

The New Roxette

www.theNewRoxette.com

ISSUE FOUR – MARCH 2009



Old Country Union
The Boy Least Likely To
Michael Lee
John Zealey

Iggy Pop
Dear Roxette
News, Reviews & Interviews
...and so much more!

Editor: Stuart Robb
Sub Editor: Judy Pearce
Sub Editor: Rick Pearce
Photographer: Terry Lee
Designer: Mike Payne
Website: Anthony
O'Sullivan
Head of Sales: Dennis Hall

Contributors

Michael O'Connor
Richard Carr
Bob Cronin
Leon Gordon
Darryll McConnell
Michele Pethers
John Zealey

**AND A
VERY SPECIAL
'THANK YOU'
TO AVAC**

Welcome to The New Roxette

WELCOME once again to the latest issue of **The New Roxette**.

I hope you're still enjoying this magazine, and despite the heavy snow of last month, hope you still found time to venture out and pick up a copy!

If you did happen to miss last month's issue, then you will have missed exclusive interviews with **Kajagoogoo** – who exclusively announced to **The New Roxette** they will be headlining this summer's 'Hobble on the Cobbles' (free) Music Festival; plus interviews with **Slashed Seat Affair**, **TR8R** and **The Madame Project**!

Anyway – fear not.... All the magazines are now online on the Official **The New Roxette** website: **www.theNewRoxette.com**

Well, since we wrote last month, the **Aylesbury Festival** (11 & 12 July), has now been confirmed.

This will feature a number of school/college bands on the Saturday, and a local music showcase, (a 'mini Hobble' if you will) on the Sunday.

Already, bands have been queuing up to perform at this event, so it really will be a fantastic weekend for local live music.

If you are in a school/college band yourself, and are interested in performing as part of the Aylesbury Festival – drop us a line here at **The New Roxette**, and tell us about your band, which school you're from, and maybe, just maybe... you'll get the chance to play on the main stage at this event!

More news on that, and Hobble on the Cobbles next month...

Anyway, we hope you all have a fantastic month. Please keep sending in your letters and comments, and let us know what you think about **The New Roxette**, (good and bad). Also, keep those 'fan letters' coming in for Keith – who's becoming somewhat of a local celebrity! We will pass them all on to him!

So, until next month ...

The New Roxette NEWS ROUND UP

Claire Batchelor's debut EP "WISH" has been receiving rave reviews and has been flying off the shelf since its release last month... If you haven't already picked up a copy of this limited edition EP, it's available on iTunes, and via Jam Central Records: **www.jamcentralrecords.com**

This month's "Fan Of The Month" – **John Zealey** has just released a new album called "Homing Device". It's self produced, and recorded at his home studio in Aylesbury. The album is available for FREE locally, from the Oaks Cafe on Elm Farm (Aylesbury), and is also available on iTunes. More details are available from his website **www.zealey.co.uk**
60% of generated income goes to Thembalitsha UK, a charity working with orphans with HIV AIDS in South Africa.

Originally from Wendover, **The Boy Least Likely To** release their second album on 9 March, "The Law Of The Playground".



Red Nose Day – 13 March 2009. Have fun!!!

23 March 2009 sees the release of Hannah Stobart's, and Marillion-guitarist Steve Rothery's 'other band' **The Wishing Tree**, with their new album entitled "Ostara". The album will be exclusively released through Racket Records, and is currently available for pre-order from: **Marillion.com**

NEW RELEASES

U2	– "No Line On The Horizon"	– 02 March 2009
Annie Lennox	– "The Annie Lennox Collection"	– 09 March 2009
Chris Cornell	– "Scream"	– 09 March 2009
Kelly Clarkson	– "All I Ever Wanted"	– 09 March 2009
Starsailor	– "All The Plans"	– 09 March 2009
The Boy Least Likely To	– "The Law Of The Playground"	– 09 March 2009
Lunic	– "Love Thief"	– 14 March 2009
Neil Young	– "Folk In The Road"	– 23 March 2009
Pet Shop Boys	– "Yes"	– 23 March 2009
The Wishing Tree	– "Ostara"	– 23 March 2009

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Logos for Jam Central Records, Amazon.co.uk, HMV.co.uk, iTunes, and CODE are present.

