

1/Jun/2005 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Stony the Crows

The summer weather has arrived just in time for the start of the festival season. This weekend I'm off to play down at Chippenham Festival and then onward to Hay-on-Wye festival – as a punter – to see Elvis Costello. Closer to home, just up the A5 in Stony Stratford (on the northern edge of Milton Keynes), Stony Live! Kicks off this weekend with a week long programme of musical events, mainly from bands and artists based around the village. The whole shebang culminates in 'Folk on the Green' on Sunday week (June 12) with a full day's schedule of music, free to the public, which is now in its 23rd year. The music featured during the festival week is incredibly eclectic with styles ranging from folk through jazz, country to rock tribute bands.

This weekend (Jun 4/5) you can see the **Hole in the Head Gang** at lunchtime in The Plough (01908 566407), **Hellzaboppin!** in the evening at The Fox and Hounds (£5, 01908 563307) and Irish music from **Ah! Ya Will!** also at The Plough (free, 01908 263842). Sunday lunchtime there is a free Folk Workshop at The Vaults or tap into the Country Music Festival at the Stony Stratford Football Club from 12.30 to 7.30pm (£5, under 14's £3, 01908 261295). In the evening you can hear **Mudslide** at The Plough (free, 01273 413855) or the **Blue Healers** at The Shoulder of Mutton (also free).

Throughout the rest of the week you can find music every night of the week around the town with highlights being provided by **The Great Pig in the Sky** (a tribute to Pink Floyd) at The Cock Hotel (£7.50) along with early music from **Packingtons Pound** folk from **Welborn, Woodward and Merryweather** at The Crown (£5), The Cock and Bull Band at the Plough (free) on Monday (June 6). On Tuesday there is Jazz at the Cock Hotel, an Indy Music Festival at the same venue on Wednesday, while on Thursday you can see the **Spread Eagles** tribute band at The Cock Hotel and **Fat Freddy's Cat** at the Plough. On Friday you can catch an amazing double bill with **Mike Silver** and the Anglo/Australian **Mundy-Turner** at The Cock Hotel (£8) and on Saturday (Jun11) **Prussian Blue** are at The Fox and **The Concrete Cowboys** are at the Plough.

The Folk on the Green concert on Sunday (June 2005) starts at noon and features; Pete , Elles Belles, The Midnight , Crippsy , Savanna, Tom Manning, Saint , Out Of The Wood, John Howarth, Martyna , Top Banana, The Clenaghan Trio, Dansmall and the Spredaeagles close the concert with a set starting at 6.45pm. For more information you can check out the Stony Live! website at www.stonyarts.org.uk (under music events) or details of Folk on the Green from www.folkonthegreen.org.uk

8/June/2005 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Make Music not War

Local on-line music journalist Roger King is starting a new campaign to curb the warlike tendencies of local promoters and performers. Concerned that both live musicians are getting caught in the crossfire, he is convinced that the major battlefield casualty is the music scene itself. Roger, who is the brains behind the indispensable Live Circuit electronic music newsletter, came to this conviction a few months ago after attending a gig billed local 'industry showcase' which actually turned out to be a Battle of the Bands competition. To quote Roger; "It was a real eye opener that Live Circuit's long held view that such contests were pointless and divisive was shared by so many of the bands and fans in attendance." He is not alone in his views either; idiosyncratic local band **Frog Stupid** refused to accept the prize after winning a heat in a local completion. Front-man Chris Hollis was quoted in the Hitchin Comet explaining the band's position. "It's Pop Idol for bands" he said, "grass-roots music is about people working together and helping each other - not taking part in a competition."

This principled stand has inspired Roger to kick off a campaign to eradicate this kind of divisive and essentially pointless competition. To quote Roger again "From that moment, I pledged to myself that I would never again attend, listen to or in any way participate in any Battle Of The Bands contest, no matter who was playing. I can no longer bring myself to support stupid competitions", he continues "there are so many more deserving gigs out there." The result of this is the "Co-operation, not competition" campaign where they'll be asking bands, fans and promoters to sign a pledge to never participate in or attend any music contest.

