

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 180
July
2010

Keep on Trucking

Truck Festival
founder **ROBIN
BENNETT** talks
about festivals,
floods and keeping
it fresh

plus
*all your local music
news, reviews and
gigs*



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TRUCK



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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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OXFORD CASTLE hosts a series of outdoor gigs in its gardens at the end of July. The Oxford Castle Concerts season features eight shows over ten nights, with highlights including the world-renowned Pasadena Roof Orchestra on Wednesday 21st, kings of swing King Biscuit & The Pleasure Boys on Sunday 25th and Three Bonzos & A Piano on Friday 30th, featuring surviving members of the 60s spoof band. Other nights feature tributes to Abba, Take That, Frank Sinatra and Two Tone Records. Tickets for all shows are available from wegottickets.com.

MICK QUINN returns to musical action this month with his new outfit, The DB Band. The Supergrass bassist follows up that band's farewell shows with a gig at the Beetroot Jam at the Port Mahon on Monday 19th July. The monthly Beetroot Jam features a mix of bands and an open jam session.

SAMUEL ZASADA launch their new EP with a set at Rapture in Witney on Saturday 7th August. The band, who played at this year's Oxford Punt, will perform songs from the new EP in store from 6pm.

FIXERS have been picked to perform at this year's T In The Park Festival in Kin-Rosshire in Scotland over the weekend of the

9th-11th July. The local outfit will play on the BBC Introducing Stage.

KEYBOARD CHOIR have a remix of Stornoway's 'I Saw You Blink' online now at Stornoway's Myspace – www.myspace.com/stornoway.

UTE AND SPRING OFFENSIVE feature on a compilation album released by Alcopop! Records this month. 'Alcopopular 4' features 26 bands from around the UK. Visit www.ilovealcopop.co.uk to order.

THE NEXT OXFORD TOWN HALL RECORD FAIR takes place on Sunday 1st August. The next one after that is Sunday 5th September.

A REMINDER THAT SS20 on Cowley Road now stock local CDs and vinyl. All Oxfordshire acts are encouraged to get in contact with either Mon or Lee at SS20 at 176 Cowley Road or on 01865 791851.

AS EVER, DON'T FORGET to tune into BBC Oxford Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best new local releases and demos as well as featuring interviews with local and touring acts. Local bands can upload tracks to be played on the show via the Uploader tool on the BBC website. Visit bbc.co.uk/oxford for more details.



THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND are amongst a host of local bands performing at this month's **Cowley Road Carnival**. Carnival is Oxford's largest celebration of local music and culture and this year it returns to its spiritual home on Cowley Road after last year's South Park event. Carnival takes place on **Sunday 4th July**, from 1-6pm, with a ticketed music event in South Park on the Saturday night.

Sunday's party features numerous live music stages and sound systems along the length of Cowley Road, with the local bands stage hosting the likes of Dead Jerichos, Ute, Winchell Riots, The Long Insiders, Borderville and Charly Coombes and the New Breed. The acoustic stage features Anton Barbeau, Samuel Zasada, The Epstein's Olly Wills, Bethany Weimers, Adam Barnes and Matt Winkworth, plus there's a variety of hip hop, folk, klezmer and punk on The Queen Of Clubs stage on Manzil Way. There's jazz and swing at the Methodist Church on Jeune Street, while Horns of Plenty and Sol Samba will lead the traditional Carnival parade, whose theme this year is Monster Machine.

Sound systems include Skylarkin, Fresh Out The Box and the Hi-Lo Jamaican soundsystem.

More details on Carnival are online at www.cowleyroadcarnival.co.uk.

With a plethora of small music festivals going on in Oxfordshire over the summer, here's a quick update on a few of them

ARCANE returns over the weekend of 30th July-1st August at an as yet undisclosed location. This year's event is dedicated to festival organiser and graffiti artist Dan Lewis, aka Halfcut Art, who died in an accident in June. Profits from Arcane will go to the Art Room charity, chosen by Dan's family. Amongst acts confirmed are Levi Roots & His Band, Borderville, Charly Coombes & The New Breed, The Goggenheim, Inflatable Buddha, The Mighty Redox, The New Moon and The Scholars. Dance music comes from Bossaphonik, Xpression Recordings, Dat Sound, Field Frequency and ZZBing. Visit

www.arcane-festival.com for more details.

FROM THE JAM, LITTLE FISH and The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band are amongst the acts playing at this year's **Commotion Festival**, which takes place at Kingham Primary School on Saturday 10th July. The family-friendly mini-festival raises money for the school as well as children's charities. Cooper Black, International Jetsetters and Jessie Grace also play as well as a local young bands Youth Idol contest and music workshops from the Witchwood School of Rock.

LIVESTOCK returns for its fourth year in Stratton Audley. The festival runs over the weekend of the 13th-15th August at the Red Lion pub and Hall Farm field, with the

emphasis on world, folk and country music. Acts lined-up to play include Lorraine Lucas & A Couple Of Cowboys, Jacquelyn Hynes & Allison Sleater, Howell & The Movements, Knights of Mentis, The Holloway Jug Band, Jali Fily Cissokho, Modeste, Amera Kheir, Bigg Taj, Tigran Aleksanyan & Andrew Cronshaw and the seemingly ubiquitous Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band. The festival also features a mini Scribefest event for poets and writers, plus a food fair. All proceeds are split between Maggie's Centre in Oxford and the Anthony Nolan Trust. Visit www.livestockfestival.co.uk for more details and tickets.

Full previews of Truck and Cornbury festivals are in this month's gig guide, from page 8.

a quiet word with

Truck Festival

Robin and Joe Bennett get groovy with Woodstock organiser Michael Lang at Truck America earlier this year



“TRUCK IS THE GODFATHER OF the UK’s small festival scene,” proclaimed *The Guardian* recently in its guide to the best small-scale music festivals in the country, awarding the event the title of Best Example To Other Small Festivals. Such praise is wholly deserved for Truck, which this month returns for its 13th outing at Hill Farm in Steventon, having started out in 1998 with a dozen or so local bands playing on a converted flatbed truck to a few hundred fans and which, in the intervening years, has expanded and constantly changed while remaining, at heart, the same festival it always was. Truck has played host to some of the best established and emerging talent from around the world, provided plenty of lasting memories and suffered from a flood that almost brought it to its knees.

TRUCK HAS LONG SINCE become an essential fixture – perhaps the essential fixture – in Oxfordshire’s music calendar, and in recent years, with the boom in boutique festivals, it’s become a cornerstone of the national festival circuit too.

The enduring success of Truck is testament to the hard work of many, many people, from the people of Steventon itself who worked from the outset to make it happen, to the myriad promoters who have been involved along the way, to the small army of volunteers who make it all run smoothly. But it’s Robin Bennett

who deserves the greatest plaudits for getting the ball running all those years ago and who continues to keep it rolling to this day.

Robin was only 19 when he decided he wanted a proper birthday party in his home village and invited bands he knew, like Nought, Arthur Turner’s Lovechild? and Charly Coombes’ Tumbleweed, to perform, alongside his own band at the time, Whispering Bob.

This year’s Truck Festival sees headline appearances from Denmark’s Mew – one of the greatest live bands Nightshift has ever witnessed – and Teenage Fanclub, a band whose bucolic indie pop seems to fit perfectly with the mood and ethos of Truck.

Joining them on a bill that covers six stages and over 120 live bands and DJs, are acts as diverse as Mercury Rev’s Clearwater Orchestra, Fucked Up, Bellowhead, Lau, 65Daysofstatic, Future Of The Left and Ms Dynamite, while the cast of local favourites and newcomers is headed by Stormoway, Little Fish, A Silent Film and This Town Needs Guns.

NIGHTSHIFT TALKED TO ROBIN as plans for this year’s Truck entered their final stages and asked him first what prompted him to organise that first festival.

ROBIN: “I went to some of the more corporate festivals in 96/97 and also saw the Woodstock movie and noticed how much the idea of ‘festival’ had changed from

celebration of great music to carefully calibrated marketing exercise. Also, I wanted to play at a festival! The only way to do that was to put one on. The name Truck was from an album ‘10 Trucking Greats’ I found in Cornwall, and the Grateful Dead & R Crumb’s ‘Keep on Truckin’ slogan, though of course the only cheap and practical stage we could use was the back of an old truck, which seemed fitting.”

What are your memories of that event?

ROBIN: “I can’t remember playing but I remember all the villagers building the scaffold over the truck stage, halfway up ladders with beer in hand: not allowed these days, of course. I do remember the sets by ATL? and Nought, who were headlining, being pretty spectacular. We hadn’t considered that it would get dark in the evenings, so apart from one burger van and the stage there was barely any lighting at all and people were stumbling around in the dark...”

How have the problems you encounter now changed through the past 12 years?

ROBIN: “In many ways they haven’t changed at all – the first year I had a lot of trouble convincing the elderly licensing officer we should be allowed to hold the event. I think having dyed yellow hair and being 19 didn’t help and it was only when some older friends in the village got involved that he said ‘yes’. The police came round to our parents’

house and told us there would be riots if we held the festival! We had to move it from the planned date in July to late September; we were very lucky to have great weather and no riots.

NIGHTSHIFT, OF COURSE, HAS been present at every Truck Festival since it began. Picking out particular highlights would require a list long enough to fill this magazine; often the best bands have been those we’ve never heard of before, tucked away on one of the smaller stages. Last year’s Truck, though, might just have been our best ever, particularly the special Oxford day on the Sunday, which seemed to epitomise the close-knit community feel of the festival. Has there been, in Robin’s eyes, a best ever Truck?

ROBIN: “Generally it’s the last one! Although it’s changed a lot it always feels like one continuing event and we just pick up from where we left off. Some people cite 2006 but I had my guitar nicked that year, so not me. In the last two years we’ve made numerous improvements to the site organisation and production so it really does get better and better.”

If you had to pick one single highlight from the past 12 years, what would it be?

ROBIN: “Perhaps the best moment for me was not in Steventon, but at the two-day flood benefit we held at Brookes during the great rains of 2007, where all the bands who’d made it through the floods, many of them from the USA, decided to play anyway; Goldrush backed Garth Hudson of The Band and Brian Jonestown Massacre jammed with Ride, so it was very special and the spirit of defiance to the elements was quite something. We rescheduled the festival because of the floods and my son decided to be born on the morning of the festival, six weeks early, so I spent the weekend in and out of hospital. So that year was a memorable one for me.”

ONE OF TRUCK’S GREATEST strengths over the years has been in keeping itself fresh by getting a shifting cast of local gig and club promoters involved to host their own stages. The Club That Cannot Be Named, Vacuous Pop, BBC Introducing, You! Me! Dancing! and Bob Harris have all been involved at various times, while Simple and Fresh Out The Box are among the club nights who keep things alive into the wee small hours. What have each of these people brought to Truck? Is

there a drive to keep things fresh every year?

ROBIN: "Truck has always thrived on contrasts in musical styles; from the first year we established the format that when the bands finish it turns into something of a rave – more like a superclub these days – and that the louder bands should play in the cowshed. Since early on we let other people book the barn because, while we do love to have our friends and the Truck regulars play every year, we also recognise that it makes for a better festival to have variety of programming. The Fresh Out The Box guys have been involved on the DJ side since the very beginning and they've now brought in a whole new field, Boxford, as well as programming the Cowshed Rave."

What new or different stages will there be this year?

ROBIN: "We are bringing back the Pavilion stage, which will feature a taste of some of our favourite local entertainment entrepreneurs: comedy from Free Beer Show, poetry with Hammer & Tongue, Catweazle open performance and cabaret from Queen of Clubs. This year Bob Harris will be presenting an East Nashville special with Elizabeth Cook and Red Beet Records. We're also introducing Dusty's Birthday Bonanza, which is going to be my birthday party!"

EARLIER THIS SUMMER, TRUCK made their first foray Stateside with Truck America, working on the same small festival principles as the UK version and set in the picturesque Catskill Mountains, close to the site of the original Woodstock Festival. What prompted the idea?

ROBIN: "Ever since we toured the US with Mark Gardener, we felt there was space for our type of event in the US, and later visiting the area where Woodstock was held, we reached the same conclusion as Michael Lang, the original Woodstock organiser: that it's the perfect area for a festival – close to New York but beautifully rural and full of musicians. Joe [Robin's brother and bandmate] and I were lucky enough to play with Mercury Rev and Gary from the Jayhawks, amongst others, and put together a US line-up for Dreaming Spires. Neil Halstead and The Joy Formidable came from the UK and Willy Mason and Nina Violet turned up in a school bus. The location, the Full Moon Resort, is accustomed to holding weddings, so they handled many of the aspects which usually stress us out, and we were able to focus on the music. Many people said to us 'this is the best day of my life,' so I think they liked it, and they're all begging us to come back. Even Michael Lang, came along and declared it to be 'very groovy'.

WHILE TRUCK NOW SEEMS AN immovable date in the local calendar,

like so many things musical, it survives from year to year. Back in 2007 the whole thing nearly came to an end when the heaviest rainfalls in the UK for 40 years flooded the festival site on the eve of the event. With something approaching a Blitz spirit, the organisers, and bands, soldiered on.

