

3/Dec/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

War Child Benefits from Luton gig

As the commercial world gears up for Christmas with the main purpose of relieving you of your cash it's good to see that someone hasn't forgotten the true meaning of the festival. Andy Sizmur, who helps organise The Well Music venue in Hightown Road (Luton), tells me that the hotly tipped band - **The Keys** - will headline at a special Christmas War Child benefit gig on Saturday (Dec 6). **The Keys**, who released their self-titled debut album in October, will be joined by **Chester** and **Ally McQueen**. The War Child organisation, which is dedicated to helping civilian victims of the conflict all over the world, have a long history of strong links with music involving the likes of U2, David Bowie and Brian Eno. They put together 1995's seminal 'Help' album and year teamed up with the music publication NME to produce the 'One Love compilation'. Entry is £6 and all profits will be donated to War Child. For more information you can call the venue on 01582-487464.

Rob Ingram, who manages the popular local band **The Tempest**, emailed me from New York to remind me that they are also doing a charity day on Sunday (Dec 7) at the Luton Old Boys Club, this time in aid of the Macmillan Nurses. The event is going to kick off with a game of football at 2pm followed by **The Tempest** playing a set from around 6pm. Admission is free and there will be a few local celebrities there to enjoy the fun. Robbo is in New York City checking out the live music scene and, perhaps unsurprisingly, has found loads of places featuring live music. The Indie scene is healthy and the Yanks have been knocked out by the music of the Tempest, so much so that there is a possibility of a short tour for the band next year. It good to see that a couple of bands haven't forgotten the true meaning of Christmas.

Fiddle fans should get on down to The Cricketers on Redbourn Common tomorrow (Thursday) when **Tom McConville** makes a rare foray into the area. Sometimes referred to as 'session man to the stars' he has appeared on recordings with Richard Thompson and Barbara Dickson among others. Tom has a reputation as a great musician with a lovely flowing style, beautiful tone and faultless technique and is regarded as one of the finest fiddle players in the British Isles. His 1990 album 'Cross the River' (produced by Chris Newman) was voted 'Album of the Year' by listeners to Great Northern Folk (BBC North). For more information contact 01582-452954 or 07850-163241 or via the web at www.lemonrock.com.

10/Dec/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

On Sunday (Dec 14) singer/songwriter **Graham Robins** is appearing with his band at The Luton Postal Club. Robins, who had a hit with Vinny Jones (Whooly Bully) the **Soul Survivors**, is a well respected musician on both the local and national music scene. His 1997 CD Spirit Within, which was released on Luton based 33 Records label has received considerable airplay and has had plenty good reviews. Unfortunately, Graham had a few health problems earlier this year that curtailed his live performances but he's now back on the gig trail. Along with multi-instrumentalist Peter Grove he produces a mix of soul, blues, country and gospel tunes along with some cleverly reworked standards. Graham tells me that the new set is going down extremely well, but he's not stopping at that. The Luton Postal Club, is at 3 Dunstable Road, Luton and tickets cost £5 and you can email grahamrobins@hotmail.com for more information. Graham also tells me that has been given the task of setting up a network of promoters for The Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton (formerly the Artezium). This role will involve discussing future gigs with agents, promoters, bands and individual artists with the view to performing in the basement venue. The specific opening of the venue is still to be arranged as there is urgent building work that has to be completed.

Lots of stuff is happening at Kelley's Bar, upstairs at the Winston Churchill in Dunstable. Tomorrow night (Thursday) sees the return of **2 Foot Nothing** and the introduction of **The Sunbirds**, both playing a 16+ gig in Kelley's Bar. On Saturday (Dec 13) German Pop-Punkers **Headcase** will be gigging at the venue as part of their second UK tour, they will be supported by local bands **Enter Shikari** and **Dilate**. Entrance is just £4, for more information about the bands, you can check them out on the web at www.orangemine.de/projekte/headcase/index02.htm and <http://freewebs.com/entershikarihc/home.htm>.

