

The Brian Heywood Column

Strange fruit from Iceland

If you want a passing strange musical experience then check out Icelandic superstars **Trabant** when they play over at the NME Club Live Room at Charlie Brown's in Midland Road, Luton on Friday. The five piece band are famous in the frozen north for their stage show which involves lashings of glitter, nudity (or at least gold-lame jockstraps) and copious amounts of champagne thrown about the stage and at the audience. Their main claim to fame seems to be that Brighton's most famous DJ - **Fatboy Slim** - personally chased the band for months and has signed them to his label - Southern Fried Records. According to the band's cocktail swilling singer Ragnar Kjartansson;



“We're about the party, about trying to be sexy, about the decadence.” The lack of any reference to the music should give you all the clues that you need about this bastard offspring of pop and cheesy 80's electro-pop – sort of an “Abba meets Boy George at a Glam Rock fancy dress party” experience. However I imagine that the show is pretty stunning. You can check them out on MySpace at [trabantofficial](http://trabantofficial.com). Supporting them will be **Rolling Dog** and **Cut The Blue Wire** and the music kicks off at 9pm with entry costing £5 (£3 with an NME voucher). See www.myspace.com/theliveroomluton for a full schedule of gigs.

Fans of celtic music should check out the programme of the Baldock and Letchworth Folk Club as this month they are featuring four different celtic acts from the Irish, Scottish and Cape Breton traditions. Tonight you can hear **Becky Talyor** and **Paul Cowham** (www.beckytylor.info). Becky is a champion Uilleann piper, fiddle and flute player who will be accompanied on guitar by Paul and together they create great Irish music (£6 / £7 / £8). Next Wednesday you can get a chance to see the next big thing in pan celtic music when the five piece band **The Outside Track** (www.theoutsidetrack.com) who are currently taking the festival circuit by storm (£8 / £10 / £12). June 20 features two idiosyncratic Scotsmen; **Ewan Wilkinson** and **Sandy Brechin** (www.brechin-all-records.com) who gave the world “Ceilidh Minouge” and “The Jimi Shandrix Experience” with one of Scotland's best young male singers to date (£8 / £10 / £12). Finally at the end of the month (June 27) you can see one of the few southern dates of **Eileen Mor** (www.eileenmor.net) an Aussie five piece Gaelic/Scottish band (£6 / £7 / £8). The music starts at 8.30pm and the venue is The Orange Tree in Norton Rd, Baldock. For more information call 0845 123 2656, email madnanny@questor-cp.co.uk or check out the web at www.madnanny.co.uk.

Don't forget that tonight you can catch the **Headjamz** session at the Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton where you can get a chance to perform in front of a live audience or just catch the latest talents emerging on the local music scene. For more information, and to see videos of previous performances, check out the web at www.headstartproject.org. Free entry.

13/June/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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Gothic Banshees Fly into Bute Street

Tomorrow night you can see a small horde of theatrical Goths in the shape of the **Screaming Banshee Aircrew** when they play the Coven Club down at the Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton. Listening to their MySpace tracks (check out screamingbansheeaircrew), I can hear a tremendous range of musical influences ranging from a dark eighties synthesiser sound to straight down the middle power punk. This is no Icelandic art band that just adds the music to give wheels to their theatrical posturing; the Banshee Aircrew build their theatrics onto a solid musical bass to give an honest performance which enhances, rather than eclipses, the content of the songs.



The Banshees have been around since 2001 with their first commercial release being "Fishnet Messiah", released by Resurrection Records. Since then they've been in demand due to the relentless energy of their stage show and to date have performed all over the UK, and alongside a number of high profile European and US acts, including supporting The Birthday Massacre on the UK leg of their European tour last summer. The band has even caught the attention of the Observer's Ed Vulliamy who reckons that they play "a droll rock cabaret shot through with the dark humour of two vocalists".

