

ISSUE
65

MERYL STREEK

IRISH AGIT PUNK IN OXFORD FOR 'LOVE MUSIC HATE
RACISM' REBOOT

INSIDE: SKYLARKIN 25 YEARS + BBC INTRODUCING + THE
CREATIVE TIMES + BEDD. LIVE: BABYSHAMBLES + THE DREAMING
SPIRES + THE SAMURAI SEVEN + WILLY MASON + THE
UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH + LOCAL RELEASES & LOTS MORE

THE BULLINGDON

DECEMBER 2025

GIG & CLUB LISTINGS

Monday 1st December

Night School
End of Term
Doors: 11PM

Tuesday 2nd December

Oxford University
Jazz Orchestra
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 3rd December

Elena Gabrielle:
Disturb the Vibe
Doors: 6:30PM

Wednesday 3rd December

Patrick Spicer:
Absolutely
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 3rd December

Off the Record
Doors: 11PM

Thursday 4th December

Dog Show
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 4th December

So Fetch
Xmas Party
Doors: 11PM

Friday 5th December

Pear: Phobia
Doors: 7PM

Friday 5th December

Soul Sista
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 6th December

Simple
Bakey
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 7th December

Will Varley
Jack Francis
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 7th December

Victory Vocals
Christmas Show
Doors: 4PM

Wednesday 10th December

Ben Poole
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 10th December

The Crazy Orange Hotel
Placeholder
Doors: 7PM

Friday 12th December

Shotovers & Struggles End
The Tolls
Doors: 7PM

Friday 12th December

Bully Boiler
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 13th December

Jeskae
Ozzie Guven
Doors: 11PM

Sunday 14th December

In a Different Place 2025
Doors: 7PM

Monday 15th December

James Acaster:
Work-in-Progress
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 18th December

Neon Teepee
Christmas Party
Doors: 7PM

Friday 19th December

The Shapes
Doors: 7PM

Friday 19th December

Paradise
Episode 8
Doors: 11PM

Saturday 20th December

Old Skool Oxford
Shades of Rhythm
Doors: 11PM

Wednesday 24th December

Reggae Xmas 2025
Wrongtom meets Ragga Twins
Count Skylarkin
Little Norlie
Constant Jammin
Tansha Soundsystem
Doors: 10:30PM

Wednesday 31st December

Oxford Time Machine
Rock Through the Ages,
and roll into the New Year
Doors: 10PM

Friday 9th January

Pyjama
Nausy
Cadence
Doors: 7PM

Friday 23rd January

A Night of
Jagged Little Pill LIVE
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 28th January

Mike Rice:
Cruel Little Man
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 5th February

Chloe Petts:
Big Naturals
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 8th February

Westside Cowboy
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 11th February

Jordan Gray:
Is that a C*ck in your pocket
or are you just here to kill me?
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 12th February

Phil Nichol:
Trying My Best
Doors: 7PM

Friday 13th February

Ian Stone:
Looking for the Wow
Doors: 7PM

Friday 20th February

Mark Nelson:
Liquid Gold
Doors: 7PM

Saturday 21st February

Simple in the Jungle
Congo Natty
Doors: 11PM

Monday 23rd February

Michael Graves (Misfits)
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 26th February

Ian Smith:
Foot Spa Half Empty
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 26th February

Laurence Jones
Amy Eftekhari
Doors: 7PM

Friday 27th February

The Total Stone Roses
Oasis
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 5th March

Georgie Jones:
And the World Spins Away
Doors: 7PM

Friday 6th March

Dominic Frisby:
An Evening of Comedy,
Songs & Satire
Doors: 7PM

Sunday 8th March

John Tothill:
This Must be Heaven
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 12th March

Calum Bowie
Doors: 7PM

Friday 13th March

Robin Morgan:
Let's Overshare!
Doors: 7PM

Wednesday 18th March

Phil Ellis:
Bath Mat
Doors: 7PM

Friday 20th March

Sambrosa All Stars
Buena Vista Social Club
Doors: 7PM

Thursday 26th March

Chas Leman and His Band
Doors: 7PM

OMS 65 EDITION THANKS OMS MAGAZINE PRODUCTION CREDITS

We'd like to give a big hug and thanks to everyone who contributes to the OMS magazine!

Hugh Garrety, Aria Sky, Dave Roberts, Geno Naughton, Liam Walsh, Charlie Burnham, Kevin Rodd, Steven Green, Adam Thompson, Ian Hanham, Sam Coles, Simon Guillard at Aardvarky, Ennaya Shehzad, Nathan Gothard.

OMS Magazine

OMS Magazine contact

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Back issues at: back2left.co.uk

Edited by Stewart Garden

Design & words by Autumn Neagle

Published by Back & to the Left Publishing.

OMS65

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MusicScene



HOT FACE

London psych punk trio on Speedy Wunderground

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Fri 16th January - 7:30pm

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Sat 31st January - 4:30pm

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DJ CHART SKYLARKIN

AHEAD OF HIS ANNUAL

REGGAE CHRISTMAS, THE LOCAL DJ CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ROCKING THIS YEAR, REFLECTS ON TEN OF HIS ALL TIME FAVOURITE TUNES

HORACE ANDY - SKYLARKING

When a Jamaican plumber found a 16-year-old me asleep in a cupboard on a building site, he couldn't wait to take the piss: "Aidan Larkin! Mi ketch yuh Skylarkin' today!" I already loved Massive Attack and learned that "Skylarking" had been a hit for their vocalist Horace Andy in the '70s. It's basically Jamaican for getting up to no good. I've been Skylarkin ever since.

AUGUSTUS PABLO - KING TUBBYS MEETS ROCKERS UPTOWN

My world changed forever when I heard this track reverberating round the stone walls of the Granville Arcade in Brixton one afternoon in the mid-'90s. It still blows my mind. Rich musicianship, sonic-sorcery, that thumping kick-drum, flying cymbals, clattering rim-shot snares and heavy, heavy bass. The definition of dub.

ERNEST RANGLIN - HONKY TONK

Glastonbury 1997, Sunday afternoon. The mud still hadn't dried from the downpour that accompanied Radiohead's set the night before, but we sat down in it anyway. An elder statesman of reggae is introduced to the Jazz-World Stage carrying a guitar, accompanied by players on drums, keys and double-bass. Apparently he was two days late on account of the somme-like weather conditions. But for us, his set couldn't have been more perfectly timed. I would rediscover this particular version of a timeless Bill Doggett classic years later when trawling the collection of my dear friend, the late DJ Derek and it's never left my record box since.

SKA CUBANO - CHANGO

By 2004 my weekly Thursday night sessions in the basement of The Brickworks on Cowley Road were always ram-jam, and my new Zodiac residency with DJ Derek was roadblock. When my fingers chanced upon this hand-stamped white-label 7" in a Soho record store,



I accidentally discovered the most perfect live band to take things to the next level. Ska Cubano tore the roof off for me time and time again.

MAX ROMEO - WET DREAM

The first Jamaican legend I ever booked - Maxie blew us away in March 2006 and November 2008. In that second show he performed his 1969 hit 'Wet Dream' live onstage for the first time in more than 30 years. Reggae history, made in Oxford. You can see the footage on my Instagram feed.

THE SKATALITES - PHOENIX CITY

Jamaica's original supergroup. I first linked with them in Galway, Ireland, on a trip home for a family wedding. They played The Zodiac for me in April 2007 and were still onstage smashing out requests to a packed house after more than three hours.

SUSAN CADOGAN - HURT SO GOOD

Susie is a dear friend and the most warm, engaging performer. You can't help but fall in love with her. This track, produced by Lee Scratch Perry, is absolute perfection.

EASY ALLSTARS ft. TOOTS HIBBERT - LET DOWN

The voice that brought the gospel to reggae bringing ska to a song written in Oxford. Toots was a force of nature.

