

# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month  
Issue 330  
June  
2024

“There’s a danger of sounding  
preachy and sanctimonious when  
dealing with dark subject  
matter and we always want  
to avoid that”

# Killer Kowalski

Cynicism, satire and serrated  
pop with Oxford's caustic  
avengers

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# THE BULLINGDON

JUNE 2024

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# NEWS

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**JULIA SOPHIE** releases her debut solo album next month. 'Forgive Too Slow' is out on the 26<sup>th</sup> July on the Brooklyn-based label Ba Da Bing Records. 'Forgive Too Slow' follows the Oxford-based Anglo-French electronic artist's acclaimed EPs 'y?', '</3' and 'Feels Like Tunder' EPs, the latter of which featured *Nightshift* end of year Number 1 'Dial Your Number'.

A first single from the new record, 'Numb', is out now with 'Telephone' out on the 25<sup>th</sup> June.

**UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH** are putting their 'Misc. Music' album online for the first time. The album, which features songs recorded around the time of their second album, 'sorrythankyou', was originally released in 2001, after the band originally split. It will be available on all major streaming services from the 14<sup>th</sup> June.

Unbelievable Truth reformed last year, playing a sold-out show at The Jericho Tavern in September. The trio, whose 1998 debut album reached Number 21 in the charts, are currently writing and recording their third album.

**THAME** is set to get a new monthly live music night from this month. Thursday Night Live takes over from the First

Thursday Music Club, which ran in the town for over 14 years until recently.

The opening night takes place on **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June** at **Thame Snooker Club**, featuring Band With No Name, Into The South, The Kiera Gabriella Band, and Vanessa & Neil. You can follow the club on Facebook at [Thursdaynightlivethame](https://www.facebook.com/Thursdaynightlivethame). Acts wanting to play can contact Michele and Iola at [thursdaynightlivethame@gmail.com](mailto:thursdaynightlivethame@gmail.com)

**SPANK HAIR** released a split EP with Adults in May. The local emo outfit joined forces with the London band for a four-song EP on Fika Records, with Spank hair contributing the songs 'Cowboy Scene' and 'Many Phones Ago'. The EP is available from [Fikarecordings.com](http://Fikarecordings.com).

**BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORDSHIRE & BERKSHIRE** continues to showcase grassroots music from across both counties every Thursday, from 8-10pm on 95.2fm and DAB. The show, presented by Dave Gilyeat, is repeated on Saturday evenings and is available to listen to online on BBC Sounds.

**MELTING POT** continues to showcase new and classic Oxford music every fortnight on Get Radio. Local acts can submit their music to the show, presented by Rich and Deadly, by emailing [meltingpot@getradio.co.uk](mailto:meltingpot@getradio.co.uk).

**BANDSCANNER** offers a gig guide app for phones, laptops and PCs that let's gig-goers instantly access videos by artists playing in Oxfordshire. Find it at [bandscanner.net](http://bandscanner.net).



**LYDIA LUNCH** is among the first set of artists confirmed for this year's **Supernormal Festival**. The New York punk and spoken word legend plays the leftfield music and arts festival over the weekend of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> August at **Braziers Park** in Ipsden.

Among the other acts announced are Al Karpenter; Anamnesis; Brain Worm; Chaos Musick 101; Dhangsha; Dubmorphology; Electric Fire; Fashion Tips; Genderisthebastard; Genghis Cohn; Gimic; Ginny Lemon; Historically Fucked; Jali Fily Cissokho; Kikimora; Maria Uzor; Marlene Ribiero; Merlin Nova; Midgitte Bardot; Mosquito Farm; My Blood Is My Voice; Shake Chain, and Wormhooks.

Visit [supernormalfestival.co.uk](http://supernormalfestival.co.uk) for full line-up news.

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Experience not required. Enthusiasm essential

# Killer Kowalski



“I THINK IT’S GOOD WHEN artists have a bit of a roguish quality and indulge in a bit of skulduggery,” says Tom Hadfield, singer, songwriter and guitarist with Killer Kowalski; “you don’t want a world of Chris Martins, and what’s exciting as a young music fan is people that seem to live outside of regular social norms: outlaws, mavericks, chancers. For that reason, we wouldn’t be too puritanical about people’s private lives. It’s just a shame when people go a bit conservative and Brexit and *Daily Mail* in their old age, believing a load of hysterical bull about what’s happening to communities, despite never stepping outside of their mansions to have a look.

“I think someone like Joe Stummer, although he died a long time ago, would be an example of someone who was genuine and didn’t let the insulation of fame and money turn him sour.”

**TOM IS TALKING TO** *Nightshift* about musical heroes who let you down one way or another. We’re asking because the first song we ever heard from Killer Kowalski, exactly a year ago, was the brilliantly splenetic ‘Heroes In Disgrace’, a punk rock poem-cum-tirade that took razor-sharp aim at various fallen idols in a style that recalled The Fall at their punkiest, gene-spliced with the likes of Devo, Dead Kennedys and even The B52s. The song earned them a *Nightshift* Top Track award.

The deft but brutal take-down felt like a universal sense of rage against a cast of miscreants but was inspired by particular stars.

“The track was mainly inspired by the gradual decline of John Lydon and Morrissey,” explains Tom; “seeing their interviews and recoiling with embarrassment as they grew into daft old bigots complaining about immigrants, cancel culture and the decline of

an England that they now suddenly feel nostalgic about. More broadly, the song questions whether such counter-cultural figures ever spoke out of genuine principle in the first place, or if ‘they only did it cos of fame’. The whole thing leaves you feeling a bit sheepish actually, having banged on about certain inspirations for years, going to lots of gigs etc, and then it turns out they’re a bit Farage in their views, or will simply say whatever generates the most attention or outrage.”

**KILLER KOWALSKI** formed during the various Covid lockdowns of 2021 and 22. Tom and drummer Simon Calver (who also drums in local synth-rockers In-Flight Movie) had played in bands together previously but teamed up with bass player Alfie Weston online.

“Simon and I had played together for a while, but with an ever-

changing cast of other members and regular periods of quarantine we couldn’t get a band off the ground. Fortunately, we found the others in the musical backwaters of Join my Band and they gave us the kick up the proverbial that we needed to progress. I think we had similar ideas about what we wanted to play – lyrical, slightly off-kilter material that eschewed the trappings of meat ‘n’ spuds rock or landfill indie.”

The trio named themselves Killer Kowalski after the Polish-Canadian wrestler of the same name. A renowned fighter throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s, he was an unusual character in wrestling circles, particularly for the period, being an avowed vegan and a teetotaler. “As much as we admire the vegan and teetotal communities, that certainly wasn’t the reason for choosing the name! The kitschy silliness of the world of wrestling just makes for good imagery, I think – men clad in spandex and baby oil called things like Papa Shango and Ravishing Rick Rude, it’s just funny isn’t it? Killer Kowalski was pick of the bunch as it sounded catchy and alliterative. It also sounds like it could be a faltering soviet fighter jet as much as a bloke in shiny Y-fronts.”

**IN THEIR INITIAL THREE-** piece form Killer Kowalski released a succession of inventive, punk-inspired singles, each seemingly fuelled by a serrated sense of cynicism, earning themselves a reputation amongst regular Oxford gig-goers as one of the most exciting new bands in town.

That reputation ramped up a few notches at the end of 2023 when they recruited Howard Gray on guitar; their show at the In A Different Place all-dayer in December introduced them to a wider audience and confirmed their status as pack leaders

“We’d wanted to have two guitars from the outset really, it was just a while before we actually got round to asking anyone, which helps. Howard’s a great player and has helped us achieve a more textured, unusual sound – hopefully! – and avoid that over-familiar, power chord chuggery you hear in pub basements across the country. Plus, it’s good for us each to have cover in case it all goes tits up with one of the guitars on stage!

“We were really grateful to be asked to play In A Different Place

and I think we knew it was a great opportunity, seeing as so many people on the local scene would be hearing us for the first time. We were pleasantly surprised by the amount of positive feedback to be honest, seeing as we were still pretty new compared to some of the other acts and probably a bit rough around the edges. We hadn’t had much involvement with other bands or promoters on the scene beforehand, so it did feel like a turning point and it’s been great for us to meet lots of like-minded people and feel part of that community.”

**AT THE HEART OF KILLER** Kowalski’s appeal though is the sometimes seething cynicism of Tom’s lyrics. Whether it’s disgraced stars, dodgy landlords, toxic masculinity or awful pubs, his scabrous wordsmithery has the wit and heft to take it down. Is Tom, we wonder, a man driven by cynicism for his fellow human beings?

“I find it much easier to write from a place of adversity, and that could be cynicism, frustration, sometimes disappointment. It feels cathartic and a way to transmit something authentic – but I’m aware that sounds like a pretentious ‘yah, I’m so tortured’ artist. It always feels a bit twee to write in a more celebratory fashion, like some medieval troubadour going ‘a child is born, we must mark the occasion with song!’.”

The single ‘I’m No Marco Polo’ from last year feels particularly sardonic.

“Whenever I travel for long periods of time I tend to experience an increase of anxiety and OCD symptoms, generally going a bit insane and ending up like Robert Carlyle or Di-Caprio in *The Beach*. It’s frustrating because I love travelling, but I could do without the side order of a nervous breakdown. More generally the song is about not being able to effectively relax, when everything feels too idyllic, so your mind throws you a non-sensical problem, like ‘enjoying yourself? Have some of this then you little fucker!’”

Musically, vocally and lyrically Tom can sound incredibly caustic, but there’s often a playfulness about the songs – the inspiration of bands like Devo and Young Knives comes through in particular. Are the songs meant to have an undercurrent of humour and is it something that can get missed amid the barbs?

“Yes I think that’s definitely true. Sometimes it makes us laugh when we read a blog post that’s all like ‘this song / band rallies against the abhorrent evils of consumer

capitalism’ or whatever, when it’ll just be about something parochial like some bloke stealing an elf bar. Some of the songs have a socio-political undertone, but we do like to amuse ourselves with them and attack them in a playful manner. There’s a danger of sounding preachy and sanctimonious when dealing with dark subject matter and we always want to avoid that. But yeah, maybe the tongue-in-cheek aspects become more apparent on closer inspection!”

The band are also regularly described as a punk band, which isn’t inaccurate, but there

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*“I find it much easier to write from a place of adversity, and that could be cynicism, frustration, sometimes disappointment. It feels cathartic”*

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are mod, new wave, even ska influences (check out the skanking documentation of a violent club bouncer that is ‘In Security’) at play; who or what are the musical forces that guide them?

“With punk, it’s always been the original mid-late 70s stuff and new wave that’s been an inspiration – Buzzcocks, X-Ray Spex, the Clash, Devo, as you mentioned – there was a bit more melody and invention in that. We’re not as keen on the tub thumping, ‘I hate my mom’ type sound of later punk bands like Black Flag and all that. Ska has definitely been an influence, both topically and musically, especially the Trojan Records material and Two-Tone bands like The Specials and The Selecter. Another influence would be the bands we grew up listening to like The Strokes, Libertines and Arctic Monkeys. I could see us going a bit more jazzy, but the chords are too bloody difficult!”

That sense of mocking cynicism could even be traced back to the likes of The Kinks’ ‘...Village Green Preservation Society’, do you think?

“What a masterpiece that is! Yes, there’s definitely a lineage of mocking cynicism from their satirical depiction of Merry Olde England. I think partly it utilises the sense of humour and sarcasm that has always been part of the national discourse, but also it still feels so relevant when there continues to be a lot of flag shagging zealotry in this country.”

**GIVEN THE SENSE OF** cynicism that pervades much of Killer Kowalski’s lyrical world, we wonder how many songs are inspired by personal experience as opposed to universal themes.

The song ‘Landlord Leonard’ for example feels like it comes from close to home for Tom. “Unfortunately, it was very much inspired by personal experience! My landlord is this old school aristocratic type, all boating shoes and offensively red trousers. He’s obviously alright for a few quid but he gave us an old fridge full of mould when the original one went caput. You obviously want your songs to be relatable rather than petty personal grievances, otherwise there would be no point in sharing them. Most of the time I think that happens quite organically;

we live pretty mundane, run of the mill lives like everyone else, so the issues discussed aren’t so otherworldly!”

On the face of it, the rollocking, off-kilter ‘Never Drink In A Flat-Roofed Pub’ could be a bit of Idles-like social commentary with its tongue in its cheek but listened to more closely it’s pretty existential; was there anything in particular that inspired that song, and do you think it speaks universal truth about a lot of people’s lives? For *Nightshift*’s part we particularly love the lines “That godforsaken warehouse swill / Would make Shane MacGowan ill”.

