

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 319
June
2023

*"It's only since
I've quit work to
focus on music
full time I've been
able to appreciate
the simplicity of
a hazy Sunday
morning"*

Tom Webbber

Easy like a Sunday morning
with Didcot's soulful troubadour

Also in this issue:

UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH return!

Introducing **DREAM PHONE**

At work with **DEADLY THE ROADIE**

plus

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

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JUNE 2023

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Friday 2nd June

Soul Sista

Summer Loving

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 3rd June

That 70s Club

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 4th June

Chuck Prophet

Doors: 7PM

Friday 9th June

Drum and Bass VS UKG

Doors: 11PM

Monday 12th June

The Oxford Imps

End of Term Extravaganza

Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 13th June

Fluorescent Adolescent

Doors: 11PM

Friday 16th June

The Bully Boiler

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 17th June

Simple

Object Blue & TVSI

Doors: 11PM

Monday 19th June

Isaac Gracie

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 21st June

**Wunderhorse
Eads**

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 22nd June

Alison Russell

Doors: 7PM

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: 7PM

Wednesday 19th July

Rev Peyton's

Big Damn Band

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 22nd July

Reggaeton Party

Doors: 11PM

Friday 28th July

Ang Grupong Pendong

Doors: 6PM

Saturday 29th July

Inair

Detroit Run

Chasing Mallory

Local Support

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 29th July

Terraforms

Twisted Individual

Doors: 11PM

Friday 11th August

Space Elevator

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 12th August

Alyndra Segarra

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 19th August

Special Kinda Madness

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 19th August

Reggaeton Party

Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 22nd August

Sea Power

Doors: 7PM

Friday 25th August

Audio Friends

3LIAS

Maxquerade, Marble Sun, Nazz

Doors: 11PM

Friday 9th September

**Richard Marriott
& Chris Jordan**

Doors: 7PM

Friday 15th September

Badly Drawn Boy *SOLD OUT*

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 21st September

Pierre Novellie:

Why Can't I Just Enjoy Things?

Doors: 7PM

Friday 22nd September

Darren Harriott *Roadman*

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 30th September

Rawdio

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 5th October

Dan Nightingale:
Is Special

Doors: 7PM

Sunday 8th October

Coach Party

Doors: 7PM

Friday 13th October

The Style Councillors

Doors: 7PM

Sunday 15th October

John Kearns:
The Varnishing Days

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 18th October

Dom Martin Band
Delta Fuse

Doors: 7PM

Friday 20th October

Cut Capers

Doors: 7PM

NEWS

email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



DIVINE SCHISM have been talking about the theft of their PA system and the crowdfunder that saw them surpass their target in a matter of hours last month.

The local indie promoters, who celebrated ten years of putting on DIY shows in Oxford with a three-day festival in 2022, discovered their equipment had been stolen at the end of April from a local venue. Aiden Canaday and Richard Bell, who run Divine Schism together, launch a Gofundme campaign to buy a new PA set-up and raised over £5,000 in the space of a day which reflected the high esteem they are held in on both the Oxford and wider indie scene.

Talking to *Nightshift* Aiden said: "It says a lot about the kind of scene we have here that people are willing to fight so hard to keep it alive. We've all felt the pain of losing several much loved venues and even though we're just a small part of what goes on here it was truly humbling to feel the love and support from the music community in our hour of need; it honestly brought us to tears. I guess due to social media, we got a lot of love from around the UK and beyond which I guess goes to show that the Oxford community is on the map musically, as much as it ever has been, which is a massive positive! Now we need to figure out a way to thank everyone and keep it going!"

Divine Schism host two gigs in June. On Friday the 2nd June they host Sly & The Family Drone, Deadpop and Unman at Common Ground on Little Clarendon Street, while on Friday 16th they have Dutch indie band Klittens on at The Library.

CATWEAZLE goes on hiatus for the summer from this month. The long-running open night, which has found a new home at The

Handle Bar since the end of Covid and following the closure of East Oxford Community Centre, is set to return in the autumn.

AGS CONNOLLY, Little Brother Eli and The Epstein are among a host of Oxfordshire acts contributing to a charity album out this month. 'Covered – Pieces For The Head & Heart' is released digitally and on CD on the 26th May in aid of Oxfordshire MIND and Bridewell Gardens Mental Health Recovery and features a selection of blues, Americana and pop acts covering tracks by the likes of Billie Eilish, Tina Turner, Squeeze, A-Ha, The Cars, Fleetwood Mac, John Mayall, The Magnetic Fields, Gloria Gaynor, Eurythmics, Janet Jackson and Paul Simon. Other local acts involved include Lee Christian, Paul McClure and The Glovebox Allstars while Nine Below Zero and Big Boy Bloater also contribute. Order your copy at gloveboxallstars.bandcamp.com.

TRUCK WITNEY host the **Witney Pedal Party** on Saturday 1st July. Chase Bliss, Origin Effects, Rainger FX and Thorpy FX will be in attendance at the free event that takes place in Truck's store in the Woolgate Centre from 12-5pm.

MARK WILDEN returns to Truck Store to host his free open legal surgery for local bands again this month. The intellectual copyright barrister and musician will be on hand to answer any legal or copyright questions from artists on Saturday 10th June from 11am-2pm.

BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD continues to showcase local musical talent 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.



UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH are set to reform for one show later this year. The trio will reunite to celebrate the 25th anniversary of their debut album 'Almost Here' with a gig at **The Jericho Tavern** on the 15th September.

The band – Andy Yorke, Nigel Powell and Jason Moulster – were stars of the 1990s Oxford scene, signed to Virgin and 'Almost Here' reached Number 21 in the UK charts in 1998. They released one more studio album, 'Sorrythankyou', before splitting in 2000.

Talking to *Nightshift* about the reunion show singer Andy said: "For me, there are lots of fond memories of moments, when we were writing and recording 'Almost Here' especially, and some gigs where everything kind of came together musically, like playing second on the bill to Portishead at Route du Rock festival. It was a fraught period for me, trying and mostly failing to do and be what the music industry expected, but writing and playing with Jason and Nigel was always great."

Nigel added: "Andy and Jase have always been my best friends, so we've never been out of touch. We played together for my 50th birthday party in 2021, and this idea developed from there. Our plan is for the main set to be full band, with long-time guitarist Jim Crosskey and Bluetones / Dodgy keyboardist Richard Payne, and all taken from 'Almost Here', including b-sides and stuff. But we're also going to support ourselves as an acoustic 3 piece playing other songs from our career. We're not really planning anything long-term, but that doesn't mean nothing will happen. It just means we're a bit shapeless." Tickets for the Jericho Tavern show are on sale now, priced £15 in advance at Wegotickets.com.



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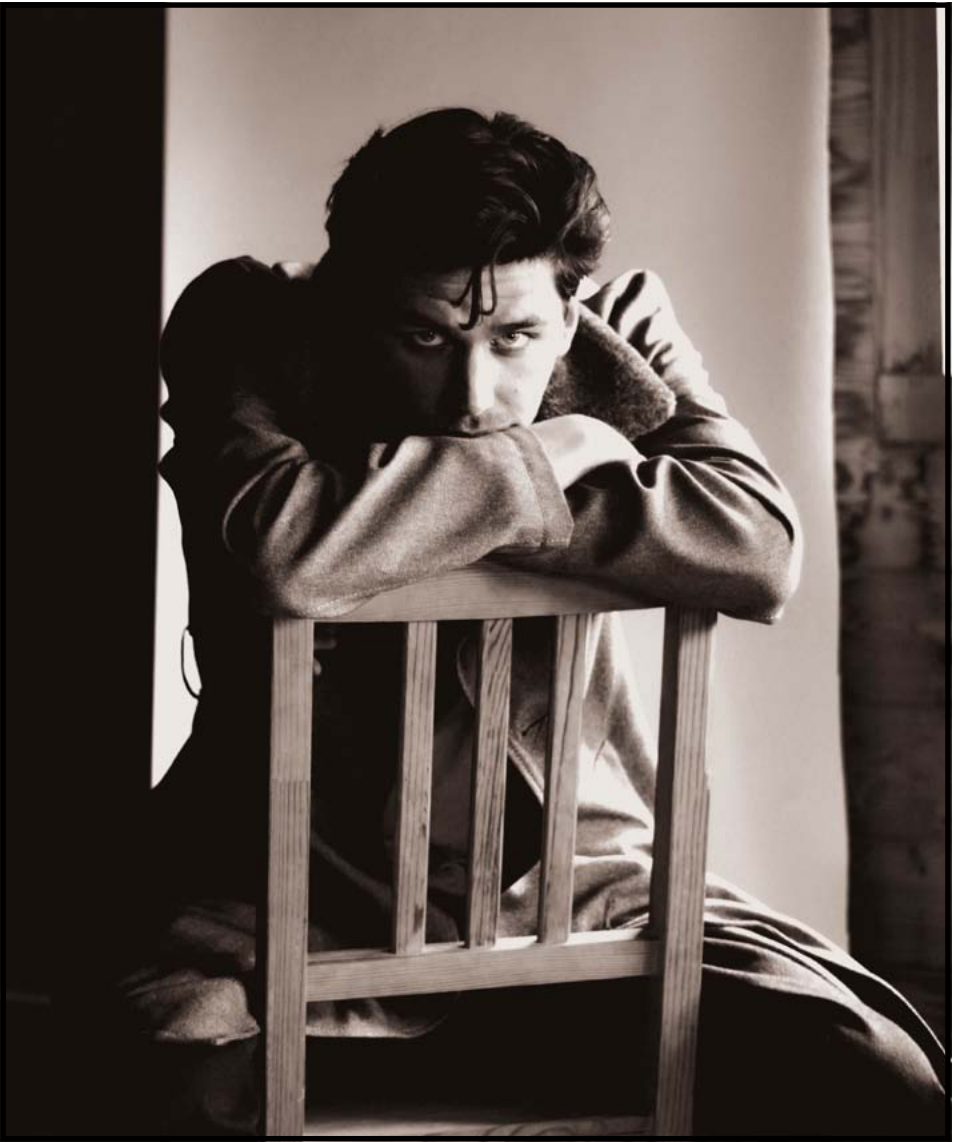
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A quiet word with

Tom Webber



“**MY EARLIEST MEMORIES OF REALLY appreciating music were listening to The Beatles and Beach Boys at about eight years old. Then once I reached 12 or 13 I was heavily into 1950s rock’n’roll music after being introduced to it by my family. Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and Sam Cooke were some which made the biggest impact on me musically and I still enjoy listening to them now amongst different music from all decades. Sometimes if I’m at a loose end writing a song now I’ll go back to those guys to remind myself not to overcomplicate things and keep things simple.**”

TOM WEBBER IS TALKING TO *Nightshift* about his formative musical experiences and influences. In particular those classic early performers whose sound permeates his own songs and singing. Songs that have already seen the 23-year-old singer described as “a timeless star for the future” and earned him a growing reputation as one of the brightest young talents in Oxfordshire. Songs like ‘Martha’, the stand-out cut from his debut EP, and recent single ‘Face In Crowd’, tap into a rough-hewn but easy form of soul and

rock’n’roll, with even a hint of skiffle in the mix. It’s seen him compared favourably to Sam Cooke and Richard Hawley as well as the urban soul of Jake Bugg and earned him slots at festivals like Glastonbury and WOMAD as well as a tour support to the great Nick Lowe.