ROBIN: "The floods were a major shock, since we'd had 10 years of almost uninterrupted sunshine. Because we didn't have weather insurance, we had to reschedule the festival to honour the existing tickets. This used up all our resources and proved the final act for the committee which had run Truck since 98, and they bowed out because the financial risks had become too much for a small voluntary group. In addition, our parents' home was badly flooded, as were the homes of many of our Truck team in Steventon and Oxford, so the flood effects were still

"We rescheduled because of the floods and my son was born on the morning of the festival, six weeks early, so I spent the weekend in and out of hospital. So that was a memorable Truck for me."

there for a long time after the waters had receded. Our mum and dad, who've always been integral to the organisation of the event, had to move out of the village for over a year. That could have been the end for the festival but Joe and I weren't prepared to see the thing which we'd been doing our whole adult lives just stop. So we set up a company to run the event and sought investment so it could carry on. Every year we have to decide whether we can do the event; it's a massive commitment of time and money. As long as the support is there we can continue to do it, and I do think it's become one of the pillars that makes Oxfordshire a good place for music."

Wood Festival was a response to those floods. Where did the idea spring from and how difficult was it to fulfil your vision for a completely environmentally-friendly festival?

ROBIN: "It was a combination of being a recent father and wanting to do a new type of festival; stumbling on Braziers Park, which is an eco-village and conscious living community, it seemed the perfect place for such an event. They already had several composting toilets built! Once we'd decided on the principle of 100% renewable power, local food and drink, and things being generally made of Wood, all we had to do was live up to it. We're lucky that there are some great people in Oxfordshire working on the same premise, like the Vaults Café, Cotswold Brewing Co, Golden Fuels

etc. and that we know so many handy carpenters. It's run three times now and has got better and better, and we are now working towards Industry Green standard – which involves measuring all our waste, emissions and impacts; we aim to be the first UK festival to get it."

SOME PEOPLE WILL

inevitably complain that ticket prices are higher again this year. For the uninitiated, how do you go about organising a festival like Truck?

ROBIN: "It really is a year-round process, and involves all kinds of unexpected activities and responsibilities. The level of oversight from official bodies is now such that we have to do things in a professional way and that costs money. Huge chunks are swallowed up by the dull things - toilets, fencing, security – and we don't like to cut corners on audio production, because

heart of Truck, from Whispering Bob, through Goldrush to Dusty & The Dreaming Spires. In addition to their regular main stage shows, the pair can usually be found together or separately joining other acts on the Truck bill, acting as backing band or simply jamming along; are they the indie Fairport Convention?

ROBIN: "We'd love to be the indie Fairport! But they are all-time legends so we have a way to go. Ultimately, we put on events because we love to play and share music, and that's still why we do it now."

What are the plans for the band?

ROBIN: "Joe and I will be playing as the Dreaming Spires; we have just recorded an EP with Sam Williams which will be available in time for the festival, and an album to follow in 2011. It's been a while since the last Goldrush tour so it's exciting to be doing this stuff again and starting from scratch."

Any special guests with you?

ROBIN: "Laurence Colbert will be joining us on drums. Joe and I will be playing with Mercury Rev for their improvised soundtrack to Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising* film, which should be a nice follow up to last year's Damo Suzuki extravaganza." While Truck's charm comes partly from its small size, Robin surely dreams of being able to attract the biggest and best bands in the world to play. Given an unlimited budget, which single act would he like to headline Truck?

ROBIN: "Radiohead backing Neil Young. We'll call that a single act."

Which acts, other than ones you're involved in, are you most looking forward to seeing this year?

ROBIN: "Mew and Bellowhead, in their different ways, are both renowned for putting on incredible live shows. I gather Mew are bringing a massive lighting rig, so I'm looking forward to that; and hearing the Fanclub play 'Everything Flows' will be sweet. DJ Zinc and Ms Dynamite, of course!"

Finally, after all these years of organising Truck and dealing with hundreds of different bands, there must be some good salacious Truck gossip to recount? Some star-studded scandal?

ROBIN: "Surprisingly, the most salacious scandal we've had was actually at the first Wood Festival! Two environmentalists who should've known better were caught *in flagrante* in a yurt that was actually somebody's house – and were chased out by the owner. The female of the species was forced to borrow a pair of underpants from our head of security as she had no clothes left..."

Truck Festival takes place over the weekend of the 23rd-25th July at Hill Farm in Steventon. Visit www.thisistruck.com for ticket and line-up details.

that's what it's all about! Since running the event on a business footing, we have to pay VAT of course, which means 17.5% of the ticket income heads straight to the Chancellor. We also have all the usual overheads and staff costs. Most festivals break even on ticket sales and make money from food concessions, bars and sponsors; Truck has no commercial sponsors, and all proceeds from food and drink last year were donated to charity, over £50,000. No other comparable event I know of does this. I understand why people might complain, because the festival was £5 in 1998, but it really is a very different beast now. It's still cheaper than most festivals I've seen advertised. We always set the ticket price as low as we can."

Presumably most of the local residents are behind Truck? Any problems with the neighbours?

ROBIN: "We have recently been subject to several hearings, as all events are, after one or two noise complaints last year. Of course, people have a right to complain but we were amazed by the volume of letters of support and local residents' signatures to a petition in favour of the event; the council said it was the most they'd ever received. Steventon is proud to have Truck and a great many local residents are involved in the festival."

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, Robin and Joe Bennett's own musical projects have always figured at the

RELEASED

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MUNDANE SANDS

'Mundane Sands'

(Own label)

We reviewed Mundane Sands' demo a couple of months back but here's the band's full debut album hot on its heels. Most of what we thought of that demo still stands; if anything familiarity increases their appeal, particularly album opener 'Wishing Well', a wistful, rough-hewn folk-rock lament that pitches Alan Foulkes' husky, slightly wasted voice centre-stage, somewhere between Chris Rea, Robbie Robertson and Mark Knopfler, while an accordion wheezes softly, almost hauntingly behind him. Similarly 'Blow Me Home', the vocals cleaner cut, more questing, less downtrodden and sweetly complemented by Rachel Hughes' crystal-cut backing vocals. In fact it's the female vocal performances of Rachel, along with Georgie Stickells on occasion, that really lift Mundane Sands out of the ordinary. When the album starts to get slightly formulaic after the halfway mark, on songs like 'See The Eagle Fly' and 'Tired Clothes', Rachel brings light and life to the songs when they might otherwise sink into generic folk-rock somnolence.

When Mundane Sands err more towards the rock side of things, as on 'Setting Sun', they struggle, all Stones-y chug and boogie, but they come into their own on the more reflective 'Goodbye Mrs Robinson', accordion rather than



guitars taking the lead, a feeling of early Dire Straits permeating the moody lullaby, while the self-titled album closer shows the band's gentle charm and not insignificant magic more fully. But it's 'Rathmullan Bay' that really shows Mundane Sands as capable of something genuinely special, Georgie Stickells taking the vocal lead as the band waltz through a simply gorgeous trad-folk number in the mood of The Oyster Band's dalliance with June Tabor.

Mundane Sands' take on folk-rock is pretty traditional, but they've both the individual talents and songwriting strength to shine through. On the evidence of this debut album, you feel they're only a Cropredy Festival appearance away from some wider success.

Dale Kattack

ALPHABET BACKWARDS

'Polar Bears'

(Kittywake)

Alphabet Backwards' long-time live favourite gets a single release, doubtless to give last year's eponymous debut album a timely push now that summer's here. Not just because its lyrical theme tackles people's tokenistic attempts to thwart global warming ("If we all threw an ice cube in the sea / Could we save the polar bears?"), but also because it's absolutely perfect summer pop, giddy, wide-eyed synth-pop carried skywards by bubbles of lemonade and a sweet, sunshine snarl. It's what might have happened if Vince Clarke had befriended Billy Bragg at school and taken him down the disco on Basildon High Street instead of letting him get too militant and shouty on all those protest marches.

Sue Foreman

THE VIBE

'My Practice'

(Own label download)

Foals' twinkling, trilling guitar sound is now so ubiquitous in their army of copyists, any band using it are going to be need to be something special. The Vibe aren't without their charms, and all still in their mid-teens, although, let's not forget, at 15 Yannis Phillipakis was already fronting the astonishing Elizabeth. 'My Practice' is typically uptight, trebly and very slightly funky, the female vocals breathless and the whole thing buoyed by a great synth buzz that gives it muscles and a sharper edge. Just as you're starting to get into it, though they try and break things down, lose momentum and struggle to regain it. B-side 'The Genius' is sweeter and softer until it picks up the pace and suffers from a similarly clunky arrangement and execution. Promising, but not yet fully formed.

Dale Kattack

CHIMAANYA

'New Day'

(Own label)

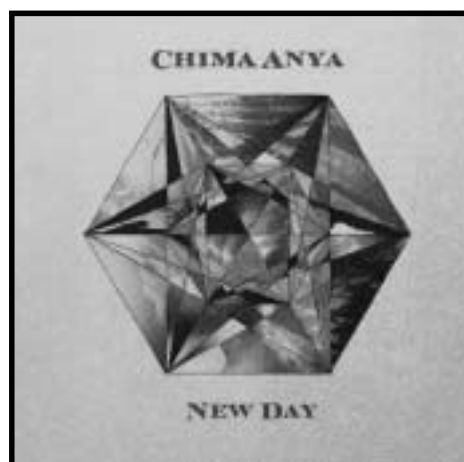
Rap is "CNN for black people", claimed Chuck D. It's a killer line, but too often listening to a bloated, second-tier hip hop LP is like watching the endless, fumbling footage of a rolling news team stuck outside closed courtroom doors elaborating on nothing, or desperate commentators filling time during a scrappy no score draw. GTA member Chima Anya is a great example: he has a superb delivery and some decent lines, but this record could do with some focus, too many tracks drift off halfway through, or end up a smidgen trite.

Sonically the tracks are solid, and if Astrosnare's production is rich it isn't always astonishing, 'Eye Choose You' being built on a bubbly electro swagger, and 'Spell It Out' having cheery funk loops that wouldn't have been out of place on some smiley-faced Monie Love track from the 'Native Tongues' era. The lyrics tend to reach the same level, often tidy and effective, but also clichéd. Things change vastly in the final two tracks, meditations on mortality and the complex role of the healer in society (Anya is a practising doctor, though some of his patients might be concerned by his playground talk of ho's and people being "too gay").

We wish Anya could produce more music like this, fraught with honest emotion, shining his lyrical sensibility onto interesting subjects, rather than women "eyeing on my tool".

Despite quality moments, this is just another talented local rapper who has produced an uneven album. And that ain't news.

David Murphy



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MARIANA MAGNAVITA

'White'

(Own label)

I find myself scouring, to no avail, the small print on the sleeve of Mariana Magnavita's debut album, to see when her brisk, firm-voiced, opening song 'Things That Go Around', was written, and if it was part of Mariana's formative writing or a sign of songs to come. Such is its Irish matter of factness and Natalie Merchant-style vibrato, that it stands slightly proud of the seven wistful tracks that follow it.

Not that it doesn't fit in. Indeed the hallmark of this album, by the Bahian-born singer-songwriter, is the strong collective production values and attention to detail; from the crisp engineering by Shannon Harris and Simon Tuke, to the top notch musicians, like cellist Barney



Morse-Brown, whose wonderful wife, the late Kate Garrett, Mariana's voice often echoes. But the rise to a more trilling register is noticeable in the plaintive 'Part-time Honey' and the album's

title track, which is, as songs about colour go, quite remarkable in its evocation.

In between Mariana explores her astrology with 'Cancer Moon'; lusty surrender to a fantasy bodice-ripping Irish brigand in 'Smugglers Land' ("He'll take you to a sandy beach / Strip down naked / Feel the cold air whip your skin"), and fond, wise paternal thoughts in 'I Ask My Father'.

'White' is a classy lyrical album from a heart and mind somehow forever caught high in the jetstream of her twin lives in Brazil and Oxford, where loss and longing's open eyes search the clouds below for a home and love. Her dark curled hair will no doubt have her seated alongside the like of Katie Melua in people's minds, but while she lays herself open to this view, you sense Mariana's very much her own woman.

Paul Carrera

HARRY ANGEL

'A Bad Business'

(Own label)

We're sitting listening to Harry Angel's new EP while sneakily watching Japan play Cameroon and it strikes us it was the last World Cup since we heard a new CD from the band. A glance through some old issues confirms the suspicion – 2006 the band released 'You Are Your Own Disaster'. Surely growing a beard doesn't take that much time up?

Not much has changed in Harry Angel's world in the intervening four years, a mood of teeth-grindingly giddy gothic nervousness remains, tribal voodoo beats underpin edgy, spidery guitars straight out the Chameleons songbook, while Chris Beard sounds like a man trying not to burst into a fit of giggles as he sharpens his axe ahead of a dinner party massacre. 'Children' in particular echoes the band's superb debut outing, 'Death Valley Of The Dolls', while 'Saint Joan' is more considered and genially pensive, like a lost moment from 4AD's early-80s canon. 'Get Out' rumbles in on an old Joy Division bassline before jinking through some vampiric twilit pop backstreet, Chris singing with an almost chorister-like purity.

