

# NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 194  
September  
2011



# DUBWISER

After twenty years together Oxford's reggae godfathers release their debut album!

also inside:

**TRUCK FESTIVAL GOES INTO LIQUIDATION.**

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# NEWS

**STEVENTON EVENTS LIMITED**, the company behind **Truck Festival**, has gone into liquidation. Festival organisers Robin and Joe Bennett (*pictured*) had revealed a shortfall in the event's finances days after this year's Truck, at the end of July. On the 11<sup>th</sup> August Robin issued a statement confirming the worst: "Insufficient final ticket sales and revenues over the weekend have combined to force this outcome in what is a very difficult festival market. We would like to apologise to all those affected, including those who have not received their fees. On a personal note, we are devastated after such a well-received event, which was a success on many levels."

The sad news comes after Truck had enjoyed a complete redesign of its site, an expansion in capacity, and a move up to a three day event.

How the news affects the Truck organisation's other events, including WOOD Festival and Truck America is uncertain but it looks like it will spell the end to one of the Oxfordshire music scene's best loved institutions, one that started out as a party for Robin's birthday in 1998 and helped pioneer a whole new movement of small-scale local festivals, hailed as the Godfather of small festivals in *The Guardian* last year. Indeed its success in inspiring other festival organisers may in the long term have been its undoing; with the festival calendar increasingly over-saturated, Truck struggled to attract ticket buyers against stiff competition. The selling of hugely discounted tickets on Groupon in the weeks before this year's event suggested sales were not going as well as a hoped and angered some long-term Truck-goers who had already paid full price for tickets.

That aside, the loss of Truck to the local music calendar is huge. Not only did the festival provide an annual centrepiece for the local scene, it provided many local bands with their first taste of playing a proper festival, while raising thousands of pounds for charity over the years. Despite widespread speculation about the wisdom of expanding Truck in the current economic climate, that Truck had run so successfully for fourteen years proves that the event was a genuine success until it succumbed to circumstances.

The high esteem Truck, and Robin and Joe Bennett themselves, are held was showed when John Spiers, of this year's headliners Bellowhead, posted on the



*Oxford Mail* forum when the news was announced, revealing that his band had not been paid but that, despite "feeling a little betrayed by fellow musos who I really trusted for not levelling with us and giving us the opportunity to choose the risk for ourselves," he felt that "Truck Festival is an absolute asset to Oxford," adding, "I am proud that I come from the area that can put on a festival with an atmosphere that most others would give their eye-teeth for. Despite what has happened I still believe that they should continue with all they can in the same vein, because it is the right thing to do."

Whether Truck can come back in some shape or form in future years is doubtful, but from Nightshift's point of view, we shall cherish all the memories we hold of the festival over the years and say a big thanks to everyone who has worked to make it such a special event in that time.

**JAMES WOON and FUTURES** are set to headline **Leylines Festival** on **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October**. The one-day, multi-venue festival, set around the Cowley Road area, is being organised by DHP Concerts, whose Isla Miskelly has been putting on gigs at the Jericho Tavern and other local venues over the past few years.

Taking over from where OX4 Festival left off, Leylines will feature a mix of touring and local acts across venues like the O2 Academy, the Bullingdon and the newly opened Old Boot Factory, with more venues set to be added soon. As well as gigs, the event will incorporate workshops, music classes, talks, stalls and exhibitions, running from early afternoon into the wee small hours.

Talking about the event, Isla said, "We're really excited to be bringing a new festival to the city, and we hope that even in the current economic climate, people can still experience the atmosphere of a festival and discover new acts as well as seeing some great bands at an affordable price, all on their doorstep in OX4. We'll be bringing a whole host of exciting national acts into the mix with the best of Oxford's new emerging talent, there really will be something for everyone."

Leylines is open to over-14s, although some shows will be over-18s only. A limited number of early bird tickets are still on sale, priced £10 – thereafter £15 – from [www.alt-tickets.co.uk](http://www.alt-tickets.co.uk) as well as the Academy box office.

**ABBA GOLD and ARE YOU EXPERIENCED** headline **Summer Fayre Festival** in South Park this month. Running over the weekend of the **9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September**, Summer Fayre is a free live music event organised by Gecko Events, who run similar festivals in Bedford and Milton Keynes. Beyond the tribute band headliners, there will be a host of local acts playing, including Dead Jerichos, Spring Offensive, Minor Coles, The Anydays, Charly Coombes & The New Breed, The Scholars, Phantom Theory, Black Hats and Matt Winkworth. Local house and electro club Simple host a second stage on the Sunday, while Friday evening finds Jack FM hosting a live broadcast party with assorted local bands.

**STORNOWAY** release a brand new track, 'You Don't Know Anything', exclusively through the Patagonia Music Collective website this month. The download-only track will be available for 79p, with all profits going towards the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. Visit [www.patagonia.com/music](http://www.patagonia.com/music) to buy it.

The release coincides with Stormoway's Concert4Conservation show at the Regal on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**, which will raise money for The Sumatran Orangutan Society, The Earth Trust and the RSPB. Tickets are on sale through Truck Store on Cowley Road or at [www.seetickets.com](http://www.seetickets.com), priced £12.

## ALAN COOK 1949-2011

Local musicians have been paying tribute to Alan Cook, who founded the BA in Popular Music at Oxford & Cherwell Valley College and led the course for ten years, helping to inspire a generation of budding young musicians, among them members of Fixers, Dial F For Frankenstein and Dreaming Spires.

Alan passed away at the end of July after battling cancer. After a career as a touring and session musician he started up the course for a handful of students, run from a converted shipping container in the college car-park, nurturing it to become the prestigious Roland Academy.

Nigel Powell, drummer with Unbelievable Truth and Dive Dive, who worked as a technician and lecturer on the course, said of his friend and colleague, "Alan's passion and breadth of knowledge was only matched by his pure and almost childlike enthusiasm for music, which was one of the main ingredients that made the course inspirational for the hundreds of students that he taught; he would quite happily flit between talking about Meshuggah, John Coltrane, Erik Satie and Neil Young to illustrate in the real world some point about musical theory.

"I was repeatedly moved by Alan's unsentimental and uncoddling belief in the potential of all the students. Even after his diagnosis with cancer he worked

tirelessly and selflessly until he was physically unable to. Although the course will continue, it will remain a testament to Alan and the students he inspired."

Fixers' Jack Goldstein too paid tribute to his old mentor: "Myself, Dawson and Michael were all students of Alan's and we were all shocked to hear the news. He was the only person I have ever met who had seen Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band perform live. It's very sad."

Andrew Smith, who played with local bands Vestibule and FLM, said, "Alan taught me for two years and was probably the greatest teacher I ever had. Not only was he incredibly knowledgeable about music, he could answer any question you could ask him, and I can't recall a time where he wouldn't win a debate. I think anyone who studied music under him in his time at Oxford College have been influenced in their music performances long after leaving."



a quiet word with

# DUBWISER



**“LIVE REGGAE PARTICULARLY** has become one of the most traditional and regimental forms of music out there. The players are often so awed by the greats that they just reproduce as faithfully as they can the styles of the 60s and 70s. I understand this degree of respect but it’s no way forward; the kings’ music will die like this.

“Bob Marley and Peter Tosh and so on did not play a style, they played music in the way that they did because they felt it. That is roots. They played their roots and now heartists must play as they feel it now. That’s why I am more interested in modern styles like dubstep, electronica and the UK rap scene. For me that is just as much roots. Because as a band we bridge the gap between styles and if you can hear all these influences on the album, well then that is *our* roots.”

**JONAS TORRANCE, SINGER,** percussionist, guitarist and keyboard player with Oxford reggae veterans Dubwiser is musing on the eclectic blend of styles that informs his band’s new album, ‘A Crack In Paradise’, and whether pure roots reggae can still find its place in a world where hybrid styles are constantly being invented.

The album draws in soul, rap, ska, even acid house along its expansive journey, but at its heart is built on the solid foundations of roots reggae and dub. Nightshift wonders if that traditional sound is still as strong as it ever was.

Dubwiser bassist Paul ‘Tads’ Tadman is quick to pick up on the idea of strong foundations.

“I liken the traditional roots to a foundation of a building; once the foundations are there any number of things can be tried and tested – and they are, too!”

“Traditional sounds will remain potent while the archetypes they express are relevant to our society. When they are not we will give up playing music and weave baskets out of old Dubwiser gig posters,” adds keyboard player Malcolm Atkins, before multi-instrumentalist and singer Spider J chips in, “No roots? Nah, they will always be roots! No roots, no trees and certainly no money trees! We all know how humans love money!”

**IT’S A WHOPPING EIGHTEEN** years since we last interviewed Dubwiser, back when they graced the front cover of Nightshift’s predecessor Curfew.

A lot has changed in that time, both for the band and for the Oxford music scene, but the core of Dubwiser today is the same as it was back then: Jonas, Spider and Malcolm. Tads is the band’s new boy with mere ten years membership under his belt.

**ALMOST TWO DECADES** young, Dubwiser seem like an ever-present force on the local scene: benevolent, godfatherly figures not just to reggae fans and musicians but across the board. Jonas and Spider have helped mentor young local

musicians for years; Jonas for a while played in a full-on rock band with former-Sevenchurch axeman Dave Smart, while Malcolm is a well-known figure on the local improv circuit, chair of the Oxford Improvisers Collective. For his part, Spider is a renowned producer, working with the likes of Killa Kela, as well as co-writing the first-ever jungle number 1 hit, ‘Original Nutter’ by UK Apache.

Given this pedigree, plus the fact that individually and collectively the quartet have played with Lee Perry, Madness, Mad Professor and others, it’s both a shock and not that ‘A Crack In Paradise’ is Dubwiser’s debut album. We have to wonder, why it’s taken so long in coming.

SPIDER: “Twenty years but we were not in this permanent line up. We tried different combinations, gave a few friends chances, played in a few other bands then realised, like squash, it’s best to play this game with *real* friends.”

MALCOLM: “With the demise of the CD as a real product and its invention as a virtual product we have finally decided to create a virtual presence in a non-existent market-place for an impoverished music buying public. But then money isn’t everything. Is it?”

**INDIVIDUALLY AND** collectively you’ve played with myriad big-name reggae acts; any particular stories to tell?

SPIDER: “Plenty to tell but you know what they say about informers!”

JONAS: “Oh the stories we could tell! You just wouldn’t believe. No really, you wouldn’t. I do remember one show when Lee Perry nearly set the place on fire. Literally. Lee has a set of real die-hard fans who love him whatever he does, although the venues don’t necessarily.”

TADS: “For me, meeting Aston ‘Family Man’ Barrett was one of the highlights, a really nice guy who took time to talk and impart some of that secret insight into his own playing.”

Working with so many other acts must have affected the way in which Dubwiser have able to work as a band  
SPIDER: “Working with other acts takes time, so you look forward to playing games with your friends.”

JONAS: “He’s back to squash again! But racquets aside, Spider has a point. Time has always been limited for us because we are often busy with other projects. That focuses us when we do get together. In terms of the influence of other acts I’m probably more likely to be impressed and influenced by some singer down at the Wolvercote festival, because she or he is completely new to me. I love being surprised by music and performance and I hope we manage to keep some of that freshness and surprise in our act.”

MALCOLM: “We all work constantly with a range of other acts and other art forms. Jonas and Malcolm both work with dance, Spider is recognised as an outstanding producer and session player.; Paul has the funk and is a thespian as well.”

**THE GREAT THING ABOUT ‘A** Crack In Paradise’ is that it all feels so fresh, like the work of a band that has never lost that original spark of enthusiasm for writing and performing. It is an album of vastly differing moods – from the joyous positivity of ‘Ride Your Life Like A Bicycle’, through the more militant social commentary of ‘Power Up’ to far darker tracks like ‘Africa’.

MALCOLM: “We are a culturally and aesthetically diverse group in a multicultural society. I’m from the socialist republic of East Oxford; Jonas the rural idyll of Wolvercote; Paul the urban sprawl of south London and Spider the constantly reconstructed East End. Every time we are in a room together the atmosphere shifts; the sun disappears behind clouds; strange voices emanate from the heavens; people approach Jonas and ask if he is the Messiah.”

JONAS: “Moi? Definitely not! Mind you, when Tads drops that bass it is like a second coming! Spider’s skill as

a producer has already been mentioned. Although he's my brother he told me straight I had to write darker, more aggressive songs, so I did and I haven't looked back; I'm the Henry Rollins of reggae!"

An early high point of the album, 'Papa Is A Rudie', feels particularly nostalgic, despite its upbeat nature. JONAS: "'Papa is a Rudie' is a wheel within a wheel. All of us have played in ska bands over the years. It was originally a ska tune, but then we decided to give it a 'skacid' feel (ska mixed with acid house; an actual genre) so it was like generations of styles which suited the father/son idea of the song."

