

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 311
September
2022**

Ally Craig

"I would love to witness the moment another life-form first encounters Earth. Would we still be there to greet them, or would they be archaeologists, piecing together a flawed understanding of human culture based on the ruins of our civilisation?"

Shielding, the silver screen and star stuff with Oxford's off-kilter pop poet

Also in this issue:

Introducing **LEONIDAS**

At work with **LIZ GREEN**

TRUCK & SUPERNORMAL reviewed

plus

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

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THE BULLINGDON

SEPTEMBER 2022

Thursday 1st September
Danny Mellin
The Mezz and Holler
Doors: 7PM

Friday 2nd September
Kockroachez
The Station
The Ivy Chains
Chloe August
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 3rd September
We Are Still Young
The Club Night
Doors: 11PM

Friday 9th September
Noahfinnace
Doors: 7PM

Friday 9th September
Reggaeton
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 15th September
Holy Coves
Doors: 7PM

Friday 16th September
DIY Class of 2022 Tour
Yard Act
English Teacher
Lime Garden
Doors: 7PM

Friday 16th September
Bluetooth Beats and Bangers
90s and 00s Edition
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 17th September
Rawdio
DRS in session
T-I B2B Saxxon
MC Juiceman
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 18th September
Welcome to Oxford
The Underground Rave
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 20th September
Afflecks Palace
Pastel & Vega Rally
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 21st September
Fishies Part II
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 22nd September
Laurence Jones
Blue Nation
Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd September
The 900
Tony Hawks Pro Skater Cover Band
Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd September
Drum and Bass
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 24th September
Musical Medicine
X De La Disco
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 25th September
Freshers Closing Party
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 28th September
Drum and Bass
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 29th September
Sports Team
Album Launch Show
Doors: 7PM

Friday 30th September
Katy J Pearson
Rosie Alena
Doors: 7PM

Friday 30th September
Soul Sista
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 1st October
Skylarkin
Mungo's HiFi Soundsystem
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 2nd October
Divine Schism 10
Doors: 2PM

Wednesday 5th October
Ben Poole
Doors: 7PM

Friday 7th October
Cut Capers
Doors: 7PM

Friday 7th October
The HAU5 Party
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 8th October
Reggaeton
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 9th October
Elf Lyons
Doors: 7PM

Monday 10th October
The Skinner Brothers
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 11th October
Andy Parsons:
Work in Progress
Doors: 7PM

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

Thursday 13th October
Semi Detached
TBA
Doors: 11PM

Friday 14th October
Drink and Jive
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 15th October
Simple
Sherelle and Yung Singh
Doors: 11PM

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

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

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

Friday 21st October
Troy Hawke:
Sigmund Troyd!
Doors: 7PM

Friday 21st October
Raving Trippy
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 22nd October
Musical Medicine
Ruby Savage
Doors: 11PM

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

Wednesday 26th October
Space Elevator
Doors: 7PM

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

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

Friday 28th October
Cut the Trap
Doors: 11PM

Monday 31st October
Soul Sista
Panic at the Disco
Doors: 11PM

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

Friday 4th November
The People Versus
Doors: 7PM

Friday 4th November
Bangerz and Lash
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th November
Rabidfest 2022
Krysthla
Footprints in the Custard, Desert Storm
Pulverise, The Grand Mal, Disinherit, Wall
Public Execution, Sin Dweller, Slay Duggee
Doors: 12PM

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

Thursday 10th November
Tankus the Henge
Doors: 7PM

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

Friday 11th November
Imperial Leisure
Doors: 7PM

Friday 11th November
Tracksuit and Trance
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 12th November
Simple
Helena Hauff
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 15th November
The Way Down Wanderers
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 16th November
Corky Laing
Doors: 7PM

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

Friday 18th November
Drum and Bass
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 19th November
Musical Medicine
Daughters of Frank
Doors: 11PM

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

Wednesday 23rd November
Billy Nomates
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 24th November
Semi Detached
TBA
Doors: 11PM

Friday 25th November
World Cup 2022
England v USA
Doors: 6PM

Friday 25th November
Fred Stripe
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 29th November
World Cup 2022
England v Wales
Doors: 6PM

Wednesday 30th November
Kira Mac
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 1st December
So Fetch
Xmas Special
Doors: 11PM

Friday 2nd December
Dreadzone
Doors: 7PM

Friday 2nd December
Raving Trippy
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 3rd December
Simple
Jossey Mitsy
Doors: 11PM

Friday 9th December
The HAU5 Party
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 10th December
Reggaeton
Doors: 11PM

Friday 16th December
Drum and Bass
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 17th December
Old Skool Oxford
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 21st December
Krissy Matthews
& Friends Xmas Show
Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd December
Taylor Swiftmas
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 24th December
Reggae Xmas
Aleighcia Scott
Count Skylarkin
Destination DJs
Dasher and Wazzy
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 10th January
Big Joanie
Doors: 7PM

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

NEWS

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



JEFFREY LEWIS & THE VOLTAGE, Johnny Foreigner and Pozi are among the acts confirmed to play **Divine Schism's 10th anniversary weekend**. The three-day celebration of the local DIY promoters and record label runs over the weekend of the **30th September-2nd October**. Jeffrey Lewis and his band play the Friday (30th Sept) at Florence Park Community Centre, while the Saturday and Sunday will feature all-day events. Other acts announced include: Mammoth Penguins, Trust Fund, Witching Waves and Gemma Cullingford, as well as local artists Zahra Haji Fath Ali Tehrani, Self Help, Max Blansjaar and Dream Phone. Full line-up news will be announced on the 29th August, with tickets for all events on sale at wegottickets.com/divineschism

THERE IS SOME HOPE that live music might return to Oxford city centre after an application to turn the **Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre** into a hotel was approved but with provisos that Z Hotels, who own the building, recognise live music regularly took place there and must be able to continue once the building work is completed. This includes installation of sufficient sound insulation so that hotel guests will not be disturbed by gigs, and that hire fees for promoters are kept affordable. On the downside, hopes that parking provision for bands might be made available did not get passed, although a small amount of disabled parking will be available. The local music scene should be particularly grateful to Greg Owen and Glenda Huish for coordinating a campaign to get the venue recognised at extremely short notice.

Please follow the Save Our Venue page on Facebook for updates on future campaigns to protect local venues at [facebook.com/SaveOxfordLiveMusic](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOxfordLiveMusic)

MOOGIEMAN launches a new album with a headline show at The Port Mahon next month. 'Dial M For Moogiemán' is released on All Will Be Well Records on Friday the 7th October, the same night as the launch show. The new album is a solo record, although it does feature contributions from Masochists bandmates Claire le Master and Clare Heaviside. Talking about the album, Shan Sriharan – aka Moogiemán – said: "Like a lot of recent releases, it was written during the first stage of the pandemic, though recording and mixing was completed later. From the start, however, I tried not to make it a 'lockdown' album, conscious of the fact that people would probably be eager to move away from that kind of thing by the time the album was released. Of course it's up to the listener to judge whether I succeeded in that, either for better or for worse, and no doubt the mood of that period has crept in anyway. On the other hand, post-pandemic (in so far as it can be considered over) developments have hardly been positive so perhaps these considerations are irrelevant. "The recordings also incorporate some new modular synthesiser and sampling equipment, which may have had a greater impact in ramping up the gloomy atmosphere."

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC host **OCM Open**, a music conference on **Saturday 25th February**, at **The Old Fire Station**. Steph West from OCM said the free event will be "a mini-conference for anyone involved in the Oxfordshire music scene: promoters, venues, magazines etc... basically anyone who wants to see the scene thrive and works to make it happen. OCM is hiring the venue and the facilitator, but on the day we're not telling anyone what to do; this is about giving the people inside the Oxfordshire music scene space and a flexible structure to talk about what matters to them. It's like a conference but there aren't any speakers, just the good bits in the coffee breaks." Visit ocmevents.org for more info and register your interest.



STORNOWAY enjoyed a brief reunion in August and managed to fit two impromptu Oxford shows in. The band, who bowed out with an emotional sold-out farewell show at The New Theatre in 2017, reunited for a one-off performance at WOMAD festival but played two warm-up sets, one at **Truck Store** on Cowley Road, followed by another in the **Veterans & Virgins tent at Truck Festival**. The band's debut album, 'Beachcomber's Windowsill', recently won a **Truck Store** poll to find Oxford's favourite ever album, beating Ride's 'Nowhere' into second place.

SPORT TEAM's album launch show scheduled for the 23rd August has been rescheduled. The Cambridge indie crew now play **The Bullingdon on Thursday 29th September** for **Truck Store**. On the same evening Truck host an intimate instore set from **Beth Orton**; the singer is launching her new album 'Weather Alive', while on Wednesday 21st September **Suede** will be singing copies of their new album. Visit Truckmusic.store to pre-order albums and guarantee entry.

OXFORD CITY FESTIVAL returns for the last two weeks of November, celebrating its tenth anniversary with gigs at venues across Oxford, featuring local and out of town acts. Artists wanting to play this year's event should apply via the Oxford City Festival Facebook page.

JAZZ AT ST GILES returns for a new season this month. The annual series of shows at St. Giles Church is back for the first time since the start of the Covid pandemic; it will also be the first season since the death of founder Jean Darke, who curated the first nine seasons but who passed away in 2021. The opening show of the new

season features The Dominic Allidis Trio on September 17th. This is followed by The Oxley-Meier Project (8th October); Brigitte Behara (29th October); The Donut Kings (12th November), and Budapest Café Orchestra (3rd December). Full concert details at jazzatstgiles.com.

BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD, continues to showcase local music every Saturday night from 8-9pm on DAB and 95.2fm. The show, produced by Liz Green and presented by Dave Gilyeat, is available to stream and download at bbc.co.uk.

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

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

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A quiet word with

Ally Craig



photo: Laima Bite

“WHEN I FIRST STARTED *shielding, I made the conscious decision not to predict an end date. It’s served me well so far. Trying to guess would only make me more frustrated in the long run. And it’s already been quite a long run!”*

SO SAYS ALLY CRAIG, WHO due to his immune-compromised situation (he was born with muscular dystrophy), remains shielding a year after the majority of the UK population seem to have forgotten all about Covid-19 and its health risks. Ally is speaking to *Nightshift* about his new album, ‘Star Stuff’, written and recorded solo over the past two years and released this month. If Ally has been separated from friends and his Bug Prentice bandmates since the start of the pandemic, he has, as much as he can, remained busy and productive musically, pouring his love for classic Hollywood cinema in particular into songs, like the

sad, sweet and utterly lovely ‘Carol Lombard’, about the silver screen actress who tragically died in a plane crash after a charity concert, taking the flight “on the toss of a coin”; or the pensive ‘Bankhead vs Crawford’, about the meeting at a party of renowned stars Talulah Bankhead and Joan Crawford, revealing both the glitz and glamour and bitchiness of the showbiz world; or the deliciously gnarly electro-crunk of ‘Gene Kelly is on the Telly’; or the self-explanatory ‘I Don’t Like John Wayne’, which takes a righteous pop at the famously bigoted Western hero. The album mixes together Ally’s trademark off-kilter approaches to music: where Slint and Shellac meet synth-pop and where understatement both musical and lyrical, contrasts with moments of explosive dissonance.

LOCKDOWN AND ISOLATION

have affected Ally’s life more than most of us over the last two years and continue to do so, but this period has seen him make the best music of his life. ‘Star Stuff’ is a strikingly inventive, clever and touching record, made with real love but unafraid to inject difficult moments into proceedings. For people who think Covid is over and everything back to normal, how is Ally’s life still impacted? “COVID-19 is still a significant risk for disabled and immune-compromised people, especially now safety regulations have been relaxed. I regret not taking advantage of that brief window where people were masking and distancing as a matter of course. Now people have become complacent, and I’m even more reticent than ever to go anywhere. I’m not willing to risk what little health I have, so I’m just stuck at home trying to protect myself... without losing my last marble. “The risk also exists for abled people, or, as some disability activists call them, the *currently* abled. The lasting effects of COVID-19 can be severe even after a mild infection, so lots of people are endangering their health as we speak. As much as I love live music, I value my health more. I wish the general public weren’t taking theirs and mine for granted.”

HOW, AND IN WHAT WAYS, did lockdown change Ally’s way of composing and recording songs? What, if anything, has he learned from those different methods or processes? “With Bug Prentice, immediacy is key; we record the songs together in the studio as quickly and simply as we can. The only overdubs are the vocals and an occasional extra guitar part, maybe a little cello here and there. The idea is for it to sound like a live band. We’re aiming for a Steve Albini, Shellac-type approach. “But the ongoing pandemic makes it too risky for me to go to gigs or studios. I’ve had to learn how to mix and produce my own music at home, instead of relying on more experienced collaborators and better-equipped studios. It’s a massive limitation, but sometimes limitations can be inspiring. Bug Prentice has one set of self-imposed limitations; my solo work has another. And while Bug Prentice records are made

quickly, home recording allows me to work at a slower pace, with more attention to detail. The only cost is my time. It also frees me to make songs without worrying how I’ll replicate them live. I’ve been able to incorporate more electronic elements, multiple guitar parts and more varied production techniques. It doesn’t matter that I can’t replicate it live. In that way, my touchstones were the Beatles and XTC, both of whom had careers divided between ‘live’ and ‘studio-bound’ eras. Andy Partridge likened it to using all the colours in the paintbox instead of just a handful.”

