



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every

month

Issue 317

April

2023

Dolly Mavies

*"If you'd told me
when I was small
that one day I would
be supporting Mel C
I would never have
believed you!"*

photo: Translucio

Sailing emotional seas with
Oxford's folk-pop siren

Also in this issue:

Introducing **EMILY JEFFRI**

At work with **FAMOUS BANANA PICTURES**
TRUCK, **WOOD**, **ELEMENTARY** and
SUPERNORMAL festivals news

plus

All your Oxford music reviews, previews and
listings for April

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THE BULLINGDON

APRIL 2023

Saturday 1st April

Back to the 80s

Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 4th April

Wunderhorse

Eades

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 5th April

Mike & The Moonpies

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 6th April

Danny Mellin

Doors: 7PM

Friday 7th April

Dolly Mavies the Calm and the Storm

Joely Quartermelon

Doors: 7PM

Friday 7th April

Operation Good Times Bakey

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 8th April

Yard Force Circuit

Nuh Seh Nuttin
Yard Force Sound, Captain Leafy
Breadback, Erite Irie, Gappy
Set it off Sound, DJ Barry B

Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 11th April

Modernlove.

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th April

Alasdair Beckett-King:
The Interdimensional ABK

Doors: 7PM

Friday 14th April

The Lottery Winners

Doors: 7PM

Friday 14th April

Teen Spirit

90s Rock Night

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 15th April

Latino Fest

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 16th April

Gary Meikle: 2.5

Doors: 7PM

Monday 17th April

Temples

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 19th April

Kevin James Thornton

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 20th April

Troy Redfern/The Commoners

Doors: 7PM

Friday 21st April

Daft Funk Live

Doors: 7PM

Friday 21st April

The HAU5 Party

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 22nd April

Musical Medicine

Ben Gomori

Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 25th April

Jack Barry:
Don't Happy Be Worry

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 27th April

Blue Highways & Steady Habits

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 27th April

Haute Mess

Oxford's Next Top Mess

Doors: 11PM

Friday 28th April

Brian of J

The Pearl Jam Tribute

Doors: 7PM

Friday 28th April

Raving Trippy

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 30th April

Simple

DJ Spit & RE:NI

Doors: 11PM

Monday 1st May

May Day After Party

Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 2nd May

Little Clarendon
Izzy and Martha
Little Clarendon Friends

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 3rd May

Billy Locket

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 4th May

Halina Rice
Immersive Liveset and AV

Doors: 7PM

Friday 5th May

Noble Jacks

Doors: 7PM

Friday 5th May

UKING (G)

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 6th May

God Rave the King

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 11th May

Therapy?

Doors: 7PM

Friday 12th May

The Bully Boiler
Blowing Off the Steam...

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 13th May

Musical Medicine
Mr. Scruff

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 18th May

Tiff Stevenson:
Sexy Brain

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 18th May

Indie Discoteque

Doors: 11PM

Friday 19th May

Soul Sista

Summer of Love

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 20th May

Basic
Girls Don't Sync

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 21st May

Gary Delaney:
Gary in Punderland

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 24th May

Pete Boss & Matt Edwards

Doors: 7PM

Friday 26th May

Mista Trick Collective

Doors: 7PM

Friday 26th May

The Bully Boiler

Doors:

Saturday 27th May

Terraforms

Celebrating 15 Years

Doors: 11PM

Friday 2nd June

Come Grime with Me

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 4th June

Chuck Prophet

Doors: 7PM

Friday 9th June

Soul Sista

Summer Loving

Doors: 11PM

Friday 23rd June

Pearl Handled Revolver

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 1st July

Party Time Again

Celebrity International
Likkle Platinum + Kirky Vibes
Empire Sound, DJ White Magic

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 13th July

James Oliver

Doors: 7PM

Friday 14th July

Front Row Festival

Candid

Silvi, La Phooka, Velvet Starlings

Doors: 11PM

NEWS

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Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



THE TRUCK FESTIVAL BANDS APP is now live for acts wanting to play this year's event. Artists interested should fill in the form on the Truck website at **truckfestival.com**. A selection of winners will be chosen by Truck Festival, Pirate Studios, This Feeling, BBC Introducing Oxford, *Nightshift*, Alcopop! and *So Young* magazine as well as a public vote, with one overall winner receiving other prizes, including free studio time. **The application process closes at 5pm on the 3rd April.**

THERE WILL BE NO SUPERNORMAL IN 2023. The annual festival of leftfield and underground music and arts is taking the year off, organisers have revealed. Set in the grounds of Braziers Park in Ipsden, Supernormal has gained a reputation as one of the best and most adventurous festival in the UK.

In a post on social media the organisers said: "We are sad to announce there will be no Supernormal in 2023. Plans were in motion for a much smaller and very different style of event this year at Braziers Park, but for a number of reasons, we have been unable to plough on and make our ideas a reality. "The Supernormal team will be spending the remainder of this year looking at new ways and approaches on how a Supernormal is pulled together with the aim of making the workload more manageable and enjoyable for each of us and to continue work on creating an ever better experience for all the artists, volunteers and audience members who make up each edition of Supernormal. Supernormal requires a considerable amount of sustained energy and commitment throughout the year from the core

team. This is all pretty much done in our spare time around our day jobs and/or parenthood. The team behind Supernormal has always been motivated purely by the love of the festival and works on a near-voluntary basis at every level. By giving ourselves more time to organise another Supernormal, the future of the organisation will likely be more secure. Supernormal is and will always be one big experiment lurching into the unknown; it is ever evolving and will never stand still. In one form or another, we truly hope to be back in 2024.

IN BETTER NEWS ELEMENTARY FESTIVAL comes to Braziers Park from the 29th June through to the 3rd July. The world music festival will feature sets from The Turbans; Bundjalung Kunjiel; Sandeep Raval; Dubravko Lapaine; The Majestic; Koroleko Moussa Dembele; Forest of Fools; Ruben Yon'ton; Jaly Fily Cissokho and more as well as workshops on African drumming, Aboriginal and Aztec cultures, didgeridoo and more, plus yoga, comedy, healing and kids activities. More info and ticket details at elementaryfestival.co.uk.

BIG SCARY MONSTERS host an all-day mini-festival this month. **Big Day Out** takes place on **Saturday 15th April** at **Florence Park Community Centre**. Acts confirmed so far include Ditz; Lambrini Girls; Cheerbleederz; Jack Goldstein; S.T. Manville; Pet Semetary and Suds, with more acts to be announced on the 3rd April. Tickets for the festival are on sale now, priced £16 for early birds and £18 general admission, with a £12 low income option also available. Full details at bsm.rockz/bigdayout. Meanwhile **BSM Social** hosts a series of free instore shows this month, with Lakes playing on Wednesday 5th at 7pm; on Sunday 9th at 3pm Divine Schism host a takeover with Caleb Nicholls, Hamburger and Erin Snape, while on Wednesday 12th Oceanator are the guests.



WOOD FESTIVAL returns next month, this year celebrating The Year Of The Otter.

The pioneering eco festival takes place at **Braziers Park** over the weekend of the **19th-21st May**. Among the first set of acts playing to be announced are **Angeline Morrison; Elanor Moss (pictured); Hannah White; Ida Mae; Katherine Priddy; The Hanging Stars**, and **Ora Cogan**, with more names set to be announced by the end of April. Among the local acts playing are Nick Cope; Screaming Spires; Jali Fily Cissokho; Katy Rose Bennett; Band of Hope, and Oxford Ukuleles. As well as live music there are workshops, talks, a kids activity tent and environmental-themed activities. Tickets and details are at woodfestival.com.

TRUCK OXFORD AND TRUCK WITNEY host **Record Store Day** on **Saturday 22nd April** with **Steve Mason** at the Cowley Road store for a signing session during the afternoon ahead of his gig at the O2 Academy that night. As well as the signing, there will be DJs all day in both shops, prize giveaways and limited edition RSD releases from the likes of Taylor Swift; Sam Fender; Siouxsie & The Banshees; U2; Bob Marley; Pearl Jam; The Slits; Loyle Carner; The 1975 and more. Visit **Truckmusic.store** for details of everything going on.

GRAHAM JONES, author of *The Vinyl Revival & The Shops That Made It Happen* comes to Banbury this month. Record store Strummer Room Records hosts an evening with the author, who also penned *Last Shop Standing*, on **Tuesday 4th April** at **Apothecary Tap** on Butchers Row in Banbury. The evening will feature a 45-minute

documentary based on the book as well as a talk and Q&A, a quiz, vinyl and CD giveaway and signing session. All profits from the night will go to the Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy charity. Tickets, priced £10 are available from strummerroom.com.

BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD continues to showcase local musical talent for now, every Saturday between 8-9pm on 95.2fm and on DAB. The show, presented by Dave Gilyeat, is available to listen to online on BBC Sounds.

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

Dolly Mavies

photo: Tess Viera photography



“I WOULD SAY ON THE whole I am always very calm; it makes way when a storm is needed.”

SO SAYS DOLLY MAVIES when *Nightshift* asks her how much her new album title, ‘The Calm & The Storm’, reflects her own personality. We did tend to imagine Dolly is more of the former given the serenity that pervades much of her music: reflective, emotional, almost hymnal at times. In fact, every year Dolly plays a show at her local church and it’s fair to say her music is more New Testament than Old. Musically she draws inspiration from the likes of Fleetwood Mac, Daughter, Edie Brickell, Everything But The Girl and Tanya Donnelly, a sublime set of artists who all mangle to draw the storm out of calm in their music.

‘**THE CALM & THE STORM**’ is Dolly’s debut album and the culmination of eight years of writing and performing; as such it’s a hugely assured set of songs which

Dolly herself describes as about “heartbreak to hardship, love to loss, and everything in between.” Those eight years have seen Dolly playing around the UK, including myriad festival appearances and supports to some huge names. Along the way she’s drawn praise from the likes of Bob Harris and Tom Robinson as well as building a loyal local fanbase.

BORN MOLLY DAVIES, Dolly – her adopted stage name – grew up in rural Oxfordshire and began writing songs at an early age. “Since I was small I loved music,” she says, “I loved singing, melodies, writing, poetry and songs. I have stumbled across little – emphasis on little! – songs I wrote when I was about six years old. It was always a secret though, I never wanted anyone to know, and absolutely dreaded the idea of someone actually asking me to sing! I loved the Spice Girls growing up, and I used to listen to Toni Braxton on repeat as a child, which looking back is kind of hilarious, but I think genuinely

helped me to sing. My dad plays the guitar, my nana was musical, and my family used to sing all the time in the house, making up songs, or just singing along to our favourite songs in the kitchen. When I was about eight I joined the guitar club in school and used my nan’s classical guitar, when all the other kids had children’s sized guitars; safe to say it was really hard and didn’t spur me on. But I kept singing and writing; I was always writing songs, poems. I felt like I needed to keep exploring words and finding new meanings. I then asked my dad to teach me a few chords on the guitar as I got a bit older, and then taught myself to play and added the words I’d been writing and created some songs. It was only when I was about to leave sixth form did I think to myself ‘now I really need to just go for it and perform, If I don’t do it now, I never will’ – so I stood in front of my whole school and played ‘Someone Like You’ by Kings of Leon, and as they say, the rest is history. “I have such a broad music taste

and have been influenced by so many things, I am a huge fan of Patti Smith and the 70s punk era; I love bands like The National and Daughter, The Districts, and the gorgeous tones of Gregory Alan Isakov. Growing up, one of my brothers listened to a lot of rap, r’n’b, heavy metal and rock music, whereas my other brother loved Wham!, so nothing was off the table, and for me, as long as a song has feeling, and a real message, what’s not to love.” Growing up in rural Oxfordshire, how did Dolly view the Oxford music scene and how has the reality compared with that early impression now that she’s an established part of it?