19th Century explorers and map makers referred to Africa as the Dark Continent. Today, as it hosts its first World Cup, it's appropriate that Harry Angel have finally returned to bring a little of their own darkness to the summer festivities.

Dale Kattack



SEABUCKTHORN

'A Mantra Pulled Apart'

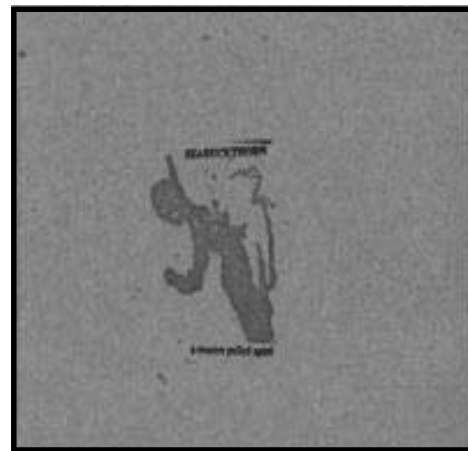
(Own label)

Music without words is often like a book with just pictures. At best, it will provide a few brief moments of interest before being discarded, forever labelled as unmemorable. Seabuckthorn's 'A Mantra Pulled Apart' at first glance threatens to stick true to this rule, but within just a few songs it opens itself up as to be something akin to a Magic Eye book, filled with stereograms that bring more depth the more you stare at them. Given that it's driven by what composer Andy Cartwright terms psych-folk, you could be forgiven for assuming, like its visual counterparts, it's somewhat dated, but again this is a false presumption.

Driven by its diverse range of string instruments and accompanying electronics, it allows the influence of eastern music to meet western, fusing them into a collection of impressive melodies. Whilst it opens with more predominant hints of the East, 'In The Ether' oozing with Indian-focused rhythms, it quickly shifts back to the West, with 'Part Mantra', fuelled by more American folk elements.

These then merge to take the rest of the album through, with the amalgamation of both influences being predominant throughout.

Whilst 'Painted Wolf Howl', with its stark



contributions from Russell Wainwright (of Hreda), breathes depth and bass into the album, 'The Light Moved With Them' conversely favours intricate melodies, creating a more ambient vibe. It's this ability to mould both sounds and influence into 40-minutes worth of poignant songs which confirms Seabuckthorn as being much more than you'd first anticipate. 'A Mantra Pulled Apart' breaks down the divides and juxtaposes sounds, culminating into an album filled with unexpected twists. It's Andy Cartwright's willingness to embrace multiplicity, which solidifies the diverse offering of the album, confirming Seabuckthorn as something extraordinary

Lisa Ward

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Sun 11th July - Free Entry British Grand Prix + World Cup Final	Fri 30th July - £7 adv £9 door The Thin Lizzy Experience (Tribute band)
Wed 14th July - £10 adv Comedy with Greg Davies of Inbetweeners	Fri 6th July £7 adv £9 door I'm Not Pink (Superb PINK tribute band)

GIG GUIDE

THURSDAY 1st

OZZY OSBOURNE: **O2 Academy** – The Sabbath legend comes to town for a special warm-up show – *see main preview*

CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford**

Community Centre – Oxford's longest-running and best open mic club continues to showcase local singers, musicians, poets, performance artists and more every week.

Thursday 1st

OZZY OSBOURNE:

O2 Academy

TCT Music continue their tradition of attracting big names to town for low-key warm-up shows. In the world of rock names don't come much bigger than Ozzy Osbourne, a man who's part of that elite club of stars who don't even need their surname mentioned to be recognisable. Tonight's show, which sold out in a matter of minutes when tickets went on sale in May, is a warm-up for his i-Tunes Festival gig at the Roundhouse a couple of nights later. What's left to say about the man? As original singer with Black Sabbath, the band that more than any defined heavy metal, he is a legend beyond compare. He's also lived a life worth recounting, that's for sure – from his drug and alcohol-fuelled escapades on and off stage, through *The Osbournes* reality show which made him and his family global household names, to the annual Ozzfests – his name is writ large in rock history. Despite his often frail-seeming, slightly bumbling old man persona, Ozzy remains a consummate and surprisingly lithe performer, belying his 61 years and decades of hard living. But then he's The Prince Of Darkness. The Godfather of Heavy Metal. He's fucking Ozzy Osbourne, man. Bow down before him. You are not worthy.

JULY

APPLE PIRATE PROMOTIONS: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – Punk, hardcore and indie bands night.

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: **Bricklayer's Arms, Marston**

OPEN MIC SESSION: **James Street Tavern**

SWINDLESTOCK: **The Port Mahon** – Good-time country rocking.

FRIDAY 2nd

KELE: **O2 Academy** – With Bloc Party on a – supposed – year-long hiatus (although it's anyone's guess as to whether they really will reconvene) frontman Kele Okereke heads out under his own name, seemingly now filled with a confidence and joyfulness never before apparent. He's traded Bloc Party's uptight post-punk for a more club-friendly mix of electro, dubstep and house on new album 'The Boxer'.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with SHAKELLERS + INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS + WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD: **The**

Wheatsheaf – Classic 60s-inspired rock and Britpop from Shakellers at tonight's Klub Kak, with support from ethereal shoe-gazy local faves International Jetsetters and their own acoustic side-project Welcome To Peepworld.

THE MODS: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – 60s mod classics covers.

MEAN RIGHT HOOK + RIOTHOUSE + BEARD OF ZEUSS: **The Port Mahon** – Inaugural gig night for the new Port In A Storm rock night, featuring hardcore noise from Mean Right Hook, trad metal from Riothouse and monstrosity stoner-metal from Beard Of Zeuss.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: **The Bullingdon** – Classic funk, soul and r'n'b every Friday.

FOUNDATION REGGAE: **East Oxford Community Centre** – Roots, dancehall and dub, every week.

GET DOWN: **The Brickworks**

JAM BOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: **The Wheatsheaf, Banbury**

SATURDAY 3rd

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: **Cornbury Park** – David Gray and Squeeze head up the first day of the annual festival – *see main preview*

YOOF: **The Cellar** – Egyptian Hip Hop headline the inaugural night of the new indie club – *see main preview*

TAINT + DESERT STORM + ALUNAH + PHANTOM THEORY: **The Wheatsheaf** – Buried In Smoke metal night with Swansea-based recent Clutch tour support Taint bringing their virulent mix of hardcore and stoner-sludge

metal to town. Local psychedelic stoner-rock titans Desert Storm support along with psych-doom crew Alunah and stripped-down hardcore-cum-post punk racketeers Phantom Theory.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: **O2 Academy** – Weekly three clubs in one night with indie and electro at Transformation,

glam, 80s and trashy pop at Trashy and hardcore, metal, punk and alt.rock at Room 101.

WAX ON WAX OFF: **James Street Tavern** – Weekly funk, soul, disco, breaks and hip hop session.

HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: **The Bullnose Morris, Cowley** – Bluegrass and Americana.

DIRTY EARTH BAND: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – Rock covers.

SUNDAY 4th

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: **Cornbury Park** – Jackson Brown headlines the second day of the festival, alongside The Feeling and Seth Lakeman – *see main preview*

COWLEY ROAD CARNIVAL: **Cowley Road (1-6pm)** – Every year the celebration of east Oxford life struggles to find funding, but

thankfully this year it's back where it belongs, on the Cowley Road itself, with an extra live music event in South Park on Saturday night. For the main event, there are the usual array of sound systems, from Fresh Out The Box and Skylarkin to a Carni Latin dance one, and of course the legendary Hi-Lo Jamaican music system. Live music comes on the local bands stage with sets from The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, Dead Jerichos, Ute, Winchell Riots, The Long Insiders, Borderville and Charly Coombes and the New Breed. The acoustic stage features Anton Barbeau, Samuel Zasada, The Epstein's Olly Wills, Bethany Weimers, Adam Barnes and Matt Winkworth, plus there's a variety of hip hop, folk, klezmer and punk on The Queen Of Club's stage on Manzil Way. There's jazz and swing at the Methodist Church on Jeune Street, while Horns of Plenty and Sol Samba will lead the traditional Carnival parade.

HORNS OF PLENTY + BRAINDOGS + DAVID SIMON + THE MIGHTY REDOX + RAGE: **The Regal** – Post-Carnival show in aid of Helen & Douglas House, featuring street band Horns of Plenty, swampy blues-rock from The Mighty Redox and more.

DUB POLITICS: **The Bullingdon** – Post-carnival party from the dubstep club night.

DARREN LESTER + KALEY MAXWELL + BLACKMATES: **The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Acoustic and open mic night.

HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + BARKUS COUNTY + BEARD OF DESTINY + PENNY & PHIL: **Donnington Community**



Centre – Free live music session with bluegrass and Americana troupe Headington Hillbillies and more.

REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Purple Turtle – Reggae, dub, ska and dubstep club night every Sunday.

MONDAY 5th

24 PESOS: The Bullingdon – Funky blues and soul from the London outfit at tonight's Famous Monday Blues club.

CLARE FREE: Six Bells, Bicester

TUESDAY 6th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly jazz club night, with funky keyboard-led live sounds from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

BOHÉM RAGTIME JAZZ BAND: Aston Village Hall – Ragtime jazz from the Hungarian eight-piece ensemble.

WEDNESDAY 7th

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Open mic session.

Saturday 3rd

YOOF!: The Cellar

A couple of years ago Marc Of Zorro, run by *Oxford Mail* clubbing guide scribe Marc West, regularly brought some of the best new unsigned or recently signed buzz bands to the Cellar. Yoof is Marc's continuation of that premise, now teamed up with London club promoters Blue Flowers and tonight's opening gig shows no sign of them taking their finger off the pulse. Egyptian Hip Hop aren't from Cairo (despite what their Myspace claims) and don't play hip hop. Instead they're from Manchester and continue in the musical lineage of New Order, The Durutti Column et al. Throw in a bit of early Cure, some Klaxons rave and you've got their glitchy, flighty, rhythmically funky electro pop squelch nailed. Great stuff; tonight is a good chance to see what they're all about before their showing at Truck later this month. Support comes from London's brother and sister electro-indie janglers The Shimmer and local gothic post-punk noisemakers Vixens, mixing up several shades of dark in the vein of Editors, Interpol and Sisters Of Mercy.



THURSDAY 8th

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayer's Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

CRASH'N'BURN: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock club night.

LOST INNOCENCE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock night.

FRIDAY 9th

MUSIC FOR THE GENOME: Diamond

Light Source – Fancy a break from the local pub circuit? How about an evening of music, poetry and science at Oxfordshire's particle accelerator centre? It's gotta be an Oxford Contemporary Music show, right? Right! Not sure of the exact details of the music, but the idea of some full-pelt hardcore sci-fi noise belting out as they create a black hole onstage and suck the world into oblivion kind of appeals. In fact we can think of a long list of potential acts to be amongst the first to be sucked into oblivion...

BUTTERFLIES ON WINGS + JESS HALL:

The Wheatsheaf

DEAR CHICAGO + BILLY RAY CYPHER:

Fat Lil's, Witney

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Bricklayers, Marston – Eccentric blues rocking.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

JAM BOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 10th

COMMOTION FESTIVAL: Kingham

Primary School – The fifth annual Commotion Festival continues to punch above its weight as it raises money for both the local primary school and various children's charities. Last year it was Abba Gold topping the bill, this year's headliners are From The Jam, Bruce Foxton (recently reunited with Paul Weller) and Rick Butler kicking out all the old classics. Joining them on an impressive bill are the mighty Little Fish, ethereal indie noisemakers International Jetsetters, New Orleans-style hot jazz party collective The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, electric country, folk and blues outfit Cooper Black and chilled-out singer and pianist Jesse Grace. Beyond the main stage there is a Youth Idol competition for local bands and singers as well as music workshops from the Witchwood School Of Rock. Loads of other family-friendly things going on too, but a great day of music in aid of some very worthy causes.

SHAKER HEIGHTS: The Wheatsheaf – Roots Americana-tinged indie rocking from the Oxford-Aylesbury outfit.

SHEPHERDS PIE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Iron Maiden.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern
ELECTEC: The Cricketers Arms – House, minimalism and Berlin techno from DJs Aleekat and Art Lagun.



Monday 12th

SUZANNE VEGA:

O2 Academy

Vega returns to Oxford for the first time since her 2007 showing at Cornbury Festival, and her first headline gig in town since 2005 as part of a tour to promote new album 'Close Up Volume 1, Love Songs'. The New York-born songstress emerged out of the same Greenwich Village folk scene in the mid-80s that had spawned Bob Dylan and Joan Baez in the 60s, and initially at least she followed a similarly political lyrical path, albeit with a strangely skewed and personal perspective. Hits like 'Marlene On The Wall' and 'Luka' dealt with bedsit isolation and child abuse respectively, while songs like 'Men In A War' detailed the experiences of military amputees. Her career received an added boost in 1990 with DNA's remix of 'Tom's Diner'. 1987's 'Solitude Standing' was Vega's commercial high point but despite diminishing returns in album sales since, she remains a crowd-puller and an influential cult concern. In recent years her songs and subject matter have mellowed considerably, tending towards more romantic themes, as the title of her new album suggests, but her recent contribution to David Lynch and Dangermouse's 'Dark Night Of The Soul' project shows she still commands respect where it counts.



CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Cornbury Country Park

Saturday 3rd – Sunday 4th

CORNBURY, LIKE TRUCK, FEELS LIKE A VERY ENGLISH festival. While Truck retains an element of a village fête about it, Cornbury feels more like a country fayre, set as it is in the picturesque setting of Cornbury Park with its expansive woodlands, its lake and its wild deer. You could stick Napalm Death on here and it'd feel slightly woody and laidback.

As it is, Cornbury's musical menu tends very much towards middle of the road and retro with a bill geared towards an older, family-friendly audience. There's also an emphasis on comfort even beyond the VIP packages and yurts-for-hire, with a site that's both clean and remarkably civilised, plus decent catering and beer that reflects a crowd who enjoy their home comforts.

While, like so many other festivals last year, Cornbury endured its fair share of rain (which at least gave us an excuse to miss Saturday night's headliners Scouting For Girls), when it's sunny there are few more relaxed places to be and with two main stages plus the Riverside stage providing a less than frenetic programme there's plenty of opportunity to fully take in each act.

This year's Saturday programme sees the return of **DAVID GRAY** as headline turn, this time with a full band after his previous acoustic showing. Seemingly back to a prolific release schedule after his mid-noughties hiatus, he's set to follow up 2009's 'Draw The Line' with his ninth album, 'Foundling', later in the summer, so will doubtless be playing a selection of new songs alongside hits from the likes of 'White Ladder' and 'A New Day At Midnight'.

Joining Gray on Saturday's bill will be veteran British pop heroes **SQUEEZE**, fronted by the indomitable songwriting duo of Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford. While the band have enjoyed an on-off career since their 1980s peak, and haven't released an album since 1998, you'll get a set of hits, from 'Cool For Cats' and 'Up The Junction' to 'Labelled With Love' and 'Pulling Mussels From The Shell'.

One of Cornbury's real coups this year is booking flamboyant blues guitarist **BUDDY GUY**. The veteran Chicago bluesman inspired everyone from Hendrix and Clapton to Jimmy Page and Stevie Ray Vaughan and has a mantelpiece groaning under the weight of awards that include five Grammys and an entry in the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame. One of rock's genuine guitar greats.

Elsewhere on Saturday are superb soul-pop outfit **NOISETTES**, fronted by Shingai Shoniwa, a singer in the mould of Dionne Warwick and Diana Ross. From their early indie-rock days they've transformed themselves into chart-bothering stars with a sweetly ebullient form of disco-fied party pop.

There's more soul from **CANDI STATON**, a woman with a career spanning forty years and thirty albums behind her, best known for her hit 'Young Hearts Run Free' as well as the voice of Source's hit 'You've Got The Love' back in 1991.

New Orleans' legendary singer and pianist **DR JOHN** is another big name on Saturday's bill, and still going strong decades after his 1970s commercial peak with his timeless mix of blues, r'n'b and jazz and, like Buddy Guy, a multi-Grammy Award-winning star.

Sunday brings a similar mix of old and new sounds, with headliner **JACKSON BROWNE** the main attraction. Inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame by long-time friend Bruce Springsteen back in 2004, Browne has been releasing albums since the early-70s, enjoying hits with 'The Pretender' and 'Running On Empty' but really hit his creative stride in the 80s as he became more politically active and still performs in aid of humanitarian and environmental charities.

Below Browne on Sunday's bill is something of a Holy Trinity of musical evil in the form of **THE FEELING**, **NEWTON FAULKNER** and **REEF**, but we'll brush over them and on to **THE BLOCKHEADS**, Ian

Jackson Browne



Dury's old band who've found a new lease of life in recent years with a succession of frontmen that's included Phil Jupitus. The core of the band is still together, including Chas Jankel, Norman Watt-Roy, Mick Gallagher and John Turnbull, while saxophonist Gilad Atzman is now part of the line-up. Whoever is fronting up the band, they'll still be unmissable given Dury's sublime songwriting legacy, so expect a set heavy on the old hits – 'Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick', 'What A Waste', 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll' – as well as new songs the collective have been recording.

Over on the Oxford Folk Festival Stage on Sunday is the reliably entertaining **SETH LAKEMEN**. He may be a permanent fixture on the festival circuit but he's a fixture for a reason, breathing

fresh life and energy into very traditional English folk music, a great singer and entertainer and an astonishingly accomplished fiddle player.

Alongside Lakeman will be 60s sunshine folk-pop collective **DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD**, featuring assorted Truck people, plus Australian folk and blues siblings **ANGUS & JULIA STONE**, Cornwall's ten-strong *a capella* collective **FISHERMAN'S FRIEND**, with their repertoire of traditional sea shanties and India's folk-fusion maestro **RAGHU DIXIT**.

And of course, tucked away in the far corner of the festival, beyond the main stages, the food stalls and the funfair is the reliably eclectic Riverside Festival stage, which is home to assorted local favourites and unsigned acts, including, this year **BORDERVILLE**, **INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS**, **DEAD JERICHO**, **MATT SAGE**, **RESERVOIR CATS**, **CHARLY COOMBES THE NEW BREED**, **MARIANA MAGNAVITA**, **LES CLOCHARDS**, **BILLY PURE** and **EASY TIGER**, so if the thought of spending the afternoon enduring The Feeling and Newton Faulkner gets too much, here's where you'll find comfort and musical succour. For, to misquote Rupert Brookes, "There's some corner of every festival field That is for ever Oxford."

Tickets and info:

www.cornburyfestival.com

Ticket hotline: 0871 472 0420

HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The Black Bull, Kidlington

SUNDAY 11th

TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE: Baby Simple – Psychedelia and prog club night.
REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Purple Turtle

MONDAY 12th

THE KATHERINE DAVIES BAND: The Bullingdon – Powerful soul, gospel and blues singing from veteran vocalist Davies in the style of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey at tonight's Famous Monday Blues.
SUZANNE VEGA: O2 Academy – The veteran folk-pop star airs her new love songs – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 13th

TENDER TRAP + LES CLOCHARDS + SHRAG: The Wheatsheaf – Return to town for Oxford pop legend Amelia Fletcher and chums – *see main preview*
YOUNG GUNS: O2 Academy – High Wycombe's post-hardcore pretty boys head off on a headline tour ahead of their Reading and Leeds Festival main stage appearances later this summer. Having been voted Best New Band in last year's Kerrang! Awards, they release 'All Our Kings Are Dead' this month.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live jazz from The Howard Peacock Quintet.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 14th

FACEOMETER + BAND OF HOPE + MATT WINKWORTH + THE EARTH IS NOT FLAT: The Bullingdon – Clever, wordy folk-pop from Faceometer in the style of Jeffrey Lewis from Faceometer, with support from Mississippi-style folk-jazz collective Band Of Hope; wry, literary piano-led cabaret pop from Matt Winkworth and folksy pop from Mountain Parade side-project The Earth Is Not Flat.
DESERT STORM + DEDLOK + 13 GAUGE: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka goes metal tonight with monstrous local psychedelic stoner rock faves Desert Storm cranking it out good and heavy, while thrash merchants Dedlok and 13 Gauge support.
STEKPANNA / VINTSKEVICH QUINTET: Jacqueline du Pre Building – The Anglo-Scandinavian post-jazz trio team up with Russia's Vintskevich brothers, mixing experimental contemporary jazz with reinterpretations of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, James Brown and more.
ADAM GREEN: O2 Academy – Quirky alt.folk and indie pop from the former-Moldy Peaches man, out on tour to plug new album, 'Musik For A Play'.
SHIELD YOUR EYES + NOPE + ILLNESS: The Jericho Tavern – Welcome return to promoting for Poor Girl Noise, bringing the best leftfield noise bands to town. Shield Your Eyes come back to Oxford after their recent support to Nitkowski at the Cellar, a shrill, cacophonous mess of angular noise, mangled angles, yelping, loose grooves and squalling

feedback. Guitar and drums two-piece Illness make with a sprightly, trashy mash-up of Sonic Youth and Wedding Present, while best of the lot are Leeds' Nope, featuring members of That Fucking Tank in their spaced-out psychedelic krautrock mode.

KING OF BEGGARS: The Purple Turtle – Strung-out alt.rock and electronica from the new local duo.

THURSDAY 15th

DEPUTEES + TAMARA PARSONS-BAKER: The Cellar
DESERT STORM + BACK POCKET PROPHET: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Psychedelic stoner-metal from the mighty Desert Storm.
OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon – With Pedicate and more.
123 AND IN + MIDGAR: Fat Lil's, Witney
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Prince of Wales, Iffley
ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayer's Arms, Marston
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

FRIDAY 16th

STEPHEN DALE PETIT: O2 Academy – The Californian blues guitarist who has made it his mission to take blues to a younger audience – notably his 2007 lecture and gig tour of UK universities – and an oddity in that he's an American bluesman inspired as much by the British blues explosion of the 60s and 70s as he is by traditional American blues greats like Albert King. Having moved over here in the 80s he made his cult reputation by busking in the London Underground and has gone on to play with the likes of Eric Clapton and Dave Gilmour as well as touring alongside The Rolling Stones' Mick Taylor.
INVISIBLE VEGAS + THE INSULT: The Wheatsheaf – Rocking roadhouse blues from the headliners.
THE HAMSTERS: Kidlington FC – Return of the British blues-rock veterans.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
JAM BOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury
FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 17th

ELLIOT MINOR: O2 Academy – Return of York's classically-trained symphonic rockers, partway between Muse and Green Day.
BEAVER FUEL + BEELZEBOZO: The Wheatsheaf – Rude and ramshackle indie-punk rocking from Beaver Fuel at tonight's Moshka club night, plus blood-spattered metal monsters Beelzebozo in support.
TOO REX: Fat Lil's, Witney – T-Rex tribute night.
TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy
WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern
OX4: The Bullingdon
VERY NICE HARRY: The Port Mahon



Tuesday 13th

TENDER TRAP / LES CLOCHARDS: The Wheatsheaf

In a month when Oxford plays host to various music legends, from Ozzy Osbourne to Buddy Guy, we also welcome one of our very own back to town. As singer with Talulah Gosh, Heavenly, Marine Research and, in recent years, Tender Trap, Amelia Fletcher is undoubtedly the Godmother of Oxford music, possibly even The Queen Of Indie. With Talulah Gosh she pioneered a twee-pop movement that flourishes even today, and inspired the original riot grrl movement. That band were the first local stars to really break out of Oxford and make a national and international reputation for themselves that still endures today. Heavenly were a slight mutation of that early incarnation but over the years and each new band Amelia, alongside partner Rob Pursey, has stayed true to her indie roots, inspired by The Shangri La's and Ronettes on one hand, The Pastels and Mary Chain on the other. Tender Trap's latest album, 'Dansette Dansette', finds them ditching their more electronic side in favour of classic 60s girl-pop harmonies and the classic lo-fi sounds of The Shop Assistants et al. Fantastic stuff, and from a woman who, as a Doctor of Economics, is also just about the brainiest pop person to come out of Oxford. As an extra treat, Amelia's former partner in Talulah Gosh and Heavenly, Pete Momtchiloff, helps provide support tonight as part of Les Clochards, whose coolly exotic blend of French café pop, country and pop marks them out as a sort of Francophone Roy Orbison. A little bit of Oxford history on show tonight then, but equally, some superb modern day pop music.

RELOAD THE RADIO + NOTHING NEW + HELLO HOUSTON + WOODEN KINGS: The Centurion, Bicester – Jambox metal and alt.rock night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Chequers, Headington – Swampy blues-rock and festival funk.

SUNDAY 18th

HELEN PEARSON + SAMUEL ZASADA + SPRING OFFENSIVE: Malmaison – The Mal hosts its regular semi-acoustic evening in the grand surroundings of the hotel's cocktail lounge, tonight featuring three of May's Oxford Punt stars: sweet, hazy acoustic folk-pop from



Wednesday 21st

**PUBLIC IMAGE Ltd:
O2 Academy**

The Sex Pistols might have kicked down the statues, but with PiL, John Lydon's musical legacy perhaps reaches further and into more interesting corners. As Simon Reynolds argues in his superb book *Rip It Up And Start Again*, PiL's debut album was the real year zero for rock music, taking the revolutionary spirit of punk and drawing in disparate strands, from dub to funk to electronic music and inventing a whole swathe of new musical genres. Abetted by some of the most innovative musicians of the modern age – bassist Jah Wobble, guitarists Keith Levene and John McGeoch and drummer Martin Atkins – Lydon took PiL to places previously unvisited by a rock band, arguably inventing post-rock along the way. From 1978 to their unofficial split in 1992 PiL's output was inconsistent to say the least but the best of it – 1979's inspirational 'Metalbox' and the more abstract, electronic 'Flowers Of Romance' in particular, stand alongside the great, most challenging music ever made. Having done the Pistols reunion to death and started advertising butter, Lydon resurrected PiL last year with a line-up featuring The Pop Group's Bruce Smith and the much-travelled Lu Edmonds, and by all accounts it's been a successful resurrection. And so we get to tick yet another legend off our list of Oxford visits. Listen and learn, people, listen and learn.

