

2/May/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Live Vroom....

The Blockheads played a cracking set down at the Live Room at Charlie Brown's on Friday night. I was chatting to their manager Lee just before the gig started and he was saying that on the current tour they are mainly playing at Arts Centres but frankly I don't think that this is quite the right atmosphere for a visceral band like the Blockheads. The layout of the Live Room means you can get up close and really get into the swing of the thing, the kind of total immersion that makes Rock'n'Roll so addictive. Another great aspect of having a touring stop-off in Luton is that local bands can get a chance to support some top names. Justin from **ToyDrum** tells me that they are supporting the **Bluetones** down at The Live Room on Saturday. The **Bluetones** were very much part of the Britpop 90's with singles such as "Slight Return" and "Solomon Bites The Worm" they were as essential to the indie movement as Oasis or Blur. The music kicks off at 8:30 and entry costs £10, see www.myspace.com/theliveroomluton for more information.



On Sunday you can see another living legend when Willy Barrett's **Sleeping Dogz** play over at the Sun Hotel in Sun St, Hitchin. Willy is perhaps best known for his work with John Otway but his interest in acoustic performance and a bit of luck led him to form this unique trio who are all based on the Grand Union canal between Dunstable and Aylesbury. John Devine's celtic music background on pipes, whistles and harmonium and Mary's world 'cello combine with Willy's wild, and somewhat mad, guitar and vocal style mean that you get a performance right out of this world. If you can't make it this weekend then you get a second chance to see Wild Willy at the same venue next month (June 24) when he appears in a special night featuring three generations of British Guitarists along with Clive Carroll and Gareth Pearson. Tickets for both gigs cost £10 members and £12 non members and must be reserved in advance for the June event which will also have an afternoon guitar workshop with Clive Carroll (£15). Doors open at 7:30pm and you can get more information from 01462 812391, www.hitchinfolkclub.co.uk or goodmusic@hitchinfolkclub.co.uk.

Next Tuesday (May 8) you can catch some classic melodic rock from the legendary **Wishbone Ash** when they play up at The Stables in Wavendon. The band came to fame in their early days for their unique blend of blues, jazz and English folk and the blending of two melodic lead guitars playing together their trademark sound which went on to inspire such bands as Thin Lizzy and Iron Maiden. The band is back on the road in a national tour to promote the release of their new album *First Light* due for release next month June. Tickets for next week's gig are £21 (Box Office 01908 280800) and you can get more information about the band from www.wishboneash.com.

9/May/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Rebels Hit the Heights

Ines from the Indy Music Awards tells me that the Dunstable based Classic Rock outfit – **Red Star Rebels** – has been nominated for the “Best Rock Act” section of this prestigious independent music award ceremony. The bands that get into these awards are the ones that are actually out there playing live and are selected by the audiences rather than the cabal of media ‘movers and shakers’ who tend to feel they own the music business. The Rebels have made quite a splash in the last couple of years and look like they’re going to take their well crafted, old school US based, metal sound as far as it can go, hijacking the mantle of bands like Guns & Roses. These guys have a massive fan base, celebrity fans (including Peaches Geldorf), music gear endorsements and a truckload of raw theatrical talent that make their shows truly epic.



Getting back to the Indy awards; the venues and promoters nominated just over two hundred acts from the 40,000 independent artists who appeared at the London various last year. The audiences and fans then voted for their favourite acts via the dedicated website www.indyawards.co.uk which cut the field down to a short list of 36 acts in nine different categories, including the Best Indie Act, Best Pop Rock Act and Best Hip Hop Act and Best Rock Act. The boys in the band will only have to wait till next week to find out if they’ve captured the top slot of their category at the Awards Ceremony at the Clapham Grand on Tuesday (May 15). You can find out more about the Awards and the Red Star Rebels from their respective websites - www.indyawards.co.uk and www.redstarrebels.com.

On Saturday DTA Promotions are putting on no less than five bands down at the Students’ Union of the Luton Campus of the University of Bedfordshire. Headlining is **Sonic Boom Six** (sonicboomsix) who mould themselves in the tradition of UK punk bands such as the Specials, the Clash and King Prawn and mixes the urban sounds of ragga, hip-hop, bhangra and jungle, a blast of dub and a heavy helping of hardcore punk rock. Also on the bill are **The JB Conspiracy** (thejbconspiracy), Luton’s favourite funk/indie/ska combination, **Pirate Radio** (pirateradiouk), the Ska/Dubstep/punk/grime music of **Mouthwash** (mouthwashlondon) and the watertight funk/rock grooves and soulful harmonies of **Sugar Daddy** (sdtb). Entry is £7 and doors open at 7pm with tickets available at www.ticketweb.co.uk and www.wegotickets.com. You can find out more from the bands’ MySpace pages (in brackets).

