

3/Jun/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Idiosyncratic Musical Fringe

Luton's "Brakin' Arts" fringe festival is back a second year with ten days of new music and art spread over four stages and three bars with more than 45 artists and theatre companies starting on Monday week (June 15). This veritable feast of music and other performance arts, coordinated by the Hat Factory Arts Centre in Bute St (Luton), aims to break barriers in performance, price and perception (and spelling apparently!). This year's music line-up features a wide range of styles ranging from acoustic anti-folk (**Amy and Jack**), through punk pop (**Kate is the Decoy** and **Saving Skylines**) to experimental post rock (**Spidermilk**).

'Brakin' Arts Festival '09' will have an exciting mix of UK and International artists - focusing on music, theatre, poetry, dance, circus and visual arts. It is an excellent opportunity to see emerging professional artists, sample experimental theatre work and view music from a variety of backgrounds and genres. The festival music programme kicks off on Monday week (June 15) with sets from singer / songwriter and guitarist **Craig Shields** and experimental folk four-piece **Spidermilk** (www.spidermilk.co.uk) who play an assortment of haunting post-rock influenced instrumentals, accompanied by live projections. On the following Friday you can the alternative acoustic music of **Amy and Jack** and the atmospheric rock 'n' roll, Indie, funk and psychedelia of the five piece outfit **Suns of Banditos** (www.myspace.com/sunsofbanditos).



To kick off the music there's a special pre-festival Gig Room showcase from PDM featuring **Bowfinger**, **Loz Jones**, **The Greatstatesmen** and **Tinker Jack** (www.pdmusic.com). If you're worried about taking a punt with all this new music then don't worry, the festival has a relaxed payment system requiring no advanced ticketing. Just turn up enjoy a performance (or otherwise) and pay what you think the gig is worth to you as you leave - whether it's 10p or £10. To see more information and the full line-up check out www.thehatfactory.org.

Meanwhile, it's busy in Dunstable this week with the next second round heat of the Dunstable Battle of the Bands (www.dunstablebob.co.uk) at The Nags Head and my band **enQ** (www.enq.org.uk) playing a mix of celtic and country rock at The White Swan tomorrow (Thursday). On Friday you can catch **Portly, Fat and Schider** are playing covers at the 4 Kings in High St South on Saturday. Gary the bass player tells me "It was a great gig last time and we would love to see all those people and more there the 6th".

On the recording side, I hear that Milton Keynes based blues rock guitarist **Ben Markus** has managed to nab a download agreement with a US company which means that his recent album ("Further On Down The Road...") is now available in digital format globally via Amazon and iTunes and other digital download sites. To celebrate and help promote the digital release, he's releasing a single of the old Sam and Dave number "Hold on" off the album to radio stations this week. You can check it out and download it from the web at www.tinyurl.com/markus-cd.



10/June/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Paul Hegley Plays Dunstable

On Friday you can hear up-and-coming singer / songwriter **Paul Hegley** down at the Four Kings Bar and Café in High St South, Dunstable. I met up with Paul when I went down to this dynamic new venue on Friday evening to see St Albans based Bluegrass and Country outfit - **Five & Dime**. Paul is remarkable in that he's a local lad who is keen to promote Dunstable when some people are content to slag it off at every opportunity. His music is a mix of his own songs as well as interpreting classic covers; check out his version of Mr Bo Jangles on YouTube (www.tinyurl.com/phegley). Apparently, he got his first crack at the bright lights helping his uncle, Luton's very own Poet Laureate - John Hegley – so maybe having a way with words, and a loyalty to his local patch, is in the Hegley blood. Anyway, Paul's set kicks off at 8:30pm and entry is free (www.myspace.com/paulhegley).



The King's music programme is pretty varied and highlights local talent with quite a range of live entertainment. The bands range from classic rock covers outfits such as **Portly Fat & Schneider**, through Blues and Jazz to Bluegrass and Country Rock over the entire weekend. On Friday, the **Five & Dime Band**, fronted by Eric Tilley (banjo) and Alan Hadwin (guitar), sang their way through an incredible range of songs Everley Brothers' style. The set included songs by the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Nanci Griffiths, Stephen Stills, U2, Johnny Cash and The Eagles. The high point of the evening for me was a great version of the Pink Floyd number "Dark Side of the Moon". You can hear them again at the Four Kings on Sunday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm (www.lemonrock.com/fiveanddime).



Friday was the first chance I'd had to check out the Four Kings since it had reopened under its new management. Chatting with one of the four Kings, owner David King, I found a music enthusiast who aims to attract back a more mature audience. To put it in David's own words, he wants to "appeal especially to the 'older teenagers' amongst us!" This family run business is operating from completely refurbished premises with a comfortable, intimate atmosphere and a good range of reasonably priced snacks and bar meals, so you can make a full night of it. The Four Kings is definitely a great addition to the nightlife in and around Dunstable, check out their website at www.fourkingsbar.co.uk for more information including a list of upcoming music nights.

Ryan from the Majik Music Group tells me that the next heat of the Dunstable Battle of the Bands is at Bar Chameleon in the centre of Dunstable tomorrow night (Thursday) featuring **The Nimblewits, In Remission, The Arbitors** and **God of Small Things**. See www.dunstablebob.co.uk for full details.

Callum Brown tells me that the second Parade alternative night will take place at the Hat Factory on Friday. The line features **Ice, Sea, Dead People** (progressive pop), **Sukie** (indie pop), **The Gaa Gaas** (psychedelic / punk) and **Demontré** (post punk / shoegaze) headlining. For more details, check them out on the web at www.myspace.com/paradepromotionsluton.

