

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 307
May
2022

*"The most painful
experiences
reveal something
about who you
are or want to be"*

Tamara

Memory, melancholy and
minimalism with Oxford's
soul-mining Queen

Also in this issue:

Introducing **TOM WEBBER**

At work with **KINGSLEY BOYDEN**

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES turns 20
CARNIVAL cancelled

Win **CORNBURY FESTIVAL** tickets!

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THE BULLINGDON

MAY 2022

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Saturday 30th April
Simple - Mayday Party
Anz & Jensen Interceptor
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 1st May
Kristin Hersh
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 3rd May
Fluorescent Adolescent
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 4th May
Brookes Big Night Out
DJ Majessty
Archie Valentine
Orthophonics
Moonlight in Blue
Mango Backchat
The Midnight Suns
Doors: 7PM

Friday 6th May
Noasis
Doors: 7PM

Friday 6th May
Haus Party
Summer Solstice
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 7th May
Time Warp!
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 8th May
Whyte Horses
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 10th May
Adam Rowe: Imperious
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 11th May
Daze
Ben Pilston
Ben Pinches
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 12th May
Stray Vambo
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 12th May
Semi Detached
MPH
Burt Cope
Doors: 11PM

Friday 13th May
Geoff Norcott:
I Blame the Parents
Doors: 7PM

Friday 13th May
Bangerz and Lash
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 14th May
Musical Medicine
Colleen 'Cosmo' Murphy
& Kirollus
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 15th May
Bob Wylan
Grove
Doors: 7PM

Monday 16th May
Grace Petrie
Jenny Owen Youngs
Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 17th May
Josh Berry
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 19th May
Crystal Tides
Doors: 7PM

Friday 20th May
Keston Cobblers Club
Nick Edward Harris
Doors: 7PM

Friday 20th May
Soul Sista
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 21st May
Simple
Haci
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 22nd May
Lestweforget
Arimea
Doors: 7PM

Monday 23rd May
Romanian Comedy
Dan Badea
(Invited: Alex Mocanu)
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 25th May
The Wave Pictures
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 26th May
Peaness
Doors: 7PM

Friday 27th May
King Awesome
Doors: 7PM

Friday 27th May
Saved by the 90s
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 28th May
New Bass Order X Outlook Festival
Launch Party
Feat. DLR + Many More
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 20th May
Battle Born
Bring to Bear
Jokers Parade
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 1st June
Musical Medicine
DJ Paulette
Doors: 11PM

Friday 3rd June
Skylarkin Soundsystem
David Rodigan
Doors: 11PM

Friday 10th June
The Quireboys
A Bit of What you Fancy
30th Anniversary Tour
Massive
Doors: 7PM

Friday 10th June
Raving Trippy
The Summer of Love
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 11th June
Semi Detached
TBA
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 12th June
Wrest
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 15th June
William the Conqueror
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 16th June
Jody and the Jermes
The Factory Lights
Doors: 7PM

Friday 17th June
The Deadbeat Apostles
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 18th June
Simple
Tim Reaper & LCY
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 23rd June
Ulysses Wells
Doors: 7PM

Friday 24th June
Rock of China
Don't Laugh
Roast Duck
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 29th June
The Vandoliers
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 2nd July
Retro 90s Hits
Ovaproof & DJ Younlx
DJ Sam
DJ Sec & Wonder
DJ Majikal
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 14th July
James Oliver
Doors: 7PM

Friday 22nd July
Hurray for the Riff Raff
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 30th July
Terraforms DNB
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 31st July
The Rock Project Oxford
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 4th August
Semi Detached
Wookie
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 26th August
Debbie Bond
Pete Boss & Friends
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 27th August
Terraforms DNB
Doors: 11PM

Friday 9th September
Noahfinnne
Doors: 7PM

Friday 16th September
DIY Class of 2022 Tour
Yard Act
English Teacher
Lime Garden
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 22nd September
Laurence Jones
Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd September
The 900
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 25th September
Jayde Adams:
Men, I Can Save You
Doors: 7PM

Friday 30th September
Katy J Pearson
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 5th October
Ben Poole
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th October
Jordan Brookes:
This is Just What Happens
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th October
Semi Detached
TBA
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 20th October
Helen Bauer
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 20th October
So Fetch
2000s Party
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 27th October
Mark Simmons:
Quip Off the Mark
Doors: 7PM

Friday 28th October
Harriet Kemsley:
Honeysuckle Island
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 10th November
Call Me Maybe
2010s Party
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 16th November
Corky Laing
Doors: 7PM

Monday 21st November
World Cup 2022
England V Iran
Doors: 12PM

Wednesday 23rd November
Billy Nomates
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 24th November
Semi Detached
TBA
Doors: 11PM

Friday 25th November
World Cup 2022
England V USA
Doors: 6PM

Tuesday 29th November
World Cup 2022
England V TBC
Doors: 6PM

Wednesday 30th November
Kira Mac
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 1st December
So Fetch
Xmas Special
Doors: 11PM

NEWS

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COWLEY ROAD CARNIVAL has been cancelled amid uncertainty over its future.

The event, one of the biggest in the south of England, regularly attracting around 50,000 people to its live music, sound system and parade, was due to return on the 3rd July after a two-year absence due to Covid but a statement by the organisers, Cowley Road Works, on the 12th April said: "Carnival started as a regeneration project for East Oxford and has succeeded amazingly in bringing our diverse communities together through celebration of this diversity for 20 years.

"We feel that the time is right to take time this year to reflect on past successes and our vision for Carnival. We will be taking the next few months to consider the future." The charity later said it was working with "a more challenging funding environment" and rather than delivering a carnival would focus on coaching local communities to deliver their own events and celebrations. 2020 saw a virtual carnival with events taking place online and local residents invited to display window lanterns to recreate a carnival atmosphere along Cowley Road, while last year saw smaller street parties and more virtual events.

The organisers' statement continued: "Cowley Road Works needs to deliver within a model that is more sustainable and secure for our future, and we are looking at our funding and fundraising strategy over the next five years and taking the opportunity to rethink the leadership of the organisation. "We also wish to review why we exist, and who we exist for, to ensure we have a sharp focus on working with targeted groups within the context of shifting demographics in Oxford. "It cannot be denied that we are also working with a more challenging funding environment. "This might mean doing things

differently in future but we will undergo this review with the needs of our community at the centre."

FLOFEST AND GLOFERST return in June after a three-year break. The community-run festival in **Florence Park** takes place on **Saturday 18th June** as two events. Flofest runs from 11am-4.30pm and is a free, family-orientated event with various activities as well as live music, including sets from The Mighty Redox and youth band Weekend Warriors. Glofest is a ticketed live music event which runs from 6-11.30pm. Headliners will be local dub reggae band Zaia, who will be joined by The People Versus and more with the night rounded off with a laser show by James Usher.

Tickets for Glofest are on sale now from Wegottickets.com on a pay-what-you-can-afford basis, ranging from £5 up to £15. More info on both events at www.flofest.uk.

BLACK COUNTRY NEW ROADS have been added to the line-up for the inaugural **Kite Festival** this summer. The band join **Grace Jones, TLC, Tom Misch, Self Esteem and Mavis Staples** at the new event, which describes itself as "A festival of music and ideas", at **Kirtlington Park** over the weekend of the **10th-12th June**. It was originally set to take place in June 2020.

Kite, which is organised by the same company as Nocturne Live at Blenheim Palace, is set to feature a mix of live music and speakers. Other musical acts already announced include St. Etienne; This Is the Kit; Baxter Dury; Gwenno; Seun Kuti & Egypt 80; The Orielles; Nubian Twist; Katy J Pearson, and Flamingods, while there will be talks by Jarvis Cocker; David Miliband; Tina Brown; Delia Smith; Rory Stewart; George Mobiot and Shirley Collins, among others.

Tickets and more line-up details are at kitefestival.co.uk.

EMF headline this year's **Witney Music Festival**. The 90s indie-dance hitmakers top the bill on The Leys on **Saturday 11th June** where they'll be joined by Kanadia, The Mezz, 4th Labyrinth and more.

Continued over...



GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES celebrates its 20th anniversary at the end of May, having recovered post-pandemic to continue showcasing new and unsigned bands and artists every month.

The monthly live music club is now ensconced at **The Port Mahon**, having been forced to find a new home after the closure of The Wheatsheaf, but its organisers have vowed to keep to the ethos that has kept them going for two decades now.

Run on the last Saturday of every month, May's Gappy Tooth Industries show (on the **28th**) will feature sets from **So Long, Space Girl** (pictured), **Vetna**, and **The May**, continuing the policy of providing a mixed bag of musical styles at a budget prices. Richard Catherall, who co-founded GTI in 2002 and continues to run it alongside friends Alan Betteridge and Alastair Tervit, spoke to *Nightshift* about the night and the part it plays in Oxford's grassroots music scene.

"The first show was May 2002 at The Jericho Tavern and featured Morph, BW Truesdale, and a set from Abel-Jones, which was a band the organisers were in at the time. Never mind 20 years, to be frank, we weren't convinced we'd make it to the end of the first gig without setting fire to something.

"We always aimed to put on eclectic line-ups, but that isn't as unusual now as it was when we started. The reason GTI is unique is that we endeavour never to repeat a booking at our gigs, so you can come every month and never see a repeated set. By the time this birthday gig has gone ahead, we should have hosted 603 separate acts, except I probably counted wrong. We also used to produce a free monthly magazine/programme, which I guess is unusual for such a small gig. It was often inscrutable, because much of it was written by a Kiwi and Swede, whom I rarely understood."

One of the challenges GTI has faced over the years is having to move venues when they close. Having begun life at The Jericho before briefly taking up resident at The Zodiac and thriving at its long-time home of The Wheatshaf, The Port Mahon is the club's fourth venue.

"To be honest, big things like venues closing are fine to deal with, because one can get energised for the battle; it's like fighting the good fight, and you have nothing to lose. The really enervating challenges are one more last-minute cancellation because somebody forgot the gig was their wedding day, or another night of arguing with people at the door about why they have to pay for art, or gigs where everything breaks and it snows and someone spills my drink into the cashbox. But, you know, it's mostly a piece of piss doing gigs, you just email some bands and a venue, turn up, and drink beer; that's a trade secret.

"Our big challenge post-pandemic was just finding a venue. We're in a weird position where we want to be professional, so we wanted a dedicated venue, not just some acoustic acts strumming away in the corner of a shoe shop, or something, but what we do means that we can't afford the big venues. It took a bit of attrition to get an answer from the previous manager of the Port, but I think it's working well now we're there. Of course, we had to pull our comeback gig because people got Covid, but that's hardly even noteworthy now. Hopefully that won't happen again."

With so many small, independent promoters still in hibernation, Gappy Tooth remains one of the last bastions of grassroots live music in Oxford, though as Richard is keen to point out, it is one part of an important community of promoters who form the base rock of our local scene. "I'd be loath to take any credit without acknowledging a good clutch of other promoters too, especially Divine Schism because their gigs are so good and they treat everyone so fairly, plus I'm almost embarrassed to celebrate 20 years in a town containing Klub Kakoffaney, who have been going since the Suez Crisis, or something. But Gappy Tooth Industries can only survive with a room to hire every few weeks, so the real bastions of the music are the people running the venues who could probably make more money doing something else."



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NEWS

Cont'd...

The show is the climax of two weeks of live bands, DJs, jam sessions and open mics across pubs and other venues across Witney starting on the 27th May. Among the venues involved are Fat Lil's; Part & Parcel; The Griffin; Studio Se7en; No.12; The Fleece; The Elm Tree, and The Plough. Local ska veterans The Inflatables headline the Leys stage on Friday 10th June, alongside Tom Hingley and The Kar-Pets.

Full Witney Music Festival listings and news at facebook.com/WitneyMusicFestival.

LIGHTS, COMMUNITY, ACTION! is a community share campaign launched this month to enable Oxford residents to save, own and shape the future of historic East Oxford cinema **The UPP**. The share sale opens on the **29th April** and runs until the **1st July**, aiming to raise over £300,000 to purchase the independent cinema, famed for its eclectic, esoteric programming, including live score screenings of silent films; singalong film showings and live music events. Shares will be priced at £1 each with a minimum purchase of £50 (or £30 for residents of the OX4, OX1 and OX3 postcode areas). A number of campaign launch events are planned, including a free screening of classic 1934 rom-com *It Happened One Night* on the 29th April; a live score screening of vampire cult classic *Nosferatu* on the 8th May with Bristol band Minima, and a screening of *The Terminator* with The Guardian's chief film critic Peter Bradshaw. Visit uppcinema.com/owntheupp for full details of the share campaign.

CHARLBURY RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL's organisers have been paying tributes to two of its team who have died.

Gary Walker and **Kathryn Custance** were part of the volunteer team responsible for the annual event for many years.

On behalf of the Riverside organisers, the team said: "It is with great sadness that the Riverside crew say goodbye to our dear friends Kathryn and Gary; both have been part of the team for many years and have ended up with tickets to the great gig in the sky.

"Gary was a founder of the festival with Andy and Chris Wray, having known Andy since school. They played in bands together, wrote songs together and toured together. Gary was the rock at the centre of Riverside: a founding director, dedicated site builder and excellent gurner; when we weren't leaning on him, he was physically leaning on one of us. As



hundreds of traders and thousands of Riversiders knew, Gary was a lovely man, a kind man and a funny man. We will miss him greatly. The world is a better place for having had him in it.

"Kathryn made Riverside bigger, her amazing skill and dedication brought us a louder voice and a bigger place in the festival world. She made sure Charlbury Riverside became a by-word for the best of everything that festivals do: friendship, sharing, freedom and the pure pleasure of music. She did all that with a wry smile and such easy charm. We are devastated that she's gone but we're really pleased that she was with us for a while."

