

FREE & INDEPENDENT • Issue 12

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Gherwood

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THE MEFFS

THE MEFFS

THE MEFFS

LILY AND LEWIS MEAN BUSINESS

THE MEFFS

THE MEFFS

THE MEFFS

+ JOS RIVERS + BE N!CE
+ BURNER + TRUEMENDOUS

Welcome back to Sherwood...

Let's kick off with the big news: Sherwood hosted our first ever curated event last month, bringing **Mulch**, **HaemoGOBLIN** and headliners **Regal Cheer** to **The Devonshire Arms**, and it was a storming success! Thanks so much to those of you that were there, keep an eye on our socials for news of our next free entry event when it's announced. Issue 12 is a punk-heavy one with cover stars **The Meffs**, who are quickly becoming one of the most respected and best loved bands in the country through a tireless focus on community. Hot on their tails, **Be Nice** are young, bratty, and already building a cult following. We're also celebrating the new album from **Burner No One Is Coming To Save Us**, out now on the formidable **Church Road Records**. **TrueMendous** has been popping up repeatedly on our radar via guest spots on all our favourite hip-hop records, and her new album *Break Offline, Before I Have A Breakdown Online* is raw, vulnerable, and brilliant. Finally **@kittycatcollective** sits down with bright, young singer-songwriter **Jos Rivers** to find out more about her debut EP *Thankyou So Very Much*.

Front cover photography: Ola Sroczynska

As ever the reviews section is stacked, and this summer has been fuelled by punk and hardcore, as well as plenty of hip-hop, prog rock, blues, gothic balladry, grunge, indie, post-rock, techno, funk, pop, and even an album of children's lullabies! This issue wouldn't have made it to print without our sponsors, so as always a massive thank you to our regular sponsors **FaceDown**, as well as **Moody Goods**, **Avdahlia Records**, **Hablo El Diablo**, and **Nerorgasmo**. If you're a label, venue, promoter, or you know somebody with a new release, event or project that you want our readers to know about, then advertising in Sherwood is one of the quickest ways to reach the people who are actually going to grassroots shows and supporting the scene. Check out the centrefold for a full list of venues that stock the zine!

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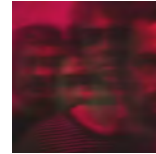
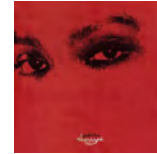
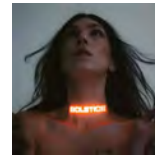
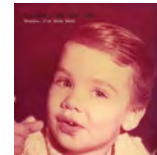
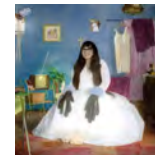
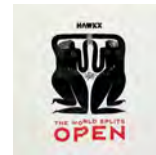
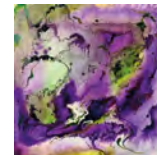
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THE MEFFS MEAN BUSINESS

An unfiltered 11-track assault on the modern music industry and the broken systems that control it, the highly anticipated second album *Business* by Essex punk duo The Meffs is out now!

The Meffs are Lily Hopkins on vocals and guitar and Lewis Copsey on drums and backing vocals. Having formed in Essex in 2019, their early shows quickly earned a reputation as an unmissable live act blending classic punk grit with modern political messaging. They've since played Download and Glastonbury, supported Alice Cooper, Sex Pistols and NOFX (on their farewell run), and hosted their own festival 3 years running, all with half the members of a normal rock band.

In 2022 The Meffs released their debut EPs *Broken Britain* Parts 1 and 2, produced by Frank Turner and released on Fat Mike's Bottles To

'MUSIC IS MORE THAN JUST NOISE FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE. IT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER, IT PULLS PEOPLE OUT OF HARD TIMES.'

The Ground, and by 2023 they were playing Download's 20th anniversary to chants of "Up The Meffs" from countless crowd-surfing fans. Lily is very much the real deal when it comes to being an excellent punk ally to have in your corner, with a burning passion to use her platform for good wherever possible, and their hugely anticipated debut album *What A Life*

came in September 2024 with sold-out shows all over the UK and Europe.

Beginning as a sold-out evening show at Three Wise Monkeys in Colchester, **Meff Fest** has grown quickly into a full-scale festival with the third edition drawing nearly a thousand people to Charter Hall in May 2026. With a crowd spanning 16-year-olds to 81-year-old Charlie Harper fronting the UK Subs, the bill for Meff Fest included Steve Ignorant Band, The Subways and Random Hand, bringing the bands that Lily and Lewis grew up on to their own celebration of unity.

Released on 11th September via FLG, The Meffs second album *Business* raises the stakes yet again with 11 tracks of their most hard-hitting and politically volatile music to date taking aim at the music industry's demand for conformity. With a torch for

every misfit who doesn't fit neatly into society's expectations, The Meffs are making punk rock that's not a nostalgic throwback but a current and necessary statement, building up a rabid diehard following completely outside of algorithms and industry positioning.

We spoke to Lily and Lewis to find out more:



Business is both the album and the first single. To us it sounds and feels very personal. Is it? Did you just need to get some stuff off your chests?

Lily: *Business* is the most vulnerable and hard-hitting record we've ever recorded. It's personal but relatable because business is everywhere. It's work, it's pleasure, it's lonely, it's dirty, it's everything. This album isn't just about what is going on around us. At times I felt uncomfortable in a way that I hadn't let myself feel when writing in the past, and I'm glad.

What makes FLG/Frontiers the right place for The Meffs right now?

Lily: I think you just know when something feels right. A bit like when we were looking at recording the record, Dan Weller from SiKth was mentioned and we just knew he should produce this one. FLG work with some legends in the game and they saw something in us.

The new album is noticeably your heaviest and hardest work yet. How intentional is that shift?

Lily: It is intentional to some degree because of the way I write now. When we were touring *What A Life*, I made a conscious decision not to write new material. Even if an idea came to mind, I wouldn't write it down or record it. I was so used to writing 24/7; recording voice notes at 2AM, having to pull the car over to write down lyrics, etc. Torture at times - a good problem to have maybe. By stopping completely, when I came to write again the ideas were fresh and didn't sound like another *What A Life*. We both like heavy music too and over the past few years I've been well into bands coming out of the new hardcore scene, so that probably played a part too.

How instrumental have other people like Frank Turner and all the bands you have played with been to your development?

Lily: Frank has been a key player not only to us but to the scene in general - fight me. He got behind us early doors and to this day reps our shirts. Forever grateful. Then you've got people like Fat Mike from NOFX who not only signed us on his imprint label back in 2022 but took us out on NOFX's final European tour, introducing us to thousands of people who would not have

known of us otherwise. Collaboration is vital in this industry - Onto Joan Jett this year!

Was being a two-piece a conscious creative decision or the most viable way to make a living as musicians?

Lewis: It was always Lily's preference having been in a two-piece prior to this band. I wasn't opposed to the idea either and we found out from day 1 that we worked really well together musically. We did a rehearsal once with a bassist but within the week was told they couldn't commit. We knew this would be a recurring situation but also thought that we didn't need to change anything in the first place, we were doing well enough just the two of us and over the years, the sound has just got bigger so that's how it's staying.

Your music is very politically charged and you and others like yourselves are not shy about your ethical positions. Is Britain more broken than ever and can musicians really have a hand in fixing it?

Lily: We based our first two EPs on a *Broken Britain* but our position has changed over time. We think of Britain as divided rather than broken. Or maybe it is both? Either way, if these current politicians are the best we've got, we've got problems as a country. Can musicians make a difference? Anyone with a platform can have a hand in fixing it. Punk has never been less about the sound and more about the attitude/ethos as it is now. We're here to entertain but if we can do that whilst raising awareness and spreading a bit of hope, it's a no brainer. They go hand in hand. I say it at every show - it's not about left and right, it's about right and wrong. And some things just aren't right.

Few bands have such a friendly fan community as Meff Army. How special is that close relationship for you as a band?

Lewis: We absolutely love the Meff Army, we can't believe how it has grown over the past few years. A separate group run by the fans which has now shot up to over 4k members, who discuss all things Meffs, arrange meet ups before shows and is filled with the friendliest people, it really does tell us how die hard our fanbase is.



Lily: We're nothing without the people who get behind this, it's simple.

You're MVT patrons and in '25 you played an entire grass roots tour in small venues you hadn't played before. Why is this so important and will there be more grass roots tours?