NOT BAD FOR A YOUNG LAD FROM Didcot who began his life busking on the streets and playing in the less celebrated pubs of south Oxfordshire. “I did more busking than I did open mic nights as I found it less nerve racking playing to strangers on the streets of Oxford than I did performing to fellow musicians in a local pub,” Tom says, remembering his earliest experiences of playing live. “It also meant I could sing whatever I liked for however long I liked and it wouldn’t matter if I messed up as I would just make it up as I went along! When I wasn’t playing blues and rock’n’roll covers I would try out some of the songs I had written which were probably terrible but it gave me the confidence to start writing more. They were received fairly well by the public considering I was winging it. Apart from one lady

on Broad Street who once threatened to phone the police on me; she wasn’t a fan. I later discovered it was because I was performing in a no busking spot, but it just so happened to be my highest earning show to that date. So I’m not sure what the moral of that story is.”

TOM FIRST CAME TO NIGHTSHIFT’S attention toward the end of 2021 when he released his first EP ‘Stop & Think About It’ and played his first gig proper in Oxford, opening at The Jericho Tavern. ‘Martha’ from that EP was the song that really grabbed our attention – a wonderful slice of romantic soul music that first drew those Sam Cooke comparisons. “I wrote ‘Martha’ in the same day as ‘Words I Love To Hear’ from the same EP and, like most people at the time, I was spending my life in lockdown having very little communication with the outside world. I can’t remember what the initial spark was which fuelled the melody but I knew I wanted to write about connecting with someone and caring for them. I now look back and think writing that song acted as some kind of release, a subconscious move made to distract me from the fact we couldn’t have any contact or connection with anyone outside the house no matter how hard we wanted it. Of all my songs I perform ‘Martha’ always seems to connect well with the audience and we have had a few Marthas in audiences in the last few months!” Was Tom surprised by the reception ‘Stop & Think About It’ got, given it was his first release? “When I released the EP I was hoping for a few people to listen to it and enjoy it obviously, but I never thought it would open some of the doors it has done for me so far. When I hear it now I listen with my cynical ears and think how much I would change it if I were to record it now. However, because it was my first time recording and releasing anything – as this was part of my final course work at uni – it has a slight naive charm to it which keeps it quite authentic I feel. So I like it in that sense.

THE EP RELEASE VERY QUICKLY pricked some influential ears and Tom was picked to support Nick Lowe on his UK tour; what was it like to go on tour with someone who has living legend status and did Tom get to take any particular advice or lessons away from the experience? “Getting the chance to go on tour with Nick was a great privilege. My manager had worked with him in the past and the opportunity came up as Nick was looking for a support; maybe it was right place right time. He’s one of England’s finest songwriters and to watch someone like him perform each night really taught me how much of a craftsman and performer he is. He has impeccable microphone control when singing low/high/soft/loud vocal lines, I had never thought about how important it is to move closer, further back and side to side from the mic at certain times in a song until I saw him do it every night. To this day I still use those tips when performing.” And you supported Richard Hawley too; you’ve

been compared to him but is he an influence or someone you feel an affinity with musically and lyrically? “Supporting Richard was another surreal moment on my musical journey as I’ve loved his music ever since I was 10 years old. I first heard his song ‘Tonight The Streets Are Ours’ in the intro to the Banksy film, *Exit Through The Gift Shop* and have been a fan ever since. I’ve always admired the fact he writes and sings songs which sound as though they could have been written in 1959 and 2023 at the same time; it’s timeless music, which is something I really appreciate musically.” Prestige shows for sure and last summer saw Tom picked to play several festivals both locally and further afield. “Playing a handful of festivals around the UK last year was the best experience a young whippersnapper from Didcot like myself could have wished for. Getting the chance to play Glastonbury was the greatest honour. And actually seeing Paul McCartney play the Pyramid Stage felt like a full circle moment for me, knowing I probably wouldn’t have even been there if it weren’t for his music influencing me to get into music in the first place. Truck Festival was another big one for me. Not only did it feel like playing on home turf, it was also the first time I saw people on shoulders at one of my shows. WOMAD was another one of my favourites: so eclectic and a great crowd and to bump into Peter Gabriel walking across the fields and have a chat made it for me!”

THIS MONTH TOM RELEASES HIS latest music – a double A-side single, ‘Lightning Strike of 22’ and ‘Sunday Morning’. For all its thoughtfulness, ‘Lightning Strike of 22’ sounds incredibly optimistic; would Tom consider himself an optimistic person? “I’d say I’m an optimistic person when things are looking good on the horizon. Generally, I’d like to think I’m positive about most things most of the time. But like everyone in this world, what comes up must come down. Each day I get older, I realise how important the ups and downs are. The low points make us appreciate the highs in life.” The song was inspired by a deep, drunken, philosophical conversation Tom had with his brother during a thunderstorm last year; what sort of stuff did the pair talk about, what if any conclusions did they come to? “My brother and I spoke about where we were headed life-wise. Everything from working life to general happiness. And after coming home from an evening of drinking in the pub with mates, it helped us grasp a simpler grip of where we were at that time. You could argue it was the influence of alcohol, yes, but forgetting about the bad things and appreciating how lucky we actually felt.” ‘Sunday Morning’ similarly has a great easy vibe about it; what’s the best thing about Sunday mornings and does Tom think Sunday mornings for people are the same today as they were, say, 50 years ago? “Sunday Mornings will always be what they always have been: easy. It’s only since I’ve quit work to focus on music full time I’ve been able to appreciate the simplicity of a sometimes hungover or hazy Sunday morning. Everyone from The Velvet Underground to Maroon 5 has sung about a Sunday morning, and ‘why’ is the question I asked myself when coming up with this tune. I realise because it’s the one time of the week you have

to yourself or with loved ones where you aren’t hassled and you can get away with not doing anything.”

TOM’S PREVIOUS SINGLE, ‘FACE IN The Crowd’, released earlier this year, was a celebration of the place where he came from and where he’s known and feels like home; what are his feelings about growing up in Didcot – is it somewhere he imagines escaping from? “I think ‘Face In The Crowd’ will always be a special song for me personally. As it’s about my hometown where I’ve lived my 23 years now. The song is an observation of the ideology towns like Didcot live by. Everybody knows something about

someone when you live in a small or medium sized area. You’re not just another face in a crowd, you’re a face which makes the town what it is. The community knows you and you know the community. Like everyone in their home towns, there are times when you want to leave and escape. But most of the time, you enjoy the fact you feel like part of the furniture and everyone stops and talks to you in the street.” Is there a supportive music scene in south Oxfordshire, has he found? “I find that there’s always music somewhere in the area but you have to know where to look to find the good stuff. I experienced some of the best nights as a punter in country pubs around the local area which are right under my nose. It’s the ones you just stumble upon which stand out as most memorable. BMW (Boon, Mew and Wooster) are one of my favourites to watch around here. In terms of support for the industry itself around here, I would love to see more festival type outdoor events with local artists from the local music scene.” And you’ve been championed a lot in Reading by Club Velocity; how’s Reading been for you and how different is it to the Oxford scene? “In terms of experience and exposure, I owe a lot to Club Velocity. Sid is a legendary promoter in Reading who I met at my first gig at the Dolphin in Wallingford back in 2021. And from thereon in he gave me the opportunity to build stagecraft and experience by giving me slots to support acts like John Otway, The Hawkmen and Nicky Booty. Thanks to him, I was able to learn the ropes playing live to an audience from an early stage and to have them now singing the songs themselves at gigs and I’ll always be grateful for that. Being an Oxfordshire born boy, strangely I have played more shows in Reading than I have in Oxford so it wouldn’t be fair to differentiate which is better for the music scene.”

TALKING OF OXFORD ITSELF, TOM will play his first headline show in the city this month when he performs at The Jericho Tavern on the 8th June. How is he feeling about that? “I can’t wait. I have played there once before and it was my second gig performing solo and I’m excited to do it this time with the band behind me. There’s going to be loads of songs not heard before as well as a few older ones which will make for a quality set. And with accompaniment of bass and drums it allows me to do songs I wouldn’t

“Supporting Richard Hawley was surreal. I’ve loved his music ever since I was 10 years old”

normally do acoustic on my own. I have had great support from the likes of BBC Introducing Oxford and played live with them a number of times so I feel a good Oxford connection – I really hope BBC Introducing continues – it’s a great avenue for new artists.” You played your earlier shows in Wallingford and Didcot and built a good following there; was there a feeling of being separate or apart from Oxford’s music scene? “I’ve played in Didcot and Wallingford a few times now and it’s always nice to play on solid home ground. Those are the types of gigs where you have to step the game up even more so than usual because the folks coming to those gigs have probably already seen you play before and it’s got to be better than before. So I’m always conscious it has been the best of the best I can possibly be when playing locally. In terms of differences between local town gigs in comparison to Oxford, I’d say they’re very similar. Aside from the fact there is probably more competition in the city. Coming from Didcot, which is a short train ride away, I’ve never felt segregated from the Oxford music scene but that said, it will be nice to dip my toes further into the deep end of the scene there.”

AND AFTER THAT GIG THE REST OF 2023 is looking busy for Tom. Festivals are set to take a backseat as he concentrates on writing and recording more songs for future release, while more industry movers and shakers are waking up to his very substantial talents. “After ‘Lightning Strike Of ’22’ and ‘Sunday Morning’ is released there will be more music to follow. A few singles and EPs. Everything is recorded and sounds good. I’m really looking forward to joining a writing week with other writers from all over the world hosted by Chris Difford in Somerset and sponsored by the Buddy Holly Foundation; that’s going to be really interesting and a real opportunity. I’m also involved in a film project about the legendary 1960s producer Joe Meek in which I have written lyrics and added vocals to a recently re-discovered backing track performed by The Honeycombs which I have titled ‘Forbidden Love’. The film is called *The Unexpected Return Of Joe Meek*; it will be coming out in early 2024.”

SO IT SEEMS THAT TOM WEBBER IS a name you’re likely to hear a lot more of over the next year or so as his star continues to rise. Classic and timeless are adjectives wholly suited to his music, and who know, if ‘Sunday Morning’ is anything to go by he might even help start a whistling revival. Does he think whistling a lost art in pop music? “I can’t remember the last contemporary song I heard where someone whistled in it. But if John Lennon, Paul McCartney and David Bowie did it, it’s enough to tell me it works. I think it’s an art form in itself which needs to come back. Personally, I don’t understand why it ever went out of fashion. Perhaps because it’s too jovial, or too cheesy, or only for the shower? I’m not sure. But it’s an instrument in its own right. I heard once, the perfect pop song is something *everyone* and *anyone* can sing along to. Most people can whistle, so they should do it more.”

‘Lightning Strike of ’22 /Sunday Morning’ are out now; Tom Webber plays The Jericho Tavern on Thursday 8th June.

RELEASED

DREAM PHONE

‘Dream Phone’

(*Divine Schism*)

If Dream Phone were once just another guitar/drums duo – albeit one with the very fine songcraft you would expect from members of Basic Dicks, Junk Whale and Worry – in this new form they’re the best band in the city. After the computer count-in, the intertwining keyboard and guitar hooks of ‘strut’ kick us off, giving an indication of the brash hyperpop territory we’re headed for, but it’s the vocals that make the Dream-sound extraordinary. Aggressively autotuned, yes, but often to the point of admirable out-of-tune-ness, an amped-up flutter of modulation that feels bracing, attritional, invigorating. The way Jenny Bell and Hannah Watts turn the machines against themselves is the punkest thing; a welcome anti-Grimes effect that antagonistically re-inserts the human into the electronics.

