

# **TRUST The DOC**



**Edition 115: 30th April 2026**

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

- **NEWS AND INFO FROM GRASSROOTS MUSIC**
- **[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: CURRENT AND NEW SINGLES**
- **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND REVIEW: WHY NO CHANGE?**
- **REVIEWS OF OVER 40 NEW INDEPENDENT RELEASES**
- **ROSA BENEMAUR EXPLAINS HER IN THE CROWD APP**
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- **CAN WE BE MARKETING SAVVY AND ETHICAL ASKS NEIL**
- **OUR FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE MONTH GONE AND AHEAD**

## INTRODUCTION:

Four months of 2026 have gone by already! In one sense it seems to have happened so quickly. But then, by the same token, Christmas and New Year already seem like they were an age ago. Maybe because we pack so much activity into the average month. And then, of course, there is no such thing as an average month in our world! The response from readers to last month's articles, especially Sherry's look at AI in music, has been so positive; a reminder of why we do this.

This month's issue continues our commitment to involving exciting guest writers. We are very proud that Neil's former MA student Rosa Benemaur has founded a fantastic fan app for finding friends to go to gigs with and she has kindly agreed to write an article about it for Trust The Doc. Rosa has many talents and the motivation to match her skills.

We also have talented composer and multi-instrumentalist Christoph R Davis talking about an Arts Council supported Research and Development Project he is involved in which offers a first glimpse of this new innovation in the ACE

repertoire of grants. Regular readers will be aware that Christoph is a frequently reviewed artist in these pages.

Also in this edition, while the Fresh on the Net Spring break means less tracks reviewed than usual (47 in fact although two are EPs), Sherry explores Bandsintown as a marketing avenue for artists while Neil questions whether it is feasible to retain an ethical approach to marketing and promotion and not compromise our principles in the name of trying to get ahead in the industry.

Fortunately, however bad global events may get, we still have music and we still have free minds. Long may that continue to be so.

**NEIL MARCH & SHERRY SAHAYARAJ**

30th April 2026

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

(TTD Logos by **PaulFCook**)

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## PART ONE: NEWS AND INFORMATION: EDITION 115

### [THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: NEW SINGLE RELEASED



paradigm  
[the] music of sound

The new single by [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) is *Paradigm* and it was released by **Monochrome Motif Records** on 24th April. Thanks to an early start to the playlist pitching process, it hit seven playlists on release day and has immediately started to build, looking set for 2000 streams in its first week with an

encouragingly high ratio of saves to personalised playlists and libraries.

Once again, we are hugely grateful to the amazing [Serge Wenus](#) who put us onto his most popular and engaged playlist first thing on release day and helped us get off to a flying start. Serge has a new

album ready to drop in May so look out for our review of that. We are also grateful to **Emiel Van Bruggen** of [YouGrow Promo](#) whose relationship with us has developed over the past year to the point where he really understands our preference for playlists whose musical outlook is closer to ours over those that have high engagement but with mainstream pop fans where we might achieve high streaming numbers but the streams will mostly be passive (i.e. streamed because we happen to fall between other tracks as opposed to the streams leading to listeners liking us enough to save the track and repeat listen).

We are also very happy with how our previous single **Tyche** is

continuing to perform, helped by some lovely reviews including our amazing friend **Tony Hardy** in [Fifty3Fridays](#) and others including [Flex](#); [Illustrate](#); [Introvert Disco](#) and [Radio Armazem](#) in Brazil who gave the single generous airplay and published a review on their website.

The reviews are now materialising for **Paradigm** so look out for news about those soon. In the meantime, we shot the video on Sunday under the direction, as always, of the awesome **Del Owusu** mostly on the Woolwich Ferry. The video will be officially published tomorrow (1st May) on our YouTube channel [Trust The Doc TV](#).

## TRUST THE DOC RADIO: UPDATE



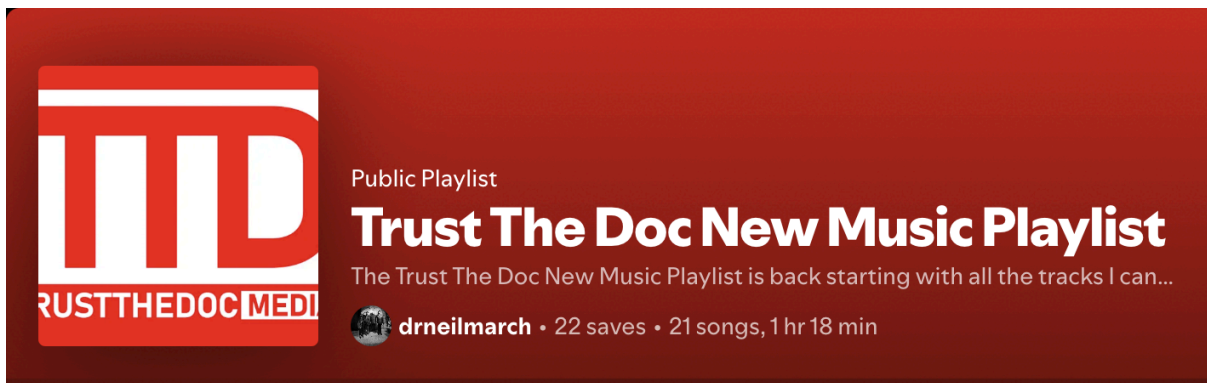
The [Trust The Doc Radio Show](#) goes out to a lovely, lively and engaged audience every Saturday at 5PM UK time and mixes the best

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 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.

## ARTS COUNCIL REVIEW: WHY NO CHANGE?



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

It was in November 2025 that the government-commissioned review of Arts Council England by Baroness [Margaret] Hodge was published. The review provided a detailed look at how the organisation functions and what needs to change. Neil's analysis of her review was published in Ed 111 of Trust The Doc in December. A copy of that article was subsequently presented to the Secretary of State for Culture Lisa Nandy by Neil's MP and DCMS Select Committee member Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham North) early in the new year.

