

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 329
May
2024

"I don't find it difficult to put feelings into words – it's fitting them into a rhyme scheme that's hard."



Alexandra Hamer

Songs of isolation and identity with Oxford's poetic pop Queen

Also in this issue:

Introducing **PET TWIN**

At work with **ANDY GREY**

BEAKER reform!

Plus

All your Oxfordshire music news, previews, reviews and gigs for May

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MAY 2024

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Thursday 2nd May Corky Laing <i>Plays Mountain</i> Doors: 7PM	Thursday 23rd May <i>Planet Ox</i> The Mezz Leonidas The Mucks Doors: 7PM	Sunday 9th & Tuesday 11th June Luke Kidgell: <i>Happy Hour</i> Doors: 7PM (Sun) @ 6:30PM (Tues)	Wednesday 10th July Alastair Greene Band Doors: 7PM
Friday 3rd May Regrets Doors: 7PM	Saturday 25th May <i>Jungle Cakes</i> Ed Solo & DJ Hybrid <i>Katalyst, Kivi, Dain, Bitter Pill, Traffic MC, Deegz, Sandman MC</i> Doors: 11PM	Monday 10th June The Oxford Imps Take the Bullingdon Doors: 7PM	Saturday 27th July Kickin it Country Doors: 6PM
Saturday 4th May Reggaeton Party Doors: 11PM	Wednesday 8th May Delights Doors: 7PM	Wednesday 12th June Swim Deep Doors: 7PM	Saturday 27th July <i>Terraforms</i> Brockie DJ Solitude DJ Comp Winner Doors: 11PM
Friday 10th May Theatre of Hate The Go Go Cult Doors: 7PM	Sunday 26th May The Inflatables AJ Jones Constant Jammin Doors: 7PM	Friday 14th June Steve Martland Hits the Club Doors: 7PM	Saturday 3rd August <i>A Pre-Carnival Jamboree</i> White Magic Young Lynx DJ Marne DJ Fearless Doors: 11PM
Friday 10th May The Last HAUS Party Doors: 11PM	Thursday 30th May Summertime Sadness Club Doors: 11PM	Tuesday 18th June Sea Girls <i>Acoustic Album Launch</i> Doors: 7PM	Friday 30th August Emily Nenni Teddy and the Rough Riders Doors: 7PM
Sunday 12th May Peja Slums Attack Doors: 7PM	Friday 31st May <i>All My Thoughts</i> Seb Wildblood Doors: 11PM	Friday 21st June Max Blansjaar <i>Album Launch</i> Doors: 7PM	Thursday 5th September Jeff Innocent: <i>Smart Casual</i> Doors: 7PM
Monday 13th May English Teacher Doors: 7PM	Friday 31st May DJ Meal Deal's Last Kicks Doors: 11PM	Thursday 27th June Malcolm Bruce + Maya Sage Doors: 7PM	Thursday 12th September Red Richardson: <i>Bugatti Live</i> Doors: 7PM
Wednesday 15th May Fat Dog Doors: 7PM	Saturday 1st June DJ Meal Deal's Last Kicks Doors: 11PM	Friday 28th June Self Help Doors: 7PM	Friday 13th September Entitled Sons Doors: 7PM
Friday 17th May Dolly Mavies Joely June Doors: 7PM	Monday 3rd June Gel Doors: 7PM	Wednesday 3rd July The Sadies Doors: 7PM	Friday 20th September Melt-Banana Doors: 7PM
Friday 17th May <i>Bangerz and Lash</i> 2010 Edition Doors: 11PM	Thursday 6th June Rob Tognoni & Krissy Matthews Doors: 7PM	Thursday 4th July Miles Hunt <i>(The Wonder Stuff)</i> Doors: 7PM	

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NEWS

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KILLER KOWALSKI will play this year's **Truck Festival** after being picked by *Nightshift* to represent the Oxford music contingent over the weekend of the **26th-28th July** at **Hill Farm** in Steventon. The band will play on the Market Stage on the Sunday.

Other Oxfordshire acts set to play after being picked from the BandApp by **BBC Introducing in Oxfordshire & Berkshire** include: Pecq; Isaac Stuart; In-Flight Movie; Hoof; Johnny Payne & the Thunder; Mid Air; The Kokroachez; Manners, and Girl Like That. Other picks came from the likes of *Alcopop!* Records, *So Young* and *Dork* magazine, as well as a public vote.

Beyond the Band App picks, the Veterans & Virgins stage will once again host a selection of Oxford acts, including *Mandrake Handshake*; *The Dreaming Spires*; *Emma Hunter*; *Alphabet Backwards*; *Steady Habits*; *The DB Band*, fronted by Supergrass' Mick Quinn, and *The Shapes*. This year's Truck Festival, headlined by *Jamie T*, *Wet Leg*

and *The Streets*, is close to another sell out with remaining tickets available from truckfestival.com.

MAX BLANSJAAR launches his debut album with a headline show at **The Bullingdon** next month. **'False Comforts'** is released on **Friday 21st June** on **Beanie Tapes** with the **Bullingdon** show on the same night. The album was produced by Julia Von Schleiser and features recent singles 'Anna Madonna' and 'Burning In Our Name'. Tickets for the show are on sale now at Wegotickets.com.

SEXTODECIMO AND WINNEBAGO DEAL are set to reform for a double-header show in July. They will play **The Jericho Tavern** on **Saturday 27th July** alongside **Desert Storm**. Sextodecimo, who originally split in 2010, were named by *Nightshift* as Oxford's greatest metal band in a special metal edition of the magazine the same year. The extreme sludge/doom outfit reformed for a one-off gig in 2014 – a sold-out show at The Library. Winnebago Deal, the garage-metal duo formed by Ben Perrier and Ben Thomas, released three albums during their time together; their last album, 'Career Suicide', came out in 2010. Most recently Ben Perrier has been fronting the band *Los Pepes*. Tickets for the show are on sale now from [Wegotickets](http://Wegotickets.com).



BEAKER have reformed to play this year's **Charlbury Riverside Festival**.

The band, who split in 1999, are set to play the Saturday of the free festival, which runs over the weekend of the **20th-21st July**. Beaker released their debut single, 'Backgarden', on Shifty Disco in 1997 and followed it up with the double A-side 'Monster / 'Plastic' on Fierce Panda, becoming one of the most popular and influential bands on the Oxford scene. Bass player Kim Parsons sadly died last year from meningitis, but her passing helped spur the reunion with singer Sam Battle, guitarist Teresa Ward and drummer Clare Howard-Saunders recruiting former Harry Angel bassist Hayley Wright, as well as Emma Hunter who will provided extra vocals.

Talking about the reunion, Sam said: I guess what triggered the reunion is that Clare and TJ and I have met up a few times in the last year, following the terrible news of Kim's death last summer. We hadn't seen each other for a very long time but when we received the news, we all wanted to reconnect. It has been great to see the girls again and of course, we are reminded of how much we shared and what fun we always had together. It seems natural to want to play together again.

"As soon as we mentioned the prospect of playing together, Clare asked her friend Hayley if she would be interested in playing bass with us. Hayley's response and enthusiasm gave us a bit of excitement about it and made it seem possible. Also, Hayley was absolutely amazing in our first rehearsal and actually knew all the songs better than we did. Every time we had any doubts about how a song went, Hayley knew, it was awesome! She slotted in really easily, as did Emma, who has been a lovely addition too. I'm not sure if this will be a one off. Obviously it's quite hard to imagine how we would keep doing gigs when TJ lives so far away, but I certainly would always be up for playing with these lovely girls. Being an old lady in a heavy rock band feels even more 'not the done thing' than being a girl in a band felt in the 90s. I like that!"

Along with Beaker, the first wave of acts set to play at this year's Riverside – now in its 28th year – has been announced, including a comeback show for **DB Band**, fronted by Supergrass bassist Mick Quinn. They'll be joined over the weekend by: **The August List**, who will headline Saturday night; **The Balkan Wanderers**; **The Subtheory**; **The Deadbeat Apostles**; **The Kokroachez**; **The Mighty Redox**; **Dubwiser**; **Dolly Mavies**; **Blue Bayou**; **Octavia Freud**; **Crossroads**; **The Knights of Mentis**, and **iiii**.

photo: IMarc West



RIDE played two intimate hometown shows at **Truck Store** last month to launch their seventh studio album, **'Interplay'**. The band played five songs from the new album: 'Peace Sign'; 'Last Frontier'; 'I Came To See The Wreck'; 'Monaco', and 'Last Night I Went Somewhere To Dream', as well as old favourites 'OX4' and 'Vapour Trail'. 'Interplay' entered the UK album charts at Number 8, making it their sixth Top 20 album, and at Number 1 in the independent charts.

SECRET RIVALS release their new album at the end of May. The band, who reformed last year after a nine-year hiatus with guitarist Jay Corcoran joined by new lead vocalist Ah Hennessy, release **'Amor Fati'** on **Friday 31st May**. The band support *The Exact Opposite* at their album launch show at **The Jericho Tavern** on the 10th May.

LIVE MUSIC at **The Port Mahon** has been extended through until the middle of June while a change of ownership and management takes place. The future of live music at the venue

NEWS

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in St Clement's after that is not known. As such, It's All About the Music will be hosting gigs at The Port every Friday, Saturday and Sunday through May. Bands wanting to play should contact Osprey via It's All About the Music on Facebook.



AQUABATS have made their debut album 'Magiko' album available on Bandcamp for the first time. The trio, featuring Tim Turan, Phil Freizinger and Sue Smith, originally released 'Magiko' on CD in December 1993, utilising percussion, vocals and earth recordings to make an experimental ambient album, but this is the first time the album has been available to buy digitally. 1999's follow-up, 'Sequoia', is due to be available soon. Get it at aquabats.bandcamp.com.

STRUMMERFEST returns to Banbury this summer after a nine year hiatus. **Strummerfest 24** takes place at **Banbury United FC** on **Saturday 13th July**. The all-day event, hosted by Strummer Room Records, will feature Peerless Pirates; Spinner Fall; Lake Acacia; Ghosts in the Photographs; The Exact Opposite; BarrelHaus; Maisy's Rainbow Dream; Secret Rivals; The Foam Heads; Queen Eleanor's Cross; The Longtime



Dead and 46 Prime. Tickets for the day are on sale at Wegotickets.com.

MORE ACTS have been added to this summer's **Flofest** and **Glofest**. The events take place in **Florence Park** on **Saturday the 22nd June** with Flofest a free, family-friendly affair running from 11am til 4.30pm and Glofest a ticketed event running from 6pm through to 11.45pm. Joining The Mighty Redox and Barricane at Flofest will be Flights of Helios, playing a set with Horns of Plenty; Manchoir; The Shapes; The Hot Crumpets, The HorMones, and Cowleyfornia, while Flofest headliners The Kokroachez will be joined in the evening by DJ Sarah Lamptey, The Black Hats, Steady Habits, and Feisty Choir. As is traditional Glofest closes with a DJ and laser set from James Ussher. Tickets for Glofest are on sale now at Flofest.uk.

WITTFEST returns again this summer. The free festival takes place at **The Plough Inn** in Long Wittenham, over the weekend the **9th-11th August**, featuring three days of local bands and artists.

DRUNKENSTEIN release a posthumous single in aid of Cancer Research this month. The prog-punk band recorded an album 15 years ago but split up before it was released. Now though, the band have made the song 'Drift' available in memory of Owen Jones, the band's guitarist who wrote the song and who died from myeloma a few years ago. The track is available on all major streaming sites.



GLASS ANIMALS release their fourth album this summer. The Oxford stars release 'I Love You So F***ing Much' on the **19th July** on Polydor. A new single, 'Creatures In Heaven', was released in early April to coincide with the announcement of the new album. Glass Animals have seen themselves becoming one of the most successful bands on the planet on the back of their 2020 album 'Dreamland', which sold over 12 million copies globally, and spawned the record-breaking single 'Heat Waves', which became the biggest international hit for a British band since The Spice Girls' 'Wannabe' in 1995, reaching Number 1 in both the Spotify charts and the US Billboard chart.

The local quartet, whose first ever review was a *Nightshift* Demo of the Month back in 2010, and who played their earliest gigs at The Jericho Tavern and East Oxford Community Centre, are set to embark on a huge world tour, beginning in the USA and Canada in August before moving onto Europe in October and concluding with a headline show at the **O2 Arena** in London on the **7th November**.

RICHARD NORRIS launches his new autobiography with a Q&A session and DJ set in Oxford this month. The musician and producer, best known as a member of electronic dance duo The Grid, will be at **Florence Park Community Centre** on **Friday 17th May**. Norris also produced and collaborated with the likes of Joe Strummer, Marc Almond, Bryan Ferry, The Pet Shop Boys, Robert Fripp and Genesis P Orridge. Tickets for the event are £10 from eventbrite.co.uk.

TRUCK STORE hosts another selection of instore sets this month. The Cowley Road record store hosts **Emily Barker** on **Friday 3rd**

SOFT CELL are the final headline act announced for this summer's **Nocturne Live** series of concerts. The 80s synth-pop duo play at **Blenheim Palace** on **Friday the 14th June**; it will be their only UK show of the year. Support comes from Heather Small and Heaven 17.

They join **Chaka Khan** (Thursday 13th); **Sugababes** (Saturday 15th) and **Crowded House** (Sunday 16th) at the World Heritage site. Crowded House is now sold out. Tickets for all other shows are on sale at Nocturnelive.com.

