

6/Jul/2005 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Consider the Alternatives...

A healthy alternative music scene seems to be developing in Luton with not one, but two promoters putting on gigs with bands playing in a variety of styles. The great thing about these gigs is that they are being organised by people who are really into the music so they aren't always looking at the financial 'bottom line'. Both PDM and "Vandalism Begins at Home" are giving bands a chance to play their music in public in a supportive and cooperative environment which – as Roger King of the Live Circuit News points out – doesn't happen in the competitive environment of a Battle of the Bands gig.

On Friday (July 8) you can see **The Stars Have Fallen** and **Rogue** at the Vandalism Begins at Home showcase at the Well in Hightown, Luton. Locally based outfit **The Stars Have Fallen** (www.tshf.tk) has been described as "hardcore metal with some real singing and melody" and has a reputation of being very loud with vocalists Matt and Boa performing at a breakneck speed. Entry is £3 and the music kicks off at 8pm. You can find out more information about the Luton Alternative music scene from <http://vandalismbegins.tripod.com> which covers Indie, Alternative, Punk, Rock, Metal and Ska and anyone who wants their band or gig advertised can email vandalismathome@hotmail.co.uk

On Sunday (July 10) you can catch a gig put on at short notice by PDM Music at the Exchange in King Street (Luton). They weren't expecting to have a gig in July as the venue was installing a dedicated PA system but, thanks to the commitment of the pub management, it's all now in place. Headlining will be **Third Law** who combine the darkness of Joy Division, the rawness of the Buzzcocks and the madness of Adam and the Ants. Also appearing is **Beggar's Belief Ltd** who are the brainchild of the enigmatic Angus Nurse and combine the rock sensibilities of Del Amitri with the big roots rock feel of REM and Big Country. The final band **Diskordian** – have been going since 1998, two albums later they are still producing interesting and evolving guitar based indie rock.

On Friday there's a rare chance to dance to the young, Lincolnshire based ceilidh band **Pigeon English** when they play for the Dunstable Tyre Kickers at St Mary's Social Club in West St, Dunstable. The band's repertoire consists of traditional material from England, with a particular emphasis on tunes from Lincolnshire and the North West; but also drawing on the traditions of other regions, including Cornwall and various other sources. The doors open at 8pm and tickets are £6, £3 conc. and under 16's and under 12s are free. For more information see the website (www.roots66.net/tkc) or call 01582-475655.

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On Friday local band **Reverie** will be playing at 'The Well', Luton as part of the 'Vandalism Begins @ Home' series of events (doors open at 7pm). Reverie's music is an idiosyncratic blend of atmospheric and manic guitar driven rock, with sonic stages ranging from King Crimson to U2 and their ilk. The band reached the finals of the last Battle of the Bands competition held in Dunstable but since then have had the inevitable line-up changes which led to the recruitment of bass player Brendan Feeney. So far they have released one single (Boy With The So Called Fame) which sold out just after Christmas 2004 but is still available by download from the music section of their website (www.reverieuk.com). Future gigs include opening the 2nd day of 'Bandfest' (also at 'The Well') next Friday (July 22).



If you fancy some electric blues this weekend then on Saturday (July 16) you'll have a chance to see the Grapevine over at The Oak' Beer Festival over in Aston Clinton (119, Green End Street, Aston Clinton, Bucks, 01296-630466). The band is the brainchild of singer/blues harp player Mike Chase and they have recently performed their 1,000th gig. The line-up includes guitarist Dr.Ika (pronounced Eeka) who hails from Georgia - the one in the former Soviet Union that is where he was twice voted top guitarist in the U.S.S.R. He has even played with the legendary B.B.King a couple of times - an unusual claim to fame from an ex- neurosurgeon. The gig on Saturday kicks off at 8.30pm and you can find out more about the band at www.grapevineblues.com

More local band news; I've heard a rumour recently that after nearly two years absence, the Luton News Pop Poll winners Loose Thread will be hitting the road with new material. So if any members of the band (or their management) are reading this then drop me an email to let me know what's going down.

Further to my comments about the venue licensing situation; I spoke with Jonathan Edwards who is the Press Officer for the South Beds District Council - which is the licensing authority on the Dunstable side of the area and he tells me that less than 20% of the local licensees have applied for a new style licence. So unless they get their act together, four pubs out of five will be shutting down in a couple of months. Remember that 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

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All's Well at the Luton Band Fest

This weekend (July 23/24) there will be an ambitious two day 'Band Fest' at the Well Music venue in Hightown Road, Luton. The weekend of bands is being organised by local artist development and management company - Shoot the Sun - whose mission is to put Luton back on the national gig map, and create a scene here that attracts attention away from London. At the beginning of the year they decided to try and kick-start the local live band scene by putting on a series of showcase gigs at The Well in Hightown. According to Shoot the Sun's Dee Lindley these have been pretty successful; "although we're not promoters per se, we have managed to bring in bands from outside Luton, as well as showcasing the local talent" and thus has helped to stimulate the local alternative live music scene.