“Thank you, and RIP the legendary Shane McGowan! The song is mainly about the folklore and romanticism around drugs and alcohol. In particular, it’s about how when you’re young you get involved because it feels a bit Keith Richards and rock’n’roll, then later it shifts and all of a sudden you have this realisation that you’re just sitting about in a solemn boozier, guzzling a San Miguel and some pork scratchings. I think it does ring true for many people, because you’re sold on the glamour and those exciting associations, but it’s not quite the same experience if you’re in a flat roofed pub instead of a private jet touring the world!

What’s the worst pub you’ve ever been in? Probably my first encounter with the White Horse in High Wycombe, when playing there with my first band at age 15. It was on a Sky programme called *Roughest Pubs in Britain*, so we didn’t expect much, but it was pretty horrible. We played to an audience of jaded strippers and dubious skinheads who weren’t much interested in our half-baked Nirvana covers.”

**THIS MONTH KILLER** Kowalski release a new EP, their first as a four-piece. And then the band are set to play Truck Festival, after being picked by *Nightshift* as one of the acts to represent the Oxford scene. What can we expect from the new record and what are the band looking forward to seeing at Truck?

“We’re hoping the new EP to be a bit more left-field and to explore a wider range of influences. It will be great to have Howard in the studio with us for the first time to expand the sound a bit, as well as our producer Umair (Chaudhry) to humour us as we mess about on the synthesisers with questionable knowledge and understanding. It’ll undoubtedly still be a punk / new wave affair though; we aren’t ready to branch out into Venezuelan space jazz or anything just yet.

“We are of course very excited about Truck and very thankful to you guys for helping us to achieve that. We’re simply hoping to deliver a decent show that’s representative of the band and not make arses of ourselves, I guess... great expectations! The line-up looks great – a couple of us in particular are looking forward to seeing The Streets, Idles and Wet Leg. Obviously we hope it will lead us onto bigger things and we really want to make the most of it.”

**AND SO, WITH EXCITING** new things on the horizon, and Killer Kowalski looking set to move on up to even bigger and better things, we wonder if Tom’s sense of cynicism might be diminished. If he saw himself as one or the other, would he consider himself a cynic or an idealist?

“Ha ha, that feels like a loaded question at this stage! I would say I’m naturally more of a cynic... shock! I used to foolishly think that was an alright mindset to live with, because you’d be less surprised or upset when things go wrong, but you just end up with a lingering feeling of dread because you’re expecting the worst all the time... maybe this new found optimism will translate to Killer Kowalski, but actually, definitely not.”

And finally, being named after a wrestler, is there anyone in the world Killer Kowalski would like to be in the ring with, and would they win? “Perhaps it could be a tag team match: Killer Kowalski vs the Nepo Babies. Pick your four most annoying – I reckon Matty Healy, Brooklyn Beckham, and Ozzy Osbourne’s offspring. Yeah I reckon we could take them; years of disdain is a powerful weapon and we’ve probably picked the weediest ones out of cowardice.”

# RELEASED

## MAX BLANSJAAR

### ‘False Comforts’

(Beanie Tapes)

Six years in the offing and it’s finally with us, the debut album from Max Blansjaar. Anyone who has been following closely will know already that he is an affable troubadour born in Amsterdam, raised and educated in (and at) Oxford. Now his international credentials are extended still further across the pond with ‘False Comforts’ recorded in Brooklyn, NYC with the help of producer Katie Von Schiecher and friends.

Self described as lo-fi, this collection has similarities and references to (amongst others) Beck, Simple Kid, Daniel Johnston, and Jeffrey Lewis, but in all honesty the lo-fi label is disingenuous and lazy as this is much more than that; it’s a distillation of studied and perfect pop, from the poetic and focussed lyrics to the multiple and complex layers of instrumentation. It suggests an artist of greater breadth and depth, with aspirations far beyond minor success – the musical design and complexity has more in common with ‘Pet Sounds’ or ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’, in that it’s experimental, bold and ambitious. Give this man a budget and he will create recordings of true historical genius.

In the meantime we are gifted with the imagery of our hero wandering wistfully from second hand book store to coffee shop, reading and writing in Green-Wood Cemetery, then catching the Q line over Manhattan bridge whilst drawing love hearts on a steamed-up subway window before sadly rubbing them out; at

## SECRET RIVALS

### ‘Amor Fati’

(Self released)

The philosophy that everything online should be free to the user has been remarkably persistent over the three decades so of the internet being a thing. Although not approaching the level of cynicism of Spotify, Soundcloud and their ilk do perpetuate the wrong that artists don’t deserve to get paid for what they do. Back in 2012, I downloaded and must have provided money to listen to Secret Rivals’ ‘Once More With Heart’, a thrillingly propulsive slice of indie pop with duelling vocals – a track I have returned to periodically over the intervening dozen years.

So, not having heard much of the band since (they split in 2013 before reforming with a new line-up, including new singer Ash), I was pleased to be reacquainted with them via this new album. On investigation of what they have been up to, I discover my earlier favourite track re-released on Bandcamp with a 2024 release date which really is a little too much for my disordered brain – although I do assume that the band have decided to fire themselves



least that’s how its youthful exuberance and innocence hit me. Oh, the envy for younger times. But there is darkness, melancholy and maturity here to, most notably in ‘On Beyond Eden’.

One of my favourite songs is ‘Burning In Our Name’, particularly for the priceless lyric: “*And now my face looks like it’s spent the night with Freddie Krueger / But even he would run a mile from the morning I’ve just had.*” I also love ‘Red Tiger’, from its gentle vocal, squeaking fretboard slides and poignant piano, to its beautiful lyrics. With every song the listener is just busting to know the intricate back stories hidden in the tangled web of imagery.

So overall, what could be dismissed as simple whimsy is in fact a completely different beast: a true work of imagination and vision, and tellingly a statement and indication of future intent... it’s so bright, I gotta wear shades.

Mark Taylor

back into action and highlight the best bits of their old catalogue at the same time as offering something new.

‘Amor Fati’ is a showcase of indie stylings from the past few decades. ‘Neck’ gets things underway, its Britpop stomp putting you to mind of Sleeper, a band currently involved in nostalgia tours. One of two album high points ensues: ‘Condition’ alternating Primitives and Flatmates-style jangle and fuzz, and later, ‘Pilot’, an effortless piece of classic indie pop, beautifully delivered by Ash’s mellifluous vocals.

Elsewhere, co-singer Jay sings in the faux-naïve method used many times down the years from the likes of Los Campesinos! to Architecture in Helsinki, although Ash is provided with far more of a centre stage. Shouty racket ‘Hate’ seems well timed to coincide with the thirty-year anniversary of Bikini Kill and Huggy Bear’s prime and if other tracks perhaps deploy rock riffs to perhaps too great an extent, in all, it’s good to have them back.

Rob Langham

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## ALEXANDRA HAMER

### ‘I Can Only Me’

(Self released)

If you are here for some preternatural popera then read on. For Alexandra Hamer, following up last year’s compelling debut album ‘All of Us and Everything’, must at times have felt like a transmission impossible, writing still more postcards from the edge as a defiant woman reaching deep inside herself to bare the elegant wasteland of her soul. Yet, ‘I Can Only Me’ once again scales her glorious contradictions: being mournful and resilient, lyrically oblique and emotionally translucent, while simultaneously begging to be cast as a wintery, off-Broadway musical-fatale.

‘I Can Only Me’ is positively alive with possibilities, pulsing with a Eurocentric glamour which pervades its celestial home-production wizardry, creating a neutral canvas with which to brush her iridescence across. In ‘Let’s Talk’ she purr-hisses “Small talk, big thoughts, big head / How did I get it all in there,“ as she prowls like a Siamese cat round the domicile of her thinking. ‘Nevertheless’ excels too, as an uplifting LGBT Pride song which buffers into the widescreen, childhood-wondering nursery rhyme of ‘A Thousand Years’.

The skill and the talent on display here is giddy; ‘The Fear’ splices a Ren-style rap amongst towering Russo-choirs; ‘A Moment of Home’ has a WWI soldier and a prostitute seeking platonic comfort under the ceaseless bombardment, and the kinetic ‘Outside Everything’ gets your buttocks dancing in your seat with a warehouse-size undulating bed of dub groove on which Hamer concludes that introversion is not a negative, and not every outsider needs saving.

Alexandra Hamer is both self effacing and a fierce blessing. She has finally found the voice that life dictated she struggle to locate, and with it she magnificently illuminates these nine fulsome songs that all bear the gold hallmarks of real quality beneath the tear stains of tragedy. Endings, it seems, are often just beginnings.

Paul Carrera



## OCTAVIA FREUD & THE WEIRD SISTERS

### ‘Mancbeth’

(Self released)

Martin Andrews is certainly a musician possessed of grand ambition. Last year he released his ‘Gary’ album, an elaborate allegory for Brexit, featuring a lost weekend and a chip-obsessed seagull. Back under his Octavia Freud moniker and joined by The Weird Sisters – local luminaries Emma Hunter, Mila Todd, The Subtheory’s Cate Debu, The Bobo, Pet Twin and newcomer to the scene Kate Hicks – he presents ‘Mancbeth’, a retelling of the great Shakespeare tragedy transposed in to the Manchester acid house scene of the early 90s and based on the concept by writer and actor David Lemberg; he’s already presented the album as a stage play at Modern Art Oxford. Anyone familiar with the play will know The Weird Sisters are the witches of the story and their opening line “Fair is foul and foul is fair” gives this album’s opening track its title as it musically sets the mood for the whole piece with its suitably ominous synth lines, acid house squelches, stark post-punk guitar and Debu’s ghostly incantation. From here we leap into the more jarring ‘My Future’ with its Underworld vibes, and the swooning electro-drenched dreampop of ‘Invincible’. And then onto the menacing bubbles, hisses and squeaks of ‘Scorpions’ and the bolshy bleep-punk of ‘Long Live The King’

With King Duncan replaced in this story by a Mancunian druglord and Lady Macbeth by a club DJ, everything quickly gets messy as murder and madness take over and the album races through the different acts with appropriate mood switches – from the celebratory ‘The King Is Dead’, through the uneasy, questioning



## SUSPIRE

### ‘A Safe Place’

(Self released)

Being an indie-girl at heart, it’s been lovely to hear bands like The Kockroachez break through recently, as well as Secret Rivals make a resurgence from the school of quality indie-pop borne out of our beloved scene. It’s therefore just as welcoming to be given Suspire’s debut EP to wrap my ears around and see if this release is as good as ‘Pleasure



‘Sleep No More’ to the brooding, pensive ‘Double Trouble’ and onto the soulful, sultry ‘Sleepwalking’. The different voices across the album keep things fresh; Andrews has certainly picked some of the absolute bests from the local scene while Hicks’ performances suggest she is a serious talent in the making.

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare’s shorter tragedies but even so, wrapping it up in under an hour of music is some feat, just one of the many impressive things about ‘Mancbeth’. While ‘Gary’ was a fun journey, its eclectic nature occasionally came off as scattergun, but with ‘Mancbeth’ Martin Andrews has created a wholly coherent piece of work that succeeds in all of its aims, from remaking the original story in a completely different form, to creating an often glorious kaleidoscope of electronic music that stretches in style from early synth pioneers like Fad Gadget, through New Order and John Carpenter, to hip hop and 90s and 00s techno, even managing to stop of at The Fall and Yard Act along the way. Macbeth might be a tragedy, but ‘Mancbeth’ is a triumph.

Dale Kattack

Crusade’, a recent *Nightshift* Top Track, promised.

‘Grow’ opens proceedings with chiming guitars, not dissimilar to The Cribs in musical and vocal delivery. Refreshingly unafraid to play with space in their compositions, the tune builds beautifully and it’s nice to hear piano refrains coming in and out, elevating this pop-indie banger to new heights. ‘Mind Numbing Television’, meanwhile, has a kind of Milburn vibe to it, with its crisp, clear production and Kinks-inspired melodies via the 90s Britpop scene – lovely stuff.

‘Sweetness’, puffing its chest with an Alex Turner-style single-coil loveliness, hits you somewhere between Madchester and an LA beach, all held together with a dead-eyed lyric that you wouldn’t want to meet in the water. Closer ‘Another Universe’ is a fine choice to wrap things up, with a stark acoustic guitar and piano accompaniment.

This is pop music with substance and delivered with a lot of love and care. Sure, it would be nice to hear them play a banger that smacks you around the face from the off, but this band are at the start of something here, and something tells this reviewer that this is just the beginning of something quite special.

