



LEFTFIELD

RETURN TO THE DANCEFLOOR

HONEY GLAZE

CRAWLERS

WORKING
MEN'S CLUB

LIGHTNING
SEEDS

BIG IMAGE

CARI CARI



THE MIC #54

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The Mic



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A message from our Managing Director...

As the Managing Director of a magazine like The Mic, there is very little that can be said for certain - aside from the age old adage that death and taxes always come under that remit. Being behind the steering wheel and having seen under the bonnet, I can confirm that this is the case. However, considering the passion for journalism and unwavering love for music seen in each and every one of our contributors, lack of certainty be damned. Whether as writers, photographers, designers, interviewers or any number of other roles, the members of The Mic Magazine have truly shown the brilliance of student media again, with yet another stellar print edition of our wonderful magazine.

My role as the first truly post-COVID Managing Director is a fluid one, not least because the rest of the committee are also still on relatively youthful foundations. In the world we are currently a part of, I feel that one of our most important responsibilities as a committee is making sure we are able to represent how we feel as students and music lovers in equal measure. In accordance with this, this edition of the magazine has been designed with the title 'Return to the Dancefloor'. Those long months where, not only could we not go out properly, but had to cope without the joyous interactions that are only found in the throngs of people crammed into a nightclub or a gig venue, were some of the hardest we've faced as a human collective. As the first edition produced free from that context, this feels like our way at The Mic of putting that era of our lives to rest: staking the claim that we are moving onwards and upwards. More specifically, all this talk of dancefloors takes us into the meat of the magazine you hold in your hands. The ever-brilliant Caradoc Gayer, our Editor-In-Chief, has taken the reins on this edition and thematically based it upon the beauty of live music.

On the cover, interviewed by Caradoc himself, the mighty Leftfield take center stage, as they have since their rise to fame in the 90s rave scene. Filling the ranks are plenty of brilliant artists each waving their own flags. In an issue promoting genre variety perhaps more than any edition previously: groups like The Lightning Seeds are backed page to page with Working Men's Club, Honeyglaze, Cari Cari, Crawlers and Big Image. There are also an exciting variety of features: Roxann Yus addresses the need for renewed safety at gigs, Dom Allum recounts the dreamlike experience of WOMAD Festival 2022, and Cat Jordan interviews renowned Nottingham photographer, Jack Kimber.

I can say for certain that the challenges we've faced and overcome as a group have been well worth the finished product. So before I get caught up in my own words I'll say - enjoy the magazine!

Jake Longhurst



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CARI CARI

Ever since bursting into the consciousness of alternative music fans, Cari Cari have been defying expectations of what it is to be a 21st century band. The Austrian duo, composed of guitarist Alexander Köck, and drummer Stephanie Widmer, released their debut EP in 2014, and have since evolved their leftfield style of R&B-influenced indie rock. Ali Glen interviews them soon after the release of their second studio album, *Welcome to Kookoo Island*.



"We felt like, either the whole world was going crazy, and we're on this island of sanity, or instead that we're the kookoo ones"

"Cari Cari continue to prove that there is still a road less travelled available in the music industry"

Cari Cari have long resisted external pressure to mould them into anything outside of their own vision. "We just try to make being in a band as much fun as we can", guitarist and vocalist Alexander Köck explains, "We don't try to change who we are for success. If you don't then it's going to kill you, and if you do it's going to kill you too."

Nonetheless, the pair have found success in the form of their latest album *Welcome to Kookoo Island*, a release that received an Amadeus Music Award: Austria's answer to the Grammys. Artistically informed by the idyllic national park where they spent lockdown recording it, the record became something of a reflection on their place in the music industry. "We felt like, either the whole world was going crazy, and we're on this island of sanity, or instead that we're the kookoo ones. Especially when in the music industry, we don't have a record label or management, which is sometimes considered kookoo, but we feel like the music industry is kookoo!"

Köck acknowledges that there has to be a trade-off between absolute creativity, and chasing the sacred algorithm. "Led Zepelin had to do interviews, they had to tailor their album to vinyl, there have always been things that determine the way you make music." What he doesn't tolerate, however, is managers, with their endless calculations about Spotify numbers, trying to turn Cari Cari into influencers. "If I have 50 conversations with potential managers, then 49 will be asking us 'what is your TikTok strategy?' The music industry wants us to become content creators, and that's not what we signed up for."

This isn't to say that Cari Cari are averse to exploring the scope of multimedia. On

the contrary, Köck sees Cari Cari as "more than just a band". Alex's partner in crime, Stephanie Widmer (vocals, drums, didgeridoo), creates the music videos for all of the songs, a passion that she picked up from a young age, filming "James Bond recreations". Spanning from the Western inspired video for *Last Days on Earth*, to the Wayne's World tribute of *Zdarlight 1992*, and even a dabble into animation for *No Proper Life*, a key principle of Cari Cari is their commitment to a brand in front of the camera.

Likewise, the artwork is crucial for Köck and Widmer. All of their favourite artists growing up had a recognisable visual identity. This is something that they want to find for themselves - "how the record looks is just as important how it sounds. As a kid I went into record stores buying records because I liked how they looked. On the other side of that, I never got into Iron Maiden because I hated the artwork." At the core of this, as with much of what Cari Cari do, is an unquenchable desire to express themselves as honestly as possible. "There's a lot of bands, artwork, music that is perfectly executed, with beautiful imagery, great graphic design, but it doesn't do anything. We try not to be afraid of doing things a little bit differently, being a little rough around the edges to convey who we are as people, and not just making it onto the Spotify 'coffee house' playlist."

To promoters, Cari Cari may appear to be their worst nightmare brought to life, but their unconventional approach to publicity appears to be working. At the time of the interview, the band are midway through a European tour, regularly playing to over

1000 people, something Köck is quick to point out is bigger than people with "five times their Instagram followers." He attributes this success to their "niche audience" of people that "actually buy music and go to shows". "There's a lot of spaces that you can carve out for yourself in the music industry at the moment", a statement that has been verified through experience. It certainly helps that their live show is yet another medium which is integral to the Cari Cari experience, with a "6 meter submarine" for a stage. Having been put on a mandatory touring hiatus by the pandemic, the pair went all out to ensure that the shows were as memorable as possible. For Köck, it's important because of his belief in "the power of escapism", via which he can "give people 2 hours to forget who they are and where they come from".

Cari Cari are very clearly a band grounded in the present. Although their commitment to whatever makes them happiest might not make finding success as easy as their overwhelming talent deserves, it's what's important to them that makes the project worthwhile. Indeed, when I ask Alex what's next for Cari Cari, he introduces me to a German phrase. For Cari Cari, "der weg ist das ziel", or, in English, it's about the journey, not the destination. Of course, it's easy to travel the path they're on, when they're taking exactly the route that they've always wanted to. "My grandmother checked out one of the music videos and said to me 'you're still doing the same thing you did when you were fourteen!', and that's true, it's just more people are paying attention now.". Clearly, the band's belligerent independence has served them well so far. Cari Cari continue to prove that there is still a road less travelled available in the music industry. Long may that continue.

Words by Ali Glen
Design by Gemma Cockrell

BIG IMAGE

Meet Big Image: The Brummies who bring dance and house influences into a four-piece band set up. Gemma Cockrell chats to vocalist George Johnson about their recent EP, the 2022 festival season, performing at Villa Park and a text they may or may not have received from Beabadoobee's manager.



“The whole line up was young - new, fresh artists rather than heritage acts, it was really inspiring”

Big Image's latest EP, *Human Touch Is Forever*, was written during and heavily inspired by lockdown. "We wrote all of the songs in lockdown, except for the song that the EP title came from - it just kind of correlated and fitted in." Even though this was a difficult time for many, it fuelled the band's creative process by opening up an extended period of time for them to solely focus on writing. "I was lucky enough to get furlough, so it was almost like being a signed band. We weren't working, so we were just writing all the time, when normally you're working, or you've got other things to do, so don't have time for it. In a way, it was the best creative time for us really!"

The band also underwent a big rebranding of their image during this time (see what I did there?), abandoning their previous name, Ivory Wave in favour of their current moniker. "We'd written all this new music and we'd been around for a bit, so we decided to start afresh. We had a member leave, and we felt like we had the chance to start again and do everything how we wanted to do it," George explains. "When you're a band and you're touring, sometimes you don't get the chance to stop and think about whether you really like everything that you're doing. Sometimes, it comes so fast that you don't have a chance to stop and think."

Big Image's fusion of electro-pop and dance music really makes them stand out among other bands, so it was no surprise to hear George admit that he doesn't really listen to any typical 'bands', opting for hip-hop and dance music instead. "When Luke and I started the band, we were obsessed with Jagwar Ma, an Australian band. We got the EP produced by Steve Osbourne, who is famous for doing dance music records. He's not really done a lot of bands. Sometimes, when you're in a studio, producers can be a bit old fashioned, but we like to change it all up, and record the drums in a weird way, and things like that!"

The band got the opportunity to record live versions of every EP track at Villa Park, which were published to their YouTube channel. An absolute dream for the Birmingham locals, you'd think? Well... "I'm actually a West Brom fan!" George confesses. "So, it was the worst team's grounds for me to go and play at! Nah, it's all banter. To play in a massive stadium, hearing your music bouncing around... the experience was amazing, and Villa are



amazing for letting us do that. The rest of the lads in the band are all Villa supporters as well, so it meant a lot to them."

When I call George via Zoom on a Monday morning, he immediately admits that he is extremely hungover, but he explains that it is for a very valid reason: the band had just got back home after performing at The Neighbourhood Festival in Manchester that weekend. "We just went out and didn't come back home!" he laughs. "It was the first time we'd played Manchester for three years. For a band that has a stereotypical Manchester sound, it's always like 'why aren't we playing here every week?' so it was amazing to be back."

George also declares that the Community Festival at Finsbury Park was a highlight of Big Image's 2022 festival season. "It was the best one for me. It was funny, we were first on in the day, so I didn't think anyone would watch us because I didn't think anyone would be getting to the festival until 6pm. We walked out on stage, and it couldn't have been busier! It was mental. We had the first mosh pit of the day. The whole line up was young - new, fresh artists rather than heritage acts. It was really inspiring."

Alongside a busy festival season, Big Image got the opportunity to support huge bands like DMAs, and Circa Waves this summer. "It's always good when you're doing what you're doing, and then a band who are

smashing it think you're really good and ask if you can come and support them. It gives you that confidence to think we're doing the right thing! We always say we love supporting people, because you walk into a room, and no one knows who you are. By the end of your set, you can win all the fans over. They aren't inclined to like you, but we love the fact that it's a bit of a competition."

Looking to the future, Big Image are eager to score more support slots. "There's a Blossoms tour coming up that would be a dream. Kasabian as well, we love them," George muses. Then, some more unexpected names are thrown into the picture: "We'd also love to support someone like The Prodigy, The Chemical Brothers or someone like that." He does explain his reasoning here: "We've always said we'd love to support a band where everyone would think 'why are they supporting them?'. Like if we supported Harry Styles, or someone totally random."