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC are looking for new trustees to be part of their board of governors. This is a chance to get involved with the running of the music charity, which curates a regular programme of world, electronic, contemporary classical and experimental concerts in and around Oxford. The commitment for anyone wishing to become a trustee is taking part in a few meetings per year as a volunteer with expenses paid. Get in touch with jo@ocmevents.org for more info and to apply.

BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORD continues to showcase local music every Saturday night from 8-9pm on DAB and 95.2fm. The show, produced by Liz Green and presented by Dave Gilyeat, is available to stream and download at bbc.co.uk.

MELTING POT on Get Radio continue to showcase and celebrate Oxford music on their fortnightly Thursday night shows hosted by Rich and Deadly. Local acts can submit music to be played by emailing info@getmeltingpot.co.uk.

WIN CORNBURY TICKETS!

Festival season is just around the corner and **CORNBURY FESTIVAL** is gearing up for its Last Hurrah.

BRYAN ADAMS, JAMES BLUNT, RONAN KEATING, THE DARKNESS, JOOLS HOLLAND and **THE WATERBOYS** are among the star names who will help bring down the curtain on the event which has become one of the centrepieces of the Oxfordshire festival calendar since it first opened its gates back in 2004, earning the title Poshstock for its history of attracting celebrity festival-goers.

After two years away due to the pandemic, Cornbury returns for one last party over the weekend of the **8th-10th JULY** at **GREAT TEW COUNTRY PARK**. Joining the headline acts will be **MICA PARIS, ALTERED IMAGES, ALICE RUSSELL, THE MAGIC NUMBERS, THE CHRISTIANS, GET CAPE, WEAR CAPE, FLY!, WILLIAM THE CONQUERER**, and **ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW** among a host of others.

Beyond the two main stages there will be the traditional Riverside Stage, featuring an array of local artists, as well as the comedy tent and more, with the Rapture tent continuing to host intimate sets and signing sessions.



Tickets for the family-friendly weekend are onsale now from www.cornburyfestival.com with VIP tickets available and discounts for over-70s and under-16s.

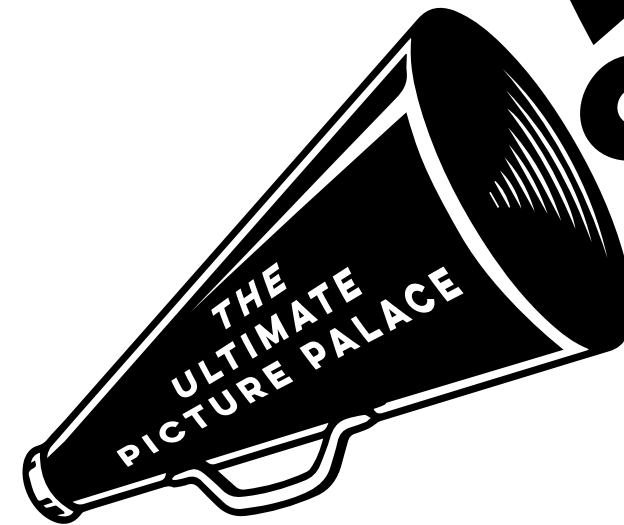
And thanks to our friends at Cornbury we have two pairs of weekend camping tickets to give away! In a competition! Get in!

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer

the question:

What was Bryan Adams' first UK Number 1 hit?

Email answers to editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk clearly marked **Cornbury Competition** and including your full name, phone number and postal address. Deadline for entry is the 20th May 2022. The editor's decision is to swoon uncontrollably when Altered Images come onstage.



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A quiet word with

Tamara



“**THIS IS PROBABLY MY** *most personal collection of songs and the album is an expression of vulnerability;*” *says Tamara Parsons-Baker about her new album, released this month. “There is so much strength and power in Death of the Maiden, visually as well as musically, but at my core I am a total soft one,” she continues. “Those closest to me know this and I am able to share this part of myself with the audience when I perform these songs. I am more comfortable with expressing myself in this way through music and performance because then it becomes a shared experience, and that makes it easier.”*

AS EVER WITH TAMARA, her new songs are highly personal, her heart and soul laid bare, heartbreak, longing, loss and desire the driving forces behind her lyrics and music.

Her new album, defiantly titled ‘Pain Is Just Pain’, and released simply under the name Tamara, is her solo debut, and follows 2019’s ‘The Girl With the Secret Fire’, her superb album with her band Death Of The Maiden, which earned her a *Nightshift* Track of the Year for ‘A Pair of Blue Eyes’. The new album is launched on the 20th May with a show at The Jericho Tavern. ‘Pain Is Just Pain’ was planned before Covid hit but much of it was written and recorded during lockdown, supported by a crowdfunding campaign that exceeded its target within days. It is an album of elegant minimalism, played on acoustic guitar, Tamara’s limpid, precise voice and poetic lyrical style perfect for conveying the often turbulent and conflicted emotions that play into her songs. Even with a band behind her – Death Of The Maiden, and before that

The Martyrs – Tamara’s music has made good use of space and sparse arrangements (DOTM guitarist Hannah Bruce is an absolute master of the less-is-more ethos), so the stripped-back nature of the new album feels like a logical extension of her previous music. Even so, there’s some seriously deep, often dark, stuff going on as Tamara explores memory, abandonment, break-ups and beyond over eleven songs.

“**THIS ALBUM WAS ALWAYS** planned,” she explains about going solo. “I had stacked up a lot of songs that didn’t really fit the Death Of The Maiden vibe, and with lockdown I was able to develop and spend more time on these songs as part of a complete record. “Don’t believe anyone who tells you they were super creative during lockdown, they are lying,” she says of her writing and recording during Covid isolation. “Honestly, I had moments of feeling creative, but really lockdown gave me the space to conceptualise the album, how I wanted it to sound and the meaning behind it. The rest of the time I worked from home, drank wine, watched *Tiger King* and scoured various websites for loo roll.”

WHILE TAMARA HAS always been a band leader and chief songwriter, making an album completely on her own brought its own challenges and opportunities compared to The Martyrs and Death Of The Maiden.

“It comes with fewer challenges because the only real challenge in life is other people. Remove them from the equation and things become way more simple. No diaries to coordinate; no egos to smooth over; no outbursts to manage. In all seriousness though, it’s completely different in the sense that you just have to trust yourself. You don’t have your mates in the room to bounce ideas off of or jam things out with. Annoyingly, you also have to do more things for yourself and when you are as reluctant to learn anything musical as much as me, that can be irritating.”

An intensely personal and emotionally honest songwriter, across ‘Pain Is Just Pain’ Tamara runs the full gamut of self-examination and defiance in music that is often

desolate but can equally feel euphoric. Nowhere more so than on one of the album’s stand-out songs ‘I Don’t Care’, with its complex and conflicted emotional signals. “That song is a little dig at myself when I pretend I don’t care about something but then go to the lengths of writing a song about it. It’s about all the things we don’t communicate, and the things we tell ourselves to make ourselves okay with how we feel. ‘I Don’t Care’ really should be called ‘I actually care quite a lot and would like to make you fully aware of this without having to tell you, so I’ll just do it in a song and hope you get it’.”

Conversely the track ‘Fuck Off’ seems pretty unequivocal. What drives that song and does it feel cathartic to write and sing it? “Ha ha! That is my song for exes – disclaimer: obviously not the ones I am still friends with! People say a lot of bizarre shit to each other during and after break ups. It hurts but we are all absolutely bonkers. What does annoy me though is when one person is told that they are ‘too emotional’, especially during a break up. This is bonkers. There is no universal barometer for emotions. Like, who made you the boss of how much is too much? Someone who tells you ‘you are too emotional’ is in fact emotionally unavailable. No self-aware, mature human being stigmatises another for having feelings. That is really what I’m saying fuck off to.”

ABANDONMENT, specifically parental abandonment, is a subject Tamara has long sung about and visits once more on ‘Pain Is Just Pain’. Yet even compared to her previous songs about it, ‘Dropped’ on the new album feels quite desolate, haunted even.

“‘Dropped’ is about living with the real consequences of abandonment. I’ve talked to you before about having an absent parent and the truth is, you grow up feeling like there is always something inherently wrong with you. The situation seems like proof that you are unlovable in some way, a way in which you seemingly have no control over. What you intrinsically understand is that people who are supposed to love you can leave you at any time. This anxiety feeds into many corners of life, friendships and relationships, and

it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It’s always there, it’s a rejection; one parent didn’t love you enough to want to be in the same house as you. But these things do come around in some ways and make you stronger. I always share the meaning of this song when I sing it on stage. It’s probably the most honest I have ever really been able to be about this issue and how it has impacted my life.” Perhaps by way of searching for escape, ‘Home From the Sea’ revisits happier childhood memories, and also ties in with another of Tamara’s regular themes.

“Me and the sea are obsessed with each other, despite the fact that we couldn’t be living further away from each other right now. It’s complicated. When I was young our family holidays would be camping by the seaside in Wales and as an adult I love trips to Wales, Cornwall and Devon just to be by the sea. When you can watch the sea, you don’t need a book, TV, podcast or dog. It is so calming and full of joy, mystery and myth. The sea is basically the best.”

‘Made of You’, meanwhile, is about how we’re all made up of the people we’ve met and known through life; who does Tamara think are the best and worst people she’s met and how much is there of each in her? “Ha ha! I think there isn’t a worst or best in that sense; I mean, obviously my close friends are the best people, but even the worst people have something to teach you about yourself. The most painful experiences reveal something about who you are or want to be. Once you have recovered from the ‘worst’ people, you can see what lessons they have left for you, or just live in denial and ignore them. The best people simply bring out the best in you, and that can also be in challenging ways. All these worst and best people contribute to making us who we are. We cannot learn anything about ourselves without them, even the ones that are the absolute pits.” And yet, for all the emotional intensity and turbulence in your songs, there is a great deal of musical serenity across ‘Pain Is Just Pain’; is that a balance you consciously strive for? Could you imagine singing about the same things but fronting a hardcore punk band? “I’m not really conscious of anything when I write songs. They just sort of splurge out in whatever way they like. I do enjoy juxtaposition in songs though. In the Martyrs I used to write very cheerful melodies with pretty dark lyrics. I’d love to front a hardcore punk band but I don’t think songs about eating crab sandwiches by the beach would work.”

Do you feel writing these solo songs has allowed any different aspects of your music to come to the fore? The influence of Tracy Chapman on ‘Colours’, for example, feels new. “I’ve always been a big fan of Tracy Chapman, so that is a huge compliment. I think it gave me more of an opportunity to define myself as a solo artist. I’ve always been playing solo at gigs over the years, but I’ve been so involved in bands and putting on gigs that I never really took the time to work on a solo project like this. It’s allowed me to explore that persona, and it has been surprising and fun.”

AS MENTIONED, ‘PAIN IS Just Pain’ was funded, as with the Death Of The Maiden album, via a crowdfunding campaign which hit, and surpassed, its target very quickly,

“I Don’t Care’ really should be called ‘I actually care quite a lot and would like to make you fully aware of this without having to tell you, so I’ll just do it in a song and hope you get it’.”

testament once again of the loyal fanbase Tamara has built up over the past few years. As a solo artist without a label or management or friends in high places, what are the biggest fears and challenges about making music and trying to get people to hear it, or does Tamara feel a lack of pressure or constraint? “I think the most important thing for me has always been performing. That’s where I feel happiest and most connected. That’s where I want people to hear my music. I’ve loved being able to have the freedom to write what I want, to spend two, or four, years on an album and say whatever it is I want without being concerned with deadlines or making radio hits. When I had a meeting with Decca Records, who listened to an EP and took me for lunch, it was really eye opening to how the music industry operated, how they mould you and your music into something that will sell in supermarkets: because apparently that is where most people buy music. I was so grateful for everything I learnt in that experience. I’d spent so much of my life wanting to write and perform my songs, it didn’t make sense to give that up so quickly. Of course, it is great when you get played on the radio, or have certain opportunities come your way. But ‘success’ in the music industry is so often about who you know and privilege, and of course so many other things. One of the most interesting and relatable artists out there at the moment is Self Esteem. She talks about trying to

‘make it’ on the *How to Fail* podcast, which I would highly recommend.”

MUCH LIKE SELF ESTEEM’S Rebecca Lucy Taylor, Tamara has long been a strong, uncompromising female voice in music. In tandem with her own music she previously organised her own All Tamara’s Parties shows and mini festivals, aiming to showcase female and non-binary artists in a safe and supportive environment, while with Death Of The Maiden she helped organise a series of gigs under the banner Zero Tolerance, spurred on by experiences of sexism and misogyny at gigs and joining forces with other female acts who had endured similar experiences. Will All Tamara’s Parties or the Zero Tolerance shows return post-Covid? “I think they will return next year. I absolutely love curating those shows

and miss it. I’ve been focusing on my album and bands now that we’ve been able to socialise more again. Following the various lockdowns I’ve needed to focus on making lots of music and playing with people again. I missed that the most. Perhaps there will be an All Tamara’s Parties festival in 2023!” Does Tamara think that Covid has allowed some kind of reset as far as gender equality goes in music, and has the dominance of solo artists over bands made any difference on that score, or are we still stuck with the same issues, and just scratching the surface? “Covid has only intensified the gender inequalities and has reversed decades of progress. There is a lot of global evidence that supports this, and is true for most aspects of society such as employment and education, therefore I imagine it must be the same for the music industry, which has always struggled to represent and treat women equally, with sexual harassment being a key challenge. I think locally I see massive improvements and as an artist who has actively promoted and created a platform for female artists for over ten years, it’s great to see more diversity and safe space policies amongst the scene. I think since the *#metoo* movement we have heard more women’s voices in the media, and following recent atrocities such as the murders of Sabina Nessa and Sarah Everard, the outpouring of grief and anger is finally putting women’s voices front and centre.

