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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
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Oxford's Greatest Metal
Bands Ever Revealed!

The METAL! issue

featuring
Desert Storm
Sextodecimo
JOR
Sevenchurch
Dedlok
Taste My Eyes
and many more

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NEWS

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DIVE DIVE have signed a deal with Xtra Mile Records, home to Frank Turner, with whom they are bandmates, and fellow Oxford stars A Silent Film. The band have a new album, entitled 'Potential', already recorded and due for release early in 2011, with a new single, 'Liar', out on December 13th. Xtra Mile will also be releasing Dive Dive's first two albums, 'Tilting At Windmills' and 'Revenge Of The Mechanical Dog', digitally in the coming months. The band will be supporting Frank Turner at The Regal on Sunday 5th December, as well as backing the singer. 'Liar' is up online now at www.myspace.com/divedive.

JONQUIL are set to release their third album early next year after signing to new York-based Dovetail Records. 'One Hundred Suns' will get a download-only release in the States in December, followed by a full vinyl release in the UK in February. The band play a headline show at the Jericho Tavern on Friday 19th November, their first hometown show since supporting Foals and Bombay Bicycle Club on tour. Support comes from Neon Pulse and Rhosyn (formerly Wap Wap Wow). Jonquil members Kit Monteith and Jody Prewett left the band earlier this year to form Trophy Wife, who have signed to Moshi Moshi, while frontman Hugo Manuel has been playing solo under the guise Chad Valley. A track from the new album, 'Fighting Smiles', is up online now at www.myspace.com/jonquiluk.

SURFACE FESTIVAL returns in 2011, set to feature 500 shows at venues across 14 UK and European venues, including Oxford's O2 Academy. The event climaxes in a 21-act show at London's IndigO2 venue in the O2 complex. Next year's prize pot for the winning acts is £100,000, provided by various big-name sponsors and includes a slot at the Szigel 2011 Festival. Bands wanting to take part in the Surface 2011 event can find out more details and register at www.surfacefestival.com.

COMMON ROOM is a two-day mini-festival taking place at the Jericho Tavern over the weekend of 4th-5th December. Organised by Back & To The Left, the event features sets from a host of local bands, including Dead Jerichos, The Epstein, Borderville, Alphabet Backwards, Huck & the Handsome Fee, The Yarns, Band of Hope, Spring Offensive, Our Lost Infantry, Damn Vandals, Minor Coles, The Scholars, Samuel Zasada, The Deputees, Message To Bears, Above Us The Waves, The Gullivers, The Moulletes, Toliesel, Sonny Liston, Cat Matador and Treecreeper. Early bird tickets, priced £8 for both days, are on sale now from Wegottickets.com.

THE LINE UP FOR THIS YEAR'S WINTER WARMER is almost complete. The annual pre-Christmas festival is co-organised by monthly club Gappy Tooth Industries and indie promoters Swiss Concrete and this year takes place at The Wheatshaf and Café Tarifa over the weekend of the 17th-19th December. The Wheatshaf will host live music on the Friday and Saturday evenings, with free live music at Café Tarifa on the Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Acts confirmed for the Wheatshaf are Alamakota, A Scholar & A Physician, Deer Chicago, Dial F For Frankenstein, Secret Rivals, Spring Offensive, Tiger Mendoza, Volkenfunk and The Yarns, while Tarifa plays host to Anton Barbeau, James Bell, Ross Bennett, Braintead Collective, George Chopping, Ally Craig, D Gwalia, Jess Hall, Dan Holloway, King Of Cats, Midnight Boatman, Marc Nash, Helen Pearson, Prohibition Smokers Club, Trev Williams and Matt Winkworth. Visit www.gappytooth.com for more details.

DEAD JERICHO release a new single, 'Mountains', on November 1st. The local post-punk-inspired stars cap a successful year with a special launch gig at the Wheatshaf



MOTOWN LEGENDS MARTHA REEVES & THE VANDELLAS play at the O2 Academy on Sunday 12th December. Reeves initially retired from performing in 1972 due to illness and had until recently been a member of Detroit's city council. In nine years between 1963-72 the trio had 26 chart hits, including the classic 'Dancing In The Streets', 'Jimmy Mack' and 'Heatwave'. Tickets for the show are on sale now, priced £20, from the Academy box office or online at www.o2academyoxford.co.uk.

on Friday 19th November, with support from Empty Vessels plus more to be announced. They also play a series of dates in London, Birmingham and Reading. Visit www.myspace.com/deadjerichos for more news and live dates.

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA release a new single this month. 'Last March of the Acolytes' is released in digital form only, as a free download from the band's website, www.therockoftravolta.com. The band's new album, 'Fine Lines', is released in early 2011.

The single starts a campaign of releases that mark the 10th anniversary of the band's first album, 'My Band's Better Than Yours'. Two digital special-edition albums, covering the band's first decade, will

be released and the campaign culminates with the release of 'Fine Lines' in both digital and physical formats. The Rock are set to play at Audioscope Festival at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 6th November.

VIXENS have their debut single, 'Mirrors', released by Yoyo Acapulco Records this month. The single was reviewed in Nightshift in May when the band originally planned to release it themselves. Visit www.myspace.com/vixensmusic to hear tracks by the band.

RADIATE launch a new unsigned bands night at the Jericho Tavern starting on January 28th. Promoter Jon Chapman is looking for original new bands to play the regular club night. Email details to radiatebookings@gmail.com.

Rodger Dawling 1975-2010

Tributes have been paid to Rodger Dawling, drummer with local rockers Beaver Fuel, who has died, aged 35. It is believed Rodger succumbed to carbon-monoxide fumes at his home. Bandmate Leigh Alexander recalled his friend's sense of humour, "His attitude and cheekiness reflected the band's general ethos, and he had told me on a number of occasions that Beaver Fuel was the only band he had really felt he belonged in. I will forever be indebted to his enthusiasm and will miss him as the family member he undoubtedly was." Beaver Fuel bassist James Serjeant also paid tribute to Rodger's humour, saying "It's not just about him being the drummer for our band; he was a damn good friend who was generous to a fault

with his time and efforts towards pretty much everyone he knew and I've forgotten how many times he'd have us in stitches with his utterly irrepressible cheeky humour and general mischievousness." Nightshift extends our deepest condolences to all of Rodger's family and friends.



Bring the Noise!

Oxford has long been home to a thriving metal scene, from bands to promoters.



METAL LASTS FOREVER. IT'S AS OLD AND as heavy as the hills and whatever form it takes, when it hits you, you know it's metal.

Oxford's musical reputation around the world has been built on bands like Radiohead, Ride, Supergrass and Foals but through the decades the city has always had a strong, characteristically diverse and self-sufficient metal scene. A scene that has spawned acts as diverse as doom-metal titans Sevenchurch, metalcore attack dogs JOR, sludge-core grinders Sextodecimo, garage-thrash duo Winnebago Deal, stoner-rock champs Desert Storm and the almost uncategorisable Suitable Case For Treatment.

HEAVY METAL TENDS TO BE ASSOCIATED with the old industrial heartlands – the Black Country, South Yorkshire and south Wales, but increasingly over the years it has been the real sound of the suburbs. Many of Oxfordshire's greatest heavyweights have emerged from the small towns surrounding Oxford, while almost without exception, local metallers are born and bred Oxfordians.

In the 1970s and 80s the Dolly – the Corndolly as it was – was spiritual home to the local metal community, an heroic if sometimes isolated haven of heaviosity as the genre's popularity waxed and waned. In more recent times though, particularly in the past decade, the scene has grown in size, strength and diversity.

THE CATALYST FOR METAL'S RESURGENCE in Oxford was, of course, The Club That Cannot Be Named. The club, started in 2000 by friends Alan Day and Dave Hale at the Elm Tree on Cowley Road, was a reaction to the perceived lack of opportunity for local and touring metal bands to find a regular, supportive home.

What The Club That Cannot Be Named achieved

cannot be overstated. As well as encouraging local metal bands and bringing emerging big names to town, the club created a hub for the local scene, pioneered all-ages gigs in Oxfordshire and inspired other promoters to start their own metal nights.

The first TCTCBN show featured local heroes JOR alongside Spine and Primate. Their second show featured Raging Speedhorn.

Alan Day now works for Kilimanjaro, one of the largest live promotions companies in the UK, responsible for Ozzfest and Sonisphere and tour promoting Ozzy, Slayer and Fear Factory, among others, but earlier this year he went back to his roots as TCTCBN celebrated its tenth anniversary with a show at the Wheatsheaf, featuring many of the bands he first helped find their place on the scene, including JOR, Sextodecimo and Shouting Myke, who have gone on to greater international success as A Silent Film. He recalls why he and Dave first started putting on metal nights.

"I always thought Oxford was totally lacking in a metal scene. If anyone was to play at the Zodiac I wasn't old enough to go – something I was proud to change later on.

"I was president of the Rock Society at Portsmouth University and used to put on bands once a month, so when I met Dave, who worked with a band called JOR, I said, 'Why don't we do something similar, with a club night vibe'. We didn't know what to call it, so one night in Dave's parents' attic we decided to just call it The Club That Cannot Be Named, based on The Dwarves' 'He Cannot Be Named'.

"We just tried to create a community and get local bands involved. I worked in a record shop in Abingdon at the time too, which helped. I guess we created a focus point for people into heavy music and brought everyone together in one unit."

PRIOR TO STARTING TCTCBN WITH ALAN,

Dave had managed a couple of mates' bands who became JOR and Faith In Hate, while running his own label, Chicken Records, putting out compilation albums of underground metal and hardcore acts. "Things were very different then as there were hardly any metal bands, at least not young ones. Oxford was still very much 'indie town', which is not a bad thing. But it all came along at a time when things had got a bit boring," he recalls.

"For me The Club That Cannot Be Named was just about putting on nights so all of our friends could have fun and party. Luckily it took off straight away and this allowed us to bring bands we wanted to see to town and make a real go of things as promoters.

"The Club changed the local metal scene completely. As soon as younger kids saw bands like JOR and Black Candy they all stated forming their own bands and before you know it there was loads of them! There was definitely a feeling of camaraderie between bands when things got going with The Club and I still see that now."

SUCH WAS ALAN AND DAVE'S SUCCESS at promoting that they soon outgrew the Elm Tree and the Wheatsheaf and became the main promoters at the Zodiac, attracting bigger and bigger touring bands to town. Anthrax, SIKTH, Killswitch Engage and most recently Ozzy Osbourne are among the host of names they have attracted to Oxford, as well as myriad big name and emerging indie acts.

Of course, this success spelled the end for TCTCBN as a local grassroots club, but it had sown the seed for a new generation of promoters to take over the reins.

"Without Alan's gigs I would never have been tempted to come to Oxford, full stop," says Bethan Groves, who has promoted metal and hardcore shows here since 2003 under the name Burning Legacy. "Without Alan Day in Oxford, there'd be fuck all of a metal scene in Oxford."

Beth comes from Cwmbran in south Wales but grew up with the Newport music scene, based around the legendary TJs in Newport. She promoted her first show aged 17, oddly enough featuring three Oxford bands – JOR, Miazma and Coma Kai. Moving to Oxford to study at Brookes she advertised for bands on the Nightshift forum ("I remember a certain vocalist of a local band telling me I'd be stepping on other promoters' toes. It pissed me off so much I thought, I'll show you mate"), and has since put on touring acts like Tesseract and Lithurgy, always with local supports.

ALONGSIDE BURNING LEGACY, TWO other regular metal nights have emerged in recent months, Skeletor at the Bullingdon and Buried In Smoke at the Wheatsheaf, to offer local metal fans the best selection of gigs in years.

Both Skeletor and Buried In Smoke are run by local metal musicians who found it hard to get gigs for their own bands – Taste My Eyes and Desert

Storm respectively – in the wake of The Club That Cannot Be Named coming to an end.

“We grew up with the under-18s rock nights in Abingdon and at the Zodiac,” recalls Buried In Smoke’s Elliot Cole, also drummer with Desert Storm. “Alan and Dave were putting on great bands like JOR, Coma Kai, Winnebago Deal and Sextodecimo. It was those bands, as much as Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, that inspired us.

“Now that Alan and Dave are doing Kilimanjaro and the Zodiac has changed to the Academy, it’s harder for local bands to get shows, that’s why we started Buried In Smoke. We wanted to help out the local metal scene and give our band more exposure. We seem to get a good sized audience at most of our shows.”

Similarly the group of friends behind Skeletor Promotions, including Taste My Eyes’ John Daniel, grew up going to TCTCBN shows in the early noughties and were prompted to start putting on gigs by the lack of shows left in TCTCBN’s wake. Lately they’ve put on gigs by Terrathorn and Divine Chaos, again alongside local acts.

“I used to love that dark, dingy room downstairs at the Zodiac; nothing seems to compare to it. Oxford was great back then but it died down after TCTCBN moved on and was quiet for a few years. There is a revival going on at the moment though, and I think 2011 will see a resurgence of a thriving metal scene once again.”

JOHN’S POINT ABOUT THE LOCAL METAL scene enjoying a resurgence seems to be born out by the sheer number and quality of metal bands around at the moment.

Nightshift has always supported the local metal scene with the best bands around regularly finding their way onto the annual Oxford Punt bill, while Near Life Experience, Xmas Lights and Sextodecimo are among those to have graced the front cover. In recent years our Demo Of The Month title has been won by a metal band more than any other genre.

BY FAR AND AWAY THE MOST

successful local metal band ever was Sevenchurch in the early-90s. The quintet were signed to Noise Records and released one album, ‘Bleak Insight’, which has become an international underground metal classic, quoted by Terrorizer Magazine as the third best doom-metal album of all time, beaten only by Black Sabbath and Cathedral.

Sevenchurch’s portentously-voiced frontman Martin Spear has recently re-emerged as singer with Agness Pike, while the band’s guitarist Dave Smart now runs the Oxford Guitar Gallery in Summertown. Sevenchurch laid down some seriously heavy foundations for the bands that followed them. “There wasn’t really a local metal scene when we were playing,” recalls Dave, “just a handful of bands. The scene has grown since. I don’t think it’s more diverse now, just that more genres of music are put under the metal umbrella.”

Of Sevenchurch’s singularly monolithic sound, he says, “It was never intentional to make the slowest or dooziest music ever, just an unhappy accident brought on by years of pain, misery and despair. It was good being able to lay down a nice, juicy slab of a riff under Martin, who never ceased to amaze me.”

WHILE SEVENCHURCH MAY HAVE THE greatest recognition beyond Oxford, for local bands the two acts that have had the most influence on what came after are extreme sludge metallers Sextodecimo, and of course the mighty JOR.

JOR frontman Ben Hollyer, now the singer with Taste My Eyes, credits Alan Day and Dave Hale



for the scene’s strength and JOR’s success.

“They were organised, professional and a little wacky, which made the shows a real experience for the bands and the punters. I have never heard a bad word about the calibre of their work and that’s why they are where they are today.”

Of JOR’s influence on a new generation of local metal bands, Ben simply states that, “JOR was just five guys sharing an adventure, with absolutely no aspirations to be playing full time or conquering the world. We just wanted to play shows, sleep on some floors and laugh at the bands that actually thought nu-metal would put food on the table. It’s really flattering to hear that there is still mention of JOR. The advice I’d give to young bands would be simply this: enjoy what you play, enjoy who you play it with; some people will get it, others will not. And play every gig like it’s your last!”

Sextodecimo guitarist Roo Bhasin, now part of Fixers, remains proud of his band’s local legacy: “We left a massive hole in this town and its gonna be hard to fill it, so try as they might these kids ain’t got shit on us. Mind you, I’m sure Sevenchurch said the same thing when they split and look what happened. I hope someone does steal our crown one day; I’d happily hand it over to a worthy contender. Don’t get me wrong, there are some great metal bands around at the moment, some whose musical proficiency and talents we could only dream of, but I think that was part of our charm: there was no shine and we didn’t care.”

SO, IS OXFORD’S METAL SCENE ENJOYING a revival? Opinion seems divided even among the local promoters.

“The local scene is taking its time to get noticed but a lot of metallers from Swindon and Reading know about it now. The Oxford scene is a late bloomer with a flat chest, but in a couple of years time it will have grown and all the boys will start paying attention,” says Skeletor’s John. “But it could really do with a weekend night event or club to get more people out. The venues know they can make more money on an r’n’b or hip hop night so, the Wheatsheaf aside, it ain’t happening.”

Burning Legacy’s Beth is less enthused by the current crop of bands in town:

“Other cities have bands emerging and touring out of town. Oxford doesn’t have so much since Near Life Experience and JOR. The quality of bands forming isn’t of that standard and it does hinder. There’s a lot of average metal bands in Oxford.”

