

Lunn runs a village cafe near Banbury and is one of many performers travelling in from outside. The traffic is two-way - some Oxonian musicians also head out to play in Witney, Thame and other towns.

Meanwhile, some are talent-spotted for bigger events, such as the Jericho Street Fair, Phil Freisinger's Klub Kakofanney at the Wheatsheaf or Andy Pickard's Riverside Festival in Charlbury.

Besides catering for every kind of local music, from folk and blues to jazz and hip-hop, the Open Mics also attract people from all over the world - from Spanish flamenco artists to Japanese drummers - who've come to Oxford to work and study, and sometimes as refugees and asylum-seekers.

Young female singer-guitarists are increasingly prominent - with budding stars including Anna Gillies, Emma De La Querra and Caola McMahon from Ireland.

Some regulars have landed recording contracts, such as Rhys Lewis, who played as a teenager at Lee Davies's Open Mic nights and has since toured the world after being signed by Decca.

And while university students are often too busy with their own college bands and choirs, at least two venues - Sandy's Piano Bar on Sunday evenings, and the Catweazle Club in East Oxford's Community Centre on Thursdays - cater specially for them.

If undergraduates are thin on the ground, postgraduate musicians play a big role. So do Oxford's academics.

Mark Atherton, a tutor at Regent's Park College, specialising in Old English and Anglo-Latin literature, is an Open Mic veteran, whose "medieval rock" compositions have incorporated influences from Beowulf and Piers Plowman.

So is the American Dave Wark, a Fellow of the Royal Society and professor of Experimental Particle Physics from Balliol, who heads up Franklin's Tower, a rock outfit specialising in Grateful Dead songs.

Rich Rainford, a carehome manager who writes his own material, thinks the profusion of Open Mic venues, now an essential Oxford feature, will remain a big draw for the city.

"There's something to look forward to every day of the week", Rainford says.

"You never know who'll turn up and what you'll see and hear on any given evening. This sense of potential is what makes it exciting - both for those performing and for the non-musicians who simply come to enjoy the atmosphere".

Oxford's Open Mic network is at its dynamic best on Sunday evenings, when several venues run simultaneously, from the warehouse space of Botley's Tap Social Movement, to the cosy Old Bookbinders Arms in Jericho - both led expertly by Lee Davies.

Just up the road, the Harcourt Arms Open Mic is run by Nigel Brown, who first organised music evenings as a teacher of English in Colombia.

Brown rates Oxford's Open Mics well above any he encountered while working in Cambridge and Bath. His Harcourt evenings have provided a launchpad for prominent local bands such as the Knights of Mentis and Oxford Beatles, who've twice sold out the Sheldonian Theatre.

They also attract unexpected visitors.

Logan Metz, a Midwest singer-songwriter who's supported Neil Young and Lady Gaga, and backed the Rolling Stones on their 2019 "No Filter" tour, dropped in to play this January.

Metz's California-based country-rock band, Promise of the Real, is headed by Willy Nelson's son Lukas and has over 32 million internet hits. But he was allowed three songs at the Harcourt - just like everyone else.

"I'm continually awed by the styles of music and performance on offer, and by the endless social and cultural opportunities these evenings provide", Brown says.

"I'm never sure how many people will turn up, and there can be some quiet times. But I'll always hear something I haven't heard before and have my musical perceptions challenged in some way".

Should the Open Mics be placed on a more formal footing, such as with Council grants and subsidies, or offers of pay and contracts?

Most organisers and performers say a firm no. The Open Mics are community events, not businesses - and it would jeopardise the spontaneity and creativity if attempts were made to commercialise or monetise them.

But as contributors to the city's social and cultural life, propping up local pubs and enthusing local communities, they deserve greater recognition. And that counts for the people who run them, the landlords who support them - and the countless singers and musicians, fans and punters who've helped make Oxford a great live music magnet.

The lovely Julie Dyson says she's constantly amazed at "what you can get for the price of a pint", and hopes the Open Mics will remain a point of intersection for city residents.

"There's no doubt this is one of the top music towns in the country, both in quality and in quantity", Dyson says.

"And though it's right not to place a price-tag on what's available, it is fantastic value as a forum for entertainment, a source of social capital and a model of tolerance and acceptance".