



# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every  
month  
Issue 305  
March  
2022**

photo: DZPhoto

# JODY & THE JERMS

**"I heard Jody's voice  
for the first time and  
it dawned on me that  
we'd accidentally  
formed a great band"**

Happy happenstance and perfect  
pop with Oxford's indie stars

*Also in this issue:*

Truckfest, Cornbury, Feastival and  
Folk Weekend news

Introducing **BEWARETHISBOY**

At work with **DJ Katalyst**

*plus*

All your Oxfordshire music news, previews  
and gig listings for March

## OXFORD DUPLICATION CENTRE



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# THE BULLINGDON

MARCH 2022

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Tuesday 1st March  
**Airways**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 2nd March  
**Melt Yourself Down**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 3rd March  
**Semi Detached**  
**Sammy Virji**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 4th March  
**Larry Dean: FUDNUT**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 4th March  
**Cut the Trap**  
**Bad & Bully**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 5th March  
**Simple**  
**Daniel Avery**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 6th March  
**Trash Boat**  
**Modern Error**  
**So Long Space Girl**  
Doors: 7PM

Monday 7th March  
**Dots Funk Odyssey**  
**Rough Edge Brass Band**  
**Unwade**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 8th March  
**Beans on Toast**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 9th March  
**Oxford Electronica**  
**Octavia Freud**  
**Tiger Mendoza**  
**Moth Drop**  
**The Subtheory**  
Doors: 7PM

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

Friday 11th March  
**Wille and the Bandits**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 11th March  
**Raving Trippy**  
**Cosmic Vision**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 12th March  
**Musical Medicine**  
**Crazy P (DJ)**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 13th March  
**The Now**  
**Concord Drive**  
**Haig**  
**The Follants**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 15th March  
**Aurie Styla: Green**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 16th March  
**O Moon**  
**Mannequin**  
**Tales of Adler aka Christina Truman**  
**The Foam Heads**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 17th March  
**Dream Wife**  
Doors: 7PM

Friday 18th March  
**Soft Machine**  
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 19th March  
**Bangerz and Lash**  
**00s Edition**  
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 20th March  
**Skylarkin Soundsystem**  
**Mungo's HIFI Soundsystem**  
**+ Eva Lazarus**  
Doors: 11PM

Monday 21st March  
**Warmduscher (SOLD OUT)**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 22nd March  
**Warner E Hodges**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 23rd March  
**The Total Stone Roses**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 24th March  
**Soul Sista**  
**Grand Theft Disco**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 25th March  
**Rumble in the Jungle X Rawdia**  
**AMC & Phantom MC**  
**Saxxon & Cheshire Cat**  
**Monroller B2B Noisy Antics**  
**DJ Instinct B2B Magnum B2B Re-Ofinda**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 26th March  
**Desi Central Comedy Show**  
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 27th March  
**The Skinner Brothers**  
**Teef**  
**Rolla**  
Doors: 7PM

Monday 28th March  
**In-Flight Movie**  
**Mila Todd**  
**Siamese Sirens**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 29th March  
**Rosalie Cunningham**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 30th March  
**Sean Walsh:**  
**Back from the Bed**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 31st March  
**HAU5 Party**  
**Volume 2**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 1st April  
**Melt-Banana**  
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 2nd April  
**Danny George Wilson**  
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 3rd April  
**Police Dog Hogan**  
Doors: 7PM

Monday 4th April  
**Dreadzone**  
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 5th April  
**Bobby V**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 6th April  
**Noasis**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 7th April  
**Drum and Bass**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 8th April  
**Time Warp!**  
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 9th April  
**Whyte Horses**  
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 10th April  
**Stray Vambo**  
Doors: 7PM

Monday 11th April  
**Semi Detached**  
**TBA**  
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 12th April  
**The Quireboys**  
**A Bit of What you Fancy**  
**30th Anniversary Tour**  
**Massive**  
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 13th April  
**Geoff Norcott:**  
**I Blame the Parents**  
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 14th April  
**Back to the 80s**  
Doors: 11PM

Friday 15th April  
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# NEWS



**THE HUMAN LEAGUE, ANNE-MARIE AND STEREOPHONICS** will headline this year's **Big Festival**.

The music and food festival takes place at **Alex James' Farm** in Kingham over the August Bank Holiday weekend – the **26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> August**.

Synth-pop legends The Human League headline the Friday night with trippy pop star Anne-Marie topping the bill on Saturday and Stereophonics last on the Sunday, giving everyone a perfect excuse to leave nice and early.

Joining the headliners are special guests **Sugababes** plus a line-up that includes Jake Bugg; Basement Jaxx DJs; Gabrielle; Sam Ryder; Lola Young; Alfie Templeton; The Futureheads and The Sherklocks. The festival's chef and family entertainment bills are yet to be announced. More details and tickets at [thebigfestival.com](http://thebigfestival.com).

**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](mailto:info@getmeltingpot.co.uk).

**FINALLY**, a very fond *Nightshift* farewell to O2 Academy venue manager Caren Ashton-Penketh who is leaving Oxford to take up the job of running the Academy venue in Birmingham. Best of luck in the new job, Caren.



**ALTERED IMAGES, MICA PARIS AND ALICE RUSSELL** are among the latest acts confirmed for this year's **Cornbury Festival**.

They join headliners **Bryan Adams, Ronan Keating and James Blunt** at **Great Tew Country Park** over the weekend of the **8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July 2022** as Cornbury returns after two years off due to the pandemic.

Blunt tops the bill on the Friday and is joined by The Darkness. Saturday sees Adams headlining alongside The Waterboys, while the final day is headed by Keating with Cornbury regulars Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra. Other acts announced include The Magic Numbers; Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly!; Stone Foundation; Captain Accident; The Christians; William the Conqueror; Ferris & Sylvester; Toby Lee; Andy Fairweather Low; Beans on Toast; Amy Montgomery. Tickets for Cornbury are on sale now at [cornburyfestival.com](http://cornburyfestival.com).

**Bossaphonik**  
Superb live bands each month! DJ Bossaphonik Dan and Guests  
OXFORD'S UNIQUE JAZZ WORLD DANCE EVENT

**K.O.G.**  
Dynamite Afro-fusion  
7 piece band

Kweku Sackey aka K.O.G. (Kweku of Ghana) is a multi dimensional creative force combining exquisite writing skills with shamanistic live performance.

The band mix up Afro-funk, reggae, Afro-dancehall and hip hop featuring electric brass lines, thunderous percussion, sharp edge electric guitar and a tornado of energy from Jamaican rapper Franz Von.

"Ghana's finest" Jools Holland

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March** 9pm - 2am  
£12adv / £12 student ID / £15 door Live band on at 10pm  
[wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com)

NOW AT  
**COWLEY WORKERS SOCIAL CLUB**  
Between Towns Road, OX4 3LZ  
[www.bossaphonik.com](http://www.bossaphonik.com)

Map showing location: Cowley Workers Social Club, Between Towns Road, OX4 3LZ. Routes 1+5, 2+6, 3+7, 4+8, 5+9, 6+10, 7+11, 8+12, 9+13, 10+14, 11+15, 12+16, 13+17, 14+18, 15+19, 16+20, 17+21, 18+22, 19+23, 20+24, 21+25, 22+26, 23+27, 24+28, 25+29, 26+30, 27+31, 28+32, 29+33, 30+34, 31+35, 32+36, 33+37, 34+38, 35+39, 36+40, 37+41, 38+42, 39+43, 40+44, 41+45, 42+46, 43+47, 44+48, 45+49, 46+50, 47+51, 48+52, 49+53, 50+54, 51+55, 52+56, 53+57, 54+58, 55+59, 56+60, 57+61, 58+62, 59+63, 60+64, 61+65, 62+66, 63+67, 64+68, 65+69, 66+70, 67+71, 68+72, 69+73, 70+74, 71+75, 72+76, 73+77, 74+78, 75+79, 76+80, 77+81, 78+82, 79+83, 80+84, 81+85, 82+86, 83+87, 84+88, 85+89, 86+90, 87+91, 88+92, 89+93, 90+94, 91+95, 92+96, 93+97, 94+98, 95+99, 96+100, 97+101, 98+102, 99+103, 100+104, 101+105, 102+106, 103+107, 104+108, 105+109, 106+110, 107+111, 108+112, 109+113, 110+114, 111+115, 112+116, 113+117, 114+118, 115+119, 116+120, 117+121, 118+122, 119+123, 120+124, 121+125, 122+126, 123+127, 124+128, 125+129, 126+130, 127+131, 128+132, 129+133, 130+134, 131+135, 132+136, 133+137, 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A quiet word with

# JODY & THE JERMS

photo: DZPhoto



“**EVERY ERA IS A GOLDEN** age for someone,” says Niall Jeger, guitarist with Jody & the Jerms, chatting to *Nightshift* about his band’s regular array of cover versions that dot their live sets, including The Cure, Kirsty MacColl and Strawberry Switchblade, suggesting a love for the pure pop thrills of the 1980s.

“I think sometimes in this country, music and fads move on so quickly and so much good stuff wrongly gets left behind,” he continues, warming to the theme; “I remember touring Italy with my old band The Anydays and the clubs we went to after gigs had such a diverse playlist, from Jerry Lee Lewis to Placebo, to Metallica, to De La Soul, all in the space of fifteen minutes and no one batted an eyelid and the dancefloor was rammed.”

**A JODY & THE JERMS GIG** is a fizzing, fuzzing, jingling and jangling celebration of great pop music: all thrills, few frills, classic indie sparkle and a tune to get stuck in your head for days after over clever experimentation. Which is why the band’s new album, ‘Flicker’, is such a joy. Released this month, it’s fifteen tracks of sunshine-fuelled bubblegum guitar pop that buzzes and bounces with the classic indie spirit of bands like The Primitives, Talulah Gosh

and Darling Buds, and beyond to Blondie and The GoGo’s at their poppiest and the bright, folk-tinged joy of Kirsty MacColl. Amazingly for a band only formed in the summer of 2019, ‘Flicker’ is Jody & the Jerms’ second full album; their debut, ‘Deeper’, was released in 2020. Covid might have stopped them gigging but it never slowed their creative output.

**JODY & THE JERMS WERE** formed by Niall and drummer Alex Bridge, who knew each other from 00s Oxford band The Anydays. The pair recorded the bones of two songs in Safehouse Studios in August 2019 and had a singer lined up who then got a big role in the West End instead, so he never actually joined the band. Instead Niall persuaded his wife Jody, who had never sung before “other than when baking cakes,” to put a guide vocal down in the studio in case another singer ever came along. She agreed but only if she could record ‘Never Going Home’, her favourite b-side from long-forgotten New York shoegazers The Belltower. Within weeks their new version was being played on national radio in Spain and BBC Introducing. The new band had their singer and their name. If Jody joining was almost an accident her voice is at the heart of the Jerms’ sound, possessed of the

rich, impassioned vulnerability of Kirsty MacColl herself. The trio added keyboard player Robert Anwood and bassist David Meaden, friends who had never been in a band or even played much before. Jody and the fledgling Jerms had a tour of Spain lined up and UK dates and festivals, but after a sole gig in February 2020 at The Wheatsheaf, Covid hit. Through lockdown, Niall and Jody continued to write, the other Jerms grew into their instruments, and before long the band had recorded and released ‘Deeper’, followed by a bunch of singles and an EP. Last year they recruited West Country singer songwriter Peter James Millson, Niall’s old school buddy and the brother of the singer who never was, on guitar and additional vocals.

**LOOKING BACK TO THEIR** time with The Anydays – who played The Oxford Punt in 2010, but who split in 2015 – *Nightshift* wonders how Niall and Alex went from that band’s more 60s-inspired garage-rock sound to the fuzz and shimmer of Jody & the Jerms. Alex: We had a lot of fun with The Anydays and that’s where I met Niall and we got to know each other’s wider friends and family – including everyone who is now in Jody & the Jerms. Our

last Anydays gig was a Teenage Cancer Trust fundraiser in 2015. We’ve played together a few times since, kind of undercover when we’ve all been at the same parties, so we’ve always had a beer and caught up on each other’s musical endeavours (Anydays frontman Drew Atkins now plays in local electro-indie band Brite Spires). I love that people still talk about it with warmth and affection. We did 10 years so it’s a neat package to leave behind. “The Jerms started forming kind of by accident when Niall asked if I fancied playing drums on a few song ideas he wanted to record. We put down the basis of a few tracks at Safehouse and Niall said he knew a singer who might come and record some vocals. The singer guy never made it down to the studio so I kind of forgot about it and went away on holiday. I got back a few weeks later and Niall played me the mixes. I heard Jody’s singing voice for the first time and it dawned on me that we’d accidentally formed a great band.”