Big Image have also received backing from BBC Introducing, something that George says you "can't put a price on". "It's amazing, the support they give you. It used to be NME and stuff like that - you'd get in when you were tiny, they'd write about you and it would launch your career, but that's not really a thing anymore unless you pay. BBC is totally free, and they really care about your music. If you're tiny and you send them a song and they

“Sometimes when you’re in a studio producers can be a bit old fashioned, but we like to change it up”

like it, they'll send it to Jack Saunders or someone like that. To be honest, they've been the only people who've supported us since the beginning. There was no benefit for them to do that, they just liked our music. We can't thank them enough.”

One of the topics that I was most excited to speak to George about was the fact that there is a mobile phone number on the band's website that fans can contact, leaving me intrigued to hear the most memorable message they've ever received. “It's pretty mad, because it's anonymous, so you can send anything and get away with it! Someone messaged us once, claiming to be Beabadoobee's manager, saying ‘can you give us a call?’ We thought it was a wind-up, so we didn't reply! Afterwards, we looked into it, and I actually think it was Beabadoobee's manager, but we just didn't think it could be real! Probably should have replied to that...” he laughs.



So, what's next for Big Image? “We're recording a lot at the moment, putting a lot of music together with a guy who produced a lot of The Chemical Brothers' stuff, which is amazing. Then, we're going to tour until our legs fall off! Carry on until no one books

us anymore,” he laughs. When pressed about whether these touring plans will involve a trip to Nottingham at any point, George tells me that they're actually in talks with some bands at the moment about playing Rock City. “We played there

back in 2019, before lockdown. It's the best venue ever!” he exclaims — a comment that I'm sure many of our Nottingham-based readers will be inclined to agree with.

Words and design by Gemma Cockrell

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO KEEP EVERYBODY SAFE AT CONCERTS?

Content Warning: This article contains discussion of sexual assault. If you, or someone you know are affected by the issues outlined below, please know that you are not alone. If you are in need of immediate support, seek it by calling VictimSupport on 0808 1689111 or Rape Crisis on 0808 802 9999. Local assistance can be found at the Topaz Centre (Nottingham's Sexual Assault Referral Centre). Alternatively, Nottingham Women's Centre offers a wide range of counselling services.

The conversation around women's safety intensified throughout 2022, within which cultures of sexual misbehaviour both in the corporate music industry and live music, were challenged. The Mic's Features Editor, Roxann Yus relates her personal account, and discusses how groping, verbal harassment, drink-spiking, and other violent behaviour in live music is still endemic.

Concerts are events where adrenaline is high- mosh pits and crowd surfing are par the course. Many artists encourage both, and that is just as much a part of the gig experience as the music itself. But what if they can cause just as much harm as enjoyment? Or even make fans vulnerable to sexual harassment? As an avid gig-goer, I have unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, experienced and witnessed such harm and harassment.

The frequency of these incidents leads me to a number of considerations. Should I attribute it to the fact that I am a woman, that I am not as equipped as my male counterparts to withstand the physical experience of being in a rowdy gig crowd- that this should make me more susceptible to harm? I'm forced to consider whether I should really be attending such events without a man by my side. Or even that it's perceived that my feminine appearance indicates I cannot 'really be into rock and metal music'? Not least the thought that I should have to stand on the side to avoid harassment.

I want to explain some of my personal experiences before answering the important question of how we can all stay safe at gigs - which should be a key aim of the music community. Firstly, mosh pits. I often find myself retreating from them - after plucking up the confidence to get involved- because some men view them as an opportunity to aggressively assert dominance, and thus, kick, punch, and jump on any friendly participants of the circle. In other cases, the mosh pit presents perpetrators with an opportunity for groping. Because who am I to know if it is an accident, or who even touched me, in such a frenzied environment? Even if it is accidental, it is uncomfortable enough for me to retreat and exclude myself from an experience I actively want to be a part of.

"The presentation of men as aggressive beings and women as sexual ones is macrocosmic: treatment within community-driven spaces is still dominated by wider stereotypes."

"I hope that these environments will no longer require the prerequisite of experience and confidence to be valid. I'd rather it be born from mutual energy"

Crowd-surfing presents a multitude of dangers for both crowd-surfers and crowds. For the crowd-surfer, these include the risk of being dropped as well as groped (again). Meanwhile, for the crowd the risks include being kicked, as well as being crushed under someone's weight. Within my own crowd experiences, I have been kicked and unable to support the weight of a surfer. Both risks manifested themselves at a particular 2022 gig: I was sharply kicked in the face by heavy boots, and then trampled by the crowd surfer. It was an extremely unpleasant experience and led to a panic attack. This is by far the most extreme example of harm at a concert that I have endured, but I nonetheless doubt that it's an isolated experience, which only I am familiar with.

Thirdly, is the most pernicious form of harm common at gigs, sexual harassment. Oftentimes it can be casual: a person walking past you, and for some reason, feeling entitled to use your hips as a lever. In other instances, it is more overt. I was groped very inappropriately at a 2021 concert and, despite my physical resistance, the perpetrator would not let go. My boyfriend noticed and intervened, which led to him being pulled up face-to-face by his shirt as an invitation to fight.

It is clear from the trauma of this incident that explicit aggression at gigs is most often directed towards men. Such an experience has affected my attitude towards the bands who played, despite their lack of control. I connect the incident with their music and find myself skipping their songs, after encountering them during my own listening.

When women, like myself, choose to enter the pit we consent to a violence that is tied inextricably to an 'alpha struggle'. It is a place that is not designed to include feminine presenting people: why would we be eligible to compete for alpha-status? Our presence seems confined to non-violent activities which submit us to secondary status - ones we don't even have a role in instigating, like sexual harassment. The presentation of men as aggressive beings and women as sexual ones is macrocosmic: treatment within community-driven spaces is still dominated by wider stereotypes.

When harm of any nature occurs at concerts, women are often the victims. We fall victim because for so long we have not been invited into this masculine arena. Our invitation to gig activities requires a change of the status quo, or else we must suddenly build up decades of experience and confidence to handle live music's chaos.

In the past few years many artists have addressed the issue head-on: slapping posters on the walls that state any verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated (Nova Twins); introducing signals for a timeout if anybody needs help (Boston Manor); or even stopping the show to help someone in the crowd (Billie Eilish and Death Blooms). These efforts are symbols of solidarity, and not only make us feel safe in their space, but also deflect disrespectful people out of them. Despite the impact that an artist's solidarity can have on the audience they attract, there are actors that stay silent on such matters, and by this I refer to the venues themselves. Indifferent security personnel are too often permitted to 'police' such events. Individual safety cannot be guaranteed, particularly in venues that host huge capacities: neither artist nor security can really witness what goes on.

If my partner beside me cannot see me kicked to the floor by a crowd surfer, how can the people who are paid to protect us be expected to? Efforts from artists contribute greatly to the behaviour of the audience but unless venues can ensure that people of all genders have equal protection through increased security, nothing changes. Music cannot have a dominator: it is as equally a part of my life as it is the next person

My main conclusion is that masculine presenting people fall naturally on the side of experienced and confident gig-goers, because society has tethered their identity to an aggression that is present in dominating situations. Music cannot have a dominator: it is as equally a part of my life as it is the next person. I hope that these environments will no longer require the prerequisite of experience and confidence to be valid. I'd rather it be born from mutual energy, but until then I can only praise the work of artists trying to make gigs safer. We should be grateful to have live music back, but let's not squander the opportunity to make it safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Words by: Roxann Yus
Design by: Emma Travers

The Hold TV Has on Popular Music: Stranger Things, Running up that Hill, and Everything Inbetween

Earlier in 2022, the beloved Netflix sci-fi drama, *Stranger Things* moved into its fourth and penultimate season. Its use of Kate Bush's *Running Up that Hill*, in its soundtrack, created almost unprecedented success for the 80s-alt-pop-hit. The Mic's Hal Hewlett reflects upon the blurry cultural line between music and visual entertainment.

I cannot escape from *Running Up That Hill*. It is on the stereo in the car in the morning, it is on the radio at work, its shitty EDM remixes thicken the air in the clubs at evening. In the murky soup of social media, it bubbles up irregularly through algorithmic recommendations. On a quaint day trip to Bath, someone drove by three times blasting an aforementioned remix so loudly that it drowned out the noises of the train.

The culprit here is obvious. Although inertia is finally beginning to impose itself on the powerful momentum of 80s nostalgia baiting, *Stranger Things* continues to chug onwards to its final season, releasing some time in (probably) 2024. In the meantime, the show, which has become emblematic of a large cultural throwback to the 1980s in the latter 2010s and early 2020s that encompasses everything from *It* to *Adventureland*, continues to occasionally thrust cultural relics of that era idiosyncratically back into the mainstream.

"It's a massive pavlovian experiment.... music standing both for itself and for the shows and social media trends that utilise it."

But, frankly, I feel like many are framing this dynamic in a strange way. When Roxann, *The Mic's* Features Editor, suggested this topic she wrote it as "the hold TV has on popular music". And that is certainly a way to look at it- this show thrust *Running Up That Hill* back into the charts, the clubs and the zeitgeist. But in reality, this is one more point in the symbiotic maze of modern media promotion, where everything is simply a signifier of everything else. Music that consumers hear in television shows is edited over video trends, screenshots of which are posted to other social media sites and, if writers are savvy enough, recreated or referenced in television shows. It's a massive pavlovian experiment in which each part is both bell and treat, music standing both for itself and for the shows and social media trends that utilise it. In the case of old pop music - it's classic conditioning.

If television and movies are the filter through which we view old popular music, then like any filter, there are some clumps that don't get through. There's a reason that the soundtrack of *Stranger Things 4* is so widely noticed - because they don't play around. Out of every licensed song on the soundtrack that is played prominently, almost all of them were popular and ear-catching. Songs like *Psycho Killer*, *Rock Me Amadeus* or *Fire and Rain* are not here to just create a mood, they are songs that likely have scenes written around their inclusion - meaning that rights holders can afford to play hardball with big-budget productions.

The rise of short video-based content across social media sites (spurred by the success of TikTok and followed up on by Instagram and Youtube with Reels and Shorts respectively) have made soundtracks and music part and parcel of online television discussion. Themes like that of Better Call Saul or Game of Thrones are easily recognisable from only a few notes and, importantly, can be edited over almost any video based content. The use of popular music in these shows, then, serves as a repeated gamble of getting something associated with your show thrown into the recommended pages of millions of users.

But, as in many facets of the music industry, big players are muscling in and taking an even bigger share of the profits. How many people could tell you who did the theme song for Stranger Things, or any of the dozens of atmospheric synth pieces that are nearly omnipresent? The musicians putting in the work to create these pieces are likely seeing a minute portion of the show's \$270 million budget. An article from the Hollywood Reporter speculates that smaller artists could be seeing as low as a hundredth of the amount for their music licensing as larger artists are haggling for. Songs like the Talking Heads' Psycho Killer are thematic, recognisable and catchy, showing up in shows as disparate and popular as 'Stranger Things', 'The Boys', 'Riverdale' and 'It's Always Sunny' - there's no telling how much money the artist and label are making from tracks like these, but as "syncs" continue to grow their share of the music market, it's no doubt that prices for these high-value tracks are growing too.