ONE PARTICULAR significant shift in Ally’s music was a move towards more towards electronic music during his lockdown releases, beginning with the single ‘Chrysalids’ in 2020 and onto last year’s wonderful ‘Digitally’ EP, which saw the influence of artists like Devo, Gary Numan and particularly Kraftwerk come to the fore. “I’ve been experimenting with sample sequencing for a long time. I mean a *really* long time: over a decade! It took me that long to develop reliable methods – and reliable taste – but a certain amount of luck is still involved. It feels like being a beginner again, with all the excitement and frustration that entails. “When I started making ‘Digitally’ and the preceding singles, I was inspired by all the electronic music I was listening to at the time: classics like Kraftwerk, Devo, Gary Numan, Brian Eno, the ‘Mwandishi’ era of Herbie Hancock, and more recent acts like Beauty Pill, Sylvan Esso, who feature Amelia who is part of the Appalachian folk trio Mountain Man, and Sufjan Stevens. I found it particularly inspiring that Herbie Hancock and all of those more recent acts had each made their own transitions towards electronic music. ‘Chrysalids’ was my attempt at a sparkly Sufjan Stevens-style electro-pop tune. I’m not sure how obvious that is from the sound of it, mind... “I think ‘Star Stuff’ is aiming for a balance between the strictly electronic sound of ‘Digitally’ and my earlier, more guitar-centric stuff. ‘Digitally’ was limited to one guitar per song, with everything else being vocal or electronic. There’s a lot of space in those songs. With

‘Star Stuff’ I allowed myself to fill up some of that space with extra guitar, though there’s still plenty of electronica in there too. I’m really happy with how it turned out.” The ‘Digitally’ EP featured some of your best songs to date; do you feel you’re continually evolving and progressing as a songwriter, musician and producer and any areas you’d like to change or improve? “I do try to keep progressing. It’s tempting to find a method and stick with it forever, but that leads to stagnation. That’s essentially what ‘Chrysalids’ is about, albeit in more socio-political terms. So I’m always trying new ways of writing songs. “Traditionally I would start by messing around on guitar, finding some interesting chords, bashing them into something song-shaped. But by starting with another element – bass, drums, melody, lyrics, etc. – the songs would grow differently or have a different emphasis. There’s more variety in the music. Of the four tracks on ‘Digitally’, two were initiated on guitar, one on keyboard, and one from programming. ‘Star Stuff’ has a similar spread of different approaches, including a couple of songs with spoken-word vocals: something I’d always felt too self-conscious to attempt. There’s always room for improvement. Even listening back to ‘Digitally’, I hear things I would tweak now. In fact I did adjust the mixes of ‘Carole Lombard’ and ‘Larry, I’m on Duck Tails’ for the new album, and re-recorded ‘Chrysalids’ entirely – but the original versions will remain intact on their respective releases. I have no intention of becoming the George Lucas of obscure Oxonian art-rock!”

ALLY’S NEW ALBUM IS titled ‘Star Stuff’ – a title that is deliberately open to interpretation in the astronomical and Hollywood senses. “Pretty much, yes. It’s not strictly a concept album, but the ambiguity of the title makes it applicable to each track in one way or another.” In the TV series *Cosmos*, Carl Sagan had a spaceship of the mind; given the same, where, or even when, would Ally travel to? “Given that the size of the Universe is infinite, extra-terrestrial life is a statistical certainty, but we have yet to find any proof of its existence. One theory is that the Universe is just too young. We were here first; there’s no one out there yet for us to meet. So I would love to witness the moment another life-form first encounters Earth. Would we still be there to greet them? Or would they be archaeologists, piecing together a flawed understanding of human culture based on the ruins of our civilisation? And would that be funny

or tragic? Would they even recognise us, or our remains, as civilised?” **HOLLYWOOD AND ITS** stars, though, remain the core of ‘Star Stuff’. What is it about the classic silver screen stars that is so appealing? Is there something intrinsically more romantic or mysterious about people whose lives weren’t so exposed by social media, etc? “The films themselves first lured me in. I remember loving *Singin’ in the Rain* when I was a kid, though it wasn’t until my twenties that I first got seriously into classic films. I watched *The Maltese Falcon* and sought out all the Humphrey

I spend more time enjoying the films than reading about the stars, but they are the most inviting subject to write songs about

Bogart and film noir I could find, then branched out to other classics: Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, Fred Astaire, Buster Keaton, the Marx Brothers. There’s a great variety of films, from dark dramas to glamorous romantic comedies and frothy musicals. The stylish black and white cinematography, the wise-cracking dialogue and the beautiful people are all very alluring. “But to best appreciate the films, it helps to know a bit of the historical context: The invention of cinema; the addition of sound and colour; the implementation of the Hays Code (Hollywood’s censorship rules which lasted from the mid ‘30s to the late ‘60s); the Red Scare, and the influence of various historical events on cinematic trends. And all that leads to learning a bit about the lives of the stars too. They may not be my primary interest; I spend more time enjoying the films than reading about the stars, but they are the most inviting subject to write songs about. Summarising the plot of *The Thin Man* in song would be a fool’s errand, but I can write a tribute to Myrna Loy! “I don’t really have a system for choosing which stars to write about. Sometimes it’s because they have a compelling story, like Carole Lombard, or I want to shine a light on a forgotten star like Theda Bara, or a title just suggests itself as with ‘Gene Kelly is on the Telly’. Sometimes it’s a single moment that tickled me (‘Larry, I’m on Duck Tails’), or it’s a roundabout way to approach a deeper subject, like in ‘Keanu Reeves’.” You’ve added Gene Kelly and Myrna Loy to your list of stars to get their own song. Any particular movie stars you’d like to write about in the future? “‘Star Stuff’ is probably the

culmination of my long-running obsession with classic Hollywood. There are other stars who deserve a song – Buster Keaton and Jacques Tati spring to mind – but I should probably give it a rest for now!” They’re not all love letters to the stars of course; tell us about ‘I Don’t Like John Wayne’. “Public Enemy put it much more succinctly in ‘Fight the Power’ than I ever could, but I figured there was room for one more song with anti-Wayne sentiments! After all my glowing tributes to beloved stars, the idea of writing a hit-piece amused me. I can’t even remember what prompted me to write it now. I simply don’t like the man. As I say in

the song, ‘I’m not a fan of westerns anyway’: the inherent racism of ‘cowboys and injuns’ stuff is deeply unappealing, and the stories of Wayne’s prejudices are sickening. If anything, my song doesn’t really go far enough.” **THE LAST TIME ALLY WAS** on the cover of *Nightshift* was with Bug Prentice, the band he formed with bass player Ruth Goller and drummer Stephen Gilchrist, the music they made together drawing on Ruth’s extensive work at the forefront of jazz music as well as Ally’s gloriously skewed approach to songwriting and often idiosyncratic observational lyrics. Is Bug Prentice still an ongoing project? Ruth seems to be getting some serious recognition of late with her ‘Skylla’ solo debut. “I’m so excited for Ruth, she deserves every bit of praise coming her way! Ruth and Stephen are both doing incredible solo work, I’m continually impressed and excited by their new music. They’re both brilliant in very different ways. We are in touch, and Bug Prentice is still A Thing; we’re just on hold right now. We did attempt some long-distance recording at the start of lockdown, but the results weren’t up to our high standards. I look forward to recording with them again, but I don’t know when that’ll be or what shape it’ll take.”

SELF-ISOLATION MEANS there will, sadly, be no album launch gig for ‘Star Stuff’, but Ally’s gigging opportunities go deeper than Covid. As a wheelchair user, most grassroots venues are off-limits to him. After the closure of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre before Covid and Fusion Arts more recently, Florence Park Community Centre is now the

only wheelchair access-friendly grassroots venue in Oxford. How does that make Ally feel and what can realistically be done to create more spaces for musicians with disabilities and accessibility issues? “I feel quite disconnected from the local scene already, thanks to my ongoing covid-centric isolation. I don’t want to be a downer but it’s all very dispiriting. The lack of accessible venues is just one symptom of a larger problem of systemic ableism. How are disabled people supposed to demand access and inclusion if we can’t even get there to demand it? “I wish I had solutions to these problems, but all I can really say is that we should be included without having to fight for every scrap of progress. If you’re putting on gigs or other public events, put some thought into access *now*. Do the research, do the work, use your influence for good. Do it now, before someone asks you why you didn’t bother to make your space accessible. The campaign group Attitude Is Everything does great work making live music more accessible, so if you’re not sure where to start, look them up. Also, for the love of whatever gods you may or may not believe in, don’t vote Tory.”

GIVEN HIS LOVE FOR THE heroes of the big screen, *Nightshift* wonders which film hero Ally would like to be, given the chance. “I don’t really see myself as a hero; it sounds exhausting, really. That said, I deeply admire Juror #8 (Henry Fonda) from *12 Angry Men*. If I can speak up for what’s right and change a few minds around me, I guess I’ll have done alright.” If not a hero, then, if Ally could be king of the world for a day and allowed to change or introduce one law, what would it be, and why? “Abolish billionaires. It’s obscene for one person to hoard that amount of money while many of us struggle to pay our bills and feed ourselves. And no one needs a private jet, taking half-hour flights that leave a bigger carbon footprint than the average household does in a year. The inequity is disgusting. Redistribute their wealth and save the planet.” And finally, once he feels safe to go out again, who most of all is Ally looking forward to seeing? “My best friend Rachel, who inspired the Bug Prentice song ‘Spoons’. I keep in touch with my closest friends online, but I haven’t seen most of them in person since 2020. More than any live music, I miss them.”

‘Star Stuff’ is released on the 2nd September. Hear Ally Craig at bugprentice.bandcamp.com.

RELEASED

ALLY CRAIG

‘Star Stuff’

(Self released)

The title ‘Star Stuff’ of course is deliberately open to interpretation, but then that’s typical of Ally Craig whose music is rarely obvious. This, his first full album in a long, never less than interesting musical life, is characteristically oblique yet shines with melodic prowess, while lyrically he – like fellow local traveller on roads less well trodden, Moogiemán – enjoys exploring subjects few if any have visited before.

In particular Ally writes and sings about often forgotten stars of classic Hollywood, or moments in their lives. ‘Carole Lombard’, which earned Ally a Top 10 berth in last years *Nightshift*’s end of year chart, is one of cinema’s great lost tragedies, the film star’s untimely death in a plane crash on a flight she only took after the toss of a coin, rendered as a beautifully understated synth-pop lullaby. By contrast ‘Gene Kelly is On the Telly’ is a far gnarlier form of electronic pop, motorik rhythms underpinning tightly wound guitar and Ally’s nursery rhyme-simple narrative.

In fact there’s a regular childlike simplicity and serenity to much of Ally’s songwriting, like the soothing plucked guitar lines of the album’s title track, and the oddly frail yet steely self affirmation of ‘Myrna Loy’, but kids probably shouldn’t be allowed to listen to the mischievous (okay, filthy) ‘Bankhead vs



Crawford’ and not just for its lyrics, but also the Slint-like guitars, which are equal parts subtle and downright dirty.

There’s plenty here that’s familiar to long-time fans of Ally: 2020’s first foray into synth-pop, ‘Chrysalids’, and more recent singles ‘Keanu Reeves’ and ‘Larry, I’m on Duck Tails’, but equally there are new songs like ‘I Don’t Like John Wayne’, proving that Ally’s love for the stars of the silver screen isn’t universal. Those unfamiliar with Ally Craig – or his band Bug Prentice – will find ‘Star Stuff’ the perfect boarding place to get into his music – an always intriguing, unpredictable writer, musician and singer who seems to exist in a genre of his very own. Cosmic, cinematic or musical, there’s definitely some star stuff about Ally.

Dale Kattack



FAR // DUST

‘EP 01’

(Self released)

This new collaborative EP between Asher Dust and Farjedi is, we think, the pair’s first together since their eponymous 2014 album, though so prolific is Asher Dust in particular there’s every chance we’ve missed something in the meantime.

It’s a welcome coming back together whatever, with a similar sense of disorientation and deliberate disregard for coherent song structure apparent through these six tracks. From the

highly rhythmic, almost staccato ‘Biding My Time’, to the meandering dark-jazz of closer ‘Shits & Giggles’, the pair use machine beats and trippy factory stylings to provide a fog of sound behind Asher’s vocals, be they the urgent growl of that opener or the spoken word self examination of ‘Fear of Water’. The latter, dealing with mental health issues, features guest vocals from Mary Bell, who provides soothing, liquid r’n’b vibes to counterpoint the claustrophobic feel of Asher’s stream of consciousness.

