

# **TRUST The DOC**



**Edition 114: 31st March 2026**

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## **THE HOTTEST NEWS FROM THE GRASSROOTS SCENE:**

- **STOP PRESSURISING ARTISTS TO BE TIKTOK CREATORS**
- **BARONESS HODGE REITERATES CALL FOR ACE REFORM**
- **GABRIELLE SEY: INTERVIEW BY DEL OWUSU**
- **MARK L BEAZLEY: INTERVIEW BY NEIL MARCH**
- **ALAN DREEZER HIGHLIGHTS BAD PRACTICES BY PRS**
- **REVIEWS OF OVER 50 NEW INDEPENDENT RELEASES**
- **IS AI DESTROYING OR PRESERVING MUSIC? (ASKS SHERRY)**
- **TIME TO STEP OFF THE TIKTOK TREADMILL (SAYS NEIL)**

## INTRODUCTION:

Spring is with us. The bees are buzzing and the winter coats have been put away for another time. March has seen plenty of new music coming at us, including new releases by some of our regulars who had been a little quiet over the winter months. Consequently, there are over 50 new releases reviewed in Part 2 of this edition.

We have been beavering away on various fronts; promoting and marketing our own music, preparing for the new *DocCast* on Trust The Doc TV, building our network with new collaborations and activities in mind and gearing up to get stuck into The Portsmouth Hub, our Arts Council funded project in partnership with Dom Elton and Mayfield Records.

Meanwhile, the noise around how we should all be spending hours being TikTok content creators has reached fever pitch, sparking a wider debate about the moral compass of people whose own 'content' consists of

making three minute videos of themselves talking who then pour pressure on artists, whose content can take weeks to produce at the requisite level, to be posting four times a day. See the article in Part 3 for a lengthy dive into this debate.

We have a guest article from Alan Dreezer, who highlights a serious issue with how PRS collect and distribute royalties plus Del Owusu's interview with Gabrielle Sey and ours with Mark L Beazley plus Sherry's look at the impact of AI in music.

As always, thanks for reading this and we hope it brings some joy into your lives or at least provides some useful information and cool new tracks to check out.

**NEIL MARCH & SHERRY SAHAYARAJ**

31st March 2026

[Instagram](#); [BlueSky](#); [Facebook](#); [Threads](#); [TikTok](#); [X Logos by PaulFCook](#)

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**STOP PRESSURISING ARTISTS TO BE TIKTOK CREATORS**

If one issue has repeatedly raised its head in discussions with grassroots artists and music students over the past month, it has been the pressure on artists to spend untold hours on TikTok posting content. It is abundantly clear that, while [particularly] young artists but not only young ones feel they have no choice but to yield to the

overwhelming advice of influencers and alleged industry insiders to post at a practically unfeasible and certainly unsustainable level of intensity, they are finding the process depressing, disheartening and a very real impediment to creativity. It is time to shout 'STOP !!!' **See Neil's article about this in Part 3.** We need to find a better way forward than this.



## HODGE REITERATES CALL FOR ACE REFORM !!!



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Baroness Margaret Hodge, author of November's report into Arts Council England, as analysed by Neil in Ed 111 of *Trust The Doc*, has repeated her call for the organisation to embrace change or 'face disaster'. In words that echoed our own, she talked about how the recipients of grant funding have lost faith in the organisation and see it as overly bureaucratic, stifling instead of enabling creativity and acting as a '... command-and-control' body rather than a leader and advocate for the arts.

Having seen, in recent weeks, the problems caused as ACE transitions back to using Grantium after the fresh air of their decoupled application process, there has been the sense of an organisation too stuck in its ways to be capable of change. The characteristically feeble and inappropriate reasoning behind their rejection of the latest applications from *Fresh On The Net Live* and *Action Grassroots* also suggests the panels are no more competent to be handling applications than they were prior to the publication of Hodge's report.

Baroness Hodge was addressing the DCMS Select Committee, whose members include the excellent Lewisham North MP Vicky Foxcroft, when she made her latest comments. Nick Serota, former head of Tate Galleries (and someone Neil dealt with in his previous life as a union official) has recently stepped down as CEO of Arts Council England and Hodge argued that his replacement must be a proactive manager of change with the vision to move forward and turn ACE into the cultural leader and advocate it should be. She also warned against the kind of unwarranted political interference indulged in by the last [Conservative] government that threatened ACE's independence and impartiality as an 'arms length' non-departmental public body (NDPB).

As reported in previous issues, Vicky Foxcroft kindly took Neil's article to the minister and asked for a response although, to date, none has been forthcoming. We stand by the contention that, for real and meaningful change to be achieved, the government has to increase the

funding and reverse the cuts their predecessors made in 2022. But they also need to implement all the other recommendations in the report too.

The ball is squarely in their court but with the caveat that the government needs to put its hand in its pocket to kick start that radical shake-up.

## [THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: NEW SINGLE OUT 24th MARCH



paradigm  
[the] music of sound

The new single by [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) will be released by **Monochrome Motif Records** on Friday 24th March. *Paradigm* is another comment on the current chaos in the world and how we relate

to it. As Sherin (Sherry) sings at one point: ‘Even though I long for harmony/We’re at war and love’s our military’. The single also continues developing the band’s evolving signature sounds of multi-tracked

harmonies, Sherin's pure voice and South Indian accent, Ellie's virtuosic flute playing and trademark slow vibrato and Neil's open harmonic piano style and rich arrangements.

[The] Music Of Sound will be working with ace video director Del Owusu on having a video ready for late March. In the meantime, watch this space.

## TRUST THE DOC RADIO: UPDATE



The [Trust The Doc Radio Show](#) goes out to a lovely, lively and engaged audience every Saturday at 5PM UK time and mixes the best current grassroots artists with the best established ones plus some fun features that get the audience involved and enable Neil to play some classics. The two hours always fly by.

If you aren't familiar with the show, come and check it out at 5PM UK Time

every Saturday on <https://exilefm> or catch the podcast recording of the show over the ensuing 7 days on <https://exilefm.com/podcasts/trust-the-doc-radio-47>. Also please like, follow and stream the [Trust The Doc New Music Playlist](#) on Spotify which we keep updating with tracks that are on our radio show playlist (if available to stream) [here](#).



## TRUST THE DOC NEW MUSIC PLAYLIST

One of the ways we can all support one another in highlighting grassroots music is by getting as many people as possible to follow and stream the [Trust The Doc New Music Playlist](#) on Spotify. We are continually adding tracks as artists we are aware of release new music and we obviously give priority to artists who are loyal members of the grassroots music community and are always supportive to fellow artists. But we also include tracks we like by established artists and the best current tracks we can find from independent music. It is another way

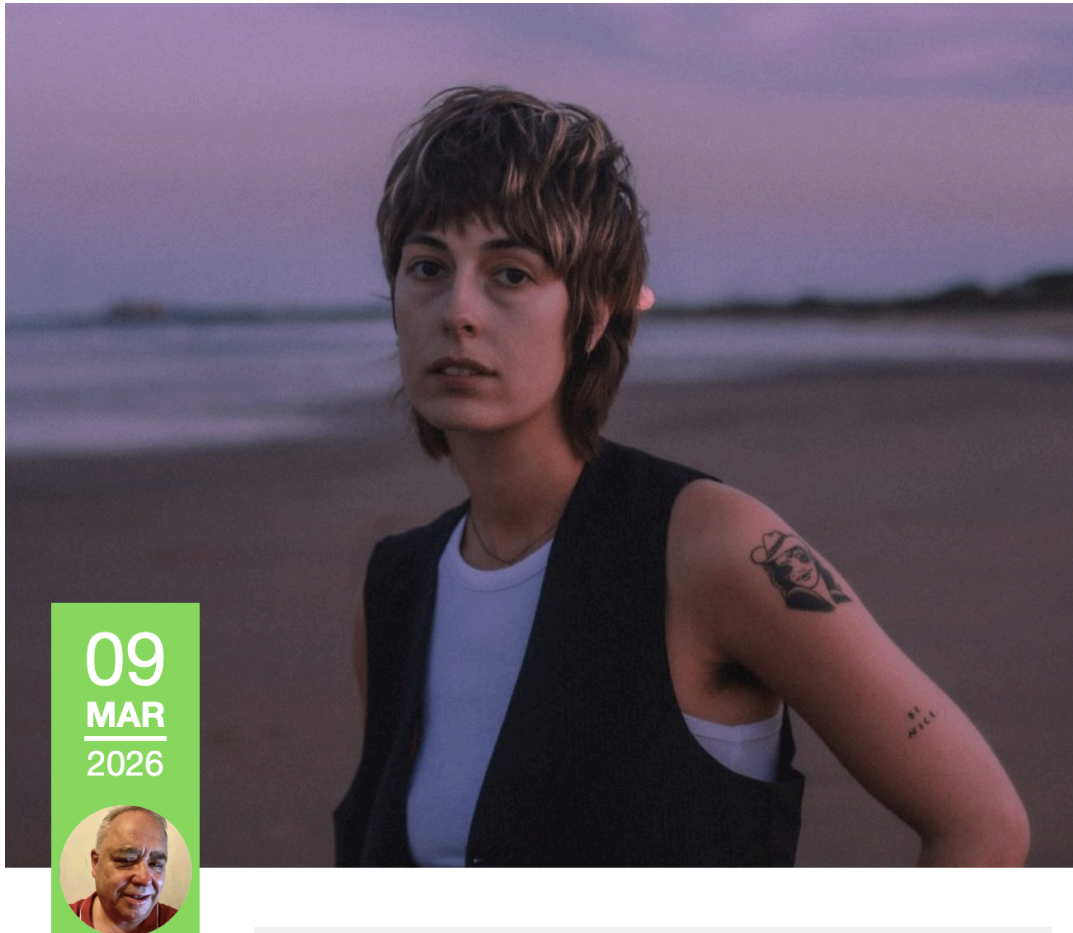
we can fly the flag for independent music without being at the mercy of TikTok, Instagram, the global recorded music giants, the BBC or any other elite groups that are contributing to the pressure and mental health epidemic among struggling musicians. Use the link in this feature to log on, save the playlist and encourage others to do the same. And you can listen from time to time and hear the latest collection of cool new music from across the widest possible spectrum of genres; usually around 50 - 60 tracks.

