

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

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photo: Jason Warner @ Fyrefly Studios



“David Bowie created an idea that he was not of this world, it was easier for him to be from nowhere and everywhere; maybe I feel the same.”

EMMA HUNTER

Murder, addiction and star crossed lovers with Oxford's gothic Flamenco storyteller

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At work with **ADRIAN BANKS**

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

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MARCH 2024

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<p>Friday 1st March Chloe Petts: <i>If You Can't Say Anything Nice</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 1st March UKG Presents The Garage Special Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Saturday 2nd March <i>Simple</i> Saoirse Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Sunday 3rd March Tolochko Dmytro Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Monday 4th March Sam Campbell: <i>Wobversations</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Thursday 7th March Indie Discoteque Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Friday 8th March The Mezz The Ariston Tivertons Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 8th March <i>The Bully Boiler</i> Haus Warming Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Saturday 9th March Reggaeton Party Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Wednesday 13th March Gracie Petrie Gabi Garbutt Molly Naylor Doors: 7PM</p>	<p>Thursday 14th March Fin Taylor: <i>Ask Your Mother</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 15th March Sam Sweeney <i>Escape That</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 15th March <i>Haus Party X GFN</i> After Party Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Sunday 17th March Richard Blackwood: <i>Live</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Monday 18th March Tom Meigan (Acoustic) Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Wednesday 20th March Dewolff Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 22nd March Wrest Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Saturday 23rd March <i>El Surco</i> Murphys Law Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Sunday 24th March John Otway & Wild Willy Barrett <i>50th Anniversary Tour</i> Doors: 7PM</p>	<p>Monday 25th March The Staves Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Wednesday 27th March Th!nk & Wilmadeep <i>Small World Theory</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Thursday 28th March Lionel Vinyl Decades Party <i>Dasher & Wazzy</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 29th March <i>Friends Through Tech</i> J Matin Holly Rouge Bach Idan Matin RG Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Saturday 30th March <i>Kinetic</i> DJ Rap Dope Ammo, Benny Page Johne Bravo, Shabba D Fearless, Sye, Inna, Sandman Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Monday 1st April Dream State Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Tuesday 2nd April Phil Ellis's: <i>Excellent Comedy Show</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Wednesday 3rd April True Strays Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Thursday 4th April <i>DIY Now and Next Tour 2024</i> Big Special Grandma's House The Pill Doors: 7PM</p>	<p>Saturday 6th April Norman Jay Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Thursday 11th April Tom Lawrinson: <i>Hubba Hubba</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 12th April Carl Hutchinson: <i>Today Years Old</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Wednesday 17th April Nocny Kochanek Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 19th April Fin Taylor: <i>Ask Your Mother</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Wednesday 24th April Pet Needs Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Thursday 25th April MC Hammersmith: <i>Straight Outta Brompton</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Friday 26th April Brain of J <i>Pearl Jam Tribute</i> Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Tuesday 30th April October Drift Doors: 7PM</p> <p>Tuesday 30th April <i>Simple Mayday</i> Dr. Banana & Sully Doors: 11PM</p> <p>Friday 3rd May Regrets and Compounds Doors: 7PM</p>
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NEWS

email: editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk
Online: nightshiftmag.co.uk



THE FUTURE OF THE PORT MAHON as a live music venue is in doubt once again with the news that the current management is set to leave at the end of March. As it stands no gigs are being booked into the upstairs venues after that point, but whether live music will return depends on what plans any new management have for the pub.

With such an uncertain future, **Gappy Tooth Industries**, which runs on the last Saturday of each month, are relocating to Common Ground on Little Clarendon Street from April until such times as the Port's future is known.

festival at Brookes, on **Friday the 19th April**. The event pitches musicians together with academics from the Psychology, Education and Politics faculties and along with the live performances there will be a roundtable discussion about the impact of music on people's lives. The event runs from 5-6.30pm at the **John Henry Building forum** at the Gipsy Lane campus. Tickets, price £2 are on sale via Eventbrite.co.uk.

MELTING POT celebrate their third birthday in April. The fortnightly local music show on Get Radio, presented by Rich and Deadly, host this month's *Nightshift* cover star Emma Hunter alongside Mid Air and Barricane at **The Jericho Tavern** on **Friday 26th April**. The chosen acts were voted the Top 3 Oxford songs of 2023 by listeners. Tickets, priced £10, are on sale now from Wegotickets.com.

Bands and artists wanting to get played on the show should get in touch at meltingpot@getradio.co.uk.

THE TRUCK FESTIVAL BAND APP is now open for acts to apply to play this summer's event. Various festival partners will pick acts to play over the weekend of the 26th-28th July with the overall winner given the chance to play at Truck as well as Tramlines, Y Not and Victorious festivals as well as winning studio time at Pirate Studios as well as other prizes. Deadline for admissions is the 10th March. Find out more at Truckfestival.com.

RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL is back for 2024. The free festival in Charlbury hosts two days of mostly local artists over the weekend of the **20th-21st July**. Last year's event featured headline sets from Self Help and Dolly Mavies as well as one-off reunion performances from The Daisies and Smilex. Info as it's announced at riversidefestival.charlbury.com.

IT LOOKS INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY that **Kite Festival** will be returning this summer. The festival of music and ideas, which launched two years ago at Kirtlington Country Park, had previously announced that it was due to return over the weekend of the 7th-9th June but since then no acts have been announced and no tickets have gone on sale. Last year's event was headlined by Suede, The Pretenders and Hot Chip.

FLOFEST AND GLOFEST return this summer. The family-friendly festival is back in **Florence Park on Saturday 22nd June**, coinciding with Florence Park's 90th anniversary. Flofest, a free event with live music and family activities, runs from 11am-4.30pm, with a headline set from The Mighty Redox already confirmed. Glofest, a ticketed live music event, runs through the evening.

MARTIN CARTHY will perform at the Changing Hearts & Minds With Music event at Brookes University in April. The folk legend plays a live set alongside local musicians at the event, which is part of the Think Human

Additionally, on Friday 21st June, Flofest is teaming up with Bossaphonik – who are celebrating their 20th birthday this year – for an evening of world and jazz dance in the park. More info at Flofest.uk.



BECKY HILL, SNOW PATROL AND MINISTRY OF SOUND CLASSICAL will headline this year's **Big Festival**. The music and food festival returns to **Alex James' Farm** near Chipping Norton over the weekend of the **23rd-25th August**. Other live music acts confirmed are: Johnny Marr; Kate Nash; Cat Burns; Circa Waves; Jax Jones; Ash; CMAT; Cia Duncan; Ella Henderson; Joel Corry; Natasha Bedingfield; The Cuban Brothers; The Florentines; Jalen Ngonda, and Panic Shack.

As well as the music there will be guest appearances from celebrity chefs including Raymond Blanc as well as children's TV star Justin Fletcher and more.

Full line-up and ticket details at thebigfestival.com.

ELIZA CARTHY is one of the first acts to be announced for this year's **Oxford Folk Festival**. Taking over from where Folk Weekend Oxford left off, the volunteer-run Oxford Folk Festival runs over the weekend of the **19th-21st April** at various venues across Oxford city centre. Carthy will perform at The North Wall on the Saturday. Other acts confirmed so far include Celtic Heartbeat, Owen Spafford & Louis Campell, and Milady Clare's Musicke. As with FWO, the weekend will feature ceilidhs, buskers, workshops and Morris dancing alongside the live performances. Visit oxfordfolkfestival.org.uk for details.

YOUNG WOMEN'S MUSIC PROJECT director Zahra Haji Fath Ali Tehrani celebrates 20 years of helming the project with an evening of film, discussion and music this month. Zahra originally joined the project as a teenager and has spent the last two decades running it, helping employer young women and non-binary people become involved in music. The event takes place at **Makespace** in Aristotle Place on **Thursday 28th March**, starting at 6.30pm. The evening begins with the screening of a documentary about Zhara's work directed by Nia Fekri, followed by a discussion with Big Joanie's Estelle Adeyeri, Zahra and the Good Night Out campaign, talking about their Safer Spaces programme, and closes with DJ sets from Estelle and YWMP. Entry is free.

SELF HELP gear up for a busy few months ahead of the release of their debut album in June. The band released a new single, 'Spaceman', in February and follow it up on the 18th March with another new song 'Enrage Engage'. The quintet will support Buzzard Buzzard at The Jericho Tavern on Friday 1st March with a headline show at The Bullingdon planned for the end of June.

BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORDSHIRE & BERKSHIRE continues to showcase grassroots music from 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.

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A Quiet Word With

EMMA HUNTER

photo: Jason Warner @ Fyrefly Studios



“I GENUINELY FEEL THAT the spirit of flamenco is in my blood. My ancestry comes from the Iberian Peninsula, amongst many other places, and I feel that the Sephardi/Flamenco gene has always been a big part of who I am. I suppose I don’t really feel British. I’m not sure where I’m from really and our mixed family background was always celebrated as a positive thing. Maybe that’s why David Bowie created an idea that he was not of this world, it was easier for him to be from nowhere and everywhere; maybe I feel the same.”

EMMA HUNTER IS TALKING to *Nightshift* about a review last year that declared she “exuded *duende*” – the living expression or embodiment of Flamenco (“That was such a huge compliment and made me have a little cry”). It is indeed a huge compliment to level at a British musician, but one that’s wholly justified in the case of Emma, who has over the last couple of years become established as one of the premier talents on the local music scene, not just for her powerful, deeply emotive voice, but her fantastic guitar playing, inventive use of a looper and a rich story-based songwriting style that mixes up Flamenco with surf rock and a gothic darkness, in which

she is more than ably abetted by drummer Tom Bruce.

IT’S AN ARRAY OF TALENTS that has earned Emma two *Nightshift* Song of the Year awards so far – for 2021’s ‘Window’ and last year’s gloriously epic ‘Morire’ – as well as a similar brace for Get Radio’s local music show Melting Pot. This month Emma releases an EP, ‘Morire’, that gathers ‘Morire’ itself along with her other recent singles ‘Love Is Not A Choice’ and ‘Guilty’ together with a brand new song, ‘Awaken Me’. The EP precedes a full album in the autumn that will compile previously released songs alongside new material and draw to a close the Yolanda and Danny story arc that permeates many of her songs: a story of star crossed lovers, murder, addiction, death and redemption. A story worthy of an artist infused with *duende*.

IT’S OVER TWO AND A half years since we last featured Emma and Tom on the front cover – a period of time that has seen both musical triumph and personal tragedy in Emma’s life. “As artists, the highlight of the last two years has to be playing on the main stage of Truck in 2022. It was also a huge highlight to play at Cornbury Festival. In 2021 and

2023 we won *Nightshift* Song of the Year and that was a huge highlight, as was winning the Melting Pot Song of the Year twice.

“The ironic thing about that time was that on the day we were meant to be celebrating and doing our ‘isn’t it great that we are on the front cover of *Nightshift* gig’ I had devastating news. I found out that my beloved uncle had died. We went ahead and did the gig but my god that was tough. It’s been two and half years of trying to get my spirit back to some semblance of normality; grief really feels like utter heartbreak for a while.” That tragedy has fed into some of Emma’s most recent songs, including ‘Without’, a collaboration with Tiger Mendoza.

