



# Sprawl

MAGAZINE

music film art culture

Inside:

SLEAFORD MODS  
DO NOTHING  
HEAVY LUNGS  
PHLEXX RECORDS  
STUART PEARCE  
SOPHIE DIVER  
SCARCE  
OTALA  
KP

& MORE  
MORE  
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MORE

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# THE BURNING WORLD



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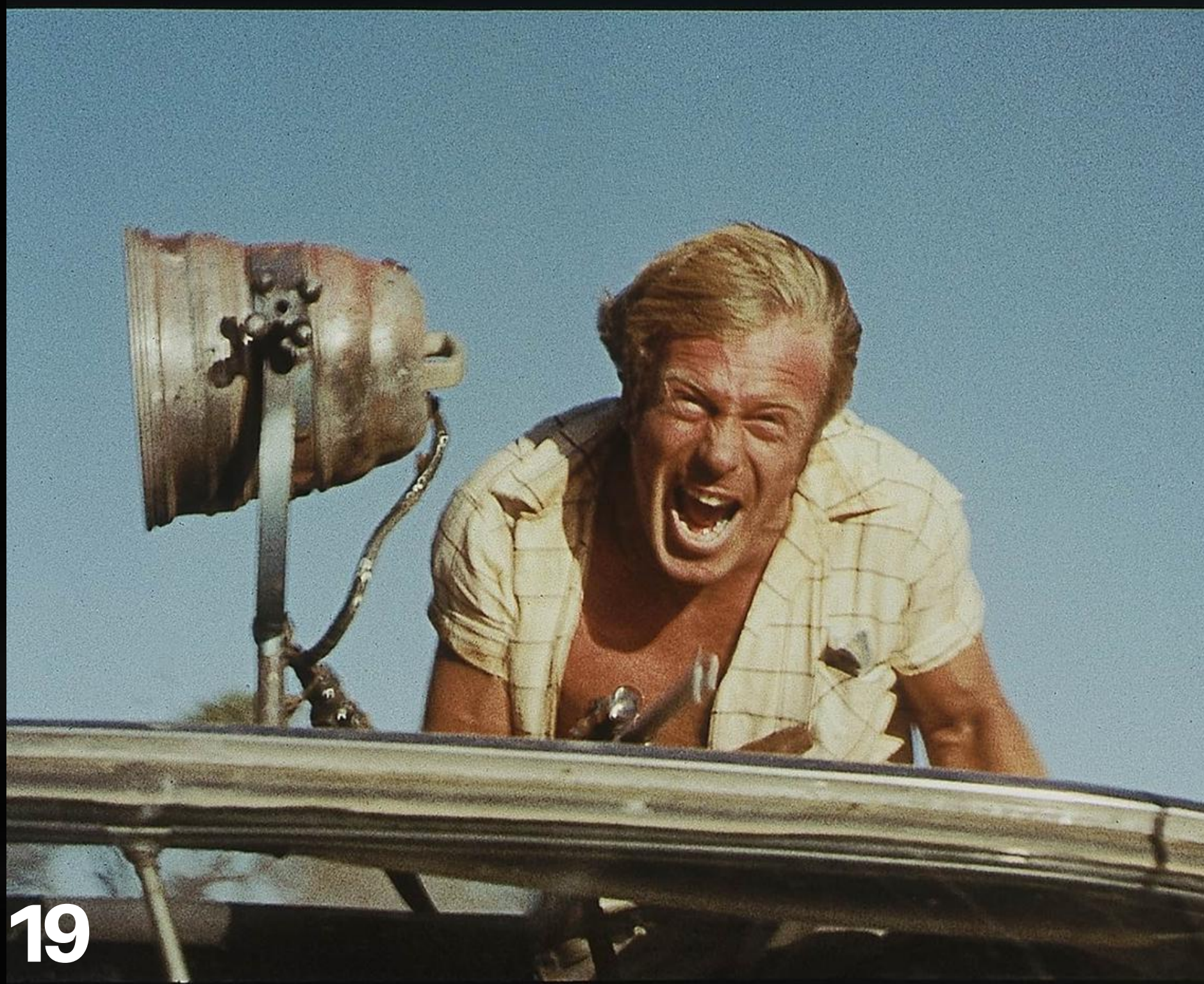
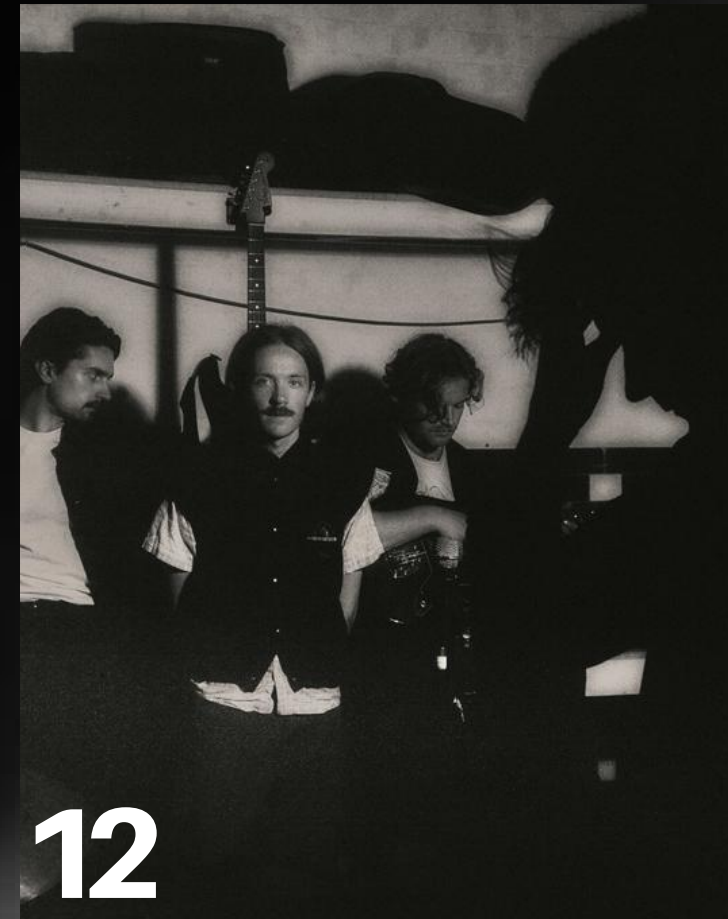
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# ALL PASSION

## THE SPRAWL, ISSUE ONE

I THOUGHT I'D MAKE IT CLEAR FROM THE OFF - I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING HERE, AND FRANKLY, THAT'S THE POINT, TO JUST CREATE SOMETHING.

THE SPRAWL EXISTS NOT BECAUSE THE WORLD IS LACKING IN COMMENTARY ON CREATIVE OUTLETS BUT BECAUSE I KEPT LOOKING AT SOME PUNK AND ART ZINES LIKE; RIPPED AND TORN, RADIUM DIAL, OR XL5 AND JUST THOUGHT, FUCK IT, WHY NOT?

THIS IS NOT DESIGNED TO BE PERFECT, NOR DOES IT ASPIRE TO BE. CRITICS, FOR THE MOST PART, ARE GLORIFIED GUESSERS, AND I'M NO DIFFERENT. I'M JUST WRITING ABOUT WHAT I KNOW, WHAT'S AROUND ME, CHAMPIONING ARTISTS AND INVITING OTHERS UP TO THE ROOM INSIDE MY HEAD.

THERE ARE NO 'PROPER CHANNELS', NO ONE ON RECEPTION AND NO ONE SAYING YOU CAN'T DO THAT. IT'S ESSENTIALLY AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND RANTS ABOUT THE CITIES, PUBS, LIVING ROOMS AND SPACES WHERE PEOPLE EXIST, CREATE, AND DESTROY THINGS—NOT A WHO'S "IN" OR "OUT."

I'M NOT HERE TO PLAY GATEKEEPER. IF ANYTHING, I'M SWINGING THE GATE OPEN, INVITING EVERYONE IN, AND THEN WANDERING OFF TO LET IT TAKE ITS COURSE.



# NO TECHNIQUE

**EDITOR & CREATOR / KIERAN T. POOLE**

ALTHOUGH I'VE DONE THIS ALONE, WITH NO BUDGET AND EVEN LESS EXPERIENCE, I'M NOT COMPLETELY TO BLAME FOR ALL OF IT. GETTING THIS OFF THE GROUND HAS BEEN MORE OF A COLLECTIVE STUMBLE—AND I OWE A HUGE THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO'S CHIPPED IN, HELPED FORMAT MY CHAOS, OR OFFERED ADVICE TO KEEP MY GLASS-HALF-EMPTY OUTLOOK FROM SINKING ENTIRELY.

SO, FLICK THROUGH IT, GLANCE WITH VAGUE INDIFFERENCE, TOSS IT ON YOUR COFFEE TABLE OR NEARBY BONFIRE—IT'S YOURS NOW.

BUT IF, BY SOME MINOR MIRACLE, IT SPARKS SOMETHING IN YOU, GETS YOU INTERESTED, OR NUDGES YOU TO MAKE YOUR OWN ZINE, THEN MAYBE IT'S DONE ITS JOB. BECAUSE LET'S BE HONEST, NONE OF US REALLY KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING, DO WE?

IF YOU'VE GOT AN IDEA, OR SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SHINE A LIGHT ON—EVEN IF IT'S JUST A FLICKER FROM A 30-WATT BULB—REACH OUT. DOOR'S ALWAYS OPEN.

DROP BY AGAIN SOMETIME.





# 10 Years of Divide & Exit

Who care's about rock stars anymore?

**Noel Gallagher once sneered, "There'll never be another Bowie because of cunts like Sleaford Mods." So looking back, *Divide and Exit* seemed fitting for the title of Nottingham duo Sleaford Mods' second outing.**

It's 2013 again, or maybe it's not. Time blurs when you've got half a memory and twice the bad habits. Back then, a monotony of 6 til 6 abbatior factory hell, Lee Scratch Perry's Super Ape on repeat, and casual shoplifting made the schedule.

A decade later, I still listen to Super Ape but have since moved on to self-serve scanners.

It was the mid-term Tory hangover; Cameron's days were numbered, UKIP had started opening registration offices like some weirdo Vietnam sign-up depot, and zero-hour agency-rulled contracts flourished.

Austerity was now more than a buzzword—as if it were some kind of noble sacrifice and not a slow bleed of anything worthwhile. Thinking about it, that moment never ended. It's still unfolding, like a slow-motion car crash that we're all somehow still part of.

## Musical Landscape

The early 2010s was a time when the last fumes of indie lingered, like the smell of stale lager in a festival tent. The winkle pickers and the sunglasses on stage brigade were still present - All desperately clawing at relevance, like moths to the flickering bulb of the NME's dying machine.

Third-wave 'radar' bands copying first-wave 'radar' bands, who themselves were barely treading water.

A closed loop of unmitigated shite, clinging to the coattails of other shite, all sinking together into the quicksand of cultural irrelevance.

The genre clung to existence by siphoning any glimmers of authenticity from the genuine bands, only to pump out a slurry of generic riffs, knowing winks and a desperate attempt to obscure the fact that they had absolutely nothing new to say.

Every release was a limp photocopy of a photocopy, each subsequent band sounding slightly more like a dial-up modem trying to cover the first Strokes album, now in loafers - We now know it as late-stage 'landfill indie' - But I think it was worse than that.

It did, however, give birth to the likes of Factory Floor's speed-fuelled electronic debut and Fat White Family's Mark E. Smith-inspired dark rockabilly—I'm not saying as if we were starved of an antidote to the overblown fodder from Kasabian's weak carry-on, Two Door Cinema Club, or whatever overcooked turd the not-quite-dead, but getting there 'Fly Magazine' had thrust upon us - Someone needed to cut out the middlemen and throw the guitar pedals in the river for a bit.

## Enter, Sleaford Mods

I first stumbled on Sleaford Mods' *Austerity Dogs* (their first "proper" album), a year after its release. At the time, I was probably still convinced the idea that "real punk" came in the form of Mark Perry's 'Sniffin Glue' zines or one of those 50,000 Don Letts documentaries on BBC4, endlessly regurgitating, "Those were the punk rock days." Yes, I watched them all. Yes, I nodded along, like a well-trained seal.

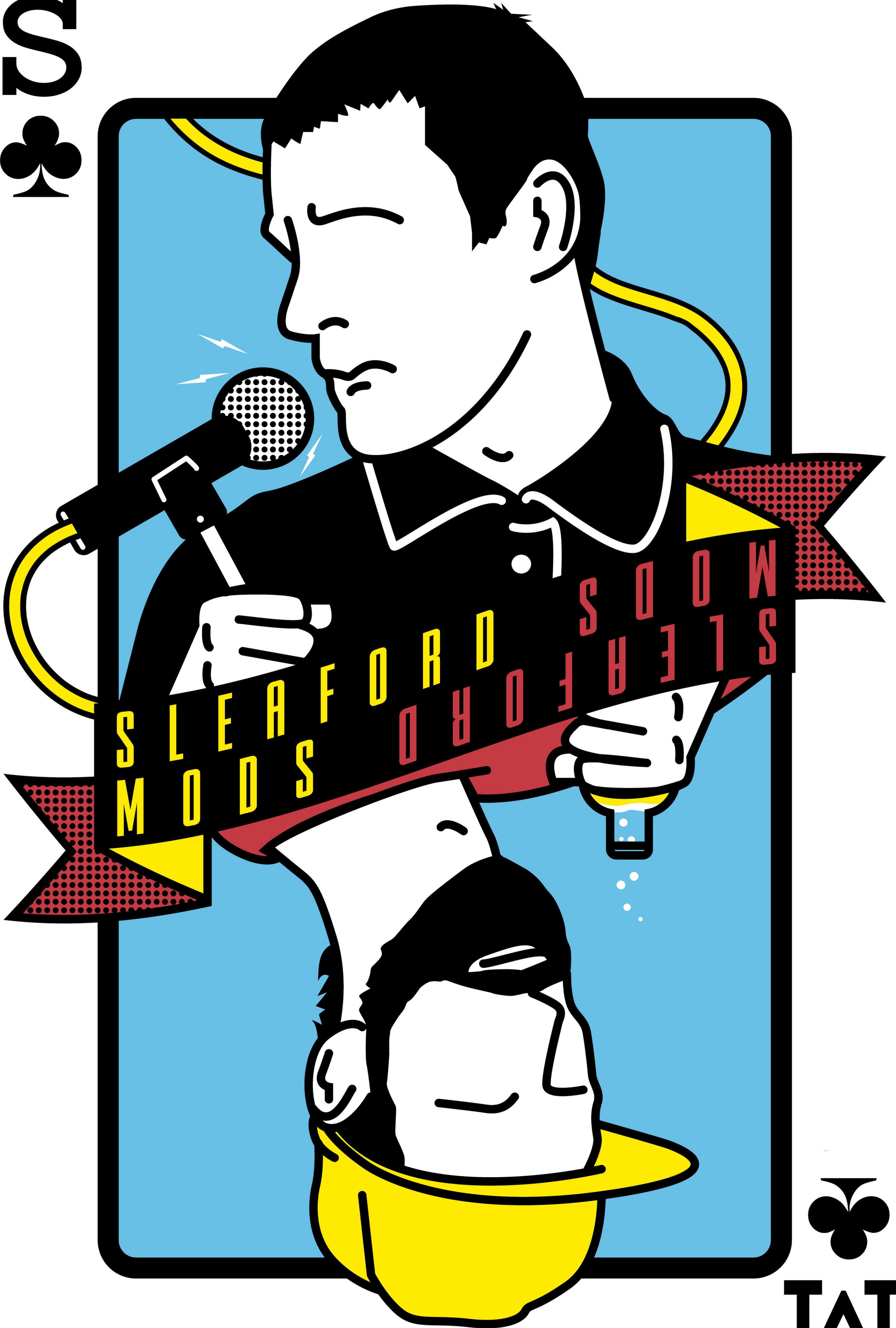
*Austerity Dogs* felt both entirely fresh and bizarrely retro—a kind of 2013 electronic punk that somehow bypassed all the "artistic" rubbish. It wasn't trying to be edgy or "experimental", nor was it interested in the critics' constant labels of John Cooper Clarke, Suicide or any other supposed 'boundary-pushing art jaunts' that had torn the rule book up and started from ground zero. Looking back, It probably had more in common with *The Exploited* and *English Dogs* than any of those.

No one seemed to be doing what Sleaford Mods were back then.

It was still punk, but just without the poser bullshit.

It made 1977's yesteryears look like well-polished museum pieces.

♣ 10



♣ 10

# “Liveable shit, you put up with it”

## Enter, divide, and then exit

*Divide And Exit* arrived a year and a bit after *Austerity Dogs*. It built on the foundations and rattled it around the back alleys of your brain a bit longer to pry open all those unsavoury details you'd rather leave untouched. This was Sleaford Mods at their “most punk, class-conscious, and urgent”.

As with all of their output, up until this point, Jason Williamson's lyrics were undoubtedly the star attraction to *Divide and Exit*. Sprawling verses of character assassinations, the boredom of casual drug use, and the banality of it all are the sound of a thousand broken conversations happening at once.

I could list all the lyrical gems willingly, but there really are just too many great ones to choose from.

Do the work yourself. Listen to the record, and you'll hear lines like, “I won't talk to nice people if they look rich, I know it's not on, mate, I'm such a fucking bitch!”

Williamson seemed to hold a mirror up at himself first, then turned it over to the audience for more grim reflection.