ALTON ELLIS - MY WILLOW TREE

Alton Ellis. He called me up, I called Intensified (one of the best rocksteady backing bands in the business) - we made the show happen. He sang with his son, he sang to his wife. He held his teenage daughter's hand as they duetted for the encore. Months later he left us, taken too soon by cancer. But what a life, what a legacy, THAT voice. The most special show I ever put on.

WRONGTOM MEETS THE RAGGA TWINS - THE VIBES

Wrongtom is a musical encyclopedia, a fantastic producer, a phenomenal DJ and a great friend.

REGGAE CHRISTMAS 2025 IS AT THE BULLINGDON, DECEMBER 24 WITH WRONGTOM MEETS RAGGA TWINS, COUNT SKYLARKIN LITTLE NORLIE AND CONSTANT JAMMIN' - DOORS 10.30PM

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THE SLITS - CUT

The Slits may have emerged from the late '70s London punk scene, but this isn't really a punk album. Produced by Dennis Bovell, it's deep, dense, and dubbed up and one of the few albums to emerge with seemingly no antecedents, still sounds fresh and totally original 46 years later.



NICK DRAKE - THE MAKING OF FIVE LEAVES LEFT

I struggled for a while to justify shelling out for this four LP box-set, but so glad I did. Contains an excellent selection of alternate takes, and home recordings, beautifully presented with exhaustive notes in the enclosed booklet. The original 1969 album is a folk rock classic of course, the songs are all so perfect I even named the shop after one of them.

HUGH MASEKELA - INTRODUCING HEDZOLEH SOUND

After achieving some success in the '60s in the USA, South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela returned to Africa in 1973 to record this album with Hedzoleh Sound, a band from Ghana

introduced to Masekela by Fela Kuti. He doesn't overwhelm the songs with his trumpet playing and lets the group stretch out over eight consistently excellent songs, mostly written by the band. Great African grooves with top notch drums and percussion.

GWENIFER RAYMOND - LAST NIGHT I HEARD THE DOG STAR BARK

I was lucky enough to see Gwenifer just around the corner at Common Ground a few weeks ago, and bought her latest LP on the night. Incredibly talented acoustic guitar picker in the style of John Fahey and Robbie Basho. This album seems more assured than her early stuff, all acoustic solo pieces, beautifully played.

GIL SCOTT HERON - THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED

"You will not be able to stay home, brother, You will not be able to plug in, turn on and cop out..." So starts Gil Scott-Heron's most famous song, on arguably his best album, being a compilation of tracks from his first three LPs. Recorded with a top team of Jazz musicians including Bernard Purdie on drums, he masters a perfect combination of jazz, proto-rap and soulful ballads, hugely influential and still relevant. Hopefully, one day the revolution will really be 'live'.



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WHAT'S IN YOUR RECORD COLLECTION WITH... JAMIE HYATT FROM BEDD

THE BAND HAVE JUST RELEASED THEIR DEBUT ALBUM 'DO NOT BE AFRAID' TO MUCH ACCLAIM IN THESE PARTS AND BEYOND. FRONTMAN JAMIE HYATT GAVE US A FLAVOUR OF HIS MUSIC LOVES.



Lemonheads' 'Into Your Arms' played loudly with the windows wide open.

What music do you cook to?

Depends on the meal and the day. Maybe something like Billy Holiday or Fats Waller on a Sunday evening. But it could just as easily be something scuzzy and loud.

What was the first dance at your wedding?

'All Night Long' by Lionel Richie - it was something of a drunken anthem for us and our friends at the time.

Which Oxford bands / personalities do you admire?

Swervedriver are my favourite Oxford band. I played the 'Son of a Mustang Ford' EP and the 'Raise' album to death.

Guiltiest pleasure in your collection?

I don't have guilty pleasures, but I am sometimes surprised by some of the music I like. I do like a pop banger - 'Driver's Licence' by Olivia Rodrigo or 'Riding Solo' by Jason Derulo.

You ask the gig DJ to get something on to whip up a crowd before you come on - what would it be?

We used to come on to the theme tune to 'Some Mothers Do 'ave 'em' in The Daisies. But I always preferred 'Higher Than The Sun' by Primal Scream.

JAMIE HYATT TALKING TO STEWART GARDEN.

'DO NOT BE AFRAID'
IS OUT NOW.



What was the first record you bought?

JH: 7" - 'Ghost Town' by The Specials.
Album - 'Humans Lib' by Howard Jones.

And the last? 'Songs of a Lost World' by The Cure.

You have to leave your house in a hurry - you can take one record - what is it? 'The White Album' by The Beatles.

Favourite sleeve ever and why? 'The Sophtware Slump' - by Grandaddy. I love the collage, homemade feel and look - It's also an absolutely amazing record.

Currently listening to? Weirdly, I always give 'Astronauts' by The Lilac Time a spin at this time of year. It sounds like autumn and dark nights to me.

Did a record inspire you to pick up an instrument?

No, watching my older cousin play a gig at a local youth club made me want to have a go - it looked fun.

A great morning album? 'Five Leaves Left' by Nick Drake. 'Blood on the Tracks' by Bob Dylan

Favourite lyric?

"And if a double-decker bus
Crashes into us
To die by your side
Is such a heavenly way to die
And if a ten tonne truck
Kills the both of us
To die by your side
Well, the pleasure, the privilege is mine."
'There is a Light That Never Goes Out' by The Smiths

Tour bus / car current listening? Whenever we're near the seaside (which is quite often), it's The



Meryl Streek

IRISH AGIT PUNK IN OXFORD FOR 'LOVE MUSIC HATE RACISM' REBOOT

IRISH ACTS ARE ALL THE RAGE AGAIN, AS OMS EDITOR STEWART GARDEN GETS THE TEA WITH MERYL STREEK, DUBLIN BASED POLITICALLY-OUTSPOKEN AVANT GARDE PRODUCER AND ANGRY ONE-MAN PUNK BAND.

I read that your dad was a drummer back in Dublin and you were one too in other bands. How much of an influence was your dad on your choice and what decided you to move out front?

I was a drummer in many bands over the years. I decided to move out front as I learnt how to make music by myself and remotely during Covid and came to figure out we're gonna die eventually and if we don't do what we wanna do because we're scared of what others think then that's quite sad really. So I took the plunge and tried something different.

Brilliant name by the way - how did that come about?

Lots of weed and lots of stupid thinking and you'll end up with a name like Meryl Streek. I do like it tho it was picked carefully while under the influence.

You've supported Kneecap on tour - what's your connection to them and how were those shows in terms of reaction?

Playing with Kneecap is always a great one - the crowd are always just so up for it and ready and the lads are great to be around too. We chat from time to time still and hopefully we get to do it again sometime soon.

Your first album was '796' How do you feel about it looking back on it and anything on there you were particularly proud of or were glad to get out there?

The title came from the number of infants found buried on Catholic land in Tuam Galway, a case now known as the "796 Tuam babies" a harrowing case that you should google and read about. A case that sickened me and hopefully sickens you too.

What was it like working with Fontaines DC producer Dan Doherty on 'Songs for the Deceased' - how did that relationship come about?

Dan's one of my best mates - we were in a band together many moons ago and I chat with him almost every day so it's always a pleasure having his help with this project.

"The young generation need to wake up and realise it's now or never to speak up and take action."

What are your next plans?

I've just wrapped my next release and it's an EP scheduled for release early next year. More collaborations with heroes of mine and more angry bangers to keep you ticking over

You've done a major amount of touring and gigs over the last year - what stands out?

I've got to play with a lot of incredible acts over the last three years but this year my highlight has been getting picked by Iggy Pop to support him in Dublin. Even hearing him say my name on BBC was utterly brilliant and a very proud moment.