Festivals are now clearly making more of an effort to have a gender balanced line-up, but the music scene needs to better represent all of society. I think we are still scratching the surface; ultimately there is still a huge way to go, and I think Covid hasn’t helped.” How do you see the state of the Oxford music scene generally post-Covid? “It’s shocking how many venues we’ve lost in the past few years. There are a lot more empty shops etc. in Oxford that are just screaming to be made in to pop-up venues. Nothing beats having a dedicated space though, and the impact of losing The Wheatsheaf and Cellar is great, not to mention the wonderful Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre. Oxford’s musos are very good at coming up with creative ideas for new spaces, but what would really be great would be a large, central, community-run venue that has a dedicated space for a number of stages, a bar and workshop room for courses, like learning how to build your own guitar, for example, or music lessons. We need some sort of hub space that reflects the strength of the local music scene and celebrates the community and all it has to offer.”

WHATEVER YOUR definition of success, Tamara’s musical output continues to be a triumph: often bleak, always beautiful songs full of emotional honesty that continue to mark her out as a genuine star to rank alongside the very best Oxford has to offer. ‘Pain Is Just Pain’ might be informed by trauma and turmoil and forged in the fires of lockdown but it’s an album that will steal your heart. For now Tamara has her album launch gig to look forward to later this month, while Death Of The Maiden are set to return with their own new album in the not too distant future. “I’ll be playing through the entire album with some guest performers at The Jericho on the 20th. Rainbow Reservoir will also be playing a set, which I am really excited about and I’ll also be doing a couple of songs with my new sea shanty band, The Jolly Grogsters. There will also be a few surprises up my sleeve. It’s been so fun to organise a gig again. “Death Of The Maiden are already back in the studio rehearsing and are booked to play a summer ball this year! We are hoping to record our second album and start playing gigs again soon. We just have to remember how all the songs go!”

Tamara plays The Jericho Tavern on Friday 20th May. Order your copy at tamaramusic.space

RELEASED

THE MAY

‘Abbey Road’

(All Will Be Well)

Nigel Firth is not a man to whom the label ‘sensible’ has ever knowingly been applied. As one half of Vienna Ditto he regularly teetered on the brink of catastrophe and personal injury with his half-thought-through onstage balancing acts, while he’s probably lost count of the pieces of musical equipment he’s seen floating off down the Thames when he was transporting it back in an old shopping trolley to his houseboat after a few drinks too many. And that’s before you even get to Vienna Ditto’s often wildly exotic brand of pop.

But maybe with his new solo project The May (also the name of the sensible one in *Top Gear*, remember) he’s seen the straight and narrow at last, since this new EP was recorded at Abbey Road Studios. Except not that Abbey Road Studios. Of course not, rather a home set up in his house on Abbey Road, in Oxford. And no, musically it’s not sensible either.

Nigel describes his new music as “nasty low-quality ramshackle scrapbook techno,” some of which is close to the mark, though ‘nasty’ is subjective; we’re rather partial to the feeling a caffeinated cyber wasp is stuck in our middle ear and is hosting a German industrial rave up there, which is the impression you get from ‘Resistance’, with its gnarly guitar, fractured grungy electronics and hectoring political speeches. Over five minutes it manages to visit more places than your average Lonely Planet scribe might in a month of Sundays. ‘Nanotheque’, meanwhile, might be a disco

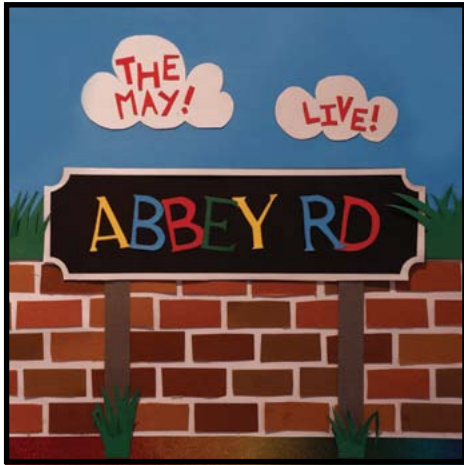


SHOTOVER

‘Kill Everything Now’

(Self released)

Thomas Roberts’ ear for quality has clearly not abandoned him since his previous musical endeavours, Balloon Ascents and Neverlnd, and while you can’t help but compare his vocal cadences to the brothers Yorke, we can all agree that there are far worse things the singer could have taken influence from.



constructed of perpetually collapsing textures, tribal rhythms and voice-like sounds, which initially appear random but are actually sweetly focussed and driving, though where they’re driving to is anyone’s guess: the land of the cartoon dinosaur robots quite possibly. Where would you rather be headed, Noel Gallagher’s fireside?

The EP closes with ‘Name Five Things’, based on the children’s sensory game, but for all its playful premise it has a jerky insistency than makes you feel your blood pressure is escalating dangerously. “Make a biscuit party please” announces a small child. Disco biscuits surely, because for all its mania and abstraction, you can most certainly dance to this nasty low-quality ramshackle scrapbook techno. You’ll look weird doing it but that’s not the point; dance like nobody’s watching. Just try not to fall in the river while you’re about it.

Dale Kattack

Opener and EP highlight ‘Dark Hair’ is a gorgeously sumptuous affair, reminiscent of Thom Yorke’s ‘Black Swan’. With its delicately dark refrain “Oh, you don’t know, is it sky or ground?” the track teases and seduces, leading to a mesmerizing climax. ‘Double Figures’, meanwhile, echoes the tones and gentle touches of Unbelievable Truth’s debut ‘Almost Here’ which, while clearly well done and solid in execution, falls a little short of the preceding track, as it seems to ever so slightly outstay its welcome. The EP’s third track, ‘Ghost Towns’, is a beautifully subtle beast, with the band avoiding the temptation to overproduce, and Roberts’ haunting melody leaves a sonic imprint that demands a revisit.

‘Butterflies Part 1’ shows how his vocals can stretch more into Rufus Wainwright territory, and while quite charming, doesn’t reach the heights of the previous three offerings, instead becoming a little plodding and Keane-like in places. ‘Butterflies Part 2’ is a more tender affair, but is instantly reminiscent of the coda of ‘Paranoid Android’, and while being more than proficient in its delivery, treads over-familiar ground that you know this band are capable of surpassing.

Caitlin Helm

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FIREGAZER

‘New Beginnings’

(Self released)

When the world seems to be falling apart a little more very day and you can’t even rely on the weather, by the fireside seems a safe and secure place to spend your time, and here’s where you’ll likely find Firegazer. The local folk-rock outfit are back with a new album, the follow-up to 2019’s ‘Healing’, and it’s comforting in many ways to find they’ve barely changed since the pandemic took away even their small corner of live music.

‘New Beginnings’ features nine songs of mostly slow-to-mid-paced guitar and accordi-pled folk-rock with the influence of Fairport and The Oysterband laced through it, from resigned, romantic odes to gentle waltzes, singer Alan Foulkes staying just the right side of the smooth/grizzled line while Anneli Chambliss-Howes’ backing vocals add both depth and a certain kind of light to even the more downbeat numbers.

The strengths and weaknesses of ‘New Beginnings’ remain pretty much the same as those of its predecessor: Foukes’ voice is charmingly world weary and unforced and he carries the downbeat mood of the songs well with Chambliss-Howes a more than able foil, while his accordion playing is often exceptional and leads the line well, giving Firegazer their own identity among the local folk massive. But, there’s still a feeling the band, and Foulkes in particular, need to let rip occasionally: this is cosy, comforting stuff but a bit more spice and energy once in a while wouldn’t hurt. A couple of tracks, like ‘Autumn Light’, veer just too far from the folk path and into middling soft rock, but it’s good to hear Anneli given the lead on the almost jazzy ‘Where the Feelings Flow’.

For now Firegazer have their comfort zone and have made it a welcoming place; there are wilder, more dangerous folk acts out there but as wars rage and the north wind wails, sometimes a gently warming hearth is what you need for a while, even if maybe a greater sense of adventure next time wouldn’t go amiss.

Sue Foreman



THE PEOPLE VERSUS

‘Again and Again’

(Self released)

Lockdown and semi-lockdown have tended to refract impressions of how long bands have been with us. The People Versus got going in 2019 but the series of hiatuses and false starts brought about by Covid have blunted their impact on the wider consciousness until now; it wasn’t until last month that the six-piece were featured in the ‘Introducing’ section of these pages. We are now almost two years on from when early EP ‘Ground Opening’ was made available – an exercise in yearning strings and delicate folk that owed much to Oxford’s rich

THE HOPE BURDEN

‘Abandonment’ /

‘I Want To Be Well’

(Self released)

“Atmospheric post-rock/metal,” it says on The Hope Burden’s Bandcamp page, and that’s pretty fair. ‘Abandonment’ is a beefed-up take on the quiet/loud dynamic of Mogwai, by way of the shouting intensity of Meshuggah and the crafted squalls of Isis. It opens with a delicate, rich, slow introduction, carefully revealing the track’s melodic themes and guitar lines, before veering around a corner into pummelling, relentless, metallic sludge. So it continues for its almost seven-minute duration; utilising familiar post-rock tropes – distant, epic squalls of guitar, and rumbling, striding rhythms – with the whole piece wrapped inside a fearlessly intense wrapper of modern metal. It just about maintains a meaningful balance between light and shade, heft and fragility, to succeed.

‘I Want To Be Well’ follows a similar template, albeit with a very different song structure. It has long passages of semi-ambient guitar noodling and complicated drum patterns, and strident lead melodies scaffolded by thundering double-kick-drum structures, before opening out into a fantastically robust end section that, oddly – perhaps only for me – partially recalls the middle eight of Ladybaby’s ‘Nippon Manju’.

‘Lamentation’ draws an even starker contrast between heartfelt, emotional post-rock navel-gazing and desperate-sounding shout/scream vocals. It’s a slow-paced piece suggesting that, in its latter moments particularly, The Hope Burden are capable of dropping in moments of crowd-

tradition of pastoral music, perched on the far north-eastern edge of Thomas Hardy’s Wessex and close to Fairport’s Cropredy kingdom as the city is. The three tracks thereon were atmospheric but didn’t push any boundaries so the follow-up single from a year later, the almost preternaturally catchy ‘Witch’ sent out a real statement of intent. Moving the conversation more towards shimmering indie pop, it was a welcome declaration of newness and a blisteringly good tune.

Now the band have distanced themselves even further from the folk boilerplate with ‘Again and Again’, a chiming, propulsive song that starts where ‘Witch’ left off and recalls The Sundays and long forgotten early Noughties popsters The Bush, the Tree and Me, while perhaps above all being resonant of search engine botherers and Prince Edward Islanders Alvveys, one of the most cherished harbingers of the new breed of indie. There’s a polished sheen to the tune and layers of lovely harmonies: lead vocalist Alice Edwards turns in her usual strong performance although most other members of the band join her forcefully. Then there is Benedict Crone’s cello, bursting in three quarters of the way through to stunning effect and probably delivering the most memorable sequence of the record. So, with a date at the O2 about a week after this issue goes to press, The People Versus are building from strength to strength.

Rob Langham

pleasing Russian Circles-esque chunky riffing and listener-terrifying Khanate-y scorched-soul fierceness. This counterbalances effectively with the post-metal sound that the other tracks here encapsulate.

It’s an impressively finished and confident set of tracks. The Hope Burden promise much and, based on what’s on display here, are likely to deliver a combination of what makes this kind of music work familiarly well, with subtle invention and experimentation to take things in new directions.

Simon Minter

JADA PEARL

‘Unravel Me’

(Self released)

For a long while Jada Pearl seemed like a lone r’n’b voice in Oxford’s music scene. A decade and a half after lending her lithe, powerful soul voice to tracks by the likes of Rawz and GTA as well as releasing a trickle of solo singles, she’s still going strong and these days she feels like a field leader with the number of young r’n’b singers coming through.

Her voice, though, remains a bright, acrobatic shining light, with the high register purity of Minie Riperton cut through by some Amy Winehouse-style rawness to give ‘Unravel Me’ a bit of a lived-in authenticity. It’s that ability to coo and soar sweetly while still sound like she’s viewing life through a glass darkly that lifts Jada above and beyond, and like a fine wine, she seems to have become richer and more complex with the passing years.

Bekti Manish

SEBASTIAN REYNOLDS

‘Athletics’

(Faith & Industry)

Sebastian Reynolds follows last year’s stunning ‘Crows’ with this six track EP. Having literally just completed another Brighton Marathon I feel well placed to state that this release captures perfectly the emotions and sensations of a major run. Reynolds has achieved here what Public Service Broadcasting did for tour ice skating with their two-part ‘Elfstedentocht’ single; it’s totally evocative.

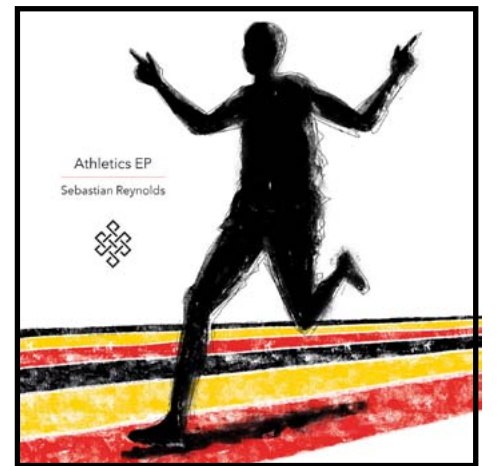
‘Cheptegei’ is first out of the blocks, a tribute to the Ugandan 5000m record-breaking runner of the title; it’s positive and upbeat, has a gradual percussive build up which feels like the crowd urging the runners on and/or the mechanical movements of the runners, and it has a celebratory brass finish from Peter Fraser – again similar to PSB’s own ‘Brassy Gents on Everest’, as are the commentary samples.