Helen Pearson; dark, intricately-crafted pop-noir from Samuel Zasada and folk-inflected alt.rocking from Spring Offensive.

SMALL FAKERS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to The Small Faces.

REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Purple Turtle

MONDAY 19th

THE GREGG WRIGHT BAND: The Bullingdon – Classic blues and rock anthems and originals from the Californian guitarist, a veteran session man who has worked with Michael Jackson and Spencer Davies and a left-handed player renowned for playing a right-handed guitar upside down.

BEETROOT JAM: The Port Mahon – Mix of live bands and a jam session at the monthly club night, tonight featuring the return to action of Supergrass bassist Mick Quinn with his new DB Band. Local singer-songwriter David Simon also performs and hopefully Mick will be stick

around for the jam session afterwards.

TUESDAY 20th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from The Hugh Turner Band.

STEKPANNA / VINTSKEVICH QUINTET:

Deddington Parish Church

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 21st

PASADENA ROOF ORCHESTRA: Oxford Castle Gardens – Opening night of the Oxford Castle Concert season – *see main preview*

PDDR PRESENTS: The Port Mahon – Experimental electronica night.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 22nd

BARRY & THE BEACHCOMBERS + HEADCOUNT: Fat Lil's, Witney –

Weird'n'wacky punk and hardcore noise in the vein of Butthole Surfers from Barry & Co, plus righteous punk-metal inspired by Killing Joke, Adam and the Ants and Therapy? from the mighty Headcount.

CHRIS BECK & THE VALENTINE VAGABONDS: Oxford Castle Gardens – Classic rock'n'roll tribute.

HOLD YOUR HORSE IS + GREAT ANCESTORS + ETEBAN + GUNNING FOR TAMAR: The Cellar

BURY THE ARCHIVE + VISIONFALL: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Metal and heavy rock at tonight's Jambox rock night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayer's Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

FRIDAY 23rd

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – An early start for Truck this year with BBC Introducing hosting a selection of new acts to ease fans into the weekend ahead – *see main preview*

TOOT'N'SKAMEN: Oxford Castle Gardens – Two Tone tribute.

AGE OF MISRULE + KOMLA: The Bullingdon – Bluesy hard rock and grunge from Age Of Misrule.

CLARE FREE: Red Lion, Kidlington
JAM BOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Prince of Wales, Horspath

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 24th

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – Mew headline the first full day – *see main preview*

CARETAKER + NOVEMBER FLEET + IVY'S ITCH + UNDERSMILE: The Cellar – Monstrous noise-rock from Caretaker, plus wild-eyed gothic hardcore from Ivy's Itch, launching their new EP. Sludgy grunge metallers Undersmile get the ball rolling in suitably

monolithic style.

UPWATT: The Northwall, Summertown – Jazz, funk and fusion from the quartet.

W.A.M: Fat Lil's, Witney – Ska and punk covers.

ABBA REVIVAL NIGHT: Oxford Castle Gardens

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern
OX4: The Bullingdon

SUNDAY 25th

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm,

Wednesday 21st – Friday 30th

**OXFORD CASTLE
SUMMER CONCERTS:
Oxford Castle Gardens**

Working on the principle that folks don't seem to want to be stuck in a dark, sweaty venue in the middle of summer, this season of shows takes the music outdoors and into the suitably grand surroundings of Oxford Castle's gardens. Eight shows in ten nights includes tributes to **Abba**, **Take That** and **Frank Sinatra** from an array of big-name tribute acts, as well as a night of Two-Tone music from **Toots'n'Skamen**, and another night of classic 50s and 60s rock'n'roll from **Chris Beck & The Valentine Vagabonds**, who have shared stages with the likes of Chuck Berry, Gene Pitney, Cliff Richard and Paul McCartney in their time. The season's real highlights, though, come from **The Pasadena Roof Orchestra**, celebrating 40 years playing around the globe, with as many albums to their name, keeping the classic swing and hot jazz dance sounds of the 1920s and 30s alive, and kings of swing, **King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys**, a band with 20 years experience on the road under their belts, rated to be among the best live bands around and regular guests on *Teletubbies*. The 30th sees an appearance from **Three Bonzos and a Piano** (pictured), with Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band vets Rodney 'Rhino' Slater, Roger Ruskin Spear and Sam Spoons reunited and joined by various guests for a run through of their 60s comedy rock. All shows start early evening to make the best of the, hopefully, summery evenings, with tickets for each night available from wegottickets.com.



Steventon – Teenage Fanclub headline the final day – *see main preview*
BABY GRAVY + UNDERSMILE + THE CHARM ASSAULT: The Wheatsheaf – Buzzing party-mode electro-pop and punk noise from Baby Gravy at tonight's charity gig. Support comes from uber-sludgy grungers Undersmile, coming in somewhere dark and heavy between The Melvins and Babes In Toyland.
KING PLEASURE & THE BISCUIT BOYS: Oxford Castle Gardens – Veteran kings of swing.
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney – Open jam session.
REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Purple Turtle

MONDAY 26th

ALVIN YOUNGBLOOD HART: The Bullingdon – Country blues and 60s and 70s-styled rocking, somewhere between Led Zeppelin and Leadbelly from the Grammy-winning Californian guitarist at tonight's Famous Monday Blues session.

TUESDAY 27th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With the Hugh Turner Band.
OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 28th

FRANK SINATRA TRIBUTE: Oxford Castle Gardens – Atila Huseyin and the Colors Big Band pay tribute to Old Blue Eyes.

THURSDAY 29th

WILLIAM CONTROL + MAVRICKZ: O2 Academy – Theatrical existential electro-pop from Aiden frontman Wil Francis' William Control side project, over in the UK to plug new album 'Noir. Sean and Tom from Saving Aimee support in their Mavarickz guise.
KEYBOARD CHOIR + JOHN FARAH + CHAD VALLEY + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: The Cellar – Great night of local electronic noise and experimentation with synth orchestra The Keyboard Choir mixing ambient soundscapes with harder, more expansive pieces. Jonquil's Hugo Manuel goes solo under his Chad Valley moniker in support, while ace retro-futurist synth-pop duo SHOTP open the show.
TAKE THAT 2: Oxford Castle Gardens
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

VENTFLOW + I THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT + ALTERNATIVE CARPARK: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Metal and rock night.
ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayer's Arms, Marston
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

FRIDAY 30th

THREE BONZOS & A PIANO: Oxford Castle Gardens – Surviving members of the 60s spoof rockers reconvene – *see main preview*
CAT MATADOR + PRDCTV + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS: The Wheatsheaf – Darkly-crafted new wave pop from Cat Matador, plus ambient electronica from PRDCTV and 60s-style psychedelia from The Graceful Slicks.
QUIREBOYS: O2 Academy – Re-arranged gig for the 80s glam-metal cult heroes.
MELTING POT: The Bullingdon – Early gig with mixed bill of unsigned acts.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
THE THIN LIZZY EXPERIENCE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Thin Lizzy.
YANKS + ASHER DUST + UNEEK + MIZZ LYRICAL + N-ZYME: The Port Mahon – A night of fresh new hip hop, grime and r'n'b.
THE BIG 10th: The Cellar - Count Skylarkin hosts his bi-monthly rock'n'roll, r'n'b, swing, ska, skiffle and jive club night, with a live set from 60s-styled r'n'b band The Kneejerk Reactions.
JAM BOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – The final.
FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 31st

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE ANYDAYS + CHARLIE BAXTER + CRAYON: The Wheatsheaf – Characteristically eclectic three-band bill at tonight's GTI with recent Oxford Punt stars The Anydays adding a fresh twist to classic 60s garage pop in the vein of The Kinks, Beatles and Sonics. Support comes from mellow indie rockers Crayon. Cheltenham's squelchy electro-pop outfit Charlie Baxter completes the bill.
TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy
WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

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TRUCK FESTIVAL

Hill Farm, Steventon

Friday 23rd – Sunday 25th

UNLUCKY FOR SOME? NOT IF THE LINE-UP FOR THIS year's thirteenth Truck Festival is anything to go by. Truck remains the centrepiece of Oxfordshire's musical calendar, as well as the benchmark by which other small festivals should be judged. Anyway, Truck had more than their fair share of bad luck three years ago when the floods threatened to put an end to the event for good. But last year saw the festival enjoy a vintage year, with Damo Suzuki's astonishing set on the main stage, as well as the special Oxford Sunday, which saw Supergrass and The Candyskins steal the show.

This year's headliners are Denmark's flamboyantly epic alt-rockers **MEW** who top Saturday's bill, while Scottish indie veterans **TEENAGE FANCLUB** finish the whole festival off on Sunday night.

Anyone who caught Mew's gig at the Academy a few years back will testify to their astonishing rock credentials, a band who recognise the visual as well as musical importance of a show. Truck organiser Robin Bennett tells us they're bringing a huge lighting rig with them, so Saturday's finale should be suitably incendiary.

For their part Teenage Fanclub are more understated but master craftsmen in the songwriting stakes and their personably bucolic take on noisy guitar pop makes them perfect companions for a Sunday evening at Truck.

Beyond the headliners there is, as ever with Truck, a surfeit of choice and Nightshift's rule of thumb is generally to follow our ears, take a few pot luck chances and see what gems we can unearth. With six stages to pick from you'll be hard pressed not to find something new you like. The XX, A Place To Bury Strangers and The Joy Formidable were just a few of the then barely-known acts we loved last year.

If we can recommend one band not to miss under any circumstances it is **FUCKED UP**, Canadian hardcore monsters beyond compare. And we mean monsters. Frontman Pink Eyes is hardcore personified, tearing into the crowd and chucking a few bodies – willing or otherwise – around, while bellowing his righteous invective over the band's almost symphonic cacophony. Experience has all but immunised us to confrontational music, but Fucked Up's gig at the Academy two years back filled us with a heady mixture of fear and undiluted exhilaration. They rock. Like bastards.

Other don't-miss moments should include **THE MERCURY REV CLEARLIGHT ORCHESTRA**, which finds Jonathan Donahue and co. backed by a full orchestra and assorted guests to provide an improvised soundtrack to Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising* film. Spiers and Boden's folk big band **BELLOWHEAD** get a chance to show the Truck crowd just why they're consistently voted best live band at the BBC Folk Awards, although last year's winners **LAU** should run them close, featuring as they do acclaimed Orcadian singer-songwriter Kris Drever, easily the freshest, brightest new talent to emerge on the UK folk scene



in recent times.

Proving Truck's eclectic credentials, **DJ ZINC & Ms DYNAMITE** bring their pop-friendly hip hop to the party, while **65DAYSOFSTATIC** return to high-octane post-rock action. **LOS CAMPESINOS!** will hopefully bring plenty of sunshine with their cheerily riotous twee-pop noise, while Truck veterans **BLOOD RED SHOES** are always good, noisy entertainment.

There is really far too much going on at Truck to fit it all in here, but a supporting cast that features **PULLED APART BY HORSES, DARWIN DEEZ, GOOD SHOES, FUTURE OF THE LEFT, EBSEN & THE WITCH, EGYPTIAN HIP HOP**, former-Beta Band man **STEVE MASON, THOMAS TRUAX** and **CHAPEL CLUB** gives a good indication of the quality of great up and coming bands on offer.

This year's local contingent is particularly special too.

STORNOWAY's homecoming set on the main stage should be both emotional and celebratory, the band's progress even since their showing here last year has

been incredible and this weekend should see them firmly crowned the kings of Oxford pop. **LITTLE FISH** too have enjoyed an astonishing twelve months, recording their debut album with Linda Perry in LA, supporting Hole, Them Crooked Vultures and most recently Blondie. Juju and Nez's taut, emotive garage-rock is something of a force of nature if you haven't seen them before. Very soon everyone in the world will have.

Truck organisers Robin and Joe Bennett will of course be doing their usual rounds, playing with everyone who'll have them, from Mercury Rev to **DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD**, but they'll also be performing their own songs as **THE DREAMING SPIRES**, their latest incarnation, following on from Whispering Bob, Goldrush and Dusty & The Dreaming Spires. The music remains timelessly rustic, starry-eyed country-rocking in the vein of The Band and Crosby Stills, Nash & Young, and as founders and hosts of Truck their set is always an inclusive pleasure.

Other star local turns should come from **A SILENT FILM**, currently flying the flag for Oxford, and indeed the whole UK, in Portugal where they're regular chart-toppers with their literary cinematic pop; **CHARLY COOMBES**, who follows up his headlining set with Supergrass last year with his new band **THE NEW BREED**; sunshine synth-popsters **ALPHABET BACKWARDS**, this year's hottest local rising stars **DEAD JERICHO**s, Brian Wilson acolytes **FIXERS**, darkly ethereal gothsters **THE GULLIVERS** and riffastic two-piece **PHANTOM THEORY**.

