

5/Nov/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Busy Bowfinger!

One of Luton's favourite bands **Bowfinger** seem to have been rather quiet of late but Justin Saban, who produces and manages the band, assures me that nothing could be further from the truth. It seems that the band have been busy recording their debut album, enlisting the help of some of the local area's top musicians - with the likes of **Nigel Carter** (first trumpet player with the BBC Radio Big Band), **Adrian Woods** saxophonist with Hellzaboppin and vintage keys session player **Simon Rinaldo** to mention just three. According to Bowfinger's lead singer Ed; "It was great recording at Southern Studios in London, the backing we've now got has allowed us to take the songs further than we've been able to before. I like to think at last we've captured what the band is really about." Fans will get a chance to hear the fruits of these sessions when they play their next local gig, a Christmas Extravaganza on Saturday 13th December at The Well in High Town (Luton). According to Ed there may well be a few surprises in store. For more information about the band check out www.bowfinger.net or email Justin on info@justinsaban.co.uk

Anyone who is into e-Ceilidh - which is a kind of souped-up barn dance - on Friday (Nov 7) **Nelson's Arm Band** is appearing at St Mary's Hall (West Street, Dunstable) with **Mick Brooks** calling. This dance is the latest in an occasional series of Ceilidhs that goes under the name of Tyre Kicker's. The band features the violin (and electric guitar) of Kevin Adams (Stocai) and the melodeon of Elaine and the bass and keyboard skills of Ned. For more information call 01582-862643 or 01582-475655 or see www.roots66.net/tkc. Tickets will also be available from Octave Music in High Street North, Dunstable.

Local celtic rock band **Mercy Street** will be playing their fourth reunion on Saturday (Nov 8) at the Bedfordshire Yeoman in Dallow Road, Luton. Angus tells me that this will be guitarist Paul O'Brien's first gig with the band since becoming a father so we'll see how two or three months of sleepless nights have affected his playing (and his memory!). For more information call 01582-730469 or email anguish.nurse@ntlworld.com. Band onstage at 9pm sharp!

12/Nov/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Hat Factory News

Plans for the launch of Luton's new arts and music venue - **The Hat Factory** - seem to be coming along nicely. I was chatting to Fahim Qureshi, who is Luton Borough Council's Arts Development Manager, earlier this week and it seems that although the official launch of the centre is not happening till March next year, things are already starting to happen at the Bute Street site. The 'new' centre, which takes over the role of the failed Artezium, looks like it's going to take a much more grass roots approach to the music programme, working with local musicians and promoters. While various parts of the Bute Street complex are already being put to good use, for instance Block House studios, the official opening has been delayed by the need to do extensive work on the downstairs venue. Fahim assures me that there are some exciting plans to promote local music when the Hat Factory fully opens next year.

The reopening of the Hat Factory and Luton's plans for a big Carnival Centre which will include a 500 seater performance venue coupled with the building of the Dunstable Arts centre means should give a much needed shot in the arm to the local music scene. Don't get me wrong, the local music pubs and bars are doing sterling work along with local promotions like the 16+ music nights at the Winston Churchill in Dunstable. And the two local councils Luton and Dunstable are doing a good job promoting music with the Carnival, Folk Festival and Battle of the Bands and so on. However the lack of a broad range of different venue types in the area has reduced the variety of music available and the opportunities for local musicians to perform, especially outside the mainstream. Let's hope that 2004 will see the start of a turnaround in live music locally.

Local acoustic pop/rockers **Tempest** are playing a rather special gig down at the Cork and Bull in Cumberland St, Luton on Friday (Nov 14). It seems that there's a birthday in the band and they decided to have a party, and everyone's invited! The lads have been going from strength to strength recently, spending a lot of time in the studio working on their new album and developing new material so it should be a good gig. The **Tempest** must be the only local band I know who sponsor a football team (Stopsley Athletic F.C), not quite the same league as Elton John and Watford, but it shows a 'star' attitude just the same. For more details call 01582-729586 or 07956-812831.