Lily: That was a fun tour! When we started out, grassroots venues were the only venues where we got a look in. When no one wanted to know, they did. The least we can do is to work with MVT to raise awareness and play shows to help keep venues open. Our aim is to keep doing grassroots tours on top of our already-rammed touring schedule. Music is more than just noise for a lot of people. It brings people together, it pulls people out of hard times and it just makes for a proper good time. For working class artists grassroots venues are the only way to start out. If they keep shutting, the scene will be full of manufactured trash. The government needs to show more support for the arts or they'll die.

Would teenage Lily and Lewis believe you if you told them about Vive Le Rock front covers and Kerrang limited edition cassette collaborations?

Lewis: Teenage Lewis would have asked what a 'Vive Le Rock' was at the time but the thought of being on the cover of a rock magazine would have shocked him to his very core. The same goes for Kerrang, which was definitely a big

part of my teenage years, watching the video channel most days.

Lily: I collected Kerrang! magazines for years to rip posters out for my wall. Never did I think people would be doing the same for The Meffs.

You've had a skateboard on stage with you for as long as we can remember. Are you actually skateboarders?

Lewis: As much as we would love to tell you all about our skating career, unfortunately it's non-existent as we're both terrible skaters. Lily dug it out of her shed; wrote The Meffs on it and it was used as our first backdrop whilst we couldn't afford to buy a proper one... Though to this day, it still comes with us to all the shows.

Is it true the you're the friendliest nicest people in punk or do you have a dark side?

Lewis: Get *****ed.

Lily: Hahaha

What's the end goal for The Meffs both musically and personally?

Lily: We learnt early on that what we're doing doesn't have an end goal. It's about progression but without targets. That's the beauty of this. As time goes on the stages get bigger, the audiences get bigger, we share stages with legends, our sound develops, we go to countries we'd never see without being in The Meffs... It's a privilege. Long may it continue.

Formed in late 2022, Be Nice have spent the past few years

building a cult following at some of the UK's biggest and best punk festivals, pairing

biting social commentary with an absurd sense of humour.

BE N!CE

Pol Mills (vocals), Emily Harris (bass), Alex McIntosh (drums) and Brett Lee (guitar) released their debut EP *WHERE AM I?* in January 2025, exploring themes of social injustice and personal struggles with a wildly funny streak. ThePunkSite gave the EP five stars, and the band went overseas to perform in Germany and Belgium, honing into a tight and explosive live unit. They played Loud Women Festival and Attitude Festival in 2025, and opened the main stage at Manchester Punk Festival in April 2026 before going on to perform at Rebellion Festival, Bearded Theory and Utrecht's Beware The Banshees.

With their new EP *IT'S GETTING HARDER* out this week and a headline tour on the horizon, we caught up with the band to find out more:

You've described yourselves as 'chaos punk'. Where does the chaos come from?

Brett: To be honest, we've struggled knowing how to describe ourselves. The idea behind calling ourselves 'chaos punk' was to get

across that though punk at heart, our songs all sound a bit different because of the range of influences we all have.

Alex: We've changed it to freak punk recently. The chaos is still on display at the shows but people were pointing out artists like GG Allin as examples of chaos punk. Some weirdos online called us freaks so we adopted it.

Emily: I think we are just a bit chaotic in our own lives. I like to go on lil Emily side adventures and just do fun things. Sometimes the things are 'chaotic' and sometimes they are just fun. What is important is having fun and being happy. And if being chaotic is that then lock me up officer!

Pol: Both musical influences and personality for me I think. I listen to a broad range of music and a lot of different things inspire me which I think goes for most of the group, but also I'm a lil odd.

Photography: Becca Cairns



Sherwood proudly champions inclusivity in the grass-roots music scene. You have a strong LGBTQ+ following. How intentional and important is that?

Emily: I mean we are all gay (except for Brett, for now) and a lot of our friends who love and support us are also queer and I think that is where a lot of our queer base comes from. We did have a conversation fairly early on where we said we don't want to be a gay band, we want to be a band that happens to be gay. I think a lot of cis-het people see queer people as kind of a novelty but that novelty doesn't really exist within the community cos it is our normal every day.

Alex: We aren't afraid to show our queerness and to give people a space to be themselves at the shows. We show our queerness and people relate. But we aren't a queer band, we are a band that is queer. Trans rights forever.

Pol: It's somewhat intentional, like when we wrote *WITCH HUNT* we knew it would likely go down better among queer audiences and we try to make our shows a safe space for people to be themselves. Also I'm still gunning for a majority non-binary audience, but that's just me haha

You're called Be Nice, but you do take aim at quite a few targets in many of your songs. Is it fair to say some people are just impossible to be nice to?

Brett: There was always meant to be some irony and passive aggressiveness around the name. It's kinda cutesy but we write some pretty intense songs about horrible people. When we were thinking about a name, we were talking a lot about how draining the divisiveness in society was (and unfortunately still is) and it came about in a sort of 'Why can't people just be nice?' kind of way.

Emily: Be Nice is a threat. Not nice people / evil people should have no place in society and can fuck off. Free Palestine, trans rights, fuck capitalism.

Alex: It's a threat and those people who aren't



gonna be nice can get to fuck. It's more so exasperation with people not being nice.

Pol: Yeah, if someone's actions or beliefs are inherently unkind or immoral that's where my "niceness" checks out, I think. You can't expect niceness if you aren't nice.

This year you opened up the main stage at Manchester Punk Fest. How special was that moment?

Alex: It was really reaffirming to be given the opportunity and to have a great time seeing all the wicked bands. Shoutout to Tree for putting us on. Big up Jesus for being there. He was in all of us that day. My dad also saw it and he came too.

Emily: I will be so real, I had a technical error in every song and the Nun's hood I was wearing kept falling over my face so I was in the trenches a bit. I had a lovely time though and the crowd was amazing. It was also the first festival that my girlfriend and I went to, so it was very special for us.

Pol: It was a really big moment for us. It was the biggest room we'd ever played to and it felt kinda silly because I was dressed up as Jesus. We'd wanted to be on MPF's line-up for years so it was great to finally get there.

Let's talk mental health. 'Cambridge' is a pretty dark track. It feels like a howl of frustration. Is making music the thing that is keeping you sane in a problematic world?

Brett: Music is responsible for keeping me sane for a very long time lol. Also antidepressants. But it's definitely cathartic to play and write the songs we make given the state of things.

Alex: No it's probably the drugs. But it can be helpful to know other people are going through what you're going through and know you aren't alone.

Emily: I wrote Cambridge between meetings and train rides to and from the town when I was working there. It was lame and soul crushing and venting my thoughts in this way was cathartic and kind of empowering. I don't

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really see it that way anymore, I am now more of the mind that if you don't like something to the point where you want to kill yourself you should make changes. It doesn't have to be an overnight thing but just make a plan for how to get out of it and if you can't plan then do research on other things you can do to help yourself. Also go outside, make friends and be in a community. A lot of people have felt this way and there are better things in the world to look forward to.

Pol: Bold of you to assume that I'm sane.

There is a very strong streak of humour in a lot of your songs. Is having a bit of a giggle part of your DNA?

Alex: Yeah bro the doctors can't help it, I'm too goofy. But I like being silly and finding the humour in dark times. Laughter is a good way to cope with absurdity of the world.

Emily: We are silly people. We like to have fun and have a laugh cos the world is so bleak that we just want to try to be happy in the face of it. Bedtime was us kind of venting about being tired in the middle of winter and not wanting to do stuff, and Buddy is a mixture of several of my friends.

Pol: I've not had the tests done but I believe so. I just like having a silly time.

With your unique combination of satire, fury and dark humour do you feel your music can be a force for good and genuine social change?

Brett: Music definitely can. Whether ours can is a different question lol. There are plenty of people out there who would probably argue our music has made the world a worse place.

Alex: Yeah man for sure. I just wanna let people know it's ok to feel angry and have a giggle and know that there's other people out there who are going through something similar and so can relate.



Pol: I mean hopefully. If we bring one person some sort of joy, that's a win. As is pissing off the right person.

You've played with many Sherwood favourites including Split Dogs. Are there any other grass roots bands you want to shout out for any reason whatsoever?

There are many: Shooting Daggers, Mae-v, Misgendered, Leibniz, Thwack, Pityspeed, Sunday Best, Cowboy Hunters, That Band Called Susan, Cheap Dirty Horse, Nervous Pills, Peer Pleasure, BLDSGR!, Pussylquor, Skint Knees, Tarmak Abra and almost certainly many more that we're forgetting.

As well as MPF in April, this summer you will have also played Rebellion, Bearded Theory and Burn It Down. Where do you hope to find yourselves in 5 years time?

