

5/Aug/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Stop Press- Battle of the Bands Winners!

As the dust settles on this year's Dunstable Battle of the Bands, the winner emerges as the local melodic hardcore progressive metal outfit **In Remission**. They literally leaped into the limelight at the Grove Theatre on Saturday to snatch the top prize with a truly animated performance complete with band members jumping off the drums with the judges commenting, "so much energy and an incredibly tight performance". You can catch them on BBC Introducing... on Friday (BBC 3 Counties Radio at 7pm) for a full interview and you will get a chance to hear one of their tracks.



Second place went to **Jonny Fever** (with a little help from **Sarah Doe**) who won the vote of the judges with his personable approach and originality. Third place went to **Dirty Joker Music** who kicked off with a stunning start, with the drummer playing a solo groove, then each band member joining in one at a time followed by the vocalist bounding onto the stage to wild applause from the crowd. Finally, the 'Crowd Vote' went to **Dirty Money** whose powerful music won over the crowd with an awesome sound and true rock vibe.

The winning bands get a selection of prizes designed to help their development with either some kind of promotion or musical equipment. This approach to the prizes helps the Dunstable Battle of the Bands stand apart from the great mass of competitions of this type, which are often fairly cynical exercises to either make money from aspiring musicians, or bring in cash to a lazy, or failing venues. The goodwill and enthusiasm of the bands, the fans, the venues and the **Majick Music Group**, who organised this glorious exercise in live music, have been evident throughout the entire exercise.

The competition also shows how the Grove Theatre can take an active part in the local live music scene. What an amazing place to hold the final, and what great experience for the bands to play in a fully professional venue. Ryan from Majick tells me he'd like to thank everyone who helped out in any way and a big thank you to the Central Bedfordshire Council, The Grove Theatre, the Drax lighting company and all the sponsors. My opinion is that in the end the winners have been all the participants and the town centre of Dunstable itself, which has had a shot in the arm from the music fans who have rediscovered the diversity of the town's music venues. Rock on Dunstable!

Looking forward to Friday, you can catch **Paul Hegley** and his band (featuring drummer Gary Roberts) at the Four Kings Bar and Café (High Street South, Dunstable). Paul will be playing and singing some of his own compositions as well as playing some classic covers in his own inimitable style. The evening will also feature Ashley Morton on acoustic guitar. Entry is free and you can get more information from the venue, by calling 07709779196, emailing info@fourkingsbar.co.uk or by checking out the website at www.fourkingsbar.co.uk.

12/Aug/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Luton's feast of Festivals

From noon on Saturday you can catch a day of free unsigned music as part of the annual Luton Summer Festival at St Georges Square. The event is hosted by the BBC Introducing team and features **The Amigos, The Arrows, The Broadcast, Craig Shields, Dee Nyoni, Kilty Take, Loz Jones, Man Like Me, New Groove Formation, Phoenixdown** and **Pirate Radio**. This is the third year that Luton Borough Council has invited 'BBC Introducing...' to put on a day of unsigned music. According to presenter Gareth Lloyd, "the headline band Man Like Me are an astounding electro-pop trio, who are taking the UK music scene by storm".



Gareth goes on to say that they are being "hailed as one of the best damn live acts you'll see today" with a quirky sound forged from indie, rave, grime, electro, ska, hip hop and funk. The band are being touted as one of the most exciting new crossover acts in the UK today with gigs at Madstock (supporting Madness), Glastonbury, Bestival and On The Rocks Festival in Corsica. Be sure to check them out on Saturday, more details at the BBC website at www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties/introducing.

Next weekend you can catch some really 'off the wall' music in the heart of Luton when the second annual Dislocation Festival takes place on August 21/22. The festival is hosted by The School of Unthink and is an exploration of experimental music and media. The festival venue is The Old Shop in George Street (Luton), a dedicated arts space run by the organisers of Filmstock. Friday's programme is an afternoon and evening of short and feature films and live soundtracks, while Saturday is an all-day musical marathon featuring local and not-so-local acts.

The School of Unthink are a rag tag collection of musicians and filmmakers from in and around Luton. whose aim "is to try and acquaint people with different kinds of film and music that are rarely, if ever, exhibited in the Luton area". Organiser Robin Van Rijn tells me that idea is to show "film and music that may sometimes seem inaccessible but are in fact vibrant, cutting edge and exciting". Robin goes on to say that "We see the festival as an in-road to experimental film and music; it's programmed to be accessible and fun, not in any way pretentious and still new and unusual."

On Saturday, the music programme features 13 acts over 12 hours so there is quite a bit of choice available. The music ranges from bands such as the pounding and grainy **Black Carrot** (21:35) and the banshee-like fast punk rock of **Wartgore Hellsnicker** (15:25) to the more ambient and experimental vibes of **Same Actor** (20:30) **Temperatures** (19:35), **Nitkowski** (16:20), **N,N Minus** (14:30), **Cigars of the Pharaoh** (13:45) and **Coldstream** (12:15) amongst others. You can find the full line-up and links to the artists' web and MySpace pages on the 'ARTISTS & MUSIC LINE UP' page on the festival website at www.dislocation-festival.co.uk.