The Boy Least Likely To

We're here with The Boy Least Likely To, lyricist and songwriter Jof Owen, and composer/multi-instrumentalist Pete Hobbs.

Thanks for chatting to The New Roxette guys ...

You've already had success in the UK, and USA, and have toured with the likes of James Blunt, and Razorlight... but some of our readers may recognise and remember you, as you're originally from 'up the road' in Wendover!

What have been some of the biggest highlights so far, since you formed TBLT?

I remember when Steve Lamacq played our first single on his radio show, after we'd sent him a copy with a hand written note. It was so exciting. If that had been all that had ever happened I would have still been happy. There have been so many highlights I can't list them all... Going on tour in America, landing in Boston and being on the front page of the Daily newspapers. Landing in New York and being photographed for Rolling Stone. Playing Wembley, and all the other places we've been able to play. I suppose we started the band because we wanted to make records and that was all we really cared about. When we

started I never imagined us playing live, so to have done as many shows as we have still seems weird to me, but in a nice way!

Your latest (second) album is released on 9th March 2009, which is called "The Law Of The Playground". What is the inspiration and story behind this album?

Musically it's still a very happy record. It bounces around and bobs along like the last one did. We moved our recording equipment out of the bedroom that we recorded the first album in and into a studio a few miles down the road. We brought in a few new instruments to compliment the banjos, recorders and glockenspiels of the first album.

There's a brass section courtesy of the Grimethorpe Colliery Band for example, and then even when we were recording the more familiar instruments we still tried to record them in different ways, and then lyrically I think it's quite a sad angry record. **It's an album about what happens when all your dreams come true, and it isn't how you thought it would be.**

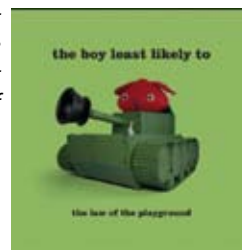
I suppose there are themes of disillusionment and feelings like you don't fit in, that run throughout the album. It's kind of about coming to terms with the compromises and the failures that are likely to happen in everyone's lives, but it's also like a celebration of those failures too.

Do you have a favourite track from the album, and please tell us about the new Double-A-side you're releasing.

I'm so excited about all the songs on the record and I can't wait for people to hear them, but if I had to pick one, then there's a song called 'The Boy With Two Hearts' that I'm really proud of. We recorded all the brass parts with the Grimethorpe Colliery Band. I remember the demo was quite mournful in a really sweet way and I ended up writing relatively simple words for it. It sounds quite sad and Christmassy, and it reminds me of the theme tune to the Flumps, but I don't expect anyone else will think that.

The new Double-A side has 'Every Goliath Has Its David' on one side and 'A Balloon On A Broken String' on the other. We liked them both as much as each other and so it's a Double-A side! It has two videos and everything! Both of the songs are quite bouncy indie pop-songs, one of them is just me imagining what it would be like to be a balloon and then squeezing that metaphor dry, and the other song is a song about fighting – but then most of our songs are!

For the FULL interview, visit the Official Website: www.theNewRoxette.com



Dear Roxette

Dear Roxette

Last year we attended some great gigs at The King's Head in Aylesbury – do you know what the programme is for this summer?

We especially loved Slashed Seat Affair, Pause and Fluid Lines!! They were such fantastic gigs as the setting was brilliant, not to mention the great beer and food.

Cheers, Jez

A: Hi Jez, many thanks for your note. Unfortunately, at the present time, there aren't any plans to run the 'Showcase' events at The King's Head this summer. If another venue becomes available, we'll announce it first in The New Roxette.

Dear Roxette

I am 15 years old and like most of my mates like going to see live bands, but in Aylesbury this is not very easy as most of the local pubs only allow people over 18 or 21 to attend. Is there a venue in Aylesbury, apart from the Civic Centre, which caters for under 18's?