Even when the duo consciously set their aim towards nebulous, as on ‘After Club Blues’, they achieve a level of almost hypnotic, sub-aquatic trippiness, accentuating those stark, ruminative vocal paths.

Along with ‘Biding My Time’, the EP’s highlight is ‘Praying Praying’, a woozy, warped dub workout where structure just about holds out against the collapsing miasma of machinery and what might even be whale song within and around it.

Where this fits in is up to the listener: it feels too dark and oppressive to be post-club comedown music, but it feels suited to darker days and nights than we have right now, although the claustrophobia of endless heatwaves suits the disorientated feel of the EP; certainly there’s little chill here to relieve the heat.

Dale Kattack

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CATGOD

‘Born Again’

(Self released)

Catgod are delicate to the point of fragility musically; listening to this, the band’s second album, you fear any of the songs might break into a million tiny pieces should it be exposed to anything as rough and tumble as the elements.

Much of this has to do with the twin vocal talents of Robin and Cat Marriot; he has a limpid choirboy purity, not unlike Wild Beasts’ Hayden Thorpe; she is serenely rarefied, not far off angelic, closer to Karen Carpenter or even Jackie McShee. Put them together though and they’re quite the force of nature. Across ‘Born Again’ both take the lead but it’s when they sing together they can really weave magic.

Album opening ‘Living in the Now’ begins with delicate, plucked guitar – another nod to Pentangle – before taking flight, heading into almost folk-prog territory to the point we’re set to thinking of Curved Air, while ‘I’m Dead’, darker, nominally heavier, has a similarly epic edge about it for all its folky delicacy and a meticulous approach to instrumentation and arrangement. Twice in recent times we’ve seen Catgod live and the experience has been blighted somewhat by crowd noise or venue acoustics imposing on the fine balance of sounds they conjure; listening to them on record, they shine; you can hear every working part, however small – and all those small working parts add up to something far, far bigger, even when it’s as hushed, tender and, yes, fragile as this.

There’s an almost comic level of sensitivity to some of the lyrics, like “I love you mummy, but I’m invincible” (‘Mummy’), and “I can’t stop crying; I’m a lonely boy” (‘Wild Man on the Moon’), but also a childlike naivety to both that makes almost anything forgivable and both songs are among the high points of the album, which at a modest seven songs manages that rare thing of leaving you wanting more, having so effectively wrapped you up in its comfort blanket of gently powerful chamber folk.

Sue Foreman



VERNONS FUTURE

‘Aquaplaning’

(Self released)

Vernons Future have their roots in Oxford, London and Liverpool, but mostly they have roots in mid-80s indie pop; in fact, if they have a local antecedent, it is Oxford godfathers The Relationships, whose mix of classic guitar jangle, hints of 60s psychedelia and a melancholy disposition all apply to this quintet across their new album, recorded over the last three years.

Songs like ‘Call To Arms’ and ‘Waiting At the Station’ carry a gentle moodiness about their

person even as the guitars promise summer freshness, while album highlight ‘Honeysuckle Love’ features some neat Doors-y organ that lends a psych edge to its indie whimsy. Similarly ‘Holy Joe’, which allows the keys to add to buoyancy to the song.

Vernons Future do have a way with a well-constructed three-minute pop song at times but they can be guilty of sinking into glum awkwardness occasionally – ‘Just Can’t Help Myself’ for example, where a somewhat whiny vocal lead detracts from an otherwise loping melody. Two tracks here act as interesting excursions from the band’s modus operandi: ‘B Movie’ and ‘Seek Shelter Now’, both more upbeat, sample-laden tracks that suggest Vernons Future have been listening to Public Service Broadcasting; the former steals quotes from myriad old b-movies as it enjoys its 60s/70s jam-out, while the more abrupt ‘Seek Shelter Now’ plays on old nuclear attack warning notices and is pleasingly fun, almost quaint even as the world’s super powers continue to rattle their sabres and indulge in territorial pissing contests.

Across 10 tracks, ‘Aquaplaning’ tilts just enough towards enjoyable; it could do to lose a couple of its more downbeat, formulaic numbers and maybe enjoy some more of those more effusive diversions, but there’s little here to dislike, and enough to actively enjoy.

Ian Chesterton

SPANK HAIR

‘Part of the Family’

(Heavenly Creature)

I’ve not always associated the Oxford music scene with emo and punk, but when I do think back to the bands that fitted into those categories over the years, they almost always bring back fond memories. Daisy, being one of those acts, were a personal favourite and I confess I was rather emosh myself when they called it a day. However, how blessed we were when out of the ashes came two splendid bands: Junk Whale and Spank Hair. While this reviewer enjoys them both, the latter have gone from strength to strength as Luke Allmond and Alasdair Crawford show that they have the musical chops to hit our hearts hard with emo-pop that just makes us want to smile; and get a little teary at the same time.

‘Personal Details’ is a perfect example of what Spank Hair are all about: great melodies. As the two vocalists take us through their observations of the familiar trappings of social media, the band oozes charm and wit, while sprinkling their craft effortlessly with beautiful guitar textures reminiscent of early Pavement. ‘Everything Is So Good’ is a subtle affair that hints at something darker, but while well executed, misses the mark a touch when the second verse kicks in, the delivery going a bit too far to convey the message of frustration and angst.

Te EP’s highlight, ‘Wannabe’, is one-and-a-half-minutes of punk-pop bliss. As Allmond’s effortless guitar-licks rise through the mix to complement each transition from verse to chorus, the song is something that should be part of people’s summer playlists; the lyrics in the middle-eight justifying this alone, and that’s before you let the chorus bore itself into your teenage mindset of days gone by.

‘Pro Skater’ and ‘Ridge Racer’ close the EP with more delicate textures and play with melody and dynamic to intoxicating effect. Where the band may slightly miss the mark in vocal delivery occasionally, the songs still work well, conveying far more feeling than any overly-polished Blink 182 try-hards.

Caitlin Helm

he didn’t

‘Detour, earth’

(Self released)

‘Detour, earth’ is an interesting beast, and certainly isn’t easy listening. Completely composed by multi-instrumentalist he didn’t (all lowercase and not a typo), the EP sits somewhere between Radiohead and Lou Reed’s ‘Metal Machine Music’. The rolling drone sounds and buzzing noise comprising the opening nine minute title track is not instantly accessible and requires repeated listening to get your teeth into.

But when you sit with it for a while, you can begin to fully enjoy the space and depth he didn’t creates through layering ambient sounds mixed with delicate vocals and spots of acoustic guitar. The EP blooms on ‘SLSVRS’, while ‘Instrumental #2’ provides a short palette cleanser ahead of the sludge-core leaning ‘Outro’.

The journey ‘Detour, earth’ takes will not be for everyone, and that’s okay, for there is a lot for those who want to take their time with it to unpack. Turn your phone off, lie back in a comfy chair, chill-out, maybe make some tea and stick on a good pair of headphones, and let this EP envelop you. You won’t be sorry.

Damon Boughen

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND

‘Victoria – An Adventure’

(Serious Types)

As the aul’ song goes: you don’t know what you’ve got til it’s gone, and there has been an Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band shaped hole in our lives for some time now.

The Rabbits are back, derailed not just by the global pandemic, but also the untimely passing of top trumpeter Martin Horsfall, whose voice graces the final track on this record. Written by Stuart Macbeth and almost entirely produced and performed by him and his brother Pal, it still sounds like the full band experience, with a live, sparkling flavour. Although the Rabbits are presently few they – like their furry namesakes – will doubtless swiftly become more plentiful.

Opener ‘Kokoshka’, starts with a stately piano motif, before the kind of oompah-punk ORFSB specialise in, and a wild story about the KGB and the narrator’s Russian doll (“If I could have a few, I’d tell the vicar about you...”). Lively yet thoughtful, what marks this album out is a newfound kind of eclecticism, tinkering – as it does – with dub reggae on ‘Vine Street’, electric guitar solos (‘Kokoshka’) and folk (‘Ferguson’s Gang’: simple voice and guitar, but you could imagine a full band version with a pounding Johnny Cash-style bass and fiddle).


What ties things together, however, is the lyrical strand. ‘Victoria: An Adventure’ is about travel through London, and to and from London and Oxford. It is about places, but also time, (“...the girl in the Co-Op said that’ll be 19.39; me and Amy Johnson’ll be hanging off the Siegfried Line”) and signs of the times (‘Shop To Let’ is a whimsical take on the woeful present state of Oxford’s municipal centre). ‘Frankie Fraser’ is about a wild night in London town – “Sinatra in rags”, according to the Press bumf – and it does, at one point almost wander off into “Start spreading the news...”).

Neo-classicist, without being anachronistic, the aforementioned ‘Ferguson’s Gang’ is, intentionally or otherwise, the closest Rabbit GHQ has got yet to capturing the renegade ramshackle spirit of early Pogues. Quite appropriately, then, does ‘Victoria’ end on a big-band blaze of glory with ‘Waltzing Matilda’.

Leo Bowder



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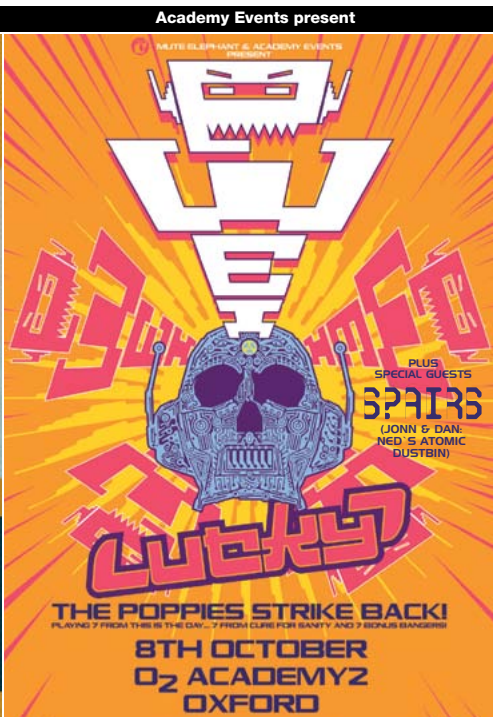
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GET GUIDE

THURSDAY 1st
DANNY MELLIN + THE MEZZ + HOLLER: **The Bullingdon** – Fresh-faced, upbeat indie rocking from the local singer-songwriter.
ISIS CITY ROCKERS: **Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock** – Blues, punk, r’n’b, Americana classics and more from the supergroup made up of members of Deadbeat Apostles, Ragged Charms

Saturday 3rd
THE HANDSOME FAMILY: St. Barnabas Church
True to the idea of alt.country, The Handsome Family are both rooted in country-folk traditions, and something way, way beyond its restrictive boundaries. The husband and wife duo of Brett and Rennie Sparks have been creating darkly beautiful, grotesquely comical music for almost three decades now. The couple’s mix of atmospheric minimalist music and lyrics that blur the lines between mundane and magical is as potent as it is unassuming. These are songs of wonder and weirdness, set in mysterious places, whether deep in the forests, or dusty backroads motels, and deal with everything from meditations on love and death to witchcraft and the discovery of electricity, and on to bizarre stories about people finding never-ending holes in their backyards where they spend years tipping their garbage. The pictures Rennie paints are fantastical and surreal – not surprising coming from someone who claims she sees ghosts – while Brett’s time spent in a mental institution finds its way into some of the duo’s stories. It’s almost ten years since The Handsome Family last passed through Oxford – a sold-out show at The Bullingdon – yet they remain as earthy and unearthly as ever, and the pair are a joy to watch as they trade genially barbed banter and insults throughout what is always a mesmerising set.



September

and Beard of Destiny.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon – Weekly open mic hosted by local musician Tom Dalby.

FRIDAY 2nd
KOKKROACHEZ + THE STATION + IVY CHAINS + CHLOE AUGUST: The Bullingdon – Rock and indie originals and covers from Witney youngsters Kokkroachez at tonight’s local bands showcase.
GERRY COLVIN: The Unicorn, Abingdon – Former skiffle-punk man Colvin, one half of Terry & Gerry, brings his solo show to the Unicorn’s monthly folk night.
BEACH BOYS SMILE: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Beach Boys tribute.

SATURDAY 3rd
THE HANDSOME FAMILY: St. Barnabas Church – Return to town for the first couple of alt.country – *see main preview*
FLEETWOOD BAC: O2 Academy – The Mac tribute act play ‘Rumours’ in full.
WE ARE STILL YOUNG: The Bullingdon – Retro emo and pop-punk club night
HIPSHAKIN: The Harcourt Arms – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul classics from Hipshakin’ DJs, tonight celebrating the club’s tenth birthday.

SUNDAY 4th
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Port Mahon (3pm) – Free afternoon of live music from It’s All About the Music.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: Harcourt Arms – Weekly open night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.30pm) – Funtime fusion of blues, rock and roll, ska, funk, folk and more from the local stalwarts.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon – Weekly Irish folk session.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm) – Weekly open session.

