



NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month
Issue 308
June
2022

Octavia Freud

"I am acknowledging something maybe people are afraid to say. I am far too old to be worried about that any more. At the same time it's me saying 'I am worth more than this!'"

Sisters, self worth and synths with Oxford's nomadic techno king

Also in this issue:

Introducing PEARL DIVER
At work with PMT's DAN RAWLE
RIDE's homecoming reviewed

plus

All your Oxford music news, previews, reviews and gigs for June

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THE BULLINGDON

JUNE 2022

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Sunday 29th May

Battle Born
Bring to Bear
Jokers Parade

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 1st June

Musical Medicine
DJ Paulette

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 2nd June

Singularity
A Journey from Dystopia to Utopia

Doors: 6PM

Friday 3rd June

Brother Strut

Doors: 7PM

Friday 3rd June

Skylarkin Soundsystem
David Rodigan

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 4th June

God Rave the Queen

Doors: 11PM

Friday 10th June

The Quireboys

A Bit of What you Fancy
30th Anniversary Tour
Massive

Doors: 7PM

Friday 10th June

Raving Trippy
The Summer of Love

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 11th June

Semi Detached
Higgo & Oppidan

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 12th June

Wrest

Doors: 7PM

Monday 13th June

Adam Rowe: Imperious

Doors: 7PM

Tuesday 14th June

Out of the Blue

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 15th June

William the Conqueror

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 16th June

Jody and the Jerm
The Factory Lights

Doors: 7PM

Friday 17th June

The Deadbeat Apostles

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 18th June

Simple
Tim Reaper & LCY

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 23rd June

Ulysses Wells

Doors: 7PM

Friday 24th June

Rock of China
Don't Laugh
Roast Duck

Doors: 7PM

Friday 24th June

Reggaeton Party

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 25th June

Rawdio
Logan D ft Eksman
(96 - 00 Jungle Set)

Bitter Pill Takeover

Madusa
Bruxley
Re-Ofnda

Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 29th June

The Vandoliers

Doors: 7PM

Friday 1st July

Barricane
London Graffiti

Doors: 7PM

Friday 1st July

Take me to the Deep

Bessasa *(Zeitgeist Records)*

Jay Love
Finest Wear

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 2nd July

Retro 90s Hits

Ovaproof & DJ Younlx
DJ Sam
DJ Sec & Wonder
DJ Majikal

Doors: 11PM

Friday 8th July

Emma Hunter
The Peerless Pirates
Captain Kuppa T & The Zepplin Crew

Doors: 7PM

Friday 8th July

Carnival Bounce
A Night of Old School
Garage Legends

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 14th July

James Oliver

Doors: 7PM

Friday 15th July

Coth Present

Grudgewood
Underbelly
The Last Rites
Black Tish II

Doors: 7PM

Sunday 17th July

The Rock Project Oxford

Doors: 7PM

Friday 22nd July

Hurray for the Riff Raff

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 30th July

Terraforms
Nicky Blackmarket

Doors: 11PM

Saturday 6th August

Semi Detached
Wookie

Doors: 11PM

Thursday 25th August

Debbie Bond
Pete Boss & Friends

Doors: 7PM

Saturday 27th August

Terraforms DNB

Doors: 11PM

Friday 9th September

Noahfinn

Doors: 7PM

Friday 16th September

DIY Class of 2022 Tour
Yard Act
English Teacher
Lime Garden

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 22nd September

Laurence Jones

Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd September

The 900

Doors: 7PM

Sunday 25th September

Jayde Adams:
Men, I Can Save You

Doors: 7PM

Friday 30th September

Katy J Pearson

Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 5th October

Ben Poole

Doors: 7PM

Sunday 9th October

Elf Lyons

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th October

Jordan Brookes:
This is Just What Happens

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 13th October

Semi Detached
TBA

Doors: 11PM

Sunday 16th October

The Trials of Cato

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 20th October

Helen Bauer:
Madam Good Tit

Doors: 7PM

Thursday 20th October

So Fetch
2000s Party

Doors: 11PM

NEWS

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STEVE WINWOOD will be the guest vocalist for **Staks** set at **Cornbury Festival** in July. The legendary Spencer Davis Group, Traffic and Blind Faith man joins the soul stars at Great Tew Country Park over the weekend of the **8th-10th July** as Cornbury bows out with its Last Hurrah. Winwood and Staks join headliners **Ronan Keating, Bryan Adams, James Blunt, The Waterboys and Jools Holland**. Tickets and full line-up at cornburyfestival.com.

JACK GOLDSTEIN releases a new album this month. The former Fixers frontman releases 'The World Is Ending & I Love you' as a double cassette on Beanie Tapes on the 24th June. The same day Jack plays a headline set at Florence Park Community Centre for Divine Schism, with support from Max Blansjaar, Richard Lewis and Lost Lyra. Advance tickets are available from Wegottickets.com.

TRUCK STORE host a special Record Store day drop on Saturday 17th June with new and limited edition releases due in, including Radiohead side project **The Smile**'s debut album as well as reissues of **Supergrass** 'Moving' EP and **Foals** 'Antidotes'.

Truck will be running the merch stall at the inaugural **Kite Festival** over the weekend of the 10th-12th June at Kirtlington Park and are selling tickets for the event free of booking fee at its Cowley Road and Witney stores.

THAME TOWN MUSIC FESTIVAL returns on **Saturday 9th July**, featuring 65 acts across ten venues, all completely free. Headliners for the event are **Big Country**, while among the other acts performing are Rusty Shackle, Laid Blak, Curse of Lono, The People Versus, The Deadbeat Apostles and The Dung Beatles.



GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS have launched a Kickstarter campaign to finance a Kickstart campaign to finance their debut album. The post-rock and shoegaze trio and former *Nightshift* cover stars are offering albums, gig tickets, original artwork and t-shirt packages to donors. Get on it at Kickstarter.com.



EMMA HUNTER AND CHIKA will play on the main stage at this summer's **TRUCK FESTIVAL** after being picked by *Nightshift* from the BandApp shortlist.

They are joined by fellow Oxford stars **31hours; Aphra Taylor; The People Versus; Tilly Valentine; Sam J Martin; Slow Drift; Bushrod; Chloe August**, and **Danny Mellin**, who were chosen by BBC Introducing in Oxford, and **Daze**, picked by Truck themselves, with other BandApp picks selected by Alcopop!, So Young and This Feeling, with **Carsick** chosen from the public vote.

They join headliners **Kasabian, Sam Fender, Bombay Bicycle Club** and **Blossoms** at the sold-out festival at Hill Farm in Steventon over the weekend of the **22nd-24th July**, with Sam Fender's show now looking set to be something of a legendary Truck moment after his fantastic performance at Eurovision.

Full line-up at truckfestival.com.

THE MIGHTY REDOX have also launched a crowdfunder as they prepare to record their next album. The band will go into Evolution Studios in June and are looknig to raise £5,000 with signed albums, a wall of fame poster, lyric booklets and an exclusive gig available to anyone who donates via Gofundme.com.

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

OXFORD GIGBOT provides a regular Oxford gig listing update on Twitter (@oxgigbot), bringing you new gigs as soon as they're

announced. They also provide a free weekly listings email; just contact oxgigbot@datasalon.com to join.

MELTING POT on Get Radio continue to showcase and celebrate Oxford music on their fortnightly Thursday night shows hosted by Rich and Deadly, as well as hosting regular In The Mix shows with playlists from Oxford music luminaries. Local acts can submit music to be played by emailing info@getmeltingpot.co.uk.

NIGHTSHIFT is always keen to hear from new contributors – reviewers or photographers. If you're enthusiastic about live and new music or feel your favourite stuff isn't being covered in the magazine, get in touch at editor@nightshiftmag.co.uk

KANADIA AND THE STANDARD headline this year's **CHARLBURY RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL**

The free festival returns over the weekend of the **30th-31st July** after two years off due to Covid and celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Kanadia top the bill on the Saturday with The Standard closing the show on the Sunday. Joining Kanadia on Saturday will be: Molly Davies; Von Braun; The Font; Darkgnoss; The Mighty Redox; Bedd; The August List; The Knights of Mentis; The Brickwork Lizards; Little Brother Eli, and Barricane, while among the acts playing Sunday will be The Deadbeat Apostles; Jonny Payne & the Thunder, and The 2-Tone All-Skas.

The volunteer-run Riverside Festival recently scooped an award at the UK Enterprise Awards, hosted by SME News, winning Best Celebration of Local Talent for the South East region.

Riverside will also be running their traditional stage at Cornbury Festival in July, with the line-up to be announced soon.

More Riverside news and info at riversidefestival.charlbury.com.



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A quiet word with

Octavia Freud

photo: Jason Warner @ Fyrefly Studios



“**THERE IS DEFINITELY A need for the reality of everyday life to be told, particularly in response to the last decade of this horrendous Tory government; since the Mumfordisation of the industry I don’t think nice middle class voices need to feel ‘seen’ on top of all their other entitlements.**”

SO SAYS MARTIN ANDREWS, the man behind Octavia Freud, the electronic music artist who this month releases his third studio album.

MARTIN, BORN AND RAISED in Manchester by his father alongside his three older sisters, is talking to *Nightshift* about the need for more working class voices, particularly northern ones, in music, particularly music of a political bent. ‘Land Ahoy’, Octavia Freud’s follow-up to 2020’s ‘Smoke & Mirrors’, is dominated by one particular northern working class voice – Martin’s own. His deadpan, wryly funny or quietly angry narratives drive his synth-based songs, drawing comparisons to Sleaford Mods and Yard Act along the way, although it is a range of female voices that has provided the biggest influence on his latest music. “I was listening to Anika, the band Audiobooks and Billynomates when writing this album as I just think they are cool,” he explains. In fact Octavia Freud itself was originally intended to provide a gender-neutral platform for Martin to explore sounds and stories while inhabiting a character other than his own. “I bought a VT8 FX and a looper pedal and put an octave on my

voice and what came out sounded non-gender specific. That appealed because I was brought up by a single dad, so I have a different perspective on gender roles being quite fluid. I enjoyed writing the tracks as an alter-ego and becoming someone else away from my previous history of music making. I liked Gazelle Twin, Fever Ray and Planningtonrock’s vocal approach as they played around with identity and authenticity. I guess it is harder for a straight man to do that. I wrote the songs as a process of internal investigation but then I started to realise I might need to evolve the sound.”

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS Octavia Freud has been a leading light in Oxford’s compact but increasingly fertile electronic music scene, releasing a succession of albums and singles while regularly sharing a stage with likeminded acts such as Means of Production, Tiger Mendoza, Bruno Muerte, Moth Drop and The Subtheory. Drawing on acid house, post-punk, analogue synth-pop, big beat and disco, ‘Land Ahoy’ is a stylistic shift up from his previous albums with its more prominent vocals and storytelling which deals with childhood, coming to terms with middle age, and grief, as well more overt political songs, such as recent single ‘Boris Can Dance’. The album is Martin’s latest move in a long, highly productive musical career that took shape when he was growing up in his native Manchester. “My oldest sister was the first punk in her school when she wore a bin liner and safety pins combo at her

school disco. She wagged off school and went to see the Stiff Records tour in 1978 and met Wreckless Eric and Lene Lovich, and Tony Wilson gave her a lift home in his escort; my other sister got into synth pop and remembers seeing Pete Shelley and The Redskins at a miners’ benefit at the Hacienda in ‘85. For a time we lived a few houses down from where Morrissey grew up in Stretford. My dad had hundreds of jazz, blues, folk, krautrock and 70s rock records so I listened to lots of stuff. By my teens I was going into town to buy clothes and records and watching *The Other Side of Midnight* program, which was the first time I saw The Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses.”

ONE OF THE FORMATIVE experiences of Martin’s musical life was visiting Manchester’s legendary Hacienda Club as a teenager. “Before the Hacienda central Manchester was full of blokes in white shirts and shiny shoes looking to cop off and have a fight. When acid house started the city went mental and the Hacienda was the epicentre of that new energy. I first got in around 1988. I remember hearing the bass sounds of Chicago house tracks as I waited outside, walking through the plastic sheeting on the door, seeing this massive industrial club space and hearing tracks like ‘Voodoo Ray’ for the first time. It was very liberating for the city to party again after Thatcher’s toxic economic policies in the north. The maddest thing were the night buses going home through Moss Side as everyone would be skinning up and the police raided them as

they had become the unofficial after parties.”