Andy Sizmur tells me that **The Keys**, who were due to headline at their War Child gig at The Well in Luton, had to pull out of last Saturday's charity benefit at two days notice. Apparently they were very apologetic about letting down their fans, but have said that the venue would will be on their national tour in March. Anyway, the lead slot was filled at short notice by a professional Coldplay tribute band. The Well schedule for this week looks pretty hot with **Loose Thread** and **Rat:Daddy** playing on Friday (Dec 12) and **Bowfinger's** Christmas Extravaganza on Saturday (Dec 13) - with support from **Reverie** and **Shine**. The Well can be found at 5 High Town Road, Luton and entrance is £2. Doors open at 7.30pm and the music carries on until 1am.

17/Dec/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

In the Lime-light

Dave from **Lime** - a well regarded local eight piece funk outfit - tells me that the band is still going strong and will be playing down at the Well in Luton Hightown on Friday (Dec 19). Lime were finalists in last year's Battle of the Bands organised by the Dunstable Town Council and came pretty close to carrying off the title. Since then the band has been headlining all over the country at established Jazz/Funk clubs and bars including Jagz in Ascot, the Borderline in Soho and Jools Holland's massive club in Birmingham - TheJamHouse. If you haven't already heard them, Lime's set is an infectiously crunchy mix of Latin/jazz dance grooves featuring original arrangements of songs and instrumentals.

The band's 'in the pocket' funk sound is driven by Dave Hallam's fantastic guitar work and the suppressed power of vocalist Anna Abrahams, all underpinned by the percussion of Elim Gobbit. Their rip-roaring signature last number - a stunning rendition of "I feel Good" - has to be heard to be believed. So what better way to spend a Friday night than in the company of a bunch of punchy jazz funk instrumentals featuring the band's twin saxophones. The band's funk sensibility and their obvious musical talents coupled with a pop perspective mean that you'd better make sure you have your dancing shoes handy and prepare yourself to have a good time. For more information check them out on the web at www.limefunk.co.uk.

There are plenty of music venues who are jumping onto the Christmas bandwagon (no pun intended) and why not? What better way to celebrate the turning of the year than going to a live music gig and there's something for everyone.

- Tomorrow night (Thurs) you can catch **Novacaine's** Alternative Christmas with support from **Dilate**, **Noon Layer Drive** at The Well Music Venue (5 Hightown Rd, Luton, 01582-487464).
 - On Saturday (Dec 20) there's a fair amount of choice with the Rhythms Of The World Christmas party at Hitchin Club 85, featuring **Bone People** (Afro funk), **Bate Tambor** (Samba drummers) and **Mganga** (Cuban jazz funk). Doors open at 7.45pm and admission is £5, including mince pies and mulled wine on arrival. You can also catch **Enter Shikari** playing their Trashcan Xmas Party at The Pioneer in St Albans or **Tempest's** Yuletide Party at The Well.
 - On Sunday (Dec 21) you can go the whole Christmas hog with the Hitchin Folk Club Christmas special featuring seasonal songs and music, mince pies, the annual mummers play from **Brafront Guizers**. There is also a special Christmas show from the multi-talented and entertaining **Dangerous Curves** who are three ladies from the West Country with razor-sharp harmonies, lively exchanges and a great sense of fun. The club is held at The Sun Hotel, Sun Street, Hitchin and local performers are most welcome to do a floor spot. For more information phone Maureen on 01462-812391 or visit www.hitchinfolkclub.org.uk.
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23/Dec/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Christmas at last and almost another year has passed and we still don't have any kind of dedicated music or arts venue in either Luton or Dunstable. In fact the 'replacement' for the much loved Queensway Hall in Dunstable doesn't even appear to have a projected start date yet, let alone a completion date. In Luton things are looking up somewhat with the long delayed opening of the Hat Factory in Bute Street, a much awaited replacement for the Artezium. I understand that the new complex is due to open with a bang in mid-April and will initially have two nights a week of programmed music in The Venue, which is name of the downstairs bar. The eventual aim is to have music every night and at least some lunch-times. The music will be a mix of national, international and local performers and I heard a rumour that Detroit's prince of soul, **Gino Washington** might be the opening act.