So why has nothing changed as we enter May with nearly six months having elapsed since publication of the report? Granted, events in the political world rarely move quickly, unless there is a war or some form of crisis, but the more worrying aspect is that the Arts Council itself has shown not even an iota of willingness to address the criticisms of its own culture and

conduct. Baroness Hodge accused ACE of acting like a 'Command And Control' body instead of one that supports and nurtures creative talent. Looking at the feedback on several recently rejected applications for funds from ACE's Supporting Grassroots Music and National Lottery Project grants, there is nothing to suggest they have learned anything from the review.

When we published Neil's article, we were pleased and relieved that the primary recommendation in the report had been that we need the Arts Council and it would be a mistake to scrap it and try to implement a radically different model. For all its faults, it has been the source of so much support to vital grassroots and independent projects over the past seven years and beyond. The horrific and reckless cuts to funding implemented by Boris Johnson's Conservative Government in 2022 have made it extremely challenging for both

applicants and respondents to match previous achievements in terms of the availability of support and the recognition for progressive projects. Certainly, the current situation is not helped by the failure, to date, by Starmer's Labour Government, to find any genuinely new funds for ACE to utilise.

Nevertheless, it has been the combination of two aspects that have rung alarm bells so far in 2026. One has been the paucity, bordering on outright incompetence, of the feedback provided to rejected applications, demonstrating both an inability (or perhaps unwillingness) to be thorough in reading through and understanding the applications. The other has been the continuing tendency for the organisation to accept zero criticism and never admit to any mistakes or wrong-doing when complaints are raised. If the definition of an organisation that is not fit for purpose is one that cannot take let alone respond positively to justified criticism and which would prefer always to back its people when they have very clearly messed up or fallen short of acceptable standards, then the Arts Council is sailing perilously close to the wind. Their 'see no evil, hear no evil' approach to handling complaints is no longer

credible and the fact that they have not made a single visible change to any part of their process, structure or culture since the report was published reveals an organisation in complete denial and resistant to change. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Lisa Nandy has two choices. Come down hard on the Arts Council to begin rebuilding the confidence of applicants and the creative arts communities by responding positively to the call for significant change. Or scrap it and come up with a new model for distributing funds that is fair, transparent, supportive and modern. It is our hope that it will not come to the latter route. But retaining the status quo in perpetuity when the community it serves has lost so much confidence in ACE to be transparent, consistent and supportive is simply not an option.

In the meantime, Neil will be writing to Vicky Foxcroft in her dual role as his MP and a member of the DCMS Select Committee, calling on her to keep the pressure on the government to provide new funding and explain how it intends implementing Baroness Hodge's recommendations while, at the same time, demanding a radical change of attitude, approach and

culture within the Arts Council itself. The alternatives, if these changes do not happen soon, could lead to a period of chaos and uncertainty at a time when

the arts and creative industries need to be able to have the confidence to invest in discovering, nurturing and promoting talent and innovation.

## PART TWO: REVIEWS OF NEW MUSIC

### ALBUMS & EPs



It scarcely seems like five minutes since we were reviewing the last EP (*Wintering Snow*) by the super talented [Chloë March](#). We waited five years for that particular masterpiece so it is a joy to see the ***Wintering Light*** EP follow a few months later, a kind of part two to its predecessor. Here Chloë brings more of her ethereal, harmonically otherworldly beauty to the table, kicking off with the ghostly intro to ***Sunbound***, airy spacy chords floating by as her voices answer one another, some deeper and others high and harmonised. String sounds bring a triplet feel as the call and response continues, gradually building a more translucent soundscape. ***Waking Words*** sees Chloë using one of her favourite methods of repeating piano figures with modally inflected harmony, set against

beautiful harmonised vocals. The change into the chorus is quite exquisite. As the track develops, the BVs are haunting and understated while the harmonic language is beautiful in its relative simplicity, topped off with a kind of C-Section that is mostly major key and feels like the hope at the end of the hurt before the original piano figure ushers in the final, emotion-shredding stretch.

***London Planes*** begins with some enigmatic synths gushing and fading before more ethereal keyboards play spread chords and harmonies fortify a gorgeous melody. This is rhythmically clever and unusual, characterised by contrasts both in terms of the overall texture and the major-minor relationship between sections. As ever, Chloë can't resist

extending the chorus into a more complex and dreamlike final section whose final sounds fade like melting snow. The final track is ***Same Sycamore***, introduced by a semi-arpeggio piano figure and striking vocal melody. The lyrics reflect the lure of the world she is trying to walk away from. There is a more explicitly classical influence as the piano goes deeper into its lower register. But the half-expected arrival of a rich, full-on cinematic instrumental arrangement never materialises. It does suddenly change into a quicker tempo though with waves of piano in chordal arpeggios that remind us about Chloë's impressive instrumental skills. It is a brave move to end the EP with the track that has the least going on - just single voice and piano - but she pulls it off with effortless grace, wrapping up another truly brilliant EP.

The latest collaboration between TTD friends and favourites [The Happy Somethings](#), from the English East Midlands, and **Matt Couchman** aka [Lost Signal](#) from Norwich in the East is the ***Happy Signals*** EP. It consolidates their previous collaborations and adds a new track too.

The new track ***Falling And Rising*** is also the opener, Matt's electronic

riff kicking things off before Joy's distinctive voice arrives with the melody and some guitar jangle. The tempo is slow despite a busy but unobtrusive beat as the Happys' trademark harmonies fortify the chorus and big chords play off against warm synths. It is a lovely track and sets the scene. ***Overjoyed Android*** follows with an electro-synth backdrop that looks back to Kraftwerk and maybe even a hint of OMD while Joy's vocals and then the Happys' harmonies add something distinct to this template.

***Spaghetti Hoops*** is more syncopated and has rich deep chords accompanying a fast-paced harmonised melody that references some of our familiar favourite tinned and related foods! ***Lessons In Love*** is slower and more enigmatic, Joy's voice put through a filter as Matt builds an atmosphere, initially with long tones and then with an electronic beat kicking in. Spoken word adds to the aura here. The EP ends with ***Time***, a bubbling beat and long fuzzy tones announcing the track while harmonised and octave-apart vocals set out an appealing melody. It builds nicely, achieving a lot in less than three minutes of music, rounding off a very enjoyable and refreshingly original EP.