“We’ve created some newer songs which explore grief, such as ‘Your Voice’. That track probably needs to be on a double single release with another song called ‘Marmalade’ as they were written after my uncle’s death and were a way for me to try to make sense of it all. It would be great if they could be released for a men’s mental health charity. ‘Without’, which I wrote with Tiger Mendoza, is about the void that we all felt after he died and many people have said that it helped to give a voice to how they were feeling when they lost someone.”

UNTIL THOSE SONGS SEE the light of day, new fans and old can immerse themselves in the new EP, out at the end of March. Slowly but surely the story of Yolanda and Danny is coming together with each song a chapter in their arc, which began with ‘Sun Blood’ and will conclude with the hope and happiness (for Yolanda at least) of ‘Love Is Not A Choice’. How does Emma see the EP and then the album bringing all the parts of the story together?

“It’s making some new threads I think and maybe crocheting the rest! ‘Morire’ and ‘Love Is Not A Choice’ are about tying up the loose threads of the Danny and Yolanda story... sort of. There are actually two new tracks that help to finally put the whole story arc to bed, which will be on the album. In ‘Morire’, Yolanda is giving Danny one last chance to prove that she is more important to him than his addiction, but alas, that doesn’t happen. ‘Love is Not a Choice’ is more about her fierce dedication to her new life and her acceptance of her queerness. That’s where her story ends. I think. She is happy in love with her song-bird lady, and accepts all that she is.

“‘Awaken Me’ and ‘Guilty’ are more about what happens in my brain. ‘Awaken Me’ was written a long time ago when I was getting back into music. It was about not standing still and procrastinating or giving in to imposter syndrome. It lifts a David Bowie line: “Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming.” I thought that line said a huge amount, so adapted it to “I am listening to tomorrow,” for the track. It’s a more commercial track than some of our other songs. It’s important to us to explore different styles of songs.

“‘Guilty’ is about a conversation I had with a therapist. I saw guilt and worry as a payment for happiness. I felt guilty about pretty much everything. The price for being a Jewish-Catholic I suppose. My therapist said, “what’s the worst thing that would happen?” My response was that I felt my guilt somehow held the world up; if I let go, it would all come tumbling down. But it didn’t. I wanted to share that with other people, who are programmed to believe that they should feel guilty for everything. Life is about joy; the darkness will always find a way in, so looking for the light is essential.”

THE STORY OF YOLANDA and Danny is the thread that runs through many of Emma’s songs; when did those people first creep into her imagination and how have they and their stories changed or expanded in the interim?

“I think they came into mind about ten years ago; I wrote the first EP before my son Tommy was born in 2015. I always found it hard to be totally honest in my lyrical content and was really inspired by the flamenco sound. It made sense to create a character who could have a very different life to me and to channel the songs into her life. As time has gone on, the narrative that was first developed as a sort of murder ballad arc has turned into something more. It’s now more about self acceptance and not holding yourself back.”

To what extent do you inhabit the characters of your songs when you’re writing, and then how do you pour yourself into them to perform the songs?

“When I write music I also see moving images and a sort of filmscape. So when I write about Yolanda I imagine a hot plain somewhere in Mexico. I see the plants and trees swaying in the breeze and the bright colours all around. It sounds odd, but I find that helps to write about the opposite side of life, the darkness, the things that people do that they really shouldn’t. To inhabit that world I need to be on my own, but increasingly it’s easier to play with ideas in the rehearsal room, rather than me secretly writing and bringing it to Tom.

“I find that when I sing, it takes me back to the visual place that I had in my mind when I wrote the song in the first place, that helps me to get into character and feel transported.”

Emma is particularly inspired by David Bowie, both musically and when it comes to creating characters; what does she draw from him, and which other artists feed into that style of writing and performance?

“Bowie’s sense of creating a character is what inspired me to create Yolanda and Danny. I love his sense of stylistic flexibility. He is the same when it comes to recording music. He has explored so many different styles of music, but the thread that runs through his canon of work is his dedication to melody. He pushes the envelope on what constitutes a song on albums like ‘Low’ and yet constructs perfect pop songs like ‘Let’s Dance’. I find that really inspiring. As a person he seemed to push himself and try new things. I think we all need to be a bit like that. ‘What would David Bowie do?’ is

still a motto of mine.

“I also feel a real kinship with Anna Calvi; I love her music and her rawness. Her voice is really something but the way that she incorporates her guitar is something else. She has a real darkness to her music that I love. PJ Harvey has also been a huge inspiration to my music, especially early on and I adore Imogen Heap and her use of technology.”

‘LOVE IS NOT A CHOICE’ from the EP was originally released in Pride month in 2022 as a celebration of love in all its forms but it also marks the final part of the Yolanda and Danny story. “It was important to me that the songs followed Yolanda as she fell in love again and felt truly safe.

“When I sing, it takes me back to the visual place that I had in my mind when I wrote the song, that helps me to get into character and feel transported.”

‘Love is Not a Choice’ is definitely the last song in the story, but that doesn’t mean there won’t be more songs that exist in the time frame before it. This song is about Yolanda feeling empowered by her queerness and being a changed woman by the end of the story. She is sure of who she is and will never go back to living in fear.”

‘Morire’, meanwhile, feels like the tragic denouement of Danny’s story and a release for Yolanda. The word is Italian, meaning to fade away and die, reflecting Danny’s submission to addiction; was it always the hope or intention for Yolanda to ride off into the sunset while Danny goes to the Devil?

“Yes... he gets his comeuppance and it allows her to give herself permission to give him up. I am like a dog with a bone and I find it really hard to walk away from poisonous situations. I think this song was about that moment of ‘this is actually the last straw, I can see it and you just snapped it.’ In my actual real life, I find it hard to recognise when that moment happens.”

The album, when it’s released will present all the Yolanda and Danny songs in chronological order, from ‘Sun Blood’ onwards. How will the so-far unreleased songs fit into the story?

“There will be two new tracks. ‘Hide’ is about accepting your own desire and sexuality. ‘Gates of Love’ is about Yolanda’s absolute abhorrence towards Danny. It steals a line from *Much Ado About*

Nothing: ‘For thee I’ll lock up all the gates of love, And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang, To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm, And never shall it more be gracious.’ She is saying that she casts Danny to the Devil where he belongs, for him to turn to dust and in a sense is exorcising him from her life. It’s an angry song, played in a higher register than the other tracks and is a song that I can really belt out in a ragedful way.”

Why do you feel Danny is so damaged, and what draws someone like Yolanda to a person who is to all intents and purposes an absolute bastard – a misogynist and a murderer?

“Ha! If only everyone was clear and upfront about who they are from the start. Maybe it’s the James

Yolanda as I’m not sure where she starts and I finish sometimes.”

And who, we wonder, would play Emma in a movie of her own life – directed by her beloved David Lynch of course.

“Well first of all, thank you so much for making this film happen, we are very happy to hear this news! If only! Ooh, that’s a really tough question, possibly Aisling Bea; I feel like she understands the dark side but has mastered the Muppet-like front that I tend to put on. If I’m being really greedy I would go for Hayley Atwell, the actress who played Agent Carter, or Rachel Weisz. Now, who would play Tom? Tom Allen!”

What do you envisage writing about once the Yolanda and Danny story is done, or will Yolanda continue to have more adventures? “We think it’s done and then I write another angry song and it seems to fit into their world. I think I’m getting more comfortable at writing songs about genuine feelings and not needing to hide them in their story. I imagine that it also depends on if we write more Latin, Ennio Morricone-inspired music.

Who are your favourite star crossed lovers, either in literature or cinema?

“Ooooh, probably Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester. But to cheat and squeeze another one in, as I love the *Before Sunrise* film trilogy, Jessie and Celine, who let’s face it, are more realistic these days!”

FOR ALL THE DARKNESS IN her music, we can only hope that Emma Hunter’s musical future is as bright as the approaching summer sunshine: hers is music of grand ambition and immense invention, and when Yolanda and Danny’s story – or even Emma’s own – comes to the big screen we’ll be in the front row.

We leave her with the question of which is her favourite season of the year – the encroaching darkness of autumn, or the hope and potential of spring?

“Spring, spring, spring... I love it when I know the summer is coming. I much prefer being outside. I find autumn sad; the world is dying all over again. Let’s not get me started about climate change... That being said, sad times definitely help me to write songs. When things are great and sunny, I’m more likely to be found in a field and not writing inside. As Tom spends a lot of time outdoors he sees the beauty in both, but still definitely prefers the spring!”

‘Morire’ is released on the 29th March. Visit emmahunter.bandcamp.com

RELEASED

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DOG MILK

‘Same Again’

(Self released)

From Willie J Healey-like retro whimsy to exuberant highlife to scurrying, Supergrass-inspired glam-tinged pop. We’re only a minute into the first song on Dogmilk’s new EP and we’ve already hit more musical bases than a lot of bands would cover in a career. But that’s Dogmilk for you: their very reason for existing seems to keep listeners guessing and stop reviewers being able to pigeonhole them too easily.

That first track is called ‘Apathy’ and it sounds anything but apathetic, like it’s just got out of the right side of bed and is ready to seize the day. It has nervous energy to spare. Those energy levels rarely dip below giddy across five songs that are fidgety both rhythmically and in the sense that they seem ever eager to get to the end of a song so they can bounce onto the next. ‘Elephant Man’ is an afro-flavoured funk-pop jaunt, while ‘What Can I Say?’ ratchets up the urgency while remaining light on its pins. ‘Who’s Your Doctor?’ sounds like Dogmilk might just burst with their sugar rush giddiness, again grabbing a fistful of Supergrass-flavoured sweeties that probably contain dangerous chemical colourings but who cares when they can make you scamper round the garden this



quickly, and it’s only towards the end of final number ‘It Must Be Nice’ that there’s even the merest hint that they regret all this bouncing around, and even then only for the briefest of moments as the EP comes to a neat sudden stop.

Last time we saw Dogmilk live they were a far noisier proposition than this set of songs, with a post-punk heft to their urgency. ‘Same Again’ suggests they’re already leaving that part of their lives behind while instead of maturing they’re discovering a childlike sense of glee. We doubt very much that whatever comes next will be the same again.

Dale Kattack

CELTIC HEARTBEAT

‘Thame And The River’

(Self released)

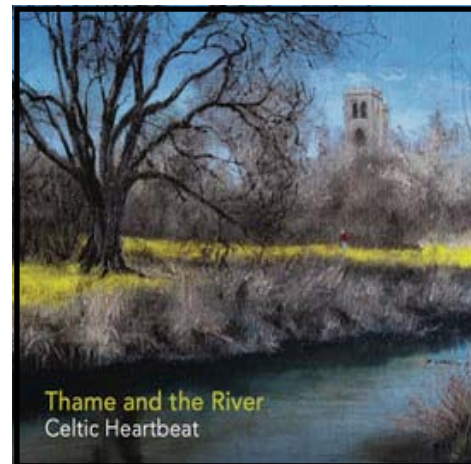
‘Thame and the River’, the third album by Oxfordshire based Folk band Celtic Heartbeat, is an exhaustive roister down the bucolic vale of the River Thame, from the marshes of Hulcott near Aylesbury, til it empties without pomp into the Isis at Dorchester.