Beth does agree with John though about the need for a regular weekend metal night. “There’s too many other promoters in Oxford, so that no-one else can secure a decent Friday or Saturday night to work with, as the venues are all booked up.”

For his part, Alan Day believes it wouldn’t take so much to bring the local metal scene on a level. “Oxford is the best place to be in a band. Full stop.

It’s very close-knit and everything is at hand; there is advice on hand for everything. I think a band breaking out and doing a Foals would help: something to bring focus to the scene.”

WHAT DOES EMERGE FROM WHOEVER you talk to about the local metal scene is its sense of community and mutual help. “It’s such a tight-knit community, which is great,” says John, although he also admits, “there is a general bitchiness and competition that really needs to be stamped out.”

For her part, Beth believes the scene is “more harmonious in Oxford than in south Wales. Buried In Smoke, Skeletor and myself all support each other and more people have started to cotton on to what we’re trying to achieve.” Evidence of this mutual support comes as Burning Legacy and Skeletor recently collaborated on a gig promotion to try and maximise resources.

It’s not an isolated scene though; Oxford’s propensity to foster bands who stretch genres or break down barriers means its best metal bands never get stuck in a metal ghetto. JOR, Suitable Case, Winnebago Deal and even Sevenchurch managed to attract a following from across the board. The popularity of bands like Taste My Eyes, Black Skies Burn and Desert Storm at recent Oxford Punts also shows how open-minded the local gig-going community is.

SO WHERE DOES THE OXFORD METAL scene go from here? Elsewhere in this issue we list some of the emerging local stars. Some, such as Taste My Eyes and Desert Storm, sound ready for bigger things already, while others are still finding their identity. What is undeniable, is that the local metal scene is integral to the Oxford music scene’s identity and success. It is a part of the scene that is often under-exposed but should be celebrated as much as our more acclaimed local successes.

Selected November metal highlights:

- Thu 4th Taste My Eyes / K-Lacura / Annero / In Oceans - Fat Lil’s, Witney.
- Sat 6th Buried in Smoke with Charger / Sworn to Oath / Desert Storm / Beard of Zeus - The Wheatsheaf.
- Sat 6th Jambox with Ventflow / Aethana / Elysium Waits - The Centurion, Bicester.
- Wed 10th Moshka with Agness Pike / K-Lacura - the Wheatsheaf
- Thu 11th Jambox with Mask of Judas / Reign Upon Us - Hobgoblin, Bicester
- Wed 17th The Crushing / Annero / Komrad / Risen In Black
- Thu 25th Skeletor with Safety Fire / Taste My Eyes / Galleons / Prospekt - The Bullingdon
- Sat 27th Jambox with Taste My Eyes / Prospekt / Dedlok / Desert Storm - The Wheatsheaf, Banbury

DESERT STORM

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FAN OF VIOLENT media as it's a powerful tool of therapy; violence can either be sung and heard or carried out. There's always something foul beneath the surface and everybody has a little insanity deeply seeded. All it needs is a little teasing out. Burying it can cause the need for professional help and so many problems."

MATT RYAN, OGRE-VOICED FRONTMAN of local metal stars Desert Storm is talking to *Nightshift* about the violent imagery inherent in the song 'Forked Tongues', stand-out track from the band's recent second album of the same name.

The song finds Matt growling, "A preacher started yelling / So I slapped his face raw / And when he turned the other cheek to me / I broke his fucking jaw," over a crushing bed of stoner-rock riffs and artillery-heavy beats.

Matt is quick, though, to play down his band's violent lyrical imagery: "Looking at the new album, the themes range from the paranoia of drug use to the narrative life of a drifter and also the euphoria of life. 'Forked Tongues' features some brutal imagery, but it's not a conscious effort to play up to the demonic side of rock music."

"Really it's only that song that includes violent imagery, the lyrics are actually very diverse," adds the band's rhythm guitarist, Ryan Cole.

PERHAPS DESERT STORM'S SONGS simply feel more violent than they actually are because of the ingredients that go into them. Chief amongst these is Matt's voice, an astonishing, larva-gargling, nicotine-stained beast that sounds like it's already fought a thousand battles and sunk countless bottles of whisky. And behind Matt are the riffs. Riffs are everything in rock and Desert Storm have riffs made from granite and rusty steam rollers, timeless riffs that hark back to Led Zeppelin by way of Monster Magnet, Kyuss and Killdozer. And behind those riffs come the beats, sometimes fast and furious, at others Bonham-heavy and sturdy enough to carry the band's considerable weight with Herculean heroism.

JOINING MATT AND RYAN IN DESERT Storm are lead guitarist Chris White, bassist Chris Benoist and drummer (and Ryan's brother) Elliot.

Chris W, Ryan and Elliot were previously in teen metallers 20/20 Vision who had a decent reputation locally before they grew apart over musical differences, the trio intent on following their original love for Black Sabbath and Led Zep and local cult heroes Sextodecimo, as well as an increasing affection for blues.

Desert Storm's debut album, released last year, was an impressive opening shot by any standards, even more so from such a young band. Though steeped in classic metal and heavy rock, it sounded incredibly fresh and painted from an impressively wide palette that brought elements of psychedelia and even folk into the dominant stoner-metal vibe.

The quintet's follow-up, 'Forked Tongues', released in September this year, confirms their



potential, the brutal metal sound accentuated by producer Jimmy Hetherington, the scope of their sound widened even further as they plough through blues, country and almost middle eastern elements, with guest singer Lauren Hayes adding sweet, folksy backing vocals on 'Cosmic Drips' and 'Ol'Town'.

As *Nightshift* celebrates Oxford's metal scene, we caught up with the band who currently sit firmly atop the pile of great local heavyweights.

WE WONDER, FIRST, HOW DESERT STORM felt about the acclaim they were accorded for that debut album last year.

Chris W: "We were certainly pleased with what we had recorded; we didn't expect it to be received so well. The advantage of starting afresh after 20/20 Vision was that we felt that we had nothing to prove and could just record without the fear of having to meet expectations."

Matt: "Our fans had an idea what was coming. We had been introducing our new material into the set song by song as it was being created. There were moments in the studio of being fearlessly charged. Again it's something I'm proud to have worked on and created."

You haven't been idle since its release; you've already released a follow-up. How do you feel 'Forked Tongues' compares to the first album? Matt: "We find it difficult comparing, as to us it's been one long journey and it feels like the border between releases is really hazy. We don't write songs for an album, we just write them and are forced into grouping them together. The new album is certainly more polished, thanks to Jimmy and our performance has been honed due to the practice since the first album. As for round three, we've already got a fair few songs and a video on the go."

Ryan: "I think that there are a diverse range of sounds on the second album that mark it out as a progression. But our live set still includes material from the first album; we still really enjoy playing them."

Chris B: "We all feel the songs are stronger and the production is a lot more polished. Our sludge influences are more prominent."

WHEREAS THERE CAN BE A TENDENCY with stoner and sludge bands to hit a groove and just ride it, Desert Storm's greatest strength is in bringing in different styles and colours to the mix. How much conscious effort is there from the band to keep the mix fresh?

Elliot: "We all listen to different styles of music as well as stoner rock and sludge, so I think that naturally comes out in our sound."

Chris W: "At any one time we always have a lot of material that is ready to be worked on and practised, so there is an element of trying to work on a variety of styles, whilst incorporating it into the blues rock/stoner sound. We like our sets to be varied and interesting, but by no means is sticking to a certain style wrong or boring."

Chris B: "The importance with our song writing is that we all have an input; there is no band leader

telling everyone what to play and when. We're good friends, so we know to take criticism constructively. We feel it's important that everyone has their own input and are honest about their feelings on what we are trying to produce."

Matt: "It's always kinda difficult to explain how a song is written, it just happens. The only time you really think about the fact you're writing a tune is when you get the occasional mental dry spell. As for keeping it fresh, we like experimenting. If something sounds shit we don't use it. Apart from that, anything goes. You'd hear us play with a brass section if we thought it would fit. But there is a distinct Desert Storm sound throughout."

Can you imagine writing a love ballad?

Matt: "'Cosmic Drips' isn't far off, lyrically.

We're the wrong band to whine and swoon about love but 'Cosmic' is our piece."

AS WELL AS PLAYING IN DESERT STORM,

Elliot and Ryan have played a part in helping make the current local metal scene the strongest it's been since the heyday of The Club That Cannot Be Named with their monthly Buried In Smoke club nights, showcasing local acts like Dedlok, K-Lacura and Vision Fall as well as attracting bigger out-of-town bands like Orange Goblin to the city. How do they think the scene has changed since they started playing and promoting?

Matt: "Particularly recently the metal scene has had a burst of life. There has been a swell with all the talent and interest in Oxford. Promoters old and new are doing their bit by getting talent on the stage and I would advise all aspiring performers to approach them. The Oxford scene has never been stronger, which is largely down to the fans. If they never came to see us who would put us on?"

Ryan: "I think the local scene is strong, there are enough decent bands emerging, and there's a lot of diversity. I think it is also more cohesive with bands and promoters working together; it's created a positive atmosphere amongst the rock and metal community."

HAVING MADE THEIR MARK IN OXFORD, Desert Storm have been gigging out of the county over the past couple of years.

Chris B: "For the past two summers we have tried to do as many out of town shows as possible; we have to do it this way as some of us are still at university. We love gigs out of town as it gives us an opportunity to play out of our comfort zone."

Elliot: "Yeah, the reception we've been getting out of town has been really positive, especially down in Bournemouth. We got asked back a week after we played there, supporting Firebird. Other highlights have been when we supported CKY at the Leamington Assembly, for their warm up to Sonisphere, back in July. That also got us some good radio exposure."

Ryan: "The Bulldog Bash last summer was also an amazing experience, playing with the likes of Motorhead and U.F.O. It would be awesome to play there again."

Having played out of town, we wonder how Desert Storm's Oxford roots have affected the way they are perceived and how this differs from the way local audiences think of them. Despite the underground success of a few local metal bands over the years, Oxford isn't a city renowned for producing heavy bands.

Chris B: "We realise that Oxford has a rich heritage with the success of many local bands, particularly recently, but we have never felt that it has led to more being expected of us as a band out

of town. It's harder nationally as you rarely know of the best venues and promoters first off; you have to gig these places relentlessly until you make an impression. The fact that we come from Oxford counts for nothing, you start from the bottom at every new place you play."

Matt: "Local recognition requires work as you have to be committed to the cause. Some people may enjoy what you play and some won't, but every show you are making fans. Nationally it's a mission as you start afresh in every town. It's all about perseverance and playing the same cities time and time again. We've played London, Bristol and Bournemouth a fair few times as they have strong scenes with listeners keen for more. The fact we're from Oxford doesn't really matter to people we meet."

Matt: "Chris and I were chatting after a particularly dire gig about how it takes the piss to get some sob story whining to Simon Cowell that they've always wanted to be a singer and have never been heard. If you want to play that much you'd get to the stinking dives in the middle of nowhere to be heard. You hound and nag promoters until they give you a chance. You do your bit and pay your dues. Gigging is fun but far from easy. Early sound checks, late finishes, rocky road trips, van crashes, sweats, time and money all have to coexist with your passion. There's that time old saying 'You suffer for your art' and we continue to do our thing because we love it so much."

'Forked Tongues' is out now on Buried In Smoke Records. Desert Storm play at the Wheatsheaf on Saturday 6th November. Visit www.myspace.com/experiencethestorm for more dates and to hear tracks from the album.



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DIG THE NEW BREED!

Nightshift's guide to the best new metal bands in Oxfordshire

AGNESS PIKE

Formed by former-Madamadam bandmates Martin Spear and Chris and Mick Brown, plus erstwhile Underbelly and Suitable Case For Treatment bassist Pete bastard, Agness Pike have a peerless pedigree. Their debut gig in August suggests they've lost none of their old power, Chris's huge serrated punk-metal riffs still a force of nature, while Martin remains a Mad Hatter-like host at the metal tea party.

www.myspace.com/agnesspike

BEARD OF ZEUSS

Stoner-metal protagonists of the highest order and the only local band to our knowledge who write songs about hunting wild boar on the plains of Africa. Sludgy, greasy and probably very bad for you, their rumbling, rampaging riot of riffage fuses Led Zep to Kyuss and comes with a big fat spliff hanging from its lip.

www.myspace.com/beardofzeuss

RISEN IN BLACK

A roaring, squalling distillation of thrash, death and industrial thunder, Risen In Black take in influences like In Flames, The Haunted and Metallica and dutifully crank the volume up beyond anything you might consider decent. For all their music's evil intent, there is something fantastically pure in their raging onslaught.

<http://www.myspace.com/riseninblack>

THE CRUSHING

Potential jokers in the pack, fronted as they are by former-Marconi's Voodoo panto villain Snuffy and also featuring Near Life Experience screamer Pete Bougourd on drums, their propulsive update of classic British metal is full of drama and fruity virtuosity.

www.myspace.com/thecrushingband

K-LACURA

More metalcore, this time from the south of the county from a young band really starting to turn heads locally. Alternately contemplative and technical, anthemic even on occasion, but equally able to turn on a sixpence and brew up a



TASTE MY EYES

Malevolent freakazoid hardcore metal of the sort you'd hope for and expect from any band fronted by one-time JOR frontman Ben Hollyer. TME take all the best bits of metalcore – screaming, growling, shredding their guitars and hammering beats into your skull with a jack hammer – and dump all the sappy bits. Their set at this year's Oxford Punt was stunning, revealing a band who, beneath the brutality, have serious talent and passion.

www.myspace.com/tastemyeyes

fuzzstorm, knock it out at full pelt and incite a serious moshpit. Much loved by other local metal bands, they look like being a name you'll hear a lot more of in coming months.

www.myspace.com/klacura

BLACK SKIES BURN

Formed from the ashes of grindcore faves Faith In Hate, Black Skies Burn have been off the scene for a while but are hopefully now back for good: their recent Wheatsheaf show was punishing in the extreme, a lesson in how to pile on the pressure and then keep on piling it on beyond the point of decency. Probably the local band most likely to win a fight with a tank.

www.myspace.com/blackskiesburn

THE FIERCE

Formed from the ashes of Wantage-based faves Outofinto, recent Nightshift Demo of the Month winners The Fierce live up to their name, arming their bulldozing industrial-strength rumble with hysterical hardcore spikes, switching from atmospheric, almost prog passages into virulent bettering ram thrash in monstrous fashion.

www.myspace.com/thefierceband

PROSPEKT

Epic, intricate, technical metal, Prospekt offer an unexpected mix of styles that sometimes sounds like Rush or ELP trapped in Hell's own rehearsal room with Slayer. Lee Luland is rated by many of his peers as one of the best guitarists in the area and his uniquely crafted flights of fancy take the band from the thrash gutter to a higher plane altogether.

www.myspace.com/prospektoxford

DEDLOK

Screaming thrash riffage, double kick drum salvos and guttural growling, Dedlok's uncluttered vision and proud single-mindedness have long since marked them at the head of the local pack, taking Iron Maiden's classic metal through Pantera's thrash and onwards into Discharge's hardcore punk, replete with a convincing line in hardcore swearing.

www.myspace.com/dedlokmetal

13 GAUGE

Vomit-flecked vocals and simple mid-paced riffage, 13 Gauge aren't quite fast enough to be grindcore or portentous enough to be dark-metal

but take elements of both and give them a hardcore makeover, ending up sounding like the troll from Three Billy Goats Gruff jamming with a heroin-addicted battle tank. Your gran would love them.
www.myspace.com/13Gauge

UNDERSMILE

Some serious girl rocking in a shockingly male-dominated genre, Undersmile prefer slow and spooky over fast and brutal. Imagine Linda Blair in *The Exorcist* fronting Melvins or Flipper. In a cave. At midnight. So seriously sludgy you have to wash the grime from your skin afterwards, and while they make take things very, very slowly, like an oil tanker, they're unstoppable.

www.myspace.com/undersmile

BEELZEBOZO

Formed by four-fifths of the mighty Mook, Beelzebozo play a stripped-down version of that band's classic metal, harking back to Saxon and even Blue Cheer at times and brightened up by some Screaming Lord Sutch blood and gore imagery for the live shows. It's metal played down, dirty and dumb by a bunch of deceptively clever buggers.

www.myspace.com/bozobozobozo

ANNERO

Brutal death-thrash cacophony formed by squashing all their favourite bits of Pantera, Meshuggah and Slayer together, then squeezing it extra tight with a brutal, iron fist. Pleasingly uncompromising stuff, fronted by a chap who sounds like he should be wearing a horned helmet and carrying a giant axe as he pillages villages along England's north-east coast. Grrr.

www.myspace.com/anneromusic

KOMRAD

Prog-metal? Tech-core? King Crimson get a Mike Patton makeover? Sometimes it's difficult to keep up with Komrad as they turn so many corners along their frenetic, convoluted way through each live set, rarely letting any label you wish to confer on them stick.

www.myspace.com/eduardoundingblock

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www.dressedtokill.org.uk

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www.thekinx.com

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Remember the Titans

Oxfordshire, despite its reputation for indie sounds, has produced some incredible metal bands over the years. Here we bring you our Greatest Local Metal Heroes. Ever.

photo: Johnny Moto



1. SEXTODECIMO

"If the radioactive fall-out from Chernobyl formed a band, it would sound like Sextodecimo" ran an early Nightshift eulogy to Oxford's greatest ever metal protagonists. Sextodecimo's unrelenting sludge-core was so dark, so dense, so unforgiving it went through metal and out the other side of a black hole into a whole new universe of musical pain; tracks regularly clocked in around the ten-minute mark, oppressive assaults on the senses that recalled Eyehategod, Iron Monkey and Kyuss but went beyond the call of duty on every level. The quintet, from Witney, had to be experienced live to fully appreciate their incredible power, but the band's debut EP, 'The Banshee Screams For Buffalo Meat', captures plenty of their dark art, astutely produced as it was by Sevenchurch guitarist Dave Smart and legendary Jericho Tavern and Point promoter Mac. After going into semi-hibernation in the latter part of this decade Sextodecimo finally called it a day with one final, brutal show at The Club That Cannot Be Named's 10th anniversary party earlier this year. Guitarist Roo is now in psychedelic pop outfit Fixers while bassist Humphrey and drummer Tommy formed lachrymose blues-folksters Huck & The Handsome Fee: an acceptance perhaps that after Sextodecimo they could go no further into metal's heart of darkness.