19/Aug/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Almost a Decade of Rockin' Dunstable

Only just over week to this year's Dunstable Music Festival held at The Grove Theatre and Grove House Gardens over the bank holiday weekend. The music kicks off on Friday night at the Grove Theatre with **T.Rextasy**, the 'official' tribute to T.Rex and Marc Bolan as the rights owner of all Marc Bolan's material sanctions the band. According to their blurb their lead singer and lead guitarist (Danielz) has an uncanny resemblance to the late Mark Bolan and that **T.Rextasy** perform "a powerful and mesmerising presentation of Marc's rock and pop anthems".

Most of Bolan's records were produced by the legendary Toni Visconti who was one of the major influences on the sound of the 70's. In his autobiography "Bowie, Bolan and the Brooklyn Boy", he gives an insight into the history and mindset of Marc Bolan and the pressures that led to his unfortunately early demise. The book is available on Amazon if you want to check it out (<http://tinyurl.com/TonyV>). Next Friday's concert starts at 7:30pm and tickets cost £12 or £15 (concessions available), call the Grove Theatre Box Office on 01582 602080 or visit www.grovetheatre.co.uk for more information.

On Saturday (Aug 29) there is a free outdoor concert in Grove House Gardens compared by **Rick Christian** with headliners **Doctor and the Medics** supported by **enQ**, **In Remission** and **Sarah Doe** and **Jonny Fever**. Clive Jackson (The Doctor) originally put the **Doctor and the Medics** together when he teamed up with guitarist Steve McGuire and drummer Steve Ritchie to produce a massive International hit with a cover of Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky" back in 1986. The band is renowned for its over-the-top, glam-rock glam rock performances.



Opening the show will be local acoustic duo **Sarah Doe** and **Jonny Fever** who have recently released their first EP. Second on the bill is **In Remission** who secured the top slot at this year's Dunstable Battle of the Bands with an incredibly energetic performance at the final a couple of weeks ago. My band **enQ** will be playing a rocky set with some special guests to celebrate opening the original festival back in 2001. As usual, Rick Christian will be introducing the bands and playing short acoustic sets during the changeovers.

Sunday afternoon will see a change of mood when you can hear the big band sounds of **The String of Pearls** and the mellow jazz of **Sheela Munro Jazz Band**. This is an ideal chance to chill out and have a picnic in Grove House Gardens whilst listening to the music. The event kicks off at 3pm and is free. The events are organized by Dunstable Town Council and show their commitment to keeping the town center alive.

Don't forget that this weekend you can catch some really 'off the wall' music in the heart of Luton when the second annual Dislocation Festival takes place at The Old Shop in George Street (Luton). See the 'ARTISTS & MUSIC LINE UP' page on the festival website at www.dislocation-festival.co.uk for full information.

26/Aug/2009 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Live music up on the Downs

Dunstable is definitely the place to be this weekend with a weekend full of live music starting up on the Dunstable Downs and ending up on Sunday afternoon with live jazz in Grove House Gardens.

The music kicks off just after midday on Friday with when **Alex Holmes** opens a bill of unsigned local music hosted by the BBC Introducing team as part of a weeklong festival of food events. The rest of the programme features **Paul Tiger Taylor** (13:15), **David Lloyd** (14:00), **Jessie Grace** (14:45), **Tinker Jack** (15:30), **Cass Lowe** (16:15), **The Rivalries** (17:00), **Swing Youth** (17:45), **Beta Boy** (18:30), **Eassay Like Nephew** (19:15), **Me And The Beast** (19:55), **Scholars** (20:45) and finishing of with **Exit Avenue** (21:30). There will be a fully licensed bar and hog roast and 'BBC Introducing...' will be broadcasting live from the festival. The event is free, see <http://tinyurl.com/nymb2o> for more information.



Meanwhile down in the town you can catch the retro sounds of **T-Rextasy** when they play perform “a powerful and mesmerising presentation of Marc Bolan's rock and pop anthems” down at the Grove Theatre in Dunstable. Call the Box Office on 01582 602080 or visit www.grovetheatre.co.uk for more information.

On Saturday evening there's the free outdoor concert in Grove House Gardens compared by **Rick Christian** with headliners **Doctor and the Medics** supported by **enQ**, **In Remission** and **Sarah Doe** and **Jonny Fever**. While on Sunday afternoon, you can catch the big band sounds of **The String of Pearls** and the mellow jazz of the **Sheela Munro Jazz Band**. Both these events are free.

Looking ahead, next week is the first dance in the new series of Chiltern Ceilidhs at that will feature the nationally known caller **Fee Lock**. There will be live music from the house band made up of **Mark 'madfiddler' Knight** (Tricks upon Travellers, K-Passa, Blue Horses) on electric violin, **Tom Fairbairn** (Whapweasel, Boka Halat) on bass, **Sam McEvoy** (Nordic Tone) on drums and electronic percussion and myself on electric guitar and guitar synthesiser. The event kicks off at 8pm and takes place at St Mary's Social Club in West St Dunstable. See www.chilternceilidhs.info for more information.

If you really care about live music and want to help to change the law that makes it a criminal offence to play without a licence then check out the petition on the Prime Minister's website. Phil Little of Live Music Forum has called on the Prime Minister to implement new entertainment licensing exemptions for small gigs. The change is supported by parliament's Culture, Media and Sport Committee and is the core of a private member's bill from the Lib-Dems. If implemented, this would take most small gigs (i.e. with audiences up to 200) from under the dead hand of local bureaucracy. Last time I checked there were over 7,000 signatures and the petition was hovering just outside the top twenty of over 5,000 active petitions after just four weeks. To make your voice heard go to <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/livemusicevents>.

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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> and on MySpace at [lutonscene](http://lutonscene.com).