On top of all that, the songwriting is just great. At 2:29, ‘strut’ is the EP’s longest track, and the structure is classic; it even has a bridge. Thrill to the anthemic tempo giving way to a double-time riff-reprise! ‘hell’ is funkier: glistening, glissing synths see-sawing, reflecting the



protagonist’s unease. ‘bad girls’ is the loudest of a loud bunch, pushing the 100 gees whimsy up to 11; bar-room-ballad closer ‘I don’t want to talk to you (at the show)’ deftly weaves together the EP’s ambivalent themes: isolation, self-knowledge, human connection, the radical potential of rocking out – and it’s these themes, expressed so joyously, so inventively, in a way that will annoy all the right people, that make Dream Phone the quintessential punk band of now.

Mike Smith

met with tremolo picking and a crescendo that leaves the listener wanting to put this on all over again; it’s killer material that makes us wonder – where will this band go next?

Caitlin Helm

BEARD OF DESTINY

‘Ted Ate Keith’

(*Self released*)

One of the under-sung stalwarts of the Oxford scene under his guise of Beard Of Destiny and previously bassist with The Mighty Redox, Gray Barlow hits the digital age with the release of this three-song EP, displaying both sides of his blues persona. Best of the three is lead track ‘Hubba Bubba’, a harder-edged slug of rocking blues with nicely gnarly guitar, growled vocals and a driving sense of purpose that hints towards the pub rock that preceded punk, although ‘Ted Ate Keith’ is likably geezerish whimsy, likely the only song you’re likely to hear this year or next about a pet dog who eats the pet budgie he’s jealous of only to be haunted by the hapless bird. Less appealing is the more laidback ‘Ten Pence Man’, which lacks the oomph of the opener and the character of the previous song. It’s perhaps more suited to some of the Sunday afternoon sessions which Beard Of Destiny are regulars at, but overall this is easily digested, sometimes fun music that might not set out to change the world but likely helps the beer slip down more easily.

John Leeson

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ANT KELLY

‘Seaspray’

(*Self released*)

Ant Kelly is best known as the front man of The Shapes and The Factory Lights, a songwriter with a rich sense of local nostalgia both for East Oxford and his working class Irish roots. Both are much to the fore on this compact but gently classy solo debut album.

The title track and album opener once again shows Kelly’s natural way with a good hook as he captures the freshness of standing by the sea and the way it conjures a sense of wellbeing. It’s a rare moment of optimism though on a record that is heavy on reflection, particularly for those no longer with us. Among those are the wife of a good friend who died during lockdown on the solemn piano ballad ‘Some People’, and even more poignantly the Irish singer and musician Bobby Bible on ‘The Ballad of Bobby G’, who died in an accident on the way to a gig. The latter is a richly textured lament for a lost talent.

Album closer ‘The Last Time’ is an uncomplicated hoedown that used to be part of The Shapes’ live set but here signs things off with an air of musical if not lyrical positivity, but it’s ‘My Boreen Green’ that is the stand-out song, a song about Ant’s Irish father who came to Oxford aged just 19 with nothing but hope for a brighter future and who found work at the Cowley car plant, and by extension the entire Irish diaspora who still hunger for the homeland generations later. It allows Kelly to explore his love for Irish folk music, which he only touches on in his other bands, and if it’s more Fureys than Pogues compared to The Shapes’ roustabout ‘Til They Put Me In The Ground’, it’s gently stirring, evocative and nostalgic without being mawkish.

While ‘Seaspray’ is a solo album, Kelly is joined by a cast of musicians throughout who add texture and variety, none more so than Salma Craig, whose backing vocals lift every song she’s involved in to a higher level. It makes for a pleasingly personal, emotive and musically varied experience.

Dale Kattack



JONNY PAYNE & THE

THUNDER

‘End of Summer’

(*Self released*)

Lamenting the summer is over before it has even begun seems pretty apt for the state of the nation right now, but chronology aside the latest single from Jonny Payne & The Thunder is the perfect tune for sitting in the shade on another “hottest since records began” day, with a cold drink, begging there to be another surprise bank holiday.

Channelling Wilco with a slice of hazy slacker energy, the thick guitars groove along, breaking apart in a scrappy cacophony halfway through before following the dynamics of the intro back down to one simple, infectious guitar lick. It’s not hard to imagine this as a mid-set festival highlight with every single person in a bone-dry field singing their hearts out whilst spilling their fruity ciders. Coming in at just under three minutes there’s no fat on the bones, no extraneous extra verses, just a rock-solid anthem for bittersweet holidays that never last long enough.

Following a series of excellent singles over the last six months, it seems Jonny is pushing

HE DIDNT

‘(sic)’

(*Drone Alone*)

Like cookbooks whose purpose is to create recipes using the fewest possible ingredients, He Didnt is capable of creating sumptuous noise while appearing to do very little. Nick Peel, the sole member of the band, uses sparse, plucked notes or washes of distortion to build his often stark guitar dronescapes and nothing else bar some middle-distance ooh-oohs on opening track ‘Trouble Every Day’, a brooding slo-core piece that mushrooms into a final minute of industrial buzzsaw.

‘Econowives’ draws him close to Sonic Youth’s orbit but it’s ‘Diversion Earth’ that provides the EP’s centrepiece, all minimalist repetition, microfuzz and pensive atmospherics that is very much more than the sum of its scant parts.

Another deceptively intriguing offering from an act whose dedication to cutting out anything superfluous is such he doesn’t even allow himself an apostrophe in his band name.

Dale Kattack

hard with his eyes only looking upwards.

With a few lucky rolls of the cosmic music industry dice, ‘End Of Summer’ absolutely should be pumping out of every windows-down hatchback stuck in the queues at Dover all summer long.

Matt Chapman Jones

SLOW DRIFT

‘Sports’

(*Self released*)

A dreamy, mellow, warm hug of a track from Oxford/Canadian duo Slow Drift. They’ve recorded with their members in multiple continents after starting up during Covid lockdown and doing what needed to be done to make music when physically separated. That physical distance doesn’t stop their music sounding intimate, organised and just as pleasing as if the band members were huddled in the same room.

As with so much music recorded recently, we get strong 1980s synth-pop/electronic music vibes from ‘Sports’. In particular, the muted joy of very early Human League seems a touchpoint – technology wrangled to display emotion. The track has a rather traditional song structure, placing it as future-observing synth-pop rather than as misanthropic oddness (cf. Cabaret Voltaire or Throbbing Gristle). The ethereal vocals are something like a more robust Liz Fraser, or a less wispy Enya. ‘Sports’ even taps at the door of the Field Mice, when that band was doing more electronic work – it shares a similar thoughtful, melancholic feel.

The song is rich and deep enough to move it beyond being a simple pastiche of music gone by. In a similar way to the appallingly-named chillwave of a decade or so ago, Slow Drift sound of the moment, but it’s a moment wrapped up in immediate digital access to the past.

Simon Minter

CIRCLE

‘Seasons’

(*Self released*)

Well, this one is a delight. ‘Seasons’, the third album by Circle, is not something we would normally pick up off the shelf, preferring something with a heavier sound, but sometimes change is a good thing.

Dual vocalists Livy Watson and Harriet Van der Vliet harmonise beautifully, recalling groups like The Unthanks or First Aid Kit. They’re supported by astute production and keyboards from Ashley Goodall as each of the ten tracks on the album manage to dodge melancholy and move the sound closer to Kate Bush’s ‘Wuthering Heights’.

As the press release for ‘Seasons’ notes, Circle have been played on Scala radio so that should give you a sense of the relaxed nature of the album: nothing here goes over 100 BPM, some moving closer to 60 BPM. It certainly isn’t Pendulum, but for a relaxing evening’s listening this definitely hits the spot.

Damon Boughen

AGS CONNOLLY

‘Siempre’

(*Self released*)

Coincidence has it that as we sit down to review Ags Connolly’s fourth album ‘Siempre’ (“Always”) the lunchtime news on the radio tells us of the passing of the singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot. Lightfoot was such an avowed foundational root to Ags’ emotional storytelling style, since he’d discovered him in 1998, that he eventually covered the singer’s ‘Early Morning Rain’ on his own third album ‘Wrong Again’.

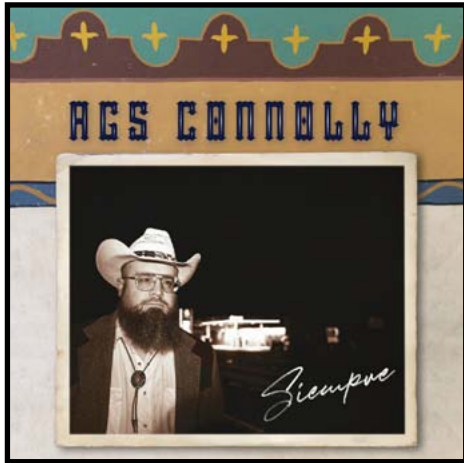
The pair’s core tenet of lyrical strength and faultless phrasing is still here in this new collection, and once again we feel like we are cheating on our undying love of his previous songs by embracing so eagerly these fresh Petrarchan despairs and hopes. Ags really is an astonishingly gifted country songwriter.

This time he leaves the pedal steel in the rear-view mirror as he heads metaphorically South, down Mexico way. Michael Guerra’s button accordion is once again his wingman with Ags teaching himself the Baja Quinto’s crisp jangle to authenticate and skip through the Norteno-infused Czech polkas of ‘Change My Mind’ and ‘Senora’ in jaunty fashion. The sunlit instrumentation continues to dapple even the shaded moments, shifting the moods, dispelling any sense of gloom in the slow barroom waltz ‘Overwhelmed’, while his cover of Wes McGhee’s ‘Half Forgotten Tunes’ shows just how skilled he is at compressing the original rambling lines into his own immovable sentiments.

But mostly this is Ags’ love letter to Texas written on the tequila-stained bar napkins of the honkytonks and cantinas of the borderlands. Nobody, but nobody, does lost and oceans apart love like Ags. His unique, maple soaked, seared-steak voice knows that the heart has more than six strings and here again the killer lines pluck every last one of them. In ‘Turns Out’ he asides “Love told me it was now or never, and never came through once again,” and then in the very last line of this whole session it is the exquisitely sculptured “You’d be wonderful for me and I’d be good for you,” sung in a way that would have made Jim Reeves say “I’ll get my coat”.

They say in music you are only as good as your last album; ‘Siempre’ simply confirms Ags is as great as his last four.

Paul Carrera



GIG GUIDE

THURSDAY 1st
MICHAELA ANNE: **The Jericho Tavern** – Soulful Americana from the rising Nashville star – *see main preview*
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: **The Fox Inn, Steventon** – Tom Dalby hosts a weekly open mic session.