Beyond the bands there will be the traditional Saturday night Rave In The Barn, while **FRESH OUT THE BOX** will be hosting their Boxford Tune-iversity party in the far corner of the festival site, and the return of the Pavilion Stage sees poetry, cabaret, comedy and performance art from the likes of **THE FREE BEER SHOW, QUEEN OF CLUBS, CATWEAZLE CLUB** and **HAMMER & TONGUE**. Meanwhile the kids tent and bus should keep even the youngest Truck-goers amused.

With 120 or so acts and DJs across the festival's six stages it'll be a packed weekend. For the first time ever music starts on the Friday night, hosted by BBC Oxford Introducing, and all that's left for us to say is, let's hope the sun keeps shining and you discover the band of your dreams.

Tickets and info:
www.thisistruck.com



**#5 KING PLEASURE
& THE BISCUIT BOYS
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SLEIGH BELLS / TEENAGERS IN TOKYO / SPEAKOWIRE

The Jericho Tavern

Two wows and a what-the-fuck tonight at the Tavern for what might be the surprise gig of the year.

The what the... comes first in the shape of local newcomers Speakowire, the strangest duo we've witnessed in some time. Stage left is a long-haired bearded bass player in Bermuda shorts and an *Eraserhead* t-shirt; stage right is a singer and keyboard player in unfeasibly tight jean shorts who could be the kid sister of Tamsin Greig. He's crunking out odd industrial noises while she's apparently pressing random demo jingles and singing in an odd glossalia. It's like industrial metal budget cruise ship cabaret trapped in an oddly-shaped synth-pop land. It's as

awkward as a cyborg Bambi on ice and while the crowd are trying to work out whether it's terribly fascinating or just fascinatingly terrible, we find we're oddly entranced.

Teenagers In Tokyo are in the UK from their native Sydney, playing a self-financed tour to plug their debut album and if tonight's performance and reception is anything to by they'll hopefully be over here for some time to come. Four girls and a guy, there are visual and musical similarities to New Young Ponyclub as they race through a short set of post-punk-charged electrodisco, all pensive metronomic grooves and Sophie McGinn's atmospheric guitar noise that veers from slasher ferocity

to Cure-like spangle. Set opener 'Sacrifice' finds singer Samantha Lim wailing ethereally as the band keep a tight rein on tension and it reminds us of 90s cult stars Bang Bang Machine. Lim has a tendency to over-dominate at times but really comes into her own on a hollowed-out, gothic take on Hall & Oates' 'Maneater' and by the time they finish, with every band member mercilessly walloping whatever piece of percussion comes to hand in a tribal frenzy as Lim screams her lungs out, we're begging for more.

The cult of Sleigh Bells is, as yet, small but devoted. People are literally risking broken necks to perch on rickety stools to catch a glimpse of

the New York duo. They suffer an untidy start, 'Tell 'Em' misfiring as Alexis Kraus' cheerleader chirrup gets buried under helicopter gunship percussion blasts. To the uninitiated the first impression of Sleigh Bells is of Ting Tings taken to the N'th degree, a brilliantly, skin-scouring industrial disco hell, but as Derek Miller fires out his monstrously distorted, euphoric guitar reveilles around Kraus' alternately playfully and brutally feline screams and the volume finally hits the point where the band work best, jagged, disjointed but fantastically danceable, they become less a band, more a force of nature, like M.I.A. (to whose N.E.E.T label they are signed) hotwired for a grunge-garage death race. The world will be a hearing a lot more of Sleigh Bells in future. If they have their way, right across town. Wow. And, indeed, wow.

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HARRY ANGEL / COUNTRYSIDE

The Port Mahon

Countryside come from the Southwest of the UK. That is all I knew of this band when I came into the Port Mahon and that is pretty much what I came out with when I left. No more, no less. Man, this band is twee. They may add layers of synth effects with wavy and curvy melodies as well as loopy guitars (presumably to pump up their momentum a bit), but they are still twee to the core. I'm slightly baffled, though, by something I can't quite pinpoint: the particular element that makes everything so twee. By the time I figure it out, the show is over. It's the drums. They make me increasingly make me queasy with each song. That same-y, tedious strumming and grinding away: 1-2,1-2,1-2. Oh yes! And then a little drum roll here and there. Then back to 1-2, 1-2. With the sole exception of 'Taste of Morocco', which is the least sticky track of all, everything else is like going to the countryside one weekend and not experiencing anything particularly exciting but... the countryside.

Enter Harry Angel. The band have seemingly been at it for years, on and off, and their sound has never changed - unique, true and identifiable straight away. They make psychedelic hardcore with a pop twist. In fact, their new EP, 'A Bad Business', has more of that pop sound than the dark, spiky textures of old. Like so many other bands with obscure and detailed structures, they have adopted a more approachable attitude, whether intentionally or not, which works well. Basslines and drums remain as tight, yet the melody of the vocals are more refined, sharp and elegant with a beautiful decadent aroma. It's a shame Harry Angel don't play live more often, nor have the following they deserve because, regardless of musical niche and tastes, they are a supreme act in terms of execution and originality.

Liane Escorza

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE / STEARICA

The Bullingdon

Credit should go to Keyboard Choir lynchpin-turned-promoter Seb Reynolds for his hand in bringing some excellent music to Oxford over the last few months. Without such interventions, we wouldn't have had the privilege of taking in the excellent Stearica, an Italian three-piece who create an involving, absorbing miasma, drifting from psychedelic dreaminess to concrete sonic palisades like Cluster channelling the powers of Kyuss.

Japan's Acid Mothers Temple must be one of the most prolific bands doing the rounds over the last few years, judging by the sea of CD-R releases and limited-edition vinyl on their extensive merch table. When you're producing as much music as this, though, it's tough to keep your standards high - or to look at it another way, it's easy to be prolific if most of your songs simply spin out one idea for ten minutes without really developing it. There are peaks, for sure. AMT do a hugely convincing rock feedback finale, hanging their guitars off the lighting rigs and battering them into so much plywood. The opening tracks in particular boast satisfying, chunky riffs that swirl around in a most absorbing fashion.

Yet for every compelling moment in their set, there seems to be a haphazard misfire and a sense that they've dug themselves into a rut of ill-defined prolixity. A symptom of their unfocused noodling is the liberal sprinkling of a preset theremin-style ululation from an expensive-looking bit of Roland kit sprayed identically over most of the songs. Worse, some parts of their set feel like listening to a locked-groove Eagles record for ten minutes. AMT's last visit to Oxford was a throat-singing cosmic spectacular - maybe it's not their best night of the tour, or maybe they caught me in the wrong mood, but sad to say this just feels a little flat and listless by comparison.

Stuart Fowkes

HEATHER WOODS

BRODERICK /

NILS FRAHM

Holywell Music Room

The Holywell steals any show for better or worse. It can enhance the beauty of the music, or make it all feel vacuous. There is something of both in the case of Heather Woods Broderick. You'd think being the sister of Efterklang's Peter Broderick, the musical virtuosity has soaked in so that playing and composing becomes such an easy task as counting to ten. Heather, regardless of how gentle, thoughtful, softly melodic and husky-in-vocals she is, cannot be placed at the same level yet. She plays piano and guitar, and while her set exudes intimacy and melancholic calm, her limited guitar skills condition the structure and scope of her songs. Lyrically she is also still on her way to larger prospects, although 'Wounded Bird' displays maturity and closure. With youth still very much on her side, for Heather Woods it is in all probability just a matter of time.

No such reservations about Nils Frahm. Here is a master (already) of piano of a young age and a lucid, intricate and beautiful composer. His work is not written for a piano but *with* a piano; he does not play the grand instrument but plays *with* it. You can tell by his caressing, thumbing, pricking, pinching of its black and white surface and by the swaying of his body to the tune, and by the curling and tensing of his back. But most importantly, you can hear it in their "singing" together in unison, in their private dialogues of love, their fiery arguments, their stormy agony and in their sharing of nostalgic memories. It is all held together by warm keys, strained strings, silky fingertips and a silent surrounding ether, and of course, by the brains and expertise of a musician trained by no less than Nahum Brodski, a student of the last scholar of Tchaikowski. This is, hand on heart, a supreme recital that nobody should ever miss.

Liane Escorza

CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED / THE KIN / SPRING OFFENSIVE

The Bullingdon

First impressions of Spring Offensive don't bode well. Surely there's more to the local scene than earnest Jonquil-inspired semi-acoustic bands with lots of unaccompanied harmonising and alternating loud and quiet patches? But before long we're won over by the sophisticated craftsmanship and sheer catchiness of the material. 'Every Coin', introduced as a true story of urban thuggery, mesmerises the audience with its unsettling lyrics set against a gentle musical backing.

Large numbers of young women suddenly appear to watch The Kin, two implausibly good-looking Australian brothers on keyboard, guitar and vocals, plus a drummer who plays a full kit with just his bare hands. The set, highly emotive with a touch of early U2 grandiosity, comes across as one long serenade to the appreciative female following, though not without the odd inspired touch of something more substantial. A huddled *a capella* section in the middle of the crowd, provokes much flashing of cameras and it would be easy to dismiss them as pretty boys on a cynical marketing drive but there's some genuine talent here.

Though barely a year old Charly Coombes & The New Breed already come across as well-travelled in every sense. Unbelievable tight and polished, they fire out a stream of upbeat, ridiculously catchy songs. Coombes has taken his love of 60s soul and cleverly given it a contemporary twist, not unlike Paul Weller's various efforts, but with greater success. Non-stop gigging, including a trip to SXSW in Austin, suggests they're trying for a traditional route to success, real fans always worth more than online 'friends'. Though still unsigned, their new EP is highly polished, featuring a string section that clearly cost someone a few bob. 'For The Pain' deserves to be a feelgood summer smash and manages to sound familiar from the first hearing. A wander over to the merchandise stall finds Mickey from Supergrass busy selling copies, a nice illustration of pop's changing tides.

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BAND OF HORSES

O2 Academy

There's a long tradition of American bands rocking out when they head out on tour, either through a desire to make sure everyone is fully entertained, or maybe to keep their energy levels high for those seemingly endless slogs around the globe. We didn't expect it from Band Of Horses, though.

Ben Bridwell's home-spun country outfit have always been among the most mellow and dreamy bands, at least on CD. His

songs always seem too private, too wistful to stand up and make bold statements but tonight Band Of Horses seem intent on proving critics, who have bemoaned their lack of showmanship, wrong, with often surprising results.

Opening tonight's long-since sold-out show with 'Ode To LRC', from second album, 'Time To Begin', they're soon in full flow, 'Wicked Gil' in particular given a right royal rocking up its rump. 'The Great Salt Lake' trades starry-

eyed reflection for big beats and riffs and an almost Springsteen-like desire for stadium-sized splendour. While the band have always leaned overtly towards the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young side of things, tonight they're more like Crazy Horse.

Such an approach doesn't always work, some more fragile songs feel slightly crushed, even as they're backed by Christopher Wilkins' photos of rustic log cabins and forest wildernesses. But Band Of

Horses seem to recognise the need for a more tender touch, the gorgeous 'Is There A Ghost' retained as a sleepwalking lament at least until its chiming climax, while 'No One's Gonna Love You' is intimate and anthemic, wracked with a rare, pure emotion, a great modern day love song that makes us think there should be a law passed making it the compulsory first dance at every wedding in the land, instead of 'Everything I Do' or whatever crap it is that soulless zombies choose to cement their love.

Band Of Horses aren't a band for conflicting or extreme moods. There is romantic longing, wonderment and longing aplenty, while musically their spacious, countrified soft rock stretches as far as Flaming Lips and Eels on the one shore to The Eagles and Allman Brothers on the far side, but that matters little when they have songs as emotionally gripping as 'The Funeral', seductive, deceptively epic, and 'General Specific', a refreshingly spaced-out canter to end the night before they come their closest to switching style altogether with a bluesy, soulful cover of Them Two's 'Am I Good Man'.

The last two times Band Of Horses played in the UK we tried and failed to get tickets as those rare shows sold out in minutes, but tonight makes that wait all the more worthwhile. The way things are moving for them, this will be the last time they'll play anywhere quite so intimate. Those stadiums they now seem to be aiming look closer than ever.

Ian Chesterton

WOOD FESTIVAL

Braziers Park

The third eco-friendly WOOD is simply a great place to be. Braziers Park is at its beautiful best with its meadows and woods inviting you to do a little exploring. The compact festival site has a new layout which makes it particularly easy this year to get around, and the infrastructure of solar and bike power and compost toilets works almost faultlessly.

The festival is much bigger than the try out in 2008 and this year it's almost sold out. While this means many more people on site, especially families with small children, it still retains its green ethos, its friendliness and the space to stretch out comfortably in the grass with a beer. Indeed the atmosphere this year seems particularly blissful, probably because for the whole weekend there is fabulous sunshine and clear starry nights.

Many of the bands playing are lo-fi and with a couple of big names from the folk world on the bill and the audience sitting spread out on the grass listening with quiet appreciation the atmosphere is often quite low key. Each night

though, when the headliners are playing, the atmosphere changes and it's party time.