Rooted in acoustic instrumentation, over the soft aire of an English accordion and the ‘foot-tump’ of double bass, the six members carouse as a Greek chorus fronted by the diamond voice of Julia Greenhough, whose remarkable voice ranges from Elizabethan falsetto to the warm country burr that you’d get if the cartoon Cadbury’s bunny could sing.

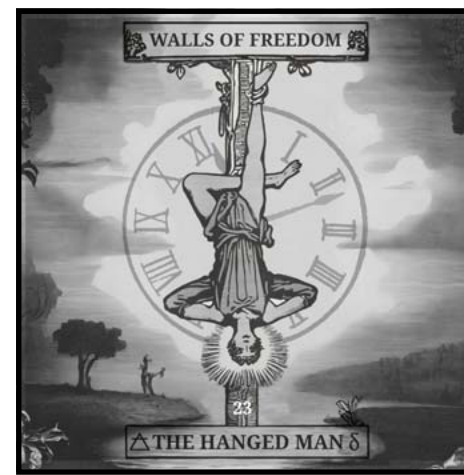
There’s nothing here that grates or galls within these 16 hearty tales; no “hey nonnys”, no modern carps about solar farms or signs in meadows saying “Acquired For Development”; instead it hangs its straw hat on tightly lyrical yarns of yore featuring famous prize-fighters and hoary blacksmiths, along with over-nighting suffragettes; Civil War battles that turn the river red; pub-crawl polkas round Thame’s 50 inns, and the merry to be made at the 700-year-old Thame Fayre. If that’s not breathless enough for you they do take time to poignantly remember the local soldiers of WWI and in two further quality highlights they cover W.B. Yeats’ poem ‘Down by the Salley (Willow) Gardens’, using Herbert Hughes unforgettable Irish tune, and ‘I Started A Joke’ by Robin Gibb from The Bee Gee who famously lived in Thame’s haunted 13th century Prebendal from 1983 until his death in 2012.

The album, with its beery gusto and passion that brews throughout, is truly heart-warming and a credit to all concerned. It all makes you want to up sticks and go live in their “Village-town”, in which case we might need to acquire that lovely meadow for new housing after all.

Paul Carrera



the gloom hangs heavy over these four dense and solemn songs. The EP’s title track is reminiscent of a lot of 80s European darkwave with a strange gothic serenity about it, notably in the almost hymnal vocals. Synths gleam amid the monochrome musical fog which is in no hurry to lift. ‘Achilles Heel’ continues in a similar vein but by comparison feels forced: the vocals begin to lose their calm detachment as the guitars churn and churn, offering little light, hope or, sadly, a tune. ‘For Silence’ regains some of that earlier grace but again there’s a feeling Umair has forsaken melody for mood. An elegant crescendo rescues the track, lifting it into stately shoegaze territory and proving to be the high point of the EP.



WALLS OF FREEDOM

‘The Hanged Man’

(Blindsight)

Having hit a creative peak even by his own high standards with his Silent Weapon project recently, Umair Chaudhry returns to one of his former incarnations, offering a more organic style of music while keeping a strong electronic core.

As we know – and love – with all of Umair’s music light and hope are at a premium and

It closes with the portentously titled ‘No Promise Have I Made’, which again proceeds with refined, grandiose strength, a glacial bulldozer of a song but as with the EP as a whole you wonder if some purposeful intent could have been sacrificed to allow a stronger melodic element room to breathe.

Perhaps we judge Umair more harshly here because he’s proved time and again just what a supreme talent he is; by most standards ‘The Hanged Man’ is a decent EP, but he’s made better.

Ian Chesterton

TIGER MENDOZA vs KILLER KOWALSKI

‘Live Well for Less’

(Self released)

Straight to the bone like a power tool through nerve endings, Tiger Mendoza’s latest single doesn’t beat around the bush. In fact, it abruptly pulls back the curtain on the grotesque reality of materialism. Bringing a whole new meaning to ‘buy one get one free’, Ian De Quadros collaborates for the first time with a whole band in the shape of post punk up-and-comers Killer Kowalski, as the single grabs the feeble throat of consumerist culture in both its burly, defiant hands and pounds it against the wall.

From the word go, we are met with a flurry of chopped up jungle breakbeats and a spine shaking, grungy guitar riff that slams our head back at breakneck speed and seemingly steals all the air from our lungs in one fell swoop. Pulsating with an infectious energy, the track only accelerates from this point onward. Punctuated by Tom Hadfield’s piercing vocals, incendiary lines like ‘stop muckin’ me about’ rip through the track and expose the emptiness at the hollow core of corporate greed and the vampiric cycle of buying and discarding.

Around a third of the way through, we enter a brief ceasefire from the sonic onslaught, and I mean brief. Five seconds to be exact, before the track ramps back up into an erratic rebellion of punishing drumbeats and screeching guitar chords fuelled by a potent vengeance. So, next time Black Friday rolls around with its shiny discounts and teases the glutton in you, take a moment to ask yourself – can I live well for less?

Sam Mumford

OCTAVIA FREUD & THE WEIRD SISTERS

‘Fair Is Foul’ /

‘Invincible’

(Self released)

A pair of moody, driving-through-the-city-at-night tracks here from electronic artist Martin Andrews, aka Octavia Freud, and vocal guests on this pair of singles, combining the darker end of 80s synth-pop with modern production sensibilities.

‘Fair is Foul’ has a dispassionate vocal centre, with lyrics – “Fair is foul / And foul is fair” – that reinforce the music’s slightly bleak sense of unhappiness and disappointment. That’s not to say it’s unpleasant listening; it has melodic subtlety akin to The Human League, and a sense of negative space that creates a certain weight. Electronic arpeggios skitter around the long swathes of keyboard sounds that form the song’s base; carefully-chosen guitar lines lead us from one place to the next.

‘Invincible’ very slightly ups the disco banger levels, with a more spritely BPM and a rosier-feeling lyrical approach. It’s no hands-in-the-air vacuous celebration though, and as with ‘Fair Is Foul’ suggests Octavia Freud has listened to a lot of Soft Cell, OMD and even Pet Shop Boys.

As a set, these two tracks work along similar lines, and work very well: a light/dark duo sharing a strong shared approach to electronic music. Personally, I’d love to hear this musical style stretched into much longer, less heavily-structured pieces, but there’s nothing wrong with a pinch of pop at the right time.

Simon Minter

ASHER DUST

‘Losing My Faith’

(Self released)

Asher Dust’s new single exudes the electrifying energy reminiscent of Chase & Status, High Contrast and Sub Focus, but also elements of the classic ‘Insomnia’ by Faithless.

Like Faithless, it builds slowly over almost spoken lyrics reflecting on personal issues, and how the artist is self medicating to get through a rough patch. Despite the downbeat subject matter, it builds into a euphoric mix of digital sounds that if played in the intense environs of a small club would get a lot of hands in the air under the strobe lights.

Asher Dust avoids most dance music tropes that get overused such as bass drops to mask poor songs, and instead livens the track up with some solid songwriting that is balanced well against the bombast of the dance track underneath. For a comparison, think of Radiohead’s ‘Lotus Flower’ with the 808 turned up to 11. The production quality is top-notch, showcasing Dust’s prowess as a musician and producer.

Damon Boughen

SUPERLOOSE

‘Dem Comin’

(Self released)

Making music should be fun, and it’s clear that Superloose have been having that in abundance when putting together this new EP. There’s a lot of heart in this collection of songs and it’s (mostly) nice to hear the band having a good time along the way.

‘Ambulance Song’ kicks things off in a catchy, yet slightly chaotic way. Ian Drury & The Blockheads come to mind with a candid vocal about the state of the nation and while it’s got a good hook, some nice arrangements, and moments of lyrical weight, the production and vocal delivery leaves a fair bit to be desired. ‘Fishermen’ is an improvement in this regard, as the vocals sit more within their comfort zone and layers of musical textures tell a poignant tale of how people who rely on our seas to make a living have struggled to make ends meet. But when the song starts to grow, the vocals don’t seem to quite keep up – a shame.

‘Complemental’ has got some nice tasty guitars and equally witty lyrics. It’s punk(ish) and works well with the layered atmospherics. There’s also something quite refreshing about the vocals here; it’s not overdoing it and it oozes charm. EP closer ‘John’ is another astute ditty about the current political climate, with perfectly understandable frustrated quips about the failure of Brexit and other political shitshows. Again it’s got good ideas, but seems to run out of breath in places; there is potential though.

Superloose have some great ideas and wear their heart on the correct sleeve, but we can’t help but feel that it would pack a heavier punch if some of the delivery was a little tighter, which going by the band name, was perhaps never in their blueprint

Caitlin Helm



DUBWISER

‘Free I’

(Self released)

Fair to say Dubwiser are enjoying a new lease of life of late. Having been mainstays of Oxford’s reggae scene since the 1990s, the band’s release schedule was leisurely to say the least and in recent years we’d kind of assumed they’d gone their separate ways (multi-instrumentalist Spider J is an in-demand musician in London). Three new EPs in the past six months has put paid to that assumption with the core of the band Spider and singer Jonas Torrance alongside brothers Eddie and

John Smythe once again putting a very British spin on classic Jamaican music.

If previous EPs ‘Smile Plenty’ and ‘The Empire Windrush’ focussing on party vibes and Black British history respectively, ‘Free I’ finds Dubwiser casting their gaze over the state of the nation. Not that they’ve let that party vibe dissipate too much as the likes of ‘A Night In Port of Spain’ crest on a loping rhythm and rich brass. That EP opener is followed by a toasted version of the same track but with the subject matter switching in mood from a celebration of Trinidad’s landscape to the story of a man escaping England to the safety of Trinidad.

Title track ‘Free I’ brings in more obvious dub influences, all pops and bubbles with Spider taking on lead vocal duties and bringing a soulful, roots feel to the song. Such positive vibes don’t last too long as ‘Jackal’ deals with the dark atmosphere of Covid lockdown and EP closer ‘Hell 4 A Piece of Bread’ broaches tensions between London’s Black communities and the police, the track reminiscent of Misty In Roots’ sweet way of mixing political observation with a mellow roots vibe.

With Oxford’s reggae scene – particularly as far as live acts goes – a pale shadow of its former self, Dubwiser’s return couldn’t be more welcome.