Jack

A: Hi Jack – Unfortunately (as far as we're aware) all the venues in Aylesbury have age restrictions. We do know that The Blues Loft at The Nags Head (High Wycombe) allows under 16's as long as they are accompanied by an adult. Also The Carling Academy in Oxford allow 14+ in, again accompanied by an adult. It is something we at The New

Roxette are looking into, and would like to see more local venues cater for music lovers of all ages. Also Limelight Theatre have some great gigs coming up, and Southcourt Studios have gigs on occasion but if we hear of anything else, we'll let you know!

Dear Roxette

We heard last year that the Civic Centre was closing down in February this year, and this then got moved to June – do you know when the Civic is actually closing....Or will it stay open until the new Theatre opens?

Laura x

A: Hi Laura. At present The Civic Centre is due to close on 30th June 2009. If this is further extended we'll let you know as soon as we know!

Great to see the Roxette back, it's a timely reminder to those of us that can remember when Aylesbury Friars was a major hub to the music scene back in the day...

Cheers, Badger

Think the mag looks great and a nice combination of forward and backward looking. It looks very promising!

Mike Trotman

Thanks for dropping a copy through my door. It looks like the magazine is improving with every issue.

David Stopps

Just got the New Roxette... it's great!

All the best with it.

Pete Frame

The New Roxette looks excellent, and great to read Kris Needs' run down in the previous issues, looking forward to future episodes!

Cheers, Chris France

It arrived on Saturday! Thanks.

Interesting, and brought back a few memories.

Robin Pike

Dear Roxette

Just happened to stumble upon the "Roxette" web page. Very nice! I've still got some of the original "Roxette" papers and "Friars" flyer's from them halcyon days of Aylesbury. I would be grateful if you could send me a copy, is it available via subscription?

... I was only talking with my brother-in-law the other week regarding Friars, and we both came to the same conclusion. It's only now that we are a lot older do we realise how lucky we were. At the time we just took it for granted, great days, lovely memories, can't recall any trouble and I got in to Greenslade!

Best regards, Alan Keinch

A: Many thanks Alan. At present The New Roxette is available for FREE online, and in numerous music shops, cafes, recording studios and music venues across Buckinghamshire. It may eventually go the subscription route ... but certainly not yet!



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The New Roxette chats to Frank and the guys from Old Country Union

Starting out with "winsome folkies" *Tamburlaine* and a constant presence on the local scene from then through to acoustic Beatles tribute band *Bigger Than Jesus*, **Frank Walsh** is something of a legend. These days he can be found fronting *Old Country Union* with Geof (Guitar/Vocals), Simon (Bass/Vocals) and Richie (Drums/Vocals).

Braving snow and general inclement weather Frank, Geof and Richie met **The New Roxette** in an Aylesbury bar to discuss the past, present and future.

TNR: As a Cover Star on Issue Two of The Aylesbury Roxette in 1976, how does it feel to be back?

F: *Pretty weird actually, really odd. Was it 1976 – 33 years ago! It's frightening, that's exactly how it feels. Oh well, never mind!*

TNR: As a mainstay of the local music scene were you involved in the Thursday night gigs at The Bell – (at that time?).

F: *I'm sure we did the first one. We definitely played at The Bell, The King's Head, the John Hampden (now Mendozas) and The*

Britannia. You could play every night of the week in a different pub in those days. It was fantastic – that's what we're trying to get back to now.

TNR: Do you see any similarities between the live music scene in Aylesbury back then and now?

F: *It's heading that way again isn't it? A lot of the youngsters are getting into live music now. A lot of people at our gigs are 18 – 21. When we played at Pendley Court Theatre, all the youngsters there said "Great, the band's awesome!" "Fantastic!" – So yeah, it's exactly the same really, just in a different time.*



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TNR: What are your current plans – gigs, recording...?