The band line-up has changed somewhat with original members **MisteR Ed** (vocals), **Jo Violet** (vocals and violin) and **Xris Banshee** (guitar) being joined by **Tori Pink** on bass, **Neal Unreal** on keys and **Donnie Blue** on drums. This expanded line-up has given their sound a rawer, punkier edge, with a wide dynamic that complements the flamboyant nature of their live shows. Tomorrow's gig is to celebrate the Coven's fifth Anniversary, and promises to be something really rather special. The music kicks off at 9pm and goes on until till 1.30am (last entry 1.00am) with entry £5. Call the box office on 01582 878100 for more information.

Steve Locke from local band the **Suspects** tells me that they've had to put back the release of their next single "The Things We Do" to July 9th due to problems with the download site. The single was due for release this week and has three tracks, all of which are potential singles. The band line-up is **Andy Barraclough**. (vocals/guitar), **Jim Oliver** (lead vocals/guitar), **John Connaghan** (drums/vocals) and **Steve Locke** (vocals/guitar) and they have taken the increasingly popular DIY approach to the record business by setting up their own record label - Low Tone Records - which can be found on the web at www.lowtone.co.uk. The label is promoting the new release heavily to radio stations all around the country in hope of getting the some of that elusive airplay. The tracks will be available for download at CD Baby, and for CD purchase at HMV in Luton and Stevenage and at independent record shop CD Heaven in Hitchin. You can also get a sneak preview of the title track on their MySpace page (thesuspects06). Good luck guys, you deserve it.

20/June/2007 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

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A feast of festivals

On Sunday week (July 1) a new music festival is due to kick off in the historic and picturesque setting of Barton Watermill just north of Luton on the A6. The first Watermill Music Festival will offer up to nine solid hours of music right across the board, ranging from blues and gospel to rock'n'roll and Celtic music. Headlining will be **Mick Abrahams**, who is best known for his stints with Jethro Tull, Blodwyn Pig and for his blues guitar work with superstars. Another highlight will be a set by former Colosseum guitarist **James Litherland**, who has played and recorded with stars like Long John Baldry and Leo Sayer before turning to session work and live solo dates around the UK.



One of the event's main organisers is local blues and soul singer / songwriter and music journalist **Graham Robins** who tells me that the whole event will have something of a 'Home Counties' feel about it, with a variety of bands and solo performers from Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire and says that "We are aiming at a good, family day out with good music and a great atmosphere. There's never been anything like it at the mill site, which is surrounded by rolling countryside and is a beautiful area." Graham will also be appearing along with his band which features St Albans guitarist **Pete Ridley**. Luton is also represented by good-time rock band **Phonic Rapture** - currently on the crest of a wave with a forthcoming European tour – and **King Coopa's Final Castle**.

It's not all rock and roll though as **The Luton Gospel Collective**, who are a talented band of local schoolchildren who are fast making a name for themselves, are also on the bill along with 23-year-old jazz-blues Luton singer **Ally McCann** who got the gig after appearing at an 'open mic' at the Hat Factory in Luton. The celtic corner is held down by the amazing piper, whistle player and all round multi-instrumentalist and Wild Willy Barret sideman **John Devine** and Cambridge men **Al Lindsay** and **Chris Newman**. The music festival runs from noon until around 9pm, with a bar and food available, and tickets at £15 are available now from the box office on 0845 4502012 or from Coda Music in Guildford Street, Luton or by calling 01582 725625. **[editor's note: this event was cancelled at short notice due to lack of advance ticket sales]**

You can catch another shed-load of music and dance just down the road at the St Albans Folk Festival from Friday which features; concerts, a ceilidh, a day of dance, workshops, and song and music sessions. The event has moved on from being a two yearly to an annual festival and will take place at various venues around the town over the weekend. Artists taking part include **Chris Wood**, **Asha**, **George Papavgeris**, **Lynne Heraud** and **Pat Turner**, **Life and Times**, **Clive Batkin** and **Joel McDermott**, **Steph West**, **Jan Strapp** and **Kerry Fletcher**. For further details and booking information check out the website at www.stalbansfolkmusic.org.uk, email info@stalbandsfolkmusic.org.uk or ring Alison Macfarlane 01727 852111 (evening) 0207 040 5832 (day).