17/Jun/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Festival Season

The advent of summer weather heralds the start of the serious music festival season. It can be a busy time for both bands and punters all over the UK. Nearer to home, we have a crop of our own to keep us busy over the next couple of weeks.

Luton's Brakin' Arts Fringe Festival continues until the end of next week with a variety of music and arts events at the Hat Factory. Tonight you can see **Sound Journey**, a combined music and dance event by master percussionist **Adriano Adewale** with choreography by **Kate Flatt** while on Friday you can catch a mix of music and poetry with **Shiva** (indie / dance / punk), **Suns of Banditos** (rock'n'roll / indie / funk / psychedelic), **Rachel Amey** (poet), **John Pearson** (singer / poet) and **Amy and Jack2** (anti folk). You can pick up a daily festival pass from the reception at the Hat Factory Arts' Centre in Bute St, which not only gets you into the events but also gives a 10% discount on food at the PocoLoco café restaurant, plus drinks vouchers to spend at the festival bars. For a full programme go to www.thehatfactory.org and follow the "Brakin' Arts" link.



The following weekend you can catch this year's Togfest Music Festival at Bradwell Abbey in Milton Keynes with no less than four music stages of original bands playing just about every genre imaginable. This friendly family event is now in its eleventh year and attracts both bands and audiences from across the UK and beyond. This year's line-up includes something to please every musical taste; from rock to pop, classical strings to a bit of original trance / drum-n-bass / electronica plus indie, blues, progressive rock, Latin rhythms, traditional and contemporary folk and soul.

Togfest also offers free children's entertainment, a range of festival traders, a good choice of food vendors and two bars, including real ale. There are also free music workshops that include Inta-Africa Drums, Didgeridoo, Beatbox and Children's Drama. Ticket sales are strictly limited to 2,000 people and cost £10 (Friday), £15 (Saturday), £24 (weekend) with under 12's from £2, £8 camping (advance only) and are available on-line, or from Talkin' Headz, Rock Hard, Hobgoblin or Hollywood music shops. For further information, check out www.togfest.org or phone 01908 311557.

The final for the Dunstable Battle of the Bands will be on August 1st at the Grove Theatre and the bands that have qualified so far are **Dirty Money**, **Dirty Joker Music** and **Inremission**. There are still three more acts to get through the second round of heats so get along to Bar Chameleon next Thursday (June 25) to see **Firetone**, **Jonny Fever**, **Liliths Army** and **She Fell Victim** fight it out. The winning band will also get a slot on the main stage at the Dunstable Music Festival in August along with **Sarah Doe and Jonny Fever**, **enQ** and **Doctor and the Medics**. The tickets, which cost £10, went on sale yesterday and are available from The Grove and online via www.dunstablebob.co.uk and www.grovetheatre.co.uk.

24/June/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Dunstable Rocks

The Dunstable music scene has really taking off recently with town centre venues putting on gigs. The great thing about it is there is a range of styles to appeal to all age groups. Looking at the coming week you can hear an acoustic music session to the best of local new rock and metal talent as well as some country and retro 60's and 70's music.

Tomorrow night you can catch the last of the round two heats of the Dunstable Battle of the Bands competition at Bar Chameleon in the centre of town. The night will feature **She Fell Victim** (screamo / ambient), **Jonny Fever** (acoustic / indie), **Firetone** (Alternative / Experimental / Rock) and **Liliths Army** (rock). The music kicks off at 8:30pm and entry is free with the audience having a chance to vote for the band that gets through to the next round. The first of the round three heats will take place the following Thursday (July 2) at the Four Kings.

If you want something a little quieter, there's a music session at the White Swan in High St South. It's a friendly acoustic music session/jam with no rules as to genre. So if you're into playing folk, blues, tex-mex, cajun, celtic, singer / songwriter, pop or jazz bring you instrument down. Just come along, have some fun, and meet up with other local musicians in a friendly atmosphere. Entry is free, with musicians getting a free drink. If you don't want to play, just come down and listen to some laid back music in one of Dunstable's oldest family run pubs.

On Friday you can dust off your flairs and floppy hat when the **The Huggy Flares** play down at the Four Kings in High St South. The five piece band play a mix of the hits from the 60's and 70's including Atlantic Soul, Motown, Disco and Funk along with more recent material from Amy Winehouse and Duffy. The music kicks off at 8pm and entry is £2 with tickets available in advance from the venue's website (www.fourkingsbar.co.uk) or by popping into the venue during the week. You can find out more about the band at www.huggyflares.com.

On Saturday you can hear some new country and country rock when the **Hoedown Band** appear at the Wheatsheaf in High St North. The five piece band features the amazing voice of **Martyna Hodges** singing hits from the likes of the Dixie Chicks, Carrie Underwood and the Wreckers along with other favourite country hits. Mosey on down to www.hoedownband.com to find out more about the band. The music kicks off at 8:30pm and entry is free.

Meanwhile, over in Legrave on Saturday, you can catch the fourth Luton Youth Festival at St Luke's Church. There will be an outdoor rock stage with seven hours of local bands ranging from bouncy pop to emo and metal as well as a world music tent and a Community Stage showcasing everything from gospel to street dance as well a short plays, poems and reggae. It's a family fun day so there will be lots of activities for children as well. See www.lywag.org.uk for full details.

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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 search-able archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com> and on MySpace at [lutonscene](http://lutonscene.com).