Bekti Manish

GIG GUIDE

FRIDAY 1st

BUZZARD BUZZARD BUZZARD + SELF HELP: The Jericho Tavern – Cardiff’s fuzzed-up glamsters return to town, channelling a host of classic 70s influences – Bowie, T-Rex, The Sweet and Thin Lizzy – into a hard rocking

Friday 1st / Saturday 2nd

RICHARD DAWSON / SHARRON KRAUS: Holywell Music Room

Fair to say Richard Dawson is a Marmite musician: few contemporary artists elicit such passionate and conflicting reactions. Music fans of our acquaintance will switch off the radio as soon as one of Dawson’s songs comes on while other eulogise his skewed genius. In many ways that’s how music should work – none of this “that’s okay” mediocrity. Born and raised in Newcastle, Dawson worked in a record store for a decade before buying himself a cheap acoustic guitar. He promptly broke it but once repaired he discovered it produced an unusual sound and he’s based his musical style on that happy happenstance. His 2017 ‘Peasant’ was voted *The Quietus*’ album of the year and he’s received critical acclaim across the board for its follow-ups, including ‘Henki’, his collaboration with Finnish band Circle. Influences as diverse as Captain Beefheart, sufi devotional music, Kenyan folk music and English artists like Mike Waterson add up to a singularly idiosyncratic style – one that his devotees (and they really are devotees) love. Unsurprisingly his Oxford debut sold out so a second night has been added but don’t hang about on the ticket front. An added bonus is a support set from Sharron Kraus on the Friday, the singer and multi-instrumentalist is once again resident in Oxford, where her music career began some three decades ago, having led a nomadic life in the interim while earning herself a reputation as one of the best underground folk artists around.

March

sound. Support from local indie-punk stars Self Help.

RICHARD DAWSON + SHARRON KRAUS: Holywell Music Room – Oxford debut for the idiosyncratic prog-folk singer – *see main preview*

KLUB KAKOFANNEY: The Gladiator Club – Another lively goody bag of sounds at this month’s Klub Kakofanney party with punk-infused rockers Kokroachez headlining and joined by bucolic folk-rockers London Graffiti and EDM, trip hop and chillout sound manipulator Dr Steevo.

GARAGE SPECIAL: The Bullingdon – UK garage club night.

ONE FOR THE WALL + BLOODY FIASCO + DAN AUSTIN: St. Michael’s at the Northgate – Baroque pop and folk-rock from Bernard Hanaway’s One For the Wall alongside local newcomers Bloody Fiasco, formed by former members of Big Speakers, Borderville and Horns of Plenty.

INDIE DISCO: Tap Social, Botley – 80s and 90s indie classics on vinyl with DJ Dom.

BON GIOVI: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute night.

SATURDAY 2nd

DAY OF THE DEADBEATS 20: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Twenty and out for the long-running free live music party hosted by local soul, blues and rock and roll stars The Deadbeat Apostles. And it’s a corker to bow out on with elegantly epic indie rockers Kanadia headlining. They’re joined by The Deadbeats themselves, plus caustic angular post-punk crew Killer Kowalski and summery surf-pop-tinged star Jonny Payne. In the words of Arnie – get your ass to Iffley.

RICHARD DAWSON + AIDEN CANADAY: Holywell Music Room – Second night for Mr Dawson – *see main preview*

ALESTORM: O2 Academy – Boozy pirate-themed heavy metal fun from the Scottish crew, touring their ‘Seventh Rum Of A Seventh Rum’ album.

HIPSHAKIN: Harcourt Arms – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul from the Hipshakin’ DJs.

SIMPLE ft. SAOIRSE: The Bullingdon – house club night.

TOOLOGY: The Jericho Tavern – Tribute to Tool.

PETE FRYER BAND: Littlemore Rugby Club – Classic rock and blues with the veteran local singer and guitarist and chums.

KWASSA KWASSA: Tap Social, Botley – Cumbia, salsa, soukous, Afrobeat, highlife and

calypso with the local DJs.

DOLLY MAVIES + EMMA HUNTER + SECRET RIVALS: Strummer Room, Banbury – Excellent triple bill of local talent at tonight’s Strummer Room Live show, including this month’s *Nightshift* cover stars Emma Hunter alongside indie-folk singer Dolly Mavies and jangly indie-punk crew Secret Rivals.

THE REVELATORS PRESENT JUMPIN’ JAKE FLASH: The New Club, Wheatley – Tribute to The Rolling Stones and Blues Brothers.

GROOVE CLUB COLLECTIVE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Live funk, groove and disco.

SUNDAY 3rd

TOLOCHKO DMYTRO: The Bullingdon – Traditional songs from Ukraine from the musician now living in Oxford.

MAX BLANSJAAR + TONGUE: Common Ground – Off-kilter post-grunge slacker pop from the local singer-songwriter launching his new single, ‘Anna Madonna’.

OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms – Weekly open night.

JOURNEYMAN + FIREGAZER + TONY BATEY & SAL MOORE: The Tree, Iffley (4-7pm) – Klub Kakofanney host a free afternoon of live music.

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

OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (3pm) – Weekly open session.

SHANTY NIGHT: The White Hart, Wolvercote

OCK STREET BAND: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 4th

TUESDAY 5th

COSSE + THE WATER CHESTNUTS + SINEWS: The Library – Divine Schism host the epic, angular French post-rock/noise outfit, over in the UK touring their ‘It Turns Pale’ album – *see main preview*

WEDNESDAY 6th

DAVE O’HIGGINS & ROB LUFFT BAND: Tap Social, Botley – Spin jazz club.

DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon – Weekly open night.

THURSDAY 7th

INDIE DISCOTEQUE: The Bullingdon

CATWEAZLE: Common Ground – Oxford’s longest running open night, with singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists.

TURKAY & RYAN: The Unicorn, Abingdon

– Contemporary folk from the Northampton duo.

FRIDAY 8th

THE MEZZ: The Bullingdon – The Witney rockers release their new EP, featuring recent single ‘Harbour the Feeling’.

ALL WILL BE WIRED: The Library – All Will Be Well Records host their bi-monthly night of electronic music, tonight with recent star of In A Different Place Old Man May, with his inventively eclectic madcap brand of electro madness. Joining him are atmospheric industrial, hip hop and drum&bass-infused electro meister Tiger Mendoza and darkwave producer Manners.

REALLY BIG, REALLY CLEVER + WITCHING WAVES + SECRET RIVALS: Common Ground – Brighton’s Really Big, Really Clever return to Oxford for tonight’s Divine Schism show after supporting Church Girls here last year, the band formed by Jared Tomkins and Jordan Lilford, formerly of Gender Roles. Support from indie crew Witching Waves and reformed local tykes Secret Rivals, drawing comparisons to Bis, The Cure and The Breeders.

SOUL PLAZA COLLECTIVE: Tap Social, Botley – Eclectic dance vibes from the London DJ collective.

WEBB + REVELLER: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Double bill of heavy rock on tour with Wiltshire’s Webb and local stalwarts Reveller.

POP UP BOWIE: The Northcourt, Abingdon

SATURDAY 9th

METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Fourth heart of the battle of the bands to win a slot at this summer’s Bloodstock, tonight with Mondegree, Terraborn, Second Hour and Informal Complaint going up against each other.

WHAT THE FUNK: Harcourt Arms – Live funk.

ENERGY: O2 Academy – Dancehall, Afrobeat and soca club night with White Magic Sound; Untouchable; DJ Platinum and Supa Nytro.

COUNT SKYLARKIN x NINE TON PEANUT SMUGGLERS: Tap Social, Botley – Old school ska and rocksteady.

STEREONICS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute night.

SUNDAY 10th

MECHANICAL ANIMALS: Florence Park Community Centre – The new unplugged night hosts ethereal trip-folk from last month’s *Nightshift* cover stars Barricane, Rosy and Emily playing new singles ‘Walking In The Dark’ and ‘Night Out’. They’re joined by James Gallagher’s folk-noir project Pet Twin and Scottish folk poet Christopher Rollen in his Pea Sea guise.

QUEEN EXTRAVAGANZA: The New Theatre

OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms

LIGHTHOUSE JAZZ BAND: The White House – Jazz classics and originals.

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC: The White Hart, Wolvercote

OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (3pm)

LIZA MARSHALL: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 11th

FEEDER: O2 Academy – Grant Nicholas’ pop-friendly post-grunge rockers return to town after their show here in 2019 on the back of their twelfth studio album, ‘Black/Red’.

TUESDAY 12th

INTRUSION: Kiss Bar – Monthly gothic, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 13th

GRACE PETRIE: The Bullingdon – Witty, protest folk from singer, comedian and activist Petrie, back in town as she tours her new album ‘Build Something Better’ album, having previously toured with Billy Bragg, Frank Turner and Emmy the Great as well as Josie Long and Robin Ince, and winning The Guardian’s Folk Album of the Year for her 2018 release ‘Queer As Folk; she has the rare talent of turning songs about zero hours contracts, welfare and LGBT rights into singalong, sometimes laugh-along anthems.

THE LONGEST JOHNS: O2 Academy – Daft, deft sea shanties from Bristol’s festival faves best known for their viral TikTok performance of 19th Century shanty ‘Wellerman’.

ELECTRONIC MUSIC OPEN MIC: The Jericho Tavern

KEITH FAIRBAIRN’S GROOVE CORPORATION: Tap Social, Botley

DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

THURSDAY 14th

THE UMBRELLAS + AUTOCAMPER + FLAMINGO + STRAWBERRY RUNNERS: Common Ground – A return to town for San Francisco’s Umbrellas at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the Bay-area indie pop crew channelling the spirits of Belle & Sebastian, The Pastels and Comet Gain as they tour new album ‘Fairweather Friend’.

MARTIN SHAW: The White House – The Spin jazz club welcomes the UK trumpeter and BBC Big Band star who has played with Sting, Jamiroquai and The Brand New Heavies

FRIDAY 15th

SAM SWEENEY: The Bullingdon – English, Celtic and Scandinavian folk music from Leveret and Bellowhead fiddle maestro Sam Sweeney and his band, playing a set of folk dance tunes, from Morris to hornpipes to waltzes, as well as traditional and original songs.

BOSSAPHONIK presents AN **DANNSA DUB:** Cowley Workers Social Club – The monthly world dance night hosts An Dansa Dub, the band fusing Scottish and Gaelic folk stylings with deep dub dance. Bossa host Dan Ofer mans the decks, spinning a lively mix of Latin, Afro,



Tuesday 5th

COSSE / THE WATER CHESTNUTS / SINEWS: The Library

Divine Schism pull another gem of a gig out of their seemingly bottomless bag, tonight hosting Parisian quartet Cosse, who make the journey across the Channel to tour their debut album ‘It Turns Pale’, recorded in The Netherlands with renowned producer Floyd Atema. The record is a mini masterpiece of post-rock and noise as the band oscillate between lush post-rock passages, hostile noise rock, sludgy rivers of feedback and pensive prettiness and contemplation, the vocals switching between raw and wracked, through delicate, even plaintive and onward through delicately sculptured harmonies. You can hear the influences of Sonic Youth, Radiohead, Slint, Gilla Band and Polvo in the mix but they all add up to something very special indeed; tonight is Cosse’s Oxford debut and if they likely won’t sell millions of records, you get the feeling ‘It Turns Pale’ will become a touchstone of experimental rock in years to come. Support tonight comes from London quintet Water Chestnuts, described as “American football with extra sass” and Oxford’s own post-hardcore crew Sinews, taking the influences of Fugazi, Drive Like Jehu and McLusky for a turbulent ride along malevolent roads.

Balkan and more.

ABSOLUTE BOWIE: O2 Academy

TIM FRIERS & THE MERCENARIES: The Jericho Tavern – A night of Celtic rock to kick off St. Patrick’s weekend.

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

LAKE ACACIA + THE ARBOURETUM + SIMON DWIGHT: Apothecary Tap, Banbury – Strummer Room local bands showcase with heavyweights Lake Acacia and more.