Alex: Glasto babay.

Gimme Boomtown, Coachella, Chelsea flower show, Butlins. It would be nice to do bigger shows, bigger projects, meet more people, play some weird places. As long as the vibes are right and the people are cool, I'll play where they'll have me.

Emily: I hope to be living life with my beautiful girlfriend, having adventures. I think having an album out would be really cool as well.

Brett: Honestly it's crazy that we're where we are right now. The last 4 years have been a lot of fun but also a lot of grind and to see that paying off is mad. If we could do this and get paid whilst still sticking to our guns, making music we like, playing cool shows with cool bands, that would be the dream.

Pol: On The Muppet Show, ideally. But also still doing what we're doing, having a lovely old time playing to people who like us.

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Whilst her work has always been clever and witty, her most recent album, 2026's *Break Offline, Before I Have A Breakdown Online* is explicitly uncomfortable, speaking to situations that sting. TrueMendous has been able to out-rap anyone in the room for years, but this record had a different aim entirely with songs that are extremely vulnerable, asking to be felt rather than admired for their technical skill alone. Her recent headline show at The Jago in Dalston brought a bill of friends from across the soul and R&B scene, with an attentive and adoring audience beaming with respect and shouting the words right back at her. More than a technically gifted MC, TrueMendous is an artist whose vulnerable honesty has made her a firm favourite of the UK's hip-hop scene.

We love High Focus here at Sherwood for so many reasons. Did you feel pressure signing to the label, or was it more of a support network?

Never felt pressure to sign anything it was always a choice. After being independent for so long High Focus gave my music a bigger platform to be heard on and introduced me to a lot more supporters of UK hip hop. Even though I'm not signed to the label anymore I'm still featured on some of the guys' new albums such as Verb T's track *Minimal* and most recently King Kashmere's *Unfunny*. We actually have a visual dropping for that soon. The label still hits me up to be a part of their live showcases and birthday celebrations. I'll always be grateful and will continue to pop up on their platform going forward. Shout out to Fliptrix.

TrueMendous

Originally from Birmingham, TrueMendous spent years busking in cities before landing placements with Adidas, the FIFA 21 soundtrack, Pepsi Max, and even McVitie's.

In 2019 TrueMendous signed to High Focus Records, becoming the first female rapper on the label's roster. Her debut EP *Huh?* featuring Chemo, Illinformed and Winchester arrived in 2020, and her 17-track debut album *Misdiagnosis of Chyvonne Johnson* followed in 2021 full of technical wordplay so densely packed that it takes several spins to fully unpack and appreciate.

Hi True! First things first, can you tell us all about your time busking before you signed to a label? Where did you frequent, and do you think more aspiring rappers should do the same to cut their teeth?

A lot of benefits come with busking especially if you're a vocalist who doesn't really practise much. Over time you'll see drastic improvement with your stamina, clarity, breath control, vocal strength and your overall execution is refined. This is excellent for live performances. Busking was introduced to me over a decade ago by a rapper called Obi Rudo and I still do it to this day. When I first started, I was doing roughly 8 hours a day in 5 to 6 different cities a week. I've definitely put in my 10,000 hours now, ha. I've busked all over the UK and most recently in New York. Yes, I do advise more rappers in particular to busk as a lot aren't very good live but I reckon their ego gets the best of them so I think it'll remain a small niche.

Presumably not many rappers can say they've collaborated with the legendary McVitie's. How did that come about, and did you get any free biscuits?

I was put forward for that advert by a couple agencies I was in contact with at the time and managed to make it as one of the final 2 candidates before landing one of the lead roles. That was one of the first tv adverts I had ever done and the team I worked on it with were lovely. Thank you to Michelle and Dave for making that happen. From memory I think the only free biscuits I had was during the shoot, ha.

Let's talk about your amazing album that you put out this year. What were you hoping to achieve with *Break Offline* that you hadn't done on your previous releases?

Relatable and raw. Out of all the projects I have released so far *Break Offline* is definitely my most significant for the time we are currently

in. I'm confident a lot of people will listen to it and at least one song will speak directly to them about a situation they have been in or are currently going through. Some songs may even be uncomfortable to listen to due to how close to home they hit. I wanted to create a body of work which reflects how most of us feel right now. Hopefully some people find solace in it. My earlier 2 projects focused more on the lyricism being clever and witty with only a handful of songs actually focusing on a specific theme all the way through. This time around however I feel that is still present to some capacity from a lyrical standpoint, but I have intentionally simplified a lot of the songs to be more meaningful and straight to the point. I'm not excessively dancing around metaphors and double-entendres etc. trying to make it super complex for people to figure out why it's so 'brilliant' and 'genius', I've just stripped it back and given it to the audience to consume without seasoning.

The whole album is produced by Bear., can you tell us about why that was an important decision?

I've always wanted to collaborate with one producer on a full project. I met Bear. through High Focus and we built a bond while working on my previous album *Great. On Purpose.* which we have maintained to this day. He's an exceptionally talented producer. I wanted *Break Offline* to be cohesive and I find it's a lot easier to accomplish with fewer people involved. Too many people can introduce too many directions and opinions which I didn't want. I wanted the project to have a running thread all the way through and at the time I believed Bear. would do it the most justice, which he did.

What do you hope that people get from listening to the album?

Themes of grief, financial hardships, mental and physical health issues, therapy and so forth are continuous themes throughout the project. But an underlining rebellion theme is also present in the album. I want people to no longer conform to anyone's expectations of you, not seek external validation so much and unlearn all the incorrect information we have

been force fed since we were kids. I want people to realise how delicate and short life really is. Evict yourself from somewhere that makes and keeps you unhappy. You still have time.

Your headline show at The Jago in Dalston was wonderful, not least because of the soul and R&B acts on the bill. Can you tell our readers about the guests you invited along that evening?

Curating my first ever UK tour will forever be my biggest achievement because I know how many years I procrastinated doing one. That London show is hands down one of my most favourite moments. I've delayed doing a tour or even just a singular headline show for a very long time in fear

of no one showing up.

In hindsight I do believe this has hindered my momentum to be honest. The show at The Jago is a moment in time I will never forget and I'm so happy I was able to experience it with so many people I care about. Though having an all-black female line up wasn't intentional the fact it was the end result was perfect and 100% needed as it's not common, especially in the UK. No one dropped the ball and everyone executed

their performance to such a high calibre that people were refusing to go to the loo or have a smoke break because no one wanted to miss anything. Everyone in the audience was mingling and laughing with each other to the point you'd think everyone had met before and weren't just strangers at a gig. People came in from Germany, New York and other cities in the UK just for little old me. I've also never heard so many people rap my lyrics back to me, I thought there was an echo on the mic at first. Big shout out to Danielle, Zion & Siobhan, Courtney Bennett, Rozzzqween, Janel Antonesia and KSsense. Not only that show but that tour will forever be one of the best things I've ever accomplished in my life.

What's coming next for TrueMendous?

I'll be venturing off into other creative realms, can't say too much yet.



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A warm and welcoming vinyl shop, café and bar tucked in next to the legendary Bush Hall. Head downstairs on a hot day and you'll find a secret little oasis.

Rough Trade West

The original and oldest store in the Rough Trade chain has been open since the height of the punk movement in 1976.

CAMDEN

The Fiddler's Elbow

A 150-capacity Camden institution with live grassroots music every night of the week, friendly staff and cheap drinks.

The Dome

A Grade II-listed Victorian landmark in Tufnell Park hosting two stages and a pub, with over four decades of independent music history soaked into the walls.

Barfly

The historic Barfly reopened in June 2026 under new ownership with a wall of fame, a jukebox, a vinyl listening bar and the same legendary stage.

Imperial Palace of Big Red

A great rock bar with pool tables, pinball, a beer garden, free entry gigs and club nights, and plenty of space to relax.

The Lock Tavern

Right opposite Camden Market's chaos with a rooftop terrace, cosy wood-panelled bar and a gentle atmosphere.

Dingwalls

Sat right on the Camden Lock canal Dingwalls has been open since 1973 with a terrace looking out over the market.

The Elephants Head

A mid-19th century tiled corner pub on Camden High Street that's constantly hosting young, rowdy bands.

The Devonshire Arms

Camden's cramped and loud metal institution, platforming the heaviest new bands in the city and free entry every single night!

The Dublin Castle

Camden's greatest launchpad ever since Madness pretended to be a jazz band and ended up with a residency in 1979.

