

7/Aug/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

By the time you read this I'll be at Sidmouth International Music Festival on the South coast in Dorset. Over the years this festival has grown into one of the biggest music events in the country - of any type. The festival takes over this sleepy little seaside town for over a week with venues ranging from the huge outdoor arena to a multitude of small pub venues, street events and marquees set up in any available green space. The acts range from top World, European and British acts to local and aspiring performers who get a chance to take their music to a wider audience.

One thing that the South Bedfordshire arts establishment might like to muse upon is how a town - about the same size as Dunstable - has become a fixture on the national arts scene, bringing in thousands and thousands of visitors and thus providing a tremendous boost to the local economy. The festival makes a profit so it's no burden on the local council tax payers and the whole shebang is run by one of the top festival promoters in the country so there no organisational headaches for the local government.

Dunstable Town Council has taken the first steps along this path with their Dunstable Folk Weekend and other musical events. However, for the full potential of this type of arts led initiative to be realised a broader cross section of local organisations is going to have to become involved. The South Beds District Council is ideally placed to lead this kind of project, especially as will give perfect high profile showcase for the new arts venue that will fill the hole left by the demolition of the Queensway Hall. The time to start planning for this is now, building on the success of the last two years and not letting the momentum dissipate.

Back to the present, I hear that local Battle of the Bands winners **Over*Easy** have being going from strength to strength since their triumph at the Dunstable Jubilee celebrations. Tom Dobson, who is the band's manager, let me know via email that the band's first London gig at West One Four in Kensington - went down an absolute storm. The band has a few more gig's lined up for August and September and the possibility of supporting a few 'name' bands in October and November. Band members Matt and Brett have been writing some tunes so the band won't lack for new repertoire. They have a new web site which you check out for new and details of up-and-coming gigs - www.overeasymusic.co.uk.

Rob Bridgman emailed me saying that he is looking for a lead singer for his band playing a

range of material along the lines of Republica and Madonna. He goes to say that their aim is to play local pubs, clubs and functions. Contact Rob on 01582-759726 if you want take a crack at the job.

14/Aug/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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Just back from Sidmouth International Festival and the band that everyone was talking about was **Whapweasel**, who are a ceilidh band from 'up-north'. The line-up consists of two melodeons, a pair of saxophones, an electric cittern, keyboards, electric guitar, bass guitar and a set of drums.



The music mixes traditional style English roots tunes with rock and ska to get a frantic, but eminently danceable fusion. The tight sax arrangements, driving piano and choreographed capers were reminiscent of Madness at their loony best and the addition of more traditional instruments such as melodeon, cittern and electric guitar gave enough variation to keep the mix interesting.

However, without the rock solid rhythm section all the rest would be playing in vain. This has to be the most danceable band on the British music scene at the moment - in any genre. I saw them last year when they performed an arena overture during a rainstorm at Towersey. At the time I thought that they were pretty good, but at Sidmouth they knocked my socks off. If you get a chance to see them then grab it with both hands. The next time they're down this way is Saturday, October 12 at the Oxford Ceilidh in Kidlington, Oxfordshire and then in on Saturday, November 2 at the Haddenham Ceilidh in Oxfordshire. For more information check out their web site at www.whapweasel.co.uk.

While on the topic of Towersey Village Festival, this great little local festival kicks off on Thursday week (August 22) and runs through to the Bank Holiday Monday (August 26). Topping the bill is BBC Radio 2 Folk Award winner **Kate Rusby** (who is appearing with her trio), veteran Scottish performers **Aly Bain & Phil Cunningham** on fiddle and accordion and the inimitable **John Kirkpatrick**. The festival also features young up-and-coming artists such as **422** and **Kieron Means** as well as a number of locally based bands such as **The Cock & Bull Band**, **Asha** and Dunstable based **MoonDance**. You can get tickets for the entire weekend or you can just dip in for the day. For more information check out www.mrscasey.co.uk/towersey.

It looks like most of the local rock/pop gigging bands are away on holiday or touring since they're not sending me any information about their movements, gigs or recording plans. I'm always interested in hearing the news from local bands, venues and artists. Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4XD and you can also email details of gigs, gossip, web sites or anything else to info@lutonscene.com. A search-able archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>.

