by former members of Slate Hearts and Easter Island Statues, and Spiritualised-inspired psych-rockers The Booyah Settlement.
NEON TEEPEE: The Jericho Tavern
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon – Weekly open night with local musician Tom.

FRIDAY 8th

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Country Park – First day of the final

Cornbury – *see main preview*

THE DELINES: St. Barnabas Church – Melancholy southern soul from the country survivors – *see main preview*
EMMA HUNTER + PEERLESS PIRATES + CAPTAIN KUPPA-T & THE ZEPPELIN CREW + SLEEPER: The Bullingdon – Intense gothic balladry, flamenco-flavoured torch songs and inventive loop-based dark-pop from recent *Nightshift* cover stars Emma Hunter, joined tonight by swashbuckling indie, punk, rockabilly and Spaghetti Western soundtrack rockers Peerless Pirates and a capella steam-punk folk crew Captain Kuppa-T.
CARNIVAL BOUNCE: The Bullingdon – Old skool garage club night.
THE WEEPING WILLOWS + MIRIAM JONES: Quaker Meeting House – Bluegrass and gothic Americana from Australian duo The Weeping Willows, the pair three-times winners of the CMA Awards Golden Guitar prize, telling stories of sunshine, romance, God and the Devil on new album ‘You Reap What You Sow’. Smooth, contemporary Nashville-style country music in the vein of Shania Twain from local singer Miriam in support.
THE AUTUMN SAINTS: The Jericho Tavern – Album launch show for the local gothic Americana crew, pitching up somewhere between 16 Horsepower, U2 and Bauhaus.

SATURDAY 9th

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Country Park – Bryan Adams tops the bill on the second day of the farewell Cornbury – *see main preview*
THAME TOWN MUSIC FESTIVAL: Various venues – Thame’s annual free festival returns after a two-year pandemic break with some 65 acts playing across 10 venues with a headline set from Big Country, plus quality Americana from Curse of Lono, folk from Rusty Shackles and Bristol’s 90s rave and jungle stars Laid Blak, plus a host of local artists throughout the day.
SHOCK HORROR + THE JERICHOs + HALF DECENT: The Port Mahon – Slacker pop and shoegaze shimmer from Bristol’s Shock Horror at tonight’s OMS show, with indie rockers The Jerichos and rapper Half Decent in support.
BODFEST: Kingsfield, Bodicote (Midday-11pm) – Live music all day at the family festival, including The Fuss, The Shapes, The Uninvited, Seven O’Clock Junkies and more.

SUNDAY 10th

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Country Park – Last day of the last Cornbury – *see main preview*
JAMES RIGHTON: Truck Store – In-store set from the former Klaxons keyboard man, playing songs from his new, Soulwax-produced solo album.
OH, COMMUNITY!: Tap Social (2-10pm) – Divine Schism hosts another full day of live music in aid of the Young Women’s Music Project with a return to town for Hurling, the band fronted by My Bloody Valentine’s touring guitarist and keyboard player Jen

Marco, recent support to Deeper and melding visceral art-pop with furious noise-rock. They’re joined by grungy indie rockers Schande; pop-punk crew Charmpit; elegantly epic shoegaze and electronic artist Kid Kin; this month’s cover star Aphra Taylor; fuzzy emo types Spank Hair, and more.
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) – Free afternoon of local electronic music in the front bar with Means of Production, Tiger Mendoza, Moth Drop, Mojave and DJ Art Lagun.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.30pm) – Funky, blues, ska, folk and more from the local veterans.
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)
TOM MARTIN: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm) – Electric soul from the local singer and guitarist.

MONDAY 11th

TUESDAY 12th

UNSOCIABLE MEDIA: The Jericho Tavern
INTRUSION: Kiss Bar – Monthly goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 13th

THURSDAY 14th

JAMES OLIVER: The Bullingdon – Passionate roots rocking and blues from James Oliver at tonight’s Haven Club show, the guitarist having played alongside Bill Kirchen, Albert Lee and Greg Koch.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 15th

GRUDGEWOOD + UNDERBELLY + THE LAST RITES + BLACK TISH II: The Bullingdon – Church of the Heavy presents a night of heaviosity including high-velocity, riff-heavy tech-rock from GrudgeWood, taking inspiration from Tool, Van Halen and Primus, plus super-heavyweight grungecore from recently reformed local 90s heroes Underbelly.
THE ETHICAL DEBATING SOCIETY + BLOOD-VISION + SINEW: The Library – Ferocious DIY punk and riot grrl-inspired noise in the vein of Poison Girls, Crass and Bratmobile from Tegan Christmas’ cult stars Ethical Debating Society at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the band having played with Prolapse, Shrag, Bis and Jack Off Jill. Support from Northampton punks Blood-Vision and local newcomers Sinew.
MOON AROON: Harcourt Arms – Traditional Irish songs and dance tunes from the local outfit.

SATURDAY 16th

BOTLEY CRUE: Harcourt Arms – Indie, New Wave and Britpop covers.
ROWACHELLA FESTIVAL: Aston Rowant Cricket Club – Peerless Pirates, MuttzKnuttz,



Friday 8th – Sunday 10th

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Country Park

So. Farewell then, Cornbury Festival... Having bowed out once before, this time it really does seem to be time on the festival previously dubbed Poshstock for its litany of well-heeled guests, many from the Cotswold Set, but which stood as a bastion of good old-fashioned music festival amid an ever-growing swell of “lifestyle” events around the country. Founder and organiser Hugh Phillimore’s booking policy has always tended towards the safer side of the street but over the past 18 years we’ve seen plenty of bona fide legends on the line-up – from Amy Winehouse, Blondie and The Damned, to Peter Green, Sugababes and Elvis Costello, via some sets that were legendary in themselves – Half Man Half Biscuit, Katzenjammer and Ragu Dixit spring to mind. The Last Hurrah as it’s being named will feature the return of one of the best acts to grace its stage in recent times in **BRYAN ADAMS**, whose anthemic stadium rock is tailor-made for a Saturday night singalong. This year’s other headliners are **RONAN KEATING** (pictured) and **JAMES BLUNT**, though we’re kind of hoping the latter will just read his tweets rather than actually sing. Elsewhere **THE WATERBOYS** and **JOOLS HOLLAND + HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA** will feel at home at a festival they’ve been regulars at over the years, as will **MICA PARIS** who has performed here previously with **STAKS**. They’re back again of course and this time joined by former-Spencer Davis Group, Traffic and Blind Faith frontman **STEVE WINWOOD**, revisiting classic songs from across the decades. There’ll be soul too from **ALICE RUSSELL**, while **THE SHIRES’** British take on American country and folk should stand in neat contrast to **THE DARKNESS’** unreconstructed rocking. But if *Nightshift* is looking forward to one act in particular this weekend it’s **ALTERED IMAGES**, lead by the unstintingly gorgeous Clare Grogan and the woman with the loveliest speaking voice on the planet. Frankly we’ll be fit to swoon. Plenty more besides, including the Riverside stage, featuring plenty of local talents, and the comedy tent. It might be a farewell but it’ll also be a celebration of perhaps the most Oxfordshire of all Oxfordshire festivals, and frankly we’ve loved every minute of our times there.





Thursday 21st – Sunday 24th

TRUCK FESTIVAL:

Hill Farm Steventon

Previewing Truck Festival here seems a tad pointless given it's already long since sold out and even starting to convey the depth and breadth of artists on the line-up would simply be a list of names, so let's just celebrate the fact Truck is back, like so many other festivals, after two horribly uncertain years when no-one could foresee when or how the pandemic would end (or not). Probably more than ever people are keen to get out into those fields and celebrate with the music they love.

A few likely highlights though. Probably the biggest crowd of the weekend will be for **SAM FENDER** whose rise to stadium-filling stardom is all the more heartening given he remains at heart the lad who just wants to sit in the pub with his mates and go down the footie when he's not belting out anthems like 'Seventeen Going Under'.

All this year's headliners come under the "Big Festival Sing-along Anthems" banner, not least **KASABIAN** who, with Sergio Pizzorno now on lead vocals after the sacking of Tom Meighan, have five Number 1 albums under their belt and enough singles to fill a headline set twice over. **BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB**, meanwhile, are probably not far off Sam Fender in the likability stakes, having earned their status on graft and decent tunes rather than any kind of hype.

You can judge a festival on its strength lower down the bill though, and among high points to expect over the weekend are Leeds' post-punk poets **YARD ACT**; monstrous riff-mongers **SLAVES**; pop-friendly shoegazers **GOA EXPRESS**; wired alt.popsters **SPORTS TEAM**; classic indie janglers **PEANESS**, and a double dose of superb Irish noise-rock in the forms of **THE MURDER CAPITAL** and **ENOLA GAY**.