‘Final Push’ is based around a pulsing heartbeat and the piston beats of arms and legs; it is all adrenaline-filled nerves and induces the same insular claustrophobia experienced when pushing yourself to the limits in competition. ‘Start Line’, by contrast, takes us back to the race start and the different feeling of pre-race nerves. A shimmering intro leads to a speeding pulse and cardio fine tuning, which quickly fade away as the runner readies and then vanishes into the distance.

On ‘Dominance Hierachy’ a stuttering beat and scratchy percussion sounds illustrate a mid-race runner at a healthy pace, their inhalations and exhalations palpable as they try to keep a constant speed over a great distance. ‘Hammering’, reminiscent of Vangelis’ Blade Runner soundtrack or Daft Punk is more industrial and has slightly darker overtones; it feels like an automaton; the runner has become the perfect machine and is no longer sensing in a human way; they are robotic.

‘Four Minute Mile’, the last track on the EP, comes back to Oxford in celebration of Roger Bannister’s ground breaking 1954 record on Iffley Road. It’s also an homage to Vangelis’ own musical depiction of a major running event in that signatures from *Chariots of Fire* are subtly recreated and blended, coupled with additional commentary. Overall, this EP is a definite gold medal contender.

Mark Taylor



GUIDE

SUNDAY 1st
THE KRISTIN HERSH ELECTRIC TRIO + FRED ABONG: The Bullingdon – The former Throwing Muses star returns to town in full electric mode – *see main preview*
SELF HELP + IN-FLIGHT MOVIE + THE BOOYAH SETTLEMENT: The Jericho Tavern – OMS magazine hosts a May Day local bands showcase with raucous pop-punk from Self Help alongside synth-pop from In-Flight Movie and psych-rock from The Booyah Settlement.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms –

Sunday 1st
THE KRISTIN HERSH ELECTRIC TRIO: The Bullingdon
There were two distinct sides to Throwing Muses and that’s what made them such a fantastic band. On the one hand there was Tanya Donelly’s spring-pure songs; on the other was step-sister and schoolmate Kristin Hersh’s often disjointed, sometimes aggressive, emotionally intense input, which tended to involve odd time signatures and deliberately off tunings, the result of a childhood accident that left her hearing music in her head at all times and prone to intense periods of depression. Pioneers both musically and as women in rock music, they should have been absolutely massive and *Nightshift* feels privileged to have seen them live in their prime (supported by Pixies no less). While Donelly went on to form the far more commercial Belly, Hersh’s solo debut was the intensely personal ‘Hips & Makers’, a stark acoustic album that dealt with mental illness and motherhood, depression and domestic mundanity. Friend and muse Michael Stipe joined her for the lead single ‘Your Ghost’, one of the most beautiful and haunting songs ever written, a perfect vehicle for Hersh’s incredible voice which ranges from disquietingly introspective to violently dramatic. Over the course of eleven solo albums, including the most recent, 2018’s ‘Possible Dust Clouds’, she’s continued to follow her own path, however wayward it has sometimes seemed, and remains an iconic figure not only for female musicians but those making music in the face of in tandem with mental illness.



MAY

Weekly open session.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon – Weekly Irish folk session.
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm) – Weekly open afternoon.
RODNEY QUAKES: The Brewery Tap (5pm) – Folk and pop from the local quartet.

MONDAY 2nd
FLUORESCENT ADOLESCENTS: The Bullingdon – Indie club night.
WEDNESDAY 4th
JOCKSTRAP: The Jericho Tavern – Wonky, wired and weird fusion pop from the London duo – *see main preview*
THE SAM SWEENEY BAND: The North Wall – English, Celtic and Scandinavian folk music from Leveret and Bellowhead fiddle maestro Sam Sweeney and his band, playing tracks from new album ‘Unearth Repeat’.
JIM MORAY + EVAN CARSON & GEORGIA LEWIS: The Unicorn, Abingdon – Updated trad folk from longstanding champion of English indie and folktronica Moray at the monthly Abingdon folk session, the singer and multi-instrumentalist a five-time BBC Folk Awards winner.
MUSIC TO INSPIRE LISTENING PARTY: The Barn, St. John’s College – An open evening for audience members to bring along and share their favourite tracks. Free entry.

THURSDAY 5th
METRONOMY + GOAT GIRL: O2 Academy – Ebullient, uplifting electro-pop, disco and new wave from Joseph Mount’s synth stars, back on the road to promote recent seventh album ‘Small World’, showing a marked shift towards a softer, smoother kind of pop. Support from smouldering grunge/garage rockers Goat Girl.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon – Weekly open session hosted by Tom Dalby.

FRIDAY 6th
NOASIS: The Bullingdon – Behold! The void!
HAUS PARTY: The Bullingdon – Techno, house and disco club night.
SLOW DOWN, MOLASSES + SAVAGE MANSION + THE COOLING PEARLS: Florence Park Community Centre – Expansive, almost orchestral shoegaze, elegant post-punk and post-rock dream pop from Canada’s Slow Down, Molasses, at tonight’s Divine Schism show, the collective over in the UK to promote third album ‘Minor Deaths’, paying due homage to Echo & the Bunnymen, Galaxie 500, Mogwai and Dinosaur Jr along the way. Proper lovely, innit.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY: Gladiator Club –

First Friday of the month party time with Klub Kakofanney, tonight with fusion-pop crew Papa Nui, folksters Firegazer and electro-pop singer Mila Todd.
BLUES PEOPLE: The Cornerstone, Didcot – Singer and guitarist Mark Harrison and storyteller David Freeman host a night of live blues music and stories from the genre’s history.
DURAN DURANISH: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tribute night.

SATURDAY 7th
DAY OF THE DEADBEATS 16: Isis River Farmhouse – The Deadbeat Apostles return to action with another free DOTD celebration, kicking out soulful blues, country and classic rock, led by the twin vocal talents of Michelle Mayes and Mike Ginger. They’re joined by blues rockers Ragged Charms and The Scott Gordon Band.
RED SNAPPER + INK PROJECT: O2 Academy – London’s pioneering acid jazz instrumentalists build up to the release of their first album since 2014 with a short UK tour, the band – original trio Ali Friend, Richard Thair and David Ayers now permanently joined by saxophonist Tom Challenger – together continuing to mix and meld jazz, dub, drum&bass, breakbeat and hip hop while collaborating with MCs and instrumentalists from across myriad genres.
TIME WARP!: The Bullingdon – Club night playing classics from *The Rocky Horror Show* alongside Queen, Bowie, Madonna, Prince, ABBA and more.
HIPSHAKIN’: Harcourt Arms – 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul.
MUSIC 4 UKRAINE: The Old Anchor, Abingdon – Benefit for Ukrainian war relief charities with Making Music in Abingdon.

SUNDAY 8th
WHYTE HORSES: The Bullingdon – Exotic mix of psychedelia, cosmic folk, indie spangle and 60s-style French pop from Don Thomas’ shifting collective whose expansive live line-up has previously featured La Roux, Melanie Pain and John Grant.
THE DIVINE COMEDY: The New Theatre – Neil Hannon’s wry, literate chamber pop ensemble bring his new Best Of album, ‘Charmed Life’, to town following his show here back in 2019, the eternal champion of the underdog still a potent pop force two decades after his commercial peak with hits like ‘National Express’, ‘The Frog Princess’ and ‘Something For the Weekend’.
CHILDREN OF UKRAINE FUNDRAISER: The Royal Blenheim (2pm) – A full day of live music in aid of UNICEF working in Ukraine with sets from Beard of Destiny; Mila Todd; Alex van Roose; Leon P Fields; Domi; Caola McMahon, and Jordan Mernyj. Free entry with donations welcome.
NOSFERATU LIVE SCORE SHOWING: Ultimate Picture Palace – Bristol’s Minima perform a live soundtrack to FW Murnau’s classic adaptation of the Dracula legend.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms

FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.30pm) – Funk, swamp blues, psychedelia, ska and folk from the local stalwarts.
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)
LIZA MARSHALL: The Brewery Tap (5pm) – Acoustic Americana and pop.

MONDAY 9th
ANAMANAGUCHI + PLANET 1999: O2 Academy – Peter Berkman and James DeVito’s synth power-pop and chiptune crew continue to mix up the disparate influences of The Beach Boys, Weezer, Japanese animation, vintage video games and absurdist comedy.
MARGO CILKER: The Listening Room, Thame – Americana, country rock and folk in the vein of Lucinda Williams, Townes Van Zandt and Gillian Welch from Oregon’s rising star at tonight’s Empty Room show, the singer and guitarist touring her new album, ‘Pohorylle’.
FAIRPORT CONVENTION: Nettlebed Folk Club – Ahead of their annual Cropredy gathering, the folk-rock fountainheads head out on what’s become an almost equally traditional tour of small folk clubs for a more intimate journey into over half a century of traditional and contemporary English folk songs, from songs from most recent album ‘Shuffle & Go’ to timeless classics like ‘Matty Groves’ and ‘Meet on the Ledge’.

Wednesday 4th
JOCKSTRAP: The Jericho Tavern
When the genre walls came down all those years ago, few people could have imagined the sometimes dizzying mix’n’match’n’mix-some-more mayhem we’d get from bands like Jockstrap. Even their name doesn’t fit: an ugly macho word that conjures unwelcome images of large sweaty blokes in gym changing rooms rather than the often cherubic vocals of singer and violinist Georgia Ellery who formed Jockstrap with singer and electronics chap Taylor Skye when the pair met at London’s Guildhall School of Music back in 2016. Finding any kind of pigeonhole to fit the duo into is impossible, so just imagine a sweetly chaotic fusion of hip hop, techno, synth-pop, string-laden easy listening and silver screen jazz, one that scurries along on skittering electronic beats one moment and luxuriates in waltz time or boss nova the next. Or maybe where Broadcast and James Blake meet Marilyn Monroe at a basement rave. The pair found a natural home for their unnatural sounds with Warp Records who have put out their frenetically eclectic EPs so far and tonight is Oxford’s first chance to see the band live. In a world going mad, wonky bonkers pop like this is probably exactly what we need.



TUESDAY 10th
OSEES: O2 Academy – John Dwyer’s shape-shifting, name-changing, uber-prolific garage rockers hit town – *see main preview*
THE CURSE OF LONO: The Jericho Tavern – Darkness on the edge of town with London’s gothic Americana crew – *see main preview*
SAMANTHA SAVAGE SMITH + GARDEN CENTRE + MAX BLANSJAAR + NOOR: The Library – Divine Schism host Canadian indie-folk artist Samantha Savage Smith with support from creep-pop crew Garden Centre, lo-fi garage-pop chap Max Blansjaar and neo-soul singer Noor.
INTRUSION: Kiss Bar – Vintage and contemporary goth, ebm, industrial and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 11th
DAZE + BEN PILSTON + BEN PINCHES: The Bullingdon – Airy electro-pop from Daze at tonight’s It’s All About the Music showcase.
PROGRESSION: The Bullingdon – Fortnightly breakbeat, electro, funk and disco club night.
ILLUMINATI HOTTIES + DUCKS LIMITED + DREAM PHONE: The Jericho Tavern – Divine Schism hosts Sarah Tudzin’s ‘tenderpunk’ crew Illuminati Hotties, touring second album ‘Let Me Do One More’, mixing breezily ebullient pop-punk and balladry.