Then there's Andrew Fearn, the other half of Sleaford Mods: A man of few words, presenting a masterclass in minimalism. Consisting largely of rough drum loops and low-end bass rumbles, they jolt each song further along and provide the perfect backdrop for Williamson's lyrics. But this isn't some krautrock for the punk scene; these are strange spiralling choruses floating atop a beat that consistently slaps you awake.

Tracks like "Tied Up in Nottz" and "Tweet, Tweet, Tweet" are reminders that you don't need layers of polish to achieve an intense atmosphere with very little.

"Air Conditioning" and "Liveable Shit" still hit hard today. Incredible, really. I mean, the subject matter hasn't aged a day. It's as fresh as the stagnant, recycled air still gliding in a world that insists on battling the same tedious issues -“Big car, Small life”, or who left the toilet door open because it fucking stinks!

Did I say there was humour?

You can easily find yourself diving into new territory with each listen, navigating your way through its murky waters with a new appreciation for every shitty pub in town where the air is thick with stale ambition and half-spoilt fame seekers.

Around this time, it seemed crazy that I had to argue the significance of *Divide and Exit* to people (you know, before “The Fame” and 6 Music heads joined in) who live in the eternal twilight of the Oasis/Lambretta universe.

“Where's the fuckin' guitars?” they whined, like some stunted Peter Pans who never realised Wonderwall fell down years ago. “Just them two and a laptop, then, is it?” As if that wasn't exactly the point—Less was so much more in that landscape when you stripped away the bullshit.

Sleaford Mods proved that in spades.

Now a decade on and still as relevant, *Divide and Exit* stands as an unyielding monument to the disregard of overproduction and hours of staring at a pedal board.

It is a time capsule of disillusionment that hasn't faded and a reflection of Britain at its most honest—Etched with corners of beauty, humility, and insecurity, pulling at the already half-battered sleeves that entangle you in.

“Sir Paul, you can find b-inspiration in everything. The recyclable black bins bags of dog shit Angels sing.”

*Divide and Exit: 10th Anniversary Edition* is out now, accompanied by updated artwork by Cold War Steve.

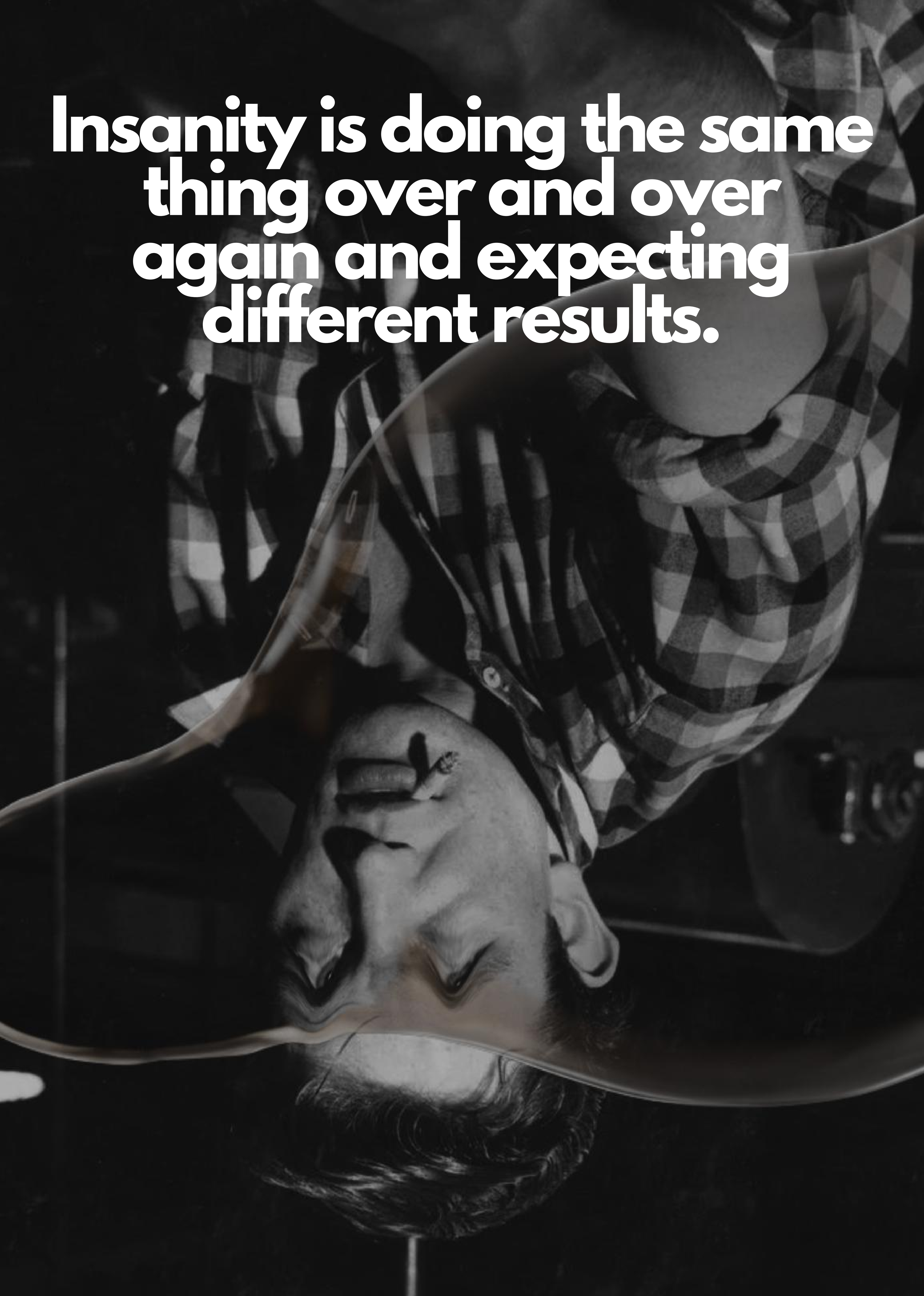
But if you're only getting around to listening now, where have you been?







**Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.**





**TRY**

**AGAIN**

# DO NOTHING

## 'SUMMER OF HATE': A REFLECTION ON AGING AND UNCERTAINTY

**E**ndearing oddballs from Nottingham, Do Nothing defy convention with their genre-blurring mix of new wave, art rock, and post-punk. Their sound, a disjointed expression of confusion in a strange world, is brought to life by singer Chris Bailey's witty lyrics and the off-kilter rhythms of guitarist Kasper Sandstrøm, bassist Charlie Howarth, and drummer Andy Harrison.

Friends since school, the quartet, formerly known as Field Studies, are BBC 6music favorites, with every release earning airplay. Their debut album *Snake Sideways* was followed by a UK and European tour, and they've graced major festivals like Glastonbury and Y Not.

Now, Do Nothing returns with "Summer Of Hate," an angular anthem blending malice with uncertainty, begging to be heard live. We caught up with Chris to discuss the band's latest single, influences, and what's next.

Do Nothing first came to life during a recording session for your previous incarnation as Field Studies on the Isle of Lewis. It must have been an idyllic place to work. What happened at Black Bay Studio that prompted the birth of a new band?

**Chris:** We sucked! That's what happened. The studio was great, and the setting was lovely, but the songs were unsure of themselves and a bit complicated (in a not-good way). So, we returned to the drawing board and did something more minimal. I'm glad that we made fast, punchy music while we were young - now we can be slow and mean and old.

The reaction to *Zero Dollar Bill* and the *Glueland* EP was enormous. Then COVID hit, and the world was in lockdown right around the time of the release of the second EP. Did that have a massive impact on your momentum?

**Sure,** but that's never really bothered me much. Maybe there's an alternative universe in which the pandemic didn't happen, and we're a big, famous mega-band, but I'm happy that we're not—*Hakuna Matata*, etc.

You've been open about the writer's block you faced when starting work on *Snake Sideways*. Despite the frustrations, it resulted in a raw and sincere album. Do you find that pressure like that helps fuel your creativity?

**Nope!** I hate pressure; I buckle under it. Nowadays, I've managed to quit worrying about pressure so much, and I'd say the new material benefits from it.

Although one could argue that pretty much any live show comes with a certain amount of pressure, which does need responding to, that's the fun kind of pressure.

There have always been clear comparisons between Do Nothing and Talking Heads' observational lyrics and angular sound. Perhaps a bit of Pixies unorthodox approach, plus Frank Black's unhinged outbursts, too. Talk us through some of your influences.

**Sure!** Many people discover those bands at a certain age, and they have a significant impact. Sometimes, I totally follow the comparisons that folks make, and sometimes, they surprise me a lot. It just means that person gets something similar out of your music to what they get out of someone else's, which is nice. No one ever seems to compare us to The National, which I find weird cause, lyrically, they're a big one for me. We used to get Roxy Music a lot back in the day, which I quite liked. Here's a small, top-of-the-head list of bands that I don't think I've mentioned before when asked this question.

1. Underworld
2. Portishead
3. The Mountain Goats



And now the new single “Summer of Hate” has dropped just in time for the start of winter. It’s tinged with melancholy and filled with obscure confessional lyrics put to spikey guitars, the trademark elements we’ve come to know and love. What’s the song all about?

That one sort of just came about without me thinking too hard, but I guess it’s generally about bullies, getting older, and not having the energy to get angry in the same way anymore. It clearly wanted to be a certain kind of thing, and I just stayed out of its way.

Usually, I would jump in there and try to make it less fun, but I didn’t feel like doing that this time, so it turned out to be a lovely, simple guitar song.

**"IT'S GENERALLY ABOUT BULLIES, GETTING OLDER, AND NOT HAVING THE ENERGY TO GET ANGRY IN THE SAME WAY ANYMORE."**

You guys have always understood the importance of videos, and “Summer of Hate” continues your surrealist storytelling with maybe just a hint of H.P. Lovecraft’s character’s descent into inevitable madness. Do you work with the same people for each video, and who develops the concepts?

We’ve worked with a whole host of talented folks over the years. It’s been nice to work in different ways, depending on people’s unique styles. This particular one was our own Charlie’s directorial debut, and we worked on it with the same people who did the “LeBron James” video back in the day. There is no explaining how we got so lucky as to get to do this stuff with these people.

You’re calling it a standalone single that won’t appear on the next LP. Has writing and recording already started for the next album?

Yeah, we released it now because the rest of the new material leans in a slightly different direction. As I type this, the recording is two days away.

All the songs are written and have been meddled with in pre-production, and we are texting each other about our excitement.

Would you like to give us some hints on where you think you’ll go next with the second record?

Better songs! All round. It’s still generally about being a miserable git. We’re looking to record them in kooky ways, too, so they don’t all feel like they come from a regular rock band format. Louis Milburn of Folly Group is producing, and we can’t wait to see him again.

It’s currently a great time to be a Nottingham band, with Kasper’s other outfit, Divorce, making waves and GIRLBAND appearing on Rolling Stone’s UK site.

There are plenty of other promising acts like Bloodworm, Otala, Rain Age and Tranks who are waiting in the wings, too. What is it about the Notts scene that’s producing all this incredible talent?

Who knows?! Music scenes start with people just being friends and hanging out. If there are places for creative people to huddle together, and enough of those people are friendly, good bands will form, and shows will happen. I’ve always enjoyed seeing the kids (it makes me sound like an old man, but I don’t know how else to phrase it) start new bands together and get good.

Being in a band is the only thing I’ve ever really done, and when I see these people in the early stages of it, I think about all the fun they’re going to have.

“Summer Of Hate” is out now. Head to YouTube and streaming services.

WORDS: JIMI ARUNDELL

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a sprawling residential development. The image shows a dense grid of small, uniform houses, likely townhomes or small apartments, arranged in neat rows. A prominent feature is a large, circular road or driveway that winds through the center of the development, creating a focal point. The overall scene is characterized by a repetitive pattern of buildings and roads, illustrating the concept of a housing 'sprawl'.

**CRITIQUE FOR THE  
SPLAIN SPRAY**



# IN CONVER- SATION WITH

# Matt Vardy AKA SCARCE



*“I’ll paint whatever I want, and it’ll be the dog’s bollocks either way.”*

Matt Vardy, AKA Scarce, is a Nottingham artist whose style is a blend of bold, gritty street art and unapologetic skate culture that's as fearless as his words. For years now, Scarce has been transforming Nottingham's landscape, carving out his own niche. Though many might label him a graffiti artist, Scarce sees himself simply as a creative, someone who doesn't let titles define his work or his worth.

“I've grown up around graff,” he says, but he's not concerned with fitting into any box.

Raised in a tough environment, he embraces the meaning behind his name—'scarce' or 'lacking'—to symbolise the scarcity he experienced growing up. Drawing alongside his father, a talented artist who passed away when Matt was just ten, his path has been clear. “I'm here to carry on his legacy and create my own.”

With nearly two decades of skateboarding, Scarce's work is shaped by the skate scene—a community as much about the grind as the art he pours onto the city walls. As he reflects on his processes, he shares a piece of advice for artists and skaters making their first steps into the game: “It's simple, you want something you don't ever fucking stop.”

**What drew you to art, and how has your approach evolved?**

Matt: Art's in my blood mate. My dad was a very talented artist, and by the grand age of three, I was picking up pens and paintbrushes and following his footsteps; he was a G, passed away when I was 10, bless him, bless me, life got tough. Growing up, it just felt right to lean into street art—a bit more raw and real, like I wanted to be. I was on this planet not only to carry on his legacy but to perfect my own and ride with the times; organically tuning into street art is a fine example of going with the times.

**Do you consider yourself a graffiti artist or something broader?**

I don't label myself a graffiti artist. I'd say I'm just a creative artist. I grew up around the graffiti—OGs who've been painting for decades. I've always looked up to them, and they've definitely inspired me. Some hardcore graffiti writers might call you a "toy" if you're not deep in the game, but I say screw that. I'll paint whatever I want, and it'll be the dog's bollocks either way. No one's gonna shit on my shine.

**How does skateboarding influence your creative process and your art?**

I've been skateboarding for nearly 20 years, so it's in my blood too! It's not even conscious at this point, but skate culture and the whole vibe around it has shaped my work over the years. That gnarly skate rat, young Matthew—that energy is still coming through in my work today. It's all about freedom and pushing boundaries, and that carries over into my art, too.



**Are there any specific spots in Nottingham that are meaningful to you as an artist and skater?**

Oh, man, Chilwell Olympia skatepark, for sure. It's not around anymore, but that place was my roots—the training ground for a young skater back in the day. RIP Chilwell ramps! Aside from that, Maple Street, Sneinton Market... I could go on. I've been pushing wood on these streets and parks for years. And as for art, my recent mural opposite Nottingham Contemporary means the world to me. I've lived here my whole life, and to paint in a place that's part of my journey—it's become part of my legacy.

**What advice would you give to young artists or skaters trying to make their mark?**

It's simple: you want something, don't ever fucking stop. Skateboarding isn't easy, and neither is making it as an artist, but if you're not practicing, painting, or learning, then you're not moving forward. Keep your foot on the fucking gas. Progress doesn't happen by accident.

**What is your process for creating a new piece?**

It varies. Sometimes, it's as cliché as a lightbulb going off in my noggin, like, "Boom! I've got an idea I need to bring into the real world." Other times, I find inspiration in the most random stuff. I can visualize the finished piece in my mind before I even start—it's almost like watching it come to life behind my eyelids. All I have to do is make it happen.