Caitlin Helm

## SELF HELP

### ‘Enrage Engage’

(Self released)

Dread, broken dreams, the anxiety of adulthood, the terror of social media interaction. Not the sort of stuff you’d imagine to make for an album of musical positivity, but with their debut full album Self Help find a way to bring a sense of enjoyability, even fun occasionally, to all that terror of the modern world. The album title is a reference to the algorithms that fuel that social media addiction; throughout the album Self Help take a subject that’s been turned over by myriad musicians but manages to find something fresh to say, and mostly say it noisily.

Recent single ‘Spaceman’ is a bold, thumping opening gambit, a stomping glam-punk beast partway between Idles and The Glitter Band that dwells on thwarted childhood dreams while sounding like the band have thrown literally everything in their arsenal at it. They immediately slow things down on the woozy ‘Do You Really Mean It’, sounding a bit like Supergrass’ more psychedelic moments, but ‘Make It Stop’ brings the buoyancy back, something they build on on the playful pop-punk of the album’s title track. But mostly Self Help prefer a more serrated approach to songsmithery and the fulsome fuzz of ‘Nuovo’ and in particular the slow crawl of ‘Shiva’ bring that to the fore, the latter featuring some lovely gnarly guitar work from Sean Cousins, while never drowning out Danny Jeffries’ cracked, smouldering voice.

‘Kick’, by contrast, sees the band expanding their horizons wider than we’ve heard before. It’s a nine-minute trip of sorts that takes in everything from jazz and funk to psychedelia and space rock; it’s an outlier not just on this album but compared to anything we’ve heard before from Self Help, the near-hysterical clip of Stewart Lee as a coda reflecting complete mental breakdown. And they leave us with the bleak, macabre tale of one man’s deranged experiments and the unsolved murder of a child in 1954 that is ‘Midnight Sun’, a sinister musical incarnation of distant thunder and fully capturing the sense of dread their lyrics conjure.

With ‘Enrage Engage’ Self Help have become a very different band to the original quartet who burst onto the scene back in 2017; they’re more complex beast and, most pleasingly, a beast prepared to explore different, sometimes dark, pathways. They more than deserve your engagement.

Dale Kattack



# GIG GUIDE

## SATURDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**THE SHAPES + THE BALKAN WANDERERS: The Up In Arms (6pm)** – The local r’n’b, folk, new wave and blue-eyed soul faves host a free summer party with guests The Balkan Wanderers mixing traditional Balkan folk music with indie.

**DJ MEAL DEAL: The Bullingdon** – Genre-blending dance tunes from the Aussie ex-pat now resident in the Shire.

**METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern** – First semi-final of the metal battle of the bands to win a slot at this summer’s Bloodstock. Tonight features a guest headline set from Bournemouth’s To Obey A Tyrant.

**SHORT NOTICE JAZZ BAND: The White House** – Originals and standards from the local jazz quartet.

**SEPTIC & THE TANKS + GUTTER**

## Monday 3<sup>rd</sup>

### GEL: The Bullingdon

Few things get *Nightshift*’s blood pumping in the live arena more than a singer who sounds like Hell vomiting up its dinner, especially when that dinner was a cauldron of lava. So it is with Gel’s Sami Kaiser, who sounds like a one-woman volcanic eruption when she’s in full flow. Gel, hailing from New Jersey, formed in 2018 as a side project of guitarist Matthew Bobko’s powerviolence outfit Sick Shit, but have rapidly eclipsed that (magnificent) band’s success. Aiming for a more straightforward hardcore sound than Sick Shit, Gel eschew metalcore tropes in favour of a more punk sound with distinct D-beat influences, though the fact they’ve been compared favourably to both Slayer and Trash Talk suggests they happily span hardcore genres. Happy not being a word you’d generally use to describe Gel, although amid the cathartic chaos and exhilarating aggression of their live shows, there is something joyous – the joy you get from losing yourself in fast, noisy, uncompromising music. After a brace of EPs and a split with Cold Bats, Gel released their debut album, ‘Only Constant’, last year to widespread acclaim and now they’re over in the UK to kick our backsides into the middle of next week. We say “YES!” to such things. And also “GRAAAAGGHHH!”



# June

**PUPPY + DUDE SMELL: Strummer Room Records Café, Banbury** – Triple bill of punk at Strummer Room’s monthly showcase night with Coventry’s militant DIY banjo punk outfit alongside Leamington punks Gutter Puppy and East Anglia’s post-hardcore crew Dude Smell.

**THE LIQUID ENGINEERS: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Well, whaddya know, it’s the *Nightshift* editor’s birthday and here’s a Gary Numan tribute band coming to the Shire. Fate plays the sweetest games sometimes.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX: Chadlington Beer Festival**

## SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms** – Weekly open night.

**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon** – Weekly Irish folk session.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern (2.30pm)** – Weekly open mic afternoon.

**ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock**

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)** – Classic rock and blues with the veteran local singer and guitarist and chums.

**LIZA MARSHALL: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)** – Country, blues and Americana from the Reading singer and guitarist.

**SUMMER BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Open jam session.

## MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**GEL + SPLIT CHAIN: The Bullingdon** – Lava-gargling hardcore punk fun from the New Jersey noisemakers – *see main preview*

## TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**WORMBOYS + HAEMOGLOBIN + L!ES L!ES L!ES: The Library** – Wistful, melodic lo-fi fuzz-pop from Leeds’ Wormboys at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the quartet having released a succession of singles on the Come Play With Me label. They’re joined by Haemoglobin, featuring Cassels’ Loz Beck, and local electro-indie newcomers L!es L!es L!es.

## WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**SUSPIRE: Truck Store (6pm)** – EP launch show for the local band, mixing up Britpop and shoegaze on their ‘A Safe Place’ debut.

**LORD BUG + NOOR: Common Ground** – Sleepy-eyed indie-folk in the vein of Soccer Mommy and Feist from recent *Nightshift* Top Track winner Lord Bug – *see Introducing feature*

**JALI FILY CISSOKHO: Warneford Hospital Chapel** – Virtuoso kora playing from the locally based Senegalese griot.

**SPIN with JOHN ETHERIDGE: Tap Social, Botley** – The long-running jazz club celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday with guitar virtuoso Etheridge as well as saxophonist Theo Travis and bassist Fred T Baker and The Spin’s in-house rhythm section.

**A HEAD FULL OF COLDPLAY: THE CORNERSTONE, DIDCOT** – seriously, imagine if your entire head was full of Coldplay. And then it burst, like an overstuffed balloon full of mediocre brains and splattered everyone with Coldplay songs. *Scanners* had nothing on this.

## THURSDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**ROB TOGNONI + KRISSEY MATTHEWS: The Bullingdon** – The Tasmanian blues devil returns to the Haven Club, displaying the powerful and versatile electric style that’s served him well in his 30-plus years on the road, his powerful electric style owing much to Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. He’s joined by local blues-rock man Krissy Matthews.

**LUCY LEAVE: Tap Social, Botley (6pm)** – Outdoor show from the prog/avant-pop trio.

**SOUNDS OF THE 60s: The New Theatre** – Tony Blackburn hosts an evening of classic 60s covers.

**CATWEAZLE: Common Ground** – Oxford’s oldest open night showcases singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more on the first and third Thursday of every month.

**BAND WITH NO NAME + INTO THE SOUTH + KIERA GABRIELLE BAND + VANESSA & NEIL: Thame Snooker Club** – First night of Thame’s new Thursday Night Live, taking over where the long-running First Thursday Music Club left off, showcasing local and out of town acts as well as open mic slots early in the evening.

## FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**DB BAND + ANDY & THE MOTION + SMALL WORLD THEORY + L!ES L!ES L!ES: The Bullingdon** – Supergrass bassman Mick Quinn resurrects his DB Band project ahead of an appearance at this summer’s Charlbury Riverside Festival.

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with MARY’S GARDEN + THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE BOROUGH + THE THURSTON BAYNE BAND: Gladiator Club** – Shadows and euphoria with gothic rockers Mary’s Garden at this month’s Klub Kakofanney shindig and joined tonight by KK hosts Sue and Phil’s own band, The Mighty Redox, bringing the party vibes with their mix of funky blues rock, folk, ska and psychedelia.

**MECHANICAL ANIMALS with LORD BUG + JESS TUTHILL + TAYLOR AND GIRISH: Florence Park Community Centre**

– Mechanical Animals’ intimate unplugged night hosts Lord Bug, recent *Nightshift* Top Track winner for her summery folk-pop, in the vein of Soccer Mommy and Feist, plus Reading’s ukulele-wielding singer-songwriter Jess Tuthill and more.

**THE IMPOSTERS: The Jericho Tavern** – Local party band.

**INDIE DISCO: Tap Social, Botley** – Indie classics with DJ Dom.

**OPEN MIC: The Market Tap**

**WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL: The Leys, Witney** – First night of the annual Witney Music Festival with tribute bands Absolute Stone Roses, BeMUSEd and Skadinals playing the main stage alongside The Vodka Shots, while in the dance tent there’s a Daft Punk laser show, plus Hooked on Music, Katalyst, Count Skylarkin’ and more.

## SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**JERICHO STREET FAIR: Various venues** – Live music across various stages on and around Walton Street at the annual street fair.

**THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES: Isis**

## Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>

### FIEVEL IS GLAUQUE / BERNICE: Common Ground

Happy happenstance comes in many forms. Brooklyn-based bandleader and keyboardist Zack Phillips had over 50 albums released under myriad guises when a mutual friend suggested he work with French singer Ma Clément. The two were due to meet in Brussels but on the way Phillips hit his head on a street pole and knocked himself out. Turns out Clément was a trained nurse and was able to treat him. They began writing and rehearsing together the following day. Under the name Fievel Is Glauque they released a compilation of early recordings called ‘God’s Trashmen Sent To Right The Mess’, mostly Phillips’ compositions. Their initial cult following soon grew after the pair were featured on Bandcamp Daily and Needle Drop and second album ‘Flaming Sword’ followed, this time a more collaborative set of songs. Style-wise the band is lively, inventive jazz fusion, drawing together different strands of jazz, prog, pop and more, as close to Henry Cow or Black Midi as they are to Astrud Gilberto, and tonight they make their Oxford debut for Divine Schism, having previously supported Stereolab on tour in the States. They’re joined by Toronto’s experimental jazz-pop outfit Bernice, over in the UK to promote their second album ‘Cruisin’.



**Farmhouse, Iffley Lock** – Epic soul, r’n’b and rock and roll with a punk heart from the mighty Deadbeats and friends.

**ONLY THE POETS + KERR MERCER: O2 Academy** – Reading’s anthemic stadium-popsters tour their new ‘One More Night’ EP, out on a headline tour having previously opened for Louis Tomlinson, Bastille and Lewis Capaldi.

**METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern** – Second semi-final of the metal battle of the bands to win a slot at this summer’s Bloodstock. Tonight features a guest headline set from last year’s winners, Shoot To Kill.

**WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL: The Leys, Witney** – The main event of this year’s Music Festival features ska legends The Beat featuring Rankin’ Jr, plus Lucille & The Lightning Soul Train, Gina Larner, Be-Long, Lina & The Lions, The Inflatables, Spl/t and The Kokroachez on the main stage, while over on the dance stage there’s Sister Stroke, Groovetown, Chemical Dance, Beatles Dub Club and DJ Pat Loughnane.

## SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**RIVAL SONS: O2 Academy** – Heavy-duty blues rocking from the longstanding Californian crew, over in the UK to promote most recent album ‘Lightbringer’.

**FIEVEL IS GLAUQUE + BERNICE: Common Ground** – Lively, inventive jazz fusion from French singer and visual artist Ma Clément and Brooklyn keyboardist Zack Phillips – *see main preview*

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms**

**JOURNEYMAN + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS + TRAVELS WITH THE SWEET ZOMBIE HORSE: The Tree, Iffley (4-7pm)** – Klub Kakofanney host a free afternoon of live music, including Phil Freizinger’s musical story for children.

**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**

**GEORGIA MICHELL: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)**

## MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

## TUESDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**THE DELINES + OUR MAN IN THE FIELD + FREDDY TRUJILLO: O2 Academy** – More songs of heartache and longing from Portland, Oregon’s Delines, back in Oxford once again, this time touring their new album ‘The Night Always Comes’, after previous sold-out shows in town. They’re joined by UK Americana Awards nominee Our Man In The Field.