Those are just our personal picks from an extensive bill that should keep most festival-goers more than happy. *Nightshift* did also directly pick two acts who play on the main stage this year, so make the trip down the front to cheer on Oxford stars **EMMA HUNTER** and **CHIIKA** who both make their Truck debuts, as does this month's *Nightshift* cover star **APHRA TAYLOR**. Festivals, not least Truck, aren't just about the big names; they're about the new names and the unknowns – the headliners of the future. Happy Trucking, everyone.

Houseology Live and Mike Richards play the one-day music and beer festival.

SUNDAY 17th

SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm)

– Free afternoon of live music in the front bar with sets from Franklin's Tower, Beard of Destiny, Scott Gordon & Sammy Pope, Ady Davey, and Hannah Osofsky.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

JAMES LAINEY: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm) – The singer, guitarist and loopster plays hits from Ed Sheeran through to Kings of Leon.

MONDAY 18th

TUESDAY 19th

WEDNESDAY 20th

BILL KIRCHEN: The Jericho Tavern – The "Titan of the Telecaster" shows no sign of giving up any time soon as he continues to tour, some 50 years after the success of 'Lincoln Hotrod', the hit he led as guitarist with Commander Cody's Lost Planet Airmen. Versatile enough to cover everything from rockabilly and blues-rock to country, swing and boogie woogie, a hybrid style he's dubbed 'Dieselbilly', Kirchen has played alongside Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello and Emmylou Harris among others.

THURSDAY 21st

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – Blossoms, Black Honey and Vistas kick this year's Truck off early – *see main preview*
THE JOHN O'BRIEN EXPERIENCE + HELLO AMNESIA: The Bullingdon – Blues rocking from the veteran American singer and guitarist with four decades of gigging and recording behind him.
CAPTAIN KUPPA T & THE ZEPPELIN CREW: The Jericho Tavern – A capella folk and steampunk from the good Captain and crew.
DALBY'S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 22nd

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – First full day of the festival with headliners Bombay Bicycle Club joined by Sigma, Sundara Karma and The Subways among a multitude of others – *see main preview*
HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF: The Bullingdon – Alynda Segarra brings her nature punk to town as they tour their 'Life on Earth' album – *see main preview*
BOSSAPHONIK: Cowley Workers Social Club – Hard hitting tropical flavoured Afrobeat, funk, soul and jazz from seven-strong outfit Lakuta, made up of members from Ghana, Malaysia, Kenya, Spain and the UK, at tonight's global jazz dance night, with host Dan Ofer spinning everything from latin dancefloor to Balkan beats and Afrobeat to

jazz, plus a guest DJ set from Daniel Prince.

BARRICANE UNPLUGGED: The Port Mahon

SATURDAY 23rd

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – Sam Fender brings the good vibes alongside The Kooks, Kelis and Shame – *see main preview*

MAMBO PANTHERS: Harcourt Arms

STARBELLY: The Jericho Tavern – Gothic glam rocking from the local outfit.

BEER & BEATS: The Up in Arms, Marston – Retro DJs and more at the monthly family fun day.

SUNDAY 24th

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – Kasabian close the weekend off in anthemic style alongside Easy Life, Inhaler, Palace and many more – *see main preview*

SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm)

– Free live music in the front bar with The Oxford Blues Corporation, Bankside Blues, Tony & Sal Batey and more.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-6.30pm) – Classic blues and rock covers from the veteran local guitarist and chums.

OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

FLICK: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm)

MONDAY 25th

TUESDAY 26th

CHEERBLEEDERZ + GOLDBABY + DREAM PHONE + JETSKI WORLD: The Library – The fuzztastic London-based indie janglers, made up of members of Fresh, Happy Accidents and Supermilk, return to town as guests of Divine Schism after their showing at Oh, Community! previously, the trio set to release their debut album on Alcopop! later this year.

WEDNESDAY 27th

THURSDAY 28th

DALBY'S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 29th

TREEHOUSE FESTIVAL: Marcy Fields, Uffington – First day of the woodland-based eco-fest with live music, DJs, talks and workshops across three days and occasionally in treetop houses, with sets from Brass Funkeys; Bush Fyre; Joe Hicks; Robi Mitch; Sherman Tender; Part-Time Models; Jen Berkova and more over the weekend.
VOLTA: The Jericho Tavern – Rare show for the reformed local 70s band.

SATURDAY 30th

RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL: Charlbury – The county's favourite free festival returns to

celebrate its Silver Jubilee – *see main preview*

SUMMER STREET PARTY: The Rusty Bike (midday) – Live music and DJs all day as the annual Rusty shindig returns, with a headline set from Nice Swan singings Opus Kink, alongside Prima Queen, The Pylons, Easter Island Statues, Juniper Nights, Tamara and loads more.

TERRAFORMS ft. NICKY

BLACKMARKET: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

THE MONOCHROME SET + PEERLESS

PIRATES: The Jericho Tavern – A return to town for post-punk survivors The Monochrome Set, whose early embracing of lounge and surf pop, as well as an

idiosyncratic approach to rhythms and melody and an ironic, oblique lyricism set them apart from the leftfield rock of the late-70s. They've split up and reformed twice in their lifetime, founder Bid and long-term guitarist Andy Warren still helming the band as they tour their last album, 'Allhallowtide' which, characteristically, brings Latin pop, bossa

Friday 22nd

HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF:

The Bullingdon

When you've lived the kind of itinerant life that Alynda Segarra has, no one should expect you to stay comfortably within a single musical genre, and so it is that, after a half dozen albums of rootsy country-folk and Americana, Segarra – who is, to all intents and purposes Hurray For the Riff Raff – switched to a rockier sound for 2016's 'The Navigator', the better to explore their Puerto Rican heritage and identity, and now, on most recent album 'Life On Earth', taking on rap, electronics, a punkier attitude and bigger production values, while their expressive voice continues to bring a world of soul and feeling to the songs. Aged 17 Segarra ran away from their Bronx home and lived the hobo life – jumping trains, sleeping in the woods – with a nebulous community of other teens – before relocating to New Orleans and more recently returning to New York. Their take on traditional American music styles has always been fresh and elastic and Segarra was hailed as "The sound of modern New Orleans" by *The Times* early in their career. The new album reflects on nature, its destruction and its resilience and explores humanity's indomitable spirit to survive and thrive in a dangerous, violent world – something Segarra has done since childhood and musically continues to do rather brilliantly.



nova, Indian raga and chanson to its melting pot. Great support from longstanding faves Peerless Pirates, themselves inspired by The Monochrome Set as well as The Smiths, The Ukrainians and a whole lotta seafaring fun.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with CEDARS OF LEBANON + ALMAGREY + LAIMA: Port Mahon – GTI host their monthly mixed bag of sounds with psychedelia, classic rock, epic shoegaze and grunge from local crew Cedars of Lebanon alongside Bristol's dreampop, noise rock and power-pop outfit Almagrey, and dark-hued gothic folk-pop from Laima.

G-SQUARED: Harcourt Arms – Funky blues rocking from the local outfit.

TREEHOUSE FESTIVAL: Marcy Fields, Uffington

SUNDAY 31st

RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL: Charlbury – Second day of the free local fest – *see main preview*

TREEHOUSE FESTIVAL: Marcy Fields, Uffington

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

SCAMPY: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm) – Easy listening pop, country, soul and funk from the local duo.

We need some more venues



Saturday 30th – Sunday 31st

RIVERSIDE

FESTIVAL: Charlbury

In May's issue of *Nightshift* Riverside Festival's organisers paid tribute to two of its team of volunteers who left us this year – Kathryn Custance and Gary Walker. It was a reminder that while it might be celebrating its silver jubilee this year and is probably the biggest free music festival in the area, Riverside is run by volunteers and is all the more remarkable for that, so it's great to see it back after three years off due to Covid and other issues.

As ever, the emphasis is on local talent with **KANADIA** headlining Saturday's bill and **THE STANDARD** closing the show on the Sunday. The former are ideal festival material with their big, expansive indie sound that takes inspiration from Radiohead and Muse among others, while the latter will provide a crowd-pleasing set of covers. Joining Kanadia on Saturday will be **MOLLY DAVIES; VON BRAUN; THE FONT; DARKGNOSS; THE MIGHTY REDOX; BEDD; THE AUGUST LIST; THE KNIGHTS OF MENTIS; THE BRICKWORK LIZARDS; LITTLE BROTHER ELLI**, and **BARRICANE**, while among the acts playing Sunday will be **THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES; JONNY PAYNE & THE THUNDER**, and **THE 2-TONE ALL-SKAS**.

