

The school of rock

LSE students are, of course, very smart. But there's also that alternative edge to students at the School, which perhaps explains the surprising level of musical talent within the LSE community. **Hemant Grover** and **Alex Habachi** fill you in on the rock and roll.

Below: Funk improvisation set at Open Mic. Bottom: Frank Turner with Million Dead



About once a month during term time you'll hear weird and wonderful sounds emanating from the newly refurbished Underground Bar beneath the Three Tuns. The LSE Students' Union (SU) Live Music Society has been hosting fortnightly Open Mic events for a couple of years now – our channel to expose raw musical talent. Open Mic shows allow performers to play a set of three songs – be it solo acoustic or full band performances. We encourage a variety of musical styles – fortunate audiences could hear anything from soft rock acoustic acts to funk bands, live hip hop or even perhaps the odd Lionel Richie cover song. Anything goes.

These Open Mic nights are so successful that they won the SU Colour award for Most Popular Event in 2003-04. With more than 500 members, the Live Music Society also co-hosts events with others such as the Alternative Music Society, the Music Business Society and the campus radio station PuLSE FM. Another event was the 'Battle of the Strands' – a competition with Pop Idol style judging by various SU sabbatical officers. And we're looking at a charity outdoor busking event too – weather permitting. Music is definitely alive and kicking at the School.

What about other musical events at LSE? Well, 'Rock Idols' is an inter-university battle of the bands competition, organised by two Imperial College students. Winners receive £1,000 in cash along with a recording contract from the sponsors. The final at the School was such a success in 2004 that

both second round heats in 2005 have been held in the Quad. The LSE Ents team hosted the event, and LSESU Live Music Society provided equipment. Last year's winners Hoochie Choo are hoping to release their album soon.

And then there is the weekly popular student night 'Crush'. This has been host to upcoming live hip hop band Shorty. We think they are sure to be the new breakthrough artists of 2005 – merging hip hop lyrics over funky bass lines, harmonised with the tender sound of their female vocalist. They have recently secured a deal as the opening act for UK hip hop legends Roots Manuva on their 2005 tour. 'Crush' has also been host to Dogs Die in Hot Cars.

But how can we have come so far and not mentioned the most famous LSE musician – the one that every taxi driver knows! Alongside Matt Osman (BSc Econ 1989), bass player for Suede, the most obvious LSE musical success story is that of a 1960s student who went on to sell millions of records with his rock and roll band, and who continues to play sell-out concerts in every part of the world. Mick Jagger has done every LSE closet rock god proud. The new breed of LSE musical talent may not be as visible (yet), or as rich for that matter, but is certainly gifted enough to take its place in the history of successful artists who emerge from the School.

A shining example is Frank Turner (BA History 2004), lead singer of Million Dead. He now fronts arguably the most exciting young hardcore band of

Above: Fynn Prager
Right: Lella Zerai and Paul Kirby



the moment. Million Dead have received rave reviews from the music press, and toured Europe and the US to promote their highly acclaimed first album *A Song to Ruin*. For the uninitiated, their musical style is essentially a fast, often politically-motivated mixture of alternative rock and punk. Frank describes himself as 'playing rock music of an independent mind – both musically and administratively'. This is reflected in his lyrics which include references to Isaac Newton, consumerism, the Aeneid, and Sarajevo, as well as Walt Disney and Macgyver. Million Dead have gathered a large and loyal following and are planning to release their second studio album this year.

Another up-and-coming band with an LSE link is Rooster. Guitarist Luke Potashnick (BSc Business Mathematics and Statistics 2004) formed the band while balancing his degree with his music obsession. He lists Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton and Free as influences which clearly sculpt Rooster's music along with bands like Aerosmith and Guns'n'Roses. Rooster were the first band to be signed to Brightside/BMG and have scored a number seven hit with the single *Come Get Some*. Their goal is to resurrect arena rock and, by the look of their tour numbers, it won't be long before they're playing in front of 30,000 people a night. Their self titled debut album is – as all the best ads say – in record shops now.

Another of the better known bands on campus are The Bazookas. Front man Jasper Ward (BSc Sociology 1997), former student events officer, along with Jon Edwards, Chris Mathison and Steely have built themselves a fantastic reputation in the capital playing alongside the likes of The Cooper Temple Clause (LSE Quad, October 2004), Johnny Panic and Senser. Their video single *Phone In Sick Tomorrow* premiered to a sell-out audience in Soho's Curzon cinema. They count chance topping Babyshambles among their

friends and have been showered with praise by legendary producer Kim Fowley.

So that is just some of the musical talent. But LSE graduates are putting their business skills to good use in the music industry too. The LSESU Music Business Society was started in 2003 by economics student Ellie Stylianou, and sponsored by BMI publishing. It now has more than 200 members. Among alumni, Doron Meyassad (BSc Economics 2003), currently LSESU events manager, worked with record company giants Warner Music in their music publishing division; Shreshtha Jana (BSc Economics and Mathematics 2004) is now the royalty administrator for Warner Music Strategic Marketing division; and Darius Rustam (BSc Sociology 1994), signed with Notation Publishing (Warner Chappell) and Wake Productions, has produced music for artists such as Mariah Carey, Anastacia and Jennifer Lopez. Others kindly come back to Music Business Society meetings to pass on their expertise, such as Radio 1 DJ Judge Jules (LLB 1987). These are just a few of the many LSE graduates who provide an excellent example of the alternative career paths outside investment banking!

