

## 07/Feb/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *New Music Venue for Luton*



This Friday you can get down to the opening of a brand new music venue in Luton called 'The Live Room' based in Charlie Browns (in Midland Road). The promoter is local music personality and singer Andy Sizmur who tells me that no expense has been spared on the PA and lighting equipment making it one of the most professional, high specification music venues in the area. In fact Andy goes further and says that "This will quite simply be one of the finest venues of its size in the UK". Working closely with Charlie Browns owner Gerard Duggan, they have fitted out the venue up to a standard that will enable it to host professional touring bands of all genres. In fact it was no surprise to me that one of the Duggan family are backing this new venture. Working quietly in the background they have probably done more to help promote live music in the area than most people realise.

The Live Room will have a capacity of 300 which fills a gap for midsize venues in the Luton area which are suitable for both up-and-coming new touring bands and as a place for better known bands to do warm up shows for their large tours, all within striking distance of London. The music programme starts as they mean to go on with Radio 1/XFM favourites **The Holloways** who are using the gig as a warm up for their national tour. The local bands get a look in as well with support comes from popular local bands **The Occasion**, **Bowfinger** and **Pirate Radio**. Future acts include **The Clone Roses** (the UK's #1 tribute to The Stone Roses) on Saturday, **Towers Of London** (featuring Donny Tourette) next Thursday and the current NME favourites **The Maccabees** who stop off on their national tour next Friday (Feb 16).

And this is just a start as there will be more nationally known acts playing at the venue in the coming months with the **Blockheads** already lined up for April. But perhaps the best bit for the Luton music scene is that the venue will be a two way street for local talent as every gig will have support from unsigned local bands, exposing them to new audiences and giving them opportunities to work with top names. As Andy points out "Luton has been overlooked by pro acts for too long, this will change everything". For more information check out [www.myspace.com/theliveroomluton](http://www.myspace.com/theliveroomluton).

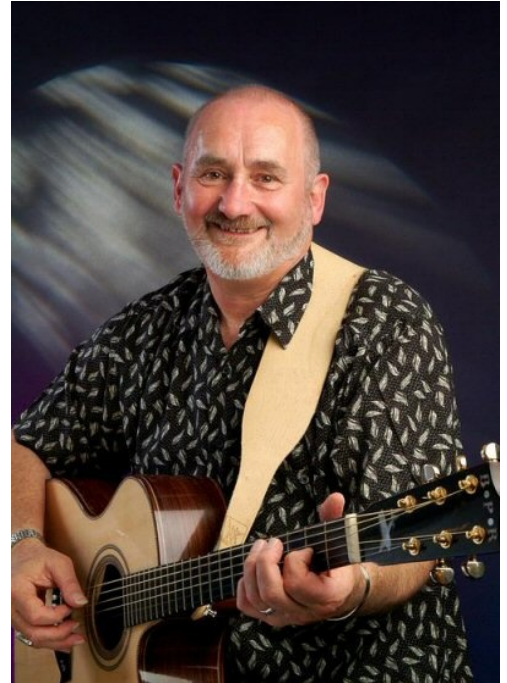
On Sunday guitar buffs can get a rare opportunity to see guitar legend, **John Renbourn**, playing solo over at the Sun Hotel in Hitchin. John was a founder member of the 60s "super group" Pentangle and has performed with some of the greatest guitarists around such as Bert Jansch, Davey Graham, Stefan Grossman, Doc Watson to mention but four. On Sunday he will be spicing the consummate plank spanking with tales from his illustrious past and an insight as to how the music came about. The music starts at 7:30pm and you can get more information from 01462 812391, [goodmusic@hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk](mailto:goodmusic@hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk) or [www.hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk](http://www.hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk).

## 14/Feb/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *A Feast of Folk*

Popular acoustic singer/songwriter **Mike Silver** is making a rare local appearance over at the Sun Hotel in Hitchin on Sunday. His songs are all about longing, love and loss, perceptive and thoughtful, with haunting melodies and heart stopping lyrics and address every day issues without being trite, reaching out to a wide audience. With a voice that is as warm and inviting as the fire in the fireplace on a cold winter's night, making audience involvement an art form. He is also a consummate guitarist and catches his audiences by surprise with that little extra bit of dexterity. No stranger to the media, Mike has recorded several sessions for BBC National Radio including two Radio 1 "In Concert" programmes as well as being interviewed or playing live for many BBC and independent local radio stations. He's even represented the UK at the European Broadcasting Union festival in Kiel, Northern Germany. On Sunday the music starts at 7:30pm and you can get more information by ringing 01462 812391, emailing [goodmusic@hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk](mailto:goodmusic@hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk) or from the web at [www.hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk](http://www.hitchinfofolkclub.co.uk).