| # | Title                                   | Album                      | Date added  |      |
|---|---|----------------------------|-------------|------|
| 1 | Pop!<br>The Jojo Man Band               | Pop!                       | 3 weeks ago | 3:03 |
| 2 | Tyche<br>The Music Of Sound             | Tyche                      | 2 weeks ago | 3:45 |
| 3 | Other Side Of The Mir...<br>Serge Wenus | other side of the mirro... | 2 weeks ago | 5:06 |
| 4 | Liars Tale<br>KNEECAP                   | Liars Tale                 | 1 week ago  | 3:18 |
| 5 | 2SIDED<br>Arlo Parks                    | 2SIDED                     | 3 weeks ago | 2:57 |
| 6 | To Be Loved<br>Elli Glyn                | To Be Loved                | 3 weeks ago | 3:36 |
| 7 | Blue Chamber<br>Lunar Bird              | Blue Chamber               | 3 weeks ago | 2:47 |

## FRESH ON THE NET: REVIEWS BY NEIL & SHERRY

March saw both of us reviewing the Fresh On The Net *Faves* on separate occasions after having jointly reviewed them in February. 9th March saw **Neil** get to review a stellar ten tracks as voted for by our readers

including TTD favourites like Alexandra Leaving and Temple Of Shibboleth plus superb tracks by Kī; Korder Korda; Charlie Forrest and others. Read his words [here](#).



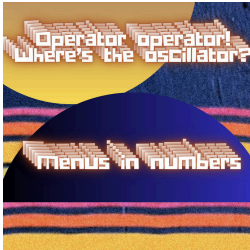
Then, on 23rd March, it was **Sherry's** turn to provide the reviews of another excellent ten tracks chosen by the readers including Trust The Doc favourites **Chinwe** and **Four-Legged Fruit**.

Read Sherry's expressive words [here](#).



## PART TWO: REVIEWS OF NEW MUSIC

### ALBUMS & EPs



Our good friend **John Davis** aka [Arpraxis](#) has never been one for following fashion or convention and the EP ***Operator Operator Where's The Oscillator?*** sees him wrapping up his several years old Arpraxis project as he morphs into his new identity as **Unhinged**. We should add though that there is an almost unfeasible number of other tracks all with March releases to pick from so best visit his Bandcamp page if you want to check them all out.

This EP gives us 5 tracks in which John achieves a wealth of ideas, sounds and stylistic shifts that incorporate House, Techno, Ambient and wider Electronica, often with a strong nod to the past while always keeping eyes and ears on the present and future too.

***Opened In Mode Classicus*** begins like a filmic classical synth strings

piece in almost Wendy Carlos territory before adding a touch of Morricone to the mix. ***Abstract Dub Living*** then brings a Reggae element into his dubby electronic style. ***Operator Operator*** is nuts, spacy sounds swirling around in a whirlpool of sound while the beat shifts in tone but not in tempo.

***Just As The 80s Ended - Remix*** has a more persistent beat with echoing drums, some slappy synth bass and a series of sounds that play off against the underlying bass riff. Again this is quite cinematic at times. ***Waves ... Oh The Waves*** ends things with a hypnotic Techno pattern and beat underpinning an intense, high tempo piece full of contrasting sounds and almost tribal in moments. It's an intriguing, inventive EP and a nice way to [partially] sign off on what has been a really enjoyable project to observe. (See also *Club Culture*)

## POP NOODLES



There is both power and dreaminess in Seattle-based artist [Ki](#)'s *Respair*. A mid-tempo groove, picking guitar and translucent synths allow space for her voice to bring a yearning expressiveness and lush harmonies to bear on a melancholy, nagging and catchy melody and hook. Beautifully produced too, really bringing out her expressive and distinctive voice.

One of the indisputable stars of *Fresh On The Net Live (Day 1)* and a regular in these pages, Londoner [Chinwe](#) kicks off her year with *Lately*. The unique electric harp playing singer-songwriter grabs our instant attention with some striking extended chords and semi-modal figures as the harp rides against crashing keys and a crunching beat. Chinwe's highly recognisable voice soon takes centre stage, swooping and circling around the mix with an almost teasing delivery. This is one of her best yet, a

monster of a track with big production, great instrumental interplay and a vocal that is simply goose-bumping.

I am particularly pleased to be able to review the new single by Brighton's London-based singer-songwriter [Maisie Bea](#). As well as being a talented teenage artist, Maisie is one of my super smart ICMP students and has a bright future as demonstrated by *End Of The World*. This slow-burning ballad begins relatively quiet and translucent but soon builds as Maisie's emotionally charged and agile, acrobatic vocals take centre stage over measured foundations and elements of rock and soul mixing with the epic pop sensibilities of the song and production to produce an emotional powerhouse of a track.

## ALT ROCK & INDIE



The ever-reliable London-based West Midlander [Alexandra Leaving](#) returns with ***I Was Wrong***. Alex blew the lid off The Lower Third at 2024's *Fresh On The Net Live* even playing a stripped down set and that same sense of drama, darkness and dynamic is evident here. This is a slow burner that begins relatively quiet and sparse, yet always carrying the threat that it will blow up and gradually it does as chunky guitars are reinforced, the harmonies fortify the expressive vocals in alto range and a big chorus emerges from the fray.

The Devon based band [Temple Of Shobboleth](#), led by the extraordinary **Billie Bottle**, no stranger to these pages, and her band of fellow top quality musicians return with ***White Elephant***. This is an intriguing and imaginative exploration of Prog, Rock, Folk. Classical and Jazz infusions with cool rhythmic configurations, goose-bumping chords, an unusual blend of timbres including some lovely sax improv. Add Billie's distinctive dexterous vocals, harmonised in part, including her mind-spinning modal multi-tracked a capella that follows a ceremonial

style intro.. The combination of effort to piece together contrasting sections and differing dynamics and textures within sophisticated composing and musicianship all adds up to a highly impressive track, as good as the finest classic Canterbury Prog-Folk but original enough to bring it right into the here and now. Outstanding.

It is a thing that every time it is my turn to write the fresh faves reviews for Fresh on the Net, there is always a track I can't believe I didn't spot at moderation and vote for in the first place. So it was with Brighton's [Korda Korder](#) and the song ***I Was Your Witness***. A rueful female vocal with an ethereal quality leads the line in this tragic tale of teenage love turned sour. The track builds from a quiet start into a mid-tempo melodic Alt Rock tune with driving instrumental backdrop and lyrics that pull no punches. Genuinely emotion shredding.

Derry's **Shannon Delores O'Neill** aka [Sister Ghost](#) follows *Not Your Toy* with the exuberant ***She's Wild***. Harnessing the joyous raw energy of early New Wave alongside nods to Grunge and a more contemporary Alt

Rock sound that has common ground with the likes of Dream Wife and Honeyblood, this oozes energy and effortless melodic flair while the guitars snarl and sizzle around Shannon's distinctive delivery. Another belter.

London's [Charlie Forrest](#) has a track out called *On The Wings Of A Dove*.



[Digsby](#) are a mixed male-female quintet from Bristol. There are several descriptions of their music available but based, admittedly, on hearing this one track, I like 'Americana Indie'. *Bugging Out* lives up to that Americana Indie tag. The sound is organic and wholesome with chunky guitar, contrasting bassline, driving drums and colourful keyboards. Singer Joe has an engaging voice that sounds, and I kid you not, a little like Roy Orbison in a mash with Graham Lyle although the style is timeless and the band's harmonies are big, rich and spacious. The chord pattern complements the melody perfectly and the responding keyboard figure is subtle but effective as are the bluesy and jangling guitars.

It has been some time since we had a new track from **Rob Howsam** aka [Six](#)

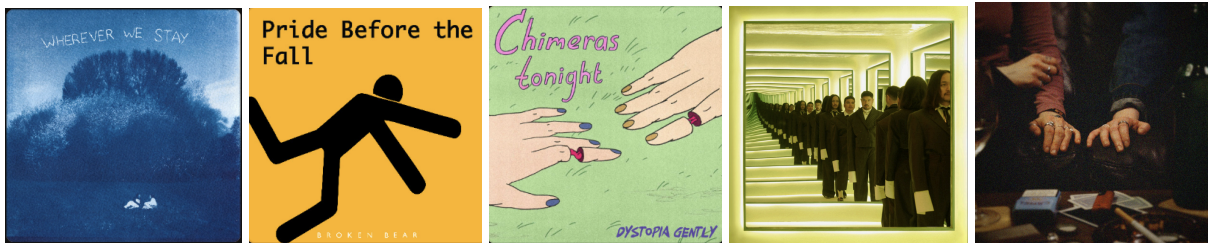
Built around strummed shimmering acoustic guitar, instrumental colour and otherworldly harmonies, this nods to Pink Floyd's *Breathe* in the verses but it also reminds me of Neil Young, both in terms of Charlie's quite extraordinary and [genuinely] haunting voice and the way the track develops. This is goose-bumping.