FRIDAY 2nd
SLY & THE FAMILY DRONE + DEADPOP + UNMAN: **Common Ground** – Hypnotic, chaotic psych-rock art-noise and abstract space-jazz experimentation from the fourth wall-battering collective, back in Oxfordshire after shows at Supernormal previously.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE MIGHTY REDOX + MOTHER FOLKERS + JOURNEYMAN + MOJO DEMON: **Gladiator Club** – KK’s monthly shindig welcomes its own

Thursday 1st
MICHAELA ANNE:
The Jericho Tavern
With her superb 2019 album ‘Desert Dove’, her first for Yep Roc, Nashville resident Michaela Anne dared to take traditional country music in a different direction; from the silvery vocal delivery, through the fuzzed-up electric guitar and strings where a pedal steel might otherwise have been, to the dreamy, almost ethereal atmosphere of her songs, it avoided so many of the genres clichés. It earned her rave reviews with *Rolling Stone* hailing it as one of the finest modern country and America records with comparisons to Angelo Badalamenti sitting next to those to Brandi Carlile, Kacey Musgrave and Emmylou Harris. If ‘Desert Dove’ reinvented Anne as an artist her follow-up, ‘Oh To Be That Free’, finds her trying to reinvent herself as a person. Amid the pandemic and coming to terms with her drinking, she discovered she was pregnant and then found herself caring for her severely ill mother who had suffered a stroke. The new album is, understandably, full of self reflection as she seeks to find a new form of freedom in life. Soundwise it’s rootsier than its predecessor but still not a typical Nashville sounding album, the honky tonk softened by her tender, empathetic lyricism and vocal delivery. Tonight’s gig, for Empty Room Promotions – who else – is her Oxford debut and a suitably intimate setting to experience songs straight from the heart.



June

hosts, The Mighty Redox to the party with their lively mix of blues, funk, ska, folk and more.
SOUL SISTA: **The Bullingdon** – Funk, soul and disco club night.
SUPernaut: **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Black Sabbath tribute.

SATURDAY 3rd
JOHN COOPER CLARKE: **Oxford Playhouse** – Manchester’s titan of scabrous wit and legendary punk poet JCC returns to Oxford, continuing to explore the gutter and the sky in his undiminished sardonic style, the godfather of slam poetry and a rhyming genius with few peers on classic cuts like ‘Beasley Street’, ‘I Wanna Be Yours’, ‘Evidently Chickentown’ and ‘Twat’.
HIPSHAKIN’: **The Harcourt Arms** – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul from the Hipshakin’ DJs.
LANTERNS ON THE LAKE: **Truck Store (1pm)** - Instore show in conjunction with new album ‘Visions of Us’.
IN-FLIGHT MOVIE + JUNIPER NIGHTS + TIGER MENDOZA: **The Port Mahon** – *OMS* magazine host a local bands showcase with Flight Movie mixing 80s electro-pop with the darker tones of post-punk, kind of where Depeche Mode meet Joy Division. They’re joined by indie-rockers Juniper Nights and atmospheric electronic, industrial and hip hop star Tiger Mendoza.
METAL 2 THE MASSES: **The Jericho Tavern** – BOTB to win a slot at this summer’s Bloodstock.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: **The Chequers, Headington** – Blues and rock classics from the veteran local guitarist and chums.

SUNDAY 4th
CHUCK PROPHET & MISSION EXPRESS: **The Bullingdon** – Return to town for the Titan of the Telecaster – *see main preview*
OPEN MIC: **The Harcourt Arms**
SUNDAY SOCIAL: **The Port Mahon (3pm)** – Live blues, folk, roots and Americana.
PETE FRYER BAND: **The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)**
FOLK SESSION: **The Half Moon** – Weekly Irish folk session.
OPEN MIC: **James Street Tavern (3pm)** –

MONDAY 5th
OPEN MIC: **Red Lion, Eynsham**

TUESDAY 6th

WEDNESDAY 7th
BONNIE RAITT: **The New Theatre** – a bona fide living legend in town as the first lady of blues-rock and roots-rock returns to the New Theatre, with a fifty-year career behind her and still picking up the awards and critical plaudits to

go alongside the dozen or so Grammys already on her mantelpiece. She continues to defy the years, possessed of a powerful voice as well as being one of the finest blues-rock guitar virtuosos alive. From drug casualty to international rock star she’s been there and done it all and this time round is touring her 18th studio album, ‘Just Like That...’, the title track of which just won her another Grammy for Best Song.
ARTISAN BLUES: **The New Theatre Piano Bar** – Bonnie Raitt pre-show warm-up set from the local blues outfit.

THURSDAY 8th
TOM WEBBER: **The Jericho Tavern** – Smalltown soul from the rising local singer and this month’s cover star – *see main feature*
CRAMPED & CRANKED + THE BROOK ELLINGWORTH BAND: **The Library**
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: **The Fox Inn, Steventon**

FRIDAY 9th
KITE FESTIVAL: **Kirtlington Country Park** – Opening day of the second Kite Fest with live music, talks, comedy and more, including headliners Suede, The Pretenders and Hot Chip – *see main preview*
WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL: **The Leys, Witney** – The closing two-day extravaganza of Witney’s annual music fortnight opens with a headline set from The Marley Experience, who are joined by The Britpop Band, Ilseleena, Fallen Angels and Dolly Mavies.
MASTER DOG: **The Port Mahon**
BLUE FRIDAY SESSION: **The Midget, Abingdon** – A night of acoustic blues.
DNB Vs UKG: **The Bullingdon** – Drum&bass and UK Garage club night.
INDIE DISCO: **Tap Social** – 80s and 90s indie classics on vinyl with DJ Dominic Utton.

SATURDAY 10th
KITE FESTIVAL: **Kirtlington Country Park**
NINE-TON PEANUT SMUGGLERS: **Harcourt Arms** – 60s-style ska and ska-jazz.
JERICHO STREET FAIR: **Jericho** – Full day of live music and family activities on and around Walton Street, with The Mighty Redox, The Pete Fryer Band, Killer Kowalski, The Greylags, Jesters, Holy Fools and more playing on the Old Bookbinders stage.
WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL: **The Leys, Witney** – The final night of the Witney festival features a headline set from Phats & Small. They’re joined by Happy Mondays’ Bez for a DJ set as well as a live PA from Rowetta, plus sets from Jilted Generation; South Arcade; The Skadinals; Crowd Control Collective; Sons of the Seventies; The Subtheory; Lightning Threads, and The Scott Gordon Band.

SUNDAY 11th
KITE FESTIVAL: **Kirtlington Country Park**
OPEN MIC: **The Harcourt Arms**
SUNDAY SOCIAL: **The Port Mahon (3pm)**
THE MIGHTY REDOX: **The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)**

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

MONDAY 12th
CIRCA WAVES: **O2 Academy** – Liverpool’s enduring 00s indie rock nostalgists tour their new album ‘Never Going Under’.

TUESDAY 13th
LUKAS NELSON & PROMISE OF THE REAL: **O2 Academy** – The Willie Nelson-loving, Neil Young-collaborating Californian country rockers come to the UK to tour new album ‘Sticks and Stones’.
FLUORESCENT ADOLESCENTS: **The Bullingdon** – Indie club night.
INTRUSION: **Kiss Bar** – Monthly goth, industrial, EBM and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 14th
EMILY NENNI: **The Jericho Tavern** – Honky tonk country from one of the rising stars of the Nashville scene at tonight’s Empty Room show, the singer and guitarist over in the UK to tour her

Sunday 4th
CHUCK PROPHET & THE MISSION EXPRESS:
The Bullingdon
Empty Room Promotions continue to do what they have long since done best – bringing the cult heroes of Americana to Oxford. None more so than Chuck Prophet, back in town for his first show in town since 2014. Chuck is a very much in the A-list of cult American roots-rock heroes, having made his name in the 1980s fronting Green On Red, before going solo in the 90s. Since then he’s played alongside Jonathan Richman, Warren Zevon, Lucinda Williams and country singer Kelly Willis, widely renowned as a master of the Telecaster, a versatile guitarist inspired by the likes of Dick Dale, Neil Young and Clarence White, while in his own right he’s pursued a career that’s found favour more with critics than the public at large, in the main due to his unwillingness to get too comfortable or play too fully to fans’ expectations. Notable high points over the years have been ‘Age Of Miracles’, where country and rock’n’roll mixed unexpectedly with blues and hip hop, and the political ‘Let Freedom Ring’, which, like Springsteen, took the disenfranchised blue-collar worker as a starting point for a wider comment on American society. Comparisons to Ray Davies, Tom Petty and Alex Chilton point to the high esteem the man is held in, but over a 40 year career, he’s never been anything other than his own man.



‘On The Ranch’ album, inspired by Patsy Cline, Hank Williams and Willie Nelson.

THURSDAY 15th
GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + BARRELHAUS + LOST IN LONGPLAY: **The Library** – Elegant, abrasive post-rock and shoegaze soundscaping from Ghost in the Photographs, joined by groove-heavy rockers BarrelHaus and more.
KILLER KOWALSKI + LAKE ACACIA + HELEN PEARSON: **The Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music local showcase with scabrous, funky post-punk from this month’s Top Track act Killer Kowalski and more.
BILL & THE BELLES: **St. Nicholas Church, Baulking** – Pre-60s r’n’b, swing, bluegrass, hillbilly folk and boogie woogie from songsmith Kris Truelsen and his gang.
MOONRAKERS + DAN KEMP: **The Unicorn, Abingdon** – Celtic folk from The Moonrakers.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: **Fox Inn, Steventon**

FRIDAY 16th
BOSSAPHONIK presents ALOGTE OHO & HIS SOUNDS OF JOY: **Cowley Workers Social Club** – Joyous highlife, funk and Ghanaian gospel from the Frafra star – *see main preview*
THE KYND + INSTITUTES + SIRACUSE: **The Jericho Tavern** – Jangly power pop in the vein of The Beatles, Pink Floyd and REM from 90s survivors The Kynd, back with their second album, ‘Timelines’. They’re joined for tonight’s Speakeasy show by recent Inspirial Carpets supports Institutes.
THE KLITTENS: **The Library** – Lo-fi fuzz-pop from Netherlands DIYers Klittens who’ve shared a stage with fellow Dutch bands Personal Trainer and Pip Blom along the way to releasing their debut EP ‘Citrus’.
OSMOSIS: **The Port Mahon**
WANNABE: **The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Spice Girls tribute.

SATURDAY 17th
GLOFEST / FLOFEST: **Florence Park** – The community-run two-festivals-in-one returns for a day of musical celebration in Florence Park. Flofest is the free, daytime family-friendly event, running from 11am through to 4.30pm. On the mainstage are Funkin’ Souled out; Whynotfrank; Lilibet; Horns of Plenty; Feisty Choir and Lucy Leave, while the second stage features The Hot Crumpets; Sam Twigg & the Some; Oxford Ukulele Chords; The Mighty Redox and more. From 6pm through to 11pm it’s Glofest, a ticketed music event. Headlining will be recent *Nightshift* covers stars Kanadia, who’re joined by DJ Magnum OX4; Jody & The Jermis; Tiece & the Pieces; Sol Samba and DJ Kwassa Kwassa, while DJ James Ussher will play his traditional closing set accompanied by a laser display.
THIS IS THE KIT: **Truck Store (5pm)** – The folktronica outfit plays songs from new album ‘Careful of Your Keepers’.
BARRICANE: **The Harcourt Arms** – Ghostly harmony-led folk and shoegazey indie from the local stars.
SIMPLE: **The Bullingdon** – House and techno club night with sets from Blue and TVSI.
METAL 2 THE MASSES: **The Jericho Tavern**



Friday 9th – Sunday 11th
KITE FESTIVAL:
Kirtlington Country Park

After last year’s successful launch which featured some superb sets from Grace Jones, Self Esteem and Confidence Man among others, the self-described festival of music and ideas returns to Kirtlington, once again mixing up live music with talks – from politics to food to literature – comedy, poetry, discussions and more. On the music front there are headline sets from **SUEDE**, **THE PRETENDERS** and **HOT CHIP**, who’ll be joined on the main stage by soul legend **CANDI STATON**, set to play as part of a farewell tour, electro-pop star **ALISON GOLDFRAPP**, **DJANGO DJANGO** and **EZRA COLLECTIVE**. Like last year Heavenly Records will be hosting the second stage where live music and talks mingle. **BAXTER DURY**; **SOFIA KOURTESIS**; **DECIUS**; **DAVID HOLMES**; **MIKI BERENYI**; **SARATHY KORWAR** and **MAUSKOVIC DANCE BAND** are among the highlights, while Skylark Social hosts **PRIMA QUEEN**, **SWEET BABOO** and **YAMA WARASHI** among a host of other acts. If your brain needs a work out as well as your dancing shoes, the ideas side of the weekend features a diverse cast including **GEORGE THE POET**; **MARINA HYDE**; **LAYLA MORAN**; **HENRY DIMBLEBY**; **BRIAN BILSTON**; **GRACE DENT** and **STELLA RIMINGTON** among many more. It’s a welcome addition to the local festival calendar, organised by the people behind Love Supreme, a relaxed weekend where you can learn stuff in between watching live bands and knowledge, as we all know, is as dangerous as any rock and roll.