The second stage is curated by Quickfix Records this year and has scooped a proper one in the shape of electronic music pioneer **ADAMSKI** (*pictured*). He's joined by a strong electronic cast on the Saturday, including **TIGER MENDOZA; MEANS OF PRODUCTION; OCTAVIA FREUD; DAZE; PUN** featuring **JENNY MATTHIAS** from The Belle Stars; **GEISHA DAVIS; GIGSY; MANNERS**, and host **LEE SMILEX**, while Sunday on the second stage sees **THE SHAPES** alongside reformed grunge-core crew **UNDERBELLY** and many more.

Riverside Festival recently scooped an award at the UK Enterprise Awards, hosted by SME News, winning Best Celebration of Local Talent for the South East region, which is something to be very proud of, and we're more than happy to see it back where it belongs.

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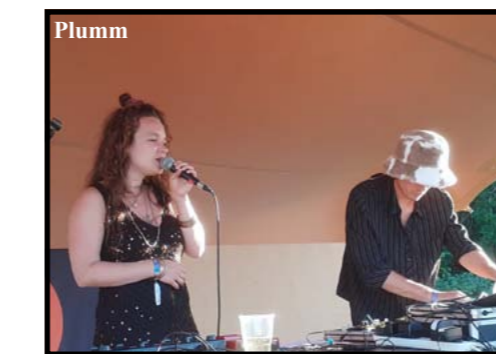
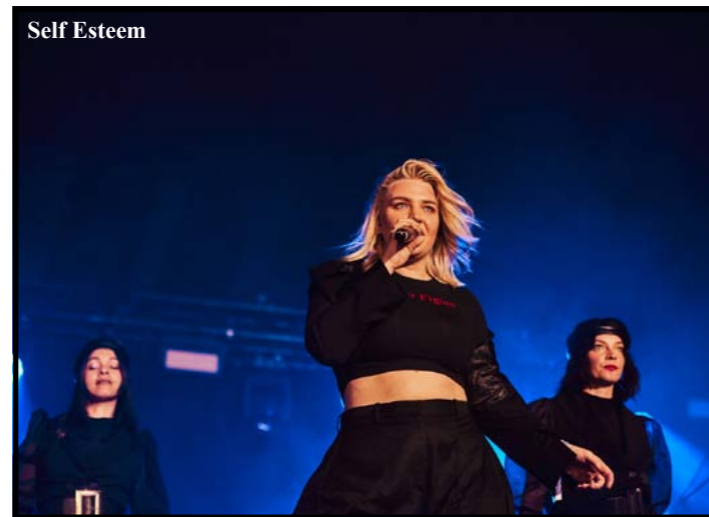


photo: Colin May

KITE FESTIVAL Kirtlington Country Park

“Excuse me, I think I have someone else’s oat milk latte,” announces a woman to the early morning queue for hot drinks, perfectly encapsulating the genteel air of Oxfordshire’s newest festival, one that’s more Hay-on-Wye literary gathering than Download for sure. But one that still knows how to host a psychedelic pop riot, as evidenced by early weekend highlight **FLAMINGODS** on the Heavenly Records stage, whose set builds from engaging Indian-flavoured rock exploration to wild psych abandon and sweeps up a crowd who’ve spent most of the first day witnessing intellectual discussions and talks in the myriad tents across the site. The Heavenly tent provides most of the best musical thrills across the weekend with the likes of **MERMAID CHUNKY** resolving from awkward loop-pop abstraction into something closer to labelmates Audiobooks and then onto something intriguingly glitchy in an odd post-punk kind of way. **ONEDA**’s “Pussy Power” grime is fun with its dancehall influences but really kicks in when she and her DJ bring some heavy-duty drum&bass to play, coming on like a meeting point of Burial, Roni Size and Ms Dynamite, while **GWENNO**’s solo synth set is a reminder of an artist who’s simultaneously pushing boundaries both musically and in language while remaining perfectly pop friendly. Only

ORIELLES disappoint, choosing to try for a funkier, but oddly laboured set over their usually pin-sharp jangle pop, but slightly redeeming themselves with a number that sounds like a lost Life Without Building number. Amid talks on how to tell a joke – with comedian Grainne Maguire, who pleasingly finishes with a clip of an old Dave Allen classic – there’s plenty to discover on some of the smallest stages, from **JELLY CLEAVER**’s inventive discordant guitar work, through **LUNCH SPECIAL**’s easy, likeable set of bluegrass originals and standards, to **BULAWAYO**’s excellent Zimbabwean folk, powered by Mbira thumb pianos and singer Cecilia’s wonderfully bonkers stage presence, getting a mellow seated audience to fully loosen up across an hour. Best of the lot on the outlying stages though are **PLUMM**, a duo who mix deep house groove with soulful trip hop and EDM, being unafraid to let tracks build or wander for up to ten minutes, base songs around extensive Kate Bush and Eurythmics steals and rouse a rave out of a previously sedentary bar-side crowd, like Portishead discovering their inner Inner City. For reasons we never get to the bottom of the festival’s main stage doesn’t turn up, so the weekend’s biggest acts play in the giant Forum tent which has housed the likes of Jarvis Cocker

and Delia Smith in conversation, but, even though it messes with the timetable it works well, lending an intimacy to the sets. **MAVIS STAPLES** defies her 82 years, perhaps lacking the vocal range that has made her such a legend but ably backed up by a mini choir and bringing some earthy gospel blues to the weekend, surviving a power cut that stops the set for a good 20 minutes (“the Devil is always busy” she proclaims on retaking the stage) and closing on a fine ‘I’ll Take You There’. The outage and timetable reshuffle means a truncated **SELF ESTEEM** set but while Rebecca Taylor is clearly unhappy, her 35 minutes are spectacular. Dressed in all black and topped by a huge Stetson she leads a supremely choreographed set of song and dance that’s big on swagger – Queen-like pomp, disco fun, Madonna-level pop brilliance and Glitterstomping energy. Frankly, you wonder why she isn’t the biggest pop star on the planet right now. Taylor might yet become an icon on the level of **GRACE JONES**. The tent is heaving for her entrance, dressed in robes, warpaint and death mask, an imperiously graceful performer who moves like a woman 50 years her junior. From the opening ‘Nightclubbing’, through ‘My Jamaican Guy’, ‘Pull Up To The Bumper’ and ‘Private Life’, this is everything you could ever want from a Jones show: she

SPIERS AND BODEN Oxford Playhouse

Having mothballed what *The Guardian* called “the finest instrumental duo on the traditional scene” in 2014, Spiers and Boden are back and with a new album conceived in lockdown. For their two preceding albums, 2009’s ‘Vagabond’, and the collection of their greatest hits ‘The Works’, they were pictured in gritty urban environments, seemingly reflecting their take on folk music. Their new one, ‘Fallow Ground’, shows them in a field, possibly with Wittenham Clumps in the distance, and looking rather puzzled at finding themselves in such a bucolic setting. It has us going into tonight’s gig wondering if they’ve gone a bit soft. They certainly seem up for the gig, bounding onto the stage to a very warm welcome from what in effect is a hometown crowd, since the duo met and learnt their trade in sessions in Oxford and have played here many times. Boden has said of ‘Fallow Ground’ “we were looking for songs with a sense of fun”, and the first song is about a chancer hiding up a chimney and emerging, covered in soot and then masquerading as the devil. The first half of tonight’s show closes with the tale of a mighty Australian sheep shearer whose drink is spiked with sulphuric acid with the only effect being his beard catches fire when coughing. Such songs could have been being sung by a cheeky chap or lady in a burlesque show. It is almost entirely an upbeat night with even the tales of lovers’ trysts ending happily rather than with the maid deserted or the swain being run through or decapitated. Boden’s vocal storytelling still makes these tales compelling

as he could squeeze drama out of singing about a stone. The hornpipes and morris and self-penned tunes are a joy too with Boden’s fiddle and Spiers’ various melodeons and concertinas bouncing of each other, with a stomp box for the bottom notes. Their talent is such that there’s even a passage that could have been inspired by Hungarian modernist composer Bela Bartok. The Spiers originals ‘Fog’ and ‘Wittenham Clumps’ are very evocative, and with the latter even two such gifted musicians are out of their comfort zone and you can see the relief and pride at getting to the end without major mishaps. The instrumental ‘Slow Gin’ and a vibrant ‘Tom Padgett,’ one of their greatest hits, ignite the second half. While omitting their version of shape shifter ‘Reynardine’, the darkest song on the current album, they do give us the blood spattered ballad of ‘Bold Sir Rylas’ that Boden introduces “as about a psychopath from Swindon,” and sings with lip-smacking relish. The duo’s pleasure in playing together again front of an audience is contagious. A rousing finale of crowd favourites ‘Prickle-Eye Bush’, introduced as “about being stuck in a bush near Swindon” (and which Led Zeppelin did as ‘Gallows Tree’), followed by ‘New York Girls’, has the crowd even more completely with them. Forget the question of whether they and we sitting in our comfy Playhouse sets are getting soft, just celebrate the triumphant return of one of the very finest of traditional folk music’s – and Oxford’s – bands. **Colin May**