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Wednesday 20th

OMD:

The New Theatre

OMD were one of electro-pop's finest hitmakers, selling millions around the world with hits like 'Enola Gay', 'Souvenir' and 'Joan of Arc' in the early-80s. As such it's easy to think of Andy McLusky and Paul Humphreys as simple purveyors of pristine pop perfection – and they were, to the Nth degree, but to anyone with a serious interest in electronic music the pair were true pioneers, firstly with their homemade tape machines and modular synths and abstract initial experiments, and later with the likes of 'Dazzle Ships', the follow-up to their multi-million-selling magnum opus 'Architecture and Morality', and the album that almost broke the band: utilising samples and cut-ups years before such things became mainstream and more fully exploring the political edge that was too often overlooked simply because the tunes were so bloody great. The pair did eventually fall out and McLusky just about kept the name going with diminishing returns, but a reunion was never too far away and since returning fully to action, revisiting many of those earliest triumphs and making new music that continues to be pristine while making room for cutting edge electro-pop and lyrics, OMD have at last achieved the critical acclaim they always deserved. Not just pioneers and not just creators of great pop music, OMD are also a superb live band and tonight's gig, part of a tour to promote brilliant new album 'Bauhaus Staircase', is unsurprisingly sold out already.

NINEBARROWS: Orchard Hall, Harwell – Traditional folk songs and stories rooted in English history and landscape from award-winning harmony-heavy duo Ninebarrow, the band championed by Mark Radcliffe and Mike Harding as well as Seth Lakeman and Kate Rusby.

SERIOUSLY COLLINS: The Northcourt, Abingdon – Seriously, Phil Collins?

SATURDAY 16th

MAMBO PANTHERS: Florence Park Community Centre – Latin American and Caribbean dance.

HOOKED ON GARAGE: The Bullingdon –

Club night with Silva Bumpa and Ell Murphy.
SCRATCH, CRACKLE & POP: Harcourt Arms

THE CORNERMEN: The Jericho Tavern – Rock originals and covers, including The Jam, Libertines and Foo Fighters, from the band formed from the South Moreton Boxing Club project to support men's mental health.

St. PATRICK'S DAY CEILIDH: Tap Social, Botley

SILVERBLUES: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Folk and blues from the improvisational band featuring Ric Sanders at tonight's Wychwood Acoustic Club.

WHO'S NEXT: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to The Who.

NEAR LIAM GALLAGHER: The Northcourt, Abingdon – Oh joy.

SUNDAY 17th

REAL FARMER + YOGZI: The Library – Wiry, angular punk and post-punk from the Netherlands quartet making their Oxford debut at tonight's Divine Schism show was they tour their new album, 'Compare What's There'.

St PATRICK'S DAY SESSION The Bullingdon (2pm) – Free St Patrick's Day session in the Bully's front bar with A Celtic Affair, The Mark Atherton Band and The Jesters.

THE CYMBAL SHARDS: The Port Mahon (3pm) – Single launch show for the local band.
MONTMORENCY: The Red Lion, Eynsham – St. Patrick's Day celebration from the local contemporary folk, blues and pop quartet.

OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Ifley (3.45pm)

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (3pm)
FLICK: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 18th

TOM MEIGHAN ACOUSTIC: The Bullingdon – Solo show for the former Kasabian singer, playing songs from his 'The Reckoning' album as well as Kasabian songs.

TUESDAY 19th

WEDNESDAY 20th

OMD: The New Theatre – The synth-pop legends tour their new 'Bauhaus Staircase' album – see main preview

DEWOLFF: The Bullingdon – Classic 70s-inspired rock, blues, gospel, psychedelia and southern rocking from the Dutch trio.

PETER ASTOR + CHLOE AUGUST + GYM SOCKS: Common Ground – A return to town for the former Loft and Weather Prophets frontman at tonight's Divine Schism show. Something of an 80s indie demigod, Astor's bands were synonymous with Creation Records long before Oasis, My Bloody Valentine or Ride came on the scene, helping spearhead a particularly elegant, poetic form of indie pop. The author of such timeless indie classics as 'Up The Hill & Down the Slope' and 'Why Does the Rain', his cult status has rarely been troubled by commercial success but he

remains an iconic figure in the history of indie music. Lovely, airy acoustic jazz-pop from local singer-songwriter Chloe August in support.
DALBY'S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

THURSDAY 21st

FEBUEDER + PEM: The Jericho Tavern – Rhythmic, highly textured avant-pop from the Ascot duo on tour – see main preview

STEPH PIRRIE: Harcourt Arms – Live jazz with the local singer and trumpeter and her band.

CATWEAZLE: Common Ground
CHARMS AGAINST THE EVIL EYE + GROOVE DRIVER + SIMON GREGORY: Loose Cannon Tap Room, Abingdon – Make Music in Abingdon showcase.

FRIDAY 22nd

BURIED IN SMOKE FESTIVAL: The Jericho Tavern – First night of the metal, rock, punk and hardcore weekender with a headline set from punk legends Discharge – see main preview

Thursday 21st

FEBUEDER / PEM:

The Jericho Tavern

Febueder are often called an indie band but the term mostly applies to their independence of thought when it comes to making music. The Ascot-based duo – singer and multi-instrumentalist Kieren Godfrey and percussionist Samuel Keyse – have been around for well over a decade but only released their debut album, 'Tomalin, Has Etched In', in 2020, and if the title seems somewhat oblique it's a reflection of the music it contains. Their approach to melody is fractured, the pair concentrating on rhythm (however skewed) and texture to create their strange, off-kilter songs which take in jazz, contemporary classical music and avant garde electronic pop. They've been variously compared to alt.j, Agnes Obel and Foals and Godfrey's vocals do sound a bit like Yannis Philippakis, but most people will struggle to find anything like a locktight comparison or pigeonhole for them, and that's always a good sign. Tonight's gig is part of a UK tour to promote most recent album 'Follow The Colonnade' and they're joined by Pem, the musical incarnation of Bristol musician Emily Perry, whose dreamy, ethereal folk-pop reminds a bit of the wonderful Kathryn Joseph at times, which can only be a good thing.



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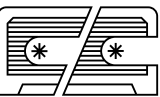
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Friday 22nd – Sunday 24th

BURIED IN SMOKE FESTIVAL: The Jericho Tavern / Port Mahon

Buried In Smoke have long been heroic torch bearers for all things heavy in Oxford: as well as being part of rock titans Desert Storm they've regularly brought the best underground metal, rock and hardcore acts to town and this weekender feels like the culmination of all those years of hard work. Over three days across two venues you can get your heavyweight thrills from the likes of legendary punk pioneers **DISCHARGE**, who arguably invented the entire hardcore genre; brutal, unrelenting death-grind monsters **HANG THE BASTARD**, and doom and sludge behemoths **CONAN** (pictured). Those three are the headline acts across the weekend and they're variously joined by London's thrashcore crew **INHUMAN NATURE**; blackened sludge-doom ogres **WALLOWING**; hardcore sludge riffage and classic metal from **VIKING SKULL**, formed by members of Raging SpeedHorn; sludgy Weedeater-style rocking from Hull's **BATTALIONS**; splenetic Norfolk sludgers **A HORSE CALLED WAR**, and of course **DESERT STORM** themselves. Other names on the line-up are **MOLLY KARLOFF**; **RITUAL KING**; **THE CRUSHING**; **PUBLIC EXECUTION**; **OLD HORN TOOTH**; **INDICA BLUES** and recent *Nightshift* cover star **SILENT WEAPON**. All of which makes for a visceral and varied selection with the one unifying factor being a devotion to heaviness. A great celebration of crushing music and of Buried In Smoke themselves. We salute them.

WREST: The Bullingdon – Dark, elegant folk-tinged indie rock in the vein of Frightened Rabbit, The National and Idlewild from Edinburgh's Wrest, winners of the 2019 Scottish Album of the Year award and out on

tour to promote new record 'Bedtime Rhymes' as well as 2022 album 'End All the Days'.
DAMIAN LEWIS: O2 Academy – The *Band of Brothers*, *Homeland* and *Wolf Hall* star explores his musical side, touring his debut album 'Mission Creep', playing rootsy rock, folk and jazz-influenced songs.
KILLER KOWALSKI + SHOCK HORROR + SUSPIRE: The Port Mahon – *OMS* magazine local bands showcase with caustic punk crew Killer Kowalski.
10CC: The New Theatre – Graham Gouldman continues to lead the 1970s soft rock stars, reliving chart-toppers 'I'm Not In Love', 'Rubber Bullets' and 'Dreadlock Holiday', among others.
OASIZ: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute night.
CYDONIAN KNIGHTS: The Northcourt, Abingdon – Tribute to Muse.

SATURDAY 23rd

BURIED IN SMOKE FESTIVAL: The Port Mahon – Blackened metal titans Hang The Bastard headline the second day of the weekender – see main preview
EL SURCO feat. MURPHY'S LAW: The Bullingdon
MARAKUTAYA: Harcourt Arms – Brazilian bossa nova, soulful blues and 70s-flavoured funk from the Anglo-Brazilian quartet, playing a diverse collection of covers.
UK FOO FIGHTERS + ROYAL MONSTER: O2 Academy – Double tribute action – to Foo Fighters and Royal Blood.
FLEETWOOD MAC BY CANDLELIGHT: The New Theatre – Fleetwood Mac tribute. With added candles.
THE HOLY FOOLS: The Market Tap – Traditional roots and Americana from the local band in aid of this year's Oxford Folk Festival.

SUNDAY 24th

BURIED IN SMOKE FESTIVAL: The Jericho Tavern – Conan top the bill on the third and final day of the festival – see main preview
OTWAY & BARRETT: The Bullingdon – The duo celebrate their half century of mayhem gigging together – see main preview
WHITNEY – QUEEN OF THE NIGHT: The New Theatre – Big stage Whitney Houston tribute.
OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (3pm)
RAG'N'MOAN MEN: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

MONDAY 25th

THE STAVES: The Bullingdon – Winsome indie-folk from the Staveley-Taylor sisters, back in Oxford as they tour new album 'All Now'.

TUESDAY 26th

WEDNESDAY 27th
TH!NK + WILMADEEP: The Bullingdon

STEPH PIRRIE'S JAZZ CHORUS: Tap Social, Botley – The singer and trumpet player hosts a night for new singers playing jazz, blues, soul and pop.
DALBY'S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

THURSDAY 28th

POEMS & SONGS BY ARTHUR: Harcourt Arms – Former Overload frontman Arthur Osofsky hosts and performs an evening of poetry and music.
BROOK ELLINGWORTH: The Jericho Tavern – Nashville-flavoured country rocking from the local musician and his band.
EMMA RAWICZ: Tap Social, Botley – The finalist of the BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year brings her band to the Spin jazz club.
METAAAL!: Kiss Bar – Metal club night.