F: I'm not all that keen on recording really, we all love playing live, - gigging is the best. We've got a huge selection of songs from America, Doobie Brothers, Steve Miller, The Eagles. We've got a different edge to everybody else. We're a covers band but we're not a tribute band. We'll do any artist you like, Neil Young, Steve Earle, whatever! But we do still write our own stuff.

F: We have thought of doing an album but it's finding the time. The main thing is to have a really good gigging summer. We're hoping to get the MAD Festival at Waddesdon. We do an Open Mic Night at The Lion in Waddesdon on Thursdays and people down there work at the Manor and are trying to get us on the bill, which would be great!

TNR: We'd be keen to see you playing at Hobble on the Cobbles this summer.

F: I think we are, aren't we? That'll be great. We're really looking forward to it.

TNR: Who inspired you to start out as a singer and to pick up a guitar, drums etc?

F: The Beatles – I've got an older brother. He had all the Beatles albums, he took me to see 'Hard Day's Night' and they did all those harmonies and they did the guitar bit as well and I thought that looks easy, I'll have a go at that. How wrong can you be! My brother was in the RAF and he got posted so he gave me his guitar and said "here's the guitar you can learn how to play it", so I did.

It's not just The Beatles, anything with good songs, good melodies, anything like that I love. Then I went on to The Eagles, if it's a good song I like it. So that's me, The Beatles and The Beach Boys.

G: Friars. That's what started me off musically. I went there when I was about 13 I think.

TNR: Any bands in particular?

G: My idol vocally was always Roger Chapman, I just thought he had great vocals.

TNR: What was the first band you saw at Friars?

G: Blodwyn Pig or Vinegar Joe, one of those. I missed Bowie, I'm afraid.

F: You could see all the big bands there. No need to go to Wembley – it was right there in your own town.

F: What we wanted to do was to be in a band playing songs with no effects, no backing tapes, just two acoustic guitars, bass and drums and four part harmonies and we thought if we can't do it with that, we can't do it at all. Our point is it's that and nothing else. Oh and harmonicas. Ritchie plays harmonica as well. The whole point is to keep it as simple as possible, no frills and it's just really worked. Because we've developed our act – we know our limitations when it comes to a song, if we can't do it, we can't do it. If we can do it, we do it brilliantly, without sounding arrogant, but they come out really well and that's the whole point of it to play (a) great songs and (b) play them as best we can.

F: We create our own magic because we are loving what we do. You can't help but affect the audience, you play songs by your heroes so you want to do them justice. There's nothing more pleasurable than doing that.

TNR: Do you play any brand new stuff?

F: Yeah, well, we do some Red Hot Chilli Peppers, we also do 'Easy' by The Commodores, but in our own way. We do 'Ain't No Sunshine' by Bill Withers, some Kings of Leon. Right back to Dylan, Eagles, The Doobie Brothers, Steve Miller. We want to do 'Don't Fear the Reaper' by Blue Oyster Cult next.

F: ... Fantastic song – there's cowbell all the way through that. Ritchie has cowbell fans! We're just in the middle of doing this tape from Pendley Court Theatre and hope to have a DVD finished soon.

We're also headlining there on the 21st March – it's an evening of local talent. Although we are headlining, there are loads of other good local bands on as well and some of them are young bands. It's a great little theatre and the lighting's amazing. The crew there work really hard and are just great people ...

TNR: Well, thanks so much for chatting to us guys. See you on the 21st March!

With the interview at an end we make our way out into the arctic wastes of Olde Aylesbury and head home, warmed by the thought of summer gigs to come...

**For the FULL interview visit the
Official Website:
www.theNewRoxette.com**

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Reviews

The Response Collective *Dark Is The Light*

Strange other worldly sounds from the The Response Collective. Dominated by floating dreamlike keyboard driven soundscapes, this recording has an added aura of mystery in its announcement that "This album contains no explicit lyrics". Vocals are buried deep in the mix, not exactly like The Cocteau Twins as these are real lyrics rather than an invented language but as far as lazy comparisons go this gives a hint of direction.