"We recorded the whole album live then remixed everything and then chose the best versions for the album, which partly accounts for the variety in styles. 'Power Up', for example, was originally a live rhythm similar to 'Could You Be Loved'. The remix worked better for rap, so on the album it went."

By contrast, 'A Racist (Stays The Same)' feels oddly resigned given its subject matter. Is there a feeling of sadness there? That you feel powerless to change something like that?

JONAS: "Sadness, yes. I do have a positive outlook, but I'm not blind; the song is in part about how racist organisations change their brand and keep reinventing themselves and their targets. It's a howl, not a song and props to AJ for doing it justice. We sat in my studio and talked about the complete insanity of racism for about an hour, then I gave him the mike and he did it in one take."

SPIDER: "Always trying to change this but some will never see; so sorry for them and happy for the ones who unite in this big party of life."

#### 'A CRACK IN PARADISE'S

variety and freshness benefits greatly from a cast of guest contributors drawn from Dubwiser's wide circle of friends on the local scene and beyond, including Ska Cubano's Miss Megumi; Zion Train's Dave Cosmics, Execution Squad's Scrutineer and the multi-talented Asher Dust. What things in particular do the band feel each of them brought to the mix?

JONAS: "We really wanted a strong UK rap influence on the album. All the rappers really jumped on the project, plus Natalie Maddix guests on 'Slowly' because we had to get some lovers rock in there somewhere. At the Oxford end, we pulled Nicky Moorbath out of retirement and got a guitarist called Joe Shallis to take some solos. Our dear brother Asher is on three tracks and I seriously don't know if I've ever heard him sound better. We tried to be as authentic as possible; for example, people who have spent time inside played on 'Bang Up,' and 'Racist' features Wayne MacArthur and his daughters

who come from Luton, which has some serious problems with racist activities."

**DUBWISER COULD RIGHTLY** be considered elder statesmen, but how strong is Oxford's reggae scene?

JONAS: "It's been stable for a long time. You have different people who emphasise different angles, but I think things are definitely looking up. Promoters are getting wise to what Aidan's [Count Skylarkin] been saying for a long time, that there's an audience for large reggae acts as well as small ones. Lots of kids come to our shows and always have, but I don't know if they specifically see themselves as 'reggae' as such. I keep bumping into indie bands who tell me they like us and have been heavily into dub for years. I see it as part of the mainstream Oxford vibe, not separate."

And given Dubwiser's longevity, how much do you think Oxford has changed in your time together?

SPIDER: "Musically it never was just a city generating great indie bands. It has some great bands and is near enough to be relevant to London but far enough not to get caught up in the constant rat race of London."

JONAS: "Please! No more cafes! In terms of music... I miss [legendary Jericho Tavern and Point promoter] Maccie: the city could do with more punk rock attitude in general. But I'm into a lot of the new bands around. I'm very proud of the fact that Oxford consistently produces bands that cannot be pigeonholed."

#### SO WHERE DO DUBWISER GO

from here? Having stayed the course for two decades their continued presence feels assured, though the long-overdue arrival of that debut album suggests the intensity of the band's activity might well change. The response is, predictably idealistic.

MALCOLM: "We will keep paddling steadfastly up the Cherwell until corporate rock is successfully buried in the foundations of a new organic farmers' co-operative replacing Tesco's on Cowley Road and everyone is tripping happily down Cowley Road in red, green and gold trainers whistling Jonas' tunes. Birds will sing happy pentatonic melodies from trees outside the reclaimed Zodiac and the small shopkeepers of Cowley Road will sell organic food, home spun clothes and locally produced goods and spend their evening gathered around camp fires outside the East Oxford Health Centre singing old Dubwiser songs."

Hey, you gotta have a dream. Else how you gonna make that dream come true?

'A Crack In Paradise' is released this month on Crash Records. Dubwiser play The Cellar on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Visit [www.dubwiser.co.uk](http://www.dubwiser.co.uk) for news and gig dates.



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## DUBWISER

### ‘A Crack In Paradise’

(Crash)

You’d be forgiven for thinking that after twenty years together a band might have run out of fresh ideas or anything worthwhile to say, particularly when that band has spent so much of that period individually playing with myriad world-renowned acts, sporadically coming together to record or tour. So it says a lot about Dubwiser that two decades on from their inception their debut album (seriously – we had to check that twice) sounds as fresh as any by a new young band.

‘A Crack In Paradise’ isn’t without its faults: at 73 minutes it’s too long for starters and its mood tends to meander a little too much, particularly after the midway point when you’re never quite sure whether you’re supposed to be partying or manning the barricades, but to be honest, those are minor discrepancies as the core four-piece (Jonas Torrance, Spider J, Malcolm Atkins and Paul Tadman) are joined by a host of guests for a record that runs the gamut of emotions, from joyous positivity to politically-charged anger to contemplation and resignation.



In the former camp is the sweet, hippy-ish ‘Ride Your Life Like A Bicycle’ that’s pure summer sunshine fun with an overriding sense of unselfconscious *joy de vivre*. Similarly infectious is ‘Papa Is A Rudie’, with its oddly giddy sense of nostalgia.

Moving into more political territory, ‘Power Up’ – a serious contender, amid strong competition, for stand-out track of the album – easily mixes hip hop and 70s soul into the dominant dub, raging against government austerity somewhere between Culture and Stevie

Wonder.

By contrast ‘A Racist Stays The Same’ prefers weary resignation to militancy, perhaps lacking the authority of ‘Power Up’ but awash with odd skronks and a soulfulness that saves it.

With Jonas and Spider trading lead, Dubwiser avoid sinking into a vocal rut and the addition of Asher Dust and Natalie Maddix (who adds some lovely soulful vocals to ‘Slowly’), everything stays fresh.

Dipping into darker, dubbier territory, ‘Africa (1 Out Of 2)’ and the atmospheric skronk of ‘A Ton On U Boombox’ switch the mood even further, interspersed with the loping, brassy ‘Cool U Fire’ and the Wailers-styled ‘Come Forward’, but it’s appropriate that ‘A Crack In Paradise’ ends with laughter, the impish clowning around of ‘Bye Bye’ closing the album in almost surreal fashion.

Always one of the most musically talented bands in Oxford, Dubwiser’s sometimes nebulous nature and enduring part-of-the-furniture character might have seen them written off as little more than a curiosity, but ‘A Crack In Paradise’ is as strong a statement of intent as any local band will release this year. With any luck we won’t have to wait another twenty years for its follow up.

**Dale Kattack**

## LITTLE FISH

### ‘Wonderful’

(Estupendo)

Watching Little Fish play at Cornbury Festival, it was striking just how much more rich and powerful singer Julia Sophie’s voice was than any of the far more experienced blues singers on show over the weekend.

She’s always been a singer of extraordinary talent of course but since working with Linda Perry she’s discovered even greater depths of vocal strength and flexibility and that shows on this new single, one that finds Little Fish sounding far more like a three-piece than a year or so ago when Hammond player Ben Walker felt a little like a tagged-on extra to Julia and Nez’s unfettered garage rock. In fact, having watched Ju and Ben’s set as a duo at Truck, you wonder if this isn’t a direction they’re heading more towards.

On ‘Wonderful’, the organ swirls and howls around the melody sumptuously, lifting Julia’s voice higher than before, the song feeling awash with a sense of jubilation where previously Little Fish have mined a darker lyrical seam – ‘Wonderful’ feels like a ‘Sunday Morning’ to ‘Darling Dear’-s ‘Heroin’.

You sense this marks entry into a more mainstream musical world but not at the expense of the band’s heart and soul, which still shine bright as ever. And catch the excellent animated video for the single if you can; it’s a fantastic slice of psychedelic whimsy, reminiscent of Mew’s Jonas Bjerre or Wladyslaw Starewicz’s early-80s work.

**Dale Kattack**

## SEABUCKTHORN

### ‘In Nightfall’

(Bookmaker)

The solo avant-garde guitar scene has become pretty crowded in recent years, with the likes of Alexander Tucker and Matt Elliott breaking new ground for the one man guitar heroes, and it’s becoming harder to stand out from the (frequently-bearded) crowd. We should be thankful, then, for Oxford’s contribution to this loose-knit ‘scene’, in the form of Andy Cartwright’s Seabuckthorn.

‘In Nightfall’ is a mini-album stitched together from acoustic guitars – sometimes layered, sometimes effected, but more often than not twisting along in a series of charismatic arpeggios that take in a healthy range of interesting influences along the way. ‘Journeyed Road’ features almost sitar-esque drones that bring to mind some of Irmin Schmidt’s soundtrack work, while the gently-sinister lilt of ‘Carrier’ has something of Espers’ instrumental moments about it. ‘Dark Blue’ could have been an out-take from Papa M’s ‘Live From A Shark Cage’ and the acoustic melodies give way to a funereal cavern of reverb redolent of Jackie-O Motherfucker soundtracking a spaghetti western on ‘Gone Estray, Being Circled’.

If there’s a criticism to be levelled at the record, it’s that with few genuinely striking melodies, it’s at risk of slipping into background music from time to time, but when viewed under the microscope, these are clever, well-constructed slices of guitar atmospherics that stand up with the very best of the genre.

**Stuart Fowkes**

## THE DREAMING

### ‘SPIRES’

### ‘Everything All The Time’

(Clubhouse)

As co-founders of Truck Festival and its myriad offshoots, and mainstays of the much-missed Goldrush, brothers Robin and Joe Bennett have nothing left to prove, but that isn’t going to stop them trying, and thus they’ve recruited former-Ride sticksman and (arguably) Oxford’s finest drummer Loz Colbert into their ranks and entered the studio for this debut single with producer *extrordinaire* Sam Williams (the man who helmed Supergrass’ ‘I Should Coco’ amongst others). The result is as anthemic as you’d expect given that combination, Goldrush’s previous disposition towards understatement replaced with a more melodramatic and rousing form of Americana-infused pop, instantly recalling Big Star and Teenage Fanclub. Oddly, despite traces of his old tremulous self still detectable in Robin’s voice, this single sounds more fresh-faced than much of what the brothers Bennett have produced previously.

B-side ‘In Our Lifetimes’, with its “look what we’ve done to the world” environmental sentiments (more than excusable given their pioneering work with eco-friendly festivals with WOOD), exposes Robin’s more plaintive side, but with its big-hearted feel and swelling trumpet, it too feels discreetly epic, like Gorky’s lysergic folk-pop scrubbed up for a West Coast sunrise shindig. All really rather pretty, truth be told.

**Dale Kattack**

## UNDERSMILE / CARETAKER

### 'Split EP'

(Blindsight)

Few bands could even start to compete with Undersmile in the scouring intensity stakes, but Hampshire's Caretaker – regular visitors to Oxford, particularly the Cellar – make a decent fist of it, their abrasive clatter and chug reaching a plateau on 'The Inexorable March' with pleasing hints of The God Machine.

That's a fleeting flight of fancy compared to what follows courtesy of Oxford's own damsels of doom. A whole four minutes of 'Big Wow' has passed before Hel Sterne and Taz Corona-Brown's mediaeval Hammer Horror flick vocals creep into the picture, like ghostly apparitions. Onward it grinds with Swans-like malevolence and a sturdy sense of tectonic purpose, melting to a thick black tar some 13 minutes later, an unforgiving dirge that really needs to be experienced at full live volume to experience the singular musical pain and pressure it brings to bear.

'Anchor' is similarly singular of purpose, the musical equivalent of watching the slowly widening stain of evil in *Dark Water* as it expands across the ceiling, a harbinger of unimaginable terror. Again it really needs the full force of a live performance to make its presence felt, but crank up the stereo loud enough to rattle the windows and you'll get the idea. Your parents, your neighbours and quite possibly your parish priest will advise you to turn that damn dirge off and

they'll have a point, but that's no reason not to simply stick your head further into the speakers and see if you really can drown in sound.

Ian Chesterton

## SECRET RIVALS

### 'Make Do & Mend'

(Kittiwake)

Having started out life as an untidy gaggle of lo-fi noisenicks a couple of years back, it's testament to the virtues of constant giggling that Secret Rivals' debut album finds a far more cohesive band in action, although one that doesn't seem to have ditched that early spark of exuberance and feistiness along the way.

Having followed fellow local synth pop-tinged indie chanters Alphabet Backwards onto Kittiwake, Rivals share a similarly raucous sense of chirpiness, album opener 'Ghosting' sounding like a bottle of double-caffeinated coke shaken up and allowed to decorate the lawn one sunny afternoon.

With their roots in 80s riot grrl, 90s indie pop and more recent fight-pop bands like Johnny Foreigner and Dananananaykroyd, Secret Rivals revel in the mess of the party, while simultaneously keeping a fist gripped round the tune in hand, 'Blisters' sparking and stuttering with deceptively well defined pop nous. While a wall of guitar fuzz backs up most of the songs here it's the odd couple girl-boy relationship between singers Clouds and Jay that defines the band, as with bands like Huggy Bear and Bis before them, each seemingly trying to match the



other's joyous belligerence.