On Friday you can catch some seminal 80's Folk Rock when **The Cluster of Nuts Band** perform at a one-off reunion at this month's Chiltern Ceilidh in Dunstable. The band - whose name was filched from a typically suggestive folk song - was formed at Surrey University in the late 70's and reached their peak in 1983 when their album "Fridge in the Fast Lane" was acclaimed as one of the best new albums of the Rogue Folk movement. Friday's ceilidh is one of the regular Chiltern Ceilidhs at St Mary's Social Club in West Street. The music begins at 8pm, the dances are great fun and the caller on this occasion will be the acclaimed rising star of the ceilidh movement Liam Robinson. Tickets are available on the door or in advance by calling 01582-475655 and are £6 for adults, £3 concessions and free for under 12's. Check out [www.chilternceilidhs.info](http://www.chilternceilidhs.info) for directions and links.

Next Thursday (Feb 22) you can hear a cocktail of new melodies and traditional tunes when the trio **Zoos** appear at the Cricketers just off the common in Redbourn. Performing on an array of string, wind and percussion instruments ranging from contrabassoon to congas the music aims entertain and enchant with exciting arrangements, great musicianship and infectious energy. Also appearing is singer **Bob Wakeling** who was one of the leading lights of both the famous Herga Song Club in Wealdstone and later the Pumphouse Folk Club in Watford. I remember him performing as a regular at the Red and Green Umbrella Club in the Rose public house just off Seven Sisters Road when I used to do the sound down there. Bob plays a mix of traditional ballads and contemporary songs of social comment either with guitar or 5-string banjo backing or unaccompanied. Tickets are available in advance or on the door for £6. For further information ring 01582 452954, 07850 163241 or check out [www.redbournfolkclub.org.uk](http://www.redbournfolkclub.org.uk).

## 21/Feb/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *MoonDog Touches Down in Houghton*



On Saturday you can catch Ben Marcus's new reggae/rock fusion project – **MoonDog** – when they play over at the Crown in Houghton Regis. Ben, who hails from just up the road in Milton Keynes, is best known for power blues rock with his eponymous band 'Markus' but in 2005 a reggae inspired track on his album 'Time to Move On' received a lot of airplay. In fact it even got a slot on BBC 2's Drivetime show at which point he saw the writing on the wall and started **MoonDog** as a vehicle for a more laidback, Caribbean influenced style of music.

Listening to the tracks on the band's website ([www.musicfinitly.com/moondog](http://www.musicfinitly.com/moondog)) I can still hear a strong blues/rock sensibility underpinning the music, but like the Clapton version of Marley's 'I shot the Sherriff', the two threads of African/anglo music meld naturally to provide a more sensuous mix than straight rock and blues. Ben tells me that the change in direction has worked for him at all kinds of levels with a lot creativity being unleashed and an increasingly full gig diary – with promoters saying "Thank God not another Blues band!". Anyway you can check it out yourself at The Crown, East End, Houghton Regis, admission is free.

Tomorrow you can catch some high quality Jazz/Funk over at the Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton when Focus on Jazz presents **The Rob Mach Group** as part of The Jazz in the Basement series. Dunstable lad Rob is a graduate from a Middlesex University with an Honours degree in Jazz where he studied with the likes of Rob Townsend, Mark Locheart, Stuart Hall, Chris Batchelor, Nikki Illes and Pete Churchill. He went on start a residency at "The Downtown Cafe" in High Street South Dunstable and ended up as the main 'fixer' for gigs of a variety of different genres, though obviously Jazz acts had a special significance to him. He even managed to get a DVD deal out the gig, recording the "The Lawton / Dunning Project" which was released by Classic Rock Productions.

The **Rob Mach Group** is a ten piece band who deliver a mix of original compositions as well as putting a new spin on some well-known classics. You'll also get a support set of infectious material from **Fresh**. The doors at the Hat Factory open at 8pm and tickets cost £8 with £6 for concessions and £5 for NUS card holders. For more information contact the Box Office on 01582 878115.