DESPITE HIS ROOTS AND his home city’s vibrant music scene, Martin subsequently moved to London where his own musical career began to take over in earnest. “I moved to Brixton with some mates and we set up a label to release electronica stuff and started live electronic nights. A track got played on the John Peel show and another got licensed to an Australian Sports show for ten grand. I was working in a record shop so met loads of people in bands. Punk-funk new rave was taking off and Jamie, who worked on the tills with me, won the Mercury Prize for his Klaxons thing. That motivated me to start Volunteer with Chris Shade who wrote for *NME* and played synths. We DJ-ed in Shoreditch in an old strip joint before the area took off and young hipsters queued around the block. Our manager Frank got us a gig in Paris at Flèche Dor and in East London when we played for Lilly Allen’s management. It was funny trying to play bass and sing while Lilly Allen stood in the front row dancing along in her trackies and hooped earrings. I got a residency at The Heavenly Social called Neural Ohmlette with my mate Chris Allinson. It was one of the few live electronic nights in London. We supported Steve Mason and Simon Jones from the Verve borrowed my crappy amp. Alan McGee came down to watch and have a chat. I played guitar for Camp Actor, we played Bestival and The ICA where Throbbing Gristle famously played. I wrote vocals for IDC’s single ‘Modern Touch’, promoted it with a live session for XFM and it got voted number one in *Mixmag*. Volunteer did a show in Soho at Madam Jojo’s and Mark Moore came back stage and said he loved our sound. I went to Death in Vegas’ Contino studios and Richard Clouston did a remix and Andrew Weatherall was lined up to do the next one. We had a single on a compilation with Goldfrapp and I was finishing the album in a studio when I got a call from my sister. She told me our dad had terminal cancer. I spent the next two months by his side until he passed away. I was angry and the band drifted apart. Looking back, it was a hard way for it to end. But it also feels good knowing I had played a part in building a scene in London.

WHILE HIS FATHER’S death brought Martin’s nascent

career to an abrupt halt, becoming a father put a long-term stopper on making music, while also ushering in a whole new chapter in his life as he moved to Oxford, which he now calls home. “My partner, who is originally from Oxford, was offered a job here and moving to Oxford meant I could spend time with our daughter as a stay-at-home dad and it was great to have the time to bond with her. It was when she got old enough to go to nursery that I thought about doing music again. “I didn’t record any music for four years; I needed the break mentally and to refresh my ears. That was really important: helping me to realise making music was not about those external signifiers of success or seeking validation or love. It was about trying to find a way back to making music that had meaning for me.” Before he began to fully focus on Octavia Freud, Martin eased himself into the local music scene by promoting gigs at Modern Art Oxford, where he works. “I liked the industrial look of MAO so I set up the Basement and the Yard live sessions. The crowd reminded me of my nights in Shoreditch. I booked stuff from London and added local bands and they got a decent fee. I gave Public Service Broadcasting their first gig in Oxford. The Coloureds gigs in the Basement were always packed. Spring Offensive’s final show was scarily busy as loads of kids sneaked in. The MAO director at the time, Michael Stanley, was very supportive of hosting music events and it being a hub for the younger creative types. Then the news came that Michael had killed himself. The whole gallery went into shock and retreated back into the art world. It’s a shame the current curating team weren’t around to see the place packed. Divine Schism are putting on Julia Sophie over the summer and EMPRES do brilliant experimental events so I hope MAO can get back to being a central Oxford music venue again. That would be a fitting tribute to Michael.”

MARTIN’S BACKSTORY could fill this feature twice over but we’re up to date now with the release of ‘Land Ahoy’, its title a recognition of “finally getting to a place emotionally and musically where I can feel landed and be myself”. Two of its stand-out tracks were released recently as singles, the thematically linked ‘When I Was a Kid’, about the simple mundane joys and tribulations of childhood and fatherhood, and ‘50’, which finds him dealing with hitting the

big 5-0 as a musician, playing gigs to 50 people and earning 50 quid if he’s lucky. ‘When I Was A Kid’ is partly inspired by Martin’s mum leaving when he was a baby; Tamara talked about parental abandonment in last month’s *Nightshift* – how much as it affected his life and music? “I read the Tamara interview and found it very honest. Her point about feeling ‘unloveable’ and being sensitive to others leaving rings true. I was interviewed for a Radio 4 program called *Afterlives* in which two people examine their journeys since their mothers left them as children. My mum left me and my three sisters when I was a baby. Before I did the interview I did EMDR therapy sessions which helped a lot. That inspired my track ‘Tappin’ which I did with producer Adventures In Noise. With ‘When I Was a Kid’ I wanted to write something that was respectful to

“The electronic scene in Oxford is getting stronger as more acts emerge, collaborate and support each other”

my dad for bringing us all up on his own. It made me realise I could do talkie songs, which has opened up a new avenue for my music making style.”

THE SONG ‘50’ HAS A balance of humour alongside some serious points; for a musician who’s been around for and seen plenty, where does Martin see his place in musical life now? Any particular regrets or does he feel he’s making the best music of your life now? “I was reflecting on becoming 50 and having a kid myself, but it’s also about only playing to 50 people in the back of a pub for £50. That is often the reality of making DIY music so I am acknowledging something maybe people are afraid to say. I am far too old to be worried about that any more. At the same time it’s me saying ‘I am worth more than this!’ I am enjoying having fun writing quirky electronic stories about life. I am not expecting my music to be credible but hopefully people can find something in the songs to connect to.” The song is also about resilience. What do music scenes – musicians, promoter and others – need to do to look after each other that they might not be doing, especially in a small scene like Oxford’s? “Oxford struggles because bigger promoters focus on national acts with a following and ignore local acts, and smaller promoters struggle to get a crowd. Putting local and national acts together would help

put acts in front of bigger audiences. That model is dependent on decent sized independent music venues being available. I think the Labour-led Oxford City Council have a big part to play in the future of the local music scene. They need to repair their damaged reputation from their horrendously botched job of closing down Fusion Arts, stop being obsessed with only using property for housing and start reinvesting into community projects for the future of the arts in the city. Maybe some of the big hitters from Oxford’s past music scene, who all benefited from grassroots support, can come out and help galvanise a campaign to make the national music press aware of the Council’s inadequate policies.” ‘I Find This Hard’ is probably the most emotive song on the new album, very different to the humour of some other tracks. “It’s a eulogy for my friend Chris Shade, who died last year. He was

the synth player in Volunteer and died during Covid. I wrote this a couple of days after I heard about his death. It came out in one take and was written in about an hour. I put on some gnarly Korg synth sounds similar to how Chris would have played them, he would have liked that. They say people die twice, first physically and second when people stop talking about you after you have gone. It has been a year now since he died so it is nice the track can come out on the album and Chris can be around for a bit longer.”

AND OF COURSE THERE is the brilliant, overtly political, Underworld-influenced single ‘Boris Can Dance’. How much, if at all, can music act as a catalyst for political change and does Martin ever feel powerless in the face of such unrelenting corruption, incompetence and cruelty from the Tories? “Boris is a pure Teflon narcissist. The song is about my frustration at northern working class voters who have enabled Boris to do his worst. It’s fascinating the discrepancy in people’s logic when they vote for something that is against their interests. It’s Boris dancing with the truth rather than his actual dance floor skills. Maybe he is like Fred Astaire, who knows. I am influenced by ‘personal is political’ thinking from feminism, with acts of resistance through art and culture, such as making sardonic electronica. I am not expecting my opinion to change world events but sometimes

you have to come out fighting. To be fair, most people at my gigs seem to agree he is a plum.”

SOMEONE WHO WOULD doubtless agree with such sentiments is fellow local artist and political activist Mila Todd who guest sings on Octavia Freud’s forthcoming single from the album ‘Straight To the Top’, while Martin repays the favour by playing keyboards in her live band; is she an artist he particular admires and how does he feel about Oxford’s electronic music scene generally – it’s got so many great artists in it but seems to struggle to attract a larger audience. “Mila has a strong voice and big personality and can write a tune. She has the same northern directness I have where you just want to get on and do stuff. We talked about doing a collaboration but when she came round she said did I want to join her band and by the way there is a gig in a couple of weeks. I laughed but I thought that attitude was cool. I did some shows on synths and she added some vocals on my next single, ‘Straight to the Top’. “The electronic scene in Oxford is getting stronger as more acts emerge, collaborate and support each other. I want to say a big shout out to Osprey; he has been one of the few promoters who continually puts on live electronic nights and supports acts. Other promoters need to get involved or acts will have to look for more established nights in Bristol and London.”

OCTAVIA FREUD HAS, without doubt, been a hugely important part of the emergence and ongoing expansion of Oxford’s electronic music scene. As he readies himself for the release of his new album, having been involved in two of the UK’s biggest city music scenes in Manchester and London, how does Martin think Oxford compares? “I bought the first couple of Ride EPs as a teenager and I remember thinking Oxford must be a cool place to have such a big sound. Since living here I would say the Blessing Force events and then the Divine Schism nights have impressed me the most with the local audiences they have built. I think *Nightshift*, *OMS* mag, BBC Introducing Oxford and local radio show Melting Pot do amazing jobs in keeping the scene going. Most of all I appreciate Oxford has given me a chance later in life to find my voice and make music again.”

‘Land Ahoy’ is released on the 27th June. Visit octaviareid.bandcamp.com

RELEASED

TAMARA ‘Pain Is Just Pain’

(Self released)
Music has long been an outlet for emotional pain, self examination or working-stuff-out and in Oxford at least Tamara Parsons-Baker has few equals at doing all those in song form.

‘Pain Is Just Pain’ is her debut solo album, the follow-up to 2019’s superb ‘The Girl With the Secret Fire’ with her band Death of the Maiden, and a record written before and during lockdown and financed by a successful crowdfunder campaign. Across eleven songs, just her voice and acoustic guitar, she delves fully into absence, loss, abandonment, memory, longing and identity, but while it is a musically solemn affair it’s as beautiful as it is bleak. Tamara sets the scene from opening number ‘Best Advice’, which finds her heartbroken and desolate, her precise vocals, as so often across the album, bringing an almost classical or hymnal feel to her songs, benefitting from a sparse musical backing that has always worked best for her – which is why she works so well with Hannah Jacobs in Death of the Maiden, the guitarist offering her so much space to vocally and lyrically move.

‘Colours’ is sweeter, reminiscent of Tracey Chapman’s ‘Fast Car’ and similarly dreaming of escape while steeped in sadness (“I stopped seeing colours”), although ‘Dropped’ packs the hardest emotional punch as Tamara deals with the long-term effect of parental abandonment, a recurring theme in her songs and revisited later on ‘Pain Is Just Pain’’s title track. Not that she ever wallows in defeatism. Alongside the introspection there is defiance on



PEARL DIVER ‘Look For the Light’

(Self released)
It’s easy to laugh at hippies but let’s be honest – if there were more of them maybe the world would be a happier, more peaceful place. The opening lyric of Pearl Diver’s debut EP is “Go in peace”, repeated in a lysergic wash of gently bucolic folk-psych. If a new Age of Aquarius



‘Fuck Off’, a kiss-off to an emotionally stunted ex with almost comical seething rage, and nostalgia for happier times on ‘Home From the Sea’ with its memory of childhood holidays. Dig deep enough into these songs and you’ll find comfort and even occasional joy amid the ashes. Perhaps the highlight (although highlight seems an incongruous word to use in the context of music like this) of the album is the conflicted ‘I Don’t Care’, which Tamara mentioned in last month’s interview feature should really be called ‘I Actually Care Quite A Lot’, where she best captures her ability to bring stillness to songs of such emotional turmoil, although ‘Slow’ runs it close, a suitably serene album closer with the purity and serenity of an operatic aria. ‘Pain Is Just Pain’ is not an easy listen lyrically, but musically it is wholly accessible, and for an album recorded so simply, it’s unstintingly engaging – a genuine pleasure for all the pain it holds.

Dale Kattack

is upon us, let’s hope it sweeps up all the angry despots and disaster capitalists currently pulling the planet apart building by building, tree by tree.

‘Look For the Light’ carries a bit of Pink Floyd’s mid-70s airy spangle about it and that 70s vibe continues on the funkier ‘Heaven Help’ me, a harmony-laden slice of soft-centred groove-rock that’s perhaps neither as groovy or rocking as it might be, but it’s quickly followed by the EP’s highlight, ‘Give It All Away’, a crepuscular croon drawing a line between the vintage balladry of someone like Bobby Darin and Richard Hawley’s cobbled street romanticism, with Matt Sage at his vocal best, smooth but slightly cracked. It’s almost, though, matched by a lovely acoustic take on the title track at the end if the EP which actually outshines the full-on version.

“Look for the light – light is where we come from” is the closing message here; it’s one step removed from “We are stardust, we are golden,” but blessed are the peacemakers and all that and such unabashed idealism really isn’t to be sniffed at. The sooner we all get back to the garden, the sooner the world can heal.

Dale Kattack

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MEANS OF PRODUCTION

‘Lit Up’

(Self released)

It has been interesting to observe the evolution of Means of Production’s discography since the arrival of their first EP, subtitled ‘Golden Cities’, half a decade ago now. Early tracks such as ‘Monitors’ and ‘Static Test Authority’ deployed pioneering electronica and post-punk as their primary reference points, with Kraftwerk and Throbbing Gristle as clear influences, sparse beats accompanied by almost chanted vocals, the music perfectly fitting the duo’s clear Brutalist aesthetic. Indeed, one half of the band, Jeremy Day, is the brains behind the always striking visual side of the operation – motorway flyovers, control towers, barbed wire – with partner Tim concocting the musical textures.