Where Secret Rivals falter is when they lose touch with that formula: 'Me Vs Melodrama' finds Clouds out on her own in a more considered synth-pop ballad that sounds like an old *Just Seventeen* angst column made into a musical. Saying that, Jay's closing, almost acoustic, lament at the end of the album deserves more than its 76-second life-span, coming on like something Roddy Woomble might conjure these days.

At their best, though, as on 'We're Not Leaving You Again', Secret Rivals sound like an indie band from a time when that term actually meant something: boys and girls with little adherence to the macho rules of rock or the polished aesthetics of chart pop, set afloat to make their own entertainment. Quite possibly in a summer meadow and in possession of an illegal amount of sugary snacks.

Dale Kattack

# JAMIE WOON FUTURES

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# GIG GUIDE

## THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**HEALTH + LISTING SHIPS: The Jericho Tavern** – Intense, experimental electro-noise from LA's Liars-inspired pop kooks – *see main preview*  
**THE REAPER + COLOUR CHANGE FOR CAMOUFLAGE: The Cellar** – Classic metal riffage from teenage newcomers The Reaper, plus rap and ska-inflected rocking from CC4C. Followed by hip hop club night Wordplay.  
**NIKKI LOY: The Port Mahon** – Soulful, emotive acoustic pop from the local songstress at tonight's Live&Loud show.

*Thursday 1<sup>st</sup>*

## HEALTH /

## LISTING SHIPS:

### The Jericho Tavern

LA's primal noise experimentalists return to Oxford for the first time since 2008, hopefully to promote a new album; only 2010's remix album 'Health Disco: 2' having filled the gap since their last album proper, 'Get Colour', a relatively more melodic outing than their abrasive self-titled debut. The clean-cut, almost glossy vibe of those remixes maybe points the way for Health's future, although live it's their sense of organised chaos that is so appealing: dramatic tribal percussion, skewed song structures, other-worldly vocals and a savagely inventive clatter all combining to make for a seriously intense, occasionally confrontational show. No surprise they started out teaming up with Crystal Castles before going out on tour with Nine Inch Nails. Sound-wise there are definite leanings towards the likes of Liars, Boredoms and Gang Gang Dance as they pick'n'mix from krautrock to pagan industrial folk, electro-pop and experimental dance, but they're very much their own band, and one hell of a band at that. Great support tonight from local post-rock and krautrock-inspired noiseniks Listing Ships.



## SEPTEMBER

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre** – Oxford's oldest and best open mic club continues to showcase local singers, musicians, poets, performance artists and more every week.  
**GOOD VIBRATIONS: Cafe Tarifa** – Weekly unplugged session.  
**APPLE PIRATE PROMOTIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Local metal, rock and indie bands night.  
**AVENGE VULTURE ATTACK + LEOPARDS + SHATTERED DREAMS: The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Jambox rock night, with female-fronted Ealing heavyweights Avenger Vulture Attack and local punk-pop types Shattered Dreams.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston**

## FRIDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**ARCANE: City Far, Eynsham** – First day of the annual live music and dance charity festival that features Chumbawamba, 3 Daft Monkeys and Imperial Leisure over the weekend – *see main preview*  
**BUNKFEST: Various Venues, Wallingford** – Opening day of the annual Wallingford music festival, featuring a wide selection of free gigs across various venues in the town, plus ceilidhs, workshops, dance and song sessions, a beer festival, kids stuff and more. Transglobal Underground, Peatbog Faeries, Demon Barbers Roadshow, Zulu and Isambard are among the acts performing across the weekend.  
**EAST 17: O2 Academy** – Walthamstow's one-time hitmakers and, hard to believe now, rivals for the nation's hearts and wallets with Take That in the early-90s, continue along the comeback trail, though without chief songwriter Tony Mortimer. Brian Harvey still leads the line on old hits like 'Steam' and 'If I Ever', but it doesn't seem too much of a coincidence that if you look at the name East 17 quickly it looks like Past It.  
**SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with DUBWISER: The Cellar** – Album launch gig from this month's Nightshift cover stars at Count Skylarkin's monthly celebration of all things reggae, ska, dancehall, dubstep and jungle, with DJ sets from Tenoshi and Indecision.  
**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with MINI GINGE & THE DARK MOPS + THE NEW MOON + STONE CONNECTION: The Wheatsheaf** – Wistful folk-pop from Mini Ginge at tonight's Klub Kak, plus acoustic pop from The New Moon.  
**THE SECRET POLICE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to The Police.  
**D GWALIA + THE GOGGENHEIM + MacGILLIVRAY: Modern Art Oxford** – Beautifully bleak ethereal mood pop from D Gwalia, with excellent support from spaced-out mutant psych-punk outfit The Goggenheim, sounding like a whacked-out collision of Faust, The Slits, Soft Machine and Renaldo & The Loaf at times.  
**SAMUEL ZASADA + MATT CHANARIN + JESS HALL: The Port Mahon** – Benefit gig for

local mental health charity Restore, featuring elegantly dark-hearted alt.folksters Samuel Zasada.  
**THIRD COMPANY + LEOPARDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury** – Jambox rock and metal night.  
**FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon** – Classic soul, funk and r'n'b every week.  
**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre** – Weekly dose of roots and dub.  
**WHO DO YOU LOVE: The Duke, St.Clement's** – Alt.rock, 60s garage, soul, new wave, punk and electro-pop DJ session with Jen, Jim and Grizilla.

## SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**STORNOWAY + THE DREAMING SPIRES + THE EPSTEIN: The Regal** – Stornoway play a special homecoming show in aid of local environmental charities, including The Sumatran Orangutan Society, The Earth Trust and the RSPB. Currently working on their highly-anticipated second album, the band are promising to air a selection of new songs for the first time, especially for local fans. Joining them are The Dreaming Spires, now bolstered by the recruitment of former-Ride drummer Loz Colbert, plus elegantly cinematic alt.country faves The Epstein. Should be a pretty special night.  
**MOTHER CORONA + BELLIGERANCE + K-LACURA + GRINGO: The Wheatsheaf** – Sludgy, groove-led psych-metal from Mother Corona at tonight's Buried In Smoke gig, plus high-octane metalcore from K-Lacura.  
**OXFORD WHEELS PROJECT FUNDRAISER: The Cellar** – Chug DJs Discotty and Loudat raise money for a new local skate park.  
**ARCANE: City Far, Eynsham** – *See main preview*  
**DEDLOK DAY: The Port Mahon** – Local thrash overlords Dedlok host another metal all-dayer in the suitably compact confines of the Port, featuring along the way metalcore types Taste My Eyes and K-Lacura, death-thrash crew Black Skies Burn, prog-core types Mutagenocide, stoner metallers Caravan of Whores, RIP Sanity and plenty more besides.  
**BUNKFEST: Various Venues, Wallingford ALAMAKOTA + DAN WEBB + D GWALIA: Folly Bridge Inn** – Groove-led fusion of funk, dub, drum&bass and world sounds from Alamakota, with support from Aussie rock keyboardist Dan Webb and ghostly, ethereal songsmith D Gwalia.  
**MOFO: Fat Lil's, Witney PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy** – Weekly three-clubs-in-one extravaganza with indie and electro at Propaganda; kitsch pop and guilty pleasures at Trashy and alt.rock and metal at Room 101.

## SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**ARCANE: City Far, Eynsham**  
**BUNKFEST: Various Venues, Wallingford BEARD OF DESTINY + MOON LEOPARD + PENNY & PHIL + STEM: Donnington Community Centre (6pm)** – Free acoustic live music session.



**JAMBOX ACOUSTIC AND OPEN MIC SESSION: The Hobgoblin, Bicester**

### **MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup>**

**THE BLUE BISHOPS: The Bullingdon** – Hard-rocking blues in the style of Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters and Peter Green from the European blues festival favourites.

### **TUESDAY 6<sup>th</sup>**

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Free weekly live jazz club with tonight's guests The Hugh Turner Band.

**GREEK: The Playhouse** – A contemporary, non-traditional opera, composed by Anthony Turnage and based on a Berkoff play, reworking the myth of Oedipus into an angry commentary on Thatcherite Britain.

**DON GOLLARDO & HOW FAR WEST + SWINDLESTOCK + GUY DE VALLE: Folly Bridge Inn** – Americana, folk and 70s rock from Nashville's Don Gollardo, teaming up with How Far West for a UK tour. Classic country covers, from Johnny Cash to Kris Kristofferson from Guy de Valle and American country blues from Swindlestock in support.

**GOOD VIBRATIONS: Cafe Tarifa** -

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon**

### **WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup>**

**PEERLESS PIRATES + MR TOM + THE GOGGENHEIM: The Bullingdon** – Peerless Pirates return to action after a lengthy hiatus with more nautical tales in a jangly Smiths-inspired style.

### **THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup>**

**LISTEN TO THIS – MICROMUSIC: Oxford Playhouse** – The second in the Playhouse's series of composer-curated Listen To This concerts, tonight hosted and compiled by Joanna Bailie and featuring three pieces performed by Apartment House, exploring how contemporary composers transfer techniques from rock and pop. American drone composer Phill Niblock's 'Five More String Quartets' reveals how close frequencies appear in daily life; 'Atopia (Hyperamplified)' by Yannis Kyriakides explores the relationship between loudness and distance, inspired by the sound of sand drifting past a window in Cairo. The evening is completed by Johannes Kreidler's 'In Hyper Intervals', a piece that aims to "smash expectations of remix culture, creating a rebellious union of the acoustic and electronic."

**PEARL JEM: O2 Academy** – The long-standing Pearl Jam tribute band perform '10' in its entirety.

**HOT HOOVES + GENERALS & MAJORS:**

**The Bullingdon** – Hot rocking action in the vein of Bob Mould, Eddy & The Hot Roads and Guided By Voices from the mighty Hot Hooves at tonight's It's All About The Music show.

**BELZEBOZO + MOTHER CORONA: The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Heavyweight classic metal from Beelzebozo, plus thrash noise from Mother Corona at tonight's Jambox rock session.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston**

### **FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup>**

**SUMMER FAYRE FESTIVAL: South Park** – The opening night of the three-day free live music festival is hosted by Jack FM, with a live broadcast party featuring The Reaper, Shattered Dreams,

Phousa, Future Shape of Sound and more – *see main preview*

**ARTCLASSINK: The Wheatsheaf**

**BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Dancefloor Latin, afrobeat, Balkan beats and world breaks club night, with a live set from London's Los Chinces, playing a mix of Amazonian cumbia and Peruvian chicha.

**SACK SABBATH: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Black Sabbath tribute.

**MOTHER CORONA + SNOW GLASS JACK: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury** – Rock and metal night.

**FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon**

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford**

**Community Centre**

**THE SCOTT GORDON BAND + LES**

**CLOCHARDS + CRIPPLE CREEK GIRLS +**

**DJ SCOTTY McTURNABLE: Isis Farmhouse,**

**Ifley Lock** – Acoustic roots folk and blues from Scott Gordon, plus French café pop and classic rock'n'roll from Les Clochards.

### **SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup>**

**SUMMER FAYRE FESTIVAL: South Park (12 midday)** – Full day of live music with Dead Jerichos and Spring Offensive among the local acts playing, plus a headline set from ABBA Gold – *see main preview*

**XERATH + PROSPEKT + AETHARA + IN**

**DECADENCE + ZAOS: O2 Academy** –

Following on from successful metal all-dayers co-hosted by Room 101 and Skeletor, the two clubs join forces for a regular monthly night, featuring out-of-town names and supports picked from the increasingly healthy local scene. Tonight's headliners Xerath fuse tech-core with death metal and a cinematic pomp to create an orchestral cross between Opeth and Meshuggah, while among the supporting cast are prog-metallers Prospekt and melodic death-metal crew Aethara.

**CLUB SKAPUNK: The Bullingdon** – Live ska-punk and DJs, including a live set from The Big Society.

**BENEATH THE WILLOW: The Perch, Binsey**

– Charity mini-festival in aid of Oxfam, featuring Alamakota, Inflatable Buddha, David Simon, Matt Sage, Matt Chanarin, Matt Winkworth, Scratch Tuesday, Rosehips, Jess Hall and more.

**SHEPHERDS PIE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Rock covers.

**BATTSTOCK: Batt School, Witney (1pm)** –

School fundraiser with live music from Jessie Grace, Miriam Jones, Phousa, The Outcast Band, Thrill Collins and Russell Morgan.