## POP NOODLES



Eastbourne's finest and TTD friend and regular [Alan Dreezer](#) has a single out on 26th May. *Delusional* is lush and dreamy with syncopated rhythmic configurations underpinning rich synth stabs and chords while Alan's voice, harmonised in parts, is expressive and rueful. This is another example of Alan's penchant for combining a cool hook with a sophisticated pop arrangement and perfect production.

LA-based Indian artist [Rivita](#) returns with *Dil Jale*. This is an intriguing combination of influences. On the one hand, it has an eighties Soul undercurrent but also leaning into Arlo Parks/Lianne La Havas territory with the buoyant beat and repeating chord pattern under an infectious hook. The Hindi lyrics then add another element. She sings it beautifully with a crystal clear tone and a richness to her voice.

Plymouth's British-Iranian artist [Zahra Deljoui](#) sends out a powerful political message about

the horror and hypocrisy of events in the Middle East and here at home too with *Freedom Azadi Azadi*. She places this message amid an epic pop powerhouse of a track with reverberating chords, choir-like backing vocals and pleading, heartfelt lyrics. If you cannot feel anything of the desperation in her delivery, you need to develop a heart! This is goose-bumping.

Our very good friend [Freya Everest](#) has a new single called *Monique* and this is an absolute gem. From the opening glissando swipes on the strings and the first statement of Freya's goose bumping vocals, we know we are in for a treat. As the track develops, the array of sounds is so impressive as are the nuanced changes in texture, timbre and tempo. The melody is stunning and the lyrics (down to Monique's answerphone message in mid-track) are clever and intriguing. Freya has put so much thought, imagination and creativity into this track and the production is top quality too. So exciting to hear this. Outstanding.

## ALT ROCK & INDIE



Our good friend Frances Findlay has introduced us to South Coast Alt Pop combo [ALLEY The Band](#). Their latest offering is ***Song For A Diva***. This is in a slowish tempo with floaty synths, scorched sax, strumming guitar and busy bass and drums accompanying appealing female vocals, adorned with some classic West Coast-style harmonies. This is striking, catchy and bolstered by the musicianship and chemistry of the band.

The inimitable [Gurry Wurry](#) returns with ***Have You***. Deep and sometimes extended piano chords dominate the instrumental backdrop to his baritone range, slightly filtered vocals. The style is a mix of 70s retro Pop a la Billy Joel meets Wings but with a semi-psychedelic edge and a darker undercurrent both of which bring it squarely into contemporary sophisticated pop territory. It's catchy too and cleverly arranged.

Brought to us by the always reliable Terri of Get Louder PR, Oxford's [Beaker](#) have a single out called ***50 Men***. A gutsy female vocal, playing off against an

angsty male one, set out an infectious melody over driving fuzztone guitars and corresponding bass and drums. There is a post-Grunge aspect to this and shades of bands like The Breeders, Pixies and even Throwing Muses in their rockier moments. But they add a freshness and energy that produces the sparkle.

The Happy Somethings' [Happy](#) records solo as [Happy As You Like](#) and, as his new album drops in early May, he has released the single ***Take My Breath Away***. This is bristling with energy and has some lovely open chords that lend it a kind of Eastern edge but with a hint of the Celtic too. Guitars drive this along while Happy's vocals are passionate and yearning, responding to the horrors of what we see daily on the news and social media right now. A track you have to hear.

[Lyon Tide](#) return with ***Hope & Hurt*** (ft. *Afterhours*). This almost belongs in the Pop Noodles section because this is big production Pop Rock with expressive female vocals that could almost be Pink in a mash

with Olivia Rodrigo while RAYE brings flavours. Bright piano, intricate interplaying guitars, solid bass and power-driven drums all add to the sum of its parts. The vocals are superb and the

harmonies add to the intensity of her performance. It shows Lyon Tide have moved some way from their earlier sound but they deliver this with genuine style and power.



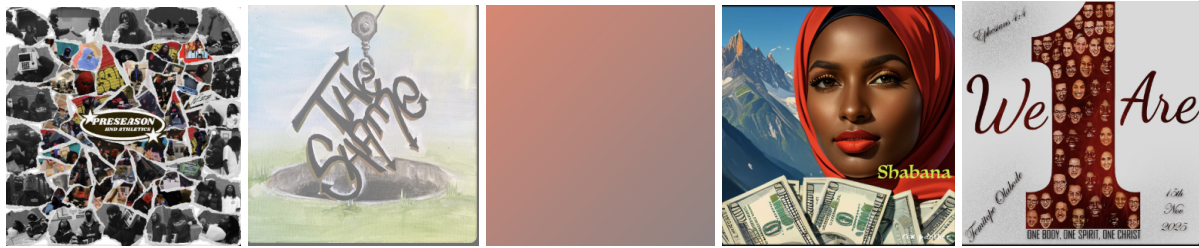
Exeter's [GRICE](#) returns with another release on Hungersleep Records. ***Love Me Out*** is a slow-burning minor key affair in which strummed guitar is joined, as things develop, by various additional guitar and synth tracks, offering up a chocolate box of sounds and timbres while the vocals are whispery, dreamy and melancholy, setting out a rueful and engaging melody to boot.

Our amazing friend and TTD regular **Nick Woodgate** and his band [The Jojo Man Band](#) have a new track called ***Ace***. This is classic JJMB with a descending post-Psych style figure played by chunky guitars, keys and bass while the drums are crisp and add real power. The whole sound is big, brash and beautiful and Nick's instantly recognisable voice provides the melodic flair to round it all off. The track opens a new

album, mostly with previously released material but well worth checking out (which you can do using the link provided), Meanwhile ***Ace*** is another absolute gem and we will be playing it on the TTD Radio show throughout the month of May.

As regular readers will be aware, Brighton is unequivocally the South English Capital of new music and this time, courtesy of the excellent Lee Jackson at Wall Of Sound PR, we have [Not Richard & Her Majesty](#) with ***A Song About Being A Parasite***. It kicks off with some joyous Stranglers-like keyboards before the harmonised male vocals come in and the song takes on an unusual kind of bouncy Reggae-infused Punk-Pop feel with busy drums and bass, sardonic humour and some great chord changes and bendy guitar to boot. Catchy, energetic and individual.

