

## THE BRIGHT LIGHTS BECKON

Folk-rock is reaching out to the masses thanks to Kent-rabble rousers **Fate the Juggler**. **Chris Price** caught up with the band everyone on the London-scene is talking about.

» With their debut album about to drop and a string of high-profile London shows under their belt, you really should have heard about Fate the Juggler.

The folk-rock six-piece are marking themselves out as one of the brightest musical prospects to emerge from Kent in recent times.

The band have played top small venues in London like the Dublin Castle in Camden, The Troubadour in Earl's Court and the 100 Club on Oxford Street, which has hosted everyone from the Sex Pistols, to the White Stripes over the years. They have also been asked to play a show at the O2 Academy in Islington.

"We had 52 people come from Kent on a coach and by train to see us at the 100 Club," said Rob Spiers, the band's founder and frontman.

"We are trying to up the ante with every show. We need to see if we can get into the London scene. We headlined at the Troubadour and have been asked to headline at Dublin Castle. We are turning gigs

away at the moment as we have got so many. We want to become bigger and better."

The new album, *The Ghost of Beauty Lost*, is available on iTunes and Spotify from Monday, February 6. It will be available to buy in HMV and Tesco four weeks later. Released through Folkestone-based Red Admiral Records, the album took about four months to make and was recorded in Rob's studio at his house in Boxley Road, Maidstone.

Formed in the summer of 2010, the band quickly built up a following on the local music scene and then started touring all over Kent. Rob has been in several bands, most notably classic rock tribute band Learning Curve, where he played Eagles and Beatles songs around the county for 16 years. However, there's only so many times you can play Hotel California and eventually Rob decided he wanted to devote his time to original material and advertised for folk musicians.

"We did open mic nights and they went so well the pubs said, 'Can you do a full gig?' We went down a storm," recalled Rob. "We try to increase what we are doing each time. We played local gigs first and now we are getting booked in London." Rob is the main creative force of the band, who play tunes on instruments as diverse as the djembe, mandolin, bouzouki and harmonica. All their songs were written by Rob but the band has started co-writing songs as a whole for the next album, which they feel they could start



### FATE THE JUGGLER: THE LINE UP

**Robert Spiers**  
Songwriter, composer, vocals and acoustic guitar

**Kirsteen Bristow**  
Djembe, cajon, congas and cocktail kit

**Del Whitehead**  
Mandolin and acoustic bass

**Andy Ross Gower**  
Harmonica and percussion

**Sam L Dunstall**  
Lead guitar, bouzouki, acoustic bass and banjo

**Chris James**  
Electric bass, vocals, keyboard.

recording right away. "I have written for this project and some of it is some old stuff I had," said Rob, 57.

"We are tapping into a young and old audience. There seems to be a wide age range at the shows. Lots of people like the music.

"I think it is the mix of our set up. When people see Kirsteen [Bristow] playing the djembe, they say 'what's that?' It is unique. You hear the bouzouki, mandolin, cajon – it all just fits. "It seems like we may just have hit on something. On Facebook we are up to 5,000 friends. We seem to have caught the imagination."

### DETAILS

» Fate the Juggler's next Kent show is at The Barge in Gillingham on Saturday, February 4. Admission free. Call 01634 850485. The band's new album, *The Ghost of Beauty Lost*, is available on iTunes and Spotify from Monday, February 6. Details at [www.fatethejuggler.com](http://www.fatethejuggler.com).

### Doug Hudson rounds up this week's folk action

» After the French invasion from Dunkerque's folk-rock favourites Sur Les Docks last week, their pals The Hot Rats play host to a Big Broadstairs Ceilidh. There has been an entente cordiale between Kent and the Continent's folk fans in recent years and local acts The Singing Loins, Rob McGeorge and the Hot Rats all swapped places with Kreik Balise, Pavilion Noir, Chiens d'Mer and Sur Les Docks. All these groups have a following in both England and France.

Hot Rats come to the Sarah Thorne Memorial Theatre on Saturday, February 4, where novices and experts can enjoy "called" dances to a live band.

Tickets £10, concessions £8. Box office 08452 626263. If the night is successful, it could herald a series of regular ceilidhs or barn dances. Another band mentioned above – The Singing Loins – are in concert on Friday, February 3, at a new folk venue in Margate. The Tom Thumb Theatre now runs a First Friday Folk night with some interesting guests from the world of folk.

The Singing Loins, Medway's own super folk heroes, will pack out the 50-seater venue with their original take on life and times from the depths of Chatham and Gillingham.

Other booked guests in the coming months include Rory McLeod, Richard Digance and Damien Barber.

Have a look on Facebook's Tom Thumb Theatre First Friday Folk site or book on 01843 221719. Finally, Folk at the Brook has a special night on Sunday, February 5, when Jackie Oates and Karen Tweed play the Chatham venue as the last night of their national tour. The former Unthanks musician and BBC Folk Award-winner plays violin and sings and has teamed up with accordion player Karen Tweed for a one-off tour. Tickets £10. Box office 01634 338338.

### Tribute gig

» Blues-inspired indie rock five piece Stray Dogs will perform at Concert for Peter at East Peckham Social Club in memory of Peter Midddup, a popular fundraiser for Hospice in the Weald, who died last year. His widow Jules is among the performers. The concert is on Friday, February 10. Tickets £5, with proceeds to the hospice. Call 01622 871339.

### Toast 'n jam

» A new series of morning concerts at Tunbridge Wells Trinity Theatre starts with Kent singer-songwriters Dan Clews and Fred Clark. The first of the Breakfast at Trinity's is on Saturday, February 4, 10am to noon. The theatre's Kay Ruby says: "You will be able to enjoy breakfast while listening to musicians perform unplugged." The shows take place on the second and fourth Saturday of the month. Admission free. Box office 01892 678678.