**THE CARVELL ROCK SHOW: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury**

**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy**

**SWINDLESTOCK: The Port Mahon**

### **SUNDAY 11<sup>th</sup>**

**SUMMER FAYRE FESTIVAL: South Park (12 midday)** – Second full day of live music and dance, featuring a headline set from Hendrix tribute act Are You Experienced? plus local turns from Charly Coombes, Scholars, Gunning For Tamar and many more – *see main preview*

### **MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup>**

**RISE TO REMAIN + BLEED FROM WITHIN + THE SAFETY FIRE: O2 Academy** – London metalcore heroes Rise To Remain head out on a headline



*Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> – Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>*

## **ARCANE: City Farm, Eynsham**

Now comfortably esconced at the end of the festival season, Arcane has quietly gone about establishing itself as something far more than the low-key, local-band-based weekend it started off as, as demonstrated by this year's headline acts. Anarcho-folk-punk collective **Chumbawamba** have been sticking two fingers up to the system for a quarter of a century now, adding a hefty dose of humour and some serious pop hooks to their original Crass-inspired political rantings; they used to be regular visitors to Oxford but this will be their first local showing for some time. Joining them atop the bill are Cornish folk-punks **3 Daft Monkeys** who have been frequent guests of local venues and festivals in recent years, including Cornbury and the Oxford Folk Festival, while London's ska-rockers **Imperial Leisure**'s raucous horn-heavy party music is fit to top any festival bill. Beyond the bigger names, reliably entertaining local acts like **Borderville**, **The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band**, **Space Heroes Of The People** and **Brickwork Lizards** perform, while **Prism** and **Vaudeville Rave** are among the clubs hosting dance parties on site. Arcane is, as ever, run in aid of The Art Room, in memory of festival founder Dan Lewis, aka Halfcut Art. Visit [www.arcane-festival.com](http://www.arcane-festival.com) for full line-up and ticket details.

tour in support of their debut album for EMI, 'City Of Vultures', having played at Sonisphere and Download this summer, as well as supporting Trivium and In Flames on the Defenders of the Faith tour.

**DIANA BRAITHWAITE with CHRIS WHITELEY & BLUESMOVE: The Bullingdon** – Authentic vintage blues from Toronto's Diana





*Friday 9<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>*

## SUMMER FAYRE

### FESTIVAL: South Park

This summer, more than any, has been awash with music festivals, but you can't argue with a free one, especially when the local contingent is as strong as this. Organised by Gecko Events, who put on similar free festivals in Bedford and Milton Keynes, Summer Fayre is three days of free live music in that most picturesque of central Oxford locations, South Park. Friday evening sees Jack FM host a live broadcast event from the park with a handful of local acts, while across Saturday and Sunday the likes of **Dead Jerichos**, **Spring Offensive**, **Minor Coles**, **The Anydays**, **Charly Coombes and New Breed** (pictured), **The Scholars**, **Matt Winkworth**, **Phantom Theory**, **Gunning For Tamar**, **Adam Barnes**, **Black Hats** and **Mustard & The Monocle** are just some of the local acts set to perform, and hopefully convert a decent number of passing punters to the local music cause. Headlining each night is a tribute band, with **ABBA Gold** knocking out all the old hits on Saturday and Jimi Hendrix tribute **Are You Experienced?** setting their guitars alight in honour of the world's greatest ever fret wizard on Sunday. A second Daisy Fields stage hosts acoustic acts and singer-songwriters on Saturday, while Sunday sees it taken over by Ultra Vegas and Simple for a chilled-out dance session. With more and more festivals increasingly competing for big name acts to be able to attract the crowds, hopefully a free event like this will entice enough casual fans along to catch rising local starlets alongside Oxford's hardcore gig-goers.

Braithwaite and Chris Whitely, on tour in the UK together with British blues band Bluesmove providing backing. Award-winning stars in their own rights back home in Canada (Braithwaite has sung with Albert Collins, John Lee Hooker and Mel Brown, while Whitely was mentored by Lonnie Johnson and Blind John Davis before being awarded the prestigious Blues With Feeling award), the pair's 'Morning Sun' album swept the board at Canada's Maple Blues Awards.  
**BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3-7pm)** – Open blues jam.

### TUESDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**TOOTS & THE MAYTALS: O2 Academy** – Classic reggae from the Jamaican legend – *see main preview*

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Funky keyboard-led jazz grooves from The Howard Peacock Quintet at the Bully's free weekly jazz club.

**INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Goth, industrial, ebm, darkwave and 80s night.

**GOOD VIBRATIONS: Cafe Tarifa** –  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon**

### WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**LOOSE SALUTE + CAT MATADOR + BAND OF HOPE + LEWIS WATSON + HOUND REELS: The Bullingdon** – Former-Slowdive and Mojave 3 drummer Ian McCutcheon returns, fronting his own band, signed to Heavenly Records and playing dreamy surf pop. Dark, violin-led indie pop from Cat Matador and uplifting Americana from Band Of Hope in support.  
**UNKNOWN FLOW + LUCRETIA: The Wheatsheaf** – Prog from local rockers Unknown Flow.  
**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Live band and open jam session with the Phat Sessions Collective, playing funk, hip hop and more and tonight joined by UK beatboxer Layth.

### THURSDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**DAVID FORD: O2 Academy** – Eastbourne's travelling folk-pop troubadour, in the vein of Bright Eyes and Ryan Adams, returns to town to promote his latest album, 'Let The Hard Times Roll'.  
**SECRET RIVALS + ALPHABET BACKWARDS + MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION: The Wheatsheaf** – Album launch show from the local indie pop scrappers, mixing it up between riot grrl and fight pop and joined for the evening by ace local electro-pop starlets Alphabet Backwards – *See Introducing piece*  
**WIG WAM + MARTINI ROCKERS + YELLOW FEVER + JACK HARLEY-BOURNE + MOOGIE MAN: The Bullingdon** – Glam rock from headliners Wig Wam at tonight's It's All About The Music promotion.  
**THE HIGH JINKS + THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + THE SHORTCUTS: The Port Mahon** – Rugged indie rocking from The High Jinks, with support from Aylesbury's Americana-influenced rockers Shaker Heights at tonight's Live&Loud show.  
**WORDPLAY: The Cellar** – Hip hop club night with residents Geenee, Kid Fury and Sultan.  
**MILK WHITE THROAT + MUTAGENOCIDE + EYES OF EVE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Triple bill of local metal, featuring Brighton's prog-core outfit Milk White Throat and local tech-metallers Mutagenocide.  
**APPLE PIRATES PROMOTIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Local rock, metal and indie bands.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston**

### FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**RICHMOND FONTAINE + LAURA GIBSON: The Bullingdon** – Sublime Americana from the Portland, Oregon outfit – *see main preview*  
**G-LOVE: O2 Academy** – Garrett Dutton heads out on his own, without Special Sauce, to plug his new solo album, 'Fixin' To Die'.  
**THE BIG 10<sup>th</sup>: The Cellar** – Count Skylarkin celebrates the best in jump blues, rock'n'roll and r'n'b with live sets from Hipbone Slim & The Kneetremblers, set to release their fifth album next month, and The Severed Limb's Robert Paul playing a solo skiffle set. The Clash's former on-tour DJ Scratchy makes a special appearance on the decks.  
**CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED + ALRIGHT THE CAPTAIN + KARHIDE: The**

**Wheatsheaf** – Music In Oxford continue their new series of monthly shows with some seriously soulful 70s-style rocking from Charly Coombes and co. in the style of Little Feat. Loud, experimental math-rock somewhere between Hella and Primus from Alright The Captain, plus Pelican-meets-Big Black malevolence from Ann Arbour's Tim Waterfield in his Karhide guise.

**LETZ ZEP: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Led Zeppelin tribute.

**BOOTLED ZEPPELIN + RESERVOIR CATS: Kidlington Football Club** – Led tribute plus hard-rocking blues from Reservoir Cats.

**THE WHYTHAM HARVEST: Wytham Village Hall** – An evening of acoustic music and poetry, featuring psychedelic folksters Telling The Bees and slam poet Alan Buckley, plus Joshua Knight, Helen Mort and Lewis Necombe-Jones.

**TWINKLE & THE SLUTS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury**

**FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon**

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**

### SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**THE JAMM: O2 Academy** – Jam tribute.  
**THE SUBWAYS: O2 Academy** – Welwyn Garden City's post-grunge trio return to action as they release their third, Stephen Street-produced album, 'Money & Celebrity'.  
**THE GRACEFUL SLICKS + SHATTERED DREAMS + THIN GREEN CANDLES + ATOMIC BROWN: The Wheatsheaf** – Moshka club night with Velvets-inspired psychedelic garage rockers The Graceful Slicks, plus punky popsters Shattered Dreams, in the vein of Paramore and Penetration, plus kooky electro-rockers Thin Green Candles.  
**FREE RANGE: The Cellar** – UK garage, 2step, 4x4 and bassline from Charris and B-Ill, plus club host MC Macular.  
**MEGAFUNA + 14TEN + MECHANISMS: Folly Bridge Inn** – Grunge, metal and post-rock of an epic disposition from Megafauna, with theatrical folk-rockers Mechanisms in support.  
**PORK CHOP EXPRESS: Fat Lil's, Witney**  
**PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy**  
**UNHINGED: The Bullingdon** – Drum&bass club night.

### SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC'S LAZY SUNDAY AFTERNOON: Donnington Bridge Rowing Club** – An afternoon of laid-back music on the banks of the river by Donnington Bridge in aid of autistic children's charity Kids In Touch, featuring solo sets from former-Hurricane #1 frontman Alex Lowe; Inspiral Carpets singer Tom Hingley; Nine-Stone Cowboy chap Mark Cope; Easy Tiger fella Ady Davey; Prism's Kieran; bluesy rockabilly siren Tamara Parsons-Baker; International Jetsetters singer Fi McFall and plenty more.  
**HALF NAKED + THE DEAD BETAS + JACKDAW: The Bullingdon** – Grungy rocking from Half Naked.  
**JAMBOX ACOUSTIC & OPEN MIC SESSION: The Hobgoblin, Bicester**

### MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**JERRY JABLONSKI & ELECTRIC BAND: The Bullingdon** – Blues, rock and folk from the Aberdeen-based singer and guitarist, sporting his rare Gianni Craviola electro-acoustic and kicking it

out in the style of Led Zep, Cream, Jeff Beck and John Martyn.

**DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: The Jericho Tavern** – Warm-hearted 60s-inspired alt.country and sunshine pop from former-Grand Drive frontman Danny George Wilson and his band who until recently featured Truck brothers Robin and Joe Bennett.

**HAYSEED DIXIE: O2 Academy** – Return of the good-time bluegrass boys, now into their second decade of a career turning classic heavy rock and metal classics into backwoods hoe-downs, from AC/DC and Kiss, through Queen and Motorhead, to Spinal Tap. It's a career that has seen them playing Download and Sonisphere as well as Cropredy and the Cambridge Folk Festival. But then they're far more than a high-concept joke band, stamping some good ol' bluegrass earthiness onto music that was already awash with grit and dirt, with style and wit and some serious musicianship. Their new album is, apparently, covers of songs composed in Norwegian, so hopefully some Burzum and Mayhem obscurities in there at some point.

**SPIERS & BODEN: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington** – Livewire folk from the multi-award-winning duo.

**I REMEMBER TAPES: The Cellar** – Sparky mixture of 80s pop and modern electro, sort of

*Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup>*

## TOOTS & THE MAYTALS: O2 Academy

Since we're celebrating Oxford's own longstanding reggae heroes Dubwise this issue, it's appropriate that one of Jamaica's most legendary groups are also in town this month. Depending on which version of history you believe, Kingston singer Frederick 'Toots' Hibbert and co. could easily be the world's greatest reggae act, if only Island Records' Chris Blackwell hadn't signed The Wailers because he thought he'd never get The Maytals' signatures. In the end he did get them and they enjoyed plenty of global success in a career that's lasted fifty years now. Having originally worked with Coxsone Dodd at Studio 1 with The Skatalites, The Maytals moved over to Prince Buster and later Byron Lee before finding their firmest feet with Leslie Kong's Beverley's label, constantly enjoying chart success with a string of singles that continued to build well into the 70s. Signing with Island established the band as a global name and their 'Reggae Got Soul' is a classic. While such a level of success waned over time, the band have never faded away and were a massive influence on 2-Tone as well as subsequent generations of ska and reggae acts and live, they most definitely still got it.



halfway between Metronomy and Duran Duran, from Winchester's I Remember Tapes.

### TUESDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**THE BLUETONES: O2 Academy** – The Britpop survivors drag themselves round the block once again for their farewell tour. Missing you already! Hey, stop giggling at the back.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Free live jazz with The Heavy Dextors.

**GOOD VIBRATIONS: Cafe Tarifa** -

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon**

### WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**BLACK POWDER + WHITE HEATHER: The Bullingdon** – Classic thrash punk action from Black Powder.