THURSDAY 12th
STRAY: The Bullingdon – The Haven Club hosts Del Bromham’s reformed 60s and 70s bluesy hard rockers, the band – at one time, managed by Charlie Kray – having recently released a career-spanning Best Of album.
SEMI-DETACHED: The Bullingdon – Garage, hip hop and house club night with MPH and Burt Cope.
KSI: O2 Academy – The Youtuber, boxer, rapper, Celebrity Goggleboxer and general everywhere chap finally, possible, definitely, maybe, plays his long-since sold-out show, rearranged from, well, pretty much every month since whenever.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 13th
SEA GIRLS: O2 Academy – Sold out show from London’s anthemic indie guitar popsters, in the vein of Magic Gang and Fickle Friends and back in town in conjunction with Truck Store ahead of their show at Truck Festival this summer, playing songs from 2020’s debut album ‘Open Up Your Head’ and recent Number 3 follow-up ‘Homesick’.
TONY McMANUS & JULIA TOASPERN: St Michael at the Northgate – Celtic guitar duets, classical, traditional and self-penned songs and fiddle tunes from Tony and Julia. Mcmanus hailed as the best Celtic guitarist in the world by the late John Renbourn.
BANGERZ & LASH: The Bullingdon – Pop, indie and club anthems.
SUICIDE NOTES + TRAUMA UK + DAS GHOUL: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Sleazy glam-rocking from The Suicide Notes, keeping the spirits of Motley Crue and Hanoi Rocks alive and joined tonight by heavyweight punks Trauma UK and horror-rock crew Das Ghoul.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Bay Tree, Grove

SATURDAY 14th
SCOTT BRADLEY’S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX: O2 Academy – Iconic hits given



Tuesday 10th
CURSE OF LONO: The Jericho Tavern
Darkness on the edge of town is the order of the day tonight as the reliably excellent Empty Room Promotions bring London’s Americana stars back to town after their impressive showing here back in 2019. Curse of Lono – named after an obscure Hunter S Thompson book – mix up rich, harmony-heavy American roots with gothic rock, a driving, cinematic sound that’s seen them heading out on tour with Chuck Prophet, Steve Earle and Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes among others since they formed back in 2015. Maybe it’s the British weather, but while the quintet are rooted in American roots music, they’re less wide open highways, more the dark streets of their native London. Frontman Felix Bechtolsheimer in particular has a weather-beaten growl of a voice that betrays issues from an earlier musical life and this brings a rawness to his band’s mix of bluesy country rock, r’n’b and barroom honky tonk. Two albums, including 2018’s ‘As I Fell’, recorded in Joshua Tree, have cemented their reputation as one of the best British Americana bands and not long before the first lockdown they won the coveted Bob Harris Emerging Artist Award at the UK Americana Awards. They have as much in common with The Doors as they do the likes of Wilco and with those road now open again for them to travel they’re a band whose darkness is going to be seeing a lot more light in years to come.

an ironic makeover by pianist and arranger Scott Bradley and his big band, remodelling songs by everyone from Radiohead and The Cure to Lorde, Meghan Trainor and Miley Cyrus into vintage 20s jazz standards, Irish folk ballads, classic cabaret numbers and 50s doo-wop.
MUSICAL MEDICINE ft. COLLEEN ‘COSMO’ MURPHY & KIROLLUS: The Bullingdon – Disco, house and disco-house party time with a special guest set from queen of New York city’s disco underground Colleen Murphy.
KNIGHTS OF MENTIS: Harcourt Arms – Expansive rustic folk inspired by Irish and American traditions, mixing romantic balladry with raucous folk-dance.
BOSS KELOID + OUR MAN IN THE BRONZE AGE + UNDERBELLY + WALL: The Jericho Tavern – Epic prog-laced stoner-doom from Wigan behemoths Boss Keloid at tonight’s Buried in Smoke show, the band touring their most recent album, ‘Family the Smiling Thrush’. Reformed grungecore titans Underbelly and instrumental beats’n’riffs beasts Wall support.
COUNT SKYLARKIN’S REGGAE REDEMPTION: Tap Social – Monthly reggae session at the Social.

SUNDAY 15th

BOB VYLAN: The Bullingdon – London’s punk-grime warriors fight the power – *see main preview*
BEAR’S DEN: Truck Store – Plaintive folk-pop from Communion Records signings Bear’s Den, playing an intimate instore show to promote new album ‘Blue Hours’ – order your copy via Truck to secure your ticket.
TONY HADLEY: The New Theatre – Spandau Ballet hits, solo songs and standards from the big-voiced fella.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)
LAURA WILLIAMS: The Brewery Tap (5pm) – Solo set from the singer and guitarist who has played and sung with Rod Stewart, Craig David and John Legend.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.30pm) – Rock and blues classics from the veteran local guitarist and chums.

MONDAY 16th

ALT.J : O2 Academy – Already sold-out stripped-down, semi-acoustic set from the Mercury-winning

Tuesday 10th

OSEES: O2 Academy

There is a particular strain of artist whose mission seems to make it difficult for all but the most devoted – and single-minded – fanatic to keep up. Usually because they’re so prolific, which is certainly the case with Osees, whose studio album count to date is 26, plus a fair few live and compilation albums, but given they only began releasing them in 2003, that’s some going. But beyond this almost compulsive release schedule, there’s the regular name changes to contend with. The band – centred around John Dwyer and featuring a rotating cast of touring and studio bandmates – began life as Orinoka Crash Suite, a side project for Dwyer who was in various other bands in his native San Fransisco. From there they became OCS, the The Oh Sees, then Thee Oh Sees, Oh Sees and more recently Osees. By the time tonight’s gig happens don’t be surprised to see a new name on the poster and a couple more albums in the catalogue. Dwyer’s philosophy has always been that, free from the usual record/release/tour schedule, the band could simply put out everything as soon as it was ready and then move on. Style-wise they have moved through 60s garage rock, psychedelia, blues-rock, punk, post-punk, art-rock and a few more besides, the core ethos being a free rock spirit which has earned them a reputation as one of the very best live bands on the planet. So really, whether you own all the albums or none, if visceral rock thrills are your thing, that won’t change as far as Dwyer is concerned and tonight is for fanatics and newcomers alike.



indie stars, playing an intimate show in conjunction with Truck Store to promote new album ‘The Dream’.
GRACE PETRIE + JENNY OWEN YOUNGS: The Bullingdon – Witty protest folk from singer, comedian and activist Petrie, touring her new album ‘Connectivity’ – the follow-up to 2018’s acclaimed ‘Queer As Folk’ – *MOJO*’s Folk Album of the Year. Petrie is back in Oxford having played at St. John the Evangelist last year, and having previously toured with Billy Bragg, Frank Turner and Emmy the Great as well as Josie long and Robin Ince; she has the rare talent of turning songs about zero hours contracts, welfare and LGBT rights into singalong, sometimes laugh-along anthems.
ROBERT CRAY: The New Theatre – Southern blues from the multi-Grammy-winning, Blues Hall of Fame inductee, touring his most recent album, ‘That’s What I Heard’, still a torch bearer for a funky, soulful style of blues forty years on from his debut and 80s commercial peaks ‘Strong Persuader’ and ‘Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark’.
PETER KNIGHT’S GIGSPANNER BIG BAND: Nettlebed Folk Club – Former Steeleye Spanner fiddle player Peter Knight brings a modern folk twist to traditional songs on most recent album ‘Layers of Ages’.

TUESDAY 17th

DELIGHTS + THE FOAMHEADS: The Jericho Tavern – Laidback guitar-pop inspired by War On Drugs and Fleetwood Mac from Manchester’s Delights alongside local new wavers The Foamheads.
THE PINK DIAMOND REVUE + HATE MOSS + MOTHDROP: The Library – All Will Be Well Records showcase night with Reading’s acid-techno surf-psych duo The Pink Diamond Revue alongside Italy-based Brazilian electroclash outfit Hate Moss, and local techno explorer Mothdrop.

WEDNESDAY 18th

FEET + LIME GARDEN + BULL: O2 Academy – There’s ham in them thar hills – *see main preview*
CAMILLE O’SULLIVAN SINGS CAVE: The North Wall – The renowned French-Irish singer explores the Nick Cave songbook over two nights.
RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC: The New Theatre – Tribute night.

THURSDAY 19th

CRYSTAL TIDES: The Bullingdon – Anthemic pop-punk from Portsmouth’s Crystal Tides, touring their new single ‘Honey’.
THE SHIRES: The New Theatre – Authentic Nashville-style country out of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire with duo Ben Earle and Crissie Rhodes becoming the first British country act to sign to a major Nashville record label, 2016’s debut album, ‘Brave’, becoming the first homegrown country album to go Top 10. The pair are back out on tour to promote fifth album, ‘Ten Year Plan’, their fifth straight UK Country chart Number 1.
SAN SALVADOR: St. John the Evangelist – Oxford Contemporary Music host French multi-way harmony and percussion ensemble San Salvador, singing traditional songs from the Massif Central region in their native Occitan.
CAMILLE O’SULLIVAN SINGS CAVE: The North Wall – Second night of the tribute to Nick Cave.



Sunday 15th

BOB VYLAN:

The Bullingdon

Anyone still asking where today’s protest music is haven’t been listening or looking in the right places. Punk in particular has changed and Bob Vylan are just one of its furious new faces. The London duo (Bobby and Bobbie) take all the rage and confrontation of bands like Crass, Dead Kennedys and Black Flag and sandblast it with rap and grime, shake it up like a carbonated Molotov cocktail and spray it in your face. They are no easy ride and complacent liberals are in for as rough a time of it as rightwingers as the duo give it both barrels and the middle finger to politicians, racists, police brutality, rapacious capitalism and social injustice on songs like ‘England’s Ending’ and ‘Lynch the Leaders’. The pair first attracted attention through supports to Gallows and hardcore rapper Nasca Aloe as well as collaborations with Frank Carter and Tricky but found few labels willing to touch them for their absolute militancy, so they released their music through Bandcamp, refusing to use rip-off streaming services. But now they’re coming for the wider world in a storm of uncomfortable, educational righteous fury: protest music ready to stand its ground and tell you to pick your side – no middle way. As the closing line of anti-racist anthem ‘We Live Here’ venomously proclaims: “We fucking live here, you cunt!”

TIM HINGLEY + WILL COX: The Jericho Tavern – It’s All About the Music hosts Inspiral Carpets frontman Tom, playing a solo show.
NEVADA + MONTMORENCY + VAGABONDS: Loose Cannon, Abingdon – Making Music in Abingdon host a triple bill of local live bands including Cotswold folk crew Montmorency.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 20th

BOSSAPHONIK feat. ONIPA: Cowley Workers Social Club – Your monthly dose of world jazz dance with host Dan Ofer spinning Latin dancefloor, Balkan beats, Afrobeat and more, with a live set from Onipa, featuring recent Bossa star K.O.G. alongside members of Nubian Twist, blending analogue Afrobeat, hi-life and soukous with rap and electronics.
KESTON COBBLERS CLUB: The Bullingdon – Lovely, rustic close-harmony folk from Keston Cobblers Cub – previous support to local heroes

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Stornoway – led by singing siblings Julia and Matt Lowe, the band exuding campfire warmth while finding room for pop, reggae, even jazz in their serenely bucolic songs.

TAMARA: The Jericho Tavern – Album launch show for this month’s *Nightshift* cover star – *see main interview feature*

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS: O2 Academy – Legendary Motorhead axeman Phil Campbell and his sons play a full set of ‘head classics. Time to get dirty and heavy.

DUTTY MOONSHINE BIG BAND: O2 Academy – Big band swing, bass and 1930s dance with Bristol/Oxford electro-swing act Dutty Moonshine, the band helmed by DJ and producer Michael Rack, mixing classic swing and Vaudeville with garage, grime, funk and drum&bass.

WILL POUND BAND: The North Wall – Swedish polska, Bulgarian rachenitsa, Italian tarantella, French bourees and Irish jigs from acclaimed harmonica and melodeon player Will Pound, out on a tour of the European Union to discover the links and common themes of European folk music, accompanied by Polish poet Bohdan Piasecki and a band of award-winning musicians, including members of Breabach and Nizlopi.

MOONAROON: Harcourt Arms – Traditional

Wednesday 18th
FEET / LIME GARDEN / BULL: O2 Academy

If naming your band FEET is inviting ridicule (FEET stink!) then calling your album ‘What’s Inside Is More Than Just Ham’ is probably just the next step in attracting puzzled if not downright queasy reactions. But then FEET have never really cared what people thought of them, right back to when they formed in Coventry in 2016, released a debut single ‘Petty Thieving’ and would take to the stage in kimonos and fancy hats. They had the decency to take a step back, regroup and have a rethink about what they were and wanted to be but that’s still not entirely clear: the album title is both a positive invitation and warning sticker while lyrically songs like ‘Dog Walking’ and the album’s title track are quirky-bordering-on whimsical while the music is swaggering and funky: an almost psychedelic take on post-punk and a funk-ed-up kind of Britpop, where disparate body parts of Blur, Fat White Family, Squid and Sports Team strut their thing and get a bit messy. If any of that reads like it’s meant to put you off, it’s really not: FEET were one of the absolute high points of last year’s Are You Listening? festival and seem set for far bigger things throughout 2022. Support from London/Brighton post-punk funk-pop quartet Lime Garden and airy Pavement-inspired crew Bull.



Irish songs and dance tunes from the local outfit. **COUNTERFEIT 60s: The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Classic 60s hits from The Beatles and Stones to The Who and Kinks.

SUPERNAUT: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Black Sabbath tribute.

FORTY ELEPHANT GANG + LIZZY HARDINGHAM: Harwell Village Hall – Folk, Americana and blues from the east London trio.

SATURDAY 21st

SIMPLE ft. HAAI: The Bullingdon – Oxford’s leading house and techno club night welcomes back Aussie DJ, Teneil Throssell, aka HAAI, mixing up big beats, harsh trance, Middle Eastern rave and African rhythms into her trippy, hypnotic set.

MARTIN KEMP ULTIMATE 80s: O2 Academy – The former Spandau Ballet bassist-turned-actor-turned Celebrity Goggleboxer spins classic 80s tunes.

SUBLOONICA: Harcourt Arms – Live and improvised hip hop with electronics and double bass from the new local duo.

SUNJAY + KATIE HARRIS: Tiddy Hall, Ascott-under-Wychwood – Intimate folk and blues from rising star Sunjay at tonight’s Wychwood Folk Club, the singer and guitarist having won the Wath Festival Young Performers Award as well as supporting Steeleye Span, Martin Simpson and Passenger along the way.

MAN CHOIR + MANDOLIRIUM: Oxford University Church – Community male voice choir singing shanties, Georgian laments, 80s pop hits and movie soundtracks, plus Celtic folk, bluegrass, ragtime and swing jazz from Mandolirium.

SUNDAY 22nd

LESTWEOFORGET + ARIMEA + DARKGNOSS: The Bullingdon – Complex yet melodic prog-metal from Lestweforget at tonight’s Dancing Man show, with support from local heavyweights Arimea and Darkgnoss.

CHARLIE SIMPSON: O2 Academy – The former Busted and Fightstar bookbinder-turned-rock-axe-wielder tours his new album ‘Hope Is a Drug’, which is more Soma than Peyote from what we’ve just listened to.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Harcourt Arms
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)
ABI POWELL: The Brewery Tap (5pm) – Classic covers from the 60s onwards.

MONDAY 23rd

DON’T WORRY + SPANK HAIR + SLEEPERS: The Library – London/Essex indie rockers Don’t Worry tour their second album ‘Remorseless Swing’.