A series of tracks released in 2019 and 2020 tipped more than a wink to Norwich’s ‘Sink Ya Teeth’: ‘Recognizer’, ‘Named Storms’ and ‘Neon Heart’ were all metallic sheen and misleadingly disaffected vocals. In between, 2018’s ‘The Depths’, remixed in typically barnstorming fashion by Tiger Mendoza, recalled Aphex Twin and their second EP’s ‘Ethics Committee’ (still probably the stand-out track in their impressive back catalogue) nodded more to ‘Choice’-era Orbital and some full-on dancefloor moves. So it’s interesting to encounter ‘Lit Up’. The new track further explores the recesses and alcoves of clubland, albeit a darker side of its history – and it’s a tune fully immersed in the heady days of early acid house. Phuture, Hardfloor and Joey Beltram are conjured up from memory as the beats hammer harshly and that genre’s trademark squelching is entered into with gusto. It’s not all retro though: the current preponderance of spoken word vocals, always present in the Means of Production soundscape, is more up front than ever here. As Florence Shaw and James Smith have shown, there’s plenty of mileage in sprechgesang although it’s perhaps the band Reigns to whose vocals Day’s style can be most readily compared. In all, this is a group whose body of work constitutes a serious artistic statement and ‘Lit Up’ is a worthy addition.

Rob Langham



MOTH DROP

‘I’ll Think Of You’

(Self released)

From Philip K Dick-themed concept albums via inventively organic live techno shows and

THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES

‘Sweet Sweet Love’

(Self released)

After last year’s punked-up blues-rock call to arms that was ‘Leave It To Men’, The Deadbeat Apostles reel it back a few notches on this new single, initially at least. The first 35 seconds or so of ‘Sweet Sweet Love’ are pretty standard funky soul-rock to be honest, Mike Ginger doing his best chilled Van Morrison impersonation as things lope pleasantly along without disturbing the horses, but then he shows the first signs that he’s gonna get wild and raw and really *soar* and off we go – the band pick up a head of steam, Ginger properly exercises those tonsils and Michelle Mayes goes the full Merry Clayton as the Deadbeats revisit Altamont Stones-style. Even then they tease us by drawing back before we can all get properly carried away and by the time they’ve brought the noise for a third and final time we’re wishing they’d jam it out for another couple of minutes.

DAZE

‘Misunderstanding You’

(Quickfix)

The most accomplished and instant of Daze’s steady succession of singles so far, ‘Misunderstanding You’ is the follow up to last summer’s somewhat over-produced ‘Star Sign’ but falls into none of that track’s pitfalls, bubbling away easy as a Sunday morning – or perhaps more like a summer’s evening, the lightweight, funky jazz-pop topped of with the appropriately-named Daisy Eaton’s fresh-as-a-spring-flower voice, a slight edge of melancholy never allowed to devour the sense of *joi de vivre*. It’s a break-up song after all, though it has a “like I care” kiss off to the boy who got himself a new beau and is breaking the news over coffee.

It’s in step with the modern r’n’b-flavoured pop of Hope Tala but also, musically at least,

some wonderfully esoteric sampling, Moth Drop – the alias of Brendan Morgan – has been a consistently intriguing wildcard among the local electronic music pack over the past handful of years and this new single is another gear shift, ‘I’ll Think Of You’ a more considered outing: soft, shifting textures and subtle patterns unravelling and resolving beneath the sparse, soulful sampled vocals, skittering beats and moody synth hums adding a future factory machine sheen to the plaintive human side of the song, like Arthur Russell in a downbeat jam session with Boards of Canada.

B-side (inasmuch as such things exist anymore) ‘Musi O Tunya- Bashi’ is an Afro-futurist synth-psych mantra that’s both livelier and yet more sinister than the lead track, as if Mbongwana Star had teamed up with John Carpenter – not something we ever thought we’d be saying but then Moth Drop has never been an artist you could easily second guess, and hopefully never will be.

Dale Kattack



It’s a song that shows the two chief sides of The Deadbeat Apostles; easy pub crowd pleasers on the one hand, but at heart a band who can let rip and rock with the very best. Obviously *Nightshift* prefers the latter but at least we know, during those moments when they’re keeping their powder dry, the storm is just a shot away.

Dale Kattack

with 90s acid jazz groovers Sandals, nippy on its pins and keeping the funk side sweet and light. Not a song to linger long in the memory but fresh and cool like a summer breeze.

Bekti Manish



MILA TODD

‘Mouthy’

(Self released)

One of the many reasons why music matters is because it can communicate feelings, personal experiences and the historic – acting as a bridge between what has come to pass and the present day. Recent events remind us we should never forget the lessons of the past, and that change can come if people stand up for what they believe in.

On new single ‘Mouthy’, Mila Todd has embraced the spoken word to retell the events of the suffragette movement to powerful and thought-provoking effect. It’s quite the departure from Todd’s work with grunge-rock band Ciphers, and a noticeable development from her instrumental debut EP ‘Pepper’.

The track opens with what initially reminds us of Arab Strap’s ‘First Big Weekend’ – albeit lyrically far more serious in tone – as she gently retells how women got the right to vote despite the hardships they had to overcome in a male-dominated world. From gorgeous, low-fi indie-pop for the first few minutes, the track evolves and the beat locks in with a reoccurring, free-flowing piano refrain that starts to play with melody to tantalising effect. As anyone will know if they have heard Todd’s previous projects, Mila can really sing, and her vocal prowess is expertly used here: employed to accent the composition as it develops. This is an exciting evolution in Todd’s sound, and a song and message that should be heard – long may she continue to fight the good fight.

Caitlin Helm

THE SUBTHEORY

‘Everyday’

(Self released)

With the dissolution of Death of Hi-Fi Andy Hill turned his musical sights on instrumental tracks inspired by and desigend to soundtrack computer games and 80s movies under the moniker The Subtheory, but having recruited singer Cate DeBo, the pair have headed down a darker, trippier path. ‘Everyday’ pays homage to Portishead with its shadowy synths and gothic soul, Cate doing a very fair approximation of Beth Gibbons’ pure and fragile midnight songbird style as Andy casts sparse, glowering light on film noir street corners, futuristic jazz cabaret as imagined by 60s sci-fi geeks and with a pleasingly haunted vibe.

Ian Chesterton


G1G GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st
ME FIRST & THE GIMME GIMMES:
O2 Academy – Fat Mike and friends – Spike Slawson, Joey Cape and Dave Raun – bring their rapid-fire punk covers schtick to town.
MUSICAL MEDICINE with DJ PAULETTE: **The Bullingdon** – Uplifting party hip hop, raw funk, rare grooves, disco, deep house and techno from DJ Paulette at tonight’s Musical Medicine, the veteran crate digger having enjoyed residencies at The Hacienda, Ministry of Sound and Zap Club as well as in Paris, Frankfurt and Ibiza over the years.
THREE IDLE WOMEN: **Harcourt Arms** – Close harmony singing, folk music and stories

Sunday 5th

SPIERS & BODEN:
Oxford Playhouse

A return and a homecoming for the act once widely regarded as the best instrumental duo on the folk scene. John Spiers and Jon Boden hung up their Spiers & Boden guise back in 2014 to explore new musical directions, both solo and with other luminaries of the scene. Their split as a duo came shortly before they called time on their pioneering folk big band Bellowhead, who made their live debut at the Oxford Folk Weekend in 2004 and went on to cross myriad genre boundaries, headlining Truck Festival in 2011 after stealing the show there the previous year. Having earned their spurs on Oxfordshire’s folk scene John and Jon came together in 1999 and released their debut album ‘Through & Through’ in 2001, releasing five more together before calling it a day. But after six years apart they reconvened and the result was last year’s ‘Fallow Ground’, again the pair delving into often obscure corners, manuscripts and archives of folk music to bring traditional songs and instrumental tunes back to life and into the modern age via their energetic, virtuoso mix of melodeon, accordion and fiddle. From rousing songs to contemplative ballads, as well as waltzes and hornpipes, they visit English, Irish and Australian traditional tunes, stopping off at Giants Causeway as well as Wittenham Clumps, a local landmark to mark a landmark local concert.



JUNE

from the a capella trio.
THE SUBTHEORY + BETHANY WEIMERS + DOMI + DOLLY MAVIES + DAS GHOUL + THE MEZZ + LIGHTNING THREADS: **Studio Se7en, Witney** – Trip-hop and electro-pop from The Subtheory, topping an extensive local line-up as part of Witney Music Festival.
TRUE GOLD: **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Tribute to Spandau Ballet.
BEACH BOYS SMILE: **The Cornerstone, Didcot** – Beach Boys tribute.

THURSDAY 2nd
SINGULARITY: **The Bullingdon** – Immersive psychedelic club night across two rooms from Oxford Psychedelic Society and Oddball, featuring DJs, live sets, visuals and performance art.
STEPH PIRRIE JAZZ: **Harcourt Arms** – Live jazz from the singer and trumpeter and her band.
EMILY MAE WINTERS: **The Unicorn, Abingdon** – Haunting, atmospheric folk and bluegrass from singer Emily Mae Winters, touring her debut album ‘Siren Serenade’, produced by Ben Walker, and inspired by Gillian Welch, Carole King and Alison Krauss.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: **The Fox Inn, Steventon** – Weekly open mic session with musician Tom Dalby.

FRIDAY 3rd
COUNT SKYLARKIN presents DAVID RODIGAN: **The Bullingdon** – Local DJ legend Count Skylarkin hosts the undisputed king of reggae and dancehall, David Rodigan MBE, the former Kidlington schoolboy now recognised as one of the chief authorities on reggae as well as one of the finest and most respected reggae DJs in the UK, having toured with Shinehead and been name-checked by The Beastie Boys along the way.
EMMA DE LA QUERRA & THE SPIRALITES: **Harcourt Arms**
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with ZAIA + BEAVER FUEL + MOJO DEMON: **The Gladiator Cub** – Klub Kakofanney’s monthly shindig plays host to pop-friendly dub-reggae crew Zaia, plus idiosyncratic punks Beaver Fuel, and heavy-duty blues in the vein of Led Zep and The Doors from Mojo Demon.
YXNG DAVE: **O2 Academy** – Return to town for the Reading grime MC and singer.
SLEEPRS + CATGOD + ARTHUR OSOFSKY + BENEDICT ARNOLD: **Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music showcase.
BOTLEY CRUE: **The Hollybush, Osney** –

Indie, new wave and Britpop classics.
QUARTERMELON + THE JERICHOs + HALF DECENT + THE BOBO: **Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Soulful, funky shoegaze and indie rocking from Quartermelon alongside indie rockers The Jerichos, rapper Half Decent and electronic dreampop singer The Bobo at tonight’s Witney music fest show.
ESCAPADE: **The Elm Tree, Witney** – Rock and pop covers from the 60s onwards as part of WMF.

SATURDAY 4th
JERICHO STREET FAIR: **Jericho** – The return of Jericho’s annual outdoor fair across various street stages and pubs, with live music across the area.
DEVOUT: **O2 Academy** – Depeche Mode tribute.
SGT THUNDERHOOF: **The Jericho Tavern** – Monstrous fuzzed-out psychedelic stoner rock and dark, heavy blues from Bath’s Black Sabbath-inspired Sergeant Thunderhoof at tonight’s Buried in Smoke show.
NINE TON PEANUT SMUGGLERS + HIPSHAKIN’: **Harcourt Arms** – Classic 60s-style ska from Nine Ton Peanut Smugglers, alongside 50s and 60s rhythm’n’blues, rock’n’roll, jump jive, jazz, boogaloo and early soul classics from Hipshakin’ DJs.
BARRICANE + SARAH DERRICK + DOLLY MAVIES + LEE GILBERT: **St. Mary’s Church, Witney** – Folky trip-pop from Barricane and more at the Witney Music Fest show.
MUDDY JOHNSON: **The Fleece, Witney** – Live blues at WMF.

SUNDAY 5th
SPIERS & BODEN: **Oxford Playhouse** – The stalwarts of the modern trad scene reunite for new album ‘Fallow Ground’ – *see main preview*
COSMIT + TRUST CLUB + AND WHAT + THE DUMPLINGS: **The Library** – An Oxford debut from Bristol’s indie power-pop supergroup Cosmit, made up of members of Toodles & the Hectic Pity Party, Austeros and Specialist Subject Records, at tonight’s Divine Schism show, with support from post-grunge art-pop outfit Trust Club, mixing up influences of Pixies, Pavement and Weezer.
JACOB COLLIER: **O2 Academy** – Already sold out show from the virtuoso multi-instrumentalist, beloved of everyone from Chris Martin and Herbie Hancock to Stormzy and Quincy Jones, subject of a new BBC documentary, and the first artist ever to win a Grammy for each and every one of his first four albums. He’s currently on a world tour to promote his latest ‘Djesse’ album project with tonight’s show a relatively intimate affair ahead of two nights at Brixton Academy.
OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Harcourt Arms**


– Weekly open night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: **The Tree, Iffley (3.30-5.30pm)** – Free live music from the local ska, funk, blues, rock and folk crew.
FOLK SESSION: **The Half Moon** – Weekly Irish session.
OPEN MIC: **James Street Tavern (2.30pm)** – Weekly open afternoon.
RAG & MOAN MEN: **The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5pm)** – Blues, folk and Americana with the local trio.

