

soundcheck

Issue 10 | February 2022 | FREE

Reading's FREE live music guide



This month's headliner:

The Rocket Kings





Opening hours

Sunday to Thursday
5pm to 2.00am

Friday and Saturday
5pm to 3.00am

231 London Road, Reading RG1 3NY

Here we go, then – welcome back to Sound-check, all proper and monthly. Let's see how this goes!?!

This one has The Rocket Kings down the front end, gig listing in the middle and, up the back, there's one Danny Molyneux giving the rundown on **Nothing Will Change**. Worth keeping an eye on, I reckon.

Now that we're back in action, come on in and give uz a hand, eh? If you want to show off your photo skills, do an interview, help put it all together or just help getting it round town, just give me a shout. ■

– RiCH

rich@sound-check.co.uk

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Sound-check #10

A lot of Sound-check readers might be rolling their eyes at the idea that you're a ukulele band!?! So can you tell us who, exactly, The Rocket Kings are?

Dave: We're a 5-piece band, formed in 2016, drums, bass, three ukuleles, three vocals... we're just a band... who happen to play ukuleles. In the same way that a band might have guitars in, might have pianos in, might have saxophones in, might have anything else in... We happen to play ukuleles through various pedals. When they hear it, people go, "That has ukuleles in it, does it?" Yeah. That's the tool I choose to write songs with and the instrument of choice that three of us play.

'Ukulele' has come to almost refer to a genre rather than an instrument. Listening to you, it feels like you're definitely more Belle & Sebastian than George Formby.

We'll take that. We never set out to 'break barriers' in the uke world. We just started playing as this band and playing ukes is what we do. If others like it too and it breaks anyone's misconception of what you can do with ukuleles and changes people's expectations of what they think a band with ukes might sound like, then that's a bonus.

How did you all come together, then?

Becks: Well, Dave started writing some songs in 2015. They were duets to start with for Dave and I to sing. We made some demos of them at his home and they sounded amazing so we decided we needed a band. Dave went and booked a gig... so we had a gig before we had a band and we went out hunting for a band.

We played that first gig, loved it and didn't stop.

The Rocket Kings

Has the music changed much since that first, hurriedly assembled line-up?

David: We still do some of those songs from early but... Dave's a very prolific songwriter, as well as Jess and Becks now so there's no shortage of material.

Dave: The sound has become bigger and bit 'rockier'. I probably stick my pedals on more often than I did before. The overdrive appears a bit more often.

Becks: We've definitely got noisier.

David: When we started I was playing with brushes and no cymbals. It's a

The word "ukelele" is often a word to strike fear into the hearts of gig-goers. Not so with Rocket Kings, Reading's own crafters of good old-fashioned pop songs – who happen to play ukuleles.

They played recently with Reading's own Damien A Passmore which resulted in a Sound-check first that might continue, we had an idea: let's get Damien to do the interview...



Damien A Passmore

full kit now and it's all moving away from a kind of folksy sound.

Dave: It's even little things as well, like... I bought a phaser!

One important thing is what the lockdown did for us. We notoriously don't practice unless we've got a gig. When there were no gigs going on, we started actually getting together when we could and bringing new songs in. The new songs we're playing now, even though it might be still me writing them, they're a lot more collaborative. Everybody having much more input into them. And that makes them better, fundamentally.

It's not long since you released your first album is it?

Dave: We recorded an e.p. in 2018 and then we accidentally recorded an album!?

We had ended up with an evening of free studio time and the whole plan was to go in and just record all the songs we were playing live that weren't on the e.p. It took a year for us to find the time and, by that time, we thought 'Well... let's just record some bass and drums... and then we'll pay for more time...' and it just kind of snowballed until we realised '...we're doing this, let's keep going. Oh, hang



on... We've written some new songs, let's have a play around with those as well'... It just went on and on to the point where we had 13 finished songs and we thought, 'Well, there's an album there.'. We didn't tell anybody we were recording anything because we didn't even know what we were doing with it.