MONDAY 5th
NERVUS + THE DEADNOTES + RATS EAT RATS: Jericho Tavern – Melodic slacker indie-punk from the Watford/Brighton crew, back in town as guests of Divine Schism and promoting new album ‘The Evil One’ on Get Better Records. They’re joined by German indie-punks The Deadnotes and local noise merchants Rats Eat Rats, playing their first show in a few years.

TUESDAY 6th
FUN LOVIN CRIMINALS: O2 Academy – Return to town for Huey Morgan and chums after their show here back in 2019, still documenting

New York life over 25 years on from their biggest UK hit, ‘Scooby Snacks. From hip hop, funk and rock, to lounge, there’s an endearingly gleeful satire entrenched in their crime and drug narratives and Huey’s innate star quality – these days as much as a 6Music presenter as on stage – always makes the band worth a visit.
ADVANCE BASE + KARIMA WALKER + KATIE MALCO: The Library – Double dose of Stateside electronic Americana courtesy of Divine Schism tonight with Chicago’s Advance Base – former Casiotone For The Painfully Alone fella Owen Ashworth – touring last year’s ‘Wall of Tears & Other Songs I Didn’t Write’, alongside Arizona’s ambient/electro-folk singer Karima Walker.

WEDNESDAY 7th
LIME CORDIALE: O2 Academy – Lightweight, feelgood rock, hip hop and surf-pop from Sydney’s Lime Cordiale, brothers Oliver and Louis sweeping the board at the ARIA Awards for Number 1 second album ‘14 Steps To A Better You’.

THURSDAY 8th
CANCER BATS + WITCH FEVER + MARIEL BUCKLEY: O2 Academy – Liam Cormier and co bring the noise – *see main preview*
ARUN GHOSH - CANTICLE OF THE SUN: St. Barnabas Church – Oxford Contemporary Music hosts a spiritual jazz reimagining of St. Francis of Assisi’s mystical prayer, The Canticle of the Sun. Arun Ghosh directs his eight-piece jazz ensemble with the poem spoken in English and sung in Umbrian.
GRUDGEWOOD + DARKGNOSS: The Jericho Tavern – Riff-heavy tech-rock from Grudgewood, taking inspiration from Tool, Van Halen and Primus, plus darkly inclined rocking from Darkgnoss.
RANT: The North Wall – Scottish fiddle music from the virtuoso Highlands and islands quartet.
TANNAHILL WEAVERS: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Traditional Celtic ballads, lullabies, jigs and reels from the Scottish band.
THE LOST NOTES: The Unicorn, Abingdon – Foot-stomping roots tunes and three-way harmonies from the Birmingham quintet.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 9th
NOAHFINNCE: The Bullingdon – Various fun and frenetic and heart-on-sleeve pop-punk from Youtube fave Noahfinnce touring his new ‘My Brain After Therapy’ EP, the follow up to his acclaimed debut ‘Stuff From My Brain’.
JOLLY GROGSTERS: Harcourt Arms – Shanties and sea songs from the local vocal ensemble.
CATGOD + THE AUGUST LIST + MILA TODD: The Jericho Tavern – Album launch show from the local folk-pop stars, mixing

celestial harmonies with influences of 60s folk and shoegaze, plus a return to action for drone-folk wonders The August List. Political pop, hip hop and electronica from Mila Todd to open the show.

CRAKE + THE COOLING PEARLS + MILKWEED + ROBIN JAY BARD: Florence Park Community Centre – Rowan Sandle’s alt. folk and folkloric band return to Divine Schism to promote the release of their debut album ‘Humans Worst Habbits’, exploring grief, nature and identity. Romantic, poetic folk-pop from The Cooling Pearls in support.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY: The Gladiator Club – KK’s monthly shindig returns after a summer break with sets from Beaver Fuel, Gravid and Superloose.
PEARL DIVER: James Street Tavern – Free show from the elegant, funk-inclined crooners.
REGGAETON OXFORD: The Bullingdon – Reggaeton party night.

Tuesday 8th
CANCER BATS / WITCH FEVER: O2 Academy
Ah, Cancer Bats, how much do we love you? Lots and lots and lots, it must be said. Here’s a band that doesn’t mess about, preferring to get on with economical sub-four-minute blasts of (often surprisingly melodic) metalcore noise rather than fanny about with technical fripperies. The Toronto band are back in town touring new album ‘Psychic Jailbreak’. Its predecessor, 2018’s ‘The Spark That Moves’, saw them nominated for the Juno Award for the first time – overdue recognition for their hard work and fiery musical mission. Live they’re a highly volatile emotional catharsis, black-hearted blues and southern rock sludge boogie, mixed with venomous punk-tinged metal anthems and all-out hardcore fury, with impressively strident frontman Liam Cormier letting rip in a manner that suggests Beelzebub himself is tearing terrible confessions from him. Here is sweat-soaked mayhem and ferocity of a type that’s irresistible, from a band that time has utterly failed to mellow. Great to see Manchester’s Witch Fever joining the party, having witnessed their malevolent heavyweight firepower at The Jericho Tavern a while back, their bulldozing Sabbath-esque riffage laced with Babes In Toyland-like punk/grunge venom. A night for awesome noise and reckless behaviour, no apologies and no remorse.



THE BROS. LANDRETH: O2 Academy – Joey and David Landreth return to the UK, the Canadian country-folk crew touring their 2019 album ‘87’.

SATURDAY 10th
LIGHTNIN’ WILLIE: The Harcourt Arms – A return to town for the Texas-born, Pasadena-resident electric blues guitarist, a big favourite on the UK circuit with his mix of blues, swing and rock’n’roll, inspired by Otis Rush, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eddie Cochran.
ILLEGAL EAGLES: The New Theatre – Tribute to the band whose image is featured in the Oxford English Dictionary to define the phrase Pompous, tedious guff.
INDIE DISCO: Tap Social – Dominic Utton spins 80s and 90s indie classics on vinyl.
PETE MORTON + PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – 60s-styled folk and protest songs from veteran singer Pete Morton, inspired to become a musician by Buffy Saint Marie and Pete Seeger, and now touring his new album, ‘A Golden Thread’ at tonight’s Wychwood Folk Club show.
SHEPHERD’S PIE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Classic rock and metal covers.

SUNDAY 11th
CLT DRP: The Jericho Tavern – Fractious, militant feminist electro-punk from the Brighton outfit, with the influences of Peaches, Death Grips and The Prodigy doing mighty battle.
A-TOTA-SO + CIVIL VILLIANS + KULK + AND WHAT: The Library – Mathsy post-rock in a Fugazi / At the Drive-In vein from A-Tota-So, out on a joint headline tour with Oxford-London art-rock/post-hardcore crew Civil Villains; they’re joined by Norfolk’s fuzz-doom, psych-sludgers Kulk, and And What, the new post-grunge project from Basic Dick’s Loz Corona.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: Harcourt Arms
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the front bar.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

MONDAY 12th
HOUSE OF LOVE: O2 Academy – 80s indie and proto-shoegaze from Guy Chadwick, the sole remaining member of the classic Creation band, playing ‘Destroy the Heart’, ‘Christine’ and ‘Shine On’
DAVID ESSEX: The New Theatre – Return of the enduring pop idol, once a teen pin-up, now more of an object of gentle desire for ladies of a certain age, but with a very decent catalogue of top hits behind him, including the timeless ‘Silver Dream Machine’ and the actually brilliant ‘Oh What A Circus’, though recent years have seen a shift into softer balladry.
CHRIS & KELLIE WHILE: Nettlebed Folk Club – St Agnes Fountain singer Chris While teams up with daughter Kellie for a night of traditional folk tunes.

TUESDAY 13th
WEDNESDAY 14th



Friday 16th
YARD ACT / ENGLISH TEACHER / LIME GARDEN: The Bullingdon
When this show was originally scheduled last year we predicted 2022 would be Yard Act’s year and so it’s proved so far with the band stealing the show across a whole summer of festivals and debut album ‘The Overload’ getting a deserved Mercury nomination. Because they’re a band made for times like this: indirect descendants of The Fall’s pin-sharp, musically uptight observational lyricism or perhaps Sleaford Mods after a fistful of party pills. Their last visit to town, in September 2021, before they really took off, was a weird, wired and witty demonstration of the band’s vitality and relevance in a world going slightly mad. ‘The Overload’ showed the band at something like their poppiest and most accessible but live they can mix propulsive passages of dubby post-punk noise that twist themselves out of shape and dare to get funky much like The Pop Group’s assault on rock convention, occasionally breaking out into swaggering, blokey choruses, while singer James Smith rants and rhymes in caustic fashion like a middle ranking council official who’s one bad day at the office away from a full-on pavement meltdown. Militant and confrontational but compulsively catchy – no wonder they’ve struck a chord with so many. Support for this DIY Mag-organised tour from Yard Act’s Leeds neighbours and post-punk-inspired kindred spirits English Teacher, and London/Brighton post-punk funk-pop quartet Lime Garden.

THURSDAY 15th
HOLY COVES: The Bullingdon – Psych-tinged rocking from Anglesey’s Holy Coves, out on their ‘Druids & Bards’ tour.
NEVER PUBLIC RIVALS + HOT SAUCE RHYTHM & BRASS + PAUL LODGE: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music local bands showcase night.
THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK: The New Theatre – Tribute night.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon
THE SLOCAN RAMBLERS: St Nicholas Church, Baulking – Toronto’s Juno-nominated bluegrass quartet bring their lively, down-home roots ramble back to the Shire.

FRIDAY 16th
YARD ACT + ENGLISH TEACHER + LIME GARDEN: The Bullingdon – Cerebral caustic pop fun with Leeds’ stars on the rise – *see main preview*



Sunday 18th

DANA GAVANSKI: Florence Park

Community Centre

When Dana Gavanski released her debut album ‘Yesterday Is Gone’ in 2020 she sounded like a new star in the making. Then Covid happened, and then she lost her voice. The conflicted emotions this twin setback brought on feed into her follow-up, ‘When It Comes’, one of the most gorgeous records you’ll hear this year and beyond. It sounds like music from a waking dream: whimsical, wistful, idiosyncratic, experimental and otherworldly; like musical kindred spirit Cate le Bon, Gavanski manages to sound both abstract and dissonant while being superbly melodic as she bridges a strange divide between folk music and Moog-pop. A native Serb who’s spent most of her life in Canada, she’s more recently resident in the UK but that eclectic background helps make her music similarly difficult to pin down as it sounds simultaneously moody and playful, experimental but accessible, utilising a suitably mixed bag of instruments – from synths and guitars to piano, trumpet and harpsichord. It’s her voice that’s the chief instrument though; along with Cate le Bon, Gavanski has been compared favourably to Jane Weaver, Lætitia Sadier, Aldous Harding and even Judee Sill, who she’s been known to cover on occasion. All you really need to know though is she’s brilliantly strange and strangely brilliant and Divine Schism might just be hosting one of the gigs of the year tonight.

BOSSAPHONIK: Cowley Workers Social Club – The monthly world jazz dance club night welcomes funk jazz fusion outfit Pyjaen to town, while DJs Boomshank and Dan Ofer spin a global fusion of Latin, Balkan, Afro and more. **MOONAROOB: The Harcourt Arms** – Traditional Irish folk songs and tunes from the local trio. **EMMA HUNTER: The Port Mahon** – Gothic torch songs, flamenco, surf-rock and loop-heavy wyrd-folk from the local star. **EVAN CARSON + GEORGIA LEWIS + CHRIS CLEVERLY: Harwell Village Hall** – Trad folk and prog-rock from much-travelled percussionist Evan Carson alongside multi-instrumentalist Georgia Lewis.

SATURDAY 17th

FELL OUT BOY + THE BLACK CHARADE:

O2 Academy – Tributes to Fall Out Boy and My Chemical Romance. **THOMAS TRUAX + CAPTAIN KUPPA-T & THE ZEPPELIN CREW: The Jericho Tavern** – Eccentric musical adventuring and invention from crackpot troubadour and boffin Truax, a regular visitor to town over the years, and a recent star of WOOD Festival. Here he is back again with his oddly shaped songs and even more oddly shaped instruments, from a drum machine made of old bike wheels, to his (in)famous hornicator. Witty a capella chap hop from Captain Kuppa-T in support. **THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES: The Harcourt Arms** – Raucous, soulful blues-rocking kicked out with punk spirit by the local stars. **DOMINIC ALLDIS TRIO: St Giles Church** – Jazz interpretations of classical and opera themes to kick off this year’s Jazz at St Giles season. **RAWDIO: The Bullingdon** – Drum&bass and jungle club night. **OXFORD CANAL FESTIVAL: Aristotle Lane Recreation Ground & more** – The annual celebration of canal life returns, with live music on the main stage and along the Oxford canal, plus myriad food and family events.