[Four Zero Two](#). So it was good to receive *Ten Dollars*. This starts with slow dreamy chords before a deep voice hook comes in on a monotone and then the beat picks up under wonky chords, octave-apart vocals and an agreeably lo-fi slice of alternative pop.

From Vancouver, Canada come [In The Afterglow](#), brainchild of **Alfred Hermida**, with *Don't Stand Out*. On here, Alfred deploys a female vocalist whose strong, breathy and dreamy qualities are perfect for the driving, mainly two-chord, shoegaze piece that has been created around her with big resonating guitars prominent throughout. The dynamic contrasts are particularly effective in holding our interest throughout.

Manchester's indie legends [Inca Babies](#) have been delighting listeners

to Trust The Doc Radio lately and especially so with **Daniella**. This is a dauntingly dark dub-dominated slice of edgy Post-Punk and related flavours with dramatic (though not excessively so) male vocals, walking bass, striking tremolo guitars, clever and echoing drums and superb instrumental chemistry that shows they have lost none of their inventiveness and spirit of exploration and adventure. The production is top-notch too.



Well it's been a while since we had new material from the inimitable **Four Legged Fruit** aka **Rosa** and **Elise** from Bath in the English Western Counties so it is good to welcome them back with **Whatever We Say**. This doesn't have the laconic or macabre sensibilities of their earlier material but it does have dreamy, slightly modal sounding piano fantasia accompanying their vocals, reminding us once again of their ability to infuse good alt pop songwriting with highly imaginative and classical-influenced harmonic language. These two besties always delight with their creativity and refreshing disregard for what anyone else is doing. Let's hope 2026 brings them some well-deserved success.

Our favourite UK-based Aussie exiles **Ash** and **Paul** aka **Fendahlene** kick off their 2026 itinerary with **Looking For A Break**. This is, in essence, classic Fendahlene. Driving, energetic guitar with suspended and extended chords adding spice while the bass is busy and buoyant. The vocals are passionate and the style is like a kind of Indie Americana, organic and tuneful, punchily played and produced and highly enjoyable.

Epsom's finest, aka **Laura** and **Paul**, are TTD regulars **Broken Bear**. They return with the slowish triplet time of **Pride Before The Fall**. As ever, we get inventive fuzztone guitar and chunky rhythmic drumming and bassline while Laura's distinctive vocals cut through the mix, delivering a cool melody and clever lyric.

If invention is your thing, you should love the shoegazey Alt Rock of **Dystopia Gently** on the track **Chimeras Tonight (Too Mercury)**. A sea of reverberant guitars and general wall-of-sound exuberance dances rhythmically around Katherine Christie Evans's agile vocals and cinematic arrangement. There is even a folky element (imagine if Been Stellar had travelled

back in time to Canterbury in the early seventies!). There are great harmonies and so many ideas that appear and disappear. The final surprise is, when the track seems to have ended at around 3:14, it rises back up from scratched record fuzz through foldback guitar and growing volume for a dreamy finale. Fantastic.

From Jakarta, Indonesia come [Elephant Kind](#) with *More Time*. This is an intriguing combination of sounds. On the one hand, they use guitar, bass and drums as their bedrock but there are staccato keys, bendy synths and what sounds like a short descending glissando figure on maybe a saxophone. The vocals are in tenor range and are distinctive and dexterous while the melody, built

around essentially a I - V - IVflat - IV riff that incorporates the fluid sound choices, is catchy and strong. The way it develops in the latter stages holds our interest too.

It is always good news to have a new single from South London's [Slaney Bay](#). *That's Cool* finds them in more shoegazey territory, at least in the reverberant shimmer of the chorus while the verses, with picked guitar and understated vocals are a contrast. This has the wall-of-sound production and driving feel that puts it in broadly similar territory to the likes of Been Stellar, Ride and NewDad. Caitlin's distinctive voice rides atop this rich undercurrent to mark out a memorable and slightly dreamy melody.

## BEATS, RHYTHMS & RHYMES



**Bribam Babam BaBey** is the Tanzanian producer and artist [Kabuh Worldwide](#) and, according to his Spotify profile, he is behind a number of African music hits. Now he brings *Wowowo*, a lilting syncopated slice of sophisticated and melodic Afrobeat in which his sweet soulful vocals play off against the fluid chord changes and picked notes in an agreeable fashion

that brings the sunshine as we emerge from the British Winter.

South East London rap king [Raiza](#) returns with *Wide Awake*. This is a characteristically dark, daunting and measured delivery of a haunting observationist lyric in his distinctive voice with a mid-tempo beat and slowly swirling instrumental backdrop.

Always good to hear. Also check out the more laid back but thoughtful **Fame**.

Manchester's **J Chambers** is a regular in these pages and he is at it again with **Repatriation Charge**. Here he mixes his rapid fire vocal delivery and biting commentary on the racism we feel swamped by at times with a lovely female vocal sample put through some kind of filter and a clever hybrid of Reggae, Hip Hop and Afrobeat that is punchy but light-textured and thoroughly contemporary. J Chambers is a serious talent and we hope 2026 will be a big year for him.

From Newham in East London comes **Guero** with **Festive Scam**. But this is not so much a swipe at the commercialisation of festive season(s) but more a general message to anyone who has proved to be fickle, dishonest, two-faced or just too cynical for their own good. Guero tells it like it is, accompanied by a sparse post-grime backdrop of crisp beat, translucent synths and sounds and plenty of space for his distinctive vocal delivery to take precedence. This is attractively edgy and well worth hearing.

## SOULFUL SENSIBILITIES



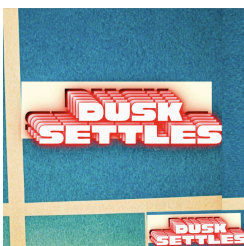
Londoners **Mamas Gun** are joined by featured artist **Brian Jackson** on **DIG!** This is smooth sophisticated Soul-Funk that, on the one hand, owes a great deal to retro influences (i.e. Earth Wind & Fire, Average White Band etc.) but also chimes with current artists like Thundercat and Poppy Ajudha. The chords are rich and made all the more so by the instrumental talents of the band while the vocals are appealing and agile. Great hook too so plenty to 'dig' here and a band to watch for the future.

It is very special to have a new single by the super talented East Londoner **Kevin East**. It was Neil who wrote and co-wrote and MD'd Kevin's highly acclaimed debut album back in 2003 and they played together for several years. Neil also released a single by Kevin in 2016 and now they are talking about collaborating again. In the meantime, Kevin has recorded this stunning tribute to his son Maxwell who tragically died so young, Produced by Jules Chown (who also

produced that 2003 debut), this is classy sophisticated Soul with a subtly funky groove and jazz-tinged keyboard chords. The picking guitar is really effective as are the superb bass and beat while the sax features prominently and adds to the quality. But the star of the show is Kev himself with that instantly recognisable high tenor voice, so sweet and soulful, pouring his heart into this beautiful song but never in an over-sentimental way, thus adding to the emotional power of the track. Just stunning.

Young Londoner [Fibi Ngozi](#) has gone for a retro slow triplet time Soul style with ***Give It A Go (Original)*** produced by **Sam Calisto**. Her beckoning, alluring voice and soulful plea to give love another try gets straight to our emotions and her delivery is agile and free-flowing like a young Deniece Williams in a mash with Kele Le Roc while Coco Jones brings flavours. Add a sophisticated and polished instrumental back-up and sweet harmonies and this ticks all the boxes.

## CLUB CULTURE



In addition to reviewing an EP by our good friend **John Davis** aka [Arpraxis](#)

There's precious little info on her Soundcloud page but [Sarife](#) brings a cool surprise with ***Come Closer***, teaming up with **Joél David** whose matter-of-fact rap provides the perfect foil for Sarife's soulful vocals. This starts like a classy Old Skool Soul vibe but soon takes a turn when Joél takes centre stage. After this, Sarife's style also changes and becomes more intense and acrobatic as the track builds to a climax. This is smart, a little sassy and has real impact.