Finally, what about some names you may not have heard of yet, but rest assured – these guys and gals will be on your radios, in your newspapers, and hopefully in your hearts in the near future. Ida Norheim Hagtun, (BSc International Relations 2004), has a sultry Scandinavian voice, and is songwriting and producing the sort of tracks to make Tori Amos spill her cornflakes. Then there's Lella Zerai, a final year Law student, who has opted to take the next year out to concentrate on touring with her newly formed band. Lastly, keep your eyes and ears open for second year student Fynn Prager, described as 'a one-man show stopping Ragga northerner' in *The Beaver*. Remember – you heard of them here first. ■



Hemant Grover
is president of the Live Music Society and a third year Economics student.



Alex Habachi
is a third year Law student, guitar player and songwriter/amateur producer.

Musical notes

Million Dead – www.milliondead.com

Judge Jules – www.judgejules.net

Konni Deppe – a professional jazz singer who has worked part time at Rosebery hall of residence since 2002, see www.konni-deppe.de

Freedonia – a band made up of staff from the Academic Registrar's division. They describe themselves as 'a cross between the Kinks and Gyorgy Ligeti' and have two successful gigs at pubs in London under their belt.

See www.lse.ac.uk/artsandmusic for more musical, academic, artistic and creative links.

Musical notes



Dick Heckstall-Smith (MSc 1981), who died this year, was well known in the world of British jazz and blues. A saxophonist and composer, he was a founder member of Blues Incorporated,

and later a soloist with such leading bands as John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Colosseum and Mainsqueeze. He also, for a while, accompanied the veteran rhythm and blues star Bo Diddley.



Dr David Lewis, reader in Social Policy at LSE, is a singer-songwriter who has produced two albums, the latest called

For Now on the Applesed Recordings folk label. Applesed's other artists include Billy Bragg and Joan Baez. He describes his music as 'British folk rock with a 1970s feel', and he's been recording his third CD with the musician and novelist John Wesley Harding in San Francisco, due for release later in 2005. See www.applesedrec.com/davidlewis

Dave Bull (BSc Government and History 1985) spent the 1970s in blues bands and on the folk circuit. He played with US blues legends like The Reverend Gary Davis and Champion Jack Dupre and toured with John Renbourn and Jaqui McShee.

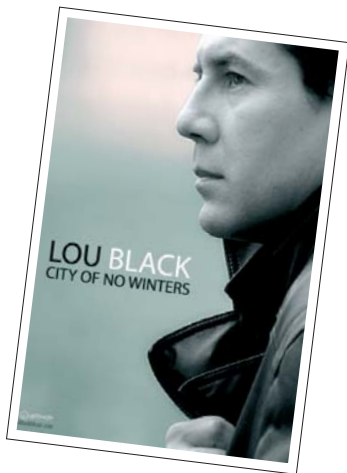


Putting the pop in population

Louis Schwarz (MSc Demography 1986) wants all of us to think more from the right side instead of the left, at least when it comes to brain function rather than politics. Having studied survey research at the University of Michigan and Social Psychology at Boston University, Peruvian born Louis came to LSE to pursue his interests in demography. After graduating, he did what many graduates do and pursued a life as a researcher and consultant to the private and public sectors, and on occasion published technical articles. 'My life was about number crunching and problem solving but I found that composing music was a great stress reliever from the day to day analytic work'.

Then he met New York poet Richard Hess and began developing melodies and arrangements for Hess's poems. This led to collaboration with other poets. Having researched the ins and outs of the music business from technology to publishing, he soon realised that his dream could become a reality and his hobby a business. 'The fact that Mick Jagger went to LSE also served as a reminder of what else you can do with an LSE education'.

His new self-produced album, *City of No Winters*, released under his musical pseudonym Lou Black, has garnered praise from music critics and airplay on more than 70 university radio stations. His music combines Western pop music with African and South American rhythms while



his lyrics communicate social and political issues, and tales of alienation, interpersonal conflict and despair. 'I strive to distinguish myself from mass produced commercial radio music so I design my music to be subversive with memorable melodies on the surface and thoughtful messages behind the scenes,' he said.

Louis Schwarz lives in Arlington, Virginia, USA, and is currently consulting to the US Bureau of the Census. His new album is available for digital download via iTunes and Napster.com. To read more about his music see www.LouBlackMusic.com



Classic notes

Classical music plays a major part in LSE's cultural life

The School still holds its famous free lunchtime concerts in the Shaw Library. Alongside the professional performers, the LSE Music Society with its 50 strong choir and symphony orchestra, gives a concert each Michaelmas and Lent term. Throughout the year the choir and orchestra also host evening soirées, showcasing soloists, chamber ensembles and jazz bands. Members rehearse every week during term time under the professional tutelage of choirmaster Andrew Campling and conductor Matthew Taylor, both internationally respected composers. They have built up an impressive repertoire ranging from classic

masterpieces such as Vivaldi's

Gloria, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and the Mozart clarinet concerto to contemporary compositions such as Campling's *In Paradisum* and Taylor's *The Needles Overture*, both commissioned by the LSE Symphony Orchestra. Closer cooperation with the LSE Events and Conferences team has brought increased support for Music Society concerts, and the opportunity to perform at nearby St Clement Danes and St-Mary-le-Strand churches.

Tim Lloyd (BSc Accounting and Finance 1991) is CEO of www.classical.com, an internet music company.