SUNDAY 18th

DANA GAVANSKI: Florence Park Community Centre – Experimental dream-pop from the Serbian-Canadian musician – *see main preview* **OPEN MIC NIGHT: Harcourt Arms** **SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Port Mahon (3pm)** – Free afternoon of live music from It’s All About the Music. **THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (3.30pm)** –Rock and blues classics from the veteran local singer and guitarist. **FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon** **OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**

MONDAY 19th

JACKIE OATES TRIO: Nettlebed Folk Club – Home venue show from the Nettlebed patron and Ladies of Nettlebed stalwart.

TUESDAY 20th

AFFLECKS PALACE: The Bullingdon – Currently Manchester’s hottest band, Afflecks Palace – named after the city’s legendary clothing market – tick every box going with their airy swagger, baggy flares, bucket hats, 60s-nodding tunes and a singer sometimes spotted waving a bunch of flowers around while singing; the band’s rave-received album ‘What Do You Mean it’s Not Raining’ (another hometown nod) mixes and matches bits of The Stones Roses, Happy Mondays, The Smiths and New Fast Automatic Daffodils into a jangly psychedelic whole and for all its late-80s nostalgia, it’s an often joyous experience.

WEDNESDAY 21st

DRAHLA + TAUPE + PRICE ATTACK + HAINTS: The Port Mahon – oblique post-punk, inspired by Wire and The Fall, married to Sonic Youth’s exploratory art-rock, and Husker Du-inspired wigged-out psych-grunge from Leeds’ excellent Drahla, back in action for the first time since 2019, touring comeback single ‘Under the Glass’ at tonight’s Divine Schism show. **PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon** – Breakbeat,

electro, funk and disco club night.

THURSDAY 22nd

LAURENCE JONES: The Bullingdon – Stratford’s blues-rock guitarist, winner of the Young Artist of the Year three years running at the British Blues Awards and likened to Peter Green and Joe Bonamassa, returns to town at the Haven Club. **STEPH PIRRIE: The Harcourt Arms** – Free live jazz from the singer and trumpeter and her band. **ISIS CITY ROCKERS: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock** **DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Stevenon**

FRIDAY 23rd

THE 900: The Bullingdon – The UK’s only Tony Hawk’s Pro-Skater covers band, playing tracks from ‘THPS1’ to ‘American Wasteland’. **DRUM&BASS NIGHT: The Bullingdon** **BARRICANE: The Port Mahon** – Tripped-out, well chilled indie-folk and close harmony singing from the local crew. **THE BOB MARLEY REVIVAL: O2 Academy** – Tribute night. **SHAKE CHAIN + BETH SHEARSBY: Modern Art** – Performance art-meets-wyrd pop from recent Melt Banana support Shake Chain at the launch show for Marina Abramovic’s new exhibition. **WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT: The New Theatre** – Tribute to Tina Turner. **KATIE GRACE HARRIS: The Unicorn, Abingdon** – The folk singer launches her debut album, ‘Toledo Sessions’, tonight backed by a six-piece band.

SATURDAY 24th

FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS + PET NEEDS + TRUCKSTOP HONEYMOON: O2 Academy – The ever-touring troubadour returns – *see main preview* **THE SLOW READERS CLUB: O2 Academy** – Elegantly doomy synth-pop, indie rock and electro-funk in the vein of New Order, Editors and Interpol from Manchester’s cult heroes, led by the rich, versatile vocal talents of singer Aaron Starkie, the band touring their ‘91 Days in Isolation’ and top 10 ‘The Joy of Return’ albums. **GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with OCTAVIA FREUD + DOGMILK + DADA PARADOX: The Port Mahon** – Marvellous mixed bag of sounds once again at this month’s GTI, with recent *Nightshift* cover star Octavia Freud mixing observational lyricism, political commentary and deadpan humour with killer synth sounds, where retro-futurist electro-pop meets acid house. He’s joined by eclectic post-grunge indie crew Dogmilk, and psych-rock and anti-folk from Dada Paradox. **CANCER RESEARCH FUNDRAISER: The Harcourt Arms** – Charity gig. **THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES + BARRICANE + TAMARA: The Red Lion, Eynsham** – First of the new monthly Melting Point gigs, bringing local artists to the wilds of Eynsham. Raucous soulful blues-rocking from The Deadbeats, plus chilled tripped-out indie-folk from Barricane and hushed acoustic soul bearing from Tamara. **THE MIGHTY REDOX FAMILY SHOW: The White Hart, Wolvercote (2-3.30pm)** –

Special family show from the local party-starters. **RUM BUFFALO: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Blues, rock and space-punk from the London crew, touring their ‘Dark Mountain’ album following sets at Glastonbury, Boomtown, Shambala and Wilderness.

SUNDAY 25th

YAWNERS + THE PLEASURE DOME + SLEEPRS: The Library – Divine Schism hosts Madrid’s hook-heavy power-pop trio Yawners as they tour their new album, released on local label Big Scary Monsters. Support from Bristol’s indie-punk crew The Pleasure Dome and local dream-rockers Sleepers. **TURIN BRAKES: O2 Academy** – Spiky, euphoric country-tinged indie from stalwarts Turin Brakes, touring their new, ninth album, ‘Wide Awake Nowhere’, following a summer of festivals. **OPEN MIC NIGHT: Harcourt Arms** **SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm)** –

Saturday 24th

FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS: O2 Academy

Frank Turner spent much of Covid lockdown playing acoustic livestreams to keep connected with his notoriously loyal fanbase but also to help raise much-needed money for grassroots venues, so often left behind by government support but without whom Turner himself would never have achieved the level of stardom he has. It was typical of the man who has followed a DIY/indie ethos since leaving Million Dead Behind in 2005. Many of the new songs debuted in those livestreams became his ninth studio album, ‘FTHC’, which was recorded in Oxford with a series of different guest drummers in the wake of Nigel Powell’s departure, including Muse’s Dominic Howard; NIN’s Ilan Rubin and Death Cab For Cutie’s Jason McGerr. And of course the new album came out on Xtra Mile, the label he’s stuck with since the beginning. It went to Number 1, his first chart topper, a sign of his enduring popularity. Turner has always been his own man, defying expectations from the off – avoiding the stereotype of a politically-minded folk-punk singer-songwriter as woolly Guardianista or Marxist firebrand by daring to declare himself a libertarian for starters and remaining a principled artist on myriad levels. He’s been a frequent visitor to town since he began – from support act The Wheatsheaf to sell-out headliner everywhere from The New Theatre to Oxford Town Hall, and tonight’s gig is, unsurprisingly, already sold out.



Free afternoon of live music in the front bar. **KLUB KAKOFANNEY SUNDAY SESSION: The Tree, Iffley (4-7pm)** – Sets from The Monkeyfists, Mark Atherton & friends, and Edwin & the Keepers. **FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon** **OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**

MONDAY 26th

MIRANDA SYKES & HANNAH MARTIN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Show of Hands singer and multi-instrumentalist Miranda Sykes returns to the folk club she is a patron of, teaming up with Edgelarks’ Hannah Martin for a night of traditional and contemporary English folk songs.

TUESDAY 27th

WEDNESDAY 28th

BEX BURCH + LEAFCUTTER JOHN: Oxford Artisan Distillery – Minimalist percussion meets exuberant synths as Bex Burch and Leafcutter John perform their new ‘Boing!’ album; Burch plays gylil (a Dagaare xylophone) and percussion, with John playing a modular synthesiser controlled by his self-authored software.

THURSDAY 29th

BETH ORTON: Truck Store – An intimate instore show and signing session for the relentlessly inventive chillout queen, promoting her new album, ‘Weather Alive’ – the long-awaited follow-up to 2016’s superb ‘Kidsticks’ – infused with her frosty, fiery electro-folk-pop; a rare chance to catch one of the best contemporary singers around up close. **SPORTS TEAM: The Bullingdon** – Album launch show in conjunction with Truck Store from the Cambridge art-pop antagonists, rearranged from August. **EDDI READER: St. Barnabas Church** – The one-time Fairground Attraction singer and guitarist continues her journey into Celtic folk music, including 2014 Irish language album ‘Vagabond’. **CRYSTALLITE + CHEAP PETROL + SOUTH ARCADE + UNSOCIAL MEDIA: The Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music local bands showcase night. **DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Stevenon**

FRIDAY 30th

KATY J PEARSON: The Bullingdon – Ebullient folk and country-tinged pop anthems from the Bristol singer – *see main preview* **SOUL SISTA: The Bullingdon** – Classic funk, soul and disco tunes. **JEFFREY LEWIS & THE VOLTAGE + MAX BLANSJAAR: Florence Park Community Centre** – Continuing to be a beacon of genuine wit and humour in music, New York’s Jeffrey Lewis returns to town as part of Divine Schism’s 10th anniversary celebrations, his sleight of hand as a lyricist matched by his talent as an artist, and his way with a story that marks him out as



Friday 30th

KATY J PEARSON: The Bullingdon

Last time Katy J Pearson came to town – in October last year, we said she should be playing in the middle of summer. Since then she’s starred at the inaugural Kite Festival and proved that she’s tailor-made for sunshine so tonight’s gig, before autumn kicks in properly, is a perfect opportunity to catch her. The Bristolian singer-songwriter can write about heartache and make it feel like a Solstice shindig, or maybe a post-cider-apple harvest barn dance, given her very obvious love for American country and folk music. Everywhere she is “light as a feather” as her quavering voice warbles and chirrups over sparse, rootsy guitar twang. Like Julia Jacklin, Pearson brings rootsy Americana into more indie circles but still allows it to kick up a sprinkling of dirt on the dancefloor as it gets on down to Fleetwood Mac. Her debut album, ‘Return’, was awash with playful, life-affirming wistfulness. Brand new follow-up ‘Sound of the Morning’ doesn’t tamper with that winning formula too much but does it with renewed vigour and plenty of extra confidence – big guitars, bold brass and powerful synths making everything a bit of a pop anthem. There’s even room for a superb motorik/Mariachi take on ‘Willow’s Song’ from *The Wicker Man*. Whatever the month, here’s the soundtrack to summer.

a genuinely funny entertainer, his songs tread a fine line between melancholic introspection and jaunty whimsy. Stylistically he can flit from grunge to skiffle with ease, unconstrained by style or the anti-folk tag. He’s lately been releasing unreleased demos from over the past few years and with over 30 albums under his belt there’s a wealth of gems to pick from for tonight’s set. Great support from local starlet Max Blansjaar, himself influenced in part by Lewis in his grungy take on anti-folk and pop.

DANNY GEORGE WILSON + KATY ROSE BENNETT: The Jericho Tavern – Heartland rock, folk, country and soul from the Danny & the Champions of the World and Bennett Wilson Poole man, touring his new album ‘Another Place’ at tonight’s Empty Room Promotions show. **THE ASKEW SISTERS + CHRIS BRAIN: Harwell Village Hall** – Reinterpretations of traditional folk tunes and ballads from the multi-instrumentalist sisters. **THE MIGHT REDOX: The Golden Ball, Littlemore**

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



TRUCK FESTIVAL Hill Farm, Steventon

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Truck Festival and a crowd of 25,000 at Hill Farm shows just how far the event has grown from its humble origins; the scope of the festival has expanded too, encompassing classical music alongside a wide platter of indie, pop, rock and dance.

SEAGIRLS are Friday evening’s openers, bringing with them a swarm of fans. The band provide a selection of modern indie with a few acoustic numbers such as ‘Lonely’ which, stripped back, showcases the band’s emotionally-driven lyrics. As they leave the stage, the crowd continue singing, proving that Sea Girls are well on their way to making a significant name for themselves in the wider indie scene.

SIGRID’s bouncy pop raises spirits further. One of the few unabashedly pop acts at the festival this year her feel-good beats and impressive vocals shine. As the singer starts ‘Strangers’ the heavens open, rather fittingly, (“Just like in

the movies / It starts to rain”), but the poor weather doesn’t dilute the enthusiasm of the crowd, as people continue to dance until the end.

As we opt to shelter from the rain, indie band **SUNDARA KARMA** take to the Market Stage. The tent is brimming with people desperate to escape the shower, creating a bustling atmosphere. Early in the set, the band thrill with songs from their first album: ‘A Young Understanding’ and ‘Flame’; however the auto-tuned vocals and emo-style drums in ‘Oblivion’, the title track of the band’s new EP, feel slightly out of place in their disco style indie set. Sundara Karma must be commended for experimenting, but their early music is a more successful showcase of the band’s talent.

With over 15 years under their belt and a mass of chart-topping albums, it’s touching to see how delighted **BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB** are to be headlining Friday night. Early in their set, the London band perform ‘Feel’ with an explosion

of streamers which sees the crowd unified in a celebration; the instrumental segment of the track continues to build the momentum, which ripples into the audience. The band maintain the perfect balance between new and old songs, with the new numbers, including ‘Everything Else Has Gone Wrong’, proving just as much of a treat as classics ‘Dust on the Ground’ and ‘Lights out Words Gone’. Jack Steadman’s vocals haven’t aged one bit; in fact at moments we shut our eyes and it feels like we’re listening to the original recording. An unlikely highlight of the set is a cover of Selena Gomez’s ‘Lose You to Love Me’; rather than mimicking Gomez’s whispery vocals, the band make it their own. The penultimate song, ‘Carry Me’, leaves people screaming for more, and luckily Bombay Bicycle Club know exactly how to give a festival crowd what they want and swiftly return with ‘Always Like This’, to bring the curtain down on Friday night.

OXFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, fast becoming

one of Truck’s finest traditions first on main Stage on Saturday, are rewarded with one of the most animated crowds of the weekend. As Truck Festival regulars, the orchestra’s conductor, the wonderfully ebullient Robert Camp, announces how happy they are to be back and judging by the reaction of the crowd, the feeling is mutual. Their mix of classical (Offenbach’s ‘Galop Infernal’ and Brahms’ ‘Hungarian Dance’) with popular music (Bowie’s ‘Starman’ and ABBA’s ‘Gimme Gimme Gimme’) is a fitting selection for Truck’s audience; for every song the crowd find some way of engaging with the orchestra, from spinning like ballerinas to rowing on the floor and even moshing. Chants for “Schubert” join cries for more as the orchestra leave the stage. How often do you hear that at a festival?

Later in the afternoon **KELIS** takes to the main stage. Her performance, much like the Oxford Symphony Orchestra, is a diversion from the weekend indie-dominated line-up. Backed by DJ Nikki Beatnik and a small band, her set covers a wide range of styles in the form of a DJ set. The mash up includes Kelis’ own hits (‘Milkshake’ and ‘Caught



Out There’ are not unexpected high points) and other classics, including Donna Summer’s ‘I Feel Love’ and Nirvana’s ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit’, which give the feeling of being part of a supercharged dance party.

THE KOOKS deliver bouncy indie songs built on nostalgia, which is perhaps why their newer tracks fail to gain momentum. The set list is nothing remarkable, a few early songs sprinkled with tracks off the band’s new album, although one of their earliest tracks, ‘Do You Wanna’, played with a gritty guitar solo by Hugh Harris, is a highlight, contrasting with the rest of the similar sounding set. After playing a song off the latest album, singer Luke Pritchard announces, “Don’t worry, we’ll be playing ‘Naive’ tonight,” which feels more like a telling off than a boost of motivation. Of course, as soon as the guitar riff for ‘Naive’ is played the crowd burst into song, bringing a positive end to the set.

SAM FENDER had been the talk of the weekend after his Glastonbury Pyramid Stage debut earlier this summer. He enters the stage with an immediately down-to-earth presence, reminding the

crowd that this is only the second time he has headlined a festival, so his growing success is still overwhelming for him. The crowd screams as he opens with ‘Will We Talk’ with unfaltering vocals, despite him suffering from a sore throat. For his second song Fender proudly brings Barry from *EastEnders* onto the stage, which is slightly lost on the predominantly teenage crowd who have gathered for him, but Fender seemed chuffed, nonetheless. ‘Spice’ quickly picks up the pace, opening the floor to moshers; however, this energy is short-lived as crowd members start calling for assistance. Clearly as caring as he is charismatic, Fender pauses his set to help injured fans out of the crowd, leaving out one of his punk songs, ‘Howdon Aldi Death Queue’, a wise decision following the Travis Scott catastrophe last year, however disappointing. The pause leads to a brief subsiding of momentum as Fender opts for slower-paced songs. Each has carefully penned lyrics, ‘Spit of You’ (a song about Fender’s dad) being a perfect example of this. The crowd regain their energy just in time for the youth anthem ‘Seventeen Going Under’ and

apocalyptic ‘Hypersonic Missiles’, which close Fender’s set with a serious bang and leave the festival on a serious Saturday night high.

MR MOTIVATOR, another Truck tradition now, it seems, is the first to take to the main stage on Sunday, reviving everyone for the final day. Meanwhile, upcoming Liverpool-based singer **PIXEY** cements her position as one to watch on the Market Stage. Her pop is instantly catchy yet possesses an edge, utilising interesting samples and beats which pay tribute to her influences: The Verve, The Prodigy and De La Soul. ‘Sunshine State’ is a standout track: a nostalgic yet modern song with a Stone Roses-esque riff and an upbeat vocal. Pixey deserves a larger crowd; however, as she is now signed to Chess Club Records – a label which previously housed Jungle, Wolf Alice and Easy Life – it’s only a matter of time before far more fans will be flocking to watch her perform.

After performing at Truck for many years, **THE MAGIC GANG** make their main stage debut this year. The Brighton-born band has a collection of feel-good indie music with

upbeat riffs comparable to American rock band Weezer. Towards the start of their set they play ‘Take Back the Track’, an instantly likeable singsong, indie number. They continue with mostly early, crowd-pleasing songs which are unmistakably noteworthy. Unlike other bands, The Magic Gang have no clear frontman, which allows each member to have their moment in the limelight. The mere 30-minute time slot is a snapshot of the band’s best work, and hopefully they will be back for a longer set next year.

To kickstart Sunday evening **INHALER** perform a set of catchy rock. What sets this band apart are their harmonies and impressive solo guitar segments. ‘It Won’t Always Be Like This’ has gained a new meaning since the pandemic and the crowd is quick to pick up on this.

Next to the stage, **EASY LIFE** attracts an impressive audience, which frontman Murray Matravers is quick to engage. A party-like atmosphere quickly develops, complete with crowd surfing, dancing and moshing. The barrier between artist and audience becomes blurred as the band break into ‘Nightmares’ and Murray climbed into the crowd to join in with the fun.

To top off this highly anticipated weekend, with everyone quite obviously delighted to be here after two years off due to the pandemic, rock legends **KASABIAN** are tasked with delivering the grand finale with their final UK festival performance of the year. Apprehension looms prior to their set as guitarist Sergio Pizzorno has recently taken the place of lead singer Tom Meighan, who left the band in July 2020, but any early worries are soon forgotten as the band leapt into action with ‘Club Foot’. Pizzorno had no trouble in his new role, dominating the stage as if he were performing solo. Jumping from one anthem to the next, it’s easy to see how the band’s repertoire stretches to headline Glastonbury in 2014. Before reaching the encore Pizzorno tells the crowd, “This has been the best fucking gig of the summer... it’s absolutely insane. This is what you join a band for”. They close with ‘Fire’, accompanied by a firework display, which signals the end of the festival and feels like a fitting celebration for Truck’s welcome return and its quarter of a century anniversary. *Laura Cutting*



CAPTAIN KUPPA-T & THE ZEPPELIN CREW / BARRICANE / GIGSY / SILENT WEAPON

The Jericho Tavern

Umair Chaudhry has been a glowering, malevolent presence on the local scene for a fair few years, back to his time in Xmas Lights, switching between different musical guises, always with an air of deepest darkness about them but Silent Weapon might be his

greatest work yet. Like a fully electronic sibling of his Gift of Blindness project, dues are paid to Justin Broadrick in the machine beats, bowel-bothering sub-bass and oppressive electronic storm beneath which Umair submerges death rasp vocals. Sounds like

sirens from a future war-ravaged city howl ominously as synth sounds are bent out of shape, yet continue to pile on the pressure with each track and by the end we feel both sandblasted and cleansed. Magnificent. “She’s a witch to you, a bitch to

them” sings Gigsy on ‘She’s Evil, belying the pure pop vein that runs through her songs with messages about female subjugation, social anxiety, US abortion laws and the general shit state of the world. The cyclical nature of horror is explored in recent *Nightshift* Track of the Month ‘Déjà Vu’ and yet for all the darkness in her lyrics this is great, positive music: a hip hop infused blend of dancey electro-pop and almost industrial noise where Twentyonepilots share space with Nine In Nails and Lady Gaga parties with Fad Gadget. Gigsy herself is a confident, animated performer who looks like she’s having an absolute ball on stage.

Performing as a trio tonight, a stripped-back Barricane lose little of their bewitching spook-folk sound. In fact it allows Rosy and Emily’s breathless harmonies even greater space to move on tracks like ‘Breathe In’, while ‘Night Out’ is a more sombre set highlight.

If Captain Cuppa-T’s Gregorian shroud seems in keeping with some of the earlier darkness, he and his a capella trio soon strip away the shadows with a daft, brilliant take on ‘Gaudete’ and are rarely less than wonderfully silly from thereon in, whether it’s a fruit cake-themed play on Kelis’ ‘Milkshake’ or ‘Brewed Lines’, puncturing Robin Thicke’s problematic pop hit. The *faux*-posh chap-hop persona can seem a tad forced at times but the set is never less than a jolly romp, partway between The Andrews Sisters and The Two Ronnies: smart, sharp harmony singing and swing with punnery and entendre aplenty where “A king elf” becomes “fucking ‘ell” in the vocal mix, and a night that began with the sound of a world on the brink of apocalypse, ends with tea and biscuits all round.

Dale Kattack

BOSSAPHONIK with SOMA SOMA / AZHAAR & GLOBAL WAVE

Cowley Workers Social Club

This is a night for the promoter’s name to be in lights alongside the bands. Bossaphonik is celebrating its 16th anniversary (18 years, minus two covid years) of bringing live jazz-global-dance to the city with balloons, lights, and a double bill. It’s had downs but now it’s found a venue where it can thrive, and there’s a good number of the Bossaphonik ‘movement’ in tonight, even though it’s peak holiday season. Azhaar & Global Wave are quite low key for a Bossaphonik band. Azhaar both sings and plays violin, a combination more usual in the folk world. She’s moved her music towards the jazz end of the spectrum and starts with a number that’s lounge jazz ahead of songs that are a just tad heavier. In a throw-back one number is built

on the cha cha cha rhythm (remember that?) and another on the now more familiar samba. There’s fine soloing from her keyboard player, and always just enough of a pulse to keep those wanting to dance – which is nearly everybody – interested.

Soma Soma are also quite laid-back but with much greater depth and weight and are a league or more higher. They had been scheduled to play earlier in the year but were blown off-course not by covid but by the great gale. There are eight of them building layers of sound, starting from the locked together kit drummer and exceptional bass player, playing Brazilian and Trinidadian rhythms, with jangly Congolese guitar riffs and a very tight trio of brass players

delivering soaring Afro beat lines. Add in that the leader’s Portuguese vocals are in a great baritone voice, or voices – he has several – and you’ve got a high quality band. They begin with a voodoo-like chant, and later combine trance and catchy melodies which is pretty unusual. The most purely Brazilian of their numbers is a tribute to Rio in a set which is overflowing with variety and joy. Tonight’s bands are more chilled than most that Bossaphonik put on but Soma Soma’s musicianship is well worth bringing to Oxford, they keep the dancers happy and it’s a great night. Thanks Dan and Gil, and here’s to the next 16 years.

Colin May

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Oxford Contemporary Music

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SUPERNORMAL Braziers Park

Because Supernormal is a cross between a village fete and a revolutionary happening, they have an old-fashioned crockery smashing stall; the only differences being that it's mic'd and amplified at a ridiculous volume, and that the plates are daubed with negative concepts that we can symbolically destroy ("Tories"; "patriarchy"; err, "plates"). The very first one to be obliterated on Friday reads "judgment", as if to make this review redundant from the outset. But in a way criticising Supernormal *is* pointless, because the line between viewer and performer is blurred at best: only half the people here are paying customers, and someone you'll be chatting to might turn out to

be the next act half an hour later. In a telling moment, somebody leaping onstage to boogie to **AYA's** abstract dance set gets a cheer as big as the musician, and at what other festival can you create a graphic score and have it interpreted by a pianist? And the other reason criticising Supernormal is pointless is that nearly everything is excellent, whether it's a gloriously varied three days of music; a horsebox filled with mystifying charity shop artworks; the bar prices, or the lovely stewards cooling sweltering crowds with plant misters.

It might have been three years since the last Supernormal, but the organisers' desire for intensity has

not waned, and any visitor must expect to have their ears – and possibly cerebellum – pounded regularly. **JOOKLO 5 BEANS** set the bar, creating a disorienting percussion-heavy avant-jazz onslaught with spiralling electric piano that nods towards 70s Miles, but **GUTTERNSIPE** leap the bar with a maelstrom of drums, guitar and electronics which is somehow pummelling and intricate at the same time. Then Brighton duo **HUMAN LEATHER** take the bar, break it over their knee and wade into us like Begbie on a bad day with their outstanding sludge-punk, guttural syllabic vocals making each song sound like the mating call of the Judoon. Which leaves NYC's **IMPERIAL**

TRIUMPHANT to replace the bar with a solid platinum battleaxe and enact a ritual culling, their baroque widescreen black metal matched by their polished high priest masks; believe it or not, their name is an understatement; double believe it or not, Kenny G is on their new album, which is surely a first for a Supernormal act.

Speaking of heaviness, **LO EGIN** add sax and trombone to a metal template, finding a space between New Orleans funeral parades and doom trudges. It's a brass metal fusion... or do we mean alloy? **SKULL MASK**, from Mexico, also stretch traditions by drizzling rootsy guitar licks with eerie hurdy-gurdy noise, until it's like

listening to a mariachi musician via haunted ear canals.