Niall: “I loved The Anydays and when it was over I stopped playing and sold all my bass gear. That was probably that catalyst I needed to then pick up an acoustic guitar and start writing. I never wrote songs in The Anydays, so when I started writing, it was just natural with no aspiration to sound like anything really. Somehow we are all on the same wavelength when Pete, Dave and Rob come up with their ideas that introduce a wider range of influences and creativity. And Jody is a bit of a perfectionist and knows what works for her voice, so adds a layer of quality control and direction.” Niall’s musical history goes back some way before even The Anydays. In fact he was on the front cover of *Nightshift*’s precursor *Curfew* in the early 1990s as a teenager with his band Radiance. Niall: “The early 90s was a great time for music in Oxford. My fondest memory is supporting The Jennifers, featuring Gaz Coombes and Danny Goffey, at The Venue. I remember we decided to cover all the amps and stage in white sheets and hired in a load of UV lights. I think it burnt our singer’s eyes out. We used to put a club night on at The Wheatsheaf and spent every weekend playing in Oxford or London for a few years. It was a great way to spend your adolescence. We used to rehearse

in The Coldroom in Cumnor in the slot before Radiohead and chatted when we were loading out. I remember they loved a guitar effect we were getting with a tremolo pedal and were asking about it. It was definitely – maybe – on ‘Pablo Honey’.”

**BY CONTRAST TO** seasoned band veterans Niall and Alex, Jody had absolutely no experience of singing outside the house. How easy was it to convince her to be in the band and how has she taken to the experience? Jody: “Before the Jerms, I last sang in public as a 12-year-old in a school play, but that was about a gazillion years ago. Singing on stage now is both terrifying and amazing at the same time. Luckily stage lighting helps. Being part of a band and singing is completely outside of my comfort zone; I’m not a natural extrovert front person. I do have stage fright and have to give myself a good talking to whilst waiting to go on stage. I almost have to become a different person. There’s the Jody that dresses up and sings on stage with big false eyelashes and chunky DM boots and then there is the other me, who is married to the lead guitarist, has kids and runs a cake making business at home. “Despite that, despite the nerves and imposter syndrome, I’m lucky to be doing this as they are amazingly supportive friends whom I’ve known for years. We’re having a ton of fun doing this together and that’s what makes it so enjoyable.” Listening to Jody sing she sounds like a natural and to be compared to a talent as great as Kirsty MacColl is quite something. Jody: “Being compared to Kirsty MacColl is just like getting all my Christmas and birthday presents for the next 100 years all at once! It’s a massive compliment to be told that. She was a beautiful singer and a wonderful human being. I always love hearing her songs and can massively relate to her. I’ve read that she was quite shy about performing too. I can sometimes hear an unintentional country twang in my voice when I sing, and that’s something I believe she had too. Not sure where it comes from with me, as I’m West Berkshire born and bred! Growing up, I was essentially a 90s indie girl and have been most influenced by The Cure, The Primitives, The Stone Roses, The Smiths and Blur, but also by Karen Carpenter, Dolly Parton and of course, Blondie.” We have to wonder, then how The Jerms might have turned out had that original singer not got his West End calling. Niall: “He was a guy called Joe

who I knew from being in a school band, and being an amazing actor he can really sing. When I wrote those early songs I asked him if he would sing and he was well up for it. Literally a few weeks later Mary Poppins came calling which was a full time paid gig... and then the world changed anyhow! I think he used lockdown to write a book that is now published, so I’m sure he has no regrets. Anyhow, his very talented brother Peter ended up joining the band and he does a lot of the harmonies and has added a really important layer to our sound.” Alex: “Jody has taken on the lyric writing as we’ve grown, so I can’t imagine anyone in her place. I don’t want to think about it.” Like Jody, Robert and David had never been in bands before, but like her have brought a sense of freshness and naivety to the music

**“Being compared to Kirsty MacColl is like getting all my Christmas and birthday presents for the next 100 years all at once”**

that carries it all along. David: “I’d never played bass and barely picked up a guitar prior to Niall asking out of the blue whether I wanted to join them to play a gig. I do play a bit of piano and that certainly helped and I think I just about got away with it on the night. Just.” Robert: “I’ve found playing a part in the alchemical process of creating a song addictive – going from someone’s rough recording of an idea with an acoustic guitar and a vocal, layering it up with drums, guitars, keyboards, backing vocals and percussion, and ending up with something I want to hum along to. I was terrified playing that first gig at The Wheatsheaf, but have got to the point where I really look forward to performing live now. Niall promised me there would be unlimited sex, drugs, rock’n’roll and brandy, so it was an easy sell. So far, I have seen a limited amount of rock’n’roll and brandy.”

**OF COURSE, HAVING MADE** that debut at The Wheatsheaf, and with so much planned, Covid hit, gigs shut down and having just got off the ground, Jody & the Jerms ground to a halt, but rather than giving up or going into hibernation, the band put the downtime to good use and now see plenty of positives in it all. Niall: “It was such a fast start, but lockdown actually helped us to develop as a band. It was obviously horrible cancelling all our gigs and plans in March 2020, but ironically that may have helped us.”

Jody: “Living with Niall we literally just wrote songs, practised every day, worked out what worked, what didn’t, listened to a lot of music and generally just really enjoyed music.” Alex: “I went full hermit for lockdown, so one of the weirdest days was after the first lockdown, driving away from home and going back into a studio for the first time. It was a beautiful couple of sunny days and the roads were eerily quiet. With the bright yellow fields, blue skies with the odd couple of fluffy clouds, it kind of seemed idyllic, but feels like watching a weird Australian art movie on super-8 when I think back.” Writing, recording and releasing two albums during the pandemic suggests the songwriting side of things thrived despite, or perhaps because of, that downtime.

**“Being compared to Kirsty MacColl is like getting all my Christmas and birthday presents for the next 100 years all at once”**

Alex: “I’ll forever associate ‘Deeper’ with the weird, hot summer of 2020, but in a good way. It makes me think of sunshine and blue sky. We’ve kind of settled into a groove as a band and also developed a bigger sound since then. Plus Jody now writes most of the lyrics, so ‘Flicker’ sounds bigger and more together.”

**THE NEW RECORD REALLY** is a gem of a pop album: sharp, tight and bright with just the right amount of indie fragility – it reminds *Nightshift* of The Primitives, one of the 80s and 90s’ great indie pop acts; are they a particular influence? Alex: “I went out and bought The Primitives LP ‘Lovely’ as soon as it came out in 1988. I remember going to see them in a club in Hereford. I was trying to get a look at the drums, but I couldn’t even see Tracy Tracy behind all the legs sticking up out of the moshpit. It was a brilliant gig! So I guess they’re lodged in my brain somewhere amongst everything else.” Niall: “I’ve always liked a great guitar intro to a song, like ‘This Charming Man’, The Primitives’ ‘Crash’, or The La’s’ ‘There She Goes’, so that jangle guitar element is definitely an influence.” Oxford was once renowned for producing the kind of sparkling, jangle’n’fuzz-led indie music Jody & the Jerms play – bands like Talulah Gosh, The Anyways and The Razorcuts were among the bands who helped form the local scene; do they see any other acts

in town nowadays that they feel kinship with? Niall: “I think the downside of lockdown is there hasn’t been as much gig going, meeting other people and acts that you would get otherwise. Certainly Alex and myself have a lot of friends in other Oxford bands and they are all doing amazing things. But yeah, maybe that indie guitar scene ain’t what it once was.”

**DESPITE A LACK OF** gigging opportunities, Jody & the Jerms’ knack for a pure and simple pop song has seen them enjoy success on the radio play front, picking up plays across the BBC as well as in Spain and the US, and they recorded a session for what became the late, great Janice Long’s final show on Radio Wales before her untimely death in December last year. Alex: “I was so excited to get to be on Radio Wales, for our songs to be played and to name-check the town where I was raised. It would be easy to compare Janice Long to John Peel in terms of her brilliant ear and innate passion for discovering and sharing great music, but she was her own woman. She did so much for so many up and coming bands.” Niall: “My mate Jonny tells a great anecdote from when he was working in Sainsbury’s in the late 80s and she walked in wearing a Stone Roses T-shirt and they had a good chat about this ‘new’ band he’d read about. She has supported so many new bands and stayed with them so it was a real honour to be asked to record three songs and do the interview.”

**WITH GIGS BACK ON AND** the new album out, 2022 looks like Jody & the Jerms’ for the taking – a chance at last to put all that lockdown productivity into practice with shows across the spring and summer. They’ll pays shows in Cardiff, London, Liverpool, Hull and York ahead of their hometown headline show at The Bullingdon on the 16<sup>th</sup> June, followed by festival shows and we’re betting the sheer simple pleasure of their pure pop will continue to earn them new fans far beyond Oxfordshire. But before we go – who, in their eyes is the greatest pop band of all time? Alex: “Blondie! And The Cure. And Prefab Sprout!” Niall: “Blondie’s ‘Parallel Lines’ is probably my favourite album ever, and has a really unique pop and rock balance, full of attitude.”

**‘Flicker’ is released on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. Jody & the Jerms play The Bullingdon on the 16<sup>th</sup> June. Visit [jodyandthejermms.com](http://jodyandthejermms.com)**

# RELEASED

## JODY & THE JERMS ‘Flicker’

*(Self released)*  
If The Lathums’ Number 1 chart success last year sent the withering, journalistic sobriquet “landfill indie” to, ahem, landfill, it also flung wide open the door of the jangle pop, guilty secret closet and proved that there was an eagerly waiting audience outside, disillusioned by the current pitch-bent, EDM failure to understand simple melodic, short duration singles. Jody Jeger and her five Jerms instinctively know about this potent nature of hook-driven, human sounding pop, characterised by songs like Strawberry Switchblade’s ‘Since Yesterday’, which they helpfully cover here as a bonus track. It is a benchmark they easily ascend to, and beyond, on this their second album since forming in 2019, after their tentative debut ‘Deeper’ got lost in the fog of the pandemic and venue closure in 2020. ‘Flicker’ shows the band have now fully formed and are at the top of their A game. Jody’s voice has gained an un-twee vital edge, plus the hint of a Hibernian tic in her throat, as if Dolores O’Riordan has joined forces with the muscular spirit of The Attractions or a ‘Chain Gang’-era Pretenders. Yes, The Jerms really are that solid a set of musicians – a legacy of having been formed round the rhythm section of



## PECO ‘Brittle’

*(Upcycled Sounds)*  
Pecq have emerged from the ashes of Limpet Space Race, a duo featuring Hannah Jacobs and Nikò O’Brien that first served notice of their talents back in 2018 with their inventive ‘Cartograffiti’ EP and who have worked since with a litany of talented collaborators including Liz Fraser of Cocteau Twins and the Women’s Orchestra of Afghanistan. This new EP is recognisable as an outgrowth of the band’s earlier work – the ‘random percussive junk’ of their earlier incarnation is still there – but moves beyond it to create something that’s more



The Anydays – and yes, you’ll catch glimpses of a cavalcade of vintage riffs and influences in the waterfall of tracks that sweep you away; the ‘Paperback Writer’-esque ‘Heavenly’, the wash of ‘Sloop John B’ in ‘Spinning’, and the driving beat of Sniff N’ The Tears in ‘Sensations’, all repurposed, and bettered, in the innocent abandon of the creative new. At fourteen plus tracks a couple of them could well have been lost to sharpen up the giddy dynamism, but have no doubt in the Covid-free festival years we have ahead, this flicker won’t be so secret, and will become a welcome and liberating flame.

*Paul Carrera*

recognisably a product of the introspection that lockdown brought with it, shorn of some of Limpet Spaces Race’s more jazzy stylings. The result, on the title track and ‘Too Far Gone’ and ‘Same Mistakes’ at least nods to Slow Club, London Grammar and Polica as well as local heroine Esther Joy Lane in its babbling brook of synths and insistent pulses, providing a backdrop to Jacobs’ dreamy vocals. ‘Brittle’ in particular, is punctuated by the gorgeous metallic sheen of a keyboard break, a trick repeated entirely differently but just as impressively on ‘Too Far Gone’. Deployment of a DIY oscilloscope would appear to be the route to such musical gorgeousness. But it’s on opener ‘Over and Over’ that the EP really soars – a recreation of the blissed out electronica of ten years ago or so, a creative burst in the vein of Delorean or Air France and particularly calling to mind the majesty of Gang Gang Dance’s ‘Eye Contact’ long player from 2011. Indeed, an early Limpet Space Race track, ‘Half Light’, can also be considered a distant cousin of this new tune. Jacobs and O’Brien are ever busy and their determination to immerse themselves in climate activism – they have worked with the Centre for Energy Ethics and created a vocal piece for Jazz South on the subject of microplastics – is an entirely admirable illustration of where they are moving. ‘Brittle’ contains enough ducks and feints to satisfy the most demanding of musical commentators.

*Rob Langham*

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## CHIIKA ‘Cure, Antidote, Commotion’

*(Self released)*  
The very definition of a Covid lockdown artist, Chiika first began making music in isolation, creating the beats and melodies to match her poetry but has got up to speed like a fast-tracked government PPE contract. Except more honest. Honesty being a watchword when it comes to Chiika as she explores relationships and self love, mixing the sounds, and occasional words, of her Indian heritage with more typically western pop, r’n’b and hip hop. This six-track EP features two of her recent singles: ‘Poseidon’ and *Nightshift* Top 10 pick ‘Natural Nicotine’, both of which sound ready-made chart hits. The former is reflective and poetic but infectiously playful, almost breathless; the latter is more of a banger with its bigger beats and made-for-festivals-singalong-season while remaining intimate – equal parts vulnerable and bring-it defiant. The fact that we’re still discovering elements we’ve not noticed before six months after first hearing it despite the fact it’s so instantly catchy, suggests a songwriting and production ability that defies its bedroom origins. Of the newer songs here, ‘Paint Me (I’m a Masterpiece)’ is more fluid r’n’b with just a hint of rap swagger about it, while ‘Spend the Night’ is slower, smokier and more soulful. There’s a neat and delicate mixing of styles throughout Chiika’s songs, so she never falls into simple genre holes and through everything there’s a pop core that means melody is first and last and always. Like Arlo Parks or Hope Tala, Chiika paints from an expansive palette but never loses that sense of intimacy, and she burrows into and borrows from a world of sound while sounding so, so English. You listen to this EP and marvel at how simple it all sounds, but if it were that simple, everyone would be doing. They’re not, but Chiika is, and from lockdown solitude, we now have one of Oxford’s brightest new musical talents on our hands.