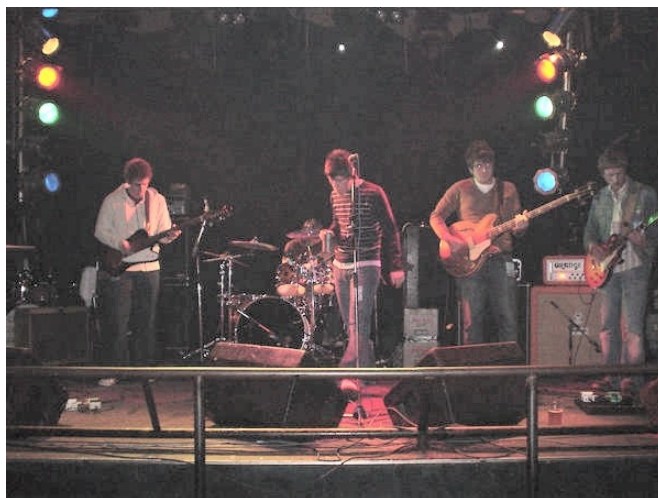
Tonight you can hear Anglo Celtic band **Tam Lin** playing over at The Orange Tree in Norton Rd, Baldock. **Tam Lin's** show consists of lively fiddle driven jigs and reels along with traditional and contemporary songs. Support will be by St Albans based duo **Na Mara** who combine vocals with a lovely mix of guitar and mandolin. The music starts at 8:30pm and entry is £6/£7/£8. Call 0845 123 2656, email [madnanny@questor-cp.co.uk](mailto:madnanny@questor-cp.co.uk) or check it on the web at [www.madnanny.co.uk](http://www.madnanny.co.uk) for more information.

## 28/Feb/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

### The Brian Heywood Column

#### *Raid at New Music Venue*

No it's not a police bust for illegal live music under the new entertainment licensing laws, but rather it's a bunch of rockers from Hemel - **The Raid** - who are headlining at the Live Room in Luton on Saturday. The band got the gig after the Live Room's promoter saw them supporting the **Towers of London** a few weeks ago. **The Raid** are living up to their name by smashing down the doors of the music establishment with their of guitar powered rock In fact they've already been invited to record for EMI publishing in March, won a BBC phone in poll for new bands, been made band of the month for Totalrock Radio and Playmusic magazine with a major feature and cover CD. The manic rollercoaster ride started after they recorded their demo tracks at Sawmills with producers John Cornfield (Muse, Razorlight, Supergrass) and Greg Brimson (Bush, Levellers, Eminem) and it has now got to the point where the heads of major record labels are calling them up.



Originally the band started off as four piece with school friends Adam Robinson (vocals), Paul Taylor (lead guitar), Sam Street bass), and Tom Chambers (drums) gigging out in London. At these gigs they bumped into another former school mate Andy Maguire and it wasn't long until he was asked to join the band on rhythm guitar. On Saturday they will be playing at Luton's newest and most ambitious music venue with support from Luton rockers **The Tyke Tyler Band** (formerly Shine) who will be helping to exercise the high specification sound system at the 300 seater venue. The Live Room has gotten off to a great start and has a full programme of live music with upto to four gigs a week .You can check them out on MySpace at theliveroomluton and the band can be found at wearetheraid. The Live Room is based in Charlie Browns in Midland Road, Luton and entrance is £5.

While we're on the subject of great promoters in the Luton area, Paul from PDMmusic tells me that they are changing tack somewhat in the coming months. After over two years of promoting new bands, giving them the opportunity to experience playing live, they've decided to make some changes that give more focused support to new bands. The first step is to become an officially 'not for profit' community based organisation which will give them access to funding to help them pursue there aims of increasing performance opportunities for new music and also help train people to promote gigs, either as a band or as an independent promoter. They'll be kicking off with a one day training session in partnership with the Headstart Project and have also secured funding to trial a shared release singles project. See pdmpromo on MySpace for more details.

Don't forget that you can do your bit to help promote live music by letting Tony Blair know how you feel about the effect government red tape on the performance of live music by signing the petition on the Prime Minister's website (<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/licensing>).

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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](mailto:info@lutonscene.com). A searchable archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>.