**INTRUSION: Kiss Bar** – Monthly goth industrial, ebm and darkwave club night, tonight celebrating its 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

## WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**BAT FOR LASHES: O2 Academy** – Natasha Khan return with new album ‘Dream of Delphi’ – *see main preview*

**SWIM DEEP + PRIMA QUEEN: The Bullingdon** – Birmingham’s dream-pop crew return to the Shire after playing at last year’s Truck Festival, touring new album ‘There’s A



## Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>

### BAT FOR LASHES: O2 Academy

Oh, Natasha Khan, how we’ve missed you. It’s been well over a decade since Bat For Lashes came to Oxford; it’s been five years since she played a UK headline tour, so it’s little surprise tonight’s gig sold out in a matter of hours. Khan’s debut, 2006’s ‘Fur & Gold’ remains one of the most startling albums of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and one of the greatest debuts ever. It was robbed of the Mercury Prize but revealed a staggering new talent, one that has continued to blossom and mutate over the intervening years. This month Khan releases her sixth Bat For Lashes album, ‘The Dream of Delphi’, inspired by the conception and birth of her daughter Delphi during Covid lockdown and awash with the kind of devotional love songs we’ve come to love, with their mix of folklore, ancestry, existential wonder and spirituality. While she continues to evolve musically, with more prominent electronics on the album, it’s still characteristically ethereal and haunting, Khan’s voice pure and emotive, deserving to be talked about in the same hushed tones as Kate Bush, Sinead O’Connor and Björk. There’s not much more *Nightshift* can say about Bat For Lashes without simply resorting to superlatives but if you’ve got a ticket for tonight, you hopefully know the treat you’re in for. If you weren’t so lucky, there are six wonderful albums to lose yourself in. And if you’re not familiar with Bat For Lashes – it’s never too late to come under their spell.

Big Star Outside’, their earlier baggy-inspired sound making way for a more languorous psychedelic shoegaze style, plus sweetly epic indie pop from previous Big Moon tour support Prima Queen.

**SUPERMILK + TOP SHORTAGE + NOTHING DREAMS: Common Ground** – Return to town for former-Doe chap Jake Popyura’s angular post-punk and fuzzy indie rockers Supermilk, channelling XTC, Guided By Voices and Weezer at tonight’s Divine Schism show.

## THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**CHAKA KHAN + SISTER SLEDGE + FAT BACK BAND: Blenheim Palace** – the Queen of Funk opens this year’s Nocturne Live season – *see main preview*

**GIRL LIKE THAT + HONOR THOMPSON: The Jericho Tavern** – Album launch show from local singer Lucy Peer,



Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>

## NOCTURNE LIVE:

### Blenheim Palace

The Nocturne Live summer season provides one of those very rare occasions: the chance to watch a gig in an actual palace. Or four opportunities to be precise. Whatever your views on pomp and privilege, Blenheim Palace is a beautiful setting for any show and this year's Nocturne line-up is a bit of a corker. Opening the festival on the Thursday is the Queen of Funk **CHAKA KHAN**, whose catalogue of hits includes 'Ain't Nobody', 'I'm Every Woman', 'This Is My Night' and of course 'I Feel For You'. She's joined by 'We Are Family' and 'Frankie' hitmakers **SISTER SLEDGE**, and **FATBACK BAND**. On Friday synth-pop legends **SOFT CELL** play their only UK show of the year, Marc Almond and Dave Ball heading through classic 80s hits like 'Say Hello, Wave Goodbye', 'Torch' and their glorious cover of Gloria Jones' 'Tainted Love'. Support comes from former M People singer **HEATHER SMALL**, and electro-pop stars **HEAVEN 17**. Yet more Grade-A pop splendour follows on Saturday with **SUGABABES** headlining, the original line-up of Mutya, Keisha and Siobhan revisiting the likes of 'Overload', 'Round Round' and the glorious 'Freak Like Me'. They're joined by Spice Girls' **MELANIE C** and ex-All Saints singer **SHAZNAY LEWIS**. Things come to a close on the Sunday with an already sold-out show from **CROWDED HOUSE**, who'll hopefully bring the weather with them, alongside **SHERYL CROWE** and **TURIN BRAKES**. It's easily the most impressive Nocturne Live line-up so far and the World Heritage site is the perfect setting for some serious heritage pop action.

channelling the likes of Paramore, Olivia Rodrigo and Nothing But Thieves on her punk-informed pop.

### FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**SOFT CELL + HEATHER SMALLS + HEAVEN 17: Blenheim Palace** – Synth-pop and soul from Soft Cell at Nocturne Live – *see main preview*  
**STEVE MARTLAND: The Bullingdon** – Seminal Factory Records composer Steve Martland joins forces with the Komuna Collective, a group of young artists, musicians and DJs working in and around classical works, providing cross-genre pollination for Martland's compositions.  
**BARRELHAUS + EMPIRES, EMPIRES + PET TWIN + HE DIDNT: The Library**

– Riff-heavy rocking in the vein of Queens of the Stone-Age, Royal Blood and Clutch from recent *Nightshift* cover stars BarrelHaus, playing songs from their new 'Azimuth' album. They're joined by Reading's alt.folksters Empires, Empires, delicately downbeat poetic pop chap Pet Twin and dronemeister He Didnt.  
**SOUL PLAZA DJ COLLECTIVE: Tap Social, Botley**  
**TOTALLY AMORPHOUS: The Jericho Tavern** – Instrumental funk-rock from the Oxford-London outfit.  
**PET SHOP BOYS, ACTUALLY: Fat Lil's, Witney**

### SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**SUGABABES + MELANIE C + SHAZNAY LEWIS: Blenheim Palace** – The original and best line-up of the 00s hitmakers come to Nocturne Live – *see main preview*  
**NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS: The New Theatre** – Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason once again teams up with Gary Kemp, guitarist Lee Harris and long-time Floyd collaborator Guy Pratt and others to revisit the band's classic early albums – including 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' and 'Saucerful of Secrets' – so expect 'See Emily Play', 'Interstellar Overdrive', 'Remember a Day' and, best Floyd song of all time, 'Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun'.  
**BLVCKLISTED – THE SEQUEL: The Bullingdon**  
**KWASSA KWASSA: Tap Social, Botley** – Dancefloor-focussed tropicalia from the local DJs.  
**BEN SMITH + BAND OF HOPE: The Market Tap** – Double dose of live folk music.  
**DURAN: The Northcourt, Abingdon** – Duran Duran tribute.  
**THESE SMITHS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Smiths tribute.

### SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**CROWDED HOUSE + SHERYL CROWE + TURIN BRAKES: Blenheim Palace** – Sold-out show from the Aussie/Kiwi rockers to close Nocturne Live – *see main preview*  
**ROO & THE SMYTHS: Common Ground**  
**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms**  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**  
**TOPETTE!:: St. Nicholas Church, Baulking** – Exuberant pan-European folk music from the Bristol-Burgundy quintet, touring their new 'ON – Live at The Jam' album.  
**NO HORSES: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)** – Electric blues duo.

### MONDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**WITCHING + DAMAGED REICH: The Jericho Tavern** – Monstrous sludge-core, doom and blackened death metal from Philadelphia's glorious heavyweights, lead by lava-voiced singer Jacqui Powell, at tonight's Buried In Smoke show.  
**LEWSBERG: Common Ground** – Divine Schism welcomes Rotterdam's sparse, poetic lo-fi stars back to town as they tour last year's 'Out & About' album, drawing inspiration from The Velvet Underground and Jeffrey Lewis

along the way.  
**CARA DILLON & SAM LAKEMAN: Nettlebed Village Club** – Multi-award-winning Irish folk singer Cara Dillon returns to Nettlebed Folk Club alongside acclaimed multi-instrumentalist Sam Lakeman.

### TUESDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**SEA GIRLS ACOUSTIC: The Bullingdon** – London's anthemic indie guitar posters play an intimate unplugged show to launch new album 'Midnight Butterflies'.  
**OPEN MIC: The Cowshed, Abingdon**

### WEDNESDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**MAVEN GRACE: The Jericho Tavern** – Intricate, orchestral dream-pop in the vein of Beach House and Goldfrapp from the Bryan

### Friday 21<sup>st</sup>

## BOSSAPHONIK TURNS 20:

### Florence Park

Even among the Oxford music scene's many heroes, Dan Ofer stands out: back in 2004 he started his monthly Bossaphonik club night, bringing an array of world jazz dance acts to town and carving a unique groove in the local scene. Groove being the operative word as good time dance music is very much the order of the day, whatever the genre or style on offer. Two decades on, and having moved from its original home at The Cellar to Cowley Workers Social Club, Bossaphonik continues to live up to that ideal, and regular sold-out nights prove a lot of people are loving it. Today's summer solstice celebration in the park features some of Dan's favourite global dance acts, including the band he has hailed as his favourite UK based band: **LOKKHI TERRA**, helmed by Bangladeshi piano virtuoso Kishon Khan and interpreting the traditional music of his cultural background through the prism of Bengali folk music, Afro-Cuban grooves, jazz-funk and Afrobeat. Joining them today are **ALOGTE OHO & HIS SOUND OF JOY**, a high-energy Afro-futurist take on northern Ghana's Frafra spiritual music – three-part vocals, synths and horns with the influences of highlife, reggae and funk; **THE TURBANS** – a multicultural collective mixing up Balkan, Middle Eastern and North African grooves; locally based Senegalese griot **JALI FILY CISSOKHO**, a mast kora player, and **MAZAIIKA DUO** – a virtuoso violin and accordion duo playing gypsy jazz, Balkan folk, Argentinean tangos and hot club swing. A very happy big two-oh to Dan and Bossaphonik – may they make Oxford dance for many more years to come.




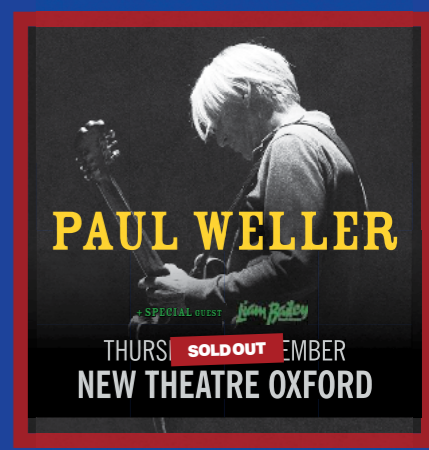
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 20 years, 20 shows, 20 songs, £20 OAD  
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**BESS ATWELL**  
 THE LIGHT SLEEPER TOUR  
  
**THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER**  
**THE BULLINGDON OXFORD**

  
**PAUL WELLER**  
 SPECIAL GUEST *Liam Bailey*  
**THURS SOLD OUT EMBER**  
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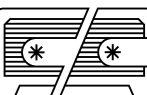
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**TURIN BRAKES ACOUSTIC**  
  
**THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER**  
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*Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>*

## FLOFEST / GLOFEST: Florence Park

Now a firm fixture in the local summer music calendar, the two-festivals-in-one that is Flofest and Glofest return with another day and evening of local music and family fun. This year's events also coincide with Florence Park's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so all the more reason to get out and celebrate.

Flofest is a free family-friendly day that runs from 11am through to 4pm. Amid the arts and crafts and other activities there's live music from Klub Kakofanny stalwarts **THE MIGHTY REDOX** with their party-hearty mix of funky blues rock, psychedelia, folk, ska and more, and they're joined by psych soundscapists **FLIGHTS OF HELIOS**, today playing a set with **HORNS OF PLENTY**; community vocal ensemble **MANCHOIR**; soul, r'n'b and new wave faves **THE SHAPES**; over-50s female punk band **THE HORMONES**, and Cowley rockers **COWLEYFORNIA**. Then in the evening it's a ticketed affair culminating in **DJ JAMES USSHER**'s dance music and laser show. Headline band for the day are rising local teen alt-rockers **THE KOKROACHEZ** (pictured), while **DJ SARAH LAMPTEY**; **THE BLACK HATS**; **STEADY HABITS** and **FEISTY CHOIR** are also on the bill.

Organised by a team of local volunteers, both Flofest and Glofest are great examples of making stuff happen at the heart of the community; while there are parks, let people party in them.

Ferry-endorsed band, featuring former-Psychid people Henry Jack and Marcus Efstriatou together with singer Mary Home. Having been championed early on by Ferry, the band are out on tour to promote second album 'Surface With a Smile', produced by Chris 'Merrick' Hughes. **KEITH FAIRBAIRN & FRIENDS: Tap Social, Botley** – Funky, groove-led Latin jazz with percussionist Fairbairn and guests.

## THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**RHODRI DAVIES: Fusion Arts** – A are live performance in Oxford for experimental harpist, composer and artist Davies, mixing acoustic and electric harp with live electronics on compositions and improvisations, including with long-time collaborator Eliane Radigue. Across a distinguished and varied career he's worked with the likes of David Sylvian, Jenny Hval and Derek Bailey as well as Richard Dawson on their Hen Ogledd project. **CATWEAZLE: Common Ground**

## FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**BOSSAPHONIK IS 20: Florence Park** – The world jazz dance club celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday with a summer solstice party in the park – *see main preview*

**MAX BLANSJAAR: The Bullingdon** – Album launch show from the local star, his debut 'False Comforts' revealing an artist of serious songwriting ambition, drawing comparisons to Brian Wilson as well as Beck and Jeffrey Lewis.