*Dale Kattack*



## JULIA-SOPHIE ‘It Feels Like Thunder’

*(Beat Palace)*  
“Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.” Thus said President Theodore Roosevelt back in 1900 and it’s a maxim that feels appropriate to Julia-Sophie’s music over the last year or so. It bubbles and hums softly, Julia’s voice is ghostly and unimposing, and there is an air of wracked uncertainty about it all but there’s also a conflicted emotional intensity here, like a 2am confessional down a disconnected phone line. “I wake up and it feels like thunder” she sings on ‘Dial My Number’ and for all that glimmers of clear sky punctuate the song, a scene is gently but firmly set. The machinery of the music is all thrumming synths and nervy, skittering beats – fine, fragile textures whose purpose is to make a bed for those softly questing, self-questioning vocals to drift sleepily over. You can tell Julia has experience in writing music for film soundtracks – each of the three songs here brings with it an imagined movie scene, passages of stillness and contemplation far beyond the drama and action. Fittingly for such an understated set of songs Julia leaves the absolute best to last – ‘Video Girl’ whirrs and thrums and oh-so-gently blooms like a soundtrack to a slo-mo cyborg nature doc before dissolving into mist, Julia’s barely-there vocals lost yet searching – for hope... redemption... certainty? That’s for her to know but softly as she speaks, musically this is one big stick and, yes, she will go far.

*Dale Kattack*

## OCTAVIA FREUD ‘When I Was a Kid’ / ‘Fifty’

*(Ditto)*  
A brace of new singles from prolific local electro artist, and recent *Nightshift* Track of the Month winner Octavia Freud, the musical incarnation of Martin Andrews. Both songs share a similar coming-to-terms-with-the-world theme in quite different but overlapping ways: ‘When I Was a Kid’ a reflection on the simplicities, mundanities and freedoms of life as a child; ‘Fifty’ dwelling on being 50, playing gigs to no more than 50 people in the back of a pub and getting £50 for your troubles if you’re lucky. The conclusion to

## TIGER MENDOZA ‘EPTWO’

*(Self released)*  
The second of three EP releases from Tiger Mendoza over the first part of 2022, ‘EPTWO’ is part of a body of work that Ian de Quadros claims to be his most personal music so far, each EP reflecting a different emotional state during lockdown. That said, this is mostly instrumental, only second track ‘Unravel’ having a lead vocal as such. EP Opener ‘Oedo’ glides from Nine Inch Nails-style industrial throb into a frantic guitar workout, which invites comparison to fellow local electro travellers The Subtheory, and sets the scene for a ride through the near-future streets and battlegrounds of the video games that provide much of Tiger Mendoza’s inspiration (he quotes Noughties cult fave *Bayonetta* as an influence). ‘Unravel’ is perhaps the least successful track here, even a Vocoder struggling to make the vocals fit the beats’n’buzzes of the music beneath, but ‘Sheer Hope’ takes us to a darker place, skittering drum&bass beats, gnarly bass synths and an almost playful keyboard melody offering a neat balance between abstract and purposeful, like an imagined studio jam session involving Vangelis and Burial. ‘Earning Subtlety’ offers light and something gentler after that, though still carrying the feel of a drive down a neon-lit LA street in a 90s film noir, and the EP ends on another high with ‘Modern Tape’, again balancing the rapid-fire beats with more elegant electronic glide, like a swan, serene on its pond while beneath the surface it’s paddling like crazy.

*Ian Chesterton*



‘Kid’ finds Martin reflecting on being a grown-up and having a kid of his own in a way that pretty much leads into ‘50’. Musically and lyrically the songs share common ground: Martin’s laconic, matter-of-fact, northern accented narration adds a dryly understated humour to them (“When I was a kid I had lots of things / Like sisters”), churning, propulsive guitars mixed up with synth squiggles and simple marching electronic beats, drawing a line from post-punk to acid house via krautrock, or



## BEWARETHIS BOY ‘Let’s Get Back There Soon’

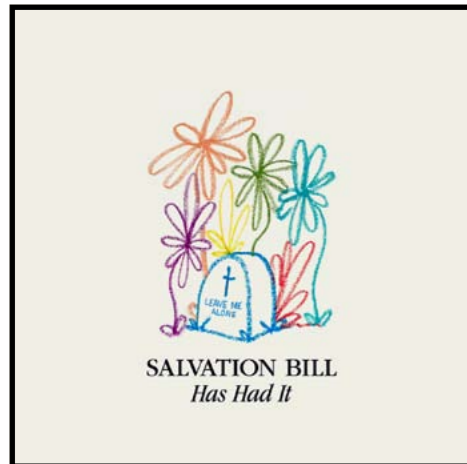
*(Self released)*  
If Boris Johnson and his coterie of smirking yahoos are planning any more parties in the coming months, maybe they could book Bewarethisboy to play. Not that the local folk quartet are any kind of jolly shindig soundtrack – quite the opposite – rather they might serve to remind those privileged pricks what normal people have gone through: not just across the pandemic and its assorted restrictions, but throughout history. Previously the band have ruminated on absent friends (‘Be Here Next Year’) and the generations of young men who fought and died for their country (‘Tommy & Jack’), and ‘Let’s Get Back There Soon’ continues that tradition of lamentation with this song about hoping to get back into the world and all those special places after lockdown. As ever with Bewarethisboy their sound rests on the balance between singer Simon Meakin’s doleful, rough-hewn voice, and Sue Mallet’s dancing fiddle, steeped in the traditions of English folk-rock, particularly Fairport, simply made but with a heart full of romantic yearning and a sense of hope for all its downbeat nature. It’s music tailor-made to fit the Cropredy Fringe – snug bars, tankards of ale, and ordinary tales of ordinary people sung by ordinary people of the sort the Tories tend to treat with disdain or outright contempt but should be seriously terrified of.

*Ian Chesterton*

maybe The Fall, A Guy Called Gerald and Yard Act forming a twisted tribute to Depeche Mode at The Hacienda. Both songs avoid mawkish nostalgia and bitterness, preferring a stoic ‘that’s how it was/is’ approach, even as Martin gets right to the heart of childish hope and ambition (“I just wanted to grow up so I could buy cola and drink it all day”) and the middle-aged frustration of mediocrity (“I’m worth more than fifty quid”). Both are as endearing as they are enjoyable and Octavia Freud continues to carve out a reputation for himself as a creative force who might only get fifty quid for a gig if he’s lucky, but is, in fact, priceless.

*Dale Kattack*

# RELEASED



## SALVATION BILL

### 'Has Had It'

(Divine Schism)

On the one hand you know what you're going to get with Salvation Bill – earthy, downbeat balladry with its roots in Americana and its heart on its sleeve – but on the other, you never quite know what's going to come next or where a song might go.

Musically Ollie Thomas – who essentially is Salvation Bill – remains great company: plaintive yet soothing, not afraid to wander off-piste a little, and an engaging storyteller. Listening through the seven songs on this latest mini-album – his first on Divine Schism's label – you could easily be in a strange after-hours bar where Thom Yorke, a few drinks in, picks up an abandoned acoustic guitar and, encouraged by Jeff Buckley, strums out his heartache. But it's not quite that simple. There's violin too – either silken and stirring or sharp and dramatic; vocally we're pitched from a weary, cracked and lovelorn croon into

1930s-style doo-wop harmonies (notably on the lovely 'Baby Bird'), while a 50-second track that's more an interlude than a song sounds like a piece of music made up of discarded toys. The balance between airy and sombre remains well poised, not least on 'The Husband & His Mouse', which delves more deeply into darkness, though the EP's highlight is 'Well Wishers (Again)', a stand-off between lush arrangements and stripped-back, scratchy primitivism. Over a decade into his solo career, Salvation Bill continues to deliver what you want and expect but always with a satisfying side order of something stimulating and intoxicating – a little secret ingredient in that late-night drink in the last chance saloon.

Dale Kattack

## THE SUICIDE NOTES

### 'Trampstamp'

(Self released)

What *This Is Spinal Tap* didn't condemn to ridicule purgatory grunge stomped into the dirt, but good old hard rock can't actually die and so, like fire lilies, it lies dormant underground until the desolation has passed and it can reclaim its dominion.

The Suicide Notes are a five-piece band, four of whom hail from Witney; in their hearts it is still 1985, Hanoi Rocks still rule and Sunset Strip is theirs for the taking. It's no surprise to learn this EP was mastered by Wildhearts producer Dave Draper. Here are four songs that come dressed in leather and lace and smell of dark, sleazy basement bars, testosterone and spilled beer, a singer with a fag-ash voice and velocity blues riffage that's been steeped in Jack Daniels for 40 years until its time came again. And you know what? It's effective and

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fun. If we thought for one moment this was done ironically we'd kick it into the middle of tomorrow with a snakeskin boot, but done with sincerity, it's almost endearingly unreconstructed, belting out of the traps with lead song 'Rollin' With the Punches', ballsy and punky, AC/DC and Motorhead via early Motley Crue and riding a Harley to the bar for more shots. 'Snakes Skin Within' is more of the same, while 'Dead Flowers' slows things down a few notches to allow a bit of bar-room blues to leak out of its ruined veins, though by this point *Nightshift* is two thirds of the way through a bottle of Eagle Rare and has started back-combing what remains of its hair, so frankly concepts like oblique musical invention don't even make sense – we're just here to rock.

The EP finishes with 'Black Dog Howlin'', an acoustic gutter-blues lament that's even more roughhouse than what came before, and when it's over we feel dirty, hungover and sullied. But, hey, we had a good time, and really that's all that matters sometimes.

Ian Chesterton



Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre

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# G1G GUIDE

**TUESDAY 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**BUZZARD BUZZARD BUZZARD:** **Truck Store** (*5pm*) – Instore set from Cardiff’s fuzzed-up glamsters, channelling a host of classic 70s influences – Bowie, T-Rex, The Sweet and Thin Lizzy – into a hard rocking sound.  
**AIRWAYS:** **The Bullingdon** – Peterborough’s Arctic Monkeys, Courteeners and Cage the Elephant-influenced indie rockers kick off their ‘Terrible Towns’ tour.  
**RIVERSIDE RHYTHMS LIVE: Part & Parcel, Witney** – Live gig as part of the Windrush Radio show presented by Riverside Festival’s Fergus McVey, with acts to be announced.

*Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup>*  
**MELT YOURSELF DOWN: The Bullingdon**  
Get ready for chaos, wild abandon, dancing and plenty of funk as Melt Yourself Down bring their time and space-spanning jazz fusion to town for the first time (belatedly since the original was postponed). A supergroup in the surest sense, MYD were formed by saxophonist Pete Wareham in the wake of Acoustic Ladyland’s demise. He was joined at the beginning by Shabaka Hutchings from Sons of Kemet and The Comet is Coming; Zun Zun Egui singer Kushal Gaya; bassist Ruth Goller who had also played in Acoustic Ladyland, and percussionist Satin Singh, whose CV includes Transglobal Underground. A peerless pedigree as far as contemporary jazz goes, but so much more: together the band explore North African music, particularly Egyptian and Nubian traditions; punk; funk; no-wave and krautrock. Part of the joy of listening to the band is hearing the clash of those styles as well as their merging. More than one reviewer has referred to a sense of controlled chaos about their live shows and that’s always a good thing. Hutchings has since left the band but they’ve remained at the heart of the current wave of UK jazz pioneers who’ve wrenched the style into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century via every genre hedge going and as they finally get to tour their 2020 studio album, ‘100% YES’, it’s Oxford’s long-awaited turn to lose itself down their jazz fusion rabbit hole.



**MARCH**  
**WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**MELT YOURSELF DOWN: The Bullingdon** – The jazz starship has returned from Saturn and it’s brought the party – *see main preview*

**THURSDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**NINEBARROW + CORRIE SHELLEY: The Unicorn, Abingdon** – Traditional folk songs and stories rooted in English history and landscape from award-winning harmony-heavy duo Ninebarrow at The Unicorn, the band championed by Mark Radcliffe and Mike Harding as well as Seth Lakeman and Kate Rusby.  
**DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon** – Weekly open session hosted by local musician Tom Dalby.

**FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE SHAPES + EDWIN & THE KEEPERS + SIAMESE SIRENS: Gladiator Club** – Boisterous, emotive r’n’b, new wave, folk and punk, inspired by Dexy’s, Tom Petty, Van Morrison and The Pogues from The Shapes at this month’s Klub Kakofanney, alongside rockers Edwin & the Keepers.  
**CUT THE TRAP: The Bullingdon** – Trap club night with Bad and Bully.  
**BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Bon Jovi tribute.

**SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**BUZZCOCKS: O2 Academy** – Steve Diggle continues to lead Buzzcocks following Pete Shelley’s death in 2018, now the sole remaining original member of the band, though how they’ll fare without one of the greatest songwriters and most recognisable singers of the punk era remains to be seen.  
**SIMPLE feat. DANIEL AVERY: The Bullingdon** – Atmospheric, explorative EDM from the eclectic and prolific DJ and producer at tonight’s Simple club night, tonight’s show rescheduled from last summer as Avery tours his most recent ‘Together in Static’ album.  
**HIPSHAKIN’: Harcourt Arms** – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul.  
**MIRANDA SYKES + COLIN PITTS: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – Show of Hands singer and bassist Miranda Sykes plays a solo show at Wychwood Folk Club.

**SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup>**  
**TRASH BOAT: The Bullingdon** – St Albans’ post-hardcore crew tour their third studio album, ‘Don’t You Feel Amazing’, finding a heavier, more venomous path to their earlier pop-punk, now joining the dots between influences as

diverse as Muse, Linkin Park and Bring Me The Horizon.  
**KIRAN LEONARD + DEAR LAIKA + AIDEN CANADAY: Florence Park Community Centre** – A return to Oxford for the restlessly inventive songsmith after his last show here in 2017 when he performed at St Barnabas Church in support of his neo-classical ‘Derevaun Seraun’ project. This time round he’s performing tracks from last year’s double album ‘Trespass On Foot’, mixing elongated pieces with shorter, more intense acoustic numbers, and tonight backed by a new band for the occasion.  
**THE KUT + SONS + EMBERS OF GRAVID: Jericho Tavern** – Glam-grunge rocking from Live UK Breakthrough Artist winners The Kut, likened to Hole, The Distillers and L7 for their debut album ‘Valley of Thorns’.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms** – Weekly open night.  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon** – Weekly Irish session.  
**FRANKLIN’S TOWER + PUPPET MECHANIC + MARK ATHERTON: The Tree, Iffley (4-7pm)** – Klub Kakofanney host a free afternoon of live music.  
**OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)** – Weekly open session.  
**STEPH WILLIS: The Brewery Tap (5.30pm)** – Soulful pop covers and originals.

**MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup>**  
**DOT’S FUNKY ODYSSEY: The Bullingdon** – Funk, soul and disco classics.  
**PHIL BEER’S PATRON’S NIGHT: Nettlebed Folk Club** – The Show of Hands man hosts Nettlebed Folk Club’s patrons’ night, with sets from Miranda Sykes, Dom Prag and Odette Michell.

**TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**BEANS ON TOAST: The Bullingdon** – Hoarse, ramshackle protest folk and meditations on love, life and drugs from Essex’s Jay McAllister, back in town once more, the cult favourite having collaborated with Frank Turner, Mumford and Sons, Billy Bragg, Laura Marling and Emmy the Great along the way to releasing a new album on the 1<sup>st</sup> December every year (his birthday), including last year’s ‘Survival of the Friendliest’, as well as playing Glastonbury Festival every year since 2007.

**WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**OCTAVIA FREUD + TIGER MENDOZA + MOTHDROP + THE SUBTHEORY: The Bullingdon** – Single-launch show from prolific local electro artist Octavia Freud whose new single ‘When I Was a Child’ draws inspiration from The Fall, Cabaret Voltaire and Baxter Dury. Industrial synth-core, hip hop, drum&bass and game soundtrack electronics from Tiger Mendoza in support alongside techno chap Mothdrop, and electro trip-hop soundscapists The Subtheory.  
**PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon** – Fortnightly

breakbeat, electro, funk and disco club night.

**THURSDAY 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**THE BROS LANDRETH: O2 Academy** – Joey and David Landreth return to the UK, the Canadian country-folk crew touring their 2019 album ‘87’.  
**CALL ME MAYBE: The Bullingdon** – Noughties pop club night.  
**DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**

**FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**VILLAGERS + LAUNDROMAT: O2 Academy** – Songmeister Conor O’Brien and band return with their fifth studio album, the Top 20 ‘Fever Dreams’, following a brace of Mercury-nominated outings in the form of ‘{Awayland}’ and acclaimed debut ‘Becoming a Jackal’, the title track of which earned him an Ivor Novello award. The new album finds him

*Friday 11<sup>th</sup>*  
**NAPALM DEATH / RAGING SPEEDHORN: O2 Academy**  
Napalm Death were and remain the acme of extreme metal. Their early Peel sessions and 1987 debut album ‘Scum’ defined grindcore and laid down the markers of speed, brevity and heaviosity by which everyone since must be judged. The band have evolved and mutated in various ways since those epoch-making opening salvos, both musically and in personnel, but they’ve never lightened up one iota. 2015’s ‘Apex Predator – Easy Meat’ was the band’s best record in many years – unrelentingly heavy but closer in feel to Swans, Young Gods and Big Black at times than their more traditional metal and crust influences. It took a while to follow that universally acclaimed behemoth but 2020’s ‘Throes Of Joy in the Jaws of Deafeatism’, and last month’s companion piece ‘Resentment is Always Seismic – The Final Throw of Throes’, proved that age and experience will never mellow Napalm Death musically or lyrically. A good friend of *Nightshift*’s was once warned by venue staff not to attend one of their gigs because she was heavily pregnant and might go into labour due to the sheer volume and brutality on offer. Heavy as heavy comes. And who better to set the sonic scene than Corby’s virulent, hate’n’hedonism-fuelled heavyweights Raging Speedhorn whose sludgy assault breaches the walls between metal, hardcore, punk and all-out sonic violence.



in characteristically hushed and sensitive mood, with an earnest and confessional soul-searching. He remains as literary as ever, introducing his wistful, witty, worldly tales.  
**NAPALM DEATH + RAGING SPEEDHORN: O2 Academy** – The grindcore fountainhead erupts once more – *see main preview*  
**WILLE & THE BANDITS: The Bullingdon** – Rock, blues, Latin and folk from Cornwall’s Wille & The Bandits back in town and on tour to promote new album ‘When the World Stood Still’, the band having variously been compared to Led Zeppelin, Hendrix, Cream and Santana as they mix up rootsy rocking and blues with electronics and convoluted song structures.  
**RAVING TRIPPY: The Bullingdon** – Psychedelic house and techno club night.  
**SENTINEL: The Old Fire Station** – “Climate Change in Sound In Light” audio-visual concert from electronic music composer Richard Evans, mixing music with light, video, news footage and climate change data and composed from the point of view of a fictional climate satellite called Sentinel,  
**INDIE DISCO: Tap Social** – Dominic Utton spins 80s and 90s indie classics on vinyl. Free entry.

**SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**THE CORAL: O2 Academy** – The Wirral’s enduring indie/psych/folk-rock heroes, celebrate 20 years since the release of their Platinum-selling, Mercury-nominated debut album, playing the album in its entirety as well as songs from last year’s acclaimed ‘Coral Island’ album, a more intricate set of songs after 2016’s more psychedelic ‘Distance Inbetween’, and the 60s pop-inspired ‘Move Through the Dawn’.  
**GET CAPE. WEAR CAPE. FLY! + BLAB: O2 Academy** – Sam Duckworth returns to town, touring what will hopefully be the follow-up to his 2018 sixth album ‘Young Adult’, his first since reviving the band name he retired back in 2014, his slick electro-indie-folk mix of the personal and political having boasted an eclectic set of collaborators in the past – Nitin Sawhney; Baaba Maal; Shy FX; Kate Nash – while he’s continued to perform under his own name and keep up his anti-fascist and pro Fairtrade activism over the years.  
**THURSTON & THE LADS: Harcourt Arms** – Live music from the Oxford Beatles offshoot.  
**MUSICAL MEDICINE with CRAZY P: The Bullingdon** – Melodic house and disco from Nottingham DJ collective Crazy P at tonight’s party club night.

**SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup>**  
**THE NOW + CONCORD DRIVE + HAGUE + THE FOLIANTS: The Bullingdon** – South Wales rockers The Now tour their new EP ‘The Truth Will Always Come Out in the End’ – rearranged from last month.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms**  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.50pm)** – Funk’n’folk-infused good vibes from the local party-psych stalwarts.  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**  
**EMMA JANE KENNEDY: The Brewery Tap (5.30pm)** – Pop and country classics from the Irish singer and guitarist.



*Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>*  
**DREAM WIFE: The Bullingdon**  
Like so many bands most of Dream Wife’s best laid plans got blown away by Covid, but they still got to release their second album, ‘So When You Gonna...’ stepping up and onward from their eponymous debut, the ire-fuelled garage rock and riot grrl-inspired punk not so much tempered as expanded on by a more pop-leaning sound and slower, more heartfelt songs. Not that they don’t still kick it out: album opener ‘Sports!’ begins with the lines “fuck sorry, fuck please” before flying into a bubblegum Yeah Yeah Yeahs-style barrel of Noughties rock, while the album’s title track is sprightly, spiky and highly energised, but elsewhere, while singer Rakel Mjöll continues to deal with topics like misogyny, queer love and miscarriage, they sound just as home delving into yearning balladry and 60s harmony pop. Despite being unable to tour, the album went Top 20, not only the only highest placed independently-released album in the charts that week but the only one recorded by an entirely female production team. Finally back on the road, the trio should find their following and their message hasn’t diminished one iota; in fact they’re more important standard-bearers than ever.

**MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup>**  
**BREABACH: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Nettlebed welcomes the return of regular visitors Breabach, the Scottish-flavoured folk dance outfit, winners of the 2016 Scottish Traditional Music Awards Best Folk Act and Album of the Year winners, playing songs, tunes and step dances from their ‘Astar’ album, on bagpipes, fiddle, flute and guitar.

**TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**JAMES MORRISON: The New Theatre** – Is this the guy who did ‘Babylon’? Or are we thinking of ‘You’re Beautiful’? Actually, can we not think about him at all, please?

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup>**  
**DREAM WIFE: The Bullingdon** – The London trio finally get a chance to tour second album ‘So When You Gonna...’, taking a more polished pop path to great effect – *see main preview*  
**RODDY WOOMBLE: The Jericho Tavern** – The Idlewild singer returns to Oxford for the first

time since 2018 for a solo show, including songs from last year’s solo album ‘Lo! Soul’, able to take a more tender, experimental and insular musical path to his band’s often epic songscapes; Woomble’s rich, dolorous voice continues to shine through though, his previous collaborations with the likes of Kate Rusby, Katrine Polwart and Kris Drever and John McCusker feeding into his solo work.

**STATUS QUO: The New Theatre** – Francis Rossi continues to helm the enduring rock and roll legends, fellow founding member Alan Lancaster having passed away last year, the band one of the most enduring acts of the last 60 years, out on tour to promote most recent album ‘Backbone’ alongside that vast back catalogue of hits.

**MYELE MANZANZA: St John’s College Auditorium** – Oxford Contemporary Music host the New Zealand-raised drummer and his band, tonight playing pieces from his ‘Crisis & Opportunity’ set as first performed at the EFG

*Friday 18<sup>th</sup>*

**BC CAMPLIGHT: O2 Academy**

Self destruction and music have long been uneasy bedfellows and BC Camplight has embraced both with equal fervour. Born New Jersey, the child named Brian Christinzio and raised on a diet of opera, showtunes and rock’n’roll, was prone to depression and hypochondria from an early age. Later in life he would cancel tours convinced he was suffering from serious illness and after releasing two critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful albums (his backing band went on to become War on Drugs) and being dropped by his label, One Little Indian, he turned to drink and drugs, compounding his mental health problems. By his own admission he would probably have ended up homeless and worse but when a fan on Facebook recommended relocating to Manchester he went for it and it changed his life. He found new bandmates and a partner and released another well received album, ‘How To Die In Manchester’. But of course it all went wrong again. He suffered a severe leg injury and couldn’t fly; consequently he overstayed his Visa and was deported, missing not only the chance to play Green Man, End of the Road and *Later...* but also his own wedding. Finally, though, he got back on course with his fourth album, 2018’s superb ‘Deportation Blues’, with its urgent, frazzled earworm of a lead single ‘I’m Desperate’ on Bella Union, while 2020’s gloriously tender, witty and passionate follow-up, ‘Shortly After Take Off’, has been hailed as a gently skewed pop masterpiece.



London Jazz Festival, mixing Detroit house with free jazz.

**DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**

**FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup>**

**SOFT MACHINE: The Bullingdon** – A rare-as-hen’s-teeth visit to Oxford from the seminal Canterbury scene jazz-prog-psych-art-rockers, whose on-off-on-off existence since 1966 has taken in myriad variations on the band name and even more variations on the line-up. None of the original 60s members remain but John Etheridge, Roy Babbington and John Marshall have all been here since the early 1970s, and while across all their incarnations Soft Machine have managed to avoid anything resembling commercial success they have remained one of the most influential underground acts of the last 50-plus years, inspiring generations of acts who dare to tread far from the musical mainstream.

**BC CAMPLIGHT: O2 Academy** – Brian Christinzio completes his Manchester trilogy with ‘Shortly After Take-Off’ – *see main preview*

**SWITCH feat. ANDY C: O2 Academy** – Long-running club night Switch hosts drum&bass legend Andy C as part of his X03 UK tour, the veteran DJ and co-founder of the pioneering RAM Records label a master of the mix.