Local band **Bowfinger** tell me that they would like to send out a huge 'Thank You' to their fans that packed The Well in Hightown, Luton to capacity for their Christmas Extravaganza. As Justin Saban says "this new Luton venue has now proved that the live scene in Luton is not dead yet and the right band can attract a 200 plus crowd". A CD of the gig will be available soon and ten lucky fans from their mailing list will be picked at random to receive a free copy of the CD. If you would like to be added to the band's mailing list just send your details to bowfingerlist@bowfinger.net or use the link from their web site www.bowfinger.net and they will send you a free copy of the band's first single - Probably Wrong!

Here's a regular date for your ceilidh dance diary - the second Friday in each month at St Mary's Church Social Club in West Street Dunstable. The dances are organised by a bunch of local bands who have got together to promote a regular series of public ceilidhs to help fill the local dance vacuum and give local e-ceilidh bands a platform to reach a wider audience; general public and experienced dancers alike. The 2004 season kicks off on January 9 with a welcome return visit by **Fee Lock** and the electric sound of **MoonDance** - who last played locally at the Dunstable Folk Festival in September. Future fixtures will feature **ODE** and **Pete North** (February 13) and **Nelsons Arm Band** with **Chris Jewell** (March 12). Be sure to mark it your diary.

Anyway, I'd like to wish everyone a happy, safe, and above all, a musical festive season.

30/Dec/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Last column of the year already! Traditionally I do a rundown of local bands and this year is no exception. This week I'll be covering some of the more established bands on the local circuit and next week I'll have a look at those who have either surfaced or become more active during 2003.

- Bowfinger** • These guys have been pushing pretty hard on the local scene this year. They are currently finishing off their debut album which has a post Punk/New Wave edge and a pop sensibility. Web: www.bowfinger.net
- Shine** • Appeared on two compilation CDs this year, one with Matchbox Records and the other with Monstar Records. Web: www.shine-music.tk
- Lime** • Have been touring around the country at jazz and funk music clubs with a burst of local gigs at the end of the year. Web: www.limefunk.co.uk
- Loose Thread** • Are still going strong and have recently had some tracks released by with Northern independent label Changes One Records (along with Rat:Daddy). Web: www.loosethread.co.uk
- enQ** • Released first album "Tear Down the Barriers" and did a cracking set at the Dunstable Festival but are still waiting to break out of the local scene into the national arena. Web: www.enq.org.uk
- Devlin** • Still going strong after all these years and keep on winning Battle of the Bands type competitions around the country. Web: www.devlinrock.com
- Tempest** • Have been slogging away at getting a foothold in the ferocious London gig scene with some success. They've been spending time in the studio so hope to see some recorded output soon. Web: www.the-tempest.co.uk
- Over*Easy** • The band have been keeping a fairly low profile and have changed their lead singer. They became more active recently so expect to see them gigging next year. Web: www.overeasymusic.co.uk
- Hush** • These boys have been bubbling under for a couple of years now, but have recently been in the studio so expect some plastic action soon. Web: www.hush.org.uk
- Reverie** • Have been courting interest from a major indie label and a London management company. Latent Lemon Records released their E.P. Web: www.reverietheband.co.uk
- Suspicious Package** • A jazz and funk four-piece from Luton, whose material embraces both their own melodies and benchmark songs by other artists. They've been gigging around the country.
- Stonegrass** • Home Counties rock band composed of ex-members of **Eesifreek** and **Throat Oyster**. They'll be kicking off the New Year at St Alban's Horn Reborn, on Friday January 2. Web: www.stonegrass.com
- SureFire** • The bad boys of Luton rock are still targeting the London music scene. They also have a track on the new R2 Records industry sampler (along with enQ). Web: www.surefireuk.com

That's all for this week, and this year! If you think your band should be in the list of locally based bands then be sure to send me details at bands@lutonscene.com.

Have a great new year.

Send gig information to “The Brian Heywood Column”, PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4XD or info@lutonscene.com

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