**FREE RANGE: The Cellar** – Drum&bass club night.

### THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**KILL CITY SAINTS + MOGMATIC + RECLAIMERS + MILLION FACES: The Bullingdon** – It's All About Music local bands showcase.

**MOLOTOV SEXBOMB + 3KICKS: The Port Mahon** – Raucous indie-punk and garage-rock from Witney's Molotov Sexbomb at tonight's Live&Loud showcase.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**COWBOY & THE CORPSES: The Hobgoblin, Bicester**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston**

### FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**DREADZONE: O2 Academy** – A Greatest Hits tour from the quintessentially English reggae band, mixing rootsy sounds and dub with a folky feel, trance and breakbeats. After 20 years on the road, ten albums and more festival appearances than they can probably remember, they remain a great dance band and perfect party hosts.

**SINGING ADAMS + ALPHABET BACKWARDS + LAURAJ MARTIN + THE YARNS: The Jericho Tavern** – Former-Broken Family Band singer Steven Adams returns with a new band, playing his trademark mix of folk, indie and rock'n'roll, plus his sweetly witty lyricism. Local electro-pop darlings Alphabet Backwards support, alongside fluffy jangle-pop types The Yarns.

**SUPERCHARGED: O2 Academy** – Heavy-duty bassline from a seriously hardcore cast including Rinse FM's Plastician, Krafty Kuts, Bassline Smith and Linguistics.

**INVISIBLE VEGAS: The Wheatsheaf** – Rocking roadhouse blues from the local act.

**THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN: The New Theatre** – Classic hits from the likes of The Supremes, Temptations, Four Tops, Jackson 5, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Martha Reeves and Lionel Richie.

**FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon**

**ENRAGED: Fat Lil's, Witney**  
**K-LACURA: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury** – Jambox metal night with the local metalcore faves.

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**PROGRESSIVELY LESS**

**ELEPHANT: Baby Love** – Indie, soul and electronica club night.



*Friday 16<sup>th</sup>*

## RICHMOND FONTAINE: The Bullingdon

Dammit, those Empty Room Promotions folks have gone done it again, somehow bringing the very best of cult Americana to our doorstep in understated style, this time in the form of Portland, Oregon's sublime Richmond Fontaine, a band who, more than even say The Hold Steady or Springsteen himself, capture the often desolate underbelly of a twilight blue-collar American underbelly. Over the course of eight albums, singer and lyricist Willy Vlautin has documented life as one long losing streak, one populated by beaten wives, hapless gamblers and drunks and washed-up losers, set in situations that are simultaneously everyday but hidden from view. Having been a cult concern on the Pacific Northwest circuit for years it was only after 2003's 'Winnemucca' album – their fourth – that wider exposure came Richmond Fontaine's way, followed by a deal with Decca. Since then various releases, notable among them being 'Port To Wire' and 'The Fitzgerald' have been hailed as modern masterpieces and Vlautin as a writer in the mould of Raymond Carver and Charles Bukowski. Musically the band would be in good company alongside Green On Red, Uncle Tupelo, American Music Club and The Replacements but, like the subjects of their myriad, beautifully romantic and tragic songs, they'd never get too comfortable.

### SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**COLOURED + KEYBOARD CHOIR + GRUDLE BAY RIOTS + WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC + TIGER MENDOZA: O2 Academy** – The Academy's latest Upstairs showcase takes an electro turn with mayhem psycho-rave duo Coloureds topping the bill, following on from their triumphant collaboration with The ODC Drumline at Truck Festival. Joining them are expansive, atmospheric synth orchestra



The Keyboard Choir, chilled-out ambient soundscapists Grudle Bay Riots, old-school acid house squelcher We Are Ugly... and tripped-out electro-soul from Tiger Mendoza.

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with EMPTY VESSELS + DALLAS DON'T + JD SMITH: The Wheatsheaf** – A characteristically eclectic bill from GTI with monstrous psychedelic blues-rockers Empty Vessels recalling Led Zep and Blue Cheer, while newcomers Dallas Don't opt for a sweeter, fuzzier form of indie pop. Essex's JD Smith gives it some stomp and slide, having previously supported Richard Hawley, Jarvis Cocker and Duane Eddy.

**THE WILD MERCURY SOUND + THE RECLINERS + GO ROMANO: The Jericho Tavern** – Daisy Rodgers Music night with alternately pensive and epic indie rockers Wild Mercury Sound and local funk-infused rock newcomers Go Romano.

*Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>*

## EMMY THE GREAT: The Jericho Tavern

The break-up album is a classic staple of songwriters throughout pop's history, and if Emma-Lee Moss denies her new opus, 'Virtue', is really a break-up album, its stories – full of biblical imagery, mythology and fairy tales – do centre around her split from her former fiancé, who discovered religion and went off to become a missionary. Leaving aside the sanity of anyone who'd walk out on someone as beautiful as Emma-Lee, the experience has fuelled a more than satisfying follow-up to her excellent 2009 debut, 'First Love'. After stints in bands with Florence Welch and as part of Noah & The Whale, the solo musical persona of Emmy The Great was born, Emma possessed of a gorgeously smoky voice and inspired by the bucolic idyll of the English countryside (having been born in Hong Kong, she moved to England as a teenager and lived for a while on a canal boat in Oxfordshire). Early in her career she toured with Martha Wainwright and Get Cape, Wear Cape, Fly! As well as making her name on the burgeoning boutique festival circuit, including Truck. Initially lumped in with the anti-folk scene, her romantic acoustic pop stands up on its own and now, happily hooked up with Ash's Tim Wheeler, with whom she is recording a Christmas album, she's increasingly establishing herself with a wider audience, while tonight offers a chance to enjoy her music in a suitably intimate setting.



**MR BIG: The Port Mahon** – The reformed local rockers perform songs from their new album.

**EVERY HIPPIE'S DREAM: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic 60s rock, from Cream to The Doors.

**DARK SIDE OF THE ROOM: Folly Bridge Inn** – Pink Floyd tribute.

**OVERNIGHT FLIGHT #2: The Cellar** – UK bass, hip hop, garage and house.

**PROPAGANDA : O2 Academy**

**SELECTA: The Bullingdon** – Drum&bass club.

**PETE FRYER BAND: Bowyer Arms, Radley**

### SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**LORD AV MERCY: The Port Mahon** –

Monthly reggae club with guest DJs.

**DAVID TATTERSALL & HOWARD HUGHES + WE AERONAUTS + WATER PAGEANT: Albion Beatnik Bookstore**

**GATE HOUSE FUNDRAISER: The Bullingdon** – It's All About The Music host a charity fundraiser with local acts to be confirmed.

**BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3-7pm)**

### MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**JAWLESS: The Cellar** – Drum&bass club night.

### TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Live jazz from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

**GOOD VIBRATIONS: Cafe Tarifa** –

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon**

### WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**EMMY THE GREAT: The Jericho Tavern** – Broken-hearted acoustic pop loveliness from Emma-Lou Moss – *see main preview*

**BEN PHILIPS + THE SHORT CUTS: The Wheatsheaf**

**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Phat Sessions Collective host a full band session and open jam.

### THURSDAY 29<sup>th</sup>

**CLOUD CONTROL + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS: The Jericho Tavern** – Wide-eyed,

harmony-heavy Afrobeat-tinged psych-pop from Sydney's Cloud Control, whose debut album, 'Bliss Release', won the Australian equivalent of the Mercury Prize this year. Seemingly inspired by a wide range of acts, from Talking Heads and Vampire Weekend to The Mamas and Papas and Fleet Foxes, they've supported the likes of Supergrass and Arcade Fire back home and are now set to take a pop at UK pop glory. Local psych-rockers Graceful Slicks support.

**KAMIKAZE TEST-PILOTS + KOMRAD: The Cellar** – Berkshire's funk-ed-up, technical heavyweights Kamikaze Testpilots crank it out in the vein of Red Hot Chili Peppers and Thin Lizzy, with ferocious technical support from Komrad.

**SHATTERED DREAMS: The Port Mahon** – Spiky punk-pop from the local hopefuls at tonight's Live & Loud show.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**WORDPLAY: The Cellar**

### FRIDAY 30<sup>th</sup>

**GHOSTPOET: O2 Academy** – Somnambulating morning-after hip hop from the Mercury Prize nominee – *see main preview*



*Friday 30<sup>th</sup>*

## GHOSTPOET: O2 Academy

Amid the pretty uninspiring shortlist for this year's Mercury Prize, one of the few interesting choices was Ghostpoet's 'Peanut Butter Blues & Melancholy Jam'. Coventry/London-based rapper-cum-singer-cum-storyteller of Nigerian and Dominican descent Obaro Ejimiwe is that rare thing: an artist that's nigh on impossible to pigeonhole. Championed by Mike Skinner, he claims his chief inspiration is Badly Drawn Boy; signed to Gilles Peterson's Brownswood label, he's got as much in common with John Cooper Clarke and Gil Scott Heron as he has with Dizzee Rascal or Roots Manuva and he's lately been on tour supporting Metronomy. A nice little mix of bases for the man not quite pinned down by the description of him as a cross between Tricky and Dirty Projectors. There's a light, playfulness to his music that touches on jazz, but equally the mood of so many of his songs is pensive and anxious, stories often recounted through the fug of morning-after confusion and paranoia. Tracks like 'Cash & Carry' sound like they're somnambulating through fog, while 'Survive It' is simply gorgeous in its airy minimalism. With the Mercury winner set to be announced at the beginning of September, there's every likelihood the O2 will be hosting a deserved champion tonight, but whether he wins or not, Ghostpoet sounds like he's sleepwalking his way to greatness.

**SPRING OFFENSIVE + FLIGHT OF HELIOS + COOLING PEARLS: The Bullingdon** – Great, highly-strung math-pop and indie rocking from Spring Offensive tonight, playing alongside Flight Of Helios, the new name for Braintead Collective's more focussed, dubbed-out pop and launching their debut EP tonight. Darkly wistful popsters The Cooling Pearls open tonight's Pindrop Performance show.

**MARK STEPHENSON + JESS HALL: The Wheatsheaf**

**METALICA UK: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Metallica tribute.

**FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon**

**HQ: The Cellar** – Hip hop club night.

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**

*Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month - no exceptions. Call 01865 372255 (10am-6pm) or email listings to Nightshift@oxfordmusic.net. All listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be reproduced without permission*

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# LIVE

## TRUCK FESTIVAL

### FRIDAY

Oh, there'll be letters. Pints will be mumbled into. The internet may be utilised. Truck has done the unthinkable, and redesigned the festival site. Not only is the main stage in a different place, it's in a different damned field. And the barn is gone. Everyone loved the barn. Everyone loved the atrocious acoustics, awkward bottleneck entrance and lingering smell of cow faeces. Who wants this new Clash stage, with its high-quality PA and easy access?

Well, we do. We feel that, after some initial disorientation (Nightshift writers are like honey bees – move something even a few inches and we're lost), Truck's new, more spacious layout is a success, and if they have co-opted some of the trappings of the well-heeled boutique festivals they helped to create – posh sit-down dining, stalls selling over-priced nick-nacks made from old Penguin paperbacks – the old, unpretentious, home-made atmosphere still survives. And, yes, you can still buy doughnuts from the vicar and grub from the Rotary Club (quote of the weekend: "I got a lovely burger, but it was weird to buy it from the Masons").

Our weekend starts in the new Clash tent, with **GAGGLE**, a large bunch of vibrantly bedecked young ladies doing a line in big tribal pop chants. It's something like a school nativity play version of Bow Wow Wow, and is good honest fun. There are about 35 of them, which we suppose might look impressive if we hadn't just spent 20 minutes as part of a large and twitchy crowd at the Steventon level crossing, as some sort of ovine emergency meltdown caused by sheep on the line a few miles away meant that the barriers had to be kept inexplicably closed.

The Wood stage is a cosy, new intimate tent that is sadly a little underused over the weekend, but it's the perfect place to watch **WATER PAGEANT**, a likeable folk-pop trio, whose delicate sound might get lost in larger spaces.

At another corner of the site, the Last.FM stage is curated on the Friday night by BBC Oxford Introducing, and we're tempted to say this was the line-up of the weekend. First up we catch the tail end of **THE NEON VIOLETS**, a set which is, as far as the briefest of

glimpses allows us to ascertain, a tumultuous navigation through emotional catch and release.

**THE BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE** swap their free improv racket for an exploration of open-ended pop, and it works beautifully, Chris Beard's lucid, careening voice sailing high above a mixture of dub touches and Fripp-like effects, riding each crescendo like a finely-honed surfer, each lull becoming an emotionally-charged moment of introspection.

**MR SHAADOW**, increasingly as much a Truck fixture as the Bennett brothers, follows them admirably, with a crowd pleasingly boisterous set that may have hidden some of his clever lyrics, but highlights his way with an eager audience, which features plenty of crowd surfing amid the mass call-and-response sessions. Shadow is one of an odd breed of Oxford-connected artists who always get a rave reception at Truck, but who generally play to small, indifferent audiences in the city, and with this in mind we can hardly blame him for keeping things accessible.