You have written about social issues from back home (Ireland) - have things changed, what still riles you and inspires you to write one of your lyrics or a song?

It's unfortunately getting so much worse here in Ireland and abroad and what riles me up is people standing by and letting it happen before their eyes. A continued rise in the cost of living with thousands sleeping rough on the streets and a housing market that nobody can afford to buy into. The young generation need to wake up and realise it's now or never to speak up and take action.

Can you tell us about some of the music or artists that inspired you during the making of the albums and more current stuff that excites you?

Minor threat, A House, Guernica, Burnt out, GAG, APTBS, Bonobo, Chumbawamba, Crass, Jay Reatard and some newer bands in the same circuit as me like Split Dogs, Bruise Control, The Chisel, The Meffs, Peer Pleasure, Enola Gay, Bob Vylan, Benefits, and anyone else giving out about the state of world right now is doing it right.

There are a lot of new Irish acts breaking through here - what do you think has inspired this wave of creativity and any of them you like or feel particularly in step with?

I don't think it's a new thing - the Irish have always had great music coming out of here but I think Fontaines D.C. and now Kneecap



have opened up an avenue where people are looking more into Ireland than they have done before and finding out more about our bands and culture.

What are you looking forward to next year? Finally seeing my new music come out into the world and experience playing it live!

**MERYL STREEK PLAYS
LOVE MUSIC HATE
RACISM AT THE
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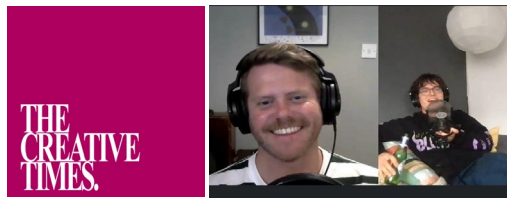
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PODCAST SERIES DELVING INTO THE MINDS OF ARTISTS, EXPLORING THE CREATIVE PROCESS. Presenter Jonny Payne caught up with Amsterdam born Oxford talent Max Blansjaar, who recently supported The Young Knives on tour.



JONNY: How do you start writing something, do you sit down and go write with a notebook or use voice notes on your phone? How does your writing process work?

MAX: Yeah, it tends to happen pretty erratically. Sometimes I do sit myself down and I think, right, I've got 4 or 5 hours now at the weekend or whatever, and I'm like, going to try and write a song or I'm going to and even if it's really bad, I'm just going to put like put something down in this notebook. But then, of course, the way that it generally happens is it's when I haven't got time or when I'm on the way to something that I have what I feel like is a really good idea. So then I have to kind of quickly make it happen. Purely musical stuff, like writing a string accompaniment or writing a this or that part I can sort of do whenever. I think I find that less hard than, um, than coming up with ideas in the first place.

JONNY: Do you always have a flow of stuff coming? Do you have lots of song ideas in your head that you're thinking about and working on?

MAX: It's definitely not a constant flow. I think there was a point after I'd finished when, you know, my album came out and then we toured it for a couple of weeks, and there was definitely a point after that where I was like, I don't really have anything anymore. Not in a permanent way. It definitely comes in waves. And it took a couple of months then to soak up a bunch more stuff and be able to write again. So I'm definitely not someone who's writing all the time. I definitely don't play my guitar all the time. But I do also believe that you have to sit yourself down in order for it to come. You can't just wait for it to come. I try to be disciplined because I think that's important, but I don't do it all the time. No. Definitely not.

JONNY: That leads me on to the big question of; do you believe in writer's block?

MAX: Yeah. I do believe in writer's block. Not purely because I think I've had it, but I also believe that the way through it is to just write anyway. I think one of the biggest obstacles to writing anything good, and that's kind of true for music,

but it's also true of any other kind of making or writing is like the biggest obstacle, is wanting everything you do to be good immediately or good the first time. Or I'm going to have this idea and then it's going to be an amazing song immediately. Because, if you get into that mindset, then you have this fear of starting where whatever I put down now has got to be really good because it's going to be the finished thing. Whereas that's not how it works. You may have a really good idea and then you write something and then cross it out and you write something again. Sometimes if you've got writer's block, then you have to write stuff for a day that is just trash.

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**BAND RECOGNITION!
A LOOK AT OUR FAVOURITE
BAND MONIKERS**

FAWLERS

WE MEET A BRAND NEW BAND IN THESE PARTS WHOSE DEBUT RELEASE 'IN SILENCE' (TOTALLY THE OPPOSITE OF ANYTHING SILENT) GRABBED US BY THE SCRUFF OF THE NECK IN THAT SOARING, WUNDERHORSE KINDA WAY... AND WE CANNOT WAIT TO HEAR MORE!

What came first, the band or the name?

The band came first, it was originally me trying to start a solo project so I got in touch with some old friends. As soon as we got in a room together it was like "nah this has to be a band" - the energy and the chemistry was already there and it just worked. I had always been in bands my whole life and if I'm being honest I didn't want to be solo anyway. I'm very happy the boys wanted it as much as me!

But why FAWLERS? Well to be honest, it just looked cool written down. We're from Witney and near us is a tiny little village called Fawler. We just thought it looked and sounded too cool to just be a little village with four houses in it, so we added the S on the end and ran with it.

Any previous bands your members have been in, how did you meet and what were your previous incarnations like compared to now?

We all knew of each other from the Oxford scene and grew up playing shows together in separate bands. Drummer Jamie in his band Waterfools with his brother George on bass who also plays bass for us on records and live shows. Guitarist Al in his band Fiver and frontman Ben with his band The Mezz.

How did the band come together?

Growing up in the same scene really helped us out when we came to putting this project together. It was like old mates meeting up and hanging out. It's the best way to do things really because then you get the magic of people creating something out of passion instead of forcing it.

One of your lyrics you're most pleased about?

It's really hard to pick one because they all serve a purpose in the context of each song. I like to think of them more as a look into my mind or a way to inflame someone else's, but for that to happen you really have to sit there and listen yourself and come



up with your own view on what they mean. If I give it all away then it loses its magic.

First gig and most recent gig? At the time of this interview we have only played two gigs under the name FAWLERS. But both went really well! We launched on Halloween this year and tested out our live set in venues around Oxford. They were fun! The O2 Academy was a highlight. After months out it was so good to get back on stage to do what we love.

Some records old and new that have influenced you? We all grew up just before streaming became available so like most people in their 20s we got all our music from Kerrang, Scuzz and MTV etc. I was a massive Green Day fan as a kid. It was impossible to find someone at school who didn't have 'American Idiot' on CD. I still love that album for the nostalgia it gives me. Another one, like most alt rock musicians, was Nirvana's 'Nevermind'. I remember hearing that for the first time in my dad's work van whilst we went to watch some local football. I sat in the van and pressed play. From 20 seconds in it just took my head off, man.

Other Oxford bands you like? It's got to be Radiohead hasn't it! Ok computer is still one of the best records to come out of the city if not the country to this day.

Other things that influence you? I think it's just the story of everyday life that I obsess with; I like to people watch. It's wild to me that everyone you see has a story and life they're living. I like to think I put that into a lot of our music.

Please tell us there is more coming soon? We have singles set for release throughout the first half of 2026, I can't say too much more right now but if you follow our socials you'll find out soon enough.

Favourite song to play live? As it stands it has to be our debut single 'In Silence'.

'IN SILENCE' IS OUT TO STREAM EVERYWHERE NOW.

LIVE REVIEWS



THE SAMURAI SEVEN, EMMA HUNTER, THE EXACT OPPOSITE - THE JERICHO TAVERN

The Samurai Seven were first championed by John Peel after BBC Radio 1 Sound City, which celebrated Oxford's rising star nearly 30 years ago, and tonight's sold out gig seems to be similarly caught by the buzz. The OMS line-up is Epic, (if we do say so ourselves), and the Great and the Good rock up like it's 1997. *"I knew you'd be doing the door!"* whispers an ex-Shifty Disco founder (Oxford's seminal label) as I take it upon myself to Meet and Greet. Opens The Exact Opposite featuring Nigel Powell (The Unbelievable Truth) and Jamie (Ex-Dustball) tear up the stage, swiftly followed by the Morriccone-esque majesty of Emma Hunter. Queen.