The Camden Eye

Plastered in punk stickers and sitting right outside Camden Town station, the Camden Eye is small and cheerful with live bands and DJs upstairs.

Raven Records

Raven Records has vinyl, CDs, books, merch, legendary signings and some of the most welcoming staff in London.

The Black Heart

The quintessential heavy metal dive bar so beloved that fans crowdfunded to save it during the pandemic. Deliciously dark with a small box of a room where bands play loud enough to make the walls shake.

All Ages Records

London's ONLY dedicated punk and hardcore shop. DIY since 2003 with vinyl, CDs, tapes, fanzines, patches, badges and more plus Bob and Yellow the dogs on duty on weekends.

SOHO

The Social

A narrow basement that's hosted everyone from the Chemical Brothers to Jack White since 1999, at 150 capacity you're essentially standing on the stage.

100 Club

A basement beneath Oxford Street that's been hosting live music since 1942, from swing and jazz to blues, mod, punk and Britpop with walls plastered in photographs that tell the complete history of popular music.

Rough Trade Denmark St.

Just off Tottenham Court Road, the central Rough Trade outpost brings their legendary curation to London's most historic music street, with staff picks and live sessions.

HACKNEY

New River Studios

A community-rooted arts space and venue with a sun-trap terrace that's one of the best spots in North London on a warm afternoon and welcoming favourite for loud and angry young bands.

Next Door Records Two

The second location of the popular Shepherd's Bush branch, functioning as a record store by day and a lively bar and music venue by night.

The Shacklewell Arms

Built in the 1870s, The Shacklewell Arms is one of the best testing grounds for future festival favourites in London, fiercely committed to loud bands and great club nights.

Sebright Arms

A popular pub that's a staple of the East London music scene with an intimate basement gig space.

Eastway Baths

A 1930s public bathhouse in Hackney Wick repurposed as one of the finest not-for-profit community spaces in London with a sauna, artist studios and a 300-capacity events hall all under one roof.

Blondies Taproom

A sun-drenched outdoor terrace, a packed events calendar and all the same punk spirit that made the Clapton original so legendary, just bigger than its older sibling.

SHOREDITCH

The Old Blue Last

The Old Blue Last has a downstairs bar that buzzes every night of the week with shows upstairs that are almost always cheap or completely free.

Rough Trade East

Vinyl, CDs, books and merch and some of the most knowledgeable staff in the business, the shop folds into a live venue for in-store performances.

BRIXTON

Windmill Brixton

Tucked down a backstreet with space for 150 people, The Windmill is one of the most significant venues of recent times.

The Chip Shop

Serving cod and chips at the bar, The Chip Shop is also London's premier hip-hop venue, holding 100 people and hosting the likes of Ice T, Mobb Deep and Chuck D

Hootananny Brixton

A Victorian pub and music venue on the edge of Brockwell Park that feels like a festival every weekend with a spacious beer garden.

NEW CROSS

New Cross Inn

The beating heart of London's punk scene, with an absolutely relentless gig schedule that keeps the scene thriving.

The Amersham Arms

A New Cross institution since the 1850s packing in a traditional pub and a 300-capacity live music venue that's a firm favourite of South London's music scene.

If you run a venue or record shop and would like to stock Sherwood, we'd love to hear from you, so please get in touch at sherwoodmagazine@proton.me for more information.

burner

South London metal unit Burner already have the support of the biggest names in the game.

Signed to Church Road Records Burner released their debut EP *A Vision of the End* in 2022, produced by Lewis Johns. Metal Hammer promptly named the band one of their bands to watch, and their 2023 debut album *It All Returns To Nothing* cemented a brutal sound that pulls from death metal, hardcore, black metal and crust punk all at once. Now they're back with their second album, *No One Is Coming to Save Us*, coming out on 25th September, and the company Burner find themselves in has jumped to another level entirely.

Lead single *Sunrise, Parabellum* features a guest vocal from Trivium's Matt Heafy, a hero of vocalist Harry Nott's, *What Will You Give?* pairs up with Josh Middleton of Sylosis, and Cult Leader's Anthony Lucero features on the song *Kurtz*. These guest features are all a result of Burner's relentless touring, punishing live reputation and genuinely distinctive sound. The album's release was marked with a London show at The Lower Third on 26th September before the band heads out on a full UK headline tour, and we strongly recommend you catch them in a small venue while you still have the chance.

We spoke to vocalist Harry Nott to find out more:

***No One Is Coming to Save Us* is a bleak but truthful title, is that the driving theme of the whole record?**

It's a bit more nuanced than that. The title, I feel, is a summation of all the other themes and ideas within the album, but with more of a directive to them for the listener. That's why the record begins and ends on a reflection of what that title means.

Across the album, I really wanted to express the loss and despair I feel at the state of the world, but with a view towards the history that has led us here. I feel that others before us have sacrificed so much to create the world we exist in now, and there's a great tragedy in how we've struggled and failed to learn those lessons. The climate crisis worsens every year, the tipping points approach. Deadly wars continue to rage. We grow more cynical and self-invested, communities growing further apart. Racism, xenophobia, fear - all still in great abundance. There's a lot of pain I feel and, for me, I think a lot of the album is about my own struggle with that pain, trying to move forward.

But I'd never want to leave the album in the kind of place where someone could just call it "nihilism" and that's it. Making music is far too important to me to waste your chance to say something on cliché imagery and slogans. So, the album's title is two-fold: no one is coming to save us from the dark place we're

Photography: Connor Standfield



descending into. But, at the same time, it's a call to action: it's up to you and I to make that change. We have to do it together, to make good on the promise of the world that others fought and died for: stamping out hatred, creating a safe and prosperous world for us all. It's idealism, but if I don't have that kind of hope in my music, I don't think I can expect anyone to believe things are going to get better.

How did the guest features come about, and what inspired the choice to reach out to so many other artists this time around?

Well, we always had the ambition of really making this album as big as we reasonably could. Part of that is just asking, even for the sake of it, if other artists would be interested in collaborating with us. For me, it's something I've always appreciated: a good feature can really bring a song together and take it to the next level. We didn't have any way of anticipating we'd be as radically successful with the features we obtained for *NOICTSU*, though. We're as shocked as everyone else, even now. We toured with Sylosis across the UK and Ireland back in 2024, in support of *A Sign Of Things To Come*. From there, it felt natural to ask Josh if he'd be on a track, to which he immediately accepted. We're very thankful for his support from the outset.

Candidly, it's not too different a story with Matt, either. We had just finished our set at ArcTanGent last year when it came to me in a rush and I pitched it to the boys right there: why don't we just ask him? We knew he was a fan of us, both from playing our music on his SiriusXM Liquid Metal radio show, and through a mutual contact of ours. We went through a few channels and, to our shock: he said yes! But he could only do it after the tour they were wrapping up at the end of 2025. I spent the following months up to that time hesitantly in awe - it's a nice idea, but I'm going to believe it when I see it. I asked a few people to feature on our first album and it bottomed out. We had to give him a nudge, just in case he couldn't do it... but then a couple of hours later, he sent it over. In the studio, while we're recording drums, we all take a break to listen to his take. None of us can believe it and it was unbelievable. Particularly for me: to hear him screaming the lyrics I wrote, speaking them with such intensity, is madness.

But, being honest, the feature I'm most surprised we got was Anthony. We're all big fans of Cult Leader, but I knew they weren't a band that would easily go for a thing like ours. That's partly just down to not having any features prior, but also because of the disparity in the style and intensity of our music and visibility. They feel like a very serious band, which works absolute wonders for what they do - but it's not exactly confidence building when you're wanting to potentially break that up with something that's your idea of what serious is, insofar as our style of metal goes. Sure enough, when I pitched it to Anthony, he wrote a very polite reply that explained he wasn't fond of features, but he liked our band and would listen to the demo to let us know. We all shrugged: it was no great surprise. But then our jaws hit the floor: he's up for it. Sure enough, the take comes in (the first one we got of any feature) and it's superb. Everyone smashed their features, but to this day, Kurtz is still my favourite feature and track on the record. Very happy with it.

Take us back to the very beginning before you were gigging. What was the initial spark that formed Burner?