Friday is particularly strong with the excellent **Danny and the Champions of the World**, featuring WOOD organisers Robin and Joe Bennett, getting the party started even when having to go acoustic when the solar-powered generator endures a brief hiccup.

6 Day Riot's energy keeps it going before headliner **Fionn Regan** takes over. Backed by some of the Champions, his poetic lyrics are framed in a style more rock and roll than singer songwriter. With four guitars blazing away on stage, it's the nearest WOOD gets to an indie guitar band.

Saturday headliners **Tuung's** hour-long set is much harder driving than I expected given their folkatronics tag. It has what must be the biggest ever WOOD audience crowding the stage, dancing and celebrating. Sunday night's headliner, **Frank Turner**, passes a bottle of Jim Beam to the crowd who join in some of the songs in a set that's a defiant rant about middle

age and mortality.

Further highlights of the weekend are folk legend **Martin Simpson**, whose guitar playing is as dazzling as ever and gets my best song award for 'Never Any Good', which is as perfect a storytelling song as you are likely to hear anywhere; **6 Bach**, new to me, who sing folk songs in Welsh, with great vocals and front line of a harp, harmonium and glockenspiel laid over a driving guitar and kit drum groove; **KTB** singing 'Soul In The Soil', which had to be the perfect refrain for WOOD, and **Frontier Ruckus**, from Michigan, who after finishing their enjoyable set hang out at the big central fire jamming and giving impromptu advice on how to play the saw.

WOOD also enjoys its first lock-in, late on Sunday when the **Wood All Stars**, led by the Bennett brothers, have to turn off the amps to keep playing after the curfew because the crowd simply will not let them, or the festival, stop.

Frank Turner, in his set, sings about going to hell. WOOD 2010, though, is rather more like the other place is meant to be.

Colin May

GOLDFRAPP

O2 Academy

Alison Goldfrapp's timeless retro-futurism often gives the impression of a pre-Raphealite disco diva thrust into the set of *Barbarella*, an oddball otherworldliness that serves to accentuate the sleek, kitsch pop gloss she sprays over music inspired by the cream of the electro underground. Tonight, dressed in a gold dress-cum-cape, with a fan constantly blowing against her blond locks, she looks more like the lovechild of Rick Wakeman and Bonnie Tyler.

Perhaps it's a reflection of the disappointing nature of her latest album, 'Head First', where the undisputed queen of synth-pop seems to have lost her cutting edge and started cribbing over La Roux's shoulder. And it has to be said, the songs from that album form the least satisfying segments of tonight's sold-out show. 'I Wanna Life' sounds sterile with its 80s electronic drum kick and synth patches nicked from Hazel O'Connor, while the album's title track could easily be ELO.

Better, then, to concentrate on what Alison Goldfrapp and long-term musical partner Will Gregory do better, adding soul and synth squelch to glitterstomping electro-dance as on 'Crystalline Green', which sounds like Add N To (X) getting sexy and sultry with Donna Summer, or, even better, 'Ooh La-La', which sounds, fantastically, like Madonna fronting Suicide as they fillet 'Spirit In the Sky' with an old Moog. 'Rocket', a rare

highlight from 'Head First' is saved for the encore tonight but aborted twice when someone, or something, cocks up. Having heard the story that roadies apparently rate an artist's difficulty to work with on a scale of 1 to Goldfrapp, we half expect a hissy fit at such casualness after an otherwise slick show but throughout tonight's performance, Alison shows an unimposing, good-humoured side to her personality that maybe doesn't always come over in interviews.

She's undoubtedly a great performer, showy but not forced and with a voice that's strong enough not to need the support of so many back-up vocal tracks. You kind of expect a few costume changes along the way, but it's not until the encores she re-emerges in a frankly bizarre neck ruff, offering an operatic 'Utopia' that looks and sounds like an aria from *The Fifth Element's* alien diva Plava Laguna. But it's the closing number that's the killer blow: 'Strict Machine' from her peerless 'Black Cherry' album, an awesome neo-primitive bass throb topped by Alison's girly dominatrix coo. If 'Head First' finds Goldfrapp winning the mass mainstream success they've always flirted with, it's perhaps what they've long deserved. From pioneers to pop stars, pure and simple. We'll always love them more for those earlier moments of musical glory.

Dale Kattack

100 BULLETS BACK / COLOUREDS

The Cellar

The decreasingly parallel lines of independent music are slowly, inexorably merging into one coherent strand that takes in all previous influences, and uses all available technology to create an *über*-music; one that ticks all boxes and appeals to all crowds, be they hipster, chin-stroker or headbanger. This unavoidable conclusion is some way off, but one resolution it will see is that of an eternal question - guitars or electronics? Two outfits tonight provide alternate insights into the difficulty that this choice poses. Coloureds address it by wiping the slate clean, as they feature two members of the sadly-departed Xmas Lights, Oxford's band-most-likely-to-go-all-Mars-Volta-super-heavio-complexity. That band nudged at the edges of post-rock and now they've jacked in the guitars completely to present a set based around the output of a bewildering array of laptops, samplers, microKORGS and suchlike. The complexity of the equipment isn't obviously reflected in the sound created - that being a relatively accurate recreation of pounding mid-'90s rave - but this is more than simple pastiche. What Coloureds *get* is the essential shared energy of this music; ramping up the beats and making sure to engage the crowd regularly with some cheesy hands-in-the-air breaks and frenzy-whipping lurches. Their performance is spectacular. The two musicians

wear lumpy blue and yellow face masks, reinforcing their alien music whilst nodding at the hilarity at the core of their sounds.

It's this grin-forming good-time feel that's slightly lacking from 100 Bullets Back's set, who address the GvsE question by hanging on to both, with an electronic core augmented by heavily-effected guitars and vocals. This combination can be a tough nut to crack, as it can create tensions between playing live and playing supplementary to backing tracks. It's hard to simultaneously go straight down a beat-heavy rhythmic path and a more considered melodic one. Largely, 100 Bullets Back pretty deftly pull off an approximate resolution, but it's sometimes hard to shake off the feeling that they're stuck between a rhythmic rock and a melodic hard place.

What occasionally kicks in as fantastic combination of tight vocal-led indie rock and sprawling electronica, all too easily splurges out as a muddy, noisy halfway house. All credit though to them, though, for exploring this difficult terrain - it's beaten many a band before (65daysofstatic included, oh yes, controversy fans) and perhaps they could be the one to successfully find the balance. As that inevitable musical conclusion is slowly shifted one step closer, both outfits tonight do good things to show their workings.

Simon Minter

CODES IN THE CLOUDS / CAT MATADOR /

AIDEN CANADAY

The Jericho Tavern

A mass of dinner jackets and bow ties awaits us at the Jericho, which is somewhat disconcerting, as we didn't realise there'd be a dress code for tonight's gig, and we're feeling slightly shabby. Fortunately there seems to be a different party on tonight and seeing as we're not invited, we can dispense with the bow-tie we've fashioned from a napkin and settle down to Aiden Canaday's maudlin folk.

It'd be nice to relax and kick back a bit, but Canaday has a style that insists on introspection. Playing to a nearly empty room, his set takes on an almost voyeuristic quality, as if the few people here have walked into his bedroom while he writes poetry about the latest girl to break his heart. A shaky high-pitched delivery makes him sound nervous and hazily delicate at times, and there are moments during his set when Nick Drake is called to mind - although generally those thoughts are "I'd rather be listening to Nick Drake".

With From Light To Sound dropping out of

tonight's gig due to injury, it's down to Cat Matador to break the fug of misery left by Canaday. They're on form tonight, and although they can often be feather-light there's a definite urgency about them. Sian Williams' violin dances around the taut guitars and almost industrial sounding drums with unquestionable grace. When the band settles down into a repetitive, hypnotic Joy Division-inspired groove, that the vocals go missing occasionally is entirely inconsequential. Cat Matador are inspired this evening.

Codes In The Clouds could easily fall into the trap of being yet another post-rock band going through the motions. There are so many bands around with more effects pedals than good ideas and simply having the quiet/loud/quiet template isn't good enough anymore. They do stick fairly religiously to that well weathered format, but they're in no mood to hang around. The quiet sections, whilst affecting, are quickly dispatched with a stomp of the distortion pedal

and a mass of hair. The band themselves are immersed in the escalating grandeur of their songs, thrashing around the stage in animated fashion. There's no beard stroking or introspection here, just revelling in the power of wild mood swings. If anything, their set seems too short and the songs are over far too quickly, which is unusual for a post-rock band, but then Codes In The Clouds aren't just another post-rock band.

Sam Shepherd



Codes In The Clouds by Sam Shepherd



July

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Dr SHOTOVER: Any Old Irony

Well, you know how much I hate the festival season. *Almost* as much as the FESTIVE season; yes, very good, Dilworthy. Award yourself a gold star, and get me a bottle of Gold Label from behind the bar while you're about it... Ahh, the sweet, sweet taste of barley wine! Reminds me of when I was a teenager, climbing around rusty tanks on our local MoD firing range with Snuffy, Dave and Horlicks. Hmm, I wonder what happened to old Horlicks? Oh yes, he was blown up by an unexploded device on one of our nocturnal drinking expeditions. Nice chap, if a bit all over the place... But I digress. Festivals. Hate 'em, as you well know. I gather from our Esteemed Editor that he was at Cornbury the other year watching Echo and The Bunnymen... when he turned round, there was bloody David Ham-Face Cameron, dressed in a parka and scally trainies, la', nodding his head along to *The Cutter* as if he were trying for a bit part in *Awaydays*. Brrr, what a hellish vision. Our poor Esteemed Ed had to go into therapy for a year after that, and he is a man who has lived through more Goth, Dark Wave and Black Metal gigs than Amy Winehouse has had hot knives. Hang on a minute... now THERE'S an idea for a festival! You've had Cornbury... you've had Charlbury... we could call it CUTLERY! Amy Shitehouse, Pete Doperly and their soap-dodger mates could demonstrate how to inhale the most cannabinoids off heated kitchen utensils in the Bad Trips Tent while those old festival favourites CAN'T treated us to an endless jam version of the splendid *Ege Bamyasi* track *Spoon*, supported ably by our own dear Young Knives, and of course, erm... couldn't Sergeant Serjeant's FORK reform for the event?... Anyway, where was I? Oh yes, the Coalition

Government. Those moronic grinning clones Ham and Clegg trying to pretend we actually voted for them! Bah, and Double Bah! In fact, Dilworthy, get off your scrawny arse and procure me another Bah-ley Wine – NOW!

Next month:
Bah-my Army



SPARE US THE CUTTER: Scally-Lition leaders Hammo and Cleggsy get some policies sorted, like.

The Wheatsheaf

Live music in July

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Sat 3rd Buried In Smoke Presents...@pm/03

TAINT + DESERT STORM + ALUNAH PHANTOM THEORY

Fri 8th MWhitcombe Presents...@pm/03

BUTTERFLIES ON WINGS + JESS HALL

Sat 10th Alan Behind Logic Presents...@pm/03

SHAKER HEIGHTS

Tue 12th Swiss Concrete Presents...@pm/03

TENDER TRAP + LES CLOCHARDS + SHRAG

Wed 14th Muckie Presents...@pm/03

DEDLOK + 13 GAUGE

Fri 16th Alan Behind Logic Presents...@pm/03

INVISIBLE VEGAS + THE INSULT

Sat 17th Muckie Presents...@pm/03

BEELZEBOZO + BEAVER FUEL

Sun 18th @pm/03

BABY GRAVY + UNDERSMILE THE CHARM ASSAULT

Fri 20th Three Blind Mice Presents...@pm/03

CAT MATADOR + PRDCTV THE GRACEFUL SLICKS

Sat 21st GFI Presents...@pm/03-00

THE ANYDAYS + CHARLIE BAXTOR CRAYON

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INTRODUCING....

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

THE ANYDAYS

Who are they?

Classic garage-pop trio The Anydays are Drew Atkins (*vocals / guitar*), Niall Jeger (*bass*) and Cal Brumhead (*drums / vocal harmonies*). Niall and Drew have been friends since the early-90s. They finally got a band together at the end of 2006, recording a few songs at the legendary Toerag Studio in London with an acoustic guitar, bass and drums in one take. Soon Mark Radcliffe was playing them on his Radio 2 show. The band subsequently released a single 'Rollercoaster', followed by their debut album, 'Sound'. A 5-star review in *Nuts* magazine attracted the attention of promoters around the UK, before they were invited to play in Italy and later Spain last year. In May The Anydays played at the Oxford Punt before releasing a new single, 'Tambourine', which has again received airplay from Mark Radcliffe as well as on Spanish radio.

What do they sound like?

The Anydays are a fresh twist on a classic pop sound, taking inspiration from The Kinks and Beatles as well as 60s garage rock and sprucing it all up with a lively modern guitar-pop edge. They're simultaneously noisy and feelgood; as they say themselves, they're "Retro flavoured Brit guitar-pop with a ray of west-coast sunshine", while Nightshift described their Punt set as "Like the Crabbie's alcoholic ginger beer we discover at the bar, a new twist on a classic flavour".