May; **The Howlers** on Wednesday the 15th; **Bess Atwell** on Saturday 25th and **Octavia Freud & The Weird Sisters** on Thursday 30th. Each show commences at 6pm. Entry to all the instores is free but to guarantee entry, reserve your copy of the artist's new album at Truck. Visit Truckmusic.store for more details.

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

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

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

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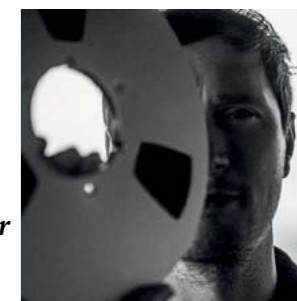
ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Tuesday 10th September
The Jericho Tavern



ERLAND COOPER
seated show

Wednesday 27th November
SJE Arts



Heavy Pop are independent Reading-based live music promoters organising gigs across the South East, as well as Reading's annual Are You Listening? Festival and Down At The Abbey Festival.

For full gig listings and tickets: heavypop.co.uk
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Alexandra Hamer



“**PICTURE ME AT TWELVE** years old reading Chaucer and trying to learn to speak Middle English, then wandering alone in the countryside with an armful of field guides, looking for edible plants. Yes, that nerdy. I love nerds, I love geeks – always the best people.”

ALEXANDRA HAMER IS A nerd; she doesn’t just admit it, she celebrates it, and so she should. Aren’t all great artists essentially nerds, channelling their nerdiness? Alexandra is also neurodivergent, an introvert and a trans woman. These too she celebrates on her new album ‘I Can Only Me’, released this month. ‘I Can Only Me’ – the follow-up to last year’s glorious, often heart-rending, debut ‘All Of Us & Everything’ – is one of the most deeply personal and intimate records you’ll hear this year. It’s also one of the loveliest: a bedroom-made collection of songs with a grand vision and a seriously eclectic array of influences – notably Kazakh

singer Dimash; Norwegian artist Aurora; the rapper Ren; Billy Eilish, and Jacob Collier. By turns reflective, confused, despairing, defiant and playful, ‘I Can Only Me’ finds Alexandra exploring everything from childhood and depression to the importance of talking about your feelings, and being in love with a long-dead celebrity. Throughout, her voice is both hushed and expansive, almost hymnal at times, delicate as blossom and able to draw you into her world.

ALEXANDRA FIRST BEGAN releasing music during lockdown – a series of self-made videos on Youtube featuring both her own songs and an exotic selection of cover versions that found her singing in an array of different languages. Her making music, however, goes back far earlier. “I was doing music even back when mammoths walked the earth, but I think I became weary of trying to communicate with humans by singing at them and being ignored,

so I wrote a novel instead. That took a whole decade, which ended during lockdown and by then I was feeling like singing at the world again, so the timing with lockdown was coincidental. The reaction to those first few songs was amazing. It’s lovely when people are lovely. Have I progressed? I don’t know – music is really only about reaching people emotionally, and maybe I’m very slightly better at that than I used to be.” There was an interesting and eclectic mix of covers among Alexandra’s early music; who was inspiring her then, and how have those influences changed? “Sometimes a cover would come about because I would hear a song that I love, but that I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t be able to sing, which annoys me so much that I decide to do it anyway. For example, my cover of Dimash’s song ‘The Love of Wild Swans’ was just so difficult. It has some really awkward modulations and melodic jumps in it, I have to sing across a big

range, and the dynamics go from a whisper – singing quietly is much harder than singing loud – all the way to this semi-operatic belt. And it’s in Russian, which I don’t speak, and which has some really difficult consonant clusters. On some days, I feel I actually did kind of okay, but then I hear the Dimash version which covers literally double my range and is an absolute, superhuman masterpiece... *sigh*.” Such was Alexandra’s fluid, fluent singing in various languages, it’s easy to imagine she is naturally multilingual. “Yes, I am fluent in seven languages. No, not really – I speak little bits of French and Italian, and I’m learning Norwegian, but I have sung in five languages so far: English, French, Italian, Japanese and Russian. I love doing that; you have to make all these new sounds with your voice. And this is weird, but because of my ADHD, I am terrible at remembering lyrics; when I was in a band, I always had prompt sheets on stage, or had to ask the guitarist for the first line, and I still forgot them, but when I sing in a language I don’t speak, I find it much easier to remember the lyrics – it’s like my brain can remember strings of sounds, but not so much strings of English words.”

‘**I CAN ONLY ME**’ COMES just a year after Alexandra’s debut; written and recorded solo at home in a more compact timeframe than its predecessor, how different, we wonder, was the creative process. “My creative process hasn’t changed; it usually starts with a set of chords which I find by messing around on piano, tenor ukulele or my four-string acoustic. I often don’t know what all of the chords are – I just try out different finger positions until they make noises I like. Then I start singing melodies to them, until I have a little musical journey mapped out. The mood that emerges from this music inspires the lyrics. Next, I start building the track in Cubase; this is the point at which I do have to work out what the chords actually are so I can bring in other instruments, and I often find the chords are quite hefty – lots of flat 5s, added 9ths etc – jazzy monsters, but that’s okay, I like dense chords. Also, I seem to use unusual scales sometimes, like the Hungarian minor. No idea why that happens.” You say the overarching theme of the album is the isolation of being LGBT and/or neurodivergent; in what ways does that isolation feed

into both your lyrics and your music? “A lot of my lyrics seem to be about defying the people that would isolate you, but not all of them are about defiance; for example, ‘Somebody Else’s Shoes’ is simply about what it feels like to have gender dysphoria, and ‘Go’ is about depression. They are not about wallowing in those dark places though, they are about the catharsis of saying those things out loud: you put them outside of yourself for a moment, where you can see them, argue with them, bite pieces off and spit them out. And if the listener is currently in one of those dark places, songs like that can be the reassuring hug of someone else knowing exactly how you feel.” Your introverted nature is reflected in many songs. ‘Outside Everything’ is about being an introvert and how introverts don’t need to be “saved”; do you think the world is run by extroverts *for* extroverts? “Absolutely it is. I mean what the fuck are communal tables in cafés about? It’s monstrous. Give me a dark corner, and turn the fucking music down, cos I’m in sensory overload back here! But really, introversion isn’t sadness – walking alone in a forest can be profoundly joyful in a way that cannot be shared. People really should listen to introverts, because we’ve been quietly observing and analysing in the background, and we often have solutions you will never think of.”

ANYONE LISTENING TO Alexandra’s music would point to her voice as the stand-out feature and centrepiece of her songs, often fragile but deeply emotive, and yet talking to her about her music she admits she struggles with it; is that, we wonder, a lack of self confidence or a striving to make her voice go to even further places than she already does? “When singing is going well, and I’m in the zone, it feels like I’m flying; I love it, but it’s also an endless frustration. Being trans plays a part: my voice is broken, and I can’t fix it. Unfortunately, puberty blockers just weren’t an option when I was growing up, so it couldn’t be prevented and I mourn the soprano high C that was once in my grasp. In truth, I am lucky, because my voice is quite androgynous, and I’m reasonably practised at working in head voice – the higher, softer sound your voice can make. But then I have this fight with myself because I like to use my full range – it’s not very big, maybe 2.5 useful octaves, but when I do dip into my lowest notes, gender dysphoria slaps me right in the face. Also I spend too much time studying the best singers and get angry with myself when I can’t do what they can do. So I might listen to the unearthly gorgeousness of Aurora’s voice, and of course I

can’t do what she can do; her voice is a beautiful freak of nature, and only she can make that noise, but I try to sing as beautifully as her with my broken instrument, and inevitably fail, and I get quite upset about it. On the plus side though, this has all led me to using a wider range of techniques than singers usually trouble themselves with, and I would like to think that that makes my voice sort of interestingly varied on some tracks.” I think it’s fair to say your lyrics can be deeply personal and emotive; do you find it easy to transfer your feelings into words, and how hard is it for you to put those feelings out there in the world? “I don’t find it difficult to put feelings into words – it’s fitting them into a rhyme scheme that’s hard.” Debut album ‘All Of Us

“I’m so introverted that I can’t do all the dealing-with-humans stuff to actually make a gig happen. That’s what managers are for, and I don’t have one”

& Everything’ included the heartbreaking ‘Gone’ about the loss of your brother; that must have been an incredibly difficult song to write and record. “Yes, my little brother died, and ‘Gone’ is about that, but I guess it’s broader than one death; it’s about the inability of our monkey brains to understand how someone can be there, and then not be there. To a large degree you have to detach from it when you write and record a song like that; your focus is more on the technicalities of singing and production. I did cry making the video, but it’s good to cry.” There is sadness, confusion and maybe some anger on songs like ‘Somebody Else’s Shoes’ and ‘Nevertheless’ from the new album; how do you put those feelings about those parts of your life into lyrics – they’re pretty much poems really, aren’t they? “Yes, I think song lyrics are poems, but how do I actually write them? I’ve no idea – they just fall out.”

GOING BACK TO LAST year’s ‘All Of Us & Everything’ the songs ‘I’m Still Me’ and ‘She Lives’ were affirmations and celebrations of Alexandra’s life as a trans woman; at a time when trans people are being attacked online, in print and on the street, how important was it to her to write and sing songs of positivity and defiance? “I transitioned over 20 years ago, and it’s essential that trans people starting out on their journey can see other trans people thriving long-term. I’m very open about being trans and

ADHD – neither are faults and I’m not ashamed of them.” Why do you think trans people are subject to so much negativity? Is it simply a case of it being “their turn” like single mothers, asylum seekers etc, or is there something deeper and even nastier at work? “There are certainly a lot of sinister elements pushing it along, like JK Rowling making her daily negative posts about us to her 14 million followers on X. The Tories, much of Labour, and most of the media hate us too. I mean, what the fuck? We’re less than 1% of the population. Consequently, transphobic hate crimes are rising fast, so I stopped wearing my trans pride badge a couple of years ago for my own safety. Luckily I pass easily so people don’t generally know I’m trans, but it is getting worse, and we’re

all scared. In fact, the reason I’m learning Norwegian is that my wife and I are thinking of moving there to escape the transphobic, far-right, blood-sucking, genocide-facilitating, sewage dump that the UK is becoming.” Do you think transphobia is a new supposedly “acceptable” face of general homophobia that was more prevalent – or at least easier to get away with – in the past? “Absolutely – every transphobic argument is recycled homophobia.” **VERY MUCH AN INTROVERT,** Alexandra doesn’t – yet, at least – perform live; *Nightshift* has tried to persuade her in the past, but for now she is more comfortable making music by herself. Could she ever be persuaded? “I’d love to perform live again, but a lot of my songs are really hard to sing – for me – which makes it daunting, and I’m so introverted that I can’t do all the interacting with venue managers and all that dealing-with-humans stuff to actually make a gig happen. That’s what managers are for, and I don’t have one. If a good gig opportunity arises though, I will probably go for it, and if I end up singing really badly, well, it wouldn’t be the first time.” Do you find composing and recording by yourself allows you complete freedom, or would you like to work with other artists at some point? “I like the freedom of working alone, but my musicianship is very limited, and I have to do every single thing myself, so it’s hard

and slow. Still, I always think limitations enhance creativity, so if I can’t physically play that blistering bassoon solo in that bridge, I need to get creative and fill the space in a different way. The artists I’d like to work with are all too brilliant – I’d feel like a car mechanic showing up at the Hadron Collider.”

AS MENTIONED EARLIER, as well as her music Alexandra is also an author. Her debut novel *To Be A Girl*, about a trans girl’s fight for survival and to be loved for who she is in Victorian England, came out a couple of years ago and was very well received. “Yes, my little novel. The response has been overwhelmingly positive; I’ve been really taken aback. I think people were expecting some sort of dry, political thing about trans rights, but it’s not that at all – it’s more like *Oliver Twist*, if Oliver’s main problem was being trans. I mean, how the hell would a teenager pull off a transition in Victorian England? Read it and find out! It’s an adventure, a love story, a thriller, but please be aware, there are some extremely dark chapters involving violence and sexual abuse. I would like to write another, but I just get so lost in music that I haven’t found the time yet.”

WITH ‘I CAN ONLY ME’ released this month, it’s to be hoped that Alexandra’s songs can reach an even wider audience; in particular to reach some of those people like her who perhaps feel isolated in life. If she could send one message to all the nerds, introverts and LGBT and neurodivergent people out there in the world feeling isolated, what would it be? “I might sound like a bit of a hopeless case – trans, ADHD, a tortured-artist cliché – but in truth I am having an absolute blast. I am very happily married; my life is full of creativity; I travel a lot, and wifey and me laugh incessantly. So life is good, and that means that at least you know it *can* get better – that it’s possible. I can’t deny that it has been overwhelmingly difficult at times: I left school at 16 with almost no qualifications because of ADHD and spent years unemployed or on minimum wage, and transitioning cost me a lot of people that I thought loved me unconditionally, so I’ve been to some very dark places, and at times, I wasn’t sure I would survive it, but I did survive it, and 20 years later, here I am. So fuck the doubters, the rejecters, and the haters – fuck them all, keep fighting to be you, because you can only you, and *I CAN ONLY ME*.”

‘I Can Only Me’ is released on the 1st May.