### Jazz singer

» Jazz singer Janette Mason performs with her trio at Chatham's Brook Theatre on Tuesday, February 7. Tickets £11. £10. Box office 01634 338338.

### Jubilee night

» A Diamond Jubilee concert will be performed by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra, led by violin soloist Callum Smart. Featuring ceremonial pieces by Coates, Elgar and Walton, the concert is at 3pm on Sunday, February 5. Tickets from £10. Call 01892 530613.

### All covers

» Rock and funk covers band Jam Sandwich play a gig at the Old Brewery Store at Faversham's Shepherd Neame Visitor Centre. They will be supported by Thanet group EK1. The concert is on Saturday, February 4. Tickets £8. Call 01795 542285.

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| <p>The Millers Cottage 31, Shrubbery Road, Gravesend, 01474 358354, Rumblefish 8pm</p> <p>The Vigo Inn Gravesend Road, Faversham, 01732 822465, Alan Glen Band 9pm</p> <p><b>SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4</b></p> <p>Deco 5 Wine Bar Oxford Street, Whitestable, 01227 770079, Chris Concoran Trio 9pm</p> <p>Horsebridge Arts and Community Centre Horsebridge Rd, Whitestable, 01227 281174, Chris Difford £10-12, 7:30pm</p> <p>Ocean Inn High Street, Dymchurch, 01303 872152, Gaffer and Horse 8:30pm</p> <p>Pizza Express Live East Street, Maidstone, 0208 688 5916, Kate Robbins £15, 8pm</p> <p>The Duke of Edinburgh 1 Heath Road, Maidstone, 01622 727122, The Motors 9pm</p> <p>The Forum Fonthill, Tunbridge Wells, 08702 643333</p> <p>Revolver + Fearless Vampire Killers + Ugly Love + Vier £7, With booking fee, 7pm</p> <p>The Grey Lady Music Lounge The Pentiles, Tunbridge Wells, 01892 544700, Soul Avenue £6, 9:30pm</p> | <p>The Bridge Wardens The Tideway, Rochester, 01634 845889, Storm King 4pm</p> <p><b>FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10</b></p> <p>Quarterhouse Tontine Street, Folkestone, 01303 858500, Keith James: The Songs of Leonard Cohen £12, 8pm</p> <p>The Chequers Inn The Broadway, Lambhurst, 01892 890260, Canary Wolf 9pm</p> <p>The Fountain PH Station St, Sittingbourne, 01795 472015, Red Hot Retro 9pm</p> <p>The Lotus Armstrong Maison Dieu Rd, Dover, 01304 204759, Hard Road Blues Band 8pm</p> <p>The Lower Bell Chatham Road, Aylesford, 01634 861127, Sociology 8:30pm</p> <p>The Market Inn East Street, Faversham, 01795 532529, Wild Fire 8:30pm</p> <p>The Railway Tavern Station Road, Dartford, 01474 705075, Hard 2 Handle 9pm</p> <p>The Swan Swan Street, Tenterden, 01797 270913, The Fabulous Granddads 8pm</p> <p>The Vigo Inn Gravesend Rd, Faversham, 01732 822465, Geoff Everett, Pete Shaw, Andy Forrest, Wez 9pm</p> |
| <p>The Louis Armstrong Maison Dieu Road, Dover, 01304 204759, The New Road Hookers 8pm</p> <p>The Lower Bell Chatham Road, Aylesford, 01634 861127, The Love Street Band 8:30pm</p> <p>The Old Brewery Store Shepherd Neame Brewery, Faversham, 01795 542016, Jam Sandwich + EK1 £8, 7:45pm</p> <p>The Royal Norfolk Hotel Sandgate High St, Folkestone, 01303 246262, Sacknote Blues band 9:30pm</p> <p>The Vigo Inn Gravesend Road, Faversham, 01732 822465, Bluesville 9pm</p> <p>Village Hall Church Road, Harbledown, 07500 548806, The Greatest Take That Tribute £30, with meal, 8pm</p> <p>Westgate United Services Club Town Hall Buildings, 01843 831135, Hang 10 9pm</p> <p><b>SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5</b></p> <p>Quarterhouse Tontine Street, Folkestone, 01303 858500, Dirty Vibes 8pm</p> <p>The Alexandra Hotel Railway St, Chatham, 01634 830546, Bitten by Montkeys 6pm</p>   | <p>The Peacher Hatfield Rd, Tunbridge, 01732 358934, Jim Crawford 8:30pm</p> <p><b>FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10</b></p> <p>Quarterhouse Tontine Street, Folkestone, 01303 858500, Keith James: The Songs of Leonard Cohen £12, 8pm</p> <p>The Chequers Inn The Broadway, Lambhurst, 01892 890260, Canary Wolf 9pm</p> <p>The Fountain PH Station St, Sittingbourne, 01795 472015, Red Hot Retro 9pm</p> <p>The Lotus Armstrong Maison Dieu Rd, Dover, 01304 204759, Hard Road Blues Band 8pm</p> <p>The Lower Bell Chatham Road, Aylesford, 01634 861127, Sociology 8:30pm</p> <p>The Market Inn East Street, Faversham, 01795 532529, Wild Fire 8:30pm</p> <p>The Railway Tavern Station Road, Dartford, 01474 705075, Hard 2 Handle 9pm</p> <p>The Swan Swan Street, Tenterden, 01797 270913, The Fabulous Granddads 8pm</p> <p>The Vigo Inn Gravesend Rd, Faversham, 01732 822465, Geoff Everett, Pete Shaw, Andy Forrest, Wez 9pm</p>   |

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