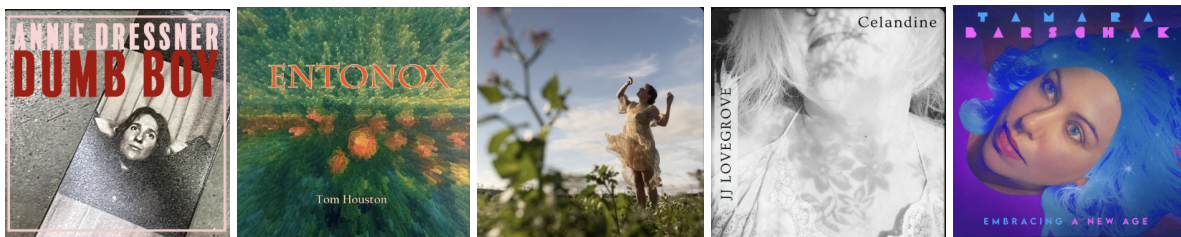
There seems to be a bit of a theme emerging here with more sophisticated jazz-tinged Old Skool Soul vibes, this time from [Shane Sato & Box Dreams](#) and ***Deep Dive***. Extended chords, dreamy textures and a wild synth solo all add to the aura while the vocals are silky and effortlessly melodic, mainly floating around two chords but kept aloft by the nuances that make this track so compelling.

at the start of Part 2, there are a host of singles with March release dates

too, one of which is ***Dusk Settles***. This has a driving electronic beat and a host of sounds and ideas that bring retro elements including classic synths and what sound like bendy lead guitar riffs, open fifths that have an Eastern quality and breakz where

you least expect them. John has been on a mission to finish the Arpraxis project before focusing on Unhinged and this is just one in the latest series. You can find them all at his [Bandcamp](#) page.

## SINGER-SONGWriters



Popular Cambridge-based American singer-songwriter [Annie Dressner](#) never fails to deliver the goods and so it is with ***Dumb Boy***. This is more in Alt Rock territory compared to some of her folkier material. The chord sequence of VII - IV - I that repeats throughout has a classic feel that maybe looks back to early nineties pre-Grunge US Indie and the fuzzy guitar sound is a treat. But mostly it's Annie's distinctive vocals, full of character, slightly sardonic as she repeats 'You're just a dumb boy in a band' while musing on what she loves about this dumb boy but also what she is not so crazy about. The hook will grab you and the harmonies seal the deal.

Tillicoultry's finest, [Tom Houston](#) continues his very welcome return to activity with ***Entonox***. This develops

in a mid-tempo groove, Tom's highly recognisable voice and strumming acoustic at the heart of a mix that is increasingly populated with organic sounds, airy keyboards, spy movie guitars etc. It is classic Tom story-telling to an engaging song and top-notch arrangement.

Scottish singer-songwriter [Emma Miller](#) brings a track called ***Breathe***. This is an intriguing hybrid of slow triplet time a la Lorraine Ellison with an earthy indie-folk vibe. The instrumental mix is organic and understated while the vocals are laid back and yet have a gripping intensity, helped by a clever hook. Really well performed and produced.

On the subject of 'gripping intensity', Nottingham's [JJ Lovegrove](#) offers us plenty of that on ***Celandine***. Judi's

powerful and expressive voice soars, swoops and simmers above ambient long tones and extended piano chords in an unusual and striking piece that never lets up for an instant.

TTD regular and friend [Tamara Barschak](#) returns with ***Embracing A New Age***. This is a slower song and builds from rich, extended piano chords, wrapping themselves around Tamara's scorching soulful alto voice while jazz-infused double bass and fluid drums provide the foundations and some tasty Larry Carlton/Lee

Ritenour-esque lead guitar and goose-bumping sax take the track off into new waters. It is a beautifully crafted song that sits somewhere between classic singer-songwriter fare and the song-based end of the Jazzrock spectrum (Carly Simon jamming with Rikki Lee Jones while Norah Jones adds chops or something vaguely like that anyway!). Add to this the sheer polish and professionalism of Tamara and her musicians and this is pure class from start to end.



Aylesbury was the music mecca when I (Neil) was a youngster growing up in Hemel Hempstead. It was home to Friars, the best venue in the area by a distance, and had cool record shops that sold Reggae and Post-Punk music. It has changed a bit in recent decades but it is still home to a thriving creative community and from there comes singer-songwriter [Joe Hicks](#) with ***The Architect***. This has so many flavours with shuffling Folkrock rhythms, jangly indie guitar, epic pop ambitions and great harmonies. The melody is catchy but also unusual and striking and the instrumental arrangement is nuanced and dynamic. Great [alternative] pop in essence.

The always versatile and unpredictable [Terry Naylor](#) from St Helens in Merseyside brings us ***Holy War***. No, this is not a comment on events in the middle east (or anywhere else in the world for that matter) but a rueful tale of past love. Terry's expressive vocal is set against an appealing chord progression that is eventually adorned with cinematic strings and a tasty bit of lead guitar work. Dynamic, dark and delightful.

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne's [Simon Taylor](#) returns with ***Stay Away From Me*** which, like his last single, has his brother Paul on keyboards. Built around a picking guitar figure and organic instrumentation, Simon delivers a rueful breakup lyric in a

semi-conversational but melodic style with some rich textures to boot.

Australian singer-songwriter, poet and environmental scientist [Shannon Jade](#) has a song called **Jack & Rose** which is inspired by the Titanic story. She keeps it simple with a repeating

on-beat piano chord sequence of I - IV - V - I while running water and windy breeze provide a comforting ambience. Shannon's voice is in soprano range and the melody is engaging and alluring, complementing a thoughtful lyric.

## SYNTHEMATIC



It has been a while since we had new music from the talented performer and multi-instrumentalist **Francesca Lewis** aka [Sansha](#), star of several of our own live events and the 2024 London leg of *Fresh On The Net Live*. Now we have **Mr Dinosad**. This finds Francesca in her poppier synth-driven spectrum with a lot of upper register vocals and backing vocals popping and leaping around the mix while the chords are extended and sweet. There is an alternative universe somewhere where this is top of the charts. Or there ought to be.

Finland's [Jonsjoel](#) was another pleasant surprise in this month's Fresh on the Net inbox. **One Of Half** mixes Vangelis-like synth melodies with rich piano chords in triplet time and Jonsjoel's beautiful, ghostly vocals delivering a soft dreamy and subtly melancholy tune. This is

haunting, ethereal and goose-bumpingly emotion-shredding.

From Leeds, Warrington and Scarfolk come [Things That Go](#) with **Past The Trees**. The rapid staccato synths and electronic undercurrents just about place this in synthemantic territory but it is also a great slice of uplifting Indie Pop. Vocally, it reminds me a little of Marc Almond in a mash with Julian Cope but the style is a mix of the contemporary with nods to early eighties Synthpop and Indie. The arrangement is buoyant, bubbling and brisk while the melody is lovely and the interplay between the musicians underlines their chemistry. And it has an epic quality that is very appealing too.

The new single by Brighton's [Ochre](#) is **Way Out**. Although it also has prominent spread chords on the

guitar, this is a synth-dominated track in a quick tempo with Ochre's voice multi-tracked and developing in intensity as she adds timbres and textures to a clever, fluid instrumental arrangement. The melody is original and distinctive and she cooks up a feast of inventiveness in this punchy and highly satisfying track.

Our favourite Finnish-German Synthpop duo of **Kay** and **Sami** aka **Platronic** return with **Fortress Of Fools**. Kay's spoken word is expressive while the lyrics clearly

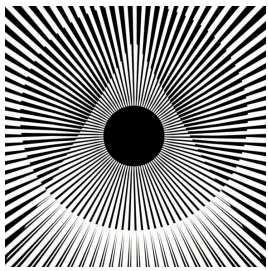


**Oui Plastique** have kept up the New Romantic penchant for European sounding band names (Duran Duran, Classix Nouveaux, Depeche Mode etc.) and they have a track called **Revival**. This is reverberant and richly produced Synthpop with epic melody that reminds me a little of Marc Almond in a jam with Talk Talk while Future Islands bring flavours. Engaging, enjoyable stuff.

reference Trump and maybe other fascist demagogues, lamenting the unquestioning support they get from their followers. Her singing lifts a catchy chorus while Sami provides trademark layers of diatonic synth harmony with an unmistakably European aura plus pounding four-to-the-floor beat, winding the waves of sounds around Kay's distinctive, dexterous voice. As ever, they do this with style and a yearning intensity that is very appealing. Definite Pet Shop Boys vibe here too which is no bad thing.

The new single by Croydon's **Bugeye** brings big chunky Synth Bass and persistent beat with loud melodic synths and passionate alto range vocals. Add crashing chords and some great contrasts, including the faster final section, and this is a killa track.

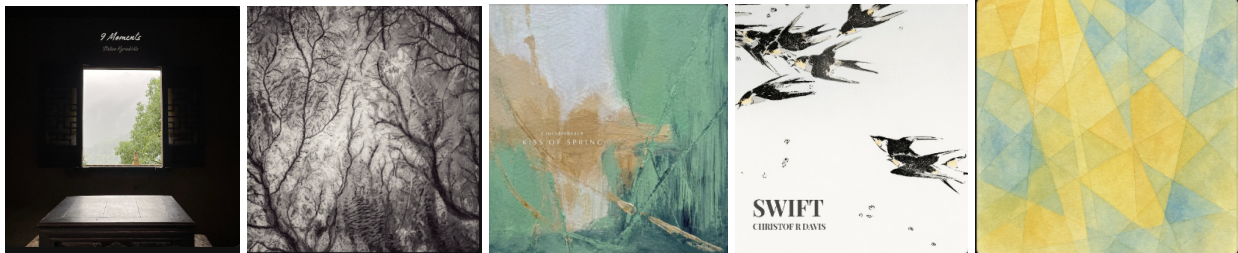
## ELECTRONIC & AMBIENT



Our good friend **David Little** aka [Lines Of Silence](#) returns with another Dimple Discs-released EP called ***Radiate*** from which comes the track ***Transcendental Radiation***. This is in triplet time with a repeating four-note figure surrounded by floating

ethereal synth chords put through some sort of filter while other sounds drift around the main themes and a persistent, light-textured beat plays throughout. Evocative, futuristic and spacy, this is quite lovely.

## CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL AND SOUND ART



London-based Greek guitarist and composer [Stelios Kyriakidis](#) returns with ***Stars Shine Brightest At Night***. It is listed on Soundcloud as Folk & Singer-Songwriter but, for me, this is a thoughtful, harmonically inventive and tuneful piece of expertly played classical guitar with a soft tinge of Mediterranean traditional fare about it. His virtuosic skills and imaginative composing combine to make this a breath of fresh air.

London's [Yew Tree](#) brings us ***Snow Wolf***. This is, in essence, an arpeggio-based piano fantasia with quiet synth ambience behind it,

adding to the wintery atmosphere. It keeps to conventional diatonic harmony but has a delicate sweetness that is pleasant to the ear.

Macclesfield's **Adrian Webster** is [CrusaderBeach](#), self-taught pianist and composer who is a regular in these pages. ***Kiss Of Spring***, despite its optimistic sounding title, has a rueful quality, based around a colourful chord progression that is neo-romantic in style and performed with a delicate expressiveness that is touching.

The always dependable [Christof R](#)

[Davis](#) seems to be in this section nearly every month and so it is the case again thanks to **Swift**. A beautiful blend of bell-like upper register piano in fluid exploration and rich deep synth chords create an aura of raindrop-like impressionism that is harmonically inventive and uses a subtle drone. Lovingly crafted.

Northern English composer [Matt Mereport](#) is another regular in these pages and he signs off the longish English Winter with **Winter Leaves**, a solo piano piece that is, at times, pretty and harmonically imaginative, at other times has an aching sense of melancholy and, in the middle, is powerful, dynamic and loud. All these moods are punctuated by a deftness

of touch and sense of how to use little extensions and suspensions to make chords more fluid and interesting while retaining the semi-arpeggio pattern that underpins this engaging, enjoyable track.

Solo piano works seem to be the dominant feature of this section in this edition. So along comes Latvian pianist and composer [Eduard Sozolins](#) (therefore a compatriot of our good friend Ieva Dubova). On **Spring**, his style is busy and comes in waves of arpeggio-style figures as he moves around the piano registers, keeping within largely diatonic language but with enough fluidity and invention to pull it off.

## JAZZ & INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS



The link will take you to something called **Property Of The Lost** but the track we are interested in is the artist [King Zepha](#) and the song **Prez**. This is almost peculiarly old school Ska and Rocksteady but with a Latin Jazz element, the track clearly paying homage to Cuban legend Perez Prado but also referencing Louis Bega's vocalisation of Prado's *Mambo No 5*. It possesses an edginess that is hard

to put your finger on. And the musicianship is quality of course. King Zepha, incidentally, is a singer, multi-instrumentalist and composer from Leeds and he has a kicking live band who are touring extensively from April to August.

The enigmatic [HyperSync](#) has a new track called **Assurance** which combines his self-professed love of

Joe Sample (The Crusaders) with a hint of Bill Sharpe (Shakatak) in what is a quite funky, danceable slice of instrumental jazz dominated by some tasty piano play. It ends quite

suddenly, making it short and sweet but, if the idea is to leave us wanting more, it certainly achieves its aim. A little gem for sure.

## FOLK & COUNTRY FARE



Even by [Agent Starling](#)'s standards, **Boom Bay** is a lively affair. Lou's vocals are dexterous and upper register with a lovely effect on them. Quentin's Hurdy Gurdy is in-yer-face unique and brilliantly played, the perfect foil for Dexter's mercurial violin acrobatics and Lou's chunky guitars. The whole thing is original, agitated, inventive and invigorating. Like a tart tasty fizzy drink on a hot day. This will give you energy. Also check out the intense and driving

energy of **Meet Me At The Souk**.

Norwich-based Londoner and former FOTN mod [Marina Florance](#) returns with **Broadway Cafe**. This is a slow track that mixes her highly recognisable spoken word style with some soft, soulful singing in a folky melancholic track that comes from Marina's penchant for story telling and bringing to life places and times that have importance in people's lives. This is touching and fresh.

## PART THREE: OTHER COMMENTARIES

### GABRIELLE SEY: INTERVIEW BY DEL OWUSU



Regular readers will probably be aware that South London singer-songwriter **Gabrielle Sey** is deemed to be Trust The Doc royalty. As well as having performed at several gigs and one festival put on by Neil and Sherry, Gabrielle has been a favourite of Fresh on the Net readers for some time and was recently taken on tour by none other than music legend and FOTN founder

**Hello Gabrielle, how are you?**

Hello hello! I'm doing well, thank you.

Tom Robinson. **Del Owusu**, who leads Fresh on the Net as well as being a musician and broadcaster (and often a contributor to Trust The Doc too), caught up with Gabrielle over tea and biscuits. Here is the interview which also appeared in Fresh on the Net on 26th March.

**Congratulations on the release of "Colourblind" , how does it feel?**

It feels absolutely amazing to have finally released Colourblind.

It's my first single in 4 years so it feels great to be sharing new music.

### **What's the story behind the song?**

years back during Covid with a wonderful group of female musicians/producers. We would challenge ourselves to write a song a week, then would listen to everyone's songs and give each other feedback

Colourblind was written during this time. During this particular week I was having a turbulent time. My emotions were everywhere and I'd also left trying to submit a song down to the last minute. In desperation, I decided to hit record and improvise to see what would come out and this song came out.

For me the song is an honest monologue of my life at the time. I hope it allows others to accept their emotions and feelings without judgement.

### **You're an artist originally from Ghana living in London. How did it all begin for you?**

My heritage is from Ghana but I was born and raised in Croydon, South London. I spent my early years singing at church. I've always been fascinated with songwriting and performing from a young age which

The song was initially a submission for a song game challenge that I took part in a couple of led me to performing arts school where I studied musical theatre. I then went on to study music at Uni. I would say that is where my musical sound birthed.

### **What did you listen to growing up?**

I'm definitely what you would call a 00s radio baby. I would listen to a lot of Pop, Soul and R&B. I also grew up listening to a lot of Gospel and worship music.

I grew up with Ghana Hiplife and highlife being played in the house as well as 70s & 80s soul and disco. A lot of Barry White and Lionel Richie to name a few. As I grew my tastes changed and I developed I fell in love with Jeff Buckley, Nina Simone, John Mayer, Jon Bellion, Tune-Yards, Angelique Kidjo, Pearl Jam, Emily King, Janelle Monae, Moses Sumney, Laura Mvula. So there's quite an eclectic range there.

### **You finally finished your UK tour with Tom Robinson, how was it?**

The tour was incredible. I feel so blessed to join Tom and Adam Phillips on tour. They are amazing people and fantastic musicians.

**Have you picked up any tips from him?**

To keep your set list fresh and current. You can always keep working and developing your show, especially to make it meaningful to the audience that you are playing to that night. I've also loved how Tom has so many stories and is able to communicate it with his audiences. He always gives room to build a connection with those in the audience.

**Tell us a funny story from the road?**

Not a funny story but a cool moment. We stopped off at the first service station and as I'm walking into the toilet I saw Joan Armatrading walking out. I ran back to the van and told Tom because it was such a random sighting of a great British legend. He laughed and said he's friends with her which is awesome!

**You have graced many impressive stages, what's been a pinch me moment for you?**

I would say this tour. Playing at Tedx Brighton and Soho.

**You have a deep love for songwriting, do you have a routine?**

I try to journal and try to do as much free writing as possible. It's not very scheduled, I just make sure to invest a lot of time into it as this tends to be my foundation when writing songs. I also schedule writing sessions with bandmate and collaborator Rubén Vázquez Amos.

**What are you listening to at the moment?**

I've been exploring the 60s again. Been listening specifically to the album The Dock of the Bay by Otis Redding. My favourite song on the album is Open the Door. I also have been enjoying Madison Cunningham's new album ACE and Moses Sumney's Sophcore EP.

**What are you looking forward to doing next?**

I'm looking forward to putting out more music!

## **TIME TO STEP OFF THE TIKTOK TREADMILL !!!**

### **Neil asks whether it is time to challenge the narrative**

It is the current curse of the marketing culture among aspiring music artists. Everywhere we look, on TikTok timelines, Instagram videos, YouTube, Music Business Forums etc, we are bombarded by self-elected 'experts' telling us the only way to have a career in music is by posting up to four videos a day on TikTok with engaging content.

Given that TikTok is an audio-visual platform, that means every piece of content has to have both appealing video content and suitable sound (typically either the artist's own music or some kind of *trending* track). 'Hooks' are also considered to be a key means of going viral! Just think about how much work that entails on a daily basis for the artist.

The noise can seem deafening at times and the message is frequently brutal. Follow the advice or forget about ever having a successful career in music. Never mind that this is pouring enormous pressure on often impressionable individuals to push themselves day after day to produce sufficient content, however unrealistic and ultimately unsustainable that may be.

