

6/10/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Hats off to Folk like Us

Luton's new folk club got off to a good start last week when Benny's Folk Club featured local lad and old man of the folk/blues scene **Derek Brimstone** at the Hat Factory in Bute Street. The venue was the larger of the two cellars and has loads of atmosphere, being laid out like a cabaret with tables rather than the serried ranks of chairs that you'd get in a more formal concert venue. The resident's put on a go show as well with **Martin Banks** displaying his wry sense of humour with a song about genetic engineering and **Graham Robins'** atmospheric acoustic compositions. Last night saw the undeclared king of the folk scene – **Martin Carthy** – making an appearance while next Tuesday (October 12) singer / songwriter and acoustic bluesman **Wizz Jones** takes centre stage. While he is not particularly well known in this country, he has often been mentioned as being an important early influence by artists such as Eric Clapton, John Renbourn and Ralph McTell. Wizz has been playing the circuit since 1958 and has worked with luminaries as Davey Graham and Long John Baldry and even a young up-and-coming bluesman – Rod Stewart. On Tuesday the doors open at 7:30pm and entry costs £4 for members (£5 for non-members, £2 concessions). See www.bennys.org.uk, email BennysFolkClub@hotmail.com or call the box office on 01582-878100 for more information.

On Thursday (tomorrow) London band **Killing Moon** is playing over at The Well music venue in Hightown Road, Luton supported **My Luminaries** (www.myluminaries.com). I've not heard of either of these Indie rock bands before but I hear that Killing Moon (www.killingmoon.org) has been causing a bit of a stir in the music industry in recent months. In fact both bands were featured on the Radio 1 OneMusic Unsigned website before being picked up by Steve Lamacq and played on his show back in August. The band does have links with the town as they rehearse in Luton. Admission is free at The Well on a Thursday night, and you are guaranteed a night of good music from new bands. Ring 01582-487464 for more information.

On Friday (October 8) Hertfordshire based band **My Pet Junkie** are releasing their debut album 'When You're Not Busy' at the Garage in Islington. The thirteen track CD is being released through Riverrun Records and features Stuart O'Connor on lead vocals/guitar, Leon Camfield on drums/vocals and Julia Bell on bass/vocals. The trio first met while they were studying in North Hertfordshire at the end of 1999 and quote influences ranging from The Smashing Pumpkins to King Crimson. The gig on Friday is at the Garage in Highbury and Islington and the band hits the stage at 9:30pm. You can get more information by visiting their website at www.mypetjunkie.com or by e-mailing mypetjunkie@hotmail.com

13/Oct/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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The World of Music, Music of the World

I've got a busy fortnight ahead of me as I get stuff together for the Womex World Music Expo' in Essen (Germany) at the end of this month. This annual conference, showcase and general 'bun fight' pulls together the global World Music community to talk business, share wares and generally party late into the night while everyone tries to catch-up with the last twelve months' news. World Music is a very broad church with styles and genres ranging from traditional/ethnic folk music through fusions to 'World Beat' dance. In fact you could say that the label fits any non-mainstream music that is not Jazz. Anyone who's been to the Rhythms of the World festival held annually in Hitchin will be aware of how broad the genre is.

The term 'World Music' was coined by a group of London based record labels, distributors and artistes in a bid to create shelf space for the wide range of international and local acts that were being squeezed out of the market because record retailers didn't have a category to cover the music. I like the description that **ROOTS** magazine – one of the biggest publications dedicated to the genre – uses; "Local Music From Out There". Luton has a big stake in World Music with the carnival being just one manifestation while **33Records** (now based in the new Hat Factory complex) has a large catalogue of this vital music style (www.jazz33.f9.co.uk).

Getting back to more local matters; tomorrow night (Thursday) the legendary master of Blues and Soul – **Geno Washington** – will be appearing at the Luton Library Theatre (St George's Square, Luton) along with **Mark Sams**, the Alabama 3 guitarist who also composed the theme to the 'The Sopranos' TV series. Contact the Box Office on 01582 547474, or visit www.themodestmusicgroup.com for more information.

On Friday (October 15) the chart veterans **The Selecter** are playing down at The Horn, Victoria Street, St Albans. The Coventry based band spearheaded the 'Two Tone' movement along with The Specials and Madness and still feature their original singer Pauline Black who helped take 'On My Radio' to the top of the charts. Doors open at 7.20pm and entrance is £6 on door or £5 in advance. The Horn is an 18+ venue, see www.thehorn.co.uk for more information.

On Sunday (October 17) **John Tams** and **Barry Coup** are appearing at the Hitchin Folk Club (Sun Hotel, Sun St, Hitchin) with a diverse mix of compelling contemporary acoustic folk. They will be supported by resident performer **Chris Smyth**. Check out www.hitchinfolkclub.idnet.net or phone Maureen on 01462 812391.