But there is also room on the bill for subtlety and delicacy. Violist **AILBHE NIC OIREACHTAIGH** plays one of the few sets in Braziers House, summoning a web of harmonics and glissandi from which fragments of folk motifs can be picked, like the shanties of the damned. **ALISON COTTON's** closing set in the Barn on Friday also uses viola, but creates a more spectral sound to which haunting vocals are added, in a style reminiscent of some of Sheila Chandra's drone-based work.

HANNAH SILVA weaves a spell often with voice alone, looping imitations of infant burbling and producing live recreations of glitched recordings, like a post-modern Norman Collier, and an even deeper enchantment is cast by **NORIKO OKAKU AND HELEN PAPAIOANNOU** with 'That Long Moonless Chase', utilising the immersive potential of The Vortex stage to show beautiful animation interpreting a collage of two folktales from different continents which have been mangled by online translation services, plus a bit of skronking sax, just to stay on the Supernormal brand.

Or perhaps there is no brand. The festival as a whole is more about being open-minded and open-eared than any specific group of styles and genres, meaning that not every act is challenging. **SOCIÉTÉ ÉTRANGE** use bass, drums and electronics to create dubby burbling which is like To Rococo Rot with the krautrock froideur replaced by a cheery warmth: this is friendly music that would invite you in for tea and ensue you had the last piece of cake (Kick out the jam sponges! Release the battenburgs!). Also liable to become your sonic best friends are **DEAN RODNEY JR & THE COWBOYS**, whose summery grooves and golden Stetson could enliven any shindig, whilst **SHOVEL DANCE COLLECTIVE** are a brilliant British folk outfit who could inspire jigs and singalongs in any village hall, whilst reminding us just how many of our nation's traditional songs are about celebrating the downtrodden and oppressed. Possibly most enjoyable of all are **DISCHI**, an urban pop duo from Manchester who bring unbounded fun to their light bouncy backing tracks in a style that might recall Althea & Donna, Daphne & Celeste, and Fun Boy Three all at once. But if that sounds too mainstream, the little Queef Qult stage reliably delivers a diet of queer cabaret and DJs playing absolute certified bangers all weekend, or you can make some masks with a proxy Lord Summerisle ready for a midnight screening of *The Wicker Man*.

Perhaps as a result of the non-hierarchical nature of Supernormal,

where performers become audience members, and punters become collaborators, the crowds seem to naturally intuit the right response to any set. So, **THOMAS STONE's** refined contrabassoon pieces are met by a quiet contemplative audience (excluding a dragonfly who is buzzing madly against the Barn's window, and that somehow merges wonderfully with the automated rattling snare sounds); people laugh at **FEGHOOT's** preposterous performance (one person tries to play keyboard, the other tries to fuck it up, genius simplicity); they dance to the wry literate indie funk of **COMFORT**, which merges Sultans of Ping FC with LCD Soundsystem, and go batshit bonkers to the industrial techno of **SAMUEL KERRIDGE**. Then they do all of these at once for **PINK SIUFU & THE NEGRO ALIVE! EXPERIENCE** (*sic*), because they're a Jameson-guzzling collision between Funkadelic, Public Enemy, and Rage Against The Machine, with a little Snoop Dogg snakiness to the vocals to keep big grins present, on- and offstage.

There are inevitably a handful of things that don't quite land. **RECIPROCATÉ's** plaintive US alt-rock style doesn't excite, coming off like a wheedling, petulant Pavement, and – it pains us to say – **NIGHTSHIFT**, whose buzzy mantric tunes have potential, but whose performance seems tentative. Oh, and we're also invited to climb over a stile, go into the wood, and look at a blue polystyrene cow (and then to go straight back, because there's really not much to do once you get there). But to balance this there's always something inexplicable and intriguing, like **LDSN/YAKKI DA!**, who play melodica and make wonky loops from fragments of a story about going on holiday we can never quite decode like a child's summer holiday project being sucked into a black hole, or **THE TUNA RAFFLE** (not a band or an artwork, but a raffle for a shitload of canned tuna; no, us neither).

The final live set of the weekend is Birmingham electronica legend **SURGEON**, whose relentless, clanging techno set is a joy, and also a masterclass in how to make something endlessly fascinating from minimal means. In a way, this is a great metaphor for the whole festival, which is a Sellotape and sawdust affair run on hope and good will rather than wedges of cash or corporate sponsorship partners, but which manages to surprise and delight with every iteration, constantly feeling new by never losing its core identity. Asking whether Supernormal is a good festival is like asking whether manna is good fast food; it's so far ahead of the competition in Oxfordshire (and probably the universe) that the question is utterly meaningless. So here's our final judgment: smashing.

David Murphy

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WHAT’S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music.
This month it’s **LIZ GREEN** *from* **BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD** *and she’s a* **RADIO PRODUCER.**

How long have you worked in this job? “11 years”
What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? “Every week I forward the best tracks sent to us that week via the BBC Introducing Uploader (bbc.co.uk/introducing) to radio DJs and producers at Radio 1/1Xtra/2/3 and 6 Music. They listen to it and then they play the best Oxfordshire music on their shows.”

What’s been the single biggest highlight of your career so far? “There have been lots! Picking bands with Colin Greenwood for the first ever Independent Venue Week gig and then meeting him. Glass Animals headlined that show before they were playing at Glastonbury and stadiums in the US. However I think my highlight was putting on a gig on with Gaz Coombes at the Sheldonian Theatre with full orchestra, though I’m kind of cheating as that was in my other job as a project maager at the University of Oxford.”

And the lowlight? “When I had to wake up at 5.30am at Truck Festival for a radio interview after sleeping in a not so waterproof tent. It’s not really a lowlight though as I was still at Truck Festival.”

How much did Covid affect your job? Our show was taken off air for about 3 months in the first lockdown, but Dave Gilyeat kept recording the podcast. It felt very strange to not be broadcasting live. There were also no festivals, so the number of opportunities we could offer bands and artists



were limited but we tried to offer as many virtual opportunities as possible. We were also unable to have live guests in the studio due to restrictions, meaning no live sessions either. In the last few months we’ve been inviting a few people back in. It’s been great to see some old faces and some new. We’re planning to bring back live sessions soon and we’ve already been out and about at a few festivals this summer.”

Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist? “Beta Blocker and the Bodyclock. I loved that band.”

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

“Reach out to your local radio station. You can always email us. We have a work experience programme at BBC Introducing in Oxfordshire which we’re hoping to start up again soon. Some of the people who have been part of the programme have gone on to work at the NME, BBC Radio 1, 6 Music and even Newsnight.”

Who’s the most awkward person you’ve ever had to deal with in your job? “The Radio Oxford Sports show, as they can sometimes overrun and take us off air. We don’t mind really!”

When was the last time you heard genius? “Jack Goldstein popped by the show last week. His back catalogue is incredible and his new album is magnificent.”

Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work? “I don’t think so; I certainly hope not...”

Would you swap your job for any other? “No. In the past I dreamt of working for national radio but Oxfordshire is where my heart is.”

Are you rich? “I never have any money, but I’ve met great people and have had loads of amazing experiences working for BBC Introducing. I also get to hang out with two of my best friends every Saturday – Chris Wood and Dave Gilyeat – so it may sound a bit cringe but I consider myself very rich in other ways.”

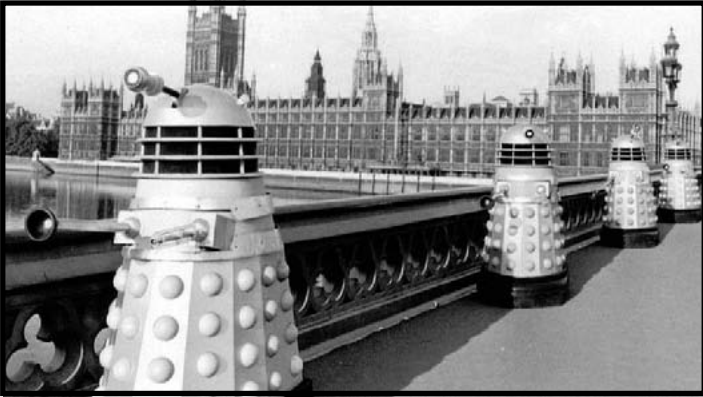
Do you consider your job glamorous? “Yes. I never thought that someone like me could or would ever work for the BBC. When I first arrived I was pretty awestruck by the cameras and studios. I’ve got used to it now, but I never take it for granted.”

What’s your favourite thing about Oxford’s music scene? “It’s supportive. Bands and artists stick together and are eager to help each other out. There’s a real sense of community.”

DR SHOTOVER: Tories Invasion Earth 2050

Ah, there you are, Young Cribbins. Remarkable. Quite remarkable. Pull up a dusty 1960s pew and join us in the rubble-strewn remains of the East Indies Club bar. Bedingfield will open a miraculously-saved can of pre-drought, pre-Smegzit tomato juice and we’ll mix it with some of Subotsky’s home-brewed potato vodka. Then we can play a game of darts – you’ll notice that the dart board has a picture of the hated tyrants with their chief robo-Quisling on it. Ah, well done – bullseye! Take that, Dorries! Hard to believe, isn’t it, that – despite Lord Keir’s best efforts – the Daily Mail Daleks invaded in their Unidentified Flying Golf Buggies, and appointed the horrendous hybrid mutant Truss Sunak to be our leader. Cheers! Down the post-apocalyptic hatch!

New six-parter next month: *Escape from Boriolanus*



New six-parter next month: Escape from Boriolanus

INTRODUCING....

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

LEONIDAS

Who is he?

Leonidas (“like Sparta”) is a rapper and youth worker from Oxford. He has been making music since 2007 but released his first track online in 2018. His dad ran a sound system which inspired his cousin, who was part of rap collective G-Block in the early-2000s, who then took him under his wing. Leonidas was mentored by Oxford rap legend Sonorous, who sadly died during lockdown. Since 2018 he has released a succession of songs and videos, including his recent *Nightshift* Track of the Month, ‘Hennessy & Jealousy’. He has been championed by BBC Introducing in Oxford as well as getting national airplay from 1Xtra and Kiss FM, and featured in an award-winning docu-series around Black History Month with Oxford City Council. His latest song, ‘Normalise’, is out now.

What does he sound like?

With an insistent, almost machine gun-like flow, Leonidas mixes the militancy of grime with the homemade electronic darkness of drill, barely pausing for breath as he spits his message with a rare intensity in Oxford rap, whether he’s taking aim at the music industry or social injustice.

What inspires him?

“I’m inspired by life in general; my journey has been difficult, my upbringing somewhat tough, and I’ve worked extremely hard to achieve everything I have. I knew from an early age music was a career path I’d take, growing up on Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Nirvana etc. with a Jamaican influence from my Pops, but also being introduced to Hip-Hop from an early age played the most integral role with Wu-Tang Clan, Public Enemy, NWA all parts of my rap origin. Music with strong political views complemented by powerful lyrics and imagery inspires me to make sure the words mattered.”

His career highlight so far is:

“The first was my first play on BBC Introducing with my single ‘Far From Good’, then performing at the O2 Oxford Academy with Rhymeskeemz; gaining the attention of Mista Jam at BBC 1Xtra and having my first

national play with ‘Nightmares in Nike Airs’ on Reece Parkinson’s Drivetime Show.”

And the lowlight:

“Losing my mentor Sonorous; this was tough because no matter what I did or where I went or what position I’ve been in, I’ve always been able to contact him for advice; to not have that now physically is painful but we still speak, spiritually.”

His favourite other

Oxfordshire act is:

“Lauren Marlow! She’s the GOAT.”

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

“Foals: ‘What Went Down’: it has a certain sound and feel to it that is refreshing and risky at the same time. It also reminds me of a time in life where I took a lot of risks and chose to live uncomfortably to better myself and my career prospects; this album got me through some real tough times.”

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

“I’m working on that one, but you’ll be first to know.”

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Favourite is that there’s so much room for expansion, especially in the rap scene; not many, if any, have made it big and I’d like to be the first. Least favourite is that Oxford is a really funny place in the sense that there’s very little unity amongst the artists and maybe an imbedded Oxonian trait is to be somewhat entitled and a little snobby.”

You might love him if you love:

Dave; Potter Payper; J Hus; Ghetts; Kano.

Hear him here:

[instagram.com/leonidasnsfw](https://www.instagram.com/leonidasnsfw) / [facebook.com/LeonidasNSFW](https://www.facebook.com/LeonidasNSFW)



ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Dustball were the featured band in September 2002’s *Nightshift*. The quartet were set to release a new single, ‘Name & Number’ on local indie label **Vacuous Pop** and reflecting on the circumstances that saw their dalliance with various major labels fall apart and what a lucky escape they’d had in the long term. Who would have guessed back then that ten years later two of the band – Tarrant and Ben – would be playing to an audience of over a billion at the Olympic opening ceremony with **Frank Turner**?