RELEASED

THE EXACT OPPOSITE

‘Skill Issue’

(Dental Records)

Growing up on the periphery of the Oxford music scene, I was always jealous of the big names I heard coming through a neighbouring city: Radiohead, Supergrass, and Unbelievable Truth were huge bands for me as an aspiring teenage musician, and Nigel Powell was always my go-to drummer when asked to think of my dream band, while in the same conversation, Dive Dive’s Jamie Stuart’s credentials would always pop up. So, when I heard that these two titans of the Oxford music scene had joined forces once more, I must admit I got a bit giddy. ‘Skill Issue’, The Exact Opposite’s debut album, kicks off with ‘Look At Him Go!’, a three-minute celebration of all things indie-pop: crisp guitars, a great hook, and lyrics that seem to have a nostalgic nod to days-gone-by, which sets you off through the record with a huge smile on your face. ‘What We Do At Night’ has a rolling synthy bass line reminiscent of early Cure and a chorus that would sit beautifully on any Dive Dive release; it’s nice to hear that this isn’t a major departure from the duo’s previous musical successes.

‘Long Walk’ has a more sombre feel to it, not far removed from Powell’s recent Sad Song Co. work, or Unbelievable Truth’s first album; it’s got punchy lyrical refrains and is expertly crafted, with verses and choruses that wash over you in a way that sound familiar, but never get old. ‘Battle for Progress’ kicks in with an angular edge to it, and returns the listener, once more, to Dive Dive days, with moments of keyboards and instrumental passages that work deliciously together.

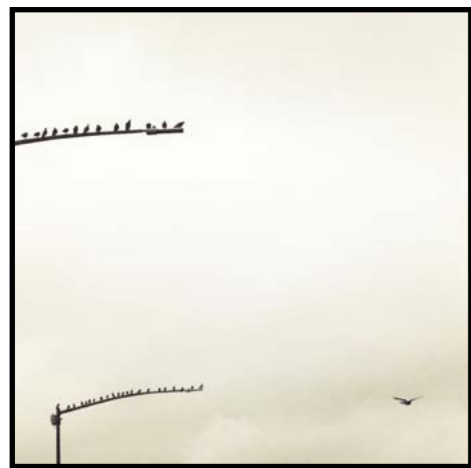
Stand-out track ‘You Made Us Proud’ has an



almost Dick Dale-esque circulating riff that propels the song forward to an angry chorus with lines like “My God, who’s laughing now?” building to a crescendo and creating a sumptuous coda. ‘FFS’ has all the hallmarks of a Noughties banger, taking this reviewer back to simpler times; it’s a showcase of tight vocals, exceptional instrumentation and production; it basically demonstrates how The Exact Opposite really know what they are doing.

‘Why Are You Back Again?’ closes things beautifully; angular guitars and tastefully delivered lyrics take us through both members’ previous projects, particularly Unbelievable Truth. The Exact Opposite aren’t really what their new name promises them to be, which, in this reviewer’s opinion, is a marvellous thing. This album is a culmination of years of musical graft, and it showcases what both members have mastered: the ability to write great songs and perform them exceptionally well while raising our dopamine levels, and this addition to the pair’s musical canon is The Exact Thing our scene will always need.

Caitlin Helm



THE SUBTHEORY featuring PET TWIN

‘Song of the Damascene’

(Self released)

The shadows is where The Subtheory lurk, conjuring songs of fragility and no little beauty amid the dark corners and detritus of the bleak movie which they surely inhabit. Their take on trip-hop might be inspired by Portishead but they’ve made a place all of their own, somewhere otherworldly. After the pensive, towering torch song of previous single ‘Sophistry’, they’ve teamed up with Pet Twin, another denizen of music’s twilight hours. His delicate, soothing voice, intertwining with Cate Debu’s tremulous, pillow-soft tones, casts a dream-like spell over Andy Hill’s tick-tock electronic beats which seem to accentuate the starless late-night vibe of the song.

Every part of ‘Song of the Damascene’ feels so fragile you wonder how it manages to hold itself together, but like a dew-dappled spider’s web its strength is deceptive, its sinister purpose hidden beneath pretty patterns. It’s a lovely, haunting song that belies its apparent smallness and, like mist, envelopes you.

Dale Kattack

Sponsored by



BABY MAKER

‘From The Desk Of’

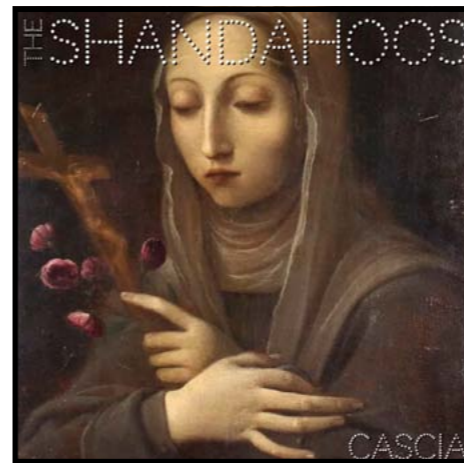
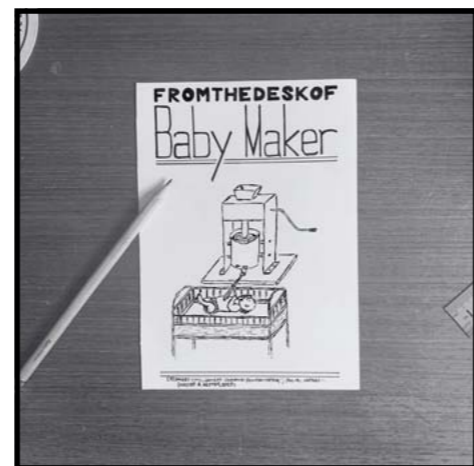
(Self released)

A cavalcade of grievances from Baby Maker here, who largely spend ‘From The Desk Of’ moaning about and ruminating on the various inadequacies of modern society. That sounds like grim listening, but it’s redeemed with spectacularly listenable, foot-tapping grooves that position Baby Maker equidistant between the misanthropic beats of Arab Strap and the sardonic, loveable lyrical sharpness of The Streets.

There’s scant detail available about Baby Maker but it seems they’re a pair of brothers based in Oxford and Reading. I have a hunch they’re of an age that’s allowed them to gather both a wide variety of listening knowledge, and a teetering pile of chips on their collective shoulders. Opens with ‘Muck Rake’ and ‘Keepie Uppies’ are moody, syncopated grumbles, but it’s ‘Details Forgotten’ where things really pick up. It has meandering dual vocals and a delicious, subtle, head-nodding backdrop. It’s clever, fascinating and hugely enjoyable.

From there, ‘From The Desk Of’ is largely unstoppable: the dreamy, dour ‘Drivel’; the restrained, semi-psychedelic ‘Full Metal Jacket’, with the superbly evocative lyric “the hardest man in the market town”; ‘Ad Nauseam’, which rails against bland songwriting within a fortunately excellent bassline-driven shuffle, and ‘Bags Of It’ which sounds like a combination of Beta Band and shoe-gazing, believe it or not. The final three tracks ‘No Watershed’, ‘In Space Fading’ and ‘Spitting Distance’ offer organically funky warmth, Burial-esque wistful reverberations and a combination of decent old indie-dance and restrained, pessimistic, beat-driven pseudo-rap. In a nutshell: everything is here. Baby Maker – as social commentators – have the potential to be miserable, simplistic, tough to listen to. Happily, they’ve decided to keep things approachable, inviting and humorous, maintaining an air of genuine realism and honesty, and a sound that combines the best takes on old-style indie and new-fangled electronic acuity. It takes quite some skill and confidence to pull that off.

Simon Minter



THE SHANDAHOOS

‘Cascia’

(Self released)

The day I pen this review coincides with The

BARRELHAUS

‘Azimuth’

(Self release)

If the riff is the basic building block of rock music, then ‘Azimuth’ is a Legoland day pass. For their second album, no-nonsense duo BarrelHaus have retained the rugged simplicity of their debut but branched out, so although this album is still built from big riffs on a foundation of bigger riffs held together with ostinato putty, there are a number of variations on display. So, whilst ‘GAD’ is a slouching Sabbath beast, it’s immediately followed by the high-octane punkabilly of ‘How Did You Die Today, My Dear?’. ‘Red Rag’ has a lazy mariachi lope which is balanced by ‘Ballad Of The Former Mariner’ and its playful Queens Of The Stone-Age blues-suet stickiness.

‘Diet Cheese’ waddles like an overfed ZZ Top whereas the bright, trebly chords of the excellently named ‘Your Friends Don’t Have To Like Each Other’ take us on a sprightly dance – at least until the heady grunge chorus, which makes you want to don a greasy old TAD T-shirt. At a sliver over thirty minutes, Azimuth packs a lot into a small space, and is the sort of album you want to play again as soon as it’s finished (perhaps all those riffs are coated in MSG). If there’s a downside it’s the lyrics, which are definitely not bad, but co-opt some pretty shopworn material – “It’s a game of give and take”, “Red rag to a bull”, “She doesn’t suffer fools” – but really the songs are just riff delivery systems, and it doesn’t matter what a track like ‘Down With His Ship’ is about, so long as the righteous bludgeoning anger is communicated. And did we mention the riffs?

David Murphy

HE DIDNT

‘Nothingness Manifested’

(Drone Alone)

Any He Didnt fans here? Yes you, the one who thinks outside the litter box. If you enjoyed Nick Peel’s 2023 debut album, ‘Anti-Ambient Passive Resistance’, then you will positively widdle

Searchers gracing the lunchtime news, marking nearly seven decades since their inaugural performance. Yet, amidst this nostalgic reverie, the Shandahoos’ debut emerges as a timeless gem, transporting listeners back to the era of doo-wop, reminiscent of The Searchers’ heyday. ‘Cascia’ opens with the delightful ‘Little Boats’, followed by the equally lovely ‘Desiree’; these tracks could have been from Dion & The Belmonts, though third track ‘Lucky Blue’ shares elements of The Beach Boys. Adding more to the mix ‘Say Hello to St. Rita’ adds a little of the Arctic Monkeys’ current lounge lizard phase, with smooth piano and witty lyrics. ‘If Only’ follows up in much the same vein but the (mostly) instrumental interlude ‘Cascia’ could be the Flaming Lips and breaks the album up well. Returning to the second half of the album, ‘Sunshine’ could easily be placed alongside the Arctics’ ‘There’d Better Be a Mirrorball’ on any playlist. Whisper it, but it may be even better than some of the output from the boys

yourself with this fresh batch of carefully crafted drone-tastic existentialism.

“What does the music sound like?” We hear you cry. There isn’t any music. “Is it silence then?” No, it’s the antithesis of silence, in that while silence is indeed nothing, this is everything; denuded of chords, beat, waveform and possibly life, yet is still nothing, as clearly stated in the title ‘Nothingness Manifested’. “Is Nick Peel taking the piss”? Probably not. We realise Nick’s four-part suite, themselves divided into EIGHT parts, opens itself to any number of snarky jokes about dense, abstract, minimised clusters, most of which will have been used up in old Sunn O))) reviews, and while they are defensively amusing we’re guessing we’ve grown up enough as a society to embrace every body of thinking. Everything is subjective, so we’ve brought along our concept, you have to go away and play it and bring your own.

Parts 1 & 2 are the sort of thing played very loudly over the Tannoy in North Korean concentration camps to keep the prisoners awake at night. Part 3 to 5 would suit someone who has quite forgotten where they’ve hidden themselves and their shadow, and Parts 6-8 would definitely be appreciated by a dog who thinks he is his stick and is doomed to forever play fetch with his own consciousness.

We have an eerie feeling we are going to be reminded of this day in the future when we’re single free-floating atoms in the afterlife, and we’ll go, that sounds just like He Didnt, and God will be grumbling about not getting his copyright residuals.

Paul Carrera

SANTA CARLA

‘Unireverse’

(Self released)

John Robb’s gargantuan tome simply entitled *Goth* did a brilliant job of charting the history of that particular brand of outsider music last year and a read through its pages helps you realise the myriad directions the movement has operated in ever since Bauhaus released ‘Bela

from Sheffield. ‘I’m Sorry I’m a Fool’ brings it back more towards the doo-wop that started the album, but also has touches of Buddy Holly and Marty Wilde’s ‘A Teenager in Love’. Putting paid to that is ‘Capistrano’, which slowly drives along like something from the Everly Brothers or even Roy Orbison.

‘If I...’ and ‘My Foolish Way’ gracefully conclude the album, a pair of ballads evocative of the 1950s. Despite its modern release, the album boasts a production quality that seamlessly blends old-school charm with contemporary flair, resulting in a cohesive sonic experience that transcends time. This may be the first doo-wop album reviewed in *Nightshift*, but I hope it won’t be the last; in an ever-changing musical landscape, The Shandahoos’ album serves as a reminder of the enduring power of classic harmonies and heartfelt lyrics; in this case, sung with a real joy that reminds this reviewer to dig into his parents’ record collection again.

Damon Boughen

Lugosi’s Dead’ in 1979.

While much of the genre is introspective in its approach, there has also been a faction of the black clad horde that goes more for the sweeping, theatrical gesture and it is in this camp that Santa Carla lie – somewhere in between The Sisters of Mercy and My Chemical Romance – although of course many would deny the latter the label of goth at all. Emanating from the ashes of Wonderland, from whom we last heard in 2021 with their drivingly rocky single ‘Vampyre’, the band have not only changed their name, but their vocalist too – and the five tracks that span this release are belted out with melodic gusto. Indeed, opener ‘Dust’ recalls goth heroine Julianne Regan and her band All About Eve in its stately progress. There’s more jangle and more ornamentation to the music than previously, although it doesn’t stop the deployment of a soaring bank of guitars and keyboards kicking in two thirds of the way through.