2. SEVENCHURCH 3. JOR

In 2006 *Terrorizer* magazine listed their Greatest Doom-Metal Albums of all time. And Sevenchurch were number 3, beaten only by Black Sabbath and Cathedral. Not bad for a band from Oxford who only released one album and broke up a decade previously. But then the band's legacy goes well beyond their short lifespan. 'Bleak Insight', released on Noise Records in 1993, featured an astonishing six tracks across 70 minutes, an uncompromisingly slow and bleak Gregorian form of doom metal with the crushing, intricate guitars occasionally giving way to proggy flights of fancy and topped off with Martin Spear's theatrically portentous vocals. They sounded like a Titanically morose Brian Blessed fronting a bucolic, mediaeval Black Sabbath. At half speed. On Mogadon. Sadly problems with the label, which later folded, pre-empted the band's demise but since then they have become underground metal legends.

Or JOOOOORRRRRR! to give them their proper name. JOR were the daddies of Oxford metalcore, the band who more than any defined that spirit of rock revolution that The Club That Cannot Be Named brought to the local scene, going on to inspire the likes of Coma Kai, Miazma and Shouting Myke, amongst others with their virulent blend of Slayer, Pantera, Jesus Lizard and Black Flag. This was molten stuff and from a band who were willing and able to take it out of Oxford and into the rest of the UK, sharing stages with Dead Kennedys, Hundred Reasons and Biffy Clyro before returning home to pack out local venues where sweat and occasionally blood would stream down the walls. Their only album, 'Blunt' ("Music to Hoover Hell to", we said back then) still rocks ten years after the fact and their one-off reunion gig for TCTCBN's 10th anniversary party proved that age has neither withered nor tamed them.

4. XMAS LIGHTS

Xmas Lights were, at their peak, ironically just before they split, a force for pure musical violence, a hyperactive, spasticated industrial killing machine. With lots of screaming. The screaming is important. But instead of the typical frontman screaming over noisy guitar format, here it was just one part of a vast, many-angled tapestry of metal noise where electronic drones battled with squalling, virulent guitars while trying to balance on shifting time signatures. The musical virtuosity and disparate ideas that went into Xmas Lights can't be overstated, whether it was guitarist James Gray-King's frenzied shapes or Umair Chaudhry's molten electronics. Here was a band that created symphonies for the end of days.

5. SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT

Like Xmas Lights, Suitable Case For Treatment took metal as their sonic base then by some strange alchemy twisted it into such bizarre shapes you wonder whether it even qualifies as metal in the end. But that's metal's timelessly universal appeal. It's a many-headed beast but in its heart it is always metal. Thus SC4T sometimes sounded like Tom Waits fronting Cannibal Corpse. At others they took Melvins into the Deep South for a fire and brimstone Baptist conversion, never content to get from A to B without visiting several outlying settlements along the way. Their Sabbath-inspired riffage was mighty, frontman Liam Ings-Reeves' ire was righteous and live they could be a genuinely disconcerting spectacle as they ploughed through jazz, funk, prog, hardcore and several lorry loads of kitchen sinks besides.

6. MADAMADAM

Punk and metal have long been volatile bedmates and Oxford's late-80s / early-90s favourites were the ensuing pillow-fight, evil laughter included. Before he fronted Sevenchurch, Martin Spear was the Mad Hatter-like host of Madamadam's regular bunfights, a Lydon-voiced cheerleader for metal mayhem as his band piled on the pressure somewhere between Black Sabbath and Anthrax. People regularly left Madamadam gigs in ambulances and then came back for more. Rarely have moshing and laughter gone together so well.

7. WINNEBAGO DEAL

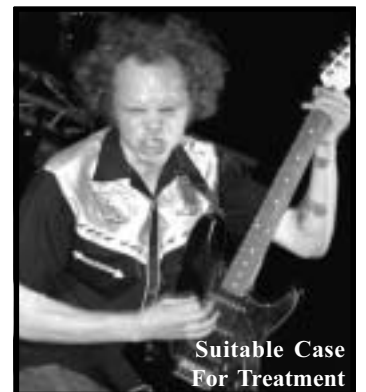
A two-man army before such things became *de rigueur*, Winnebago Deal – Ben Perrier and Ben Thomas – took metal out of the garage and onto the dusty highway, a non-stop, no-frills joyride concerned with little more than whisky and knife fights. They sounded – still sound; a new album is due at some point in the near or possibly not so near future – like Motorhead going head-to-head with Black Flag for the title of Speed Kings. Uncompromising in the extreme, the pair have never wilted or made any concession to the vagaries of fashion in their single-minded pursuit of raw, hard riffage. And whisky.

8. COMA KAI

Prime exponents of hardcore-infused nu-metal, taking System Of A Down's convoluted structures and righteous fury and mixing it with Korn's neo-brutalist approach, Abingdon's Coma Kai were the best of the bands that came up in JOR's wake. Their strength came in managing to make white-hot rage sound incredibly melodic, brilliantly captured on their 'Firekillschildren' EP, particularly songs like 'Fury' and 'Old.Skool.Reject' which might have sounded like a God-sized Gollum vomiting up his breakfast over a torrent rolling thrash riffs and blast beats.

9. MINDSURFER

Steeped in the classic sounds of NWOBHM, particularly Judas Priest, and 80s thrash, Mindsurfer were regularly found covering the likes of Metallica and Diamond Head but equally at home tackling Anti-Nowhere League's 'So What?', a regular highlight of their brutish, no-nonsense sets. Frontman Steve Phelps was like a human pitbull



onstage and when he was forced to retire from singing the band lost some of their magic. Debut album, 'The Right To Remain Violent' was a disappointment but they'll be fondly remembered for their determinedly pure-at-heart metalness.

10. FAITH IN HATE

Four scrawny long-hairs who made a racket like Carfax Tower being sucked into a giant jet engine, fronted by a giant of a bloke who looked like a butcher and sang like a herd of wildebeest being put through a mincer and tended to start his own, particularly violent, moshpits, Faith In Hate sounded like an evil mash-up of Deftones and Carcass, death meets thrash in unholy communion. Like others in this list they reformed for TCTCBN's anniversary party but without the maniac up front. They still rocked. Like bastards.



11. SOW

More unrelenting brutality from the axe of Anslay Prothero after the demise of his previous band, JOR and featuring a rotating cast of local metallers, including former-members of Days of Grace and Miazma. Heavy-duty roaring and riffery inspired by At The Gates and Meshuggah, Sow kept it simple but highly effective, distortion and aggression the keys to their hardcore-tinged sonic warfare. "Chopped-out guitar stabs that sound like machine gun fire, the band's vocals the screams of the bullet-riddled dying," said Nightshift of their 2006 Demo Of The Month.

12. UNDERBELLY

Metal and grunge. Or, as they described themselves, Munge. Which sounds like something they make budget sausages out of. In Underbelly's case, though, it was a damned heavy fusion of classic metal and the then emergent sounds of Seattle - Tad and Nirvana getting stomped on by Machine Head and with the odd ballad thrown in for good measure. For what is metal without the odd ballad? Considerably better, you say? Don't be cheeky! Softiness aside, when Underbelly rocked they rocked big time, titanium-tipped riffs providing the bedrock for James Green's growling vocals. Munge. Mmm. Eat up.

13. NEAR LIFE EXPERIENCE

Formed by erstwhile Mindsurfer riffmeister Johnny McNeil and fronted by the rabid howler monkey voice of Pete Bougourd, who also happened to be head security man at the Zodiac, NLE (contractually obliged to spell their name N3ar Lif3 Exp3ri3nc3) were a dizzying amalgam of metal genres, 80s Brit-metal riffs, raging bull thrash ferocity and pin-tight math-metal freakery. Somewhere between Pantera, Dillinger Escape Plan and Shadows Fall, they were complex, sometimes operatic but always thrillingly fast and heavy.

14. HIGH & MIGHTY

Even in a genre that appreciates longevity, High & Mighty are survivors. They seem to have been around forever and if they only play one gig a year these days, they are Oxford's metal everymen, rooted in traditional heavy rock traditions (big riffs, heroic, chest-beating choruses, bulldozing drum salvos) but keen to try their hands at each and any new variation on the theme. Hence their one and only album, released in 2000, veered from almost funk-rock to something approaching gothic punk, but always sounded like a proper old-fashioned heavy metal band.

15. BLACK CANDY

Oxford's chief contribution to late-90s post-grunge, rap-tinged nu-metal. Equal parts Rage Against The Machine, Deftones and Pearl Jam they had rage and riffage and an ability to get funky without sounding like Linkin Park, instead thundering with almost industrial zeal. In their prime they played regular riotous shows at The Club That Cannot Be Named. Highlight of their career was their pummelling final single 'Downfall', which also featured a duet with JOR's Ben Hollyer. That and provoking some seriously crowd-surfing, including a bloke in a rubber dinghy, at Truck 2000.

16. 2DIE4

Covered recently in Nightshift as part of our monthly 'Whatever Happened To...?' pieces, current Long Insiders brothers Nick and Simon Kenny began their musical lives as teenagers in this long-haired, LA-fixated soft-metal outfit and promptly got themselves signed to Hollywood label Morgan Creek. Who promptly shat all over them. But not before paying top dollar for MTV-friendly videos of them bungee-jumping off bridges while playing guitar. They toured the States and hung out with Lemmy on Sunset Strip, which is about as

authentically metal as it gets when you think about it.

17. DAYS OF GRACE

Regularly, and unfairly, labelled emo in their day, mainly because frontman Patrick Currier could actually sing and they had proper melodies and everything, Days Of Grace, formed by former-members of Black Candy, Kaowin and Slave Unit, and quickly taken under the wing of TCTCBN's Alan Day, could be technical and delicate in the same way as Tool, but they came with a hardened, bludgeoning edge. Gigs with InMe, Hell Is For Heroes and one Minute Silence earned them a strong local following before they split. Patrick went on to front Lights. Action.

18. MARCONI'S VOODOO

Pimp suits, inflatable lizards, arse-baring and a sense of theatrical ridiculousness couldn't hide Marconi's Voodoo's very serious virtuosity, particularly from versatile bassist Snuffy. Mostly instrumental, the three-piece mixed up speed-addled funk-core and big old fashioned powerchords into groove-heavy metal chugs that were always unpredictable enough to swing out on tangents. A broken effects pedal would become a grand pantomime in the Voodoo's crazy world, but these guys could seriously rock it.

19. FIVE ALARM PANIC

Banbury has always been a nurturing hothouse for metal and Five Alarm Panic were the town's biggest heroes for a while in the early-90s. They funkled like Faith No More but riffed like Slayer, infused with punk and kicked out with an abandon that regularly had Banbury's Mill venue packed out and rocking like that last Saturday night on earth. They wrote songs about giant apes with giant willies who drove cars around America and carry guns. They even had pyrotechnics. Yeah, proper metal.

20. MOOK

Like Mindsurfer, Mook were always old-school metal loyalists. Inspired by the likes of Metallica and Judas Priest, and with songs with titles like 'I Like Fuck', they rumbled, growled, barked, fuzzed and turned it up to 11 with admirable aplomb, studiously avoiding anything resembling da funk in favour of a sturdy Panzer tank assault. After their demise the core of the band re-emerged as Beelzebozo who are still going steady. And heavy.



SEXTODECIMO guitarist **Roo Bhasin** talks about the band's origins and unique sound.

"We definitely set out to be loud and heavy, we knew we wanted to be an extreme band but at the time we didn't really know how to go about it, we were just a bunch of dumb kids. We first formed the band when we were 16 or 17 but we lacked the drive or know-how to do anything constructive. We'd sit around smoking pot and listening to heavy music, dreaming about being in a heavy band, *maaaan*, but we eventually got round to recording a 3-track demo that showed promise... but we quickly lost interest. A year or so later we decided to give it another go and at the time we were listening to a lot of slow, down-tuned and aggressive bands, that at the same time had a real groove to them. Me and Humphrey started writing a bunch of riffs, to which we assigned stupid names so we could remember them. 'Bridge Over Sludgy Water' was a favourite. It usually took us about six months to write a song, partly because they were so long, and partly because we could never remember them. You could say the driving forces behind the band were extreme music and extreme excess. "We definitely polarised opinion, but there was nothing more satisfying than clearing a room. We got a kick out of playing slow, low and loud, and seeing people's confusion and disbelief made it even sweeter for us. It's hard to exist as a band like that, especially in a small town like Oxford. We shot ourselves in the foot from day one making the music that we made, cos you're never gonna have many fans, you're never gonna do many shows and there's never gonna be much opportunity. It's the nature of the beast. "Dave Smart, who produced our EP really helped mould our sound and, having done it all before with Sevenchurch, had a lot of great ideas and advice. 'Bleak Insight' is the best album from any Oxford band ever, so to have the man that wrote it helping us was a real buzz."

RELEASED

WINNEBAGO DEAL

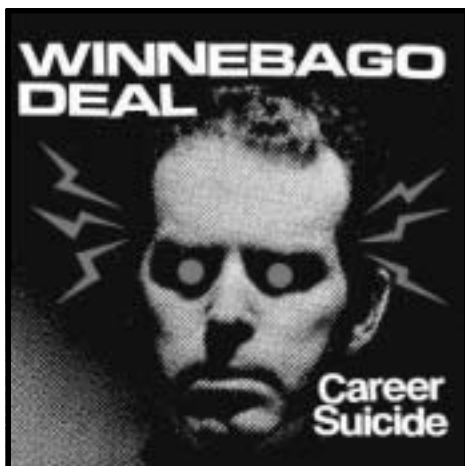
'Career Suicide'

(Cargo)

Earlier this year while reviewing The Club That Cannot Be Named's 10th anniversary party, we concluded that Winnebago Deal were the most uncompromising band Oxford has produced, because they've always stuck to their guns amid the ever-tightening spiral of changing fashion, sticking hard and fast to the twin rules of... well, hard and fast.

Hard and fast is what Winnebago Deal have always done best and 'Career Suicide' finds no need to tinker with a winning formula. Fourteen tracks in a little over half an hour tells you much of what you need to know. But by no means all. Fantastically frantic and pulverisingly full-pelted though they are, Winnebago Deal haven't got to album number four and supported everyone from Fugazi and Blood Brothers to Motörhead and Mondo Generator by being mindless thrash-merchants. 'Career Suicide' is a side-step from its predecessor, 'Flight Of The Raven', more melodic, taking a trip into glam on its title track and visiting The Damned on 'Avalanche' for a beer or ten. 'Frostbiter' and 'Can't See, Don't Care, Don't Know' are closer to the duo's earlier hellbastard hardcore attack, while 'Heart Attack In My Head' rumbles monstrously like Motörhead in battle mode.