The issue came to a head for me when I was discussing it with a group

of teenage BA Music Marketing students. They were feeling exhausted and disillusioned from the amount of time they felt obliged to spend on social media, making content for engagement when they would far rather be creating music. Earlier the same day, I had been talking with two ICMP colleagues who are hard working musicians, one a singer-songwriter, the other a session musician. Even they were talking about the absurd amount of time they spend making videos for social media instead of putting that time into honing their skills or creating music.

The point that particularly resonated with me, when talking to the young students, was that they no longer see any pleasure in social media. It has become a necessary evil; a place they are forced to spend time in but not a place they visit for their own entertainment or enjoyment. This is supposed to be the generation most likely to want to engage with social media and spend time in that environment. Yet they don't go on social media for fun anymore; just to work at building a fanbase. They feel burnt out by the experience. And this is at age 18 or 19!

I did take the opportunity to flag the idea with them that maybe it would be worth finding someone who is happy to handle their social media and treat them as a band member (or creative partner) just as, in pre-digital times, artists would have had to have found, say, a drummer in order to perform their music live and make professional recordings. While none of them were opposed to the idea, they still resented the feeling of being trapped on a TikTok treadmill. They also made the point that the more people who follow this approach, the less effective it will be for most of them anyway.

What is certainly true, and a further justification for the resentment these young artists are feeling, is that those who hammer home this message daily on social media about the need for such an intense level of content creation are not musicians. Perhaps they can spend that time being on social media because it fits their own business models and the only content they have to create is a video of themselves talking this trash. But, in order to have sufficient content to meet such a high level of commitment, artists need to have time to create new music. They can't do that AND be on TikTok all day! There is something distasteful and arguably hypocritical about people who are not creative artists putting pressure on those who are to be

shunning their creativity in order to slavishly follow trends like these.

Yesterday, I went onto my TikTok timeline. In the space of about 20 minutes, I sat through about 5 videos posted by self-elected experts all hammering home this same message. The narrative never changes. And it comes with the implied threat that, if you don't do as they suggest, you are destined to fail. No doubt they believe they are giving out good advice. But they are certainly not thinking about the potential consequences of pushing ambitious, committed artists to burn themselves out, chasing an unattainable goal of creating 4 distinct pieces of engaging content every day. We have to shout 'STOP !!!' and take a collective step back.

If you are in a band, this is potentially an even bigger problem because you can't just knock out a video of yourself playing a new song on an acoustic guitar. You need the entire band to be together, playing and recording tracks for content. Where the influencer may have needed a few minutes to record yet another video telling us we must post 4 times a day, the band will need weeks to be able to produce content. That is why people who don't understand the creative process should not be giving out advice on frequency of content creation.

Firstly, there is no firm evidence that a viral video on TikTok is *guaranteed* to translate into meaningful record sales or streams. I do accept that there is evidence of a direct correlation between viral tracks and chart success in the USA, UK and Europe. I get that it can also help you build a bigger following which indirectly may become a fanbase willing to spend money. Yet there is also survey evidence suggesting people who like a track and contribute to it going viral may not show any interest in the artist's subsequent releases. So it is not really fanbase building in the real sense.

Even if it can help you build support, so too can gigging as far and wide as possible in suitable venues and with suitable fellow artists. So too can building an engaged community around your activities on other social media platforms. So too can gaining sufficient traction through supporting better known artists, playing some festival stages and getting endorsed by BBC Introduction, hopefully helping build the case for rotation on key radio stations. (See my article in Ed 113 about getting onto the media's radar).

Another negative bi-product of the TikTok treadmill is that it encourages artists to copy what others are doing in a rush to look and sound commercial and relevant. But, in reality, the way to stand out from the

crowd is by having your own distinctive sound and style, not by copying what others are already doing.

This brings me to another important point. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. The TikTok Treadmill might be effective if you are a mainstream Pop artist. But that does not mean it automatically translates for other, less mainstream genres where fans may take their interaction with music more seriously and are unlikely to be impressed by trending themes. In fact, if anything, they are more likely to take offence at content that they may view as trivial or vacuous.

We also need to encourage artists not to be blinded by shallow notions of superstardom. Pop historians, myself included, are very aware that it is generally not the overnight sensation hitmakers who go on to have long, sustained success in music. Better to be outside the pop mainstream and have a loyal, consistent following that builds gradually and continues for the long term. That is how bands and artists like U2, Prince, REM, Radiohead and more recently Fontaines D.C, Arlo Parks and Little Simz started out.

Even the received wisdom about building a fanbase through extensive live performance needs to be more nuanced. In particular, it can lead some artists to make a fundamental

but common error. Namely playing far too many gigs in the same locations. When big established artists are limiting themselves to playing any venues across the whole of London, a City with a population of around 9 million, no more than twice in any calendar year, why would a struggling grassroots band or artist think it is a good idea to play within the same three square miles radius every week?! Then they are just relying on their same friends coming to see them regularly which is unfair on the friends (after all, I wouldn't even go to see my favourite band more than twice in a year) and does not actually constitute building a fanbase.

A much better idea would be to play selected gigs a few times in any one geographical area and look for opportunities to go and play further afield where there are potential new followers to win over. If an artist is impressive enough, they will win audiences over wherever they play. But, even so, the hard slog of gigging around the UK is not the only game in town. We talk about TikTok, Instagram and YouTube being such important platforms for engagement [which they are] but maybe we need to look at the wider picture where digital options are concerned.

Live streaming offers a means by which audiences can join an event from anywhere in the world. Creating new forms of content for a YouTube

channel offers a means by which the artists can control how they present themselves and provide a focus for their activities through programme making, scheduling and marketing their work.

We also need to remind artists that there are other platforms. Since Twitter became X, its reputation within grassroots music circles has taken a well-deserved battering thanks to Elon Musk's far right politics and the reflection of his perspective through the constant and unfiltered accommodating of the most toxic, offensive, deliberately misleading and, in some cases, bullying content.

Yet if, like me, you avoid getting into futile arguments with far right morons and focus on talking about music, you can avoid that netherworld for the most part and X still offers the most efficient way to build or join communities and participate in message threads where everyone in the thread can see everyone else's posts. BlueSky is trying to provide a similar community-oriented presence that resembles the old Twitter but it is still a long way from achieving the same degree of efficiency. My advice is to be on both platforms for now.

Threads is the other potential alternative to X but it has been slow to offer much to users. Furthermore it is owned by Zuckerberg's Meta which

raises doubts about whether we should be any more inclined to trust it.

Whichever of these platforms you choose to focus on for the purposes of being part of communities and large message threads, artists should not under-estimate their genuine effectiveness in building followings. They also enable artists to present their music and project their personalities without being under pressure to produce a punishing level of audio-visual content.

Facebook has been desperately unfashionable for some time now. Yet this also leads to poor decision making. If you are an artist, you should at least have a presence on Facebook in the form of an artist account that acts like a mini-website where you can post content, populate your About page, put up Events and invite up to 500 people to attend them etc. There is a misguided tendency among artists, especially younger ones, to believe their fanbase is too young and cool to be on Facebook. But all the statistical data says otherwise with older fans being more inclined to spend money on purchasing tracks or tickets as well as streaming music by independent artists.

Facebook is also still the only platform that enables you to create or join multiple groups that align with

your music and activities whether through genre, location or some other shared interest. And it is quick and easy to share an important post with multiple groups provided you handle this carefully and avoid being suspended from doing so because you are accused of spamming people.

Soundcloud has also come in for a lot of criticism and negativity but it has equally proved to be a highly useful means for some artists to establish themselves. It has the advantage that your music stays on your page for as long as you want it to and you can include all the important links from your Soundcloud page to where you want people either to stream or buy your music or to interact on other platforms. Obviously, some artists are using the premium version to sell tracks and have more space to upload multiple tracks which is an option too.

Then there is LinkedIn. Once upon a time, it was a business-to-business platform where users posted profiles, advertising their work skills. But it has become increasingly used like a social media platform with artists posting videos and audio content and talking about their live dates, new releases etc. It is also the easiest platform on which to search for people via their job titles and make connections with potentially useful industry and media contacts. You don't need to be on it that frequently but it is always worth

sharing your important content there and it is a great networking site too. It also has a Music Industry forum you can join where people share posts, join message threads etc.

Of course, I am just flagging up all the various means through which it is possible to find new followers and get your music in front of new audiences. But the key issue at the heart of all this is that we have to stop pouring all this pressure on artists, especially but by no means only younger artists. If we don't, the NHS is going to be inundated with burnt out music artists needing therapy and other treatments because they have been overwhelmed by the constant, relentless stress they have felt obliged to put themselves under.

The self-elected experts need to take some responsibility for their actions. It is easy for them to sit in judgement, meting out advice when they are not creative artists and don't understand the need for artists to spend time writing, practising, experimenting, jamming etc. to produce exciting new music. They have no concept of where songs come from because they have never written any. If they did, they

might better understand the damage their daily diatribes are doing. And, as I previously pointed out, it takes far less time and effort to make the kind of content they create compared to artists who have to have a constant stream of songs, video clips and other time-consuming content to share. More so where bands are concerned.

We need a nuanced, informed and considered debate and not more self-elected 'experts' hammering the same drum to the same tune day after day on TikTok. We can start by encouraging artists to stop listening to and believing every word these people are throwing at them and think about all the avenues for sharing music with potential fans.