We'd got most of them mixed, and then it was lockdown. So, we started it in 2018 and it eventually came out in October 2021.

Becks: The Rocket Kings stuff is the first thing I've ever recorded and it has been fascinating watching it come together. I absolutely love studio time.

Jess: It's a bit annoying, sometimes, to do the same thing over and over ten times and then decide that the first one was the best one.

Dave: And, of course, we have a ready supply of biscuits...

Becks: ...cake...

Dave: ...doughnuts...

Becks: ...pastries...

So important!

Dave: I don't really like recording – I just like the biscuits and cakes.

You're back in the studio now, aren't you. We know cos Rich came to find you.

Dave: This is the recording we started last Sunday; new, new stuff. The first new stuff since that first album.

Becks: This time, Greg turned up dressed as a giant dog, in a giant white dog suit with an articulated mouth and a huge tail. He spent all day dressed as a dog.

He has dressed as a fox before, hasn't he?

Becks: Yes, but this is a whole new level.

So, as a band, who would you count as musical influences, then?

Dave: I'm probably not the best person to ask. People who come to see us always seem to come up with some fairly obscure indie bands from the late 80s and 90s.

Belle & Sebastian has been one we've had before. That's a good one. I like them.

You'll definitely hear some Teenage Fanclub-isms at times. Definitely a bit of that.

This is the blurb that the promoters came up with for our next gig in Henley

because I rather like it: "Reading's Rocket Kings have been described as a uke pop band. Which doesn't really cover it. There's definitely a hefty dose of pop with hints of The Kinks and The La's. Expect to discover your new favourite song during their set."

For those who have never seen you, what can they expect from a Rocket Kings gig?

Jess: Fun – and possibly a toilet break halfway through.

Becks: Our last gig, at the West End Centre in Aldershot, we played 'The Running Man'. Normally there's one brave soul who will get up run with us but there we had the whole of the front of the crowd running with us and they didn't give in. They ran to the end. For us standing on stage looking at what looked like an army of people running at us, it was brilliant! That was a great audience.

What have you got coming up, then?

Becks: We're all really excited about our first ever ukulele festival down in Winchester, in June. We have no idea how that's going to go down. They could hate us. We do kind of push the boundaries of what people can expect from a ukulele.

Dave: Could be 'Bob Dylan' moment.

Dave: We've got Wokingham festival and one or two other festivals that might happen... We have another Reading gig in the spring but that's not sorted as yet. ■

And so we wait for the results of this current recording. In the meantime, 'Everyday Adventures' is available now on all streaming services.

facebook.com/rocketkings
twitter.com/rocketkingsband
instagram.com/rocketkingsband



gigguide

FRI 4 FEB

RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE
Club Velocity
Independent Venue Week

Nicky Booty + Tom Webber + Hatty Taylor

£8.80 | 8pm
wegottickets.com

THE FACEBAR The Paradox Twin

£10.84 | 7:30
www.ticketsource.eu

SAT 5 FEB



RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE
Club Velocity

Tomorrow Bird + Colours & Fires + One Eyed Man

£8.80 | 8pm
wegottickets.com



FACE BAR
Heavy Pop

The Rills + Free House + Phantom Booth

£8.80 | 7:30pm | 14+ (U18 with adult)
gigantic.com

THE TURKS HEAD Band SubStance

Free | 8pm

THE CASTLE TAP Across the Sea

Free | 8pm

SUN 6 FEB

WATLINGTON HOUSE
Readifolk

Readifolk: 'Town & Around'

£2 otd | 8pm

For tonight's theme we are looking for songs about any town or its surroundings.
readifolk.org.uk

FRI 11 FEB

SUB89

Glasvegas

£22 | 7pm | 14+
gigantic.com

SOUTH STREET
Heavy Pop

FEET + tbc

£14 | 7:30pm
gigantic.com

PURPLE TURTLE Jewels & The Jacuzzis + DJ Dom

£7 | 7:30pm
fatsoma.com

FACE BAR
Club Velocity & New Mind promotions

The DeRellas + Rage DC + The Go Go Cult

£8.80 | 8pm | 18+

"Infused with spirit of Dead Boys, Heartbreakers and MC5, with leathers, spikes and bad attitudes as standard, London's DeRellas boast a young, loud LAMF snottiness so totally NYC, you'd swear it was Swedish" - Classic Rock
wegottickets.com

To list your gig here, for free, just email all the info to copy@sound-check.co.uk before the 20th of each month.