THE MARK HARRISON BAND: **The Cornerstone, Didcot** – The renowned finger-picker and slide guitar player tours his new album, ‘The Road To Liberty’.



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KING AWESOME: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to 80s arena rock.

SUNDAY 18th
OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Port Mahon (3pm) – Live blues, folk, roots and Americana.

MONDAY 19th
ISAAC GRACIE: The Bullingdon – Alternately epic and melancholic pastoral folk-pop in the vein of Ryan Adams and Jeff Buckley from the London-based singer-songwriter.

TUESDAY 20th
WEDNESDAY 21st

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 fashioned Led Zep riffage. The band are touring debut album ‘Cub’ and will be back in the Shire later in the summer when they play Truck Festival.

Friday 16th
BOSSAPHONIK presents ALOGTE
OHO & HIS SOUNDS
OF JOY: Cowley
Workers Social Club
Bossaphonik have long been a beacon for world jazz dance in Oxford, Dan Ofer and crew championing artists from across the globe and bringing to town artists who otherwise would never make it to Oxford. So when Dan says he’s particularly excited about an act it’s wise to sit up and pay attention. Alogte Oho is a popular Frafra gospel musician from Bolgatanga in northern Ghana. He grew up fascinated by the Frafra choirs in his local churches and adding celebratory highlife music and deep pockets of afro-funk to the mix, he became a renowned star in the region. But when German producer and label honcho Max Weissenfeldt visited Ghana and chanced upon him things really took off. Weissenfeldt began producing him and subsequently brought him to an international audience. Gilles Peterson brought him to the UK for his Worldwide festival and declared Oho and his band to be the best thing he’d ever seen at the event. Three-way female harmonies, synths and horns with strong funk and dub influences make Alogte and his band a fresh new Frafra strain of Afro-futurism and tonight, with the band on a mammoth tour to promote second album ‘O Yinne!’, promises to be one of the most fun, celebratory nights of the year in Oxford.



NORMA WINSTONE: Iffley Church Hall – The renowned jazz singer, known for her pioneering wordless vocals, comes to town having having won Best jazz Vocalist at the BBC Jazz Awards in 2007.

THURSDAY 22nd
ALLISON RUSSELL: The Bullingdon – Trauma and redemption from the Grammy-nominated, Juno-winning polymath – *see main preview*
STEPH PIRRIE: The Harcourt Arms – Live jazz from the singer and trumpeter and her band.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 23rd
PEARL HANDLED REVOLVER: The Bullingdon – Richly raw and occasionally psychedelic organ-led blues rocking from the Bedford outfit.
THE JOLLY GROGSTERS: Harcourt Arms – Shanties and sea songs from the local vocal troupe.
MAISY’S RAINBOW DREAM + DARKGNOSS + BLACK TISH: The Port Mahon – It’s All About the Music showcase.
COUNTERFEIT 70s: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Rocking tribute to the likes of Slade, The Sweet, T-Rex, The Bay City Rollers and more.
ELIZABETH & JAMESON + ANNA RENAE: The Corn Exchange, Faringdon

SATURDAY 24th
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with NOTHING DREAMS + ROBINPLAYSCHORDS + PAUL LODGE: The Port Mahon – This month’s GTI mixed bag of musical goodies features new local alt.rock, grunge and indie outfit Nothing Dreams alongside atmospheric, delicate popsmith Robinplayschords, and conceptual song cycles from folk singer and philosophy professor Paul Lodge.
THE OXFORD BEATLES: The Harcourt Arms – Reunion show for the local Beatles tribute.
DEVOUT: O2 Academy – Tribute to Depeche Mode.
METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern

SUNDAY 25th
OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) – Free afternoon of live music, including a set from The Oxford Blues Corporation.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (3pm)

MONDAY 26th
SPIERS & BODEN: The Parish Hall, Benson – Nettlebed Folk Club hosts the local folk stars as they tour the reunion album ‘Fallow Ground’.

TUESDAY 27th
WEDNESDAY 28th

THURSDAY 29th
STARBELLY + TUBER MURPHY + JOKERS PARADE + FORGOTTEN GODS: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music local bands showcase.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 30th
STIFF LITTLE FINGERS: O2 Academy – Jake Burns’ enduring Belfast punk rockers come back for



Thursday 22nd
ALLISON RUSSELL: The Bullingdon
Now this is a real treat in town, courtesy of Empty Room Promotions, who have so consistently brought cult stars of the Americana and folk-roots scenes of North America to Oxford over the years. Allison Russell is among the best of all of those, the singer, poet, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and activist the first Black artist to win Contemporary Roots Album of the Year in the Juno Awards in her native Canada. As well as this honour she’s been Grammy nominated three times for her album ‘Outside Child’, and shortlisted for the Polaris Prize. ‘Outside Child’ is a fantastic record, her solo debut after being a founding member of banjo supergroup Our Native Daughters (with Rhiannon Giddens among others); Po’ Girl (with Be Good Tanyas’ Trish Klein), and Birds of Chicago (with partner JT Nero). The record deals with the trauma of childhood mental and sexual abuse at the hands of her white supremacist step-father before she fled home to Montreal aged just 15, but for all its anger and sorrow there’s resilience, affirmation and self discovery, all delivered by Russell in her gorgeously rich, smoky, soulful voice. It’s a voice that’s seen her compared favourably to fellow Canadian Frazey Ford and found her collaborating with Brandi Carlile along the way. Tonight’s show has all the makings of an “I was there” moment as Russell becomes an outsider no more and looks set to rise ever higher in the folk-roots firmament.

another outing of classic hits ‘Alternative Ulster’, ‘Suspect Device’ and more.
CVC: O2 Academy – Buoyant 60s psychedelia and folk and 70s rock from the Welsh sextet, out on tour to promote debut album ‘Get Real’.

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O2 Academy

The capacity crowd roars as the house lights dim; then there’s an expectant hush as a bass-heavy anthem and strobe lights raking the stage herald the arrival of the local heroes.

This enter-the-gladiators-style overture could be a prelude to a night of over the top rock grandiosity, and while they occasionally teeter on the edge, Foals are so nimble they mostly dance away from tumbling into this abyss even when going to very dark places.

The big news is that after a six-year absence bassist Walter Gervers returns. “He got lost for a few years, now he’s safely back where he belongs,” announces Yannis Philippakis. Gervers’ partnership with drummer Jack Bevan makes for an outstanding funky rhythm section but there’s his contribution as a backing vocalist too. While the interlocking guitars of Yannis and Jimmy Smith are often remarked upon as a Foals trademark, the synergy of Walter’s voice harmonising with that of Yannis’, as on ‘2001’, is beautiful and

one of the band’s myriad strengths.

Foals are, of course, super tight. Their combination of melodic grooves, staccato beats, clever arrangements, and sweet West African-influenced guitar lines, plus the more recent weighty rock vibe, are all present, along with a cowbell that is clearly seen yet rarely heard. Yannis is his dynamic, charismatic self. Possessed of a powerful baritone voice, he can seemingly effortlessly switch to falsetto as on an emotion-laden rendition of ‘Blue Blood’ which sounds even better tonight than on record.

Tonight’s set starts with ‘Wake Me Up’ from most recent album ‘Life is Yours’ but they play songs from every album from 2010’s ‘Total Life Forever’ onwards. The moshpit gets into it early, bouncing exuberantly along with ‘The Runner’. The band keep the energy and the numbers flowing; there is little stage chat from Yannis other than thanking Truck Store, the Oxford music scene, *Nightshift*’s editor

included, and their hometown fans generally for their support.

Soon enough Foals take everything up another level, with Yannis’ vocals becoming even more impassioned. The excitement and the tension builds with each number; ‘Knife in the Ocean’ veers towards being rock bombast but the crowd, very much part of the show themselves, love it, roaring it home, and surely you couldn’t get more feral than Yannis screaming the lyrics of ‘Black Bull’.

And just when we think he and Foals are at full throttle they find still one more gear for the final sequence; Yannis crowd surfs and the finale is a tremendous ‘What Went Down’ with the crowd roaring out the chorus.

For ninety minutes we haven’t been able to take our eyes off the stage. It’s easy to see why Foals have become the answer to many commentators’ question of where the next generation of festival headliners will come from. As the football manager says, “The lads left everything out there”. Foals, truly, are awesome.

Colin May

and backing vocals, a keyboardist who seems chilled to the point of having to be nudged occasionally to check he’s not nodding off, and what is alleged to be the tour manager on drums. The set is preceded by a menacing sermon from Lev Parker of Morbid Books on the dangers of phones, which just adds to the weirdness of the occasion. There are moments of delicateness but also nastiness: Alex and Saul both speak disparagingly of a friend immortalised in ‘Waiting for Adam’ and Saul mutters occasionally under his breath about shortcomings only he seems to hear in the sound mix. It seems odd witnessing such calm from an artist more commonly known for chaotic and aggressive sets, but there is just enough of a dark undercurrent to mean it doesn’t stray too far from home.

Mark Taylor

OH, COMMUNITY!

Common Ground

Divine Schism’s Oh, Community! all-dayers have been a regular highlight of Oxford’s post-lockdown music scene. By holding them in community-run spaces like the Common Ground coffee shop and art space they seem to attract people who might not explore classic dingy beer-dungeon venues, and today we see intrigued passers-by decide to step in, as well as some under-18s who can’t access most gigs. But, crucially, the bills have not been tempered or diluted to comfort the casual listener, and today’s line-up spans the delicate and the discordant, above a valley of the absurd. Sensibly, the day starts with the approachable. Young singer **BETH PIRRIE** has a lovely, unshowy voice and gives an excellent reading of a song by Corinne Bailey Rae (even though she can’t pronounce Corinne Bailey Rae). **GREEN HANDS** are a pleasingly relaxed three-piece, recalling Wilco or Silver Jews at their least threatening, but **THE BOBO** – with regular collaborator **KID KIN** – are more memorable, their ethereal synth-pop icily austere whilst being attractively melodic; imagine if the three ghosts who visited Scrooge had been the members of A-Ha.