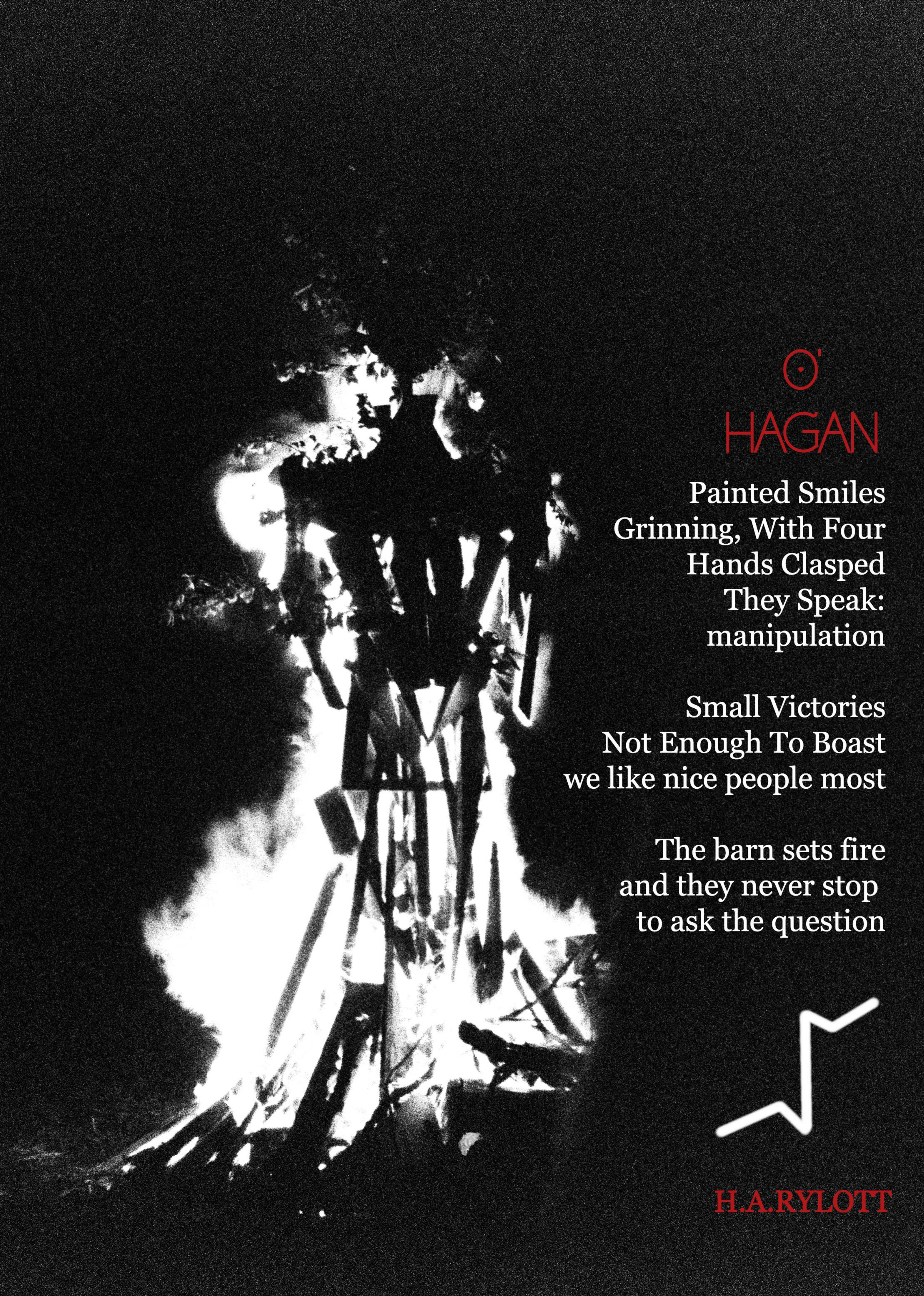
**How have you seen graffiti and street art change in Nottingham over the years?**

There's definitely more of it now than when I was growing up, which is great! Cities can be so grey and dull, so I don't know why you wouldn't want colour on every corner? Nottingham may be small, but what we put out is massive. The talent here is wild. Over the years, I want to see the city get even more colourful and accepting of all the crazy talent around here. Fuck the monotony of grey life—Nottingham deserves a splash of colour to put a smile on people's faces.

**What do you hope people feel or think when they encounter your art on the streets?**

I hope there's a mix of reactions—people loving it and going, "Fuck, Matt, that's sick!" while others might feel uncomfortable or even confused. That's art to me; you don't want every Barry and his dog loving your work. Stir things up a bit; be the reason for a debate or a conversation. If I can make someone's day and leave another scratching their head, that's art in my eyes.





HAGAN

Painted Smiles  
Grinning, With Four  
Hands Clasped  
They Speak:  
manipulation

Small Victories  
Not Enough To Boast  
we like nice people most

The barn sets fire  
and they never stop  
to ask the question



H.A.RYLOTT

## UNLEASHING THE OUTBACK: Wake in Fright — A Fever Dream of Madness and Survival

I tried to shoehorn this twisted ode to madness into a Nottingham arts zine. Why? Because Donald Pleasence, the man who grinned through the dark heart of *Wake in Fright*, was born on the fringes of Nottingham. That's all the connection I need, right? Yeah, it's a stretch, but then again, if *Wake in Fright* teaches us anything, it's that nothing is ever too far gone to resurrect, and Pleasence's grimy gift to cinema is the perfect gateway into this fever dream of a film.

Watching *Wake in Fright* today, it's clear why this Australian New Wave classic still haunts audiences more than 50 years after its release. Unleashed initially in 1971 under the title 'Outback' (and probably sent Australian tourism back 20 years), this brutal, nerve-shredding tale thrusts viewers into a slow-motion nightmare in the dust-choked veins of Outback Australia.

Have a drink, mate?  
Have a fight, mate?  
Have a taste of dust and sweat, mate?  
There's nothing else out here.

## THE FILM

The film opens with a slow 360-degree shot of a flat, sun-bleached landscape, a lonely fly spotted in a comfortless pub, and a screeching train hurtling across the plain. Waiting on the platform is John Grant, a young teacher who is about to descend into five relentless days in Bundanyabba, an outback mining town known to locals as “The Yabba.” Grant doesn’t plan to stay in The Yabba for long—he’s just passing through before catching a plane to Sydney, some 1,200 miles away. He’s already travelled six hours by train from Tiboonda, a place defined by its single pub and two lonely shacks floating in a sea of dust.

But in *The Yabba*, everything spirals. Grant, who arrives with six weeks of wages in hand, soon finds himself penniless after a feverish night of drinking and deranged gambling, where tails are king until the next throw of the coin descends into the pit.

When he wakes up hungover and parched under the unforgiving sun, he’s already a changed man. By 9:30 am the tarmac is starting to bubble.

Desperate to relieve his panicked throat, he finds himself back in a pub, buying one beer, then another.

Over the next few days, Grant drifts through a waking nightmare of booze, violence, and shadowy strangers. When he finally stumbles out of the fog, the educated Sydney-born teacher is gone, replaced by a self-loathing man in a threadbare shirt, stinking of half-raw rabbit, with only one bullet left in his rifle.

## RETROSPECT

It’s been over sixty years since Kenneth Cook’s novel was released and just over fifty since Ted Kotcheff transformed it into a sun-scorched film that still feels as fresh, raw, and uncompromising today.

*Wake in Fright* leapt into the Australian New Wave and married the sensibilities of European art cinema with Hollywood’s appetite for violence and thrill. In doing so, it created a brutal experience showing the raw toll that Australia’s uber-masculine psyche—takes on body and mind, with its visceral images of a vast beer-littered desolate landscape and, of course, that infamous kangaroo hunt that I truly cannot bear to watch.





Shot in a claustrophobic 1.85:1 aspect ratio, the film squeezes you into its frame. Kotcheff doesn't just present the outback as a hostile place; he portrays it as a psychological landscape, where its inhabitants' strength and sanity dissolve under endless nights of drink.

The town's unhinged character is encapsulated in Donald Pleasence's portrayal of Doc Tydon, a doctor and part-time philosopher who's long since surrendered to the madness. Pleasence plays Tydon with a deranged glee, who hasn't just fallen from grace but rather embraced his moral decay with a toast, revelling in his descent and drawing others down with him, including Grant.

The film's brutal dissection of 'outback masculinity' - A place where men push each other toward the abyss, echoes fragmentations of our own culture's battle with being the dominant figure in society. Particularly rooted in working-class culture and the 'tough guy' mentality. These expectations are almost always reinforced through 'social norms'. However, like the characters in *Wake in Fright*, the pressures of upholding these facades in a world that increasingly challenges them leads to struggles with identity and emotional health.

The film often blurs the boundary between horror fiction and documentary realism. None more visceral than the infamous kangaroo hunt scene, shrouded in eerie darkness and illuminated by sporadic flashes of headlights targeting helpless animals. It's no wonder this scene was banned in England for its raw intensity—too real, too disturbing, like life itself when stripped of its civilised facade.

For me, *Wake in Fright* sits alongside films like *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Badlands* or even *Deliverance*, that capture a distinct vision of a land that is disconnected from civilisation. Films like *Nomadland*, with its vast, empty landscapes, or *A Place Beyond The Pines*, with its nihilistic streak, are no doubt influenced by this era of cinema that examines the disconnection and decay that lie at the edges of human experience, inspiring directors like David Lynch and Nicolas Winding Refn, whose works often peel back the layers of the human psyche to reveal the darkness beneath.



# OUT OF TOWN: HEAVY LUNGS

CHAOS TO CAVIAR

**K**nown for their raw intensity and wild stage presence, Heavy Lungs never hold back, bombarding audiences with ferocious punk rock riffs and unapologetically chaotic noise. No wonder they're a favourite of Steve Lamacq!

Fronted by the ever-compelling Danny Nedelko, Heavy Lungs consists of drummer George Garratt, guitarist Oliver Southgate, and bassist James Minchall. The band has made waves with their EPs *Abstract Thoughts*, *Straight to CD*, and *Measure*, as well as their high-octane debut album, *All Gas No Brakes*.

I caught up with George ahead of Heavy Lungs' much-anticipated headline slot for *The Sprawl's* launch issue to chat about their upcoming sophomore album, *Caviar*, *Independent Venue Week*, and, surprisingly, Kelis' iconic track "Milkshake."

Heavy Lungs are usually labelled as post-punk, but your sound goes beyond that. There's a mix of garage, metal, and even hints of psych rock. Who would you say are your main influences?

**George:** Heavy Lungs are four individuals with eclectic tastes, from morning commutes blaring Mr. Oizo's "Flat Beat" to whatever else might strike a chord on any given day. We're constantly trying to channel that unique energy—just four people bringing their distinct voices to create something unrestrained.

How do you approach songwriting? Does one person bring the songs to the rest, or is it more of a free-for-all in the studio?

We're not the Red Hot Chili Peppers; we can't just walk into the studio and crank out hit after hit with ease. Writing is intense, full of arguments and clashes of creative vision. Every song ends up as a reluctant compromise. It's a way for each of us to tell the others, "You're wrong, but let's go with it."

How did you all come together and get started?

Danny's the one to thank—or blame—for Heavy Lungs. I was ready to leave the country after my last band fizzled out, but Danny's vision pulled us together. It's his dream that made this band possible.

"Writing is intense, full of arguments and clashes of creative vision. Every song ends up as a reluctant compromise—'You're wrong, but let's go with it.'"

The new single "Get Out" just dropped, and it's intense, even by your standards. What's it about?

I used to try to decode Danny's lyrics, but honestly, I think he might just need a break! Although, who knows? Maybe there's a hidden political message in there.

The video features Danny in a straitjacket, trying to escape a mannequin-filled dump. Where was it filmed, and how did you get a straitjacket?

We had the straitjacket lying around, so we made use of it! We shot it at Mannakin LTD, near Lincoln, a weird lock-up filled with mannequins. It's DIY filmmaking at its finest—doing the best we could on a tight budget.



What can you tell us about the next record? Is it similar to your debut, or can we expect a change?

This new record comes from a different mindset. We weren't trying to please anyone but ourselves, giving us the freedom to have fun and let loose. There are the usual limitations with budget and time, but overall, it's a record that lets our playful side shine through. We laughed a lot in the studio, and I hope listeners can hear that spirit in the tracks.

You'll be headlining the launch gig for The Sprawl, returning to Nottingham to showcase new material. You've previously played at Bodega and Rough Trade Nottingham—how do you feel about the city?

Nottingham's crowd is great—friendly, with genuine smiles. One time at Rough Trade, I played the theme from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and they got the joke and even embraced the existential moment with me—Nottingham's a special place for us.

You've just wrapped up some dates on the European circuit, with shows in Rotterdam and Portugal. How did the crowds respond?

Honestly, I didn't think anyone outside the UK really knew us, so seeing that reaction was incredible. We can't wait to go back.

Seeing you scream Kelis' "Milkshake" in a Dutch church was surreal and hilarious. What inspired that cover?

The guys asked me to come out from behind the kit and do something, and somehow, Kelis was my go-to.

In January, you're hitting the road for Independent Venue Week. Independent venues are vital for grassroots music communities. Are there any UK venues that stand out as favourites?

I love those places that embrace their quirks and imperfections. Venues where the stairs might trip you up and the lines are rarely clean, but they're consistent in their chaotic charm. Places where I can leave my jacket by the stage without worrying, where staff remember your face—maybe even that you're banned from the dartboard. These spots are rare and vanishing fast, so if you have a favourite, cherish it. The 02 Arena is great, but it'll never quite have the smell and stamp of an independent venue's mosh pit.

Caviar drops on April 11 through FatCat Records.

WORDS: JIMI ARUNDELL

# USELESS

It's some rigid year before crude oil  
and pouring gasoline all over the morning  
to set our hearts on fire.

We're slowly learning to be less crude beings.

I enter the assembly point with a hacksaw around my neck.  
It's no emergency.

Don't pan the camera on me with that harsh violin,  
it's not going to slit my throat.

Promise.

We committed arson to a place of bad imagination  
with our disorderly rage, birthed by it.  
You just made it out of the scene alive.

Why the holes in your trousers?

No one has figured out the moonlight yet.

Might it turn your exposed knees to stone,  
unswerving like a God of war and thunder.

I want to rise beneath it too  
even with the battle scars that introduce the sullen man.

That's what you get  
when you strap a useless epiphany to your back  
and run out of every building you're in,  
just to make an impact.

Try harder.

People are still upset out here  
and the human anatomy is dumb.

Where's your heart at?

Where your hands are?

If it pounds all over your body,  
you can bat anything out of the park.





# O T A L A

## Everything, but the hate.

Undefinable and undefiable, Nottingham's cherished quintet Otala are grabbing 2024 with their throbbing hands. They have written their own checklist, with homemade ideas of specific crafted post-rock, sinister twists on jazz, wall-crashing heaviness and spoken word drama that implies the narrator has seen it all.

Their 2023 debut EP, *Tell The Bees*, bonded them with Nottingham's community and launched them across the UK and Europe. This year isn't a victory lap; it's a bold new chapter.

Their latest achievements include a 7" record release with Lil Chop Record Shop and new singles *Everything but the Hate* and *Patchwork*.

I took guitarist/frontman Oscar Thorpe and saxophonist Charlotte Foulkes out for coffee on a hot Friday morning - waking them up enough to reflect on the past year as a band, share their excitement for where they are now and what's yet to come.

Words by Elias Serghi



## OTALA: EVERYTHING, BUT THE HATE.

**Your music draws from a wide range of influences. What are some key elements that shape your sound?**

**Oscar:** We focus on matching lyrics with tone, creating something immersive. I'm inspired by poets like Baudelaire and Bukowski, who can turn the everyday into something haunting.

**Charlotte:** All of us bring different influences, from jazz to folk. Each member's background shapes our sound, which evolves as we jam together. Some songs take time to feel complete, but we learn each other's styles, and that's how it all comes together.

**What philosophical ideas do you explore in your music?**

**Oscar:** Lately, it's the idea of "man-eat-man"—how the world has potential for beauty but often ends up wrecked, whether by nature or influence.

**How did you develop confidence in expressing intense emotions in your music?**

**Oscar:** It's like performance art. I change how I read lyrics to convey different emotions—shouting, sounding defeated—and the music amplifies that.

**Charlotte:** At first, I was just playing. But as I got to know the band's emotional intentions, I started channelling that myself. The saxophone is perfect for guttural, shrieking sounds that bring out emotion.

**You recently released a 7" record through Lil Chop Record Shop. How has that experience been?**

**Oscar:** Working with Ol at Lil Chop has been excellent. He came to one of our shows and saw potential. He's become a mentor, helping us with everything from pressings to recording.

**Charlotte:** It's more personal than with big labels that handle tons of artists. Ol gives us real support and guidance.

**Tell us about Everything but the Hate. It has a striking build-up, both sonically and emotionally**

**Oscar:** The lyrics started as a poem about homesickness and missing people. Musically, it builds from a slow, pretty start to an intense crescendo, mirroring the longing and envy in the lyrics.

**If the "flames" took away your hate, what would you want in return?**

**Oscar:** A lifetime supply of vegetable samosas!

**Your father also did the artwork for Everything but the Hate. What inspired it?**

**Oscar:** I asked him to create something based on how the music made him feel. I liked the idea of depersonalised figures, which suited the tone perfectly.

**“IT'S LIKE PERFORMANCE ART. I CHANGE HOW I READ LYRICS TO CONVEY DIFFERENT EMOTIONS SHOUTING, SOUNDING DEFEATED, AND THE MUSIC AMPLIFIES THAT”  
— Oscar Thorpe**

**You've just released another immersive track, 'Patchwork' How has the process been?**

**Oscar:** Patchwork was an old song we'd dropped but reworked. Now we're happy with it, and it reflects how we've grown together. Our sound keeps changing, and that's the fun part.

**Is recording becoming a regular practice for the band?**

**Charlotte:** Definitely. Before Commedia and Guatavita, we hadn't recorded for a year. Now, with support from Ol, we've got plans and timelines for more releases.

**You've started touring outside the UK. What's that been like?**

**Oscar:** It's like a free holiday! We didn't expect much our first time in Paris but got a great response. It's surreal seeing people wearing Otala T-shirts.

**Charlotte:** It's incredible meeting new crowds who found us independently. Left of the Dial in the Netherlands made me realise, "Wow, I'm in a band." We've made friends who give advice and help when we go back.

**Is there anything about being in a band that you'd still like to learn**

**Charlotte:** How do you handle industry relationships and navigate more extensive partnerships? There's a lot we haven't had to manage yet, so there's plenty to learn as we grow.



**Looking back, what advice would you give yourselves a year ago?**

**Oscar:** Don't regret putting out your early stuff, even if you cringe later. It's all experience and helps with confidence.

**Charlotte:** I joined Otala only a few months after picking up the sax, so performing was a huge learning curve. I don't need a pre-show beer for courage—I've grown confident. For beginners, I'd say stick with it; confidence will come.

**Your homecoming show at The Bodega is coming up. What's changed in your set since your first headliner there?**

**Oscar:** As we get more comfortable with each other on stage, our shows have become more expressive. We can get into the emotions of the songs more easily now.

**What advice would you give to up-and-coming bands?**

**Oscar:** Keep grinding.

**Charlotte:** Play as many gigs as possible, even if the venue's small or the pay could be better. Building connections with venues and sound engineers is key.

**Oscar:** Playing live lets you refine your songs and understand what works best. Plus, it builds up your band's CV and reputation.