Info is correct at time of going to press. (At least, I've tried very hard.)

Websites on these pages refer to where to get tickets.

bf = booking fee otd = on the door adv = advance

SAT 12 FEB

THETURKS HEAD
Dirt Bag

Free | 8pm

SUN 13 FEB

WATLINGTON HOUSE
Readifolk

The Jigantics

£6 otd | 8pm

MON 14 FEB

SUB 89
Heavy Pop

The Night Café + Oscar Lang

£12.50 | 7pm | 14+
gigantic.com

FRI 18 FEB

SUB89

Anti-Nowhere League + Knock Off

£16.50 | 7pm | 14+

Lead singer Animal and his friend Magoo formed the band in 1980, and promptly got arrested at their very first gig. The history of the League is littered with brushes with the law, rock n roll misbehaviour and very loud music. And now they're coming here!
gigantic.com

Whitehouse Studios
Production, Recording & Rehearsal Studios

info@whitehouse-studios.co.uk
0118 9502 102
www.whitehouse-studios.co.uk

Alma Road Windsor SL4 3HR

3 March, 8pm
Mike Goff Jazz Trio
Nick Hill (Piano)
Howard King (Bass)

7 April, 8pm
Holly Shillito + Katie Maddock

Open 7 Days Free Entry

SAT 19 FEB

THE CASTLE TAP
As Loud As A Mouse + Chloe Rose (poetry) + Amazing Tiger Band + The Air Circus

Free | 7:30pm

Local Two-man punk band. Simple Math Rock / Fight Pop.

THE TURKS HEAD
Lee Aaron Band

Free | 8pm

TUES 22 FEB

WATLINGTON HOUSE
Readifolk

Singers' Night

£2 otd | 8pm

THU 24 FEB

SUB89
MJR

Black Sabbitch

The all-female Black Sabbath tribute hand picked by Sharon and Ozzy Osbourne to open the inaugural Ozzifesta

£17.95 | 7pm | 14+
premier.ticketek.co.uk

THU 24 FEB

SOUTH STREET
Bex Burch & Leafcutter John + support

£14 (£12 mem) | 8pm
whatsonreading.com

Email listings info to copy@sound-check.co.uk

FACE BAR
Club Velocity/New Mind

Girls In Synthesis + Head Drop

£11 | 8pm | 16+

One of the most exciting and volatile live acts in London - equal parts frantic, considered, ear-splitting and melodic plus support from local, living legends.
wegottickets.com

HEXAGON
The Illegal Eagles

£32.50 / £30.50 | 8pm
whatsonreading.com

FRI 25 FEB

PURPLE TURTLE
Jazz Mino

£9 | 7:30pm | 18+
fatsoma.com

SUB89

AC/DC UK

£14.30 | 7pm | 14+
gigantic.com

SOUTH STREET

Limehouse Lizzy

A tribute to Thin Lizzy
£22.50 | 7:30pm | 12+ (U14 with adult)
whatsonreading.com

SUN 27 FEB

WATLINGTON HOUSE

Readifolk

Moonrakers

£6 otd | 8pm

MON 28 FEB

SUB89

Heavy Pop

**Paul Draper (ex Mansun)
+ Steve Hewitt's Love
Amongst Ruin**

£16.50 | 7:30pm | 16+ (U18 with adult)
'One of the greatest voices of his generation.' – *Louder Than War*
gigantic.com