FRIDAY 29th

OH, COMMUNITY!: Tap Social, Botley – Divine Schism host another full day of

Sunday 24th

OTWAY & BARRETT – HALF A SENTRY: The Bullingdon

There are few musical cults as enduring as that of John Otway and his on-off partnership with Wild Willy Barrett, and fewer still based on such scant commercial success. When the pair appeared on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1977 to promote their new single, 'Really Free', Otway leapt over his amp, brought the PA down and nearly ruptured his testicles in the process. A legend was born. The pair's coming together, in their home town of Aylesbury, went back further than that of course and they had been recording together with Pete Townsend at his Eel Pie Studios for a few years previously. 'Really Free' hit a peak of Number 27 in the charts and was to be Otway's only Top 40 hit until 'Bunsen Burner' went Top 10 in 2002. That hit was boosted up the charts by one of the most fanatical and loyal followings in music. Otway's constant touring – literally anywhere and everywhere – and his unstinting dedication to often mayhem onstage lunacy, has earned him such loyalty and while he's happiest playing to a couple of hundred in pub backrooms, he can draw crowds in the thousands for major shows. To celebrate 50 years playing with his old friend the pair are on tour together once more and a most English form of rock and roll chaos will once again reign supreme.



live music, today featuring a headline set from Jade Hairpins, the band formed by Jack Goldstein alongside members of Fucked Up and Es. They're joined by a quality cast that includes Leatherhead; Baggio; Oh, Hippo!; Dream Phone; My Fat Pony; Tigers & Flies; Top Shortage; doops; Tiger Mendoza; Selver; Death of the Maiden, and Means of Production.

SI CRANSTOUN: O2 Academy – The London soul man returns to town, the former Dualers founder having played here as part of the Ruf Records Blues Caravan previously; on his own he harks back to the classic swing blues of the 1940s and 50s and he's been compared to Jackie Wilson and Sam Cooke; he's on tour to promote new album 'Poems Unlocked'.

FRIENDS THROUGH TECH: The Bullingdon – House and techno label showcase night with J Matin, Holly Rouge, Bach, Idan Matin and RG.

THE DELICATE SOUND OF PINK FLOYD: Radley College – first of a two-night show from the eleven-strong ensemble, performing songs from Pink Floyd's iconic 1988 tour in the picturesque grounds of Radley College.

YOU TALK TOO MUCH + DOM THOMAS + TOM EMLYN: The Jericho Tavern

SATURDAY 30th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SINEWS + HYBRID KID + QUEEN

ELEANOR'S CROSS: The Port Mahon – Another quality triple bill at this month's GTI, with post-hardcore quartet Sinews keeping it serrated and menacingly restrained in a Fugazi and Drove Like Jehu style. They're joined by Brighton's spiky, sparky indie-punk crew Hybrid Kid, plus gothic newcomers Queen Eleanor's Cross, formed by former S.P.U.N.K.L.E chap Jim Davies.

THE DELICATE SOUND OF PINK FLOYD: Radley College

KINETIC ft DJ RAP: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

DANCEHALL ROCKS: O2 Academy – Dancehall club night with Pure Vibes, White Magic, Sir Corey and Invasion Crew.

RAVE AGAINST THE REGIME: Tap Social, Botley – Live covers of classic 90s dance hits.

SYNTH: Fat Lil's, Witney – 80s synth-pop hits.

BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA: The Northcourt, Abingdon – Orchestral rock.

SUNDAY 31st

SEAN MCGOWAN: The Jericho Tavern – Return to town for the Southampton troubadour, mixing raucous folk with punk and hip hop, coming in somewhere between Billy Bragg and Mike Skinner.

OPEN MIC: The Harcourt Arms

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (3pm)

KRISSY MATTHEWS: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)

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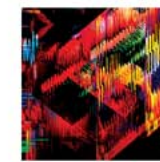


THE STAVES

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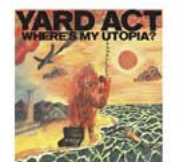
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BEAM ME UP

02 Academy / The Bullingdon

After our seventh full-body pat-down at the doors of the Academy, we rechristen this all-dayer Feel Me Up. But, although we never try to smuggle anything illicit past the (consistently polite and respectful) security, we often brazenly walked out with a sense of pride at the local talent on display, mostly in the tiny Academy 3, a corner of the downstairs room hastily screened off as if there had been a horrific incident (well, there had been a Stereophonics tribute the week before). **MY CROOKED TEETH** play a lovely set alternating between Don McLean lyricism and straight-up country lamenting, even though an intense light just under Jack's chin makes it look like he's going to launch into a ghost story at a scout camp.

EVA GADD looks less demonic, but her versatile jazzy voice sounds just as sweet, and **THE BOBO** sees this bet and raises it, unleashing her inner Julee Cruise with a wispy, sultry set accompanied by James Maund from Flights of Helios on guitar; we'd say her voice was smoky, but smoking is bad for you, and

this music is balm for any ailment. **JOHNNY PAYNE**, meanwhile, unveils a new unnamed trio in the larger upstairs venue, sounding like Joy Division if they enjoyed wholesome road trips across the Midwest instead of nights drying Manchester drizzle by a two-bar fire. Conversely, **TIGER MENDOZA** play the small room as if it's the biggest imaginable, with striking projections and some of their block-rockingest beats. Plus, university band **GIRL LIKE THAT** do a sterling job of opening the day at the Bully, playing 90s altrock that's somewhere between Stone Temple Pilots and The Breeders as if they'd been together twenty years.

But other acts have travelled from further afield, such as **CHROMA**, who are almost distracted from performing by a certain rugby match because they are "very Welsh" (pity, we hoped they were pun-lovers from the Norfolk coast). Thankfully they manage to focus enough to deliver corking glam-punk fun with greasy riffs, chunky drums, and infectiously cheeky vocals. They pair well

with **SHELF LIVES**, whose mix of sassy, insouciant rapping/singing, gnarly guitar and distorted electronics isn't quite Beyoncé Teenage Riot but comes close to being Gwen Stefani possessed by Peaches.

Some bands just work despite all the signs being initially bad. **MAKE FRIENDS** sound as though they're shooting for Foals, but hitting Curiosity Killed The Cat, yet their rubbery bass, soft chorus guitar and urbane vocals manage to remind us of Climie Fisher and entertain us enormously, which is surely a victory. Conversely, **BLUE BAYOU** look like the full prescription, with soul revue vibes, folky fiddle, crazy Scooby-Doo villain vocals, and brass, but they stall at every hurdle and never manage to lift off, ending up as Dexy's Tired School Runners.

The de-facto headliners today at the Academy are **THE RILLS**, who make a perfectly passable fist of being a new rock revolution band from 2001, and more excitingly **DEADLETTER**, whose broadly drawn psych rock is something like Spiritualized if the only drug they'd

taken was speed, or The Brian Jonestown Massacre, if they'd not taken any drugs at all and had just put more effort in.

But the real stars are both at The Bully. **SNAYX** look like Max and Paddy, and sound like a monstrous melange of Soft Play, Idles, and Silver Bullet. Their delivery is Black Flag brutal, but they charmingly take time out to ensure everyone in the pit is doing okay between numbers. Whilst their drummer is honed and stripped back, like John Bonham playing Run DMC patterns, the bass descends into the filthiest bit-crushed noise we've heard in a while.

Even better are **HOME COUNTIES**, whose council-estate take on Talking Heads disco and Chicago house we christen GLC Soundsystem, although at one point they groove around a classic rock riff like The Streets doing Thin Lizzy. There's even a touch of The Blockheads about their most ornery, awkwardly bouncy tracks, but as with Ian Dury, beneath all the winks and sneers there is an undercurrent of melancholy. Turns out, despite all the fun, we go home having felt something... a bit like the Academy bouncers.

David Murphy

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with DOG OF MAN / STARBELLY / SECRET RIVALS

Gladiator Club

After a decade out of action Secret Rivals are back. Well, guitarist and co-vocalist Jay Corcoran is back, joined by a new band, including singer Ash who's replaced the enigmatically monikered Clouds, and sometime Moogiemán and the Masochists bassist Vincent. Except that they've gone and lost their new drummer, so for tonight's Klub Kakofanney set they're playing a sort of unplugged set.

Luckily it doesn't hinder them too much; if anything it allows their rather sweet indie-pop tunes to bloom. Songs like new single 'Neck' carry an almost grunge like undercurrent on record but here, stripped back, sound like they could have emerged from Sarah Records back in the early 90s. Even without a drummer there's an infectious urgency about Secret Rivals, particularly Jay and Ash's call-and-response interaction and while we hope they can get back to full complement soon, if not they're not found wanting as they are.

If you're going to take to the stage to a bombastic classical intro tape you need to match it, and Starbelly's meaty post-grunge glam sound is certainly no shrinking violet. They're at their best

when they're big, bold and brash as with the first couple of numbers tonight. They threaten to lose that early momentum with a dirgy overlong piece that comes across as a partially formed jam but recover well, getting their fuzz on to conjure a great pensive atmosphere and reminding us a little of Pearl Jam.

Dog Of Man – hailing half and half from Brighton and Stroud – are almost the quintessential Klub Kakofanney band. They mix up folk, punk, prog and psychedelia variable proportions but lead with an accordion that mostly sounds like an old Hammond. The intention is very much to make people get up and get down and an enthusiastic throng down the front duly obliges. At one point we get to thinking of folk-punks Blyth Power getting it on with Santana; at other times we're imagining a heavy metal Tiger Lillies; friends of an older vintage mention Uriah Heap and Atomic Rooster and an early-70s vibe does tend to dominate. Most importantly it's fun and if the set isn't exactly loaded with memorable songs, in tonight's setting that seems very much an issue for another day.

Dale Kattack

MOOGIEMAN / THE SUBTHEORY / CHOLLY

The Port Mahon

An all-electronic line-up for tonight's OMS mag's showcase. Back in town after her impressive showing at In A Different Place in December, and probably now worthy of Honorary Oxfordian status, Cholly has that fine balance of experimentalism and pop nous that too many electronic acts fail to capture, pulsing sequencers and clattering drum&bass beats augmenting rather than dominating her vocal melodies.

Talking of vocals, Cate Debu has the kind of pure, soaring yet melancholic voice you worry might get lost or broken in this kind of setting but the Port's endearingly ramshackle environs merely accentuate her tremulous torch singer stylings, pensive electronics adding to the midnight-at-the-last-jazz-bar-in-the-universe vibe. The mix of machine music and vocal drama makes for a seductive trip, particularly on the somnambulating 'Crown of Thorns'. A duet with James from Pet Twin is all the more impressive for being unrehearsed and if a cover of Portishead's 'Glory Box' is maybe too obvious, their take on Dido's 'White Flag' feels like a natural fit for their seedily romantic sound.

We've witnessed Moogiemán in many guises over the years, from solo to full band but tonight's two-piece format – Shan Sriharan alongside Stefano Maio – is as good as we've ever heard, bringing a harsher, more purely electronic edge to bear on songs that are as strange as they are impossible to get out of your head. Like some weird android lounge crooner Shan recites from a you-choose-where-the-adventure-goes book, or sings about marshmallow planets as he and Stefano conjure a gloriously retro-futurist sound from their compact banks of gadgetry, reminding us of The Human League's earliest experiments, or some of Daniel Miller's pioneering explorations. The harsh monochrome sounds of early-80s European minimal wave make way for harder, almost ebm-like beats while against all that melodic synths somehow bloom lushly. Like fellow electronic travellers Means of Production – who are dancing down the front tonight – Moogiemán make a virtue of monotony and yet invite you in with an almost playfulness poppiness, a mix that continues to make them one of the most engagingly unpredictable acts in town.