“I think there weren’t a lot of opportunities growing up; I mean, I’m not sure it’s any better now. Over the years I have played across the country and all over Oxfordshire and made friends and connections, and ended up bringing together a band, so that has been really positive. I think the Oxford music scene is very eclectic and there is a great mix of sounds.”

EVEN EARLY ON IN HER fledgling career, Dolly played some seriously prestige shows, supporting the likes of Rae Morris and Vesperteen; how did gigs like that and early festival shows at Cornbury, Truck, Pub in the Park etc. shape her – those were big crowds to be learning her trade in front of. “I love performing, whether it’s a tiny show, or supporting a big name, or to a huge crowd of people. The most important thing is to remember to enjoy it, and I think sometimes with the bigger shows you can really focus on playing great and putting on a good show, so you forget you’re in the show! “Supporting Vesperteen was one of my favourite gigs I’ve played, it was at the Courtyard in London to a room full of teenagers, and when they are into something, they’re the best. My favourite show we’ve played may be at Truck Festival, or one of the Pub in the Park shows, where the stage was huge, the sound was incredible, and we had a brilliant audience too. We have loved playing at Cornbury as it is only a stone’s throw away from home, and lots of friends and family can come along and see us.” Dolly has also supported Mel C, Gabrielle, Beverley Knight, Coasts and Tom Robinson along the way; did any of those acts particularly affect or inspire her?

“It is amazing to be put on the same line up with any incredible artists, but supporting Mel C didn’t feel real! If you’d told me when I was small that I would have been doing that one day – and Gabrielle, I used to listen to her album on repeat – I would never have believed you! I think it is always so inspiring to watch other artists, and see how they craft their show, their stage banter, and performance. It was brilliant to open for Tom Robinson on the opening night of his solo acoustic tour, and the first performance at Drapers Hall in Coventry since it reopened. I take inspiration from those everyday and have to remind myself that these moments are real, and to enjoy them in that moment.”

WHEN WE FIRST SAW Dolly play live, back in 2018, it was just her, plus her partner Adrian Banks (who also plays in local indie stars Zurich) on bass. These days she has a full band behind her. Particularly given the nature of her music, which is often minimalist, how has that changed the nature of her writing and performing? “For many years it was just me and my guitar, which was great, it

meant I could easily travel and play loads of gigs, but now I have the whole band with me it’s on a whole other level. It is brilliant to play alongside such brilliant musicians, and also to have a group of friends on the journey with you makes it all the more worthwhile. Adrian and I have been writing together for a while; he’s a brilliant composer and I think our styles and influences blend really well, so that we are on the same wavelength which definitely helps.” Despite that your music is very stripped back and emotionally upfront – how hard is it to bare your doubts, fears, heartache etc for an audience? Is it all from personal experience and perspective or do you every play a character in songs?

“*Churches have such a magical quality and charm, and of course, you’ve gotta love church reverb!*”

“I have always written songs because I have had something to say, or a thought or a feeling. I don’t try and write to a script or create something for the sake of it. I feel that way things can create their own organic path and then the songs have their own meaning. I write from personal experience, and about the lives of the people I love, friends, family, and whatever life throws at me. I think it can be hard to write a song and then listen back to it and go ‘oh, that’s what that’s all about’ but by the time you share it with other people, you’ve already worked through it.”

Fans will get a chance to see Dolly Mavis in full band mode at The Bullingdon on the 7th April when she launches ‘The Calm & The Storm’. She’ll be joined by fellow local singer-songwriter Joely, who was also her support at that first show we saw her at. Is she a local artist Dolly has particular affinity for? “I think Joely is absolutely fantastic. She has such an organic sound and beautiful voice, and I love her songs, so it’s always wonderful to share the bill. There are so many local bands it’s hard to name them all; I think Nina Jade is a phenomenal vocalist and Megzz just goes from strength to strength. Of course I am a big fan of Zurich and the brilliant Quartermelon who will also be supporting us at our release show at The Bullingdon.”

MOVING ONTO THE ALBUM itself, ‘The Calm & The Storm’ brings together songs that have been written over a long period of time.

“We have been recording the album for a year, and have written songs for the album for many years before that. It is a collection of songs looking at life, love, hardship, loss, defiance, and integrity, and I can’t wait for people to hear them. The album includes some of the previously released singles but re-worked to be bigger and better. We have spent a long time crafting the songs, so they sound more polished and full and I think we have managed to capture that big sound on the album.” ‘The Calm & The Storm’ suggests emotional conflict and contrasts. “‘The Calm & The Storm’ symbolises the juxtapositions of life. You can be super happy and sad, in love with a broken heart, living whilst dying, and everything

else in-between. It’s a never-ending cycle and life is full of ups and downs. The songs mimic this in both their style and substance. ‘Spaghetti’ and ‘Drown Me Out’ are about defiance, defending what’s right and standing up for yourself, whereas songs like ‘Silhouette’ and ‘Drawing Circles’ are sombre and reflective.” Talking of juxtapositions, there’s an edge of bitterness and some musical turmoil in recent single ‘I’m All Sugar’, despite its title. “‘I’m All Sugar’ is about the lives that we portray: these days, you can be who you make yourself online, and there is a tendency for people to compare themselves to these unrealistic expectations, and for others to throw in their two cents. People can be two faced, people can mean well but say the wrong thing; at the end of the day we are all the same just in different circumstances, and that can hugely impact how we face life.” You describe the song ‘Drown Me Out’ being about defiance; is that political or personal? It seems to lyrically straddle the line. “I wrote ‘Drown Me Out’ when the world was going mad: Brexit, Trump, you name it! It is a mixture of the two. The song is about standing up for yourself, and not being pushed aside, whether that’s on a small or large scale. It’s a reminder to use your voice and speak up and speak out to injustice.” ‘Wait For Me’ is the big, epic banger to close the album; was it important to close with something musically euphoric? “‘Wait For Me’ is a song from my

very first EP; in my head it always sounded huge and epic, and I am so pleased that now I have the band alongside me, we can turn that idea into reality. The song is reflective and is almost an internal monologue trying to figure out what to do with yourself, how to move forward, how to stop negative thoughts and to remind yourself to take a second, breathe in, breathe out, and look at things differently. I think I always envisaged it as the closer on the album. I love how it builds like a huge wave crash and then finishes like waves lapping at the shore.” There’s always been something of a hymnal quality to your songs and every Christmas you play as Dolly & The Ivys at Deddington Church; do you draw inspiration from devotional music.

“To be honest no, not really. I did used to love singing songs in the church when I was growing up, but I think that is because a big chorus of people always sounds beautiful in a church. The Christmas show is my favourite show of the year, and I get to invite artists I’ve met in the year, or locally, to come along and play for an attentive listening crowd. I think churches have such a magical quality and charm, and of course, you’ve gotta love church reverb! It really is a Christmas treat, I would highly recommend it... 16th December at Deddington Church, save the date.”

ONE OF DOLLY’S EARLIEST singles, and still a favourite here at *Nightshift* but not included on the new album is the gorgeous ‘My Buoy’; when we first reviewed it we pictured Dolly adrift and alone on a boat, meanwhile ‘Reflection’, which is on the album, finds her singing “I dreamed we could sail the world”; could Dolly imagine sailing away from it all to shores unknown, and if so, what home comforts would she take with her? “I feel like family is what makes anywhere home, so as long as I could bundle them all in with me, I’d happily sail anywhere!” And finally, Fleetwood Mac being a major influence on Dolly, notably on songs like ‘Forgive & Forget’ and ‘Drown Me Out’, is it all cocaine-fuelled tantrums and rows when she’s working with partner Adrian? “Ha ha, we were saying the other day we should really get into drugs.”

‘*The Calm & The Storm*’ is released on the 7th April. Dolly Mavies plays The Bullingdon the same night. Find out more at dollymavies.bandcamp.com

RELEASED

DOLLY MAVIES

‘The Calm & The Storm’ (Self released)

From the dreamy “Dum dum dum”s that open Dolly Mavies’ debut album, it’s clear we’re going to get more calm than storm. But then Dolly is a singer and musician at her best when the waters are calm – a hazy sea mist suits her style more than a Force-9.

The highlights of ‘The Calm & The Storm’ come when Mavies is at her dreamiest: the lovely high-register lullaby that is ‘Drawing Circles’ with its air of serenity and a pure vocal performance that harks back to the late, great Minnie Riperton; or ‘Silhouette’, which begins with just a solemn, solitary piano and Dolly’s voice put through a harmoniser, reminding us of another great local singing star, Julia Sophie. Even when the band’s full instrumentation comes in – synths, strings, drums – it’s understated and never deigns to impose on the vocals. Best of the lot though is ‘Reflection’ – appropriately titled with its breathless vocal performance and the stand-out line from the album – “We could sail the world but I’m scared of the sea”.

There is bite and fight here too, though. ‘I’m All Sugar, about the face people put on for



social media, ups the pace to a canter and sticks its nails in just enough to leave a mark, while ‘Drown Me Out’ feels like a gloved punch, though is no less effective for that. Only ‘Forgive & Forget’, where Dolly seems to bring out her inner Alanis Morissette, and the slightly too soft-focus ‘The Rain’ fails to hit the spot and if album closer ‘Wait For Me’ is less storm, more euphoric sunrise after the dark night, then know that ‘The Calm & The Storm’ is a welcoming voyage rather than a tumult to be avoided.

Ian Chesterton



PHILIP SELWAY

‘Strange Dance’

(Bella Union)

Among the hardscrabble of modern composition, ‘Strange Dance’, Philip Selway’s third solo outing, and his first in nine years, offers up a teasing selfie of his current state of mind, laid out on a sound-bed of lessons learned in the previous decade.

Clearly he has absorbed the Radiohead chamber-pop gestations during their work on 2016’s ‘Moon Shaped Pool’ as he fashioned it with hustles of arterial rhythms from on his drum riser. A year later a commission to experiment further himself, to credible acclaim, with similar cinematic pieces on the

full soundtrack of the harrowing, WWII movie drama *Let Me Go*, helped him develop a more restrained and epigrammatic style based on oblique melodies, a porous tone and an instinct for dramatic understatement.

