

7/Jun/2006 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column



The Vipers are Back in Town

After a certain amount of confusion, the poll topping Dunstable **Imperial Vipers** will definitely be playing at the Luton University Student Union on Saturday (June 10). The band started out in Dunstable back in early 2003 by the main songwriter **Wevs** who had just spent six months travelling around Australia on the cheap and partaking in his second love; surfing. By the time he arrived back in England Wevs already had a core of songs and an idea of sound established in his head. His weapon of choice was a straight up, no frills rock and roll, a style of music invented in the UK but which had been notably quiet of late.

The **Imperial Vipers** are; **Ash Simmons** on vocals, **Wevs** on guitars, **Corky** on guitars, **Bim** on bass and **Lofty** on drums and in their three short years they have already appeared in the rock singles chart with their anthemic single 'Kick a Hole'. Recent history has seen them topping the Sun Newspaper's Battle of the Bands Poll against very stiff opposition and they've just released their debut album – Searching : Falling : Silence. With over 200 gigs under their collective belts, the band do a great live show based around

loud and straightforward rock music that the musicians actually believe in. What more could you want?

Sharing the bill on Friday will be a bumper crop of local talent ranging from the furious guitars of **Dopamine**, the melodic rock of Harpenden based **Firstborn**, a punk/Emo mix from Hemel based **A Boy Called Hero** and some chilled out bluesy rock from another Dunstable band - **The Mighty Sixteen**. The doors open at 7pm and entry is £6. As the Vipers are getting a national profile then this gig is very likely to be sold out so it would be a good idea to get your tickets in advance from the DTA Promotions website at www.dtapromo.co.uk.

Richard from local band **The Shine** tells me that they are taking time out from the studio to play a gig over at The Well in High Town, Luton on Friday (June 9) along with **Firegarden** and **I'm a Helicopter Blade Inspector**. **The Shine** have been in the studio writing and recording new material inspired by acts as diverse as Led Zeppelin and Johnny Cash and are looking forward to getting out on the road again. Friday's gig kicks off at 8pm and you can hear some 'demo' versions of their new material on the web at www.shinemusic.tk.

A 'heads up' for next week; good time band **Los Pacaminos** which features Paul Young will be appearing at The White Swan Inn in High Street South, Dunstable next Friday (June 16). The band will be performing in the Swan's purpose-built garden which is an ideal setting for the spicy Tex-Mex menu of hot southern music. This is a ticket only event so be sure to book early if you want to get to see this nationally acclaimed band – call Mary on 01582 667833 for details.

14/Jun/2006 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Summer is here with a Vengeance

Last weekend was a fantastic prelude to the Summer festival season with great weather all round – which just goes to show that global warming can't be all bad. I was playing with **WoodworX** up at the Folk on the Green Festival up in Stony Stratford on Sunday with a crowd



of around 2,000 crammed onto the village green. Also on the bill were folk duo **Leon Jay and Gemma and Josh Kershaw**, both of whom I've seen at the excellent Wolverton Acoustic Club (www.wolvertonacousticclub.co.uk) that takes place at the Madcap Theatre in Wolverton every Sunday.

This leads neatly onto our own local open air festival at Dunstable on the August bank holiday (Aug25-27). The festival continues to expand with another live stage in the Priory House Gardens on the Sunday afternoon featuring **Strange Folk, Sons of the Soil** and the welcome return of the latin/celtic world music of **Mas Y Mas**. The evening performance on the main stage in Grove House Gardens will be headlined by those cockney sparrows **Chas and Dave** and their band, supported by Canadian singer songwriter **Heather Dale** with her guitarist **Ben Deschamps** and local celtic rockers **enQ**. Compere for both concerts will be **Rick Christian** who will be performing during the changeovers and generally ensuring everything runs to schedule.

The weekend will kick off as usual on the Friday night with an opening ceilidh from **MoonDance** with caller **Liam Robinson**, back at St Mary's social club in West Street. I'm sure that there'll be loads of other things going on, including dance displays and other events around the town. This is the sixth year of the festival and so far it has grown every year. Of course next year we'll have a brand spanking new theatre right next to the festival site so we can hope for a quantum jump in the scope of the festival which will bring all kinds of benefits. Research commissioned by the Arts Council has shown that every town that has a long running music festival benefits both commercially and in improving the quality of life and image of the town. So don't forget to stick the Festival dates in your diary!

A little sooner in the festival calendar, you can catch local rockers **Imicus** at the Bedrock Festival in Bedford on Saturday (Jun 17) along with **Balance of Silence, Kingsize Blues, Blindside, Enter Shikari** amongst others. The idea behind the festival is to showcase some of the best local bands of various genres such as Metal, Rock, Punk, Indie and Emo. The festival takes place at the Bedford Athletic Rugby Club in Wentworth Drive, Bedford and there will be two stages; one indoors and an outdoor main stage which is inside a Marquee. Food and drink will be available throughout the day and there will be a variety of stands to visit for merchandise and fun activities. The festival is a family occasion and there are no age restrictions so this is an ideal day out for all the family.