19/Nov/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Noisecandy hits Dunstable

South Wales is perhaps not the funkier place on the Rock 'n' Roll map but Cwmbran based rock/pop quintet **Noisecandy** would beg to differ. And they're not the only ones who think so either as their brand of 'sweet noise' won them the prestigious BBC Big Buzz "Battle of the Bands" competition in July 2002. They describe themselves modestly as a 'great song band', mixing strong vocal harmonies, crashing guitars, swirling Hammond organs, pounding pianos and catchy choruses with a whole bunch of panache. And their full gig schedule backs this description with over 50 club dates this year under their belts, including London's Kashmir Club and Barfly venues, the band have not stopped working. The band's line up consists of five young guys; **Ash Lottay** on lead vocals and acoustic guitar, **Dan Oliver** on guitar and vocals, **Matt (Bondi) Bond** on keyboards and guitar, **Chris (Jissy) James** on bass and **Tim Jones** on drums and vocals.

Their music appeals to a wide audience if Noisecandy's festival support slots are anything to go by. Supporting acts as diverse as Blue, Funeral for a Friend, Slade, The Crimea, and even Atomic Kitten have exposed them to an audience of over 40,000 over the summer. Anyway you can see them upstairs at the Winston Churchill (Church St, Dunstable) on Saturday (Nov 22) when they're playing at the newly refurbished Kelly's Bar. The gig is part of the tour promoting the band's first single release '7TEEN' which was released this Monday by South Wales' Complete Control label (Distributed through Shellshock). You can check out their sound on their website at www.noisecandy.co.uk

Guitar based melodic rock is on the menu on Sunday (Nov 23) when **The Crossing** play down at the Cork and Bull (Cumberland St, Luton). The duo got together four years ago because of a mutual liking for melodic pop music originating from their love of bands such as The Beatles, The Kinks, The Jam and The Who, Thin Lizzy, Squeeze, Manfred Man and Bob Dylan. The duo consists of **Rob Stride** and **Rob Smith** who both feature on guitar and vocals. Mr Stride is an old campaigner on the music trail and has played with such luminaries as Robert Plant and Neil Morrisey and has toured UK and Europe extensively. Smithy on the other hand has worked with chart artist Troy Woods and has played extensively all over the Southeast with popsters Si's Boys. For more information call the Cork on 01582-729586 or one of the Robs on 07939555585.

26/Nov/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Sin È play Northampton

On Sunday I scooted up the M1 to Northampton to listen to the celtic roots/jazz fusion music of **Sin È** (pronounced shin-ay) when they performed at the Royal Theatre. This internationally renowned band, which features some local musicians and headlined at the first Dunstable Folk Festival, doesn't often get a chance to play on these shores so it was a welcome opportunity to catch their set. Though their music is rooted firmly in the Irish celtic tradition their repertoire draws enthusiastically on sources from the whole British isles (including Bhangra!). They seamlessly mix influences from Brittany, Asturia, and other regions with a celtic connection, and then mix them with less obviously related elements such as eastern European or Asian, jazz, dub and I detected a few electro-acoustic influences of the Philip Glass and Steve Reich variety. Their musicianship is flawless both individually and collectively with each musician playing at least two instruments; in fact Steáfán Hannigan had a veritable arsenal of ethnic instruments to draw on.

Whilst waiting for the band to come on I couldn't help but admire the venue, a classic theatre and 'opera house', and speculate as to where this kind of band might perform locally. I came to the conclusion that apart from the Library Theatre in Luton - which doesn't programme this kind of music - there is nowhere suitable. As it stands, we are being cut off from a whole range of wider musical culture due to lack of a suitable venue - not only the innovative bands like **Sin È** - but the mainstream as well. When was the last time a 'name' band played locally? Being cut off from the mainstream of UK and world musical culture can't help but harm the local music scene, by driving audiences away to more vital music centres and turning Luton into a musical backwater. When The Hat Factory comes on-line and the Dunstable Arts Centre finally makes an appearance they are going to need to do some clever, pro-active programming to reverse this trend and avoid another Artezium debacle.

Well regarded Luton record producer Justin Saban tells me that local band **Bowfinger** are almost finished their debut album, with just a few keyboard and brass parts to finish off. I've heard two of the tracks - Action Girl and You Scare Me - and it's sounding pretty good with a post Punk/New Wave edge and a pop sensibility. Fans will get a chance to hear the fruits of these sessions when they play their next local gig, a Christmas Extravaganza on Saturday December 13th at The Well in High Town (Luton) with support from **Shine** and **Reverie**. For more information about the band check out www.bowfinger.net or email their management at info@justinsaban.co.uk.

Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 or to info@lutonscene.com.

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