MONDAY 6th
THE ROWAN GODEL TRIBUTE CONCERT: **Nettlebed Folk Club** – A tribute show to one of the Ladies of Nettlebed who

Tuesday 7th

AMYL & THE SNIFFERS:
O2 Academy

Real, actual, no-holds-barred punk rock fun and fury from Melbourne’s seemingly unstoppable Amyl & the Sniffers tonight, the band having risen from their local DIY scene to win the ARIA Music Awards Rock Album of the Year for their eponymous debut and on to hitting the Number 2 spot in their native charts with follow-up ‘Comfort To Me’, while scraping the Top 20 over here, where much of their popularity has come via word of mouth raving about their live shows where a primal, full-throttle energy powers a mix of outsider rage and frustration, and joyous female empowerment from force-of-nature frontwoman Amy Taylor, a ferocious, erudite, emotionally upfront punk rock star in the tradition of Wendy O. Williams and Poly Styrene. Amy’s guest appearance on Sleaford Mods ‘Nudge’ opened her and her band up to a wider audience and pretty soon you imagine even venues this size will be too small for Amyl and the Sniffers. ‘Comfort To Me’ is a superb record, few frills, all thrills speedcore in the vein of The Stooges, Motorhead, Minor Threat and The Exploited but awash with great sing-along songs – from ‘Security’ to ‘Hertz’ and the no-punches-pulled ‘Don’t Need a Cunt Like You (To Love Me)’. “You can’t limit me” sings Taylor on ‘Don’t Fence Me In’, a battlecry for personal and wider female freedom and ambition but increasingly a statement of intent for a band who might just be the most exciting act around right now.



passed away in February. Rowan’s partner Benji Kirkpatrick hosts a night with sets from John Jones, Ian Telfer, Alan Prosser and Al Scott from Oysterband, Charlie Dore, Jackie Oates and Megan Henwood from Ladies of Nettlebed, and John Jones and the Reluctant Ramblers, including Benji himself with Tim Cotterell.

TUESDAY 7th
AMYL & THE SNIFFERS: **O2 Academy** – This is punk rock, accept no imitations – *see main preview*

WEDNESDAY 8th
BERRY BROWN & FRIENDS: **The Edge, Witney** – Summery electro-pop from local singer Berry Brown and chums as part of Witney Music Fest.
LITTLE BROTHER ELI: **Blunt Rabbit, Witney** – The local funk and disco-infused rockers take over the local barbers as part of WMF.

THURSDAY 9th
THE STATION + DELTA VIOLIN + UNKNOWN METHODS: **Jericho Tavern** – It’s All About the Music showcase.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: **The Fox Inn, Steventon**

FRIDAY 10th
KITE FESTIVAL: Kirtlington Country Park – Opening day of the inaugural ‘festival of music and ideas’ featuring sets from Grace Jones, Self Esteem, Tom Misch, TLC and Mavis Staples among myriad others, plus talks from the likes of Jarvis Cocker, David Miliband and George Monbiot and comedy from Reginald D Hunter – *see main preview*
THE QUIREBOYS + MASSIVE: **The Bullingdon** – Sleazy glam-rocking from the 90s Britrockers, still led by main man Spike and once dubbed The English Poison, keeping it hairy once again on tour.
RAVING TRIPPY: **The Bullingdon** – Psychedelic house and techno club night.
THE INFLATABLES + TOM HINGLEY & THE KAR-PETS + TOM MOORE + VODKA SHOTS: **The Leys, Witney** – First night of Witney Music Festival’s big finale, today with ska and Two Tone tribute veterans The Inflatables providing a suitable summer soundtrack alongside former Inspiral Carpets singer Tom Hingley.
KANDA BONGO MAN: **Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall Uffington** – The Kwasa Kwasa King, finally, hopefully, makes a return journey into the Oxfordshire countryside after the postponement of his shows here in September and December due to surgery, the man launching a new live album recorded at his last gig here. The veteran Congolese showman helped revitalised Congolese rumba through the 80s and 90s, becoming a firm favourite with John Peel and earning himself shows at WOMAD, Queen Elizabeth Hall and more before leaving these shores to live in South Africa. As a wise man once said, “if Kanda Bongo Man can’t make you dance, call an ambulance – you must be dead or dying.”



Friday 10th – Sunday 12th
KITE FESTIVAL:
Kirtlington Park
A big welcome to the Oxfordshire festival calendar to Kite Festival, billed as ‘a festival of music and ideas’, which was originally due to take place in Kirtlington back in 2020 before Covid hit, so this is their inaugural year and it’s an impressive opening line-up they’ve delivered. Not least with a headline showing from the god-like **GRACE JONES** (*pictured*), a genuinely unique, instantly recognisable, genre-spanning artist best known for monster hit ‘Slave To the Rhythm’ but whose entire catalogue (and autobiography) are utterly essential. We genuinely cannot wait to see her live. Joining her on the main stage will be enduring r’n’b hitmakers **TLC**; funk, nu-jazz and neo-soul man **TOM MISCH**; glam-stomping, empowering art-pop star **SELF ESTEEM**; gospel living legend **MAVIS STAPLES**; Kate Stables’ indie folksters **THIS IS THE KIT**; electro-pop hitmakers **ST. ETIENNE**; Afrobeat singer and saxophonist – and son of Fela Kuti – **SEUN KUTI** with **EGYPT 80**; Middle Eastern, North African and Indian-inspired psych crew **FLAMINGODS** and more, while **HEAVENLY RECORDS** play host to a superb cast of acts including experimental rock travellers **BLACK COUNTRY**, **NEW ROAD**; Aussie electro-pop outfit **CONFIDENCE MAN**; Welsh synth-pop star **GWENNO**; classic indie fuzzsters **THE ORIELLES**, and Americana-slavoured pop party-starter **KATY J PEARSON**. Away from the music, on the ‘ideas’ stages you’ll find the likes of **DAVID MILIBAND**; **JARVIS COCKER**; **DELIA SMITH**; **TINA BROWN**; **RORY STEWART** and **GEORGE MONBIOT** discussing everything from global conflict and the climate crisis, to the royal family and political leadership, while folk legend **SHIRLEY COLLINS** is in conversation with **MATTHEW SHAW**. And if that’s all a bit too serious for a weekend in the summer sun, there’s comedy from **REGINALD D HUNTER**; **DAVID O’DOHERTY**; **JEN BRISTER**, **SARA BARRON** and more. It’s an eclectic yet star-studded bill and as we’re set to lose Cornbury Festival after this year, hopefully Kite will become a staple of the summer. Did we mention how excited we are to be seeing Grace Jones?

SATURDAY 11th
KITE FESTIVAL: Kirtlington Country Park
– see main preview

THE INFLATABLES + KING HAMMOND:
O2 Academy – Ska and Two-Tone classics
 from the enduring local crew.

Tuesday 14th
BOB MOULD:
O2 Academy

One of the most distinctive voices in alternative music, and one of the most influential musicians of the past few decades, Bob Mould's place in rock's firmament is assured, even if he remains below the radar of glossy Hall of Fame ceremonies. With Husker Du he helped break the mould of American rock music, providing the bridge between punk and what became American alternative, indie and college rock, inspiring everyone from Pixies to Nirvana as well as releasing one of the greatest albums of all time in 'Zen Arcade'. From there Mould formed Sugar, whose 'Copper Blue' remains one of the 90s finest records as well as his biggest selling album to date. Since 1996 when Sugar split, Mould's career and life has gone an ever more eclectic journey, from working in wrestling scriptwriting to exploring electronic music, dance and remixing, DJing and becoming both a gay icon and advocate for gay rights and marriage. His most recent musical output was 2020's 'Blue Hearts', something of a return to the harder guitar sounds of Husker Du – short, sharp bursts of noise with that trademark melodic heart. His influence is everywhere but no one sounds like Bob Mould and this visit to the O2 – postponed from earlier this year – is something to treasure.



SUNDAY 12th

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms
THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Tree, Iffley
(3.30-5.30pm) – Rock and blues classics from

TOM DALBY: The Old Anchor, Abingdon –
Bluesy Americana from the local songsmith.

MONDAY 13th

THE CHURCHFITTERS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Energetic folk fusion from the Anglo-Irish-French band, mixing up original songs with updated takes on traditional British folk tunes.

TUESDAY 14th

BOB MOULD + KATIE MALCO: O2 Academy – The legendary Husker Du and Sugar singer makes it to town after the postponement of his last show here – *see main preview*

INTRUSION: Kiss Bar – The monthly goth, industrial ebm and alternative club night celebrates its 21st birthday, keeping it dark on the dancefloor.

WEDNESDAY 15th

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR + CHLOE FOY: The Bullingdon – Rearranged from March, Ruarri Joseph's band return to the Shire for the first time since their 2019 show in Witney, this time touring their album 'Maverick Thinker', the trio's earthy blues rocking inspired by Jim Morrison and JJ Cale.

SIMPLY DREADFUL: Blenheim Palace – Mick Hucknall and his Pink Pancake Band ruin soul music in a fashion only the 1980s could conjure.

THURSDAY 16th

SKUNK ANANSIE: O2 Academy – The



Monday 20th

**COURTNEY MARIE
ANDREWS: St. John
the Evangelist**

Courtney Marie Andrews has spent almost her entire adult life on the road. Raised in Arizona, at the age of 16 she headed off on her first tour, playing any bar or café that would have her along the West Coast. And when she finished that she took a Greyhound bus to New York and did the same along the East Coast. And when that was done, she spent the following decade touring as guitarist and backing singer with some 40 different acts, including Jimmy Eatworld and Damien Jurado, as well as Belgian band Milow, whose members in turn became her backing band on the EP she recorded over there. Eventually homesickness caught up with her and she went home and worked in a bar. Here she used the stories she heard from customers – farmers, construction workers, waitresses – alongside her own experiences to write and record her classic 2016 album ‘Honest Life’, using that life on the road as a framework to explore youth, maturity, dreams of escape and the cost of that escape, longing and redemption in a classic, unfussy country roots style that recalls Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris and the 70s Laurel Canyon sound. This time round in town she’s touring her eighth album ‘Old Flowers’, written about her separation from her long-time partner, exploring themes of love and its loss, separation, change, self-discovery and omens in characteristically honest and emotive style.

pioneering 90s rock icons reform to celebrate 25 years since they first formed, releasing a new album, '25Live@25', at the end of last year, singer Skin in particular a star with few if any contemporaries as a queer black woman fronting a multi-racial band in a white rock world, Skunk Anansie headlining Glastonbury long before Stormzy and Beyonce enjoyed their much more lauded top billing. Expect classic tracks like mega hit 'Weak', and 'Hedonism' alongside the new songs.

JODY & THE JERMS + THE FACTORY
LIGHTS: The Bullingdon – Local indie crew and recent *Nightshift* cover stars Jody & the Jerms officially launch their new album, 'Flicker', inspired by classic 80s and 90s indie acts like The Primitives and Darling Buds as well as the timeless pop sounds of Blondie and Kirsty MacColl. Support from Ant Kelly from The Shapes' more introspective project The

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE IMPOSTERS:
The New Theatre – The ever-restless elder statesman of English pop, country, new wave, soul and beyond tours his energised new album ‘The Boy Named If’ – his 32nd studio album and another Top 10 hit to add to the collection. New songs plus all those classics from across his enviable career: ‘Watching the Detectives’; ‘I Don’t Want To Go To Chelsea’ ‘Alison’; ‘I Can’t Stand Up For Falling Down’ and more.

DAVID GRAY + JAMES MORRISON:
Blenheim Palace – Following on from
 Blenheim's annual jousting tournament,
 music's two most boring men go head to head
 as to who can kill the most people through
 abject tedium in one sitting.

FOAM HEADS + GRAVID: Jericho Tavern – It's All About the Music showcase with 80s-style new wavers Foam Heads and psychedelic prog crew Gravid.

DALBY'S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

HAZY SOUL + 2AM BLUE + BENEDICT HEANEY: Loose Cannon, Abingdon – Making Music in Abingdon build up to their full day of live music around town with another show of local talent at the Loose Cannon brewery.