21/Jun/2006 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Los Pacaminos in Dunstable



Local lad Paul Young's Tex-Mex band played a storming gig down at the newly refurbished White Swan last Friday. The seven piece band played a set made up of Tex-Mex classics, Spanish songs and original material to a packed beer garden on a glorious summer evening. The band first got together back in 1995 as a bit of fun and a desire to get back to basics. The line-up features a three guitars, accordion, pedal steel guitar, bass and drums - all well regarded session players with credits as diverse as Manfred Mann, Alison Moyer, Squeeze and Robbie Williams.

The gig was the first of a series of three featuring well known local artists with the next one being the soulful **Lauren Field** who will be playing Jazz on Saturday week (July 1). Lauren – who lives in Dunstable - was hailed as the 'International Star of the Year' by the US based World Art Celebrities Journal and has packed out the Albert Hall. Not just a performer, she co-wrote most of the tracks on her last CD – Modern Woman – which has been described as 'a kind of Buena Vista Social Club of British jazz'. The final gig in the series will be another Dunstable lad, tenor Laurence Robinson who will be playing there sometime in August. These events are ticket only and you need to book them in advance by calling Mary on 01582 667833. Apart from these high profile gigs Declan tells me he is planning to continue putting on bands inside the pub as well, stay tuned for updates.

If you want to tap into the summer music festival scene then there's no need to trek over to the West Country, just wander up the road to Bradwell Abbey on the edge of Milton Keynes for **Togfest**. Described as a local "one day Glastonbury", the festival features a very broad range of musical genres with four stages of live music and some forty acts on the line-up. There should be something for everybody. This annual Music Festival is a 'not for profit', family friendly, live music event and has been going since 1998.

This year's programme features over 30 acts as diverse as gritty blues rock from the **Spikedrivers**, the music of Pink Floyd from **Great Pig in The Sky**, even experimental dance music using Aboriginal instruments from **Dyframix** and of course Celtic roots music and contemporary folk rock from the festival hosts – **Togmor**. Tickets are available on the day for £10 per adult (under 12's £2) or you can get a reduced rate until Friday - adults £7 (under 12s £1). To get tickets in advance call the Box Office on 01908-313413 with your credit card details (subject to additional 75p per booking) – check out www.togfest.org for more information.

Closer to home on Saturday (June 24) you can catch the second visit of **Tetra'tum** to the Greyhound pub in High Street South in Dunstable. Entry is free and the music kicks off at 9pm, for more information surf over to www.tetratum.com.

28/June/2006 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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A Walk on the Wild Side

On Friday (June 30) you can catch an interesting rock gig down at the Hat Factory in Luton featuring three of the more eccentric local rock groups. The line up for the night will be **The Kix**, **Final Sounds** and **Laika Abduction Theory** and Roger from the last of these tells me that the sounds will range from the "sublime to the downright dangerous". He goes on to say that they are drawn together through shared musical taste, influences and sense of pop rock exploration and mischief. Friday will be the first time the three bands have played together and all three will be making an effort to create a visual spectacle through their respective performances. Despite coming at their shows with fresh, exhilarating and probably deeply strange sounds, the bands uphold an old fashioned ethic of providing fun and entertainment. It all sounds pretty good to me.



The Kix are from just down the road in Harpenden and aim to bring a fresh breath of "summer of love" sound of the late 60's, West Coast America (www.myspace.com/thekixband). **Final Sounds** are a trio who hail from North London and meld early punk with 70's progressive rock using synthesisers, vocal distortions and techno vibes to create a contemporary and distinctive feel to their music to get an indie, psychedelic form of space-rock (www.myspace.com/finalsounds). **Laika Abduction Theory** are also from Harpenden and create a low tech, futurist vibe based on Eno period Roxy Music and Hawkwind, mixed in with a retro surf-punk, trash-rock soundscape (www.myspace.com/laikaabductiontheory). The music kicks off at 8:30pm at the Hat Factory (Bute Street, Luton) and admission is just £3.

Steve from **The Suspects** tells me that you can catch them at the Musik 4U festival at Campbell Park in central Milton Keynes on Saturday (July 1). The band will be on stage at 5pm for a half hour set in front of what the organisers anticipate to be a crowd of 10,000 for the week-end. The festival bills it self as the biggest free event and takes place over the entire weekend with a full bill of local bands along with DJs, sports activities, food stalls, Salsa workshops, rock climbing, bungee jumping and other activities. The programme kicks off at 2pm on both Saturday and Sunday and finishes around 9pm.

Closer to home on Saturday you can see 'International Star of the Year' **Lauren Field** who will be singing Jazz at the White Swan in High Street South, Dunstable. Tickets are only available in advance by calling Mary on 01582 667833.

Adam from the Horn in Victoria St, St Albans tells me that they are starting a new venture next Wednesday (July 5). Called cLUBhORN, it will feature two of the best up-and-coming bands on the indie scene. At least one the acts will be a 'profile' touring artist as seen in NME, The Fly etc. The club night will début with **Giant Drag** (www.myspace.com/giantdrag) and **Pirate Radio** (www.myspace.com/pirateradiouk). Tickets are £8 in advance.

Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4XD and you can also email details of gigs, gossip, web sites or anything else to info@lutonscene.com. A searchable archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>.