Local music news was dominated by the return to **Supergrass** with a new single, ‘Grace’, ahead of their eponymous third album, the trio having spent the summer recording on the French Riviera. Elsewhere **Goldrush** and **The Rock Of Travolta** were set to headline a brace of gigs at the Zodiac to celebrate the success of **Truck Records** and its offshoot **Juggernaut**. Goldrush also released their new album ‘Don’t Bring Me Down’ on Virgin. **Sugababes** and **Atomic Kitten** headed up the late, unlamented Fox FM’s **Party In The Park** in South Park, while **Audioscope** provided a musical antidote to such chart-friendly frivolity with sets from **Pram**, **Nought**, **Appliance** and **Cat On Form**. Elsewhere in the local gig calendar there were shows from **The Libertines**; **Dillinger Escape Plan**; **The Fall**; **The Music** and **The 80s Matchbox B-Line Disaster**, all at The Zodiac, while **The Domes of Silence**; **Warhen**; **Nowherefast**; **Lesbo Pig** and

Tongue & Groove were among the local names on various bills.

10 YEARS AGO

Proving just how ephemeral this pop lark is, cover stars in September 2012 were indie troublemakers **Secret Rivals**, whose career to date had largely consisted of online – and occasionally physical – confrontations with other local bands and jourmos, while a steady stream of gigs had ranged from inspired to ramshackle. Their new single, ‘Everything I Lost’ was released as a free download this month and the band, formed by Liverpoolian singer/guitarist Jamie Corcoran and Chilean singer Claudia ‘Clouds’ Saez, admitted they had “a kill switch live” which added to the chaos, while on record they were perfect, feisty guitar pop, inspired equally by The Cribbs and The Cure. But, having worked – and fought – so hard to find acceptance and acclaim in Oxford, they promptly disappeared. No announcements, no fanfare, and even online they vanished from the face of the earth.

Also disappearing from view were **The Cellar Family**, who issued a denial they were splitting up as bassist Sam King departed to study in Italy. They’ve not been seen in action since.

Highlights of the month’s gigs included **Alabama Shakes** and **The Fratellis** at The O2 Academy and **Ultravox** and **Dexys** at The New Theatre.

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Rapper **ShaoDow** featured in this issue of *Nightshift*, announcing the release of his new album, ‘Cut the Bullspit’, following a joint UK tour with fellow former-Oxford rapper **Zuby**. Also set to release a new album were **Trophy Wife**, who previewed the release with a series of videos that made up a complete collage, while **ToLiesel**, **Yellow Fever** and **A Silent Film** also had new records out.

5 YEARS AGO

ShaoDow was back in the news in September 2017 when he won Hardest Working Artist at the **AIM Awards**, recognition of his constant busking and gigging, which had helped him sell over 25,000 CDs and counting. “You’re never too old, or too young, to appreciate a good melody and a fun gig,” said **Shapes** singer Ant Kelly as his band made their front cover debut and talked about growing up as a working class lad in Cowley but coming back to music late in life; he singled out **Osprey** as a local promoter who took a chance on him and his band when too many others saw them as too old: “ageism is definitely still prevalent in music.”

Gig highlights for the month included **Nadia Reid** at **The Cellar**; **Alvvays**, **David Rodigan** and **Dawn Penn** at The Bullingdon; **Psychedelic Furs**, **DJ Shadow**, and rapper **Lowkey** at **O2 Academy**, and **Kiran Leonard** at **St. Barnabas Church**.

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SEPTEMBER

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FRI 9TH
JOLLY GROGSTERS

SAT 10TH
LIGHTNIN' WILLIE

FRI 16TH
MOONAROON

SAT 17TH
THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES

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TRACKS

Yin & Yang Audio

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TOP TRACK

ALEXANDRA HAMER

It has, if you hadn't noticed, been a bit hot lately. And dry. The earth is scorched and parched, much like we feel, even as we wake up severalty times a night stuck unpleasantly to the pillow, vexed by dreams of global nuclear Armageddon and walking through deserts in giant iron wellies. As such, this was always going to win Top Track. And for why, dear reader, for why? Well in part because Alexandra Hamer's new song is called 'The Birds, The Trees & You' and is about falling in love during a plant-hunting expedition to a rain forest. And the video features rain. Lots of rain. Lovely, lovely rain. Falling from the sky and making things cool and wet again. And, of course, because it's all really rather lovely, as is everything Alexandra seems to sing, because she brings a little bit of Weimer Republic cabaret torch song glamour to these often most desolate of magazine pages with her quavering, high-register vocals. We mean, there she is, sat among the foliage, singing about rain and nature and love and stuff and looking serene in a way we haven't felt since, we dunno, Brentford scored their fourth goal against Man Utd a few days ago. Or perhaps that was simply giddy and this is more about being at peace with the world, even as it tumbles inexorably into climate crisis, war and a cost of living apocalypse. There's Alexandra gently stroking a leaf while an exotic bird cackles and caws gently behind her, and she's crooning oh so sweetly and delicately over softly plucked strings and – did we mention this yet? – it's raining. And even if she looks a tad pensive come the end it's still raining with some purpose. Track of the summer, no contest.

RICH RAINFORD

And talking of rain, here's Rich Rainford back and sounding like a one-man drizzle, which in the context of recent weeks we mean as a compliment. Rich found himself Toilet Tracked some time back and took it in good stead and has since been on a very steady upward road of musical improvement. This track is much in his standard style of plaintive acoustic balladry, but avoiding too much moping or self pity, instead offering something like defiance and hope in his lyrics ("And live to fight

again" – that's the spirit, fella; don't let bastards like us get you down). It's simple strumalong stuff, but comes over as a protest anthem crossed with a stoic love song and even as he sings about sitting by open fires, we picture Rich hand in hand with his beloved as they storm the barricades and deliver those flames to our Tory overlords, all this without sounding overwrought or sorry for himself. And of course we might have got the wrong end of the stick and it's all actually an ode to a beloved family pet, but we don't care: this land is our land and all that, love conquers all and a giant bonfire of burning Tory ideology is a little extra heat we can get onside with.

TOM DALBY

More acoustic balladry and again possessed of the welcome melancholy of summer rain. With Tom Dalby – previously a Top Track winner for his filthy rockabilly track 'Blacktop Killer' and more recently impressing with an earthier, almost Springsteen-style outing, 'Tonight'. This new track, 'Shadows' is on a different tack again, a sparse, circling plucked guitar and wistful, limpid vocals which gets us to thinking of Jackson C Franks (if you're unfamiliar, look up his seminal song 'Carnival – you'll thank us forever). Unlike Rich Rainford before him, Tom seems in little mood for battling defiance, preferring to be haunted by the ghost of a past self, and he does it with an understated elegance and a sense of solemnity that allows plenty of light in, even if it does little dispel the shadow of regret. Sad and yet really rather pretty.

IN-FLIGHT MOVIE

Alright, enough with the balladry and solemnity. Okay, let's keep the solemnity, since In-Flight Movie aren't what the layman might call chipper particularly, possessed of the decidedly uncheery steely gaze of so many electro-pop acts who are aware that alien invasion or AI takeover is merely a Depeche Mode song away. Like Working Men's Club, or even Nation of Language, In-Flight Movie mix the pure synth sounds of the early 80s with the slightly darker post-punk sounds of New Order et al. for a propulsive slice of pop that comes with a good dash of something a little spikier – a sharpener to get you on the dancefloor with a nagging feeling of militancy in your blood. They've got some proper lovely lush synth sounds in their armoury, these guys, and *Nightshift* isn't afraid to admit we're all up for donning our old black jumpsuits and cutting a few shapes out there. Possibly at a nightclub simply called Neon, or maybe Lufthansa Terminal.

REBECCA MILEHAM

The divide between folk music and something somewhat more exotic has long been a blurred border and Rebecca Mileham's debut set of songs does little

to make it any clearer, straying – with no little grace, we hasten to add – between traditional rustic song and chamber pop, utilising piano, violin, octave violin and various found sounds alongside her alternatively rich and strident and more celestial vocals, like Tori Amos wandering into ecclesiastical territory, or, as on 'To Grow A Rose', tipping more into slightly chilly indie-folk in a manner not a million miles from fellow local crew Barricane, while best of the lot is 'Oh Kylie', which may or may not be aware it's nicked a hefty chunk of its personality from 'Days' by The Kinks. If Rebecca's rhymes can err towards clumsy very occasionally her voice makes up for it: clear and expressive and if this pop lark doesn't make her fortune, there are plenty of churches would welcome her spiritual songsmithery.

ALIBI

"I know you must get a lot of emails, listen to a lot of music and hear a lot of people saying the right things, but all I ask is that you hear me out," say Alibi by way of introduction, continuing to set out their stall in no uncertain terms: "We're not like other bands, all the time since we've formed, rehearsed and written our tunes we've been surrounded by other bands and seen people coming up. They've got the attitude, the hair dos, but their music just doesn't stand up. They aren't putting out the anthems that make you wanna sing your heart out that everybody's missing and craving. Literally everybody I speak to says the same thing, when's rock and roll gonna come back? Like it was in the 60s, the 90s? People are waiting for that big moment and we're gonna be the band that brings it to them, it really is just a matter of time." Bold words there from the newbies. Fighting talk some might say. So, what do these new rock revolutionaries sound like? Oasis. That's it. They sound like Oasis. A lot like Oasis. Possibly an Oasis tribute band, particularly the singer who couldn't be trying to sound like Liam any harder if he had a t-shirt and facial tattoo stating as much. 'Deadbeat Paradise' is a decent enough mush of indie noise and 90s swagger, maybe just the merest hint of The Stone Roses about it but mostly, y'know, Oasis. Had we mentioned they sounded like Oasis before? Their other song here 'Daytime Fantasy' even plays that old Oasis trick of ripping off T-Rex before going all wall-of-fuzz bluster and turning into a slightly tinny pastiche of 'Cigarettes & Alcohol'. It's not so bad all things considered, bar being so obviously in thrall to – oh, you know, and we'd probably have let it go with a cheery wave if it hadn't been for that introductory boast. Chaps, you need the walk as well as the talk.

BURN THE LOUVRE

We reviewed Burn the Louvre a few months back when they assured us "we can confidently tell you it's the best thing we've released thus far," which we remembered them saying of their previous offering.

Send tracks, downloads or streaming links for review to 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 sanctimonious hippies.

This time round they say... well, exactly the same fucking thing. To the word. Come on guys, at least have a bit of originality in your cheap, misleading PR spiel if not your music, else we'll hate you before we even hear you, and this isn't particularly hateful music. Nor is it particularly loveable, just passable, a jolly jumble of almost country-ish indie that might pass for a Wannadies b-side back in the late-90s. It's about the singer "recapturing a fun day I had with my ex-girlfriend," apparently. Bet he told her it was "the best day out with you I've had thus far" and she sighed and wandered off to have a somewhat more satisfying afternoon down the local art gallery with a bloke who didn't keep banging on about being sick of "always being the nice guy", and who didn't pretend today was the best yet when actually that time the pair of them necked a bottle of tequila together and laughed themselves to the point of vomiting while watching *Withnail & I* together was. We fully expect yet another identically worded email in another two months, at which point we'll actually burn down the Louvre with these fuckers locked inside.

TOILET TRACK

THE RITZY KIDS

Readers, you are doubtless aware that the greatest threat facing humanity is not climate breakdown, nor imminent nuclear war, nor even looming widespread fuel poverty. No, it's actually dead-eyed middling soft rock which sounds like it was written and recorded with an eye on the record label accounts office. Or possibly by the record label accounts office. This lot have also been round these parts previously and seem to have learned nothing from their previous slating, perhaps taking lines like "lowest common denominator radio-friendly pap that undiscerning imbeciles won't feel challenged by when they hum along to it and you can make a few extra quid by selling it to a marketing agency who want a featureless grey soundtrack to their latest empowering lifestyle ad campaign" as motivational management speak, giving them new ideas of how to polish any remaining semblance of character (and believe us, there is precious little here) from their boyband-goes-grunge-lite gruel and hope its resolute inoffensiveness will guarantee a trillion Spotify streams and garner over a fiver in royalties. Dear God, there is much we can start to forgive in music: hopeless amateurism (we love that, actually); ripping off other bands, if at least done with love and a lick of spirit; even boasting about being the best new band on the planet when clearly you're several solar systems wide of the mark, but making bland, careerist crap like this will always get our goat, and make us want to feed you to a goat. Mind you, goats are quite discerning about what they eat, so maybe pigs: their teeth will go through bone like butter, as a wise psychopath once said.

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&// PLUS GUESTS

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&// WITCH FEVER
&// XL LIFE

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RED

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

FRI~18~NOV~22

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**TOM MCGUIRE AND
THE BRASSHOLES**

&// PLUS GUESTS

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CLT DRP

&// CONGRATULATIONS

SUN~16~OCT~22

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SKINNY LISTER

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

FRI~23~SEP~22

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&// APOLLO SYNDROME

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