SUEP deliver the sort of scrappy organ-led pep that has been played loud and tipsy in garages since 1963, and often remind us of old-school Truck favourites Fonda 500. They have a synth line that nicks to tune from ‘Love Will Tear Us Apart’ which they put above a countryish lope, and some Bow Wow Wow buoyancy with a keyboard that sounds like a disappointed kitten. They merge into **GARDEN CENTRE**, sharing members, but with Max “King of Cats” Levy at the helm, giving them a more focussed Monkees flavour (plus the best parasite shanty you’ll ever hear). **SINEWS**, although

having a hardcore underpinning and a taste for ‘Bleach’-era Nirvana, are fitting bedfellows with a surprising ear for a tune despite vocals delivered with the angry belch of a killer whale with a hangover.

The day really belongs to a pair of bands who are part high-concept performance art, part farcical prank...which is what all great pop is, ultimately. **DREAM PHONE** toss nasally pitch-shifted Auto-Tune vocals above infectious electro-punk à la Blectum From Blechdom, at times sounding like nightmare pier-end entertainers, Daniel Bedingfield & Orville. **SHAKE CHAIN** are more intense, and as the band begins Kate Mahoney is crawling agonisingly from the middle of the street outside, before delivering the second number from under a rug. When The Fall’s final line-up morphed into Imperial Wax, they had a vocalist conundrum: an MES impersonator would have been crass, but a standard rock singer leached some of the magic. Shake Chain sound like an alternate reality version of the group, where lean wiry post-punk is paired with a Diamanda Goulash of visceral howls and startling sobs.

The only way to follow that is with good tight bands. **EX-VOID** play sweet-minded college rock with a nod to Throwing Muses, or even Juliana Hatfield. They do a nice sprightly Arthur Russell cover, though they aren’t experts at mid-song gear changes. **HOLIDAY GHOSTS** splice in some classic rock’n’roll chug driven forward by Gedghey hyperstrums, and are frankly excellent. Oh, and those kids we mentioned earlier? They get into the day, and go *bananas* for Shake Chain; there may be a future for mankind after all.

David Murphy

THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE / MEANS OF PRODUCTION

The Port Mahon

“Tunes are bourgeois,” jokes Means of Production’s Tim Day ahead of tonight’s show, talking about the clash with Eurovision. Much as we’d die to see the duo represent the UK at the song contest, they don’t go big on singalong anthems. Instead magnificent monotony is both king and queen of their musical world. From the glowering motorik groove of ‘High Traffic Neighbourhood’ to the space age ping pong of ‘Resuscitation Status’ and onwards through the minimalist acid house of ‘Lit Up’, there’s bleak beauty and hypnotic brutality in their unstintingly linear set pieces. For all its artificiality, there’s something very human about Means of Production’s music. The joy of repetition is in them. One-nil to the proletariat.

The Pink Diamond Revue similarly are a battle between humanity and something more synthetic. Even the trademark ongoing onstage conflict-come-love-affair between guitarist Tim Lane and the mannequin Acid Dol takes on a sinister edge as he nudges her askew with his guitar or adjusts her shades between tracks. Musically and visually too The Pink Diamond Revue are a constant war between a golden age of American rock’n’roll and a dark, dystopian future. “We’re not a rock and roll band” intones the narrative over the duo’s signature tune. No, they’re something far more potent: a simply magnificent spectacle – all militant, monolithic beats, serrated acid-surf guitars, snatches of arcane narrative and sirens. Lane himself often resembles a Teddy Boy re-imagined by a malevolent future AI and you can imagine this music acting as the perfect backdrop to apocalyptic cinema.

So, while half of humanity is tucked up at home celebrating the cream cheese of Europop, we select few are immersed in the battlefield of mankind and machinery’s glorious battle of music’s soul. And that’s our kind of party.

Dale Kattack

MAISIE PETERS

O2 Academy

I have to admit, I expected to be amongst the older end of the Maisie Peters fan club, surrounded by teens. It’s a pleasant surprise then that Maisie’s appeal spans not only a range of ages, but also across genders too. Perhaps a bit like fashion comes in waves, pure unadulterated pop music is trendy again, and frankly I’m more than okay with that.

Bouncing onto stage to One Direction’s ‘Best Song Ever’ she immediately sets the tone for the evening which is filled with energy and charisma. From opener ‘Body Better’ in which her trademark self-deprecating lyrics take the lead, to ‘Psycho’ in which she effortlessly slates an ex, she moves pop away from songs which are just about unrequited love, to musing on the wider complexities of relationships.

As if pre-empting the comparisons, she also offers a medley of her own songs, finished off with a cover of Taylor Swift’s ‘Dear John’; it’s a brave move, but one she pulls off with aplomb. It’s clear that the Spotify streams and headline Wembley Arena show are more than justified. With a guest appearance from Cate in ‘Cate’s Brother’ thrown in for good measure, she fills an hour with catchy hooks that make it impossible not to sing and dance along.

With a set filled with songs that have Top Ten written all over them it’s hard to remember that Maisie is a relative newcomer, launching her career in the middle of a pandemic. However, just as she can now proudly boast that she finally has her driver’s licence, it seems she’s coming of age in multiple ways, and I expect her sound to continue to mature. I have little doubt her fan club with continue to expand as a result, with shows in venues even of this size becoming a thing of the past.

Lisa Ward

SAUL ADAMCZEWSKI / AVICE CARO

The Jericho Tavern

Tonight is one of the weirdest and most wonderful nights of music I have ever witnessed at the Jericho in my 35 years of attending gigs here. I arrive to find the curtains in the middle of the venue pulled almost all the way across the room, and for the first time ever seats arranged in two curving semi-circles across the floor closest to the stage. A DJ is spinning vinyl records but it’s a disco like no other... church organ music, which seems fitting, if a little creepy, as it’s a Sunday; this is followed by *Wickerman*-style folk, drones, and then bagpipe music. I take a pew nervously at the front.

I am not prepared for what follows. A truly mesmerising support set commences when a

waif-like siren gracefully takes to the stage, almost levitating towards the microphone; she stands momentarily in front of the mic stand and then delicately strums at an autoharp before timidly drenching the room in the most beautiful faerie vocal. It is absolutely magical and room is transfixed. Totally astonishing. Saul Adamczewski joins her momentarily for a delicate folk duet then she is gone, and I feel heartbroken. Unbelievable; do all you can to see her before the innocence is gone.

Saul follows to showcase his first solo album, ‘Adventures in Limbo’. Like the audience Saul and his supporting cast are sat; there is Alex White from The Surrealist Temple Band on various brass and woodwind instruments

Oxford gig listings

Ticket your event

BRECHT ON LOVE
AND WAR

The Sheldonian Theatre

With the Sheldonian filled by sixteen music stands and a big screen its clear this is an *event*.

It's not a retrospective of poet, playwright and critic of capitalism's excesses Bertolt Brecht's separate collaborations with the classical composers Kurt Weill and Hans Eisler, nor is it primarily an update of their work, though Tom Kuhn has done fresh translations and contemporary composers have been commissioned to "underscore" poems or to help create video/film art. Rather the focus is the continuity of then and now as demonstrated by the subject matter – hunger; war; exploitation; love; living in dark times; fighting back – and by the multimedia presentation, Brecht, Weill and Eisner all having been involved to some extent in multimedia experimentation.

It must be difficult to choreograph the big cast; the technology; approximately 50 'numbers', and the different combinations of performers, but the show runs very smoothly. Weill/Ogden Nash's, 'I'm A Stranger Here Myself' is a brilliant choice for the first song as Weill, Brecht, and Eisler were all refugees from Nazism. Marc Almond OBE, in doing the singing in the first half, gives a masterclass in delivering a song. His version of Brecht/Weill's famous 'Surabaya Johnny' is brimful of tainted love, and he's terrifying when enunciating the vengeance 'Pirate Jenny' brings to those who exploited her.

In the second half Eisler's settings of fifteen of the "scenes" from Brecht's (anti-) 'War Primer'

stand up well alongside the newly commissioned settings of Brecht's work, including the three striking films, one of which is very beautiful and another very challenging. In this half Almond reads some of the poems and the singing is done by The Bauhaus Band Singers and three confident soloists from their ranks, Tom McGowan, Jacob Cole and Rosa Herwig. Herwig's performance of the technically difficult, touching but gritty 'One Rose to Find' is particularly compelling.

World renowned saxophonist John Harle, whose sax is nowhere to be seen, directs the whole event, including The Bauhaus Band, who nearly steal the show. Their ensemble playing is exemplary whatever the music, plus there's some equally impressive soloing, especially from Lucas Houldcroft on trumpet.

We've been taken to some dark places but the band and their singers' rousing rendition of Eisler/Brecht's 'Solidarity Song' sends us into the night uplifted and primed to person the barricades.

Colin May

LAST DINNER PARTY
The Bullingdon

For a band with one solitary single to their name the column inches and debate dedicated to Brixton's Last Dinner Party has been extraordinary and in the Tik Tok age feels like a return to an old school way of thinking.

That the band have near enough packed the Bullingdon tonight at scarcely a fortnight's notice suggest plenty of people have bought into the supposed hype or are interested to see

if it's justified. On tonight's evidence it seems the future could be very bright indeed for the band. They have a sound and an aura about them that suggests they could be headlining Reading or playing Eurovision with equal ease, possessed of a sense of drama and musical versatility. They can be icy, almost gothic, as on tonight's set opener 'Burn Alive' which shivers in on spidery guitars, Abigail Morris' imperious vocals and flamboyant stage presence reminding us a little of Siouxsie Sioux, but they can also be playful, even – whisper it – proggy at times. Kate Bush seems to be the most apparent influence on songs like 'On Your Side' and 'Beautiful Boy', the latter a festival anthem in waiting with its neatly orchestrated five-way vocal harmonies and even the introduction of a flute. And when Morris sings in Albanian on 'Gjuha' you wonder just how many different strings they might have to their musical bow already.

That big stage potential comes most to the fore on the drama-laden 'My Lady Of Mercy', though they finish a compact set with new single 'Nothing Matters' a downbeat number that echoes ABBA's 'The Day Before You Came', but with far more swearing and sex.

With a major label deal and a support set to The Rolling Stones already under their belt, the debate so far has centred around whether Last Dinner Party are some kind of nepo baby band or somehow manufactured. Neither seems fair or appropriate; some bands just get the breaks – t'was ever thus, and taken purely on their musical merits, Last Dinner Party look like they have plenty more courses to come.

Dale Kattack

MEMORIALS /
DHELTRA / MYSTERY
BISCUIT

The Port Mahon

Mystery Biscuit's self-description of psychedelik is on target, the guitar featuring just the right amount of scuzziness to bring bands like The MC5 to mind. But there's also some delicate guitar work that, neatly combined with some classic organ sounds, make them a highly entertaining listen, one song featuring an E E Cummings poem that works much better than you might expect. Initially playing with light electronic drum beats, things get wilder when a full kit is beaten around on 'A Practical Man', their (successful) attempt at a pop song that underlines their very English eccentricity.

Dheltra are asked to play for 30 minutes and only over-run by 46 seconds, a considerable achievement given their set is one long improvisation. Sitting on the floor in front of a rather distracting video they mix modular and digital synths with guitar, often bowed, and various extraneous samples and sounds. Featuring well-known local sound and visual artist Lee Riley, it all sounds rather like part of a film soundtrack, possibly an anxious walk through a deserted inner city late at night, which in less accepting surroundings could have failed badly. Here it doesn't.