The surf-popping fantastic four are 'Back Back', with The Samurai Seven touting sharper suits and higher kicks than ever. The room is heaving as our headliners mainline raw energy, blistering through old favourites from 'Amateur Photographer' to 'Xeroxy Music' and debut bangers 'Make It Real' and 'Punching Down'. Everyone - even the cool ones - joined in the signature finalé sing-along to A-ha's 'Take On Me' for a textbook ending. No notes.

As the anniversary of Sound City Oxford approaches in 2027, the scene is still strong and plans are afoot. With new music and releases set for next year and shows in the pipeline, this is no doubt just the beginning of a new era - and I'm here for it. (AN) Photo: Ian Hanhham.

SPRINTS - O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

Garage punk Dubliners SPRINTS caused a stir here this November, in support of their sophomore record 'All That Is Over'. It's noted by their growing cult fanbase that the band have recently shifted in style towards more measured post punk arrangements, but their live show remains a snarling whirlwind of singalong moshpit mayhem. Lead vocalist and guitarist Karla Chubb barks song lyrics like orders, pointing accusingly at the Oxford mob, as a loyal following respond word-for-word. New permanent guitarist Zac Stephenson mostly holds it down side-stage, chugging open chords through a wall of effects, but is given huge moments to step forward and let rip, surely pushing the O2's famously deafening PA system to its limit. Certainly for fans of Amyl and the Sniffers, IDLES and their rowdy peers - expect to see SPRINTS become a regular part of the UK touring circuit. (CB)

GOLDEN DREGS - THE JERICHO TAVERN

Oxford's Jerico Tavern is well-suited to the six-piece Golden Dregs, whose performance is less about spectacle and more about depth. Despite a disappointingly small audience, the band appeared to thrive, unfolding their stories with an assured confidence that comes from a collective rather than focusing on just the singer.

Benjamin Woods, the band's songwriter and singer, has a love of storytelling which is delivered in a rich baritone, often compared to Leonard Cohen and Bill Callahan, and with lyrics described as "existential dread and reckless abandon". The band opened with 'American Airlines', a gentle mix of baritone murmurs, soft synth hums, and brushed percussion before diving into the new album with 'Linoleum'. This set the tone for a set shaped by nuance: warm, patient, and quietly assured. The emotional peak arrived with 'Godspeed', the title track of their latest album. Stripped-back and unhurried, it felt like a late-night confessional whispered into the room. The crowd responded in kind: hushed, attentive, leaning in. The Golden Dregs don't command silence through force; they earn it by crafting spaces where people instinctively settle into stillness.

The band's sound blended soft guitar spirals, warm bass glides, and minimal yet expressive drumming, creating an atmosphere closer to a

shared meditation than a conventional indie set. Woods's dry, understated humour between songs punctured the stillness just enough, reminding us of the everyday mundanity behind music that often sounds celestial.

By the time they closed with 'The Company of Strangers', its harmonies rising like a soft tide, the room felt hushed. Nothing felt rushed; nothing felt overstated. This was a performance rooted in trust - trust in the songs, in the space, and in an audience willing to meet them halfway. (DR)



THE UTOPIA STRONG - THE BULLINGDON

The seeds of The Utopia Strong were born when Steve Davis (yes, that Steve Davis) met Iranian-born musician Kavus Torabi (Gong, Cardiacs), with Michael J. York (Coil) coming onboard after DJing at Glastonbury Festival in 2017, with the three of them deciding to form a band.

Before the main act however, Andrew Liles took to the stage, or didn't as it happens, as he preferred to stay off to the side and let the visuals take his place. Starting with grimy council estate pics and equally fitting mood music (think '70s BBC kitchen sink drama) before morphing into a Jarre-esque piece. Part three saw the introduction of some metal guitar along with disturbing visuals before ending on a more mellow sci-fi Orb-like vibe.

The Utopia Strong on the other hand had no such qualms about taking to the stage and bringing a more mellow energy to the night's entertainment. A lazy comparison of much of their set might be Barrett - era Pink Floyd, and at times they did sound like a slowed down 'Interstellar Overdrive', but perhaps a more accurate description might be a less goth and more pastoral Dead Can Dance. Playing for just

over an hour, their set appeared to be highly improvised, but I left suspecting that it was more structured than it first appeared. (AT)

Photo: Ian Hanhham.

BABYSHAMBLES - O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

Last time I saw Babyshambles was 2005, and to be honest, it was a show I'd rather forget! But after more than a decade off the road, Babyshambles are back as part of their 20th-anniversary run for 'Down in Albion', and whilst ticket prices were steep, fans certainly got their money's worth.

Vona Vella, GANS and Charlie Beuller all offered support slots, ensuring a non-stop musical cabaret before Pete Doherty entered the stage to, wait for it... flog copies of his new fanzine - £10 cash only. This is proper old-skool and allowed those at the front a chance to buy copies, get selfies and meet the legend that has become Pete Doherty. From the moment the band hit the stage, the atmosphere was loose, loud and full of swagger. Opening with 'Killamangiro' and 'Delivery', the twenty-song set included plenty of classics, a few nuggets, the new ska and reggae influenced 'Dandy Hooligan' and an unexpected, acapella verse or two of 'Eternal Flame'.

Doherty is a frontman with style and pose and the audience love him for it. For longtime fans, hearing these songs live again carried weight, but it was nice to see so many young people in the audience who may well have missed the band last time around. The between-song tape of Hancock's half hour helped cement the gig in the band's roots of cockney Albion and whilst plenty of fun was had by the band, Doherty also offered a heartfelt recognition of the tragic passing of founding guitarist Patrick Walden earlier this year. No frills, no polished production: just battered guitars, bruised and ragged voices, sometimes very, but undeniable heart. By the end, there was a communal shout-along for a closing 'Fuck Forever', a feeling of camaraderie: you weren't just witnessing a reunion - you were part of one. For what it was, Babyshambles delivered a ragged night that felt sincere, unpredictable and uncomfortably beautiful - just like their best records. Let's hope we don't have to wait so long to see them again. (DR) Photo: Dave Roberts.



LIVE REVIEWS

THE DREAMING SPIRES - CORNERSTONE, DIDCOT

The Cornerstone isn't the place for local bands, normally familiar to more mainstream fare. Tonight is a different story though as The Dreaming Spires'



'Normal Town' tour reaches the land of its muse: Didcot! The unsung (or spoken word) hero of the night was Shaun Belcher who set the tone so perfectly with his words on Didcot's weird anomalies that get easily submerged in its normality (it was voted UK's most normal town not too long ago).

Hannah White's support was utterly fantastic and her country songs about the harshness of sheltered accommodation in London, momentarily ripped everyone away from the pleasant world of the art centre auditorium. The Spires played a blinder and faithfully did full justice to the new album with brilliant tales between each track. They praised their drummer Jamie Dawson who had lived in a few US locations including LA but couldn't resist returning to the magnetic pull of Didcot, and the wizardry of the keys player Tom Collison also deserves huge credit considering the album's prominent use of piano. The setlist examined a disappearing world but never felt overly sentimental or anti-progress, rather it took a grounded look at our times. After new album standout song 'Real Life', a hard-hitting cover of Springsteen's 'Atlantic City' before we got the band's old iconic favourites including the Fanclub - esque 'Everything All the Time. (GN) Photo: Shaun Belcher.