**DANNY MELLIN + BLUE BAYOU + JOEY JUNE: O2 Academy** – Soulful indie rocking from Witney/Sheffield singer-songwriter Mellin.

**BLOODY FIASCO + SUGARBULLY + BESH & KIKO: The Jericho Tavern** – Genre-bending jazz-punk-hip-hop-funk-blues-spaghetti-western fun from the recent *Nightshift* Top Track winners, the band formed by former Borderville and Keyboard Choir wiz Tom Woodhouse alongside Big Speakers Don Mac and Georgia Milton from Horns Of Plenty. **FOLK AT THE CAPE: The Cape of Good Hope** – Live folk music from Abingdon's soulful acoustic folk-pop singer-songwriter Amber Anderton, guitar, vocals and cello duo The Hex Collective, The Sceptics, and Cat & Lewis.

**SUMMER SOLSTICE PARTY: The Bullingdon**  
**PEERLESS PIRATES + MEANS OF PRODUCTION + NOTHING DREAMS: Tap Social, Botley** – TAD Live show with rollicking indie and rockabilly crew Peerless Pirates and synth-pop, post-punk and acid house from Means of Production. **SHOCK HORROR + DOUBLE YELLOW LINES: Common Ground** – *OMS* magazine showcase.

**REV FERRIDAY: The Market Tap** – Electric blues from the one-man band. **THE FAITH HEALERS + BARRELHAUS + HELEN PEARSON: Apothecary Tap, Banbury** – Funky, soulful blues-rock from local trio The Faith Healers at tonight's Strummer Room show, joined by riffmeisters BarrelHaus and stark, emotive acoustic pop from Helen Pearson.

**THE CO-POLICE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to the Police. **SEPIA TONES FOLK COLLECTIVE + STRUGGLES END + ARTISAN BLUES: Loose Cannon Tap Room, Abingdon** – Live music as part of Making Music In Abingdon on UK Making Music Day. **KAY FRANCIS DAVIES: One Planet Café, Abingdon (12 noon)**

## SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**FLOFEST / GLOFEST: Florence Park** – Double festival action in Florence Park – *see main preview*

**THE AMY WINEHOUSE BAND: O2 Academy** – The late and very great singer's backing band, led by bassist and musical director Dale Davies and singer Bronte Shardé, play classic songs from Amy's back catalogue. **STYLO G: O2 Academy** – Dancehall, hip hop and grime from the south London rapper and producer playing a live set at tonight's club night and joined by White Magic Sound, Loyal

Squad and Untouchable.

**BROOK ELLINGWORTH: Tap Social, Botley** – Live music on the back of a truck as Tap Social host their Craft Beer festival. **KISS THE TEACHER: Fat Lil's, Witney** – ABBA tribute.

## SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms**  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**FRANKLIN'S TOWER + SECRET RIVALS + DELTA HARDWARE: The Tree, Iffley (4-7pm)** – Klub Kakofanny host a free afternoon of live music including Grateful Dead tribute Franklin's Tower and feisty indie janglers Secret Rivals.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**  
**MARLIA RAE: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)**

## MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

## TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

## WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**MATTHEW & THE ATLAS: The Jericho Tavern** – Earthy, soulful indie-folk from

*Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>*

## CSS: O2 Academy

With Bat For Lashes also back in town this month, June has got a bit of a Noughties vibe about it. Back in the middle of that decades, you couldn't move for hearing CSS – on the radio, on telly (including CBeebies), and on myriad game soundtracks. The Band, from Sao Paulo, arrived at exactly the right moment to pick up on UK media attention, their arrival coinciding with New Rave as it was called. They toured with The Klaxons but their best songs have stuck in the memory longer than any of that band's: 'Alcohol', 'Alala', 'Music Is My Hot Hot Sex', and of course 'Let's Make Love & Listen To Death From Above'. By their own admission CSS (Cansei de Ser Sexy, or Tired Of Being Sexy) could barely plug in their instruments when they formed but they were always a triumph of fun and attitude over technique – infectious muso-baiting bubble and bounce, a merry-making mix of of synth-pop, disco, new wave and classic 60s girl group pop. The band officially split in 2013 when Adriano Cintra left on acrimonious terms, but they reformed without him for a one-off show in Brazil in 2019. That gig went down so well they decided to continue and this year they celebrate 20 years since their original formation and fun will, once again, be the order of the day.



Aldershot's introspective, reflective songsmith, previously tour support for Mumford & Sons, but carving out a name for himself inspired by the likes of Ray Lamontagne, Bon Iver and Damien Rice, and back out on tour to promote new album 'This Place We Live'. **SPIN with THE TRISTAN BANKS QUARTET: Tap Social, Botley** – Contemporary jazz from the renowned drummer alongside saxophonist Paul Booth at tonight's Spin club night.

## THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**MALCOLM BRUCE + MAYA SAGE: The Bullingdon** – Malcolm Bruce – son of the legendary Jack – continues to plough his own musical furrow as well as keeping his father's Cream legacy alive, having worked with Elton John, Little Richard, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker over the years. **THE BOBO + PET TWIN + MOUNT ST. HELEN + LORD BUG: Common Ground** – Ethereal, airy and trippy electronic pop and shoegaze in the vein of Mazzy Star, Daughter and Japanese House from The Bobo, tonight launching her new single 'Too Sad' **METAAAL!!!!: Kiss Bar** – Monthly metal club night.

## FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**SELF HELP + KILLER KOWALSKI: The Bullingdon** – Album launch show for the local indie-punk, psych and electro-rock stars. This month's *Nightshift* cover stars support. **NIK KERSHAW: O2 Academy** – The 80s popstrel revisits his old hits – 'I Won't Let The

Sun Go Down On Me', 'Wouldn't It Be Good' and 'Donkey Oatie' among them – at tonight's festival warm-up show. **GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with OCTAVIA FREUD & THE WEIRD SISTERS + VOXISH + SIMON VEANEY: Common Ground** – Octavia Freud and The Weird Sisters – featuring the likes of Emma Hunter, Mila Todd, The Bobo and Pet Twin – perform their 'Manbeth' album, reimagining Macbeth in Manchester's 90s acid house scene with a suitably electronic soundtrack. They're joined at this month's Gappy Tooth Industries night by the chunky glitchtronica of Voxish (from Manchester, appropriately), and lovelorn, downbeat acoustic pop in a Tindersticks vein from local songsmith Simon Veaney. **RATS EAT RATS + SMALLTOWN SAVIOURS + HALFWAY HOME: The Jericho Tavern** – Post-grunge alt-rocking from Rats Eat Rats, launching their new EP. **D-FEST: The Red Lion, Drayton** – The free music mini-fest returns to Drayton over two days. Tonight's opening session features sets from ska tribute act Hope & Glory, gothic surf-rock flamenco star Emma Hunter and Hard on Ya Ears. **ARTISAN BLUES: Littlemore Rugby Club** – Live blues from the season local outfit. **DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic rock covers from the veteran local trio.

## SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup>

**CSS: O2 Academy** – Dayglo indie-rave fun from the reformed Brazilian pop crew – *see main preview*  
**METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern** – Grand final of the metal battle of the bands. **THE INFLATABLES: Tap Social, Botley** – Classic ska and Two-Tone. **D-FEST: The Red Lion, Drayton** – Full day of free live music, with a headline set from reggae crew Zaia, plus Doug Graves & the Sextons; The Faith Healers; Darkgnoss; Beard of Destiny; Studio 6; 13 Burning; Dr Steevo; Superloose; Charms Against the Evil Eye, and The Mark Bosley Band. **THE BRITPOP BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney**  
**THE ELO ENCOUNTER: The Northcourt, Abingdon**

## SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup>

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms**  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)**  
**FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The James Street Tavern (2.30pm)**  
**ADAM MATTHEWS: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)**

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

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## JUNE NEW RELEASES



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**JOHN GRANT** THE ART OF THE LIE  
**BONNIE LIGHT HORSEMAN** KEEP ME ON YOUR MIND/SEE YOU FREE  
**BON JOVI** FOREVER



**ISOBEL CAMPBELL** BOW TO LOVE  
**KATE NASH** 9 SAD SYMPHONIES  
**GOAT GIRL** BELOW THE WASTE  
**JOHN CALE** OPTICAL ILLUSION



**KNEECAP** FINE ART  
**LIZ LAWRENCE** PEANUTS  
**ELKKA** PRISM OF PLEASURE  
**THE MYSTERINES** AFRAID OF TOMORROWS



**LOMA** HOW WILL I LIVE WITHOUT A BODY?  
**THE DECEMBERISTS** AS IT EVER WAS, SO WILL IT BE AGAIN  
**DIRTY THREE** LOVE CHANGES EVERYTHING  
**MOBY** ALWAYS CENTRED AT NIGHT

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## **FAT DOG** **The Bullington**

We're barely two songs into tonight's show when Fat Dog's keyboard player decides to throw himself into the crowd – with keyboard still in hand. He does it every show apparently and tonight is quite obviously choreographed chaos, but it's exactly the kind of chaos gigs need. Tonight is one of those "I was there" shows, revealing a band who arrive wrapped in a giant fluorescent hype blanket but prove that hype to be right on the nail, and look set for far bigger things.

Singer Joe Love, moustachioed

and resplendent in a Stetson that somehow survives his regular excursions into the lively moshpit, is in the frontman-as-preacher mould, proclaiming "I am the king of the slugs!" during the band's frankly bonkers debut single, one that mixes up and matches rave, industrial rock, psychedelia and, why not, klezmer. In fact a Fat Dog show feels as much like a rave as a gig, with its breakdowns that allow songs to kick back in with extra oomph.

The first twenty minutes of tonight's set are among the most

## **THE EXACT OPPOSITE / SECRET RIVALS / LIFE UNDERGROUND**

### **The Jericho Tavern**

In an entertaining set, Life Underground pull us in lots of directions, but all of them turn out to be separate paths up the big glowing mountain named Melodic Rock. So, signature track 'Sunshine' is a mixture between Roy Orbison and Steve Harley, two very different acts, but both of which are big on tunes. Elsewhere we pick up on some 70s Dylan pronouncements, an early Kinks jangle, an airy glide past Fleetwood Mac, and a very small pinch of Bowie pizzazz. Sometimes the sound is clumpy Sunday pub-session rocking, but there's enough attention to hook and songcraft here to make Life Underground well worth revisiting.

Their best weapon might be drummer Mike Gore, who plays with a light carefree innocence which owes more to the early days of rock'n'roll, or even skiffle, than it does to anything after 1966. When Gore joins Secret Rivals for their final song, it's an unexpected joy as he brings a strange country lode to the tune. Prior to this some charmless programmed drums had marred an

intense we've witnessed in recent times and we're reminded of Fat White Family's incredible show here a decade ago. Techno-rock with ebm propulsion drives everything forward, laced with almost gothic menace and a great pretentious, portentous spoken word passage at one point. From there we head into something a little looser, elements of jazz and no wave, particular in Morgan Wallace's hefty sax skronk, but even here it feels closer to the edge of mania than most bands would ever tread, and soon enough things boil over

otherwise strong set, airless and graceless tom fills from an emo karaoke disc undercutting songs that want to fizz and bubble. Secret Rivals Mk II might not have the fight-pop 'tude of the early incarnation, but Ash Hennessey's vocal alternates nicely between Lush-style softness and cheeky rants, with Jay Corcoran busting in almost randomly with Scrappy Doo yelps. The Cure-chorus guitar sounds great, as do the rolling basslines from erstwhile Masochist Vincent Lynch. Next gig, will they be a four piece?

As soon as Nigel Powell sits behind the drums, the Rivals' lovable sloppiness is exorcised by clinical precision. Not that The Exact Opposite – Nigel with his old Dive Dive bandmate Jamie Stuart – can't be fun or lovable, but their streamlined, stripped back mecha-indie is meticulously thought out, and their performance is flawless (one hilarious high-speed lap of the venue in search of a capo notwithstanding). The vocals are agile and striking, the guitar is just on the well-behaved side of angular, and the drums are impeccably controlled, whilst also packing a kick in the ribs when Powell wants to drive a point home. These songs are playful, intense, and yearning, and are testament to the duo's long history writing and playing together. Were they as good as we expected? The exact same.

**David Murphy**

once again, that initial militancy returns and so does the fervent circle pit.

