

FACE OF CHEAM JANUARY 2006

Hello.

This is to be my final semi-regular newsletter for this site alas. This is because I have discovered the joys of blogging which should keep the readers informed of my gigging, pubbing and other mullarkies that happen in my life. Here's the link if you haven't already seen it on Dan's other page. <http://faceofcheam.blogspot.com> However this only started a couple of months ago so here is a brief report of what happened in the last few months of last year.

Good Evening

All go gig wise with 22 gone to in the last six months of the year. Personal highlights were the two small shows done by Pete Townshend which were organised by his girlfriend. The first was at the Bedford pub in Balham which had a very cute blonde barmaid there! And the second was at Pete's own private studio in Twickenham. Both apparently will be available on DVD shortly. Stephen Fretwell played Kings College in July and was very good with his breathy acoustic songs. How can someone like James Blunt become huge yet Mr Fretwell is largely ignored shows how much I hate the general populous. Just because the Sun is the highest selling newspaper doesn't make it the best!

In new bands, I have seen The Kaiser Chiefs at Brixton supported by Maximo Park and The Cribs. The Cribs were excellent, so much so I saw them on their own a few weeks later at UCL. Maximo Park though, with a Bobby Charlton / Ian Curtis lovechild on vocals were disappointing and the Kaiser Chiefs failed to live up to their hype. Perhaps they would be better at a festival or when they have more than one albums worth of material.

An embarrassing attendance at the Borderline saw Natasha Hamilton of Atomic Kittens solo debut. Surprisingly funky though she ended with a cover of Somebody Else's Guy. Also I think Abi Tittmuss was spied in the venue.

Finally a mention of the highly rated KT Tunstall at Shepherds Bush. Fairly pleasant but I found her personality very very annoying. I can half understand what happened to one of her previous boyfriends in a story that I am unable to repeat in a public domain.

Welcome

So 720 pubs/bars visited last year. Had I thought about it a bit more I did have a day doing nothing between Christmas and New Year where I could have done the ten more (Epsom or Carshalton) to bring the average up to two a day. But I didn't! Still a personal best unlikely to be bettered for a few years.

A few surprises. The pubs of Little Venice (Maida Vale - Warwick Avenue) were done for the first time and were surprisingly good. A trip for the great river race saw a few pubs in Wandsworth done together with the very good Phene Arms in Chelsea. Saints relegation saw crawls done in Preston and the surprisingly fantastic Leicester. The Rutland & Derby Arms had over 22 choices of draught stuff, the majority were lagers!!! A fantastic trip of the midlands tram took place in November which took in

Bilston and the superb Noddy Holder local the Trumpet. And finally before seeing in the New Year in Cardiff we took in some Belgravia bars including the Nags Head run by Pogo Patterson of Grange Hill.

2005

To end this letter thought I'd take some time for my annual awards;

Best Pub / Bar (by rating)

The Avondale House in Southampton won this. This shows that there is no rating system that is going to work well. Its an ok Scream student pub but won the award with an excellent choice of lagers, being very well priced and having a couple of very saucy barmaids on duty. 2nd equal was the Mushroom bar in Newcastle (for a similar reason) and The Spring in Ewell.

Best Pub (chosen by RB)

The Trumpet in Bilston. Probably swayed by the Slade connections this had lots of character and everything to make you relaxed. 2nd would be Colton Arms in Hammersmith and 3rd The Alexandra in Southampton

Best Bar

The Exhibit in Balham wins for the second year running, closely followed by Bar Sia in Wimbledon and Bar Ice in Southampton

Best Real Ale

Solar Power which I had in Wareham wins this hands down!

Best Lager

Cobra wins. One of the rare drinks you must have if seen on tap!

Best New / Refurbished Pub/Bar

The Academy in Sutton wins this. After being closed for a good few months (& boarded up) it reopened towards the end of the year with a good choice of lagers and a nice relaxing atmosphere.

Best Barmaid

A tough choice with last years winner from Café Mango disappearing by Easter. However, the winner of this prestigious award goes to Emily from The Nightingale (below)



closely followed by the one in the Bedford, and one in Bar Ice in Southampton. Unfortunately Emily now appears to have left the Nightingale making next years award the more open.

Best Gig

1st Oasis at Hammersmith, 2nd Natalie Imbruglia at Shepherds Bush, 3rd The Subways at The Forum.

This concludes my reflection on 2005. I shall pop up again on this site hopefully with various pub documents. Meanwhile though stay tuned to my blog. Cheers to Dan too for making this public!

Rich (The Face Of Cheam)