FRIDAY 17th

**THE DEADBEAT APOSTLES +
BARRICANE: The Bullingdon –** *Raucous,
rocking blues, soul, country, r'n'b and punk*

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FRIDAY 02 DECEMBER
THE BULLINGDON

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH DMF

The Tree, Iffley (4-7pm) – Klub Kakofanney host a free afternoon of live music.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the front bar hosted by Osprey with Beard of Destiny, Osmosis, The Holy Fools, Will Cox, Bill Frizzell and Chloe August.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)
THE MYSTERIES: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm) – Harmony-heavy acoustic soul from the local trio.
TOM DAVIS: The Old Anchor, Abingdon

MONDAY 20th
COURTNEY MARIE ANDREWS: St. John the Evangelist – The much-travelled Arizona

Wednesday 22nd
ST. VINCENT: O2 Academy
Much like David Bowie and Kate Bush, Annie Clark is a relentlessly inventive musician who conveys her art through the spectrum of different characters, perhaps as a way to deflect from herself, a very private individual. Across six albums she’s played myriad parts, always under the name St Vincent, the only consistent thing been the excellence of the music. Her most recent, ‘Daddy’s Home’, refers to her father’s release from prison but only the title track directly deals with him; instead the album is informed and inspired for the most part by his record collection which is mostly from the early and mid 1970s. So across its dozen or so tracks it visits psychedelic soul; cabaret pop; prog balladry and cosmic funk by way of Stevie Wonder; Harry Nilsson; Randy Newman; Freda Payne; Pink Floyd and The Stylistics, but instead of just paying tribute to that time and its music, it mutates and deconstructs it and remakes it into sometimes strange and unsettling shapes, her superb, wide-ranging voice and guitar playing able to go their own way and stop either her or the listener getting too comfortable. The album won her a Grammy for Best Alternative Music Album as well as numerous album of the year nominations and whatever, or whoever, she chooses to do and be next, St Vincent is an artist in a league very much of her own.



singer and songwriter returns to Oxford to promote her new ‘Old Flowers’ album, dealing with the break-up of her relationship – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 21st
CRAKE + HAMBURGER + TENDERTWIN: Florence Park Community Centre – Rowan Sandle’s alt.folk and folkloric band come to Divine Schism ahead of the release of their debut album ‘Humans Worst Habbits’, exploring grief, nature and identity.
MAKING MUSIC ABINGDON
SHOWCASE: The Old Anchor, Abingdon (2pm) – Live sets from Ma Bessy, Trip Hazard, Kay Davis, Asimov Cascade, Sarah Knowles, Cora, Martin Wood and Jaci CK.

WEDNESDAY 22nd
ST. VINCENT: O2 Academy – Annie Clark revisits and remodels 70s pop, funk, soul and psychedelia on her new album ‘Daddy’s Home’ – *see main preview*

THURSDAY 23rd
SIERRA FERRELL: St. Barnabas Church – Already sold-out Empty Room Promotions show from the nomadic Nashville country singer-songwriter, over in the UK to promote her debut album, ‘Long Time Coming’.
ULYSSES WELLS: The Bullingdon – Funky blues rocking somewhere between Muse and Black Denim from local rockers Ulysses Wells, launching their new EP tonight.
IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC
SHOWCASE: Jericho Tavern
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

FRIDAY 24th
BOSSAPHONIK with FONTANAS: Cowley Workers Social Club – Oxford’s monthly world jazz extravaganza hosts Fontanas, the seven-strong ensemble mixing Brazilian percussion and brass with soul, funk and Latin swing. Bossa host Dan Ofer spins a goodly mix of Balkan beats, Latin dancefloor, Afrobeat and nu-jazz.
DON’T LAUGH + ROAST DUCK: The Bullingdon – A double dose of Chinese rock bands out of Oxford uni.
JACK GOLDSTEIN + RICHARD LEWIS + LOST LYRA: Florence Park Community Centre – Consummate showman, shaman and possibly the world’s great pop performer in waiting, Jack G returns to his hometown to promote new album ‘The World Is Ending & I Love you’ – it is, and he does. Imagine Meatloaf via Madonna, Freddie Mercury via Richard T Herring and Gibby Haynes via Timmy Mallet: it’s called fun, kids.
ROGER DALTREY: The New Theatre – Part of a tour of intimate “evening with” shows from the Who frontman, playing a career-spanning selection of Who and solo hits and rarities, acoustic and electric as well as hosting Q&As with the audience.
REGGAETON PARTY: The Bullingdon
GHOSTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS + JUNIPER NIGHTS + DAZE: The Jericho Tavern – This month’s OMS mag’s local



Wednesday 29th
VANDOLIERS: The Bullingdon
Rendered blind for two months by a severe eye infection, Joshua Fleming, former frontman of Dallas-Fort Worth punk band Phuss spent his time listening to the Marty Stuart Show and discovered the similarities between punk and country music. Recovered, and musically rejuvenated, Fleming promptly wrote what would become Vandoliers’ debut album ‘Ameri-Kinda’ in a week and formed a band made up of veterans of the local punk and country scenes, kicking it out in local bars, earning themselves support slots with The Old 97s and The Reverend Horton Heat, self styling themselves Converse Country and helping start a cow-punk revival into the bargain as they mixed up outlaw country, Texas swing, electric blues, honky tonk and rough-edged roots with a bit of punk rock vim and vigour and the odd Proclaimers cover thrown in for good measure. Eventually they got themselves signed to Bloodshot Records who released their third and most recent album ‘Forever’, as well as providing a natural home for their brand of music, which has been likened to a meeting point between Calexico and The Dropkick Murphys. Tonight’s show – Vandoliers’ Oxford debut – is hosted by, who else, Empty Room Promotions, who have long been bringing cult Americana stars to town and it’ll be quite the hoedown. To paraphrase the bartender in *The Blues Brothers*, Vandoliers play both kinds of music: country *and* punk rock.

showcase features instrumental post-rock and shoegaze soundscapists Ghosts in the Photographs with their cinematic take on Mogwai, Godspeed and Ride, alongside grunge, psych and alt.rock crew Juniper Nights, and jazzy electro-popsters Daze.
OCTAVIA FREUD + TIGER MENDOZA + ELUCIDATE: Kenton Theatre, Henley-on-Thames – Electro-pop storytelling from this month’s cover star alongside electronic/drum&bass/hip hop/industrial star Tiger Mendoza.
INDIE DISCO: Tap Social, Botley – Dominic Utton spins 80s and 90s vinyl indie classics.
CHRIS FOX: Harwell Village Hall – British folk, Americana and rock from the singer, songwriter and loopmeister.

SATURDAY 25th
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with KING PANIC + FAST TRAINS + CITIES &

MEMORIES: The Port Mahon – Gappy Tooth’s monthly mixed bag once again throws up a diverse treat of a show with raucous pop, swamp rock and alt.folk from King Panic, plus a solo acoustic Oxford debut from Portsmouth’s Fast Trains and a festival warm-up for Stuart Fowkes’ pioneering sound experiment Cities & Memories, “remixing the world one found sound at a time.”
RAWDIO ft. LOGAN + DJ EKSMAN: The Bullingdon – 90s jungle classics.
THE GEES + HOT SAUC RHYTHM & BRASS BAND: The Jericho Tavern
MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: Harcourt Arms
ANCHORFEST: The Old Anchor, Abingdon (2pm) – Full day and live music.

SUNDAY 26th
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Harcourt Arms
SUNDAY SOCIAL: The Bullingdon (3pm) – Free afternoon of live music in the front bar hosted by Osprey, with No Horses, The Oxford Blues Corporation Band, Mojo Demon, Tony & Sal Batey and Blues Artisan.
FOLK SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC: James Street Tavern (2.30pm)
STEPHEN BUTTON: The Brewery Tap, Abingdon (5.30pm) – Pop, indie, r’n’b and soul faves.
BEN HAWKINS: The Old Anchor, Abingdon (4pm)

MONDAY 27th
TUESDAY 28th
THE BEVIS FROND + LINA SIMON: The Jericho Tavern – Divine Schism welcomes back cult hero Nick Saloman, the prolific talent behind the name The Bevis Frond, who has been self-making and releasing albums since the mid-1980s (his latest, ‘Little Eden’, was his 28th) mostly staying loyal to the path of psychedelia, exploring its boundaries, from garage rock to a more pastoral path, a gentle natured British eccentricity battling with its axe hero desires at its core, which has seen him compared to Syd Barrett, Robert Wyatt and Robyn Hitchcock, but also Hendrix – his chief musical love – and Neil Young, and sustained by a fanatical fanbase that includes Stewart Lee and J Mascis. Electro-pop support from Lina Simon.

Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion is the 20th of each month, no exceptions. Listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be used without permission.

WEDNESDAY 29th
THE VANDOLIERS: The Bullingdon – The cowpunk revival reaches stampede status with the Texan country rockers – *see main preview*

THURSDAY 30th
PETE BOSS & THE BLUEHEARTS: The Jericho Tavern – Slowhand blues from Oxford’s Clapton-inspired guitarist.
DALBY’S OPEN MIC: The Fox Inn, Steventon

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JUNE NEW RELEASES

<p>THE SMILE A LIGHT FOR ATTRACTING ATTENTION</p>	<p>FOALS LIFE IS YOURS</p>	<p>ANGEL OLSEN BIG TIME</p>
<p>GEORGE EZRA GOLD RUSH KID</p>	<p>HORSEGIRL VERSIONS OF MODERN PERFORMANCE</p>	<p>SOCCER MOMMY SOMETIMES, FOREVER</p>
<p>DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS WELCOME 2 CLUB XIII</p>	<p>KELLY LEE OWENS LP 8</p>	<p>MICHAEL HEAD & THE RED ELASTIC BAND DEAR SCOTT</p>
<p>SHEARWATER THE GREAT AWAKENING</p>	<p>THE LINDA LINDAS GROWING UP</p>	<p>DESTROYER LABYRINTHITIS</p>

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RIDE

O2 Academy

‘Nowhere’ was a ground zero in so many ways. It was the first album by an Oxford band to chart and Creation Records’ most successful release to date when it came out. Moreover, it laid the groundwork for what became known as shoegaze and has set the bar for the genre ever since. With its release, Ride kicked open doors Oxford musicians had considered permanently closed to them for years; finally they could dream of success beyond the city walls. Tonight’s show – the home leg of a belated tour to celebrate ‘Nowhere’'s 30th anniversary – is a reminder of just what an incredible record it was and remains. Neither its power nor melodic prowess has diminished an iota since

1990. Pleasingly tonight’s packed crowd features plenty of fans who likely weren’t even born when the album was released – including a contingent of current local psych stars Mandrake Handshake. The record’s legacy cannot be overstated. Ride choose to play the album in its entirety and correct track order tonight. Even their intro music – This Mortal Coil’s ‘Fyt’ – is the same as when they first toured it. And then, from the soaring opening psychedelic cascade of ‘Seagull’, it’s a night of euphoria and celebration. From the strung-out spangle of ‘In a Different Place’, through the gloriously flanged-to-fuckery ‘Polar Bear’ with its gorgeous daydreaming vocals and Loz Colbert’s tumbling drums,

to the graceful gothic lament of ‘Paralysed’ – perhaps Andy Bell’s greatest ever vocal performance – with its scouring coda and dubby rejoinder, it’s a simply magnificent set worthy of such a homecoming. ‘Taste’ is simultaneously bulldozing and sky-touching; ‘Vapour Trail’ gets the extended mass audience sing-along treatment, while ‘Dreams Burn Down’, perhaps the song that most defined shoegaze at its birth, remains a staggeringly visceral experience with its succession of guitar peaks and avalanches and incandescent climax. They close the first part of the set with ‘Nowhere’ itself, a crushing noise-rock indulgence that we could happily allow to go on forever, but return for another shorter set of

later songs: ‘Lannoy Point’ sounds more like a piece of ‘Nowhere’ than anything that came in between then and now, while ‘Kill Switch’ is almost venomous in its sonic assault. Of course, they have to play ‘OX4’, the song, as Mark Gardener reminds everyone, Ride wrote about the part of Oxford that made them, and as he and Andy sing “I’m going home” some kind of emotional dam in the room shatters – it’s a moment of pure magic on a very special night. Ride might not be as fresh faced as they were when ‘Nowhere’ was released (none of us are) but musically it is a timeless titan of indie rock and that it both came out of Oxford and helped lay the foundation for the next three decades of our local scene, is something worth celebrating for a long time to come. **Dale Kattack**

One, the newest, which he wrote when working night shifts in Slough, and not strictly a dance tune, is one of his best, combining an earworm melody, a killer double bass line from Ben Nicholls (from Seth Lakeman’s band) and wah wah electric guitar. When it comes to older tunes Sweeney often finds an unusual version, as with ‘Cuckoo’s Nest’, while ‘Old Tom of Oxford’ is all about the raw beauty of his playing. He says one tune he learnt from Dr Andy Letcher, once of this parish and of much-missed local gothic folk band ‘Telling the Bees’. Given this it’s no surprise that though going from melancholy to jolly, ‘Steppy Downs Road’ never entirely escapes the dark side. The night ends with Sweeney and the band smiling broadly and most of the audience out of their seats applauding and stamping their feet. That says it all. **Colin May**

see if his fiddle has resonating strings. It hasn’t; it’s just sheer skill. His playing prioritises clarity of melody over excessive ornamentation and grandstanding and has both an elegance and rawness which can mesmerise. The tune is the thing, but while he treats tunes with respect he opens them up for his band to come in with riffs and Louis Campbell’s electric guitar effects, which often sound borrowed from the best contemporary pop and indie. For a couple of numbers Sweeney and Jack Rutter’s acoustic guitar duke it out rock style, face-to-face centre stage, and collectively the band can make a satisfyingly big sound. If there’s a thread running through the gig then its English dance tunes: morris, hornpipes, and waltzes, some old, some written by Sweeney.