The subsequent four tracks adopt Cure and Chameleons stylings but again choose to go for the big gesture generally, guitars pirouetting as choruses kick in; as a whole, the vocals are strong, the musicianship accomplished and the tunes are present, but it’s a totality that veers very much towards mainstream rock and the way each song proceeds is perhaps a little signposted. Progress has certainly been made though.

Rob Langham



GIG GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st

THURSDAY 2nd

THE MEN THEY COULDN'T HANG: O2 Academy – The legendary folk-punk gang ride again – *see main preview*
CORKY LAING PLAYS MOUNTAIN:

Thursday 2nd

THE MEN THEY COULDN'T HANG: O2 Academy

The Pogues are rightly revered for the punk spirit they brought to folk music; less widely celebrated but worthy of similar adulation are The Men They Couldn't Hang. Both bands emerged together out of a fertile London scene of the early 1980s, reinvigorating traditional music with lessons learned from punk and fuelled by the effects of Thatcherism on the UK. In fact The Men They Couldn't Hang played their first gig with The Pogues while co-singer Stefan Cush was a Pogues roadie and bassist Shanne Bradley had previously played in The Nipple Erectors with Shane MacGowan. Their first two albums, 'Night of a Thousand Candles' and 'How Green Is The Valley', are nothing short of masterpieces of folk-punk, documenting societal strife both historical and contemporary, while their take on 'The Green Fields of France' is perhaps the definitive version. Critical acclaim and modest commercial success went hand in hand but the band split in 1991, shortly after supporting David Bowie. They reformed in 96 but activity was intermittent as core members Paul Simmonds and Phil Odgers released solo material, but since the 2009 silver anniversary of the band they've become more prolific and 2018's 'Cock-a-Hoop' might have been mellower musically but that fire still burns. Bradley left the band back in the 80s and Cush sadly died three years ago but Simmonds and Odgers remain at the heart of the band and when they inevitably play 'Ironmasters', *Nightshift* will be first in the queue to dance all over Margaret Thatcher's grave.



May

The Bullingdon – The legendary Canadian drummer brings his band back to town, having started his career playing with The Ink Spots before forming metal forerunners Mountain and later playing in bands with John Cale, Bo Diddley, Mick Ronson, Noel Redding and Ian Hunter along the way. Tonight he revisits those classic Mountain tunes.
CATWEAZLE: Common Ground – Oxford's longest running open night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more on the first and Thursday of every month.
SONS OF TOWN HALL: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Theatrical close-harmony folk in the vein of Fleet Foxes and Simon & Garfunkel from Ben Parker and David Berkeley.

FRIDAY 3rd

EMILY BARKER: Truck Store (6pm) – The acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter returns to Truck Oxford to celebrate the launch of her new album 'Fragile As Humans'.
REGRETS + DOWNPOUR + COMPOUNDS + CHAOS REIGNS: The Bullingdon – Quadruple bill of UK hardcore with ferocious London crew Regrets headlining alongside Bristol's Downpour, Reading's Compounds and London's Chaos Reigns.
VC PINES: The Jericho Tavern – Smooth funk-inflected indie-soul from the former Carnabys man, touring his 'MRI' album.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with ZAIA + JOURNEYMAN + LONDON GRAFFITI + CYMBAL SHARDS: Gladiator Club – Klub Kakofanney's monthly shindig welcomes local dub reggae outfit Zaia alongside bucolic indie-folksters London Graffiti and noisy indie newcomers Cymbal Shards.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon – Kicking off a month of local music showcases at The Port as it faces an uncertain future and possible closure as a gig venue. It's All About the Music host live music here every Friday, Saturday and Sunday throughout May.
HIP HOP BEEF: Tap Social, Botley – Rap battles with Deep Cover.

SATURDAY 4th

DEEPER PURPLE: O2 Academy – Tribute night.
BLACK PARADE: O2 Academy – 00s emo anthems club night.
REGGAETON PARTY: The Bullingdon – Reggaeton club night.
HIPSHAKIN': The Harcourt Arms – 50s and 60s rhythm'n'blues, rock'n'roll, jump jive, jazz,

boogaloo and early soul from the Hipshakin' DJs.
METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Third quarterfinal of the rock and metal BOTB to win a slot at this summer's Bloodstock, with Deadblow, Halfway Home, RPC and Ocean Planet going up against each other.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon LOVELACE B2B HEAVY SKIN + DJ MEAL DEAL + LIL' CAM B2B CHARLIE STOKER + KAT: Cowley Workers Social Club – Community fundraiser in aid of the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund with a night of electronic dance music.
ORDER#227 + KILLER KOWALSKI + DIEZELBUD: Strummer Room Records Café, Banbury – The marvellous Strummer Room Records hosts hardcore punk outfit Order#227, back in action after an extended hiatus; they're joined by caustic post-punkers Killer Kowalski and Bletchington's atmospheric rock, post-rock and hip hop newcomers Diezelbud.
STEVE ASHLEY + HEATHER INNESS: Tiddy Hall, Shipton Road, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Wychwood Folk & Acoustic Club welcomes something of a legend of the English folk scene in Steve Ashley, renowned contemporary folk and folk-rock songsmith, the original singer with The Albion Country Band and Ragged Robin as well as a regular collaborator with members of Fairport Convention.
THE BLACK CHARADE: Fat Lil's, Witney – My Chemical Romance tribute.
SHANTY NIGHT: The White Hart, Wolvercote

SUNDAY 5th

CHERRY SCREAM + BEARD OF DESTINY + COWLEYFORNIA + THE FAITH HEALERS + N:SH + ADY DAVEY + MARK BOSLEY BAND: Cowley Workers Social Club (1-8pm) – All-day fundraiser for the British Heart Foundation, featuring a headline set from Aylesbury's punk crew Cherry Scream alongside a cast of local artists.
USA NAILS + GROSS MISCONDUCT + SINEWS: The Jericho Tavern – You ordered the brutal, cathartic noise rock, madam? Well here it is – *see main preview*
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms – Weekly open mic night.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon THE HOLY FOOLS + FOUR-MINUTE WARNING + TONY BATEY: 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 SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm) – Weekly open mic afternoon.

MONDAY 6th

TUESDAY 7th

WEDNESDAY 8th

DELIGHTS: The Bullingdon – Soft-centred, funk-lite pop from Manchester's Delights, out on a headline tour after supports to Red Rum Club and Deacon Blue and ahead of their appearance at Truck Festival later in the summer.
KATE RUSBY: Oxford Playhouse – A welcome back to Oxford for the Barnsley Nightingale and first lady of English folk music, the Mercury-nominated, four-times Radio 2 Folk Awards winner, playing an intimate UK tour, playing songs from across her illustrious career. Unsurprisingly tonight's show is sold out.
BLUE BENDY + BLUE BAYOU + SHOCK HORROR: Common Ground – Busy, propulsive indie, post-rock and experimental guitar pop from Blue Bendy at tonight's Divine Schism show, the band having supported Squid on tour as well as making a name for themselves at last year's End of the Road and Green Man festivals.
THE SPIN: Tap Social, Botley – Live jazz at the long-running club.

THURSDAY 9th

LADY MAISERY: The North Wall Arts Centre – Rowan Rheingans, Hazel Askew and Hannah James bring their gorgeous harmony singing and multi-instrumental talents to town, touring their most recent 'Tender' album, featuring cover versions of Bjork, Tracy Chapman and Lal Waterson alongside original compositions.
BENJI KIRKPATRICK + THE DICEMEN: The Unicorn, Abingdon – Solo show from the former Bellowhead, Steeleye Span and Seth Lakeman band singer and multi-instrumentalist.

FRIDAY 10th

THEATRE OF HATE: The Bullingdon – Kirk Brandon and Stan Stammer's epic post-punk crew keep the gothic torch burning as they play their first major tour in decades, including classic early 80s anthems 'Original Sin', 'Nero', 'Legion' and Top 20 hit 'Do You Believe In The Westworld'.
THE LAST HAUS PARTY: The Bullingdon – Techno, house and disco club night.
THE EXACT OPPOSITE + TEO + SECRET RIVALS + LIFE UNDERGROUND: The Jericho Tavern – **The Exact Opposite** – The band formed by former Dive Dive bandmates Jamie Stuart and Nigel Powell (also of Unbelievable Truth) – launch their debut album 'Skill Issue', having made their live debut at last summer's Riverside Festival.
ALL WILL BE WIRED with MANCBETH + YELLOW BELLY + BABY MAKER: The Library – All Will Be Well hosts its bimonthly showcase of electronic music with Octavia Freud & The Weird Sisters performing their Mancbeth project, taking the story of Macbeth into 90s Manchester's rave scene. They're joined by Yellow Belly, bringing spacey, reverb-drenched Arp sounds and analogue beats, and

darkwave breakbeat jazz from Baby Maker.
ONE NIGHT IN NASHVILLE: O2 Academy – Classic country hits from Maria Jordan and her band, taking on everything from Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton to Carrie Usherwood and Luke Combs.
JAMES & ALLIX: The Harcourt Arms TONGUE: Common Ground – Indie punk from the local student band.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon SOUL PLAZA DJ COLLECTIVE: Tap Social, Botley – Electronica night promoting female, trans and non-binary input into music spaces.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: Market Tap MacLAINE COLSTON & SAUL ROSE: The Cornerstone, Didcot – 27 years on from first playing together as part of Eliza Carthy's band, the hammered dulcimer and melodeon duo warm up for the release of their second album.
THE GUITAR LEGENDS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Classic rock guitar, from Hendrix, BB King and Clapton, to Van Halen, Jimmy Page and Brian May.
TOTALLY BLONDIE: The Northcourt, Abingdon

SATURDAY 11th

JOHN METCALFE: St. Barnabas Church – A rare chance to witness the storied composer, arranger and violist live tonight as he plays pieces from his most recent album 'Tree'. The New Zealand-born Metcalfe moved to the UK as a child and joined Manchester legends The Durutti Column. Subsequently he helped found the Factory Classical label and with The Duke Quartet he worked with Blur, Coldplay, Morrissey, The Pretenders and Simple Minds as well as collaborating with Peter Gabriel. His mix and meld of classical, pop and electronic styles with an ear for improvisation makes him a unique, genre-crossing talent.
PAPA NUI: The Harcourt Arms – Original ska, Balkan folk and blues from the local outfit.
METAL 2 THE MASSES: The Jericho Tavern – Fourth quarterfinal of the metal BOTB with Dead Man's Pistol, This Dying Hour, Second Hour and Nymral hoping to win a slot in the semis.
UK GARAGE BRUNCH: O2 Academy (12 noon) – Old school UK garage DJs and MCs to soundtrack your bottomless brunch.
OH HIPPO + PRECIOUS MELDS + SAFETY JACKET: The Library – Triple bill of indie with Manchester's wonderfully named Oh Hippo inspired by Talulah Gosh and Heavenly, joined by Manchester/Sheffield outfit Precious Melds and Brighton's Safety Jacket.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon

LA RUMBA II: James Street Tavern (1pm) – Showcasing local Latin dance talent with flamenco from Matt & Marta, cumbia from Los Grillos, Latin and New Orleans jazz from Mambo Panthers and more, plus Kwassa Kwassa DJs and dance classes.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The White Hart, Wolvercote
SYSTEM 80s: Fat Lil's, Witney – 80s pop hits.



Sunday 5th

USA NAILS:

The Jericho Tavern

Here at *Nightshift* we'll never really understand people whose idea of enjoyment doesn't involve standing amid what might be the soundtrack to the end of the world. Those sort of people likely won't be here tonight for the long overdue return to Oxford for south London's USA Nails. The sort of folks who will be here are very much more our kind of people. The quartet, formed by various body parts of Future of the Left; Blacklisters; Kong; Silent Front and Death Pedals, make a brilliant abrasive noise – an angular, sheet-metal take on hardcore that sounds a bit like Minor Threat given a Cyberdyne Systems upgrade and post-surgery lessons in ire from Steve Albini. The quartet's new album 'Feel Worse' was released last month on One Little Independent Records, also home to musical kindred spirits Bad Breeding, and takes steely aim at austerity, authoritarianism, consumer culture, bullying and more in suitably oppressive and unrelenting fashion. Since forming back in 2013 USA Nails have toured or shared stages with the likes of Mission of Burma; No Age; Unsane; Hey, Colossus and Cocaine Piss and deserve to be held in similar esteem as all those edifices of noise. Their last show in town, at The Wheatsheaf back in 2017, was a cataclysmic tour de force and we cannot wait to lose our hearing once again in the manner God intended.

ZAIA + GLADYS: Kings Head & Bell, Abingdon – Live dub from Zaia at tonight's Skittle Alley show.