"While the idea of a kind of music lottery that rights giants are simply betting on may seem cynical, there is room in this emerging ecosystem for smaller artists to make something happen."

While the idea of a kind of music lottery that rights giants are simply betting on may seem cynical, there is room in this emerging ecosystem for smaller artists to make something happen. Foals, now one of the most popular and enduring bands in Britain right now, got their start in Skins, before their first album had even been released - years later, they're headlining festivals. Entwining their music with a cult TV show certainly isn't the only thing that led to their success, but you'd be hard pressed to say it didn't help. However, in more recent times, television music selection has been a little stale. Even in shows that market themselves to teenaged demographics, like HBO's Euphoria, you will find swathes of songs by older artists like INXS, leaving contemporaneous small artists to social media, and a shot at going viral.

The rise of "syncs" as a key part of music marketing and the way in which tracks reach our ears is still coming into its own as an important part of the music landscape. One can hope that this rising tide will lift the ships of a wide variety of artists, not just wealthy, popular rights holders, and that artists and songwriters (and, in many cases, their estates), will benefit from the increasingly symbiotic nature of music and television. Running Up That Hill was not the first song to skyrocket back into the charts thanks to television or movies, but the sheer prevalence of it has ensured that the ears of these industries have pricked. We can't know what the next Running Up That Hill is going to be - but everyone knows that they want it to be them.

Words by: Hal Hewlett
Design by: Emma Travers



HONEYGLAZE

London-based indie rock band Honeyglaze are now nearly three years since their debut shows, and hot off the heels of their first album release, earlier this summer. They bring an individualistic, laidback, and chilling (bordering occasionally on dark) approach to the alternative landscape. They've accompanied their smattering of singles with well-produced music videos, and a self-titled record that is extremely thematically strong. Hal Hewlett interviews the band, and learns that they're looking to the future.

Words by: Hal Hewlett
Design by: Faith Hussain

Your debut feels like it draws from a lot of wells, like post-rock, contemporary indie, etc. Are there any particular acts that you kept in mind when making this album - contemporary or otherwise?

The making of the record mainly consisted of us three as individuals bringing our own tastes, in quite an isolated way. The result was just the sum of it which formed the initial sound and mood. We have styles and artists that we like or are inspired by that overlap between us, but since the record didn't have a concept, it was purely what came to us individually and as a collective, most naturally.

“We are part of a local community/scene centred around a couple pubs, but it's amorphous, and expands as we meet more people.”



What was the creative process like in finding your sound for this album, and do you feel like that sound is still changing?

There wasn't much to the searching aspect for a sound, but there were certainly explorations in playing with the trio dynamic. You have a lot of expressionistic freedom with the space that's there to be filled. The sound is certainly changing with intention and I think it is quite noticeable in comparison to our first record. It functions as the foundation for the next musical and sonic stage of our project.

How do you go about composing songs on this record? The lyrics are often very personal and candid - do you try to build the sound around that mood, or is it something else?

All of the songs were written over a 2-3 year period, going from being a teenager into my twenties, and I think the lyrics do really capture that period of my life. I generally write lyrics and melodies together, and that's really how the mood is formed, and once we play them together the vibe will sort of deepen as we really figure out the song.

Was it strange for you all to form when the future of live music was so up in the air? Did you have any anxieties about your ability to make it through that period as an act, and how does it feel to be out in the fresh air, so to speak?

We were all just quite happy with playing together in a rehearsal room, so there wasn't really a fear or anxiety of that. We naturally accepted gigs that came to us and it hasn't stopped. We're just taking things step-by-step and having fun making music as friends.

“I once wrote a computer program to generate haikus from a group chat.”

I really feel like the UK alternative scene has had some high-quality acts lately. Do you share that sentiment, and more importantly, where do you see yourselves in that landscape?

We definitely share that sentiment. It's a privilege being able to live in a city like London, where you can see an amazing artist every night if you want to. Also now, as we're doing festivals, we're seeing acts from the rest of the country. We are part of a local community/scene centred around a couple pubs, but it's amorphous, and expands as we meet more people. I wouldn't say we fit into any particular genre-specific movement or anything.

Your page on Red Light Management describes you as "haiku-loving". Any favourite haikus?

I once wrote a computer program to generate haikus from a group chat. My favourite is:

"actually i
that is so like but sort of
ah, well i digress"

You guys accompanied each of your singles ahead of your first album with a music video, which isn't that popular among a lot of bands nowadays. And they're very well produced! Why is this something that you guys value?

Music videos are just such a fun opportunity to be creative outside of our music, as well as involving other artists and our friends in what we do. We're all creative people and are really into film and art, so having another outlet to give a different context to our music is great.

And finally - the earliest show I can find of you all, is in a small box at FarmFest 2020. Does it feel strange to look back on that now, with two years and a debut album release under your belt?

It's shocking to see the amount of shows we've done since then, but generally it feels like we've accomplished what we would have wanted to do, up until now. We're grateful for all the people we've met and experiences we've had on our UK and EU excursions. We never thought we'd even leave that box.

THIS IS WHAT WE DO
LEFT FEEL





Legendary dance act Leftfield, founded by Neil Barnes and Paul Daley, are behind some of the most important British albums of the past thirty years. As progenitors of the dance-genre dubbed 'progressive house', they rose to shining prominence in the 90s-UK-rave-scene with their iconic debut *Leftism*. Following the departure of Paul Daley, Neil Barnes stepped up to the role of frontman, releasing the third Leftfield record in 2015, and the fourth in December of 2022. In November, on the verge of the album release date and a UK tour, Neil spoke to Caradoc Gayer, *The Mic's* Editor-in-Chief.




I phone up Leffield frontman Neil Barnes on a November morning. One hour from now I'll be travelling to Nottingham, after visiting my family in the south-west. Neil, on the other hand, has returned to London after playing at Klub Wytwornia in Poland. He's soon to embark upon a sold-out-UK-tour, after the release of the fourth Leffield record in early December. With the widespread railway strikes in mind, I've been dreading my long train journey all morning, but suddenly I feel a little unjustified in doing so.

Neil sounds energetic and relaxed, despite his packed schedule. This is perhaps due his music-centric approach thus far to promoting *This Is What We Do*, the first Leffield record in seven years. 'I haven't done many interviews. I suppose that I did the one with the *Guardian*. This side of things is not really what I'm about, but I like talking to people about music, so I'm happy to enjoy it.'

These are, perhaps, humble words for a man of Barnes' industry prowess. His upcoming album is the fourth chapter in a story stretching back to 1989, that played an unprecedentedly huge part in constructing UK rave culture. Along with his bandmate Paul Daley, Barnes elevated Leffield to stand, influence-wise, in amongst 90s dance-contemporaries like Underworld and the Chemical Brothers, releasing two Mercury Prize-nominated albums: *Leflism* and *Rhythm and Stealth*. Following Daley's departure in 2010, Barnes released the meditative *Alternative Light Source* in 2015. Conceptually, *This Is What We Do* is looking to be the most liberatory Leffield release yet: it's a dance album, from the masters of dance, that bridges 'the whole covid-nightmare situation,' as Neil puts it.

'Each track, because of my life experiences, meant that I had started them with concepts. Some of them worked, and some of them didn't. We start a track with a concept, and try to hold on to it. But you get issues. Some vocalists you can't get, or different vocalists work, and certain things don't work. Because I'm not a singer-songwriter, the overall sound is the concept. That concept is being exciting, relevant, and a journey. Making people dance, and making people think about what they're doing.'

At the time of our conversation, Neil has released three singles from the record: *Accumulator*, *Pulses*, and *Full Way Round*. Each track has a faster pace and energy than the general atmosphere of *Alternative Light Source*. Neil laughs when I mention that I wrote the word 'aggressive' in my notes.



The biggest influence on the record is that I've done so much DJing since *Alternative Light Source*. I've been DJing in underground clubs, playing modern techno and house music of varying kinds. I've tried to fit that type of vibe in *Accumulator and Pulses*. In many parts of the album the drums are more upfront and stripped down. It's definitely a tougher sound, a very powerful sound. There are also different circumstances around its making, as we're in a more settled studio, we know our sound, and we're in a different stage of life. But the album is still a journey. It's mainly got influences from modern electronic music, and you have to hear the whole thing to get it.

“ I SUPPOSE THAT THERE'S A CELTIC THING, A RAWNESS, AN HONESTY, AND A BRAVERY IN THE VOCAL, THAT I REALLY LIKE FROM BOTH JASON AND GRIAN. ”

Certainly, whereas *Alternative Light Source* might have signified a small stylistic diversion in its ambient leanings, the singles from *This Is What We Do* recall the relentless rave-phoria of *Leftism* and *Rhythm and Stealth*. Some part of that could be attributed to the important presence of, once Leftfield sound-engineer, now co-producer and writer, Adam Wren. 'Adam engineered Original...' Neil explains, mentioning Leftfield's Toni Halliday—featuring Wren's single, that gave the group their first appearance on *Top of the Pops*. '...he then engineered the whole of *Rhythm and Stealth*. He's now basically half of Leftfield, and his input is massive. He's produced a lot of the music and has a big share in the writing. So yes, there's a lot of crossover between our roles, like there often is with electronic music. He also mixed the record, so had massive control over its acoustics.'

Original is one of Leftfield's most well-known 90s singles: a good example of their pioneering tendency to include guest-vocals on dance tracks. Until Leftfield rose to prominence, artistic anonymity and facelessness had been characteristic of club music. In the case of This Is What We Do, Fontaines DC frontman Grian Chatten is one of the main vocal presences; he sings on Full Way Round. 'I was working on two demos,' Neil mentions. 'I was wrong about one and (Grian) picked this one. He was always in my mind as someone I'd like to work with. So no, we didn't sit down and produce it with him in the room, but we still shaped the sound a lot after his input.'

“ WE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DO. DANCE MUSIC WAS ALL ABOUT PLAYING RECORDS, AND DJs. SUDDENLY GOING OUT INTO A LIVE ENVIRONMENT POSES DIFFICULTIES AND ISSUES. ”

Neil and Grian's collaboration parallels another which featured on *Alternative Light Source*. Back in 2015, Neil enlisted the help of Sleaford Mods frontman Jason Williamson, who provided vocals for Head and Shoulders. It's an interesting pattern, I mention to Neil, in that Sleaford Mods and Fontaines DC are both giants of UK post-punk. 'It's a world that I'm attracted to collaborating with,' Neil explains, 'and you can trace it back to our work with John Lydon and Tunde from TV on the Radio. I suppose that there's a Celtic thing, a rawness, an honesty, and a bravery in the vocal, that I really like from both Jason and Grian. Only with Jason, I put the music around a poem that he wrote. It's also interesting to see the reaction to those tracks. It's equally weird from the radio, where they're sort of reticent, because the music is so on it. So yeah, I find their politics and views very interesting.'