Fat Dog spent much of last summer making a name for themselves with similarly wild, wall-breaking shows at festivals and likely will again, but here, tonight, we're lucky to catch them in exactly the kind of intimate venue this sort of performance works best in. Yes, it might be choreographed, and yes the industry hype machine is behind them full speed, but let's just be excited that there are bands still ready and willing to bring chaos and danger into a sometimes sanitised live arena.

**Dale Kattack**

## **JOHN METCALFE** **St Barnabas Church**

This evening's proceedings are split into three branches. First we have a solo set of back catalogue material from composer John Metcalfe – Reichian guitar, synths, strings and beats swell, ebb and flow all around in a lush tapestry while thick drum&bass-adjacent bass and beats bring just a hint of the dancefloor, or at least a late night 6Music session. The result is something like Jonsi for William Henry Davies' England, or perhaps said better; British folk music for the post-digital age.

After this there is a brief but fascinating conversation between Metcalfe and local artist and biologist Emma Coleman-Jones discussing her charcoal studies of trees and the local context of the woodland and urban trees around Oxford. Not the first creative types to be inspired by Oxford's trees, *ent* they... but their insights are compelling and Metcalfe's true appreciation and fascination really shows why he chose to write a whole album inspired directly by these forces of nature and their life

cycles. And that's what's next: a full performance of Metcalfe's most recent album 'Tree', from beginning to end. Accompanied by stunning digital visuals and a small section of string musicians this is the true highlight of the night and all of a sudden St Barnabas resonates as a perfect space to showcase this music. This is spiritual music without a doubt, not religious or dogmatic but connected deeply to nature and the world of everything alive, be it leafy or biped. Big drones shift slowly like spreading roots and while the strings flutter through the leaves swirling under the vaulted ceiling. It's beautiful and encompassing and such a joy to see such a major force in the music canon in such an intimate, local space. When you've got Bono on speed dial, a church on a side street in Jericho isn't perhaps the obvious first stop on the tour, but there is clearly a special energy in the room for a local man playing material that is so close to home.

**Matt Chapman Jones**

## **MECHANICAL ANIMALS with DEATH OF THE MAIDEN / LEE SWITZER-WOOLF / EVA GADD** **Florence Park Community Centre**

The new Mechanical Animals night feels a bit like a scaled down *Later... With Jools Holland* show, only not in the cauldron of a BBC studio, instead at the rather cosier Florence Park Community Centre. The new monthly gig night hosts three diverse acts, each performing stripped down, acoustic versions of their material. The intimate, homely format of the evening allows performers to talk to the audience in a more conversational style than at a typical gig, meaning everyone in the room feels parts of the performance.

First up tonight is the delightful Eva Gadd, straight outta Banbury. She sings in a wistful jazzy style, with songs of angst and wondering, the rhythmic keyboards driving the melody to a crescendo. Eva is more Amy Winehouse than Dolly Parton, though the latter is the subject matter of her university thesis.

A handbrake turn from the gentle melodies of Eva, as we enter the darker world of Lee Switzer-Woolf. He is a stalwart of the Reading punk scene, but singing solo and unplugged gives Lee the space to display his lyrical prowess, painting

bleak pictures of misery and suffering. This is pure gothic poetry, underpinned with solid acoustic guitar fretwork. Lee's favourite words are annihilation, destruction and armageddon. It's intense and stylish but delivered askance with a confident air of bonhomie.

Headlining tonight, we see Death Of The Maiden back in live action for the first time since Covid. While singer Tamara Parsons-Baker oozes charisma, Death Of The Maiden are knockabout chums; you can tell they love performing together, revelling in each other's company. That said, no one would want to get the wrong side of Tamara; 'Bitch Stole My Guitars' is a warning to those who wrong her, deliciously embracing the profane. The slapstick sea shanty tone is delivered with wit and muscularity and Tamara doesn't need a microphone.

Mechanical Animals feels like a perfect chilled addition to the local calendar with an almost old-fashioned lounge cabaret vibe about it that's both eclectic and inclusive, a community event as much as a gig.

**Mick Conmy**

## **ENGLISH TEACHER / PLEASURE CENTRE**

### **The Bullington**

You know you're at a classy Oxford gig when one of the 'Head turns up, and Phil Selway joins many happy punters leaving The Bully clutching some newly acquired vinyl. For this is a joyful and celebratory gig, where even the bouncers are beaming, and it's noteworthy that the average age of the crowd must be well north of 40, which may be down to the influence of 6Music.

Pleasure Centre, from North Yorkshire, are enjoying their first night on this marathon tour. Epic washes of guitar, with much re-tuning between songs, bring to mind 80s US psychedelic bands like The Rain Parade, while their acknowledged debt to Slowdive is hard to miss. Unfamiliar songs suggest a move towards a lighter, more poppy sound than their clutch of singles, while successfully balancing tunefulness with raw multi guitar-led energy is what makes them such an engaging and worthwhile listen.

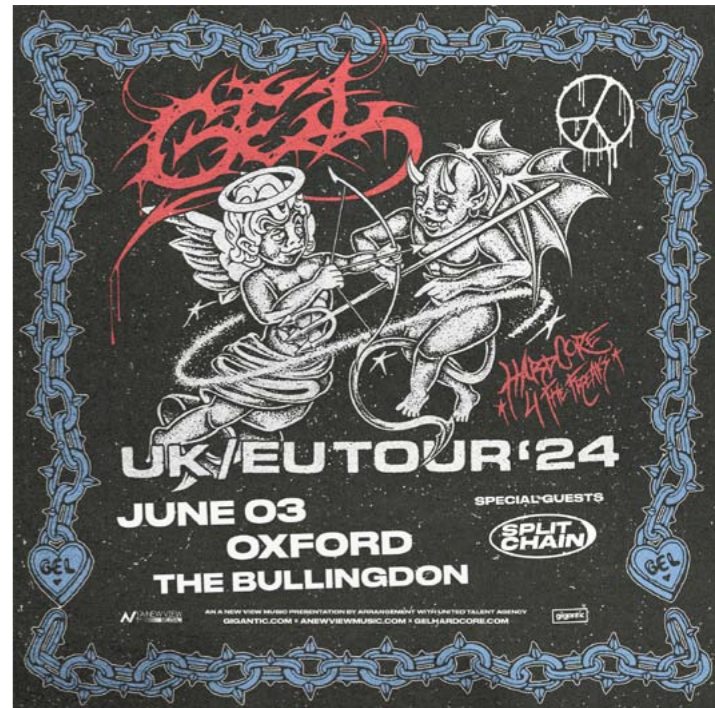
There's nothing as thrilling as catching a great band when the first album has just hit the streets and you can see them feeling their way and experimenting sonically in search of a true direction, in a small environment like this. Leeds band English Teacher emerge more warm, appreciative and funny than some of their photo shoots might suggest, though a number of songs display a harder edge than the studio versions. Opening with 'The World's Biggest Paving Slab', the four-piece are joined by a guest whose keyboards and cello help

recreate the complex textures of the LP.

They've often spoken of resisting a post-punk pigeonhole, yet guitarist Lewis Whiting's style, with unexpected rapid-fire chops making perfect sense, is often strongly reminiscent of key players of that scene like The Pop Group or early Pere Ubu. (Just next door in Halifax Henry Wade of The Orielles has been following a similar path for a touch longer.) In fact they're all ridiculously talented, with much swapping of instruments, singer Lily Fontaine playing a left-handed guitar upside down, sometimes moving to keyboards. Her voice is huge and captivating while her dry, sharp, observational lyrics keep the interest level set at 10 throughout the set. 'Sideboob' may borrow some chords from Future Islands' 'Seasons' but it's still delightfully warm and touching. 'Albert Road', a tribute to Lily's hometown of Colne, builds up from a barely-there start to a wide-screen tidal wave of sound, a masterclass in precision you wouldn't necessarily expect from such a relatively young band.

The encore brings a final surprise in a powerful take on LCD Soundsystem's 'New York I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down', sounding all the better in a Colne accent, before graciously thanking the crowd and their support band. We won't see them again in such intimate surroundings, so this has been truly a night to treasure.

**Art Lagun**







## THE MEN THEY COULDN'T HANG

### O2 Academy

There is no new thing under the sun goes the timeless idiom and so it seems watching The Men They Couldn't Hang tonight. When the band emerged alongside The Pogues from London's fertile folk-punk scene of the early 1980s, they sang about and against war, police brutality and the oppression of working class communities.

Most of us here tonight – there's plenty of grey hair both on and off stage – will never forget or forgive Margaret Thatcher for what she did to ordinary people in the name of radical Conservatism, but here we are in 2024 faced with her bastard children, steeped in corruption and inflicting ever more devious cruelty

on the most vulnerable in society. The Men They Couldn't Hang's ire hasn't dampened one iota and the songs we sang along to 40 years ago are as relevant as they ever were. 'Shirt Of Blue' is awash with pathos and fury, telling the tale of childhood friends who ended up on opposing sides during the miners' strike; 'The Bells' follows an ordinary man through life and the bells that landmark it, and is probably the greatest Christmas hit that never was; 'The Colours' is a call to arms from a man sentenced to death for his part in a naval mutiny, while the epic 'Ironmasters' tells of the subjugation of rural working class communities and

the greed of the ruling class with its glorious "It's no sin to fight to be free!" that has everyone in a pleasingly packed room punching the air in unison.

It's not all oldies of course. Despite splitting up in 1991 before reforming on and off, and despite the death of founding member Stefan Cush three years ago – remembered fondly tonight on 'Red Kite Rising' – they've continued to make new music, together and solo and their way with a roustabout folk tune coupled with often biting lyrics seems undiminished.

But it's those golden oldies that still send a shiver down the spine

and make you want to man the barricades – the literal barricades of the militant, marching 'Ghosts of Cable Street', telling the story of ordinary Eastenders standing up to Mosley's Black Shirts back in 1936 but which feels particularly apposite at a time of a resurgent far right across the world. And the absolute pinnacle of tonight's triumphant show: 'The Green Fields of France', their debut single, a cover of the Eric Bogle classic, the horror and futility of war reflected through the prism of one young man's short life. *Nightshift* isn't ashamed to admit the song brings us to tears and we're not alone.

40 years on from their inception, The Men They Couldn't Hang are as potent and relevant as they ever were. Still angry, still game.  
**Dale Kattack**

## THEATRE OF HATE / GO GO CULT

### The Bullingdon

Battle hardened Oxford ex-punks of a certain age throng to the Bullingdon tonight, like Chelsea Pensioners on Remembrance Day, curious to see if Theatre of Hate still have lead in their pencil. Thankfully Kirk Brandon, along with Stan Stammers prove their eery dystopian shtick remains impressive and sinister.

First up though, Reading's Go Go Cult are a versatile veteran combo in The Cramps / Sisters of Mercy mould. Diminutive frontman Nige, with his prominent vampish incisors, jet black hair and spangly shirt seeks to ooze macabre menace, but with his cherubic face and occasional smiles the ghoulishness is only skin deep. He probably doesn't even sleep in a coffin. These are a close-knit team, a jocular, tightly-honed bunch of professionals, note perfect. Each song creates a distinctive soundscape, and all seem longer than 'Bohemian Rhapsody'. The set builds to a crescendo of finale 'Wake Up'. What looks like an exhumed Charlie Watts on drums looks happy enough to be reincarnated and his band deserve headline status soon.

Talking of drums, Theatre of Hate have always had an outstanding rhythm section, and combined with the angry, powerful vocals of Kirk Brandon and Stan Stammers the lively Bullingdon crowd are entertained to a 17-song set that focuses on their early material. Each song has something to say and Kirk is the consummate frontman with his chiselled Mount Rushmore good looks remaining intact. Stammers, meanwhile, prowls the stage like a jackal, while the band's trademark saxophone adds to the drama. Brandon's chief asset is his ear-splitting voice; he hardly needs amplification. He is a slender cockney punk Pavorotti. 'Westworld' and 'Original Sin' sound just as good as they did back in 1982. 'Grapes of Wrath' and 'Rebel Without a Brain' also go down a storm with the faithful; there's even some tentative pogoing at the front, like the good old days.

The Bullingdon is the standout Oxford music venue these days, with Cowley Road at its febrile best in this weekend's early summer heatwave. We pour out of the sweltering fleshpot into the equally tightly packed, sultry and seething night-time streets feeling refreshed with rock and roll ringing in our ears. It's better than Eurovision all day long.