Telling my own story here: I moved to London in 2018 and, from my early days of making music in a crummy hardcore band, I knew I wanted to try and ignite that fire again in The City. I met our original drummer Hugo and, after some experimenting with other musicians, we eventually circled back to an effort that led us to Nathan (our superb songwriter and guitarist). I found him in a Facebook group for wedding bands, when I was posting about people who wanted to join a Dillinger-Code Orange-type band. Silly stuff. The three of us practiced everything we had, developing a debut EP. Then, when we were tight enough, we went looking for a bassist. We found Finn in March of 2020. You know what happens then. But lockdowns couldn't stem the excitement and, sure enough, we had that EP recorded. I'd like to think it was just persistence and perseverance, especially during Covid - to be truly excited about what you're working on and taking the time to refine and work at it, to get as good as you could with it. It put us in a great position.

Church Road are a terrific label who are doing fantastic things for the metal scene, how did you link up with them so early on?

Carrying on from my prior answer: it was while we were recording drums for our first EP, with Lewis. No one had heard of us, we'd never played a show, and we were slightly taking a gamble with Lewis: we knew he'd make the drums sound great, but we also knew he had good connections. If he liked what he heard... well, maybe someone else gets to hear it. We all ended up in the studio in 2021, dying to get out of the city and to see this EP we'd prepared for come together. He made some nice comments about the songs on the first day. We all smiled and thanked him for it, but didn't think all that much of it. The next day, he tells us he'd told a hardcore band that were signed to Nuclear Blast about us, saying we should tour together. We were shocked: he really meant it! Sure enough, by the end of the recording, he said he'd send it over to Justine and Sammy, for them to see what they thought. Time goes by, we don't think much of it...but then they appear and they want to work with us. We're very grateful that we could all be in the right place, at the right time.

Who are the bands that inspired you to do this in the first place, whether sonically or in attitude?

Speaking mostly for myself here, I take a lot of influence from hardcore bands, as well as grindcore acts: Dangers, Magrudergrind, Hang The Bastard, Blacklisted, Cursed...A lot of that very direct, in your face type lyricism. I wanted to load that into the more metallic sound of what we're doing, largely because I think it's more engaging than anything else. Musically, I think we pull from a lot of different places, which is why people find it so hard to categorise us. It's a bit of The Acacia Strain, some Wolves

In The Throne Room, a sprinkle of Dillinger Escape Plan, a dash of Chimaira, the dramatics of post-metal influences like Rolo Tomassi and The Contortionist, the more death-oriented stuff of a Hate Eternal or techy The Faceless-type influence. We just try to make music that we'd like and think that we'd want to listen to, if it was us from the outside looking in.

Do the four of you come with similar music tastes or do you pull from different corners?

We all bring our own ideas to the fold, but Nathan is the one helming most of the music. When he produces a demo, most of the time it's about 85% done, or so. Then, we work on it together - he builds on it from our feedback and we dig in from there. A lot of it happens in the live room, where we shop demos into something that could have a more cohesive structure, if there isn't one already, or more surprising ideas. But having that foundation from Nathan is very powerful, he's able to process a lot of quite interesting ideas and distill them into something we can all work on, that usually has a unique approach to it already.

We just try to make music that we'd like and think that we'd want to listen to, if it was us from the outside looking in

Finally, what is the ultimate goal of Burner?

It's hard to say exactly what that is. I think we all have our own ambitions in and around the band's progress. But, I think one thing we all universally would like is to be a band that other people are influenced by. To be the bedrock for future musicians to work from would be an immense pleasure and it's one that will live beyond the finite life of any one band. I think a lot of people forget that: it's not necessarily about being remembered by Joe Public - it's carrying forward the passion and music to other musicians that feels transformative and real. Again, we try to stay grateful for it all and see where it takes us.

Punk & Metal

If you like X-Ray Spex, you'll love The Grievance by IRKED

Helen Walkinshaw is not concerned with hitting the right notes. She's concerned with telling you what's annoyed her at full volume in a Geordie accent thick and proud. IRKED are from Tyne and Wear, and their debut album *The Grievance* is putting the northeast of England on the punk map in the best way with a rock and roll racket that sounds like it was built to soundtrack a skateboarding injury compilation. The backing music is fast and unapologetic and Helen's feral scream is extremely reminiscent of Poly Styrene with a complete disregard for polish. The album opens with *I.R.K.E.D.F.U.* spending its entire two and a half minutes revving up before *Repeat Offender* kicks in with Helen embodying the spirit of a petulant teenager who's fed up with everything. *Running* is a fifty two second portrait of a Lycra-clad dickhead who speeds past you because they need to post their route to social media, pointing the finger at an extremely specific target, and *The ACP* is an explicit rejection of middle class gawpers in cherished DIY spaces. *Settle Down* captures the energy of the teenage punk bands of the seventies alongside the bratty refusal to grow up that ran through NOFX and Guttermouth. At almost forty minutes, this is a generous record since most punk releases of this style would be done and dusted in twenty, and Helen's voice is as entertaining as the best stand-up comedy, fully committed to having a good old scream.



If you like The Slits, you'll love Bingo! by La Sécurité

It's clear that *Bingo!* is a punk record from the very first seconds of *Snack City*, from the pace and the rumbling bassline to the clattering drums, but this is punk with no rules about where it can go from that jumping off point. Whilst the pace and the grit come from that world, everything else seems up for grabs as much of the album feels like a punk band playing their hand at disco, new wave, electroclash, post-punk and mid-2000s indie simultaneously. *Deny* could be an LCD Soundsystem track, and *Detour* is extremely bouncy sounding like Devo with great twangy guitar lines and crazy overwhelming synths. There are hooks left, right and centre all stacked on top of each other with gleeful abandon.



If you like Discharge, you'll love G.A.M.E.S by KLONNNS

Eleven tracks in nineteen minutes with most of them hovering around the ninety second mark, KLONNNS are not here to waste your time. A hardcore punk band from Tokyo who make a loud, fast racket and get out, *G.A.M.E.S* is one of the most exciting, concise and fun hardcore records of 2026. The core DNA is New York hardcore with two step breakdowns that tear away at breakneck pace and production that sounds huge without being obsessed with clarity. There are a great many bands doing this right now, but KLONNNS are a hidden gem with every member demonstrating a terrific understanding of groove and structure that allows them to tear away at full pace.



If you like Kyuss, you'll love House Of Mirrors by All Them Witches

An album built on patience that's heavy in theme rather than sheer volume, rooted in a tradition that stretches back to the earliest American blues. The opener *Red Rocking Chair* is an Appalachian folk tune, arranged into a six and a half-minute slow-burning piece that carries the grave quality of Nick Cave and Mark Lanegan, establishing a tone of patience and seriousness that runs through everything that follows. The best way to describe *House*

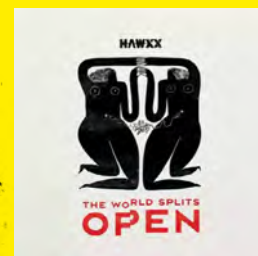


Of Mirrors is as a desert blues album that would absolutely destroy a metal festival, not just by blasting the audience with noise, but by rewarding them with something far more interesting and demanding.

The heaviness comes through swampy groove and hypnotic repetition, with The Doors and the Grateful Dead alongside doom metal and stoner rock in the DNA.

If you like System of a Down, you'll love The World Splits Open by HAWXX

If you're one of those people who thinks music and politics should remain separate, you will absolutely hate HAWXX. For those of us who like their music to be a fiery and volatile political vehicle, you will struggle to find a better album than this in 2026. The level of ferocious bounce in their performance is just - holy shit. The creativity and skill of high level metal fused with the ferocity of punk, every instrument on

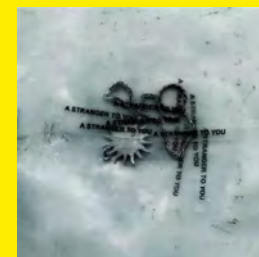


The World Splits Open is performed really, really well. The second half of the album is more spacious, patient and philosophical, spending more time praising the forests than raging at the government, giving the album a deep

dimension beyond the surface level political fury.

If you like Deftones, you'll love A Stranger To You by Loathe

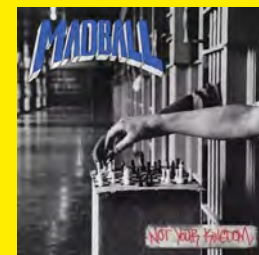
Loathe have always been genre shapeshifters, but nothing will prepare you for the breadth of styles on *A Stranger To You*. The album opens with a deliberate slow burn with two minutes of spoken word over piano before *Block Of Flats* enters with a trebly, heavily processed guitar that suspends itself in space before the band finally crashes in with a huge stomping riff dropping back out for the gothic verses and crashing back into enormously violent choruses, with the vocals pushed to ragged extremes. *Fortress Down* brings more groove and *Gemini* is a filthy stomper with a hard techno breakdown that comes out of nowhere. *Revenant* goes back to crushingly violent industrial breakdowns with lyrics that are completely indecipherable, and *The Way It Breaks* is tender slow motion shoegaze that's the polar opposite.