Throughout the 90s, Leftfield certainly symbolised a particular kind of anti-establishment furor linked with UK rave culture. Open Up, their legendary collaboration with the Sex Pistols' John Lydon, was a good example. Barnes met Lydon when the two were 19, and enlisted him to sing on the track. It became quintessential of the genre dubbed progressive house, with Lydon screaming 'Burn Hollywood burn!' over pounding drums and pulsing synthesisers. Yet, despite their collaborations with vocalists as iconic as Lydon, Leftfield became known for their unrefined and legendarily loud live shows. Within them, they'd engage in spontaneous techno jams, barely playing any of their big hits. For Neil, this aspect is still somewhat part of the live show:

'The initial shows are going to be largely about the new album. Some of the other tracks will be there. But we're still combining stuff on a playback system with jamming over the top. There are all sorts of things we're trying out and experimenting with. I still play congas; percussion is a really big part of it throughout.'





Without a doubt, Leftfield shows have always been of a different breed. Neil and Paul Daley drew inspiration from underground DJing culture, and sources like the Notting Hill Carnival samba bands, which Neil was part of as a young man. In doing so, they devised new ways to perform dance music. There are urban legends that circulate about 90s Leftfield shows: how the sheer volume detached plaster from the walls in Brixton, and caused legal action by Dutch and Belgian authorities.

'We didn't think it was possible to do,' Neil reflects. 'Dance music was all about playing records, and DJs. Suddenly going out into a live environment poses difficulties and issues. In festivals, you can't do certain things that you do whilst DJing. It's a bigger sound, people want to hear it sounding like the track, you've got complex arrangements, and have to use a lot of technology. It's all very expensive too. When we started, it was only us, Underworld, The Chemical Brothers, and a few others, and we all used sequencers. But we all did it in slightly different ways.'

No doubt, before artists of Leftfield's ilk, dance music had been mostly confined to the underground house and techno scenes of late 80s Chicago and Detroit. Before Neil rushes off, I throw him a last-minute influences question. For my own peace of mind, I've got to know whether Chicago and Detroit DJs were present in his and Paul Daley's mind, whilst they were making Leftism. DJs like Frankie Knuckles are in my mind, but Neil enthusiastically name-drops Richie Hastin instead.

'All that music influenced Paul's DJing an awful lot,' he reflects, with something of a smile in his voice. 'It was a massive part of Rhythm and Stealth too. I'm still influenced by DJs and spend so much time listening to music of today.'

This answer certainly puts my mind at rest, confirming how Leftfield have always been a channel for contemporary music's radical and subversive elements, be it John Lydon or Jason Williamson, or counter-cultural-dance-music from the USA. With this album, Leftfield will no doubt continue to make people dance and think, with an enriching collection of boundary-pushing progressive house, that you can lose yourself within but be challenged by at the same time. To conclude: long-live boundary breaking dance music and may the spirit of Leftfield never fade.

'This is What We Do' is available to buy and stream now. Tickets are now available for Leftfield's re-scheduled tour dates: This is What We Tour, in 2023. The dates are from the 18th May to the 9th June. Tickets are available from leftfieldmusic.com.

Words by Caradoc Gayer, designed by Kamile Mazeliauskaitė

WORKING MENS CLUB

Yorkshire four-piece, and synth wizards, Working Men's Club efficiently found their sound on their self-titled album, released in 2020. Described by their London label, Heavenly, as 'songs created in the shadow of terror and loss, but that crackle and pop with defiance, wrestled into being over one of the most extraordinary years in recent history', Fear Fear is a remarkable change of pace. Frontman, Syd Minsky-Sargeant shares with The Mic's Releases Editor Ewan Samms how the second record came to be, ahead of a near-sold-out UK tour.

As someone who loved the first record, it's been cool to see you take your sound to a darker place. How's that been for you? Was that a purposeful decision, or did it happen naturally?

I guess it was kind of a natural progression within the songs that were written. I definitely didn't want to repeat the first album 'cause I think that would've been a pretty bland thing to do. Within the climate I was writing the tunes in, I guess it was just a natural way to lead it, but it definitely wasn't purposeful, like, 'oh I'm gonna make a darker record'. It was just the way the tunes were.

The album's title, Fear Fear. I was wondering if you could break that down for me. Is it literal? Are you calling people to fear fear itself?

Well, it was actually just the track title, to be honest, but it was very much about that too. There was another name for the record, but it coincided that we went with that one in the end. I think it's a good summary of the themes within the album, and where it's come from. It made sense to call the whole record that.

I kind of have an obsession with opening tracks, and 19 does what I think a great opening track should do. It's like you're laying out your tools for the listener to see. How long did it take to build that track?

I originally had that on a different playlist to the second record, as I was trying to make a kind of more cinematic record on the side. Towards the end of finishing the album, I ended up taking 19 from that and putting it on Fear Fear. I remember doing that in one afternoon really. I kind of the basic arrangement of the song, all the lyrics and music. I wanted to make the production quite grand, so I kind of dried it out, made it more sonically cohesive, and re-recorded it. I'm a big fan of opening and closing tracks as well.

When I talk to friends about the band, the first thing they say is, 'it sounds like the 80s.' However, I feel that to say the tracks sound derivative is reductive. I think you're using similar tools as past bands, and using them in new ways, or combining them with new tools. Is that how you see it?

Thanks man, that's very sweet of you. I think you kind of hit the nail on the head there really, 'cause we are using the same synthesizers that people from 40 years ago were using. We're definitely trying to be innovative with the way that we operate the kit. Also, I feel like there's an art to trying to be minimal with electronic music, not so much on the second album but I guess more so on the first. The way I write songs is that I try to lay them out with a classic songwriter template, but the production is a massive part of it. There's a lot of fine details within the sorts of sounds we use, especially in stuff like Widow, which I guess you could say sounds like the '80s, 'cause it's got a lead synth line. But there's loads of modular drum sounds and stuff like that, which I guess a listener might not pick out. There's loads of stuff you wouldn't have been able to do in the '80s, but it's whether or not the listener picks them out. I can see the comparison, and I wouldn't dismiss it, but I'm definitely looking forward, rather than trying to imitate something that's already been done, 'cause I don't think that's very exciting.

The other thing I've found striking is the visuals for this album, especially compared to the last rollout. They're high contrast and colourful and almost distorted. There's an otherworldliness to them. Was that intentional? Does the record exist in a kind of alternate space?

Yeah, I guess so, that's definitely where we were trying to head with it. Personally, I think it's all quite confusing, which I guess, to a point, makes sense with the record's themes. I think it's nice to tie everything together with the colours, even though it can be quite contrasting.

It was really cool to see your collaboration with Adidas, I bet that must've been pretty satisfying. I'm actually still waiting to buy a pair of those shoes. But that's besides the point. What really stuck out to me, is you said that you started as a guitarist and then electronics came later. I was wondering if you could remember your first experience with electronics. Was it a synthesiser, or was it a laptop, or what?

From school, I was messing around with music production, just kind of building up demos on basic music software. I got a couple of synths, and I was writing the first record, but prior to even knowing I was writing an album, I had a Roland 505 and a Volka FM synth. Two basic bits of kit really, but I wrote a lot of the first record with them. They were just interesting tools to use alongside a guitar and a bass, and that's how I wrote, just making loops with them, not really knowing what I was doing. I think that there's a nice side to naivety and not necessarily knowing where somethings heading. I, at points, wish that I could go back there.

You're in Tesco, there's 3-for-2 on chocolate bars, what three chocolate bars are you getting?

I'd probably get one of them Lindt chocolate orange ones, 'cause they're right bougie. Try them 'cause they are fuckin' nice. A Kinder Bueno and then probably... a KitKat Chunky.

Greatest rapper of all time?

I'm a big fan of Jurassic 6

"I'm definitely looking forward, rather than trying to imitate something that's already been done, 'cause I don't think that's very exciting."



"There's a nice side to naivety and not necessarily knowing where something's heading..."

Words by: Ewan Samms
Design by: Emma Travers

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



EMMA TRAVERS

WOMAD

festival

During the summer of 2024, The Mic's Thom Allan attended the widely acclaimed WOMAD Festival, upon the 40th anniversary of its founding. Below, he gives his account of the festival's multitude of spectacles.

As its name suggests, WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance) is a festival that has always tried to showcase the best our planet has to offer. Despite moving location a number of times over the years, it has always carried its ethos of community and celebration along with it. Now taking place in the beautiful, scenic grounds of Charlton Park in Malmesbury, we headed down to the woods to join in the 40th anniversary celebrations. Whilst only there for the Saturday, we could have easily stayed for a week. One of those festivals where surprises wait round every corner; and new delights can be found underneath every tent; the best way to approach WOMAD is to simply allow yourself to be swept up in its wonderful wares.

"Whilst many festivals are simply created as an escape from reality, WOMAD ensures those who attend it are more finely tuned and connected to the world around them."



Beginning our afternoon at the Siam tent, we join the large crowd gathered to enjoy the infectious grooves of 9-piece afro-jazz collective Nubiyau Twist. This is a band who, no matter how many times you have seen them, create a sound that feels completely new every time it enters your eardrums, vibrations travelling through the bones in your body till each one of your toes is wriggling. Clearly a festival close to bandleader Tom Excell's heart, he speaks passionately about WOMAD, saying how he first came to the festival when he was 11, and is honoured to be performing in a tent that he watched so much amazing music in as a child. As young and old alike cheer and dance, the audience echoes the spirit of community and collectivism that Nubiyau Twist project from the stage, creating the feeling that we are all part of one big...

...Moon. Big Moon. There's a giant replica of the moon looming over us in the woods. We take one small step towards it, looking up at its intricately detailed surface. The project of British visual artist Luke Jerram, the 7m diameter internally lit orb, located in the heart of the secret forest, is a truly magnificent spectacle. Whilst some lie down amongst the leaves, we stand in awe as Yazz Ahmed's accompanying score plays out through the speakers attached to the tree trunks around us. A fully immersive experience, the soundscape at times feels like being in Ben Wheatley's forest-horror film *In the Earth*. A hypnotising experience that taps into all your senses, it is like you're walking on...

...Air. We're now suspended in the air. How did we get here? Having boarded the giant Ferris wheel that stands in the middle of the arena, we are spun slowly round and round as we are given a breathtaking view of the site in all its glory. Rising above the treetops, we take in the stunning vistas and landscapes, looking peacefully down on all the festival goers, as the arena is stretched out below us. Each time we return back down to the ground, the festival compresses together as the sound of the nearby stages can be heard once more. As we rise and fall, it's at times like these that you really get the chance to stop and think about...

...Food. Cooking demonstrations are not something you see at every festival. As we take a stroll through the World of Wellbeing, we encounter healing rituals, handmade sculptures and the Taste the World stage, where artists throughout the day cook their favourite dishes, whilst soundtracking their own food prep with live performances. Heading from here to the D&B Soundscape stage, we enter the tent to the enchanting percussive sounds of Sarathy Korwar, his bands unique blend of Indian drones and experimental jazz having a hypnotising effect that is only broken when the set finishes to the sounds of rapturous cheers and...