## BEATS, RHYTHMS & RHYMES



[TJ Tucker](#) takes us somewhere a little different with ***Sve Yourself***. In one sense, there are echoes of Nelly in the melodic semi-rap, semi-sung vocal delivery although his tone is deeper and more laid back, also nodding slightly to De La Soul. But he has very much his own sound, slightly nonchalant but also expressive in a matter-of-fact way. It's catchy too and gets inside your head faster than you know.

Essex's TTD friend and regular [Roisin Quinn](#) faces down the guilt inherent in her upbringing on ***The Shame***. Like all Roisin's tracks, she mixes her unique, earthy rap style with catchy hooks, great musicianship and sweet harmonies. The lyrics are biting and pull no punches but she delivers them with no sense of self-pity, just matter-of-fact truth. This is essential listening.

Now this is intriguing. An artist from Hong Kong making Afrobeat music with House undercurrents and providing a blank brown cover and no links to tell us who he is! Anyway the artist is [Ola](#)

[V-Sign](#) and the track is ***Rhythm Of The Motherland*** although which motherland is not entirely clear. It is lovely though. Airy, reverberant Afrobeat with an infectious tune and groove, some spine-tingling vocal chants and a beautifully clear and soulful male vocal. Whoever Ola V-Sign is, let's hope we get to hear more about him and his music soon.

Our talented friend [NX Panther](#) returns with ***Shabana***. This has a laid back vibe while the rap lyric tackles various assumptions and mixes perfectly with her soulfully sung hooks. Piano chords, echoing synths and a steady beat provide a lush backdrop and the horn-like sounds at the end add an extra sparkle although it is unequivocally Panther who is the star, her spoken and sung words so expressive and compelling to listen to.

Reggaeton from Swansea in Wales (via Nigeria) is not something we receive everyday but that is what we have with [Olabode Temitope](#) and ***We Are One***. Male and female voices

reassure us that ‘I am your brother/I am your sister/And we are family’. This is bathed in some gorgeous vocal harmonies and a bouncy Reggae-infused beat. The

vocal style is something akin to Latin Gospel and the chords played by the keys add to the vibe.

## SOULFUL SENSIBILITIES



Sometimes you can't beat a bit of proper Old Skool Soul-Funk and that's what we have with [Butter Funk Family](#) featuring Nadav Peled on the track *Love Power*. Gritty, close and clever harmonies abound with dexterous delivery of lead vocals and some sumptuous funky instrumental interplay. Music like this is timeless and sounds as fresh in 2026 as it would have done in 1976. Great to hear.

The new single by our close friend and super talented East London Soul King [Kevin East](#) is *Funky East Man*. In a sense, this is a departure from Kev's usual style. Highly funky with stabbing horns and in a lower register by his standards, this is like classic 70s/80s US Soul Funk but with plenty of modern sounds and a chord change that is straight from the Jamiroquai songbook. Tuneful, sassy and superbly produced, it is a great showcase for Kevin's dexterous delivery and

instinctively soulful sounds. It also shows he is getting confident with his self-harmonising. Another belter.

Londoner [Gareth Donkin](#) is in retro Soul-Disco mode with *Extraordinary* but his combination of lush male/female harmonies, funky keyboard chordplay, squelchy synth bass and straight beat is too irresistible not to include in these reviews. Gareth has left no stone unturned in his search for perfection and brings a whole wave of fresh air to a timeless genre. Beautiful stuff.

[Mama's Gun](#) were already on our radar through their recent Fresh on the Net success and now they give us *Joy* and, goodness gracious me, what an apt title. From the first Lenny Kravitz-ish descending chords, cool instrumental play and soulful vocals, this grabs you by the ears but then, as the hook appears

for the first time and then the track develops through more layers, vocals stretching out all the more and harmonies reinforcing the tune, we get Stevie Wonder vibes and all sorts of other flavours in one of the most uplifting, superbly

written and beautifully executed tracks you will hear all month, maybe year. This takes goose-bumping to a whole new level. Utterly outstanding on every conceivable level.

## CLUB CULTURE



**Paul Briggs** aka [Unit 4](#) brings a pleasantly engaging piece of electronica with some cool breaks and a contrast between the catchy and the ethereal on **Depart**. Although the main theme repeats through much of the piece, there are enough unexpected twists and turns to keep our interest and/or keep the dancefloor grooving.

South East London's Soulful House Emperor [Pimlican](#) keeps the grooves coming with **I'm In Luuv**. Featuring an uncredited female singer, this is classic Pimlican. 90s-style House Piano chords play over booming electro beat and extended synth stabs while the breaks and build-ups add to the experience. A floor filla all night and one you can sing to.

The latest offering from Norwich's [Skinny Boy Tunes](#) is **Day** and it sees Piers taking his instinctively soulful chord play and harmonising into different territory with a frantic Drum'n'Bass beat and vocals consisting entirely of a choir-like combo of female voices singing 'Ah's. Piers makes it work with the richness of the chords, the fluid bass and clever breaks.

[Piri](#) is a new name to me. But the Londoner brings the grooves on **Cosuluvme**. Vocally there are echoes of Mia in a mash with AURORA. Music-wise, the style is hypnotic House with R'n'B leanings, busy and tuneful with a dreamy air. Energetic, endearing and catchy.

We are suckers for a bit of pulsating hypnotic Trance with

Euro leanings and that is exactly what we have with US artist [Wade Larwin](#) and his track ***Vitamin Trance***. Lots of staccato swirls and synth overlaps, plenty of ambient noises, cool breaks in

an otherwise persistent beat and an undeniably European influence. Plenty of power in the production too.

## SINGER-SONGWriters



Our Spanish label mate on Monochrome Motif Records, the breathtakingly talented and highly likeable [John Serrano](#) continues his amazing output with ***I Can't Get You Out Of My Head***. Characteristically intense, the combination of slightly scratchy [real] strings, cleverly configured guitar parts and John's emotionally charged and undeniable vocals grab us from the outset. John has such a distinctive sound and his disregard for what anyone else is doing or what is fashionable with this or that source is one of his many strengths. *I Can't Get You Out Of My Head* makes a very

strong case for why there must be a parallel universe somewhere in which he is number one. Let's hope 2026 will be a big year for John.