**Mick Conmy**

Academy Events present

<p><b>RIVAL SONS</b> SUNDAY 9th JUNE 2024 O2 ACADEMY OXFORD</p>	<p><b>THE AMY WINEHOUSE BAND</b> LIVE IN CONCERT A CELEBRATION OF HER MUSIC, LIFE AND LEGACY, PERFORMED BY AMY'S ORIGINAL BAND SAT 22nd JUNE 2024 O2 ACADEMY OXFORD</p>	<p><b>ROYEL OTIS GLORY TO GLORY UK TOUR '24</b> 10 JULY O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD</p>	<p><b>FAT FREDDY'S DROP</b> O2 ACADEMY OXFORD MON 12 AUG 2024</p>
<p><b>THE LEMON TWIGS</b> 2024 TOUR Mon 2nd September O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD</p>	<p><b>OLD TIME SAITORS</b> Stories From Overseas Friday 6th September 2024 O2 Academy2 Oxford</p>	<p><b>THE SUBWAYS</b> PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS WEDNESDAY 2 OCTOBER 2024 O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD</p>	<p><b>ANTARCTIC MONKEYS</b> THE UK'S No.1 TRIBUTE TO THE ARCTIC MONKEYS Saturday 5th October 2024 O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD</p>
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## USA NAILS

### The Jericho Tavern

“We’ve got a couple of tunes left” announces Steve Hodson towards the end of his band’s eviscerating set and we can’t help but smile. USA Nails don’t really do tunes. Glorious, all-consuming walls of noise, yes. Malevolent, undulating battering rams of sonic violence, for sure. If there are tunes in there they’re well hidden, and that’s fine. Because we didn’t come here for pretty tunes. We came here to be punished, and punished is what we get. Wonderfully so. The London quartet, made up of

members of Blacklisters, Future of the Left, Kong, Death Pedals and Silent Front, have just released their best album to date, ‘Feel Worse’; whether the title is ironic or apposite probably depends where you stand on the bastard noise spectrum, but we take its opening track title ‘Cathartic Entertainment’ at face value and are more than happy to immerse ourselves in the deluge. Daniel Holloway’s lovely, rumbling metallic bass lays the industrial-heavy foundation for the band’s

music, reminding us of Jeff Pizzati’s insistently muscular work in Big Black, while the sheet metal sharp guitars of Hodson and Gareth Thomas can feel like an avalanche of razorblades at times: single-minded and with an unerring sense of purpose, a 21<sup>st</sup> Century update on The Jesus Lizard’s venomous take on hardcore. The abrupt stops at the end of songs bring brief respite before the tumult continues, but while it makes for an intensely visceral experience it’s equally elaborately textured, the often

hectoring, declamatory vocals a surly sheen atop the noise rock cake.

If there’s any criticism to be had it’s that you sometimes wish their tracks expand over a longer timespan, all the better to fully envelope you in their magnificent, motorik monstrosity, but it feels churlish to pick holes when the experience is so thrilling and as they close on another storm of noise with a heart full of shrapnel any remaining resistance is washed away. Feel worse? On the contrary, we’ve never felt better.

*Dale Kattack*

## JAKE BUGG

### O2 Academy

It’s been twelve years since Jake Bugg dominated British music with platinum hits like ‘Lightning Bolt’ and ‘Two Fingers’ and so the collective question tonight could be, does he still have it? The answer: he has.

Bugg might not have since found that alchemy of a universal melody, a universal thought and luck (who can forget the campaign for Usain Bolt 2012 with Bugg’s lead single sharing its name with the idolised sprinter), but it is the talent that created that magic in the first place which makes a Jake Bugg concert worth anyone’s while.

There is something mesmerising about watching Bugg on stage; the audience are quiet, pensive, but not with the petulance of an audience wanting more – instead with the rapture of people witnessing a real gift. As John Lydon once said of Kate Bush, she and her piano are like John Wayne and his saddle, it’s fair to say the same of Jake Bugg and his guitar. And that voice; it’s perhaps easy to take for granted or even mock

it for its nasal quality on his records, but in a live concert with over a decade of musicianship under his belt, it is a siren threatening you with a crash should you break your gaze. There’s something nostalgic and charming about watching someone purely for their talent. Bugg places you in an old tavern or a kitsch dance hall – a place where the music and only the music matters. In fact the music matters so much that any other showmanship doesn’t. He’s cast in simplistic lighting – blue for the sad songs, red for the angrier ones – and he has the most unassuming stage presence, as if he had got on stage to ask the audience for the time. The one downfall of his performance is when he starts shredding his guitar and given he hasn’t changed his black t-shirt and flicky pubescent hair in over a decade, these guitar solos do make you feel like you’re intruding on a teenage boy’s bedroom.

Regardless, we have a lot to thank Jake Bugg for. He is arguably the progenitor of modern musicians playing for the past; Declan McKenna, Sam Fender, Jade Bird and even Lewis Capaldi owe a lot to him, and with a performance like tonight’s, we’re reminded why.

*Maddy Jeapes*

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# WHAT'S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music.

This month it's **STEPH PIRRIE** and she's **JAZZ SINGER & TRUMPETER, SINGING TEACHER & CHOIR LEADER.**

**How long have you worked in this job?** "I've been performing, playing trumpet and singing for over 30 years. My career as a singing teacher and choir leader developed when I had little ones and that's when I got into jazz. Since 2013 I've also been part of a folk group The Three Idle Women. Now most of my teaching work is just choirs; I love it! I started The Jericho Singers in 2011. Hard to believe we are 140 singers strong."

**What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know?** "I organise and promote a lot of music events including workshops for singers so I have to get involved in all aspects of managing that. I recently started a new venture, The Steph Pirrie Jazz Chorus, a pop-up jazz club for singers, and coming up on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July a concert in St. Barnabas Church: Gospel comes to Jericho – a collaboration with The Oxford Gospel Choir."  
**What's been the single biggest highlight of your career so far?** "Sometimes the truly best, most memorable music moments happen at everyday rehearsals. But for star factor I enjoyed the madness that was teaching Robert Peston to sing 'Bohemian Rhapsody' with Jericho Singers. He wasn't bad at all!"

**And the lowlight?** "Definitely Covid."  
**How much and how did Covid affect your job?** "A hell of a lot. Not being able to rehearse or perform together was crap. On top of that, I felt a big responsibility to keep my singing community together. I think choir leaders went a bit mad looking for ways to make online fun. At first it was great to stay connected, but then Zoom started driving everyone nuts; they were desperate for the real thing. My partner built a weather-proof 'singing temple' in the garden so people could come around and sing in person. It's still partially



there – sorry, neighbours. When we were finally able to run proper live rehearsals again I spent a ridiculous amount of time managing where everyone should walk and stand. One of the toughest gigs was organising the Jericho Singers Christmas concert in the middle of a Covid spike – the risk assessment, the stress, it was a nightmare. On the plus side, I learned so many new skills and made a music video that people still tell me they love ('Rivers Run' by Jericho Singers on Youtube). I created workshops online and other stuff. There were a lot of tears of happiness when it was over."

**Who's your favourite ever Oxford musical artist?** "No single favourite, but I must include The Owl Light Trio, John Metcalfe and Radiohead."

**What's the single most important piece of advice you'd give to someone wanting to do your job?** "Be businesslike wherever you can, so you can keep doing what you love and doing it well. That might be as simple as finding the right person to advise you. I have a degree in business studies and that has helped me in so many ways. When it comes to choirs, have a vision for the

group you want to create and take the leap. Listen to what your community wants with open ears, and continuously develop yourself as a leader so you can always be your best self and inspire people with your work."

**Who's the most awkward person you've ever had to deal with in your job?** "There are lots of awkward people in my life, perhaps I shouldn't say!"

**When was the last time you heard genius?** "Last week, and usually a couple of times a month when my friend, jazz pianist Tim Laphorn, comes to Oxford. His work is exquisitely beautiful, boundary-defying and deeply soulful."

**Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work?** "I don't think so. My values underpin what I do, but life doesn't always present challenges in neat parcels. I trust my judgement."

**Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what?** "No, I absolutely love it and consider it to be a great privilege. I feel very lucky to enjoy music with some great musicians and I love bringing people together through music."

**Are you rich?** "It's not easy to make a living out of music but being business-like has helped me to make a steady income that pays the bills."

**Do you consider your job glamorous?** "It isn't glamorous in a *Hello* magazine kind of way, but yes in some ways. It is something that people want to talk to me about and can relate to. As far as choirs go, people usually know someone who enjoys singing in a choir or have often thought about joining one. I seem to have met a lot of people through making music, I can't go far in Oxford without meeting someone I've encountered through my various choirs or bands."

**What's your favourite thing about Oxford's music scene?** "Its resilience despite being massively under supported by Oxford's institutions. Even though there is a desperate shortage of grassroots venues people are getting together to make music wherever they can. And thank goodness for brilliant spaces like Common Ground and the Tap Social and pubs with music-loving landlords like Ian at The Harcourt Arms in Jericho. We just need more of the right kind of spaces. Come on Oxford!"

## INTRODUCING....

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

# LORD BUG

**Who is she?**

Singer-songwriter Lord Bug is Libby Peet. Libby was born in Nottingham but moved to Oxford for university aged 18, where she is in her second year, studying Philosophy and Linguistics. "I always liked to sing but was terribly embarrassed and insecure about my voice. My mate gave me a ukulele at 15 and I enjoyed using it to sing covers. Occasionally I would try to write but the songs were terrible, and I felt frustrated knowing that they were bad but that I wanted to write better. At 16/17 I started making what could probably be called beats on GarageBand, out of pre-made loops, and I would sing little melodies on top. In hindsight I had very good intuition about what to do with my voice and even what the production side needed but I didn't realise at the time. It's from this process that I made my first three singles: 'Scab', 'Perception' and 'Dog's Dinner'." Having got a left-handed guitar for her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, ("after having failed miserably at trying to play a right handed guitar") she began writing her own songs. After performing solo she formed a full band. 'Dog's Dinner' was a *Nightshift* Top Track in March. A new single, 'Winnie', is released this summer.

**What does she sound like?**

Sleepy-eyed, folk and jazz-inflected indie, with a mellow summer vibe in the vein of Feist or Soccer Mommy, with her voice "stretching out like a sleepy cat" as her *Nightshift* review said.

**What inspires her?**

"This year I've been experimenting with different artistic mediums, prompted by a break up and a desire to (re)connect with myself through creation. I still think words (poetry and songwriting) will always be my true love, but I have loved doing film photography, drawing and painting."

**Her career highlight so far is:**

"My first headline gig with the full band at The Library was great. It was a super intimate crowd and they really listened; I was so excited to share the new sound we'd built and was also so taken aback by how beautiful the music sounded because it was the first and only full run through we'd done. In a very different way, my debut single 'Scab' being added to a big Spotify



playlist, Our Generation, was crazy exciting and felt like a sign that things were heading in the right direction."

**And the lowlight:**

"When I released my second single 'Perception', the numbers and stats paled in comparison to 'Scab' and I felt like it flipped. It was a good prompt for reflection though and I realised I had a long way to go in building a consistent dedicated audience and also that I needed to make an active effort to disconnect from stats and numbers because it wasn't going to fulfil me."

**Her favourite other Oxfordshire act is:**

"My friend Noor is fantastic. I first saw her perform when we were both on a Divine Schism bill when I was performing solo and I was captured by her voice, it's so fluid and jazzy. I love her original writing."

**When is her next local gig and what can newcomers expect?**

"The 5<sup>th</sup> June at Common Ground. Expect lots of layered textures, a constant groove underpinning it all, vocals that have been described as hauntingly beautiful. I also have a solo acoustic stripped back set with Mechanical Animals on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June at Florence Park Community Centre."

**Her favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:**

"Favourite is how vibrant it seems to be. Aiden at Divine Schism does a fantastic job, amongst others, at contributing to that feel. Least favourite is how divided student music lovers and Oxford locals music lovers seem to be."

**You might lover her if you love:**

Billie Marten; Nilüfer Yanya; Marika Hackman; Soccer Mommy; Rachel Chinouriri; Fenne Lily; Orlando Weeks.

## ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

### 20 YEARS AGO

"Turn it up loud enough and you could break the bones of passersby with 'The Banshee Screams For Buffalo Meat'," ran *Nightshift's* review of **Sextodecimo's** landmark debut album back in June 2004. The band, who had graced the front cover of the mag the previous month, had recorded their album with **Dave Smart**, guitarist in **Sevenchurch** and their combined forces produced what still stands as Oxford's finest metal album. To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the album the band are reforming for a show at **The Jericho Tavern** this July. Be there and be afraid.

Also released this month in 2004 was **Sharron Kraus's** 'Songs of Love & Loss', the local folk singer managing to squeeze as much bloodshed and death into her songs as any hardcore metal band, as she sang about ravens and gallows on her way to becoming Oxford's most unsung of success stories.