Those propulsive, ever interesting, found and mechanical beats, along with the heart engorging John Barry-style orchestral swells finally migrate here to tracks like the paranoid ‘Little Things’ and the lamenting of ‘The Heart Of It All’, while the album completes its triumvirate approach by lyrically impressing these two malleable clays with what can only be the personnel bewilderment of someone who has been on the top rung of the ladder of a relationship only to have the dice of life send them all the way down the longest snake to sit contemplating what happened, back in square one. The heartbreak, the tropes, the resolve, they are all there throughout in the titles and verses: ‘Pick Up The Pieces’; ‘Make It Go Away’; ‘Check For Signs Of Life’, trooping past, trunk to tail, like grey days and sung in a sturdy whisper, like an unemotional therapist trying not to spook a client.

It is a brave and worthwhile amalgam, brilliantly performed by Selway and all manner of his talented friends, such as Adrian Utley on guitar, Laura Moody on cello and Valentina Magaletti on drums. As a spiritual embrocation for a cloistered soul it is only skin deep, but as a bridge over troubled waters it will ease your mind.

Paul Carrera

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GARY

‘Gary I Love You’

(Self released)

“Basically, it’s a movie length concept album, so if you treat it like sitting down to watch a film narrated by a seagull addicted to chips, then hopefully you won’t get too bored. Health warning: it is 74 mins long (WTF!!!).”

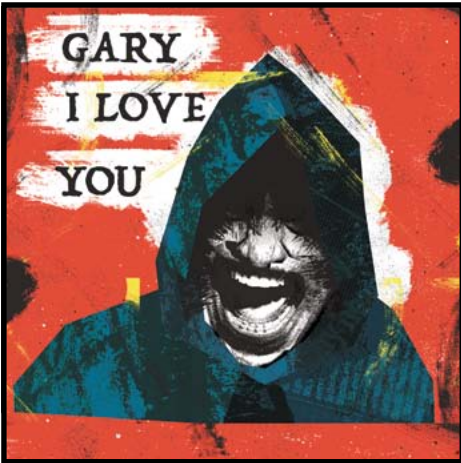
Such is Martin Andrews of Octavia Freud’s introduction to his side project debut album. Hell, wasn’t punk meant to have saved us from this kind of indulgence?

This isn’t a prog-rock opus though, nor even a rock opera folly akin to ‘Tommy’. Instead Gary allows Andrews to blow off a little musical steam with his bag of chips.

The premise of the album is that a chip-addicted seagull called Dave follows a bloke called Gary across a lost weekend that involves getting drunk, breaking up with his girlfriend, accidentally ending up in Norway and being stalked by a predatory trucker, songs or musical set pieces interspersed by the seagull’s narration on what’s going on. It’s a fun premise and for the first half of the album it is enjoyable: musically we get a baggy r’n’b shuffle (‘Going Out Tonight’); industrial hip hop (‘What’s That Sunshine’); Underworld-like techno (‘Rate My Takeaway’); yob disco (‘Fuck It, Let’s Disco’) and warped, wandering electronic psychedelia (‘Norwegian Truckers’), but while the story stays steady, the music begins to lose focus, becoming abstract, even absurd at times, although the hysterical horrrortronica of ‘Where Are You Taking Me’ is perhaps the album’s highlight.

We won’t spoil the ending for you (though there’s a neat topical political twist); find out for yourself, though be warned you’re in for the long haul. This is an undeniably ambitious and often inventive project and might stand up to a live performance with animated visuals, but the longer it goes on the more regularly you’re checking your watch, as if a mate is telling a slightly overlong joke down the pub and you’re wondering if there’s a punchline. We’ll call it a partial success, which is more than Gary can say about his weekend, that’s for sure.

Dale Kattack



THE SUBTHEORY

‘Cut To Black’

(Self released)

Due to the relatively small size of Oxford, it’s easy to be astonished by how rich the music scene is, yet despite this, it is often a nice surprise when you come across a band that fills

a void you didn’t know was even there. We have some fine examples of indie, rock, electronica and folk in our fair city, yet when one takes a step back, there is always room for more, isn’t there.

The Subtheory, fills this void in a very welcome way, echoing the likes of Massive Attack and Portishead in their latest offering. Cate De Bu’s vocals delicately tell a melancholic story of a life very much lived and Andy Hill’s unmistakable production talent ensures that this is a highly professional sounding offering. It’s a rich, swirling trip-hop affair with a deep bass line that makes you smile as you listen on. It’s a slight shame that you don’t get to hear Cate really let rip as the song progresses, but perhaps that is a conscious choice as, after all, this track needs to breathe to be at its best.

Cinematic, ethereal and even gritty in places, this recent taster from The Subtheory is an exciting indication of what’s to come from them in 2023 – and with more releases and a tour planned in the summer, this could help enrich not only the local scene, but the national one as well.

Caitlin Helm

MEANS OF PRODUCTION

‘High Traffic Neighbourhood’

(Self released)

In the 1990s electronic music went through something like a reformation; a growing movement of introverts realised they could make dance music that you didn’t have to dance to: bangers for the living room. This sub-sub-genre was rather antagonistically labelled Intelligent Dance Music, to stand opposed to those who didn’t want to stroke their goatees while listening to the latest experiments by Aphex Twin, Autechre and the like. Since then, most electronic music fans have gotten over themselves and accepted the blurring of boundaries and embraced both sides of the coin. This is all context to talk about the latest single by local synthesiser wizards Means Of Production. Their minimal industrial sound really does span the void. Listening to ‘High Traffic

Neighbourhood’ at times evokes the Berlin nightclub scenes from the brilliant 2015 movie *Victoria*, but just a moment later we feel like the Maxell man being blown away by their home stereo, pondering exactly which vintage filter MOP are using.

The pulsing bass is a hypnotic drive throughout, and the acid squelches leap out of the speakers as much as they could have leapt out of a house compilation circa 1989. The vocals and siren sounds speak strongly to the themes of the noise of modern urban life, be it sonic or the electrical signals all around us. This might be club music for the bleak future or home listening for fans of infrastructure projects, or it might just be a low-key banger for whatever mood you’re in.

Matt Chapman Jones

SELF HELP

‘Glucose Faced Killer’

(Self released)

This was supposed to be a review of Self Esteem who tore the roof off the O2 Academy this month. Sadly, Covid had other ideas, and kept this reviewer housebound for the start of March.

However, I’m then passed the new release by the similarly monikered Self Help, but that’s where the similarities end. Instead of one powerhouse of a singer with cutting lyrics on relationships and gender, we instead get five noiseniks from Oxford who have been laying waste to festival stages for a few years now, and this one will be a definite crowd favourite.

Starting off sounding like Black Country New Roads or Squid, ‘Glucose Faced Killer’ mixes a healthy dose (pun intended) of punk and psychedelia as it tells of the rampage of someone who becomes radicalised online following the hike in price of sugary treats. No, really. As absurd as it sounds, it’s a fun record



guaranteed to get the crowds moving when they tour in May ahead of a new album due in the Summer. The ending, reminiscent of the drum battle at the climax of the QOTSA ‘Song for the Dead’, is just fantastic and brings a beaming smile to this reviewer’s face, Covid or no Covid.

Damon Boughen



DESERT STORM

‘Death Rattle’

(APF)

Six, possibly seven, albums in – depending how you count them – and Desert Storm are showing as much sign of mellowing with age as Mount Everest is of becoming a grassy meadow anytime soon.

‘Death Rattle’ is the local rock titans’ first album since the departure of founding bassist Chris Benoist, replaced by the formidable Matt Dennett. It’s business as usual for the quintet though, from the opening thunder of the title track, all churning stoner riffs, pulverising bass and thunderous beats topped by Matt Ryan’s ogreish roar. Whether Desert Storm have actually got heavier is open to debate; perhaps it’s the meatier production on recent albums – this and 2020’s superb ‘Omens’ – that’s brought out that fuller sound, but what’s indisputable is the punch ‘Death Rattle’ packs from start to finish. Not that it’s wall-to-wall *sturm und drang*. Take the airy guitar journeying that breaks up ‘Melatone’, or the neat pastoral psychedelic opening to recent single ‘Cheyne Stoking’ – Desert Storm have always been a band with a firm grasp on texture and nuance even when they’re grinding your sensibilities into the dust.

Equally the band can do the blues with aplomb. ‘Salt Of The Earth’ might be rough as a grizzly bear’s bedtime hug but Ryan’s Tom Waits-like growl over a pensive guitar spangle reveals just one more angle on the band’s multifaceted sound. It still stomps like Godzilla, mind and Desert Storm are never more thrilling than when they’re go full-on bulldozing rampage, huge rolling grooves as big Lucifer’s grudges carrying all before them; ‘Druid’s Heath’ is just huge, rock at its epic best, while the galloping ‘Insomniac’ would wake Sleeping Beauty herself, the sound of fevered night time thoughts, twisted sheets and an electrical storm ravaging the sky above.

Things tend to move more slowly in the world of metal – few overnight sensations here – but over the past few years Desert Storm’s stock has grown – larger and heavier obviously – and if ‘Death Rattle’ is unlikely to make them household names quite yet, it will cement them further into the upper echelons of the UK’s heavy rock league, while in Oxfordshire they remain masters of all.

Dale Kattack

RELEASED



GET LOOSE

‘Let It Rise’

(Self released)

It would be fair to say that Get Loose haven’t moved on a great deal since their eponymous debut album in 2017; then again it would be fair to say the band haven’t moved on much if at all from the 1960s.

Get Loose are rooted in the riffage and vibes of that decade’s blues-infused rock music, with mixed results. On the one hand they are stuck very firmly in a comfort zone of their own making, on the other they can be good fun at times.



JODY & THE JERMS

‘Wonder’

(Self released)

Debuting in 2019 with a cover of The Belltower’s ‘Never Going Home’, the nostalgic, shoegaze-inspired sound which permeates ‘Wonder’, Jody and the Jerms’ new album, has been with them since the very beginning. In fact, the textured mixture of 90s jangle pop with repetitive, indie-style guitar riffs is what the band has become known for and it is clear that this established sound acts as a baseline for the new album.

Songs such as ‘Counting Dreams’, ‘The Harder I Try’ and ‘Intuition’ are all perfect exemplars

The album opens with ‘Gonna Find’ and sets its stall out from the off with solid guitars and heavy-duty organ laying down a straight highway for the singer to exercise his powerful set of lungs, the result sounding much like The Who at their bluesiest. From here they move meatily into Led Zeppelin territory with the even rockier ‘If I Run’.

Where they fall down most if when they try and make it funky. ‘Lost In the System’ might aim for good-time bar band but is decidedly unfunky and overwrought, while ‘Roll On Me’ is standard mid-paced chug-a-boogie. ‘Just My Style’ could be a decent song if they’d slow it down and add a bit of heft to it all, but here sounds hurried and even an inventive middle-8 struggles to save it.