SHOW OF HANDS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Steve Knightly and Phil Beer play a special low-key show at their regular haunt with a new ‘Dog Show Sessions’ set.

TUESDAY 24th

ROLLING BLACKOUT COASTAL FEVER + STELLA DONELLY: O2 Academy – The spirit of 80s Oz-pop stays strong and fresh in Fran Kearney, Joe White and Tom Russo’s Melbourne outfit, each bringing their own styles and stories to bear on the band’s sound, which takes inspiration from classic acts like The Go-Betweens, Television and The Only Ones, their wistful, romantic



Thursday 26th

PEANESS: The Bullingdon

Peaness were one of the last bands *Nightshift* saw before the first Covid lockdown and, at the time, when Brexit was the most of our worries, they were a musical hug and a smile come to make everyone in the room feel special and happy. Fast forward two and a bit years and maybe they can do the same again as they belatedly release their debut album just in time for summer. The album is titled ‘World Full of Worry’, which suggests things haven’t passed them by but musically they continue to be a ray of sunlight amid whatever gloom the world throws at them. Their effervescent, supremely-crafted harmony-heavy indie jangle pop with just a streak of grunge spit and spite about it, comes speckled with a carefree spirit, one that dances from The Shangri-La’s to The Orielles via Heavenly, Lush and Sleater Kinney – airy and relentlessly ebullient, even their sadder songs sounding like they’ve come armed with cake and mugs of tea. They’re one of those bands whose songs are so instant and simple it’s easy to miss just how dextrous and smart they can be and the bars that they do sew into the songs are, like kittens’ claws, small but sharp. Worth noting again too that while Peaness formed at Chester University, singer Jess is originally from Kidlington, so tonight is a sort of homecoming and will undoubtedly be celebrated as such.

tendencies coming with a bit of pop-punk dynamic and a tension that comes from having three distinctive leads, which has made them huge favourites with 6Music’s Marc Riley among others. Third album ‘Endless Rooms’ is out this month.

WEDNESDAY 25th

THE WAVE PICTURES: The Bullingdon – David Tattersall’s phenomenally prolific indie adventurers tour their nineteenth album, ‘When the Purple Emperor Spreads His Wings’, the band keeping the sounds of The Velvet Underground and Jonathan Richman alive in their witty, romantic guitar pop.

DUBIOZA KOLEKTIV: O2 Academy – Fusion-happy funk and beyond from Bosnia’s goodtime collective, mixing tales of their turbulent homeland with an often riotous mix and match of eastern European folk, reggae, hip hop and rock.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with TRISH CLOWES: Old

Fire Station – Saxophone virtuoso and star of the UK’s improv jazz scene Trish Clowes performs pieces from her latest album, ‘A View With a Room’, at the Spin’s monthly club night.

THURSDAY 26th

PEANESS: The Bullingdon – A hug and a smile in harmony-heavy pop form from the spiky indie janglers, touring their debut album – *see main preview*

MAHALIA: O2 Academy – Sultry, honeyed neo soul, slick r’n’b, reggae and gospel from the Leicestershire singer, returning to action with her third album, still only 23, having begun performing aged 13 and having toured alongside Ed Sheeran, Emily Sande and musical kindred spirit Jorja Smith as well as recording with Rudimental.

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

BARRICANE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Tripped-out harmony-pop and indie-folk from Barricane at tonight’s Riverside Festival and Windrush Radio show, simultaneously broadcast live on the show.

DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 27th

PUPPY: The Jericho Tavern – Vast metal riffage meets melodic grunge in Puppy’s rock world, the band touring their ‘Goat’ album, marrying Sabbath heaviosity with Smashing Pumpkins’ sweet grunge noise.

KING AWESOME: The Bullingdon – 80s rock covers.

BACK TO THE 80s: The Bullingdon – 80s club night.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Black Horse,

Kidlington

JOE TRUBY: Part & Parcel, Witney – Opening event of this year’s Witney Music Festival with house and techno DJ Joe Truby.

SATURDAY 28th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SO LONG, SPACE GIRL + VETNA + THE MAY: The Port Mahon – Gappy Tooth Industries celebrates its 20th anniversary, continuing to celebrate and champion new unsigned artists with its monthly mixed bag bills, tonight featuring emo/pop-punk crew So Long, Space Girl, tracing a line between MCR and Placebo at times; they’re joined by Anglo-Italian electronic artist Verna, mixing up psychedelia, big beat and ambient sounds, while former-Vienna Ditto fellow Nigel Firth provides furiously inventive and sometimes bonkers techno in his The May guise.

HANG MASSIVE: O2 Academy – Rhythmic ambient world sounds from the hang-playing duo. **NEW BASS ORDER X OUTLOOK LAUNCH: The Bullingdon** – Festival launch club night with DLR and more.

SCRATCH, CRACKLE & POP: Harcourt Arms

MAD ABOUT THE MOVIES: The Cornerstone, Didcot (2pm) – Robert Habermann sings songs from classic Hollywood movies, from Sinatra, Crosby and Gene Kelly to Streisand, Doris Day and Fred Astaire.

JAM HOT: Druumers Bar, Witney – Open jam session.

VODKA SHOTS: The Griffin, Witney – Witney

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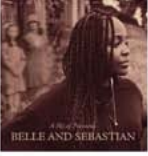
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SUPERGRASS O2 Academy

“We wanted to do Oxford, and we wanted to do it like this,” announces Gaz Coombes to a roar of approval from the sold-out upstairs room at the O2.

Homecoming shows are always something a bit special, and Supergrass gigs have always had an air of celebration about them, especially in small spaces like this. It doesn’t seem like 29 years since we first caught sight of them, playing a squatters benefit at East Oxford Community Centre, but there’s little here to show the passage of time. The stage positions are the same, even the stances; Gaz’s poise and elegant guitar

playing; Mick’s rumbling bass, held at his regulation 45-degree angle, and Danny leaning into his drum kit, almost side on. Maybe his drumming isn’t quite as wild and breakneck as we remember it, but that’s of little consequence. Rob Coombes wasn’t onstage in those early days, but he’s been an official member for the last 20 years, still an unassuming but indispensable presence behind his keyboards.

To no-one’s surprise tonight’s set comes as one hit tumbling after another, ever the best way to experience the band. ‘Moving’ was the single that marked a maturing in their songwriting, and Gaz still hits

every note with precision (it’s also one of the few Supergrass songs he’s brought into his solo career). A three-piece horn section emerge for a short run of songs starting with ‘In It For the Money’, the song that cheekily opened gigs when they reformed in 2019. After ‘Late in the Day’, ‘Richard III’ and ‘Alright’ they’re starting to sound like the ultimate singles band, yet they keep pulling more classics out of the bag.

The cartoonish quality, as captured by their logo, was always more of an asset than a burden; they arrived during Britpop but were never constrained by it, not for them the tiresome petty rivalries with other

bands. Their Oxford roots, Gaz returning here after a long spell in Brighton, further added to their innocent, carefree image, deftly sidestepping fashion and trends, but they belong to the world, even Americans taking them to their bosom, as the huge interest in this tour has demonstrated. ‘Sun Hits the Sky’ segues into ‘Lenny’ before a furious ‘Pumping on your Stereo’ brings the main set to an end.

They can’t leave without an encore and ‘Strange Ones’ has to be topped off with a glorious ‘Caught by the Fuzz’, the true cautionary tale of a misspent night in Oxford. Whether or not we’re reaching the end of the road for Supergrass it’s about as perfect a finale as we could hope for.

Art Lagun

ES / SNIFFANY & THE NITS / HE DIDNT The Library

Less slowcore, more glumcore, Nick Peel’s one-man-band he didnt is a musical raincloud, a biting drizzle in sub zero temperature and possibly what a lovelorn open mic night denizen might sound like if you burned their Bob Dylan records, replaced them with Codeine and Telescopes and gifted them every guitar pedal in the shop. Initially you worry it’ll be a bit of a trawl but he builds a shroud-like atmosphere around himself as his set progresses and you wonder if he could build his closing number up to thirty minutes it would make for a deliciously glowering set all on its own.

Sniffany & the Nits is one of those names you imagine was a drunken mishearing of an actual name, like Jah Wobble, and there’s a chaotic mania about their short and very sharp set that means whatever Sniffany is singing/screaming/gabbling about is similarly lost in translation, but it doesn’t make it any less fun, the band cutting out deceptively groovy chunks of noise that become increasingly frenetic so they sound like an art-rock dance band at

the anarchist disco, or possibly the point where Fatal Microbes meet Life Without Buildings, which is a good place to find yourself.

Es’s opening song is a bit of a mess and then their drum kit falls apart, so we get an awkward five minutes where the singer does the rounds of the front row asking if anyone knows any jokes. Stuff fixed the quartet take a lo-fi punk rock hatchet to ethereal 80s goth, particularly it seems, German 4AD stars Xmal Deutschland, with the band using keyboards in place of guitar, giving the songs a darker hue, notably on set highlight ‘Chemical’, the singer’s abrupt, almost strident delivery adding an extra biting edge as well as a pleasingly tight rein so the pocket-sized storm is contained, the tension fizzing to be allowed out. Their name makes them a hard act to seek out online but you should: their album ‘Less of Everything’ is a modern gothic punk gem.

Dale Kattack

THE OCTOBER DRIFT / THE FOAM HEADS

The Jericho Tavern

As the world teeters on the brink of nuclear war, the UK continues to be ruled by a morally bankrupt Tory government and lads sport bubble perms, it’s easy for the mind to wander back to the early 1980s where things were pretty much the same. The Foam Heads would fit in well back then too, with their heroic, chorus pedal guitar sound, which immediately reminds us of cult heroes of the time, The Chameleons, while the trio’s anthemic closing number could have TARDIS-ed in from the first U2 album. Whatever the vintage of their influences, they’re most welcome in the present day.

That climactic ending is decidedly understated compared to The October Drift’s bombastic intro, which serves to draw tonight’s modest crowd towards the stage where they remain for the next hour. The Taunton quartet are far hairier than when we first saw them tearing up the Bullingdon back in 2016 but musically they’ve remained true to their gothic noise rock, playing each song like it’s their last – songs that are sometimes a bit samey but mostly short and sharp enough to get away with it, and they can carve out a serious cliff face of noise when the mood

takes them. Moodiness being something of an ever-present as they mix gothic portent with new wave melody, at times sounding like The Libertines might have if they’d grown up listening to Bauhaus. Not that they’re sullen – their performance is energetic bordering on ebullient at times with wiry, animated singer Kiran Roy regularly taking the show into the audience.

‘Lost Without You’ is a giant wave of fuzzbomb noise, while set highlight ‘Bleed’ is darker, spidery guitar and tumbling toms bringing gothic shadows to bear before the band release the pressure and let the song soar.

After such a solidly thunderous set it feels slightly odd that they conclude on a moment of relative calm with ‘Like the Snow We Fall’, a semi-acoustic southern blues song crossed with an ancient sailors’ lament with Roy singing and sparingly plucking his guitar while drummer Chris Holmes shakes a tambourine and stomps out the rhythm on the floor with his boot, but for all that, it retains every bit as much intensity as what’s come before, and all the darkness.

Ian Chesterton

MAYA YOUSSEF St Barnabus Church

It is a said it can take half a lifetime to learn the Middle Eastern plucked zither/ dulcimer, and then half a lifetime to tune it. Fortunately Maya Youssef is a lot quicker tuning the 78 strings as you don’t want a lot of nurdling while sitting in a venue that’s so cold, despite a full house’s body heat, that one of the other musicians dons gloves when sitting out numbers.

The cold doesn’t seem to affect Youssef’s fingers, or the intensity of her concentration in what is a virtuosic display of her instrument’s range and power. The metallic sound of some of the qanum’s strings can be a harsh love/hate but piano and cello in the band smooth off some of the edges.

Maya tells us that her eight-year-old self fell instantly in love with the qanum when first hearing it through a taxi radio but the taxi driver said she’d never play it as it’s a man’s instrument. Well, he got that wrong. Her compositions, all instrumentals, are mainly based on Arabic scales but draw in other genres, particularly jazz and at least three of her band have jazz pedigrees. Born in Damascus, now living in London, it was her reaction to the Syrian war that started her composing and she now has a second, very personal album, ‘Finding Home’, out. She says she’s an optimist, believing music can heal herself and humanity and invites us on “a journey through memories and the essence of home both within and without”. The stories about how the songs got to be written are an essential part an emotional

set that’s artfully structured with frequent changes from sorrow and loss to hope. Indeed one song is called ‘Silver Lining’.

It’s understandable, given what some songs are about, that they can be a difficult listen. ‘Bombs into Roses’ uses the abrasive elements of her qanum to capture the terror before transforming into an exquisite cascade of rose petal notes. You feel her loss at not seeing her mother for six years in the achingly sad, soulful dance of ‘In My Mother’s Sweet Embrace’, and in her memories of pre-war Syria in the poignancy of the Michael Nyman-like ‘My Homeland’.

By contrast, the swinging ‘Hi/Jazz’ is a puckish tease on the stereotypical use of Hijaz scale in western music to signify “the exotic east”, and her ‘Queen of the Night’, with its sharply defined uplifting double bass line, sounds like a naughty sprite.

The musicians alongside Maya tonight helped her make the second album and it’s when, in the second half, there’s a run of tunes from that recording that the ensemble playing comes alive: ‘Soul Fever’, with qanum and keys in harmony, is bursting with feverish energy and is a highlight, as is Maya’s invitation ‘Walk With Me’, which has echoes of Ennio Morricone’s Spaghetti Western music.

The final tune, ‘Jasmine Bayati: To An Earth Angel’ is joyfully hopeful. In the end it feels Maya’s optimism might just win out.