Personally, I agree with a lot of what Roger says, however one - and perhaps the only - good thing about these events is that bands can get valuable advice and constructive criticism from more experienced musicians and industry professionals. I wonder if there is a middle way, lose the competitive aspect but keep the publicity and helpful advice aspects. If Luton or Dunstable had a decent large public venue I sure we could get something organised.

The Live Circuit electronic newsletter is run by a local voluntary organisation that was created over five years ago to promote gigs by up-and-coming musicians with the aim of helping to develop their talent. It covers gigs from Bedfordshire down to London with many local bands and venues appearing in the gig listings. This is an essential resource if you want to keep up with what is happening in the local music scene. You can find out more from the website www.livecircuit.net or you can email roger@livecircuit.net to get regular weekly updates via email.

15/June/2005 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Exchange the Living Room for Live Music

After the success of their launch gig at The Exchange in King Street Luton, the promoter PDM Music is letting rip with another night packed with local bands. Last month over 100 people attended the first gig and PDM tell me that they will be continuing their policy of bringing together some of the best established and new Luton bands on one stage. On Sunday (June 19) you'll get the chance to see another four bands when the **Fuzzy Lumpkins**, **Drive Like Casey**, **Raze** and **Rogue** strut their stuff.

The **Fuzzy Lumpkins** have been described in The Independent as "one of the UK's best new bands" with Sunday's performance being the last date of their current UK tour which shows how highly they rate the importance of the local music scene. The music of **Drive Like Casey** moves from soft harmonised low key songs to edgier, harder tunes. Their dynamic music ranges from the quiet mournful sentimentalities, through hard, angry, psychological songs and on to political and social statements. They are no spring chickens when it comes to the national music scene either, having provided solid support for some of the nation's best up-and-coming bands including Franz Ferdinand and Bloc Party amongst others.

Sunday will see first public gig from **Raze** and will mark the return of three original members of the Luton band **Chimaera**, with the addition of Phil Moore on bass (ex-Dilate). The new band's music is a combination of brutal energy, beat-downs, grooves, thrashes and a few little extras. They tell me that you might even hear the odd guitar solo here and there! Also on the bill are **Rogue** who have been quoted as saying; "we're not 'orrible, we're Punk!!!" and will kick things off on the night with power and humour. The doors open at 7:30pm and entry costs £4, check out www.pdmmusic.com for more details.

The much loved local celtic rock band **Mercy Street** will be playing down at The Wheatsheaf in High Street North, Dunstable on Saturday (June 18). The band's bass player, Angus (a.k.a. Anguish) Nurse assures me that admission is free and the band are onstage at 9pm.

If you want something entirely different then on Sunday (June 19) you can see **Tanglefoot** just down the road in Hitchin. This bunch of Canadian nutters has been described as "Stan Rogers meets Van Halen..." and has the reputation of being a thunderous live band. Made up of adept songwriters, the band's music vividly evokes the Canadian experience and has been doing so for more than twenty years. Doors open at 7:30pm and takes place the Sun Hotel in Sun Street, Hitchin. Call Maureen on 01462-812391 or email goodmusic@hitchinfolkclub.co.uk for more information.

22/June/2005 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

On Friday local melodic metal band **Imicus** will be officially launching their debut studio album “Resolution” at a launch party held at Club 85 in Hitchin. Recently the band has been buzzing about doing warm up shows and promoting the release of the new album with a single cut - “Breathe”. It seems to be going well as they’ve shifted a



thousand copies of the single and the band hope this bodes well for a successful album launch. The CD features new songs with the band’s trademark dark, refined, powerful metal sound and a number of tracks like “Wicked Prayer” and “Shadows” that have not featured at their recent warm up live shows.