**BOSSAPHONIK with K.O.G.: Cowley Workers Social Club** – Monthly world jazz dance club night hosted by DJ Dan Ofer, spinning everything from Latin and Afro to Balkan sounds and tonight featuring a live set from K.O.G. (Kewku Of Ghana), the band helmed by Kewku Sackey, mixing up brass and percussion-heavy Afro-funk and dancehall, reggae and hip hop, and led by Jamaican rapper Franz Von.

**MOONAROON: Harcourt Arms** – Traditional Irish dances and songs from the local duo.

**TEXAS: The New Theatre** – Back in touring action and with a new album ‘Hi’, their tenth and the follow-up to 2017’s ‘Jump Onboard’, which followed the recovery of founding guitarist Ally McErlaine from a brain aneurysm in 2010; Sharleen Spiteri’s soulful pop/rock hitmakers play the big hits from their 80s/90s commercial peak, including ‘I Don’t Want A Lover’, ‘Summer Son’, ‘Say What You Want’ and ‘In Our Lifetime’, as well as songs from the new album.

**BANGERZ & LASH: The Bullingdon** – Pop, indie and club anthems.

**DECOVO + LILLIBET: James Street Tavern** – Indie rocking in the vein of Foals and Arctic monkeys from local crew Decovo with support from Oxford/Milton Keynes singer-songwriter Lillibet with her Adele-style jazz-flavoured pop and balladry.

**THE PORTRAITS + DOM PRAG: Harwell Village Hall** – Emotive, expansive acoustic pop from the Anglo-Irish duo best known for their 2017 tribute to murdered MP Jo Cox, ‘Nobody Can Ever Murder Love’, and their 2020 cover of ‘Together in Electric Dreams’ in memory of Covid victims.

**SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup>**

**THE FRATELLIS: O2 Academy** – Glasgow’s enduringly chipper indie rockers return to town for the first time since 2016, touring last year’s Top 20 album ‘Half Drunk Under a Full Moon’ as well as indie mega-banger ‘Chelsea Dagger’.

**NIRVANA UK: O2 Academy** – Tribute to Kurt and crew. There’s a Foos tribute here next week,



*Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

**OCTOBER DRIFT: The Jericho Tavern**

You have to feel for all those bands who, having slogged around the gig circuit paying their dues for a few years, were all set for some kind of breakthrough success just as Covid hit and all momentum was brought to an abrupt halt. Bands like Somerset’s October Drift. Back in 2016 *Nightshift* caught their Oxford debut at The Bullingdon which was one of those classic gigs you wished the whole world could have witnessed rather than the usual few dozen diehards: an intense, passionate display of post-punk darkness, new wave euphoria, shoegaze turbulence and grunge noise. Frontman Kiran Roy is an intense, animated performer with a rich, sonorous voice that belies his slender frame and a poetic edge to his emotive lyrics, and together the band sound like Echo & the Bunnymen and Icicle Works force-fed through My Bloody Valentine’s sonic shredder and coated in Smashing Pumpkins fuzz. Since that show they’ve returned to Oxford as support to Desperate Journalist among others but with the release of debut album ‘Forever Whatever’ in January 2020, bigger things beckoned. They deserved better and hopefully this headline tour will reset their trajectory.

which seems a little rushed and insensitive.

**SKYLARKIN with MUNGO’S HI-FI**

**SOUNDSYSTEM: The Bullingdon** – Count Skylarkin’ hosts another top-drawer night of dub, dancehall, reggae, ska and more. Tonight he hosts global reggae, dub and dancehall stars Mungo’s Hi-Fi, now into their third decade together, having been formed in Glasgow in 2000 by Tom Tattersall and Doug Paine and having expanded by increments ever since. The forward-thinking collective, inspired by King Tubby and Prince Jammy, have produced a slew of original albums over the last two decades on their own, knowingly named Scotch Bonnet label.

**JONNY & THE JIVETONES: Harcourt Arms** – Classic jive, 50s and 60s pop, soul and rock’n’roll.

**MY DARLING CLEMENTINE: St. Nicholas Church, Baulking** – 700 gigs and counting for the inventive Americana duo of Michael Weston King and Lou Dalgleish, touring their new ‘Country Darkness – The Songs of Elvis Costello’ album – recorded with Costello bandmate Steve Nieve and featuring a dozen reworkings of his classic songs.

**THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Tribute night.

**TRACK DOGS + ROBERT LANE: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood** – Folk, Latin, Americana and bluegrass from the Anglo-Irish-American quartet, touring their new ‘Fire on

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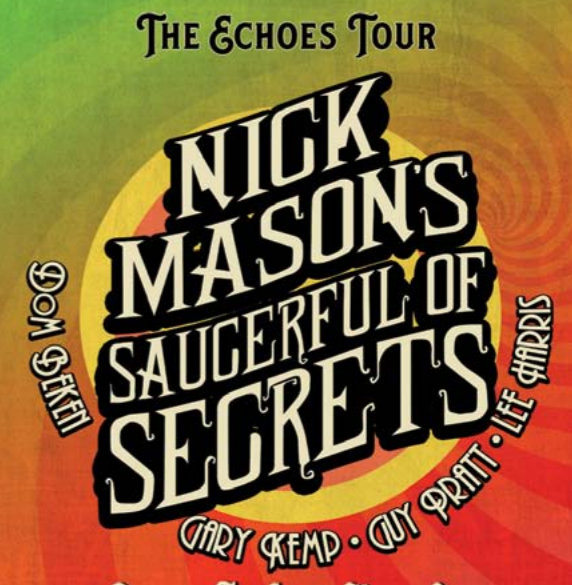
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the Rails’ album at the Wychwood Folk Club tonight.

**SUNDAY 20<sup>th</sup>**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms**  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.50pm)** – Classic rock and blues from the veteran local singer and guitarist and gang.  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**  
**FLICK: The Brewery Tap (5.30pm)** – Acoustic rock, pop, reggae and country tunes.

**MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**MOLLY LINEN + CLEMENTINE MARCH + SALVATION BILL: The Library** – Spectral acoustic pop from Molly Linen, making her Oxford debut at tonight’s Divine Schism show, her hushed, emotive vocals and sparse plucked acoustic guitar work drawing comparisons to Cat Power and This Is The Kit. London-based French singer-songwriter Clementine March draws on French chanson, Brazilian samba and leftfield pop, touching base with the likes of Juana Molina, Lætitia Sadier and Pram along the way.

*Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>*  
**WARMDUSCHER: The Bullingdon**  
This show might be a contender for ‘most rearranged gig ever’ given the number of times it was rescheduled across various lockdowns but here, at last, it is, long since sold out and Warmduscher ready to deliver new album ‘Live At The Hotspot’, which sees them digging deeper into their sleazy disco cabaret. It’s a more refined sound than when we first saw them live, at Ritual Union back in 2018, but no less sweary and dirty; back then they were one of those band that make you wonder how or where they met – two cool, skinny mod-punk lads flanking a guy in a Stetson, cheap tracksuit and shades who looks like he’d fallen off the back of a Trump rally. The chemistry was all there though, possibly in pharmaceutical form as they motored through obstinate blues-punk with all the requisite mayhem and hysteria you’d hope for from a band who careered from Dick Dale surf rumble to Jon Spencer Blues Explosion garage-rock craziness, through The Fall’s acerbic punked-up rockabilly and intermittent squalls of feedback and somehow managed to finish up sounding like Aerosmith. With ‘Hotspot’, they sound more like queasy, sinister interlopers at Studio 54, all slinked and funky up but still possessed of that gutter-level rock’n’blues spirit, and as their star continues to rise, they’re a welcome dose of debauched and unhinged in modern music’s veins.



**TUESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>**  
**TOODLES & THE HECTIC PITY / LIVE, DO NOTHING / GOLDBABY / GIVE UP: The Library** – Divine Schism hosts Bristol’s folk-punk trio Toodles & the Hectic Pity, inspired by Mountain Goats and Jeffrey Lewis.

**WEDNESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>**  
**WARMDUSCHER: The Bullingdon** – Panic at the disco with the sleaze-funk growlers – *see main preview*  
**OCTOBER DRIFT: The Jericho Tavern** – Somerset’s dark-hearted shoe gazers bring the glorious noise – *see main preview*  
**PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon**

**THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup>**  
**GENTLEMAN’S DUB CLUB + KIKO BUN + ZEN LEWIS: O2 Academy** – Leeds’ livewire nine-strong roots reggae, ska, rock and dub collective bring the party back to town, the band having built an enviable reputation on the European festival circuit and having previously played alongside Madness, Roots Manuva, The Streets and The Wailers. They’re joined by Italian/Panamanian reggae singer and Island records signing Kiko Bun.  
**SAM OUTLAW: The Jericho Tavern** – Empty Room Promotions welcomes back itinerant “SoCal country” singer Sam Outlaw, who last came to town back in 2019. Born in South Dakota, he lived much of his life in LA before relocating to Nashville and releasing his debut album in 2015, produced by Ry and Joachim Cooder; his association with the pair earned him acclaim in country circles and rave reviews in *Rolling Stone* and *American Songwriter*, in particular his rich, mournful voice and tender songwriting style which have seen him compared to Dwight Yoakam and found him sharing stages with Bonnie Raitt, Brandi Carlile and Jack Ingram.

**WARNER E HODGES: The Bullingdon** – Southern rock, blues, rock’n’roll and country roots from the singer and guitarist, mixing a little AC/DC and Led Zep into Nashville sounds.  
**STEPH PIRRIE JAZZ QUARTET: Harcourt Arms** – Live jazz from the singer and trumpeter and her band.  
**KATHRYN ROBERTS & SEAN LAKEMAN + GEORGE BOOMSMA: The Unicorn, Abingdon** – BBC Folk Award-winning husband and wife duo Kathryn and Sean return to the Shire, mixing tender folk ballads with stomping acoustic rock, the couple having previously formed Equation with Kate Rusby and Sean’s brother Seth.  
**DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon**

**FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup>**  
**WHITE LIES: O2 Academy** – The synth stadium-sized indie rockers return to the Shire after supporting Tears For Fears at Nocturne Live and previously headlining Truck Festival, Harry McVeigh and chums touring their new ‘As I Try Not To Fall Apart’ album.  
**TOTAL STONE ROSES: The Bullingdon** – Another tribute night.  
**SOUL SISTA: The Bullingdon** – Classic, funk, soul and disco tunes.  
**THE SHAPES + PEERLES PIRATES + BEWARETHISBOY: The Caddyshack, North**



*Thursday 31<sup>st</sup>*  
**GOLDFRAPP: O2 Academy**  
Although they never really got the credit for it, Goldfrapp were one of the most influential artists of the last decade or so, influencing everyone from Madonna and Bat For Lashes to Florence & the Machine, with singer Alison Goldfrapp becoming an iconic pop figure along the way. At their best Goldfrapp and musical partner Will Gregory’s trick was to take the best ideas from the musical underground and turn them into pop gold, like the techno-glam boogie of ‘Strict Machine’ or the sultry disco pulse of ‘Ride a White Horse’. The career-defining ‘Black Cherry’ was close to modern day electro-pop perfection, while 2008’s ‘Seventh Tree’ took a complete stylistic about-turn and brought a dreamy electro-pop sheen to spooky pagan folk music, inspired by *The Wicker Man*. Tonight’s gig, though, is part of the now belated 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations for ‘Felt Mountain’ the band’s elegant, graceful debut which spawned classic Goldfrapp tracks ‘Utopia’, ‘Human’ and ‘Pilots’, the duo bringing John Barry, Shirley Bassey and Nancy Sinatra into the realms of sci-fi lounge-pop. They went on to produce better records, but ‘Felt Mountain’ remains an exceptional debut and it’ll be a chance to hear many of the songs from it live for the first time in years, not to mention the chance to catch one of the best pop acts of the past two decades in the flesh once again.

**Oxford Golf Club** – After a couple of Covid-forced cancellations Oxford’s newest venue hosts a great local triple-bill, with r’n’b, punk, folk and new wave stars The Shapes channelling Dexy’s, Van Morrison, Tom Petty and The Pogues and joined tonight by swashbuckling rockers Peerless Pirates, mixing 80s indie, rockabilly, spaghetti western and shanties, plus downbeat folk storytelling from this month’s *Nightshift* Introducing act, Bewarethisboy.  
**TOTAL 80s: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – 80s hits, from Wham! and Madonna to Cyndi Lauper and Frankie Goes to Hollywood.  
**A BAND CALLED MALICE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Not, apparently, the 80s metal band called Malice, but a Jam tribute. You live and learn, innit.  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Bystander, Wotton**

**SATURDAY 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**UK FOO FIGHTERS: O2 Academy** – With Nirvana UK still warm in their grave after last week’s show here, their Anglofoo successors pay tribute to Dave Grohl’s enduringly uninteresting festival headliners.

