

The Brian Heywood Column

On Monday (Jun 3), four of the best local up-and-coming bands played to a hardy audience in Dunstable Town Council's out door performance area in Grove House Gardens as part of the local jubilee celebrations. And what better way to celebrate the festive occasion than to look to the musical future, to encourage the bands that are going to hold up the banner of British Music into the start of the new century. So four bands selected from the best of local talent through the heats and semi-finals - **Reverie**, **Lime**, **Audio Justice** and **Over*easy** - presented by Jumping Jak's residents **Chris P** and **Lisa**, braved the elements and played their socks off to



an enthusiastic audience encompassing all age groups.



Reverie kicked off the tough opening slot with an atmospheric set of hectic experimental indie rock featuring lead singer's **Gerard McMahon's** Bono-esque and somewhat angst ridden but pleasingly raw sound supported by a powerful backing from the rest of the five piece guitar oriented band. **Reverie** develop on the sounds and themes pioneered by bands like **U2** and are at the cutting edge of contemporary pop/rock music performing very dramatic numbers. I was also very impressed by the range of lead guitar textures from **Liam McMahaon's** solo work.

Second on the bill was Dunstable based **Lime** who powered into their set with a punchy jazz funk instrumental number that featured the band's twin saxophones and had the audience tapping their feet - which for an English audience is the equivalent to dancing in the street. The next number introduced singer **Anna Abrahams** who tried to coax out the sun with a song called SFX which was followed by a new number that went under the appellation of 'Electro-Duck' until the band can work out a real name for the song. The band's funk sensibility and the obvious musical talents coupled with a pop perspective mean that this band should go far.



Letchworth based **Audio Justice** followed with their unique blend of power-pop and quirky - almost heavy metal - mix of concentrated musicality. These boys pack a lot of punch into each song - ranging from Joe Jackson-like meaningful pop lyrics through head thrashing chants spiced with Jimi Hendrix quality lead guitar solos. They played a number of tracks off their recent - and forthcoming - CD releases including "Up all Night" and "Push Comes to Shove" and the amazing "Adders and Ladders, it's a Game" which is both the title and the entire lyric.

The final slot was filled by another local band - **Over*Easy** - who launched into their set with a slide guitar driven original called 'Tripping on Love' which also showed off the harmonica skills of lead singer **Brett Aaron**. While he is now based in St Albans, Brett's accent gives away the fact that he is originally a native of Los Angeles where - so the rumour goes - his dad was a good mate of soul superstar Sly Stone. Whatever the truth of the matter, he has obviously been steeped in the soul environment which gives his performances an



authority that had the audience clapping along enthusiastically by the second number ("Forget About Me"). The songs were mainly original with a couple of funky Beatles covers ("Baby you can Drive My Car" and "Why don't we do it in the Road") featuring the funk guitar virtuosity of **Matt Laureance**. The set was rounded off with another original song "Falling for You" which is a cross between a soul classic and a retro-sixties hit.

But unfortunately as MC **Lisa** pointed out, there can only be one winner in this kind of beauty contest, and the honours went to **Over*Easy**, due in no small part to **Brett Aaron's** amazing stage presence. All the bands on the day performed superbly, just having got into the final after negotiating the gruelling series of heats and semi-finals means that they have something special. The winners get a chance to record in one of Luton's best studios, kindly donated by sponsor KoolWorld and so the rest is up to the band and their management. The other three bands also deserve prizes, or at least our support, since they represent the best talent in the local area and can wipe the floor with a lot of the trash that we get fed through the media.



A big hand should also be given to Dunstable Town Council (especially Michelle Alexander) for organising this latest event, in the face of considerable difficulty. With the lack of music venues in Dunstable due to the destruction of the Queensway Hall by ASDA and the South Beds District Council, you might want to ask them what the district council are doing to promote new music in the local area. Excuse me, but I am not aware of any music promotional activities in the South Beds/Dunstable area - despite the fact they have a full time Arts Development Officer. In fact the South Beds Council are the main agent of suppressing live music in the district through their enforcement of the draconian Public Entertainment Licensing regime. I may well be mistaken, and I would be happy to dedicate a column, or have a regular slot for their activities if they can be bothered to let me know about them - they can look at the contact details at the foot of the column if they need a hint. Jumping Jaks is an excellent venue, but the age restrictions (licensing laws again) mean that a large number of younger music fans are denied a chance to participate in the event. I don't know about you, but I started following bands from about 15, but teenagers are being excluded from events of this type.