Russell Leak does cool misty vocals and his guitar runs from strident to subtly melodic and back while Selina Gibson provides deep solid bass foundations and ethereal vocals as well as the aforementioned keyboards. Scratchy turntableisms are provided by Fireproof Scratch Duck.

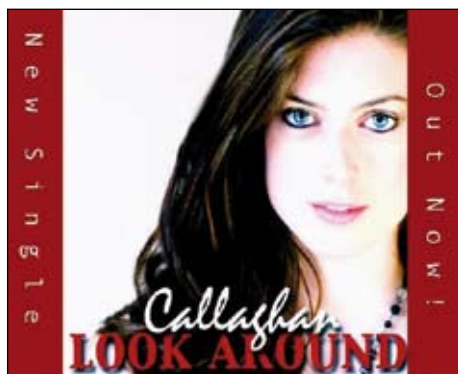
Graham Pushed It has a driving bass, insistent guitar and lovely submerged vocals with some snarly interjections accompanied by staccato scratching. There are also some nice choral bits by The Response Collective Choir.

Home combines piano with electric percussion and a lyric taken from TS Eliot.

This excellent *almost* instrumental album carries impressions of huge landscapes somewhere south of cold Celtic mists but well north of Dali's *Outskirts Of Paranoia*.

Anyone with a sense of adventure would be well advised to cast off and explore here. www.myspace.com/theresponsecollective

Callaghan *Nothing You Say*



Gentle country rock from Callaghan with a soft, almost melancholy vibe.

Tasteful, restrained instrumentation and arrangements run all the way through this EP with sensitive country inflected female vocals carrying the songs.

It Was Meant To Be has a piano and acoustic guitar backing nicely harmonised vocals while *Nothing You Say* carries a more moody full band feel.

Callaghan's EP has a quiet, reflective quality about it which suggests long summer days and nights. Altogether a pleasant accompaniment to life's quieter moments.

www.callaghaninfo.com

The New Roxette chats to Crash Records on their plans for 2009

Crash Records had a busy year in 2008, but looks like 2009 is going to be even more hectic, with some exciting new bands and artists joining the roster, tours, more radio play, new releases and magazine reviews.

New signings to the label are young band **Isaacs Aircraft**, who will be releasing their debut EP in April, a great band with a fresh sound, already getting airplay on BBC 6 Introducing, and also **The Lights** who are a female fronted electro/experimental band with a great new single.

Bucks based band **Dr Slaggleberry** (techmetal/progressive/experimental) are presently writing and recording their album due for release in the summer on Crash Records. 2008 saw two EP releases which gained outstanding reviews and press coverage.

Pop punk band **The Following Announcement** from Bristol, will be releasing their EP in the summer, following on from their album release and tour in 2008.

Indie, Brit-pop band **Modern Cliches** from Bicester will be releasing their follow-up EP in April and single during the summer of 2009, following on from their very successful EP "*Falseness and Fairytales*" released last year.

And now for something new for the label, we will be releasing a great trance/dance single by High Wycombe Artist **Joz and DJ Marcus** remixer.

Check out more about the label at www.crash-records.co.uk

"Thanks to Jam Central and The New Roxette for helping to keep a vibrant music scene in Aylesbury and the surrounding areas".

Michele – Crash Records

Music Fan of the Month – John Zealey



What was your first gig?

The first proper one I can remember was The Human League at Friars '81. I loved the previous incarnation (still play 'Travelogue' & 'Reproduction' now) but tolerated the new line-up with the girls! 'Don't You Want Me' has to be one of the greatest singles of all time.

Have you looked at the Friars website?

Yes. – Man, we had it good! Thomas Dolby at Friars is still one my favourite all-timers.

Were you a regular at the Aylesbury showcase gigs last year?

I was part of them, and really pleased to be so! I'm hoping more regular music events like that happen this year.

What have been your recent musical highlights?

Elbow at the Zodiac, Oxford, last year. Going to see Elbow is like going to Church! (I mean that in a good way). I'm seeing them again in March, sadly in a bigger venue!

What do you think of Hobbles On The Cobbles?