Over in the demo pages, former-**The Rock of Travolta** founder **Phill Honey** teamed up with **Smilex's Lee Christian** for the short-lived **Boywithatoy** project, which duly topped the pile for its seedy, sleazy and entirely funky homage to Prince, Goldfrapp and Har Mar Superstar, while on-off *Nightshift* favourite **Twizz Twangle** was in the dumper, with a request that he cease and desist from sending us any more "music" until he get his head round the concept of writing a tune.

### 10 YEARS AGO

The main news in June 2014 was that HMV in

### THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

#### 5 YEARS AGO

A lesson in resilience in June 2019 as **Little Brother Eli** made their second appearance on the *Nightshift* front cover, having started musical life in the Demo Dumper. The band were set to play this month's **Glofest** where their good vibes were exactly what was needed: "we find it exhilarating when people just start throwing their best shapes," they declared, adding "As clichéd as it sounds, I think the most important thing for us is connecting with people that are watching us live."

The return of **The Port Mahon** dominated the local news, while on the local release front there were new albums from **Earinade**, **Trevor Williams**, **Shaven Primates** and **Solo Collective** (a collaboration between local keyboard wiz Sebasrtian Reynolds, German cellist Anne Muller and violinist Alex Stolze), and a debut single, **Aeroplane Membrane**, from a band called **Knobblehead**, pioneering a shortlived local psychedelia surge; they wisely changed their name to **Mandrake Handshake** and will have their debut album out later this year, hopefully.

Talking of psychedelia, highlight of the gig calendar this month was **Oddball** at **The Isis Farmhouse**, featuring a headline set from the **Sun Ra Arkestra** alongside a host of local acts, including **Flights of Helios**, **Jeramesa**, **Jali Fily Cissoko** and **Tiger Mendoza**. Over at **Blenheim Palace** **Kylie Minogue** was the star turn at **Nocturne Live**, with **Gladys Knight**, **Lauren Hill** and **Tears For Fears** the other big names playing the world heritage site

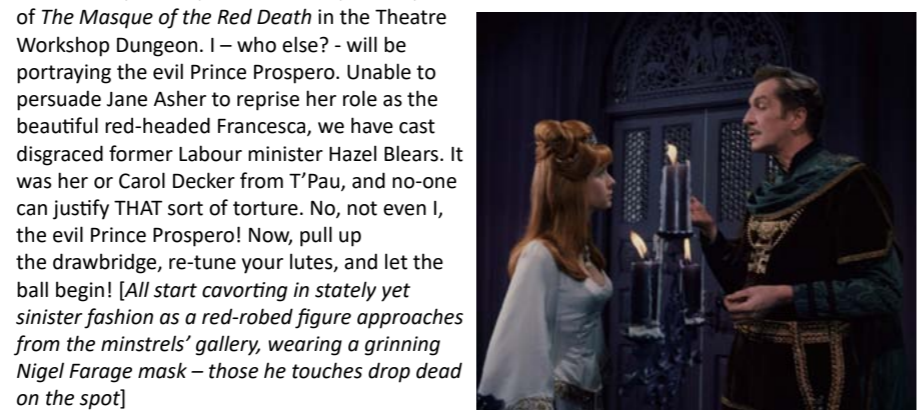
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### Dr SHOTOVER – The Masque of the Bad Breath

Ah there you are, Young Jackfruit. We're down here. Now, follow the sinister black cat and make your way carefully past the tattered tapestries and guttering torches, down the stone steps and through the creaking portal. Welcome to the East Indies Club bar. Pull up a mouldering sarcophagus and order a cask of Amontillado from Bedingfield, our skeletal Steward. We are here to celebrate the life of the late great Roger Corman, in particular his film adaptations of the works of Edgar Allan Poe. You will note that the jukebox is inhabited solely by such artists as PENDULUM, USHER, IRON MAIDEN, RAVEN, THE HORRORS etc. Later there will be a re-enactment of *The Masque of the Red Death* in the Theatre Workshop Dungeon. I – who else? - will be portraying the evil Prince Prospero. Unable to persuade Jane Asher to reprise her role as the beautiful red-headed Francesca, we have cast disgraced former Labour minister Hazel Blears. It was her or Carol Decker from T'Pau, and no-one can justify THAT sort of torture. No, not even I, the evil Prince Prospero! Now, pull up the drawbridge, re-tune your lutes, and let the ball begin! [All start cavorting in stately yet sinister fashion as a red-robed figure approaches from the minstrels' gallery, wearing a grinning Nigel Farage mask – those he touches drop dead on the spot]



**Next month: "And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all" (Daily Mail post-election headline)**

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# TRACKS

## Yin & Yang Audio

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## TOP TRACK

### WILDERNESS STATES

Well, at least it's briefly stopped raining, even if death continues to rain down on Palestine, Ukraine and Sudan; our beloved leaders continue to turn everything to shit (quite literally in the case of our rivers); the supposed opposition appear willing to accept any swivel-eyed rightwing nutjob who crosses the Commons floor, and, oh for fuck's sake, Steve Albini has died. Won't something *nice* happen? Let's check in on this month's pile of new tracks and find out, shall we? And, hurrah! a brace of new songs here from Wilderness States, who were round these parts a few months back with their promising debut single, 'Like Love'. Both these new ones suggest a potentially excellent band in the making with the elegant 'Split' the best of the pair, all guitar spangle, shoegaze fuzz and swooning vocals from singer Shauna, who again reminds us a bit of Dolores O'Riordan from The Cranberries at times. It's unassumingly epic with a pleasingly sky-searching climax and suggests big stages rather than pub corners are their natural musical environment. 'Piece Of Mine' doubles down on that thought, a more strident song with a billowing Euro-goth feel to it and we're very much heading into stadium territory, albeit with an undercurrent of intricacy about it. Nothing wrong with trying to sound like the biggest band on the planet (see also, Kanadia on the local front), although you feel mainland Europe might make stars of Wilderness States before the UK catches onto their charms, if they got the opportunity to tour over there. For now, this all sounds rather splendid.

### LASTELLE

There are myriad ways local bands can make their way in the world but it's always a surprise to see an Oxford act reaching for the stars seemingly bypassing the local gig circuit. Lastelle have paid their dues here, with supports to the likes of Dream State in the past, but they don't

seem to have trodden Oxford boards for a few years now, instead taking their anthemic post-hardcore to the masses beyond these walls and borders. And by masses, we mean masses – a quick glance at their Spotify shows listening figures in the hundreds of thousands. And they've just been on tour with InMe. Not hard to see why they're doing so well on the strength of this new single, 'Life in Silhouettes', a song about trying to deal with neurodivergence. From its solemn opening piano plonk to the headrush of emotive melodic metalcore, it ticks plenty of genre boxes. Maybe that might be a hindrance in some way – they do fit rather neatly into the post-hardcore world and you can see why they've drawn comparisons to Underoath, Holding Absence and Atreyu. But there's no arguing with a big, bold banger of a song like this, with multi-way vocals and even a bit of trumpet for good measure. It's a polished piece but supremely visceral. How long before those hundreds of thousands become millions?

### ARTHUR OSOFSKY & OWEN SPAFFORD

Arthur Osofsky was the enigmatic, militant frontman with short-lived but brilliant local rockers The Overload a few years back. Even then he was more a poet than singer and it's poetry he's pursued since. This set of demos finds him working alongside folk violinist Owen Spafford and others, reciting poetry over the musicians' sparse, discomfiting bed of strings and reeds. 'Who Killed Rook', is a gothic take on the already pretty dark 'Who Killed Cock Robin', Arthur variously snarling, snooty and sullen, the whole thing working well as a piece of performance poetry, although the words could do to be slightly higher in the mix. 'Calling All Woodwards', meanwhile, is almost a piece of nonsense poetry in the style of 'Jabberwocky', recited in a style not a million miles away from Stanley Unwin. 'Men Of The Land' is more like a traditional English folk song, Osofsky's more strident delivery complementing Spafford's fiddle backing. Better quality recordings are promised but even here it's good to hear Arthur continuing to bring his singular approach to words and their delivery to life.

### SARAH DERRICK

From the rough to the smooth and a first offering from Sarah Derrick, who's been playing around Oxford for the last couple of years. Including St Barnabas Church, which suggests she's not going to be upsetting Jesus and his pals with any filthy sludge metal anytime soon.

And hey, nothing wrong with living on the sweeter side of musical life. Sarah's song here, 'Gold', is a bittersweet semi-acoustic ballad with a discreet mix of guitar strum, piano and unobtrusive drumming, over which her limpid voice unfurls. To be honest it struggles to make a huge impression, but the chorus promises better things, reminding us a bit of Fleetwood Mac's 'Dreams'. In all seriousness, Sarah's problem isn't in her own music, which is perfectly likeable and probably has as much commercial appeal as anything else here this month, but in sending it to us to judge, when we're the musical incarnations of Judges Death, Fear, Fire and Mortis, and we do love a bit of filthy sludge metal. It's a nice song and it's doing nobody any harm, so, to misquote another Fleetwood Mac song, we'll go our own way.

### CHROME HORSE DIPLOMATS

And now, why not, a tasty chunk of good old fashioned rhythm'n'blues in the form of Chrome Horse Diplomats, fronted by two-time Top Track winner Tom Dalby. He's a man who has that rare knack of playing the sort of old-fashioned rock and roll that almost everyone gets wrong but somehow makes work by dint of keeping it unreconstructed and raw rather than letting technique take over at the expense of anything resembling feeling. So 'Love On Hold' chugs merrily along in dirty blues-rock fashion with few embellishments until it gets to the chorus, at which point they go the full Status Quo. And of course it's got an obligatory guitar solo. Chrome Horses are probably intent on taking music back several decades, to a time when hyper-pop and post-dubstep are far-future alien concepts, but we get the feeling they'll make a fair few people dance on the way there.

### TONGUE

*Nightshift* is a sucker for a well-delivered, ridiculous lyric and Tongue take this month's prize with the delicious "I've been buying a lot of six pound pints / They are expensive and they're not very nice / And I've been eating a lot of microwaved food / And from the letters you've been writing, so have you." That it's delivered in oddly opulent, stentorian voice that seems entirely incongruous with the rest of the band make it all the better. Because behind or around this am-dram Shakespearean delivery is a slice of scurrying indie-pop with a high-wired guitar twing that could almost be from a West African highlife tune. But it's those vocals that steal this show, contemplating

life's mundanities with a degree of high drama and just the right amount of pomposity. We're not even sure if band and singer are really meant to be a single unit, or whether we could withstand a full live set of this, but for now Tongue amuse and bemuse us in just the right kind of way.

### THE FOAM HEADS

The Foam Heads have previously impressed with their singles 'Waste of the World' and 'Everything's F\*ckd', displaying a way with a decent tune coupled to a smart piece of social commentary, not to say a neat update of early-80s alt.pop. So we're not sure what went wrong with this new song, an acoustic number called 'Wrap'. From the oddly overwrought vocals, through the anonymous chugging guitars to some vocal harmonies that sound like they might actually be from a completely different song, this doesn't sound anything like the band we'd hoped for big things from. It feels leaden, clumsy even, and even the vague promise of take-off at some point fails to materialise. Sorry guys, let's wrap this one up in several layers of bin bags, dump it in the canal and never speak of it again.

### WEST WICKHAMS

"A water drop on a leaf is a miniature universe, reflecting the infinite wonders of nature. With each water drop on a leaf, nature paints a unique masterpiece, crafting a symphony of colour and light. In the delicate union of a water drop and a leaf, we witness the interconnectedness of all living things." So say West Wickhams, explaining their musical inspiration. Still, that sounds like it could at least be pretentious fun, especially since the duo claim Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe and Whitby Abbey as influences. They must be goths, right? They are indeed. Just not very good ones. 'I Am Sparkling Cyanide' has a nice hollowed-out feel to it, especially the drums and vocals and the guitar spangles in suitably spidery fashion but the whole thing is pretty weedy and sounds like it was recorded one someone's phone from about a mile away. 'The Maddening Crowd', meanwhile, is scurrying plinky plonk gothic synth-pop with vocals that suggest they were aiming for Portentous but missed and ended up at Lost Child In Deserted Shopping Mall. We love a bit of gothic here at *Nightshift*. Some of our happiest times have involved feeling a bit glum, but this is all a bit insipid and so anaemic that should Dracula ever arrive back at Whitby again and fancy a snack, he'd struggle to get any sustenance out of West Wickhams.

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NOV SAT 09  
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JUN THU 13  
THE JERICHO TAVERN  
**GIRL LIKE THAT**  
PASSION FUELLED ROCK  
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SEP FRI 27  
THE BULLINGDON  
**SOUTH ARCADE**  
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SEP SAT 28  
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**ELLES BAILEY**  
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NOV WED 13 **SELLING FAST**  
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JUN FRI 28  
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