There are tracks, like 'Tokyo Rip', where it feels Ben Perrier and Ben Thomas have been



hanging out on Sunset Strip with Hanoi Rocks or Motley Crue, but even here they're out on the street fighting off all-comers with a broken bottle and making their escape on a stolen Harley while their garage-metal compatriots are still finishing their fancy cocktails.

That the two Bens make an astonishingly full-bodied racket for a two-piece goes without saying. That they can still crank it out so remorselessly and still pen choruses as simple and catchy as "I don't give a fuck about dying" after all these years remains a genuine marvel. Some band play rock and roll. Others have it in their blood from birth. Great to have them back in action. This place has been too quiet without you, boys.

Dale Kattack

ALPHABET BACKWARDS

'Superhero EP'

(Kittywake)

Are Alphabet Backwards on some serious prescription drugs? And if not, how can they always manage to sound so damn happy even when they're consumed by wistful nostalgia or facing up to a girlfriend clearing off? "Our lips



have got all the time in the world to be together / In the blink of an eye you were gone," chirps James Hitchman with the sort of zen philosophy it takes a lifetime for Buddhist monks to achieve. Crikey, maybe he's a Moony, programmed to smile like a loon whatever the circumstances.

Anyway, suffice to say, Alphabet Backwards' new EP is as chirpy a slice of melancholic synth-spangled indie pop as you'd hope for from a band who could provoke the Easter Island statues into a hands-aloft singalong. Lead track 'Collide' reflects on the vivid colours of childhood and bouncing on trampolines in what seems to be a study of trying to hold on to youthful pleasures while growing up and would in the hands of someone like Tony Parsons end up as a sour, curmudgeonly rant but here sounds giddy and full of beans and ice cream.

Maybe it's Alphabet Backwards CDs the NHS should be giving out on prescription.

Dale Kattack

MAKATING

'Reggae Rehab'

(Own label)

There are many rock'n'roll bands in Oxford but few, if any, more rock'n'roll than Mackating. Yet Makating play reggae and have done for nearly a decade and a half. The band has survived, and is indeed now thriving after, the untimely passing of vocalist, Leroy 'Slimma' Golding in 2003.

This and living out some truly hedonistic times on and off stage and in the studio, it is not for nothing their latest album, their first in seven years, is called 'Reggae Rehab'.

'Greetings' ("we bring, to all ragamuffins") bounds in, full of their upful groove. Ferocious has taken over main mic duties and pounces all over it, his Tigger-like energy tumbling out of the speakers. Ilodica (plays *me-lodica*; get it?) is his unhinged, dready bear sidekick (think Horace Andy on a strict Special Brew and Special K diet and you get the idea.) Lorraine and Vicki are the glamorous I-tuos, adding a touch of mellow sweetness to the mix (and Lorraine gets a whole song, the ridiculously sunny 'I Believe'). Paul's psychedelic keyboards and Danny's rock steady drums fill in the mix. It's an Irie celebration, yet covers much musical ground. 'Rosehillbilly Blues' starts off with *Desperado*-style guitar from James, before launching into a raunchy groove, while the album's title track is based on an Italian folk song you might just recognise. 'Judge' is a militant roots anthem but the standout track is 'Life Resurrection', more dubby with a wonderfully slurred vocal from Ilodica.

In a local scene increasingly dominated by earnest indie kids and wholesome folkers it's refreshing to tune in to an Oxford group that – like the Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, with whom they have played on a few occasions – is unapologetically non-PC, with a rock'n'roll attitude that ensures that The Party is strong within them.

Leo Bowder

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA

'Last March Of The Acolytes'

(Free download)

A free taster for the band's new album, due early next year, and a less than gentle reminder of what we miss when The Rock go on extended hiatus. 'Last March...' is grandly proportioned but not overly ornate, propulsive rather than pretty, a powerful collision between instrumental rock and dynamic classical exertion, piano subsumed early on by a crescendo that takes up half the piece, guitar battling cello until a tension-releasing finale leaves a huge silence hanging in the room.

Truth be told, The Rock Of Travolta aren't a band best appreciated in a single number, and the forthcoming album will display their range and strength far better, but since this is a free download it's a good introduction to the band for anyone unlucky enough not to already be a convert.

Dale Kattack

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Wed 10th *Stage Industries* present...

AGNESS PIKE + K-LACURA *support*

Thu 11th *The Spin Jazz Club*...

BINKER GOLDING & ALEX HO *support*

Fri 12th *Stage Industries* present...

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + JUNE THE BAND + BETHANY WEIMERS *support*

Sat 13th

JOHN OTWAY + THE BLACK HATS (Acoustic) *support*

Sat 14th *Stage Industries* present...

VERY NICE HARRY + SECRET RIVALS + ABOVE US THE WAVES + HALF NAKED *support*

Wed 17th

THE CRUSHING + ANNERO + KOMRAD + RISEN IN BLACK *support*

Fri 19th *Stage Industries* present...

DEAD JERICHO + MESSAGE TO BEARS *support*

Sat 20th

BEELZEBOZO + CARAVAN OF WHORES *support*

Wed 24th *Stage Industries* present...

THE MARMADUKES + WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + THE NO-ONES *support*

Thu 25th *The Spin Jazz Club*...

PHIL PESKETT & THE SPIN TRIO *support*

Fri 26th *Stage Industries* present...

ALPHABET BACKWARDS + KING OF CATS + ANNA LOG *support*

Sat 27th *Stage Industries* present...

PICTUREHOUSE + KAT MARSH + POST *support*

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GIG GUIDE

MONDAY 1st

THE COLIN JOHN BAND: The Bullingdon – Classic rocking blues from the Ohio guitarist and singer, making his first Famous Monday Blues appearance in some time.

ONE NIGHT ONLY: O2 Academy – Return of the increasingly synthed-up Yorkshire rockers, coming in somewhere unholy between The Feeling and New Found Glory, who have recently recruited Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong's drummer into their ranks to make them even better than before. Their eponymous second album has just been released.

Thursday 4th

STORNOWAY:

Brookes Union

Saturday 13th

LITTLE FISH:

O2 Academy

Foals notwithstanding, Stornoway and Little Fish were Oxford's two great success stories of 2010. Stornoway signed to the peerless 4AD label and released their debut album, 'Beachcomber's Windowsill, which duly went Top 20; for their part Little Fish toured the States with Hole and the UK with Blondie before putting out their debut album, 'Baffled & Beat', on Linda Perry's Custard label. Richly deserved success for two bands who exemplify Oxford's ability to keep knocking out brilliant creative and hard-working bands. (Success that's even more richly deserved by dint of being two of the nicest groups of people you're likely to encounter). Stornoway's show at Brookes is their biggest local headline gig to date after a summer of festival appearances. They're a band who like to try something a bit different wherever they play, so expect a proper show as well as a fanatically-received homecoming party. Little Fish too are playing their biggest hometown headline show, at a venue where they've regularly shone as support act. Jules and Nez's phenomenal onstage chemistry elevates their pop-friendly garage rock to another level with energy levels set to 11, and after two years on the road, learning from the very best, they're a peerless live prospect. Two shows to savour from stars we're proud to call our own.

NOVEMBER

BIRTH CTRL Z: The Cellar – Indie, electro and dubstep sounds.

TUESDAY 2nd

SAMAMIDON + HANNAH PEEL + MATT WINKWORTH: The Jericho Tavern – Currently spearheading the latest American folk revival, Vermont singer, guitarist and fiddle player Amidon has made his reputation from revitalising traditional songs going back centuries as well as increasingly penning his own compositions. Along the way he's worked with Bjork collaborator Valgeir Sigursson, bringing a modern indie and electronic edge to murder ballads, square dance tunes and bluegrass standards. Support for tonight's Coo Promotion show comes from quirky, atmospheric folk singer Hannah Peel and eccentric cabaret-pop singer and pianist Matt Winkworth.

YANN TIERSEN: O2 Academy – A bit of high culture down the Academy tonight as French composer and multi-instrumentalist Tiersen showcases music from his new album, 'Dust Lane'. Renowned for his minimalist compositions, fusing contemporary classical music with French folk and avant garde sounds, his pieces centre on violin, piano and accordion but he also employs myriad other instruments, toys and bric a brac, drawing on a wide spectrum of influences, from Chopin and Satie to Philip Glass, Michael Nyman and Penguin Café Orchestra.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon

BARE GARAGE: The Cellar – Garage, dub and dubstep club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 3rd

DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES + MATT SAGE: The Wheatsheaf – Gutter jazz in the vein of Tom Waits from Mr Chancer, plus world-folk and 60s-inspired acoustic pop from Mr Sage.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar - Live jam session with all-comers welcome to join in with the in-house band, The Phat Sessions Collective, playing a mix of hip hop, ska, funk and Latin.

THURSDAY 4th

STORNOWAY + RACE HORSES + FOXES!:
Brookes Union – Celebratory homecoming show for the local folk-pop heroes – *see main preview*

FIGHTING WITH WIRE: The Cellar – Return of Derry's Foo Fighters-styled grunge-pop cult faves, formed by ex-Jetplane Landing guitarist Cahir O'Doherty, out on tour following support slots to Lostprophets and Biffy Clyro earlier in the year and plugging a new EP, 'Sneaky', for sale only at gigs.

LESS THAN JAKE + ZEBRAHEAD + WE ARE THE UNICORN + THIS CONTRAST KILLS:

O2 Academy – Florida's poppy ska-punk troupe return to town to coincide with their new album of TV theme covers.

PLAYER2 + THE HOODYS: The Bullingdon – Lively indie pop in the vein of Vampire Weekend from Player2.

MR FOGG + CAPAC: Phoenix Picturehouse – Local electro-pop chap Mr Fogg continues his monthly series of free shows at the Phoenix's bar, tonight playing an acoustic set on keyboard and harp, and joined by Huw Stephens-championed Liverpoolian trio Capac, mixing post-rock textures with electronic beats.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guests The Nic Meier Group.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Singers, musicians, poets and storytellers at Oxford's oldest and best open mic club.

TASTE MY EYES + K-LACURA + ANNERO + IN OCEANS: Fat Lil's Witney – Excellent local metal bill with malevolent metalcore merchants Taste My Eyes and K-Lacura lining up alongside thrash crew Annero.

JAMBOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS FINAL: The Hobgoblin, Bicester
ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
NIKKI LOY: Copa Bar, George Street

FRIDAY 5th

MIDLAKE + JOHN GRANT & JASON

LYTLE: O2 Academy – Pastoral psychedelia from the Texan stars – *see main preview*

EDWYN COLLINS: O2 Academy – A doubtless emotional show from the former-Orange Juice frontman who has turned his life around since suffering a double brain haemorrhage – *see main preview*

VATICAN CELLARS + WE AERONAUTS: The Bullingdon – Album launch gig for funereal pop duo Vatican Cellars, brought together and inspired by personal tragedy, but finding plenty of room for sweetness and sunlight in their literate, pastoral pop, which owes something to Richard Hawley and The Kinks. Expansive folky indie rocking in the vein of Arcade Fire from We Aeronauts.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + VICARS OF TWIDDLY + MARK BOSLEY BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Classic electro-pop with a 90s rave twist from Space Heroes, inspired by Kraftwerk, Numan and Baby Ford, plus fun surf-rocking from Vicars and melancholic folk-rock from Mr Bosley and band.

TALONS: The Jericho Tavern – Astonishingly intense instrumental trio, and stars of last year's Truck Festival, mixing tumultuous explosions of noise with controlled aggression in the vein of 65Daysofstatic.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon – Classic funk, soul and r'n'b every Friday.

SKYLARKIN SOUND SYSTEM: The Cellar – Soul, ska, reggae and hip hop with Count Skylarkin and DJ Derek, with a live set from



Sidewalk Doctors, formed by Pama International's Lenny Bignell, paying authentic tribute to classic Jamaican rocksteady, having previously worked with Prince Buster, The Skatalites and Toots & The Maytals.

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre – Weekly roots, dancehall and dub session.

DISCO-VERY: James Street Tavern – Disco, deep house and funky beats with Cyan and Angie every Friday.

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: Cricketers Arms – Northern soul, Motown, funk and r'n'b with Mr Rossi and Kid Swanton.

SWINDLESTOCK: The Port Mahon

SATURDAY 6th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Jericho Tavern (2pm) – Audioscope celebrates its tenth anniversary with a cast of favourite acts from previous festivals, including a headline set from krautrock legend Dieter Moebius – *see main preview*

SKA CUBANO: O2 Academy – Return of the Cuban ska and mambo party-makers, led by Top Cats' irrepressible frontman Natty Bo and mixing up traditional Cuban dance with Jamaican rocksteady and ska, a fair whack of Calypso and the spirit of classic rock'n'roll. Bring your

Friday 5th

EDWYN COLLINS: O2 Academy

That this gig is even happening is little short of a miracle. In February 2005 Edwyn Collins suffered a double brain haemorrhage. It left him unable to walk, talk, read or write. Five years on the physical effects mean he can no longer play the guitar and he suffers from aphasia, a cruel blow to such an eloquent songwriter, but incredibly the man has written and recorded a new album, 'Losing Sleep', and is back out on tour. It's testament to his personal resilience as well as the astonishing care and encouragement of his wife and manager Grace Maxwell, that he's recovered to such a degree. The new album is remarkably upbeat, a reflection of an artist reborn as well as a human being given a second chance. The core ingredients remain, inspired by punk, northern soul and the pure guitar pop he plied with Orange Juice 30 years ago. Contributors to the album include Johnny Marr and Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos, both able to repay musical debts. Because whatever has happened to Collins in recent years, his best music is peerless – Orange Juice's sublime 'Rip It Up & Start Again'; his own solo 90s hit 'A Girl Like You'. Now 50s years old he's better respected and appreciated than at any time since the early-80s and tonight, as with each and every show he plays nowadays, it's going to be emotional.



dancing shoes. And a spare pair in case you wear them out.

NOUVELLE VAGUE: O2 Academy – New wave classics and obscure gems get the bossa nova treatment. French duo Marc Collin and Olivier Libaux have spent the past few years paying their own very individual tribute to it, abetted by a constantly changing cast of exotic female singers, including, in the past Mélanie Pain and Camille Dalmais. The band's 2004 self-titled debut is still their strongest, featuring radical reworkings of Killing Joke, Depeche Mode and Dead Kennedys, as well as a superb version of Modern English's 'I Melt With You', now better known for its use in a T-Mobile ad. Since that opening gambit they've moved on to classics by Blondie, Echo & The Bunnymen and Bauhaus as well as more obscure tracks by Lords of the New Church and A Certain Ratio, amongst others. Last year's '3', found Nouvelle Vague expanding slightly to collaborate with members of the bands they were covering, including Magazine's Barry Adamson, Fun Boy Three's Terry Hall and the Bunnymen's Ian McCulloch.

3 DAFT MONKEYS: The Bullingdon – Eclectic blend of traditional English folk, Latin, Balkan and gypsy dance with dub, punk and reggae from Cornwall's rising trio.

CHARGER + SWORN TO OATH + DESERT STORM + BEARD OF ZEUSS + A HORSE CALLED WAR: The Wheatsheaf – An

overdue return to live action for doomy sludge-metal stalwarts Charger at tonight's Buried In Smoke club night, the band's furiously raw take on Sabbath-eque noise made them underground cult heroes a few years back and time has not mellowed them one iota. They seem to lose singers at the same rate Spinal Tap lost drummers but new EP, 'Disgust At The Status Quo', has their trademark aggression stamped all over it. Thrash merchants Sworn To Oath support, along with local stoner-metal heroes Desert Storm and Beard Of Zeuss.

YOOF with FICTION + CHAD VALLEY + SISSY & THE BLISTERS: The Cellar – More up and coming indie and electro at Yoof, tonight featuring a headline set from Fiction, plus textured electro-pop from Jonquil mainman Hugo Manuel's Chad Valley side-project. New indie and electro sounds afterwards from guest and resident DJs.

1000 MILE HIGHWAY + NINE-STONE COWBOY: Fat Lil's Witney – Americana from 1000 Miles, plus wryly melancholic pop from NSC.

PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy – Three clubs in one every Saturday with electro and indie at Propaganda, kitsch pop and glam at Trashy and alt.rock at Room 101.

VENTFLOW + AETHANA + ELYSIUM WAITS: The Centurion, Bicester – Jambox metal night.

CABARET CLANDESTINO: East Oxford Community Centre – Music, poetry, cabaret and circus skills with sets from local psychedelic folkies Telling The Bees, glam-folk troubadour James Bell and nihilistic pastoral poet Johnny Fluffypunk, plus club host Pete The Temp.