Dee continues saying "Bringing in bands from outside the area has also delighted the audiences and feedback has been really encouraging." Spurred on by the success of the showcases, they have decided to be a bit more ambitious and stage a 2-day BandFest at The Well in Luton on the coming week end. Dee tells me that there will be a total of eighteen bands playing over the two-day period – a veritable feast of nine bands on each day. There will also be comperes and audience participation with professional quality sound provided by the Andy Pullinger of Remedy Sound.

The programme for Saturday kicks off at 1pm and consists of **Chet** (London), **Corporation Blend** (London), **Dead!Dead!Dead!** (Southampton - played on Radio 1 last week!), **Eyelash** (London), **I|Am|The|Door** (Bristol/Luton), **Imicus** (Luton/Stevenage), **Intervurt** (London), **Kneehigh** (Norwich), and **Phonic Rapture** (Luton). Sunday continues from 12:30pm with **Afterview** (W. Midlands), **Freedom High** (London), **Honeycube** (London), **Keiko** (Worcestershire), **My Luminaries** (London), **Nebraska** (London), **Novacaine** (Luton), **Reverie** (Luton), and **The Rejects** (Essex). This is a strictly over 18s event with tickets for each day available on the door for £8, £6.50 in advance or £3 from 8pm each evening. You can find full details about the Summer BandFest, and buy tickets from the website at www.shootthesun.com

On Friday (July 22) you can see a rare local performance of Brad Bradstock (Sony Radio Award) and Eric Thompson's two man show - "A Glance From a Train" - at the Visitors Centre next to Theatre and opposite the Gallery in central Milton Keynes. The show mixes music and stories from the railway age of Wolverton. This engaging show mixes humour and drama along with a set of especially written songs to give an entertaining and informative show. The show starts at 8pm and booking in advance is advised as seats are limited to around 50. More information is available at www.bradbradstock.co.uk/glance.htm or the Milton Keynes Festival website at www.mkfestival.co.uk

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Threads on the Loose

As promised, more news on the return of **Loose Thread** to the gig scene. Penni, their new promoter, tells me that the boys are back in town on Friday (July 29) when they have a gig at Wardown Park, in a Marquee near the museum. **The Kindred** are kicking the proceedings off at 5pm, and **Loose Thread** will be taking the stage at 5.45pm so make sure you're there early so that you don't miss any of the fun. Penni tells me that the band took a year out to overhaul their live set with some cracking new tunes which she assures me are incredibly groovy. You have been warned. You can see more about the band at their website -

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/donvince>



Another bunch of local lads who are making a name for themselves are the **Imperial Vipers** who tell me that to coincide with the release of their debut single "Kick a Hole"; they have been asked to support living legend 'Marky Ramone' at the Camden Underworld, London on Sunday week (August 7). Marky – whose original name was Marc Bell for rock trivia fans – was the drummer from the seminal punk rockers from 1978 and will be performing a 30 song Ramones set with his band. The Vipers expect the show will sell out fast so it would be a good idea to book well in advance. Tickets are priced at £10 and are available from www.ticketweb.co.uk and www.seetickets.com and the doors will open at 8pm.

I heard a rumour that Dunstable Town Council were promoting a rock gig in their outdoor performance area next Saturday (August 6), but my contact at the council tells me that on advice from the police the gig is being moved into another venue. I expect to get full details of the gig – bands and new venue – in time for next weeks edition so stay tuned.

Also next Saturday, my band **WoodworX** will be playing over at the Chalgrove Live Music Festival near Watlington in Oxfordshire. The three day event was first held in 1988 and is now held in a twenty acre field on Mill Lane on the outskirts of Chalgrove. WoodworX plays a mix of contemporary and traditional semi-acoustic folk with roots in both Australia and the UK. The band debuted at the Dunstable folk festival in 2001. At Chalgrove this year there will be stalls, real ale, loads of fun for the kids, free camping and parking and plenty of high quality, live music including folk, classic rock, blues and Ska. The Festival is a charity event where profits will be presented to chosen charities which this year will be Age Concern. See the website for directions and more information: www.clmfestival.com

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

. A search-able archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>