

6/Aug/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

My Pet Junkie Release Single

Hockliffe based threesome My Pet Junkie release their first single this week. The three track disc features a brand new recording of their cheeky live favourite 'Overhanging', a non-album version of the stunning 'Breathing Without Living', and non-album punk pop gem 'Particle', which they tell me features a little surprise. The band's line up features **Stuart O'Connor** on lead vocals and guitar, **Julia Bell** on bass and vocals and **Leon Camfield** on drums and vocals. Apparently they met up whilst studying in North Hertfordshire in late 1999 and have influences as diverse as Smashing Pumpkins and King Crimson.

After a good live response ("A band brimming with confidence and talent" - The Comet) and a couple of self-funded demo CD releases they are pushing the boat out - no doubt encouraged by booking at the Watford Rainbow, Uxfest (Uxbridge) and Livestock (Hitchin) festivals. They also tell me that their as-yet-unnamed debut album is set to be released early Autumn. For details about the band, their releases and gigs email mypetjunkie@hotmail.com.

Soul/funk fans should get down to Eddie's Bar in Luton on Friday (Aug 8) to see Milton Keynes based 8-piece **Common Ground** strut their stuff. They tell me that their music repertoire has influences from Brand New Heavies, Curiosity, Seal and Simply Red, with catchy lyrics and smooth melodies. They will also have available copies of their brand new CD. For information contact David Johnson at 07812-149668 or email CommonGroundMK@yahoo.com.

If you're looking for something a little rockier then **The Rossiters** are appearing at the Ewe and Lamb (Luton Road, Dunstable) on Friday (Aug 8). The five piece outfit - **Tony Ratcliffe** on vocals, **Jim Hills** on lead guitar, **Roy Ratcliffe** on rhythm guitar, **Kieran Gaffey** on bass, **Alan Ratcliffe** on keyboards and **Jason Taylor** on drums - say that their set is made up of around half covers of songs by Strokes, the Doors, Starsailor and the Dandy Warhols with the rest being originals. The band has invested in some quality lights, strobes and lasers so it should be a good show.

Tomorrow night (Thursday) you can catch some Celtic influenced original rock from my band **enQ** at The Horns in Watford. This venue is fast gaining a reputation as the best live music pub in the North Herts area with good acoustics and easy access, next to the Colosseum and Library. The pub features original bands on Thursdays, covers and tribute bands on Saturdays and variety of more laid back stuff on Sunday lunch time. **enQ**'s music has been described as "a high energy vortex which combines elements of Celtic, folk, rock, and hauntingly fugue like melodies that are universal and transcendent in their emotional impact.". For more information about the venue call 01923-225020 or check out www.thehornswatford.co.uk and the band can be found on the web at www.enq.org.uk.

13/Aug/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Dunstable Folk & Dance Festival 2003

It's less than a month till the 4th Annual Dunstable Folk and Dance Festival rolls around on September 5-7. Expect loads of great music and other events around the town including a ceilidh (barn dance) on the Friday, free concerts on Saturday and Sunday in Grove House Gardens and various music sessions, dance spots and a farmers' market on the Saturday. One of the great strengths of the weekend is that it combines both local and national talent to give a good range of different styles.

The Friday night ceilidh at St Mary's Social Club in West Street and features local band **MoonDance**, which is a five piece 'electric' line-up featuring the virtuoso fiddle work of Vicky Brown, the accordion, keys and saxophone of Alison Heywood, myself on guitar, one of the best rhythm sections in the business and top local caller **Martin Hallet**. The word ceilidh is from celtic and means 'party' and the whole idea is to have fun, the music is upbeat and the caller will guide you through the simple moves in time to some great music. Tickets cost £6 (£ conc.) on the door or will be available in advance from Octave Music in High Street North. Call 01582-475655 for more details.

During the day on Saturday there will be hosted music sessions from 11:30am at The Norman King (All Hands Around), Froth and Elbow (MoonDance), The White Swan (Penders Fen) and Bar Chameleon (Sons of the Soil) plus appearances from local Morris teams - Bedfordshire Lace, Caddington Blues and St Albans Morris - who will be dancing at The Square and the Quadrant Shopping Centre and a special farmers' market in Ashton Square from 9am.

The Saturday evening free concert in Grove House Gardens (High Street North) kicks off at 6pm and is headlined by **Prego** whose fiery mix of warm sounds from the heart of Western Europe imbued with the sun kissed rhythms and tastes of Galicia of the north western Celtic roots tradition of Spain plus the sounds, flavours and colours of France, Italy and of course the UK is bound to get everyone dancing. Also appearing are; local celtic rockers **enQ** whose original sound has been described as 'The Corrs meet the Doors', **Mas Y Mas** who are an acoustic band playing a mix of Latino Flamenco, Afro-Cuban and Celtic dance rhythms and the **Bram Taylor Band** whose repertoire is a convivial gathering of songs and music interspersed with a liberal smattering of good humour. The concert will be compared by **Rick Christian** who will also be performing during the band changeovers from his repertoire of songs by other writers as well as his own material.