Colin May



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HANNAH JAMES & TOBY KUHN

The North Wall

The story goes that successful English folk singer, dancer and accordionist Hannah James didn’t think she needed a cellist until a chance musical encounter with French self-styled post-classical player Toby Kuhn; now they’re an adventurous, open-minded duo in which Kuhn is a full partner not just an accompanist.

James is a key figure in revitalising not only percussive dance but also a wordless vocal style called tune singing, aka as diddling (yes, really), and her dancing foot percussion and wordless tune singing are much in

evidence across tonight’s songs and instrumentals, but while she and Kuhn draw on their English and European hinterland they aren’t hemmed in by these traditions. Though James claims their reflexes are a little rusty, the interplay between her vocals, accordion, and foot percussion and the cello seems pretty sharp to us. The pair create a diverse palate of sounds and atmospheres with some songs inspired by the mountains, forests and folklore of Slovakia where James now lives. And they can surprise us as they do with the

accordion and cello instrumental maelstrom with which they close out their opener.

James is in good form vocally, the young girl voice she finds for ‘In the Gloomings’ meshing with Kuhn finger picking the cello like a guitar, adding an extra edge to what is a “kiss off” song in the vein of Dylan’s ‘Don’t Think Twice’. She’s so earthy singing ‘Ragged Woman’ you can hear the grit under her finger nails, and she finds a grief-stricken lower register for the lady “full of woe” in the traditional ‘Three Ravens’, which is made even

more sorrowful by Kuhn’s cello. Her song writing too is as impressive. ‘The Giant’ is a fable about stereotyping for which she uses the ethereal sound of a Sansula thumb piano; the agile lyrics of ‘Jealousy’ cleverly personify and berate the green eyed monster (“Jealousy. what have you done...”); ‘Faint and Weary Traveller’ is a heartfelt number about having to move on to find where you want to be, with a Bulgarian dance tune played with fervour by Kuhn. It looks like Hannah James and Toby Kuhn have found where they want to be in the world, and we’re the lucky beneficiaries.

Colin May

By contrast, Melt Banana’s show starts with the minimum of fanfare. The Tokyo duo simply take to the stage, quietly set up in front of a bank of amps the size of a Transit van, and then immediately and efficiently commence pummelling. The constituent parts are straightforward – intense beats triggered by a glowing handheld device that looks like a novelty TV remote, Ichiro Agata’s razorwire guitar parts, and Yasuko Onuki’s high-octane yelping – but over an hour they are mixed, merged and shuffled like the deck of a steamboat cardsharp. In fact, despite the relentless hammering, the thing you take away from this set is just how intricate and lithe the performance is, best evidenced in a quickfire parade of seven Napalm Death-length microsongs. Onuki’s vocals, although clearly influenced by hardcore, have an elasticity that places them nearer to funk or rap, and Agata’s guitar-playing, as well as being phenomenal, is not afraid to pull back from the cascades of noise for some classic rocking; we hear a riff AC/DC would be proud to own, and a chug with which Lemmy would gladly share a bottle. As the closer, ‘Infection Defective’, with its rolling Massive Attack bassline and icy crystal shards of guitar attest, Melt Banana shoot for your head, your heart, and your dancing feet at once. And all of them are killing blows.

David Murphy

ENOLA GAY / THE GURRIERS

The Jericho Tavern

A gurrier, in Irish slang, is a “low-class, tough, ill-mannered person”, and in the case of Dublin’s Gurriers it seems entirely appropriate: the quintet look like the people your parents told you to cross the road to avoid. There’s something brilliantly raw and unmodelled about them with their unfashionable haircuts and the kind of moustaches that tend to promise trouble in pubs with flat roofs. And musically they’re thrilling and slightly feral: from the bludgeoning motorik post-punk noise storm of their opening number, to the slower, more tightly wound, almost gothic track that follows. ‘Days Golden’ carries a Middle Eastern vibe about it but with a vicious guitar scree ready to send the whole thing tumbling down on your head. ‘A Little Life As Well’ is a cherry blossom blizzard that provokes an enthusiastic moshpit of camp followers and the headline act, but the set highlight is new song ‘Wait’, sprawling and atmospheric with some gorgeous Banshees-via-The Cure guitar circling raptor-like around the singer’s intense soul mining. With neighbours Fontaines DC and The Murder Capital having led the ferocious charge of new guitar talent out of Dublin, The Gurriers – still unpolished, still growing in sound and stature – look and sound ready to take the wave to the next level.

Enola Gay might wonder what they were thinking bringing such a barnstorming band along as tour support but maybe the Belfast quartet realised it was exactly the kind of nightly adrenaline shot they needed to always perform at their best. If the opening number feels a bit of a surprise with singer Fionn Reilly’s rap set over chunky hard rock riffage briefly suggesting a nu-metal revival, the balance between his often polemical vocals



and Joe McVeigh’s heavily-effected guitar soon makes for something genuinely thrilling, all reverbed voice and phaser-heavy fretplay, a finely-honed dark noise filtered through a hip hop prism, building at times to something genuinely claustrophobic – Reilly’s abrupt, staccato delivery backed by

sometimes hellish industrial noise rock and John Bonham-like beats, like The Prodigy rebuilt in a future factory by angry revolutionary cyborgs. The set ends with Reilly howling into the void while consumed by strobing green light and McVeigh dragging every possible noise out

of his instrument and you realise it’s entirely appropriate the band are named after the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. And then it’s over and it’s time to go home and the silence on a near deserted Tuesday night Walton Street is deafening.

Dale Kattack

MILA TODD / CATGOD

The Bullingdon

So delicate is Catgod’s swooning harmony pop you sometimes wonder how it can exist in the live arena without being broken into tiny pieces by ambient forces – like the constant chatter of a gaggle of yahoos near the front who, it turns out, are the next band on stage but who we won’t dignify by naming. Anyway, Catgod, playing tonight as a three-piece, just vocals, acoustic guitar and keys, with occasional flute, rise above it all, like Iggle Piggle’s little boat cresting sleepily and serenely over the waves at the end of *In the Night Garden*, mostly by dint of Cat Marriot’s crystalline voice, binding and unbinding itself to brother Robin’s, particularly on the still gorgeous ‘Heartbeat in My Hand’. Her flute brings a folky psychedelic edge to a couple of songs and they earn extra bonus points for a very respectable cover of Mazzy Star’s ‘Fade Into You’.

After her impressive instrumental electronic solo EP earlier this year, tonight finds Mila Todd refinding her voice and leading a full band as

she launches her new single ‘Noisy’. As singer with Ciphers and regular guest performer with Tiger Mendoza, Mila has proven she is possessed of one of Oxford’s finest and most versatile voices, one she puts to good use on tonight’s dreamily soulful, trip-hop-laced opener and ‘Paris’, a folky close-harmony song given warmth and space by Martin Andrews’ starlit electronics. ‘Khali’ (“about PMT”) reveals something of a Sinead O’Connor-like snarl about Mila’s voice, though musically it remains sweet and smooth at heart. We’re starting to think maybe she could show those teeth and talons a bit more and right on cue we get set highlight ‘Stubborn’, the electronics heavier, the drumming energetic and jazzy, the whole thing far more imposing. And it’s immediately followed by ‘Mouthy’, a homage to the Suffragettes and all those who won’t shut up and do as they’re told. Its dubby hip hop and feminist proclamations, more spoken word than singing, take Mila into M.I.A. territory, fully reveal her political activist side and prove that just when you think you’ve heard every side of her talents, she’s capable of pulling a new one out of the hat.

Dale Kattack

Gurriers photo by John Leeson

WHAT’S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music.
This month it’s **KINGSLEY ‘KING’ BOYDEN** *and he’s a* **YOUTH MUSIC PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR.**

How long have you worked in this job? “I set up the studio and youth project in 2018. We greatly expanded the youth project at the start of the pandemic. My first real experience in a studio was in 2010; I went to Bogota in Colombia to produce two albums with a charity that works with young people affected by the drugs trade.”

What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? “Learning how to make people feel comfortable – whether that’s working with a new artist, someone’s first time recording, or with helping a young person with anxiety. However well-rehearsed or talented an artist is, if they don’t feel comfortable performing in front of you, you’ll never get their full potential. By creating an environment where people feel at ease, you’ll make sure you’re getting the best takes possible.”

What’s been the single biggest highlight of your career so far? “Seeing the massive transformation that can occur in young people as a result of music and mentoring. Young people often come to us in real crisis. Luckily, music has this power to engage with and act as a catalyst in creating positive changes in peoples lives. Many times, I have seen young people go from being completely shut down or paralysed by anxiety or trauma, to becoming confident, outgoing, happy and sociable young adults who managed to rebalance and find their place in the world.”

And the lowlight? “It can sometimes be tough working to support young people who are experiencing very extreme circumstances in their lives. We regularly see young people going through crippling anxiety, mental health crises and trauma; some have suffered abuse, crime or exploitation. What’s really hard is



seeing how many times they have been let down by adults or organisations, or how they simply ‘fell through the cracks’.”

How much and how did Covid affect your job? “Initially we were forced to close the studio so our commercial bookings went to zero overnight, but after the first lockdown we were able to reopen to deliver the youth work project. Because we work with vulnerable and marginalised young people, we were classed as essential key work so since the first lockdown we have been continuing; luckily this has kept us very busy as we have managed to deliver over 700 hours of bespoke music making sessions last year.

Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist? “I meet so many incredible artists through my work. I could fill the rest of this page if I listed them all, so to avoid offending anyone by forgetting to shout them out, I want to honour the late Sonorous, an incredible MC who sadly passed away. He is honestly one of the most talented lyricists I have ever heard and when I listen back to his old tracks it gives me chills. I think he

upped the bar for Oxford rap. There was just something about his flow that was so cold! And he was always such a humble person.

What’s the single most important piece advice you’d give to someone wanting to do your job? “Remember to treat them with the same respect you are hoping from them; talk to them as equals and remember that they might be mistrustful or fearful of adults. It’s your job to provide them a safe and supportive environment, somewhere for them to thrive.”

Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work? “I certainly have. We often record voiceovers; I have done some very questionable adverts for big brands. I remember I had just finished an advert for Ronseal when I got a call from a mate who told me he had just recorded a rap for an advert for a very large phone manufacturer, he was also questioning whether he had ‘sold out’. We agreed not to tell others about this, ha ha!”

Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what? “Honestly, I love working in a studio, and running the youth project, However I wouldn’t mind swapping to work in one of the big studios like Abbey Road, or somewhere with sunshine and beaches.”

Are you rich? “Nah. However, I feel privileged that I am able to earn a living through doing what I love.”

Do you consider your job glamorous? “There is a misconception that working in a studio is glamorous. It can be really hard work: long hours, regularly doing twelve-hour days, often seven days a week. But if I can spend all day making instrumentals and recording with young aspiring musicians, I can’t complain!”

What’s your favourite thing about Oxford’s music scene? “I always tell aspiring artists that you have to conquer your own city before you can conquer others. We are lucky that Oxford is small enough that you can get yourself heard and make a name for yourself, whilst also being a city that is internationally recognised. It’s produced some incredible talent and it really is a formidable force on the UK’s music scene. Ultimately, it’s the people that make the music scene what it is.”

INTRODUCING....

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

TOM WEBBER

Who is he?
Tom Webber is a 21-year-old singer-songwriter from Didcot. He began his musical life busking outside M&S on Oxford High Street and outside The Bodlean as well as playing open mic nights at The Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot. After starting uni he recorded his debut EP as part of his course. One song, ‘Martha’, attracted some attention and after a gig at The Dolphin in Wallingford he played his debut Oxford show at The Jericho Tavern in November last year. This month he is out on tour supporting Nick Lowe, with festival appearances at Truck, Cornbury and Henley lined up. A new single, ‘Here With Me’, is on Spotify now.

What does he sound like?
An old head and voice on young shoulders. Growing up listening to classic rock’n’roll and soul, Tom has the sweet and smooth, yet rough-hewn and weary voice of Sam Cooke or Ben E King with the looks and feel of a classic 1950s teen idol thrown in. Add a lively dash of skiffle, a sprinkling of doo-wop, a splash of Spanish-style guitar picking and the romantic outlook of Richard Hawley and you have a timeless pop star in the making.

What inspires him?
“People, new places and finding new music. I’m currently on tour and going to places I’ve never been to; even Leeds, for instance – I’ve never been ... what a great venue City Varieties Club is, and very nice people! There’s a lot of new stuff going on for me right now and I’m just taking it all in!”

His career highlight so far is:
“Getting the chance to go on the road with Nick Lowe.”

And the lowlight:
“There has been no lowlight yet as far I am concerned.... hopefully there won’t be.”

His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:
“BMW – a great three-piece combo.”



If he could keep one album in the world, what would it be?
“‘Hard Day’s Night’ by The Beatles.”

When is his next local gig and what can newcomers expect?
“I guess as I write this it’s currently Cornbury Festival on the Acoustic Stage on the Sunday; I’m really happy to be playing the final Cornbury and on their final day, though it’s a sad day for festival goers. I’ll be playing some acoustic tunes on my guitar: new songs and a few classic oldies.”

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxfordshire music are:
“Favourite is the variety of acts that are playing around Oxford and areas; least is the lack of funding support for venues by the council.”

You might love him if you love:
Sam Cooke; Ben E King; Nick Lowe; Richard Hawley; George Ezra; Lonnie Donegan.

Hear him here:
Tom Webber Music on Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon.