I'm thoroughly impressed by the whole idea. I've missed them all so far due to bad holiday planning but I hope to get along this year. I did the video advert for the celebratory beer last year.

Who would be your dream headliner?

If it didn't have to be local, I'd like to see Peter Gabriel come and get another 'Friars ankle'! A local band called 'This Is Freedom' would be thoroughly amusing. I love 'Lionsex' too, proper rock n' roll, and because I have an anarchistic streak, 'The Alpha Males'. I'd love to see the crowd reaction.

Any comments on the live music scene in Aylesbury?

A dedicated, accessible music venue is needed. There are some really good bands & artists, young and old, and it would be good to have somewhere to mix them up. The thing that I miss about Friars (and the following club, The Lair) was the really mixed audience. Live music is a good way to love your town. The more the better.

Where's Keith? Have you seen this man ... ?



Photo by April Blacher

Well, say hello to Keith!

If you see Keith in any pubs or music venues around town, (buy him a drink) and get your photograph taken with him.

Email the photo with the date/location of sighting to us at 'Where's Keith' – and email to: office@AylesburyShowcase.co.uk and if we publish it you will be the lucky recipient of a free CD, AND of course you'll be featured in **The New Roxette** as well.

What have you got to lose?
Stalkers and Crazy Women Welcome!

by Bob Cronin

The winter is slowly leaving and festival season is approaching in addition to our local venues spotlighting local and touring talent.

One of the first Jazz festivals of the year to put into a diary is the **Oxford Jazz Festival** (9-12 April) over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend. International artists Ian Shaw, Julian Siegel and Gwyneth Herbert are amongst all the performing artists within the fourteen venues. Participants of the festival will get an opportunity to hear local star Sophie Garner (Perrier Jazz Award – Jazz Vocalist Of The Year) and the Blake's Heaven Big Band featuring local lead trumpet player Paul Gardner and trombonist Bob Cronin. There is also a jam session for those musicians that want to take part.

For more information go to:
www.oxfordjazzfestival.com

Jumping to the summer, the Aylesbury Town Partnership are to host a **Jazz Festival in Kingsbury** on the 26th of July. As part of the multitude of music events provided by the partnership and following the Aylesbury Festival;

anyone planning to visit the town centre should bring a lounge chair and chill-out in the square for these daytime events.

Mendoza Cafe Bar has continued to be a social nightspot in Aylesbury. This month features: Grapevine Blues (5th), Three Bar Fire (12th), the return of Oktober (19th) and another appearance by James Manders and his band (26th). Friday and Saturday's warm-up sessions before the dancing is a highlight of the week and Felix Ruiz has become a regular musician playing piano to help you start your night off.

A highlight of all the different styles of music *The Stables* in Milton Keynes from the world of Jazz is the MOBO Best Jazz Act in 2007 Soweto Kinch Quartet (10th) who is become a popular artist in the circles evolving the Urban and Hip-hop sounds. Marlene VerPlanck (3rd), The TG Collective (13th) and Terry Lightfoot's Jazzmen (15th) are more outstanding artists to visit this special venue.

For those that enjoy New Orleans Traditional Jazz can go to Beaconsfield which has a weekly Jazz night featuring some the hottest bands hosted by the Amersham Jazz Club: www.amershamjazzclub.co.uk

Looking back at Friars ...

IGGY POP

MARCH 1977

Iggy Pop made his first Friars appearance in March 1977. Remarkably the gig was not sold out and was notable for a heavy media presence as it was his first show in three years and the return to Aylesbury of David Bowie, five years after his legendary Ziggy gig of 1972. The tour was to promote *The Idiot* which had been created in Berlin with Bowie.

This really was something of a memory fest, even in the bar before showtime. I recall sitting next to NME's Mick Farren and Nick Kent in drape jackets with huge eagles embroidered on the back. Also in the crowd was Johnny Thunders plus Heartbreakers lurking round the bar with The Damned hanging out in the background. Not forgetting Captain Sensible's girlfriend wrestling with a security bloke trying to prevent her taking a drink into the hall, with most of said drink ending up on security bloke while she fled clutching the dregs.