AMYL & THE SNIFFERS O2 Academy

Amyl & the Sniffers’ rapid rise and rise has brought them to a level where they can sell out the downstairs of the O2 on their first ever visit to Oxford and yet there’s something pleasingly rough, ready and loose about the band that suggests the endless touring that earned them their reputation as one of the most exciting live bands around hasn’t worn down those sharp edges. Often tonight songs seem to trip over themselves, perhaps in the giddy rush to get to the end so the next one can kick in, but it’s part of what gives them their genuine punk rock authenticity. It’s an authenticity that’s apparently been called into question according to effusive, exuberant, funny and ferocious frontwoman Amy Taylor, perpetual motion personified, who’s simultaneously pissed off that someone’s claimed she and the band are actually from London and are properly posh rather than working class kids from Melbourne, and yet chuffed she’s earning a level of celebrity amid the gossip. She tells us about this while all the time spinning what might be an imaginary lasso above her head. Even when she’s not moving, she’s moving. And she’s saying stuff too. Amyl & the Sniffers’ unfettered, uncompromising calls-to-arms mix the personal and political to potent effect, female freedom in all its forms

given a very individual blade, not least in the literal blade Amy carries on her late-night walks home through the park on ‘Knifey’, the band’s slowest song but their most hard hitting, about women’s safety, with its refrain of “Out comes the night, out comes my knifey / That’s how we get home nicely” set alongside the heartbreaking “All I ever wanted was to walk by the park / All I ever wanted was to walk by the river, see the stars”. Elsewhere she hollers “You can’t limit me” on ‘Don’t Fence Me In’, while the title of “Don’t Need a Cunt Like You (To Love Me)” says everything you need to know about women’s self worth and emancipation even before you get to its squalling speedball of a tune. While there’s anger aplenty here it’s Amyl & the Sniffers’ simple, brilliant way with a melody that has lifted them so high so fast, not least ‘Hertz’, a superb pop song dressed in punk rock rags which finds Amy crowdsurfing above the broiling, roiling throng down the front while Dec Martens screams out an unabashed stadium metal guitar solo. It’s a celebratory sing-along climax to a show that’s a swift and forceful rebuttal to any doubts that mass-appeal music can still say important stuff and affect change in the world while making it a far more fun place to be. **Dale Kattack**

Dale Kattack



KANDA BONGO MAN

Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington

It seems unlikely but the man sometimes known as the King of Soukous or Congolese rumba has history with Uffington Village Hall, having recorded a live album here. So perhaps it's no surprise he's back ahead of gigs at Africa Oye and WOMAD.

Kanda is known for revolutionising Soukous back in the 1980s by encouraging guitar solos after nearly every verse of a song and that's still his style. So it's important the guitarists in his band

are good, which the two sharing lead tonight are in coming up with particularly sweet Congolese jangling riffs and sharp interplay. The music is dance music and every time the guitars take over an always smiling young woman shimmies onto stage, hips moving back and forth in the Kwasa Kwasa rhythm that's synonymous with Kanda's style of Soukous. This isn't a sit down gig as it's difficult to keep still and the majority of the crowd, while not Kwasa Kwasaing,

are up and dancing from the off, adding to the general joyfulness of the occasion. Kanda, in his trademark wide brimmed hat and wearing a heavy wool shirt on a hot night, is rather statuesque, and when he does throw some shapes it's with an air of caution. We learn later the 68-year-old recently has had a hip replacement but that hasn't affected his fine voice – or voices; he has more than one. The vocals are shared with another

singer with a strong baritone, Nickens Nkoso, and when both his and Kanda's tenor combine the sum is greater than the parts. Our only criticism is this doesn't happen often enough.

With the bass guitarist and drummer holding everything together, the band is very tight and alone is worth the price of admission, and when Kanda doesn't come on for the encore they have the opportunity to cut loose. It's an unstintingly happy atmosphere and a good time seems to have been had by Kanda, his band and the crowd.
Colin May

FORTY ELEPHANT GANG / LIZZY HARDINGHAM

Harwell Village Hall

Lizzy Hardingham opens tonight's gig with an entertaining set of mainly self-penned songs. She has all a folkie could want really, from the sea shanty 'Rolling Down To Old Maui' and the traditional 'Fisherchild', to the environment-themed 'Harvester Of Gold' and tale of love, 'Denim Steel'. Her encore, an a capella take on the James Taylor classic 'You've Got A Friend', gets the audience singing along with gusto, making for a rousing finale to a fine and enjoyable set. An artist who will be headlining her own shows before too long, Lizzy has vocal power and range – you can easily imagine her belting out blues and soul standards with aplomb.

Forty Elephant Gang features singer and guitarist Andrew White, mandolin player Sean Mannion, and guitarist James Bachmann. The band take their name from a notorious gang of female pickpockets from The Elephant & Castle in the 19th Century, an area from which the band members hail.

Tonight's set is heavily based on their 'Next Time Round' album, which won rave reviews on its release last year. Opening with 'Jealousy',

the riff is almost Led Zep like, which considering they are playing on acoustic instruments is some feat, and it soon becomes clear we are in for another musical treat tonight.

'Songs Of Praise' perhaps sums the band's sound up best, being a mix of blues, folk, Americana and bluegrass; the guitar solo from James Bachmann is particularly impressive. The gentle melody of 'Sweet Maria', the moving 'Young Man's Game' and the stark lyrics and playing on 'Hollow Man Blues' are stand outs in a strong and varied set list. The trio air a few new songs of which 'Magpies' is quite simply stunning with their three part harmonies recalling the Beatles and Crosby, Stills & Nash. They have a relaxed between-song banter, while each of them adds their bit of musical magic to the evening. Forty Elephant Gang really do deserve to be more well-known, possessing crossover appeal as their lyrics oft remind mus of Blur and Squeeze – getting the nitty gritty of life down to a tee in song and really, tonight captures the joy of discovering and hearing new music and both acts richly deserve their ovations.
Jason Ritchie

THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES / BARRICANE

The Bullingdon

It's a sweaty, dusty 33 degrees out on Cowley Road on the hottest day of the year so far but inside the Bullingdon it's decidedly cooler, and not just because of the welcome air conditioning. Barricane's sometimes ghostly close-harmony folk-pop brings a chill to the room as Emily Green and Rosy Owen's voices blend seamlessly in almost choral style – perhaps not surprising given the pair first practised together in a church.

The band conjure a peculiarly English strain of pastoral psychedelia on tracks like 'Canopy' and almost devotional set highlight 'Breathe In', drawing on Simon & Garfunkel and The Incredible String Band at times while also heading off somewhere more oceanic in a more Fleetwood Mac vein. Something bucolically pagan is rarely far away though and Barricane might well be the best folk band on the local scene right now.

The Deadbeat Apostles are cool in a very different way. Few people could rock the leopard print shirt, shades and sailor's cap like Mike Ginger but he manages it effortlessly, even while he and his band are kicking out a cover of 'Crazy Horses' by way of a set opener, his voice all gravel, whisky and God.

Much is made of how The Deadbeats are blessed with not one but two super singers in Mike and partner Michelle Mayes, but they really are a remarkable team, the chemistry

between them turning the band's Rolling Stones-influenced blues-rock into something bigger, more irresistible. New single 'Sweet Sweet Love' bases itself on 'Gimme Shelter' but run through the Deadbeat filter it's something more soulful. Show high point though is recent single and feminist battlecry 'Leave It To Men', an (ironically) organ-led slice of 60s-style psych-framed garage-rock that cuts through the air like a musical hacksaw. It's not parochial partisanship to suggest that The Deadbeat Apostles could decamp to New Orleans tomorrow and still steal the show.
Ian Chesterton

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE IMPOSTERS

The New Theatre

You'd think music's recent *bêtes noires*, pandemic and lockdown, would give its practitioners pause about the release-record-tour-the-world cycle, but not Elvis Costello and his merry men, raring to return. It's *Carry on Music* where Sid James, in hat and specs, runs a conservatoire for deluded miscreants like Charles Hawtrey and Jim Dale. Tonight, like nothing's happened and a good 350 songs already in the bank, Costello insists we minister to *The Boy Named If*. That's right: if.