If you like Sick of It All, you'll love Not Your Kingdom by Madball

Not Your Kingdom skirts so close to material that would be corny if it were in basically anyone else's hands, but it's emphatically not because this is Madball, and they've been doing this for nearly four decades.

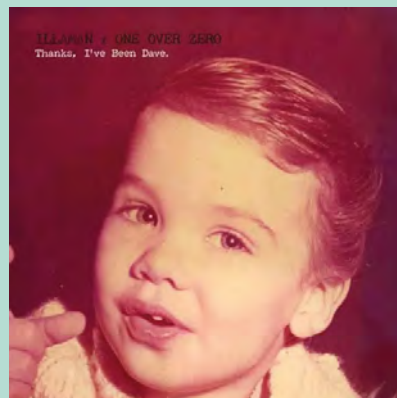
Brotherhood, pointing out hypocrisy, and taking no shit. Madball are here to prove that the template still has enormous power. *The Ride* sounds bigger than the sweaty two hundred cap venues that Madball were born in, and much of the album has the feel of a daytime festival slot with a big circle pit in the sunshine. The new generation are wearing Madball shirts and citing them as influences, and the band have responded with a triumphant victory lap.



Jazz, Hip-Hop & Folk

If you like Skinnyman, you'll love Thanks, I've Been Dave by ILLAMAN & One Over Zero.

The title alone tells you something important, as Illaman swaps his stage name out for Dave and the performer steps out from behind the persona. *Thanks, I've Been Dave* is an album of unusual authenticity made by an artist who has no interest in performing for anyone who isn't already paying attention. A hip-hop record about the reality of Illaman's actual life with graft on a building site, too much weed and difficult battles in his head all delivered with a conversational ease, he's more concerned with being vicious and authentic than following any standard rhyme structure, as quick rhymes appear and disappear in a delivery that sounds more like someone ranting than performing. With enormous bravado but a relaxed posture, he feels unperformative in a way that's impossible to fake. One Over Zero's production throughout is rich and murky with *Peep Show* a crime-ridden standout with deep textures. *Maybe* is the album's biggest highlight, opening with a silly swung triplet rhythm that you might expect from Dirty Dike or Leaf Dog, and then thirty seconds in the entire vibe shifts without warning as a much more insistent beat arrives and Illaman launches into a really intense flow that came out of nowhere. The track alternates between these two modes, and every time the heavier section hits back it's like being suddenly overwhelmed by too many distracted, dreamlike thoughts at once. There's a significant grime influence running throughout, and *Man on a Mission* is a rap rock tune with chunky guitars and a huge shout-along chorus. The title track closes the album with soul samples and as the backing track fades out Illaman keeps going, gradually relaxing down to nothing. 2026 is a great year for UK hip-hop, and *Thanks, I'm Dave* holds its own with ease.



If you like Astrud Gilberto, you'll love in this body by Sparklmami

in this body is an exceptionally rich debut from Chicago based multidisciplinary artist Sparklmami that draws from seventies Brazilian pop, Mexican boleros, Chicago soul, and the Brainfeeder universe of modern jazz funk. A swirling, sumptuous, exotic wonderland of a record that's impossible to classify, the instrumentation is breathtaking in its variety and abundance, with horn lines swirling around the vocals and vibraphones shimmering. Bass lines groove with a balance of complexity and casual ease with saxophone solos moving in and out, and there seems to be no limit to what might appear next. English and Spanish weave together throughout as the record wears its multicultural clothes with ease and confidence. The record sits in the same universe as Thundercat and Flying Lotus, with the spirit of modern jazz funk that's completely outside any box. Twenty four minutes is brief, and there are enough ideas here to fill a record twice this length, but the discipline to keep it snappy means it remains fun rather than overwhelming. The recording quality feels modern, and the unpredictability feels contemporary, but the genres and styles being quoted are classic and rich.

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If you like Run the Jewels, you'll love Cry Baby by Vince Staples

Built around murky and understated backing that gives every word room to land, *Cry Baby* is a visceral, serious and intense record about state violence against Black people and racism at the highest levels of American government, as politically confrontational as NWA or Public Enemy but delivered with a deadpan understatement and a vocal performance that's largely quiet, controlled, and matter of fact, only exploding at key moments. *Go! Go! Gorilla* is

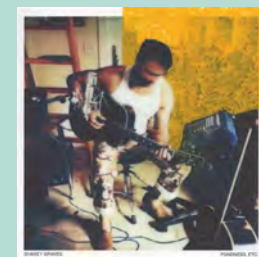


built on a fun and bouncy refrain over subject matter that's horrible, contrasting groovy music over reflections on the dark underbelly of the city in a way that's powerful and unsettling. *White Flag* captures the exhaustion of the

battle, and *The Running Man* is as exhilarating as a gritty film soundtrack feeling intense, murky and uncomfortable. *TV Guide* touches on media hypnosis and *The Big Bad Wolf* is built on a Slick Rick sample that demonstrates how little has changed since the original clip was first recorded.

If you like Bill Callahan, you'll love Fondness, Etc. by Shakey Graves

Fondness, Etc. is a record about presence and fatherhood recorded to tape at home with sparse instrumentation and tender imperfections deliberately kept intact with a striking range. Singer-songwriter records of this kind tend to have a predictable format, but Shakey Graves refuses



that template and conjures different moods and textures across nine tracks with intricate production choices that give the record a richness you wouldn't expect from something recorded in a home studio to tape. *Suddenly* is an instrumental highlight built around an angelic slide guitar and an uptempo, bouncy drum pattern while the tape recording gives an old and comforting texture that you can tell isn't artificial. *I Once Was An Ocean* is another instrumental highlight built around woozy, trippy slide guitar that edges towards psychedelia without fully committing, and *On My Own* is beautifully gentle.



If you like Kneecap, you'll love Only Built 4 Claddagh Ringz by Beano & Donkobz

This record has one foot firmly planted in Ireland, and the other stood on a deep and serious respect for the tradition of hip-hop. There are currently a lot of people claiming an interest in Irish hip-hop due to Kneecap who could do with checking out Beano and Donkobz, two excellent rappers who happen to be Irish, and who refuse to give up any part of that identity. Their label Outstraight Records has been on fire, with this being the third record from the label we've covered in just over a year. This is a scene worth watching very closely. Producer No Venom is a one man factory with a massive range of moods, tones and tempos that are full of variety and the sonic world this time around is murky and dreamy, built on hazy backdrops and catchy earworm loops that Wu-Tang Clan could have used.

The record is full of threatening violence, over the top bragging, substance abuse, regrettable decisions, and a general fucked mindstate, all delivered with thuggish pride. Toughness is not an alien concept for the Irish nation, and Beano and Donkobz embody classic hip-hop bravado and a distinctly Irish swagger simultaneously. This is really high level hip-hop, and the Irish references don't feel like gimmicks precisely because they aren't.

Alternative & Indie

If you like Focus, you'll love **Back into the Womb** by Sans Froid

Bristol keeps on delivering, producing consistently quality bands that sound nothing alike. Sans Froid are unmistakably Bristol, and sound like nobody else. *Back into the Womb* is Sans Froid's sophomore album with eleven tracks in thirty five minutes, and it's at once part of the ArcTanGent-adjacent Bristol tradition of tricky arrangements and strange time signatures, and also something much older. This is a prog rock record in the lineage of the first wave from the seventies with a lilting and pastoral quality and the mystical atmosphere of Glastonbury and the surrounding landscape immediately recognisable, with a magical quality that's rooted in the land. If you zoom in the lyrics are anything but fantastical, dealing with the overwhelming cacophony of the modern world, and the demands and difficulties of today. The tension between the ancient, spiralling music and the grounded, modern and emotionally direct lyrical content is a fascinating quality with music that sounds like it belongs to another age, but lyrics about right now. The wall of sound they produce through the density of their writing is enormous, with all four musicians doing interesting things at once and the piano doing more than a second guitarist ever could.



If you like At the Drive-In, you'll love **La Tierra Arriba / El Abismo Abajo** by Quiet Fear

The album opens with *Tiniebla*, a lumbering minute-long head-banger before *Retén* begins with a manic scream and the record tears away at full fury for most of its duration. *Sophistry* is a massive highlight with an eerie, unnerving riff running through the verses as the pace and urgency of everything around it raises your heart rate relentlessly before the anguished chorus hits. The gang vocals throughout the record are particularly



powerful, with most of the vocals screamed with throat-shredding passion and the group joining in with a cathartic all-for-one quality. This is a terrific record that communicates regardless of language, driven by real feelings and impossible circumstances.