**NEW MODEL ARMY: O2 Academy** – Justin Sullivan’s enduring rockers return to town for the first time in years, now into their fifth decade of bringing politically charged, genre-melding post-punk, folk, rock and more to the masses, building one of the most loyal and fanatical fanbases – The Family – along the way, and with most recent album ‘From Here’ showing no sign of either slowing down or mellowing.  
**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SHAVEN PRIMATES + WHO KILLED NANCY JOHNSON? + PLAGUE ARISH: The Port Mahon** – Epic, prog-laced rocking from Shaven Primates at this month’s GTI, the band’s dark, dense storytelling taking inspiration from King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Porcupine Tree and Bowie along the way. They’re joined by Reading’s classic punk rockers WKNJ? Plus abstract techno beats, bleak industrial soundscapes, harsh noise improvisations and haunted ambience from electronic experimentalist Plague Arish.  
**TOMMY & THE SPIRALITES: Harcourt Arms**  
**THE BOOTLEG BEATLES: The New Theatre** – Big stage show from the enduring tribute band, including a set of ‘Let It Be’ numbers.  
**GROOVE CLUB COLLECTIVE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Classic funk, soul, groove and disco classics.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The White Hart, Wolvercote**

**SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup>**  
**CHARLIE SIMPSON: O2 Academy** – The former Busted and Fightstar boybander-turned-

rock-axe-wielder tours his new album ‘Hope Is a Drug’, which is more Soma than Peyote from what we’ve just listened to.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms**  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**  
**MARK CROFTS: The Brewery Tap (5.30pm)**

**MONDAY 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**FEAST OF FIDDLES: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Nettlebed’s annual celebration of traditional fiddle music returns over two nights, with Peter Knight and Chris Leslie leading a line that includes Phil Beer and Dave Mattacks.

**TUESDAY 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**ENOLA GAY: Jericho Tavern** – Oxford debut for Belfast’s militant noise-makers, drawing comparisons with The Murder Capital and Gilla Band.  
**SHED SEVEN: O2 Academy** – Rescheduled from December – York’s enduring indie rockers celebrate 25 years since the release of their Top 10 breakthrough album ‘A Maximum High’, reliving Britpop era hits ‘Getting Better’, ‘Going For Gold’ and ‘Where Have You Been Tonight’.  
**THE SKINNER BROTHERS: The Bullingdon** – Swaggering indie rocking in the vein of Oasis, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and Arctic Monkeys from London’s Skinner Brothers – previous tour support to Kasabian – and out on a headline tour to promote new album ‘Soul Boy II’.

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



**Beans On Toast**  
*Tue 8th March*  
The Bullingdon



**BC Camplight**  
*Fri 18th March*  
O2 Academy2



**Dream Wife**  
*Thu 17th March*  
The Bullingdon



**Jockstrap**  
*Wed 4th May*  
The Jericho Tavern



**Roddy Woomble**  
*Thu 17th March*  
The Jericho Tavern



**The Wave Pictures**  
*Wed 25th May*  
The Bullingdon



## ANDY BELL SPACE STATION

### Jericho Tavern

What a treat it is to see Andy Bell back in the venue where his band Ride played their first proper gig, supporting local joke death metal supergroup Satan Knew My Father in 1989. Ride have been through plenty of ups and downs since then, though their long-awaited and

rescheduled 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour hits town this April. Covid led Andy into a burst of creativity, releasing four solo albums in less than eighteen months with the latest, ‘Flicker’, dropping a week after tonight’s show. His Space Station shows

were born from improvised live streams from his local coffee shop during lockdowns. Along with electric guitar he uses pedals and a table of electronics to present new versions of the material. Like the albums the show is very much a journey, songs morphing and

shifting slowly over time, often stretching into ten minutes and beyond. Early on comes ‘Plastic Bag’, his first solo single from 2019 but radically different from the original release. Starting with a riff reminiscent of the opening to The Who’s ‘Baba O’Riley’ we then get unexpected echo-drenched keyboard stabs, before some heavily distorted dark guitar lines take the place of the vocal from the original. ‘Jenny Holzer B. Goode’ on the new album is a straightforward pop song that could easily slot into a Ride set but here Andy maintains a psychedelic, almost Steve Hillage vibe, again dispensing with a vocal line and remixing himself with a stomping, almost techno section before bringing back some meandering but rather exquisite guitar. The melancholy, autumnal air shows Bell at his best, music that’s both unpretentiously rough-and-ready yet underlaid with dazzling invention. This moves into ‘That Time of Night’, originally from the album he released under the name Glok, possibly due to it being almost entirely electronic and featuring vocals only from other people. Here he adds understated little guitar parts to bring it nicely in line with the rest of the set. New single ‘Something Like Love’ is the closest we get to commercialism, with clear echoes of early Ride, before an extended take on ‘The Commune’ maintains its drone elements but ends in some uncharacteristically wild guitar. He might make it look easy but of all the music springing from the loins of lockdown Andy Bell’s surely ranks among the very best.

**Art Lagun**

## FUZZY LIGHTS

### The Library

Death and darkness have followed folk music from its birth; even the blackest of black metal cannot match the desolation of this ancient musical form. Fuzzy Lights’ songs are dark and deathly to their very marrow and on a night when Storm Dudley is whipping Cowley Road’s leaves and litter into a frenzy, they brew their very own tempest, one that occasionally threatens to tear through the walls of this most intimate of venues. After an eight-year hiatus, the Cambridge quintet have released their finest album to date, ‘Burials’, which finds singer and violinist Rachel Watkins in bewitching form, an almost celestial siren amid the tumult of her band’s huge, enveloping sound and yet an imperious presence, her voice pure yet powerful, her violin playing sharp as a blade. Most of tonight’s set comes from the new album; ‘The Maiden’s Call’ emotionally cracked, hinting at something psychedelic set to burn over the horizon any moment, but it’s the epic ‘Songbird’ that brings the deluge – a huge, enveloping onward storm front of scraping strings, cantering beats and squalling, tumultuous guitars beneath and between which Watkins’ gentle incantations cast a soothing spell.

Older songs like ‘The Museum Song’ are more spacious, as much mood pieces as melodies, guitars tripping into Pink Floyd territory or exploring the wilderness in a similar style to Mark Knopfler’s *Local Hero* soundtrack, but while they’re engaging they show just how far Fuzzy Lights have moved on and up with ‘Burials’. ‘The Gathering Storm’ is aptly titled: it begins like the musical equivalent of a stirring summer breeze and patter of raindrops before unfolding with an admirable lack of haste into an oceanic swell of noise. ‘The Graveyard Song’, by contrast, offers a warm ray of sunlight between those clouds, bucolic and airy, Watkins’ voice given full rein to wander, the song building to a strange acid rock madrigal. This is a simply stunning show from a band that time and tide could so easily have forgotten. Instead their years away have seen Fuzzy Lights growing and mutating in their chrysalis, now to emerge not like a multicoloured butterfly but a pitch-black crow – a bird of appropriate portent to lead the way into the dark where something bleak yet utterly beautiful awaits.

**Dale Kattack**

## PEERLESS PIRATES / CAPTAIN KUPPA-T&THE ZEPPELIN CREW / THE FOAM HEADS / CEDARS OF LEBANON

### Jericho Tavern

It’s late January and we’re heading up the stairs at the Tavern for the first time for a long time. We’re not even through the door before we are hit with waves of bass which say to us that these Cedars of Lebanon are not are not the Jewish-influenced folk band of the same name we found on the web. While their thunderous energy is expected from a band of their ilk, it comes with some subtlety and an unpolished stage presence that’s charming. Their finale is about a parallel universe where former Newcastle Utd manager Steve Bruce leads resistance to marauding aliens, as he would. They have the totally bonkers idea of expanding this into a rock opera with Bruce playing himself. *Nightshift* has already booked a ticket. The Foam Heads give us a case of cogitative dissonance. ‘Mass Extinction’ and especially ‘Insanity’ are songs of alienation that the alt-pop threesome deliver with cheerfully jangly guitar when more heaviness might be thought a better fit. But maybe that’s the point, for what better way is there of a band communicating alienation, than messing with our heads? Not only do they perform entirely a capella Captain Kuppa-T & The Zeppelin are also unusual in starting with

‘Gaudete’, the old Christmas carol in Latin and made famous by Steeleye Span. This is not a good guide to what follows for the rest of the crew’s set oscillates from burlesque to music hall, including large dollops of double entendre. Mary Berry and *Bake Off*, HG Wells’ *War of The Worlds*, and a “No you can’t” / “Yes I can” panto song all feature. The ripe confection is topped off with a foot-stomping encore with the crowd gleefully joining in and roaring their approval at the end. Peerless Pirates give us what could be another take on alienation by barely talking during their headline set. But they communicate by getting people dancing as songs cascade rapidly, one after the other, til they’ve notched up 15 in hardly the blink of an eye. Throughout the show singer Cliff Adams and colleagues are in fine form, whether making the familiar ‘Ghost Riders in the Sky’ swing or coming on heavier as on El Gringo. In now being very professional perhaps inevitably they’ve lost the air of innocence they had when starting out. But by pirating quite a range of musical sources, including some Middle Eastern riffs, they’ve combined their instant appeal with a touch of musical class.

**Colin May**

## CASSELS

### Florence Park Community Centre

Cassels might no longer be an Oxfordshire band as such – brothers Jim and Loz Beck having left Chipping Norton, the town they’ve long had a love-hate relationship with, for London some time ago – but tonight’s turnout suggests their home crowd still hold them as their own; there’s even a small but enthusiastic moshpit in a venue that’s probably more used to seeing kids play sessions and coffee mornings. Tonight’s set is mostly taken up by songs from Cassel’s new album ‘A Gut Feeling’, with just a few numbers remaining from its predecessor ‘The Perfect Ending’ and nothing from before then – they’re not a band much prone to looking back and when the new material is so potent you can understand why. ‘Your Humble Narrator’ for instance encapsulates everything that Jim and Loz do so well: initially wiry, even skeletal, it develops a nagging insistency, Loz’s metronomic drumming underpinning Jim’s serrated guitar and stream-of-consciousness vocals – narration rather than singing – until some eight or more minutes later the tension the song has held so firmly is allowed to dissipate. Cassels seeming fascination with the grotesque – from the engraved tripe on

the new album cover to the weird worlds and strange characters that populate their songs – is just one of the things that make them stand out from the rafts of post-punk and post-hardcore acts out there. Take the twisted, bulbous tale of a teacher’s cancer on ‘Mr Henderson Coughs’ with the titular teacher attacking a mocking student over fat, squalling guitar and a sense of seething venom that underpins pretty much everything Cassels write. The duo also manage the difficult task of brewing musical storms to match anything that’s battered the UK in recent weeks while never letting you get comfortable as they stop abruptly or take sudden left turns, heavy guitar-versus-drums duels dropping into storytime-from-hell narratives like ‘Charlie Goes Skiing’ which boils with both pity and disgust at complacency and consumerism. That Cassel eschew both of those in their determinedly skewed approach to rock music means they will likely remains outliers but the mainstream is no place to be and Cassels’ role as a perpetual musical thorn in the side of complacency is their ultimate artistic triumph.

**Bekti Manish**



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## RUTH GOLLER

### Holywell Music Room

Some musical combinations just feel right, no matter how many times they’re heard: power trio; string quartet; bebop five-piece; “three MCs and one DJ”, as the Beasties put it. But there’s plenty of scope for new or atypical ensembles, and tonight Ruth Goller from Melt Yourself Down and Acoustic Ladyland – though perhaps most celebrated in Oxford as a member of the excellent Bug Prentice – presents her album

‘Skylia’ using a bass guitar and three vocalists: this makes sense if you know that Skylia, or more commonly Scylla in English, was a multi-headed monster from Greek myth. The folk-horror angle is amplified by the band’s decision to wear head-dresses that look like stylised animal skulls adorned with black feathers, as if they’re the Summerisle choral society.

The vocals are fascinatingly fragmented, each of

the three singers often delivering single words, or even dissected phonemes or disconnected mouth effects, rather than fluid melodic lines. This creates a mysterious pointillist effect, a haze of individual vocal moments hanging in the air, or overlapping, more like a Cubist version of a single singer than any traditional chamber choir. This method fleetingly brings to mind many varied reference points, from the Stockhausen of ‘Hymnen’, to early Laurie Anderson, to Funkstörung’s Björk remixes, to an undead Swingle Singers trudging into a desiccated wassail. Sometimes, however, the voices come together to deliver a melody in close harmony, and the effect is shocking, like a blurred and jumbled image snapping briefly into focus: the line “You left too soon, I lost my soul” feels especially chilling. The bass tends to keep in the background, generally adding little clusters of harmonics behind the skein of voices, but there are stretches of solo work, which can sound like a wall of NYC loft guitar, or snippets of cues from a 70s spy movie, or even a first wave grunge bassist trying to play like Ornette Coleman.

The monster Scylla is most famous when paired with Charybdis, a deadly whirlpool, and to be “between Scylla and Charybdis” means you’re treading a dangerous path. In a way Goller is doing just this, presenting what is effectively a solid 75-minute piece which often feels more like the floating space debris from an exploded song than a cohesive whole, but ultimately Goller and her supremely talented vocal trio navigate this tricky route, doubtless to continue their musical odyssey elsewhere.

*David Murphy*

## BASTILLE

### O2 Academy

Tonight is possibly one of the most anticipated Truck Store organised O2 Academy gigs to date, with Bastille embarking on a short tour of intimate, stripped-back shows to promote fourth album ‘Give Me the Future’ and with it a suitably heavy sense of pressure and anticipation in the venue.

While album release shows like this are often less enticing to a wider audience than a normal gig with a more varied set list, it’s refreshing to be presented with an unconventional set, including the easily identifiable classics entwined with new, tech-heavy songs from the new record. Tonight is a true performance of the new, dystopian-inspired Bastille.