Ultimately it comes down to this. Are you a creative music artist or a full-time social media content creator? And is it worth making yourself thoroughly miserable to the point of breakdown in order to go after the pipe dream? Time for a reset.

## THE PRS BLIND SPOT COSTING SONGWRITERS THOUSANDS - Guest contributor, indie singer-songwriter & Fresh on the Net mod Alan Dreezer investigates



### A Cautionary Tale for Songwriters

Collaboration is one of the great joys of making music.

Over the past ten years I've written and recorded songs with my producer **Elliot Richardson**. Like many songwriting partnerships, we developed a rhythm and trust. Ideas flowed back and forth, songs evolved in the studio, and when each track was finished we agreed on the songwriting split.

Each time we completed a song, I registered it with **PRS for Music**, listing the writers and our agreed shares.

Simple. Or so I thought.

### A Song From 2018 Finds New Life

One of the songs we wrote together in 2018 appeared on my debut solo album as an album track. Nothing unusual there. It quietly existed in my catalogue like thousands of other songs do.

Then last April something happened...

The track was used by **Meta Platforms** in some capacity. Shortly afterwards I received a payment from PRS of several hundred pounds for the usage.

Naturally I was excited. I immediately messaged Elliot to tell him the good news.

But when he checked his PRS account, there was nothing.

We assumed it was simply a delay.

### **The Next Payment Changed Everything**

Three months later, during the next PRS distribution, I received another payment.

This time it wasn't a few hundred pounds.

#### **It was several thousand.**

Again I contacted Elliot to celebrate the unexpected success of our song. Again he checked his account.

Again there was nothing.

At that point we both contacted PRS directly, by phone and email, asking the obvious question:

*If the song was correctly registered with both writers and the agreed split, why was only one writer being paid?*

#### **The Answer**

After months of emails and phone calls the explanation finally arrived.

According to PRS, because Elliot himself had not also registered the song in his own account at the time it was created, he would **not receive the 40% share of the royalties generated from the usage.**

Despite the work being correctly registered by me with the writer split.

Despite the usage being correctly identified.

Despite the fact that the payment had already been calculated.

The final outcome appears to be that Elliot may only receive a portion of a much smaller payment from October 2025 — a few hundred pounds — rather than the thousands that were actually generated by the track.

And PRS will hang on to the rest....

### **This Isn't an Isolated Story**

After discussing this situation with other musicians, I discovered another example.

A successful band in the UK and Europe — a five-piece — had their songs registered with PRS by just one member, the guitarist, who handled the administration on behalf of the band.

Over several years their songs generated thousands of pounds in royalties.

But because the other band members had not individually registered the works within their own PRS accounts, only the guitarist received his portion of the payments.

### **The Hidden Problem in Music Collaboration**

Most songwriters understand splits.

Most collaborators trust each other.

What many musicians don't realise is that **administration can override intention.**

You can write a song together.

You can agree with the split.

You can even correctly list the writers when registering the work.

And yet, depending on how the registrations are processed, the system can still fail to pay collaborators what they are owed.

### **The Conversation Musicians Don't Want to Have**

In my view, the administrative side of organisations like PRS has a problem that many musicians quietly experience but rarely talk about.

It reminds me of a slightly uncomfortable metaphor.

Like erectile dysfunction, many people encounter the issue... but very few openly admit they don't fully understand why it happens?

And that silence allows the confusion to continue.

### **A Lesson for Songwriters**

Songwriting collaboration is built on trust. But systems like **PRS for Music** exist precisely to ensure that trust is protected when money is involved.

When those systems allow thousands of pounds to be paid to one writer while another listed collaborator receives nothing, something in the process clearly isn't working as it should.

Until that changes, every songwriter should double-check that their collaborators have registered works themselves — because the alternative can be very expensive.

## IS AI DESTROYING OR PRESERVING MUSIC? - SHERRY TAKES A DEEP DIVE INTO THE REAL ISSUES WITH AI

A few months ago, I entered a few words into an AI program, pressed a button, and a whole song appeared. It was melodic. There were lyrics. There was a beat to it that really slapped. I was both incredibly uncomfortable and amazed at the same time as I sat there looking at my screen. In 2026, the music business as a whole is precisely in that state.

A music executive said, "There will not be a single conference where AI isn't a topic, if not *the* topic, of conversation." and they are correct. AI has entered your life whether you invited it or not, whether you're a bedroom producer, a major label A&R, a touring artist, or just someone who enjoys music while driving. The numbers back this up in a wild way. Searches for "AI song generator" have grown by over 28,000% in five years. That's not a trend. That's a cultural earthquake happening in slow motion.

What interests me, though, is that the perception has changed. Everyone was in a panic a year ago. The musicians were incensed. Labels weren't clear. The audience was unsure of what to think. According to an industry source, "2026 is the year we move past the anxiety and into genuine collaboration." Depending

on who you ask, it may or may not be true.

Here's where most people get it wrong. They imagine AI in music as this robot sitting in a studio writing hits and stealing jobs. The reality, at least right now, is far more boring and far more useful. AI agents are increasingly being used by independent musicians to manage the administrative aspects of their jobs, such as creating pitch emails to playlist curators, scheduling social media postings, and optimising release dates based on listener data. That's not creative theft. That's a musician getting hours of their week back so they can actually make music. People who couldn't afford a professional mix five years ago are now releasing music that sounds absolutely polished. That's a good thing. However, and this is a significant however, everything has a dark side.

It's not that AI will replace musicians. The thing that should genuinely worry us is quieter and harder to argue against. As AI generated background music floods streaming platforms, there's growing pressure on artists to brand themselves as explicitly "Human-First" just to stand out. Being human, that is, being a real

person who created a real item with real feeling, has become a marketing strategy, a point of sale. You must actively communicate something. That's a strange place for music to be. Songs are moving faster through the cultural machine than ever before. But faster doesn't mean deeper. A billion streams in 200 days and then forgotten forever isn't success! It's content. And music was never supposed to be content. AI can replicate sound. It can study patterns, mimic styles, generate technically proficient melodies that tick every production box. But it is incapable of meaning anything, and I firmly think it will never be able to. Not in the sense that a song has meaning when you know someone sat down and incorporated their real-life experiences into it.

You feel that before you can explain it. The imperfection in a vocal take.

The chord change that came from a broken heart rather than a dataset. And live music? It's booming. Because a room full of people watching something unrepeatable happen on a stage is something no algorithm will ever touch.

The industry is splitting. One side: faster, AI-assisted content made at scale. The other: a growing audience actively seeking real instruments, real stories, real humans. Both will coexist. But if you're an artist the answer is simple. Make the thing only you could make. Be so stubbornly, inconveniently human that an algorithm wouldn't know where to start.

That's always been the job. It just matters more now than it ever has.

## INTERVIEW: MARK L BEAZLEY TALKS TO NEIL ABOUT HIS INCREDIBLE MASTERING SERVICES & MORE



Mark L Beazley is long established as the alternative and experimental music artist [Rothko](#). He has also spent many years performing and recording with [The Band Of Holy Joy](#) and collaborating with other artists. He has additionally built a formidable reputation for his mastering skills and for offering highly affordable rates to independent artists. Neil, who has been friends with Mark since their early days in North London, caught up with him to ask him some questions mostly about his mastering activities.

**Hi Mark. I gather you are just back from playing a Rothko gig, solo with just your Bass Guitar, in Colchester. Congratulations. How are you feeling after that event?**

A: Hi Neil, thanks so much for considering me to take part in this interview. The gig in Colchester was great, I rarely play live these days, and it's just me and my bass guitar [no loops, or backing tracks] when I do play, it was a special night. Colchester Arts Centre is a beautiful venue, and the staff there go out of their way to make everything perfect. The sound, the lights, the venue staff, all are just amazing. I'd

like to do some more shows this year if anyone will have me.

**As well as being a long-established and highly revered artist, you are also one of the leading mastering experts in independent music. How did you get into that discipline?**

A: Well, you are very kind to say that! When I started to release my own music, in 2003, I enlisted the help of the legendary Mastering Engineer, Denis Blackham, to master *Wish For A World Without Hurt*. He called me after he'd completed the work, and we had a great conversation about the sound of the album, and he gave me a lot of encouragement. It took me a few years after that [another seven to be exact] after many more releases on my own label [Trace Recordings] and having spent quite large sums of money in getting releases mastered, that I wondered if it was something I could learn to do myself. And, after doing a great deal of research, and investing in some Universal Audio hardware and software, my journey began [very, very slowly]. I must say also, that being in attendance of having an album mastered at Abbey Road, taught me a great deal about the use of stereo field [especially in regards to vinyl] and output levels. Those lessons have stayed with me throughout my career.

**You offer amazingly affordable prices for mastering tracks despite the very high standards you deliver (which I can testify to, having used your services continuously for the past 7 years or more). What motivates you to continue offering such a generous service when other, less accomplished mastering engineers, are charging considerably higher fees?**

A: I approach my whole ethos on the fact that, as an independent artist, the costs of getting your material mastered can be a huge barrier to what, I feel, is a vital part of the process of having your work released, on any platform. Just having a CD authored with the track data and ISRC codes embedded, can mean the difference between getting paid for a broadcast or not. So, on that basis, I have always wanted to make what I do affordable for independent artists, as I have experienced first hand the value, long term, that having your work mastered can bring. I don't want cost to be a barrier, so, I have tried to come to a price that is workable, for both myself, and the artists. No one should sell themselves short, on either side.