THU 3 MAR

SUB89

An Evening with GONG

£20.20 | 7:30pm | 14+
From its beginnings in a French commune in 1967, through the Virgin Records years, mismanagement, court cases, break-ups and rejoinings, deaths and rebirths – The ever metamorphosing entity that is GONG launches, as ever, into unknown territory with a new tour for 2020.
premier.ticketek.co.uk

FACE BAR

Club Velocity/New Mind

The Hawkmen

£12.10 | 8pm | 16+
wegottickets.com

FRI 4 MAR

SUB89

Ultimate Coldplay

£12.35 | 7pm | 14+
premier.ticketek.co.uk

SOUTH STREET

Leveret

£18 | 8pm

Leveret is a unique collaboration between three of England's finest folk musicians. Andy Cutting (button accordion), Sam Sweeney (fiddle) and Rob Harbron (concertina) are each regarded as exceptional performers and masters of their instruments.
whatsonreading.com

SAT 5 MAR

PURPLE TURTLE

Remones

Free | 8pm | 18+

TUE 8 MAR

SUB89

**Ricky Warwick & The
Fighting Hearts
+ Virgin Marys**

£20.20 | 7:30pm | 14+
premier.ticketek.co.uk

THU 10 MAR

SUB89

Beardyman

£19.80 | 7pm | 14+
premier.ticketek.co.uk

Email listings info to
copy@sound-check.co.uk

FRI 11 MAR

SUB89

TEG/MJR

Elektrik Live Orchestra

£16.50 | 7:30pm | 14+
gigantic.com

SAT 12 MAR

HEXAGON

Bowie Live

£27 | 7:30pm

A two hour trip through the finest work of David Bowie.
whatsonreading.com

SOUTH SREET

Faustus

£18 | 8pm

'One of Britain's outstanding folk bands.' – *The Guardian*
whatsonreading.com

PURPLE TURTLE

**Mirror Pictures
+ Shoals**

£5.50 | 7pm | 18+
seetickets.com

SUN 13 MAR

WATLINGTON HOUSE

Readifolk

Anthony John Clarke

£6 otd | 8pm



**Pickin'
Lunchtimes**

Going since 2004, Pickin Lunchtimes are monthly American Old Time (1st Sundays) and Irish (3rd Sundays) acoustic music sessions.

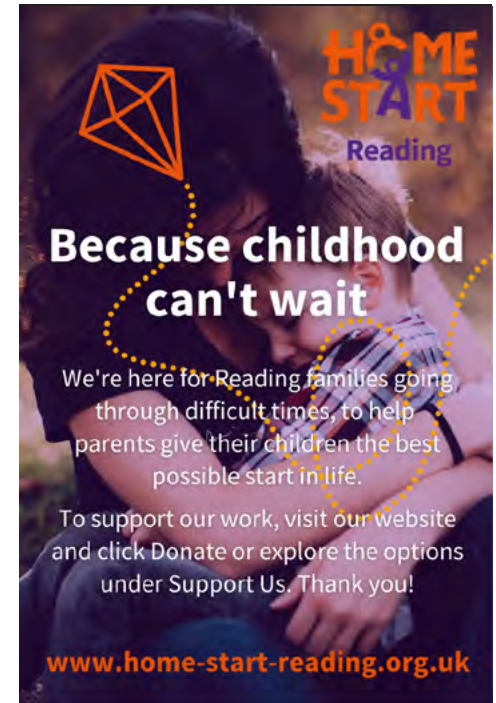
We now have a new venue, namely
The Fisherman's Cottage
at 3 Canal Way RG1 3HJ

padlet.com/newtchaser/pickinlunchtimes

facebook.com/groups/pickinlunchtime



This is just a picture of my guitar.
Next time, it could be your advert
for just fifteen quid.
rich@sound-check.co.uk



Nothing Will Change...

We got a message. Apparently there's something going on up the Uni. Some more people have realised what a lot of us have known for while: there's not many places left to play – unless you want to dress up as some band from the 90s and play all their songs... or something. If you're ploughing your own furrough, especially if it's a particularly noisy furrough, then you're a bit short of places to do it. So you have to do something about it.