His group, The Imposters, with Charlie Sexton added as second guitar, are an LSO of rock bands, drummer Pete Thomas a masterclass of stamina, accuracy and drive; Steve Nieve is the linchpin on record, the prog-rock pianist in the pub-rock band, but here his miscellaneous

attentions are lost in the slush of twin-guitar, bass, drums. Loud is the rule, expressive noise chucked into this lavish space, of pantos, musicals and ballets.

It's a long show, and doing it several times a week doesn't do Costello's voice any favours. Most numbers outstay their welcome and benefit from between-song patter, late-night Des O'Connor with f-words allowed. Imposter-era songs are short-story, Lovely-Rita characters: 'Mister Crescent', 'Penelope Halfpenny', 'Hetty O'Hara'. Plunging into each vignette with the eager conviction of a Julie Walters, Costello and voice are playing at home. Whether the songs are any good is another matter, reams of words going nowhere as the players hunker down for musical detail.

Committed to such recent material, Costello turns back decisively to pub rock for nostalgia and knees-up: 'Mystery Dance', 'Red Shoes', 'Peace, Love and Understanding', the world of Brinsley Schwarz, Charlie Gillett, Jake Riviera. Minor, first-album, Detroit-Spinners-imitation 'Alison' is hymn-substitute sing-song, tipsy boomers wondering if it's covid or cancer that'll put out the big light. There's hardly anything from the intervening decades, as though Costello heeds William Empson's view that poets are any good only when starting out or knocking on. Ever the academic, he does *both sides* of an old single on Justice Records, one a complaint about President Lyndon Johnson.

With this dependable and industrious fellow, you stand to be insulted and pay for the privilege. Now, cheap seats are no more, and everyone rattles their jewellery. Still, we don't mind, we're Oxford. Encores are for wimps.
Dai Griffiths

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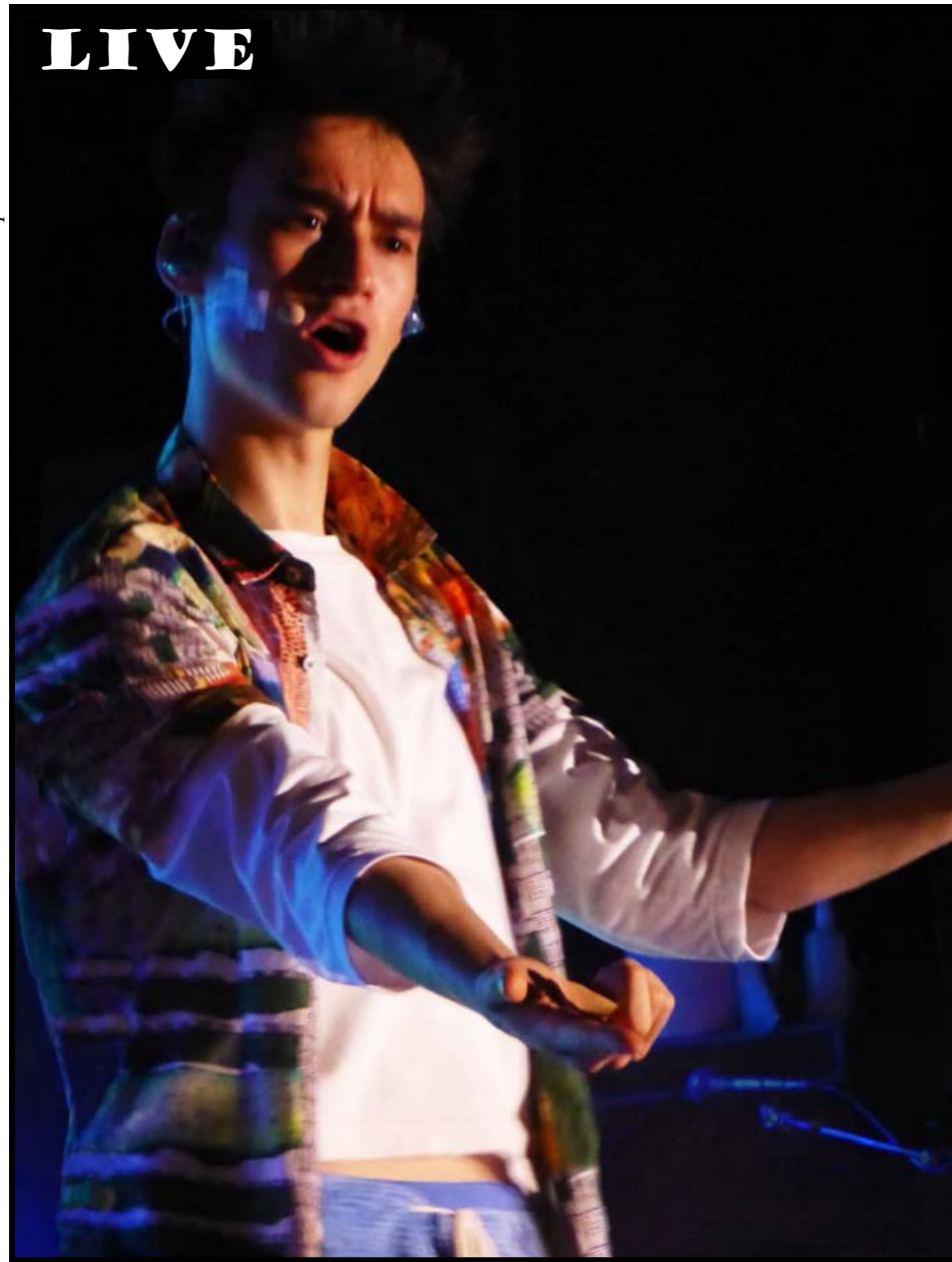
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JACOB COLLIER

O2 Academy

Suddenly, on a rising tide of crowd excitement, he is there, stage front, like an irrepressible genie full of wishes. The King of rainbow Crocs. One take Jake, the real time video legend who'd carried many of us present through the darkest period of Covid lockdown with his innocently positive, Logic Pro breakdown

sessions, and his jaw dropping Tiny Desk 'solo' concerts from his own music room. The thousand-strong throng erupts on abruptly becoming part of Jacob's unique Matrix, and he immediately scoops up this febrile sound with his home schooled energy, running across the apron, conducting and sculpting our continuing

JODY & THE JERMS / THE FACTORY LIGHTS

The Bullingdon

Few local singers do nostalgic balladry as well as Ant Kelly, frontman of The Shapes and kind-of side project The Factory Lights. Songs like 'Ballad of a Cowley Boy', which crams his entire autobiography into four minutes, and the lovelorn but life affirming 'Old School Wall' ache with working class romanticism and contrast with the band's other songs, like 'Sea Spray', which layer folk and country influences onto jaunty Van Morrison-influenced r'n'b. The set is neatly broken up by a lively swing number 'It's All About You' with French café vibes and sung by backing vocalist Salma, but mostly this is sweet, good time Saturday night music for wistful Sunday morning people.

Last time we saw Jody & the Jerms, they were a fun but ramshackle bunch, populating their set with plenty of cover versions. One near-perfect pop album and a UK tour later they're a fully-formed headline act

whose songs deserve to soundtrack summer meadows and carefree sunny days. Singer Jody Jeger is possessed of one of those voices whose fault lines only serve to make it even better, dancing over the band's sometimes Smiths-y melodies and rhythms or bringing a little careworn magic to the likes of 'Spinning' or 'The Harder I Try', the joyous jangle-fuzz spirit of The Darling Buds and The Primitives layered over each tune like glitter and honey. The Jerms are a far more solid unit now than they were last year but never heavy-handed, recognising the need to let songs of this nature take flight, and now even their slower songs, like new single 'The Harder I Try' feel light and airy with their multi-way harmonies and a deft guitar touch. We might be stuck and sticky in a heatwave today, but Jody & The Jerms are just the kind of fresh breeze we need.

Dale Kattack

voices into ever louder, pulsing choral waves, that finally crash over his tour band who have formed behind him to jump start the sugar-rush rap of 'Count The People'.

It is six short years, and five Grammy Awards, since this extraordinary, uncategorisable young multi-instrumentalist composer emerged from North London, to confound the maestros with not only his *savant* mastery of musical forms and harmonics as a second language, but also manifesting its unrealised coefficients, which he breezily articulates in brain unseating genre fusions. Now with this extensive, much delayed tour unleashed, he is showing the world two hour-plus sets of what seemed physically impossible, without even beginning to knock our shins on his multiple awards.