SUNDAY 12th

PEJA SLUMS ATTACK: The Bullingdon – Rapper and producer Peja from Polish hip hop group Slums Attack makes his Oxford debut.
HAYSEED DIXIE: O2 Academy – Classic

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Sunday 12th

KIRAN LEONARD: Common Ground

To paraphrase Forrest Gump, a Kiran Leonard gig is like a box of chocolates: you don't know what you're going to get next. Leonard's previous visits to Oxford (a city he all-too-briefly called home), have seen him perform solo, with a full band, and as a chamber orchestra (when he played his neo-classical album 'Derevaun Seraun', featuring five movements arranged for piano, strings and voice, inspired by five pieces of literature). This time round he is touring his new album 'Real Home', once again revealing himself as a relentlessly unpredictable and inventive musician. It is his sixth album proper, but along the way he's released myriad live CDRs and short-run cassettes. Highly prolific, his 2012 debut 'Bowler Hat Soup' found the then teenage troubadour playing over 20 instruments as he melded proggy pop, breezy indie folk, psychedelic cabaret, grunge and baroque show-tunes in a style that simultaneously recalled Frank Zappa, Van Dyke Parks, Radiohead, Aerial Pink, Sonic Youth and Ed Harcourt. His song 'Pink Fruit', from his album 'Grapefruit', meanwhile, was a sixteen-minute tale of a squid inside a woman's body as a metaphor for emotional freedom and body image issues, so eccentricity and inventiveness obviously runs deeply through his musical output, and more than ever music needs wobbly-headed mavericks or people who are happy to let their fevered imaginations get the better of them. Mainstream acclaim and commercial success will never be Kiran Leonard's, but creatively victory is very much his.

songs covered bluegrass style by the Stateside hillbilly crazies, renowned for taking on AC/DC, Queen, Motorhead, Led Zep, Sabbath, The Darkness and more.

KIRAN LEONARD + LOBBY + BRIAN + ASTRAL SWANS: Common Ground – Return to town for the ever adventurous troubadour, touring his new 'Real Home' album – see main preview

STARLING SESSIONS: Tap Social, Botley – The global folk community orchestra explore music from around the world via the people of Oxford, from a capella ballads to dance tunes at tonight's OCM show. They're joined by Bossaphonik host Dan Ofer on the decks – a man who knows his global dance music.
BRIGHDE CHAIMBEUL: St. John's College Auditorium – World Music At Oxford free show with award-winning Scottish

smallpipes virtuoso Brighde Chaimbeul playing traditional and experimental music. Free entry but you'll need to book tickets in advance.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon NINE IS THE LEVEL + SITE NOSITE + A YEAR'S RAIN: Fat Lil's, Witney – Ambient instrumental show as part of Witney Pedal Party.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

MONDAY 13th

ENGLISH TEACHER: The Bullingdon – Leeds' indie stars tour their debut album 'This Could Be Texas' – see main preview

TUESDAY 14th

PALOMA FAITH: The New Theatre – Big-lunged retro-soul, breezy modern pop, political polemic and cheery onstage chat from the London singer, on tour to promote sixth album 'The Glorification of Sadness'.
AVERAGE WHITE BAND: O2 Academy – The Scottish r'n'b veterans, still helmed by Alan Gorrie, relive their 70s success, including hit 'Pick Up The Pieces', out on what's being billed as their final tour.
INTRUSION: Kiss Bar – Monthly goth, industrial, ebm and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 15th

FAT DOG: The Bullingdon – Genre-battering, apocalyptic rave fun from Brixton's riotous crew – see main preview
THE HOWLERS: Truck Store (6pm) – Album launch instore from the swaggering indie rockers, taking inspiration from Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and Queens of the Stone-Age.
TEENAGE SEQUENCE + DREAM PHONE + IN-FLIGHT MOVIE + THE RARE GLITCH PROJECT: Common Ground – Big beats, snappy synth-pop, deft, deadpan humour and social commentary from London's Teenage Sequence, lead by Dewan-Dean Soomary, out on a joint tour with Oxford's own hyper-pop crew Dream Phone, giving pitch-shifted electro-pop an injection of punk spirit. They're joined by local synth-rockers In-Flight Movie and The Rare Glitch Project, the new musical outing for Ali from Junk Whale and Spank Hair.
THE HUGH TURNER BAND: Tap Social, Botley – Funk and jazz-infused blues.

THURSDAY 16th

PEERLESS PIRATES + BEARD OF DESTINY + CAPTAIN KUPPA-T & THE ZEPPELIN CREW: The Bullingdon – Rollicking indie and rockabilly from Peerless Pirates, playing songs from the recent 'Adventures For Artisans' album alongside blues crew Beard of Destiny and a capella steampunk outfit Captain Kuppa-T.
CATWEAZLE: Common Ground
DELTA LOW + STORYTELLER + MAEVE & PETE: Loose Cannon Tap Room,

Abingdon – Making Music in Abingdon showcase.

FRIDAY 17th

WOOD FESTIVAL: Braziers Park, Ipsden – Opening day of the annual eco-friendly festival. Today's headliners are The Ciderhouse Rebellion, performing their Cider With Molly set with Irish singer Molly Donnery. Across the weekend there will be sets from Stornoway, Willy Mason, Jerry Leger & the Situation, Jake Vaadeland & The Sturgeon River Boys, Brown Horse, Frontier Ruckus, Lizzy Hardingham, Annie Dressner, Kati Ellis and many more, as well as workshops, dances, talks, kids activities and more.
DOLLY MAVIES + JOELY JUNE + EVA GADD: The Bullingdon – Lovely, reflective indie-folk from Dolly Mavies, playing songs from her excellent 'The Calm & the Storm' debut album; she's joined by shoegazy dream-pop singer Joely June and jazz-inflected vocalist Eva Gadd.

BANGERZ & LASH: The Bullingdon –

Monday 13th

ENGLISH TEACHER: The Bullingdon

On English Teacher's song 'R&B' singer Lily Fontaine confronts the prejudices and stereotyping she's faced as a black woman in the music industry: "Despite appearances, I don't have the voice for R&B", she sings. She does, though, have a fantastic voice, one that brings her band's music into sharp focus with her mix of plaintive purity and venom, her lyrics full of pathos, anger and humour as she mixes the personal and political in a way that anyone unfamiliar with English Teacher but fond of Self Esteem or Dry Cleaning should love. Musically the band, formed in Leeds in 2020, defy the post-punk tag with a sound that takes from prog, post- and math-rock, carefully, intricately textured in a way that can make songs like 'Albert Road' – the gorgeous coda to their debut album 'This Could Be Texas' – sound simultaneously intimate and epic. Tonight's gig is part of a tour to promote that record and is likely to sell out with the band's star well in the ascendancy off the back of singles like 'Nearly Daffodils' and 'The World's Biggest Paving Slab', which they got to play on *Later... With Jools Holland*. Just reward for a band who've worked their way up via the DIY route, selling hand-painted CDs at shows as well as treating fans to one-minute sketches after shows. Long may they teach the world to sing.



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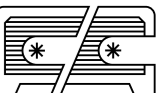
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Wednesday 15th

FAT DOG:

The Bullingdon

We're always wary of too much (usually London-based) hype here at *Nightshift*, but Brixton's Fat Dog's reputation has rapidly expanded well beyond excitable industry types with a live show that is as immersive as it is chaotic. Here's a band who sold out The Scala on the back of one single. Said single, 'King of the Slugs', was something else though: a seven minute mash-up of techno, industrial, garage rock, ska, psychedelia and yes, why not, klezmer, that reflected their genre-mixing live sound. Live is where they really need to be experienced: from air raid sirens and ominous countdowns, through rave dynamics and metal mosh pits, to frontman Joe Love's messiah complex antics, it's rock and rave theatre and probably not to be taken entirely seriously, but they're a thrilling spectacle and their appearances at Reading and Leeds festivals, End of the Road and Green Man last year were widely reported as some of the best of the festival season. Formed during lockdown from the fertile Brixton Windmill scene, Fat Dog signed to Domino and look like they're going to be absolutely huge in the near future. And if their purpose is to try and create the last disco before the world explodes, we're happy to hit the dancefloor with them.

2010s Pop, indie and club anthems.

BOSSAPHONIK presents THE DESTROYERS: Cowley Workers Social Club – The monthly world jazz dance club night welcomes raucous 12-piece collective The Destroyers, delivering frenetic Balkan, klezmer and Celtic energy.

SOPHIA DJEBEL ROSE + RAOUL EDEN: Common Ground – Great double dose of French folk music tonight, with Auvergne's dark, poetic minimalist folk singer Sophia Djebel Rose alongside instrumentalist Raoul Eden, utilising 6- and 12-string guitars, slide dobro and modular drone to create a psychedelic sound that draws on blues, Middle Eastern scales and Indian ragas.

TIGER MENDOZA + SMOKE WITH FIRE + FIVER: Tap Social, Botley – Hip hop and drum&bass-influenced electronic and industrial soundscaping from Tiger Mendoza at tonight's TAD Live showcase alongside alt.rockers Smoke With Fire and punk-infused grunge rockers Fiver.

BLAKE'S HEAVEN BIG BAND feat FLEUR STEVENSON: The North Wall Arts Centre – Funk, pop, jazz and swing from the

17-piece big band, playing hits from the 60s through to the 90s.

MARK CHADWICK: The Jolly Farmers – Solo show from the Levellers frontman.

THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + DOGMILK + NOTHING DREAMS: The Apothecary Tap, Banbury – Strummer Room Records hosts local post-rock behemoths GITP alongside effusive, eclectic indie crew Dogmilk and grunge-pop outfit Nothing Dreams.
ELIZABETH & JAMESON + LIZZY HARDINGHAM + ANNA RENAE: The Corn Exchange, Faringdon

SATURDAY 18th

WOOD FESTIVAL: Braziers Park, Ipsden – Stornoway headline the second day of the festival.

MAMBO PANTHERS: The Harcourt Arms – Latin American and Caribbean dance.
ALEX LOWE + OSPREY + MARK COPE: Cape of Good Hope – Solo show for the Hurricane #1 frontman, playing Britpop-era hits 'Step Into My World', 'Rising Sign' and 'Only the Strongest Will Survive' as well as songs from latest album 'Backstage Waiting To Go On'.

THE CHEESEGRATERS: Florence Park Community Centre – Your favourite songs butchered and barbecued by the drunken funsters.

MAN CHOIR: Mary Magdalen Church – Pop, folk and Gregorian songs from the community men's choir

THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon WESLEY STAGE: St. Nicholas Church, Bulking – The artist formerly known as John Wesley Harding finds time out from his appearance at WOOD Festival this weekend to play an intimate show in the Shire, the acclaimed cult folk-pop songsmith reverting to his birth name and playing songs from his extensive back catalogue.

L!ES L!ES L!ES: The Tippy Mercer, Abingdon – Electro-indie pop from the local newcomers.

STEREONICS: Fat Lil's, Witney – A portal to hell opens up in the Witney venue.

THE BIG R BIG BAND: Cogges Manor Farm, Witney – 1930s and 40s swing with the Bristol big band.

SUNDAY 19th

WOOD FESTIVAL: Braziers Park, Ipsden – Willy Mason tops off the third and final day of the festival.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

MONDAY 20th

PET TWIN + THE BOBO + DOGMILK + GEORGE DRAPER: Common Ground – Pet Twin celebrates his 30th birthday and previews his debut album, due out later this year, his poetic, gothic pop drawing comparisons to The Smile, The Cure and Nick Cave. Great local support from ethereal, trippy electro-pop artist The Bobo and eclectic indie crew Dogmilk.

RUN THE RHYTHM Pt.I: O2 Academy – First of two nights showcasing local student bands, tonight featuring Torn From Eden, Afternoon Farmer, Another Something and Fake High School Girlfriend.

TUESDAY 21st

RUN THE RHYTHM Pt.II: O2 Academy – Second night of the student bands showcase, with Sexecution, Jealous Resort, Nobody's Home and Stardust Lovers.

KEITH FAIRBURN & FRIENDS: Tap Social, Botley – Percussionist Fairburn is joined by sax, keys, bass and more.

WEDNESDAY 22nd

JOSEPHINE FOSTER + HANNAH LOU LARSEN + MEGAN HENWOOD: Common Ground – Delicate, sombre and inventively poetic American folk and acoustic blues from Colorado's reclusive but prolific singer-songwriter, mining a sparse, traditional early-20th Century style, augmented by an almost operatic voice. She's over in the UK to promote her new album, the haunting, austere 'Domestic Sphere'. Mellifluous folk-pop from Oxford-resident Danish singer-songwriter Hannah Lou Larsen, and delicate, poetic folk-pop from Megan Henwood.

THURSDAY 23rd

PLANET OX: The Bullingdon – Oxford United host their own music showcase, raising money for local charities Youth Music and Oxford United in the Community, with sets from Witney rockers The Mezz, grime and drill star Leonidas and Coventry's The Mucks.

JACQUI DANKWORTH: Oxford Playhouse – A rare chance to catch the renowned, award-winning jazz singer in town as she previews songs from her forthcoming 'Windmills' album as well as music from across her career.

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

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: Tap Social, Botley

FRIDAY 24th

DIZRAELI: The Jericho Tavern – Hip hop storytelling, social commentary and beats distilled through the prism of traditional English folk from Bristolian rapper Dizraeli, whose pioneering debut album, 'Engurland (City Shanties)' came packed with comic, fluent, emotive tales of Englishness, from riots to atheism.

NATHY SG + SPRING MAJOR + HÖÖF: Common Ground – Ebullient indie pop from the Martha, Onsind and Fortitude Valley fella and his new band at tonight's Divine Schism show.

BARRELHAUS + GRUDGEWOOD: O2 Academy – Big riffs, big tunes from last month's *Nightshift* cover stars, kicking it out heavy and melodic in the vein of Queens of the Stone-Age, Clutch and Royal Blood.

MARTIN KEMP: O2 Academy – 80s hits from the Spandau Ballet star on the decks.