Unable to prise ourselves away from the Last.FM stage – and amused by the prematurely paralytic gaggle of teens camped virtually outside it, one of whom manages a perfect drunken pratfall before the clock has struck 5pm – we witness **LISTING SHIPS**, a band featuring former members of The Evenings, Witches and Sunnyvale Sub Noise Element. Although the musical history of the members is considerably impressive, it seems that with Listing Ships they've found the perfect project. Each song appears to have little time for nuances and heads straight into choppy waters. This means that there's little time for 'post' and a considerable amount spent on the 'rock, which is by no means a bad thing.

Eventually, though, it's time to wander, so it's over to the new main stage, set in a natural amphitheatre that provides both a better view and a more inclusive atmosphere. Here we find **ADMIRAL FALLOW**, who initially seem lost on such a big stage but whose sound gradually swells to fit the arena. The band's gently expansive folk – think Stormoway meets Broken Records and a dash of Waterboys – is uplifting yet awash with pathos, although you feel they'd be even more effective in a

Graham Coxon



Listing Ships



more intimate setting.

By contrast **THE DUKE & THE KING** are dreadful, clichéd old guff, slapping Neil Young lyrics over Bob Dylan songs in what might be an attempt at being clever and authentic but feels rancidly self-congratulatory

Back at the Wood stage, London's Non-Classical club have taken over for the evening, and we have the pleasure of being amongst the small attendance for one of the sets of the weekend, from **CONSORTIUM 5**, a recorder quintet. In previous years a recorder only ensemble at Truck might have meant Piney Gir and chums arsing about and playing smugly dire Steely Dan covers, but Consortium 5 is a highly drilled, professional group of musicians, offering us a little Purcell and a lot of contemporary composition. The sonic range is astounding, from the sound of a baroque traffic jam through a Ligeti-like cloud of chirrups to the final number, a mass of breathy percussive bursts and gasping trills, like Thomas the Tank Engine and friends playing Takemitsu. It's random discoveries like this that make Truck special.

There are lot of people on the

Truck bill this year who Used To Be In Bands, which is fine, but there are also a lot Whose Dads Used To Be In Bands. An example for the prosecution would be **LIAM FINN**, offspring of him out of Crowded House, who is decent enough but pretty dull, going for a wall of sound pop effect, but losing us swiftly. Perhaps feeling guilty for giving up on Finn so quickly, we decide to give **AFRICA JUNCTION** more of a chance, and are amply rewarded for doing so. At first, they sound too studied to make anything from their polite African percussion, but as the tempo drops, and the balafon starts to lead the music, it wafts out of the Cabaret tent like a warm sirocco. **JOHNNY FLYNN** reminds us happily of childhood TV and Rolf Harris painting vast wall-sized pictures with house paints. Flynn's band similarly takes simple, bold strokes and throws them together to create something impressive. There's nothing here we've not heard before, just chunky folksy choruses, lively trumpet lines, bluesy guitar licks, and a bit of cello to underpin things, but the whole is rather lovely.

With Alex James starting his own festival down the road, it makes



sense for Truck to fight fire with fire somewhat, and get their own member of Blur on board. Alongside Damon Albarn, it was undoubtedly **GRAHAM COXON** who did the most to define Blur's sound and like Albarn, Coxon had the talent to make the most of a solo career when Blur ground to a halt (while Alex James turned his hand to cheese and talent show judging).

However, where Albarn went for grandeur with his Gorillaz project, Coxon prefers to keep things more stripped back and lo-fi, which as we find out this evening, doesn't make for the most exciting of shows. Tonight's performance is impressive musically, but lacks a spark and most importantly a connection with the audience. 'Spectacular' rocks pretty hard but fails to ignite; in fact it's not until the closer of 'Freaking Out' that things liven up. By then of course, it's all too late and it feels like a missed opportunity.

James Surowiecki wrote a book called *The Wisdom Of Crowds*, claiming that large groups of people are effectively cleverer than individuals. Our problem with this theory has always been that vast crowds of people are generally seen assembled to watch adequate but unexciting

things like Coldplay or Michael McIntyre – just how fucking clever can they be? Still, we get a little buzz of pleasure in seeing hundreds of Truckers swaying along to **BELLOWHEAD**'s outstanding version of 'Amsterdam', squeezing every drop of tawdry voyeurism and tragic celebration from Brel's composition. In truth, this is the outstanding moment of set that is very good, but doesn't reach the heights of their 2010 performance. Uncharacteristically, it's the slower tracks that are more successful this time round, although the wah-wah mandolin does lend a funky edge to the more upbeat songs (images of Starsky & Hutch driving through Cecil Sharp House in a flurry of madrigal manuscripts). Not up to their own high standards, perhaps, but still probably the best festival band on the circuit.

Nipping out to catch some of **SPRING OFFENSIVE**'s set turns out to be an excellent decision. We've always admired their music, but tonight the Introducing stage witnesses a band coming of age. Not only do they perform with an acidic intensity we've never seen before, but new track '52 Miles' takes the melancholic triumphalism of their best songs, but replaces the

Youthmovies-style guitar twiddles with a slow-burning haze that eventually erupts into a bloom of furry beauty. A very good band just got better. And we follow that be revisiting a great local band whom we had somewhat forgotten. **DIVE DIVE** remind us that they can produce bitter little nuggets of pop excellence, and send us off happily into the night, or at least towards the beer tent.

## **SATURDAY**

Were we slightly critical of the gentrification of Truck's catering earlier? Opinions change on Saturday morning when we find we can get a proper coffee and some orange juice a few feet from the tent, which balances out the burger we had for dinner. Chav for supper and middle class for breakfast, that's our motto! What's that? Lunch? No time for it, we'd rather visit the Butts ale stall, still the non-musical highlight of Truck. Great service, great beer and it costs £2.80 a pint. Two pounds bastard eighty! It's akin to a miracle. We're also told by parents that it would be worth our while to borrow a child just to experience Roustabout

Theatre's *My Secret Garden*, a weird mixture of improvised theatre and archaeology. Well, maybe not, but we do drop in on **NICK COPE**, who is entertaining some pre-schoolers with his chirpy activity songs. 'Stand on one leg'; 'Let's pretend we're moles'. Not so much later we find ourselves in the presence of **ALPHABET BACKWARDS**, whose music is really the same thing, for those slightly older. 'Imagine you've just passed your driving test', 'Pretend you just got off with another sixth former'. Unashamedly perky pop, delivered with unashamed chops, it's pity you don't see this mix more often. They're like a 21<sup>st</sup> century Squeeze.

Any remaining cobwebs from Friday night are unceremoniously blown away by **THE CELLAR FAMILY**: a band seemingly fuelled entirely by disgust and a fascination with life's ugly underbelly. They're righteous fury personified, singer Jamie contorted almost rigid as spits his words out, a feral punk blast, the highlight of which is 'Father Michael', rapidly becoming our favourite song ever. The Cellar Family are opening the Blessing Force day in the Last.FM tent, not just music but art installations that

# TRUCK FESTIVAL

## SATURDAY cont'd

extend from the tent through the entire festival site by way of hidden patterns.

Again it's tempting to simply hang out here for the duration as the quality count is kept astonishingly high, from **SEALINGS'** short, fantastically trashy set that ranges from Jesus & Mary Chain drone to Swans-like squall, at its best the whole thing sounding like it's been wrung through some kind of Aphex Twin blender, to **JONQUIL's** ersatz 80s pop soul, which creates new shapes from its base material and would make **SOLID GOLD DRAGONS** weep with envy: plastic, stadium pop with reggae inflections might be acceptable if the vocals weren't so clod-hoppingly oafish, even whilst they tried to plumb cosmic realms of imagery. Imagine Big Audio Dynamite on an off night fronted by Bernard Matthews. No, wait, sometimes the trumpet made it more like a tired James lead by Derek Nimmo taking the piss out of Morrissey. No, wait, can we please stop thinking about this, forever?

Throughout the day we catch **WILD SWIM**, who open their set with a proto-drum&bass rhythm topped with a light operatic tenor. It could be the lost theme for *Italia 90*. Later they sound like Spandau Ballet might have, if they'd discovered a copy of 'Amnesiac' in a time portal. All of which sounds slightly demeaning, but we are impressed with this young band, who may have grasped more than they can quite deal with as yet, but who look as though they have the potential to develop along exciting lines, and later on **TROPHY WIFE's** gossamer machine-pop, Jody Prewett's deceptively sweet and soulful vocals and airily twinkling guitars doing well to hold their own against the superbly incessant electronic drumming.

But as with Friday, we have to drag ourselves away, in particular to see **NATHANIEL RATELIFFE**, who turns out not to be a bespectacled boy wizard at all, but a rather more earthy acoustic country-folk singer. Strange how summery afternoon ale consumption can distort your expectations of the world. Rateliffe doesn't have a wand either. Instead he's got an acoustic guitar, but if we're expecting a little whinging (did you see what we did there?) we get a pleasingly sparse and soulful set of American campfire folk that holds its own kind of magic.

The more spacious Truck layout has enticed us to spend more time away from the main stages, and we are very impressed with some of the Cabaret Clandestino bookings. Ex-

Oxonian **FACE0METER** delivers his wordy alt folk with some charm. The obvious reference point is Jeffrey Lewis, though we prefer to think of him as a cross between Richard Stilgoe and Jasper Carrott. Musically it's beyond sloppy, but as entertainment it's gold.

Hyper-folk performer **JAMES BELL** doesn't have the gig of his life, but has energy enough to get away with it. Storyteller **PAUL ASKEW** also stumbles a few times, but has material to hide the cracks, a long piece about taking a gaggle of words to the botanical gardens before kidnapping a pronoun reminding us of a punk Richard Brautigan; poet **GEORGE CHOPPING** eclipses him, though, with a perfectly balanced mixture of sweet-natured observation and steel-melting bile. **MATT WINKWORTH** impresses with his finely-crafted whimsy, rushing through the brilliant realised 'Gold', which is a cynical look at the new breed of pawnbrokers. Over the course of its three minutes it manages to take in Dancehall cheekiness ('Any Old Iron'), Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody', The Queen's National Anthem, and Tom Lehrer's lyrical dexterity. A real treat.

And yes, just so the cosmic balance is restored, there's some absolute rubbish too: **THE OXFORD IMPS** do fourth rate *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* guff whilst acting like a punchably upbeat genetically engineered Partridge Family. The festival programme has a typo of "improve" for "improv" - we couldn't think of better advice for them. Oh, and **MARK NIEL** is just skin-crawlingly awful. He laments the fact that his hometown of Milton Keynes is a bad comic's punchline - funny, without that comment we'd have no idea he had any notion of what a punchline was.

Poor old **RODDY WOOMBLE**; not only is he forever to be known as Roddy Womble (a fact not helped by the misspelled sign outside the Truck Store), he's always going to be remembered as "that bloke from Idlewild". For all that band's early punk vim, Womble's always had a bit of the old folkie about him, which is firmly where his solo career resides. To be honest we'd happily listen to him recite the phone directory, so warm and welcoming is his voice, one that transports you instantly to a fireside in some Hebridean inn where endless whisky flows and hope and desolation sit hand in hand. "My name is Roddy Womble," he announces as they launch into set closer of 'My Secret Is My Silence', just in case we weren't entirely sure. He stops short of spelling it out though.

The Cellar Family



Roddy Womble



Young Knives



**SEA OF BEES** are in impressive form. There's something slightly disturbing running through the songs of Julie Baenziger, which sit in direct opposition to the delicate Americana twang of her music. What makes Sea Of Bees so interesting is Baenziger's voice, which can dart between emotionally unhinged to cutesy in a flash. Her voice variously echoes Tanya Donelly, Cerys Matthews, Kristin Hersh and Katie Jane Garside, and yet Baenziger retains an idiosyncratic charm of her own. The songs themselves are just as intriguing, apparently possessing an innocent charm and a sense of danger lurking just beneath the surface.

You know that horrible Innocent Smoothies type trend, where packaging for allegedly healthy foods says "Look at me, I'm 100% natural, aren't I lovely?", so that now products can be as smug and enraging as their consumers? Well, **FIXERS** should carry a label stating "this band is made entirely of artificial components, and is bloody great". Their set is mixture of fake Beach Boys keyboards, Ronettes vocals and Meatloaf tom flams, all tied together with a catering-sized delivery of delay. The effect is some of the most euphoric music we've

ever witnessed, a whirlwind of sugary melody and psychedelic treatments, all of which is as inauthentic as Jack Goldstein's California-Eynsham accent. Outstanding - and we've not even mentioned Jack's vast over-tentacular beard, making him look like a Captain Birdseye from the *Cthulhu* myths, or the endearingly excited exclamations between songs. A set for the annals, and vindication for a band some see as trendy Animal Collective copyists.