...Chants. Eastern European chants echo from the Charlie Gillet stage, as Ukrainian free folk band Folktery perform a set of traditional folk music that is both powerful and moving. Pausing mid-set to deliver an emotional speech on the horrific events taking place back in their homeland, they make clear that the mistreatment innocent civilians are facing in Ukraine are issues that have always existed in their country, only now being made truly visible to the rest of the western world by the presence of war. It is far from over and the country needs all the support it can get.

To be able to use this platform in this way shows how WOMAD is so much more than a music festival. Whilst many festivals are simply created as an escape from reality, WOMAD ensures those who attend it are more finely tuned and connected to the world around them, being a festival that not only seeks to entertain, but educate others on the various cultures and plights of our planet. Heading from here to the Open-Air stage, we see how this is true once again in the presence of West African female supergroup Les Amazones d'Afrique. Politically charged, Les Amazones d'Afrique empower and celebrate women (Heavy is a tribute to the strength and courage of their female ancestors who made their own way in the world), whilst simultaneously urging that violence against women must stop; whether that be the barbaric practice of female genital mutilation, carried out on young girls in Africa (denounced in tracks *Love and Power*) or domestic and sexual abuse that still occurs in so many households across the globe. Delivering these condemnations alongside beautiful harmonies and meticulously choreographed dance routines, Les Amazones d'Afrique create a perfect blend and fusion of afrobeat, pop and breakbeat. As we wave our arms in sync from side to side, it is impossible not to feed off their endless energy, activism and good...

...Night. Suddenly it is night time, the sun having sneakily set whilst we were looking the other way. Yet as the rain just about holds off, the perfect conditions are created to finish off the evening with psychedelic rock legends The Flaming Lips. Emerging onto the Open-Air stage with a barrage of lasers and lights, the band arrive in spectacular colourful fashion. Clutching a mechanical bird, charismatic frontman Wayne Coyne begins with a long softly spoken speech about what the bird symbolises in the opening track *My Cosmic Autumn Rebellion*. Intending to fly amongst the crowd during the track, he releases the bird only for it to be thrown drastically off course by the wind and crash headfirst into the roof of the stage. Although not the aim of its inclusion in the show, its fate is quite poetic.

Words by: Dom Allum

Design by: Vivika Sahajpal

As the band storm through classics such as *Do You Realise??* and *She Don't Use Jelly*, the audience is treated to one visual feast after another as the lights, screen projections and mass speakers combine in one ecstatic sensory overload. An inflatable rainbow is replaced by the unveiling of a massive giant pink robot, bringing to life the nemesis from *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*. Coyne then fires confetti cannons into the crowd, before climbing into his trademark Zorb to sling crowd favourite *Waitin' for a Superman*. Despite appearing to have arrived from some nearby space colony, Coyne remains completely down to earth, humbly talking to the crowd about how grateful he is to be appearing at the 40th anniversary of the festival. At one point, following an outrageously good outro guitar solo by Steven Drozd, the stage remains quiet for a moment before Coyne remarks "man, I was so lost in that solo I forgot where I was for a second... and I was singing the song!". Perhaps the highest compliment you can receive from your fellow bandmate. One of the most effective strengths of The Flaming Lips is their ability to take you on a full emotional journey with each track they play. Whilst at times your brain may feel lost or overwhelmed by the electronic dissonance created, you always emerge with clarity and resolution, emphatic melodies making you feel as if this was always where you were meant to end up (the outro of *Moth in the Incubator* is testament to this). The night drawing to an end, Coyne addresses the crowd once more, stating how as far as he's concerned, "there is no cooler place to be in the world, right now, than right here". As the triumphant encore of *Race for the Prize* echoes out, and giant balloons spelling 'Fuck Yeah WOMAD!' are brought onto the stage, we couldn't agree more.

Crawlers

In autumn 2021, the Liverpool-based band Crawlers amassed, staggeringly quickly, a devoted fanbase after the release of their self-titled debut EP. Their most recent release, *Loud Without Noise* has cemented them as one of the most excitingly forward thinking acts in UK alternative rock. Jake Longhurst, The Mic's Managing Director, interviewed the band at Reading Festival 2022.

On a late summer day, right of the Reading Festival main stage, I chatted with up-and-coming alternative band Crawlers. We were sat on a picnic bench, painted in the Reading & Leeds festival colour scheme: the bright red and yellow was a bizarre contrast to the mostly black outfits of those at the table. The band were in high spirits, as were we, and we discussed bands that had played the night before, namely Bring Me The Horizon and the Arctic Monkeys. We talked at length about who got closer to hugging Oli Sykes, and everybody's 'hangover' neck pain (a headbanging hangover).

Crawlers had recently opened for emo heavyweights My Chemical Romance, in their home town of Warrington. Lead vocalist Holly Minto and bassist Liv Kettle expressed their utter disbelief at the band playing there. Holly imitated Liv: 'I'm not being funny but we have to support them', Holly's always been utterly devoted to the band, and "used to listen to [The] Ghost Of You every day before school". She "nearly died" when Gerard Way said their name on stage. His constant referral to Warrington as Manchester, and his going on about 'who the fuck knows where Warrington is', made the band laugh a lot; they admit that he did have a point.



We discussed their month-long tour around the USA, which involved spending about "120 hours in a Chevy". The first thing mentioned, beyond that heinous amount of driving, was the huge culture shock: the band remarked upon the difference between American and British senses of humour. Mostly, Liv was on the receiving end of a confused look after cracking a joke, instead of a chuckle or at least an admission of understanding. One exception to that rule was Los Angeles, which was "crackers", but they conceded how they spent a lot of time with English people in LA. Maybe this was why they enjoyed it so much.

When they reached Texas, Crawlers spent most of their time in a car, rather than getting out to enjoy the state. The cities were the best bit, as they tended to be liberal, but places between were mostly a no-go. It wasn't going to be an easy ride, as an openly queer alternative band in one of the most strongly religious states. Holly often makes onstage jokes, and before playing their song I Can't Drive, she would always crack a little joke about it, and ask the audience who couldn't drive. This was a particular problem in the vast Texas state, as to be able to get further than their town most Americans have to be able to drive. So when confronted with 14-16 year olds who all said they could drive, Holly (22, can't drive) was understandably miffed.



This is all testament to how the band has come through with nothing but hard work, and love of what they do.

I asked the band about their meteoric rise on TikTok, off of their brilliant single Come Over (Again): a song claimed by the trans community, and the broader LGBTQ+ community as an empowering anthem. To summarise the vague noises they made in answer, they're probably more shocked than anyone else!

A year prior the interview, (about September 2021) Holly and Liv "were living off of rice and beans" and felt like they "were living on (TV show) I'm A Celeb", fast-forward, they're sitting in Reading, having watched Charli XCX pass by them in the artists area. Holly reminisced upon a photo from her Snapchat memories, marking when the band's first single got to 10,000 listens. Looking at the band's Spotify at the time of writing and not a single song released before 2021 has less than 850,000 listens, most of them being over one million. Two days previous, when the band played Leeds, Liv saw her own snapchat memories show her her first Leeds festival five years previous. This is all testament to how the band has come through with nothing but hard work, and love of what they do.

As evidenced by their, at-the-time, most recent single I Don't Want It, the band, and chiefly Holly as the singer and lyricist, tend to write personal and vulnerable music. Holly explained, 'It's what connects the most. We do write songs from other's perspectives, but it tends to be songs from mine, that people connect with most, and that we perform best.' This is evidenced by the band's live show; they are nothing if not personal, and connect with each and every member of the audience, whether newcomer or diehard fan. According to Holly her bandmates sometimes tell her that a song might even be too personal or upfront. I Don't Want It is directly ripped from Holly's therapy notes, making for an intense examination of her mindset. Nicely enough, their label specifically mentioned how much they loved the lyrics, to which Holly retorted, with just a hint of sarcasm (read: loads) 'I'm glad you like my therapy notes' and got us all giggling.

Following this was a serious conversation surrounding my two favourite interview questions - asking bands to curate their own supergroups, and the biscuits each of them would be in a human-biscuit world.

Holly started off strong: 'I love the Portishead drummer but can't remember their name!'. With the as-of-yet-unnamed Clive Deamer joining the fold, Holly added Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth for bass and backing vocals, followed by fellow bandmate Amy Woodhall on guitar, and herself on vocals. Amy put forward the almost unbeatable choice of Abba and N-Dubz, and we all suggested features of Pitbull and DJ Khaled. Harry had a bit of a think, before choosing Rage Against The Machine's Zach de la Rocha on vocals, described by Harry as 'the best vocalist in the world', with Jimi Hendrix on guitar, Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers on bass, and again himself behind the kit. Liv chose the ridiculously skilled Justin Chancellor from the band Tool, with Kurt Cobain on vocals, Dave Grohl on drums, and Orianthi on guitar. Her band was my personal favourite, other than the potential Abba, N-Dubz, Pitbull and DJ Khaled collaboration of course.

There were more jokes about N-Dubz and Abba, and discussion of a possible Crawlers secret set later that day. Then, the most important question of the entire interview addressed which biscuit each band member would hypothetically be. Amy jumped in instantly (almost to the point of preparation, who told her about my question?). She'd be 'I'd be a choccy digestive'. Her response as to why was succinct - 'they're just the best innit', which truly does sum the biscuit up. The other three then took a moment to think (and no doubt recover from Amy's frightening reply speed) before Liv revealed she'd be a custard cream 'because they're elite... not saying I'm elite but they're just the best biscuit'. I was inclined to agree. Holly went for the plant based subway cookies, and Harry revealed 'Oreo! I'd be an Oreo.' The band started bullying Liv as to the sheer volume of Oreos she'd consumed on the US tour. Admittedly her defence was strong, in that she had celiac disease in the only country where gluten-free Oreos exist.

Crawlers were as down to earth as you could hope. As such the interview became more of a friendly conversation between music lovers and music players than anything else. It proved (not that it needs proving) that if anyone deserves the amazing time they're having right now, it's them. As the band readied themselves for their set, later that day, I sat back in the summer sun, and reflected that sometimes your heroes are the friendliest bunch of people that you could ever meet.

"...sometimes your heroes are the friendliest bunch of people that you could ever meet..."



Words by: Jake Longhurst
Design by: Vivika Sahajpal



Powerplant
@ The Bodega
29.05.2022



Jockstrap @ The Level
29.05.2022



Otala
@ Rough Trade
26.11.2022



Heartworms & Lime garden
@ The Bodega, 7.11.2022



Charlotte Foulkes'
gig sketches around
Nottingham.

A CONVERSATION WITH JACK KIMBER

Jack Kimber is a Nottingham-based, award-winning events photographer, working at festivals like Creamfields and Detonate, and being resident photographer at UNIT 13, Stealth and The Level. If you haven't seen his face, you definitely will have seen his work. The Mic's Cat Jordan had the opportunity to talk to him about his distinctive role in the music industry.

Cat: First of all, when did you first get into photography?