For a better example of the good times Get Loose can bring, head to the Hammond’n’harmonica-heavy ‘No Surrender’, which shows the band can be a very decent r’n’b act and the singer has real voice on him. Even more so on ‘See You Moving’, a big, soulful rock anthem, pitched somewhere between The Who and Elton John, while ‘Wandering Man’ has more than enough grit under its nails to make the southern blues rock sleaze stick.

Get Loose push few if any boundaries; whether they think they do is known only to them, but for all that, they’re regularly a decent tribute to the time and place they so obviously feel is home.

Ian Chesterton

of this dreamy sound, each with smooth, echoic backing vocals and whimsical lyrical matter. This is not to suggest that the album is overwhelmingly hazy and vague; Jody and the Jerms do well to employ this dreamlike quality in a way which is distinctly upbeat, creating an album full of high-energy, confident tracks that are both easy to listen to and easy to dance to.

Though this established sound renders the album cohesive, it does not corner it into one strictly defined genre or leave it sounding monotonous. Much the opposite: though not uncharted territory for the band, the blues-inspired ‘Just For Show’ (which layers in a synthesiser beautifully), and the country-inspired ‘Get Your Feet Out Of My Shoes’ deviate from this sound just enough to keep the listening experience interesting, but remain complementary enough that they do not feel out of place.

Tying this compellingly heterogeneous range of tracks together is Jody Jeger’s light singing voice, honey-like in the way it drapes over the layered music, and always perfectly complementary to the range of sounds, from the textured rattling in ‘Insatiable’, to the introduction of brass in ‘Bare’.

‘Wonder’ is not ground-breaking, but it does provide a listening experience comprised of nothing less than sheer joy; it is to be danced to; it is to be sung along to, and it is undeniably

Madison Collier

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BLACK TISH

‘Viral Apocalypse’

(Blindsight)

Viral Apocalypse is the second album by Black Tish, formed in the Brussels area in 1988, but now based in Oxford, by singer and guitarist Bob Coecke, vocalist Marieke Coecke and bassist Bruce Warner.

It has to be said, we are partial to the more experimental side of electronic music and consequently we have an aversion to well produced but oh-so-dull, ambient-tinged electronica, or generic techno. Suffice to say, Black Tish soar above such dull mediocrity. Even though they describe themselves as industrial metal, we feel the harder edge of electronica in every groove. Bone-crushing drum programming, mashing samples into unrecognisable shapes, warped guitar sounds and 70s horror movie vocals create an unholy but beautiful sonic menagerie.

The sound of Black Tish takes the form of *musique concrete* and heavily manipulated sounds mixed with live instrumentation, which give depth and gravitas to every piece on the album. First track ‘NewNew Song’ pounds from the off; unholy vocals add to the harsh noise, coupled with great drum programming and powerful and inventive guitar/synth lines. ‘Old Song’ continues in a similar vein but is different and interesting enough to maintain the interest and momentum. The album is dark and foreboding throughout but in no way samey, repeated listening revealing nuance and variety. This is fight and flight music, packed with futuristic workout anthems for robot soldiers.

Each track is full of negative space, bone chipping bass with nine inch nails, dark dubstep, and doom metal influences; the music is full of images of characters warring with imminent end.

The manipulated sampling, mash ups, brutalist beats, surreal vocals and brooding bass form an inventive, musical quicksand, which is a malevolent pleasure to submerge yourself in. ‘Viral Apocalypse’ is abrasive, doomladen and absurd fun and, as we all know, the dark one has all the best tunes.

Lester Sideye



JONNY PAYNE & THE THUNDER

‘Soda & Lime’

(Self released)

As *Nightshift* sits down to review this latest single from Jonny Payne, it’s snowing like a Dickensian Christmas, and the band name The Thunder doesn’t offer too much hope on the weather front and yet the moment ‘Soda & Lime’ starts we’re transported back to some 1950s US summer idyll with fresh-faced teens sipping their sodas in diners, possibly in Kansas.

Like fellow Oxfordshire songsmith Tom Webber, Jonny Payne’s strength lies in a timeless quality to his songs; if his previous offering, ‘Volcanic Ash’, was more electronic,

with a New Order feel to it, this is more days of antiquity transported to modernity, hints of surf, harmony groups and early rock’n’roll amid it’s easy flavours; again like Webber, Payne sugars a bitter lyrical pill with a sense of carefree breeziness and the feeling sunshine is all set to reappear any moment.

That said, ‘Soda & Lime’ oddly reminds us of Mud’s classic ‘Lonely This Christmas’, so perhaps all this snow is wholly appropriate.

Bekti Manish

PUBLIC EXECUTION

‘Mullered’

(Brutal State of Grind)

If you can judge a band by their song titles then Didcot’s Public Execution are a group you’d probably enjoy a good night out with: ‘Who The Fuck Booked This Shit’; ‘No I In Go Fuck Yourself’; ‘Extreme Phaal Terror’; ‘I’d Rather Pay £10 Not To See You’, the last of which takes as long to say as the song itself lasts.

Public Execution, formed from the ashes of local blackened metallers Black Skies Burn and Negative Thought Process, play grindcore in all its unreconstructed glory: fast, ugly, to the point and, yeah, go fuck yourself while they’re about it. The self-deprecating, sometimes downright silly song titles suggest an affection for The Locust and vocally in parts they echo that glorious noise machine, as well as being a similarly visceral experience. Onward they rush, fripperies, subtleties and any sense of nuance ground into the dust along with the

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 <p>THE DREAM MACHINE THANK GOD! IT'S THE DREAM MACHINE</p>		

G1G GUIDE

SATURDAY 1st
OTHER HALF + SHORT FICTIONS + BASIC DICKS + CIVIL VILLAINS: **The Port Mahon** – Volatile, sardonic post-punk and hardcore crew Other Half return to town to promote new album ‘Soft Action’ on Big Scary Monsters. Joining them for a double headline tour are Pittsburgh emo crew Short Fictions, touring their own new album, ‘Fates Worse Than Death’. Anarcho punks Basic Dicks support.

Friday 7th
ALASDAIR ROBERTS: Florence Park Community Centre

Alasdair Roberts is one of those artists who are so prolific it can be dizzying just trying to keep up with their new projects and releases. From his early days as Appendix Out, offering an experimental approach to folk music, he’s gone out solo under his own name, mostly but not completely dropping the experimental, while keeping the quality as high as it gets. He is, simply, one of contemporary Scottish music’s finest proponents with a gorgeous, richly accented voice and a variously cosy and haunting approach to songwriting atmosphere. He’s also a prolific collaborator, claiming the likes of Will Oldham, Isabel Campbell, Karine Polwart, Jason Molina and John McCusker among his litany of musical mates. Beyond even this he’s been part of the fabulous Furrow Collective alongside Emily Portman, Lucy Farrell and Rachel Newton, with whom he’s most recently come to Oxford. Tonight’s show, part of a tour to promote new solo album ‘Grief in the Kitchen and Mirth in the Hall’, comes courtesy of Divine Schism in the suitably intimate and welcoming setting of Florence Park Community Centre, a great setting to experience such a talent, and whatever we get – be it bleak antique balladry, self-penned laments, nostalgic traditionalism, reworked Appendix Out numbers or euphoric singalong anthems, it’ll be just glorious.



April

BACK TO THE 80s: The Bullingdon – 80s retro club night.
HIPSHAKIN’: The Harcourt Arms – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul from the Hipshakin’ DJs.
METAL TO THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Third heat of the Battle of the Bands to win a slot at this summer’s Bloodstock, tonight featuring Street Outlaws, Hymn To Apollo, Compounds and Bring the Onslaught.
SYSTEM 80s + DURAN DURANISH: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Double dose of 80s tributes.

SUNDAY 2nd
THE DAMNED + THE NIGHTINGALES: O2 Academy – Following on from last year’s original line-up shows, The Damned revert to their current incarnation with Mssrs Vanian and Sensible continuing the band’s journey. Expect all the classics – ‘New Rose’, ‘Neat Neat Neat’, ‘Smash It Up’, ‘Wait For the Blackout’, ‘Plan 9 Channel 7’ – and more in theatrical punk style. Superb support from Robert Lloyd’s Brummie cult stars The Nightingales.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms – Weekly open night.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon – Weekly Irish folk session.
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (3pm) – Weekly open session.
TOM MARTIN: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 3rd
BILLY MITCHELL & BOB FOX: Harpsden Village Hall – Lindisfarne classics and more from two of the English folk scene’s enduring stars at this month’s Nettlebed Folk Club show.

TUESDAY 4th
WUNDERHORSE: The Bullingdon – Reflective, sometimes pastoral, rock and roll from former Dead Pretties frontman Jacob Slater, swapping punk ire for more personal storytelling in the style of Neil Young and Joni Mitchell as well as some good old fashion Led Zep riffage. The band are touring debut album ‘Cub’ and will be back in the Shire later in the year when they play Truck Festival.
THE BOOTLEG BEATLES: The New Theatre – Career-spanning tribute to the Fab Four.
ELECTRIC JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford – Fortnightly electric blues jam session.

WEDNESDAY 5th
MIKE & THE MOONPIES: The Bullingdon – Classic electric country blues and boogie from Austin Texas’ veteran stars, set to release their new album ‘One To Grow On’ later this year, featuring guest appearances from Shooter Jennings and Quaker City Nights Hawks. The band have grown out of being their native city’s premier covers band to explore their own material.
LAKES: BSM Social – Intimate instore show from Watford’s anthemic indie rockers.

THURSDAY 6th
DANNY MELLIN: The Bullingdon – Fresh-faced, soulful indie rocking from the local singer-songwriter.
CATWEAZLE: The Handlebar – Oxford’s oldest open night continues to showcase, singers, musicians, storytellers, poets, performance artists and more every week.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon – Weekly open session with recent *Nightshift* Top Track winner Tom Dalby.

FRIDAY 7th
DOLLY MAVIES + JOELY: The Bullingdon – Album launch show for this month’s cover star – *see main interview feature*
ALASDAIR ROBERTS + MILKWEED: Florence Park Community Centre – The Perthshire troubadour plays solo and intimate – *see main preview*
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES + PANDAPOPALYPSE + MASTERDOG: Gladiator Club – Klub Kakofanney’s monthly shindig welcomes livewire blues-rock, soul and Americana stars The Deadbeats alongside big beat and electro-pop faves Pandapocalypse and rockers Masterdog.
MOTLEY CRUED: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute night.

SATURDAY 8th
YARDFORCE CIRCUIT presents NUH SHE NUTTIN: The Bullingdon
GUNS2ROSES + MOTLEY CRUED: O2 Academy – Double dose of 80s hair rock “fun”.
SPIRALITES: The Harcourt Arms – Barbershop quartet with northern soul and rocksteady vibes.
MUDSLIDE MORRIS + REVEREND BLACK: The Black Swan

SUNDAY 9th
DIVINE SCHISM TAKEOVER: BSM Social (3pm) – Local indie promoters Divine Schism take over the brew shop and café with sets from Caleb Nicholls, Hamburger and Erin Snape.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (3pm)

OMARI JOHNSTON-DALEY: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 10th
TUESDAY 11th
MODERNLOVE: The Bullingdon – Effusive indie rocking from the Drogheda quartet, out on tour to promote new single ‘Only Ever Only You’.
OCEANATOR: BSM Social – Scuzzy, sludgy post-grunge power pop, melodic punk, Americana and beyond from Oceanator, back in Oxford for a low-key instore at BSM Social.
WEDNESDAY 12th
ELECTRONIC MUSIC OPEN NIGHT: The Jericho Tavern – New monthly open night for local electronic musicians to come together, play, discuss music technology and make musical connections.