PAN THE MAN: Queen's Head, Horspath – Van Morrison tribute.

MOVE IT: Jack Russell, Marston
ALL MOD CONS: James Street Tavern
NIKKI LOY: The Ashton Club, Bicester
ONO PALINDROME + SPECTRES + GUNNING FOR TAMAR: The Port Mahon



Friday 5th

MIDLAKE / JOHN GRANT / JASON

LYTLE: O2 Academy

Something approaching heaven tonight for lovers of American alt.folk as Texan beardies Midlake return to town for the first time since the release of their highly-anticipated 'The Courage Of Others' album, the follow-up to cult smash 'The Trials Of Van Occupanther'. The time between the two albums seems to have seen Midlake moving further away from their Radiohead-styled rock and into full-on pastoral haziness, the harmony-drenched tributes to The Band and Crosby Stills & Nash remain but now Fairport Convention are as much a part of their gently psychedelic wide-screen folk.

Midlake have also been providing back-up for former-Czars frontman John Grant who supports them tonight. A turbulent private life has provided the singer – one possessed of a superbly intoxicating and emotive voice – with plenty of ammunition for his acclaimed new album, 'Queen Of Denmark', which heaps on the anger and self-loathing and will hopefully reap him the rewards he deserves. Completing an excellent bill is former-Granddaddy singer Jason Lytle, whose old band really set the scene for Midlake, Band Of Horses and more back in the 90s, so make sure you get there early to pay due respect to the man.

SUNDAY 7th

BRONZE: The Bullingdon – Classic rock.

SOUND OF ARROWS: The Jericho Tavern – Dreamy electro-pop with nods to Pet Shop Boys and Vangelis from the acclaimed Swedish duo.

THE MARINER'S CHILDREN + TRISTRAM + BORN BLONDE + WE THIEVES + SONNY LISTON: The Cellar – Bringing the Communion club/collective to Oxford, this joint tour between Brighton's skiffle-inflected indie folksters Mariner's Children and lovely starlit folkies Tristram, keeps up the tradition of the club in championing the best new UK folk acts, in the past including Mumford and Sons, Laura Marling and Noah and the Whale. Waterboys-influenced popsters Born Blonde join the bill alongside local acts We Thieves and Sonny Liston.

HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + BEARD OF ZEUSS + STEVE & CHRIS + PETE WATSON: Donnington Community Centre – Free acoustic music session, with bluegrass and Americana from Headington Hillbillies.



Saturday 6th / Saturday 20th

AUDIOSCOPE:

The Jericho Tavern

Annual mini-fest Audioscope, which raises money for homeless charity Shelter, celebrates its tenth anniversary this year with three shows at the Tavern. Post-punk legends Wire are previewed separately but the first of the month's gigs is an all-day event celebrating those ten years of bringing some of the best leftfield and underground acts to town with a selection of the organisers' faves. Headlining is Krautrock legend **Dieter Moebius** who played with Cluster and Harmonia as well as collaborating with Eno. Joining him will be post-hardcore-tinged math-rockers **Billy Mahonie**, a debut show from **Rome Pays Off**, featuring former-Rothko members, trippy krautrock-inspired Julian Cope faves **Qaa**, narcotic groovers **Oscillations** and a great quintet of local bands that includes jazz'n'decker brutalists **Nought**, symphonic electro-rockers **The Rock Of Travolta**, sludge-blues ogres **Mephisto Grande**, goth-tinged indie outfit **The Half Rabbits** and a one-off reformation for electro-heavy post-rockers **Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element**.

The show on the 20th sees a headline set by Anticon Records' **SJ Esau**, with his unique blend of electronica, hip hop and experimental indie pop. Norwich's nu-gaze lovelies **Sennen** join the bill alongside **Ice Sea Dead People**, mixing seriously hardcore noise with a delicious melodic edge, new wave psychedelic outfit **Epic45**, Elysian Quartet's experimental cellist **Laura Moody**, Kranky Records' **Felix** and local riff-heavy rock duo **Phantom Theory**. A good few more besides these and both events provide a full day's portion of your necessary leftfield sounds. And of course all in a good cause. One that, given the government's plans for benefit cuts, is set to have its work cut out even more in the coming years. Visit www.audioscope.co.uk for full line-up details.

MONDAY 8th

IMOGEN HEAP: O2 Academy – A return to the Academy for the kooky folk singer after her sold-out show here in February. Still a cult concern, Heap is popular enough to pack out big venues regularly, her mad-woman-down-the-street ditziness belying a wayward pop sensibility that at times recalls Laurie Anderson, Cat Power and Tori Amos.

KENT DUCHAINE: The Bullingdon – Return of the long-time blues favourite Duchaine, singer and slide guitarist out of Minnesota, playing traditional Delta blues in the style of Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson and Lightnin' Hopkins on his trusted Leadbessy steel guitar.

TUESDAY 9th

FENECH SOLER: The Jericho Tavern – Northamptonshire's rising electro-pop starlets out on tour to promote their debut album, mixing hefty doses of club-friendly funk and house into their hook-heavy pop in a Das Pop and Cut Copy vein, while frontman Ben Duffy has recently worked with Groove Armada.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, darkwave and EBM club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 10th

WIRE: The Jericho Tavern – The punk and post-punk legends play their first Oxford show in almost 30 years as part of Audioscope – see *main preview*

HAUSCHKA + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE + LIBRARY TAPES: St Michael's at the Northgate Church – Pastoral, rhythmic contemporary classical music in the lineage of

Vaughan-Williams and Satie, with electronic and acoustic pop undercurrents from German composer and pianist Hauschka at tonight's Pindrop Performance show. Suitably unsuitable support comes from improvisational experimental group Braindead Collective, plus Sweden's experimental ambient soundscapist Library Tapes. All within the fittingly atmospheric setting of Oxford's oldest building.

AGNESS PIKE + K-LACURA: The Wheatsheaf – A Moshka metal night, with metalcore mavericks Agness Pike bringing the serrated riffs, with up and coming heavyweights K-Lacura in support.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass and dubstep.

THE YARNS: Fat Lil's Witney – Sweet-natured indie pop.

THURSDAY 11th

M.I.A: O2 Academy – Gig of the month from the multi-talented singer – see *main preview*

THE KILL CITY SAINTS + THE INSULT: The Bullingdon

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guest musicians Binker Golding and Alex Ho.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

MASK OF JUDAS + REIGN UPON US + SENTURIA: The Hobgoblin, Bicester –

Jambox metal night featuring Chichester's thrash-core outfit Mask of Judas and Bicester's own black-hearted thrash merchants Reign Upon Us.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: Prince Of Wales, Iffley – Blues rock.

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar – 2-step, garage, deep house and disco.

ROCK CLUB: Fat Lil's Witney

FRIDAY 12th

AKALA: O2 Academy – Leading the current wave of politicised Brit rappers, the Camden rhymers – and, lest we forget, younger brother of Ms Dynamite – looks towards Gil Scott Heron for inspiration as he explores racism, child poverty and more, while cramming Shakespeare and sampling Siouxsie & The Banshees. His mission to use hip hop as an educational tool might be an old one but it's one that's sadly rare in modern rap and thus is all the more welcome.

NINE-STONE COWBOY + BEAUX DEGALS + ZEM + THE NEW MOGMATIC: The

Bullingdon – Bitter-sweet pocket pop symphonies with a wry, through-a-glass-darkly lyricism from doomed romantics Nine-Stone Cowboy.

SHAKER HEIGHTS + JUNE + BETHANY WEIMERS: The Wheatsheaf – Rootsy indie pop and Americana from Shaker Heights, plus indie rocking from June and darkly-crafted acoustic pop from Bethany Weimers.

THE BLOOD ARM: The Jericho Tavern – Stomping blues and soul rocking from LA's much-touted cult heroes Blood Arm, who have supported everyone from Franz Ferdinand and Maximo Park to Killers and Hot Hot Heat along the way.

THE EPSTEIN: Rapture, Witney (6pm) – Instore show at Oxfordshire's sole remaining

Wednesday 10th

WIRE:

The Jericho Tavern

Audioscope has pulled some serious tricks out of its bag over the years – Damo Suzuki, Four Tet, Rother & Möebius – and this time they might just have surpassed themselves. Wire emerged from punk's revolution pool but were always beyond the nihilistic rage of the Pistols et al, and continued to mutate and innovate at every turn. The quartet's opening gambit, 'Pink Flag', had all the energy of punk but was more ambitious and eclectic than its contemporaries and over the next couple of albums, 'Chairs Missing' and '154', Wire became increasingly eclectic while keeping that raw, stripped-down edge. Disbanding in 1980 they reformed in the late-80s with a poppier sound for 'A Bell Is A Cup (Until It Is Struck)' but have become increasingly experimental over the years. Original guitarist Bruce Gilbert has now apparently departed for good, but frontman Colin Newman, bassist Graham Lewis and drummer Robert Gotobed still remain from the original line-up and if you can judge a band on those they inspired, Wire have few equals: REM, The Cure and The Manic Street Preachers are huge fans, while more recently Bloc Party, Franz Ferdinand and Futureheads have quoted them as a chief influence. Across the Atlantic Big Black and Minor Threat took up arms after hearing Wire. Just how tonight's show will pan out is anyone's guess; Wire are notoriously anti-nostalgia, so there'll be no greatest hits set, but to see such a genuinely legendary band in such intimate confines is something simply not to be missed. And just to make the evening *even better*, no-wave nosiemakers Teeth Of The Sea, and heavyweight krautrockers Einstellung support.



independent music store, from the local alt.country faves, launching their new single.

JOOLS HOLLAND: The New Theatre – The honky tonk geezer brings his inclusive jazz, blues, soul and rock'n'roll show back to the new Theatre.

JAGGY EDGES + THE SHAPES + UNION CHAIN: The Port Mahon – Acoustic folk-rock in the vein of Peter Gabriel from local duo Jaggy Edges.

BON GIOVI: Fat Lil's Witney – Bon Jovi tribute.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Broad Face, Abingdon

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

DISCO-VERY: James Street Tavern

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin dance, Balkan beats, world breaks and nu-jazz club night with a live set from Delation Sound, playing a mix of salsa, rumba, funk and samba.

SATURDAY 13th

LITTLE FISH: O2 Academy – The local garage-rock heroes play their biggest Oxford headline show to date – *see main preview*

STATUS QUO: The New Theatre – As is increasingly traditional at this time of year Ver Quo bring their boogie down production back to town, playing hits from their vast back catalogue as well as songs from their more recent albums.

JOHN OTWAY + BLACK HATS ACOUSTIC: The Wheatsheaf – If Status Quo, also playing town tonight, are the most successful UK singles band of all time, here's one of the least. Self-styled clown prince of pop Otway has been playing on his one-hit-blunder loser credentials since the late-70s, even managing to notch up a second hit single to mark the anniversary of his first, and all down to his astonishingly fanatical following who have sustained him through all these years. And don't let that self-consciously underachieving persona fool you; if you've yet to see John Otway live, make the effort – he's a consummate entertainer, a genuine nutcase and more fun than any of the 'stars' you'll see on telly tonight.

HOLD YOUR HORSE IS + SPRING OFFENSIVE + IDIOSYNC + PHANTOM THEORY: The Port Mahon – Local alt.rock starlets Spring Offensive continue their series of gigs inviting bands they've played with around the country back to Oxford. Tonight's guests are Hella-inspired angular post-hardcore types Hold Your Horse Is. Spring Offensive themselves provide a folky, occasionally proggy take on Jonquil and Youthmovies-inspired rock, while heavyweight post-punk hardcore duo Phantom Theory crank up the volume.

GREEN ONIONS: Fat Lil's Witney – Blues Brothers tribute.

PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

THE LIGHT DIVIDED + SIX BULLET

CHAMBER + WHERE'S BILLY + RISKY HEROES + BONE IDOL: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox rock and metal night.

HONEYTHIEF: Baby Love – 80s, 90 and noughties indie, pop and electro in aid of Amnesty International.

ALL MOD CONS: The Duke, St.Clement's BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – Hip hop, ska, reggae, drum&bass and dub with Only Joe and Fridge & Bungle.

SUNDAY 14th

ELIOT MINOR ACOUSTIC: O2 Academy – At least it'll be quieter.

VERY NICE HARRY + SECRET RIVALS + ABOVE US THE WAVES + HALF NAKED: The Wheatsheaf – Quadruple bill of indie rock.
DEAD JERICHO + YELLOW FEVER + THE VIBE + BROKEN BEDSTEADS + TWIST: The Regal – Moddish post-punkers Dead Jerichos and Foals-inspired indie funkies The Vibe are amongst the bill of up and coming local acts getting a chance to play the elegantly expansive Regal.
SUNDAY ROAST: The Cellar – Rock'n'roll, swing and folk night with live acts tbc.

MONDAY 15th

JOANNE SHAW-TAYLOR BAND: The Bullingdon – Another chance to see the rising UK blues star, currently working to do for blues what Duffy has done for soul, matching the American old-timers with a laid-back and assured style, coming on like a young, female cross between Stevie Ray Vaughan, Bonnie Raitt and Dusty Springfield, having been playing live around her native Black Country venues since the age of 14 before being discovered by Eurhythms' Dave Stewart and consequently touring in a supergroup made up of him, Candy Dulpher, Jimmy Cliff and Mudbone Cooper.

BEETROOT JAM: The Port Mahon – Open jam session and live bands.

TUESDAY 16th

THE DIVINE COMEDY: O2 Academy – Neil Hannon keeps on keeping on, flush with the success of 'Bang Goes The Knighthood (his tenth album) earlier this year, his orchestral chamber-pop now a more earnest and lyrically darker beast than his wry 90s hits.

LOSTBOY AKA JIM KERR: O2 Academy – The former-Simple Minds frontman rides into town a month after his erstwhile drummer and bassist played this same venue, tonight playing material from his new album as well as reworked versions of old Simple Minds faves.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon STARS MITH: The Jericho Tavern – Epic synth-scapes and electro-disco from the London-based producer-turned-performer Fin Dow-Smith, who has previously remixed Katy Perry, Little Boots, Passion Pit and Marina & The Diamonds, amongst others.

BARE GARAGE: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 17th

THE CRUSHING + ANNERO + KOMRAD + RISEN IN BLACK: The Wheatsheaf – More metal majesty tonight with propulsive NWOBHM-influenced types The Crushing bringing their trademark virtuosity to the party, plus hardcore thrash merchants Annero, technical prog-core types Komrad and super-heavyweight thrash from RiB.

THE CORAL: O2 Academy – The recently downsized country-tinged psychedelic Wirral outfit head out on the road to plug recent album, 'The Butterfly House', one of their best to date and perhaps sounding more relevant than ever with the success of similarly arcane songsmiths like Fleet Foxes.



Thursday 11th

M.I.A.: O2 Academy

Oh yes. Yes indeed. It's difficult to explain just how excited we got when we saw M.I.A was playing in town, but suffice to say plenty of crockery got smashed in the ensuing melee. After causing a serious stir with her debut album, 'Arula', she then surpassed herself with its 2007 follow-up 'Kala', one of the most inventive albums of recent years, and its attendant hit single, 'Paper Planes', a genuine classic, and one of the best singles of the past decade. And so, having named those first two albums after her parents, her third is sort-of named after herself, though obliquely titled 'MAYDAY' just to bugger up any Google searching. Google being funded by the CIA, according to the woman born Mathangi 'Maya' Arulpragasam. Her music may be a playful amalgam of hip hop, dancehall, punk, electronia and pop, fusing together world styles that range from South America, through Africa to India and back to New York and London, but lyrically M.I.A. is deadly serious. The daughter of a Tamil separatist, her childhood was seriously affected by political persecution and she's still listed as a terrorist sympathiser by the Sri Lankan government. That aside she is also one of the most visionary music makers on the planet with an imagination and attitude that few can even start to match. That she's also an accomplished artist, film maker and fashion designer as well running her own N.E.E.T. record label, simply confirms her importance in modern culture (she was recently included in Time Magazine's Top 100 most influential people on the planet). We could go on and on about just how great we think she is, but then we'd end up looking like the sort of mad people you avoid eye contact with at bus stops, so we'll quietly go and listen to her superb, Suicide-sampling 'Born Free' and try and glue these plates back together.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar – Second birthday bash for the live jam club, featuring in-house band The Phat Sessions Collective, plus DJ Fu.