Dale Kattack

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THE NONE / PREDECEASED / KILLER KOWALSKI

The Library

Killer Kowalski are one of the most vital bands in Oxford right now. On the one hand they sound like a proper old school punk band – all yobbish backing vocals, chunky powerchords and enough vitriol to fuel a revolution. On the other hand they're sharp, even funky at times and possessed of an almost poetic sense of cynicism,

taking aim at gap year wankers ('Marco Polo'), fallen celebrities ('Heroes in Disgrace') and mental health crises in ruined seaside towns ('Blackpool Sands'). 'Never Drink in a Flat-Roofed Pub' could be an Idles song title, but amid the buzzsaw sound of Dead Kennedys and the vim of The Sex Pistols there's the

off-kilter influence of Devo and particularly Wire at play. Having expanded to a four-piece in recent months, they sound like they're only going to get bigger.

Predeceased initially sound like they owe everything to American punk, particularly that early 80s strain, but two songs in and we're fully into Fugazi territory. Like

Killer Kowalski they balance raw aggression with a sense of precision, spindly rage presented with an ogre-ish bark. Sandwiched between two exceptional bands tonight, they do well to hold their own.

The None are little short of astonishing. The band, formed by members of Bloc Party, Frauds, Blue Ruth and Oxfordshire's own Cassels, came together through a series of jam sessions and that dynamic shines through this short, powerful set as singer Kaila Whyte exorcises demons over taut, turbulent passages of noise rock that come with some seriously brutal low end courtesy of bassist Gordon Moakes. The opening number pitches Big Black into battle with Silverfish before they switch to a more militant, staccato sound, managing to be both brittle and fluid at the same time. They don't sound like Can but we're reminded of that band's dynamic where songs emerged out of humongous jam sessions and Whyte certainly has something of the Damo Suzuki about her exhortations. Across just over half an hour it becomes hypnotic even as it pummels your internal organs and when it all collapses in on itself like a dying star at the end, it feels like all the air has been sucked out of the room. Hopefully The None will be more than a temporary diversion for its band members; this is a noise that needs to be heard across galaxies.

Dale Kattack

CHEMTRAILS

The Port Mahon

An initial review of tonight's gig simply reads "Chemtrails are great!", scrawled across the front of last month's edition of *Nightshift*. The editor demands more than this though, so what to say? That the Manchester-based band treat us all to an epic night of their niche blend of punk, surf rock and psyco pop in a crowded venue.

The band mainly showcase their new album 'The Joy of Sect', which blends Mia Lust and Laura Orlova's helium-pitched vocals over a background of bouncy guitars and driving drums. The set opens with album opener, 'Detritus Andronicus', where Chemtrails' sinister yet playful lyrics shine; "A desire to reduce it all to ash" squeaks Lust.

Similar themes appear throughout the set: Chemtrails manage to make both cults and the apocalypse fun and upbeat on 'Join Our Death Cult' and 'Apocalypstick', the latter song featuring a groovy bass line and catchy chorus to get the audience moving. The set culminates in the album's flagship single 'Bang Bang', complete with psychedelic guitars and lyrics about an egotistical yet deluded tech tycoon.

Despite the lyrical content, this song takes the roof off, the room bouncing along either in agreement with said tech bro or, more likely for Oxford, in complete awe of the swirling energetic noisecape before them. Just what you need to liven up a Thursday night.

All of which is a rather verbose way to say that Chemtrails are great, and really, that's all you need to know.

Emily Freeman

MAMMAL HANDS

The Sheldonian

Heraclitus said that no man ever steps into the same river twice. However, if you follow a stream from the source, tracking as it grows, morphs, twists and flows, eventually you find yourself on the coast staring out at the ocean, wondering where that little stream has gone; except it's not really gone at all. This is the closest approximation we could find to the beautiful meanderings and evolutions of Mammal Hands' compositions.

Simple melodic and rhythmic ideas shift imperceptibly in the moment, the constituent parts barely changing, but as time passes the

dynamics shift to a fever pitch and gently ebb away as naturally as the tides. The piano of Nick Smart is equal parts jazz and Reich-ian minimalism; Jordan Smart's saxophone rides on top, like oil on water, blossoming into rainbow swirls and echoes. The percussion of Jesse Barrett is loose and fluid, incorporating tabla one moment and sample culture the next, never repeating itself; his fervour sets the mood of each song, leading the audience sonically much as a director leads the audience's eye.

Mammal Hands are most commonly referred to as a jazz band, and they probably are, but they wear their influences proudly and the whole is both greater and more accessible than they might sound on paper. Bringing together sounds of the likes of Nils Frahm, Terry Riley, Four Tet and many of their contemporaries on the "jazz-tronica" scene, like GoGo Penguin. It's an intoxicating mix and live even more so; elevating beyond the constraints of a single definitive recording, every idea is given more space to expand and interact with the others, with the improvisation you'd expect from their roots.

Matthew Chapman Jones

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WHAT'S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it's **ADRIAN BANKS** and he's **A MEDIA COMPOSER & PRODUCER.**



How long have you worked in this job? "I've been a professional musician since 2010, but becoming a media composer took a little more time to navigate. I've been writing music to picture and theatre properly since 2016."

What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? "Media composers often work closely with directors, editors, and other members of the creative team to ensure that the music aligns seamlessly with what's going on during a performance. This requires a keen sense of storytelling through music, and the skill to enhance dramatic or emotional beats in a way that may not be immediately noticeable is crucial to the overall viewer experience. It's not just making music, it's making the music land on important moments, and that's not easy!"

What's been the single biggest highlight of your career so far? "There's a few great companies I've had the pleasure to work for but being able to go fully freelance in music and saying goodbye to part-time day jobs is a huge achievement, personally."

And the lowlight? "Being a freelancer is always risky, and certainly in the music industry, that's no exception. There have certainly been some 'dry' months over the years which fuels the dreaded imposter syndrome."

How much and how did Covid affect your job?

"I was *very* fortunate during Covid. At the time, I had been furloughed from my part-time job, and I was living with my partner and her parents to save for a house. Although there wasn't much work, it meant I could virtually network with industry professionals more and hone my craft. The contacts I made during that time have really helped progress my career to this point."

Who's your favourite ever Oxford musical artist? "Is it too obvious to say Radiohead? Probably. But true. Although, Dolly Mavies is easily one of the best... Am I biased? Probably. But also true."

What's the single most important piece of advice you'd give to someone wanting to do your job? "I'll give you two for the price of one. Get really good at translating your ideas into music (producing) but more importantly, NETWORK! You might have written the best symphony, but it won't get heard until you get it out in front of the right people. Network, network, and network."

Who's the most awkward person you've ever

had to deal with in your job? "It wouldn't be one single person, but there is a recurring theme in this industry. The bane of a composer's life is clients who want you to write something that sounds like someone else, whether that's Hans Zimmer or Taylor Swift. Trying to write something similar without ripping it off and satisfying the client's needs without being sued by some huge record label for copyright can be... tricky!"

When was the last time you heard genius? "Last year I was in Paris with my partner and we went to see Ben Howard. His support act was a French artist called November Ultra. I've never seen a support act get a standing ovation like that. Sublime talent. Go check her out."

Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work? "I'd like to say no but it comes back to the 'mimicking artists' quandary with clients. Sometimes I'll fully disagree with a director's musical vision, but then you have to remind yourself that you're being hired to do a job. Sometimes you just have to suck it up for the pay cheque and accept you need to write a track like Ed Sheeran."

Would you swap your job for any other? "I originally trained as an actor, so, if I had to swap back to that it wouldn't be all that bad."

Are you rich? "Financially? I wish! But I love my job and have the freedom to do work on projects I love doing. If that makes me rich in life of sorts, then great!"

Do you consider your job glamorous? "I think it sounds a lot more glamorous than it is. More often than not you're sitting at a desk moving MIDI notes and deciding which compressor to use."

What's your favourite thing about Oxford's music scene? "How close-knit it is. It's easy to meet people and you feel like you're part of a gang. I think Oxford artists are some of the nicest and most talented around."

INTRODUCING....

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

The Kokroachez

Who are they?

Oxford indie/alt.rock band The Kokroachez are: Ella-Mae (*vocals*); Jim (*bass*); Jamie (*guitar*) and Jaume (*drums*). Jim and Jamie started the band in primary school: "our name was a play on The Beatles and our obsession with the end of the world, but there were already lots of Cockroaches bands, so we added Ks and a Z." They saw Ella-Mae singing and playing violin in an alleyway in Carterton after lockdown in the Summer of 2022 and persuaded her to join the band. Jaume, who goes to the same college as them joined last Summer ("just in time for our festival run!"). The band released their debut EP 'Pest Control' last year. Their latest single, 'Heroes and Gods' is out this month: "we've been working with Gary Creigh who has really challenged us to think about the sound we want to achieve." They are set to release an album later in the year with a UK tour to coincide.

What do they sound like?

Melodic indie rock with a hint of grunge and the spirit if not exactly the sound of punk about it. Ella-Mae has drawn comparisons to Penetration's Pauline Murray; they draw on the influences of 90s and 00s alt.rock with a dash of funk. New single 'Heroes & Gods' is a great slice of scurrying guitar pop that once again shows off their strong melodic edge.

What inspires them?

"We're totally inspired by the Oxford scene! That we can play the same stages as our heroes and hang out with the same people they hang out with. Our songs used to be mainly inspired by our fears and stories we saw on the news; we didn't have any personal experiences to sing about outside of that because we were only 9 and 10 years old. During lockdown we started to be a bit more inspired by how we felt about stuff. Now we're more inspired by people, relationships and experiences."

Their career highlight so far is:

"We've just headlined at the O2; that was pretty massive, but it might be a gig we played at Port Mahon, it was packed and the PA blew up. We sang two songs through a megaphone while the sound was fixed!"



And the lowlight:

"Covid. We were just starting to build as a band and then everything stopped; we couldn't even rehearse. We were lined up to play some great festivals but they didn't happen. It was really difficult to keep momentum and motivation."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"The band we so want to see doing big stadiums is Kanadia. We've been following them since we were 10 or 11! We went to their album launch at The Bullingdon and it was massive and intimate at the same time. We're looking to cover one of their songs in our pub set."

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

"We honestly thought this would be an impossible question, but actually it was easy – Radiohead: 'The Bends'. It's fuelled our passion for albums."

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

"We're honoured to be headlining the legendary Klub Kakofany at the Gladiator Club on Friday 1st March. If you've never seen us before, expect a high energy rock, pop, funk, punk explosion and possibly a hat!"

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"There are so many bands and artists from all genres, often sharing a stage, and there's always something happening. There's a lot of support and love within the Oxford music community. Some venues we'd love to play won't have us because of strict over-18 rules, but we all turn 18 this year, so we're coming for The Jericho Tavern and The Library!"