21/Aug/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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Luton based musician and song writer **Tom Staunton's** new band is having an outing on Bank Holiday Monday (Aug 26) at the Cork & Bull in Luton. Tom has been inspired by artists such as Christy Moore, Van Morrison and Mike Scott and has been performing his material both in Irelan Called **Big World**, the band features some of Luton's top musicians and plays original songs from the pen of Tom himself, a blend of acoustic and electric arrangements with a strong Celtic feel. Supporting Tom on electric and acoustic guitar is **Rik Taylor**, a veteran or many top Luton bands, while on bass guitar is **Gary Corcoran** and session musician **Marko** on drums completes the line-up. Tom and Rick also play together as a duo to play a mix of Tom's originals and covers. Anyway you can see the full line-up on Monday so check them out or email them at Bigworldts@hotmail.com.



Local band **enQ's** debut album "Tear Down The Barriers" is finally due for release at the beginning of October. The album was recorded and mixed at three studios including "Gracieland" which is Lisa Stansfield's studio up in Rochdale where ex-Fairport Convention guitarist Jerry contributed to

the haunting track "The Wind is Howling". The album is a mix of energetic instrumentals and songs co-written by the band, keep an eye on the band's web-site (www.enq.org.uk) for details of how to purchase a copy! Last month the band was interviewed by Anglia TV for the arts programme 'The Biz' and features the band performing "The Wind is Howling". The programme is due to be broadcast on Friday September 6, just two days before their gig at Brooklyn's in High Street North, Dunstable as part of the Dunstable Folk Week-end.

I see that the Artezium Arts Centre in Luton is about to lurch back into action after a protracted absence with the appointment of a new director. I wonder whether they'll get the formula right this time, or will they get caught in the 'arts' ghetto again, replicating the costly white elephant of the previous attempt to give Luton an 'Arts Venue'. I'm not knocking the concept, but the new management have to realise that if they want to encourage Lutonians through the front door they are going to have to have a broader appeal than the previous version of the Artezium managed to achieve. One way would be to actively promote the more original elements of the local music scene, perhaps by having a regular Friday night original music event in the bar area and a mid-week Jazz event.

28/Aug/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

SureFire Success

Up-and-coming rocksters **SureFire** have recorded and produced a new demo and are offering to send it to anyone who wants a copy for free. Just send them an email with your address details via the **SureFire** web site (www.surefiregroup.uksingers.com) and they'll send one to you in the post. They tell that they've sent the demo to lots of the industry contacts that they have been building up over the last few years and have got the Fun Lovin Criminals manager interested in putting them on his books as well as A&R interested from Chrysalis, Sony and Time Warner. If you haven't already seen them then they are playing at the Winston Churchill in Dunstable on the 28th Sept, followed by Mary Kate's pub in Luton on 5 October. The band are also looking for a female model to feature on the cover of their demo CD's inlay that they say that they will be putting under the noses of record companies, news and media of all kinds in London in the coming months. So if anyone is reading this who is keen to be featured on the band's record sleeve then get in contact with the band. This will be a great foot in the door for anyone considering a career in modelling as the likes of Chris Evans, Kate Moss, Mick Jagger and many others will all receive a CD personally. Email Paul Mead at surefiregroup@hotmail.com for more details.

Local band **Tempest** had a problem. They had arranged to play at a well known Luton music venue tonight (Wednesday) as a sort of 'thank you' party just before the lads went off to their respective Universities. Unfortunately the venue cancelled the gig at short notice so they had a party but nowhere to play. However Viv came to the rescue (cue Thunderbirds music) and offered to let them play Duggan at the Cork and Bull in Luton, despite the fact that the pub doesn't usually have midweek music. The result? A good time for any **Tempest** fans - or even indie rock music lovers who want to see some excellent music without having to go down to London. They will be supported by a new band (at least to me) called **Pink Grass** so it should be a music packed night. To find out more information about **Tempest** check out their web site at www.the-tempest.com.

Next Thursday (Sep 5) Chalktown's **Paul Scourfield** will be hosting an open floor at the Baldock and Letchworth Folk Club. Paul is a well-known face at both Hitchin and Letchworth folk clubs. A master of the melodeon, he was Sidmouth champion in 1997. He will also be known to some of you as a long-standing member of the dance band Chalktown, & for his nationwide club appearances with guitarist Michael Davidson. Entry costs £4 or £2 for performers and concessions and the venue is the Goldcrest Inn, High Street Baldock, call 0845-123-2658 for more details.

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