If you like Led Zeppelin, you'll love **Frozen Charlotte** by Jack White

Frozen Charlotte sounds lo-fi, with the microphone clipping throughout and an organ that's earthy and powerful. There is nothing modern on this record, as it asserts the power of dirty blues and its continued ability to make you scrunch up your face. The whole record feels like a live jam, with unhinged solos and Jack screaming throughout as the band grooves with each other rather than trying to produce perfect studio cuts. It feels shorter than it is because the songs move quickly and the riffs are so consistently great. By track five *You'll Never Fix Me*, with its incredible call and response between the vocal and the guitar, you start to realise that every single one of these tracks is a banger.



If you like Tame Impala, you'll love **Inward Eye** by Spacemoth

Warm, enveloping, optimistic and creative, any instrument is free to make any noise at any time as the album fills with organic synthesisers adding meticulous textures and joyful character. *Cloud Of Echoes* is one of the most beautiful moments on the record with vocals working in a descending round and looping over each other like a nursery rhyme. You could call this psychedelia, but it sounds more like the artists of the nineties and noughties who were



influenced by the sixties, with production that's far too rich to be considered raw. The layers of sound would interfere with each other in the hands of someone who didn't know what they were doing, but Qudus

leaves space for everything, balancing an overwhelming cloud of sound with a gentle and soft character throughout.

If you like Guided by Voices, you'll love **Global Voyeur** by Big Fat Head.

Six friends from Columbus, Ohio making a hell of a noise together and clearly having the time of their lives, *Global Voyeur* is an intimate, warm and fun record that also somehow manages to sound expansive, ambitious and exciting, which is a rarer combination than it sounds. A wide

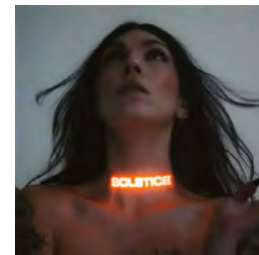


scope Americana record as much as it is an indie punk one with saxophones, synthesisers and reverb-drenched guitars giving the music the feel of an open landscape, big skies and empty roads. The dual vocals of Nate

and Olivia are central to the enterprise, giving the whole record the feel of a group of friends who really enjoy spending time making music together. With warmth and rambunctiousness, *Global Voyeur* is loud, creative and very enjoyable.

If you like Mark Lanegan, you'll love **Solstice** by A.A. Williams

The instrumentation is poised, purposeful and concerned with power through simplicity rather than a display of complexity, with uncomplicated melodies and the piano moving with the beat to play a constant pulse. Gothic music in the lineage of Nick Cave's *Murder Ballads*, *Solstice* sounds like Conan or Sleep filtered through the intimacy of a classical recital and the emotional weight of a magnificent stage play. There isn't a great range stylistically, and yet these slow, grand songs completely sustain your attention, which is a remarkable achievement for music this patient and simple. When *Wolves* crashes into the chorus the faith in the simplicity of the music is breathtaking, with drums playing a funeral march and towering guitars.



If you like Pixies, you'll love **Horseman** by The Shania Twainsaw Massacre

Grunge bands like Hole, Alice In Chains and Nirvana injected uncomfortable darkness into the punk template, and The Shania Twainsaw Massacre do exactly that with real intelligence.

Fresh takes its time opening the EP, veering between eerie arpeggiated sections and slamming grunge noise. *Bloat* runs with the body horror element fully present with rich and powerful harmonies in the chorus, a two minute single of real force. *Dog-Friendly Bone Museum* continues in the same uncomfortable vein, demonstrating that the band understands grunge at a level way beyond imitation, and *Nosebleeds* closes the EP with the most unsettling song of all.



Electronic, Pop & Experimental

If you like Max Richter, you'll love *Snowdrop* by MONO

The intention as stated by the band is to offer light and hope to those who have lost someone dear, and *Snowdrop* delivers on that promise completely. Every track is named after a flower with each one carrying a specific meaning in the Japanese tradition of hanakotoba, the language of flowers relating to how and when each one appears in the year, which is a beautiful conceptual framework for an album about loss and continuation. Like Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Mogwai, and Explosions in the Sky, MONO are using the instrumentation of a rock band to create music of orchestral and emotional grandeur like classical composers. The melodies on *Snowdrop* are so simple that you could transcribe them for a beginner's piano book, but the performance, sculpting, effects chain and passion transform simplicity into an overwhelming sound. At moments *Snowdrop* feels less like a rock record and more the soundtrack to a beautifully drawn animation of a magical world, bringing modern film music to mind. MONO are fluent in the language of inspiring music that makes you glad to be alive.

MONO
Snowdrop



If you like Quantic, you'll love *A Way In* by Mitchum Yacoub.

Multicultural funk of the highest order that's an absolute joy from the first note to the last, with a genre list that includes cumbia, salsa, afrobeat, jazz, soul and more. The musical sensibility of the record moves across Latin America, West Africa, the Arab world and the

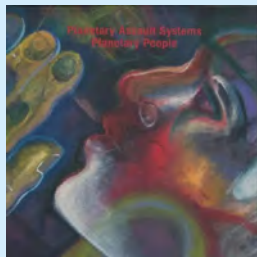


American soul tradition with complete fluency, seeing no divisions between these cultures and playing with them as if they were always one continuous tradition of rhythm and feeling. The music would flow naturally

in any DJ set, sitting at the intersection of breakbeat-driven funk and organic world music and feeling both modern and timeless. This is an album that should be familiar to everyone because it draws on traditions that are familiar to so many people.

If you like Jeff Mills, you'll love *Planetary People* by Planetary Assault Systems

Luke Slater, one of Berghain's longest-serving residents, has been making music as Planetary Assault Systems since the mid-nineties, and his first album since 2016 is a reminder of exactly why this project has endured. This is techno that doesn't rely on predictable four-four patterns and similar build-and-drop structures calibrated for easy mixing, and is instead considerably stranger and more interesting. *Planetary People* gives the image of Slater programming loops of very different lengths and then letting us watch how they interact with each other, and the result is experimental with elements appearing and disappearing in ways that feel discovered rather than planned.



If you like Kermit the Frog, you'll love *Laura Sings Raffi* by Laura Marling

Raffi Cavoukian is an Armenian-Canadian singer and songwriter born in 1948 who became the most popular children's entertainer in the English-speaking world writing songs that have been the soundtrack of childhood for generations of North American families. Laura Marling has now recorded seventeen of his songs and released them as a gift to parents and toddlers everywhere. Most children's music is absolutely awful, designed to test the

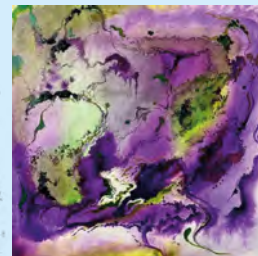


patience of every adult in earshot. These songs are exquisitely beautiful, charming, and fun to sing along with. Even if you don't have children you'll know at least half of these songs and their melodies, and it's wonderful

hearing Laura Marling in a mode we've never seen before, sounding completely happy throughout.

If you like Imogen Heap, you'll love *You'll Leave The City* by Ea Othilde

Launching a run of songs with great choruses that are somehow completely unformulaic, *City of Love* opens the EP with a huge messy cloud of guitar harmonics before snapping into focus like an elastic band. It's romantic, dreamy and slightly disorienting and *I Forgot You* carries that same quality of the unexpected with strange bar lengths and a consistently surprising harmonic language. *Room #21* has a line about being raised in anger that hits like

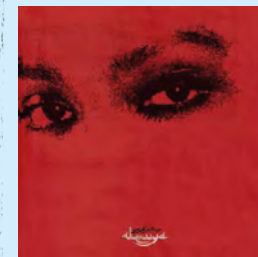


a train, and is then left to hang in the air over doubled vocals from a delay pedal that feel like thought bubbles of half-formed ideas. *Florence* is beautiful, intimate and contemplative, and *It Only Makes Me Bitter* closes the

EP with nimble drumming and a sunny richness to the instrumentation and the melodies.