It all comes without a shred of ego or arrogance, as if he simply is music incarnate, breathing in tune and even posture in the key of C. He bounces the audience like a ball, with roof-raising bangers like 'Sleeping on my Dreams' and 'All I Need', or takes it down to the sweeping multi-key changing progressions of 'Hideaway' and the moving, black despair spiritual of 'He Won't Hold You', where you don't hear the complex maths of it when you are listening to the song, you just become unmoored within its dreamlike state. We even get an idea of just how special Jacob really is, when some of his assisting band (Bryn Bliska, Emily Elbert and Alita Moses, themselves stellar names in their own fields, and who get to see him play every night) are gasping in awe from the wings as he takes to the piano alone for his "One night only, never before practised or played, gift for Oxford" (it changes every show), where on this occasion he takes Dinah Washington's 'What A Difference A Day Makes' on a ten-minute, elasticated and pirouetting journey to Jupiter and back, leaving us feeling like a flock of plucked geese and near to tears.

If this all sounds like the coked up gabbling of an acolyte, then maybe it's because we're all amped on endorphins from singing back to him in the final encore's mass harmonising under his direction. Everyone is a bird and the song is wordless, and infinitely quantum. Then, like a puckish sprite excuting a Shakespeare play with a tucked skip between the forest of equipment, he is gone. He once said in an interview at MIT, "Less is more, but only if you know what more is". Now we know.

Paul Carrera

WOOD FESTIVAL

Braziers Park

Bang on cue as its the very first chorus we hear at a vintage WOOD, LUKE JAMES WILLIAMS sings "I want to hear the rush of life." Yes there's lots of great music, but with festival goers, artists, workshop leaders and the organisers so happy to be able to come together at last, and in beautiful Braziers Park, plus good weather it's the atmosphere that is the biggest star this weekend. Not even an ice cream supply chain crisis, or a very dark set with several songs about death from a totally committed THOMAS TRUX in black suit, dents the bonhomie and community feeling.

The music is great, though. British and American bands playing varieties of Americana remain the spine of the line-up, but the headliners on both Saturday and Sunday are bands mixing global music and electronics, and the festival's closing act is the razor-sharp swamp blues-grunge outfit WILLIAM THE CONQUER.

We have to miss most of Friday including headliner WEMA's (it means goodness and benevolence in Swahili) first ever gig but we're reliably informed their organic mix of Tanzanian music, Afro-Latin rhythms and electronica have the festival buzzing, and after finding them on the web we understand why. They share *Nightshift's* award for bands-we'd-have-loved-to-see-but-didn't with LEE BAINS III who, minus his alt-Southern rock band The Glory Fires, is reported as having done a sparkling solo set. This year WOOD is designated the Year of the Newt, but also it is the year of the voice with such profusion of great ones it's ridiculous to attempt to select an award winner. To name just a few of those voices, WOOD regular DANNY GEORGE WILSON, clearly loving every aspect of being back at the festival, sounds as good as ever; RACHAEL DADD and her backing singer's voices floating unaccompanied over the site as the sun ebbs is a moment; Y's could have been marinated in whisky and cigarettes; LADY NADE's is rich, smooth and raw, and the bluegrass-tinged BLUE ROSE CODE lead singer's terrific vocals are enhanced by his fine phrasing.

Fronting Saturday headliner FOFOLAH, Batch Gueye's voice stands up against those of African greats Youssou N'Dour and Baaba Maal. When we saw Fofoulah previously the main man had been Kaw Seka and his absence tonight gives Gueye the chance to shine. JINDA BIA NT is new to us and his bluesy/soul vocals are a great find; his lead guitar playing in a classic rock/blues trio and his song-writing are also impressive but it's when he plays his faux National guitar we have the biggest wow moments. He gets *Nightshift's* discovery of the festival award

Of the local team MAX BLANSJAR's is an effervescent performance, though we're not sure about his pyjama suit; the lovely close-harmony singing of folk duo JACKIE OATES & MEGAN HENWOOD is accompanied by wicked one-liners from Megan, and part Witney based JALI FILY CISSOKHO, back after the pandemic kept him in Senegal, does probably his best ever WOOD set, including showcasing some numbers from his new album, 'BIMO'. NICK COPE – plus children and their parents



Thomas Trux



Jali Fily Cissokho



Lady Nade



Jinda Biant

– wins the sing-along award as they do every WOOD, for their rendition of the 'Poo Song', while THOMAS TRUX, after intriguing children with his backing band of steam punk machines, leads them on a merry dance in front of the main stage and wins the Pied Piper of Hamelin award.

There's a wave of affection when members of the Bennett family, the festival's founding organisers, take to the stage. ROBIN BENNETT with brother JOE on bass doing 'Dusty in Memphis' and 'Everything All the Time' with the crowd joining in whole-heartedly are now the WOOD festival anthems. There's

maybe even a smidgen more affection for KATY ROSE BENNETT leading her a cappella group in a moving personal set, with brother Joe again in the line-up this time singing bass. No surprise the Bennett family, including those behind the scenes, are winners of the gigantic Thank You award.

Also, we must thank Y for the self improvement mantra which wins outstanding lyric award: "All the nails need to be driven, and don't let your thumb get in the way." If you've read this far you'll know WOOD did just that and there wasn't a sore thumb in sight.

Colin May

WHAT'S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it's MAC and he's a LIVE FRONT OF HOUSE ENGINEER and TOUR MANAGER.

How long have you worked in this job?
"I started the same week that Osprey invented dance music, so time being a cosmic con trick, about nine minutes."

What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know?

"I blow smoke up peoples arses, not metaphorically."

What's been the single biggest highlight of your career so far?

"Vomiting behind the Aunt Sally pitch at The Jericho Tavern because Bolthrower had melted my innards."

And the lowlight?

"The fourth Sevenchurch gig: the one when there wasn't a thunderstorm."

How much and how did Covid affect your job?

"It made me get a job in the real world for a while, for which I will be eternally grateful and I now know how to deliver tomorrow's landfill."

Who's your favourite ever Oxford artiste?
"Just one? Madamadam fucking smashed it



every time though."

What's the single most important piece of advice you'd give to someone wanting to do your job?

"If you blag, you may not get caught but eventually you'll get really good at blagging."

Who's the most awkward person you've ever had to deal with in your job?

"Maybe Mike Scott from Waterboys... He's not awkward, but he is a perfectionist and that was awkward for me to begin with, but I'll be forever in his debt because of it."

When was the last time you heard genius?

"My missus properly introduced me to Northern Soul; she was doing that whilst I was sniffing glue and listening to Crass, so that's pretty much all perfection to me at the moment."

Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work?

"I once accepted a job with 70s pop icons Smokie because I fancied a jaunt to South Korea."

Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what?

"Has 'King Of The World' been taken yet... wait no. Centre midfield enforcer for Oxford United then."

Are you rich?

"No, but we all miss him."

Do you consider your job glamorous?

"Of course it is, and Covid made me realise just how much. There's only so much landfill a man can deliver in one day."

What's your favourite thing about Oxford's music scene?

"The fact that dance music was invented here, and the fact that the Oxford Clique did not hold back so many talented musicians."

Dr SHOTOVER: Lockdown Jubilee Party

Ah, there you are, Young Union-Jack-Fruit. Welcome to the East Indies Club bar. Pull up a Florence Pugh, and let us drink a toast to Her Majesty. [Stands up unsteadily as a Mellotron-drenched version of the National Anthem plays, starts singing along]. 'Happ-ee and gloooriuss, Please don't vote Tory-ius... ahem...Goh-od save the Queeen!' [Sits down heavily, losing most of drink in the process]. So, what did you do during the great Platinum Jubby? Obviously on Friday I was leading the chorus of disapproval for BOO-ris Johnson outside St Paul's. On Sunday I was on an open-topped bus with Sir Cliff, Lord Blackburn et al, waving to the happy grateful populace. On the Saturday night? Oh, my old band ELFLADE were invited to do a slot. We were due on between Rod and Elton, performing our 45-minute epic prog suite, *A Voyage to Arcturus via Rwanda*... but dammit, we were CANCELLED! It might have been bassist Hugh Tapley-Norrington's red white and blue onesie... it might have been the Transit of Venus Burlesque Dance Troupe booked by our manager... it might have been my introductory monologue about how Rod can dance but no longer sing, while Elton can still sing but no longer move... WHO BLOODY KNOWS? Or cares. Anyway, next thing we knew, we were being ushered offstage by burly security men in Paddington Bear suits and frogmarched down the Mall. Still, all in a day's work for a cutting-edge National Treasure such as Yours Truly. Hwagh, hwagh! Cheers, down the hatch!