The album is available via the band’s on-line store (www.imicusband.com), selected retail outlets and at the launch party itself of course. As well as the new album, they will be celebrating the release of the video for “Breathe” filmed with director Aaron Braybrooke in May – which will also be available from their revamped website. Transport will be running from Luton (and back!) and you can get further information about; transport, the party or how to buy the new CD by emailing Miller@imicusband.com.

Also on Friday (and also in Hitchin) you can shake a leg to northern ceilidh band Hekety with caller Pete Rees. Based in Sheffield, the band’s music mixes traditional and self-penned tunes in an English Ceilidh style and they are much in demand at festivals around the country so if you want to dance to some cutting edge English dance music the get over to Hitchin Town Hall. Don’t worry if you’ve never been before – the caller teaches you the dances as you go – and going wrong is part of the fun! Doors open at 7.30 for an 8.00 pm start, with an 11.30 pm finish – a good night out, and not expensive (£7.50 adults and £4 children under 14). Tickets available at the door and there’s a real ale bar. For more information, visit www.unicornceilidhs.org

Closer to home, there’s a folk club special on at the Hat Factory in Bute Street in Luton tomorrow night (Thursday). It’s the world premier of the ‘Hat Trique’ trio featuring Luton’s very own poet **John Hegley** on mandolin, international performance poet and hat model **Jessica D’Este** and American singer-songwriter **Erik Schelander** on guitar. I don’t have much information about this gig but I understand that the evening will feature poetry, music and hats celebrating the great Luton hat making industry and craft. Benny’s Folk club is also mentioned so I guess there will be other folk spots on the night. Tickets cost £8 (£6 concessions) and are available in advance from the Box Office on 01582-878100. There will be a retiring collection for the Pasque Hospice and Keech Cottage.

29/June/2005 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

No Beer by Christmas

There's a potential entertainment disaster brewing in England and Wales as only around 10% of licensed premises have actually applied for one of the new premises licences which will come into force on November 24. This is because anyone who wants to sell alcohol or put on a 'regulated' entertainment (i.e. music or dance) must apply for a licence by August 6 or be shutdown. As most of the country's live music takes place in licensed premises, i.e. pubs and clubs, this means that not only will there be no music, but you won't be able to drown your sorrows either! While Methodists may well think this is a great idea, for the rest of us it could lead to a bleak Christmas with no entertainment apart from what's on the TV, or I suppose you could go down to the Dog and Duck café for nice cuppa. If you are concerned that your favourite gig could disappear in a puff of paperwork, then the Musicians' Union can send you, or your publican, a Live Music Kit which can help them come to terms with the new legislation. Call Gary or Jo on 020-7840-5536 or email eastsoutheast@musiciansunion.org.uk



On a more cheerful note, local trio **My Pet Junkie** will be headlining the Camden Underworld on Monday week (July 11) and they tell me that it's being filmed for DVD and TV. The three piece band recently broke the attendance record at the Garage for an unsigned band, and are currently touring around the country to promote their debut album, 'When You're Not Busy'. Not content to sit around waiting for gigs, they have teamed up with a four other bands from around the country and they will all be taking it in turns to play in each other's local venues. The band was formed in 2000 by a bunch of North Herts students and the line-up is Stuart O'Connor (lead vocals/guitar), Leon Camfield (drums/vocals), Julia Bell (bass/vocals). The music they play is fast hard edged guitar based rock which has influences ranging from The Smashing Pumpkins to King Crimson. If you want to get down to the Camdem gig you can buy tickets from www.ticketweb.co.uk and www.seetickets.com or you can check out the band at www.mypetjunkie.com

The curse of the Hat Factory has raised its hoary head once more, with the cancellation of the **Hat Trique** gig last Thursday due to John Hegley being ill. The show was going to be a performance of poetry and music starring John along with **Jessica D'Este** and **Erik Schelander** and supported by Benny's Folk Club. The gig is due to be rescheduled as soon as John is well enough, so let's hope no other problems arise.

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