SALTLINES: Oxford Playhouse – Prose and music collaboration between best-selling author Raynor Winn and folk-roots collective

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Monday 26th

DANA GAVANSKI: Common Ground

A very welcome back to Oxford for Dana Gavanski after her excellent show at Florence Park Community Centre back in 2022. When Gavanski released her debut album 'Yesterday Is Gone' in 2020 she sounded like a new star in the making. Then Covid happened, and then she lost her voice. The conflicted emotions this twin setback brought on fed into her follow-up, 'When It Comes', a simply gorgeous record. It sounded like music from a waking dream: whimsical, wistful, idiosyncratic, experimental and otherworldly; her new album, 'Late Slap', came out last month and continues this strange and wonderful musical journey. Like musical kindred spirit Cate le Bon, Gavanski manages to sound both abstract and dissonant while being superbly melodic as she bridges a strange divide between folk music and Moog-pop. A native Serb who's spent most of her life in Canada, she's more recently resident in the UK but that eclectic background helps make her music similarly difficult to pin down as it sounds simultaneously moody and playful, experimental but accessible, utilising a suitably mixed bag of instruments – from synths and guitars to piano, trumpet and harpsichord. It's her voice that's the chief instrument though; along with Cate le Bon, Gavanski has been compared favourably to Jane Weaver, Lætitia Sadier, Aldous Harding and even Judee Sill, who she's been known to cover on occasion. All you really need to know though is she's brilliantly strange and strangely brilliant.

Gigspanner, formed by Peter Knight alongside John Spiers, Edgelarks, Roger Flack and Sacha Trochet, together performing pieces based on songs and tunes that were originally gathered from the route of the South West Coast Path by the great song collectors Cecil Sharp and Sabine Baring-Gould.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon SUSPIRE: Tap Social, Botley – EP launch gig from the recent *Nightshift* Top Track winners.
FAUX FIGHTERS: Fat Lil's, Witney
CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIEW: The Northcourt, Abingdon

SATURDAY 25th

BESS ATWELL: Truck Store (6pm) – Ethereal, emotive songs from Bess, back in town to launch her new album 'Light Sleeper'.
NO.80 FESTIVAL: Modern Art Oxford (3-11pm) – YWMP host a full day of music and multi-media art, celebrating 'otherness', including a headline set from Jenny Moore's immersive musical Wild Mix, a song cycle featuring five vocalists, drummers and a kickboxer. There are also live sets from Nailbreaker; Yay Maria; Casual Wednesday; Maria Uzor; Assia, and Mom Was Right, plus DJ sets and talks and workshops.

NOFRET + THE GREAT LESLIE + THE KOKROACHEZ: The Jericho Tavern – Frontrow Festival hosts local indie rockers NoFret alongside London's The Great Leslie and rising local alt.rockers The Kokroachez.
JUNGLE CAKES: The Bullingdon – Jungle club night with Ed Solo and DJ Hybrid, plus Katalyst, Kivi, Dain, Bitter Pill and more.
DEAD BELGIAN: The Harcourt Arms – Classic Jacques Brel songs from the Liverpoolian band.
BARRICANE: Cape of Good Hope – Atmospheric trip hop and indie-folk from the recent *Nightshift* cover stars.
SWIFTAGEDDON: 02 Academy – Taylor Swift club night.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon KWASSA KWASSA: Tap Social, Botley – Tropicalia from the local DJ collective.
INXS UK: The Northcourt, Abingdon
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Boundary House, Abingdon – Classic rock and blues tunes from the veteran local singer and guitarist and chums.
SHEPHERD'S PIE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers.

SUNDAY 26th

THE INFLATABLES: The Bullingdon – Classic ska and Two Tone from the local veterans.
DANA GAVANSKI + BINGO FURY: Common Ground – Experimental dream-pop from the Serbian-Canadian musician – *see main preview*
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Harcourt Arms
SIMPLE 25th BIRTHDAY STREET PARTY: Tap Social, Botley (12 noon) – All-day dance party from the long running house and techno club, featuring Todd Edwards and Oneman.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (3.45pm)
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)

MONDAY 27th

TUESDAY 28th

WEDNESDAY 29th

THURSDAY 30th

OCTAVIA FREUD & THE WEIRD SISTERS: Truck Store (6pm) – Instore show from Octavia Freud & The Weird Sisters – featuring the vocal talents of Emma Hunter, Cate Debu, The Bobo, Mila Todd, Kate Hicks and Pet Twin alongside electronic artist Martin Andrew, playing songs from their 'Mancbeth' album.
METAAAL!!!: Kiss Bar – Monthly metal club night.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: Tap Social, Botley

FRIDAY 31st

BITTER HC + INDEVTH + DEPOLARIZE + SHOOT TO KILL + HALFWAY HOME: The Bullingdon – Hardcore and deathcore from Bitter HC, out on their first UK tour and joined tonight by a cast that includes rising local metalcore starlets Depolarize.
ALL MY THOUGHTS: The Bullingdon – House and electronic club night with Seb Wildblood and 1-800 Girls.
THE WANDERING HEARTS: 02 Academy – Sometimes epic, sometimes intimate and emotive Americana and folk-rock from the British country/folk band whose recent 'Hesperus' EP adds elements of Fleetwood Mac and The Cranberries to their rustic sound – rescheduled from last month.
F. EMASCULATA + PIZZA TRAMP + BAD BLOOD + INFORMAL COMPLAINT: The Cape of Good Hope – *X-Files*-themed hardcore punk from F. Emasculata at tonight's Corrosive Promotions shows; they're joined by Welsh thrash-punk outfit Pizza Tramp, Bristolian punks Bad Blood and Midlands hardcore crew Informal Complaint.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE BOBO + THE MEDICINE + HUX: Common Ground – Ethereal, shoegazy electro-pop from The Bob at this month's GTI; she's joined by indie-rap crew The Medicine, and soulful grooves and melting balladry from Australian musician Hux.
MAMMOTH PENGUINS + BROKEN CHANTER + THE KOKROACHEZ + MAGNOLIA: Florence Park Community Centre – Buoyant indie fuzz from Cambridge's Mammoth Penguins, led by Emma Kupa, at tonight's Divine Schism show, the trio back in town after helping Divine Schism celebrate their tenth birthday back in 2022. They're out on tour with Broken Chanter, the solo project of former Kid Canaveral chap David MacGregor, playing songs from his most recent album 'Chorus of Doubt'. Local teen alt.rockers The Kokroachez are among the supports.
THE LAST ROUND: The Port Mahon RUST FOR GLORY: The Northcourt, Abingdon – Neil Young tribute.
POP PUNK REVOLUTION: Fat Lil's, Witney

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20TH & 21ST
JULY 2024



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LIVE**MILKWEED / JULIA MEIJER / HUGO MANUEL****Common Ground**

From the forefront of synth pop to nylon-string folk revival sound is quite a jump on paper, but in the room you wouldn't know Hugo Manuel hadn't been doing this forever. His songs are almost entirely free from any real signifier of time or place; we're in a trendy arts space in 2024 Oxford but we could just as easily be in the East Village in 1962, which is refreshing. The room is rapt with the delicate voice and guitar, you wouldn't need the PA to hear Manuel perfectly. If this is a

statement of intent for a new phase of his career, we should all – once again – be paying close attention. Julia Meijer has been performing in Oxford for a good number of years now, but rarely without accompaniment; tonight it's just Julia, six strings and an amp. This presentation completely reframes her songs which normally have an enveloping mystical sound; tonight the starkness reveals the shining core of Meijers song-writing and unconsciously our mind fills in the gaps like the unpainted strokes of

an abstract masterpiece.

Milkweed are an altogether different experience. The closest descriptor I can come up with is if the Library of Congress' field recordings department started a band. They say "slacker trad"; I think we're aiming at the same idea.

Their set is presented in three connected... sections? movements? songs? each with a spoken intro summarising and contextualising the academic texts that are their source material. Musically the

duo of banjo and acoustic and very well-loved tape loops make something like Appalachian folk: think Cinder Well or Aanaïs Mitchell but wonkier, lo-fi and heading to experimental territory with great enthusiasm. The fascinating juxtaposition is that the majority of the source material is European in focus so some degree of that folk tradition is woven in the distorted tapestry. Tape drones pulse while powerhouse vocals push us back on our chairs and the instruments twang and strum to make something genuinely unique, and more importantly absolutely magical.

Matthew Chapman Jones

SELVER / DIRTY MONEY / P.S.A.**The Bullingdon**

While the very word punk has been debased and diluted over the years to the point it doesn't really mean much anymore Aylesbury's P.S.A (Public Service Announcement) sound like punk did back when it first belched and swore out into the nation's living rooms via infamous TV interviews and outraged tabloid headlines. The band are full-throttle from start to finish, admirably tight and if they lack subtlety, frankly you can stick that where the sun don't shine, sunshine. At their best they sound like the exact place where The Jam meet The Sex Pistols, all big singalong choruses and meaty, fuzzed-up guitar chords. They man the barricades in Sham 69 style, briefly stop off at The Alarm's chest-thumping power-pop and close on the unabashed Pistols tribute 'Billy Bones'. All of which sounds even better coming from a singer who bears more than a passing resemblance to Bricktop from comedy crime caper *Snatch*.

The most visually striking feature of Thame's Dirty Money is the outrageous height difference between the wiry singer and the enormous bass player. So much so that you almost don't notice their guitarist looks

like a cross between Lemmy and Willy Nelson. What P.S.A do with punk, they do with old school rock music. They're at their best playing it bold and heroic and reminding us a little of The Wildhearts; they're less fun when they sound like The Black Crowes, but either way they remember that dirty old rock and roll like this should always sound like it has dirt under its fingernails and whisky on its breath.

Space is an underrated virtue in music so we're a little worried during Selver's opening number which finds all six members busily tripping over each other to prove they have a purpose, the end result sounding a bit of a mess, but soon enough they coalesce and find their sense of space around the singer whose sweet, mellifluous voice gets us to thinking of the great and hugely underrated Cath Carroll. From here they mix it up neatly, from tidy motorik electro-pop to lightweight, semi-funky pop, benefitting most when they allow their simple, naturally melodic sound to breathe and drift a little. They're brave enough to attempt a cover of Glass Animals' 'Goosey' and get away with it and while they definitely feel like a new band at times there's more than enough evidence tonight that they'll be ones to keep tabs on.

Dale Kattack

FEBUEDER / FLAMINGO**The Jericho Tavern**

Normally a three piece band, Flamingo open tonight's gig as just singer Lavinia Siardi with her guitar for company. Stepping in when PEM dropped out, her stark, emotional songs have a haunting quality, particularly on a poignant number about the death of her friend. While 'Mother' threatens to verge on depressing, Siardi balances the moody atmosphere with more upbeat numbers; it's an understated but engaging start to the evening.

The mood shifts dramatically as Febueder take to the stage. The three piece band from Ascot are as indefinable genre wise as their name is unpronounceable. We're hoping they might introduce themselves but these guys don't have time for banter. Instead their math-jazz-rock-calypto (and then some) sound immediately grabs the attention with throbbing percussion and rubbery basslines, reminiscent of Foals' angularity. Frontman Kieren Godfrey is a whirlwind of energy, swapping between an array of instruments while crooning and howling like a hybrid of Yannis Philippakis and Steve Mason on tracks like 'Pasiphae'. The versatile percussionist Samuel Keysell also deftly

moves between drum kit and cello and other percussive toys we can't quite make out on the dimly lit stage. At one point the bass player switches with the drummer in a seamless transition, while a simple but effective neon light show accompanies the rhythmically complex tunes, making for an unexpectedly atmospheric experience. Febueder's sound continues to prove defiantly un-pigeonholeable as the set progresses, veering from throbbing dub-ska grooves and Vampire Weekend-style calypso, into swirling psychedelia à la The Beta Band, taking in prog-style workouts that recall King Crimson along the way. These guys clearly have a lot of diverse influences and musicianship to match. Often hypnotic, the trance-inducing guitar and bass lines and syncopated beats mix with cornet, ukulele and saxophone (a flute and didgeridoo's love child) showcasing the full musical dexterity of the ensemble. The evening ended on a high with the sprawling, mind-bending sonic journey of the aptly-named 'Shapeshifter', before Febueder return for a rapturously received encore. Oh, and It's pronounced Fe-byou-der by the way.

Steve Taylor

HARCOURT ARMS OPEN MIC SHOWCASE**The Jericho Tavern**

Nightshift has long had an uneasy relationship with open mic nights. For every shining new talent we've witnessed over the years there have been a *lot* of dreadful Bob Dylan wannabes. Still, those shining new talents have to start somewhere and The Harcourt Arms' Sunday open night – running at the pub for the past 12 years – is amongst the most popular in Oxford, so we're intrigued to hear what the best of their regulars have for us.

It's a neat idea this: give open mic performers a proper stage and PA to perform with while retaining the convivial intimacy of an open night. Every act here is billed simply by their first name, so first up is **INDIYA**, who loves Olivia Rodrigo. We know this because she tells us as much enthusiastically in between songs, and because three of those four songs are Olivia Rodrigo covers. No bad thing as Indiya has a similarly airy voice to her hero and her take on 'I'm Scared of My Guitar' is probably the pick of the bunch.