Slightly more refined local heroes, next, in the shape of **YOUNG KNIVES**. And it's a warm welcome back, as the set is far more enticing than last time we saw them live. They may not have got the wired maniacal electricity of their early sets, but they've moved through the safe, foursquare indie sound that typified gigs at the height of their fame. In fact, we swiftly remember all the things that we loved about them - although the sight of a middle aged mother, carrying her weeping toddler away from the stage, whilst singing along to 'The Decision' says a lot about how time can cruelly catch up with you in this game. The House Of Lords, however, seems to be trying to cheat time, with a horrendous grebo haircut: is he living his life backwards, from





Fixers



Gruff Rhys



Coloureds vs ODC Drumline

chartered surveyor to petulant teenager?

In light of the health problems **EDWYN COLLINS** has suffered in the last few years there's a sense that his set might descend into a weird kind of outpouring of sympathy. However from the moment he takes to the stage and launches into 'Losing Sleep', it's clear that there's no danger of this being a rubber necking exercise. Sitting centre stage Collins introduces each song, the majority of which are from his latest album. If he stumbles over his words slightly when he's speaking, it's incredible that when he's singing he encounters no such problems whatsoever. The newer material is every bit as good as his more famous Orange Juice back catalogue, but he makes the odd concession to the past, and the room positively erupts when his band launch into 'A Girl Like You'.

Main stage headliner **GRUFF RHYS** is a man whose career has been defined by eccentricity. Super Furry Animals yielded some of the quirkiest and most unusual pop songs of recent times, whilst his own solo career has been equally strange. Tonight's set is no different with his carefully crafted pop nuggets drifting woozily over the

field. However he saves his *pièce de résistance* for the closing 20-minute oddity of 'Skylon', which is a brave if slightly strange move. We'd expect nothing less.

Having missed Kris Drever earlier, it was pleasant to see him accompany Kildare singer, **HEIDI TALBOT**. Like delta blues, early minimalism and acid house, you don't have to do much with Irish folk song to make us feel warm and fuzzy, but Heidi has a gorgeous papery whisper of a voice, that sounds as though it's offering each song to you as personal indulgence, and when we open our eyes, thirty minutes has gone blissfully by.

**THE LONG INSIDERS** have turned the cabaret tent into a 50s burlesque show for the evening, which we mostly steer clear of, primarily because we don't think we have the critical vocabulary to adequately review boobies, but we do catch some of the hosts' opening set. Very good they are too, knocking out a fizzy rockabilly with stridently melodic female vocals... but you do suspect they go home every night and stick pins into an Imelda May voodoo doll.

Back at the Blessing Force love-in, **CHAD VALLEY** is showing us round

the desiccated remains of a freeze dried Ibiza night from 1989. By putting sweaty, nightclub music of the past into an amniotic reverb womb, Chad Valley's set is a little like what the staff of Ghost Box Records might play if they were cruising for a shag. It's actually remarkably good music, although we've never seen anyone look so intense while trying to sound chilled out.

The collaboration between **ODC DRUMLINE AND COLOUREDS** is a pleasant surprise. Far from being a smug game for Blessing Force buddies, the drumline is actually four very well drilled players, who have rehearsed some decent arrangements to complement Coloureds' jittering techno. It's highly enjoyable, although in a twist of inverse logic, a collection of crisp, clattering martial snares actually detracts from the rhythmic power of Coloureds'

material.

Plus, no matter how hard they tried, they could never actually be more of a noisy party conclusion to the night than **THE ORIGINAL RABBIT'S FOOT SPASM BAND**, who turn the cabaret tent into a jazz apocalypse. Limbs stick at random from the beyond capacity tent, mikes are used and discarded to the confusion of the engineer, dancers leap onstage and are summarily booted off, and all to the sound of solid gold brutal jump jazz.

Everyone who doesn't like jazz should be made to watch the Rabbit's Foot...and many people who do like jazz should too, because they like the wrong bit. Sheer carnage, there's no better sound to turn in to bed to.

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Dean Wareham



Cashier No.9



# TRUCK FESTIVAL SUNDAY

We'd be lying if we told you that **MAT GIBSON** was an amazing, ground-breaking artist, but laying on our back, listening to his plangent, pedal steel drenched songs, watching the white clouds form and disperse as if we were submersed in a giant, freshly poured Guinness is a pretty great way to start Sunday.

**WE AERONAUTS** manage to avoid the trap of being overbearingly twee by injecting outbursts of aggression into their cute indie pop, which isn't something we're expecting having caught them a few times in the past. It's an odd collision of Ride and The Beautiful South caught within 'Chestnut Tree' that really catches your attention, showcasing the band's quaint and quirky pop edge to perfection.

**CASHIER NO. 9** provide another early highlight, playing comfy rootsy pop on the Clash stage, like a Northern Irish La's before they morph into something more like The Verve circa-'A Northern Soul'. They're followed by **LANTERNS ON THE LAKE**, who make grown up indie folk with Sigur Ros crescendos, which isn't seismic, but is actually better than Mew's set at last year's festival. Like much of

today's bill, there's a lot of good stuff about, very little bad but, unlike the previous two days, not so much that's really great.

Take **MAYBESHEWILL**, for example. They have a dense, muscular sound, and we enjoy their set a lot, but there are only so many times one can get truly excited about this Mogwai tumescent guitar trick. **ALESSI'S ARK** are also listenable, but help us to work out what Americana actually means. It means "leftovers". It's not folk, blues, country, rock, bluegrass or anything else that's actually good, it's just the off-cuts you get when you're making any of those. Ho hum.

Spotting in the programme notes that **GABRIEL MINNIKIN** has lent his services to The Handsome Family, and the fact that Brett and Rennie Sparks turned in one of the classic Truck performances in the past we opt to check out his set. Though The Handsome Family's songs are often dark at heart, there's always a bleak humour and elegance to be found, but on this showing it would appear that Minnikin is simply dour and somewhat tedious. A real tragedy.

Much as we love it as an addition to Cowley Road, we have to say that the Truck Store's selection for the Last.FM stage is noticeably the weakest of the three days. **TRIBES**, for example, play a sort of CITV grunge: big-boned, melodic punky tunes lobbed skywards, as if to see where they land. It's all rather good stuff, but doesn't quicken any pulses.

**ISLET** should be the ones to turn things upside down, but they can't capture the magic of their Barn set last year. The show is still a beguiling mixture of howls, whoops and keyboard washes, all held together by occasional dub basslines and percussion that sounds like an autistic class day out in a cowbell factory, but it is fun rather than mystifying. Last year we felt as though we were caught in a harrowing Branch Davidian ritual, this year it's more like being in a training camp for a Chuckle Brothers franchise.

**DEAN WAREHAM's** short impromptu appearance in the Truck Store tent yesterday was a splendid (slightly emotional for one Nightshift scribe) surprise. Today's appearance in the Clash Stage is a fuller experience, and a reminder of just what an influential and incredibly gifted songwriter he is. Today is all about his Galaxie 500 back catalogue, so we get the cacophonous yet tender tones of

'Blue Thunder', the quite amazing 'Don't Let Our Youth Go To Waste', and the heartbreaking 'Tugboat'. He wraps the set up with the Joy Division song 'Ceremony', stamping his authority all over the tune and elevating it beyond mere cover version status.

Over on the Main Stage **TUUNG** are getting things going with their full on multi-faceted sound. There are elements of afrobeat, blues and electronica to be found in amongst the jungle of their songs. Perhaps the most overriding influence however is acid fried prog-rock, which is no bad thing at all, for those content to kick back and chill out in the sunshine.

Back in the Clash Tent there's no sunshine for **PHIL SELWAY**. His souncheck is taking forever, so when he finally strolls on stage, he's already faced with a crowd who are getting twitchy. His voice is decent, which is a nice surprise, and he plays some well-structured, but slightly twee semi-acoustic numbers, one of which reminds us strongly of 'Little Drummer Boy'. As befits a member of Radiohead, there are some subtly evocative touches in the arrangements, such as the 'O Superman' backing vocals on the second number, but overall the conclusion is that this is music that would work better on midnight headphones, not in a tent on a sunny

**Dreaming Spires**



**Lanterns On The Lake**



**Phil Selway**



**The Go! Team**



afternoon and soon plenty of those assembled are departing for the exuberance of **THE GO! TEAM**.

Their performance would be invigorating at any time, but after a staid afternoon, it's like the second bloody coming, a vast ball of energy rolling from the main stage. Ninja may not be the greatest vocalist nor gymnast in the country, but she can put them together better than anyone we've seen in many a year, and the band leap into the music as if it were a swimming pool of chilled champagne.

Aside from a moment or two like 'Security Song', which is like Stereolab without the Marxism or krautrock, their tunes all have an old school hip hop *joie de vivre* performed with irrepressible positivity: Sugar Hill played by Grange Hill, if you will. We're also reminded of The Cookie Crew, Polysics and Rip, Rig & Panic at various points, but primarily the Go! Team are idiosyncratic and original, and we salute them for it.

Wrapping things up in the Clash Tent is **JOHN GRANT**, former vocalist of the criminally underrated band The Czars. His album 'The Queen Of Denmark', which he recorded with Midlake as his backing band, was one of last year's highlights and although his songs are presented tonight in a much stripped-back form his fabulous

songwriting stands out clearly. 'Marz', and 'Sigourney Weaver' are particular stand outs, but essentially when he's playing songs from such an immaculate album, he could never go wrong.

Back on the Main Stage are **DREAMING SPIRES**, who are now filling the gap vacated by Goldrush as Truck organisers the Bennett brothers' headline band. Tonight they're joined The Rabbit Foot Spasm Band's horn section and it does absolute wonders for them. A punchy full-on 'Muscle Shoals' sound compliments the electrified country blues so readily associated with the Bennetts. 'North Country Fair' is the set highlight, roaring from the speakers like The Band propelled by a jet engine.

The Bennetts aren't finished yet however as they wrap up this year's Truck in the Clash Tent with a performance of Fleetwood Mac's 'Rumours' in their guise of **THE TRUCK ALLSTARS**. On the surface, this could have been a gamble, but playing the final set of the day in the tent most central in the festival's layout is clever planning, ensuring everyone is in the same place at the same time, celebrating the same thing.

'Rumours' is, of course, a classic album and the band rises to the occasion effortlessly. 'Go Your Own Way' is belted out with gusto and

surprisingly Robin Bennett fits into the rock frontman role rather well. Things turn a bit shaky when Sarah Cracknell steps up for 'Songbird', but by this point that hardly matters. Perhaps the finest moment of the set is when Joe Bennett and his sister Katy roar through an invigorating version of 'I Don't Want To Know' – clearly enjoying every moment. "This might seem a bit incestuous," remarks Joe with a glint in his eye. He's clearly aware of accusations levelled at Truck over the years, as well as the more literal interpretation of his statement, but when you put on a such a great festival every year a little bit of self-indulgence is more than allowable. Magic Numbers join the band to finish things up with a perfect version of 'Gold Dust Woman', their harmonies pitch perfect as always.

As the band take their final bows Robin addresses the audience one last time saying, "Think about what album you want to us to play next year". We depart full

of mad ideas.

Sadly the news that leaks out a few days later suggests there will be no next year. The festival that started life as an ambitious birthday bash for a local music fan and grew to become the centrepiece of Oxfordshire's music calendar for almost a decade and a half, inspiring a whole swathe of other small, homespun festivals around the UK, has become another victim of economic downturn and an over-saturated marketplace.

If Truck does return, pray its importance to the local scene is never again taken for granted. If, as we fear, it's to become part of history, what can we say, but farewell and thanks for so many great memories.

*Words: David Murphy; Sam Shepherd; Dale Kattack*





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21<sup>st</sup> **BLACK POWDER / WHITE HEATHER**

Thursdays

8<sup>th</sup> **HOT HOOVES / GENERALS & MAJORS**

15<sup>th</sup> **WIG WAM / MARTINI ROCKERS / YELLOW FEVER / JACK HARLEY BOURNE / MOOGIE MAN**

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Sundays

18<sup>th</sup> **HALF NAKED / THE DEAD BETAS / JACKDAW**

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# INTRODUCING....

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

## SECRET RIVALS

### Who are they?

Unabashed indie-pop combo Secret Rivals are Jay (guitar / vocals); Andrew (bass); Reece (drums) and Clouds (vocals / synths). The band formed in 2008 after Jay and Clouds moved to Oxford from the Netherlands and answered an ad from fellow Idlewild fanatic Andrew. Early shows were ramshackle to say the least but incessant gigging and writing led to a more cohesive sound and a well-received debut EP on Reading's Josaka label last year, which garnered the quartet extensive play on Tom Robinson's 6Music show as well as Steve Lamacq's show. Early this year they were picked up by Kittiwake, who had previously worked with Alphabet Backwards. A new single followed, as did slots at this summer's Bestival and Wychwood festivals and more airplay from Rob Da Bank and a studio session with Tom Robinson. They release their debut album on September 12<sup>th</sup> on Kittiwake.