The bar was full of exotic, punky characters, some familiar some soon to be so, with not that many locals in sight.

Support was by the rather dodgy Vibrators (punk-lite anyone?). They may or may not have played *We Vibrate*, or the Stooges' 1969 or 1970, but it's unlikely that anyone cared anyway.

Iggy, not at all like the drug damaged casualty of past reputation, was magnificent. Wiry, twitchy and full of primal energy, his performance matched his physique. *Sister Midnight* came across as ominously as one could imagine or wish for and the old Stooges songs were delivered with style. Then there was Bowie sitting stage left behind his keyboards and trying to be unobtrusive while hammering out John Cale's one note piano part on *I Wanna Be Your Dog*. Legendary!

So there you have it, another classic night at Friars watching two 'living legends' with a whole load more in the audience. We were spoilt rotten back then.

Blackwater Blog – written by Leon Gordon



January and February bought a great start to the New Year with Blackwater Productions starting to work closely with Samplecraze (www.samplecraze.com) on their online sound catalogue, providing instrumental tracks using Samplecraze's extensive and very useable drum kits. The demos are now online so if you're a budding producer head over to Samplecraze .com now for high quality drum samples.

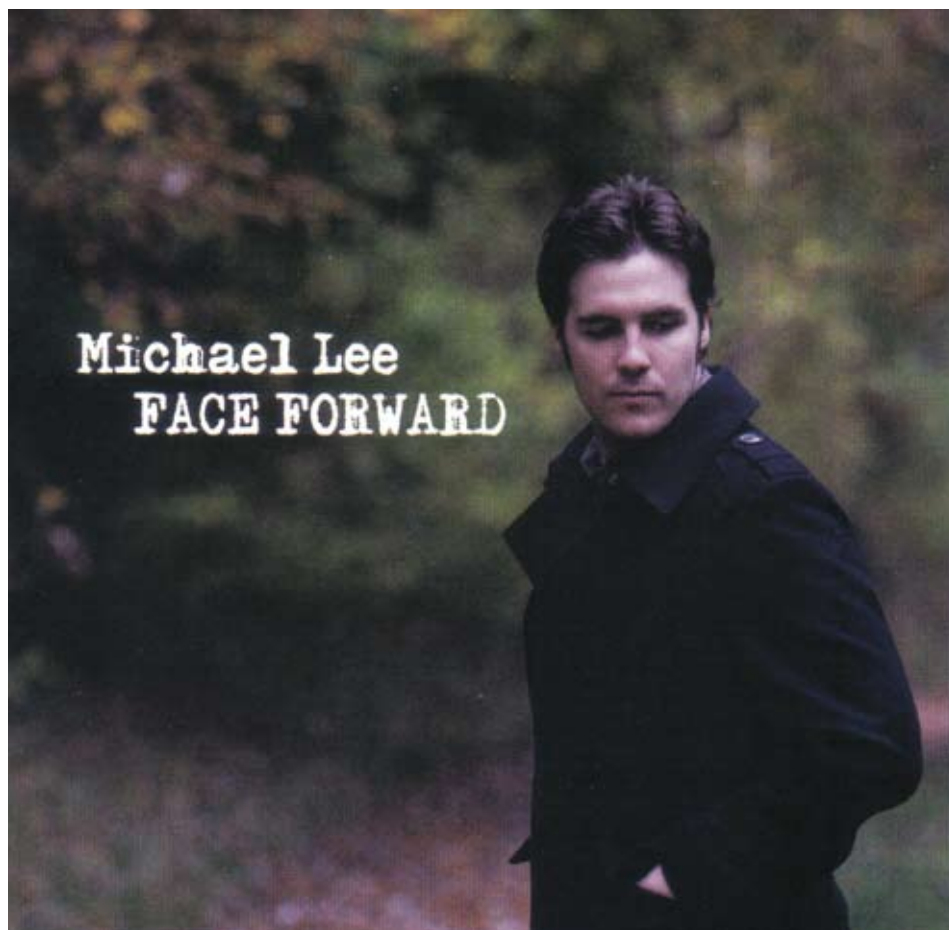
Blackwater Productions are very pleased to announce the signing of local grime artist Leon Bowerman aka 'Riddz', (15) from Aylesbury. Riddz is known on the local scene for his quick tongue and impressive wordplay. February has also seen Blackwater Productions collaborate with girl band lyricist Amy Jefferies. Amy is a member of four piece girl band Rawnch (www.myspace.com/rawnch) who are currently enjoying success performing on the London circuit.