LLOYD COLE

St. John the Evangelist

To many of us who remember 1985, ‘Rattlesnakes’ by Lloyd Cole & The Commotions stands out as the essential soundtrack to that year. Its majestically complex but accessible arrangements and literary-tinged (okay, often pretentious) lyrics delivered in his deep, soulful croon were the perfect counterpoint to most of what was going on musically at the time, such as the rise of goth; perfect British pop at its best. Formed at Glasgow University, the band only lasted five years but the man himself has quietly forged a solo career from his base in the US since then. This tour, started two and a half years ago but obviously interrupted, is approaching its 90th date and nearing completion. Picking up an acoustic guitar and launching into ‘Past Imperfect’ with no fanfare, he sounds and looks younger than his 61 years, interspersing songs from throughout the years with what sounds like well-rehearsed self-deprecating patter. The hits are cleverly placed in strategic points throughout the evening and benefit hugely from the stripped-back format allowing plenty of space, while the less familiar material shows his song writing powers have remained sharp, if lacking signs of much evolution. The influence of country music remains strong, more in the often

melancholy feel than structure of the songs: think Jim Reeves or Slim Whitman. After the interval he brings on Neil Clark, original second guitarist from the Commotions and its great asset, and the interest level rises higher. We get a totally glorious ‘Are You Ready To Be Heartbroken?’, probably Cole’s finest moment, and it’s fascinating to watch the complex interplay between the two acoustic guitars. Recent album ‘Guesswork’, recorded mainly at home, featured electronic elements, and it would be interesting to hear more of this, such as his 2013 experimental collaboration with Hans-Joachim Roedelius from Cluster, but without exception all the versions here sound better than the record. The only cover is a sensitive take on T. Rex’s ‘Cosmic Dancer’, and mirrors the themes of self-examination and regret that permeate his own lyrics. The two-hour set is great value but becomes rather an intense experience, all blown away by the final ‘Forest Fire’; its anthemic, air-punching structure beautifully arranged to fit the duo format, with Clark’s guitar work nothing short of transcendental. It’s a real pleasure to see a crucial piece of British pop history with a light shining so strong. **Art Lagun**

GEMMA CULLINGFORD / MEANS OF PRODUCTION / CHOLLY

The Library

If you’re related to Cholly chances are you’ll be in one of her songs soon enough; half her musical sounds seem to be samples of family members – from her seven-year-old sister’s humming to her dad’s tin whistle, everything gets recorded and put into her synth sounds. Maybe that’s what gives the Wycombe-based singer and synth-popster’s songs such gentle charm, with their busy, bubbling electronics and simple, woozy melodies topped by her occasionally nervy-sounding vocals. The whole set is highly likeable, as is her between-song chat which makes her seem like Grimes discovering her calling as a primary school teacher, with the high point of her set the closing number with its gently effervescent glitch-pop feel. What more to say about Means Of Production, other than the duo just get better and better every time we see them, their audio-visual show now bordering on being properly sleek, or at least it would do if the music wasn’t so wonderfully sinister: harsh, insistent, monochrome, analogue post-punk-synth-pop glory straight out of the top drawer via Fad Gadget’s dressing up box and Bam Bam’s acid house wardrobe of doom. They’re concrete and chrome, grey and neon, foreboding yet intensely danceable. In short, they’re brilliant.

The pair struck up a relationship with Norwich’s post-punk/electro-pop/disco duo Sink Ya Teeth a while before lockdown and have since remixed one half of that band, Gemma Cullingford. While it’s sad to think Sink Ya Teeth might be on permanent hiatus, both Gemma and pop partner Maria Uzor are carving out impressive solo careers. Gemma aims, initially at least, towards the disco side of their sound, ebulliently throbbing basslines and shimmering synths a musical manifestation of her sequined dress. As her set progresses though, the music becomes more propulsive, the visuals more intense, her vocals, downbeat, often spoken rather than sung, taking us into heavier and darker places. There’s deliciously squelchy techno on new track ‘Tongue Tied’, while early-80s synths glower and shimmer brilliantly, which suggests far wider success could be hers if she tapped into the house and modern disco club crowd. Soon those basslines are digging deeper roots and we’re into ESG and Liquid Liquid territory and then, at the end, full-on Afrobeat, and you can’t help feel, privilege though it is to see her in such intimate surroundings, far, far bigger rooms and crowds could be Gemma’s if only she could just get exposure to them. **Dale Kattack**

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CAMILLE O’SULLIVAN

The North Wall

Nick Cave has been rich pickings for reinterpretation lately, with everyone from Flaming Lips (with Nell) to Anna Calvi successfully exploring his songwriting genius. Camille O’Sullivan has been singing his songs in her own way for a long while yet tonight is the first time she has performed an entire set of Cave songs. Saying that, it isn’t a set entirely of Nick Cave songs since she manages to squeeze a pleasingly loose rendition of Bowie’s ‘Moonage Daydream’ in towards the end, though only after asking the audience’s permission. They couldn’t refuse Camille anything to be honest. She is an absolute star: a dramatic performer with a strikingly great voice as well as a very, very funny between-song entertainer who can somehow manage to sing songs of

sheer heartbreak and tragedy one minute, blather on about her knickers being too tight the next, before spending the next song lying on the stage with her legs in the air like a dying fly. Maybe it’s because she’s half French, half Irish and can channel those distinct styles so perfectly. Backed by a discreetly impressive three-piece band, she takes to the stage and without introduction launches into ‘God Is In the House’, smoothing its edges but retaining all its subtleties, her Irish accent leaking judiciously into the words. From here we get a sumptuous, serene take on ‘Into Your Arms but also a raucous, raunchy version of ‘Jubilee Street’ and then a raw, bluesy stab at ‘Nature Boy’ where Camille unleashes her inner Patti Smith to glorious effect.

THE PEOPLE VERSUS

O2 Academy

Anyone bemoaning a lack of pizzazz in local music should catch The People Versus at the earliest opportunity. The five musicians who take to the stage at the start of tonight’s single launch show and slope into a very slightly funky, jazz-tinged chamber pop tune are one thing, but as soon as singer Alice Edwards appears it’s time for some showbiz, *daaarling*. Resplendent in tiara and ballgown, as demonstrative physically as she is vocally – all elaborate hand dances and drama – she’s like Cyndi Lauper playing out a Marilyn Monroe fantasy. She’s a wonderfully engaging performer with a slightly breathless voice to match and for the most part the big lush musical arrangements behind her suit her style, notably on the lively, rootsy ‘Driftwood’ and the tigerish, more jazzy ‘Wilderness’. Between songs too she’s effusive and enthusiastic – unsurprising given tonight is The People Versus’ biggest local show to date and one that’s been postponed due to Covid numerous times. The gig also shows just how far the band have grown and changed since their early folk-leaning beginnings. Only a couple of more downbeat numbers tonight hint towards that, with joyously buoyant jazz-pop much more the order of the day, though coming out song ‘Lonely Teen’ is a more reflective highlight of the night. If there’s a criticism to be had it’s that we’d like to see Emily sing accompanied only by cellist Benedict Crone occasionally, giving the set and her voice a bit more space once in a while. But it’s hard to argue with the four-way harmonies and the big synth-led songs like new single ‘Again & Again’, or ‘Charybdis’, the band’s unabashedly pop finale, a suitably ebullient end to what feels like a celebratory evening even at this early stage in The People Versus’ career.

Sue Foreman

Tracks from Cave’s most recent albums, awash with the sorrow and soul searching following the death of his son Arthur, are delicately unwound but when Camille faces up to ‘Stagger Lee’ she’s possessed of terrifying intensity. Such is the depth of Cave’s catalogue even many of his old classics get left behind, but not tonight. ‘Red Right Hand’ might be a predictable choice but ‘The Mercy Seat’ – for us, Cave’s greatest ever song – isn’t and while we don’t get the full nine-minute descent into damnation it’s a sublime reading, while ‘The Ship Song’ is both faithful and individual. She might be singing someone else’s songs but O’Sullivan makes them, for the overwhelming part, her own – the mark of a true interpreter. And then she strides along the aisles, hugging every member of the audience within arms reach and off into the lobby to share jokes and more hugs. A star in every sense.

Dale Kattack

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SLOW DOWN MOLASSES / SAVAGE MANSION / DOGMILK

Florence Park Community Centre

If you go back and watch the first series of *Blackadder*, it's quite surprising how much that defines the show is absent: Baldrick is clever, the filming is lush and expensive, and there are extended riffs on Shakespeare instead of cunning plans. There's a similar pilot-episode pleasure in seeing a decent band early on; whilst you know they'll improve, witnessing ideas being tested and explored is a privilege. Dogmilk, featuring ex-members of Slate Hearts and Easter Island Statues, have only played a handful of shows, and are standing in tonight at late notice, and they try on a handful of styles during their short

set: grunge-via-90s teen soundtracks; garage rock; Cure-style lamenting; uptight punk-funk, and even a one-minute country-skank through 'You've Got A Friend In Me'. Most likely their eclectic sound will settle in the coming months, but wherever they land will be a pleasure if it involves a band this sharp and crisp. If Dogmilk are crisp, Glasgow's Savage Mansion are Findus Crispy Pancakes cooked in Crisp'n'Dry by Quentin Crisp on St Crispin's Day. This performance is gloriously tight, and the music infectious, the band generally following a pretty well-defined route, with solid, harmonically straightforward

chugging supporting sprechgesang verses and punchily sung short choruses, putting them next door to the wonderful A House. Like The Nightingales, they know how to squeeze a good riff dry, and like Jonathan Richman, they know how to deliver elegant narrative lyrics without being self-consciously arty. You may find yourself thinking of Dylan, Jeffrey Lewis, and Luke Haines. You may find yourself imagining Wet Leg as arranged by Glenn Tilbrook. And you may ask yourself, how come I never heard of this band before?

Saskatchewan's Slow Down, Molasses released their last album

through tonight's promoter, Divine Schism. Theirs is a more raucous, thrashy and transatlantic sound than what we've heard so far tonight, like goth-psych rockers Darker My Love recreated in the minds of Gnasher and Gnipper. Black-clad, and not afraid of a burning avalanche of guitar noise, the band feel pretty exciting in this bright, cosy community centre – we spot an organiser glancing at a decibel count early on – and they bounce between grubby but honed Mission Of Burma rock and the less aggressive end of hardcore, falling somewhere between the rosters of Matador and Dischord. They know precisely how to make ears ring and heads nod, and if they don't quite make hearts leap, they're still welcome visitors 4,000 miles from home.

David Murphy

SAM CARTER

Harwell Village Hall

Big Ginger Tom Music have been putting on a series of monthly folk gigs at Harwell Village Hall for the past few years. Like so many shows tonight's, originally planned for 2019, has been rearranged multiple times. Finally, though, we get to see Sam Carter, a highly rated folk musician and guitarist, who has the prestigious Horizon Award for Best Newcomer at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards in 2010 on his mantelpiece.

Tonight he is belatedly promoting his "new" 2020 album 'Home Waters', kicking off with 'The Anvil' from that record and setting the standard for the rest of the show – wonderfully

played songs of death and sorrow as well as more uplifting numbers of the kind we all need in these troubled times, like 'She Brings Me Home'. Sam's take on the Sandy Denny tune 'Bushes and Briars' highlights how to do a cover well: keeping the original's charm and adding a little bit of your own musical magic. On this one, as indeed of any of tonight's songs, he shows his guitar playing as something to behold even for the non-musos among us, keeping a steady rhythm going while picking out notes that mesmerise the eyes and delight the ears.

His subject matter can seem a tad off the wall

as times, for instance 'We Never Made It To The Lakes' – a middle class break-up song as he described it – but they work well in a live setting. 'Taunting The Dog' is another, which deals with how even the most patient of people can be pushed to a fit of anger. 'Surprise View', meanwhile, is perhaps one of Carter's most poignant songs, dealing with the loss of a loved one; it's one of those songs that is somehow uplifting despite the lyrical content, and he ends the show with a jolly sing-a-long on the traditional song 'Jack Hall', about a hanging, and the audience joins in with gusto, proving yet again his skill in bringing something inclusive and even joyous out of something otherwise dark.

Jason Ritchie

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BAMBARA The Bullingdon

Bambara seem to be a study in choreographed chaos. On the one had you can just imagine them practising their best rock and roll poses, moves and snarls in front of the mirror back in their native Brooklyn, doubtless while listening to Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds at full volume; on the other this is an irresistibly visceral rock show and any artifice that might exist is quickly and mercilessly crunched to dust as the quartet play out their garage rock god fantasies. And

anyway, a decade and more of flaying stages across the States has doubtless honed their sound and their moves to a precise art. They’re a moody and intense looking bunch, not least singer Reid Batch, a scruffily debonair cross between Michael Hutchence and Brandon Lee in *The Crow*, who spends the set variously stalking the stage, raging into the front row or going on surly walkabouts into the crowd as the band switch from gothic lounge

surf-rock to rockabilly rumble and onto garage punk, always from the dark side of the street but always audible several blocks away. Indeed, what’s best about tonight’s show is how Bambara set out their stall, show you their stock in trade but then make sure no-one gets comfortable as the guitar fuzz and organ scream are ramped up another couple of notches any time you think they’ve plateaued. They strut and swagger and kick it out with liquid chemistry but in those

feral peaks there’s an edge to it all that suggests glorious disaster might just be on the cards. They remind us of the criminally underrated Gallon Drunk at times but more than that they look and sound like the perfect bar band for a David Lynch film about suburban Midwest vampires.