The festival will be rounded off on the Sunday at 3pm by another free concert in Grove House Gardens featuring local talent and host by one of Bedfordshire's strongest all round folk performers - **Barry Goodman**. The concert line-up includes Life and Times, Michele Welborn, Anahata and Mary Huphries plus more. For both the open air concerts it's a good idea to bring along chairs and blankets (for the evening concerts) in case it gets chilly later on.

20/Aug/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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Local band **Stonegrass** are following in the tradition of going out and winning Battle of the Bands competitions in strange foreign locations. The Luton based foursome are making another return to The Cartoon in Croydon for the final of the Internet Bands' Directory Battle Of The Bands. They tell me that they're not particularly fond of this kind of musical beauty contest but they only entered, way back in May, considering it as just a another gig. However, quality will win through and the zoomed through into the finals of the competition – which the band says has been “a nice surprise”. So If you're down in that neck of the woods on August 28, be sure to drop in and support the band. Full directions to the venue appear on the band's website at www.stonegrass.com.

One of the longest running folk and World music festivals in the UK is happening on our doorstep next weekend. The 39th Towersey Village Festival - which is situated just north of Thame - kicks off tomorrow (Thursday) and carries on till Monday evening. As well as big names in the folk world like **Martin Carthy**, **Norma Waterson**, **Eliza Carthy**, **Roy Bailey** and **Tim van Eyken**, there are up-and coming stars such as John Spiers and Jon Boden who won the BBC Radio 2 Folk Horizon Award 2003 for new talent. Other acts to watch out for are **The Poozies** with their unique blend of electro-acoustic harps, accordion, fiddle and voices and **North Cregg** who are one of Ireland's finest and most popular traditional groups. From across the pond, singer/songwriter **Eileen McGann** along with her Canadian compatriots, **The Paperboys** (fronted by Tom Landa) will create a fusion of Celtic, Bluegrass, Latin and Roots pop. From south of the border, **Dana Robinson** is a multi instrumentalist from the USA who draws on the roots of traditional American music.

If you are looking for something a little spicier then **Spikedriver** will be delivering a dose of their "first-class acoustic blues" while **Firebrand** mix traditional songs with jazz, classical and funk to create their eclectic sound. On the dance side, current rising stars **Whapweasal** will be playing their unique blend of folk, rock, jazz and Ska rhythms while folk-rockers **All Blacked Up** will be getting people up on the dance floor with their upbeat sounds and driving rhythms. **Prego** - who were a big hit at last year's Folk and Dance Festival - will be leading a late night European roots dance with bags of energy and enthusiasm. You can either book tickets in advance or get them on the day, or even just pop over to the event and catch the arena events while perusing the various craft and music stalls. Check out www.mrscasey.co.uk/towersey for more details.

Local gigs...

- Tomorrow night (Thursday) **Audio Justice** play The Arena Tavern, Letchworth. Free entry, with music from 8pm.
 - On Saturday (Aug 23), **Long Shore Drift** - an indie rock 4 piece from Dunstable are playing down at The Melting pot- at The Well in High Town, Luton.
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27/Aug/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

It's now just over a week until the 4th Annual Dunstable Folk and Dance Festival kicks off (September 5-7). As well as the free Saturday night concert featuring **Prego, enQ, Mas-Y-Mas, The Bram Taylor Band** and **Rick Christian**, there will be loads of great music and other events around the town over the course of the weekend. The action opens with the Friday night ceilidh (like a barn dance) at St Mary's Social Club in West Street with local band **MoonDance** and top caller **Martin Hallett**. The band is a five piece 'electric' line-up featuring fiddle, the accordion./keys/saxophone, electric guitar, bass guitar and drums. The word ceilidh is from celtic and means 'party' and the whole idea is to have fun. The music is upbeat and the caller will guide you through the simple moves in time to some great music. Tickets cost £6 (£3 conc.) on the door or are available in advance from Octave Music in High Street North, Dunstable. Call 01582-475655 for more information about the Friday night ceilidh. For information about the rest of the events over the course of the weekend call Dunstable Town Council on 01582-513000.

Next Friday (Aug 29), local and **Tick Tock Tick** will be playing down at The Cork and Bull (in Cumberland St, Luton) as part of their 'Super Birch goes Forth' tour. If you miss them there - or like them so much you want to hear them again - they are also playing at Eddies Bar on Sunday (Aug 31). You can find out more about the Friday gig from the Cork on 01582-729586 or you can email david.lewis5@btinternet.com.

On Saturday (Aug 30) the **Shuffling Hungarians** are playing their crazy Rhythm and Blues down at The Horns in Watford. This venue is fast gaining a reputation as one of the best live music pubs in the North Hertfordshire area with good acoustics and easy access, next to the Colosseum and Library. The pub features original bands on Thursdays, covers and tribute bands on Saturdays and variety of more laid back stuff on Sunday lunch time. For more information about the venue call 01923-225020 or check out www.thehornswatford.co.uk.

On a sadder note; I hear that Johnny Mac, the Landlord of "Speed The Plough" public house near Barton, passed away due to heart attack earlier this month. John had a reputation as a hard working, down to earth guy, who would stop at nothing to ensure those around him - customers, promoters and entertainers alike - were having a good time. It takes a very special person to be a good landlord, especially in these days of theme and chained bars.

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 searchable archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>.

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