### What do they sound like?

Fresh-faced indie pop like they used to make in the good old days when that term meant something. An early Nightshift review saw Secret Rivals compared to a collision of Sonic Youth and Belle & Sebastian, while their sweet-natured but exuberant and sometimes noisy style has drawn admiring comparisons to the likes of Bis and Los Campesinos!

### What inspires them?

"Rubbish day jobs; an over-inflated sense of purpose; tunes; the people we love; the people we loathe."

### Career highlight so far:

"If we're honest, the highlight of being in Secret Rivals is hanging out with each other so much; we genuinely have loads of fun together and crack each other up regularly. Supporting The Chapman Family was amazing and being played by Tom Robinson with the 'Start Fires' EP was amazing."

### And the lowlight:

"Anytime we've lost sight of what's important and fought between ourselves."



### Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Dive Dive."

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

"Don't think we would bother. Being petulant, if we can't have a bunch of records, we don't want any."

### When is your next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"An album launch at the Wheatsheaf on the 15<sup>th</sup> Of September. If anyone's not seen us live then we're a bit faster and a bit shoutier than on record. Expect bad on-stage jokes and white boy dancing."

### Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"The best thing is the amount of resources available to bands. For a city so small we really are blessed to have so many brilliantly hardworking promoters, bloggers and DJs all waving the flag for local music. Least favourite? We don't think there's anything we could level at Oxford that couldn't be said anywhere? There are dickheads everywhere, right?"

### You might love them if you love:

Johnny Foreigner; Help, She Can't Swim; Los Campesinos!; Huggy Bear.

### Hear them here:

[www.myspace.com/secretrivalsband](http://www.myspace.com/secretrivalsband)

## DOCTOR SHOTOVER

### Lamewatch

[Slurping sounds from the East Indies Club TV Room – Dr S emerges, looking somewhat dishevelled, a bottle of Tabasco sauce in one hand and a lime in the other]... Ah, there you are. Follow me, my square-eyed pals. Now, the fact is, we on the East Indies Club Committee have grown SO sick of the intolerable dreck on the TV at this, nay at any time of year, that we have devised our own series of shows. First up, harking back to the glory days of 90s network entertainment – Ladies and Genitals, I bring you *Lamewatch*. Imagine the scene, as in glorious slow motion, members of the Torycrat Cabinet run across the sand at Blackpool in baggy orange trunks and Big Society t-shirts... at the centre of the running heroes is DAVID CAMELHOFF, a thin film of perspiration on his waxy jowls as he frowns with feigned concern at a spluttering Common Person in trouble in the water. He holds his hand up – the cabinet members all stop obediently. Camelhoff speaks: "I say, now that is, isn't it, a perfect example of Broken Britain...? That chap, well, his parents may have come from, you know, the Lower Classes, or even one of our glorious ex-colonies" [all stand to attention, looking serious]... "but he jolly well deserves not to drown. Or

have his surf shop looted by sick, sick people"[all nod, sagely]... "In fact, I want to give this man my personal undertaking that he will be entitled to a University place OF HIS CHOICE and free parking in my distant and land-locked constituency of Witney" [wild applause from Torycrat Cabinet, as the far-off figure drowns in the murky waters]. So, Ladies and Jeremies, what do you think? What's that? You don't think it'll sell, Timpkins? More of a female presence in the show, you say? An orange-swim-suited Theresa May? Saints preserve us! Horrible – yet brilliant! Now, who wants a Tequila Oyster? Let's have a meeting about our next project for EICC *Old Shows Gold*. I'll chair... well, until I bloody well fall off it, I will... Down the hatch! Chairs! **Next month: Bar Trek – The "Beat Me Up, Spotty" Years.**



CAMELHOFF: "Me and my, ah, Main Dude here are coming down hard on, you know, looting and stuff. Ra-ther!"

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# DEMOS

## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### GREY JONES

As we sit down to review this month's crop of demos, London, and a few cities beyond, are going up in flames to a degree not since the riots of 1981. As such the opening, sampled lines of Grey Jones' 'Rudeboy' feel particularly relevant: "The latest poll indicates one in five youths have access to weapons / Gang culture is epidemic." What follows would make a suitable soundtrack to urban turmoil. Grey Jones is the coming together of rapper Lex Jones and soundscapist Grey Area to create what they accurately describe as 'Cine-grime', a fusion of grime, dubstep, electronica and film soundtracks, somewhere between Burial, Radiohead and Flying Lotus. 'Rudeboy' is the stand-out here, all stark electronic bleeps and bleeps, minimalist beats and a precise vocal delivery adding to a sense of chilly, almost industrial menace. From almost woozy beginnings the track picks up speed and builds its sense of authority before dissipating. 'Anime' is more four-to-the-floor, Jones spitting out words alongside guest rapper Don The John over swirling patterns of eerie electronics. It's a pattern repeated on tracks like 'On the Dot', the intricately textured but non-invasive electro backing providing a darkly ambient platform for the rhymes that flow with something approaching nonchalance. Not everything here works quite so well: 'Prequel To Moirae' feels too whimsical, discordant piano wobbling drunkenly behind some fantastical narrative, but at their best, Grey Jones make bleak housing estate nihilism feel almost tangible.

### LAST YEAR'S MAN

Like Grey Jones, Last Year's Man – essentially Fred Toon from acid-techno act We Are Ugly But We Have The Music – creates dense, murky urban soundscapes, which aim to carry the menace of darkened underpasses and post-industrial dereliction. Sometimes he succeeds in this: the eerie 'What Do I Do With All The Flowers', which features news reportage of Princess Diana's death looped over an electronic tapestry of synth hums and static, harsh beats creeping in to puncture any residual complacency in a manner not unlike Aphex Twin's more cinematic outings. Where he can fall down is failing to fully build on some of the moods he's created, making tracks like 'Can't Finish' feel incomplete or merely incidental. 'Puresandos' in particular needs to move on having established its domain, while 'Sinking Into The Whole' might be an old Robert Fripp piece. For all

the imposing atmosphere of decaying concrete here, there are strong enough musical foundations to build on; maybe even a collaboration with the likes of Grey Jones might help add a new angle on the sounds and provide interesting new musical landscapes for both acts.

### HENRY PARKER & THIS MAGICAL WORLD

Henry's press blurb make much of the 18-year-old's virtuoso guitar skills, his out-of-time songwriting and the array of revered, older musicians he's played with. All of which are accurate, and there's evidence aplenty here that the guy has got the skill to become some kind of classic rock behemoth with the right breaks, but there's also a worry on many of the songs here that that virtuosity is stifling the heart and soul of his songs, or covering up for a lack of real rock and roll blood and guts: 'Run Away With You' for example is pedestrian and indulgent, an example of why, just because you can do all that clever stuff, you don't always have to, while 'Long Time Coming Round' could be something Cast or Ocean Colour Scene came up with in the mid-90s. But that's not to dismiss Parker as some dull muso. He's at his best when he injects an almost folky edge into proceedings, as on 'Summerlong', closer to Seth Lakeman, but perhaps in need of cutting loose a bit more, and 'Skin', which circles pleasingly and perhaps just needs a heavier central riff to give it some real welly. Parker's debt to the rock greats is evident throughout: 'All You Really Gotta Do' is jauntily Kinks-like, while 'Try & Catch A Wind' could have come from the fretboard of Peter Green. Best of the lot is 'Fire Burns The Soul', with its big earthy lead riff, not far off Jimmy Page. Given his obvious talents you do long for Henry to play a bit more fast and loose with his songs, or maybe work with a better songwriter to make the most of his abilities. It's all well and good to have respect for the old masters, but sometimes too much respect can hold you back.

### MOOGIEMAN

We blame Richard Stilgoe. And Victoria Wood. And several decades of university footlights revues. There is a small, marginal breed of songwriters who seem to equate forced, groan-inducing rhymes and wacky non-sequiturs for wit and humour in music. Given his musical moniker, we'd hoped Moogiemann was a crazed analogue synth fetishist intent on cramming the entire history of electronic music into a ten-minute demo, a bit like a retro-futurist Condensed Shakespeare Company. Instead he's a self-consciously humorous (and we use that term advisedly) poet-cum-acoustic troubadour

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who seems to see himself, on opening track 'Snow Falls On Mars' at least, as a latter-day Jarvis Cocker or Richard Hawley, half crooning, half groaning a laborious sci-fi love story, the kindest thing about which we can say is that it's hardly Neon Neon's 'I Told Her On Alderaan'. Not by several light-years. Still, at least that's bearable enough, unlike the insufferably smug 'Louis Bleriot's Moustache', which is little more than a series of forced rhyming couplets delivered in the manner of Victoria Wood by way of Billy Bragg. 'The Breda', though, suggests if Moogiemans could just take his tongue out of his cheek, his face out of a thesaurus and his head from out of his own arse, he might have something far more potent to sing about, the smugness mostly stripped away and a more serious message delivered with far more bite. Even the knowing snatch of Neil Diamond's 'Sweet Caroline' fits well into the scheme of things in this case. Proof then that if you've got something worth singing about, we want to hear it. If all you want to do is try and show how clever you can be, go and join the circus. We never go to the circus so everyone will be happy.

## BE THE BEAR

This is an even greater disappointment. Having been promised "an electronic band based in Gothenberg, Sweden," we had visions of discovering a new version of The Knife or something but after some briefly promising synth bleeps and wows, this one-song offering quickly collapses into sterile, generic sugariness, discreetly dirty guitar chops competing with the discreetly soulful female vocals to see which can be the most...well, discreet. It's all a bit like Sade stripped of her honey-tonsilled loveliness and dumped in an Ibiza chill-out lounge sometime in the early-90s. Probably around 5am. Dedicated to duty as we are, we keep replaying it, hoping, searching, for some spark, something beyond sterility personified, but every time it finishes we've instantly forgotten what it sounded like. Like a musical equivalent of The Silence from *Doctor Who*. Oh, sorry, did you say something? Could have sworn we caught something out of the corner of our eye just then. No? Ah well, nothing here, move on. Next!

## MATT THOMKINS & LIAM MARTIN

Liam Martin is lead singer with Cat Matador, so we know him to be a man capable of penning a decent tune, but perhaps that's something he could concentrate a bit more on rather than trying to make experimental sound collages with his chum Matt Thomkins via email; in fact the chatter of an old dial-up connection might be a more rewarding experience than

this rather directionless musical mist, the sole notable part of which comes towards the end of its five-minute duration when a small child starts describing some creature made up of slightly mad ingredients ("He's got ketchup for eyes and popcorn for a nose. Ears made out of chest hair"), over what sounds like a chorus of thumb pianos. Until then it drifts gently, inconsequentially, through a few minutes of acoustic guitar and electro wooziness, which is by no means unpleasant but lacking any kind of substance at all. What's all this with making music over the internet anyway? Just get together in a damp rehearsal studio in the middle of fuck knows where, neck a bottle of Jim Beam together and pretend you're Iggy & The Stooges next time, eh?

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### SHUDDERWALL

We're not averse to a bit of musical misery, really we're not. In fact the Nightshift office shelves are stacked to the ceiling with doom-laden tomes by everyone from Swans and Joy Division to Leonard Cohen. But with those acts comes grace, poise and a sense of poetry. Shudderwall here just sound like a dying heifer trying to lug a piano up a mountainside while fundamentalist priests beat it with sticks. Laborious doesn't even start to describe it since that word at least suggests some kind of progress, although there's a strange metamorphosis in the band as this album-length demo grinds to its welcome conclusion. Opener 'So Many Pitfalls' might be an attempt at r'n'b, though its pedestrian beats and barely-there piano lead defy any suggestion it's got a soul. The vocals, meanwhile, are unbelievable, half the time sounding like someone being suffocated by a pillow, the rest of the time operatically hysterical. 'The Dove' might well be that fat wanker from the Go Compare adverts singing along to an old Charlie Chaplin movie. 'I Live In Space' should, with a title like that, be a riot of sci-fi imagery and strange futuristic drugs, but is a gobsmackingly awful funeral dirge that might as well be titled 'I Exist In A Talent Vacuum'. And then, before you know it, Shudderwall have turned into a death metal band. Albeit a half-arsed, half-speed, lily-livered excuse for a death metal band. But they've got the nasty guitars and growly vocals. And if it wasn't all so monumentally shite we'd give them a medal for their sheer audacity. Interestingly, the band state that their goal is "to be signed to a major label." Dragging their sorry arses out of bed in the morning and from one end of a song to another without causing a suicide epidemic might be a more realistic ambition for now.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. Or email song links to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto: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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