WILLY MASON – THE JERICHO TAVERN

Opening the night's entertainment, singer-songwriter Lily Lyons, who played a short but sweet set of acoustic numbers in support of her new album 'Re-Open the World', highlight of which was the title track, a song that perfectly displays her penchant for sometimes gritty, sometimes fantastical, but always thoughtful

lyrics and sweet melodies. Also touring in support of new material, in this case new single 'Sailing', was Martha's Vineyard songwriter Willy Mason with his bluesy take on folk music and raw, lyrical storytelling. An early highlight was 'The World That I Wanted' from his 2007 album 'If The Ocean Gets Rough', a thoughtful and tender song about the father/son dynamic, which amazingly he wrote when he was just 15. Another memorable moment was the aforementioned 'Sailing', with its themes of escape and freedom, being another pinnacle of his 20-song set. He leaves us with the sextet of 'Oxygen', 'Riptide', 'Fear No Pain', 'When The Leaves Have Fallen', 'So Long' and for the encore 'We Can Be Strong', all fantastic songs from his astonishing back catalogue.

In a world awash with sensitive singer-songwriter types Willy Mason is a cut above your average troubadour, so let's hope he visits these shores again soon. (AT)

THE DIVINE COMEDY - THE NEW THEATRE

After three years, Neil Hannon's Divine Comedy are back in Oxford, this time with a new album 'Rainy Sunday Afternoon'. As always, Hannon, founder/singer and songwriter, looks the part of the flamboyant foppish front man, complete with trilby hat and with an air of extravagance about him. Kicking off the show with 'Archilles' and 'The Last Time I Saw the Old Man', both from the new album, it is clear this is an album Hannon believes in and is keen to present live. These opening tracks offer reflections on mortality and the impact of dementia, themes which feel mature for a band who once gave us 'Generation Sex' and 'National Express', but, like many in the audience, Hannon now finds himself in his mid-50s and grappling with such issues. But fear not, there are plenty of lyrical high-larks spread across the show, such as the almost whimsical 'Norman and Norma' or the Randy Newman-esque 'Bang Goes the Knighthood'. Hannon delivers each of the twenty-plus songs as a three-and-a-half-minute chamber pop-opus; he doesn't pretend the songs are overly deep nor drag them out with unnecessary solos. He is an entertainer, and he knows how to work the crowd, such as when he wheels out a drinks trolley to toast his band members.

The DC might not be everyone's cup of tea, but it's hard not to get sucked into the sheer pop-fun of the evening and find yourself singing along to the likes of 'Indie Disco' or 'Something for the Weekend'. As has become the norm at Divine Comedy shows, the band close with a euphoric version of 'Tonight We Fly' from their 1994 breakthrough album,

'Promenade', bringing everyone to their feet before sending them home with an ear-to-ear grin. Nothing fancy or complicated, just an evening of great baroque pop songs and plenty of humour. (DR)

UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH - THE BULLINGDON

This homecoming show was always going to be an emotional one, underscored by both their strength as live performers and their continued resonance with their audience. From the moment singer Andy Yorke took the stage, the crowd responded with a reverential warmth. Yorke spoke few words, instead allowing drummer Nigel Powell to lead the interaction with the audience, who clearly included many friends and family members for bassist, and local lad, Jason Moulster.

Visually, the show was restrained but highly effective. Ditching the temptation for ever-changing swathes of colour, the stage is decorated with simple hanging white lights, enhancing the introspective atmosphere of the show. Whilst the set drew heavily on their debut 'Almost Here' album, early favourites like 'Roadside#2' also made the grade. The melancholic and mature material from the new album worked well with the band's sound and alongside the older material. Yorke's acoustic guitar framed much of the show, allowing the delicacy of tracks like 'This Paradise' and 'Who's to Know?' to really shine through, whilst Powell's drumming and Moulster's melodic bass work helped develop the emotional depth of many of the songs.

After a 14-song main set, the band return for two encores. By this point, the connection with the audience was secured, and the double-bill of this year's 'Citizens Band' and 1998's 'Higher than Reason', their highest-charting single, left many speechless. But they weren't quite finished, returning for a second encore culminating with Yorke's stunning solo version of 'Almost Here'. It's good to have them back. (DR)

SHOCK HORROR, BLUE BAYOU, FIVER - THE BULLINGDON

For a cold Thursday night on Cowley Road, the energy in the front bar room was commendable and much-needed as everyone packed into the cosy space to hear three new greats. Fiver took to the stage with a grungy determination that had flickers of Wunderhorse about it. The Cobain-style rage in the singer's voice often made for the best moments of the set.

LIVE REVIEWS

Blue Bayou's songs do something so completely different that it always astounds new crowds. The singer Greg in a leather waistcoat, shell necklace and trackie bottoms delivered a phenomenal show while looking like he'd come from both a PE lesson and an archaeological dig. Throughout, it was a harmonious and leisurely sound that sidestepped the notion of the 'rock band'. Shock Horror were also serving a great look, like whalers on a choppy sea in their matching Dexys-style hats as they gave it their usual wellie. As 2025 gradually gets closer to its last weeks, we're reminded of an act who've consistently defined the year with their vigorous gigging, uncompromising energy (even when Charlie was lying on the floor shellshocked) and their groundbreaking sounds from the 'Terraform' EP. (GN)

GOLDIE LOOKIN' CHAIN - O2 ACADEMY, OXFORD

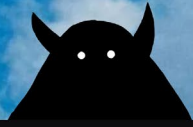
Caught support act John Mouse in time for him to call everyone at the show 'posh wankers' confirming him as a crazy, Welsh all-singing-all-electronic maestro who totally owns the stage with unflinching confidence and stage presence.

The titular spliff-smoking hip hop act, who seem like they may, possibly, have had a few, take the stage, and the whole room with it. From the first second, the music blasts and the crowd is swept up by the constant movement and energy everywhere onstage, as this seven-piece deftly dart around each other, dancing with perfect balance between tight choreography and natural drugged-up vibing.

The show continued very much in this vein, with some highlights including 'I Love Drinking', with its huge sounding and reggae-ish beat, 'Pubes', (enjoyed very much by the young child in front of me), and some obvious hits such as 'Soap Bar' and 'Guns Don't Kill People, Rappers Do'. Other highlights include some quotes from the night, such as "Make some noise for pubes!" and, in the context of an audience chant, "Ox-ford! GL-C! ...I can't think of anything else". This was all loved by a reasonably large, clearly dedicated crowd, all dressed up for the night with their best chains.

In case it wasn't clear, this was a fantastic gig - I found myself completely lost in the epic mashup of dance hits, (not GLC songs - essentially a very short DJ set), that concluded the set. Definitely catch them if you can. (NG)

TRUCK



ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2025



#1 CMAT EURO-COUNTRY

Our top pick of the year goes to the Irish singer-songwriter who has delivered both an ALL-CAPS set of infectious pop bangers and a meticulously crafted study of personal, national and societal themes that resonate deeply. She channels the chaos and charm of her overactive mind into a funny, smart and subversive record capable of inducing a lump-in-the-throat one minute and a snort-laugh the next. Iconic!



#2 WEDNESDAY BLEEDS



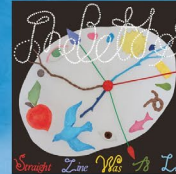
#3 GEESE GETTING KILLED



#4 THE TUBS COTTON CROWN



#5 RYAN DAVIS & THE ROADHOUSE BAND NEW THREATS FROM THE SOUL



#6 THE BETHS STRAIGHT LINE WAS A LIE



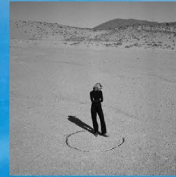
#7 CAR SEAT HEADREST THE SCHOLARS



#8 MARIE DAVIDSON CITY OF CLOWNS



#9 TURNSTILE NEVER ENOUGH



#10 NATALIE BERGMAN MY HOME IS NOT IN THIS WORLD



SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE TO EXPLORE OUR FULL TOP 50!