I see that the live music licensing petition has reached number one in the list of over 7,400 petitions on the Prime Minister’s website (<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/licensing>) with over 71,000 signatures. Regardless of whether the new law has had much effect on live music performance, Tony Blair is going to be remembered as the PM who oversaw the introduction of a law that makes the performance of live music without a government licence a criminal offence. Well done Tony.

16/May/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Czech this band out!



Luton based hard rock band **Phonic Rapture** is breezing through Luton on Sunday on the way to central Europe as part of their UK and European tour. The band will be playing down at The Park in Park St, Luton along with **Deadeye** and **Valentine Stitch** before jetting off to three gigs in the Czech Republic. The tour is promoting their new single 'The Arrow' due to be released next month as a precursor to more recorded material later this year. The band's music is an individual brand of powerful rock that aims to bridge the gap between eighties stadium rock and the Seattle scene of the nineties. According to their PR guru Tony, they hit the stage wielding dirty blues-rock riffs, explosive drumbeats, deep bass lines and growling vocals; fitting torch bearers for rock music from a city that gave the world Goth rock.

It hasn't been a smooth run though; at the end of 2006 the loss of a guitarist and founding member Blackie rocked the band back on their heels. However they decided to carry on with the remaining four which unexpectedly gave their sound a new lease of life - with the pared down line-up producing a grittier 'in your face' rock sound. The press are impressed as well with PowerPlay magazine saying "Phonic Rapture get it right with hard rock anthems, and succeed in acoustic forays as well..." while Black Velvet Magazine reckons that the "hair-raisingly soulful and versatile vocals of **Nik Scott** carry all the songs, while jaw-dropping guitar solos from **Rob Hudson** liven up the blinding riffs that surge along courtesy of grungy undercurrents...". Check them out on MySpace at [phonicrapture](http://phonicrapture.com) or find out more from their website at www.phonic-rapture.co.uk.

Tomorrow night you can catch Northampton based singer / songwriter **Martyna** when she supports **enQ** at the monthly 'Up the Swan' gig at the White Swan in High St South, Dunstable. Her music has been causing quite a stir on the acoustic scene with her finely crafted songs and beautiful piano accompaniments. Big George of BBC Three Counties Radio is big fan of hers and he knows a thing or two about real music. Her first release 'Spark' in February 2005 sold out in just two months and has received high praise from both local and national press and is continuing to produce positive feedback from publishers and radio stations alike.

A number of her tracks have made a big impression on the internet as well with 'Heroes' staying in the Mp3Songs Top 100 for 5 months and also soaring to number one on the Soundclick Acoustic Download Charts. Since then she has released 'Little Wings' (2006) and has just released a new EP called 'The Trouble With Me'. **Martyna** was also selected for the Leverhulme Artist Programme which has seen her working with such influential talents as Boo Hewerdine, David Knopfler and Cara Dillon. You can find out more about Martyna at www.myspace.com/martynamusic and more about enQ and the White Swan gig at www.myspace.com/enquk. The music kicks off at 8pm and entry is free.

23/May/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Dunstable Rocks

The live music scene is really taking off in Dunstable. Tomorrow night the reopened and revamped New Greyhound in High St South is hosting a mega live music showcase featuring four emerging local bands. The gig has been organised by Jon from the Dunstable based duo **Down in Flames** who describes the purpose of the gig to show off the talent of local bands “with the emphasis on good musicianship and original song writing.” On the bill for the first showcase are **Nemo**, **Marthas Fury**, **Seajaymusic** and **Down in Flames**.



Nemo hail from Luton where they started out as a duo but have fairly recently expanded to a quintet - acoustic guitars, drums and flute to produce a melodic blend of contemporary folk and pop (www.myspace.com/nemoluton). **Marthas Fury** describe their sound on MySpace ([marthasfury](http://marthasfury.myspace.com)) as ‘Alternative / Indie / Korean Pop’ and are a quirky four-piece from Dunstable who play with a smile on their faces. I’ve not heard them live yet but what I’ve heard so far has a pleasing left field approach to their individual brand of rock. **Seajaymusic** is the Luton based singer / songwriter and multi-instrumentalist **Colin Shanley**, who has been singing and playing in local bands for several years and has recently struck out on his own solo career – with the help of a friend or two.