THURSDAY 13th
THE BUG CLUB + MOCK TUDORS: The Jericho Tavern – Poptastic garage rock from the Welsh wizards – *see main preview*
CATWEAZLE: The Handlebar
RAY COOPER: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Solo

Friday 14th – Sunday 16th
FOLK WEEKEND OXFORD: Various venues
Always good to see Folk Weekend Oxford back, even if this year’s event seems to lack some of the bigger names of previous years. Still, it’s a great, volunteer led event that aims to celebrate and promote the city’s folk scene with three days of concerts, ceilidhs, workshops, shanty sessions, Morris dancing and family activities at venues around Oxford, including The North Wall; the Quaker Meeting House; St. Michael at the Northwall; Old Fire Station; Blackwell’s bookshop; Central Library; St. Barnabas, the Covered Market and beyond. Among the concerts taking place are Nathen and Balladesque (*Friday*); Emily Portman and Rob Harbron (*pictured*), Three Acres & a Cow; Milady Clare’s Musical, and Tot’s Tunes Family Band (*Saturday*), and George Boomsma (*Sunday*). Plenty of local acts to catch, often for free, too, with Stornoway’s Oli Steadman among those playing. Jim Driscoll; Linda Watkins; Page of Swords; Knavish Sprite; Holy Fools; Spellwood; Dave Oakley; Trev Williams; Bone Saddle; Katie Grace Harris; Montmorency and Three Idle Women are among others to see. A full programme of events as well as ticket details are available at folkweekendoxford.co.uk.



show from the former Oysterband multi-instrumentalist.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 14th
THE LOTTERY WINNERS: The Bullingdon – Euphoric anthemic indie rocking from Leigh’s quick-witted Lottery Winners, touring their new ‘Anxiety Replacement Therapy’ album, the band having made a name for themselves touring with The Keytons and their mega hit ‘Rockstar Sea Shanty’.
TEEN SPIRIT: The Bullingdon – 90s rock and grunge club night.
KANADIA + PICTURE THE SCENE + APHRA TAYLOR: The Jericho Tavern – The Independent Music Tour hosts recent *Nightshift* cover stars Kanadia, rocking it big time in the style of Radiohead, Muse and TV On the Radio, alongside another previous cover star Aphra Taylor with her dark, intimate confessional acoustic pop.
FOLK WEEKEND OXFORD: Various venues – First day of this year’s local folk celebration with concerts, dances, workshops, family activities and more. Today’s shows include performances from Balladesque and Nathen – *see main preview*
KISS THE TEACHER: Fat Lil’s, Witney – ABBA tribute.
BLUE FRIDAY: Old Anchor, Abingdon – Artisan Blues host a mostly acoustic evening of blues and more.

SATURDAY 15th
THE BIG SCARY MONSTERS BIG DAY OUT: Florence Park Community Centre – The local label hosts a full day of live music, with sets from Ditz; Lambrini Girls; Cheerbleederz; Jack Goldstein; S.T. Manville; Pet Semetary and Suds already confirmed and more acts to be announced.
FOLK WEEKEND OXFORD: Various venues – Emily Portman & Rob Harbron, and Three Acres & a Cow play the weekender – *see main preview*
THE DANIEL WAKEFORD EXPERIENCE: O2 Academy – Defiantly upbeat 60s-inspired pop and r’n’b from Daniel Wakeford, emerging from Brighton’s fertile learning disabled music scene and earning a sizeable cult following after his appearances on *The Undatables*.
METAL TO THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Fourth heat of the BOTB with Black Skull Ritual, Severed Tongues, Webb and another band whose name font is impossible to decipher.
REGGAETON OXFORD: The Bullingdon – Reggaeton club night.
BALD DIDDLEY & THE RIPCURLS: The Harcourt Arms – Classic surf sounds from the veteran local guitarist and his band.

SUNDAY 16th
MORASS OF MOLASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Reading’s bowel-quaking doom’n’blues crew Morass of Molasses return to town having supported Ohhms here last year, hosted again tonight by Buried In Smoke.



Thursday 13th
THE BUG CLUB / MOCK TUDORS: The Jericho Tavern
Anyone who’s listened in to Marc Riley’s 6Music show over the past couple of years will know about The Bug Club. The Welsh trio from Caldicot in Monmouthshire get an airing in pretty much every show and good with reason, they’re an absolute joy: idiosyncratic – both musically and lyrically – scrappy and catchy as hell. Their rough’n’ready, lo-fi garage-pop is both infectiously poppy and defiantly noisy, where kiddie-simple nursery rhymes become noise-rock dirges on a whim yet never lose sight of a great pop tune, or tunes, when you consider previous single ‘Intellectuals’ (*sic*) was actually five distinct tunes in one. The vocal interplay between Sam Willmet and Tilly Harris couldn’t really be called harmonies as such but they’re the essence of the band’s appeal, reminiscent of Lou Reed and Mo Tucker’s vocals in The Velvet Underground. Elsewhere they pay due homage to Jonathan Richman, Violent Femmes and The Vaselines while always retaining their own identity. Their new album, ‘Green Dream In F#’ came out late last year and features 14 tracks with only one clocking in over three minutes. This is one club everyone should want to be part of. Equally idiosyncratic support from Mock Tudors, a side project of Mr Ben & The Bens, whose morbidly strange single ‘Bin Day’ was similarly a big Marc Riley favourite.

FOLK WEEKEND OXFORD: Various venues – Third and final day of the festival – *see main preview*
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon



OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (3pm)
DAMIAN DELHUNTY: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 17th

TEMPLES: The Bullingdon – Psychedelic pop inspired by The Beatles, Bolan and Syd Barrett from the Kettering crew at tonight’s Truck Store show to launch fourth album ‘Exotico’. Ticket and album bundles are available.

TUESDAY 18th

MADDY PRIOR & THE CARNIVAL BAND: St. John the Evangelist – A return to town for the first lady of English folk music with her band, exploring her extensive decades-spanning career.

PAGE OF SWORDS + JACK CADE + LEE SWITZER-WOOLF: The Library – All Will Be Well label showcase including dark-folk crew Page of Swords.

ELECTRIC JAM: The Catherine Wheel, Sandford

WEDNESDAY 19th

THE OOZES: The Jericho Tavern – Militant queercore from the London outfit – *see main*

Wednesday 19th

**THE OOZES:
The Jericho Tavern**

The Oozes’ latest single ‘DBSAC’ was produced by Frank Turner; God help him if he tried to get a radio edit down for the song, in which case his production skills likely amounted to trying to mute every profanity out while keeping the song intact. Not that The Oozes particularly need radio play if their several million streams so far is anything to go by – not bad for an unsigned band with songs called ‘Wanker’ and ‘Bitchboy’, a London-based queer-punk outfit with a musical fuzzbomb approach to dealing with the patriarchy, rapists, abusers and weirdoes. The Oozes’ sound is classic grunge-informed punk that goes back to the likes of Poison Girls and Rubella Ballet, via L7 and Bikini Kill; they’ve previously been out on tour with Noahfinnee and played last year’s 2000 Trees Festival, and if plenty of bands out there claim to be on a mission, they sound like they might well be. Support from dark folk-rockers Wych Elm.



preview

JUNIOR BROTHER + TAMARA + JOOSE KESKITALO + KADONNUT MANNER: The Library – Divine Schism host County Kerry’s Ronan Kealy, aka Junior Brother, returning to town after supporting Naima Bock previously, the man playing a decidedly avant garde form of traditional Irish music, accompanied by guitar and foot tambourine as well as an almost Dadaist approach to songwriting as he delves into political waters on his ‘Great Irish Famine’ album. Great local support from Tamara plus a duo of Finnish talents in Joose Keskitalo and Kadonnut Manner.

TRAGEDY: O2 Academy – Glam-metal tribute to The BeeGees.

BYRON WALLER: Iffley Village Hall – A return to town for the renowned trumpet virtuoso who has worked with George Benson, Chaka Khan, Hugh Masekela, Courtney Pine, Red Snapper and Lonnie Liston Smith, among others.

THURSDAY 20th

TELEMAN: O2 Academy – Electro-pop perfection from Tom Sanders and the gang – *see main preview*

TROY REDFERN & THE COMMONERS: The Bullingdon – Rock’n’roll and rocking blues from the ever-touring guitarist, renowned for his slide style, and his new band, promoting latest album ‘Wings of Salvation’.

AMBER ARCADES: The Jericho Tavern – Airy, shimmering indie-electro-pop from Dutch singer and multi-instrumentalist Annelotte de Graaf, a lawyer who’s taken time out from jobs working as an aide to the International War Crimes Commission and working as an assessor for the Dutch refugee council to produce new album ‘Barefoot On Diamond Road’, that swims in similar atmospheric pop waters to Broadcast, Francoise Hardy, Angel Olsen and Madder Rose at times.

CATWEAZLE: The Handlebar

DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 21st

BOSSAPHONIK with COLECTIVA: Cowley Workers Social Club – The monthly world jazz dance club night welcomes all female Afro-Latin jazz ensemble Colectiva, plus there’s Kwasa Kwasa guest DJs on the decks.

DAFT FUNK LIVE: The Bullingdon – Daft Punk tribute.

HAU5 PARTY: The Bullingdon – Techno, house and disco club night.

GEMMA HAYES: O2 Academy – Welcome overdue return to town for the acclaimed Irish singer-songwriter – *see main preview*

THE JOLLY GROGSTERS: The Harcourt Arms – Shanties and sea songs from the local vocal ensemble.

ABI FARRELL: The Jericho Tavern – Northern Soul from the Oxford-London singer and her ten-piece band.

ZZ TOPPD: Fat Lil’s, Witney

SATURDAY 22nd

MUSICAL MEDICINE ft. BEN GOMORI: The Bullingdon – Disco and disco-house club night.