Harcourt veteran **DAN** perhaps isn't cut out to tackle Steve Harley's 'Make Me Smile (Come Up & See Me)' but fares far better with the earthier sounds of The Handsome Family's 'Far From Any Road' and War On Drugs' 'Thinking Of A Place', while **ROSIE** (alongside Ben) wins the prize for most esoteric choice of covers, taking on Kings of Convenience and Big Thief as well as Aimee Mann; the pair's

cosy chemistry gets us to thinking of one-time Truck Festival regulars Trevor Moss & Hannah Lou and together they somehow manage to make a Brian Jonestown song sound as bright and breezy as a fresh spring day.

LISSIEA might have the most accomplished voice on show tonight. Her MacBook might be causing her issues and her take on 'Wicked Game' could do with a more tremulous approach but she absolutely nails 'Ain't No Sunshine' and 'Bye Bye Blackbird' with a rich soul-jazz delivery. **PATTI**, meanwhile, provides the best blues show of the night, both with her own composition, which we think might be called 'Cabbage Patch Blues', and which reminds us of Canned Heat, and also John Prine's 'Angel From Montgomery', which conveys a sense of seediness and hurt that other blues acts tonight miss. In a way her lived-in delivery recalls Marianne Faithful, and that can only be a good thing.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the star of tonight's show is **MIRANDA**, who mostly performs her own material. Solemn, occasionally almost discordant piano and some guest trumpet back up her lovely, soulful voice, while she stamps her own identity on 'La Vie En Rose'; sometimes she's a little lost amid the chatter of the room but here is exactly the kind of diamond in the rough we go along to open mic nights hoping to hear.

Dale Kattack

HARCOURT ARMS

MAY

SAT 4TH

HIPSHAKIN'

FRI 10TH

JAMES & ALLIX

SAT 11TH

PAPA NUI

SAT 18TH

MAMBO PANTHERS

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LIVE
BIG SPECIAL / GRANDMA'S HOUSE / THE PILL

The Bullingdon

Emerging the same Isle of Wight music scene that has given us Wet Leg and Coach Party lately, The Pill possess some of the quirkiness of the former while sharing a love of simple fizzbomb guitar pop of both those neighbours. They're at their best when they bring that quirkiness to the fore, as on debut single 'Bale of Hay' with its jagged edges, odd time signatures

and pointed lyrics about being blonde. Elsewhere their straight-ahead fuzzgun pop-punk takes aim at perceptions of women drivers and lecherous scaffolders, tongue firmly in cheek but fists tightly clenched. Grandma's House are several levels heavier, guitars set to dense, dirty grunge fuzz over which Yasmin Berndt layers her smoky, gravelly

ED HARCOURT
Truck Store

Ed Harcourt's instore performance melds complex phenomena like fantasy, retrospection and death into a directed and compellingly landscaped journey. With his emotive vocals and eclectic technical range, Harcourt invents his own frank yet still artful style that deeply enhances his music's emotional impact.

In 'Until Tomorrow Then', death is imminent. The same themes present themselves in '1987' and 'Deathless', in a more subversive way, but just as unapologetically. There is a confrontation with death on the setlist that is emotionally disarming and absorbing. At the beginning of the song, the pre-recorded violin stirs the sorrowful foreground and the tone is set instantly. It's a mournful apocalyptic fantasy, where you have the chance to see your lost lover in the final moments before everything ends. Harcourt's voice is characterised by textural nuances. In one line you feel the brutal barrage of desperation; it's coarse, violent, and rips through the audience. In the next line, defeat sighs and somberly spreads itself across us. This is most notable in the stylistically prolonged and softened "I guess it's you I miss," highlighted by lighter, tender piano. Then, the sharp and rough vocal incline in the

next line: "Because I just stare at the ceiling," in contrast. Accentuated through a distinct vocal control, the experience is visceral and the fast foregrounding transports you there immediately.

'El Magnifico' is best surmised by Harcourt's line, "You see a windmill on a hill / I see a monster I can kill." This parallels Harcourt to the brazen Don Quixote. The song reflects on the singer's flaws. He believes he's a self-saboteur. He has an "alligator mouth" and a proud heart. But it all changes when he "walks back through the door," where he feels like El Magnifico. This strong self-examination is honest, and creates a reflective tone for the audience. Despite the overinflated and unbelievable caricature of El Magnifico and Don Quixote, it is hard not to be carried away by Harcourt's magnificent, larger-than-life performance. This captivation is enhanced heavily by the accompaniment of Gita Harcourt. Her violin adds to the tenderness of self-reflection, and scintillates throughout the performance. The song fills the room as the couple wander into the audience while they perform. The violin, the low guitar and Ed's grave voice feel palpable, as they end their show.

Hannah Masih

voice. The slow-burning 'Slaughterhouse' is a set highlight while drummer Poppy Dogson taking over vocal duties adds a sense of militant urgency to the set.

It's apt that Big Special take to the stage to the strains of 'Ghost Riders in the Sky', because in Joe Hicklin the Walsall duo have a singer who could doubtless do a decent Johnny Cash impersonation if the inclination took him. While he and drummer Callum Moloney have toured with Sleaford Mods and while Hicklin does the *sprechgesang* thing brilliantly on songs like 'Desperate Breakfast' and 'Shithouse', it's his wonderfully soulful baritone singing that takes Big Special to another level. That and Moloney's powerhouse drumming, both elevating the band above and beyond the raft of post-punk acts they've often been compared to. At their best they sound like John Grant fronting Fucked Up.

Hicklin's versatility is even more apparent when he displays the easy flow of a Lloyle Carner on one track, or fair spits his words out on the tense 'Mongrel'. Throughout all this the pair trade genuinely funny banter and for all his lyrical militancy Hicklin has the aura of a friendly bear. The first time we saw Big Special was supporting John at The Jericho Tavern last year; tonight they sell out The Bullingdon and with their debut album 'Postindustrial Hometown Blues' out this month, far, far bigger things surely await. Special by name, special by nature, Big Special are quite simply one of the most interesting and exciting bands currently out there.

Dale Kattack

BOSSAPHONIK presents NUBIYAN TWIST

Cowley Workers Social Club

In a coup for Bossaphonik's monthly global dance night they host Nubiyian Twist at the start of a massive European and UK tour. Tonight Cowley; tomorrow Rotterdam.

Their seamless mixing of hip hop, neo-soul, funk, big band brass, West African rhythms, jazz, Latin grooves and more, all delivered with audience friendly energy has made Nubiyian Twist dance scene royalty, so it's good to see Bossaphonik's enterprise rewarded with a sell out. "Tonight we are playing what's a lot of new music for us," announces main man Tom Exell, and the set is laden with tracks from the band's almost released fourth album, 'Find Your Flame'. But if the band have nerves, they don't show. From the start the eight strong line-up have a tightness that most bands would kill for to have by the end of a tour.

Like all the top teams Nubiyian Twist build from the back; the drums and bass guitar are so in synch you couldn't slide a five pence coin between them. The tenor sax, baritone sax and trumpet deliver subtle harmonies as well as brassy blasts and some of the catchiest riffs. Almost everyone has their moment in the spotlight, the soloing living up to the band's reputation for having

virtuoso players. But it's the overall sound that takes precedence, and with guest vocalist Aziza Jaye neo-soul and r'n'b are to the fore.

Tonight suggests the forthcoming album has plenty of bangers and no fillers. 'All the Same', with its great keyboard solo, is pure joy; 'Woman' grabs you with its heavy beat and the message of the Nile Rodgers influenced 'Lights Out' is drenched in a dance vibe that's perfect for the by now sweaty Bossaphonik crowd giving it their all on the dance floor. 'Show Me's' mix of Malian rhythms and jazz is seductive, and 'Find Your Flame' itself, about self inspiration and realisation, is an absolute belter with Exell playing amplified thumb piano mingled with frenetic broken beat rhythms and a big brass riff; it gets the biggest roar of the night. The slower, reflective tracks in the set, such as 'Reach My Soul', with Aziza Jaye's soulful, behind the beat vocal, are in their way no less intense than the full-on numbers.

The crowd demand an encore, and it's an older song, a rumbustious version of 'Tittle Tattle'. It's been a night that Nubiyian Twist and Bossaphonik, in its 20th anniversary year, can both be proud off.

Colin May

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ARAB STRAP I'M TOTALLY FINE WITH IT...	DUA LIPA RADICAL OPTIMISM	NUBIYAN TWIST FIND YOUR FLAME	BIG SPECIAL POSTINDUSTRIAL HOMETOWN BLUES
CAN WE PLEASE HAVE FUN	KINGS OF LEON CAN WE PLEASE HAVE FUN	BAT FOR LASHES THE DREAM OF DELPHI	SHELLAC TO ALL TRAINS
VILLAGERS THAT GOLDEN TIME	MICHAEL HEAD & THE RED ELASTIC BAND LOOPHOLE	CAMERA OBSCURA LOOK TO THE EAST, LOOK TO THE WEST	IBIBO SOUND MACHINE PULL THE ROPE
RICHARD HAWLEY IN THIS CITY THEY CALL YOU LOVE			

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WHAT'S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it's **ANDY GREY** and he's **A FESTIVAL PRODUCTION MANAGER**.

How long have you worked in this job?

"Been in 'The Biz' for over 20 years but working as a production manager for the last 10 to 15 years."

What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know?

"Probably easier to say what it is I don't do, which is hang out with rock stars and watch bands all day."

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

"Putting Metallica's entire stadium show into a festival and actually getting it all to work (well, almost all of it...). I've just been given the job of Reading Festival Production Manager, which has the potential to come under either career highlight or lowlight. I'll let you know in August!"

And the lowlight?

"Far too many candidates for this one, coupled with the associated painful memories... Re-assessing my life-choices whilst trying to push a minibus full of stoned musicians out of a ditch somewhere in Austria at 4 o'clock in the morning sits near the top of the list."

How much and how did Covid affect your



job?

"It killed it stone-dead for 18 months. The entire industry closed down in a matter of days and our illustrious government offered sweet FA in support for the arts and entertainment. Not many of us are Tory voters though... go figure. The effects are still being felt and the entire industry is going through a tough time readjusting."

Who's your favourite ever Oxford musical artist?

"A toss-up between Winnebago Deal and Supergrass, with an honourable mention for Nought."

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

"Read *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu."

Who's the most awkward person you've ever had to deal with in your job?

"Ian Brown."

When was the last time you heard genius?

"Deap Vally at Latitude Festival. Sadly they have just split-up."

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

"Working in the pit of vipers that is the music business is a daily compromise of anyone's integrity... you soon get over it though."

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

"I'm very lucky to also have my dream job as well with a side-hustle as a fly fishing guide."

Are you rich?

"In life and experience, yes. In money, I don't think Elon Musk will be looking over his shoulder anytime soon."

Do you consider your job glamorous?

"If fighting off sleep deprivation whilst standing in a muddy field being shouted at by an American production manager at 3am is considered glamorous, then yes."

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

"It's a city that punches well above its weight in producing exceptional bands and music and they all started as those bands playing to a handful of their mates at a small venue. There are still people forming bands and making interesting and (mainly!) good music."



Dr SHOTOVER: Cancel Culture Club

Ah, there you are, Young Jackfruit. Welcome to the secret committee room at the back of the East Indies Club bar. (OK, smartypants – to you it may look like a store cupboard, but to us it is a secret committee room. Got that?) Now, failing a proper pew, pull up a dusty Watney's Party Seven, and let us start the meeting. Yes it seems that – in a desperate last-ditch stab at pre-election deflection – an 'anti-woke' coalition of Tories, Ulster Unionists, Reclaim and Rightwing Dailies (aka TUURRDS) has cooked up a list of bands who are to be 'cancelled' from the airwaves. Mid 70s progsters REFUGEE are to be kept out. As are late 70s power-poppers YACHTS (and all such small boats). EUROPE? No chance – definitely on a final countdown. Canterbury art rockers THE NATIONAL HEALTH? To be cut, cut, cut. CHAKA KHAN? Clearly related to Sadiq Khan, thus CANCELLED. [Sigh-o]. Plus you can forget all those blues songs which start 'WOKE up this morning' too. See what we are up against? Perhaps we'll just stay in here and live on remaindered Cinzano, Peardrax and KP nuts until the next election. Cheers! [All start grooving to - the soon-to-be-cancelled – TRANS EUROPE EXPRESS]

Next month: Conservative Unwoke National Trust



REFUGEE: 'Sorry, lads, forget the Mini-Moog solo - we've been cancelled'

INTRODUCING....

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

PET TWIN

Who is he?

Pet Twin is James Gallagher. He was previously the singer for Juniper Nights and currently also plays drums for Self Help. James started Pet Twin during the first lockdown "after writing a few songs that felt like they were pulling me in a different direction and which required a new outlet. I feel like this project has allowed me to be completely true to myself with the art I want to put out into the world." He has regularly released music under his Pet Twin moniker over the past year, including the EP 'On My Beach'. He will be releasing debut album 'I Will Always Walk the Path to Self Destruction' later this year.

What does he sound like?

Poetic, gothic pop with a keen feel for space and stillness alongside melody. *Nightshift's* review of 'On My Beach' found James "planting his flags in the turf alongside the likes of The Smile, as they both reach for a state of grace amid the chaos."

What inspires him?

"I'm driven by visuals and often feel like I'm trying to write soundtracks to a memory. I tend to write about my internal struggles, but draw an equal amount of inspiration from books and cinema. Basically horror films and anything A24 release. I think Pet Twin is ultimately me trying to discover myself."

His career highlight so far is:

"I've been lucky that my music seems to have found an audience through Spotify. I've had quite a few people from across the world reach out to me directly to let me know how much a song means to them."