**You've decided to move to London together. What's the motivation behind that?**

**Oscar:** We're all ready to try something new. Living in the same city for the first time will let us write and gig more. It's an exciting step forward.

**What's next for Otala?**

**Charlotte:** It would be great to tour as a supporting act. It's an ideal way to reach new audiences and grow.

**Oscar:** Just keeping up the momentum, playing new places and developing as we go.

**In a year of touring, recording, and growth, Otala have shown they're not just another band—they're artists with vision, grit, and a passion for pushing boundaries. Their homecoming show promises to be a powerful close to their biggest year yet.**

**Otala's journey is just beginning, and they're determined to make every note count.**

Life is different now  
The 8ft yellow python has escaped  
And ruined everyone's summer

Within our specimen jars  
Cats pine as young lovers from windowsills  
Old women fade to dust motes at the hilt of sun-forged swords  
And children pace clammy and wild in their bedrooms

Outside, Lavender bathes in burning blisters  
Twisting through the primal heat  
A weight on the pavement bent cruel with age and flavour-lost liver spots  
A waking vein scoring the neighbourhood

She spoils the earth  
She turns the grass into peanut shells  
And makes the scraps of birdsong splinter  
She is the reason we haven't seen any swallows  
That the daffodils came up too soon  
And that the apples fell like a smack in a supermarket

You know she even made a little girl cry?  
When her mother took the blackbird like a heart  
Somehow the plastic bag was still so heavy with living  
Above, magpies threw expletives like angry drivers  
With their engines still running  
And at the end of this traffic is a burning wreckage

# Lavender is Missing

Sophie Diver / @sophiedwrites

Still

We imagine the worst  
Unlearning words like 'petrichor'  
The syllables jammed to our tongues as ulcers  
And Lavender sits on the ending like a tremor  
Waiting for our pan of world to bubble over

She is out there  
Reading the truest braille with muscle and sinew  
Mapping whispered contours of old bus tickets  
and baby shoes  
She is out there  
Stacked in her owners' shed like a rotten hose pipe  
Swelling in the thickness of summer, unravelling  
As a Lugworm's thread

She is out there  
As the cracked old oak outside our window  
Counting life by who's dead and who's moved in  
Measured by the creases in her tarmac skirt  
All at once deep and  
done

Shaking life from her hair  
Kissing the earth like a fault line  
Moving to see what gives first



**'Moon' gear**







“It feels like stepping into a conversation where the music does most of the talking, spinning what's on offer - as all good record stores should”

## The Shop

Phlexx Records sits unassumingly in Nottingham's city centre, nestled between The Cross Keys Pub and the regular ebb and flow of substandard office space fodder. Yet, the outside world is left behind once you walk through the door.

You don't come here just for vinyl - you come to escape the surrounding crashes and bells of the tramline and the squelching of tyres in the brutalist monument to inner city parking. Phlexx offers a quieter, more introspective take on life. It's an intimate space where sound and community intermingle, offering something deeper than instant gratification.

The selection of records here speaks volumes. Shelves are stacked with sonic history, from King Tubby's dub reggae and Tom Furse's (Ex-Horrors) synth-infused static, alongside local artists like Yandl Shyr and Last Sons. Digging through the crates you'll find a curated walk through subterranean dub techno, ambient and minimal electronic music. It feels like stepping into a conversation where the music does most of the talking, spinning what's on offer - as all good record stores should.

The staff here are always ready to fill in the gaps - not with hard-sell pretentiousness, but with recommendations that stem from a genuine love for the craft and the community.

As with any retail outlet trying to establish itself as a psychical entity whilst being battered by crippling business rates and, more often than not, greedy landlords, you have to pivot and allow for other saleable avenues.

This comes in the form of strong, earthy coffee, pastries that teeter on the edge of indulgence, and all your regular coffee shop snacks that take the edge off things.

This only compliments the general atmosphere and relaxed nature of the shop.

You might find yourself plopping down at one of the small tables, flipping through records while the soft hiss of an espresso machine chimes in the background.

Time stretches out here, just enough to give you room to breathe.

The clientèle is a mix of seasoned heads and newcomers, the odd student making their voyage into vinyl, and regulars that pop in to have a catch-up with owner Trekkah and store manager Christy over upcoming shows, what Mimm Studios are up to, community youth projects such as Nottingham C.A.N. and every other project that the team is involved with, there are genuinely too many to name here...







Coffee & Records  
what's not to like?

## The Label

Phlexx is firmly rooted in Nottingham's landscape. Initially started by Trekkah and Bru-C as a passion project to spotlight their group at the city's lost gem, 'The Maze', Phlexx has grown into much more. They've hosted Bassline raves at Bar 11, spun DJ sets for Mimm Radio, held poetry slams at Suede Bar, and organised their own Phlexxhibitions in eclectic venues around town.

Since its founding, the label has thrived with a creative spirit, releasing over 60 diverse records and featuring artists such as Do Nothing, Penny Moon, Bru-C, Soft Girls & Boys Club, and Marco Woolf, among others. It's an impressive achievement—releasing physical records is costly, time-consuming, and often a gamble just to 'break-even'. Phlexx's existence as a resource for artists striving to broaden their audience is a huge asset for Nottingham and one not to be taken for granted.

Attracting crowds to a free, talent-packed show is already a challenge, let alone committing to the effort and expense of physical media.

Partnerships with distributor Believe and publisher Genre Fluid, Phlexx hopes to broaden its influence, redefining what it means for artists to make their mark. Phlexx is far from a scrappy start-up—it's a powerhouse label built on DIY principles.

This year, they launched a physical shop, which doubles as a performance stage and community hub where people can immerse themselves in art. Situated beside Barbershop Cubed, Phlexx eschews fleeting trends in favour of the tangible, the analogue, and the notion that good music and good coffee deserve time.

So if you ever find yourself down Weekday Cross amongst the din, close to the contemporary or grabbing a mop crop next door, find your way into Phlexx.



# STUART PEARCE: THE BOSSES ARE STEALING YOUR DAYS

Nottingham band *Stuart Pearce* ("You Reds!" and all that carry-on), melds jangle-pop, post-punk and experimental synths into a sound as unpredictable as it is unforgettable.

Pulling influences from the likes of Pere Ubu, Stereolab, and Guided by Voices, the band delivers a fierce rhythm section, snappy guitar hooks and glowing keyboard melodies - mix all that up in a bowl with communist imagery, a love of unions and a sour taste of our neoliberal hellscape, you have the band, Stuart Pearce.

Their debut, *Red Sport International*, tore into themes like football violence, nuclear disaster, and the slow implosion of political discourse. Latest offerings, "The Bosses Are Stealing Your Days!" and "Fuck No, I Jangle", call for action, revolutionary ideals and opt for genuine, uncompromising innovation. Their upcoming album, *All This Vast Overproduction*, promises "all directions at once"—Bringing individualism to the forefront and intending to gut out the hollow nature of the music industries 'more of the same' attitude.

**In an era where the pressure to conform is suffocating, the message is clear: Eat the Rich.**

**So, come on then – Who are ya?**

**Nat:** Stuart Pearce are a beat-combo from the market towns of the East Midlands. There's me, along with Adam Clarkson on Guitar, Dan Green on Bass and Lawrence Lucas on the Drums.

I've been performing under the name Stuart Pearce for years in various forms. The first show was a far cry from what we do now—more free jazz with electronics and a pretty hefty sound. An eccentric Greek guy from Salford Uni, 'Dr Moriarty', strapped Wii remotes to my sax, manipulating synths and effects as a live drummer played. Stuart Pearce was my Facebook alias back then, a test of how well people knew me—whether they called me Nat or Stu.

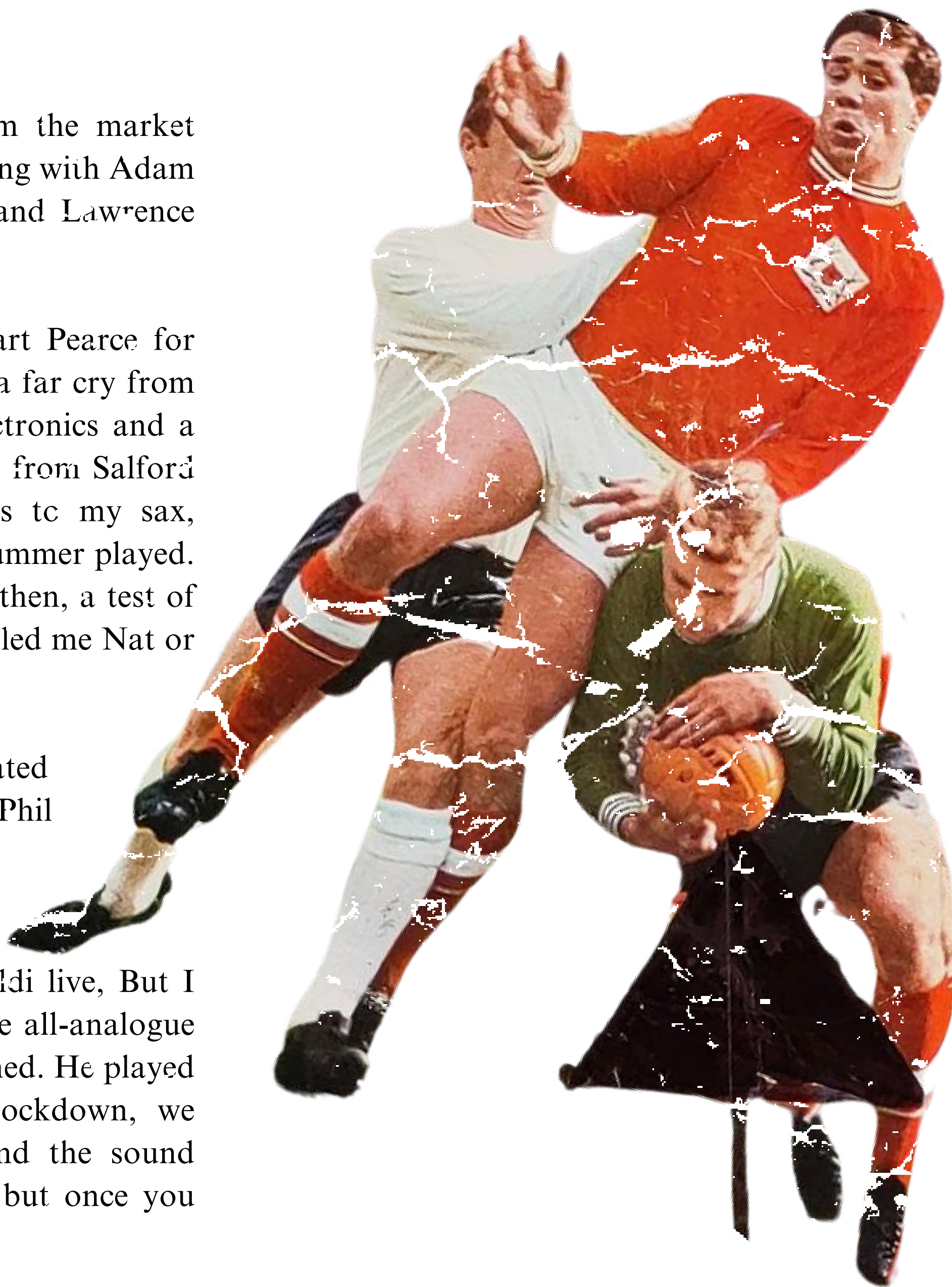
Years later, in another SP band, I got frustrated only playing sax and dove into synthesisers. Phil Booth (JT Soar) suggested I try something with all my synths and drum machines. It turned out well, and I still play songs like Robotnik, Colonia, and Forza Garibaldi live. But I realised I needed more hands to pull off the all-analogue set I wanted, so my old mate Joe Savage joined. He played bass, guitar, synth—whatever fit. After lockdown, we started adding live drums and guitars, and the sound really clicked. Some people come and go, but once you find a stable lineup, things start to gel.

**Adam:** I knew Nat from the local scene; we had mutual mates, and I was promoting gigs. I put them on with Franky's Evil Party, and I was instantly hooked. I loved the songs and just got drawn into it.

**Your live performances are known for their high energy, sometimes leaving the floor blood-stained. How do you prepare for such intense shows?**

**Nat:** Leg stretches, for a start! We're all about preparation and trust—Dan knows to steer clear of the microphone when it's windmillin'. We practise a lot, and people tell us we're tight on stage, which is good to hear.

**"Social media's melting everyone's brains, neoliberalism is rotting the foundation of everything, and yet, music? Music is just another commodity."**



We play short songs in quick succession; if you've only got half an hour, you make it count. It's surreal hearing people sing back your lyrics. There's one bit where the crowd chants, "Beat sensation!" I still don't know what that means, but it sounds great when everyone's belting it out.

**Adam:** I used to have a bit of wine before shows, but now I don't drink before playing. I prefer being relaxed, then I can put more into the performance. I've got this acupuncture mat I lie on before gigs, and it works wonders. I also try to exercise in the morning of a show, which keeps me sharp.

**Your lyrics dive into some pretty strange rabbit holes. What's going on there?**

**Nat:** Ideas come from everywhere—stuff you overhear at bus stops, books, Wikipedia rabbit holes. I've written songs since I was a teenager, but I tire of the self-centred, "woe is me" stuff. I'm into bringing in titles or concepts that can spark a whole world, characters, and emotions. Disco Elysium's been a big influence; I love its gritty, grounded setting. David Lynch's dreamlike storytelling also sneaks into some lyrics. I try to mix it up so it doesn't get stale. One song was from the perspective of a Soviet bug hidden in the U.S. ambassador's office—didn't make the album, but you get the idea.

**In an age of distraction and doom-scrolling, how do you keep it fresh?**

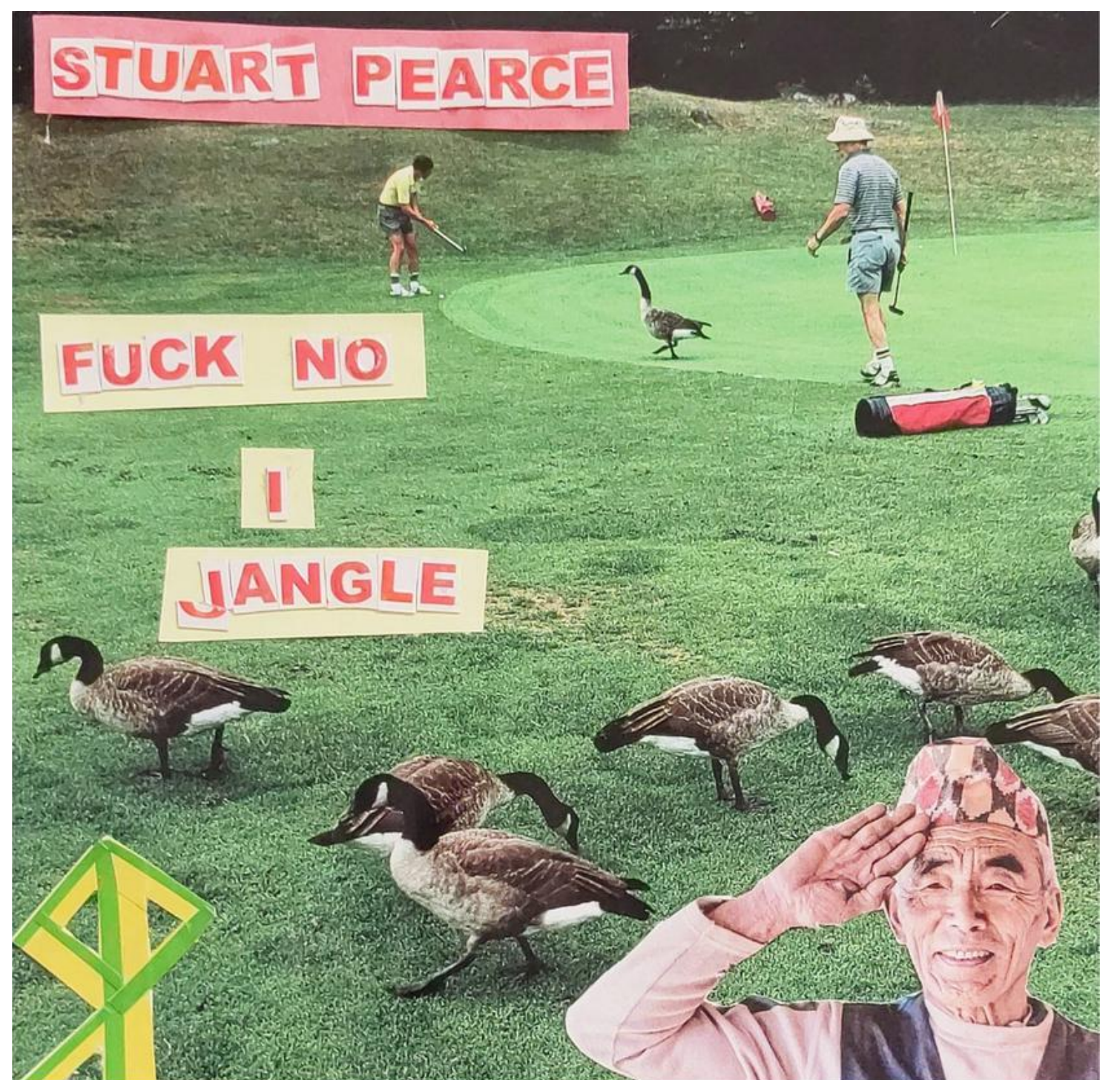
*Nat:* It's easy to feel hopeless these days. Social media's melting everyone's brains, neoliberalism is rotting the foundation of everything, and yet, music? Music is just another commodity. Some bands think giving everything away online will get them noticed, but it's just feeding the machine. We don't use hashtags to get attention; we know our music has substance. Our audience can sense when you're real. It's about meaning what you say and bringing people along for the ride.