Next month:
Carry On
Whoops-a-Daisy,
Mind Me Crown
Jewels Missus



'Is that the um, ah, Platty Joobs party over there, Carrie?' 'Erm, yah, Bodger... but I don't think it's fancy dress after all' 'Nonsense, just look at Her Majesty' etc.

INTRODUCING....

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

The Autumn Saints

Who are they?

Oxford Americana and alt.country rock band The Autumn Saints are: Britt Strickland (vocals / bass), David Ireland (lead guitar), Martin Gallagher (drums) and Nick Bennett (rhythm guitar; Hammond; harmonica). David, Britt and former drummer Joel Brisk met and formed the Autumn Saints in Oxford; Britt is originally from North Carolina and, having come to the UK via NYC, met David. "We connected over some Southern storytelling, bass playing and melodic, ethereal guitar lines." When Joel relocated, new drummer Martin joined up, "bringing some seriously shuffling rhythms and counter-rhythms to the group." Later the band met Nick, who added rhythm guitar, Hammond organ sounds, harmonica, lap steel and harmonies to the mix. During lockdown the band came to the attention of Nick Stewart, former head of Island Records, who signed them to his own label, Man In The Moon Records. They released their first EP in 2018 and will release their new album 'Wind Burn and Broken Oak' this month. Recently they have supported for New Model Army, Alabama 3, Buzzcocks, The Wave Pictures and The Leylines.

What do they sound like?

Atmospheric, rootsy Americana meets grandiose 80s stadium rock, ran a previous *Nightshift* review, adding "by god it works". It's epic but intimate American folk storytelling full of melancholy and euphoria in that room where 16 Horsepower meet The Gin Blossoms. Or, in their own words, "ambient Americana with post-punk teeth; Johnny Cash meets the Clash, and roots-rock for the cathedrals."

What inspires them?

"Seeing the unblinking red eye of an amplifier's power light across the club when you know you are about to get on stage and pour your soul out."

Their career highlight so far is:

"Being signed by the guy who signed Killing Joke, U2 and the Long Ryders."

And the lowlight:

"Being locked down for two years with a new band line-up ready to burn."



Photo: Danny Clifford

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"The Deadbeat Apostles. They know what they're there to do – pull anyone kicking and screaming out of any sullen mood and deliver a hell of a good time."

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

"The Byrds: 'Mr Tambourine Man'. It's the album growing up in North Carolina that shaped my sense of melody, tone and imagery through Dylan's 'Chimes of Freedom'."

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

"Friday 8th July at the Jericho Tavern. It's our album release party. New music, a fun time and our friend Ags Connolly playing too."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Best thing is the vibrant musical range – an ancient place with a youthful willingness to reinvent. Worst thing is its city fathers are willing to destroy venues that deserve to live."

You might love them if you love:

Son Volt; The War on Drugs; Band of Horses; The Levellers; Sixteen Horsepower; The Band.

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SAT 2ND

HIPSHAKIN'

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ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Psychid were the featured band in *Nightshift's* July 2002 issue. The band, who had supported Radiohead in South Park the previous summer under their old name Hester Thrale, had just recorded their debut album, 'They Come Out At Night', with Chris Hughes (Merrick out of Adam & The Ants), were signed to db Records and looking set for bigger things. "Beck's girlfriend gave us a macrobiotic carrot!" they enthused, referring to their backstage adventures at the South Park show. They were less positive about Oxford University, where they were all studying: "The music scene there is very competitive – only the very fastest rugby players are permitted to do karaoke versions of 'Hotel California' in the college bars, before making women drink their piss."

Of course, this being July the big event was Truck Festival. This year's line-up featured, among a host of acts Seafood, The Handsome Family, Jetplane Landing, Julie Murphy and McLusky, although stars of the weekend were The Rock of Travolta for their triumphant headline set in The Barn, and Smilex, whose chaotic and confrontational set in the Trailerpark tent set a benchmark for local acts at the festival

Away from Steventon, local rockers Vade Mecum returned from their Stateside exile to play a hometown show at The Zodiac, having spent the previous three months recording their album with producer Chris Brown, whose previous credits included Muse and Radiohead.

A typically quiet July gig guide was headed by

Truck, while Bad Manners, The Tender Trap, The Icarus Line and Rival Schools were all in town. Local names gigging in town included Winnebago Deal, JOR, Sexy Breakfast, The Half Rabbits and Headcount.

10 YEARS AGO

"I feel ashamed. Our set was dreadful; we sucked. I would have hated me too if I'd been watching." Thus said Fixers frontman Jack Goldstein by way of apology for his band's, ahem, "ramshackle" set at Truck Festival in July 2012. Having been the star turn at the previous year's Truck, the local heroes performed in a state of extreme inebriation, to equal amounts amusement and horror. If it's any consolation, it's a set that no-one has forgotten.

This was the first Truck Festival under the new stewardship of Y Not Festival, after 2011's financial woes forced brothers Robin and Joe Bennett to relinquish control. Mystery Jets; The Temper Trap; Guillemots; British Sea Power; The Low Anthem; Tim Minchen; Villagers and 65Daysofstatic among the headline names on show, while the local cast included Dead Jerichos; Yellow Fever; Kill Murray; The Old Grinding Young; Poledo and Alphabet Backwards.

Back indoors, Soulfly stopped off in town to wreak rock havoc at the O2 Academy, as did We Are Augustines, although the place to be this month was The Jericho Tavern as Savages made their first visit to Oxford, supported by Palma Violets, while perhaps most unexpected treat of the month was Charlotte Church's show at the Tavern,

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

the former child star, who'd sold over 10 million albums and performed for the Queen, the Pope and Bill Clinton revealed her new rock and roll persona to 150 intrigued fans.

5 YEARS AGO

Truck Festival once again dominated the month's gig calendar in July 2017. This time round Franz Ferdinand, The Libertines and The Vaccines were the big-name headliners, joined over the weekend by Slaves, Maximo Park, Loyle Carner, British Sea Power, Deaf Havana, Wombats and Hot 8 Brass, with Willie J Healey, Leader, Slate Hearts, Little Brother Eli, Catgod, 31hours and Autumn Saints among the local cast and Loud Mountains picked by *Nightshift* to play.

Meanwhile Cornbury Festival was planning its last hurrah, with Bryan Adams the Saturday night headline act. How times change, eh. Back then he was joined by The Pretenders, Imelda May, Jools Holland and Sophie Ellis Bextor among others. Popular demand and organiser Hugh Phillimore's kids persuaded him to return the next year but this time round it really does look like the end for Poshstock.

Smaller but no less perfectly formed was Irregular Folks' Summer Session, this year taking place in the grounds on Old Marston's Victoria Arms and featuring sets from Yorkston, Thorne and Khan alongside Go Dark, Laura J Martyn, Dead Rat Orchestra and Rozie Plain with absurdist genius Paul Foot once again master of ceremonies, Come back soon, Irregular Folks!

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TRACKS

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TOP TRACK GIGSY

“My musical inspirations are the likes of 80s synth artists like Depeche Mode, Gary Numan, Ultravox etc as well as the more modern influence of Lady Gaga, Charli XCX, MARINA...” Oh, just give her the Top Track already, why don't we! Some people know how to get us onside from the off and Gigsy here, who previously released a few tracks under the name Khloë, thankfully doesn't go and ruin it all by letting us down with her own take on those influences. Instead, her bubbling, pulsing, ultimately euphoric hip hop-inflected synth-pop is neatly layered yet melodically simple, her voice tinged with a sort of Old Europe emotional detachment at times and a slight giddiness at others so she can sound like an excitable Pixar character who's actually a slightly posh vampire, getting on down to Depeche Mode and Ladytron at the undead disco. In a month of tracks where religious themes crop up a few times, it's pleasing to see Gigsy's profile shows her dressed like some kind of demon creature, albeit one who mans the decks at the Hellbound Arms on a Saturday night rather than one who enjoys stabbing people up the jacksie with a red hot poker. And if all that isn't enough fun for one month, the next track up from her is called 'She's Evil', which comes with booming church organ, which gets us thinking of the wonderful Anna von Hausswolff as well as all the best scenes from *The Omen*. Gigsy might be evil but she is also, simultaneously, very, very good.

BETHANY WEIMERS

'Circles' here is Bethany Weimers' first new song for seven years since "Parenthood, pandemic, life and some musical disillusionment" got in the way of creativity. She'll always be welcome back here since Bethany's almost hymnal gospel-pop has long been a favourite of *Nightshift* reviewers. 'Circles' deals with the inescapable cyclical nature of the world – from human eggs that become children, to war and beyond, so it's appropriate the song feels like it's circling in on you, its mellifluous but insistent piano developing

an almost psychedelic quality as they underpin a vocal melody that we can't help but let remind us of Rod Stewart's 'Sailing' at times. The song almost becomes a chant, like a religious mantra as its moving parts start to overlap and merge to almost hypnotic effect. It's a song that amply repays repeated listens and it's a very welcome return to our musical world for Bethany. Let's not leave it another seven years til the next song, eh.