And the lowlight:

"To be honest, I think, inadvertently, that it led to my band coming to an end last year. It was really difficult seeing something that I'd loved for so long come to an end but I have learnt a lot from that and feel confident that I'm on the right path. That, or being screamed at to play 'Wonderwall' whilst I was dressed like a crow."



His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Dogmilk! They are such incredibly clever songwriters, managing to make every second count. They constantly subvert expectations without ever sacrificing melody or their pop roots. And they are insanely fun live."

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

"'Skeleton Tree' by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. I love the freeform songs structures and the lack of devotion to keeping time. The emotional weight of that album has really stuck with me from the first time I heard it."

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

"I'll be previewing my album to celebrate turning 30 at Common Ground on the 20th of May. Expect a theatrical performance and lots of feathers."

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"There are so many good artists here and everyone is lovely. I love how much of a collaborative community spirit there is and the lengths artists, promoters, magazines and local radio go to support each other. If I had to pick a single thing it would be Divine Schism. I think Aiden is doing so much to keep the scene alive and healthy. I do think Oxford can be a difficult city to 'break out' of. I don't think the university or council place much value in any local artistic endeavours going on and the city does suffer for it. You feel immediately immersed in the culture of cities like Manchester and Bristol, and I think the amount of talent in Oxford deserves to be represented in a similar way."

You might love him if you love:

Elliott Smith; The Smile; The Cure; Sylvia Plath; Deftones; Angel Olson; Nick Cave

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

20 YEARS AGO

Ten years on from making their front cover debut in *Nightshift* precursor *Curfew*, **Supergrass** celebrated their tenth anniversary with a headline show at **The New Theatre** in May 2004. The gig was the centrepiece of a tour to promote the band's greatest hits album 'Supergrass Is 10', which collected all their singles to date plus a brace of new tracks, 'Kiss of Life' and 'Bullet'.

Other gigs in town this month included **Franz Ferdinand** at **Brookes University**; **Horace Andy**; **Explosions in the Sky**; **Electric Eel Shock**; **McLusky**; **Liars**; **The Cribs**, and **Kathryn Williams** at **The Zodiac**, although the big one at this venue looking back was **The Killers**, making their Oxford debut and soon to go stratospheric.

Without a doubt the heaviest band ever to come out of Oxfordshire, **Sextodecimo** released their debut album 'The Banshee Screams For Buffalo Meat' on Hanging Out With The Cool Kids Records. Produced by Dave Smart, guitarist with doom legends **Sevenchurch**, the album captured some of the band's terrifying live intensity – an intensity that would later see them declared Oxford's greatest ever metal band. And if you never had the chance to witness them way back then, you're in luck – the band have just reformed for a one-off show at **The Jericho Tavern** in July. Be afraid.

10 YEARS AGO

It was time for some **Oxford Punt** fun back in May 2014, with **Kid Kin**; **Lee Riley**; **Julia Meija**; **Rawz**; **Hannah Bruce**; **The Cooling Pearls**; **Salvation Bill** and **Flights of Helios** among those acts playing who still among us in some shape or form, while **Girl Power** (later **Guilt Police**), **Vienna Ditto**; **Beta Blocker & the Bodyclock**; **Jordan O'Shea**; **Balloon Ascents** and **Swindlestock** were also among those playing. **Swindlestock** morphed into **The Great Western Tears**, while **Balloon Ascents** split up but spawned **Catgod** as well as singer Thomas Roberts' solo project **Zerowe**.

Beyond The Punt, **Augustines'** show at the **O2 Academy** descended into delicious chaos when their set overran the venue's curfew, so the band took to playing on Cowley Road, and then **The Library** when the police turned up. Also at the O2 were **Wolf Alice**; **Catfish and the Bottlemen**; **Echo & the Bunnymen**; **Marmozets**; **Hot 8 Brass**; **Tame Impala** and **Jungle**. Local folk heroes **Spiers and Boden** played at the **Town Hall**; **Rae Morris** was at **The Art Bar**.

Local releases this month included **Candy Says'** debut album 'Not Kings', as well as **Listing Ships'** 'The Flat Holm Sessions' and **My Crooked Teeth's** 'Watch the Darkness Stumble Home',

5 YEARS AGO

And talking of **Catgod**, here they were on the front cover of May 2019's *Nightshift*, the band contemplating what life would be like if humans were indeed ruled by Catgods ("we'd forever be ridiculed in embarrassing videos, but there'd also be far more mandatory chilling and lying in the sun," they surmised). The quintet were releasing their debut album as a full band, 'Feel It Go Round', although singer and guitarist Robin Christensen-Marriott had previously released a solo album under the name.

Young Knives, meanwhile were set to play their first Oxford gig in six years this month, at The Wheatsheaf. The band, now a duo of brothers Henry and Tom Dartnall, were in the process of recording their fifth album, 'Barbarians', which was released in 2020. **Gaz Coombes** performed a special orchestral show at **The Sheldonian** this month with the **Oxford University Orchestra**, while elsewhere **Soak** was at **O2 Academy**; **The Beths**, **Drahla** and **C Duncan** were at **The Bullingdon**; **The Murder Capital** were playing at **The Jericho Tavern**, and **Tungg**, **Martin Harley** and **Belshazzar's Feast** were the headline acts at **WOOD Festival** at **Braziers Park**.

Out this month were albums by **Peerless Pirates**, **Jack Goldstein**, Umair Chaudhry's **Futureproof**, and **Lee Riley**, plus EPs by **Basic Dicks** and **Brickwork Lizards**.

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TRACKS

Yin & Yang Audio

Top track of the Month wins a free mix/master from Yin & Yang Audio, courtesy of Umair Chaudhry. Visit www.yinandyangaudio.co.uk/nightshift

TOP TRACK

BLOODY FIASCO

Look at the world. Just look at it. What a fucking mess: as we sit down to review this month's pile of new tracks the Tories are trying to smother yet another MP sex scandal; the *fucking desert* is under about six feet of water in Dubai and World War III feels like one despotic zealot's twitchy finger away. It's a bloody fiasco. All of which is a rather over-dramatic way of introducing this month's Top Track winners. For if we are headed into the great abyss, let us at least dance our way there to some great music. And Bloody Fiasco are great. They should be, made up as they are of Don Mac, who previously performed with Big Speakers, and Tom Woodhouse, the multi-instrumentalist wizard from Borderville and Keyboard Choir, and featuring Georgia Milton from Hornsaplenty. Their song here, 'Saviour', is simultaneously all over the bloody place and pin-sharp cohesive, Don variously a snarling post-punk beast or a gruff crooner, or sometimes he just narrates his words. Musically it's stabbing and brassy, a bit jazz, a bit barrelhouse blues, a bit punk, a bit spaghetti western, a bit hip hop. It swaggers and it sways, it lurches off at tangents and even gets us to thinking of Pere Ubu at one point, before wandering off to play at something else completely. We love this kind of oddly-formed, off-kilter strangeness here at *Nightshift*, and while it would be extremely difficult to actually dance to (even with our notorious lack of coordination), we can see ourselves strutting into nuclear oblivion with this on full blast, knowing we're going out on a high note.

IN-FLIGHT MOVIE

Coupling synths with live drums isn't done nearly enough, which is a shame because it works so well as In-Flight Movie more than ably demonstrate on this brace of tracks. 'Numbers' tumbles in on cascading drums and variously squelching and shimmering synths and initially at least, reminds us of brilliant 90s electro

cruisers Add N To (X). Vocally though it's more typically indie from the darker, more questing end of that spectrum; put it all together and you're not a million miles from Editors or LCD Soundsystem, a place which we heartily approve of. The song is, apparently, about being caught out in a thunderstorm. And monsters. Two of our favourite things. Alongside cats and synthesisers. They know how to win us over do In-Flight Movie. 'Getaway', meanwhile is, if not lighter, then maybe more considered, again inhabiting that dimly lit hinterland where indie rock and synth-pop happily (but also solemnly) co-exist, taking its time to unfurl, refusing to offer instant pop gratification, keeping its almost stately melody close to its chest, but providing a suitably epic denouement. So remember, kids: synths *and* drums. Together. It's a win-win.

FIVER

Fiver's song here, 'I Ain't With You', sounds like it's waking up after a particularly heavy night, the vocals pained, somewhere between a groan and a growl, while musically it all comes together almost painfully slowly, like an ancient computer system straining to come back online, the various instruments struggling to fit together. It takes over a minute and half for things to coalesce into a gruff, belligerent ball of grunge annoyance, the song title bellowed out repeatedly, over a barrelling wrecking ball of fuzz, but then they let it all go before taking it to a higher, heavier level still. Feels like a missed opportunity, and even more so given they asked us to review this track instead of the one they sent in a few weeks earlier, 'Frog Song', which treads similarly uppity grunge territory but is far more bullish from the off. We recommend stronger coffee and perhaps a good, loud listen through to Mudhoney's 'Superfuzz Bigmuff'.

NOTHING DREAMS

More grunge – well, of a sort – here from Nothing Dreams on a compact trio of songs. They actually start off almost folksy on 'I Never Knew Why', before drums and guitar properly kick in and it becomes a slightly clumsy stumble and tumble beneath the slightly gravelly but androgynous voice; the two parts of the band don't really seem to be on the same wavelength: instruments clattering along noisily in unconcerned fashion while the voice is uptight, almost hysterical. New band teething problems we surmise and they're much better on 'Fall From the Skies', which is far grungier, albeit with some nice psychedelic flange on the guitar. 'A Minor Protest Song' might be a

bit of a middling muddle by comparison but does at least show a new band trying to mix things up a bit. Untidy much of the time but Nothing Dreams show signs they can be fun when they crank up a gear and they might well have something to dream of. Also, extra bonus points for having a guitarist called Charlie Bath, who sounds like the best *Beano* character we never had. Or possibly a 1930s wing half.

MY LOVELY HEARSE

My Lovely Hearse is the solo synth work of former-Undersmile and Drore bassist Olly Corona Brown, though as his previous offering demonstrated, it's very much a departure from those ear and eyeball-scouring days as he wanders through almost incidental ambient electronica, shifting textures over discreet beats and a distinctly downbeat mood, like a gothic budget cruise ship lounge musician trying to induce a mass, lemming-like rush over the railings and into the midnight ocean by way of some Joy Division vibes. Easy listening for goths, then. We're in.

GREEBO

We reviewed this lot a few months back and likened them to a watered-down Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine. They give off similar Carter vibes on this new song 'Reminiscing', with its Essex-tinged *sprechgesang* and punky spirit, but it also comes with a neat OMD-like synth melody that lies almost underneath the rest of the song but uplifts the whole thing, gives it some real fizz and energy and suggests distilled rather than diluted is more the order of the day. Done and dusted in under three minutes and leaving us wanting more? Make ours a double.

MYRIAD

Myriad is one of our favourite words. It means a lot to us. So we're hoping a band named Myriad will similarly dig themselves into our soul. Well, you live in hope don't you and hope is there to be dashed upon the shores of reality, or in this case the concrete blocks of workaday indie rock. The influence of Catfish & the Bottlemen is mentioned in their press blurb but we'll just have to take their word for it since any memory of that band tends to dissipate like vapour the moment a single one of their songs ends. Sometimes sooner. We wander over to Youtube to try and remember what Catfish & the Bottlemen sound like but by the time we return to include it in this review

we've forgotten already. We try Myriad again and something similar happens. It's not particularly unpleasant. It bubbles and jangles along inoffensively, briefly reminds us a bit of The Housemartins vocally, would probably upset no one at all if played in the background of a coffee shop, suggests an upbeat outlook on life and then... it's over and we can't remember a single bloody thing about it. Like The Silence in *Doctor Who*, but not sinister or scary or... interesting. So, Myriad... if we may quote from 'Vienna' by Ultravox: it means nothing to me.

HOUNDS UK

Hounds UK introduce themselves to us with the claim that they "play some pretty aggressive music!" Depends on where you sit on the scale of aggression we suppose: from rampaging Millwall fans after losing in the 97th minute to West Ham, to another snidey, bigoted Julia Hartley-Brewer thinkpiece. Thankfully Hounds UK are closer to the former with a five-ton block of metalcore brutality that doesn't stop to think, it just does. With admirable force. Chunky mid-paced riffage joins forces with alternately splenic and Uruk-hai vocals and some choice swearing and the result could probably bulldoze a medium-sized house without breaking into a sweat. Fair to say that Hounds are off the leash.

TJ FLINT

And of course, what we need after that blast of hot, sulphurous air from the bowels of hell is a lukewarm cup of weak, milky tea in musical form. "I've been stuck in 2008 in a field with my friends getting high" sings TJ over a carefree acoustic guitar strum that surely reflects those sunshiny days. Over this wistful, watery nostalgia he layers some middle-distance "Woah-ohs", some barely-there electronic beats, and a tasteful splodge of piano, mixes it lackadaisically together while gazing idly out of the window at the sunset of his youth and ta-da! A nice big bowl of fuck all. Seriously, when you think of some of the music inspired by taking drugs, you wonder just what TJ was getting high on back in 2008 – Calpol? Rennie's? Whatever it was, he should hunt his dealer down and beat the living crap out of them. Or worse, sing to them. This sounds like something that might have been left off a Louis Tomlinson album for being too bland. It makes Thomas Headon sound like Obituary. It isn't so much a song as the dried residue of a long-ago spillage, nostalgic for a time when it was a thin, flavourless gruel.

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