Also check out John's duet with [Ores Miñan](#) on ***Granada (Live)*** which does great credit to both artists in a lovely track that needs no more than Ores's skillful guitar playing and John's vocals and additional guitar. Jazzy, folky and earthy. Great stuff.

## SYNTHEMATIC



Since the link takes us to a record label or some sort, I have no information about [Remington Super 60](#) except that *Time To Breathe* is a rolling dreamy synthpop tune delivered by engaging female vocals and bright bubbling synth layers. Catchy as anything and unobtrusively relentless, it offers almost a pure pop vision in a futuristic framework. Intriguing and enjoyable.

It is always difficult to decide where to review music by Poland's inimitable [Serge Wenus](#). He has such a distinctive sound and style. *Mr Heaven* offers another side to that style. Buoyant synth bass plays off against squelchy upper synth stabbing melody and arpeggio guitar while Serge's double tracked vocals have a deep dreamy feel and the responding female voice is ethereal. Built mainly around I - VIm - IIIm - V chord structure, it introduces sounds and maintains a laid back momentum while the hook buries itself and beds down in your head. Lovely stuff.

TTD favourite [Sansha](#) takes herself into a new direction with *Drudgery*. This is almost Soul with a cool synth bass tune underpinning sweet chords and goose-bumping vocal harmonies. There is a real contrast between the edginess of the verses and the sophisticated soothingness of the chorus. Francesca's considerable musical skills and knowledge are put to great use here with some spine-tingling chord changes and unexpected diversions. Nuanced and packed with ideas, it is not hard to see why this went down a storm with Fresh on the Net readers at the Listening Post this weekend just past. Fantastic.

You never know what to expect from TTD friend and regular, Leicestershire's [Chris Mills](#) aka [C-Beem](#). His latest track *Shock On You* is a direct riposte to all the racism and bigotry of Farage, Trump and other assorted horrors. He says it has a 'Windrush' theme. The style is a mix of syncopated rhythm and some very earthy percussion sounds with more cinematic synths and great sound effects. Chris's multi-tracked vocals

are passionate and a little Bowie-esque while the big synth string stabs remind me of Tears For Fears. All done with style and power.

TTD friend and regular **Mark Heffernan** aka [Pocket Lint](#) returns with **Cyanometer**. This is slower and suggests more clearly Depeche Mode influenced ideas. As always



Spain-based Liverpoolian **Stephen Lewis** is TTD friend and regular [Exposed Brick](#) and his latest release is **Husk**. This is Stephen at his most inventive, spoken word samples adding context to a cinematic build-up of deep synth bassline, crisp electronic beat and modally-inflected synth overlaps conjuring up a kind of night-time atmosphere of quiet city streets and a darker dysfunctional underbelly. When Stephen's harmonised vocals come in later in the track repeating 'The New Frankenstein' as the spoken word female voice repeats that 'Frankenstein was a lonely creator',

with Mark's music, the instrumental backdrop is a developing, blossoming cinematic of colour and sound, mainly synth-based but with some sumptuous guitar play later on too. His voice is, as ever, crystal clear, a little Marc Almond-like but distinctive and expressive. It's a top tune too.

it feels like the culmination of a musical and sonic journey that has used subtle but important changes and diversions to hold our interest as the track builds over 6 minutes plus. Mastered, incidentally, by our close friend Mark L Beazley (aka Rothko) of Trace Recordings.

[Kiffie](#) returns with **Ambition**. Staccato synth underpins bursts of buzzing synth invasions and little melodies while Daniel's vocal is passionate and has a rueful quality. 'Sometimes love just isn't enough' he repeats. Definite 80s Synthpop vibe here but with enough about the sound mix to bring it into 2026.

## ELECTRONIC & AMBIENT



Brighton-based Midlander **Jim Purbrick** aka TTD friend and regular [Alien Alarms](#) continues his long-running *Avril* theme with **Avril 11** (released, not unreasonably on 11th April) and, once again, there are two versions (Avec and Sans Batterie). The avec version quickly develops into a fast-paced Electro-Drum'n'Bass piece with the piano providing the melodic content in high register and accompanying bass notes in the left hand while the deep synth drones and bends around the stop-start beat and quiet ambient sounds dance across the mix. The Sans version is basically the piano part unaccompanied and presented as a kind of post-minimalist solo piece. Both are well worth taking time to check out.

Norwich's alternative poet laureate [Richard Pierce](#) is on the warpath against AI and an increasing reliance on machines and computers to do our thinking for us on **Articulate**. Set against a dark, swirling synth-dominated backdrop of electronica, Richard sets out his dystopian vision while pleading for people to value discussion, debate and original thought. It is a familiar concern so many of us are feeling right now and Richard, as he so often does, captures the moment very effectively with an energetic and striking track. 'Read a book, not a machine' he repeats. Heaven forbid!

## CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL AND SOUND ART



[Yurii Sher](#) isn't pushing many boundaries with **Walking On Clouds** but his delicate upper

piano register play contracted by solid bass tones and the extensions to his arpeggio

based style are evocative and achieve a dreaminess that is engaging and sweet. The track builds well too before quietly sliding away beyond its dynamic climax, lasting just over seven minutes in total.

The always dependable **Valeska Rautenberg** aka [Valeska & The River](#) brings us more of her classical piano composing delights with ***Droplets***. Built around a fairly simple,

translucent figure in the left hand and more fluid right hand exploration, it builds with the addition of some warm chords into a kind of light-textured fantasia in which the harmonic language switches between more modal (almost Nordic in style) and major key. It is, like all her work, slightly ethereal and enigmatic but also crystalline and beautiful as well as skillfully composed and played.

## JAZZ & INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS



We love a bit of trippy experimental contemporary Jazz here at TTD and [Floating Sheep](#) bring just that on ***Turkish Kawabanga***. Continuously altering rhythmic patterns and tempi, rasping but agile sax, sumptuous tuned percussion, busy bass, quite breathtaking drums, Latinesque percussion and some mind-spinning harmonic language all combine here to create something quite distinctive, impressive and thoroughly enjoyable. Even some bendy synth effects are thrown in for good measure too. The tuned percussion

is the star of this show but all the musicians contribute significantly to an epic adventure that takes us off in a multitude of directions...