Me and Dave (out of Heavy Pop) got a word and went up The Dairy to find they had 'borrowed' a PA and squeezed three bands on in the corner. It was ace, so we went to another one... up in the seemingly soulless, strip-lights-and-plastic-chairs world of Reading Uni. And, yeah... it was amazing! So, rather than give you the rundown second-hand, I asked Danny from Masquerader to fill us in on what's going on...

We're Danny, Chris and Tim, and you can find us making a bunch of noise in the Reading-local alternative band Masquerader. We've been playing and supporting Reading shows at a grassroots level within and outside of the band for around 5 or 6 years now, and in 2021 we started up our very own DIY activity as an extension of the band, which we call Nothing Will Change Events.

We don't really see ourselves as a promoter, and we didn't really think of Nothing Will Change as a regular gig night, it's more of a proactive approach towards the post-pandemic musical opportunities of our town. To us, Reading had entered an unfortunate state where alternative music venues that we could play at were becoming more and more limited, with most historic spaces under endless challenge to keep licenses and stay open and a lot of our sure-fire promoters having to put things on hiatus – even before the pandemic took off. Following a year of nothing happening for live-music, we found ourselves in an awkward position where most of the performance options in our home-town had simply run dry.

As a band we've always found it tricky to fit into line-ups, as we sit in between common genre scenes. We draw from a lot of niches, Post-Hardcore, Math-Rock, Noise-Rock, Alt-Hip Hop, so we're deemed too weird for a lot of general metal or punk nights and often too heavy for something that's more arty and avant garde.

So, we decided that we wanted to open the gates. If there aren't shows for us to play, we wanted to do what we could to put them together, and we knew we couldn't be alone in that mentality. We set out to make a space in Reading for other acts that fall between the same cracks, an opportunity where we could organise a line-up of upcoming musicians, and foster an expressive and creative community of like-minds at local shows, and that's how our first event in October came together.

We started it at the last venue that was accessible (The Facebar) and invited our friends Vicarage, Senor Fire, and As Loud as a Mouse onto the lineup with us, creating a night of off-kilter, left-field expression – from heavy breakdowns to upbeat anthems. We also opened the space to friends who have supported us from other art-forms, such as Scuff Worldwide who makes zines that explore contemporary culture, aiming for the event to be a collective rather than solely 'our-thing'.

We were lucky enough that it was a huge success, and we've been organising our next events for March and April this year. We'll be branching out to more venues, and we want to focus on making it a safe and welcoming space so that we can start to foster a community for the weirder side of music and art here in Reading. It's early days, but we're trying to keep our ear to the floor and hopefully it'll become a shared platform for alternative bands like us, and unlike us, to step onto! ■

Danny made a point of saying, if any of you good people would like to get involved, their instagram/facebook handle would be the best way to get in touch: @i.am.masquerader

Do it. Get in touch. – Rich



Tom Webber Sub89 15.10.2021 ©Victoria Holt



Head Drop The Facebar 10.12.2021 ©Rich Lucas

sound-check

If you're up for getting involved, here, and helping me get this out every month, whether it's writing, interviewing, production, photos... whatever you've got, just give me a shout at rich@sound-check.co.uk.

You would be most welcome.

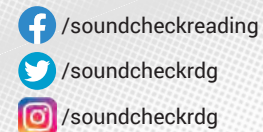
Also, contrary to popular belief, Sound-check is not distributed around town by a tiny army of pixies. No. It's mostly Muz. On a bike. If you can help, get in touch. There's probably a pint in it.

Thanks!

Rich

To advertise in Sound-check, there's a spec sheet at sound-check.co.uk and it's as cheap as I can possibly make it. Please email me at rich@sound-check.co.uk.

Reasonable efforts are made to ensure that all info in Sound-check is correct at time of going to press. If you're worried, though, please check with the relevant venue.



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