Records, CDs and DVD Fair

OXFORD TOWNHALL

SUNDAY 5th December
10am-4pm

ROCK-POP-DANCE-GOLDEN OLDIES-INDIE-SOUL-TECHNO-HIP-HOP-JAZZ-LATIN-REGGAE-DRUM&BASS-GARAGE—R&B-DISCO-1950s-2000s. Brand new back catalogue CDs £4 - £7



Thursday 18th

BELLOWHEAD:

The Regal

An unprecedented four BBC Folk Awards for Best Live Act tells you exactly what you need to know about Bellowhead, but really you have to actually experience them in the flesh to realise why such plaudits are so well deserved. The eleven-strong folk big band, formed by Jon Boden and John Spiers, who debuted at the 2004 Oxford Folk Festival, really are an unparalleled live experience, as anyone who caught them at this summer's Truck Festival will testify. They simply blew everyone else on the main stage away with a set that was a perfect mix of astounding virtuosity, showmanship and FUN. While their starting point is taking old, sometimes ancient, folk dance tunes and kicking them into the 21st Century, the manner in which they revitalise and reinvent their core material is nothing short of astonishing, whether it's 'New York Girls' or 'Amsterdam'. The collective have been wowing audiences at festivals since their inception, from WOMAD to Cambridge, able to whip a crowd of any size into a frenzy, but indoors their impact is doubled. They've just put out their third album, 'Hedonism', and celebrated its release by brewing their own ale of the same name, and with a special real ale bar promised for tonight's gig, it'll be time to drink deep and party hard.

THURSDAY 18th

KLAXONS: O2 Academy – Difficult second album time for the indie-dance heroes – *see main preview*

BELLOWHEAD: The Regal – The party starts here as the best live folk band around come to town – *see main preview*

ELLEN & THE ESCAPADES + UTE + THE

YARNS: The Bullingdon – Great, sweet-natured folk-pop from Leeds' Escapades at tonight's Everyday Folk club night. Taking inspiration from Joni Mitchell and Fleetwood Mac, they've been favourably compared to Mumford and Sons and should appeal to that band's ever-expanding fanbase. Ute, too, are on an upward trajectory, managing the difficult task of combining thoughtful, spacious melodies with an ability to seriously rock out when duty calls. Fluffy jangle pop outfit The Yarns complete an excellent bill.

RINOA + WHILE SHE SLEEPS: The Cellar – Alternately brooding and cathartic post-rock and hardcore from Essex's Rinoa, out on a farewell tour, with support from velocity metalcore outfit While She Sleeps.

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + PHANTOM THEORY + BLACK HATS + DEER

CHICAGO: Fat Lil's Witney – Great local bill with intricately expansive stars The Winchell

Riots drawing on Snow Patrol and Sigur Ros to inform their pristine pop sound. Hardcore noise and classic rock riffery from Phantom Theory and feisty moddish post-punk from Black Hats in support.

CRUDE MEASURE + IZZISTONE + TYGER STRYKE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock and metal night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

UNPLUGGED SESSION: The Duke's Cut – New monthly unplugged bands night.

FRIDAY 19th

JONQUIL: The Jericho Tavern – The local experimental pop outfit return with their new line-up – *see main preview*

DREADZONE + SHE IS DANGER: O2

Academy – That most peculiarly English of reggae bands returns to town, mixing roots sounds and dub with a folky feel, trance and breakbeats.

After almost 20 years on the road, half a dozen albums and countless festival appearances their appeal remains as a great dance band, fifteen years on from their classic 'Second Light' album.

DEAD JERICHO + EMPTY VESSELS + DIAL

F FOR FRANKENSTEIN: The Wheatsheaf – EP launch gig for young Drayton trio Dead Jerichos, who have lit up the local scene this year with their militantly funk-ed-up mod-pop, an uptight and ready for a scrap blend of Jam-like post-punk, Gang of Four grooves and Cure-like sense of melody. They've also earned a reputation as one of the hardest-working bands in Oxford, playing anywhere and everywhere, and further success is well due to them next year. Joining them at tonight's show are anthemic psychedelic blues-rockers Empty Vessels, who take inspiration from the likes of Blue Cheer, Cream and Hendrix, plus sparkling punk-pop outfit Dial F, mixing grunge noise onto tightly-wound post-hardcore to irresistible effect.

THE BIG TEN INCH: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin's monthly rock'n'roll, r'n'b, swing and jump blues club night, including a live set from Derriere, playing old school rock'n'roll, vintage soul and rockabilly.

DRESSED TO KILL: Fat Lil's Witney – Tribute to Kiss.

BROTHERS WELSH + PAPA JULES +

BRANCH IMMERSION: The Port Mahon – Spangly, math-tinged indie from former-Collisions and Consequences chaps Brothers Welsh at tonight's Daisy Rogers club night.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

DISCO-VERY: James Street Tavern

SATURDAY 20th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Jericho Tavern (2pm) – Shoegaze heroes Sennen headline the third of this month's Audioscope shows – *see main preview*

BEELZEBOZO + CARAVAN OF WHORES:

The Wheatsheaf – Grandly-proportioned traditional metal and thrash from Beelzebozo, plus heavyweight stoner-core types Caravan of Whores.

COMPLETE STONE ROSES + KINGS OF LYON: O2 Academy – Double dose of tribute bands.

PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

FOUR MORE FACES + INFLATABLES:

Kidlington FC – Mod rock from Four More Faces, ska, soul and reggae classics from Inflatables, plus a northern soul sound system.

GREEN ONIONS: Folly Bridge Inn – Blues Brothers tribute.

REPLICA: Fat Lil's Witney – Classic rock covers.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: Bear & Ragged Staff, Cumnor – Psychedelic blues and swamp-rock from the local faves.

MOVE IT: Didcot Labour Club

ALL MOD CONS: James Street Tavern

THE ROD CRISP BAND + STEAMROLLER:

The Cellar – A trip back in time tonight at the Cellar with one-time Falling Leaves chap Rod Crisp returning to his old stamping ground for the first time with his seven-piece soul and blues-rock outfit. His drummer back in those days was one Larry Reddington, who went on to form blues-rock heavyweights Steamroller in the 70s. Now reformed they join tonight's bill, while local music historian and DJ Trevor Hayward will be spinning suitably period sounds.

SUNDAY 21st

NIKKI LOY: The Fishes, North Hinksey

Thursday 18th

KLAXONS:

O2 Academy

Seemingly intent on following MGMT's How To Lose Friends And Alienate People approach to their second album, Klaxons probably deserve some credit for not simply hacking out a quickly-assembled successor to the Mercury prize-winning debut 'Myths Of The Near Future', but that's as far as it goes. The problematic gestation for new album 'Surfing The Void' has included sacking two producers, including Tony Visconti, and ditching a session with Simian Mobile Disco's James Ford, before bizarrely plumping for Ross Robinson as recording helmsman. Robinson is better known for his work with Korn and Slipknot and it seems Klaxons have now ditched the electronics and pop sensibilities that spawned indie disco anthems like 'Gravity's Rainbow' and 'Golden Skans' in favour of chunky bass lines and churning hard rock riffs. Of course the band were always more of a straightforward indie rock band than their nu-rave tag suggested, and not a particularly great live proposition at the best of times, but with even their hardcore fanbase set to be alienated by this change of tack, you wonder where next for a band whose adherence to the KLF manual of japery made them fun interviewees if nothing else. Recent press outings suggest ingestion of some seriously exotic hallucinogens has led to a bit of spiritual awakening but that's failed to translate into wondrous new psychedelic sounds.



GENTLEMEN'S DUB CLUB: The Cellar

MONDAY 22nd

65DAYSOFSTATIC + KONG +

COLOURED'S: O2 Academy – After their awe-inspiring show at Truck this summer, Sheffield's noise terrorists bring their own particular form of musical punishment back to the Academy, doing loud to an heroic degree, meshing post-rock, blinding hardcore and hip hop beats into something cinematic, brutal and elegant. Metallic Fugazi-meets-Shellac virulence from Manchester's Kong in support, plus local electro-crazies Coloureds.

THE MATT SCHOFIELD TRIO: The

Bullington – British blues guitarist who started his career playing with Lee Sankey and Dana Gillespie, as well as the Lester Butler Tribute Band, before going out on the road with his own band, playing blues and funky jazz, inspired by BB King, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Albert Collins

TUESDAY 23rd

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullington

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 24th

ATHLETE: O2 Academy – The hitmaking indie softies return after their last sold-out show here last year.

PAUL SMITH: The Jericho Tavern

THE MARMADUKES + WELCOME TO

PEEPWORLD + THE NO-ONES: The

Wheatsheaf – Alt.country rocking from Marmadukes at tonight's Moshka club night, alongside sweet-natured acoustic folk-pop outfit Welcome To Peepworld.

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

FREE RANGE: The Cellar

THURSDAY 25th

SAFETY FIRE + TASTE MY EYES +

GALLEONS + PROSPEKT: The Bullington – Skeletor Promotions metal night with London's prog-metallers Safety Fire headlining. Support comes from Rabid metalcore tyrants Taste My Eyes, Nottingham's chaotic math-core merchants Galleons and rising local talents Prospekt.

JOE BROOKS: O2 Academy – Southampton's apparent "Myspace sensation" tours his new album, 'I'd Rather Slice My Own Eyeballs Open With A Spoon Than Endure One More Second Of This Soul-Destroying Sub-James Blunt Fart Gas'.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Guest musician Phil Peskett plays with the in-house Spin Trio.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

DEER CHICAGO: The Cellar – EP launch gig for the local indie types.

DR SLAGGLEBERRY: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Return to local live action for Chinnor's math-core monsters.

IN THE POCKET: Fat Lil's Witney – Indie bands night.

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

ECLECTICITY: The Cellar

FRIDAY 26th

ALPHABET BACKWARDS + KING OF CATS + ANNA LOG: The Wheatsheaf – The local

sunshiny synth-popping indie faves launch their new single.

DRY THE RIVER: The Jericho Tavern – Gorgeous, ethereal alt.folk from Dry The River, finding a middle ground between The Low Anthem and Noah & The Whale.

BILLY PURE: Fat Lil's Witney – Stomping country and folk-rock from the Charlbury faves.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullington

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

DISCO-VERY: James Street Tavern

HQ: The Cellar

SATURDAY 27th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES WITH

PICTUREHOUSE + KAT MARSH + POST:

The Wheatsheaf – Another goodly mixed bill at GTI, with glitchy electro-acoustic beat-driven pop from Picturehouse, sassy blues, soul and jazz from loop-pedal aficionado Kat Marsh, plus the difficult-to-find-anything-out-about Post.

ABSOLUTE BOWIE: O2 Academy – Tribute to the Thin White Duke.

PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

TASTE MY EYES + PROSPEKT + DEDLOK + DESERT STORM: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Excellent night of local metal at Jambox's regular session. Virulent metalcore from Taste My Eyes, technical prog-metal from Prospekt, hardcore thrash from Dedlok and bluesy stoner-metal from this month's Nightshift cover stars Desert Storm.

QUEEN OF CLUBS: Baby Simple – Music and cabaret with style at Queen of Clubs, featuring a live set from London's country-ska outfit Pennyblack Remedy, award-winning burlesque artist Kiki Kaboom, plus magicians, vintage arcade games and DJs playing gypsy dance and more.

CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED + ULYSSES STORM: The Cellar – Rough-hewn rock'n'soul of a 70s-style vintage from Charly Coombes.

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

TUESDAY NIGHT PROJECT + TRIDEM + REFUGEES OF CULTURE: Folly Bridge Inn – Heavy rock, grunge and punk from ex-Hangman's Joe types Tuesday Night Project, supported by jazz, ska, punk and blues fusion outfit Tridem.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Crawley Inn, Witney

ALL MOD CONS: The Duke, St.Clement's

SUNDAY 28th

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's Witney (3pm) – All-day open jam session.

SUNDAY ROAST: The Cellar

MONDAY 29th

HEAVEN 17: O2 Academy – The 80s synth-pop pioneers are currently riding a wave of renewed critical appraisal, both for their influence on the current crop of electro acts but also their



Friday 19th

JONQUIL:

The Jericho Tavern

Despite their apparent lack of activity on the local gigging front, it's been a busy old year for Jonquil. They spent the early part of it on tour with old chums Foals; Jody and Kit left the band to form Trophy Wife and they've recently signed a new deal with New York's Dovecote Records, the first fruits of which will be a download-only album later this year followed by a full vinyl release in the new year. Meanwhile frontman Hugo has been busy with his solo electronic side-project Chad Valley, including sets at Truck and OX4 Festivals. But tonight finds the band back on home ground and headlining. For those unfamiliar with one of Oxford's most eclectic and esoteric musical talents, Jonquil are a band that spread their wings wide, from rousing folk shanties, to lysergic psychedelic pop and onwards to experimental electronic pop and post-rock. Their mix of bucolic tranquillity and uneasy menace make them masters of a peculiar kind of ambient pop and whichever direction the new album takes them, it'll be a journey worth taking with them.

successful BBC collaboration with La Roux. From founding the original Human League, to their era-defining 'Penthouse & Pavement' album, Martin Ware and Ian Craig Marsh, along with singer Glenn Gregory, brought a sense of soul to previously austere electronic pop and hit the charts with singles like 'Temptation' and 'Come Live With Me', although it was the classic 'We Don't Need This Fascist Groove Thang' that defines them. Only Gregory and Ware remain from the original line-up but the old hits will doubtless be out in force.

CONNIE LUSH & BLUES SHOUTER: The Bullington – Five-time winner of Best UK Female Blues Singer, Connie Lush returns to the Famous Monday Blues with her powerful singing style taking in traditional blues, rock, jazz and soul.

TUESDAY 30th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullington

BARE GARAGE: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

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OX4

Various venues

Throughout the afternoon, passers-by are enticed up to the doorway of Cafe Tarifa by the music the Oxford Folk Festival has booked, only to turn away after discovering the £5 entry fee, yet the vast majority of those who have spent twenty quid on an OX4 wristband don't venture out to see anything until the sun has set. Somewhere in this paradox is the promoter's eternal frustration, and the problem couched at the heart of OX4. You can go on all you like about "Oxford's Creative Quarter" and musical diversity, but whilst this festival may superficially resemble The Punt, OX4 is more like a touring gig writ large: there are a handful of big acts (all from outside the county, if not the country), and the rest of the multifaceted day is like one long local support act that nobody goes to see. We visit the open mike at the new INevents space, to find the host begging for participants – it seems a musical community, like music itself, just can't be forced.

But good music there is, and it's OX4's secret victory that all the best

acts we see are homegrown. The Folk Festival stage is strong, with highlights from Bellowhead's **John Spiers**, and **Huffenpuff**, a duo of accordion and soprano sax/flute, which blithely skips through the glade of musical history grabbing fragments of Breton, klezmer and jazz like so many falling blossoms. Outside the Bullingdon **Horns Of Plenty** are blowing their hearts out in their usual noisy manner. No-one invited them, they just turned up. Maybe this is the start of an OX4 festival fringe.

Hreda build intricate yet reserved instrumentals that are full of delicate mystery, and who construct their arrangements with clockwork precision when most post-rockers rely on sketchy dynamics. **The Winchell Riots**, meanwhile, seem surprisingly rejuvenated: more outward-looking and passionate than expected, they seem to have found a new voice, with an urgency and punch replacing a tendency to towards introspection and self-absorption.

Despite taking far longer to set up

than one man with a keyboard has any right, **Chad Valley** makes a quietly euphoric music that isn't far from late-80s Scritti Politti or a sun-bleached Beloved and once you've forgiven the fact that the vocal sounds like Tony Hadley with hiccoughs, the set is strong.

Some days it feels as though every band in the world can be defined with reference to The Beach Boys. In that sense **Fixers** fall somewhere between the approaches of Animal Collective and The High Llamas, but more importantly they play the set of the day. The smooth, AM sound beneath the soaring falsetto serenades is as much Dennis Wilson as it is Brian, and intrigues those of us who feel that 'Surf's Up' is at least as good as 'Pet Sounds'. The pastel-tinted songs are also dusted with mid-80s synth tones and Phil Spector drum patterns, yet manage to retain a cohesive and individual air.

Fixers are proof that music can be retro and still feel fresh, but the lesson has been lost on most of the larger acts. **Everything Everything**

offer a stilted ersatz funk that would make Arthur Russell spin in his tragically early grave, and **Glitches** are the same but worse, a Wanky Goes To Hollywood melange of syn drums, stupid hair and ineffectual yelping. Jesus, we love the 80s and these two acts are making us sound like we write for Proper Music Pub Rock Weekly by their sheer lack of vision.