A gentle introduction of live, layered harmonies and delicate, intricate piano is quickly wiped away by fuzzy, confused, futuristic dynamic samples which completely encompass the rest of the evening’s aesthetic. It’s evident the album is fresh out the studio and the crowd is calmer than you might expect for much of the evening, while receptive and interested. Frontman Dan Smith consistently works to engage the audience and the band revel in their participation, notably a spontaneous addition

to the set of entirely lyrical fan questions and bizarre statements, as well as the live recording of audience playback contributing to the backing in a chorus of ‘Shut Of The Lights’.

Although the setlist seems rather confused it does convey the ideas behind the new album well; the implementation of the bizarre, tech-heavy interludes alongside the actual songs from the albums make it so the audience are truly *experiencing* the new album rather than simply seeing Bastille perform.

This display of ups and downs, entertainment and seriousness in sound as well as reliance on the audience creates an enigmatic atmosphere. Enigmatic rather than mysterious due to the proposition that their new “Daft Punk-esque” (as described by Dan) sound could better be described as a self produced ‘OK, Computer’. Either way, Bastille have taken a huge leap away from their roots; judging by the reaction of those fans here tonight – new or longstanding – it seems that leap has paid off, and if it marks some kind of new beginning for the band we can only wonder where the future takes them next.

*Georgia Branch*

## ANRIMEAL

### Fusion Arts

*Nightshift* has seen some strange things used as instruments over the years but tonight’s show might take the biscuit. No, not biscuits, potted plants.

London-based Portuguese composer Ana Rita de Melo Alves has a history of unusual found-sounds but tonight finds her and her two bandmates wiring up a trolley of plants along with colourful glow bulbs and small bowls and triggering them via hand movements to create electronic sounds. Don’t ask us what the science is behind it is, all we know is that it works, the trio creating a set that’s both abstract and hypnotic – and also has us concocting a list of plant-based musical artist puns of which Stalk Stalk, Shrubhumans, Fertilisa Minelli and Slow Caethai are probably the least awful.

Anrimeal’s set begins with all three members sat motionless facing each other as if at a séance, glitchy laptop and celestial glossolalia, variously scraped or plucked violin and finger-played

drums resolving into something approximating Broadcast possessed by ghosts soundtracking a lost episode of *Bagpuss*, or, further in, heavily Vocoded vocals and ambient electronics suggesting Laurie Anderson gone properly hippy trip strange. It’s engrossing but when the plants take centre stage it goes to another level, Ana controlling the sounds via her laptop as her bandmates enact something akin to an elaborate mating ritual of hand signals and touching; imagine a theremin made from a shrubbery and you’re getting there.

There’s no crescendo or climax as such, the set finishing gently, dissipating into the ether but there is a feeling of a spell having been broken as the audience realise it’s time to applaud. *Nightshift* will never claim to have seen or heard it all, and tonight we’ve certainly seen and heard something completely new to us – so what shall we call it? Heavy petal? No, more like (com)post-rock.

*Dale Kattack*

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## JAH WOBBLE & THE INVADERS OF THE HEART

### The Bullingdon

Jah Wobble. the man born John Wardle in 1958 – but thusly christened by Sid Vicious in punk’s heyday – has long been a music trailblazer. We came to his rolling basslines in the ‘90s via the Orb’s ‘Blue Room’ and Primal Scream’s ‘Higher Than the Sun’, but before then he was instrumental in establishing John Lydon’s post-Pistols outfit Public Image Limited. Over a long career, Wobble has flourished into something of an archetypal sonic cosmopolitan. Via punk rock and London’s East End, he incorporates a unique mixture of “world music” flavours, plus rock,

jazz, blues, pop and speaker-rattling dub reggae sub bass.

Correspondingly, his gigs are always a cultural education. The last time we saw him in Oxford, he declared “nuffink like a naaiice cuppah tea!” as Japanese flower arranging took place in the background. Then, in 2010, he toured with the Nippon Dub Ensemble. Tonight, he is with the consummate Invaders of the Heart, his second most well-known outfit, after PiL.

Opening to ‘Take Five’ by Dave Brubeck, Wobble plays for two solid hours. We say “solid”: he is

a Zen master of digressions and asides, regaling us with stories of curfews in the Maghreb, and his animalistic band theory. “The bass,” he explains, “has no natural predators”; the rhythm guitar is furtive “like a meercat”, whilst the keyboard is “serpent-like”, and the drums “elephantine”. Tracks tonight include ‘Becoming More Like God’; ‘Visions of You’, his early 90s hit with Sinead O’Connor; a hypnotic ‘Midnight Cowboy’; a dub version of Fleetwood Mac’s ‘The Chain’, and classic rock steady riddim ‘Liquidator’. Then comes a best of section, quite PiL heavy,

as he has just released an updated dub-version of ‘Metal Box’, before ‘New Mexican Dub’, which sounds, much as you imagine it might, and ending on ‘Cosmic Love’.

A strange thing about a Jah Wobble gig is you find yourself humming along to the bass, with a kind of involuntarily vocalisation, even if you don’t know the track. Afterward, we ask him about this. He laughs, twinkly-eyed: “Well, it’s not me, it’s that supreme self! Some call it God, but there isn’t really a word for it. So within the bass, the lower down you go, you’ve got sub-harmonics and every song is contained in there. Everything connects!” Thus speaks the Buddha of Bass.

Leo Bowder

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# WHAT’S MY LINE?

*A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it’s KATALYST and she’s a DRUM&BASS DJ and PRODUCER.*

**How long have you worked in this job?** “I’ve been DJing since 2017, and learning production for around a year.”

**What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know?** “I get given a bottle of alcohol that I am allowed to drink while I work if I want to.”

**What’s been the single biggest highlight of your career so far?** “I played on a huge line-up last year at a new event in Bedford called Halloween Town Festival; the line-up was Andy C, David Rodigan, DJ Ez, Kings of the Rollers... and me! What a dream line up!”

**And the lowlight?** “Driving home on my own at 5am after a set the other side of the country is never fun.”

**How much and how did Covid affect your job?**

“Quite a lot, and it still is to a point. Obviously clubs and venues were closed, any gigs we had booked for that year were cancelled and we were thrown into the life of live streaming instead. It wasn’t for everyone, but I really enjoyed the online community that was built through the streams. Lots of people got more exposure and met other people through it too. Things are starting to get a bit better, but events are still being cancelled from time to time, either due to staff shortages, money, or worries of lockdown. Lots of events have even sold tickets and had a small percentage of ticket buyers actually go to



the event. I am hopeful this year we will start to get back to normal.”

**Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist?** “Has to be Total Science: absolute legends in the drum&bass game!”

**What’s the single most important piece advice you’d give to someone wanting to do your job?** “It is possible to make money from your passion but you must treat it like a business. My good friend Alex (King Yoof) is always giving the best advice!”

**Who’s the most awkward person you’ve ever had to deal with in your job?** “I am quite lucky that most people I work with are quite accommodating. I guess maybe when someone’s hanging over the decks pretending to DJ with you, or asking for chart song requests at a rave, ha ha!”

**When was the last time you heard genius?** “I am not actually sure what genius is!”

**Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work?** “Sometimes I think I might have bitten my tongue on things that I may not have agreed with, in fear of having a negative effect on my career if I spoke up. I also show a lot of my own personality on my social media accounts; it is a good way to boost algorithms. Some people might see this as compromising integrity but I’m confident enough in my career, and who I am as a person to show myself to people, not just my music.”

**Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what?** “I am also a physiotherapist, so I guess that, although I wouldn’t mind running a dog walking/sitting business one day.”

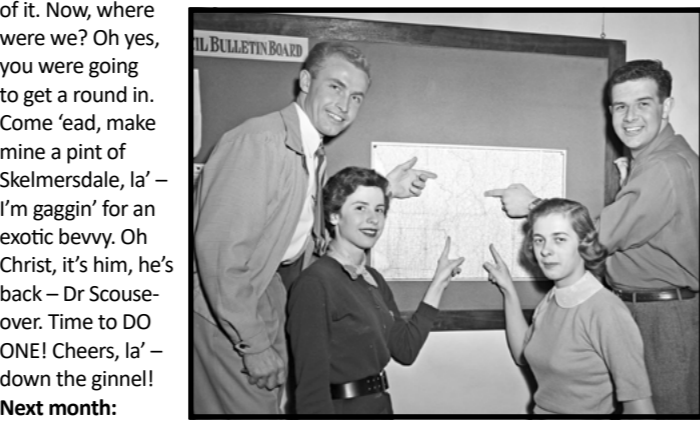
**Are you rich?** “Definitely not financially... yet! But I feel rich in that I am very lucky to be able to have such amazing experiences, two amazing jobs that I love, and a beautiful daughter, friends, and family.”

**Do you consider your job glamorous?** “Sometimes it seems relatively glamorous, but it probably has a lot more unglamorous moments. A lot of clubs that hold drum&bass events can be quite gritty – it suits it though! Also, as I mentioned earlier, the late nights and driving aren’t too glamorous. Wouldn’t change any of it though!”

**What’s your favourite thing about Oxford’s music scene?** “Probably The Bullingdon. Other than the o2, it’s the last venue that really has any drum&bass in Oxford now; so many venues have closed. The Bullingdon has a great history though and is always putting on different types of events. They have always made me feel very welcome too. The Oxford music scene in general, from what I know, isn’t huge but there is enough out there if you like different types of music.”

## Dr SHOTOVER: There’s a Riot Grrl Going On

Dey do go ON, dough, don’t dey, dough? Ahem, apologies, that was my Liverpudlian nemesis, Dr Scouse-over. Get in, Young Jakkhho, pull up a Florence Pugh and buy us some lemonade laced with vodka and jellybabies. Today at the East Indies Club we celebrate the musical phenomenon known variously as ‘Cutie’, ‘Shambling’ and ‘Spanorak’. Not to mention its later incarnation ‘Riot Grrrr!’ (aka some Talulah Gosh hangers-on who finally got on telly in the early 90s, when a producer from *The Word* famously held up a sign saying ‘RIOT NOW’ and it was even bigger than the Pistols on Bill Grundy, oh yes it was). (No disrespect to the Blessed GOSH, but this lot, oh dear). It was not long before the American branch of the movement had cosied up to Nirvana, whom they mistakenly called ‘punk-rock’ even though their denim-clad heroes sounded like a hungover Led Zeppelin jamming with King Crimson. Meanwhile the Brits started something called ‘Romo’ which was as lame or ‘Lame-o’ as it sounded. Still, I guess we wouldn’t have had the mighty KENICKIE without all this stuff, so some good came out of it. Now, where were we? Oh yes, you were going to get a round in. Come ‘ead, make mine a pint of Skelmersdale, la’ – I’m gaggin’ for an exotic bevvy. Oh Christ, it’s him, he’s back – Dr Scouse-over. Time to DO ONE! Cheers, la’ – down the ginnel!



Members of Huggy Bear plan their ideological assault on the Channel 4 TV studios

## INTRODUCING....

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

# Bewarethisboy

**Who are they?**  
Beware this Boy are a four-piece folk-influenced band from Oxfordshire consisting of Simon Meakin (*guitar / vocals*); Sue Mallett (*fiddle*); Chris Pritchard (*bass*), and Stewart Manley (*drums*). They were originally a spin-off formed from a covers band. “I was amazed when the others said they would be happy to have a crack at some original songs,” says Simon. Initially a three piece consisting of Simon and Stewart plus bassist David Shepherd, they “lacked any sort of identity” until Stewart suggested adding fiddle and invited Sue to join. “We knew from the moment she started to play that Sue would be a huge influence on the music and direction of the band.” They made their live debut at The Port Mahon in 2014 supporting Blackthorn, and have since played over 100 shows around Oxfordshire and beyond. They released an album, ‘Life’, in 2016 as well as several singles since. Their latest single, ‘Let’s Get Back There Soon’, is out this month.

**What do they sound like?**  
Poignant stories and celebrations of ordinary people told through the medium of modern English folk music, with Simon’s doleful, rough-hewn voice offset by Sue’s dancing fiddle work – one foot on the barricades, the other comfortable by the snug bar fire.

**What inspires them?**  
“Being able to create something is inspiration enough. To start with a thread of an idea and then work as a group to create something that people might like to listen to is a very great pleasure.”

**Their career highlight so far is:**  
“A charity event for Helen & Douglas House hospice we organised in 2018 at the Amphitheatre at Waterperry near Wheatley. It was a beautiful summer night and the place was packed.”

**And the lowlight:**  
“We were invited to play a new festival a few years ago. It was Mother’s Day, so meant us tearing ourselves away from various lunches and things. We arrived and went to set up only to discover that there was a bloke behind the bar – only a bloke behind the bar. Despite the organisers’ very best



efforts, no one turned up. We still played and put in a very decent set – well we thought so anyway, as did the bloke behind the bar.”

**Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:**  
“The Shapes: great songs, great fun, bags of energy. You’ll always leave their shows feeling happier than when you arrived.”

**If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:**  
“‘Leige and Lief’ by Fairport Convention. Hearing the album for the first time, everything seemed to change. ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to be in a band making that sort of music’.”

**When is their next local gig and what can newcomers expect?**  
“At the Caddyshack at North Oxford Golf Club on March 25<sup>th</sup>. It’ll be our first since 2019 so there is a danger we could be so wound up and excited that we might just fly off the stage like Zebedee at bedtime!”

**Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:**  
“Favourite: there is such a vibrant and varied amount of music in Oxford with dedicated promoters and still a number of venues happy to support live music, though we have lost some. I am always disappointed that the students and student bars don’t really seem to get involved in the scene. There are 40,000 young and vibrant residents in Oxford when the students are here, but it doesn’t seem to affect the numbers in the venues.”

**You might love them if you love:**  
Fairport Convention; Billy Bragg; Jack The Lad; The Pogues; Steeleye Span.

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## ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

### 20 YEARS AGO

Ask any long-time follower of the Oxford music scene who the city’s ultimate cult heroes are and chances are they’ll answer **The Candyskins**, and they’d be right. The band, regularly dubbed the unluckiest band on the planet for their succession of brushes with fame and fortune, each scuppered by the worst of luck, split in 2000 but in March 2002 they were releasing ‘Live at the Zodiac’, recorded at the venue they so regularly sold out. The quintet would reunite to play the last night of The Zodiac in 2007 and lead singer **Nick Cope** now has his own CBeebies show, performing his songs for children and families. If you don’t know the band, investigate them immediately. If you do know them, go and listen to them again: perfect, timeless pop music.

Talking about their legacy at the time of the album release, The Candyskins hailed **The Samurai Seven** and **Goldrush** as the bands who best carried on where they left off, and the latter were the main interview feature in this issue of *Nightshift* talking about their new EP ‘Pioneers’, their forthcoming album and a certain festival that brothers Robin and Joe Bennett from the band founded in 1998 – **Truck**. “Our ideal headliners would be The Flaming Lips,” said Robin. On the local gig front **Electric Soft Parade**, **American Head Charge**, **Thea Gilmore**, **Will Haven**, and **Clinic** – supported by **British Seapower** as they were back then – were all at **The Zodiac**, while **McLusky** were at **The Point**,

**Ozric Tentacles** were at **The Bullingdon**, and **The Bluetones** were at **Brookes University** Union. Rumours they pulled the place down to stop them coming back are unfounded.

### 10 YEARS AGO

Can it really be TEN years since *Nightshift* celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> issue? It certainly is, and looking back at that landmark moment we find **Spring Offensive** gracing the front cover, suitably holding a birthday cake and sporting balloons, bunting and glum expressions. They needn’t have been so sad; they were about to release a new single, ‘Worry Fill My Heart’, the band fully ensconced as the most exciting new band in town on the back of some seriously livewire gigs and their hugely ambitious fourteen-minute concept single ‘The First Of Many Dreams About Monsters’, based on Swiss psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s grief cycle. “Nobody wants to make forgettable music; one day we think ‘fuck it, we play straight-up indie pop’, the next we worry that we’re working on something too dirty and self-involved. Maybe it’s that confusion that people like,” they mused. We’re still waiting for that promised reunion show, boys. There was a host of other local releases this month with **Gunning For Tamar**, **Jonquil**, **The Brickwork Lizards**, **The Family Machine** and **Robots With Souls** among those putting out new music, while soul and r’n’b singer **Jada Pearl** was our Introducing artist.

## THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

In local news it was announced there would be no **Cowley Road Carnival** this year, due to a lack of funding and a summer filled with celebrations for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and The London Olympics.

### 5 YEARS AGO

If any band can match The Candyskins for title of Greatest Oxford Cult Heroes, it’s **Stornoway**, but back in March 2017 the city was bidding a very fond farewell to the band as they bowed out with a sold-out headline show at **The New Theatre**. “I can’t imagine there are many better cities to be in a band,” said singer Brian Briggs, talking to *Nightshift* ahead of the show, “Our fans have remained unbelievably loyal and we are extremely proud to be an Oxford band.” The farewell show itself was both a triumph and a hugely emotional affair with almost the entire 1,800-strong crowd in tears during a specially reworked version of ‘Fuel Up’, while the night ended with a massed stage invasion and dozens of mini Zorbs launched into the stalls from the balcony. “Thanks for the memories, fellas, and thank for the music,” concluded *Nightshift*’s suitably emotional review of the night. Oxford music carries on though and among local releases this month were albums from **Ags Connolly**, **Charlie Cunningham** and **The Great Western Tears**, as well as a split EP from local grindcore band **Black Skies Burn** with **UK Hate Grind**.

Harcourt Arms

MARCH

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SAT 12TH

THURSTON & THE LADS

(EX OXFORD BEATLES)

FRI 18TH

MOONAROON

SAT 19TH

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# TRACKS

## Yin & Yang Audio

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## TOP TRACK

### SLOW DRIFT

When your first single is not far short of being a masterpiece, following it up is never going to be easy, but a few short months after their debut, ‘Oblivion’, which earned them a Top Track award and a Number 3 slot in *Nightshift*’s end of year Top 30, synth-pop duo Slow Drift return with ‘Winter’ – just in time for spring but also just in time to coincide with a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine that could, if things go really badly, lead to a nuclear winter (come on, we’ve got Liz Truss leading negotiations at our end, what could possibly go wrong?). This song is entirely suited to such a sombre proposition, James Askwith’s brooding, starlit synths and heartbeat trip hop rhythm a silicon fog around Jenn Steeves’ angelically wraith-like vocals. It’s got a bit of a ‘Teardrop’ by Massive Attack feel to it and sounds like a siren lament from a dying space station. Watching the news, with 24-hour rolling updates on potential world war, catastrophic climate crisis, biblical storms and the ongoing effects of the pandemic it can feel like the bit in *Ghostbusters* where our heroes are told to “choose the form of your destroyer” but without even the option of an angry giant marshmallow man. On the evidence of this gently wonderful piece, perhaps a slow, painless spiral into universal entropy and heat death is still an option.

### KITE SOCIETY

Well, whaddyaknow – following straight on from that gently magnificent opening gambit here’s Kite Society. The link? While Slow Drift features Easter Island Statues’ bass player, Kite Society is the solo project of that band’s singer, Don Campbell. Coincidence? Well, actually, yes. But while his EIS campadre opts for dark, trippy electro-pop, Don prefers a brighter, more organic path, his song here, ‘Limoncello’, a dappled, acoustic lope with the disposition of a sunny interval on an otherwise grey day. That said there’s an air of melancholy about the song, which comes with a folkly sense of wanderlust about it, and the feel it’s being sung through a fine mist, but mostly it’s got a sunny disposition about it and we can

almost picture it soundtracking a feelgood Sunday afternoon comedy-drama, one where simple, cheerful, good-looking people ride bicycles through picturesque villages. Oh come one, it’s better than imagining desolate warzones and torn limbs, right? Allow us our idyllic reverie. And fetch us some more biscuits will you. And a kitten. See, the world is a better place already. Good work, Kite Society.

### MIKE ABBOTT

No fewer than 14 tracks here from Tony Abbott, who by the sounds of it spent much of the pandemic period sat on his front porch whittling pieces of wood and dreaming of village hall cake sales. This is decidedly home-baked fare, the keyboards in particular sounding like they were borrowed from the kids’ play box and were played while perched either on Mike’s lap or a passing ironing board. At his best he’s husky and homely, touching on Johnny Cash’s later years as he croons/croaks songs about past wives, failed musical dreamers and everyday folk, or maybe Mike Harding’s personably eccentric songsmithery, or possibly Tom Waits if he somehow ended up entertaining the locals at the church harvest festival. Elsewhere he comes dangerously close to sounding like a jaded country music cabaret singer on a budget cruise ship. Just as we’re about to dump him gently into the likable-but-limited skip, he introduces guest singer Sharon Noris, and some sumptuous saxophone for ‘Red Underwear’ and we’re into middle-aged break-up heartache torch song territory, not a million miles from 70s TV fave Barbara Dickson. Likable and not quite so limited, then. We feel Mike would probably make for very agreeable company of a Sunday afternoon. We also imagine he would make a very decent Victoria sponge if we asked nicely.

### TOM DALBY

Much like Mike Abbott Tom Dalby’s spiritual home is probably the corner of a rural pub snug bar, delivering rustic, homespun country-blues for careworn old romantics. Previously Tom won the *Nightshift* Top Track award for his grimy rocking and rolling belter ‘Blacktop Killer’, but here he dials it down a notch or two on a brace of songs, with mixed results. ‘Girl of My Dreams’ is a yearning acoustic ballad that’s perhaps a tad too earnest in its lovelorn emoting, but benefits from some neatly plucked guitar, but ‘Tonight’ is far better: earthier, in an almost Springsteen kind of way, with Tom’s voice huskier on a sort of protest song-cum-state-of-humanity lament with a simple, uplifting, two-line chorus that elevates the whole thing to a higher level. “I’m looking for a brand new start tonight / I’m looking to the stars above tonight” – it’s not exactly Leonard Cohen-level poetry but it’s surprisingly affecting and sung with

admirably reined-in passion and we’ll even forgive the slightly hippy-ish “Imagine a place where all is peace” message, because, let’s face it, what the world needs now is love, love, love, not power-hungry twats in charge of tanks and vast nuclear armouries. Fine song, admirable message: sometimes good things really are very simple.

### BEN OSBORN

Right, that’s enough positivity and good cheer, back to the apocalypse. Last time round we likened Ben Osborn’s song about Covid terror to the serenity of an isolated aristocratic composer finishing his masterpiece while awaiting the plague. This time round it’s climate change and its associated fear and grief that Ben addresses on ‘Are We the Flood’, with its lyrics about waves overspilling coastal defences as politicians sit by pretending all’s well and people build homes from driftwood. Given the nightmare nature of the song it’s an oddly hushed affair – not so much understated as barely said at all, minimalist piano and electronics and barely-there skittering beats over which Ben soothingly documents the apocalypse with all the abject terror of a particularly laidback jazz lounge crooner contemplating a second Martini. All of which makes the descriptions of poisoned air and ruined cities that much more eerie. In fact you can imagine Ben singing the final line of the song – “Are we the drowned, or are we the flood?” – delicately closing his piano lid and making one final bow to an empty concert hall as the waters carry the flotsam and jetsam of the deluge over the lips of the stage. A final thank you and good night.

### LEONIDAS

Right, enough with such introspection, let’s riot! Leonidas is a rapper and community activist and this track here, ‘Pretend’, is a bit of a banger, inspired by 50 Cent’s ‘Life’s on the Line’, a tirade against the music industry that’s righteous but also a bit of an earworm, with an almost psychedelic feel as its cruises on a circling church organ-style refrain. What initially sounds a bit cheap and homespun becomes almost hypnotic while Leonidas’ flow, just a notch down from machine-gun relentless, makes you wonder how and when he might pause for breath. It’s both a fuck-you to traitors and detractors and an affirmation of his own identity and self worth. It’s sharp and pointed but equally feels like a stream of consciousness. It feels absolutely wired and it makes us want to stop sitting around contemplating the horror of the world and get up and do something about it. Good work, fella.

### 808 SWAMP

More hip hop here but of a decidedly more laidback persuasion from 808 Swamp

who describe themselves as “the county’s new funky up, sound wave of UK Oxford hip hop pack”. Where Leonidas is wired and abrasive, 808 Swamp are smooth and soulful, the vocal lead a rich baritone that gets us to thinking about Snoop possessed by the spirit of Barry White, backed by an almost 80s-style r’n’b harmony group and a meandering jazzy jam, or maybe Ice Cube unwinding after a good day. And now we don’t know whether to carry on making Molotov cocktails in preparation for taking to the streets or go and drink some actual cocktails, preferably next to a heated swimming pool. Both options are tempting, although *Nightshift* is obviously more of a lover than a fighter, not to mention an absolute bloody coward when it comes to violence, but maybe after a few Margaritas, we could be persuaded to hit the barricades, yeah?

## TOILET TRACK

### J GEORGE

Ah, the old reality-over-anticipation hole of despair. “Who is J George?” asks the press release, not unreasonably. “Incognito soul, mystery punk” it answers itself promisingly before going on to tease us mercilessly with references to Gang of Four, Prince, The Cure, D’Angelo and Gil Scott Heron, not to mention self comparisons to Fontaines DC, Portishead and Parquet Courts. And then of course we actually listen to the music. Which isn’t, if we’re honest, so terrible, just a bit clumsy and directionless. Trouble is, J George cannot sing. At all. He can over-enunciate brilliantly, but that isn’t really singing as we know it, more like the sound of someone deluding themselves they’re Larry Blackmon from Cameo rather than an amateur dramatics enthusiast upsetting everyone at his local open mic night. Not that he doesn’t try and experiment along the way. On ‘Nothing More Than Dreams’ for example, he experiments with singing an entire song without using consonants, so it sounds like a slightly funky drunken ramble. By the time he gets to ‘Nowhere Man’ we find him asking himself “Shall I take my socks with me?” to which we’re tempted to answer, yes, because putting a sock in it might be the best course of action at this point. If Ben Osborn’s hushed hymn to the cataclysm had us picturing him performing to an empty hall at the end of it all, J George has us imagining him banging away oblivious as everyone watching departs the room in order to end it all. This collection of songs is titled ‘I Hope They Put These In Films’. And maybe they will. Public health and safety films probably. Don’t play near railway lines. Don’t swim in flooded quarries. Don’t climb in abandoned fridges. And don’t, for God’s sake, make music anything like this.

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

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