COMING UP IN JANUARY



DRY CLEANING SECRET LOVE



SLEAFORD MODS THE DEMISE OF PLANET X



PVA NO MORE LIKE THIS



WESTSIDE COWBOY SO MUCH COUNTRY 'TILL WE GET THERE



COURTNEY MARIE ANDREWS VALENTINE

UPCOMING EVENTS

The CRIBS

ALBUM LAUNCH OUT-STORE
O2 ACADEMY, 13TH JAN, 7PM

JENNY ON HOLIDAY

ALBUM LAUNCH IN-STORE
TRUCK OXFORD, 15TH JAN, 6PM

ELLES BAILEY

ALBUM LAUNCH IN-STORE
TRUCK OXFORD, 15TH JAN, 1PM

KEEP AN EYE ON TRUCKMUSIC.STORE FOR MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS

LOCAL RELEASES



FAWLERS - IN SILENCE

Brand new indie grunge locals FAWLERS growl their way through this debut single, complete with big choruses and crunchy guitars. Whilst contemporaries Wunderhorse are an obvious comparison, 'In Silence' also recalls early 2010s alternative bands of the Darlia/ Drengel/ Hyena ilk, reflecting on the '90s through rose-tinted clout goggles. With a rocky commercial sound like this, you'd expect FAWLERS to blow up pretty quickly in the Oxford scene - everyone keep your eyes peeled for this lot! (CB)

WORST WISHES - IT WON'T FEEL THIS WAY FOREVER

The debut EP from Witney-based alt-rockers has dropped, and it's something of a masterpiece - a throwback to late-2000s/early-2010s alt in many ways, yet managing to feel entirely fresh at the same time. Opener 'Spinning In Circles' is a fast-paced way to get the energy going, and the follow-up 'If I Don't Wake Up' brings slightly grungier guitars and a much more raw vocal to the mix. 'Same But Different' really brings the throwback energy; it feels like it belongs on the soundtrack to a soapy teen

drama or maybe even a Gran Turismo game - and that's not a bad thing.

'Smileboy' feels like an expansion on style, with the guitars and vocals given more space to breathe, and the switch of gears is a welcome one. 'Brave Face' switches us again, taking us to a bit more of a pop-punk/skate-rock feel and it's truly impressive to see a band switch through styles of alt-rock so seamlessly. Closing track 'Never Had the Time' brings the pace right down, offering a moment of reflection on what has been a truly impressive manifesto for local music, before kicking into gear and reminding you that these guys know how to rock.

As debut efforts go, you won't hear better this year. You may not hear better for years. These guys will be huge. (AS)

PERFECT CHILDREN - QUE SARAH SARAH

Previously of Barricane, the ever versatile Chris Alchin has returned to his Perfect Children roots over the last year or so - just the 35 years since their birth. Here, 'Que Sarah Sarah' (see what they did there?) finds the band in a slightly whimsical indie-folk love gone wrong quandary. It's crystal clear of message and production, reminding me most of the Lightning Seeds seeking three minute pop perfection. That the version I've heard stretches to nearly eight, is probably to allow for Laima Bite's excellent video to unfold, so I'll forgive them for that. (LW)

GENEVIEVE MILES - THEN IT GETS WORSE

When I get offered witchy alt-rock, I take it - who can resist that as a genre title? 'Cinnamon' opens the EP beautifully, and I'm keen to find out more about witchy rock. The vocals are beautiful, if a little drowned out in the mix by guitars and drums, but maybe that's the point? 'Sweet to be Alone' is a slow-paced, PJ Harvey-esque track with a touch of Bond-theme to it, with a beautiful vocal that really does impress. 'Howl' brings more lo-fi, slow-paced vibe; a beautifully-played guitar and strings with a soft vocal that just hypnotises you until you realise that this is a break-up song and you begin to wonder if you're supposed to be enjoying it or finding it this relaxing. But, somewhere therein lies the magic - maybe this is the "witchy" part? (AS)

ALTO ALTO - HONEYCOMB

The follow up to last year's single 'Broken Fin' is well worth the wait as it packs in stormy riffs, a tight rhythm section and meditative observations of an awe-inspiring landscape. The imagery of oceans, atlases, rolling thunder and mountains fits that signature Jonny Payne songbook and shows a singer whose explorations of vast geographical and natural scenes often feature a struggling protagonist as a mere speck, raging against massive and indifferent forces. The coda's siren-like backing vocals in the right headphone prove what an intricately layered production is at play here thanks to long - time cohort and Premium Leisure man Chris Barker. (GN)

LOCAL RELEASES

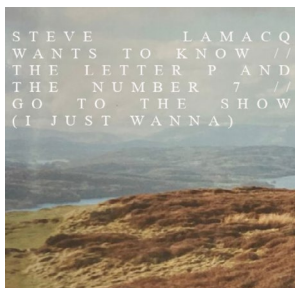


THE DREAMING SPIRES - NORMAL TOWN

Ten years on from 'Searching For the Super Truth', comes 'Normal Town': a walk through that all-too-familiar place with its locals, dead ends, frustrations and dreams. Every topic explored in these 12 tracks roars with significance, urgency and relevance. The weathered spirit of the protest song rises up irrepressibly throughout 'Normal Town' and although it's an album of the 'here and now', it captures that 'lonesome hippie' Neil Young sentiment and walks in the footsteps of Dylan, Byrds, Big Star and Teenage Fanclub. Piano ballads feature like never before as the Bennett brothers wrestle with change in a work that is fixated on creating a sense of place and working out what home means.

The eponymous opening track chooses an appropriately simple stomping beat with joyous drum fills that feel fresh out of 'A Day in the Life' trying to escape the shackles of the humdrum world that the Spires sing of. It's a song that deals with encroaching urbanisation, alienation, punchups, intoxication and the petty machinations of those who drag us down and, throughout, and it has a lovely Billy Liar-esque

will to abscond. 'Normalisation' looks at the "hate in this nation" that has crept so subtly into the status quo. 'Cooling Towers' tells of a landmark chapter in Didcot's history when the skyline changed forever. '21st Century Light Industrial' is 'Maggie's Farm' but with fresh, dull horror and a wry sense of humour. Every track is noteworthy on this masterpiece but to jump to 'Real Life', the last stop, the shallow pursuits of "high life" are rejected, an affirmation of the need to live in reality - and maybe that's what normal towns are best at? (GN)



LUCY LEAVE - THREE SONGS FROM THE DARKENING EP

An interim release from long-time musical outliers Lucy Leave, this EP is a teaser for the band's upcoming (double!) album 'Feelings Explorer' I and II, due out in March. Leading off with their strongest suit, 'Steve Lamacq Wants to Know' is a krautrock-tinged improvisational extravaganza both crunchy and gnomic. "Do you remember any numbers?" they posit. It's an excellent question. The more outwardly conventional arrangements of following tracks 'The Letter P and the Number Seven' and 'Go to the Show (I Just Wanna)' do little to conceal an essential, delightful

weirdness lurking beneath the surface. All three songs serve to confirm that Lucy Leave make music quite unlike anything else currently going on in Oxford. Can't wait to hear the full album. (HG)

JODY AND THE JERMS - LOVE DESCENDS

If there's anyone out there untouched by the prolifically spangly indie pop of six-piece Jody and the Jerms, please let 'Love Descends' be the mission that conquers final frontiers. This 12-track album is a collection of recent singles and brand-new numbers, together reminding us of the mess and complexities of love. It features stellar collaborators including Erica Nockalls and Mark Gardener, and they've been rewarded with national radio plays, increased attention and tour the UK in 2026.

I won't be the first to mention that I'm also reminded of the 80s, perhaps Kirsty MacColl and the Primitives above all. For those fortunate and young enough not to understand such references, it's a compliment. The band wear their influences with a lightness of touch, melody aplenty and lashings of energy.