The Greyhound has only recently been taken over by Jim and Joy, although they have managed pubs in the area for many years, and they have already significantly refurbished the pub which is situated on the corner of Great Northern Road and High St South in Dunstable. Entry tomorrow is completely free and the doors are open all night, with the music starting at 8pm. Interest in the four acts is likely to draw a large crowd at this, the start of the late May bank holiday weekend, and the organisers anticipate a party atmosphere. For more information contact Jon at: downinflames@hotmail.co.uk.

On Saturday you can catch a night of great reggae right in the centre of Dunstable when **Wayne MacArthur** and the **Universal Players** supported by **Natural Element** and **Ruff Edge Quartet** play at The Finbar in High St North. The night will feature a range of styles of reggae ranging from Wayne’s contemporary roots style to the silky smooth soul funk of Natural Element and the new generation roots dub of Ruff Edge. Doors open at 8pm with the music kicking off at 9:30 and you can get more information from 07729625351/07933774110 or mwmturbosonics@ntlworld.com.

Meanwhile over in Luton on Saturday you can catch **Marthas Fury**, **The Scenic Drive**, **Loose Thread** and **Just By Chance** at The Well music venue in Hightown. This is a charity gig in aid of Keech Cottage Hospice for terminally ill children on the northern edge of the town and should be a cracking night. Doors open at 8pm and entry is a mere £4 - just £1 per band for some of the best alternative / indie music in the county. And it’s all in a good cause - how can you stay away?

30/May/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Festive Season



The summer festival season is almost upon us and this year we have two local festivals. The first is the new Redbourn Festival on August 11 and is just down the road at the Herts County Showground (by Junction 9 of the M1). One of Britain's top rock bands – **Feeder** - who have won accolades as Best British Band and Best British Live Act in the Kerrang Awards is headlining with a bunch of great bands to fill up the day. The organisers reckon that up to 35,000 music fans will hit the area to enjoy music from Feeder, The Automatic, The Ordinary Boys, host and Sandy Thom who will perform on two stages as well as loads of special guests. Tickets are available from www.ts.com, www.festermanagement.com or by phoning the ticket hotline on 0871 4720410.

An adult ticket will set you back £45 with under 16's £35 and under 5's getting in free. You can also get a family ticket for £120 which covers two adults, two kids and includes free parking. Sounds pretty expensive but you are getting 10 hours of top class live music as the music kicks off at midday and goes on till 10pm. They are event running a free shuttle bus service from Harpenden station if you want to leave the car at home. It should be a great day as long as the weather holds out. Check it out on MySpace at www.myspace.com/redbournfestival.

At the end of August the Dunstable Folk Festival rolls around again with the free outdoor concerts on Saturday and Sunday (Sept 1/2) featuring Jacqui McShee's **Pentangle**, Ashley Hutchings' **Rainbow Chasers**, Roland Chadwick and Lauren Field amongst others as well as a beer tent, children's entertainment, trade stalls and food vans. The festival ceilidh will be on the Friday (Aug 31) will be hosted by local folk/rockers MoonDance with Roger Watson calling. There will be a new event on the Thursday at the White Swan in High St South which will be a concert in the outdoor performance area hosted by **enQ** and with various guests who have featured in the regular Up the Swan events. I'll let you know the full details as they are released.

Somewhat sooner; you can take part in the regular Headstart Headjamz night next Wednesday (June 6) at the Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton. These events are free to both audience and performers and give aspiring performers a chance to play in front of a live audience and develop their stage skills. The management provide backline amps, drum kit, sound engineer and PA so that bands can strut their stuff down in the basement bar area along with the solo singers and instrumentalists. You can even take along your own backing track if you want. The session always has a relaxed and friendly atmosphere which is ideal for anyone taking to the stage for the first time. You can see videos of past performances on the Headstart website (www.headstartproject.org) and you can book tickets and performance slots online. You can also get more information from the Box Office on 01582 878100.

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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. A searchable archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>. Brian is now on MySpace as well at enqk.