They hit their highest point with ‘Serafina’ and if anything a two-song encore tends to dissipate the powerful spell they’ve conjured over the previous hour, but make no mistake – Bambara at their best are rock and roll raw in tooth and claw. *Ian Chesterton*

aren’t much cop; either way too much of tonight’s set is turgid middle-of-the-road fare, replete with soft rock tropes, songs shuffling off any promise of something better halfway through to resolve as sub-‘Hey Jude’ jams or extended solos that struggle to rouse even this mob. There are brighter moments, mostly the songs from the first album; ‘Lightning Bolt’ remains a certified pop banger and there’s even a glimmer of punk energy on a couple of occasions, but more often Bugg and his band seem to be going through the motions. A guy with a beard and man bun swaggers past and, boozily thinking he recognises the intro to a song, throws his arms aloft in exaltation, sending his pint over the woman next to him. Neither seems to notice nor care. It sums up an evening when there is plenty of beer but, sadly, not much to cheer. *Dale Kattack*

BOB VYLAN / GROVE The Bullingdon

As anyone reading this hopefully agrees, live musical performances can be pretty great experiences. Hearing your faves pump out all their classic hits: there’s nothing like it. But sometimes, you can go in completely blind to see a support act you’ve never heard of and be very pleasantly surprised. Exactly this happens when Grove come onstage tonight. Accompanied by a laptop and a lone synth player, Grove – a rapper, DJ and producer, bursts forth in a wall of Clipping-esque glitches and sprechgesang declarations, then drops a massive garage beat and a massive grin. Grove is proudly black and queer and lets us all know they set out to make “dutty, sexy tunes” without the often inherent homophobia found in rap. Whatever their aim is the results are fantastic: massive kicks underpin a broad set of influences; they slide between genres effortlessly, the component broken down and mashed back together with perfect poise. There’s influences from house and techno to Boards of Canada and the full gamut of contemporary UK Bass music.

The main surprise, though, is the sheer joy and enthusiasm Grove with which covers serious topics facing the British Black community, but with a smile, with a “don’t let the bastards get you down, let’s dance” attitude. It’s not po-faced or defaulting to swagger or aggression, just high energy and joyful with thunderous bass to leave your heart thumping to a new beat.

Bob Vylan – one of the better celebrity pun band names we’ve heard – are all the hype right now. They’ve also just broken an impressive record; they are the first fully independent, unsigned band to enter the Top 20. On record, they are a powerhouse of filthy grunge guitars and call-to-action grime vocals, but on stage everything but the drums is coming from a backing track, and this a massive detrimental

effect. What we hear as raw and vital in headphones, now sounds flat and – dare we say it – a bit naff. This feeling then seems to transfer to the lyrics leaving a generally sour taste. ‘I Heard You Want Your Country Back’ is legitimate Brexit rage passed through a Limp Bizkit filter, and the lyrics “BBC talk about the GDP, means f**k all to me” just seems reductive and trite. Maybe I’m missing something or the flatness of the live sound weighs too heavily and we should have looked past it, but Iwe’re left thinking perhaps the disadvantage of a fully DIY approach is that you have to do it ALL yourself or make some compromises.

Matt Chapman Jones

EMMA RAWICZ QUINTET

The White Rabbit

Saxophonist and flautist Emma Rawicz is just 20, a student at the Royal Academy of Music, and only picked up the tenor sax when 15, yet according to the authoritative Jazzwise is already “a force to be reckoned with”. We’re tonight here for her first Oxford gig as a leader having heard her deliver some scene-stealing riff’s in Myele Manzanara’s band when he played in the city.

Three of her band: guitarist Ant Law, keyboardist Ivo Neame keyboards, and drummer Asaf Sirkis, are experienced leading musicians on the British jazz scene; all three lead their own groups and have played many times in the city. If you can tell a person by the company they keep this line-up speaks volumes for Rawicz.

Tonight is as much about Emma as composer as player and band leader. All the tunes are her compositions, some from her well received debut album ‘Incantation’, some a preview

of her soon to be recorded second. She’s got an ear for a catchy tune and the ability of every good composer of starting with a simple riff and use it to build a complex tune. Yet, however complex her tunes get, they feel rooted in solid ground. The flowing staccato opener ‘Voodoo’ builds from a three-note riff, helped by sparkling solos from Neame and Law before Emma comes in with an impressive contribution. Throughout the night her confident soloing is apparently effortless with a speed of thought in shifting rapidly between high and low, and tonality and dissonance. She seems to have great musical instinct which, allied to her mature technical ability, leads her to hit the ‘right’ note every time.

With the rest of the band contributing to their potential there’s always something exciting happening; Ivo gets gloriously rich crisp sounds from his vintage electric piano and synth set up; Ant Law’s nimble guitar playing is brilliant at creating atmospheres and he has moments when he reveals a more muscular prog-rock influenced side; Asaf drums at 100mph yet, remarkably, it feels there’s stillness at the centre of the maelstrom he creates. It’s a potent mix and much credit to young double bassist Freddie Jensen for not seeming out of place in this company.

Many of the tunes are inspired by Emma’s synaesthesia. ‘Viridian’, a shade of green, has a gentle quality, yet retains the drive which is typical of most of her tunes. The final number, ‘Phlox’, a violent shade of pink, comes across as that. Our favourites, though, are ‘Mantra’, which tonight has a chilled Middle Eastern touch in its opening, and ‘Vera’, a tribute to her grandma with Emma now on flute chattering amiably with Ant’s guitar.

Add in that Rawicz has presence on stage and copes well with some technical hitches and this is a terrific Oxford debut, which in time could go down as a legendary gig.

Colin May

JAKE BUGG O2 Academy

You wonder sometimes how an artist earns their audience. Jake Bugg doesn’t seem the kind of singer to attract such a lairy crowd, but before he’s even on stage we’ve seen two people carted, semi-conscious from the venue, found the toilet floor copiously covered in vomit and endured a shirts-off bray-along to ‘Champagne Supernova’ from the beered-up lads and ladettes nearby, one of whom spends most of the actual gig swinging his shirt over his head, arms aloft in a display of incongruous macho bravura, while near the bar another bloke appears to be weeping, possibly at tonight’s ticket price. Perhaps the Nottingham singer-songwriter’s eponymous tales-from-the-estate debut, written

and recorded while he was still just 18, resonate still with those seeking post-Gallagher thrills and spills, but Bugg seems kind of lost since then, trying some hip hop on for size on ‘On My One’ before getting rootsy on the Dylan-ish ‘Hearts That Strain’. His latest album, ‘Saturday Night, Sunday Morning’, finds him perhaps more musically stranded than ever, aiming for a pop sound he’s previously declared he hates, and bringing in songwriters Andrew Watt and Ali Tamposi whose previous credits include Justin Bieber, Post Malone, Miley Cyrus and Dua Lipa. You’d hope a new pop shine would bring a sense of fun to the songs and the show but either Bugg doesn’t like his new self or the songs just

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WHAT’S MY LINE?

A monthly look at jobs in local music. This month it’s PMT’s DAN RAWLE and he’s a MUSIC STORE MANAGER.

How long have you worked in this job? “A bloody long time... 13 years to be exact. And to think it all started from randomly strolling in and asking for a job, to which the answer was, “can you start next Tuesday?”

What is one thing you have to do as part of your job that the average person might not know? “*Not* play guitar for eight hours a day. And also, performing regular legionella safety checks. For the readers that aren’t familiar with legionella, it’s a waterborne bacteria that can cause Legionnaire’s Disease, among other things. Maintaining a clean and safe water system in a premises is vital to prevent the appearance of this little bugger. There ya go! A quick bit of health and safety for you.”

What’s been the single biggest highlight of your career so far? “Finally knocking Tim, the previous manager, off his throne. After 16 years, our beloved Tim is leaving us for a change of scene. His reign as King of the Castle is over, and that means less bloody tupperware cluttering up the staff room, and no more fancy instruments of coffee production as well!”

And the lowlight? “Seeing Tim cry and beg me for mercy.”

How much and how did Covid affect your job? “A lot. The shop was shut for business for many months, so a couple of the other lads and myself spent the days packaging orders for the



website and doing stocktakes.”

Who’s your favourite ever Oxford musical artist? “The Family Machine. Long retired now, but I spent many an hour listening to those chaps. Mostly comprised of ex-PMT boys, they’ve got a couple of cracking albums that are well worth a listen to.”

What’s the single most important piece of advice you’d give to someone wanting to do your job? “To be genuine. I’ve always hated the old school ‘car salesman vibe’ that can sometimes be found in specialist retail. So I always encourage an honest approach to this job.”

Who’s the most awkward person you’ve ever had to deal with in your job? “Tim... he simply wouldn’t stop sobbing. The things he offered to do... I just can’t repeat.”

When was the last time you heard genius? “When I listened to Bill Wurtz; he’s bonkers! And catchy as a bugger. He writes ridiculously complex music that’s super random, with so many different layers going on, but with catchy pop vocals. Not to everyone’s taste I’d say, but I’m a fan.”

Have you ever compromised your integrity in the course of your work? “Once or twice. Many, many years ago I was really unwell and had a ‘tragic bathroom accident’ and refused to go home. I bought some new items of clothing, shall we say, and with the help of Dan O’Donnell, the manager at the time, made a gaffa tape belt and cracked on.”

Would you swap your job for any other and if so, what? “If I could get paid to run around in the wild, with no shoes on, making things out of wood, that’d be great.”

Are you rich? “With money, nope, But I genuinely feel incredibly lucky, and rich, in life. That sounds tacky, to have an incredible family, some awesome friends, and to be engaged to the love of my life, Emily. Sentimental moment there.”

Do you consider your job glamorous? “Not so much any more. The days of late night shop raves, shorts and flip-flops, power cut film making sessions, Lego, and 8 Ball pool game offs are long gone.”

What’s your favourite thing about Oxford’s music scene? “The sheer variety of brilliant musicians! And the fact that there’s still a good amount of pubs that support live music. A particular mention would have to be my good pal Lee Davies (Bo), the don of open mics. Along with the aforementioned pubs, he’s responsible for giving so many musicians an opportunity to play in front of likeminded people, and is the most genuine, and encouraging chap.”

Harcourt Arms

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STEPH PIRRIE JAZZ

FRI 3RD

EMMA DE LA QUERRA

+

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Dr SHOTOVER: A Diary of the Plague Decade

Greetings, Young Jackanapes. Quit yon plague-ridden streets and step inside ye East Cheapside Club, where one may acquire a pie, a pint and a wench, all for one groat. (Lord Wigan [suspiciously] – ‘Whose pies are they?’) Ahem. Just ignore Lord Wigan and his parenthetical asides. Now, Young J, why don’t you remove your plague-mask, pull up a pew, and buy us all a foaming ale. Thank’ee! [Glugg, glugg, glugg]. Prithee, sirrah, how fares your campaign to alleviate the troubles of the plaguey yet deserving poor? We are, Lord knows, all downcast after twelve years of this dynasty of Torie knaves. A benefit gigge, you say? Time to sign up ‘people’s poet’ Francis Turner, methinks, and a host of similar bravehearts. Another foaming ale? Why not! But wait – who is that lurking outside ye mullioned casement, scribbling slanderous sketches? Why, ‘tis only hack scribe Paul Snaker from the broadsheet known as *The Daily Vial*, casting his usual fish-wifely insults at good men and true, while crawling up the breeches of his Torie masters . I’ll warrant that we’ll see his bile-soaked piece within the hour... what did I tell you? ‘ALE-GATE’. [Sigh-o]... Give it a rest, Snaker! Change the... whatever they had instead of records in the 1660s. [Dr S wakes up in the 21st century, inexplicably wearing a wig and cloak, and clutching an empty tankard].

Next month: The Daily Vile

Snaker: ‘What about Posset-gate, then? NOW will you resign?’

Shotover: ‘This doesn’t even look remotely like me. Fie, get ye hence, Torie nonce!’

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

Pearl Diver

Who are they?

Pearl Diver are a three-piece funk, blues and soul-infused rock band fronted by Catweazle Club host Matt Sage (*vocals / guitar*) alongside Joel Bassuk (*drums*) and Josh Rigal (*bass*). Matt “rescued Joel from an itinerant Latin Samba troupe,” and they put out an ad on Daily Info for The Missing Peace (being optimistic, if terrible spellers).The only person to reply was Josh.

Initially they played together under the name Art Theefe but got fed up “having to spell ‘Theefe’ to everyone we ever met at a party” last year during Covid lockdown and changed their name to Pearl Diver. They released their debut single ‘Give It All Away’ last year; EP ‘Look For The Light’ is out this month.

What do they sound like?

At their best, crepuscular, slightly cracked croon-pop where the vintage singers of the 50s and 60s are brought up to date via Richard Hawley’s cobbles street romanticism. Throw in some moments of slightly psychedelic groove-rock and you’ve got an easy but engaging band big on positive vibes. Or, in their own words: “sweet analogue soul valve chic boss crunch vibes friends with benefits once more with feeling.”