MAISIE PETERS: O2 Academy – Big pop tunes ahoy as Maisie Peters hits town, her debut



Thursday 20th

**TELEMAN:
O2 Academy**

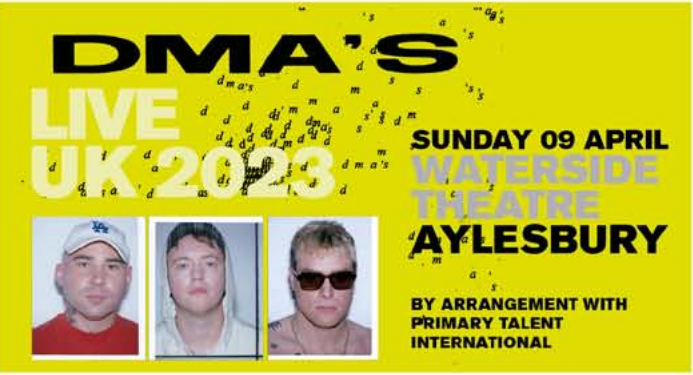
Every time we see Teleman live – and we’ve seen them a fair few times over the years – every song feels like a hit single and, four albums into their near-faultless career, we wonder what kind of global injustice is stopping them from being the biggest pop band on earth. But that’s the way the world is – the best bands rarely get all the glory, so we get to keep enjoying them in venues far more intimate than they deserve. Their last album, ‘Family of Aliens’, was a contender for album of 2018, all propulsive beats and Human League-like synth-pop warmth and simplicity, while new release ‘Good Time/Hard Time’ suggests the magic ain’t diminishing any time soon. Teleman seem incapable of writing a song that doesn’t feel like it should be a chart hit, a dancefloor favourite and an indie anthem all at once. They can mix sleek silicon synth-pop with grunge when it suits, get funky when the mood takes and in singer Thomas Sanders, they have one of modern pop’s finest singers, his voice pure and light, as displayed on his 2020 solo album, ‘Only Magic’. Tonight’s show sees Teleman back at The O2 after their post-pandemic visit to The Bullingdon back in 2021, but it’s still a more intimate venue than they deserve. They’re just bloody great and if you’re not of a sensitive disposition you might catch sight of *Nightshift* doing a wobbly robot dance down the front tonight. For which we won’t be apologising anytime soon.

album ‘You Signed Up For This’ released on Ed Sheeran’s Gingerbread label and a follow-up, ‘The Good Witch’ due imminently
STEVE MASON: O2 Academy – The personal and political collide on Mason’s new ‘Brothers & Sisters’ album – *see main preview*
METAL TO THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Fifth heat of the BOTB with Master Bizarre, Mercury’s Nell, Second Hour and Mannequin playing for a slot at this summer’s Bloodstock.
MID AIR + HUX: The Port Mahon – Harmony-laden quintet Mid Air launch their new ‘Talking Through Glass’ EP.
SCRATCH, CRACKLE & POP: The Harcourt Arms

SUNDAY 23rd

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (3pm)
ABI POWELL: Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

**CROSTOWN
CONCERTS**



MONDAY 24th

TUESDAY 25th

RAZORLIGHT: O2 Academy – Sing Hosanna, truly music is saved.

CARDINAL BLACK: O2 Academy – Soulful blues-rocking from the Welsh outfit out on tour to promote new album ‘January Came Close’.

WEDNESDAY 26th

THURSDAY 27th

THE BLUE HIGHWAYS + STEADY HABITS: The Bullingdon – Raucous country rocking and Americana in the vein of Springsteen and Grand Drive from London’s Blue Highways at tonight’s Empty Room show; alt.country support from former Loud Mountains man Kevin Duggan.

HAUTE MESS: The Bullingdon – Drag night and disco.

STEPH PIRRIE: The Harcourt Arms – Live jazz from the singer and trumpeter and her band.

CATWEAZLE: The Handlebar

Friday 21st

**GEMMA HAYES:
O2 Academy**

Is it really 15 years since Gemma Hayes last played in Oxford? Seems so but she’s not a singer renowned for doing stuff in a hurry. This time round in town she’ll be playing songs from her forthcoming sixth album, provisionally titled ‘High & Low’, her first since 2014’s ‘Bones + Longing’. These days of course Hayes is regarded as one of Ireland’s finest singer-songwriters, so the anticipation of her return to action is understandably high. She first came to widespread attention when her 2002 debut album ‘Night On My Side’ earned her a Mercury nomination and has been a regular on Irish music awards shortlists ever since for her gorgeous mixture of sweet’n’sultry folk-pop and more gritty country-tinged rock which has seen her compared favourably to Stina Nordenstam, Suzanne Vega, Sheryl Crow and Shania Twain over the years. Something of a nomad across her career, Hayes has lived in LA and London at times but is now ensconced back in West Cork where she has been recording the new record with producer David Odium. It’s been a long wait for fans to hear her new songs and even longer for Oxford fans to see her perform so tonight’s show should be an occasion for celebration.



DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 28th

BRAIN OF J: The Bullingdon – Pearl Jam tribute.

RAVING TRIPPY: The Bullingdon – Psychedelic house and techno club night.

MOONAROON: The Harcourt Arms – Irish songs, ballads and folk tunes from the local outfit.

RATS EAT RATS: The Jericho Tavern – Post-grunge noise rocking from the local crew.

TOBY SEBASTIAN: O2 Academy – Trystane Martell off of *Game of Thrones* puts down his sword and picks up an acoustic guitar so as to make music that would be as well to have a barrel or two of Wildfire poured on it.

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES + THE CORNERMEN: O2 Academy – Jump blues, swing, hot jazz and a punk spirit from local kings of the speakeasy TORFSB alongside similarly fiery blues-rock, r’n’b and soul stars The Deadbeats.

JUNIPER NIGHTS + BEDD + SHOCK HORROR: The Port Mahon – Grungy indie rocking from Juniper Nights at tonight’s *OMS* Magazine show.

DIANA JONES: The Listening Room, Cross Keys, Thame – Empty Room Promotions hosts the award-winning American singer-songwriter, known for her gritty, literary Appalachian-influenced songs.

SATURDAY 29th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with ECHO4FOUR + NOISE LOCK + BARRELHAUS: The Port Mahon – Characteristic goodly mixed bag of sounds and styles at this month’s GTI, with heavy-duty Sabbath-style rocking from Echo4Four. They’re joined by London/Oxford industrial hip hop and punk crew Noise Lock, drawing inspiration from Death Grips, Massive Attack and Show Me The Body. Opening the show are blues-rockers BarrelHaus, coming in somewhere between Queens of the Stone Age, Tame Impala and Fu Manchu.

THE MARK ATHERTON BAND: The Harcourt Arms – Live folk and blues from the local singer-guitarist and his band.

DEEPER PURPLE: O2 Academy – Tribute night.

SHEPHERD’S PIE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock and metal covers.

PETE FRYER BAND: Bowyers Arms, Radley – Blues and rock classics.

SUNDAY 30th

SIMPLE ft.DJ SPIT + RE:NI: The Bullingdon – House and techno club night, going through the night into May Morning with guest turns from Berlin’s DJ Spit, mixing up drum&bass, garage and techno, plus dub, techno and breakbeat from London’s re:ni.

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN: The New Theatre – Big stage tribute to the legendary soul



Saturday 22nd

**STEVE MASON:
O2 Academy**

The spectres of colonialism, Brexit and empire hang heavy over Steve Mason’s new album ‘Brothers & Sisters’, in his own words a “fuck Brexit, pro-immigration record,” inspired by his travels to Australia and southern Asia in particular where indigenous populations were subjugated or slaughtered by colonialism. It’s characteristically restless and angry fare from Mason, whose soothingly gravelly voice often sugars the pill of the message he’s delivering to rather lovely effect. ‘No More’, the lead single from the new album, was recorded with Pakistani singer Javed Bashir and revealed a more electronic, beat-laden and global groove-led approach to the more organic, band-orientated ‘About The Lights’, and reignited flames of anger that the excellent ‘Meet The Humans’ seemed to have quelled somewhat. From his Beta Band days onward Mason has often felt more of a critics’ choice than a commercially successful artist – notably during his below-the-radar King Biscuit Time days – but he commands a devoted following nonetheless, one worthy of such a consistently inventive songwriter – warm and hopeful, weightlessly euphoric, joyous and almost anthemic at times. Funny and extremely likeable onstage, Mason’s passed through town a few times on his travels but he is always worth checking in on.

and r’n’b label.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + TONY BATEY & SAL MOORE + JOURNEYMAN: The Tree, Iffley (4pm) – Klub Kakofanny host a free afternoon of live music.

SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) - Free live music session in the front bar with The Oxford Blues Corporation.

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (3pm)

DAN PRYDE: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

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.

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<p>POLICE DOG HOGAN No support Saturday 1st April St John the Evangelist</p>	<p>DIANA JONES No support Friday 28th April The Cross Keys, Thame</p>	<p>SON OF TINGESTOCK The Monster of all Village Hall Festivals Returns Saturday 22nd July Tingewick Village Hall, nr Buckingham</p>
<p>MIKE AND THE MOONPIES plus Ags Connolly Wednesday 5th April The Bullingdon</p>	<p>CHUCK PROPHET & THE MISSION EXPRESS plus Kris Gruen Sunday 4th June The Bullingdon</p>	<p>EDDI READER plus support Wednesday 11th October Wycombe Swan, Old Town Hall</p>
<p>Double Header THE BLUE HIGHWAYS STEADY HABITS Thursday 27th April The Bullingdon</p>	<p>THE REVEREND PEYTON'S BIG DAMN BAND plus support Wednesday 19th July The Bullingdon</p>	<p>ROD PICOTT support tbc Friday 13th October The Cross Keys, Thame</p>

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OH, COMMUNITY!

Common Ground

Today’s Divine Schism-curated all-dayer starts with two local acts. **DAZE** offer up summery acid jazz stylings with a vocalist falling somewhere between a less spiky Lily Allen and Kae Tempest. **EMMA HUNTER** on the other hand offers looped vocals a la Tune-Yards coupled with the kind of dark, late night quality bar room fare associated with David Lynch films; ‘Nightingale’ from her 2021 EP would be particularly suitable in *Twin Peaks*’ The Roadhouse.

Next, a brace of noise bands: **THE PINCH** and **MÖNEY**. The former are superb, like a cross between The Birthday Party, The Cramps and ‘Brutalism’-era Idles; their songs are short with abrupt endings, coupled with raging guitar; their lead singer feels like he is on a mission throughout. Money are speed and bass driven, straight ahead and heads-down noise rock, permeated occasionally with screamed vocals; they’re good but less immediate than The Pinch.

LOU TERRY is an odd mix of folk and post-rock, he is an intense performer and lyricist and seems to draw upon Dylan, Stipe and Lou

Barlow/J Mascis. Every song appears to come effortlessly from a different genre, and his vocal stylings also seem to offer an implausible mix. He is an enigma, in a good way. **RADIANT HEARTS**, meanwhile, are an indie-folk duo with beautiful complementary quavering vocals but sadly they are cursed with technical issues which curtail their set; they are really promising and we’d like to see them again under better circumstances.

Manchester band **MUMBLES** are one of today’s highlights, soon to release their debut album via Divine Schism. They are blessed with a truly unique and brave front man who has the charisma of Marc Bolan coupled with the attitude of Wilko Johnson (indeed at one point he ‘machine guns’ the front row with his guitar). The set is punctuated by the quiet/loud, fast/slow aesthetic of Pixies and the unique vocals are as unusual as that first time that you heard Frank Black, but they are nothing like Pixies; in fact it’s hard to pin a reference point, which makes them all the more exciting. When they finish we literally think “what have we just

witnessed!” Totally refreshing.