... and while we are talking about quirky experimental jazz with extended harmonic language, that is what we get from Brighton's [Richard Brincklow](#) on ***Dogfight***. It is almost a Bolero, the bassline repeating with a kind of jazzed up marching movement while piano plays gorgeous, sometimes slightly dissonant and extended chords, a synth drone buzzes back and forth and crazy spaced out keyboards

go nuts before vanishing from the mix. It is a compelling listen and full of invention and great

musicianship. It is thoroughly contemporary and individual too.

## FOLK & COUNTRY FARE



The West Country's Queen of Folk-Pop [Sharon Lazibyrd](#) returns with ***If***. Built around a catchy tune where the chords revolve around a root bass with a light textured buoyancy, this is a perfect showcase for Sharon's instantly recognisable and emotionally powerful voice. She brings both a yearning passion and a subtle melancholy to an infectious tune. The arrangement is organic and pure too.

London-based Italian-Australian singer-songwriter [Bity Booker](#) played a memorable set at one of our Vanishing Point gigs back in 2023. She is an artist who, with just an acoustic guitar and her highly distinctive soprano voice, has carved out her own niche within the Indie Folk world. Part of that niche is her love of birds and the correspondingly important part they play in the lyrics of her songs. So it is with ***Like A Swallow In The Spring***. Bity's guitar part consists

of skillfully picked arpeggios in a melancholy minor key while her soft but strong voice sets out the story, using the restless swallow as a metaphor here. It is beautifully done and the track holds our attention with its simple and yet compelling intensity.

Huddersfield's finest [Fishing 4 Compliments](#) return with ***If I Had***. Eileen's distinctive, dexterous and expressive voice leads the line while a catchy lead guitar figure rides atop the rhythm section. The tempo is quite quick and there's both a ruefulness and an infectious energy to the track. Organic and earthy too like all their music.

[Ceitidh Mac](#) returns with ***Ground***. This is an instantly intriguing track with clanging acoustic guitar and percussion that creates some subtle dissonances while Ceitidh's vocals are strong, agile and full of life and expression. It has a very Celtic feel and, without needing to

add much to an organic, energetic performance, it is uplifting too.

### **PART THREE: OTHER COMMENTARIES**

#### **IN THE CROWD: BY ITS FOUNDER ROSA BENEMAUR**



There's something powerful about live music.

The moment the lights go down. The first note hits. A room full of strangers suddenly feels connected, singing the same lyrics, feeling the same emotions, sharing something that can't be replicated anywhere else.

Live music has always been about community. But for a lot of people today, that sense of connection doesn't always extend beyond the stage.

### **The disconnect behind the music**

Across the UK and especially in London, more people are going to concerts alone than ever before. Not because they want to, but because it's often just easier than trying to coordinate schedules, build new friendships, or find people who actually share your taste.

At the same time, loneliness is rising in the very places that should feel the most alive. In London, around 700,000 people say they feel lonely most or all of the time, despite being surrounded by millions. Younger adults are especially affected, navigating a fast-paced, transient city where forming real connections can be genuinely hard.

It creates a strange contradiction: thousands of people standing side by side at the same concert, but experiencing it alone.

### **Introducing In The Crowd**

In The Crowd is built on a simple idea: music should bring people together, not just in the moment, but beyond it.

The app combines live music discovery with social connection, creating a space where fans don't just find events. They find each other.

With concert listings across the UK, you can easily discover what's on in your city. But what makes it different is what happens next.

Instead of going alone, fans can connect with others attending the same show, meet people who love the same artists, and build real friendships before, during, and after the event.

It turns live music into something more than a one-night experience. It becomes a starting point for community.

### **For fans, it's personal**

Music is one of the most personal things there is. The artists we listen to, the songs we replay, the concerts we choose all say something about who we are.

In The Crowd uses that as the foundation for connection.

Rather than forcing interaction, it creates natural opportunities for people to meet through something they already care about. For solo concert-goers especially, it takes away the awkwardness of showing up alone and replaces it with the chance to share the experience with someone else.

### **For promoters, it's direct**

For promoters and artists, the platform offers something equally valuable: direct access to real fans.

Instead of broad, impersonal promotion, events can be shared with communities built around

specific artists and genres, people who are already engaged and far more likely to attend.

It's not just about visibility. It's about relevance.

### **Why it matters now.**

As cities grow and digital lives expand, meaningful connection has become harder to find. People are more connected than ever online, yet more isolated in real life.

Live music remains one of the few spaces where genuine, shared experiences still exist. In The Crowd builds on that, extending the connection beyond the stage and into real life.

## **In The Crowd: Where Music Brings People Together Again**

<https://inthecrowd-app.com/>

## RE:VERSE: BEHIND THE LINES by CHRISTOPH R DAVIS



There's a moment that sometimes happens when you return to a piece of writing you thought you knew well. A line lands differently. A voice feels unfamiliar. Something shifts - not in the text itself, but in the way you hear it. Re:Verse is a new collaborative project I've recently begun with poet Emily Holtom, supported by Arts Council England. At its simplest, it brings together historic poems by male writers with newly written responses from a contemporary female poet, and uses those paired texts as the starting point for a series of new musical works - some rooted in voice and text, others moving into more abstract, instrumental territory.

I've spent a lot of time working with sound - often in quite abstract ways - but I've always been drawn to the idea that music can act as a kind of translation. Not a literal one, but something more intuitive: a way of carrying meaning, tone, atmosphere from one form into another. This project grew out of a curiosity about what might happen if that process of translation didn't begin with music, but with poetry - and more specifically, with poetry that already carries a certain cultural weight.

The starting point is simple: historic poems by male writers,

paired with newly written responses by Emily Holtom. But what interests me isn't just the pairing itself - it's the space that opens up between the two. The gap. The tension. The dialogue.

Emily's work doesn't "answer" the original texts so much as sit alongside them, sometimes in conversation, sometimes in quiet resistance. There's a sense of re-voicing - of taking something familiar and allowing it to be heard again, but differently. And that's where the music begins to emerge.