12/Jun/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Stable Diet . . .

Every time I visit the Stables in Wavenden (Milton Keynes) I'm amazed by both the quality of the venue and the variety of the music that's programmed there. I was up there on Sunday to see the **Milton Keynes Orchestra Chamber Ensemble's** performance of *Facade*, which is William Walton's setting of a series of Edith Sitwell poems. The poems were the result of Sitwell's experimentation with the use of sonorities, sibilants and sound schemes and are firmly in the tradition that has resulted in modern day rapping. The ensemble was augmented by Johnny Dankworth (Sax/clarinet) and Alec Dankworth on double bass while Cleo Laine and daughter Jacqui Dankworth narrated the poems. The venue was originally started by the Dankworth family for themselves and friends and it's good to see them still closely involved.



South Beds District councillors should take a good look at the Stables, at both its flexibility as a venue and also at the broad range of acts they present. I've seen all kinds of performances there, and even been to a Ceilidh (Barn Dance). Considering that the auditorium can only seat 400 it's worth noting that the venue survives without a subsidy of any kind. The Dunstable venue will seat twice this number so there is more scope for putting on larger, more profitable acts, but the programme should also encompass the grass roots and more esoteric forms.

Anyway, back to the Stables, on Friday (June 14) **Al Stewart** who was considered to be the un-crowned king of the 60s and 70s folk circuit is appearing there. His track 'Year of the Cat' was the most memorable hit of 1977, bringing him world-wide recognition and catapulting him to superstar status. The music starts at eight and tickets cost either £18.50 or £16.00 and are available from the box-office on 01908-280800. For more information about the Stables and their music programme you can check out their web site at <http://www.stables.org>.

Tonight (Wednesday) you'll get a rare chance to see the amazing **John Kirkpatrick** playing up at Zaks in Milton Keynes supported by local star **Brad Bradstock**. Over the years John has been a member of the Albion Country Band, Magic Lantern, The Richard Thompson Band, Umps and Dumps, Steeleye Span, Brass Monkey, Trans-Europe Diatonique, and Band of Hope, as well as numerous ceilidh bands. An as session player, his music can be heard on over 200 different commercial recordings, basically, if you hear an accordion on a pop record then it is likely to be Mr K doing a bit of session work. **Brad Bradstock** (from New Bradwell no less) is a well regarded local singer/guitarist who won a Sony Radio award a few years ago for his BBC radio show following the lives of local people. Tickets are £7 and the music starts at around 8:30. 'Roots @ Zaks' is at 46 Church Street, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, MK12 6JW. Tel: 01908 315447 See www.zakslive.com for directions.

19/06/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Nemo Live at the Lounge . . .

Local duo **Nemo** are kicking off a new live acoustic venue upstairs at the Edge in Park St, Luton on Saturday (June 22). **Nemo** consists of **Char Ritch** and **Phil Knight** and produce a mellow acoustic vibe with overtones of Jazz and alternate folk. The band debuted at the Cork and Bull in Luton where they supported top local acoustic trio **Rush Hour**. Char is a classically trained musician with a degree in performance who has always wanted to be a singer/songwriter. She tells me that she has been crooning at anyone who'll listen since the age of eight and has played in various bands since sixth form college. As a bit of light relief she currently sings with The Central Festival Opera, a Northampton based society.