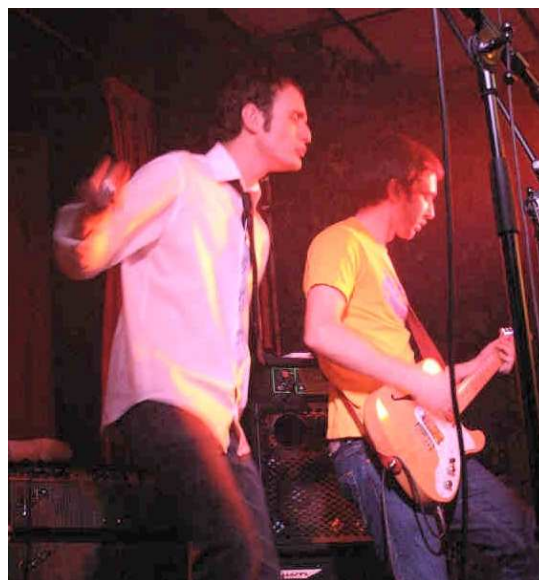
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Rise to the Occasion

Tomorrow night you can catch a dose of the acoustic mastery of

The Occasion down at the White Swan in High St South Dunstable. The band is fronted on vocals by the inimitable **Andy Sizmur** who, apart from being one of the local scene's best rock vocalists, is a tireless promoter of live music in the area. The band is best known for their full-on indie rock sound featuring the fantastic guitar solos of **Andy Paris** but tomorrow they are returning to their acoustic roots. The gig is hosted by local celtic rockers **enQ** who have been featured regularly at the Dunstable Folk Festival and last year supported Chas 'n' Dave to a packed – if slightly damp – audience at the Grove House Gardens open air performance area. You can check out both bands on MySpace at www.myspace.com/theoccasionband and www.myspace.com/theoccasionbandenq.



Francesco Bove - who runs a music Promotions Company based in Ampthill - tells me that on Friday they are taking their successful Electric Avenue event to The Carpenter's Arms in Harlington. The night will feature live music from three local bands; **The Ramblers** - an Ampthill based quartet of Irish Punk Rockers, **The Defekters** - a female fronted Ska band from Stevenage and **New Groove Formation** who are headlining. This collective feature up to nine people on stage at once playing a mix of ska, funk and reggae and includes a horn section and an MC. The night starts at 8pm and entry is free, check them out on MySpace at [avenuepromotions](http://avenuepromotions.com).

You can catch some electric ceilidh when Milton Keynes based **Asha** appear at the last of this season's Hitchin Ceilidhs. The band is the result of a collaboration between rhythm meister **Pete Lockwood's** signature synthesiser, sax and electronic drums which are layered with **Jackie Allen's** fiddle, **Peter Lubbock's** guitar-work, **Dave Jolly's** melodeons and **Lynn Swain's** flutes and whistles. The resulting music is infused with blues, soul, jazz and Latin influences that is guaranteed to get you dancing. Unicorn Ceilidhs take place at Hitchin Town Hall (in Brand Street) and the doors open at 7.30. Entry is £8 for adults and £4 for children under 14 with tickets available at the door, or in advance from 01582 733113 (day) / 724261 (eve). There's also a real ale bar, with a selection from the Potton Brewery (www.unicornceilidhs.org.uk).

Incidentally, there is uncertainty as to whether the Unicorn ceilidhs will have a venue after September as Hitchin council are putting the Town Hall into private management and they are unable to say whether the venue will be available for community bookings. This echoes the abject failure of the South Beds District Council to provide a similar undertaking for the new Dunstable Grove Theatre. They seem to have handed the new venue over to commercial promoters who have no inclination to fulfil the promises for a community arts venue made when the Queensway Hall was sold to Asda. As the new venue was financed by the sale of Queensway Hall, which it turn was paid for by the people of Dunstable who have every right to feel short changed by being locked out of the new venue.

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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 enq.uk.