Some of the pieces we're developing are quite direct: settings of the texts, where voice and language remain at the centre. But increasingly, I've found myself drawn to something less literal. Instead of setting the words, I'm trying to respond to what sits underneath them - their tone, their rhythm, their emotional residue. What does a poem feel like once you strip the language away? What remains, and how might that be expressed in sound?

In that sense, the process becomes less about adaptation and more about transformation. The original text passes through Emily's response, and then through music, changing form

each time. By the end, what you hear might be several steps removed from the starting point - but hopefully still connected to it in some way.

There's also a broader question sitting behind all of this, which is about whose voices we inherit, and how we engage with them. The literary canon - like many areas of cultural history - is uneven. Certain voices are amplified, others are absent or overlooked. Re:Verse won't try to "correct" that, but it will try to create a space where those imbalances can be felt and explored.

For me, the collaboration is central to that. Working with Emily has shifted the way I think about text, about authorship, about where meaning sits. There's something really valuable in letting go of control over the starting material - in allowing another voice to reshape it before it even reaches the music.

At the moment, the project is still in development. We're testing ideas, writing, reworking, sometimes discarding things entirely. It's a slow process, but an open one. There's a sense that the final shape of the work isn't fixed yet - that it will continue to evolve as we move towards

recording and performance (we've got a work-in-progress sharing slated towards the end of the year).

What I'm most interested in, I think, is the idea of listening differently. Not just to music, but to text, to history, to voices that we might think we already

understand. If Re:Verse does anything, I hope it encourages that - a kind of re-hearing.

Because sometimes, all it takes is a small shift in perspective for something familiar to become something else entirely

You can find out more about Re:Verse at [christofrdavis.com/reverse](https://christofrdavis.com/reverse)

## HOW USEFUL IS BANDSINTOWN FOR MUSIC PROMO? Sherry investigates

For independent artists looking to promote music without spending a fortune, Bandsintown is a name that tends to come up quickly. It has grown a lot in recent years, and there is genuine value here but there are also some real limitations worth knowing about before investing time in it.

Most people still think of Bandsintown as a gig listings site. That is no longer the full picture. The platform has grown into something closer to a promotional hub, where artists can manage tour dates, announce new releases, message fans directly, and connect with tools already in use, all in one place. In late 2025, they launched a Marketplace, bringing in over 30 partner services, including distributors like Tunecore and CD Baby, marketing tools like Linktree

and Feature.fm, and merch platforms like Shopify.

The big idea behind all of this is data ownership. Unlike Instagram followers or Spotify listeners, audiences that artists do not technically own, fans who follow an artist on Bandsintown become direct contacts. They can be messaged, their locations can be seen, and they can be reached without an algorithm deciding whether a post is worth showing. For an independent artist, that is a genuinely useful thing.

The best practical reason to use Bandsintown is its reach across other platforms. When a show or release is posted, it can automatically appear on Spotify, YouTube, Google Search, Apple Music, and Shazam. For a solo artist running their own promotion,

not having to update each platform manually saves real time.

The direct messaging feature is also stronger than it looks. When a fan follows an artist on Bandsintown, posts go straight to them as a push notification or email and no algorithm is in the way. That is a very different kind of access compared to social media, where even the most engaged followers might never see a post.

The Marketplace integrations are another practical win. For artists already using Linktree, Feature.fm, or a distributor like TuneCore, connecting them through Bandsintown removes friction from the workflow. It does not replace those tools, it just makes them talk to one another more easily.

Bandsintown's value relies on fans actually using the app, and that is a problem, because the fan facing side has had reliability issues. A number of users have reported that concert notifications arrive late, or not at all. Some have found that artists they followed appear unfollowed the next time they check. Customer support has reportedly been slow to fix these problems.

This matters because the whole point of building a Bandsintown following is that fans will hear from the artist. If notifications are not

getting through reliably, that weakens the platform's core promise. There is also a practical ceiling. Bandsintown works best for artists who are already touring, releasing music regularly, and have an audience to connect with. For those still in the early stages of building a following, many of the platform's best features will not yet have much to work with. It is not a tool for growing an audience from zero. It is a tool for deepening a relationship with an audience already there.

For fans, Bandsintown is a clean, simple way to keep track of artists they love and find out about upcoming shows. It is not trying to be a social media platform, which actually makes it quite pleasant to use, no ads, no noise, just music. The problem is that when notifications do not arrive on time, fans miss shows and lose trust in the app. That directly affects artists too.

Bandsintown is a solid, mostly free tool that works particularly well for artists who want to own their fan data and cut down on manual admin across multiple platforms. The data ownership argument alone makes it worth setting up properly. That said, relying on it as the only way of reaching fans is a risk. The stronger approach is treating it as one solid channel among several, keeping an email

list running alongside it, and paying attention to whether notifications are actually landing.

## **CAN WE BE MARKETING SAVVY AND ETHICAL? by Neil**

Taking a step back from the debate about the TikTok treadmill and the rights and wrongs of so-called industry insiders and influencers directing artists to become full-time content creators, we still have to have a strategy for getting our music in front of as many suitable people as possible. Whether you are trying, despite your lack of financial power, to compete in the over-saturated mainstream pop market against the likes of Lewis Capaldi, Charli XCX, Billie Eilish and The Weekend or in an equally over-crowded Hip Hop market against everyone from Drake and Cardi B to Little Simz and Loyle Carner or whether you are a specialist niche artist, we all have a common goal of wanting to reach and connect with fans of our genre(s).

So is it possible to adopt a potentially successful and cost-efficient marketing and promotion strategy without compromising your ethics and diluting your brand? It is a question I have heard people

asking frequently in recent times. Even if you try to close your ears to the incessant noise about what you could or should be doing to give yourself a leg up on the 'opposition', it is hard not to be sucked into trying out ideas that other people have made successful. Even if, like us, you believe there is no such thing as 'opposition', are we being sincere if we deny that we nevertheless quite like the thought of outdoing others in a similar ballpark to us musically or being the ones in our own social circle who are furthest forward in the promotion of our music? Are we saying one thing in public and then secretly plotting how we can leave our friends and allies in our wake?