LEATHER.HEAD combine traditional rock instruments with James Chance and the Contortions no wave sax, as well as trumpet and a weird, curly hunting horn and primal scream therapy; perhaps more contemporary comparisons would be Black Midi or Squid.

SWANSEA SOUND are a twee indie pop supergroup featuring local indie legend Amelia Fletcher, as well as Hue from Poohsticks. They bridge the generation gap with a combination of energetic and exciting songs, self deprecation, and years of confident stage craft. Songs cover a wide array of subject matter including Brexit, corporate indie, adult education colleges, NFTs and set highlight ‘I Sold My Soul On Ebay’; they’re funny and relevant throughout.

The day closes with **TRUST FUND**; attendees sit on the floor in a campfire moment. Song titles are shouted and requested from every corner, and encores ensue. It’s strange to see such an obsessive and raucous response when the songs are so gentle, delicate and emotional, delivered in the main in a falsetto, but the performance, as ever, is stunning.

Mark Taylor

SELF ESTEEM

O2 Academy

Tonight is Self Esteem’s third visit to Oxfordshire in just over a year; there’s been no new album – bar a theatre soundtrack – in that time and she’s still playing a set almost entirely derived from her 2021 opus ‘Prioritise Pleasure’. Is anyone complaining? Why would they when her gigs are such utterly joyous occasions.

Rebecca Lucy Taylor is a great singer. She’s also a fantastic lyricist, a phenomenal show-woman and, if you’ve ever listened to one of her interviews, an exceptionally funny raconteur. It’d be easy to stamp your feet and cry “not fair!”, but instead you’re moving those feet to the huge stomping rhythms of her songs and quite possibly, like much of tonight’s packed crowd, singing along to every word. Few artists have struck a chord with their audience quite so firmly as Self Esteem, whose clarion calls for self respect, self love and female empowerment match militancy with irresistible catchiness.

From the rhythmic, choral glam-gospel opener of ‘Prioritise Pleasure’ itself, through the bright explosion of musical sunshine that is ‘Fucking Wizardry’, to the simply incredible militant tribal stomp of ‘Mother’, this is just a magnificent show from an artist who’s learned from years of treading the boards of venues across the land with her previous band Slow Club not to give a solitary flying one but instead go your own way and spread a surfeit of good vibes while she’s about it. She slows the set down briefly for an acoustic ‘John Elton’, which then has to be paused as a fan is helped out after fainting, but soon enough she’s back up on her podium alongside her coterie of backing singers, all thunderous tom-heavy beats and dog barks on ‘I’m Fine’ as she sings “There is nothing that terrifies a man more than a woman that appears completely deranged”. ‘I Do This All The Time’ ends the main set, a song for the ages, as if Britney Spears just discovered Crass and The Raincoats; it really is an extraordinary piece of music and lyricism.

A show so closely choreographed as this – costume changes and all – could risk falling into sterility but instead it’s a powerful, visceral performance from an absolute master of the art and as ‘Still Reigning’ becomes one last tidal swell of euphoria we all know, we could watch this all the time.

Sue Foreman

EMMA HUNTER / LONDON GRAFFITI

The Jericho Tavern

Brian Eno’s Oblique Strategies cards are a collection of mysterious, unusual, or downright paradoxical prompts to help anyone hitting a creative brick wall, perhaps most famously employed during the recording of Bowie’s Berlin trilogy. If we were invited to add a new Zen zinger to the deck, after witnessing Emma Hunter tonight it would be, “Restrict the options to expand the possibilities”. The Hunter palette is elementary, just Tom Bruce on drums and Emma on guitar and vocals; this latter pair can be put through a looper to build up extra textures, but this means that all the elements have to be immaculately placed to avoid any messy bleeds and clashes. Although the first thing to impress you about the set might be the rich layers of vocal harmonies (encore ‘Treacle Well’, with its breathy vocal sections, sounds gloriously like Laurie Anderson’s ‘O Superman’ exploding in a cathedral made of mirrors), what you might marvel at later is Tom’s inventive and ornate drum parts, which manage to fit in the gaps between Emma’s complex constructions whilst still oozing character and ideas. Jazz drummers might play in the pocket, but Tom inhabits the very seams.

Emma’s vocal melodies are touched

by wonderfully subtle embellishments, trills, and curlicues, which nod towards techniques and traditions from the Mississippi Delta, Spain, and North Africa, whilst always sounding natural and unforced. This is especially clear on ‘Morire’ (meaning to die, or fade away), a new single launched tonight which concerns someone drifting inexorably into alcoholism. We can definitely imagine Marc Almond interpreting the song’s tragic emotion well – though definitely not with Emma’s cast-iron pitching.

The ingenious exploration of limitations shown by Emma is contrasted by London Graffiti’s support set. They have plenty of charm, a literate cross between thoughtful British indie and melancholic American rock that sits somewhere between Counting Crows and Elbow. Singer JP has a warm, unhurried voice that edges towards the urbane passion of Paul Simon, but occasionally the lead guitar clogs the songs’ arteries with solos and wah-wah interjections that get in the way of the tunes. The last two numbers are more stripped back, and all the better for it. London Graffiti put in a strong showing, but sometimes you just wish their approach was more...oblique.

David Murphy

ME LOST ME / MOTH DROP /

STEPHEN ELLIOTT

The Library

Stephen Elliott is a quiet opener to tonight’s proceedings, sitting with his acoustic guitar and treating us to a gentle set of fragile but mature and well-crafted songs that seem to evoke wild, open spaces. The Belfast singer, now based in Oxford, has a bookish appearance, and it comes as no great surprise that he works at Blackwell’s. The crowd, the biggest of the night, remain dutifully quiet but his invisibility, from the back, suggests an alternative venue would suit him better.

Moth Drop, aka Brendan Morgan, joins Stephen as a guest on cello before launching into his own set of off-kilter electronica. The broad church of dance music would have to open its doors extra wide to grant him admission; the more cerebral, sample-heavy, driving nature of tonight’s performance being better suited to nodding appreciation. He doesn’t even use a laptop, just a couple of sound generators linked together, surrounded by candles. It’s all refreshingly mid tech (as opposed to low tech), and a nod to the punk ethic of ‘anyone can do this, so what are you waiting for?’ Last year’s single ‘I’ll Think Of You’ shows he can engage more with dancefloor aesthetics but this side of his oeuvre seems to reap

greater rewards.

Me Lost Me is the work of Newcastle-based Jayne Dent, expanding over six years from a solo project, tonight featuring Jayne on vocals and electronics accompanied by a clarinet and double bass. There’s a strong streak of north-eastern folk music, its yearning, windswept aspects mixing rather beautifully with restrained electronics, while retaining that strong vocal tradition. Showcasing material from forthcoming album ‘RPG’, the selections are more vocal-led than previous releases, the electronics taking a lesser role and the clarinet more prominent. Her voice is quite remarkable, strong and clear and harmonising perfectly with Faye MacCalman when she takes a break from her clarinet. There are also elements of jazz, but she’s careful not to overcrowd the songs, providing space for them to take on their own life.

Whether the LP will reflect the rather minimal presentation we get tonight remains to be seen, but ahead of a big gig at Café Oto in London we’re very lucky to find her in the intimate surroundings of The Library.

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GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS / THE HOPE BURDEN

The Port Mahon

Nothing pleases *Nightshift* more than being greeted at the entrance to a gig with a smile and a pair of complementary ear defenders, setting the precedent that this is going to be a lovely, albeit ribcage rattlingly loud affair. This is further confirmed as we enter The Port Mahon’s live room and glance at the stage to see that Banbury-based support act, The Hope Burden, are already looking to get started and baying for blood. With guitarist Neil Brewer choosing to wear nothing but board shorts on stage, this already looks like it will be a rather energetic set. Singer Josh Day is an unrelenting force as he screams his way

through the next 30 minutes which are as textural as they are heavy, as the band go from post-metal to death-metal, to shoegaze and beyond. They are at their best when they mix things up and go from monstrous riffs to finely crafted noise, but one can’t help but feel that some occasional vocal melody would not go completely astray. Ghosts in The Photographs kick their set off with their new album’s opening track, ‘Strasbourg Dance Party’. Ghosts textural beginnings and well-honed live sound capture the record perfectly, yet transcend the recording when the crescendo starts to kick in. ‘Fuck L Ron Hubbard’ is a more swaying, sultry

affair and with the smell of sweat and alcohol in the air, takes you to a different place than the record. Drummer Brent Wade really anchors the band as they glide from one transition to another and the sonic layers guitarist George Naylor conjures up cement their sound in the forefront of the audience’s mind. Smart phones are held up in the air throughout, and while *Nightshift* would prefer to just take it all in, it’s easy to see why so many want to capture this evening’s performance for posterity. ‘Taylor Mountain Memorial’ takes in a change of gear that calms this Friday night crowd down a tad, but

when it kicks in, bassist Iain Deans lifts the track to new levels. Set closer ‘Buildings That Won’t Fall Down When You Want Them To’ build to a huge sound that warrants a bigger platform than this, yet oh how lucky we are to be witnessing it – the three band members locked in as one and the audience completely captivated. Josh Day returns to the stage for the encore to provide vocals on the final track of the evening, ‘The Day After Gomorrah’, and it’s a fitting end, Day’s vocals adding an extra texture to Ghosts’ power and you can’t help but remove the ear defenders and just let the sound hammer through you. You can’t help but feel that Ghosts are on the edge of greater things, and going by this evening’s performance, that should be on the cards very soon. *Caitlin Helm*

AHMED MUKHTAR

St John’s College

Any concert with just one instrument and no vocals risks inducing creeping boredom. But we don’t have any symptoms in the fifty minutes Ahmed Mukhtar plucks, strums, and caresses his oud. He’s an Iraqi who has lived in the UK since the 1990s. He began learning percussion as well as the oud in his youth, and there’s a strong percussive element in how he plays, which gives the listener something to hang onto and opens the door to his music. Mukhtar doesn’t limit himself to traditional repertoire and tonight includes some of his own compositions. These can sound as if written centuries ago while hinting at more contemporary influences. His playing of traditional pieces is very free. When he repeats phrases often he doesn’t just repeat them but gives them different textures and dynamics, as if exploring what he

can do with the music and where it will take him. We like explorers. We like weird too, and we get that with a traditional tune that uses a scale that Mukhtar forewarns will sound out of tune, and it does. The pieces he composed that he plays show he’s got an ear for a good melodic hook. The five or six note recurring motif of ten-minute opener ‘Baghdad Evening’ is a good example. ‘Sufi Moments’ mixes contemplation and moments when we could be in the presence of whirling dervishes. Our favourite is ‘Babylonian Hanging Gardens’ with its hypnotic call and response dance between the oud’s bass string and its higher registers. The finale, ‘Espania’, is flamenco and sounds as impassioned played on Mukhtar’s oud as it would be in played in Andalousia. A surprising choice to close, but then Ahmed Mukhtar has kept us pleasingly off balance most of the evening. *Colin May*

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What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? “That I design each video myself as a bespoke piece of work. I’ll listen to your track on loop until I have the perfect vision for it. That and admin. Health and Safety checks. Boring stuff like that before I can press record. ‘But why can’t we film in this abandoned mine, Laima?’ Stuff like that.”