'Unraveling' leans into Kirsty territory, with accompanying trumpets, 'Lights' features a Nik Kershaw-like hook and 'A Different Place' thumps and broods like late-period Abba. Standouts include the infectious opener 'Hooch and Happiness' and the wistful torch of 'Winter Heart' to close the album. Jody and the Jerms have clearly loved making this, without taking themselves too seriously. The tunes, ideas and sheer fun of the ten songs in between those bookends will keep you grinning. (LW)

THE BOROUGH - CONTRADICTIONS EP

I may have disregarded The Borough a little - I distinctly remember saying something about A-level politics in a previous review. We've had one of the tracks, 'Thursday in Baghdad' before, which if you've heard you'll know what to expect - not at all to disregard the whole EP - I mean the whole dangerous, prowling sound, militant motifs are present and correct and 'Good Guys' is a standout, whereby the boys channel their inner The Fall to great effect. The EP sounds brilliant, one of the best local releases I've heard. (ES)

IN FLIGHT MOVIE - DECOY

Oxford's In-Flight Movie make their album debut with 'Decoy', an eight-track plunge into synth-soaked psych, shoegaze haze and anxious machine-age pop.

It opens with 'Passenger', a driving, Numan-leaning homage built on a wobbly, addictive synth line and reverb-bathed vocals that spiral into my favourite lyrical bark on the album: "A PANIC ATTACK." It's nostalgic but sharpened with a modern, metallic edge. 'Broken Glass' brings a bouncier pulse - winding, surreal guitar shrieks slicing through a lovely underpinning synth melody. 'Staircase' marks a tonal shift: spacey ambience, shoegaze crunch and Thom Yorke-esque croons from an earlier era of the band, showcasing In-Flight Movie's slightly dreamier side. 'Lightbulb' glides like a Pink Floyd fever dream with thick, blurred layers of synth and guitar

melting into one rich, woolly whole. The intensity kicks back up on 'Factory', where industrial drums, crashing cymbals and manic lyrics speak of digital-age dread, before returning to delicate synth lines and tender textures in 'Birds'.

Closer 'Window' lifts off like a Cold War space launch, gritty bass and bright piano giving way to pounding drums and frantic vocals as the track spirals toward its climactic, cinematic finale. A rich, warped, beautifully disorienting debut. (SC)

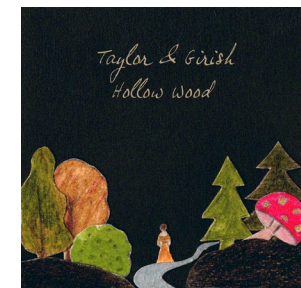
RED TEXAS - BATSHIT CRAZY BABY EP

First track of the three track EP is a blues/rock affair that doesn't hang around (no bat pun intended) but rolls in and out at just over two minutes. Second up is 'Lord Have Mercy' a slightly more earthy edition where the protagonist goes down to the head shop to get his brain cleaned out for free. This might explain a lot. 'What I Want' suddenly hits a different note - Wilko Johnson is in the house. It's all very nice, well played and produced but not especially memorable. (KR)

TAYLOR AND GIRTH - HOLLOW WOOD EP

There's no mistaking the ambition and scope of Taylor and Girish, a husband and wife folk duo who've been prolific and capturing attention over the past year. They say "this record allowed us to express the emotional and spiritual transformations that we were feeling with each passing season." As such, the four track 'Hollow Wood' EP gently arches through time, and with three seasons previously released as singles, the autumnal title

track tenderly concludes the emotional cycle moving through renewal, despair, loneliness and acceptance. The delicacy of the vocal, and fragility of its accompaniment are matched by the sumptuous seasonal colours of the video. (LW)



THE BOBO - OLD NEIGHBOURHOODS

I reviewed The Bobo's last release in the summer, praising the understated, fragile delight of 'Again' while resolving to catch them live. Ok, I've failed at that and so, nagging at my conscience, here comes the beautifully exquisite 'Old Neighbourhoods'. Its melancholy hushes, twirls and soars and before I know it, like the hope it evokes, it's already over. This is more of an acoustic delight than previous electronica-tinged releases; it's warming our winter and still confident to create space yet not waste a second. Another season's turned, and clearly, I don't get out enough. (LW)

LOCAL RELEASES



ARTHUR TURNER'S LOVECHILD? - LAST HOORAH OF THE ELECTRIC KID EP

Apparently, Arthur Turner's Lovechild? is returning after a 31 year hiatus to "unleash acerbic lyric-driven punk-pop on an unsuspecting tik-tok generation". Although we're talking '90s punk, so it's a revival of a revival which is definitely a rarefied concept. And it is precisely this disjunction which drives the excellent title track, where the band pesters the listener Ancient Mariner-like with dubious prognostication and archaic reference.

Deadpan vocals are set against spectacularly angular guitar parts in a manner defiantly Buzzcocks-influenced and none the worse for that.

Mac de Hoopla and cohorts maintain the energy on 'Sailing Stones', another splendid burst of authentic post-punk noise. The remaining tracks perhaps incline more towards superior yet quotidian indie-rock, but definitely worth a listen for 'Last Hoorah of the Electric Kid' itself. (HG)

HEADPHONE WASP - LOOSE THE CRAZY

'Loose the Crazy' really does what it says on the tin and unleashes nine tracks of weird and wonderful (emphasis on the weird!) noise exploration that rejects the trappings of any common structure and voyages into a pleasant unknown. The artist's name is also highly appropriate as some mischievous wasp really does seem to have been set loose on us on the second track. What is most refreshing about this psychedelic electronic ambiance is its pure and almost naive approach to a very 'punk' tradition of deconstructing safe musical norms and this is never done, thankfully, with 'state of the art' equipment; it's all the more welcome for using the sort of sample packs and technology that you and me would have access to. It does occasionally stray more towards music though, in pieces like 'Drop Your Favourite Cup'. 'Loose the Crazy' is clownish and anarchic at times but don't doubt its ability to transport you to wondrous places when it so pleases. (GN)

THE NIGHT HERONS - PERSEPHONE EP

The Night Herons follow up their splendid debut EP 'Here Comes the River' with a sophomore release of equal distinction. Exploring the eponymous classical myth (and appropriately pomegranate-adorned), the title track's conceit is that this Persephone is condemned to inhabit the Circle Line. Rachel Holmes'

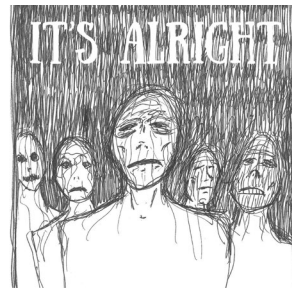
breathy vocal modulations perfectly compliment an assured instrumental performance with Martin Kutnar's cello a highlight.