More positively, **Dog Is Dead** are a tight band with some decent tunes, if you can battle past the fact they sound like Level 42, and **Willy Mason** is impressive in holding a large audience with just an acoustic and some slow paeans, classic but not retro, acknowledging influences without aping them and standing as an example of how true talent will always find its own voice.

More reference grabbing from **Abe Vigoda**, who make a passable swipe at Talking Heads artfunk and Devo japey without having the character to equal either. **Someone Still Loves You, Boris Yeltsin**, from Missouri, fondly recall the days of the 60s beat group, summery, delicate and unassuming, their songs meander pleasantly enough but lack much in the way of structure. South London's **Breton**, meanwhile, are another shining light of the day, sophisticated but not showy, their music is multi-layered and complex, with elements of dubstep and post-rock. Their slower material is where the electronic percussion and keyboards really take flight, while their expending line-up, including video work under the name BretonLABS, makes them a band to watch out for.

The hipster homogeneity of so many of the name acts, with influences stretching from 'Now 5' to 'Now 8', takes the edge off the event, but the gems are there for the dedicated. Our final act is the excellent **Mr Shadow**, for whom half the room sadly leaves within minutes, but who energises the remainder with pure expertise, originality and intelligence. As someone who has lived in London, China and Oxford, he could tell you that good musicians are united by hard graft and talent, not their postcode.

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DEDLOK / K-LACURA / VISION FALL / BLACK SKIES BURN

The Wheatsheaf

Tonight's Buried In Smoke gig showcases four local metal bands, two of whom have recently returned to action after a long lay-off.

The first of these is Black Skies Burn, who we haven't seen since the Oxford Punt in 2008. Time off hasn't mellowed them one bit and, as you'd expect of a band formed from the ashes of Faith In Hate, they're brutal in the extreme. Singer Simon Manion looks like he wrestles grizzly bears for a living and growls and roars like a man who's just been genetically spliced with a jet engine. They're gloriously relentless, a virulent blend of Napalm Death, Meshuggah and Slayer, even finishing their set with a one-second Napalm Death cover and if they're going to stick around for a while now the local scene will be a better, more dangerous place for it.

After that Vision Fall could end up sounding a bit, well, wimpy, but it's to their credit they still shine, wiry frontman Ricky Taylow belying his size with a roar of Uruk-hai proportions while the band come out of the blocks at full pelt and never let up the pace, a synchronised wall of thrash riffage delivered with studious intensity.

Somewhere at their heart they have an epic sense of melody but at their best they're simply hellish in intent and execution and it's a shame tonight is their penultimate gig.

K-Lacura's recent demo was deceptive, failing to prepare us for their far more ferocious live show. Escaping from a muffled, disappointing start to their set they build and build, tight and angular,



D. dllok photo: Johnny Moto

their songs given variety by more considered moments. Like Vision Fall, though, they're best keeping it brutally simple and by the end of their set a fair proportion of the crowd is up on stage with them adding to the racket.

Dedlok are the second of tonight's returning heroes, back with a new line-up but undiminished in their mission to keep it raw and seriously heavy. Of all tonight's bands they look the most likely to be found pillaging villages from their

long boats and worshipping Odin but their sound is the most nuanced of the night, classic thrash interspersed with old-school Brit-metal riffs and an aggression that owes as much to hardcore punk. From a moody intro, they quickly gather speed and mass and by the time they're at their peak they sound like a monstrous mash-up of Slayer and Boltthrower. And simply being able to type the name Boltthrower makes us very happy indeed.

Dale Kattack

CATE LE BON

O2 Academy

Cate le Bon and her band are having a laugh tonight. They laugh as they squeeze awkwardly past each other in their tiny corner of the stage and giggle like kids when the toy keyboard that's perched on its rack collapses to the floor halfway through a song. You'd like to think that in years to come, when they're headlining venues this size, with all the space and fancy equipment they can dream of, they'll be able to look back and laugh even more heartily.

Truth is, Cate le Bon is such a singularly unusual talent she may forever be doomed to minor cult success. Possessed of a such a strong Welsh accent she sometimes makes Max Boyce sound like a cockney barrow boy, and a restlessly creative nature, her songs, pretty as they are, would scare the bejesus out of the *X-Factor*-watching unwashed masses. Cate's regularly tagged The Welsh Nico, and it's clear why on songs like 'Me Oh My', full of fatalistic melancholy, her voice demure yet austere, the sparse drum beat funereal, the wobbly electronics bending the tune out of shape and

into something quirky but utterly captivating. It feels like an old torch song being led to the gallows.

Elsewhere Cate and her band swap instruments and styles with such casual abandon there's never time to get comfortable: here's a simple acoustic folk lullaby punctured by a grunge churn and splinters of white noise; there's a country twang twisted into wayward shapes and taken on a gentle trip into space. No wonder Super Furry Animals' Gruff Rhys is so enamoured of her.

And yet there's nothing overly arty or awkward about Cate or her songs. The pall of uncertainty and gloom that hangs over them merely throws their prettiness into starker relief and tonight's set highlight, 'Eyes So Bright', is positively imperious in its beauty.

"Baby, I'm headed for the black," croons Cate dreamily in the 'Sunday Morning'-like 'Sad Sad Feet', like a doomed romantic heroine. If we could believe for one moment that a talent this special could instead be heading for the bright lights, then we'd all be laughing.

Dale Kattack

KATE RUSBY

The New Theatre

"It's a little bit samey," an audience member observes midway through Kate Rusby's set, leaving me only to conclude she's not been paying full attention. Sure Kate is understated, the melodies from one song weaving into the next with elegance and ease, but those familiar with the folk nightingale's extensive back catalogue will realise this is her charm. This low key collection of songs, embracing reworkings of traditional tunes dating back 200 years, to ones penned entirely from scratch, seem to fuse together, distinction between the two becoming a distant dream. This however, is less a marker of originality and more indication of her command of the genre.

Some fans may have been happier with the band line up which used to accompany the Barnsley star when former-husband John McCusker appeared by her side. Yet in with the new musicians comes refined understanding of Kate's airy vocals and their melodies are sympathetic and understated, allowing her lyrics to really shine. 'The White Cockade' is stripped back, leaving her voice to carry the weight of the melody, while

'High On A Hill' is given the alternative treatment, meandering from a vocal-driven track, to a musical hoedown. Kate's comedy hasn't vanished either and in a set which features as much introduction and humour as music, she ensures the rhythm of the set is punctuated with well-timed retorts.

While the humour and best loved tracks are anticipated, Kate's sampling of new tracks from her forthcoming album suggests the days of lovers' laments may be a thing of the past. 'Only Hope' is filled with positive refrains and upbeat melodies whilst 'Let Them Fly' might well be the folk equivalent of the Dixie Chicks' 'Not Ready To Make Nice'.

Kate is perhaps, in her own words, "protecting the old ways from being abused," given her desire to continue reworking traditional songs such as 'I Courted A Sailor'. Yet she is also pushing folk firmly into the 21st Century with the likes of uptempo 'The Wishing Wife' and in a set that perfectly merges the two it's fair to suggest that Kate is unlikely to relinquish this quest anytime soon.

Lisa Ward



ORANGE GOBLIN / WINNEBAGO DEAL / DESERT STORM / IVY'S ITCH / BEARD OF ZEUSS

The Regal

I was primed to describe this gig as the aural equivalent of a boot stamping on a human face, forever, such were my expectations for some unparalleled heaviosity. As it turns out, things are slightly sweeter in nature than that. But only *slightly*: this is still a weighty affair, with The Regal proving an aptly cavernous setting for some barbarian-style thunder.

Beard Of Zeuss open proceedings in the style of a particular scene from *The Shining*: they are the slow-motion, thick waves of blood echoing out from the Overlook Hotel's metaphorical elevator doors. Continuing a lineage that starts with Black Sabbath, and most recently ends with Melvins' wrappers of noise around a dark heart, they're heavy metal through a post-indie blender,

but have the good sense to do some weird things. Notes unexpectedly ring out for indeterminate time spans, songs stop and start with the surprising nature of a supertanker making a U-turn. At times they tend towards a stoned jam of a sound, with a slip on the reins of songs, but not often enough for it to become a problem.

Ivy's Itch also edge towards a somewhat indistinct sound, but mainly due to the relentlessly brutal vocal style of Eliza Gregory, impressively sounding like an even *more* pissed-off Kat Bjelland. It's a fantastic voice, but it too often swamped all other sounds in existence, making it difficult to find much definition. When things clicked into place, though, it reveals the greatness that the band has always had at its core - a super-

heavy, uncomfortable style of songwriting that's now bound more than ever to a thundering rhythm section. More so than in previous years, they seem unafraid to stretch out into more 'epic' numbers, for want of a better word, and it's to their credit - it unveils dimensions to the band that have not always been on display.

Desert Storm take things in an entirely different direction, with a set that is largely comprised of two halves. Initially, they're funk-metal, with shadow upon tic-inducing shadow of Red Hot Chili Peppers styling, causing a fug of Californian sun-drenched fun that seems out of place. It's highly proficient, and excellently played, but it takes a turn for the better when they ditch the funk and shove the crunch of stoner rock in its place. Through this, they suddenly become a rock monster, but one that's having such a good time it's almost impossible not to get drawn in and begin to nod along.

It's perhaps this sense of relief-filled enjoyment that mars **Winnebago Deal**, who power in afterwards with an almost literal torrent of riffs. That in itself is peachy, but the band are so bloody-minded in their pursuit of speed and power that things quickly become one-dimensional. Even The Ramones or Napalm Death (as two opposite ends of the band's frame of reference) had the sense to add some texture, and a breather from time to time. Perhaps I'm just not hardy enough for such a pummeling as the two-piece seem to effortlessly create.

Finally, **Orange Goblin**, playing in Oxford for the first time in their fifteen-year history. Make no mistake, this is a heavy metal band, from the old school. They have what appears to be an actual giant for a lead singer, albeit one who resembles a cross between *Grange Hill*'s Geoff 'Bullet' Baxter and the baby-eating star of horror movie *Anthropophagus the Beast*. Wearing a Venom t-shirt. Stepping on stage to the strains of Goblin's *Suspiria* soundtrack, and referring to the majesty of Italian horror during one of his many between-song rants, he's the perfect lead vocalist. Massively powerful, and so obviously captivated by the music his band is creating - a take on early 80s New Wave Of British Heavy Metal run through a Metallica filter - he's a surprisingly charming fellow. The searing honesty that seems evident from his many drunken expressions of gratitude to the crowd (even when he demands to see us "punching each other in the fucking face") is genuinely refreshing in today's musical world that's so laden with cynicism and fakery. Who'd have thought it? The noisy, nasty band somewhat captures my heart, when I had expected them to tear it out. The big softies.

Simon Minter

BRING ME THE HORIZON / CANCER BATS

02 Academy

When it comes to metal bands, Cancer Bats are pretty much perfect. Their songs are economical, brutal four-minute blasts with a surprisingly poppy core surrounded by the kind of sheet metal riffing that inspires unconscious air guitar in half the audience without them even realising (the other half are too busy bouncing around to notice). They're happy to play with the form, chop and change the pace and feel from torpid sleaze to pugnacious bolt, and above all not forget to write some cracking songs behind a desperate rush to make as much noise as possible. And in vocalist Liam Cormier they have utterly convincing stridency coupled with an oddly-bashful charm between songs that makes you want to give him a big hug. Sort of.

Thirteen million MySpace plays can't be wrong, can they? I can't help thinking that there simply must be more to Bring Me The Horizon than I can hear and see from their euphoric reception tonight. Accentuating the

positive, they're machine-tight - every beat and riff bang on the money - and you can't fault their energy on stage. Yet at the same time, what they're playing is an incoherent, blustering profusion of the lamest bits of metalcore, rent-a-chug double bass drum-laden riffing and those awful synth pad sounds perpetuated by Linkin Park about ten years ago. Thanks, Linkin Park. Music owes you a debt.

There's a hissing blanket of insipid noise, punctuated by the odd sample or production trick, both barely concealing a dearth of inspiration or a single riff that's not out of the 2003 Bumper Book of Drop D. Considering it's intended to be confrontational, adrenaline-fuelled brutality, the most impressive thing about Bring Me The Horizon is how *boring* it all is - and that should never be what metal's all about.

Stuart Fowkes

PLAID & THE SOUTH BANK GAMELAN ORCHESTRA

The Oxford Playhouse

Promotion can really matter. We recall a Swiss Concrete gig starring ultra-twee poppets You And Me, with backing vocals from actor Ewen Macintosh. Had the promoters swapped their tasteful A4 posters for a banner across Cowley Road reading "See Keith off *The Office*: Fiver!" a sparse turnout could have become a sell-out crowd. With that in mind, this event advertised as Plaid with the South Bank Gamelan may have enticed the mid-30s Artificial Intelligence who grew up on Warp, but if anything the billing should have been reversed.

The gamelan orchestra makes by far the bigger impression, not in the quality of their playing, but with the arresting sight of their exquisitely turned Javanese metalophones, xylophones and assorted percussive devices.

The physical presence of the gamelan sound is incredible, whether it's playing with piercing volume, or with a limpid, elegant stateliness. A fascinating contrast between complexity and simplicity arises when repeated iterations of brief melodies are made on many instruments simultaneously – not only is the sound miasmic and mysterious (one piece is like the bleached bones of a 60s spy theme deep underwater), but the sight of five sets of ornate mallets being dropped in unison looks like eerie alien choreography. Plaid's dinky electro doesn't really mix. The duo has spent many years taking the 808 boom out of Detroit techno, and replacing it with a twinkle and patter of a perpetual motion toybox – 'Rest Proof Clockwork', as



their third LP would have it – so their sound hovers oddly above the surface of the gamelan's resonant overtones. Plus, for the most part, despite the programme's bombastic trumpeting about new vistas, for the most part the gamelan and Plaid alternate their playing. Joint composition with gamelan master Rahayu Supanggah is more a patchwork of ideas than a collaborative creation, more a musical Exquisite Corpse than a fresh stylistic alloy.

All very pleasant indeed, in short, but not a touch on the inscrutable architecture of the centuries old music that opens the evening. However, two moments show that this young collaboration could still blossom into something wonderful. A

subtle arrangement of Aphex Twin's 'Actium' reveals not only how dynasties and continents could be brought together, but also Richard James' knack with a killer melody, no matter how fragmentary. The encore was apparently played for the first time the preceding night, and yet it's the highlight of the concert, a melding of an old Plaid track with a traditional Javanese song. The synthesised clicks and the warm percussion tones truly works together for the first time, and suddenly we see performers working on the same wavelength as well as the same stage, musicians who share an exciting vision and not just a publicist.

David Murphy

SPARROW AND THE WORKSHOP

O2 Academy

Not so much coals to Newcastle as Foals to Oxford – that's Sketches, whose penchant for trebly guitar marks them out as keen students of the work of Cowley Road's finest. Perhaps their B-side 'Fevered Foals' is them wishing ill on their heroes so they might grab their limelight? You could never accuse Sparrow and the Workshop of fashionable pretensions – though sterner critics than I might charge them with a degree of affectation, citing the stark contrast between the goofy and playfully affectionate onstage banter of vocalist/guitarist Jill O'Sullivan and duetting drummer Gregor Donaldson and the frequently murky and bleak subject matter of their music, which, like 'Into The Wild' and debut single 'Devil Song', draws upon the rich, dark history of the folk, country and blues traditions.

In this the trio are reminiscent of another outfit who call Glasgow home, Sons & Daughters – especially new single 'Black to Red', the "snazzy" video for which O'Sullivan smilingly complains had her painted blue and tottering around in crippling

six-inch heels. The involvement of Delgados associate Paul Savage in this year's well-received album 'Crystals Fall' is another indicator of the direction in which their muse tends.

Perhaps the best way to describe them, though, is as ample compensation for anyone (like me) who loved Howling Bells' debut but found its misjudged follow-up 'Radio Wars' a crushing disappointment. The Australians' gothic and shoegazery overtones might be absent, but O'Sullivan's vocals – insinuating, sweet and stinging – are as seductive as ice maiden Juanita Stein's, making a song like 'I Will Break You' sound almost as much a serenade as a threat.

As thrilling as the punch packed by Donaldson and guitarist/bassist Nick Packer can be, it sometimes feels as though there's too much of the Workshop and not enough of the Sparrow. But when they get the balance and tension just right – as on album closer 'You've Got It All' and a new song containing a lyric about "shooting pains down my arm" – the results are stunning.

Ben Woolhead

THE JIM JONES REVUE

O2 Academy

Working by the maxim that rock'n'roll had no need to change after 1959 beyond buying some bigger amps, The Jim Jones Revue aren't so much the Devil's music stripped down to its pants as thrown headlong back into the primordial soup.