How much and how did Covid affect your job? “Quite harshly as gigs stopped completely for two years. This meant no networking and no momentum, not to mention not being able to be in the same room as each other so filming was pretty impossible. Once things became a bit more relaxed I was able to do a bit of work, under strict guidelines. On the other



What's the single most important piece advice you'd give to someone wanting to do your job? "Be prepared to keep stumbling, and then keep getting up and carrying on. The wins honestly outweigh anything negative. Seeing your work on a screen is quite invigorating."

Who's the most awkward person you've ever had to deal with in your job? "There was a guy

What's your favourite thing about Oxford's music scene? "The sense of family it brings. Anyone can belong to the music scene. Phil Freizinger and Sue Smith of The Mighty Redox are responsible for a very safe and extended community. The work they've done with Klub Kakofanney over the years is something we should all take pride in. I love to see so many artists and promoters I've known for years keep going in the face of huge adversity, and to see a steady flow of new young bands coming up and continuing the spirit of it all."

Next month: *Pritt's Immaterial*

“Meeting a girl called Amy. At 16, she travelled alone on a coach to London, then on another coach to Oxford just to come and see me live. She is the sweetest person I’ve ever met and I wept like a baby when I got home that night; I’ve always really struggled with my self esteem but that moment really made me feel proud of what I’d done. I will never forget it.

Emily Jeffri on all platforms

Still with us to this day are **Bennett, Wilson, Poole**, who released their eponymous debut album this month. Other local releases included albums from **Indica Blues** and **My Diabolo** and an instrumental opus from **Oly Ralfe** from The Ralfe Band. Highlight of the gig month was **Public Service Broadcast**'s headline show at **The New Theatre**, with the wonderful **Jane Weaver** in support. Other notable gigs included **Cabbage** at **The O2 Academy**, **Shame** at **The Bullingdon** and Bloc Party's **Kele Okereke** at **The Cellar**

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TRACKS

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TOP TRACK

DAKORRA

What do you get if you cross members of Tiger Mendoza, Bruno Muerte and Ocean Ruins, add some big machine beats and some even bigger industrial guitar riffs? Why, you get Dakorra, who are here to make damn sure any hint of approaching spring or summer is suitably covered up by boiling storm clouds. Fronted by the imperious vocals of Katy Herridge from Reading rockers Ocean Ruins, Dakorra brood rather magnificently on this song, ‘All Eyes To The Floor’ (loving that pessimistic vibe there), Numanesque synths laying the foundation for the churning guitar work, the whole thing sounding like it should be thundering out of the nightclub scene in an old cyberpunk sci-fi thriller, or perhaps 90s doom-pop titans Curve getting broody and epic with Garbage. We listen to it again, and then some more, each time cranking the volume up a few notches and by the fifth run through we can see ruined cityscapes and people dressed in black trench coats stretching before us all the way to the horizon. A wonderfully malevolent wee beastie to get this month’s reviewing session off and running, although what exactly we’re running towards is anyone’s guess; none of it will be as good as this.

KOKROACHEZ

There’s something of the spirit if not particularly the sound of early punk about local youngsters Kokroachez, a band who’ve been treading the boards with some dedication over the past year or so. Not punk as such – although singer Ella-Mae has a hint of the Pauline Murray about her at times, maybe even a flicker of Poly Styrene – but punky in their approach, which puts a bit of attitude (if not particularly aggression) and a decent sense of melody above musical technique. ‘Misunderstood’ here could almost be considered soft rock but has a post-grunge feel to it and is, at its core, a decent pop song. ‘Pest Control’ ups that grunge edge for a more chugging rock tune, while they finally get militant on the chugging ‘Never Enough’, with a switch to a male vocal and a beefier, more-thrills, few thrills approach with a hefty sense of

purpose. Behind all this is a pleasingly ramshackle approach to playing when a slicker performance might make the whole thing feel stilted and sterile. If Kokroachez can keep developing while retaining that amateurish edge they’ll be treading bigger boards in future.

NIGEL SELLARS

Then again Kokroachez sound properly sleek and shiny compared to Nigel Sellars here who’s sent us a set of tunes titled ‘Does Jesus Need a Keyboard’ that includes one song called ‘Someone’s Gonna To Get Their Head Kicked In Tonight’, all recorded on an old four-track for full lo-fi punk authenticity. Rudimentary barely starts to describe it. But rudimentary isn’t a bad thing if it’s done well and this is enjoyable stuff, fuzzed-up garage punk from the Billy Childish school of knocking ‘em out frills-free. It’s all frenetic, heads-down, tinny, annoy-the-neighbours kind of stuff, not nearly as yobbish as that title would suggest. In fact ‘Someone’s Gonna...’ sounds like a scrappy kid cousin of fellow local noisemakers Self Help, while ‘Even Though’ has a bit of the Wreckless Eric about it. A bit of chug, a lot of fuzz, a sprinkling of whatever – of such things can fun be made and without too much thinking having to be done.

LESTER VARGO

Sent to us by Balloon Twister, the musician/producer/label behind sunshiny pop starlet Berry Brown, who’s topped the Tracks pile more than once, Lester Vargo sounds like the assumed name of a 1970s cruise ship cabaret singer, and the reality isn’t so far from that. Balloon Twister describes him as “the sweet spot between Morrissey and Michael Buble”, which would be an intriguing/appalling proposition (delete as applicable according to taste), but isn’t as close to the truth as we’d have liked. Instead it’s slightly overwrought Bontempi balladry that might have been a turn on *Phoenix Nights*. The song in question is titled ‘The Impossible Man’ and it’s cheesy, easy listening that would probably lose in the semi finals of a regional Neil Diamond soundalike competition. It does, however, make us want to go out and buy a turtleneck sweater.

WEST WICKHAMS

Always a good start to send us a link to a Bandcamp page where you can’t play any of the tracks you want reviewing, but here at *Nightshift* we are diligent in our pursuit of great music and find one of the tracks on Youtube instead with a neat video featuring cool-looking cyber-goth-cum-new romantic types posing artily in neon-lit clubs. Good start. And the music? Appropriately 80s-style darkwave synth-pop, all detached old-Europe vocals and Cure-like guitar

spangle. Goth, then. And as everyone knows, *Nightshift* are a bunch of incorrigible old goths at heart (c’mon, we’re named after an old Siouxsie & the Banshees song!) so this glum, gloomy opus should be right up our street. And you know what? It isn’t. It’s all rather dull to be honest – it’s sullen and plodding and has nothing you’d recognise as a tune never mind a catchy chorus to chicken dance around the room to. All pose and no purpose.

PHILES

Now this is much more like it. More gothicky noise – which basically means we’ve achieved our annual goth demos quota in a single issue – but of a distinctly higher quality. Philes are slightly ethereal, slightly shoegazey but very definitely right down there on the downbeat scale. There’s hints of Opal or Mazzy Star in their moody spangle, though they’re perhaps closer to Portsmouth’s ace cult faves Cranes, especially in the cooing vocals that swoon over deep, dark middle-distance bass synth murmurs and guitar spangle. You imagine they’d be signed to Factory Records or 4AD back in the early 1980s and unlike West Wickhams before them they have a sweet, sultry grasp of atmosphere (Joy Division reference entirely deliberate). Goth integrity is re-established and we’d likely sit them atop this month’s pile if we didn’t belatedly realise they’re not even from Oxford, so are disqualified. Life’s unfair kids, but if it wasn’t we wouldn’t have goth music.

PET TWIN

A bit of an odd one this. Pet Twin’s track, ‘Float Along’, sounds like it should be a small part of something bigger and far better, perhaps a low-key introduction to a full album or an interlude between actual songs, but instead it’s a sub-two-minute drift through pretty but ultimately barely-there ambient soundscaping, more spangled guitar and out-of-the-ether vocals that drift pleasantly but unimposingly around the room until the track in hands just fades away and feels like it was never actually there. It’s pretty and we’d happily – if slightly moodily – sit and listen to more of Pet Twin, but gonna need to have a bit more substance next time.

RITZY KIDS

Back for another beating after a previous Toilet Track perhaps, you have to admire Ritzy Kids’ spirit if not their music. This, though, is a bit of a step up from previous offerings, their track ‘Crank The Stereo’ a just-about-passable fizz, fuzz and bluster of early-90s American-style rocking, kind of like a poor-man’s Gin Blossoms. It’s all sky-punching bravado and comes with plenty of rock and roll energy but ultimately it lacks any real character of its own and does sound a bit like musical evolution stopped sometime around 1995

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.

THE BOOYAH SETTLEMENT

Another band returning to the fray after previous reviews in these pages, but in The Booyah Settlement’s case they’ve been top of the Tracks previously with their highly impressive ‘Jesus Won’t Be Long’, and its follow-up ‘Mary Magdalene Is Getting Stoned’, both of which mined Spiritualised and The Brian Jonestown Massacre’s psych-rock for inspiration. So hopes are high, and hopes are there to be dashed. ‘Starry Blurs’ isn’t so much a song as a whimsical wash of watered-down psychedelia that sounds like it’s coming at you not from the vastness of the cosmos but through several inches of thick mud. It’s a jumbled jangle of disembodied sax wandering and vocal moaning and wailing half-heartedly that sounds like the perpetrator has just had a limb removed with inadequate sedation. It goes on for two and a half minutes and nothing of any consequence happens and then it ends and we scratch our heads wondering they’ve started taking lesser quality drugs since they last paid a visit. You can do so much better than this, guys. We know so because we’ve heard you before.

TOILET TRACK

HUGH BLAZA & KAREN BATES

Remember a few months back when it rained and rained and rained and rained some more and everything got really, really wet? Yeah, well it was never as wet as this innocuously soft-centred ballad, a song that reminds us oddly of ‘I Know Him So Well’ but makes that Elaine Page and Barbara Dickson abomination sound like ‘Love Me Like a Reptile’ by Motorhead by comparison. ‘Arms & Snow’ is a lovelorn duet composed of mawkish sentimentality, dandelion fluff and vanilla-flavoured bio-yoghurt; it’s over-earnest to an almost criminal degree but doesn’t even have a decent tune about it to compensate. Hugh and Karen might as well croon “Nice things are nice” to each other over and over again such is the emotional heft at work. Meanwhile, *Nightshift* has been forced to drink an entire litre bottle of cooking vodka and watch *Rise of the Footsoldier* on a loop for 24 hours just to reset the karmic balance of the universe thrown off kilter by this stultifyingly wish-washy bilge, and then we have to mop up the puddle of syrup that appears to have leaked out of the computer while this was playing. If they have weddings in Purgatory, this is the first dance at each and every one of them.

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WINNERS

&// PET NEEDS

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