**Is there a social or political message you hope to convey through your music?**

*Nat:* I'm not one to shove opinions down people's throats, but our views come through loud and clear. There are loads of bands who scream about what they're against, but I'd rather stand for something and let people come to their conclusions. There's a lot of grandstanding out there, but we stick to showing by doing—treating people right, booking diverse lineups, paying bands fairly. I always tell people to join a union if they're serious about change. It's not about performative allyship; it's about putting your values into action.

**With so many diverse influences, how do you see the future sound of Stuart Pearce evolving?**

*Nat:* I want us to push away from those “sounds like The Fall” comparisons. Don't get me wrong, I love MES, but there are other influences that aren't mentioned, such as Nightingales, Pere Ubu, and Stereolab. Guided By Voices taught me there are no rules to writing or making an album sound one way. I'd like to release music more often and get some self-recording going. There's room to be prolific if you don't follow every trend.



*Adam:* I'm drawn to guitarists with unique styles like Coxon, Malkmus, people with a bit of character. I love it when a guitar feels like part of the rhythm section, like Lewsberg does. At the end of the day, there are no rules; just be in tune and on time.

**What's it like working with the indie label 'Safe Suburban Home'?**

*Nat:* They've been great. Apparently, we're one of their best sellers, so they're on board with putting out singles as we have them ready. We've done some shows with other bands on the label, too, and it's a good feeling to have a team that gets what we're about and supports our vision.

**What's next for Stuart Pearce?**

*Nat:* We've got a new album, *All This Vast Overproduction*, dropping in spring 2025. We laid down 19 tracks, and we're figuring out what to do with the extras. Maybe an EP or B-sides. Who knows? But whatever's next, it's going to be an evolution of everything we've built so far.

**Thanks for your time! Any final words?**

*Nat:* Just cheers for supporting us and sticking with what we do. We're four guys from the Midlands who love making music, and it's mad that people genuinely dig it. It's validating after years of banging your head against the wall. Thanks for having us, mate!





Low Tar & Nicotine · Satisfying Taste · by Kent®

Golden Lights



**Golden Lights**

8 Mg Tar, 0.7 Mg Nicotine

# Pub Chatter

**S**itting here in The Gladstone, I feel a certain nostalgia for the standard pub - Nothing too fancy, too edgy, theme-ridden or the ones that charge you £8 a beer. I'm not tight; I'm just not that stupid.

These old haunts have always felt like bastions of simplicity, the kind of places where you're encouraged to just be. There's something about a pub that doesn't try too hard to be anything but itself—no gimmicks, no neon-lit sign floating like a shit version of Blade Runner. These are pubs you don't plan to find but stumble upon, though the regulars would argue they've been waiting for you all along.

The first thing that hits you walking into these sorta pubs is the unapologetic dimness—accompanied by a faint smell of ale and damp wood that has been inhaled and exhaled a thousand times, then heaved out twice as many.

Walls littered with beer signs, knackered dart board, mental carpets, books on rambling in the peak district that no-ones read and almost always anaglypta.

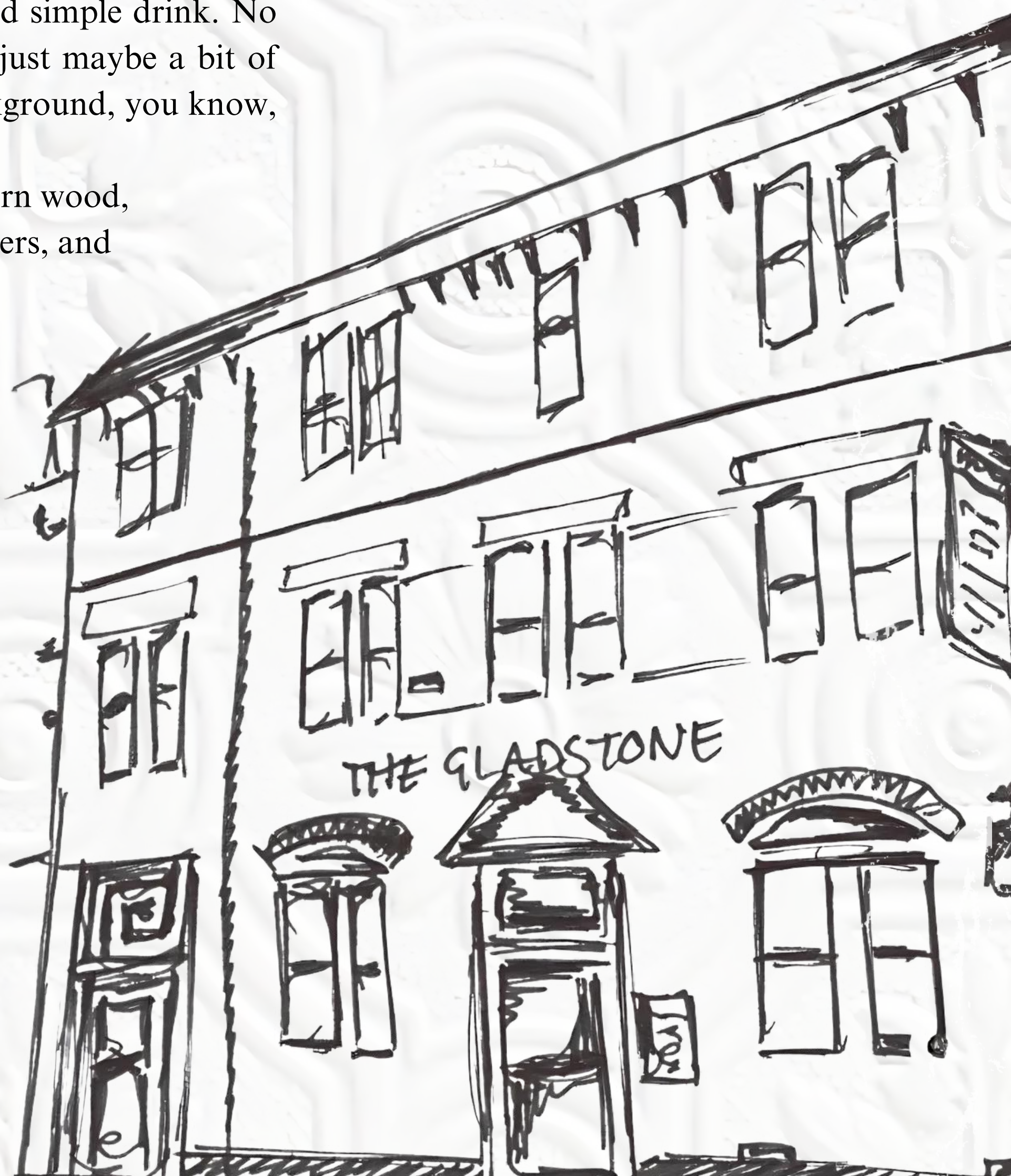
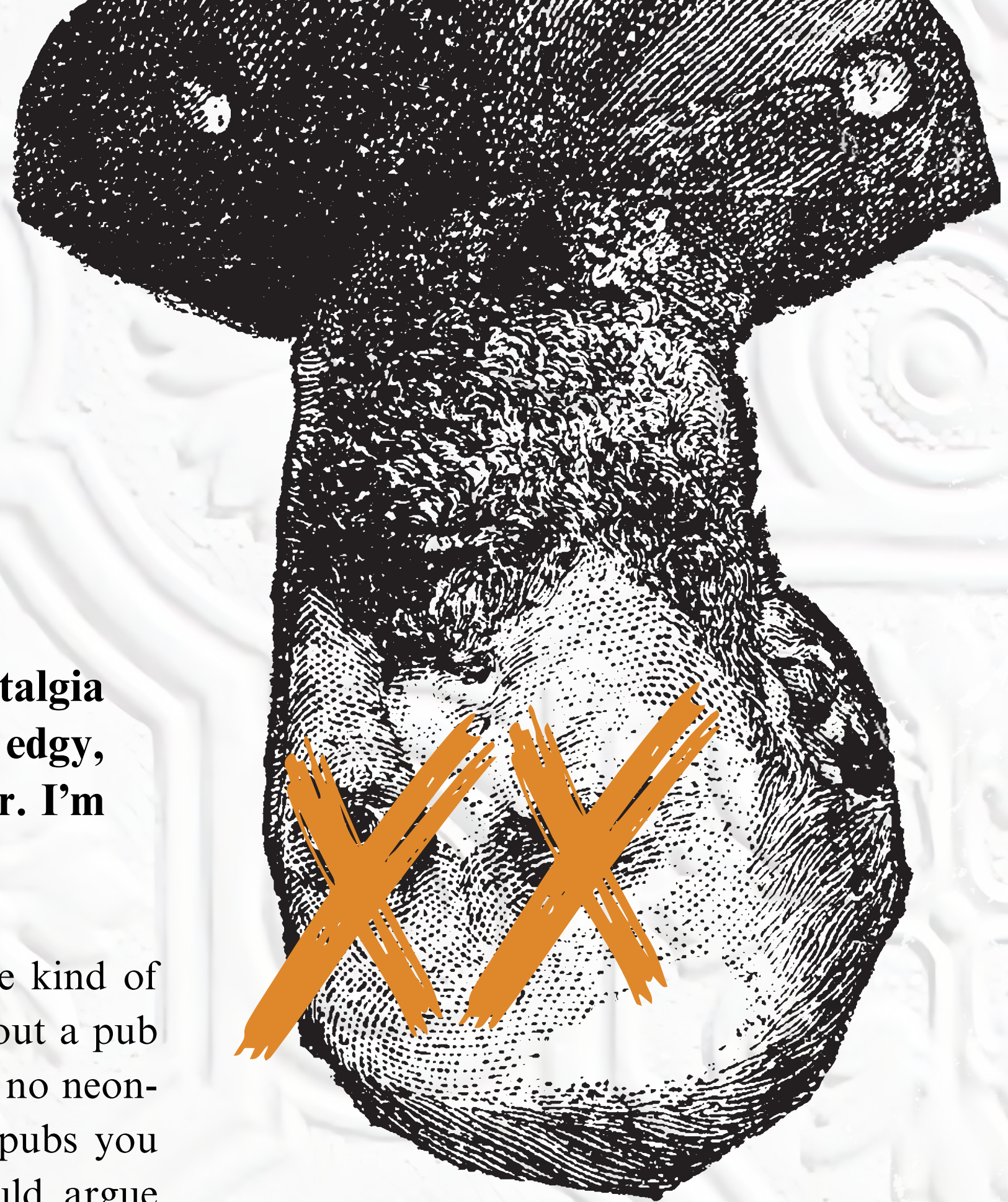
Nottingham's old pubs have been sanctuaries for a good simple drink. No curated playlists, no desperate attempts at trendiness—just maybe a bit of The Housemartins or “a bit of Quo” playing in the background, you know, pub music.

At the bar, there's a satisfying roughness—the elbow-worn wood, and behind it, unpretentious beer - Cask ales, bitters, lagers, and maybe a stout or two. No IPA revolution or anything that requires a dissertation to appreciate.

Pubs are better for it, Honestly, pack it in now.

Pub snacks that consist of the usual relics the culture refuses to move on from - Crisps, roasted peanuts, maybe those pretzel pieces on a good day. There's no kitchen to speak of unless you count the hand dryer in the bogs pumping out a thin gust of warmth that somehow reminds you you're alive.

It doesn't matter anyway - You don't come to these pubs to eat. You come to sit, drink, and work through the day's boredom or excitement depending whether you've clocked out or just killing time.



In these pubs, you won't find young professionals trading stock tips or weekend warriors, but a mix of seasoned locals (Sometimes those weird "locals" who stare at you as if you've taken a dump in the bar area. Honestly it's just part of the experience) and a few cask seekers who have stumbled in, seeking a pause from the rattling of the bus lanes.

Background noise to conversations about work or football is drowned out by the occasional burst of laughter to a sinister joke that only makes sense when your fourth pint begins to blur the lines between reason and nonsense.

But hang on wait, I'm getting way ahead of myself here, or I'm just on autopilot for some love letter on 'proper pubs', or maybe I've gone past the 3-pint threshold... Fucked if I know.

Anyway, the point is, they're vanishing. One by one, have been for years now. Only to be redesigned by sleek, minimalist spaces designed to move pints and cocktails more efficiently, with values and trends that don't belong to Nottingham or its people.

Worse still, many of them are closing altogether, part of a broader culture that no longer values the simplicity of sitting with a pint in no rush, listening to music, and sharing space and time.

Those bars I mentioned above exist for the Instagram post—they exist for the farrow and ball, the fake plants, the trip advisor reviews, not the slow unfolding of lives spent in and out of each other's company in the confines of a pub with a roasting fire.

You can see it, as I do. Sometimes, these pubs are empty on a Saturday. The number of pubs in Nottinghamshire is always decreasing - Over the last decade, at least a thousand. Particularly independent pubs and those in smaller communities. Business rates, inflation, energy costs and a whole lot more challenge these places to stay open - Most things that are beyond our control.

However, one thing that is - Drinking at home.

And yeah, you could drink at home with cheap lager, boxed wine, or whatever's on offer at Aldi. It's cheaper, isn't it?

But there's a danger there: you lose conversation, and a slow erosion of your sanity in the quiet clink of the glass ensues. You might even start drinking more often; because everything becomes much more accessible at home, and you go out with friends, less.

Drink enough at home, and the walls start to close in. The world outside becomes a little more distant, a little less inviting.

The silence, too, becomes louder.

Getting older makes it all the more poignant. There's a weight in knowing that these places—where we used to waste time and light our cigarettes off each other's fire are slipping away.

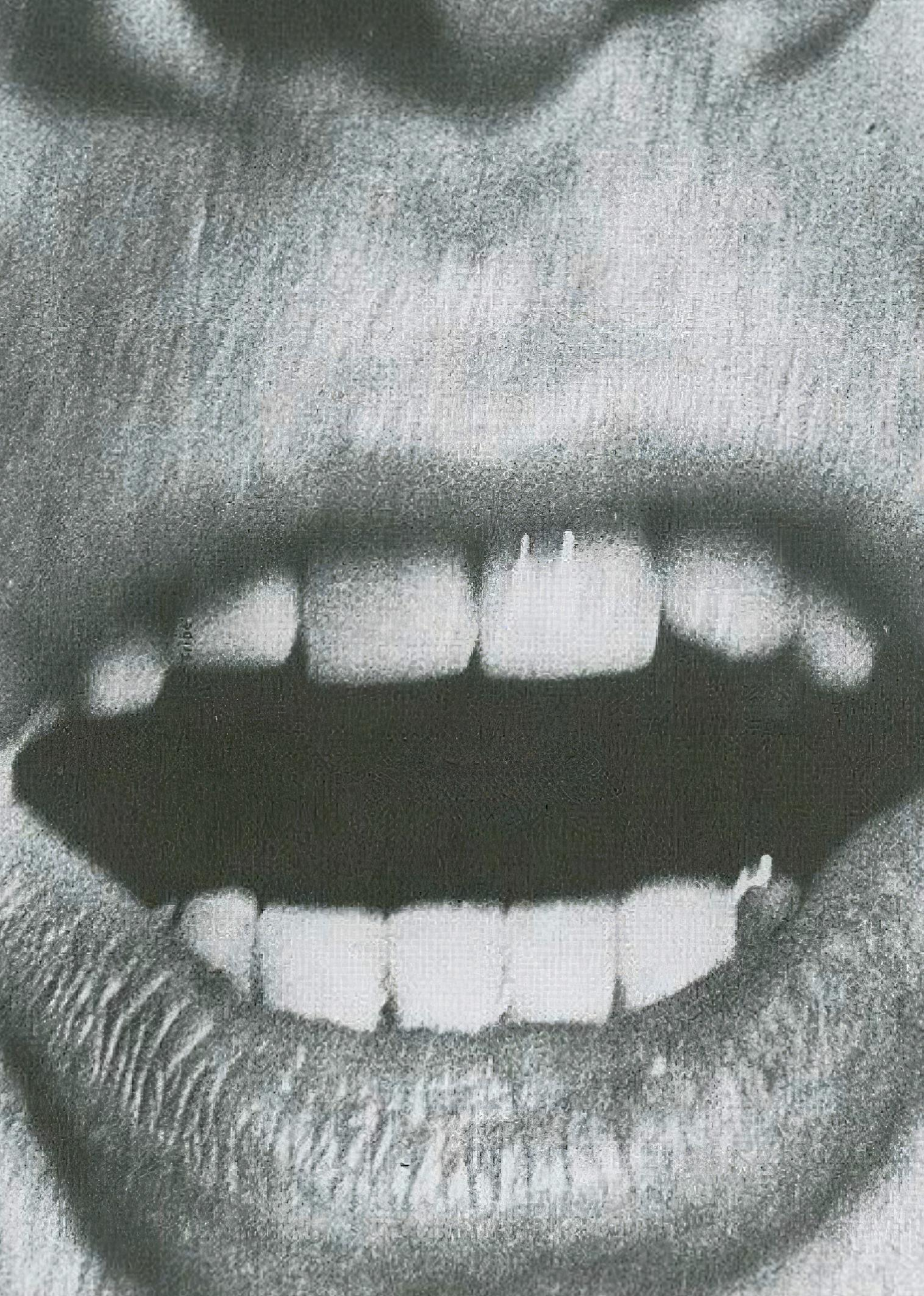
It's a loss of something unmeasured and deeply human.