'Rainy Streets' channels the atmosphere of Ella Fitzgerald at a smoky '50s Storyville, beautifully supported by David Hemming's inspired piano fills. 'Waterfall' is more poppy in feel with sophisticated electric piano work and the sort of exuberant massed vocal chorus that is becoming a feature of the band's work. Finally, 'The Movie' surprises with its excitable arpeggios and rhythmic diversity, all very New York in feel. Proper, timeless music painted on a broad canvas. (HG)



NOTHING DREAMS - I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANY MORE

Ironically it all starts out quite dreamlike, jazzy, bluesy, whispering and then the straining vocals kick in for the opening of this indie track that maybe wants to be something different, something more epic. The pace picks up into the chorus and it becomes a bit stoner in its delivery. It's interesting. The second track on the EP is 'Whatever You Want' which is much more of the same. It's more post pub type vibes. Both tracks are worth a listen but they lack anything interesting that would keep you coming back for more. (KR)



THE FOAMHEADS - IT'S ALRIGHT

The Foam Heads' new release is reassuring (it's alright, it's alright), and upbeat. Genres are pretty subjective, but I'd call it indie, and pop, like MGMT do it - I mean distinctly bright and a little edgy, very coming-of-age, especially with the initial, rapidly increasing tempo leading to the crashing wave of the song breaking onto your ears. The combination of synth and 'real' works very well, and so does the layered background mumbling and more distinct lyrics. Very much a danceable track and I can distinctly appreciate all the playing; nothing is lost to the dreamlike quality. (ES)

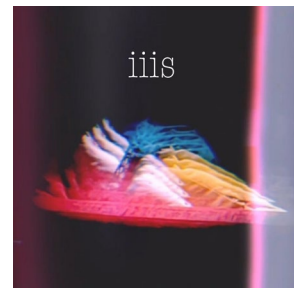
MILA TODD - RIAMBEL

Mila Todd's 'Riambel' is a spacey, beautifully textured soundscape where pulsing synths meet harsh, almost abrasive details, creating an immersive and layered four minutes and 35 seconds that really rewards return listens. Throughout, the track has a biblical feeling of awesome; a feeling of reverence, awe, and fear. It feels both celestial and mechanical, the synths provide a real sense of serenity while the track's sharper textures whirr, crash, and jolt as if this divine machine is coming to life. Named

after a wild, tranquil beach in Mauritius, 'Riambel' captures that same strange blend of beauty, peace and underlying power. (SC)

iiis - CHAIRS

Oxford three-piece iiis return with a double A-side that follows last year's 'Slow Riot' EP, pairing two clean, crisp guitar cuts that demonstrate the band's vulnerable edge. 'Chairs' grows patiently from Britpop-tinged shimmer into an impassioned final third, its dual vocals and "fabric decorates you" refrain lingering beautifully. 'Arms' leans much further into melancholy; brooding, hypnotic and gently drifting. The track's deeper vocal and slow, deliberate drums build a gauzy and, almost dusk-lit, atmosphere. Together, these two tracks form a quietly stirring, emotional release from a band at the beginning of defining their identity. (SC)



CRAB COSTUME - STACKIN' UP

Blimey what's this! Not only an MP3 track but the strangest opening to a tune that I've heard for a long time. It's children's nursery bedtime vibes. Hang on a minute. Here come the dirty vocals and the beats over a piano. First thinking that this is a new Yungblud track it turns out that it's a collaboration between British born, New York

based producer Mars Kestrel and Oxford, UK based vocalist Asher Dust. The chorus returns to nursery rhyme vibes but, outside of that, it's a top drawer, inventive and creative dance tune. Worth checking out. (KR)

i4M2 - ECHO ICONIC

While alter ego 'he didn't' tracks often feel like they have the best part of eternity to work with, i4M2 tracks fit more of the confines of the 'pop track', meaning they're around three minutes with a beat and melody. That said, this work remains totally 'out there' in its artistic mission. Unlike their debut album, 'Shut Up', 'Echo Iconic' is self-produced and neither quality or experimental power suffer as a result. 'Sun Sect Festival' summons up one of the first moments of fantastical bliss, while at the other extreme, 'Hexagonal Trip' unleashes some abrasive car-horn-esque anarchy, before the closing track, 'I Am Under No Flag', dies away serenely in a peaceful continuum. 'Echo Iconic's' wondrous selection of electronic synths, loops and occasional live instrumentation is "dedicated to the spirit of Steve Albini". (GN)



LOCAL RELEASES



THE LUNAR KEYS - PURE AS YOUR PROTOCOL

It opens and I immediately think of the Cranberries – it's all in your head! The new track by indie/rock four piece is a rather straightforward track, at times there's a bit of Def Leppard being channelled in the track. It's got a sing along chorus and you hope that it'll go somewhere but it doesn't really go anywhere exciting. Maybe a few more plays and it'll end up in my head! (KR)



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BBC INTRODUCING IN OXFORDSHIRE AND BERKSHIRE WITH NEW SHOW APPRENTICE LAUREN SKINNER

INTERVIEWS

Since starting at BBC Introducing Oxfordshire and Berkshire in September I've been blown away by the number of opportunities the team have given me. Within the first month I was at Truck Store interviewing Unbelievable Truth. We spoke about their new album 'Rich Inner Life', what life was like on hiatus, and they performed an acoustic session of the album. I'd never interviewed anyone before and I couldn't be more grateful that it was with the guys in Unbelievable Truth, as they were so well receptive of the questions I threw their way.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Before starting at the BBC I'd just finished my undergraduate at Oxford Brookes University studying photography. During that time I integrated myself into Oxford's music scene, shooting local gigs at The Bullingdon, O2 Academy and The Jericho Tavern. Because of this the team were keen to get me shooting the artists that came into the studio for interviews. Thus far I've made the white wall by the kitchen a photography studio and the stairs in the building have never looked so interesting.



MAIDA VALE

The apprenticeship is all about creating opportunities and never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be shooting the likes of Declan McKenna (pictured above) at the iconic Maida Vale Studios in London, but come October I was doing just that! The lovely content editor at BBC Introducing, Kelly Betts, invited me down to capture content for the BBC Introducing Live event, where aspiring musicians received valuable knowledge from some of the music industry's biggest players. The content team were like a well-oiled machine. They have so much knowledge and passion and it was a privilege to join them for the day.

More recently I spoke to Emily Jeffri about her single 'The Thing' and the gory inspiration behind the track. Who would have thought that an electric toothbrush could make such an interesting sound for a bass line! Not only that but BBC Introducing's Alex West and I chatted to Britain's Got Talent semi-finalist and TikTok superstar Ace Clvrk all about the session he recorded for us at Maida Vale. Ace did an insane, reimagined cover of 'In Every Heartbeat' by Robyn and performed his single 'Addicted'.

All of this can be heard on our podcast, just search for BBC Introducing Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

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Friday 30 January**
Friday 20 February**
Friday 13 March**

Indie Fridays

Saturday 6 December**
**Moving Pictures:
A Tribute To The
Music of Rush**

Saturday 6 December**
**Black Parade:
00s Emo Anthems**

Saturday 6 December
Day Fever

Saturday 6 December
**Fishies Christmas
Party Ft Taylor
Swiftmas**

Friday 12 December**
The Orb

Friday 12 December
**Country Roadshow:
Nashville's Biggest
Party Comes to
the UK**

Saturday 13 December**
**Morgan Wallen
Tribute UK**

Saturday 13 December
Stereolab

Tuesday 16 December
**Slade - The Final
Tour**

Friday 19 December**
Then Jerico

Friday 19 December
**Bingo Lingo:
Christmas Special**

Saturday 20 December
**The Smyths
+ Billy Blagg**

Saturday 20 December**
**IAATM Xmas
Bash Ft The Exact
Opposite, Dead
Anyway, Karvara,
Mortifi'd, Tim GK
and more**

Thursday 8 January
Ocean Colour Scene

Tuesday 13 January
The Cribs

Friday 16 January
**Prohibition Party:
Let's Party Like
it's 1926**

Saturday 17 January
Cast

Saturday 17 January**
**The Chris Stapleton
Experience**

Friday 23 January
Juke Box

Friday 6 February
**Elvana: Elvis
Fronted Nirvana**

Friday 13 February**
**Swiftogeddon:
The Taylor Themed
Club Night**

Sunday 15 February
Maximo Park

Friday 20 February**
China Crisis

Friday 20 February
**Fell Out Boy &
The Black Charade
+ L1nkn P4rk
+ Dookie
Green Day Tribute**

Saturday 21 February
Good Neighbours

Thursday 26 February
Sleaford Mods

Saturday 28 February
Howard Donald

Saturday 7 March
Rhythms of the 90s

Friday 20 March
The Snuts

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