Jim Jones has always been a man in love with the very essence of rock'n'roll, from his first band Thee Hypnotics, who took Hendrix's wild riffer into the realms of lysergic hedonism, through to his late-90s incarnation at the helm of Black Moses. With his Revue he's taken a trip back to the source, to a time before rock forgot how to roll, a time when it probably really did feel like nothing would ever be the same again. The band's sound is undeniably retro; it wears its period costume with pride and has the slicked-back hair and sideburns to match, but that's no matter when the music is so unrelentingly *thrilling*.

From the opening number, essentially 'Good Golly Miss Molly' racketed up to top volume by way of AC/DC, through a set of songs that

shamelessly pillage Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and Chuck Berry, The Jim Jones Revue grab you so firmly by the throat you barely have time to wonder at what point rock music learned how to be as lame as so many of its practitioners became.

The volume tonight is punishing, the honky tonk piano in particular scouring away an entire frequency of hearing by the time an hour is up. This is what it would sound like if Motorhead had invented twelve-bar boogie. There's a hefty dash of 70s glam in the mix, echoes of Slade's 'Mama Weer All Crazee Now' invade what feels like an apocalyptic rendering of 'Roll Over Beethoven', and the whole show is so pin-tight, perfectly choreographed and drenched in its own sweat it's a astonishing it can stay so fresh after so many months on the road.

The band's new album is called 'Burning Your House Down', but The Jim Jones Revue are so much fun it'd be worth all that risk to invite them round to party like there's no tomorrow.

Ian Chesterton



OCEANSIZE / THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS / MOJO FURY

O2 Academy

The question of whether to bother watching a band named Mojo Fury is a perplexing one. It's a moniker that conjures up an image of a middle aged man choking on his pipe, aghast at one too many articles on The Beatles in his music periodical of choice. Fortunately, the band themselves concentrate primarily on the Fury aspect of their name. This is most obvious when they run through the roaring muscle-bound beast of their latest single 'The Mann', which is all pummelling rhythms, taut vocals and thundering bass. They may crib a lot of their style from Biffy Clyro, but that's not necessarily a bad thing and they win a fair few over tonight with the directness.

This Town Needs Guns might well be one of the best bands in Oxford at the moment judging from the reaction they get tonight from the faithful. They are remarkably tight, complex riffs falling from their fingers with effortless grace. Their math rock intricacies twist and dazzle as vocalist Stuart Smith adds an emotional sheen to the constantly shifting time signatures and tonal nuances. It might be a little self-indulgent for some tastes, but there's no doubting the talent the band possesses.

If it's self indulgence you're after, then Oceansize are the band for you. Never afraid to prevent a song from wandering off on a lengthy deviation, their prog-tinged rock could be accused of being bloated. For the initiated however, Oceansize's songs are the musical equivalent of magic eye pictures; spend long enough with them, and hidden depths are revealed.

They take to the stage to the guttural grind of 'Part Cardiac' and from there they set about building a wall (or more specifically, a rocket) of thunderous, heavily layered noise that is almost impenetrable. Yet there are moments such as 'Silent/Transparent' when the band drops down to a low hush allowing Mike Vennart's almost apathetic vocals to climb to the top of the pile. There are concessions to gorgeous melody at times too, not least on 'Superimposer' which, like their opening song, has more than a little debt to Cardiacs songwriter Tim Smith.

Winding things up, Vennart snipes at the venue's early curfew causing them to drop 'Pine' from the set, before launching into a positively incendiary version of 'Ornament/Last Wrongs'. Self-indulgent it may be, but few do it as convincingly and as enjoyably as Oceansize.

Sam Shepherd

MR FOGG / ITAL TEK

Phoenix Picture House

It's a simple set-up: keyboard, sampler, laptop, microphone and drum module, but Mr Fogg manages to fill the homely Phoenix Picture House upstairs room with an amorous glow. The singer had his gear stolen less than a week prior, so it's fortunate that he's navigated this upset and made the most out of a small palette of materials.

Beginning with 'Stung', one of the catchiest tracks off debut album 'Moving Parts', it lays out a blueprint for the Fogg sound: heavy electro beats, swimming synthesizers and his trademark high-pitched vocals that recall Bronski Beat's Jimmy Somerville, but transcend the goolies-in-a-vice pitfalls of the style. He's a versatile performer though, manning the electronic drum kit and adding a tangible element to the gently packed venue. That he's received plaudits from *NME* and Radio 1 is a double-edged sword: it highlights the accessibility of his work but there's assuredly enough depth here to warrant investigation for electronica fans of any plane.

The same goes for Ital Tek. Signed to giant IDM stable Planet Mu, I first

saw him DJ in Holland in 2009, playing with the boundary-pushing Boxcutter. They've kept the dubstep scene on its toes with their half-speed rhythms and strong melodic assemblages that liken them to early Warp Records output and Autechre. A moderate performance on laptop and mixing desk invites one punter to dance away, but Ital's music has ample nectar for the coffee table surroundings as well.

The problem with dubstep - and electronica as a whole - is when your market reaches critical mass, creative force plummets, forcing those who loved experimentation to look harder for it. What's more, sameness of selections breed a wasteland culture - remember what happened to jungle in the mid-90s? The roots of dubstep were always entwined with drum&bass and jungle, but Ital Tek also points to its other touchstone: UK garage. You can feel it in the swing of 'Neon Arc' and the addition of sassy vox to more of the album tracks. I for one will be singing his praises for this night alone, but widespread attention is currently an unknown quantity.

Mick Buckingham

KATE NASH

O2 Academy

There's a fine line between creating music that is wacky yet wonderful and bizarrely bad and Kate Nash has always walked this divide with utmost precision. Love her or hate her, the success of 'Made Of Brick' marked her out as something of a modern day Kate Bush and her latest releases 'My Best Friend Is You', suggests she has no inclination to drop her idiosyncratic style anytime soon. Nevertheless, as she opens the show with 'I Just Love You More', you wonder if she's finally slipped onto the wrong side of that divide. Whilst the sound is rockier and heavier, deviating away from her pop-driven routes, a commendable shift, the lyrics consist of a singular line which she tediously repeats, like scratched vinyl.

As a Kate convert, it's disappointing to say the least and there's a fear that she will become something of a car crash victim, with a slim chance of survival. While 'Paris' thankfully echoes her earlier work, it is almost too alike, leaving a real dilemma that the new songs are either too similar or too removed but never satisfactorily different. It seems

the biggest issue comes with the lyrics; whilst the likes of 'Mouthwash' and 'Skeleton' receive rapturous responses, the new songs seem comparatively lacking in depth. Even 'Mansion Song', which is more verbose than the rest, lacks the sparkle it requires and drifts off into a disconnected rant.

It's telling then, that for me and at least a third of the audience (who promptly depart after its airing), 'Foundations' seems to be the highlight of the evening. Though they miss outstanding renditions of 'Birds' and 'Pumpkin Soup', during which Kate pummels her piano before standing on it, their apathy seems to highlight the flaws in her new material. If the new album were full of songs like 'Later On', which contains both original upbeat melodies and distinctive lyrics and it's punked-up vibe which rings of Blur's 'Song 2', it might be a whole different story.

As it stands Kate has wandered down the same rabbit hole as Alice, only peculiar has become somewhat insipid.

Lisa Ward

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Dr SHOTOVER – [spoofs]

[White type appears across the screen - **The KARLINGSTAN Academy, Oxford...** A huge explosion rocks the camera... cut to swarthy men with moustaches running along the street... one of them is clutching a Flying V guitar. Dr SHOTOVER pulls up in a black four-wheel-drive, wearing shades, unshaven, impassive, as debris from the explosion flies past in slow motion. A burning plenum lands on the tinted glass windscreen; he starts speaking into the lapel of his leather jacket].

Enact Level 9 Protocol with Grade A Access All Areas Backstage... Am now in character – yes, Aziz, the Kazakh roadie... They've released the "package" and they're on the move... Their goal? They won't stop until the West acquiesces to their demands - Central Asian Prog Metal 24-hour blanket coverage on all media... yes, **Holy Dragons, Ego Fall, Ulytau, DoomSword**, the lot... apparently the RUSH-ans are secretly backing them... Consider this a Priority One Threat. Will re-establish contact in a week, by which time I will have gone undercover for a doomed but passionate relationship with an exotic dark-haired woman, apparently a "trusted asset", but who will inevitably turn out to be a double agent working simultaneously for Harvey Weinstein and Vince Power...

Meanwhile I'll need you to find out whether **O2** is some kind of toxic Weapon of Mass Destruction. And... Tariq? Make sure you don't use any of that heat-sensitive night camera nonsense on me when I'm with the lovely Fatima... [The picture splits into four, gets gradually solarized, and finally disappears]. Ahem, harrumph... Ah, there you are, moth brain. Just a little fantasia for Heavy Metal Month here at the East Indies Club. Nice filming job by Frosty Farnsworth, what? Buy me a drink and I will sing you *Born To Be Wild* by Steppenwolf. No? All right then, buy me two drinks and I will merely hum it. Make it three, and I will refrain altogether from all musical activity. Cheers! [gulp-o] Cheers! [gulp-o] Etc.

Cheers! [gulp-o] Cheers! [gulp-o] Etc. **Next month: Foals/Band Of Horses double header.**



"Let's go and drink some fermented camel milk, dudes!"- Dr Shotover (far left, in wig) blends in with some Kazakh Rock fans.

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LONOLUN

DEMOS

DEMO OF THE MONTH

SHATTERED DREAMS

Sometimes, just keeping things simple, playing and singing within your own range is all that's needed. Oh and being able to write the odd decent tune or two helps, obviously. Lately we've heard so many female-fronted rock bands where the singer sounds like she's come straight out of stage school or imagines herself in the chorus line to some godawful West End production and ends up warbling painfully over some Disney executive's idea of what grunge should sound like. By contrast Shattered Dreams sound untutored, pleasingly rough around the edges, even a tad clumsy at times. It just makes us like them more. Singer Steph Branch is strident without ever being overbearing or shrill, while she and her band are unfussy, never indulging in fripperies or ostentatious muso displays. Admittedly they can find themselves veering too close to the middle of the road at times and maybe need to find the confidence to lose their inhibitions and seriously rock out, but despite that they've got a pretty authentic early punk sound about them, reminiscent of Penetration at times or Hazel O'Connor's Breaking Glass band. 'Live & Learn' is the softest yet strongest song here, Steph singing with a husky militancy as the band keep everything the right side of sweet-natured. There's talent here, albeit a talent for playing to their strengths, chief of which is simplicity. Go and download a couple of old Vice Squad or Runaways tracks and pick up a few tips perhaps but for now, a young band with no little promise.

QUICKTHORN

Quickthorn, or Prydwyn Piper as he is, sends a lovely hand-written letter on old-fashioned parchment (it was all he had lying around, he informs us, which makes us think he's maybe a wizard for a living) telling us how he saved our lives by marrying the love of his life who had threatened to butcher us in our sleep after his last review four years and made her obey him. A quick glance back at that review reveals we were really rather nice about him last time, so his missus, to quote Goldie Lookin' Chain, must be a nutter. Prydwyn, meanwhile, isn't, although he does seem to exist in a cosy netherworld of music where the lute is still the must-have item of technological innovation. That doesn't stop him

reinterpreting Pink Floyd's 'Grantchester Meadows' in the style of a troupe of time-travelling mediaeval minstrels, before moving on to a dark-folk protest song about George W Bush and the Iraq war (he apologises in the sweetest way possible for being a bit behind the times on that score). Over four songs he touches on Steeleye Span's pastoral whimsy, casting an almost spectral presence with his slight vocal delivery, so you can almost feel the chill wind blowing through the loose fitting windows of an old thatched cottage in the woods. He does tend to wander off aimlessly towards the end of the demo, but even here he explains that this was the point in the recording process where the magic mushrooms started to kick in. Things work differently and at a slower pace in Quickthorn's world and we feel it'd be a nice place to holiday once in a while. Probably during magic mushroom season.

MOTHER CORONA

This being a metal special issue of Nightshift, and this being the demo page, we've just got to have a metal CD in the pile and here it is, Mother Corona, hailing from Didcot and possessed of a pile of girders they've nicked from the railway station and fashioned into riffs. Like Desert Storm and Empty Vessels, Mother Corona lean towards the bluesy, psychedelic side of metal, Sabbath riffs grinded out with varying degrees of malevolence before the

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off in Didcot on their way to Bristol). From there it doesn't get any more cheerful, though it does sporadically get more interesting, particularly on 'Stained 2', where the whispered vocals and sparse piano suggest a Trent Reznor unplugged session in Jools Holland's kitchen, blossoming slightly into an atmospheric mood piece that takes itself just a bit too seriously. The violinist gives an edge to the downbeat blues chug that is 'Do This Everyday', but 'Friday's Song' is a horribly overwrought ballad with an ill-advised funk tendency and sounds like it fell out of the middle of some long-forgotten 80s hair metal album. They rise slightly again for the emotive country-folk of 'How We Fall' but by the end you feel like you're wandering down a particularly glum garden path lined with wilted daffodils, at the end of which is a run-down cottage full of decomposing corpses. Or worse, Didcot.

A LITTLE TWIST OF LEMON

Lina, the young lady behind this bedroom project, declares she's influenced by the weather and tends to worry a lot, which might explain the music's timidity, but for all its decidedly no-fi somnambulating, some of it's pretty sweet – warm, intimate electronica and almost ghostly acoustic pop, sounding a bit like Stereolab or Pram re-imagined by the Puffles from Club Penguin. There's a feeling Lina's lost the plot towards the end, mind, idly searching the cupboards for chocolate hobnobs while half talking, half singing to herself. Hello? Hello-o? We're still here you know and we want entertaining. That and some hobnobs.

WHO'S THE HERO

Punk-pop teens Who's The Hero inform us they've just split up but would like our opinion on their music anyway, which we'd be happy to proffer, except their Myspace seems to have been hijacked by a third-rate Cypress Hill rip-off, under which they're all but inaudible. Still, if they're no more, it's hardly going to ruin their career trajectory.

CRACKY D & THE SOAPY BANJO MAN

There is a frustratingly well-populated place between 'experimental' and 'pissing about' and it's here we find Cracky D, who comes from Wallingford and is better known to his mum as Daniel. The first track here – we can't afford it the dignity of 'song' – consists of some stoned bloke rambling and occasionally rapping about fuck all and chocolate and cheese, doubtless finding the whole exercise hilarious as he

rhymes "I lost my gran / In Japan" barely coherently, and with an apparently badly blocked nose, over distorted beats and a sampled yangquin. Awful old bollocks. But then some of what follows could be pretty fun if you didn't constantly feel the urge to slap the perpetrators roundly across the face. 'Dancing Bears' is a Streets-y monologue over a shifting backdrop of lonesome piano and tinny rhythms, a woozy dream-like piece that sucks you into its oddly lysergic lo-fi world, while 'A Hundred', with its scraping violin just about rises above the slightly pedestrian rapping. By the end though, it's back to the stoned rambling and feeling it's all a late-night, post-bong piss-take. Shame.

BELOW THE FALL

Hmm, well here's a hybrid we've not come across before – emo shoegazing. And against all expectations it's not that bad at all. Below The Fall kick in promising a bit of lightweight post-hardcore by numbers but soon they're fuzzing dreamily like a half-formed Ride. 'Commissioner' spends too long on epic swirl and bombast and forgets to go anywhere, but 'Just Run Away' takes a more subtle approach before launching into a full-on fuzzstorm and suggests they might just be onto something.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE MANIC SHINE

Manic Shine describe themselves as an "electric-eclectic concoction, the bastard child of Led Zep and John Mayer", which simply doesn't fit with the inconsequential, overly fluffy and utterly anodyne guitar pop we're listening to here. An extensive list of reviews of the band finds them described by webzines we've never heard of as "off-kilter" and praising their creativity too many times to be a coincidence, which is simply perverse given how safe and featureless these songs are. Maybe those reviews were written by their mums. Or mental people. Who don't get out much. Whatever, 'The Escape' is oppressively overlong, attempting to drag a fleeting moment of Franz Ferdinand into its dispiriting regional-band-competition world of tedium. The *faux*-literate lyrics and unnecessary guitar solos simply make them sound like a strange cipher of a band, designed by the CIA to infiltrate the rock underground unnoticed and wreak havoc with people's tastes. God forbid they succeed. In the off-kilter stakes they make Counting Crows sound like Wolf Eyes. Manic Shine? Manic Shite, more like.

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

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



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