If you like Grace Jones, you'll love *Zero* by Alewya

Zero is a record that's simultaneously pointing in every direction at once, and could only have come from London, not because it sounds like any specific scene, but because London is the only city in the world that's multicultural, connected and creatively restless enough to

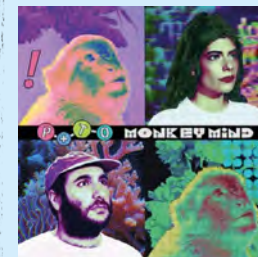


produce an album this eclectic that also feels coherent. Alewya is based in London and Ethiopian-Egyptian by heritage, and her debut album is a musical tapestry drawn from Middle Eastern modes, African instruments, Jamaican dancehall

tradition, trip-hop and classic R&B, all filtered through the subtle and moody club-textured underbelly of the city. This is some of the most organic and considered club music you will hear this year. You can nod your head and dance to the music on *Zero*, but it never quite explodes.

If you like Burt Bacharach, you'll love *Monkey Mind* by Pearl & The Oysters

The lyrics are about an overwhelming and draining world, but the music sounds like the most joyful morning of your life. *Sound Asleep* opens the record with thirty seconds of lone piano moving with such melodic intelligence that it feels like the opening of a musical, with



really high level compositional technique disguised as a brief introduction. *Wide Awake* then takes the same chord sequence and turns it into a fully orchestrated psychedelic pop song with unmistakably

French DNA, cheeky but sophisticated. *Monkey Mind* is a very technically accomplished record with high level composition, hiding behind sunshine and charm that's guaranteed to make you happier.



Jos

Rivers

Guest column from @kittycatcollective

Jos Rivers' *He's a Genius* first hit my socials in spring 2026 – a commentary on the different societal gender role expectations, delivered with acute observational humour. I was immediately hooked, and thrilled when I snagged a waitlist ticket to her sold-out headline show at Paper Dress Vintage, June 2026.

Before the show, I had the absolute pleasure of meeting the extended Cheadle-born family. The expression 'raised right' sprung to mind. They were all clearly so proud of Jos' achievements, and rightly so, but they also exuded real warmth and kindness, chatting with all the fans.

The set that night was phenomenal – Jos seemed so comfortable, with pitch on point and the audience belting her own songs back at her – which was also very much her experience at Boardmasters later this summer.

Jos, growing up in Cheadle and then moving to London to pursue music must be very different experiences. How have they shaped you and your songwriting?

I think growing in a small town like Cheadle was a proper grounding way to grow up. I think the community and the people around me definitely helped my confidence and they all believed in me from the off which is obviously very beneficial to a young aspiring little artist. Moving to London at 14 was obviously a very different experience.

I was introduced to all different types of people and situations that properly did shape what I wanna say in my music. I've definitely been shaped by some of the circumstances that I've seen since moving to London.

Your music has been connecting with a growing audience. But which artists do you connect with and have influenced you?

Definitely artists like Raye, Shirley Bassey, Tina Turner, Cilla Black, Lily Allen, Shensea, Cardi B; a big range of people from a lot of different backgrounds and a lot of different genres of music and I think that's why my music is so a bit of everything because I think it has a little bit of every genre in there that I've listened to growing up. My dad used to play me the Pogues when I was little which has definitely

influenced my style. I think it's really cool that everything I've listened to for all my life has been channelled through into what I make myself. It's like a big mixture of everything I've ever loved.

When you're creating new music, do you usually start with lyrics, melodies, or a specific emotion, or is it a simultaneous creation?

I love this question. It happens differently every single time really. I think most of the time I start with a melody and the rhythm and then I kind of fill the gaps in with the lyrics and then from starting in that process, I get a concept, but sometimes I come in and I'm like 'I really wanna write a song about this' and that's how it works. Most of the time though I'm just kind of free-styling and I just fill the gaps with what I'm thinking. I've also got a whole word bank on my notes app of things that I really want to put in a song – I hate being cliché so I just have loads of random words that've never been in a song before and I wanna just stick in somewhere.

Your music feels both vulnerable and empowering, often delivered with tongue-in-cheek humour. Was it difficult to be so open in your writing, or was it more of a cathartic experience?

I love this question as well, these are really good questions. I think it's never really been difficult for me to be open. I think I'm quite an open book. You can ask me any question and I'll tell you the exact answer without overthinking it but obviously when it's a song that's gonna be released and a song that me and my team are thinking of putting out, it's a kind of different feeling – cause it's like oh, people are actually gonna hear this shit. That's a little bit scary sometimes especially when it's about a specific person that definitely knows it's about them. I feel like my emotions come out in either anger or the humour for me so that's why my songs are quite polarising in ways. Very deep topics, just a different way of saying it.

What did you learn about yourself as an artist while creating and recording your EP?

To be honest I feel like I've learnt a lot about myself over the last year more than I ever have in my entire life and maybe that's not all down to me solely writing the EP. I think this last year

quite a lot of things have happened. I've had quite a few breakthroughs mentally and I think being so clear on my emotions and being so trusting with myself which I may have not been in the past.

Was there a particular song on the EP that challenged you the most, either creatively or emotionally, and why?

I think every song on the EP has its own special little story. I think the most difficult one for me on there is 0749 just because it's so fucking embarrassing and at the time when I was calling my ex so much I literally didn't tell any of my friends, I didn't tell any of my family, so telling Ella and Rhys who I wrote it with was devastatingly embarrassing for me, and I think creatively that was the most challenging.

How has your relationship with your fans influenced your growth as both a performer and a person?

With my fans I genuinely do believe wholeheartedly that I have reached such a beautiful little corner of the Internet. Some of

the DMs and comments I get on my songs literally make me cry. Genuinely the nicest people in my corner and I couldn't be more grateful for that. The people that show up to my gigs when I need them the most are obviously just little angels.

What do you hope listeners take away from your music?

Well firstly I hope some men take it in the most constructive way possible. Let's start there. But I really do want people to feel less guilty, less embarrassed. I want them to go away thinking 'oh so I'm not the only one', and I think by throwing a bit of humour in my songs it can maybe help someone to take it a little bit less seriously and just remember that we're all growing. It's all of our first times living and we are all doing the best we can with the information we have at the time. If I'm woman enough to admit it, anyone is woman enough to admit it. Even when you know you're being a silly twat calling someone you know isn't good for you.

This time next year...

Despite all the problems our live music scene faces there are still so many great smaller bands who deserve your attention. Here are three artists with a very bright future that we're really excited for...

Compiled and written by marco@inkblack.co.uk

Aerial Salad

Aerial Salad aren't super new. They've been around a while, but shit happens when you launch your band just before Covid. I first saw them supporting The Meffs a couple of years ago. They were great then and they are even better now. Aerial Salad are a band built on scrappy punky authenticity. The band self-identifies with the tongue-in-cheek genre tag "Madchester Punk.", citing heroes like Happy Mondays and Carter USM, but fusing that with contemporary punk royalty like High Vis. You get baggy basslines, snarling post-punk, terrace-chant choruses, and the odd genuinely tender musical flourish. Lyrically, the band often tackles capitalism mixing sardonic social commentary with oddball, personal, or straight-up silly subject matter. They've built their following the hard way cutting their teeth in the DIY punk touring scene, and they deserve your time.



The Shania Twainsaw Massacre

Back in 2024 we started hearing rumours coming out of Bristol of an interesting new band that just *felt* special. A band who could effortlessly mix shoegaze with hardcore. A band who could layer huge thundering riffs with the intricate understated surreal brutality of very early Pixies. A band who had the throw-away confidence to name themselves with a silly pun and simultaneously call their music 'horrible music for horrible people'. None of this seemed to make much sense at the time but then they released debut e.p. 'Denature' and those rumours all started to make absolute, brilliant sense. Fast forward to now and Bristol just can't contain the secret any more. With the recent release of their second e.p. 'Horsemaning' TSTM are ready now; ready to tear a hole in your musical heart. This is the moment. This is the right time to catch them before they explode.



Sunday Best

If you like the idea of an all-POC, emo/post-hardcore band with an ear for huge tunes and an exuberant live show then you need to check out Sunday Best. They have been paying their dues for a couple of years now, but they're surely poised for bigger crowds. Sunday Best are one major support slot away from breaking out of South London. The most obvious comparison is MCR but give them a London flavour and you're in the right ballpark. There is always plenty of energy for a frantic pit, but equally Alex Ekong's vocals also deliver those vast moody melodic singalong choruses that have made them extremely popular in the South London DIY scene. The guitars and drums are super tight and the groove basslines underpin hard hitting lyrics. The songs showcase confessional, community-oriented writing for marginalised people and groups, and observations on interior psychological struggle paired with open political statements.



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