Memorials are a duo made up of Verity Susman, once of indie band Electrelane, and Matthew Simms, since 2010 a member of punk pioneers Wire (who, he tells me, are currently dormant

and have not occupied the same room since March 2020). This band are ridiculously versatile as well as talented, effortlessly mixing up and swapping between vocals, electronics, sax, guitar and drums. In keeping with the new double album 'Music For Film', two soundtracks to recent documentaries, every song seems to exist in isolation from every other while retaining a cohesive feel. A Throbbing Gristle-style wall of industrial noise morphs into a Can-like motorik excursion with a pleasing, almost funky groove. A stark, moody number is followed by some garage punk with 60s-style keyboards, rock-solid drumming from Simms and some great bass lines from a backing track we can only speculate as to which. It's all joyously unpredictable and a world away from the over-produced and polished musical diet we're too often fed.

Art Lagun

TALK SHOW / CIEL /
LACUNA COMMON

The Jericho Tavern

Oxford's Lacuna Common are a swaggering indie outfit who seem to revel in the role of local heroes on tonight's bill. Guitars clang and jangle in a rousing wall of sound that sweeps over the crowd, echoing off the walls of the venue. The band's history is deeply intertwined with the city, and their performance tonight is a testament to the rich musical culture that continues to thrive here. Their music is a sonic collage of energetic riffs and resonant rhythms, creating a palpable connection with the crowd.

Brighton's Ciel are led by the Dutch frontwoman Michelle Hindriks; they contrast the intensity of Lacuna Common with their blend of dream pop, experimental lo-fi and angelic vocals. Hindriks commands the stage, writhing in time with the music. Ciel's influences are clear – Elastica, Breeders, Sorry – yet their sound is uniquely their own. It's often harder, more angular than the usual indie pop offerings, with an ethereal edge that cuts through the air. Their set is short but rich, a flawless amalgam of indie sparkle and atmospherics, ending with their hit 'Fine Everything' and you can't help agree with the song's sentiments.

Talk Show, hailing from south London, are a dynamic blend of raw rock, post punk and electronica. Singer and guitarist Harrison Swann channels the anarchic energy of Keith Flint, the raw charisma of Iggy Pop and the eccentricity of Ian Dury. His performance is a visual spectacle: snarling into the microphone, beating his head and body in time with the ferocious lyrics of songs like 'Bad to the Bone' and 'Dirt'. He shows a gentler more jovial side when he breaks a string during an energetic rendition of 'Trouble', joking about the lead guitarist wanting to play 'Sweet Child of Mine' while he tunes up. Fortunately we only hear a few notes of this before the kamikaze dive of 'Underworld'. They finish on their seminal track 'Leather' from their 'Touch the Ground' EP, their best and most distinctive track.

Tonight we're privy to a trio of rising talents. Each band, with their own unique sound and stage presence, demonstrates that the future of music is in capable hands and the small but dedicated crowd leaves the venue buzzing.

Steve Taylor

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HIGH FLYING BIRDS
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SQUID
O MONOLITH

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WHAT’S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music.
This month it’s DEADLY THE ROADIE and he’s, erm, A ROADIE.

How long have you worked in this job?
“Longer than I really should have – well over 20 years. I now have the grey hairs to prove it.”
What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know?

“It’s bloody easy: if you want to make money in the music industry, become a roadie and work for someone who a: famously cannot drive; b: cannot tune a guitar c: averages 2-3 gigs a week.”

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

“Staying alive and not killing anyone... yet.”

And the lowlight?

“Staying alive and not killing anyone... yet.”

How much and how did Covid affect your job?

“Completely obliterated it like a nasty, contagious virus. Almost overnight I went from touring round the country and planning overseas trips, to be at home, stuck in front of the TV, playing on the PS4. On the plus side, I got rather good at FIFA.”

Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist?

“This is an impossible question to answer as Oxford has been blessed with so many extremely talented musical artists. The Nubiles; The Candyskins; The Bigger The God; The Unbelievable Truth – looking at that list, any band with The in its name so bonus points



for The Bigger The God.... I should probably mention Phill Honey and Mac – two absolute genius songwriters without whom I wouldn’t be doing what I do now. Current favourites include Emma Hunter; Octavia Freud; Tiger Mendoza; BarrellHaus, and of course, back to the The’s – The Deadbeat Apostles and there is something quite special about Kanadia. The music scene here is as healthy as ever!”

What’s the single most important piece advice you’d give to someone wanting to do your job?
“Don’t go in thinking it’s all glamour, sex, drugs

and rock’n’roll. It’s far from it. The hours are long and torturous, there’s hardly any sex; you’ll occasionally get drugs and rock’n’roll though.”
Who’s the most awkward person you’ve ever had to deal with in your job?

“I don’t want to name names, but the lead singer of an American band I once had the misfortune to drive to Download. His attitude stank; he just moaned all the way to the festival about having to do a fan meet and greet, completely losing sight of the fact it’s the fans who were the reason he was there in the first place. Let’s just call the band Live Linger Deaf Hunch.”

When was the last time you heard genius?

“It was actually pretty recently when I first heard Emma Hunter’s ‘Morire’.”

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

“I’m not sure I should admit this, but once – and I am so ashamed of myself, I’ve never done it since – I went to a wine bar.”

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

“I would gladly give it all up to become a fluffier or, at a push, a steam train driver.”

Are you rich?

“No, he’s that pain in the arse I do a radio show with.”

Do you consider your job glamorous?

“Define glamorous? If it means spending almost every weekend away from home and being the only sober person at the end of the night, then yes I guess so...”

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

“We’re so lucky here in Oxford; it’s such a diverse, beautiful scene. Everyone looks out for each other. There are no egos (apart from mine)!”

HARCOURT ARMS JUNE

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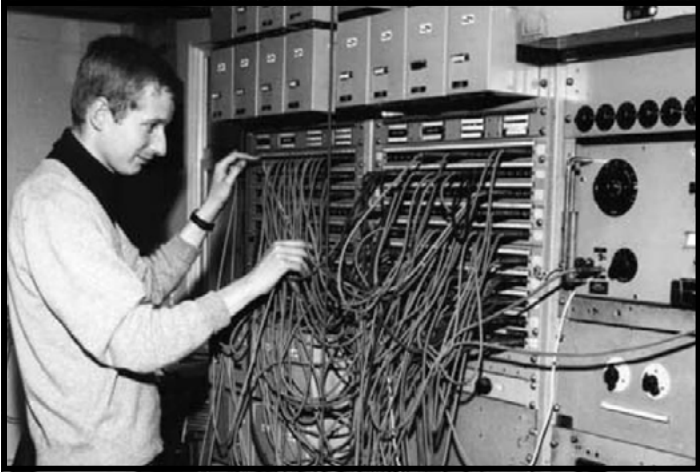
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Dr SHOTOVER: Unsound FX

Ah, there you ARGH, Young Jackfruit. Welcome to the East Indies Club BAH. Pull up a PHEW, and buy us all some fine WHINES. Yes, yes, as you can probably tell, this evening’s gathering is sponsored by the Sound Effects department of the EIC Radiophonic Workshop, for which I am Chairdude and Chief Technician. (Departmental motto: ‘No Expense Spent’). As you can imagine, we have been called upon many times over the years to contribute to all sorts of projects organised by local music scene worthies. Our squidgy synth soundtrack for Lord Spira’s ANYONE CAN PLAY GUITAR film was sadly bumped at the last minute, but our comb-and-toilet-paper arrangements for GLASS ANIMALS are justifiably legendary. Not to mention our kazoo-led take on the complete oeuvre of DUSTBALL. Just waiting for a call from NICK COPE – CBeebies surely awaits? In the meantime, cheers - down the TONY HATCH!

Next month: *The National Conservatives: a Warning from History*



OK YAH COMPUTER

INTRODUCING....

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

DREAM PHONE

Who are they?

Oxford electro-pop duo Dream Phone are Hannah Watts and Jenny Bell. They formed in 2019 with the pair already playing together in Junk Whale, but when Jenny started learning to play drums, they “decided to start a simple, silly pop-punk side-project where Jenny could practise her beats.” “last year after the lockdowns we wanted to challenge ourselves more, and decided to change it up; we started using Garageband and synths, and added autotune and pitch-shifting to our vocals, which naturally led us to a more poppy sound.” So far the pair have played numerous gigs, including Truck Festival, Big Festival, and Divine Schism 10, and more recently signed to Divine Schism’s record label for whom they released their eponymous debut EP at the end of May.

What do they sound like?

Wildly exuberant electro-pop with pitch-shifted vocals that can get everyone in a packed room grinning from ear to ear; *Nightshift’s* review of the band’s Divine Schism 10 show described them as “warped and wobbly and sounding like Suicide and Britney Spears abducted by Alvin & the Chipmunks.”

What inspires them?

“Musically, hyperpop acts like 100 gees and glitch gum, who inspired us to take this more synth-driven, auto-tuned direction initially. Also Le Tigre: Kathleen Hanna is such a huge inspiration, and the way Le Tigre mix punk with really fun, electronic pop music is just exactly what we’re going for.”

Their career highlight so far is:

“Playing Truck Festival last year was definitely one; the atmosphere was unlike any other show we’ve played, and it felt like one of our best performances. But earlier this year we also played a sold-out Get In Her Ears gig at the Shacklewell Arms in London supporting Me Rex, just after we released our first single. That felt like a really great way to celebrate, and it was such a positive, welcoming vibe in the room.”

And the lowlight:

“Being scoffed at for the short and sweet length of our live set and asked to repeat a song to make it longer. We go for quality, not quantity!”

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Lucy Leave.”

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

“Sleater-Kinney: ‘Dig Me Out’. It’s basically perfect.”

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

“We don’t have anything else booked in Oxford at the moment. Newcomers can expect a weird, silly party.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Favourite thing is the sheer number and range of DIY gigs for what is a pretty small city. Touring bands who come here are pretty surprised by how active the music scene is here. Least favourite has to be the closure of beloved independent venues, and the shortage of accessible venues too. We are really lucky to have places like Common Ground and Florence Park Community Centre though.”

You might love them if you love:

100 gees; Le Tigre; Britney Spears; the B-52s.

Hear them here:

wearedreamphone.bandcamp.com, and all the usual streaming platforms.



ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Mark Gardener was seen strumming an acoustic guitar on the cover of *Nightshift’s* June 2003 issue, the great man having been confirmed to play at that year’s **Truck Festival**. Mark had recently toured with Truck organisers **Goldrush** as his backing band. Joining Mark on the Truck bill would be **British Sea Power**; **Youthmovie Soundtrack Strategies**; **Dive Dive**; **Fonda 500** and **Electric Eel Shock**.

In other news, **Young Knives** released their single ‘Rollerskater Girl’ on **Shifty Disco**. The band apparently hated the song and refused to play it live.

Radiohead released ‘Hail To The Thief’ this month, with **Colin Greenwood** telling *Nightshift*, “One of the best things about the record for me are the words – the bleak humour and the clarity. I’m not worried about Americans possibly not buying our records as a consequence of us being outspoken about certain issues. People need to focus on bigger issues instead of whether George Bush is an idiot or not.”