Char met Phil at a Rush Hour gig and **Nemo** was conceived. Phil has been playing the guitar since he was twelve years old and is in his second year of a music degree at London College of Music and Media which is attached to Thames Valley University. He's no stranger to the Luton music scene having played in various local bands including a four month stint with **Rush Hour** while one of their members was away in Australia. The duo's influences range from such diverse talents as Depeche Mode, Beatles, Tori Amos, Joni Mitchell, The Doors, Ella Fitzgerald, K.D Lang, Suzanne Vega, John Coltrane and even Early Mettallica.

The Edge acoustic sessions will take place every Saturday night and are hoping to build on the success of the Luton Turf festival and satisfy the growing popularity of the new acoustic movement. Future acts will include acoustic sets by Raw 74 (June 29), Alan White Project (July 13), Lime (July 20) and Loose Thread (June 27). Upstairs at the Edge is a very intimate (and comfortable!) venue and the organisers, Angie and Laura, expect the nights to have a friendly atmosphere with surprise guests joining in with the musical fun.

On Friday (June 21) German four piece blues outfit **The Loop** are playing a gig at the George II in Bute Street, Luton. They're dropping in on Luton on the way back from a two week tour of Ireland and the north of England with their tribute to Rory Gallagher. Check them out, you're unlikely to get a second chance.



It's good to see both our local MPs pulling together on the issue of promoting live music and changing the current 'daft' legislation - to quote the Minister of Sport. Both **Kelvin Hopkins** (Labour, Luton North) and **Andrew Selous** (Conservative, SW Beds) have signed David Heath's parliamentary Early Day Motion (EDM 1182) on the topic. You can read the motion and see who's signed it using the web link <http://edm.ais.co.uk/weblink/html/motion.html/ref=1182>

26/Jun/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Random Ceilidh / Barn Dance . . .

Next Friday (July 5) - The **Random** Band - a local ceilidh band will be playing for a ceilidh/barn dance at St Mary's Church Social Club in West Street, Dunstable. The gig celebrates the release of their new CD - 'Deviation' - which will also be on sale. The six piece outfit bring their vast experience of all kinds of folk and dance music to their gutsy, melodic, folk-rock interpretations of tunes with traditional roots. The band features box player **Saul Rose** who has toured the world with Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy for several years. Saul is joined in the front line by **Paul Nye**, bringing two very exciting melodeon-playing talents together. The rhythm adds the classy bass guitar of **Keith Holloway**, the guitar rhythms of **Ian Woledge**, the bass trombone harmonies of **Glynn Burch**, and the drumming of **Roger Smith** to give a rock-solid danceable beat. The caller is rising star **Will Hall** and there will be interval display by Chiltern Hundreds Morris as well as a real ale bar. The music kicks off at 8pm and tickets cost £6 (£4 concessions) and are available from Octave Music in High Street North, Dunstable or from the band on 01923-221701 (info@randomband.fsnet.co.uk).



Tom, the manager for Dunstable's Battle of the Bands winners - **OVER*EASY** - tells me that the band is recording more songs for a CD to be sold at gig's and via their web site. On the gig front they are playing down at the George II next Friday (July 5) and at The Horn (St.Albans) on July 10 though most of June and July the band is busy in the studio. To find out more information about gigs and release plans you can phone or fax Tom on 07815-321972.

Tomorrow night sees **Sandra Kerr** playing down at the Holybush Folk Club in Redbourne. Sandra was the voice of Madeleine for BBC's Bagpuss on Children's Television, which is now achieving cult status. She started out in the folk music business as part of the acclaimed Critic's Group (1963-72), under the tutelage of folk giants Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. A multi-instrumentalist, she plays English concertina, guitar, Appalachian dulcimer and autoharp and is a song-writer of international repute. As well as working in the media; acting, researching, writing and presenting a whole range of programmes for BBC Radio, recently she has become a sought-after workshop leader in voice production, concertina workshops and training for teachers in the use of song and dance in early years education. She'll be performing at The Old School Room at The Hollybush Public House, Church End, Redbourn, starting at 8:15 with floor spots from club residents, admission is £4.00 in advance or £5.00 on the door. For further details phone 07710-471862, 07850-163241 or The Hollybush on 01582-792423.

Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 or email info@lutonscene.com. A search-able archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>