What inspires them?

“Sunshine after rain; trees; feelings; the way the light falls; all the gory glory of being human; love; loud, raw, beautiful, visceral rock and roll music; one another.”

Their career highlight so far is:

“Opening for Tinariwen downstairs at the O2 Academy: a sublime night.”

And the lowlight:

“Oh God, so many...”



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Pretty much everyone who ever had the nerve to grace the stage at Catweazle Club and break our hearts with their tender truth.”

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

“‘Walking in Space’ by Quincy Jones from 1969: An incredible retro-futuristic soul jazz manifesto, conducted by the Master with a supporting cast of superstar players. The hippest thing you’ll ever hear, frankly.”

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

“We are celebrating the launch of our debut EP, ‘Look For The Light’, with a gig at The Isis Farmhouse on Friday, June 17th, and playing at Flofest the next afternoon. We’ll be playing all the hits and are positively frothing at the nozzle to play live again.”

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Oxford’s just such an optimum size in which to create a thriving scene; everyone knows everyone else while the gene pool is also refreshingly deep. But where are all the fucking venues!?”

You might love them if you love:

Richard Hawley; The Rolling Stones; Johnny Guitar Watson; Al Green; Michael Kiwanuka; Bobby Darin.

Hear them here:

www.pearldiverband.com

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

The mighty JOR were the featured band in June 2002’s *Nightshift*, the local metalcore pioneers releasing their debut album, ‘Blunt’, this month on **Loudspeaker Records**. The album was receiving across-the-board ecstatic reviews and singer Ben Hollyer told us, “It sounds really fucking heavy and aggressive, which is all we wanted,” adding that “American hardcore bands always sound very polished and well produced, whereas the UK bands are a lot more raw, and we prefer that that raw edge.”

The highlights of June’s gig calendar were **McLusky** at **The Point** and **Skindred**, **Dead Inside** and the frankly astonishing **Queen Adreena**, one of the greatest live bands we’ve ever seen, at **The Zodiac**, while on the local releases front **Dustball** put out a new single, ‘Sounds All Wrong’ on Truck’s **Juggernaut** imprint, and enduring folk fave **Sharron Kraus** released her album ‘Beautiful Twisted’.

Since we were in the grip of World Cup fever back then, the *Nightshift* demo pages consisted of our tried and tested and probably a bit tired but we’ll continue to keep doing it Demo World Cup. The final, between **Dan Collins** and **The Rels**, is described as “A battle between musical pygmies. Like buying tickets for England against Argentina, only to discover American Samoa are having a kick about with their reserve team.” Earlier in the tournament The Glass Mothers find themselves metaphorically 10-0 down within the first minute for their “grim acoustic misery.” You’ll have to



THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

was **Sevenchurch**’s ‘Bleak Insight’; quite an achievement,” read Sam Shepherd’s review.

Bethany Weimers; Jess Goyder; Kill Murray; The Old Grinding Young and **Lewis Watson** also had new records out.

5 YEARS AGO

For some of us **Kraftwerk** are as important, if not more so, than The Beatles, so the German synth legends’ arrival in Oxford in June 2017 for their first show here in 40 years, at **The New Theatre** was something a bit beyond special. Even more so it was a 3D set, so we all got to look like futuristic robots with our glasses on as Ralf Hutter and his android army played a greatest hits set.

Pioneers of a different kind in town this month too with a reformed **Slowdive** at **The O2 Academy**, the shoegaze stars joined by musical heirs **Ulrika Spacek**. Also at the O2 were reformed punk heroes **The Skids** and reformed rapcore warriors **King Prawn**, while **The Pains of Being Pure at Heart** were down at **The Cellar**. **Sam Lee** was at **The Sheldonian**, and **The Strypes** were at **The Bullingdon**.

Lucy Leave were in gloriously garish colour on the cover of this month’s issue, describing their inventive fusion of jazz, post-punk, grunge and psychedelia as “an audio Rorschach inkblot test,” and over in the Introducing section was a new band called **Haze**, who would go on to change their name to **Home Counties** and later relocate to Bristol where they seem to be doing rather well for themselves.

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TRACKS

Yin & Yang Audio

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

TOP TRACK

LEONIDAS

Leonidas has a bee in his bonnet. His impressive debut offering back in March, a track called ‘Pretend’ and inspired by 50 Cent’s ‘Life on the Line’, was a sweet F-U to traitors and detractors as well as an affirmation of his own identity. This new one, ‘Hennessy & Jealousy’, continues that theme and comes in a similarly machine-gun flow. Like all the best drill it’s got a darkness to it musically, with a nice synthetic Middle Eastern feel to it. It’s insistent, almost incessant, as Leonidas gets stuff off his chest with interest, again barely pausing for breath, ramping up the intensity and everything finishing before we want it to, which is always a rare and welcome turn of events. Oxford’s rap scene remains limited in size but high on quality and this is a more than welcome addition – we’d like to see Leonidas live and see where he can go with the room of a full set rather than solitary tracks. Bullish and belligerent he might be but this is a banger and in straitened times, this kind of musical militancy can only be a good thing.

BLEDIG

Bledig, which does sound a bit like a great Welsh swear word (“Denzil? ‘es gone up bledig Snowdon, isn’t it!”) is the work of former Medal and Bubbleman keyboard wiz Richard Brinklow and chums, now based in Brighton, which sort of disqualifies him from Track of the Month, which is a shame cos this is ruddy great – bleached-out, distorted trip-pop, or maybe even trip-prog, all jazzy wanderings, mechanical bass, eerie Theremin and rich, soulful vocals set against slightly discordant piano and a variety of shifting sounds, which makes it feel like you’ve stumbled into a late night jazz bar while tripping, only to realise you’re in the dream sequence of a David Lynch film. All of which is good for music if not your sanity. Anyway, turns out the song in question, ‘Misericorde’, is about “leaders who deem themselves above the rules they set for others,” and you realise this is the reality we live in and it’s far more terrifying than anything David Lynch could imagine. Musically though: Bledig great.

TIME CODE

By rights a band called Time Kode should be

an Italian coldwave combo from about 1980, rather than, as it turns out, a Eurovision-style rock band – y’know, not too heavy to scare the kids/grandparents/pets but too heavy to be the cheesy pop act their song ‘Greedy Piggy’ cries out to be. Or maybe squeals. It’s awash with heroically OTT guitar and keyboard frippery and comes with a bombastic “Whoa-oo-oo” chorus (conveniently spelled out for us in the cheap-as-chips-made-by-a-toddler animated video which features quite a lot of pigs). Pigs, of course, aren’t as greedy as humans and have a far firmer grasp of things like respect and decency and should probably be allowed to run the country and the economy, which will be apple and potato based from now on. Musically this is hard to dislike because it’s innately silly, but sadly not quite as silly as it could be and ends up sounding like a clunky, tartrazine-fuelled kid brother to Europe’s ‘Final Countdown’.

GRAVID

If Time Kode are rather silly, Gravid are Very Serious Indeed. You imagine if they’d emerged in the mid 1970s – which they sort of do – they’d have had their own onstage mime act with them and would have been called something like This Noble Porpoise, mainly on account of their first song here being titled ‘Leviathan’, which is all about the big beasts of the sea and comes with portentous, almost stentorian lines like “Where do you go? / What do you know? / Slipping below / Into the deep”; “Four fathoms deep / Where do you sleep? / Oh the secrets you keep!”, and the immortal “Blow hole blow!” chanted with a resolute refusal to stick their tongue in their cheek, and in so many ways, more power to them for not making it an ironic or arch exercise – great comedy is always best played with a straight bat. ‘Survive’ goes the full epic doom-prog mile by way of Spinal Tap’s ‘Stonehenge’, you can almost see the mist swirling around their celestial rock reverie as the ghost of Peter Gabriel Past contorts theatrically stage front, the band pausing briefly partway through for a dub interlude, while ‘Door Mutation’, rather than sounding like a mutated Doors, sounds like Hawkwind on serious downers. All of which is kind of fun, and it’s only when they strip down the ostentation that such serious silliness doesn’t work in their favour, as on the rather turgid drudgery of the near acoustic ‘Balance’, which seems to be about bank accounts or possibly eco disaster but either way fails to turn into the madrigal it deserves to become. No, sorry, Time Kode, we’re going to have to take your crown off you – Gravid are by far and away this month’s silliest song makers. That’s not an insult, it’s just a fact. If they want to have it out with us they can find us four fathoms deep blowing our blow holes til the bubbles make us dizzy.

JOHN CARNWATH

John Carnwath here presents us with a lovely

photo of him dressed in a suit and wearing a cap, but he looks less like a member of the Peaky Blinders and more like the missing member of Chas’n’Dave who they simply left behind in a pub one night because he was sucking all the fun out of the songs. So he went solo and the result is this song, ‘Oxford Blue’, which might be a celebration of varsity victory but more likely is a blandly nostalgic love song. It’s well produced at least – perhaps a little too well produced and sounds like one of those acts from the mid-1980s who were signed to a major label in the wake of the fleeting success of Icehouse or Dream Academy but is just moody rather than magical. It’s big and epic and blowsy and overblown and bombastic and all those things we just used to describe Gravid but unlike them John has none of the ridiculousness that made them so oddly enjoyable, and this is why we guess he got kicked out of Chas’n’Dave. He also uses the word sophomore to describe his release, which is why we’re going to kick him out of the *Nightshift* office and in front of a passing double decker. Luckily for John our local bus service is now so unreliable he had an entire hour to get out of the way.

MIGHTY MAGIC ANIMAL

Oxford has produced some quite glorious stripped-down grunge/garage/noise-rock acts over the years – from Winnebago Deal through Slate Hearts and Cherokee to Grub. Can Mighty Magic Animal add to the tower? Well, kind of, but also not to the degree we’ve become used. They’re a duo and make a decent racket for their size – all clattering drums and guitars pushed, kicked and sucked through enough FX pedals to make it sound like thrice the number, with vocals that come direct from the School of Sounding Like Kurt Cobain without taking many if any detours along the way. Given the nature of the music they’re making, playing it straight, simple, loud and fast is pretty much all that’s needed to pass muster, and they do that well enough, but there’s nothing particularly feral here – something that makes us feel, as with those other bands we just mentioned, that standing near the front of one of their gigs might result in bodily harm or at least chronic tinnitus. ‘Run’ has an air of local scene daddies Winnebago Deal about it – a velocity rush through two minutes of frill-free garage-noise, while closer ‘Suitable Guy’ has just the merest hint of Shellac about it. We’re entertained but next time make us terrified!

BURN THE LOUVRE

“Dear Nightshiftmag, How are you? I hope you’re doing well. It’s Jordan Speare from indie duo Burn The Louvre again. I have some more new music for you! We just released our 4th single off of our

debut LP *Silhouettes*. This 4th song is an indie folk/rock tune called ‘Driving In The Rain’ and I can confidently tell you it’s the best thing we’ve released thus far.” Bold words there from Jordan, and we’d be inclined to believe him if they didn’t ring a bell and a quick look through the email pile reveals he sent us another song a few weeks previously which he described as “the best thing we’ve released thus far,” which means that either Burn the Louvre are just getting better and better with every new song or Jordan’s an arch bullshitter with a limited PR patter. A quick listen through to this anonymous, slightly whiny country-tinged jangle suggests it might be the latter since if this is the best they’ve ever done, going back to investigate previous work is going to be a thankless task. The song is by no means terrible but it is bland to an almost pathological degree and is probably a musical serial killer who masquerades as a car salesman or mortgage consultant during daylight hours. Still, everyone and everything needs a hobby and maybe butchering the neighbours and wearing their desiccated skin is some kind of compensation for a lack of personality or, in this case, a memorable tune.

TOILET TRACK

BUBBLEGUM HYPNOSIS

Sometimes it’s the crushing weight of reality after so much expectation and promise that kills us. Or more usually makes us want to kill others. The name Bubblegum Hypnosis screams “Psychedelia!” in the same way as Mandrake Handshake or Marshmallow Overcoat. The band tell us they’ve supported Psychedelic Porn Crumpets and Temples and are inspired by King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard and Thee Oh Sees among others. We should maybe have taken more notice of their referencing Frank Zappa because their offering is a cover of ‘Chicken in the Corn’ by Jamaican legend Brushy One String and it starts with the most wah of wah-wah-ed guitars and a big garage rock riff. And then that’s it really. The vocals are indecipherable and it all ends up like a joke jam session at the end of a Red Hot Chili Peppers gig. It’s a toddler’s idea of psychedelia. Or Frank Fucking Zappa’s. Its chief redeeming feature is it’s less than two and half minutes long, though they say they have a full album ready to go and promise it contains a “similarly unique quality which we think would be fantastic for your audience base.” It’s called ‘Burp and Vomit’, which sounds like the name of the worst market town solicitors firm imaginable, though it’s fair to imagine a bunch of jaded old probate lawyers might have a better grasp of what constitutes “crazy and chaotic garage and psychedelic rock” (their words) than they do. Bubblegum Hypnosis? Bumhole Haemorrhage, more like.

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THE 900

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RED

SUN~16~OCT~22

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