Jack: I would say that I was 15-16 years old. It was never something I was particularly focused on before, but I was always into art and graphic design, and I knew that I wanted to do something with that later in life. I think I borrowed my brother's camera one Easter just to give it a go. I'd never really shown that interest in photography before, but I started using it for projects at school and it all took off from there! I then realised I wanted to study photography at Uni and I moved to Nottingham!

C: There's a big debate over whether you need to study creative courses like photography at university in order to become a photographer after. What's your stance?

J: I don't think you need to do a course. I know a lot of my friends in the photography and music industries who haven't been to uni. I think I am one of the rare ones who actually studied photography at uni. I studied photography at Nottingham Trent University and while I generally loved it and made a lot of amazing friends, the modules focused more on the theoretical, critical, and historical aspects of photography than practical work. I didn't really get what I needed from the course, so I pushed myself to do my own thing outside of uni to get where I am today.

C: A lot of young people in creative industries struggle to find paid work, particularly where industry paid professionals will offer exposure or experience as their method of payment.

J: The whole "exposure and experience" thing is a very cliché line that people use, and there's no shame in taking it- there's still jobs I do now for free! At some point you've got to bite the bullet and take a non-paid job because it can get you great exposure.

C: How did you find paid opportunities, and did they come to you, or did you seek them out?

J: I was a fresher in Nottingham and I was one of those annoying people giving out flyers to freshers on the street for Oceana's <now Pryzm> "zoo Tuesdays" night. The person in charge of all of this was complaining that their photographer that night had cancelled at the very last minute, and my flatmate at the time told him that I did photography at uni! I had done some club stuff before back home, so I knew I could do it. And I was lucky because they paid me! I still do a couple nights at Pryzm every now and again- it hasn't really changed!



"SEEING ALL OF MY FRIENDS DO SO WELL DEFINITELY GIVES ME THE MOTIVATION TO KEEP GOING."

C: You said you started out with photography aged 15/16. Have you had any experience working in another industry?

J: I've worked in hospitality for about 11 years! But this summer was a turning point for me, as I made the decision to put that aside and become a full-time photographer. Now I'm full time, but I still do the odd shift.

C: This summer you worked at a huge variety of festivals, such as Creamfields, Forbidden Forest, and Beyond Festival just to name a couple! Would you say that working at festivals is different to working at concerts?

J: 100%. For me I work quite heavily in the electronic/dance music scene, so a lot of DJs, and the festivals haven't been too different! Concerts are very quick, normally you're only allowed an allocated amount of time to shoot in, the main rule of thumb is the first 3 songs or the first 15 minutes you're allowed in the pit (between the audience and the stage). Depending on how well you know the artist, you may or may not be allowed on stage. At both festivals and concerts you're not usually allowed to use flash. My favourite time of year is festival season.

C: You've worked a lot with Nottingham legend Bru-C. How long have you worked with him?

J: I wouldn't say I "work with" him, as he's got his own little tight-knit team, which I really respect. I've known Bru-C for about 6 or 7 years. I started out by doing a few nights where he happened to be playing, and then he hired me for his club night Bubblin' Tuesdays, way back when it first started at Filthy's, and I still work that night now

C: Would you ever consider being a touring photographer?

J: I would love to give it a go, it's definitely on my bucket list of things to try. I meet people working with artists quite a lot, and it looks fun, don't get me wrong. You get the private jets and hotels and you get to see so many cool places. But at the same time, I prefer working for festivals more, because you get to see more of the festival, rather than just seeing the same hour or two set and then starting again.



“...GENERALLY, LOOKING AT THE THINGS I DO EVERY YEAR IS AN ACHIEVEMENT FOR ME, AND I’M VERY PROUD OF IT...”

C: You worked at festivals abroad this year, for example in Germany and Ibiza. Is there a change in atmosphere abroad, and does it inspire you in any way?

J: I went to Feverville festival in Germany, and while it was the same sort of music as Creamfields, it felt very European! Of course, there was much nicer weather, and a really different vibe to what you’d experience in England- I hope people get what I’m talking about. The travelling was more stressful of course, but I love it. It was my first time going abroad professionally since COVID, which was great. In terms of meeting other creatives, there were a few people I’d met previously, so it was lovely to see them again and to meet new people. It builds a network: the more you get chatting to people, the bigger a network you can get. And everyone’s there for the same reason, whether you’re a photographer or an artist, or even just a festival-goer, you’re there to have a great time, and that creates the positive vibe that you get.

C: You said that going on tour is on your bucket list. What other things are on there?

J: I’d love to photograph at the biggest and best festivals in the world, like Coachella, Tomorrowland and Burning Man. Also, festivals in South America, Australia and Asia! I want to travel to every continent and visit as many places as I can. I’m limited travel-wise with my jobs here, because in this industry it’s important to always keep your foot in the door.

C: Back in 2020 you won the People’s Choice Award at the Events Photographer Awards, and you’ve been nominated again this year. Can you tell me more about that?

J: I came second in the Music category, which was amazing. I had a great time, and my friend Luke Dyson won the overall competition which was incredible to see! He’s someone I’ve looked up to since I first started photography (he’s been doing it a lot longer than me!) and he’s a very well-deserved winner.

C: Are there any other proudest moments of your career?

J: Getting my first big job. Around 2016-2017, I had the opportunity to photograph Steve Aoki and Armin van Buuren, one day after the other. One was in Manchester, and one was in London. Although it wasn’t my kind of music, you’ve got to respect the level that they’re at and being able to photograph them gave me the steppingstone to achieve bigger and better things. I also was very highly commended in the World Photography Awards the following year- my photo was one of 50 photos picked out of 105,000 world-wide, which was mind-blowing for me, and something I’ll always remember. More generally, looking at the things I do every year is an achievement for me, and I’m very proud of it.

C: You should be proud! What inspires you?

J: Definitely other photographers. Seeing all my friends do so well definitely gives me the motivation to keep going. It's very difficult to stay motivated and to keep your head clear and to stay healthy in this industry- not just for photographers, but also for artists and everyone else involved. It's a very tough industry to keep yourself sane in, so seeing other people keep themselves sane and continuing to work at an excellent level is very inspiring.

C: We have quite a few student photographers working for The Mic. Do you have any advice for them?

J: Message anyone and everyone. That's how I got into working most of my regular club nights! My house-mate was a DJ so he brought me along to a lot of his nights too. Don't be disheartened if people say no or don't reply- there's a million opportunities out there and you will get a yes! You might have to start out with a few unpaid jobs, but if a client likes your work they'll want you back, and then you can charge them! Keep at it, don't get disheartened, and if you build up your portfolio, you will get noticed!

C: A final question for you: although you mainly work at electronic/dance music events, you've also taken some great photos from other genres, such as Bastille, Bryan Adams, Niall Horan, and even Stormzy! Who else would you love to photograph in the future?

J: I would love to photograph Eminem, I've been listening to him for as long as I can remember. Ed Sheeran, I think he'd put on a great show. Coldplay- I've been to a Coldplay concert and they put on an amazing show. Just the biggest artists from a broad range of genres. Any of the massive artists, I'd really love to do!



Words by: Cat Jordan

Designed by: Caradoc Gayer

All photos courtesy of Jack Kimber

 [jackkimberphoto](https://www.instagram.com/jackkimberphoto)

THE MIC'S Photogallery

Max and Serena are two ambitious and creative photographers, whose work is exhibited on The Mic's website. Throughout their time at university, they've been photographing the biggest and most exciting artists that stop by to play Nottingham. Their photographs of Nova Twins, Alch, Buzzcocks, Knocked Loose and The Script



@maxharriesphoto



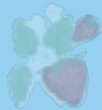
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The
Lightning
Seeds

Liverpudlian singer-songwriter, musician and record producer Ian Broudie, is the mastermind behind an eclectic career that has spanned nearly five decades, yet his accolades remain fairly unrecognized in British music history. After emerging from Liverpool's post-punk scene in the late 1970s, as a member of Big in Japan, Broudie went on to produce albums for artists including Echo & the Bunnymen, The Fall, The Coral and The Subways. Maia Gibbs discusses his legacy with him.



THE LIGHTNING SEEDS



It was in 1989 that Ian Broudie began writing and recording under the name Lightning Seeds, for which he would arguably become best known for. He released his debut album *Cloudcuckooland* through Rough Trade on the independent label Ghetto Records, only putting together a live touring band five years later, in 1994. The Lightning Seeds achieved great commercial success during the 1990s, with their final album *Four Winds* being released in 2009. After a (disputedly long) hiatus, Ian has returned with the album *See You In the Stars*.

Me: "Okay, it's been 13 years since your last album. What was it that brought about *See You In the Stars*, after so long?"

Ian: "Um, yeah, I'm trying to think, I think it's 15. People keep on saying this, it must be in something they're sending out. I'm pretty sure it's 15. Let's just put it on the record that it's at least 15."

Me: "Okay. Sure thing."

I guess I need to revisit Wikipedia.

Ian: "I felt like I was enjoying playing live, and wasn't sure that I wanted to make another 'Lightning Seeds' album. Making the previous one, I had a lot of mixed feelings. I felt like it should have been a solo album. I got a bit of pressure really from the record company. I hate when I don't stand my ground. I usually do. We started getting better and better as a live band, so I didn't feel the need to make a record. I had a set of songs that I really wanted to play to people and wanted people to hear. So I was more looking for that to happen and it took a long time to get there."

"It's easier to write a sad song, but to write a song that's positive without being banal or vacuous is quite tricky."

Me: "So when writing, would you say it was one burst of creativity or was it something you'd been writing intermittently for sort of a while?"

Ian: "Well I never really thought of myself as a singer, and I never really wanted to be a producer of bands. Probably what I am is a guitar player who writes. I'm always writing songs; I'm always writing ideas. The way I do it is I'm always humming stuff or playing little guitar lines into my phone and then chatting to myself on the phone about how I think it sounds, or what I think it could be, or what atmosphere it could be and trying to verbalize ideas. I was continuously doing that because it's just what I do. But the actual thought-process of writing: I had people say to me: "have you got any new songs?". I'd say: "yeah, w've got loads". They say: "have you got any finished?" I'd be like: "no". Someone said "You need to finish them, like I'll come up, I'll record you and finish one." I think once I did that, it was the start of the album. I thought this does sound like I really like it. And it sounds like a 'Lightning Seeds' track, maybe should get a couple more. And once you've got songs that you like, you want people to hear them. It becomes less of an abstract idea and more of 'a great let's get everyone to listen to these'."

Me: "So what would you say defines a 'Lightning Seeds' track compared to anything else?"

Ian: "Well, in the world of me, like I don't know what wider of me would say, I feel I always want, 'Lightning Seeds' songs to feel positive. And sometimes that's tricky, as it's easier to write a sad song, but to write a song that's positive without being sort of, banal or vacuous or just crap is quite tricky. There's always a fine line, but I think when you get it right, it has a certain amount of sadness in it. I want it to make you feel elated but it's a blend of lots of things. And when there's the right balance, they become a bit 3D. You discover different things within its layers. And that makes you do different things musically, because you feel that. So it's an organic sort of process. You can't really describe it, but I think when the balance is right, you go 'I think it sounds like it is'."