The widespread snow didn't stop people downloading De-andre Bruce's debut release. Bruce aka 'Kro' has been working with local production aficionado Daniel Thomas (D Beats). Available to download now at www.sendspace.com/file/8m50ne. Kro puts together a well rounded mix-tape fusing Grime and Hip Hop to great effect on street anthem '*Poppin Off*' and the soulful offering of '*Here To Stay*'.

Next month we get the inside info on what it takes to become a successful promoter/event planner speaking to George Eason, the man behind '*Sounds of London*'.

Until then check out
www.blackwaterproductions.co.uk
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Michael Lee



Singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Michael Lee chats to The New Roxette about life in Longwick, live gigs and his brand new album "Face Forward".

Hey Mike; Our readers may remember you from performing at the Aylesbury Showcase gigs (at The King's Head & Chicago Rock Café) last summer.

What's been happening since then...?

Well, where do I start? To begin with I should mention that I previously promoted my music under the band name Soul Capture. The band name was abandoned at the end of last year because I wanted to focus more on promoting myself as a solo artist. I now have the freedom to shape my music anyway I please.

Aside from changing the band name I spent most of last year recording an album called "Face Forward".

Yes, your new album is coming out shortly. You've called it "Face Forward". What is the inspiration and story behind this, and do you have a release date planned at the moment?

The inspiration for a lot of the songs on the album is my newfound belief that you should always seek the positives out of any situation, where as in the past I have been very quick to see the negative side in things. Musically, my inspiration is vast. I would say my music is a blend of pop and progressive rock with a hint of folk thrown in for good measure. As far as a release date is concerned, I am currently speaking to a range of labels to secure the best deal. I'm aiming for a release in April or May.

Do you have a favourite track from the album, and do you think you will release it as a single?

My favourite song on the album is the opening track "Land of Change" because of its unusual sound. I particularly love the interplay between the guitar riff and the drums. The song is perhaps slightly too lengthy to be a single, therefore I have chosen the song 'Tired' to be my first single instead.

What's been your favourite gig (that you've played at) so far & why?

The best gig I have played is one last summer at The Nags Head in High Wycombe, mainly due to the brilliant crowd response! One

highlight of the gig was when the input in my acoustic guitar broke and so I walked into the middle of the audience with the crowd surrounding me in silence as I played – it was a great feeling!

Have you any gigs lined up for the summer... anything in the pipeline you want to tell us about?

In March I will be performing with the band in a national unsigned competition called the "Surface Unsigned Festival". The gig is at the Boston Music Rooms in Tufnell Park, which is in London. Hopefully the competition will bring me some exposure and some more opportunities to further my music.

What else have you got coming up this year?

I am currently booking some more local gigs for the year, so expect to see me and my band popping up in venues here, there and everywhere in the coming months.

I am also working on a music video at the moment for my song "Tired".

Anything else you'd like to add?

The last thing I would like to say is check out my myspace page

www.myspace.com/michaellleeuk

THE QUICK FIRE FIVE – please complete the sentence ...

I'm currently listening to: – Lots of John Mayer

I can highly recommend: – "Ten Summoner's Tales" by Sting

I'm looking forward to: – Unleashing my album on the world!

There's 'Never Enough Time' to: – Learn everything about music

My ultimate ambition is: – To tour the world with my music!!!

Many thanks Mike, good luck with the new single, and of course the album, and we look forward to catching up with you and the band again very soon.

The New Roxette

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