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Dr SHOTOVER: Rock Garden

Ah, there you are, Young Horseradish - welcome to the East Indies Club bar and orangery. Pull up a shrub and buy us all a drink. I'll take a Lough Peatie off you, thank you very much. Now that golf has (literally) had its chips, they tell me that gardening is the 'New Rock & Roll'. *Who* tells me? Well, Robert Plant for one. Oh, and Brandon Flowers. (See how easy this is?) Ok, ok, here's one for you. Lemmy, Richard Ashcroft and Notorious B.I.G. are doing some gardening. Ashcroft is in charge of those little basket things which you keep blooms in. Notorious is looking after the implements used for breaking up the soil. Lemmy, a bit of a landscape artist, is super-keen on planting little maple trees, and insists on specific tools for doing the job. Ashcroft [*moaning as usual*]: 'Ey, lads, the trugs don't work'. Notorious [*helpfully*]: 'Want one of my hoes, fella?' Lemmy [*holding hands out impatiently*]: 'No, you muppets – the acer spades! The acer spades!' [*Small drum roll*]... Ahem... thank'ee very much, ladies & gents, I'm here all week! [*Dr S takes a bow as a ripple of half-hearted applause breaks out around the croquet lawn*].

Oh, suit yourselves, ingrates. I'm off for an Eartha Kitt.

Next month: We Care Allotment



‘She loves yew, yeah yeah yeah’

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

The centrepiece of May 2002 was the **Oxford Punt**, the annual showcase of Oxford’s emerging music talent, run by *Nightshift* and featuring 19 acts across seven venues. With Oxford no longer having a single regular city centre gig venue, it’s a bittersweet looking back to see **Borders**, **Jongleurs**, **Genesis**, **Kiss Bar** and **Po Na Na** alongside cornerstone venues **The Cellar** and **The Wheatsheaf**. Among the acts on show were **The Young Knives**; **Sharron Kraus**; **Winnebago Deal**; **Mindsurfer**; **Chamfer**, **Harambe**; **South Sea Company Prospectus**; **Hardcoresmen of the Technopalypse**, and **Hieronymus**, although we do wonder what became of **Mr Duck**, **Varjak** and **Malkovitch**. We also wonder what became of Oxford’s venue scene.

Away from The Punt, **Goldrush** gazed out from the cover of this month’s *Nightshift*, the band hosting and performing at this month’s **Truck Festival**, the newly-announced line-up featuring local stars **The Rock of Travolta**; **Meanwhile**, **Back in Communist Russia**; **The Young Knives**; **Dustball**; and **The Four Storeys**, while the out-of-town contingent included **Caretaker**, **Lapsus Linguae** and **Jetplane Landing**.

The Samurai Seven were this month’s main interview band, launching their debut album ‘Le Sport’; the local favourites had fought their way back to action after singer Simon Williams was shot by an airgun fired from a car three years previously, nearly losing an eye. Championed by the late, great

John Peel, the Sammies recorded half a dozen sessions for Peel in their time before later morphing into **The Dirty Royals**.

10 YEARS AGO

A decade on The Punt was still showcasing what was new and exciting in Oxford music. **Tamara Parsons-Baker** opened the show and **Manacles of Acid** closed it in a shower of mangled techno and confetti cannons and in between we saw **Undersmile**; **Jess Hall**; **The Long Insiders**; **Half Decent**; **Tiger Mendoza**; **Gunning For Tamar**; **Dallas Don’t**; **ToLiesel**; **Mutagenocide**; **Kill Murray** and the much missed **Cellar Family**, while **Leftouterjoin** managed to fill **The Wheatsheaf** with so much smoke the alarms went off and they had to open all the windows in the venue. Veterans of the local scene who’d made the Sheaf their second home for many years were shocked to discover the place actually had windows.

In other news **Gappy Tooth Industries** celebrated its tenth anniversary, the monthly live music club renowned for its eclectic line-ups and policy of never booking the same act twice. **Peerless Pirates** headlined the anniversary party, joined by **Leeds’ Galaxies** and laptop popster **Gert Lassitude**. Good to see the club back and still going strong, celebrating its 20th anniversary this month.

Fixers made their second appearance on *Nightshift*’s front cover, talking about debut album ‘We’ll Be The Moon’, while **Gaz Coombes** released his solo debut, ‘Presents: Here Comes the

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

Bombs’. Highlights of the local gigging month included **Death in Vegas**, **The Skatalites** and **The Rapture** at the O2 Academy, while **Bonnie ‘Prince’ Billy** teamed up with **Trembling Bells** at **The Bullingdon**, which also hosted **The Handsome Family**, and **The Lovely Eggs** played a raucous, sold-out show at **The Port Mahon**.

5 YEARS AGO

No Punt anymore by May 2017 – the local venue scene already showing signs of decline, but we still got a celebration of local music at **Common People**, the two-day festival taking over **South Park** again after the previous year’s successful inaugural event. Up on the main stage were **Sean Paul** and **Pete Tong’s Heritage Orchestra**, playing Ibiza rave classics, the headliners joined by a cast including **Wild Beasts**, **Saint Etienne**, **The Selecter**, **Amy McDonald** and **Rag’n’Bone Man**, while **Groove Armada** and **Foals** played DJ sets. The local celebration took place on the *Nightshift*-curated Uncommon Stage, with dub reggae crew **Zaia** and rapper **ShaoDow** topping the bill, joined across the weekend by **Death of Hi-Fi**; **Rhymeskeemz**; **Kanadia**; **Desert Storm**; **Low Islands**; **Catgod**; **Vienna Ditto**; **The Balkan Wanderers**; **Leader**; **Jess Hall & Duotone**; **The Shapes** and **The Epstein** among others, while we also got to pick a pair of local acts to kick-start each day on the main stage, with **Lucy Leave** and **Coldredlight** doing the Oxford honours.

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TRACKS

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TOP TRACK

DUTCH-SARNIE

Okay, this is getting silly now, though, actually it's the least silly thing Dutch-Sarnie has sent us to date, so perhaps 'predictable' is a more apt word, though there's never anything predictable about a set of Dutch-Sarnie songs. Four submissions and four Track of the Month awards so far is their record; at what point do we just give them the trophy to keep? Having previously shown a shockingly inventive approach to sampling and song construction that's had us comparing their mischief-core to everything from Gary Numan to Lee 'Scratch' Perry and The Orb, this time round Dutch-Sarnie arrives with a pandemic-themed quartet of tracks that brings the mood down several notches on previous offerings but without losing all the fun. 'Virus City' for example, with its copious use of dialogue samples from some unidentified plague movie, is motorik and spangled shoegaze that wouldn't sound out of place on a Public Service Broadcasting album, while the more downbeat 'Brewing Up' and 'For Highs & Lows' are densely textured fuzz drones, all reverbed guitar, verging on post-metal at times but closer to Mogwai or early Flying Saucer Attack, dotted with samples of Tory minister covid announcements, and if that threatens to darken anyone's mood there's 'Banwen Rave-ing' to bring back the party, with its grimy, synth squelches and squiggles and primitive, playful acid house vibe. All of which proves that even when they're at their most sensible, Dutch-Sarnie are still better company than most of the rest of this month's pile could ever be.

THE BOBO

Even dead-eyed cynics like *Nightshift* enjoy a heart-warming story once in a while in between sneering at, well, everyone, and thus it is that The Bobo, whose collaborations with Kid Kin have provided us with some absolute gems in recent times, proffers her new song, 'One By One', the lyrics of which were words written by her dad and made into a song for him as a surprise pressie. One

that dad hopefully cherishes since it's all rather lovely: an autumnal electro-acoustic ballad with its breathy vocals, the scrape of fingers over guitar strings and the hum of distant electronics to give it a warm, wafty feel. Given this was the last track we listened this month to and several others had us imagining John Lewis adverts while simultaneously imagining machine gun rampages, it's encouraging that this is far too brittle and fragile to be considered a soundtrack to selling stuff to people who don't need it. As comfortingly chilly as a mug of hot chocolate and a chunky knit jumper in an igloo.

UNO MAS

The difference between US and UK sitcoms, it has been said, is that the former are created by teams of execs in shiny smoked glass offices, honing and polishing punchlines until they shine and can be seen coming from miles away, while the latter are more likely to be written by a couple of weirdoes in a garden shed. Uno Mas sound like a band created in one of those sterile office environments, marketing execs all adding their ideas as to what will please the right demographics and removing anything that might be too abrasive or, god forbid, interesting. The band themselves tell us they make "fast-paced songs with catchy lyrics and memorable melodies," which tells us both nothing and everything. They also tell us they "love a party", possibly one with a happy atmosphere. On their song 'Jungle', we get beefy indie rock riffage, exuberant backing vocals and a festival-friendly chorus, just like the marketing department asked for. We're told it's music for fans of The Vaccines, DMA's, Foals, Courteeners and, oh yes, Arctic Monkeys, and you can see how they came by that conclusion: by sticking bits and pieces of all of them in a blender and making musical soup; it's easily digested, flavourless glop. It's music by committee. By contrast The Bobo's song sounded like it was made in a shed. Can you guess which one fills our souls and our bellies with joy?

MARLIA RAE

Talking of lack of substance, last time round we suggested Marlia Rae's song 'So High' was somewhat lacking in such things and she hopes we enjoy this new one better. It's called 'S.Y.C.K!' (Since You Came Knocking) and it's... nice. Fluffy. It's polite and precise pop-inflected r'n'b, or maybe r'n'b-inflected pop that we can't but help hold up alongside local starlet Chiika and compare unfavourably, lacking so much of the funk and sass and sheer force of personality that Chiika ladles into her music. Much like her last offering this is well constructed lightweight pop with just a

hint of homemade charm about it – notably in Marlia's harmonies – but ultimately it's too smooth to have any emotional traction and sounds like the soundtrack to a bank advert, or something to do with probiotic yoghurts.

ECHO VECTOR X

Not, as the same almost suggests, an ITV2 fly-on-the-wall series about the coastguard or a rural crime police department, but an Oxford-Ohio electro-pop duo whose song 'Breathe' comes accompanied by a suitably retro-futurist video featuring lots of long-exposure footage of urban freeways at night, all blurred tail lights and skyscrapers. It also features a lot of car tyres, to the point we're starting to think it's an actual advert for Goodyear, at least until the footage of new tyres being fitted is replaced by footage of vast mountains of used tyres, at which point it could be an advert for Extinction Rebellion. There's also a fair bit of footage of a fire juggler, which could be an advert for an experimental industrial circus coming to town. Musically this is rather neat neon-lit retro synth-pop that might have escaped from an early-80s Italian minimal-wave compilation. It's deliberately artificial and yet it feels considerably more alive than most of the ostensibly organic music elsewhere in the pile.

SCENE IT ALL

Scene It All were reviewed here at the tail end of last year and we quite enjoyed their fuzzy power-pop with its new wave influences, despite their frankly terrible band name. The name remains though the buoyant pop-punk has been replaced with a more lovelorn form of Noughties emo that almost demands to come accompanied by a video of people carrying lighted flares amid the darkness. It's slightly ungainly but the better for it, the song on the verge of tripping over itself as the band aim to lift the chorus to lighters-aloft arena rock level. It's a bit of a comedown mood-wise from that previous offering but isn't too mopey and, in a rare display of magnanimity, we decide to give them the benefit of the doubt.

GARIENT

Particularly since compared to this putrid puddle of ponderous pomposity it's an absolute joy. Garient has been sending us terrible songs so regularly and for so long now we wonder at what point it becomes harassment, but he wants to know what we think so we'll keep telling him. We think it's dreadful. This song is called 'No Love Anymore' and sounds like a discarded Noel Gallagher b-side fished out of the bin and sung by the wide-mouthed frog from the old joke. It's one long, directionless guitar solo allowed

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

to wallow and waddle to its conclusion without anyone involved realising what was really needed was a good hard smack in the teeth to make it stop. Although at some point someone did obviously think it needed a bit of a psychedelic edge to it, which basically manifested as pressing a couple of buttons on the console to give it a slightly phased effect. Dear God above, this makes Stereophonics sound like The Cardiacs and at some indistinct point in its overlong existence it fades away into inconsequentiality, like the smell of a fart in a crowded room. After which autoplay treats us to Garient playing a cover version of 'Slide Away' that makes the original sound like a prog-jazz opera scripted by Sun Ra, Captain Beeheart and The Residents. And yet, somehow, it leaves us feeling less bereft than what comes next.

TOILET TRACK

RITZY KIDS

"The page you're trying to view doesn't exist," is the message we're faced with when following Ritzy Kids' link. And that's as good as it gets. Because, dedicated music fans that we are, we search the band and their song out on Google and very quickly wish we hadn't. We would say that all the effort we went to to locate 'Wide Awake' (three clicks of a mouse and some typing) has left us too emotionally and physically exhausted to think of exciting and constructive stuff to say about the music but you could inject us with a cocktail of caffeine, cocaine and distilled toddler venom and we still couldn't bring ourselves to be enthusiastic about this. This is what happens to music when someone hears something new and exciting, possibly from a few decades back, and decides what is needed is for anything and everything dangerous about it to be filleted and replaced by lowest common denominator radio-friendly pap so that undiscerning imbeciles won't feel challenged when they hum along to it and you can make a few extra quid by selling it to a marketing agency who want a featureless grey soundtrack to their latest empowering lifestyle ad campaign. In this case take something that might in the dim and distant past have vaguely resembled grunge and remake it in the style of a sub-One Direction boy band. This makes us sad but also angry: surely there should be a law introduced that you cannot make music unless you can pass a test to prove you have some spark of creativity rather than a void where your soul should be. *Nightshift* is prepared to step up to the plate for such a solemn duty, judging who shall pass and who shall be cast into the flaming lake of fire and piss. As for Ritzy Kids, "The band you're trying to hear shouldn't exist" would have been a more honest and appropriate warning.

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