Me: "How do you think this album stands apart from other 'Lightning Seeds' albums in your discography?"

Ian: "Uh, the same. I always try to aim to go for 'same but different'. I think I've always been very nervous, and I think I've tended to cover things up with loads of music or just make the lyrics a bit vague. This time, I didn't want to do that. I wanted to be openly emotional and direct, and try to be confident in what I've done. I guess it feels a bit more out there to me."

Me: "Do you think working as a producer on other people's tracks affects your own songwriting?"

Ian: "Well, I haven't really produced anyone for about fifteen years. I didn't really like being a producer. I like collaborating with people, but I never liked the idea of being a producer. I do think, when working with people you need to take inspiration. I think that every time you work with someone, you take a bit. An extra arrow in your bow, or something like that. That's a terrible analogy — sorry. To kill someone with a song? I don't know. Ignore me."

To kill someone with a song does appear to be a terrible analogy for Broudie's work. Maybe this is the rare point at which the writer isn't efficient with his words. He has an anathematic discography, and a noticeable part of it, known by non-Broudie enthusiasts (and even non-football enthusiasts) is *Three Lions*. Alongside comedians Frank Skinner and David Baddiel he took the song to number one, with different lyrics for the Euro '96 and France '98 tournaments. Football is an important undercurrent throughout the Lightning Seeds' work. Broudie himself is a supporter of Liverpool, with the bands' album covers and inlays often containing references, such as 'Justice for the 96' and 'Support the Liverpool Dockers'. In the years since France '98, the song has been released multiple times for football tournaments. It has the unique distinction of being the only song in existence that became UK No. 1 four separate times with the same artists: two one-week stints in 1996, three straight weeks in 1998 for the remake, and again in 2018 for the original during the World Cup held in Russia. Now that's a pop trivia fact that you can take to the pub with you.

Me: "There is an upcoming World Cup. You have a lot of people just singing your songs back to you at concerts and gigs, but how does this compare to hearing England fans and football fans singing your songs around the world [with Three Lions]?"

Ian: "Well, I think Three Lions goes beyond me - like a different room, a different section. It doesn't feel like the rest of the Lightning Seeds' stuff. It feels like something else; still me, but something else. I obviously think, culturally, it is what it is. I've had different relationships with the song over the years. Sometimes I've resented it and sometimes it's been the best thing ever. I used to think, 'I've written better songs than that?!'. It's kind of weird. But then I think to myself 'well maybe I haven't?' because it is quite incredible the way that song resonates, and the way people relate to it. But also, when I see brass band versions of it, or with ukulele, or a straight orchestra. I don't think it's my best musically. I feel like two songs called Pure and Life of Riley probably hit the nail on the head, to use another terrible analogy."

"Bands are fragile ecosystems. In some ways, they don't last forever."



Me: "Well my family were quite excited about this interview because Pure is going to be my brother and his girlfriend's wedding song."

Ian: "Oh, lovely. Yeah, that's great. There are a lot of people who say that - Life of Riley and Pure seem to have really touched people's hearts in a way, even after all this time."

Me: "So, obviously your songs have like a big importance in people's lives. As you say, they become people's wedding songs. Could you name any tracks or artists that have emotional importance to you or left an impact on your life?"

Ian: "Oh, that's a good question. That's a hard question. Yeah. There are, you know, the songs that make you miserable songs, that make you sad, or songs that make you less sad when you're miserable. You'll Never Walk Alone might be the song. I know it's a weird one because it's got the football connotation. But it's an unbelievable song, you know, even taking it away from Liverpool. Even when I see it in the opera, where it was from, it's just an inspirational and amazing song."

Me: "The 'Lightning Seeds' is one of the things that you are best known for, but you have an eclectic career, like we've said. Is there any work you've done that you wish you were more known for, alongside your work with the band?"

Ian: "You know, I'm pretty happy, as different people, from different times, see me as different things. Some people regard me as a producer, because I've worked with them. Some see me as a guitar player. So it's funny, different people, it seems, have different things. And I think that's cool really. Or it might be better if I were just a guitar player and everyone went, you know, they knew you for one thing. So in some ways maybe it makes you less known for one thing - you don't wanna be a 'Jack-of-All-Trades'. But I do like the fact that people relate in different ways to stuff I've done."

Me: "You're touring this Autumn, and playing further shows in summer 2023. Why do you think that with the first couple of 'Lightning Seeds' albums you didn't tour?"

Ian: "Well, that's an easy one. I didn't wanna be the singer because I'm not very good at singing, I wasn't used to it and I didn't have a band. It was just me. I recorded the first couple of albums in my house. I was quite nervous about singing in front of people. On the third album Jollification, under some kind of pressure from people, I finally kind of plucked up the courage to sing. Even now we don't do tours. We've been playing a lot of events in the summer, and we did a 25th Anniversary Tour, but I'm actually really looking forward to this tour because I really like Badly Drawn Boy, and he's on the bill with us. I think it's gonna be a really good night. We're gonna get to play new songs, which I haven't had a chance to do for ages. Plus, all the songs everyone loves and a few that we don't usually play. So, I am actually looking forward to it."

Me: "So how did you go about forming a band, when you started performing live?"

Ian: "I'm not mad on session musicians. I never have been really. I always try to work with people who are in bands, or have been in bands. I put the band together out of people in various Liverpool groups, that I might have worked with or come across. When we played the first gig, it was, you know, my friend Chris [Sharrock], the drummer who had been in 'The La's'. Then Martyn as the bass player, he'd been in a band called 'Rain'. So it was just people I knew. And then it gradually grew into the band. I think the band now is better than it has ever been. I think we're the best version of the 'Lightning Seeds'. I think Riley's [Broudie's son] great at playing the guitar and obviously he's grown up with it [the band]..."

An instrumental version of 'Life of Riley' later became better known as the BBC theme for the Goal of the Month competition. The football connotations never seem to stop - I promise I didn't intend on this. I actually really don't know much about the sport, to be honest with you.

Ian: "...and so is Jim, the drummer who is brilliant. His dad was the original drummer in the band, so he sort of watched us since he was a kid. And Martyn's still playing; he was there at the first gig ever and he's still doing it. We feel like we're all pretty close. Bands are kind of fragile ecosystems, in some ways they don't last forever and they don't last that long. But I think we're in a lovely moment - with the record, and the people in the band, and the way we sound live. Hopefully, it'll last a bit longer, you know?"

Me: "Do you think that the next 'Lightning Seeds' album will arrive any sooner?"

Ian: "That's a really loaded question. That's a cruel question. I hope so. Honestly, in my head, I would like to do another album fairly quickly. I feel like I'd almost forgotten how to do it. This has rehabilitated me, so I think in a couple months I'll be in a good place to record another album. So that is my intention. Whether it will happen, I don't know. But good intentions."

Well, let's hope. But maybe try and get a ticket to an upcoming Lightning Seeds show - just in case it takes a bit longer, ey?



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the mic's gig diaries

The year 2022,

which saw live music getting fully into its post-pandemic rhythm, has drawn to a close. To mark how musically pivotal the year turned out to be, we asked a few questions to some members of The Mic. We asked: 'What was your favourite gig experience?', 'What was your most disappointing?', and 'What tip would you give for having the best possible live experience?' The answers we got conveyed the beautiful and ugly moments of the live experience in all of their glory.

My best live experience

What makes a Sports Team mosh pit so special is the mutual understanding between participants that you're in for a wild ride, but you're in it together. If you fall over (which you will), you will get picked up. If you need to leave, you will be able to. If your phone has fallen out of your pocket, a million and one torches will light up the floor to look. I've never seen the band need to stop a set to lift out an unwell fan. I suspect that's not coincidental. Sports Team fans make their pits interesting. I've seen backflip contests, arm wrestling and halloumi dancing. Each Sports Team live show that I've seen has felt like being amongst old friends.

My best live experience

Death Grips at O2 Academy Brixton, 2018. No support acts. No merch. No encores. Not a single word spoken on stage. Just an hour of frenetic industrial hip-hop, delivered at maximum volume, with song after song after song pumped into the ears of a frenzied crowd. I have never felt more alive.

My most disappointing live experience

I try not to dwell on negative experiences, but one that stands out is seeing Public Image Ltd in 2022. Lead singer, John Lydon (famous for fronting Sex Pistols) spent more of the set berating the audience for using their phones, and moaning about the Netflix show detailing his former band, than actually playing his songs. A punk legend reduced to a grumpy old man - disappointing.

How to have the best experience possible

You should turn up early to catch any supporting artists! I know that it's easy to discount support acts: 'I've never heard of them', 'The main act isn't on until 9', 'Let's just stay in the pub for one more'. I'm sure that you've heard them all before. The truth is, that seeing support acts is a fantastic way to find new music that you might like, and you could even earn the bragging rights of seeing a band before they blow up as the next megastars. All of your favourite artists started off as support acts - the next generation needs your attention too!

All of your favourite artists started off as support acts - the next generation needs your attention too!



IZZY MORRIS

My most disappointing live experience

My worst gig experience was at Easy Life in 2019. Picture a room full of twenty rugby lads raring for a mosh pit. The trouble is, you can't mosh in Easy Life - their music is far too laid-back and chill. This led to an out of time moshing attempt that felt like a stampede. To make matters worse, any attempts to get out were met with aggravated grunts and dirty looks. On top of that, when I managed to claw myself out from the jungle of limbs, BO and Lynx Africa, some class clown decided to light off an indoor flare right next to me. Thanks for that one mate. Moral of the story: if it's a chill vibe, you can enjoy that!

How to have the best experience possible

Great gigs have great audience members. The best advice to have a good gig is to watch out for others, help anybody that's struggling, and to not push people around just to get in the best possible spot. If they were there first, then respect that.



SAM CHRISTELOW

09
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My best live experience

Seeing Supergrass, supported by The Coral, at Alexandra Palace in March 2021. It was a brilliant evening, not least because it has been fondly recollected as my last gig before national lockdown. The Coral evoked such excitement that when Supergrass appeared, the vibrancy of their performance all the more amplified. The graphics and lighting were excellent, and Ally Pally was a blissful place to be, as always. A solidly age-mixed crowd shared in supporting the iconic Britpop band, generating an unforgettable energy, even during their lesser-known songs.

My best live experience

The best gig that I've been to was Stormzy on his COVID-delayed Heavy is the Head tour, in early 2022. I've never felt a crowd buzzing with such anticipation, and when the lights went down as the performance began, the crowd was feral. This energy was maintained throughout the set, with Stormzy showing off his signature high knees and taking us on a journey through his discography, playing absolute bangers and utilising a live gospel choir. Chills.

After the set he came out to meet the crowd, taking time to say hello to literally hundreds of people. He must have stayed out after the set for at least 30 minutes, which I have never personally seen any other artist do. It made me adore him even more.