And now, as Nottingham is being renovated en-masse and the spaces that shaped us slip through our fingers into crap student accommodation by busy junctions, maybe pubs are the last bastion of normality, along with the people and the stories.

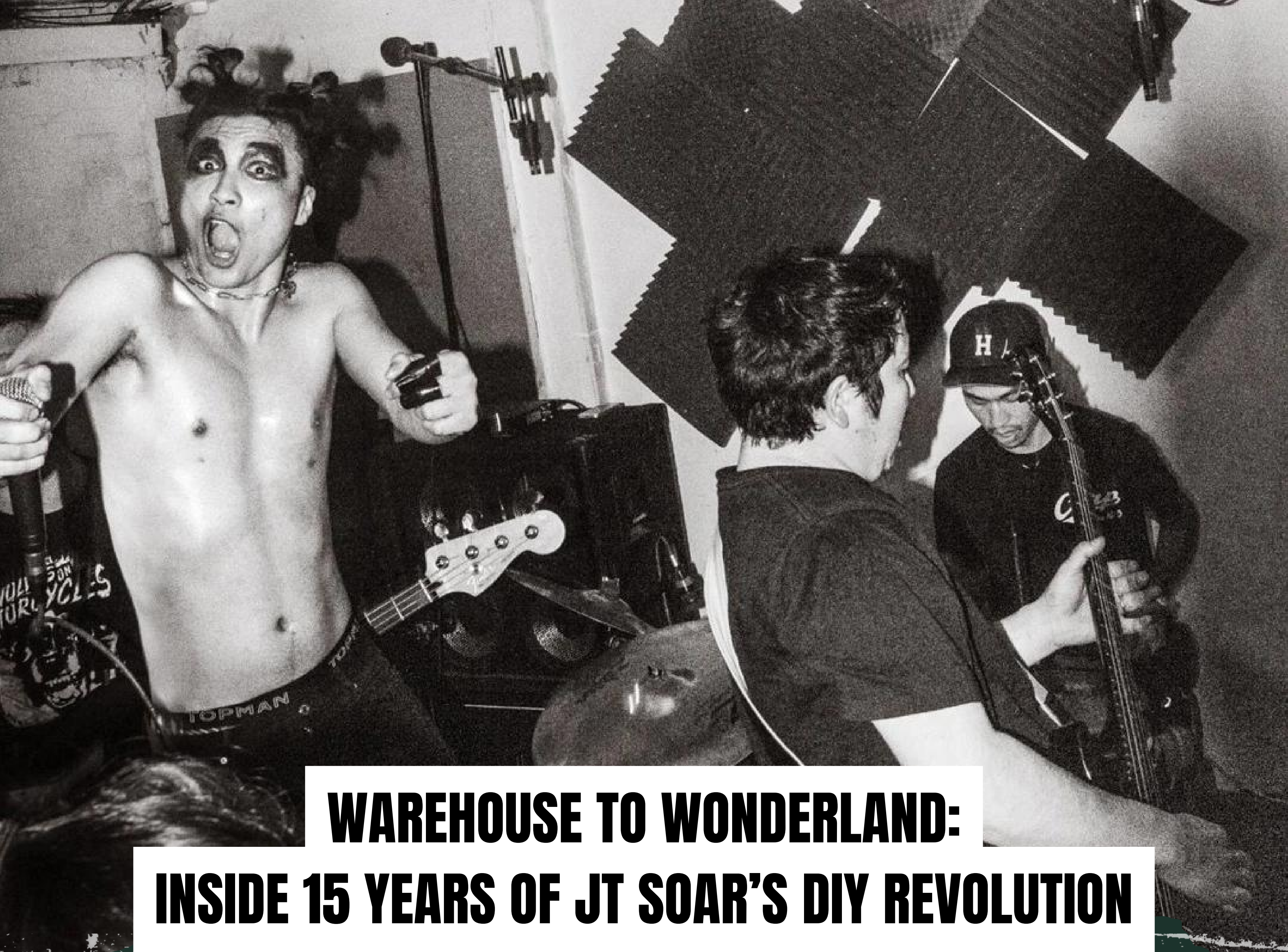
Either way, don't let them fade to who knows where; keep them alive, as one day, even that will probably be gone.

Sip your last sip, use your local, and when you've had enough for that day, head back out there to a world that's forgotten how to sit still, eventually...









## **WAREHOUSE TO WONDERLAND: INSIDE 15 YEARS OF JT SOAR'S DIY REVOLUTION**

Fifteen years ago, Phil Booth—founder of JT Soar—along with a few like-minded accomplices, transformed a humble, potato-scented warehouse on the outskirts of Sneinton Market into a DIY music venue for punk, emo and hardcore shows. Since then,

JT Soar has grown to be more than Nottingham's favourite underground venue; It's a hub for independent bands and artists, championing a community-first ethos and steadfast loyalty to the scene, unburdened by the vulgar need for ego or cash grabs.

Unlike traditional venues with their trappings of glamour—a well-stocked bar or a proper stage—JT Soar thrives on something far less tangible but infinitely more valuable: the loyalty of those who breathe life into it.

Through rent hikes, leaky roofs, and occasional council grumble, the JT Soar community has stood firm, weathering the challenges together.

Fresh off celebrating its decade-and-a-half anniversary with its own two-day festival, we spoke to Phil on the challenges, laughs, and lessons for anyone who's ever dreamed of owning their own venue and recording studio—or at least finding a decent rehearsal space.

**So, JT Soar - A proper DIY stalwart in the city's boundaries for 15 years now - Give us the lowdown on why you chose to start your own venue and recording studio.**

**Phil Booth:** I got into music late, around 15 or 16. Before that, I was all about computer games and Pokémon cards. But once I started buying cheap cover CDs from Fopp, I fell hard for music. I was washing pots for minimum wage and happily building an eclectic taste. I didn't study music at first—I was failing Accounts and Economics—so I got into it by recording my bands, trying to release something like the "real bands."

I started messing around with a digital 4-track, but the sound wasn't right, so I went to Confetti [Institute of Creative Technologies] to improve. During that time, I began working with Joe Caithness, and we were super active in the DIY scene—forming bands, releasing records, touring, and even hosting house shows. After years of home studios, a noisy recording session and a neighbor's need for peace during Coronation Street led me to move into a rehearsal space at an old fruit and potato warehouse, which became JT Soar.

Rehearsals slowed down as I got busier with recording. A couple of years later, I took over the lease and hosted our first show upstairs—a power-pop band from Minnesota, The Real Numbers, and a garage punk band from Bakewell, The Hipshakes. It was wild! But I quickly realized upstairs was too close to the recording gear, so after about six months, we started hosting shows downstairs—turning it into a proper venue.

**What were some of the challenges you faced initially?**

The space has never been about making money. We never wanted a bar or the usual trappings of traditional venues, so the main challenge was getting word out. Instead of paid advertising, we relied heavily on posters, flyers, and word of mouth. That was hard initially because we were booking more niche acts that were lesser known without the reputation we have now. The big concern was keeping on top of legislation and fire regulations and ensuring we weren't shut down. When someone from the council came to inspect, they were taken aback that we knew all about recent changes to event licensing.



They were just impressed by our ethos. They even came to a show once but left after being sonically assaulted by some German screamo band.

Of course, money was always a problem. The recording and rehearsal side was always so volatile, and I'd often have to subsidise live sound work. Whenever I thought we were doing okay, the landlord would jack up the rent. He was a miserable dude.





**JT Soar is very much an exponent of DIY. How do you think that ethos is carried through in the bands you put on and record?**

My ethos about music and running shows hails from active musician status in my early 20s. The late 2000s post-punk, post-hardcore, and emo scene was really alive, and I was part of that with bands like Plaids. We toured a lot through Europe and put out records on DIY labels, and some of those relationships still exist today. Most of the work I'm undertaking now can be tracked to have its roots in the connections established during that time.

Over the years, the studio has become increasingly "professional," for whatever that means, but I give the same support and enthusiasm. My musical tastes have shifted somewhat, but my attitude is the same. People know I love music, and I love enabling people to tour. I've had the pleasure of working with so many fantastic bands and great booking agents, and JT Soar is now a vital stop on the UK DIY circuit.

Saying that, I'm not even sure what "DIY" means anymore. Many of the bands we host have records out on labels and booking agents but still need to make money. They're part-time punks, and that's fine because it's not about the money. It's about the good times, making memories, and building lifelong relationships.

**"JT Soar is now a vital stop on the UK DIY circuit"**

**JT Soar has had some memorable moments over the years. What are your main go-to's that you look back on?**

I mean, there have been so many shows that it's hard to dwell on them for too long. But a few stand out, man: DC post-punk's Priests, Philly garage punks Sheer Mag, and Chicago art-popper Birthmark, to name just a few.

We had our first festival, Strange Boutique, with Texas post-punks Spray Paint, The Jelas and others, which was great.

One of my favourite memories is when we hosted DC rockers Give, and we filled the entire room with fake flowers and balloons. It was the perfect mix of silly and rad. I recall there was a birthday show with Martha, Spoonboy, Delay, and Captain Dangerous, and the PA blew out during a heatwave. It was a scramble to fix it, but it was a great time in the end.

**What advice would you give in the age where every man and his dog seem to want to break into the music scene?**

I'm not sure, man, cause in the future, all that's gonna matter is posting Instagram snaps, TikTok videos and whatever's next. I would advise focusing on the music, creating something new, expressing yourself, and not getting too comfortable resting on your laurels. Listen to as wide a range of music as you can. Collaborate with and listen to your contemporaries. If you think there are no bands you share a kinship with, you're not looking hard enough.

Also, don't be afraid to put on your own shows. It's not as complicated as it seems. Don't rely on big promoters who will eat you up and spit you out. They don't really care about you; they care about making money.

**Working with artists can be enriching and sometimes testing in equal measure - How do you help them achieve their vision during the recording process?**

Initially, I try to work out their vision. Then, I work out a realistic way of getting there. Many bands have a somewhat blinkered view of how their music fits together and know their parts well but not how everything relates to the whole arrangement. This is understandable since rehearsal rooms aren't always the best for sonic analysis. What sounds excellent live doesn't always translate well to a recording.

That's where we come in - All three of us - Rich, me, and Robbie. We're all experienced musicians and producers and collectively worked on hundreds of records, not to mention touring worldwide. We bring that experience into the studio, be it by suggesting a subtle rhythmic change, offering up a different guitar or amp, or using a different recording medium.

We love tape here at JT. It's an absolute pleasure to see a band's face light up when they can hear their song coming together.

**Some say the DIY ethos is unsustainable in today's market. How do you compete in a world dominated by careerist money hoarders?**

The recording studio and rehearsal rooms are the breadwinners for JT Soar, so the venue doesn't need to make money.



We cover costs like the bands, food, sound, and promo, and the hire fee for external promoters is probably the cheapest in Nottingham for a fully equipped venue. We keep gig costs low - no bar, so it's BYOB, which makes it an all-ages spot and cheaper for the audience. That way, people can spend more money on merch and gig tickets, helping the musicians.

We also provide free Personal Assistant tickets and let people pay what they want because we believe art and music should be available to everybody, whatever their situation.

**JT has changed, adapted and evolved a lot since it first opened; what's the plan for the next 15 years?**

JT Soar has expanded in every conceivable direction over the past 15 years. From a small sublet upstairs in a warehouse, this place has grown into a six-room studio complex that we own today. There were several phases of expansion, such as taking the downstairs space, adding rehearsal rooms, and assembling dream team-like collaborators: Amy, Nick, Tim, Jayne, Robbie, Rich, and Sarah.

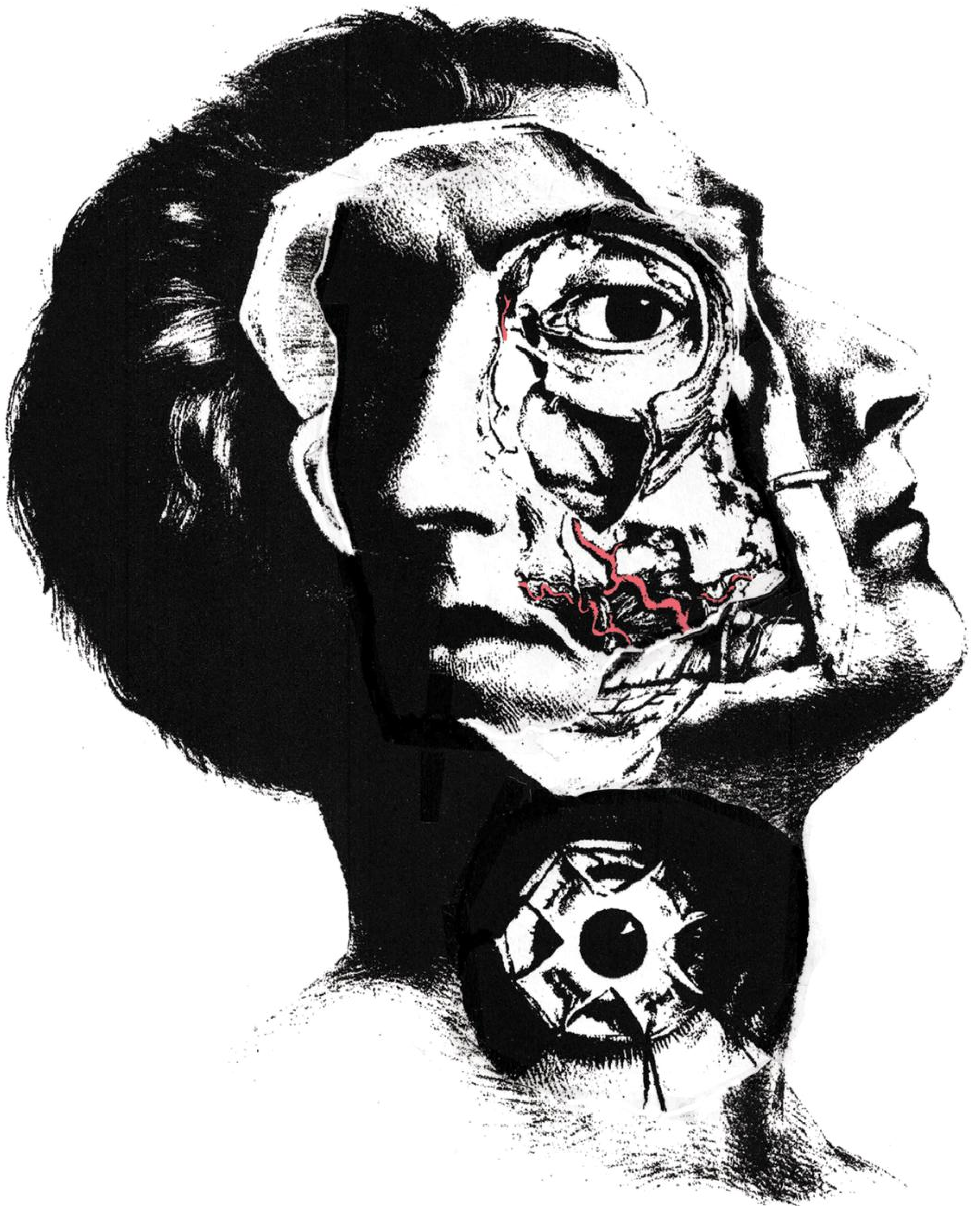
It's good now, but it can always be better. I need to get in some better lighting, some additions to accommodate touring bands, and, who knows, finally, a website.

**To celebrate 15 years of JT Soar, you threw your own festival at Castle Rock Breweries' Old Cold Store' in November. How was it taking on a mammoth task, and are you doing it again in 2025?**

I'm telling you, it's surreal to think it's been 15 years, but to celebrate in style with our festival was incredible. I was delighted with the final lineup we put together. It was a dream lineup: The Nightingales, Tyvek, Rattle, Cowtown, there were too many great names to choose from. Sorting it was pretty damn stressful, though. Hotels, travel expenses, not to mention keeping the schedule intact on the day was hectic at times, but overall, it was a huge success.

We sold out well before the weekend, and all the stars aligned for us. Neon Raptor put out its own 'DIY-PA' for the weekend, which was a joy; we had food vendors and DJs. It was a huge success and a testament to the fact that I have already booked the venue for next year, so watch out!





# Complicit

You, you are all complicit,  
You may not have the vipers tongue,  
But there, you stand, silent, suffocated and dumb.

You, you say you fight my corner,  
You may utter these words,  
But then you fall still, immobilised,  
waiting for me to come undone.

You, you say watch those tears,  
they're not worth it,

You may believe this to be true,  
But then you watch me drown,  
in an endless pool of abuse.

Hannah Siam  
@hannahsiampoet

# IN CONVERSATION WITH MADDY CHAMBERLAIN:

## EXPLORING THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF WOMEN IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

words: Hannah Siam Gascoyne

So, here we are. This is another piece of writing that explores sexism in the music industry. Is it essential? Sadly, yes, because the roles of women still have not evolved enough since the 70's. I don't have enough fingers to count the number of times I've been groped at a gig, had a male colleague try to use his seniority in a role to have a less-than-professional relationship with me or been asked to name three songs of the band, on whichever t-shirt I've been wearing, and that's the minor stuff.