Also on Sunday, local indie rockers and Dunstable Battle of the Band finalists **Reverie** return to the live fray at The Park in Luton with their atmospheric hectic, if somewhat angst ridden, pleasingly raw experimental sound.

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Down on the Farm

I had an interesting conversation last week with a producer from the TV company that produces the Channel Five reality show 'The Farm'. It seems that they wanted to have a big party on the last night of the three week series to celebrate the winner of the title 'Top Farmer'. The idea was to have a barn dance to keep in with the rural theme of the show and let everyone have a good time in the chilly outdoors leaping about to the music. It sounds logical doesn't it; an English production company, doing a show set on a farm in the rural heartland of the English countryside, with all but one English participant for an English TV network. Err, no actually. They wanted an American 'HoeDown' band with a special request for some John Denver songs.

This country has a long and robust musical tradition that is infested with Jolly Ploughboys and other rural denizens. It has an exciting ceilidh/barn scene with acts ranging from the big band ska sound of **Whapweasal**, the hard rocking **Tickled Pink** and the **Woodpecker Band** and a more traditional but still 'in your face' sound of the **Oyster Band** along with any number of local outfits who can get an audience kicking up the sawdust. And what do they want? To import in an American sound. I've got nothing against Yankee music, but what would the reaction be if the American National Anthem was played at the trooping of the guard at Buckingham Palace? It just shows the cultural ignorance of the people who produce these shows that it just doesn't occur to them to turn to their own culture for this kind of event. Maybe we are now the 51st state of the USA?

Meanwhile, back in Luton, a welcome import from the USA - **Bob Brozman** - is appearing at the Hat Factory in Bute Street, Luton on Tuesday (October 26). Bob is a pyrotechnic guitar technician, master of the slide, finger style and percussive guitar performing world spanning spectrum of music. Last time I saw him was in April at the Australian National Folk Festival in Canberra - a very clever (and funny) man. Apparently he has squeezed an extra gig into his schedule so that he could play at Benny's. It's great to see world class performers appearing in Luton again. Don't miss it! (Box Office 01582-878100).

Another piece of welcome news, Luton's acoustic rockers - **The Tempest** - have started gigging again, appearing on Saturday (October 23) at Mary Kate's (Alfies) in Luton. As well as doing more local gigs (watch this space), they will also be hitting the London scene before Christmas. Free Entry

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Riders of the Storm...

The recent stormy weather has ushered in Luton's acoustic rockers **The Tempest** getting back on the road. They appeared last Saturday at Mary Kate's (Alfies) in Luton as a warm-up for an assault on London Venues over the coming months starting at the Water Rats in Kings Cross (London) next Wednesday (Nov 3). They are promoting their new single due for release in Feb 2005 which is the fruit of spending a considerable time in their studio with Dave Dix over the past two years. December sees the fifth anniversary of the band with no change of line up – which is a feat in itself these days – and it is about time they released some new material. Their manager Robbo tells me that the new single is to be 'plugged' to the major radio networks for airplay but they hope that local radio stations will support the band – well it worked for Mark Joseph. The Tempest management team has been working hard behind the scenes developing of the band and they're now harvesting their hard graft. They've even been approached to produce a video for a Sky Music Channel which should be all sorted by the end of the year. There are coaches available for any fans interested in seeing the band at The Water Rats next week, just email robbo@the-tempest.com.

On Friday (Oct 29) this month's Hitchin Town Hall ceilidh takes place at with music from a new outfit called **English Rebellion**. Despite being a brand new line-up, its members are solidly rooted in the English playing tradition and have over 100 years of experience in high-class ceilidh bands between them. The musicians feature Mary Barber (fiddle), Mike Pinder (fiddle, mandolin), Nick Barber (melodeon, horn and recorder), Anahata (melodeon, anglo-concertina, cello) and Mary Humphreys (electric piano, banjo, English concertina). The caller on the night will be Phillipa Spencer and the interval entertainment will be provided by the **Aldbury Morris Men**. Doors open at 7.30 and tickets are available on the door at £7.50 for adults and £4 children under 14. For more information call 01582-724261.

On Tuesday (Nov 2) local heroes **Life and Times** - featuring Barry Goodman and Graham Meek - are appearing at Benny's Folk Club which takes place at the cellar venue at the Hat Factory in Bute Street (Luton). Barry and Graham are probably Bedfordshire favourite duo with songs and tunes based on local traditions and history. Readers may remember seeing them at the Dunstable Folk Festival over the last two years. The doors open at 7:30pm and the ticket price is £4 (non-members), £3 (members) and £2 (concessions) and are available on the door or in advance from 01582-878100.

Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4XD or anything info@lutonscene.com. A search-able archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>