What inspires them?

"An audience that is up for it. And a dressing room full of booze."

Career highlight so far:

"Going on stage in Perugia, Italy, at 2.30am to a sell-out crowd. Afterwards we found our support band passed out under a desk; they had previously promised to drink us under the table, so arguably they won."

And the lowlight:

"Pretending we had a manager called Dan so we didn't have to speak to business types – then one of us had to actually speak to a certain radio



producer on the phone assuming a fake accent in the style of Dan."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"The DB Band: good to see another garage-inspired band from Oxford."

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

"The Stone Roses'. Took a retro guitar sound to a new high."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"July 31st at the Wheatsheaf. Expect the unexpected."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite – The Cold Room is a good rehearsal room. Kebab Kid for afters. There are loads of great studios, even a mastering one. You get the chance to support bigger bands who pass through. Local bands cover all styles and some are creating new trends, and then there's local radio and press to encourage them. Oxford's got video makers, independent stockists, photographers, kit/tour bus hire, pretty much everything a band needs. Least – promoters who don't promote."

You might love them if you love:

The Kinks, The Beatles, The Sonics, The Wannadies, Oasis.

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/theanydays

Whatever happened to... those heroes

SKYDRIVE

WHO?

A band ahead of their time and out on their own in Oxford, Skydrive were, and remain, the best hardcore band to come out of the city. Formed in the early 90s, Skydrive were: Stefan Kunst (*vocals*); Gareth 'Griz' Williams (*bass*); Tim Darch (*guitar*); Nigel Brown (*guitar*) and Richard Willoughby (*drums*). Stef, Griz, Tim and Nige were friends from what was then Oxford Polytechnic, united by a love of American hardcore, notably The Jesus Lizard, Tad, Fugazi and Minor Threat, and hanging out at the Ampney Cottage on Cowley Road (now The Hobgoblin) where a pint cost a quid. Rich joined after replying to an ad in local music shop Russell Acott (where All Bar One now stands). From the very beginning the band were a melodically venomous proposition, better loved by London audiences than in their home town, bar a small but loyal following.

WHAT?

Hardcore. Proper hardcore. With great songs and no poncey emotional stuff. Inspired by the 80s underground sounds coming out of Washington DC, Austin, Texas and Chicago, they were brutal but incredibly melodic and an intense live experience, with Stef in particular a taught, wiry prowling panther of a frontman. Their sound was a mix of everything from Big Black and Minor Threat to Butthole Surfers and Helmet, and in particular The Jesus Lizard.



WHEN?

Skydrive existed from the early to the mid-90s, self-releasing one EP, 'The Brunt 45', as well as contributing their best song, 'Ulcer', to the seminal 'OXCD' compilation on Shifty Disco in 1996. The band were twice reviewed in NME. As well as regular gigs in London the band toured around Europe, playing squat gigs in German and Swiss towns like Pforzheim, Passau and Bernau. Over there they were treated more like rock royalty, although the entire profit from the tour was spent replacing the windscreen of their van, which had a brick thrown through it. The band split after a show at the Zodiac when inter-band issues came to a head.

WHY?

Although they never had a big local following, Skydrive directly or indirectly inspired many later local hardcore and post-hardcore acts, and as those early American hardcore influences have become more prevalent, they now seem well ahead of their time. 'Ulcer' featured in Nightshift's Top 20 Oxford Songs of the 90s. Their most lasting legacy, though, is probably Stef's coining of the term The Oxford Pasty, referring to the semi-circular space in front of the stage at sparsely-attended gigs which audiences studiously avoid, especially if, as in Skydrive's case, the singer is a bit scary.

WHERE?

After the split, Stef, Tim and Griz formed the band Callous, who took a similar but slightly more technical musical path. Apart from Stef, who now lives in Malvern, all of the band still live in Oxfordshire, with Griz running the Duke pub on St. Clement's. Callous reformed for one gig in 2008 with Nigel joining them for a rendition of 'Ulcer'.

HOW?

A few copies of 'The Brunt 45' should be available from SS20, while copies of 'OXCD' are still available from Oxfordmusic.net.

DEMOS

DEMO OF THE MONTH

THE FIERCE

The Fierce, in a previous life, were called Outofinto, a pretty promising Wantage-based metal band. A split followed by a reformation with a slightly tweaked line-up finds them, apparently, “simply enjoying writing metal songs and not living up to any expectations”, which appears to be modesty beyond the call of duty on the strength of this new demo. In it rumbles, on the back of some almost Big Black-like metallic bass, before heading off on an epic journey that covers twenty minutes in only three songs and featuring just enough convoluted detours to keep things fresh as it rolls unrelentingly through several large buildings, including a children’s hospital, on its way to join battle with whatever gets in its way. The singer’s larynx-bothering scream takes things into Blood Brothers-like hardcore territory at times, while there are moments that recall Girls Vs Boys, but mostly this is metal in all its titanic glory. It’s pulverising stuff, riffage that moves from traditional early-80s metal to thrash to more proggy wandering, while moody intros make way for battering ram charges as militant backing vocals suggest a particularly stern drill sergeant berating some slacker recruits for not bellowing loudly or fiercely enough. Monstrous, in all the right ways.

VISION FALL

More metal, and, for the most part, of a similarly high quality. What Vision Fall are doing is hardly original – in fact it could probably have come flat-packed direct from the metalcore mail order catalogue (there’s even an Ebay delivery slip in the envelope for a Killswitch Engage CD, in case we had any doubts as to exactly where they are coming from) – but it’s done with admirable vim and venom, blast beats and breakdowns backing up alternately ogre-ish and melodic vocals, lashing of snarling and growling and bellowing and hollering that coat the churning, shredded riffs with a tar-like grime, plus the odd bit of discreetly clever fretplay that doesn’t seem to want to make a big deal of itself. Each of the three songs here sound like very slightly tweaked variations of each other, but everything pummels along nicely (or not nicely, depending on whether you’re a spiritually dead Michael Bubl  fan). Five parts As I Lay Dying to three parts Shadows Fall and a hefty dash of Iron Maiden. Shake well and bump goes yer uncle, down the stairs in a crumpled heap.

ELYSIUM WAITS

Gadzooks, yet more metal. This time from a west Oxfordshire quintet whose claim to fame

is winning the 2010 Burford Battle Of The Bands. Like the previous two demos you can easily trace the band’s lineage to obvious sources, but unlike The Fierce and Vision Fall, it feels less natural, more like they’ve been swatting up on their School Of Rock textbooks a little too eagerly. ‘Through Veins’ is a rough demo and at over six minutes needs some serious editing – a good starting point would be the unnecessary and rather weedy contemplative breakdown which spoils what is up to that point an enjoyable enough thrash-out. Still, decent use of synths and a prolonged guitar solo that give it a bit of a proggy feel. ‘Insanity’, though, is overwrought soft-metal that’s only a gravel-throated whisker away from being Poison on a bad day, the singer trying to come on all emotional but sounding genuinely constipated. ‘Elysium’ brings the band back into the fold somewhat, packing more of a punch than its predecessor, but, while it’s more than passable stuff, you can’t help feel you’ve heard it all done better before and will again very soon.

AVENTINUS

Named after a particularly potent Bavarian beer, Aventinus is the latest musical project from Oxfordbands.com editor Colin MacKinnon, although since it’s a transatlantic recording affair with three of his former-Rhonda’s Basement bandmates from Chicago, maybe new isn’t the right word. Two of the three songs here are close in style to another of Colin’s old bands, Bridge, whose ‘Harvester’ remains a big favourite here at Nightshift. When as here he reigns his vocal histrionics in he’s possessed of a quite lovely voice, a full Scottish lilt that can soar without becoming bombastic. On ‘Lori’s In The Evening’ he combines well with the airy saxophone, while stand-out track ‘Sir Patrick’s Bride’ revisits his fascination with Scottish seafaring disaster, Colin’s voice and the doomed love affair subject matter attracting comparison with Orkney songsmith Kris Drever. By contrast ‘Sticking With the Union’ borrows its lyrical motif from The Strawbs, while its horn-heavy rock sound is partway between Squeeze and Stax soul. Good stuff, the best we’ve heard from Colin since Bridge. In fact we’re off to listen to ‘Harvester’ again. And maybe a couple of times again after that.

TWIZZ TWANGLE

Oh Twizz, dear Twizz, why do you torment us so? We know Mr Twangle to be a man of strange, exquisite musical genius on occasions (he remains to our knowledge the only person to go from Demo of the Month to Demo Dumper and back to Demo of the Month, and here threatens to make the return journey once again). Thing is, what can make Twizz great can also make him unbearable to listen to: he cannot sing and he cannot play and he appears to have absolutely no comprehension

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of what a tune is, never mind how to mix a demo into something listenable. This nine-track effort, entitled 'Rethinking Social Policy' after his wife's MA, packs itself into a similar timeframe to The Fierce's three tracks, but seems to last about ten times longer. Twizz moans and groans and wheezes and strums, all with heroic lack of direction or gusto, sounding like the world's worst middle-aged choir boy impersonator singing the world's worst fol-de-rol Christmas folk song, while in the midst of some crippling respiratory attack. We suppose, if we were being kind, and also inventing implausible new music genres, this could be called lo-fi Gregorian emo. There's a sample of Half Man Half Biscuit's 'I Hate Nerys Hughes' buried in here somewhere but it must have eloped with what once passed for a proper tune. Rethinking Social Policy? How about not letting Twizz near the musical toy box until he promises to write a proper song in future?

THE JACK AND JILLS

Talking about bothering to write a fucking song before you press record, maybe someone should tell The Jack And Jills, a band who, from their email, appear to have management but nothing by way of talent. We spend most of the demo wondering if the drummer has any clue whatsoever what he's meant to be doing, before concluding he doesn't because the rest of the band have secretly kept it from him that they don't either and are just making it all up as they go along. 'Parisian Waltz' spends an entire minute fanning about before lurching into something that'd be chucked into the Seine with the bog water if it had the cheek to show its face in Paris. From there it's a barely-formed scramble between frankly pathetic attempts at ska and some more spasticated waltz-time pop slurry of no discernible merit. Hey, Jack and Jill, fancy popping up this here hill with us for a moment? We've a yearning to kick your sorry arses right back down it. Maybe a broken crown will knock a bit of sense or talent into you.

NAKED YOUTH

Naked Youth's Myspace blurb suggests their site is off-limits to anyone over the age of 36 which, random age choice aside, is a pretty pathetic bit of ageism. But perhaps there's good reason to banish them oldsters, since one or several of them might just notice that Naked Youth's mad, revolutionary firebrand rock noise is merely a watered down mush of myriad pub-punk bands down the ages. They have the temerity to compare themselves to Rage Against The Machine while sounding more like the overblown grunge-lite crap of Stiltskin or Nickleback. Come on, is anyone over the age of 36 still scared of young people's music? Anyone who isn't a ranting rightwing religious zealot or a *Daily Mail*

columnist, that is? Anyway, Naked Youth chug and bluster untidily and to little discernible effect and, what's that? The sound of stampeding feet? Could it be a crowd of terrified middle-aged people running for their very lives? Or maybe just hurrying to the attic to fish out their old Minutemen and Minor Threat albums as evidence of the rancid old guff Naked Youth are playing by comparison? Ah yes, Rancid, another band who'd shit all over this drivel.

A CLEAN HOTEL ROOM

A Clean Hotel Room is the invitingly-monikered alias of Simon Du, whose Myspace finds him describing himself as acoustic emo and quoting Bright Eyes as a primary influence. Sensitive chap, then. Inaudible chap too. It's feasible the microphone was in the same part of Oxfordshire as Simon when he recorded these two live songs but probably not in the same building. What little we can make out sounds like someone gently hitting a shopping trolley with a tin plate while trying to remember the words to an old Bauhaus song. Sometimes it really is worth spending a couple of quid on a proper recording studio.

THE DEMO DUMPER

ASTEROX

Asterox describe themselves as a "matrock" band. We Googled matrock and it took us to a highly dubious "sex wrestling" site. Which would at least have been more fun to watch than this moribund heap of sheep offal. Asterox also suggest we "Taste the pulse, smell the beat and drink it fully", which suggests they either suffer from an extreme form of synaesthesia, or are off their fucking heads on something we've yet to be offered by those blokes on Manzil Way. Either way, you'd hope anyone suffering either condition would come up with music that was slightly more thrilling than the most lumpen blues-rock chug. Christ, even dead people could write and perform something a bit livelier than this. Maybe it's because they're getting on a bit (Naked Youth wouldn't approve): "It's alright if you don't let laid / It's alright if you don't get paid / As long as you've got your health" is just the sort of thing your gran might say to you. At least if she was a dirty-minded cow with an interest in your sex life. Asterox claim to be influenced by "everything we've ever heard, ever," although we'd warrant Stevie Ray Vaughan would rank highly on the list of things they've ever heard. He'd be so proud of what he's spawned, and that's saying something for a man who's probably responsible for inspiring precisely 73% of the most tedious music ever made.

Send demos for review to: *Nightshift*, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. Or email MySpace link to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, clearly marked Demo for review.

IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number. No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo.



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