You might love them if you love:

Paramore; Foo Fighters; Bloc Party; Royal Blood; Marmozets; The Strokes.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

20 YEARS AGO

"One hell of a strange, fucked-up slab of music from a strange, fucked-up band," ran the opening gambit of *Nightshift's* interview with **Suitable Case For Treatment** back in March 2004. Frontman Liam Ings-Reeves – who tragically passed away in 2018 – glowered and gurned from the cover of the mag, like a satanic rock goblin, while the band's sprawling, crawling fusion of metal, blues, jazz and something unspeakable was terrifying and thrilling local audiences in roughly equal measures. "Do not fear the dark.... But you will... YOU WILL!" bellowed Liam. An icy shiver ran up the Oxford music scene's collective spine. "We're a step up from the Cheeky Girls," added bassist Pete Bastard.

While those malevolent imps were busy releasing their 'A Sinister Case For The Laevus Levus' album, **Young Knives' House of Lords** was sneaking out his solo album, 'Very Very Songs Go'. Actually we reckon it was brother Henry who sent us said CD for review since it was bloody awful ("A half-cocked, post-pub piss-about, random bedroom dabbling and kiddies toy electro"). We suggested he stopped arsing about and give us another Young Knives album pronto. Luckily for all of us, he did.

Out in gig land former-Dubstar singer Sarah Blackwood was bringing her new electro-pop act **Client to the Zodiac**, which also hosted brutal metal titans **Raging Speedhorn**, as well

as a sold-out show from **Ash**, while up the hill at **Brookes University**, **Snow Patrol** were still waiting to achieve stadium level world domination.

10 YEARS AGO

Desert Storm were on the cover of March 2014's *Nightshift* – the second of their four cover features to date – talking about tour vans and toilet etiquette as they plundered the venues of Europe in search of rock glory. "Our manager found an elegant solution to the problem of needing the loo when we're on the move," they explained; "he simply opened the sliding door on the motorway and urinated out of the van." Boys, please...

Local music news was dominated by local festival announcements: **White Lies** and **The Cribs** for **Truck**; **Simple Minds** and **Georgie Fame** for **Cornbury** and **Burt Bacharach**, **Metronomy** and **London Grammar** for **Wilderness**, while on the local release front **Spring Offensive's** 'Young Animal Hearts' was out this month, as were 'How About Now' by **Ags Connolly**, and 'Phase' by **The Relationships**.

On the gig front we had **Annie Mac**, **Temples**, **Bonobo**, **Maximo Park**, **Metronomy**, **Katy B** and **5 Seconds of Summer** at the **O2 Academy**, although the highlight of the month was probably a last-minute show from **Suede** at the same venue.

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TRACKS

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TOP TRACK

LORD BUG

Is spring in the air? Can we dare to dream of better days ahead? Well, there are snowdrops coming up everywhere and only yesterday we saw a bumblebee – bloody massive one at that – while as we sit down to review this month's pile of new music the Tories have just had a right old kicking in two by-elections, so here's hoping. Conversely, kids are still being bombed to bits in Gaza, antisemitism is on the rise and the main hope for opposition in Russia has somehow died. No doubt of natural causes, like every other opposition figure in Russia. So please, music Gods, send us something to make us think of gambolling lambs and sunlit summer meadows. And talking of summer meadows, right on cue Lord Bug's song 'Dog's Dinner' arrives swathed in mellow late afternoon vibes. The musical moniker of Libby Peet, Nottingham born but now at uni in Oxford, Lord Bug has a sleepy-eyed approach to singing: folksy but with a neat soul edge to her voice that reminds us a fair bit of Feist but also Soccer Mommy, or on a local level maybe Aphra Taylor. Her music is introverted, mostly acoustic but with subtle, unobtrusive embellishments which make for a playfully laidback vibe. But it's her voice that takes centre stage, doing nothing showy but inviting you to stretch out like a sleepy cat in its presence. All in all, rather lovely. Thank you Lord Bug, for delivering us a dose of sugar amid a world of bitter pills.

DAKORRA

Dakorra won Top Track almost exactly a year ago for their imperious gothtronica anthem 'All Eyes To The Floor' which sounded like Garbage and Chvrches getting gloomy with Gary Numan and if this new song, 'Falling', doesn't quite possess quite the same doomy pomp, it certainly doesn't disappoint. Come on, a coming together of members of Tiger Mendoza, Bruno Muerte and Ocean Ruins is always going to sound great, right? More subdued than its predecessor, there's something of Christine & the Queens about the dappled synths of 'Falling', while Katy Herridge's restrained

drama queen vocals atop the skittering electronic beats and shoegazy guitars make for a sensual mood piece. We'd go as far as to say this feels almost optimistic but really, for all its prettiness it could be a lover's lament at a graveside. And that's the kind of mood piece us old goths can happily immerse ourselves in

THE SEPIA TONE FOLK COLLECTIVE

Funnily enough this lot got in touch after reading a Dakorra review in *Nightshift* a few months ago, though there's precious little musical similarity. Despite the name they're not a collective but a duo, but as is befitting a duo they mostly keep their music simple and uncluttered, which mostly serves them well. Best of the songs they've served us up with here is 'The Artist', their most downbeat number but still airy and not a million miles off last month's cover stars Barricane with its close harmony singing and uncluttered arrangement. The guitar line actually sounds like it might have been nabbed off an old Leonard Cohen song and if there's criticism to be made it's that it doesn't really detour from its initial good idea, but it's a sweet wee thing nonetheless. Elsewhere 'Goodbye Susie' is a simple, pretty tune, while 'Song For You' is the pair at their most inventive and reminiscent of a lot of 60s English folk revival stuff. Only the breathless scurry of 'Tick Tock Clock' fails to hit the spot, sounding like a kids' TV number and grates slightly in a madly catchy kind of way but we'll give them a pass for now since for all our dour gothic demeanour we quite enjoy music that reminds us of summer.

PAGE OF SWORDS

"You remain a constant source of hope" sings Ian Mitchell at the start of Page of Swords' new song 'Ravens & Crows'. Such a lovely optimistic sentiment, but don't go getting your spirits up too soon. Because Page of Swords – Ian's solo project that runs parallel to his work with the far rockier BarrelHaus – is rarely if ever about brightness and silver linings, and so it proves to be here; in fact downbeat barely scratches the surface as Ian sings solemnly over delicate, sparse guitar plucking. Well, speaks really since this sounds more like a poem set to music rather than a song. "We're standing on the edge" he ruminates, "And the remnants of what's left will be ravens and crows", he continues before closing on a simple "Oh no", as if to puncture any remaining vestige of hope. It maybe doesn't hit the heights (or depths) of his best work on his previous EPs but it's an oddly welcome dark cloud in the sky even as spring threatens to make itself felt.

CHLOE AUGUST

Chloe's surname does seem to reflect her music somewhat, possessed as it is of a somewhat sad-eyed, end-of-summer nature and an air of reflection. Like Lord Bug she does a lot with few moving parts: a delicately, almost lazily plucked acoustic guitar and her voice and very little else – just some judicious self harmonising and the merest hint of synth hum. Also like Lord Bug there's a lovely sleepy-eyed feel to her voice on her song here, 'Platform 7', just a hint of jazz smoke about it as she sings oh-so-softly about a train ride home – a timeless metaphor for leaving and reflection. Like her last offering here a few months back there's a stillness about 'Platform 7' even as that train moves off. A moment of calm in a non-stop world. By thunder, call us a bunch of misty-eyed old romantics but *Nightshift* is coming over all daydreamy.

EVA GADD

And gadzooks, here's another sleepy-eyed, jazz-inflected singer with a vaguely autumnal vibe. Eva's song 'The One' came to us at the end of last year but such is the pile of stuff we get it's only just come to the top. It's intended to have an end of year feel to it and as it sighs and emotes over a solemn piano track you can picture it soundtracking a heartstring-pulling John Lewis advert. Eva's got a great voice and you can imagine her doing great things but we're not sure this song does her all the necessary favours. It feels a bit like a reflective, teary ballad by rote, as if she's actually been asked to write a song for an advert. A stronger tune and we imagine she can really soar.

THIRTEEN HOURS OF RAIN

Oh yeah, great, thanks for taking us back to those glorious days of endless grey and torrential downpours. Why not just call yourselves Massive Fuck Off Puddle, or Oh Shit, The Roof's Leaking and be done with it. But hold right on there, young cynic – they might be called Thirteen Hours of Rain but the band's EP is titled 'She Dreams of Spring', so maybe they're on board with our new-found, possibly ill-found optimism. It's not exactly an EP mind, just two songs. The first is titled 'Tere Hommikust', which Google tells us means Good Morning, and which suggests they're a nice, polite bunch of young men who we could take home for afternoon tea. And so it seems to be as Thirteen Hours of Rain drift through the shoegaze songbook in perhaps too polite a fashion, somewhere between Slowdive and Dinosaur Jr at their very mellowest and soft centred (which wasn't not often we hasten to add). The second track is called 'Vespertine Moon At The Zenith', which doesn't translate

into English from Hippy Spiritualism and is more spectral and spaced out. Perhaps not spectral or spaced out enough for our liking, but not wholly without merit. You get the feeling there might be a decent band in here somewhere but Thirteen Hours of Rain should probably go back to their stated influences – Sonic Youth and My Bloody Valentine among them – and draw on what made them such game changers, rather than sound like a heavily diluted version of any of the bands mentioned here.

EDDY

Eddy is a bit of a non-committal name isn't it? Could be male or female, could be a gentle-hearted busker or Iron Maiden's grizzled monster mascot. In the end it's a male Eddy and musically he's a long way removed from heavy metal's most celebrated beast creature. Eddy's song here, 'Losers in Love', is suitably lovelorn. Actually it sounds an awful lot like the quiet bit from Radiohead's 'Creep' and Eddy himself has a bit of a Thom Yorke-with-a-blocked-nose thing going on vocally. But while 'Creep' explodes into its towering chorus, 'Losers in Love' just keeps puddling along, failing to deliver on any vague promise of an explosion. It doesn't do anything bad *per se*, but it really needs to do something extra to leave any impact. It exists in a passably pleasant fashion for three minutes, doesn't make us laugh or cry or want to break stuff, and then kind of fades away without leaving a trace. Where it's off to we don't know: into the setting sun, into the arms of a lover or maybe just off to Lidl. Eddy, old chap – make us care where you're going next time. And if it is off to Lidl, get us a new socket set and some scuba gear from the middle aisle, eh.

NICK SHANE

We said last month that the Toilet Track was a thing of the past (and immediately got accused of going soft by a few folk on the local scene), but we're half tempted to bring it back after listening to Nick Shane here. Sometimes you want to give someone a bit of a shake to hopefully instil a bit of life into them. 'en Riverside' is touted as being ambient and cinematic but it's neither really, more a softly anguished lament that might well be heartfelt but sounds artificial and lacking in any necessary emotional punch. These days it can be easy enough to disguise a home-made recording but everything here smacks of bedroom production, particularly the synthetic strings, while the vocal yearning is over-egged without conveying any genuine emotional heft. You almost want him to properly let it all out and started screaming into the mic but instead it saunters along without heart or soul or seemingly any kind of purpose. A no fat, no sugar, no flavour yoghurt of a song.

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

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