I can't believe we still have to write about this shit, highlighting the set of challenges only women face on a day-to-day basis. Issues of representation, gender stereotyping, lack of recognition and sexual assault, to name a few - It makes you want to give up. And a lot of us have. But despite all that, there are many who decide to stick it out because of what a fun, joyful, and ambitiously thrilling place it can be to be a woman, too. Maddy Chamberlain is one of them.

Working within a male-dominated field, Maddy has overcome barriers within her career, soaring to be a Production Manager of two of Nottingham's most iconic venues, The Bodega and Rescue Rooms, coordinating and production managing two of the city's most esteemed festivals Dot to Dot and Splendour, as well as being awarded the 30 under 30 award, which is presented to young people making hugely impactful contributions in the music industry, often beyond their years and experience.

More recently, Maddy returned to the stage as the frontwoman for Nottingham-based psyche-rock band Midnight Rodeo, where she enchants crowds with her vocals and charisma on stage, spearheading the band's rise to national acclaim through magazines such as Clash and Under the Radar.





**So, Maddy, how did you get started in the music industry?**

**Maddy:** In my first year at Nottingham Trent in 2018, I was lucky to move into halls with some incredible people, including Alex Blake, with whom I formed my first band, Cherry Hex & The Dream Church, in my second year. That's when I knew I wanted to be deeply involved in the music industry, whether playing or working. While finishing my degree, I left my student job to focus on my dissertation but panicked about post-uni work. So, I started working night shifts at Bodega bar, thanks to a recommendation from Kasper Sandstrom (Do Nothing guitarist and Divorce drummer), whom I knew through Cherry Hex. That led to me becoming assistant manager and now Production Manager for Bodega, Rescue Rooms, Dot to Dot, and Splendour.

**And, what are the biggest challenges you've faced being in a band?**

Unfortunately, we're not one of those bands with financial support from parents, so it all comes down to money. It's an age-old story, but the truth is that it's nearly impossible for emerging bands to make touring financially viable. The industry is under pressure—audiences can't afford higher ticket prices due to the cost-of-living, while the cost of putting on shows has skyrocketed. Touring is incredibly difficult, but bands do it because they love it and live for it, and they shouldn't have to accept £50 fees for their art.

**What is your favourite thing about being a woman in the music industry?**

Touring is tough but rewarding, and it's why we do it. Despite the long hours, hauling gear, quick meals at service stations, and crashing with generous hosts, it's all worth it for the people. The promoters who took a chance because they love your music, and the fans singing your songs back to you—it's always amazing.

People often ask if it's hard being on the road with all guys. The Midnight Rodeo crew is great, but the lack of female energy can be draining. I find balance by bonding with women I meet in smoking areas. A standout moment was playing Supersonic in Paris—exhausting but unforgettable. Europe really knows how to treat artists!

**Can you share your journey with Midnight Rodeo?**

During lockdown, I was eager to play music again after my previous band, Cherry Hex, ended when Al moved to London. After not performing for three years, I started a new project. Living with the Sancho Panza boys reignited my creativity, and once restrictions eased, I reached out to talented friends from recently disbanded Notts bands. To my delight, they all agreed to form a new band. We jammed, recorded demos, and FatCat Records signed us based on those. Since then, they've been like musical parents. We've released four singles, three 7" records, done three UK and France tours, with more to come!

**Is there a particularly memorable experience that highlights the challenges and rewards of being in a band?**

Meeting other women in the industry, hands down. Whether it's meeting women in bands or women working in the industry, promoters, agents, reps, or tour managers, the list does go on - everyone is so goddamn friendly and supportive and kind. It's not competitive; everyone wants to build everyone else up so we can all sit at the table.



**What was the driving force behind your decision to become a booking promoter/production manager?**

I noticed many of my favorite up-and-coming bands were skipping Nottingham, despite there being a scene for psych-rock, even if small. That inspired me to start booking shows here. Being in bands and working at Bodega kept me involved in the local scene, so I also wanted to highlight and support our amazing local artists.

**Are there any unique challenges you face in your role compared to your male colleagues working in the music industry?**

Like many industries, we've had to work harder to be taken seriously and to prove we deserve our place. Fortunately, the music industry is improving every year. There are now many more women in management, and you can really feel that shift. That said, there's still a long way to go, especially for female artists. Just scrolling through Instagram on International Women's Day shows the ongoing injustices—but progress is happening faster than ever. Let's keep pushing forward!

**How important do you believe mentorship is for women entering the music industry?**

I never did it myself, but my good friends Louise McGovern and Kayla Bell went through mentorship programmes and are smashing their careers. Louise is an agent at Runaway, and Kayla is a freelance Stage and Production Manager, so mentorship can be a beneficial pathway into the industry.

**Are there any support systems or networks that you have found beneficial to you and your career - particularly female-centred?**

When I moved to Notts, I was so happy to stumble across a Women in Music night here; I attended the conferences and events they held and have since become one of the team of extraordinary ladies who run WIM. It's a brilliant community of women in music who want to get into the industry, as well as artists and aspiring artists. Everyone is welcome! We get together to network, share wisdom and general support and advice, and have a good boogie afterwards.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering the industry?**

Never sell yourself short. In interviews, some people oversell themselves, so don't undersell what you bring. If you believe you deserve a promotion or raise, ask for it. I spent years worrying about this, and it turns out women ask for raises and promotions far less than men. Why? What's the worst that could happen compared to the best?

**“We have to work a little harder to be taken seriously and more challenging to prove that we have just as much of a right as anyone to be in the room.”**

And remember to go to gigs for enjoyment. Honestly, it's so easy to want to impress and get bogged down with work or being at gigs for work that you can forget to make time for the reason you got into the industry in the first place. Take a pal, take your ma, boogie on your own, but good god, go to gigs for fun and for you.

**Is there one particular woman who helped inspire and shape your career? And why?**

Can I pick two? Cheeky, I know! First, Michele Somers. She was in my first interview with Bodega Boss, Steve Walsh (also a legend), and has been nothing but supportive ever since. She offers advice and inspiration at every turn, even if she doesn't realize it—she's a total badass.

Second, Polly Miles—aka Lady Acid Box. She puts on all the cool shows in Brighton and inspired me to book the bands I wanted in Nottingham. If you're in Brighton, catch an Acid Box show—it'll be amazing. She even hosted Midnight Rodeo and let us stay at her beautiful place. Total hero!

**What can men do to tackle misogyny in the music industry?**

It's a simple first step. Don't laugh. If you hear someone say something misogynistic and shitty, say something. It doesn't need to be aggressive at all, but telling them that's not okay or asking them questions is calling them out on it and is necessary for people to improve their behaviour. Yes, it might bruise their ego for a hot second, but it's nothing compared to the bruising of misogyny on the daily.

**Is there any news you can share about Midnight Rodeo?**

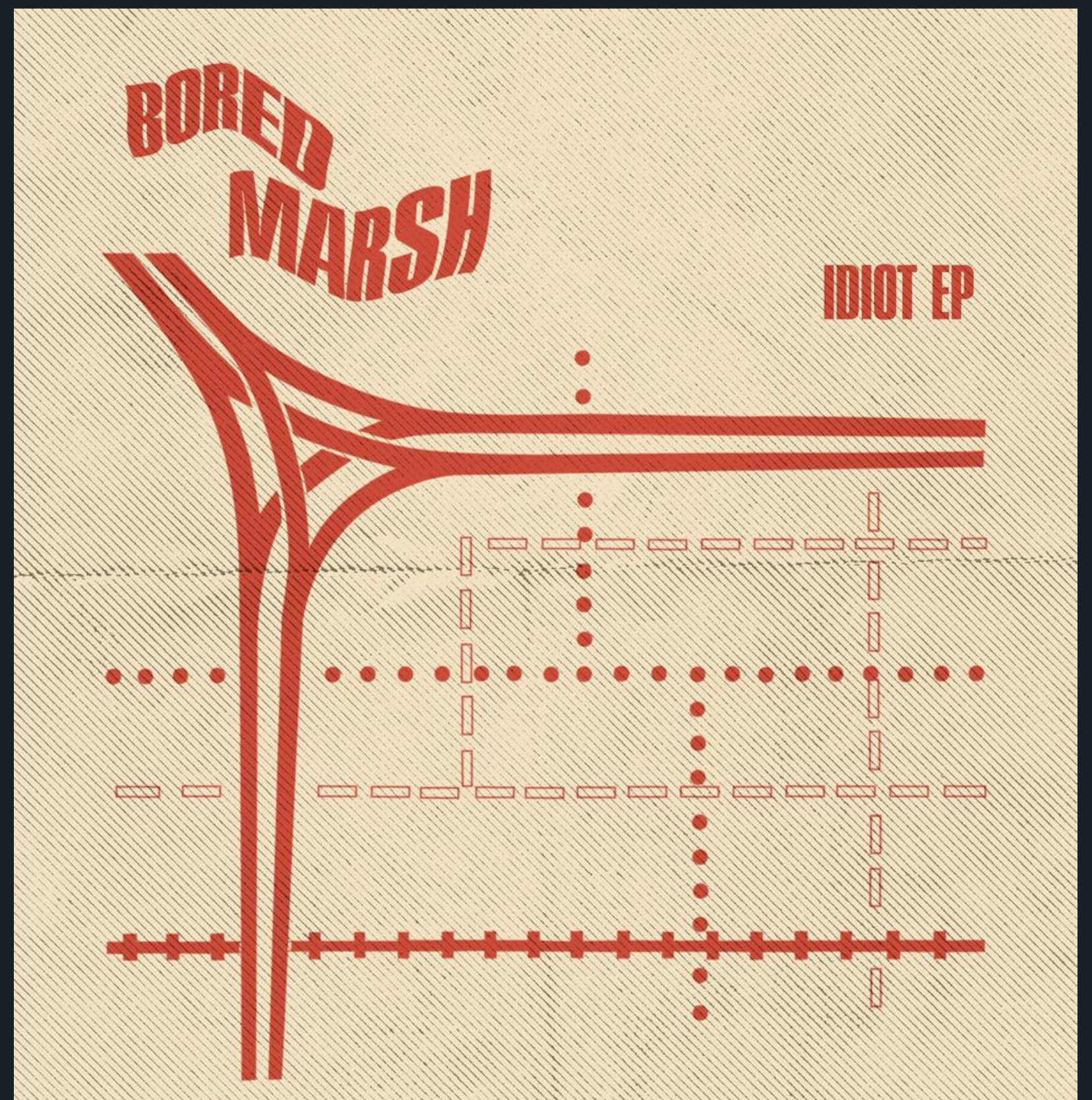
Yes! We've just been announced for the Bearded Theory festival next year alongside Iggy Pop! Which is incredible. We're also working on our debut album. Stay tuned for more!

**It's probably been said a lot quite recently, but the Nottingham music scene really is as vibrant now as it has been over the past 10 years or so. There's a plethora of artists on the verge of making a nationwide impact both critically and commercially across a wide range of genres, so there is no exaggeration to say Nottingham is in a healthy place at the moment.**

One of those acts making waves right now is Bored Marsh, a four-piece consisting of members whose names and faces have been omnipresent on the local scene for years. Singer Joe Need cut his teeth in The Wickets for the best part of a decade, while guitarist Brad Westby and drummer Paul Mason-Smith also spent a similar amount of time in critically acclaimed prog-metal outfit Future Shinjuku. Add bass player Jade Bowman to the mix – it's probably easier to list the bands he hasn't played in – and you have a potent cocktail that was always going to deliver if the truth be told. Formed during the first COVID lockdown by Need and Westby after the dissolution of their previous bands, Bored Marsh came out of the blocks at the earliest opportunity, hitting the ground running instantly. Both debut single "The Grind" and follow-up "A Better Way (Don't Start)" hinted at their potential, as did the band's live shows, which have seen their audience numbers grow considerably over the past twelve months, culminating in a sold-out Rough Trade.

If you've been fortunate enough to catch Bored Marsh live, you'll no doubt be familiar with each of the songs on "Idiot." Opener "Alright, OK" has been the regular opening number in the band's live shows for a while now, and it slays as an introductory piece. Think of "Script Of The Bridge" era Chameleons or criminally underrated Sheffield outfit The Comsat Angels, and you're in the right ballpark. "Alright, OK" is a brooding number befitting of the label "dark post-punk", yet at the same time, it's also instantly recognizable as Bored Marsh thanks to Need's distinctive vocals and Westby's incredulous guitar riffs that are both haunting yet insatiable in equal measures.

***"There's a plethora of artists on the verge of making a nationwide impact both critically and commercially, so there is no exaggeration to say Nottingham is in a healthy place at the moment."***



"Come Around" and "Honest Day's Work" are also focal points of diminutive the Bored Marsh live event (because Bored Marsh shows are events rather than simply just gigs).

The latter regularly closes the show, whereas the former has been wrestling with the title track as the EP's leading number. "What goes up must down", insists the diminutive singer during "Come Around" over a nascent chord change that once again brings the leading lights of 80s post-punk to mind. "Honest Day's Work" could easily be the band's signature tune, such as its incessant chorus that stays in one's head after its initial listen. As with most things, "Idiot" saves the best til the last, courtesy of the title track. A colossus of a tune that wouldn't sound out of place on one of those Cherry Red "Best Of [INSERT GENRE HERE]" compilations that always contain your pivotal heroes (The Cure, My Bloody Valentine, Killing Joke etc etc). Not that we're saying "Idiot" sounds like any of the aforementioned. On the contrary, "Idiot" is strictly Bored Marsh at its finest, doing what it does best and highlighting why it's become one of the most feted bands in Nottingham over the past few months.

It really doesn't get much better than this. The bar has been set, and Bored Marsh is the standard bearer. Say hello to your new favourite band.

**Words: Dom Gourlay**

**YOU CAN'T FIGHT TIME  
YOU CAN'T FIGHT THE YEARS**



**EVERYTHING ELSE  
JUST DISAPPEARS.**

# Sounds from **Another city**

## DISCOVER 10 ESSENTIAL RECORDS MADE AT DERBY'S DUBREK STUDIOS

Musically, folklore is packed with hallowed halls where the most magical musical moments are captured - Abbey Road, Inner Ear, and Sound City. Every scene and moment has these spaces, from the globally renowned to the local underground.

Derby, amongst other such spaces, has had Dubrek Studios for two decades, housing rehearsals and capturing recorded moments from some of the cream of the UK's underground.

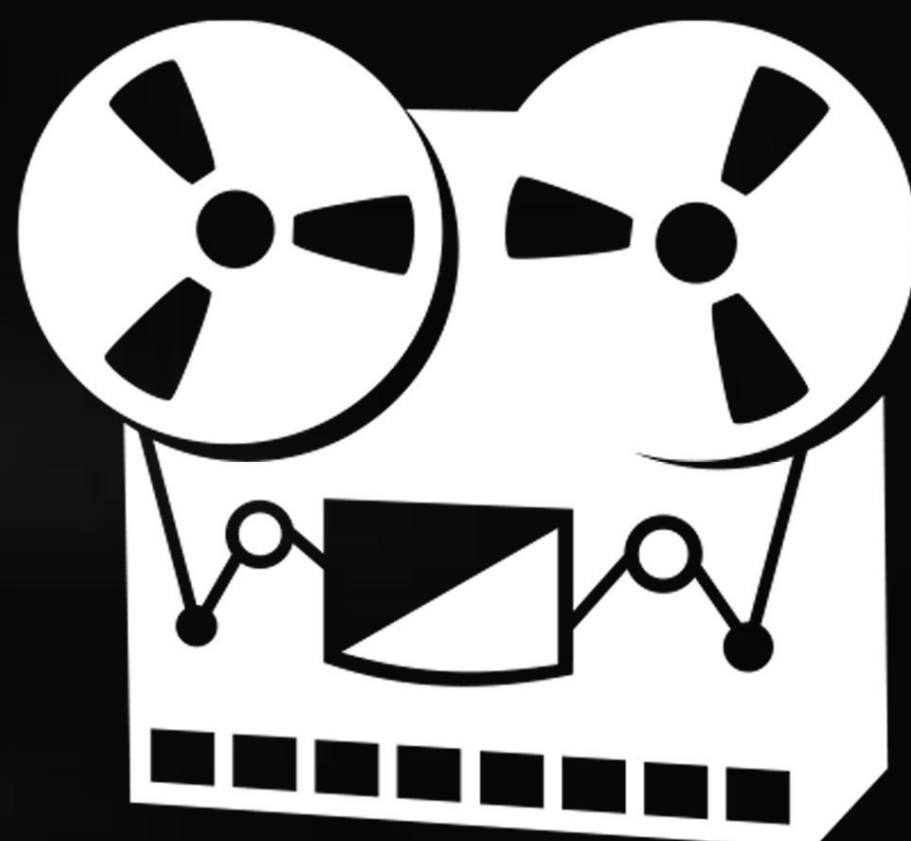
Now residing in its shiny newest home, Dubrek Studios has long been a part of the fabric of East Midlands music. Starting in a converted stable at the back of the infamous Victoria Inn, moving to Monk Street in 2001, and Becket Street until it was bulldozed to make way for the new big venue, under the direction of Jay Dean, as a studio it has cut classics from a range of local and national acts.

There is an honesty to Dean's approach, a rawness that lets noise shine. "My approach has always been to record an honest and accurate representation of what a band or artist is capable of, creating a snapshot of them at that moment in time," he says of his Albini-esque mantra.