THE FUTURE OF VIOLENCE

Good band name. Great band name. Obviously *Nightshift* abhors violence but not in the context of music where some aural destruction is always well in order. The Future of Violence appears to be the work of a bloke called Calvin Butcher, which in itself is a good name for someone making brutish music. And brutish this is – an incessant riff seemingly nicked off psych-noise rockers Mugstar that churns along without the faintest consideration or even awareness of diversions, side roads or objects that might getting its way. This is topped off by what sounds like an angry wasp impersonating Tom Waits after three bottles of Tesco's cheapest Merlot. There's an almost obligatory heavy metal guitar wig out partway through but mostly this sounds like a pissed up insectoid bluesman driving a bulldozer. Onward the riffs rolls, oblivious. If there is any certainty in this world it's that, as Bethany Weimers before him sings, violence is eternal and unstoppable and this particular vehicle certainly ain't for turning.

CHRIS KOUTSOGIANNIS

We guess the pandemic and its associated lockdowns gave a lot of people a lot of time to think about stuff. In Chris here's case he was thinking what it would sound like if he played Pink Floyd's 'Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun' on a musical saw and tubular bells in 7/8 time, incorporating John Coltrane's 'A Love Supreme' into proceedings alongside a traditional Greek folk tune. It's clever for sure but we're not convinced that everything clever is a good thing to do. Sending multi-billionaire narcissists into space in private rockets is clever but maybe not a great use of time, money or the earth's natural resources. This is reasonably interesting for its duration but despite being dubbed Voodoo Floyd it's not actually as sinister or atmospheric as the original. It has given us an idea though: next time Branson, Musk or that other dildo fancy a flight into the upper reaches of the sky why not just set the controls for the heart of the sun and make the world a slightly better place.

BIZZA

Bizza is 15 years old, or at least was when she wrote and recorded these songs in her bedroom, but we don't have to pretend to be kind while taking that into consideration since this is good stuff regardless of her age. Like this month's cover star Aphra Taylor, Bizza has a sleepy-eyed voice and it suits the simplicity and stillness of much of her music. The slightly tripped-out electro-dream-pop somnambulates along on basic synths and scraped guitar, just occasionally opting for something sweeter and poppier, or conversely a bit heavier in a drum&bass style. It might lack a bit in the memorable tune stakes, preferring to remain slightly sullen and serene as it drifts along on tracks like 'Be Free' (which comes with weird almost inaudible backing vocals that we initially thought was our neighbour's dog getting uppity with our cats again – our neighbours have some chickens and our cats like to sit and watch them and imagine them in tins), and on that score we would suggest time and experience will hopefully help things move up a gear but for now, this is all rather pleasant to sink into a summer afternoon reverie to.

JAMES' ROOM

The band is called James' Room and their song is called 'Come In', which means the song itself is inviting us into the band's world like a weird sci-fi immersive experience. Or are we indulging in wishful thing in the face of something that fails somewhat miserably to live up to its initial promise. That initial promise being a dense wall of a guitar noise that we imagine might lead us into something akin to psych-drone godheads Loop but as soon as the vocals arrive and some semblance of a melody gets involved it's little more than bogstandard heavy-duty indie-rock with perhaps the merest hint of metalcore if U2 decided they were going to discover metalcore. This is well produced and you can imagine James' Room opening for Noel Gallagher or The Courteeners and we wish them the very best in achieving such lofty ambitions, but by all that's holy this is prosaic stuff.

JOE CARNWATH

Some people just ask for it. Keen-eyed readers might remember Joe here was in last month's pile, looking like a Peaky Blinder but sounding like the fun-free missing member of Chas'n'Dave, and here he is back again straight away with a song called... 'So So'. And if that don't write its own review, the line "Maybe this is as good as it gets" certainly does. Because so-so really is what it is – neither particularly good nor especially bad, it just kind of exists in a sterile, well-produced middle ground, as if written and performed by a mid-80s AI after attending 100 songwriting workshops and deciding it had the formula. The sad truth is, of course, that so much music is written to formula now, simply to garner airplay on

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undemanding commercial radio stations, to fit into a Spotify genre playlist or hit the right note for advertisers. Maybe Joe will be a multi-millionaire by Christmas. We're betting on soundtracking a retirement fund advert or ISA commercial as his most likely source of income.

THE WORD 66

"The Word 66 always rock with a positive message, something we believe is needed in these troubled times," we're told, by which they mean they're a Christian rock band, and we wonder if the Number 66 in their name is a message to diminish the Devil and stuff in their crusade to clean up the filth and debauchery that is heavy metal and its sinful ways. If so then perhaps calling your song 'Tonight Is The Night' probably isn't a good start, what with its suggestions of, y'know, SEX and general muckiness. Not that The Word 66 seem to be overly familiar with concepts like filth since for all their chugging classic heavy rock riffage this sounds a bit too clean. And stilted. And, well, boring. Really fucking boring. It should grind or gallop; instead it trudges. Relentlessly. It doesn't even try to touch the sky to get closer to its chosen deity. It might believe in heaven but its gaze is at the ground. Guess The Devil really does have all the best tunes after all.

TOILET TRACK

YAOKI

"Hey guys, let's form a band!" "Yay dude, cool idea, what shall we sound like?" "I dunno, what's trendy and will get us signed?" "Hmm, Foals?" "Sounds cool, let's do it!" "And, erm, metalcore, apparently." "Brilliant, a metalcore Foals! We're gonna ROCK!" "Boy bands do quite well too, according to Tik Tok." "Great idea! We could be like a boy band playing Foals in a metalcore style!" "Shit man, we're gonna be RICH!" Yes, dear reader, conversations like this happen in bedrooms, garages and record company marketing offices all the time, which is why we get bands like Yaoki, whose name is either an exotic South Korean fizzy drink or the sound a pissed student rugby player makes after sixteen pints of Brewdog. Yaoki's song is called 'Brand New Life' and is, apparently, "a celebration of the self" and sounds like a rapidly discarded off-cut from 'Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost' given a soft-centred metalcore polish and delivered in the style of whoever Columbia Records got in to replace One Direction. Or, if we're being really unkind, it sounds like a second rate Bastille. Consider that for a few moments: like Bastille, but not as good. Not as good as Bastille. And now behold as the laws of reality crumble around you. Oh, and we checked Auto-Translate and Yaoki is apparently ancient Sanskrit for Utterly Fucking Generic.

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O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

BLACK PARADE
00'S EMO ANTHEMS

SUN~02~OCT~22

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

MONSTER TRUCK
&// THOSE DAMN CROWS

FRI~11~NOV~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

IMPERIAL LEISURE
&// PLUS GUESTS

SAT~30~JUL~22

THE RUSTY BICYCLE, OXFORD

RUSTY BICYCLE
STREET PARTY
FT. OPUS KINK, PIMA QUEEN
& MORE

FRI~07~OCT~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

CUT CAPERS
&// PLUS GUESTS

FRI~18~NOV~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

TOM MCGUIRE AND
THE BRASSHOLES
&// PLUS GUESTS

SUN~21~AUG~22

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

THE RUMJACKS
&// SHANGHAI TREASON
&// THE MISTAKES

FRI~14~OCT~22

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

RED
&// KEITH WALLEN (OF BREAKING BENJAMIN)
&// THE FALLEN STATE

SAT~03~DEC~23

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

SKINNY LISTER
&// BERRIES
&// TOM JENKINS (SOLO)

TUE~23~AUG~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

SPORTS TEAM
ALBUM LAUNCH SHOW

SUN~16~OCT~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

THE TRIALS OF CATO
&// PLUS GUESTS

FRI~09~DEC~22

O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

THE CRAIG CHARLES
FUNK AND SOUL CLUB
&// PLUS GUESTS

THU~08~SEP~22

O2 ACADEMY 2, OXFORD

CANCER BATS
&// WITCH FEVER
&// XL LIFE

FRI~04~NOV~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

THE PEOPLE VERSUS
&// PLUS GUESTS

SAT~28~JAN~SOLD OUT****

O2 ACADEMY2, OXFORD

FOALS
INTIMATE ALBUM SHOW

FRI~23~SEP~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

THE 900
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER
SOUNDTRACK COVER BAND
&// APOLLO SYNDROME

THU~10~NOV~22

THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD

TANKUS THE HENGE
&// PLUS GUESTS

SUN~19~MAR~23

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