**There are a lot of free or low-cost mastering apps online that encourage artists to try taking a**

**DIY approach to mastering. Do you think there is a danger that artists are too easily tempted despite then ending up with tracks that might not sound right on particular platforms?**

A: Well, some of those services are perfect for some and not for others. If I was, say, a covers band, who wanted to get an album up on Soundcloud or Spotify, then these online services are perfect, and I'd use them myself. They are cheap, convenient to use, they use very broad spectrum, genre specific algorithms, and work in many instances. However, if you are an artist who cares deeply about every aspect of the work that they produce, down to the finest detail, then enlisting the personal touch of a mastering engineer can go some way to help with realising the total vision of their work.

**As a creative artist and performer yourself, you obviously have a real empathy with fellow artists and this is demonstrated by the effort you put into doing such a good job with their work. Do you think it is possible for someone with no musical experience or knowledge to develop the skills to be good at mastering simply by having a good ear for the right details or is being a musician fundamental to being good at mastering?**

A: That's an amazing question, Neil. I've had the extreme pleasure of having recorded a couple of BBC sessions at Maida Vale Studio's. My impression from working with the sound engineers there, was that they were audio scientists, who knew more about the process of recording music than I could ever learn. Were they musicians themselves? I have no idea, but they were incredible to work with, and learn from. I believe that recording and mastering have a basis in the actual science of the process, so, yes, I think that it is possible.

**Finally, I know you work with a lot of artists and labels. Are there any exciting recordings you are working on at the moment or have recently worked on that you are allowed to mention?**

A: All sessions are special to me, but, being invited to master the Skintone Editions vinyl [and CD] box-sets by Susumu Yokota; 14 albums, over 30 sides of vinyl, on Lo Recordings, was truly special, especially having worked with, and performed with, Susumu. A truly beautiful soul, very sadly no longer with us. And, currently, there's a new album out shortly by a wonderful band called Abrasive Trees, led by Matt Rochford, it's called Light Remains. It's fantastic. They have a huge, darkly melodic, and at the same

time, a very intricate sound. Please look out for it.

**Mark, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and opinions with us at Fresh on the Net. Good luck with all your**

## **AND FINALLY .....**

So we are one quarter of the way into 2026. What does that look like from the perspective of people operating in and around grassroots and wider independent music in the UK?

Well, each month has seen more new music than the previous one although Easter will slow that process in April. As ever, the level and quantity of original and exciting music in the grassroots community is so strong and we do our best to reflect that with the spectrum of new releases we review here.

### **GRASSROOTS LIVE MUSIC**

The grassroots live music scene remains in crisis with venues still closing and promoters pulling out of regular gig curation because it is both a labour of love and an easy way to lose money. Nevertheless, there are still thousands of gigs happening and hard working promoters out there putting them on and providing a platform for talent. In truth, a lot of venues could and should do far more to partner with

**upcoming projects both as an artist and in your mastering activities.**

A: Thank you so much for these great questions, Neil, it was my pleasure to answer them.

the promoters and help generate ticket sales but there is a culture of leaving that to the promoters and artists and focusing on selling drinks to their customers. It is both foolish and lazy and it is a culture that needs to be challenged. Perhaps the Music Venue Trust, who have proved to be keen to help venues and promoters (mainly via the Association of Independent Promoters in the latter case) get extra cash might have words with their members about making more of an effort in this area. I had a very enlightening conversation with the MVT's head honcho Mark Davyd recently and was impressed by his recognition of the need for everyone involved to pull together.

### **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

We are grateful to Arts Council England for providing the grant that will enable us to work with our friends at Mayfield Records on delivering The Portsmouth Hub. However, this month was a reminder of how cumbersome and time-wasting their processes are for

uploading key details and getting the money into our accounts. They need to read Baroness Hodge's report again because, to date, there is little to suggest they have changed their attitude or approach in the light of it. A little less pointless bureaucracy and officiousness and a bit more focus on getting the funds to the project managers would be most welcome.

They also rejected two other applications we were involved in. We had expected they might not properly understand one of them but it is very disappointing that they rejected Fresh On The Net Live again for what might be politely described as fussy reasons, Flimsy might be a better word. This is the one free festival that shines a light on grassroots live music and, if we ever get the funding, will happen in three key regional locations. It is a great shame that the panel would still rather look for silly excuses to say no than to recognise why it is so important to support projects like this.

### **SO-CALLED INFLUENCERS**

Neil's article about the TikTok Treadmill goes into great detail on this topic so no need to bang on about it again here. But there needs to be a debate within the industry about people, whose own content takes a few minutes at a time to create, lecturing others whose

content takes far longer to make about spending their lives posting content. It is hypocritical, unfair and has the potential to cause an epidemic of mental health issues and breakdowns. Time to put up a very large STOP sign.

### **POLITICS AND ALL THAT!**

March has been an interesting month in the political world. Leaving aside the madness of Trump and all who sail with him and the chaos his narcissistic crusade in the Middle East is imposing on the rest of the planet, events here in the UK have caused a flurry of debates and articles. The Green Party's polls-defying triumph in the Gorton and Denton by-election shoved it up Reform UK and Labour and showed people voting for a caring, compassionate, anti-racist agenda instead of the parties who were competing to demonise hard working migrants and exaggerate the impact of boats! Subsequent polls show the Greens are on a march as their confidence grows and people begin to see that they actually could be a viable alternative to a Labour Party that has lost its sense of self and thrown its most fundamental values on the bonfire.

This, however, is not a plea for people to vote Green. It is a plea for the Labour Party to wake the f\*\*\* up and elect a leadership that is

capable of overseeing a significant shift in direction away from trying to ape Farage and waste energy trying to appeal to Reform UK supporters but instead win back all the lost loyal Labour supporters who are walking away in disgust. Labour also needs to appeal to those in what analysts call 'the middle ground' who are looking for a party that reflects their instincts for basic decency, something that has been notably absent from the mainstream parties' rhetoric as they continue to see Farage's frog-like fascistic features everywhere they look!

A new Labour leadership could start by reversing the horrifically racist changes Starmer's government has made to the rules on student visas and qualification for sponsored work visas, instead making it easier for hard-working, tax-paying, NHS insurance-paying migrants to remain in the UK where they cost us nothing but contribute billions to the economy. Strange that the allegedly super-brainy Rachel Reeves has not worked this out for herself. Unless, of course, she has but has been over-ruled by Starmer who is more concerned with playing to a gallery of thick racists.

What, you may ask, does all this have to do with grassroots music? Well, a lot actually, since so many talented foreign nationals who are part of our community are being

bullied into leaving the UK by this despicable government. We have always been a community that is proud of its diversity and sense of unity. Never have we needed to show that unity more than now. The presence of half a million anti-racist people on a march in London this month has been inspiring. Keep up the good work and let's send a constant message to the bigots that they do not speak for the majority.

### **AN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC MEDIA**

Given what we have said about the TikTok Treadmill but also about the gatekeepers who make it so hard for grassroots music talent to cut through the noise, the obvious answer is we need our own media. And we already have that in theory through the many independent radio shows supporting new music (including our Trust The Doc Radio show and Del's Songbird Sessions, both on Exile FM, Michelle's Eat My Brunch show on Phoenix FM and plenty more), various journals and blogs (including this one, Tony's Fifty3Fridays, The Zine, GodsInTheTV and various others), all those using YouTube channels to highlight new music and all the people curating cool playlists on Spotify, Apple, Soundcloud etc. We just need to bring it all closer together through a coordinated effort to collaborate and cross-pollinate one another's outlets.

We are hoping to contribute further to this process when we launch the DocCast on Trust The Doc TV but we need to lead the project we got such great feedback about, following Neil's meeting with Rocklands Art Beat's Caffy St Luce in 2025. There are so many practitioners who want to be part of something like this. And, with or without funding, we need to make it happen.

Of course, the impact of a well-organised and functioning alternative music media can also be strengthened by everyone spreading the word. So spread the word, folks!

### **OUR NEW MUSIC PLAYLIST**

Another way we can help shine a light on grassroots music talent is by building the following and profile for the [Trust The Doc New Music Playlist](#) on Spotify. We keep adding current tracks both by grassroots artists and by more well-known ones too in order to keep the playlist as vibrant as possible. But every time we post about it on socials, we get a lot of 'likes' but hardly any new followers. If everyone follows it and

spreads the word, sharing it with others, we can build a formidable presence and start to attract a lot more new listeners. Then we all get to benefit from the exposure. So don't just hit 'like'. Go and follow the playlist and share the link with others who are interested in new music.

### **NEW MUSIC NEVER SLEEPS !!!**

That has been one of our slogans going back a long time now and it is as true now as it has ever been. Witness all the new releases reviewed in this edition of Trust The Doc and making their way onto the Fresh on the Net Listening Post each weekend. Listen to all the new tracks getting airplay from us, Del, Michelle and scores of others.

The world may feel insane and corrupt to the core but music always finds a way. As we have also been frequently posting for many years now, #NewMusicNewThinking. Till next time.

**NEIL & SHERRY xxxx**