Over the years, Dubrek's halls have welcomed the likes of famed producer Gil Norton (Pixies, PJ Harvey) and Suede's Brett Anderson. As a live music space, bands like Lightyear, Lower Slaughter, Witch Fever, Part Chimp, Sly and the Family Drone, and Dream Nails have all done turns.

So much has happened around Dubrek (we'd need a book), but let us introduce you to just a fraction of the music recorded in its walls, all worth adding to your collection.

**Words:** James Thornhill



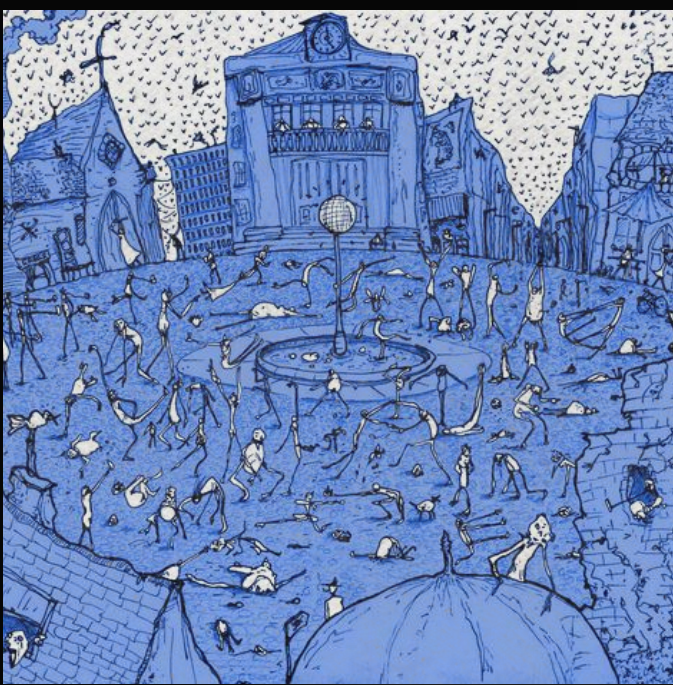
# dubrek

# 10 essential records: **Dubrek Studios**



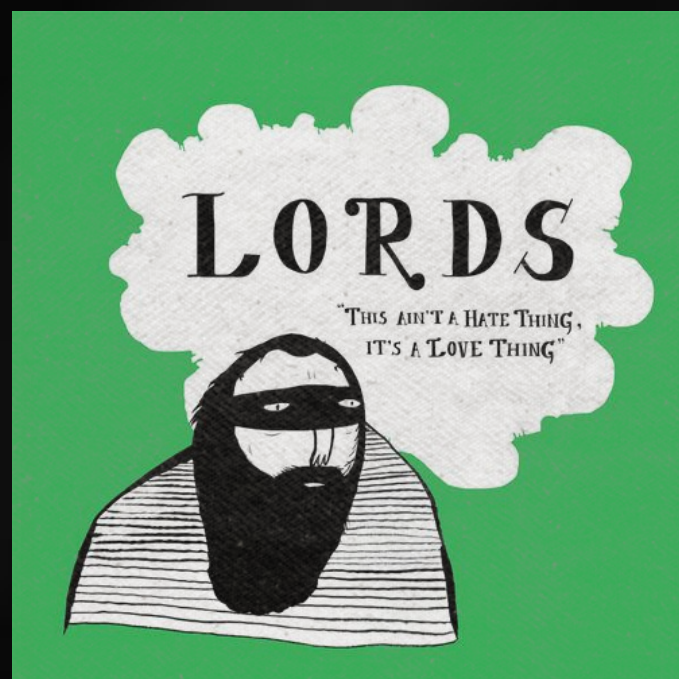
## The Little Explorer - Siderali

Derby was a centre for a certain type of “emo” in the early 2000s, a type of rock that merged first-wave emo with DIY punk ideals, math rock inventiveness and, the grand ambitions of post-rock. Following a well-received debut, The Little Explorer was signed and dropped, recording a second album, Siderali. That was 2006, and it didn’t see the light of day until 2013, when the band members decided, despite its ghosts, that it needed to be out in the world. And we’re glad it is. The debut’s kinetic energy, big riffs, and gang vocals remain, but with greater ambition and melodic exploration. Tracks like 'Harmonics' and 'Siderali' could fit on a Sigur Rós or Jimmy Eat World album—a lost gem from that era.



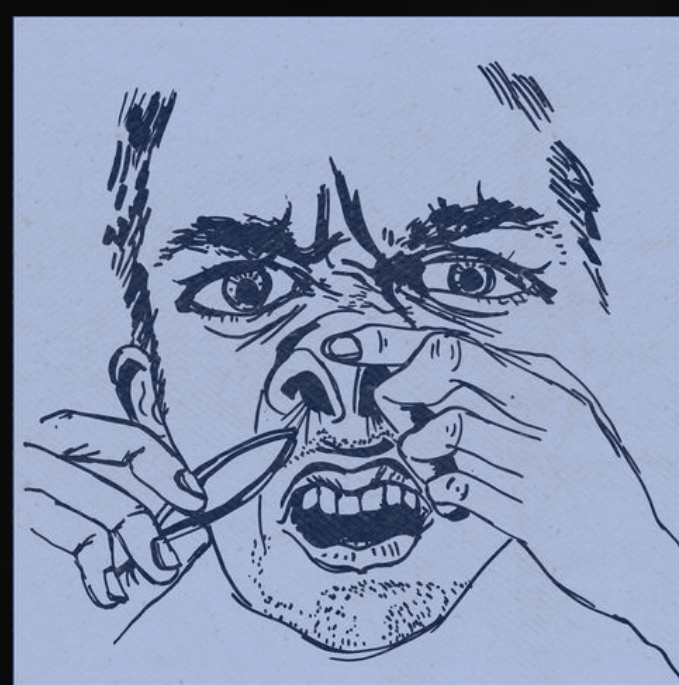
## My Psychoanalyst - Cheromania

Talking of “gems”, Cheromania is arguably one of the most criminally missed albums of the past 20 years! In a world where The Maccabees, Sea Power, Wild Beats and Frightened Rabbit made it big, Derby’s My Psychoanalyst always deserved to be mentioned in the same breath. This 2014 opus is packed with stellar songwriting, anthemic builds, lush vocal harmonies and crisp production - it is magnificent across its ten-track length. It has a pop at its heart and shoegaze in its head, expressing the kind of skilled ambition that is rare. Cheromania is all the evidence needed that My Psychoanalyst need to be rediscovered and elevated to the heights they deserve.



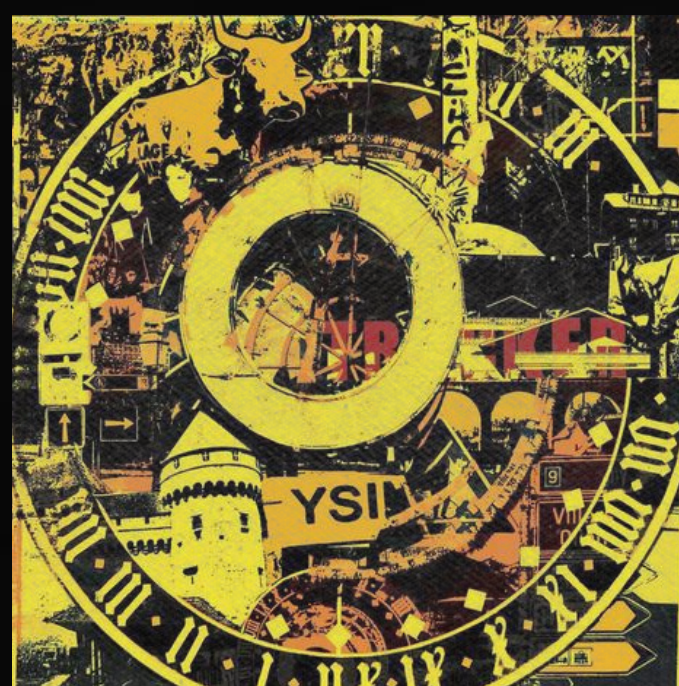
## Lords - This Aint A Hate Thing, It's A Love Thing

A stand out from Dubrek’s many stints of work with legendary label Gringo Records, this 2006 debut from Lords gives “the blues” the kicking of its life. Formed by members of Wolves of Greece and Twinkie, Lords was a bass-less, three-piece that dragged free-jazz rhythmic chops through distorted blues riffs and the experimentation of Fugazi’s later period - all that and none of it! This album is a real journey, providing big rock moments and moments of confusion - it’s bloody wonderful.



## Grey Hairs - EP

Another Gringo offering from “Nottingham’s premier midlife crisis rock band” and somewhat of a “supergroup” featuring members of Lords, The Cult of Dom Keller, Fists and Fonda 500, amongst others. Three tracks of direct, fuzzy “punk” rock channelling Sub Pop classics via offerings from each of the member's other bands - it’s not big, clever rock, but it is played with the gut instincts of seasoned musicians discovering the noise they love.



## Mothertrucker - The Power of Independent Trucking

With a name like that, of course, Birmingham’s Mothertrucker peddle instrumental stoner rock! But this 2013 opus is more than just sludgy riffage. From the contemplative opener ‘Career Ender’ with its lush delve into post-rock and post-metal beauty, it’s obvious that there’s more going on here. The brilliantly titled next track, ‘Reef Do All the Work, The Beatles Take the Credit,’ is pure desert stoner sludge! The light and dark of Mothertrucker journeys through heavy psych, math rock and alt-rock, as well as the aforementioned! It’s as good a collision of these sounds as you’ll get.

# 10 essential records: **Dubrek Studios**



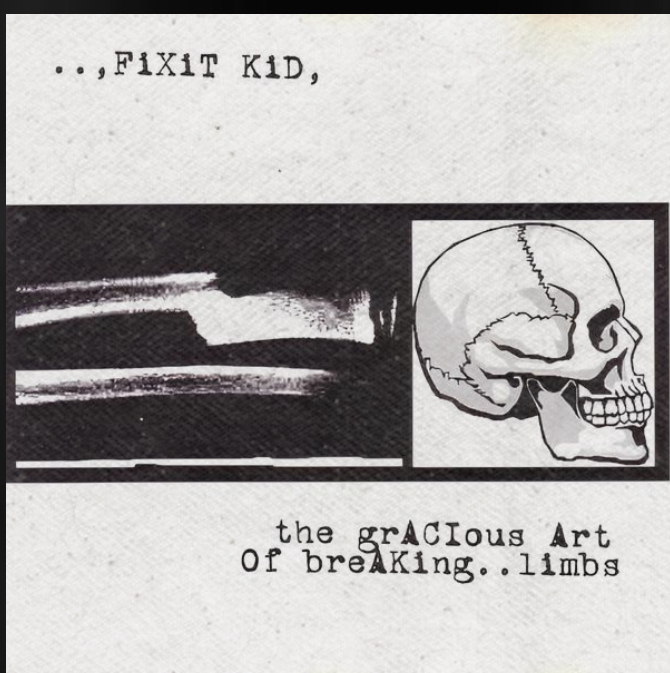
## lo - monolith

Also from Brum and also instrumental, but delving into mathy realms, I take the heavier end of the post-rock spectrum on a jolly jaunt around big riffs and subtle shade. There are moments of true beauty, building into crescendos of guitar noise, and at times, doomy riffs punch through the cascading math rock guitar dances. It's a real mixed bag that often packs a huge punch.



## Biscuit Mouth - Hot Change

What can we say about Derby's Biscuit Mouth? Their music is strange, indefinable and loosely associated with indie-rock, punk and noise rock. There were two of them; one played Buitar (a bass and guitar hybrid), and the singing drummer sounded like his vocals were being forcibly dragged from his troubled soul! The tracks have weird time signatures and changes, and the production on Hot Change is abrasive and challenging. It's not for everyone, but if you would like to be tested and still get some big tunes as a reward, this is a must.



## Fixit Kid - The Gracious Art of Breaking Limbs

With a sound as nuanced as the album title, with a slightly tongue-in-cheek violence to the whole affair, Fixit Kit features Dubrek owner Jay Dean. This stuff is HEAVY, taking all the gnarliest parts from many heavy genres - it's Korn meets Cable, Big Black meets Machine Head, with snarling, unhinged vocals and pure punk power. Fixit Kid, and especially on this album, made the kind of music conservative parents would cower in the corner and send their kids to religious camp to avoid - basically, it's bloody great.



## You Judas - Happiness

The second album from one of Dean's own bands is a different beast. Reviews said 'Happiness' is like if Radiohead started playing metal, which is apt but limiting to You Judas' heavy take on shoegaze, weaving big doomy riffs to post-rock shimmer. 'Adding Machine' could indeed be a Bends-era offcut, but the minute-plus epic 'On Your Knees and Pray Cowboy' hits that Earth stoner/post-metal crunch head-on, playing on the desolation of Godspeed for good measure - gnarly stuff. 'Happiness' sits, erm, happily, in the indie and the metal worlds, somehow not disrespecting either.



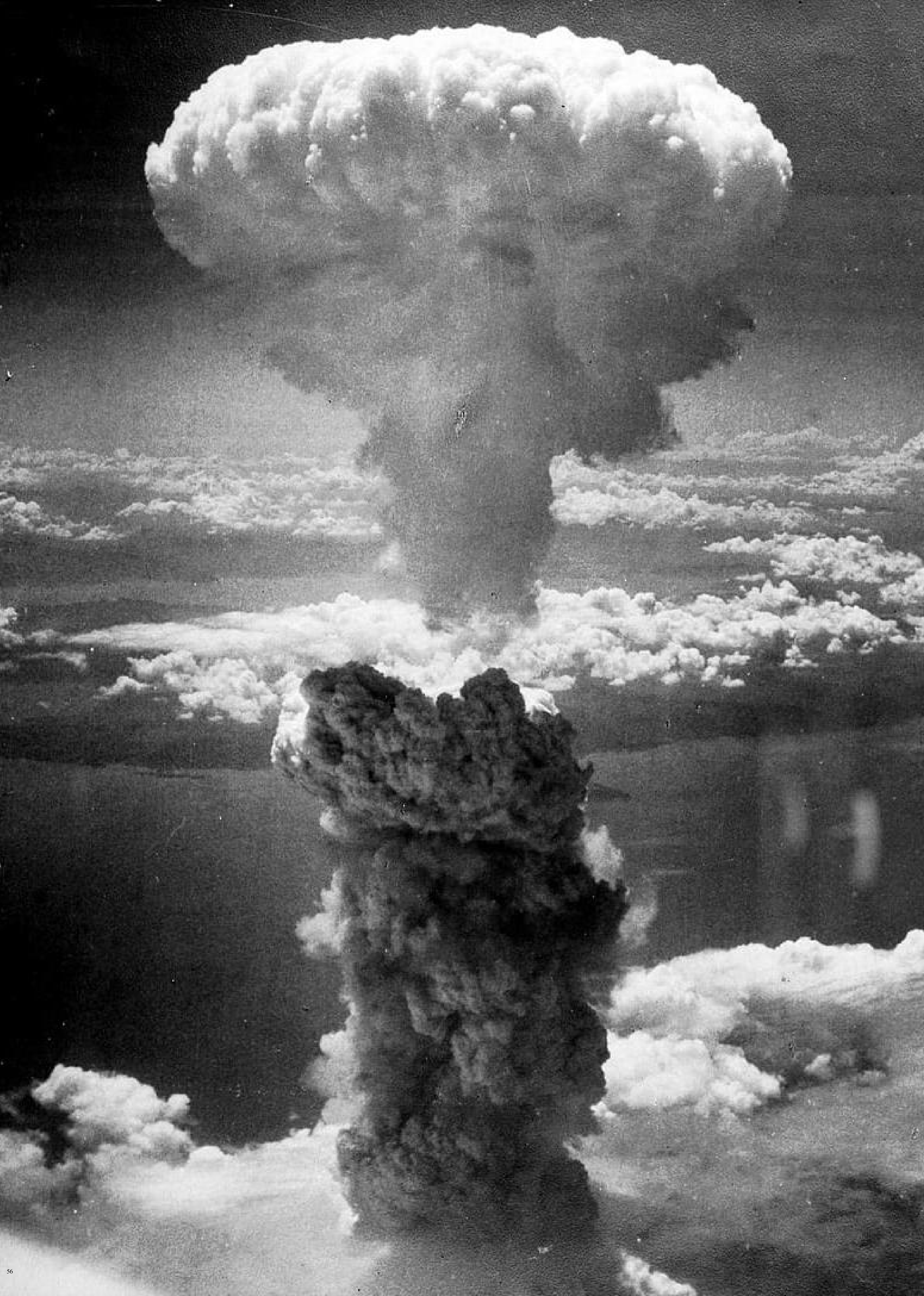
## Sailors - EP

We're ending this Dubrek crib-sheet with another Gringo gem from Leeds post-punk, post-hardcore crew Sailors, who crammed scuzzy power into these four tracks. Channelling Dischord records through the entire 80s, with Black Flag vitriol and 90s alt-rock distortion, it's a powerful, unsettling but riveting concoction.



One day, these people will tire of the smog and the squalor  
and build a city that's as clean, efficient and lovely as the machines!

And perhaps just as heartless.





**PEACE**

**IS**

**CHEAPER**

# CONTRIBUTORS

## words

### **Kieran T. Poole**

Pages: 4, 5, 6, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44

### **Jimi Arundell**

Pages: 12, 13, 22, 23

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