Also out was **Harambe’s** debut album ‘Roots’, which also found the local soul-funksters interviewed in *Nightshift*, the band a lone beacon for such things in town at the time. Their story took in drug busts, stints in jail, a fatal car crash and acrimonious splits with singers, but still preaching a message of peace and unity for all mankind. “We got soul,” said bassist Karl Clews, “We don’t do this for money or bling or fame.”

10 YEARS AGO

“The day we start being nice is the time to give up” boasted **Headcount** from the cover of June 2013’s *Nightshift*. The band, pictured glowering beefily in front of a shipping container, released their new album ‘Lullabies For Dogs’, their first release in five years, and that was a lot of pent-up anger to vent, with frontman Rob Moss raging against the Murdoch empire as well as remembering his late friend Paul Raven from Killing Joke who had helped the band in the past. “Rob has an opinion on everything” said his bandmates. How we wish more rock bands did. Up and coming but quickly gone and forgotten this month were **LAC** (Law Abiding Citizens) who released their debut single ‘Borstal Boy’ this month, the band, fronted by locally-based singer Michael Davies’ were feted by everyone from *The Guardian* to *Louder Than War* and had worked with Pete Doherty. They were *Nightshift’s* Introducing act for the month, but we’ve not heard from them since.

Some genuine legends in town this month, including hip hop godhead **Afrika Bambaataa**, who was playing at **The Cellar**; John Lydon with **Public Image Ltd** at the **O2 Academy**, and Queen guitarist and badger champion **Brian May** who played a solo show at **St John the Evangelist**, while looking to the future, **Ghostpoet** was in town at The O2 and **Wolf Alice** were starting along the road to fame with a gig at **The Jericho Tavern**. San Francisco’ weirdo geniuses

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Deerhoof were also at The Cellar and will be back in town again later this summer.

5 YEARS AGO

“It takes ages to get ready and at the end of it I don’t look any different. Richie takes no time at all and ends up looking perfectly styled,” bemoaned Maria Ilett as she and husband Richie Wildsmith, who together are **The Other Dramas**, graced the front cover of *Nightshift* in June 2018. The first couple of Oxford rock had just released their new single ‘The Future Is A Holiday’ and were set to support **LA Witch** at The Cellar. “We played at a jumble sale once. I do love a good jumble sale,” they continued, confirming their rock and roll status.

Other Oxford acts with new releases out this month were bass producer **Burt Cope**; **Little Brother Eli**; **Zurich**; **Means of Production**, and **Premium Leisure**, who were also this issue’s Introducing act and who will make their front cover debut later this year.

In other local music news, **Undersmile** were set to reform for one show, a tribute to Taz Corona’s dad Pier who died a few months previously. **David Byrne** was perhaps the biggest name in town this month, playing at **The New Theatre**, while over at **Blenheim Palace Nile Rodgers & Chic**, **Noel Gallagher’s High Flying Birds** and **Elvis Costello** were all playing Nocturne Live. Elsewhere the brilliant **Loma** and **Drahla** were both at **The Cellar**.

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TRACKS

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TOP TRACK

KILLER KOWALSKI

When the choices are between heating and eating, an impending AI takeover or another term of Tory corruption, sadism and incompetence, where sour-souled former government ministers are somehow allowed – nay, *encouraged* – to go on live telly and tell people unable to afford a cheese sandwich to simply go without food as they continue to line their own pockets with their shameless grifting, where do we turn to for hope and inspiration? Our heroes? All dead or disgraced it seems according to Killer Kowalski's rather bloody splendid debut release. Over an obstinately unfunky post-punk funk crunk, a wiry Mark E Smith-like urchin sneers and snarls lines about punk icons selling out to advertising companies, beloved actors embroiled in domestic abuse cases and more. Lines come at you at some speed. "Cecil Rhodes in diamond heist / Hero in horse dope sensation / Cricket ace in hotel sting / Elvis chokes on chicken wing" is just one staccato slice of lyrical onslaught where idols crumble or die, literally or figuratively, in ignominy. Ryan Giggs, John Lydon and Johnny Depp fail to dodge the vocal bullet as Killer Kowalski go on a hatchet-pop rampage. "Oh nothing lasts / What can I do? / I built my life around you" they conclude in one final burst of nihilistic despair. So, dear reader, where do we find solace now? Well, if this opening salvo is anything to go by, perhaps we put our hope and faith in Killer Kowalski from hereon in. They might not have the power yet but they sure got the weaponry.

PR-BSTRD

Coincidence is a fine one, isn't it. No soon have we listened to one track about heroes letting you down by a guy who sounds like Mark E Smith's sneery cousin than we get another song about slebs and how shit they are basically – and it even namechecks Mark E Smith. No idea who Pr-Bstrd are or is, though it's seemingly means Pre-Bastard. The verse that goes "I'm James Corden, I'm Mel Gibson / I cuss out waiters, I'm a cartoon villain /

I'm Ainsley Harriott on Hell's Kitchen / I'm Dick Dastardly's last victim" gives you an idea of where this is coming from and going to. Though only an initial idea since it's a song seemingly overflowing with disgust and loathing, all delivered like Baxter Dury in a particularly gloomy mood, all queasy, glowing synths over wandering funk bass. "I slither in the shadows, I'm a sinister minister / I'm a pocket full of slime, I'm soggy sprouts for your dinner / That spot that you can't pop, no matter how hard you try / I'm that brand new spark lighting up your ex-lover's eyes" sleazes the gravelly vocal and much as we like to mock lyrical clumsiness in these pages, this is proper poetry. Pr-Bstrd wants to remain anonymous for now, which is fine for us, though on the evidence of this offering we imagine him as a slightly disturbed stalker type, but a very pleasingly talented one, and in any other month this would be Top Track. So reveal yourself sir! We want to pat you on the back, buy you pints and, yes, okay, keep well away from you.

MAISY'S RAINBOW DREAM

As *Nightshift* sits listening to this track, entitled 'Disconnected', the heavens have just opened and a full-on torrential downpour is taking place. Which of course makes us think of Manchester. And so do Maisy's Rainbow Dream. Theirs is an ebullient, fuzzy, 1980s-style indie sound, slightly anthemic, slightly dancey. It's fulsome and propulsive but perhaps just a tad lyrically clumsy at times. The way they sing "There's a fire in my bones... today / And I'm disconnected / This feeling won't go... away" with such an obvious pause before the last word of each line does tend to distract you from what is otherwise a decent slice of guitar pop. Still, *Nightshift* is only happy when it rains and this musical reminder of the rainy city gets an overall pass from us.

DELTAVIOLIN

Ben Heaney is a virtuoso violinist both as a solo artist and as part of The August List so when he plays, we sit and listen. Like, properly listen. Because this might pass you by if you talk over it or try doing Wordle or somesuch while it's on. The instruction behind this short piece, entitled 'Dynamic Stasis' is explained as "*to play any note in C, very quietly, for as long as possible, then choose to play it again or change note. Changing note can only be done by 1 step either up or down in C.*" Which is like the musical equivalent of Man City players daring each other to play with only their left foot and with one arm tied behind their back (and still winning). How it comes out is in three-plus minutes

of slowly drifting, microtonal violin texture that would sit neatly on the most ambient end of Tim Hecker's oeuvre. *Nightshift* enters a gentle state of reverie where we think about kittens and biscuits (though this often happens even when not listening to ambient violin music), and we wonder what Ben could do with a far longer piece on a similar theme. Giving us more time to daydream of kittens and biscuits. Mmmm... biscuits.

LAKE ACACIA

Banbury electro-rock duo Lake Acacia certainly pack a punch. Their new track here, 'What You See Is Not What You Get', is proper meaty with its driving beats, gnarly synths and epic guitar pomp. Like metalcore gone techno. It ticks all the soaring/epic/anthemic boxes and sounds tailor-made for the big festival arena where everyone gets to mosh and pump their fists merrily along in time, but it also feels a bit too clean, as if it's missing a nastier edge to itself. If the band already have a few Nine Inch Nails and Gary Numan albums hanging around the house maybe give them another listen, or possibly invest in some classic Ministry sounds and come back sounding like they could do us some serious harm should we ever dare criticise them again.

SCENE IT ALL

We've had words with Scene It All about their chosen band name previously and we feel duty bound to have further words, since it's an undeniably terrible name and isn't befitting what's turning out to be a very decent young band indeed. Inspired by 90s pop-punk and 00s emo, they seem to have a decent grasp on the balance between their punky emo side and their pure pop side. 'Long Days' here has a longing, romantic feel about it despite its superficially jaunty thrum, and conjures a halfway memorable tune out of a whole heap of overlapping vocal harmonies, which are sweetly, neatly fired off with boyband-like proficiency if not sterility. 'There's One Thing You Need To Know' is slightly more rambunctious but not overly so; it's steelier and fuzzier and chugs along merrily while keeping its pop pipes mostly clean off too much punk dirt. So come on chaps, if it isn't too late, get yourselves a name befitting your music. No? Okay, see you for another condescending lecture again in a few months' time.

FLOOD PLAIN

"Hello *Nightshift*, the UK's best local music magazine," write Woodstock's Flood Plain by way of introduction, obviously keenly aware of just how far a bit of flattery will get them where our fragile ego is concerned. This really isn't yer standard local demo, that's for sure (but hey, what is?), since the band are an instrumental

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duo comprised of a banjo player and a mandolin player, and this track here, 'The Bowl', sounds like a more laidback cut from a Deep South movie, possibly one where hapless tourists aren't made to squeal like piggies at any point but rather a rustic idyll vibe hovers uncertainly over moody landscapes. We can almost picture the wagons rolling across dusty plains. We might have to start having reveries about biscuits again. Or since this reminds us of the Wild West, biscuits and gravy. Americans are weird, ain't they.

TOILET TRACK

LIL HOOLIGAN

With a name like that this guy should probably be a rapper. With lyrics like his he should possibly be on a watch list. Hooligan chap's introduction is full of braggadocio as he says his new EP is "a thrilling addition to his already impressive discography," but we've read far more outlandish claims and as the opening track buzzes in we're settled in for some lo-fi, bedroom-bound one-man pop-punk fun with its Good Charlotte and Blink 182 influences worn proudly and loudly on its baggy hoodie sleeve. The autotuned vocals and electronic beats make it all a bit too automated and lacking in punk fire but it's passable, but then we start to pick lines out of songs and begin to hope there's at least some level of parody going on here. "She was just like the rest" Hooligan chap sneers on 'Just Like The Rest', which seems to be bemoaning a young woman done him wrong. "This is about girls that are never straight with you" he continues on the more hip hop-informed 'One Of The Girls'. "I see the bitches" he rasps on 'The F*%k Me Song', quickly followed by "I've got something and I wanna put it in you" and the immortal chorus "She won't fuck me / I'm too ugly", like a grotesque mutation of 'Teenage Dirtbag', by which time *Nightshift* is wondering whether to report him to his mother, the police or simply stick warning posters up around town to be aware. He genuinely seems to have an issue with women generally; "Stop simping, start pimping" he sings, like he's nicked a line from an Andrew Tate manual, exhorting fellow males not to take it any more from, y'know... them kinda women. There is one line here though, "I've got a missile / I want to hide it in your silo" that does actually make us laugh out loud (and then immediately feel guilty), and a very large part of us really hopes this is a Spinal Tap-level piss-take, but sadly we don't think it is. If anyone – Lil Hooligan himself or someone else in the know – can show us this is all a (clumsy, unfunny) parody, we'd be happy to hear from them. Otherwise this is the most worrying set of songs we've been sent in a long while.

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