My most disappointing live experience

The most disappointing gig would have to be the Libertines at Y-NOT festival. They looked bored, and appeared as though they just couldn't wait to get out of there. Both Barât and Doherty's vocals seemed slurred, as if they were too drunk to perform. Just sad all-round.

How to have the best experience possible

Don't bother buying merch before the gig! Personally, I hate carrying a shirt around with me during the main show, particularly if you're planning on moshing – you'll just end up losing it IN the pit. Lots of artists are starting to sell their tour merch online, so if you really must have a £50 shirt from Fruit of the Loom, just buy it online.

My most disappointing live experience

Bastille in February 2022, at Kingston's Pryzm, turned out to be pretty disappointing. The concept of the band creating a song on stage based on interviews with the audience, was certainly ambitious and held potential. However, the execution of this abstract idea was disappointing, particularly for fans of many years, who likely prioritised seeing their big hits live.

How to have the best experience possible

Be selective in your choice of venue for upcoming gigs. Seeing big names at smaller venues (places often affiliated with local record shops and new album promotions) guarantees a distinctive and intimate performance. Crowds are generally more relaxed, the artists often have more conversational segues between songs, and the sound quality is brilliant!





TABITHA SMITH

My best live experience

Nothing But Thieves and Kid Kapichi at UEA LCR, Norwich (22/08/2021) This gig embodied everything I love about live music: they sounded incredible, the crowd sang along and, most importantly, there was a good pit! The UEA is my favourite hometown venue as there is always space to step aside from the pit, or dive right in, depending upon your preference. I went with my best friend, the gig having been four years in the making for us. It did not disappoint.

My most disappointing live experience

Ed the Dog and Circa Waves at Norwich Arts Centre (01/12/2018) Norwich Arts Centre is essentially a converted church space, so it was not fit for the type and size of the crowd that this event attracted. We were squeezed into standing bolt upright, yet there were still attempts at creating pits, making even less room for us against some large stone pillars. For what could've been a wholesome indie gig, the atmosphere was strangely tense: my shirt got torn in the crush of it all and I

couldn't focus on the music.

How to have the best experience possible

Go with people you know you'll have fun with and who will look out for you. Also, have a plan of action if you get split up, so you can meet back up at the end. Make sure to stand where you're comfortable for how you want to experience the concert and stay

My best live experience

Probably seeing Sports Team at Truck Festival 2019. Granted, this one is not so much tinted by nostalgia as resplendent with it. It was early afternoon on a sunny weekend, my first festival I was there with all my friends, seeing a band I had previously had no idea existed but had overheard some other festival-goers at the pop-up record shop talking about how they were the best live band in England at the time. It was back before they were the indie powerhouses they are today, before their first album, before it was cool. Plus, someone who is now one of my best friends was there too, years before we knew each other. It was fated.

My most disappointing live experience

Two Door Cinema Club, same festival, same year. Not particularly anything to do with the band - I made it through about three songs before some katty teenager elbowed me in the throat while dancing and I started having hacking coughing fits, so went off to go eat some overpriced food, and watched it from a distance. Spent all evening away from my friends in the cold, watching the band with a mouthful of awful fast food. The set was quite good, to be honest, I just had a bad experience watching it.

How to have the best experience possible

Don't flail your arms about. Even somewhere that's a good height for you, can have you giving the 5ft 11in person next to you a faceful of elbow, which isn't a good time for anyone. Having some fun with your body and letting it all out is fun; waving around like a drunk mind flayer isn't.



HAL HEWLETT

The Mic Committee Return to the Dancefloor

To conclude this issue of *The Mic*, our wonderful committee give accounts of their personal 'return to the dancefloor', after COVID-19, be that a festival experience during the latter half of 2021, a Nottingham gig in the 2022 autumn semester, or any experience inbetween, which exemplified how live music was back in full force.

All-Points-East Festival returned to grace East London in August 2021. The Friday headliners, Foals and Bombay Bicycle Club had been a comforting presence for me, during a covid wracked first year at University. I couldn't miss them, so I booked a room in a nearby hostel. Throughout the day, each live show's individual identity seemed entirely clear and pure; like Arlo Parks' kaleidoscopic setup of sunflowers and a ten-person big band. When the sun set, Bombay Bicycle Club rocked up, and showcased their extensive experience as performers. Highlights included the pulsing guitar breakdown in *Dust on the Ground* which more or less blew my hair back. Foals closed the night on a packed-out mainstage, which I could have been miles from, had I taken longer to buy my last Red Stripe. For a live band of their caliber, the sound quality was underwhelming. I discussed it with a fellow hostel-goer the following morning, who agreed. Nevertheless, it was the presence of deep cuts, like the grandiose *Black Gold*, the melancholy-dance floor-banger *Blue Blood* and swirling mosh-pits in *Inhale*, which made for a cathartic return-to-the-dancefloor experience. I walked back through the London night knowing I'd remember the experience for some time to come.

Caradoc Gayer

In spring 2022 I followed my favourite band, 5 Seconds of Summer on tour across 5 different European countries. Arriving at 4 out of 5 shows on my own, I was amazed to find that by the time the shows finished, I left with new friends, many of whom I'm still in touch with today. It reminded me of the euphoria that is singing and dancing alongside people who love the music as much as you do. Every night, Ashton, Callum, Luke and Michael put on a wonderful show, with insanely creative visuals, a great selection of songs spanning their entire 10-year discography, and excellent performances from each of them. By the final night in Paris, I knew exactly what was coming, but I didn't expect to become so emotional during *Take My Hand* (the song the tour was named after). Something about hearing the room chant 'that ache to be alive' was simply transcendent. I will never forget that incredible return to live concerts. I believe that having the opportunity to follow those 4 around Europe was not just my return to live music, but my return to feeling like the best version of myself again: secure, inspired and content.

Cat Jordan

I enjoy live music now more than ever. It's always been an important part of my life, but with 2022 getting everyone back on the dance floor, I've taken advantage of events more than ever: Clairo and Phoebe Bridgers at O2 Brixton Academy, Wireless Festival at Finsbury Park, Loyle Carner at Metronome, Puma blue at The Bodega Nottingham, and my friends Family Stereo and Iris Holmes at Breaking Sound. What's more, getting behind the decks with the University's Underground Music Society, and learning to spin Vinyl at The Golden Fleece in Nottingham, are experiences I won't forget. I'm almost (emphasis on almost) overwhelmed by the gift that is live music. Besides specific gigs or venues or memories, I notice a palpable sense of gratitude that live music even exists at all!

Ewan Samms

After a year and a half break from live music, the return was bliss. Heading out from the bottom of the University of Nottingham campus, on a Skylink bus, to the hallowed grounds of Donington Park for Download Pilot Festival was bizarre. I walked from a socially distanced bus with masks on every person, into a crowded festival atmosphere complete with booze, moshpits, tents and strangers singing along with each other. The event featured the best of British alternative, from the spit-flecked punk rock of Friday headliners Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes, to the anthemic metalcore of festival closers Bullet For My Valentine, and the electropunk of Saturdays headliners Enter Shikari. The genres were varied but the live acts were never less than stellar. With the first true moshpit back being to the excellent song We Like To Party by the Vengaboys over a tannoy, and such moments as a circle pit around the sound tower. Loz Taylor of While She Sleeps climbed the very same tower to address the teeming masses from on high. It was glorious return to the rock and metal's spiritual home. Being there in such circumstances made it even more special. The party atmosphere never once let up. The return to the dancefloor was sweet.

Jake Longhurst

My first taste of post lockdown live music had to wait until October 2021. Myself, along with a couple other members of The Mic, made our way to Metronome and saw Children of Zeus perform. They were helped by a packed support line up consisting of Melonyx, Juga-Naut and Harleighblu - all home-grown Nottingham artists. Each supporting act fed off the energy of the prior, building anticipation for Children of Zeus. When Children of Zeus came to the stage they were greeted with elation from the crowd, and as soon as they started performing, I felt a sense of relief that the lockdown was finally over. We were once again free to enjoy what we all love so much. This night was the first of many gigs that I got to see during last year. Whilst other performances may have impressed more or been more enjoyable, Children of Zeus will always stand out as the gig that brought back a much-needed normality. Hopefully we won't have to go through a drought of live music again.

Leo Bungay

Ah, the dance floor: a place that once felt as if it would remain a distant memory. I spend an inordinate amount of time (and money) on them; underground raves, sweaty gig venues, or the mucky fields in good ol' English festivals. Returning to the dancefloor post-Covid was a joy that cannot be replicated: it was Creamfields Festival, in August 2021. Feeling the love and two-stepping my way through sets from electronic juggernauts such as Camelphat, Carl Cox, Pendulum and The Chemical Brothers (to name a few!) was the perfect way to be welcomed back. Long may the dance continue!

Jodie Averis

Whilst not my first post-pandemic gig, Frank Carter and the Rattlesnakes at Rock City in November 2021, was a true turning point in my experience of the pandemic. I had been to prior post-lockdown concerts, standing in the crowd watching bands perform, perhaps with the slightest of concerns of the looming COVID-19 virus. This is perfectly understandable and there is nothing profoundly wrong about this, but these shows just didn't feel 'normal'. What Carter did, however, was quite the opposite. I did not feel as though I was watching a concert, I was part of it. With Frank surfing the crowd at every opportunity, it seemed as though any one of us 2,000 fans had as much claim to that stage as he did. Interacting with the crowd is the exemplar of what live music should be. I hope we never have to go without again.

Max Harries

One of my most memorable live experiences of 2022 was reviewing Y Not Festival in Derbyshire. Located in my home turf, Y Not had proved itself to be one of the fastest-growing festivals in the UK in recent years. Its unusual demographic proved it to be an interesting experience; I was as likely to bump into forgotten secondary school classmates as I was my parents' friends. The highlight of my weekend must have been when I escaped the rain to watch Kelis for some respite. My cagoule was obviously not as waterproof as advertised, but it proved to be a blessing in disguise. Kelis played an attractive set, with a live drummer, DJ, and a backing singer. She was a wonderful stage presence — with personality, voice and dance skills to boot. With scenes from The Kooks, Stereophonics and Yard Act - it was the perfect place for cool dads and indie kids alike. It made one proud to be from the Peaks.

Maia Gibbs

Deprived of live music and real-life experience, lockdown invited me into the world of playlist curation where I found many obsess-worthy artists and a style of music that really spoke to me. One of those artists was Nova Twins. Something about them was just magical. It was their collaboration with Bring Me The Horizon where I really took a grand interest, and quite frankly, made these two bands the soundtrack of my 2021. So, when Bring Me announced a hometown arena date in Sheffield, just a stone's throw away from Nottingham, supported by the magical Nova Twins, I think I cried a little bit. We walked to the end of what seemed like a never-ending queue: something that had become ridiculously familiar during the pandemic had finally become a sign of hope and tangible progression towards the dance floor. Even at this stage, I felt on top of the world (and not only because we had to climb a lot of steps). But as we got into the venue, and Nova Twins just came onto the stage, I actually did cry. It was not very punk rock of me. However, it was very punk rock of live music again.




Roxann Yus




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