Research by [Researchgate](#) (2020) suggests that pop musicians, regardless of their ideological perspectives, are forced into a highly competitive world and framework. A research paper published by [Sage Journals](#) (2024) goes further and claims artists in similar scenes or genres with the same political outlooks actually

tend to indulge in quite intense competition with their peers. Meanwhile, an article by [Punkrock Philosophy](#) (2021) suggests not only that bands can feel pressured to outdo their peers and allies despite espousing anti-competitive views because of the demands for them to do whatever they need to do to sell albums and tour tickets. It also talks about inter-subculture rivalries.

My own experience as a musician back in my youth, learning the ropes in my home town of Hemel Hempstead was an intriguing one. I made several attempts, at different points, to encourage local bands to collaborate on projects that could shine a light on our local scene including a compilation album linked to a local studio that never got beyond a big meeting in a pub. But what frequently frustrated me was the bitchiness and pointless competitiveness between local bands as if there was only one designated record deal for everyone in our town and we all had to fight to be the ones who sealed it! It was a bit like bands fighting over golden tickets to Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory (!) when, in reality, there was an entire nation of aspiring bands and artists out there trying to achieve the same goals.

I am not going to pretend to be a saint in this respect. I would be lying if I denied that there is a certain degree of satisfaction in being able to demonstrate successes that have eluded others in our broad spectrum of similar acts or our wide social circle. Sometimes this is fuelled by knowing friends have been bitching about our band and expressing resentment even though they themselves have made precious little effort to market their music while we have worked our socks off! So there is a sense of injustice that they should want their friends to share and wallow in collective failure instead of applauding our efforts to get somewhere! The words 'sense of entitlement' tend to rear their head!.

Nevertheless, in terms of how we strategise and what drives our marketing and promotion, we never give a single thought to any notion of competition. On the contrary, the only other artists we are focused on are the ones whose audiences we think might 'get' what we do and are therefore worth targeting in the hope that they might take an interest in our music. But, all the same, are we agreeing to take actions that go against the grain in order to achieve wider recognition? In other words, to resurrect a tired old cliché, are we 'selling out'?!.

This is a difficult thing to measure. It could be argued that every time you make a decision that a particular song is more suitable than another to be the next single or that you need to make a radio edit to give yourself more chance of national airplay, that constitutes a commercial decision and thus has the potential to involve 'selling out' even on the most modest scale. The contrary view is that it makes practical sense and shows some consideration to others if you submit a radio edit so you are not trying to elbow other artists out of airplay by taking too much of the show's limited time. As for choosing singles, we have actually dropped tracks because we are concerned that may be 'too' poppy and not substantial enough because actually the primary consideration is not the commercial potential of the song but how well it represents our current musical direction and footprint. That has far greater longer term importance in establishing our 'brand'.

All the same, it is easy to get sucked into following market trends on the advice of industry insiders. When [The] Music Of Sound were touring last summer, we did copy a TikTok trending video concept at the time involving a Pink Pantheress song and my two bandmates acting out the same

scene at each venue. Okay, it was a bit of fun and they had a blast doing it but was it really appropriate for a Synth-Indie Dream Pop trio to be indulging in the kind of trending TikTok campaign more readily associated with the pop mainstream? And were we targeting the wrong fanbase by doing so? Maybe. Sometimes it is a good idea to take a step back and consider who your core audience might potentially be and whether that kind of promotion might alienate rather than impress them.

So what do we mean by being 'marketing savvy'? It is a continuous learning curve and we are talking about an industry and media that is perpetually in a state of flux. Trying to keep up with what works is tough. But when you are constantly involved in marketing and promotion, you are going to learn that certain approaches are more impactful than others.

On a fairly simplistic level, we know that pitching for popular playlists on Spotify is an important means of gaining exposure to new audiences. But we have also realised that simply working with playlist pitching outlets to get onto playlists with huge followings may result in a boost to our streaming numbers but, if we are on playlists where we are surrounded by

commercial pop tracks, the streams are going to be 'passive'. The audience for such a playlist is streaming us because we happen to be on the playlist but they are not going to go back and listen again, save us to their personal library or add us to their personalised playlists. On the contrary, they are more likely to skip past our track before it ends which might actually damage our status as far as the mysterious Spotify algorithm is concerned.

So it is actually more sensible to pitch for playlists whose genre mix has more in common with our own music and where it is much more likely that we will gain new fans. It may not boost the streaming numbers so dramatically but it will boost the saves, shares and repeat listens which is good for fanbase building and more likely to have a positive impact on the algorithm, leading to us being placed on more radio playlists, release radars and mix lists. It is a frustration that, while we can see where geographically we are picking up streams and what Spotify identifies as 'active listeners', we have no data about who they are so we cannot add them to playlists and a recent attempt to use Bandsintown as a means of matching stats to people (see Sherry's article above this one) fell flat and proved to be an expensive flop. All the same, the

amount we pay for playlist pitching is a fraction of what we might once have had to pay for radio plugging and the impact is far more positive and useful.

The issue of paying for other media support such as reviews and interviews can be a thornier one. For years, those of us who have found ourselves in the role of advising others had an unequivocal policy of saying a blanket 'no' to all forms of payment for such things. But, in today's much changed landscape, it has become necessary to seriously re-evaluate. And cost must always be a key consideration. For example, you can pay £42 for Musosoup to send your new single to all its curators and then have the option to pay for the ensuing offers that appear. You can pick the most useful ones, on the basis of doing your homework and background research, while accepting the compulsory 'free alternatives' for the vast bulk of offers. So you might find yourself spending, say, another £50 - £80 on cherry picking the ones that look likely to be the most useful to you. But then that's less than £100 overall for a bunch of quality reviews, features and interviews where you might have instead paid ten or more times that figure to a PR outlet to get you nowhere near as many good ones.

So is it selling out or compromising longstanding principles to pay for these reviews (most of which cost anywhere from about £2.50 to £20 each and, not unreasonably, allow the curator to cover their magazine's/blog's costs to some extent) or is it simply a far more cost-efficient and practical alternative to wasting money on overpriced plugging and PR? Sometimes it pays to think outside the box.

We can argue about the rights and wrongs of agreeing to specific marketing and promotional campaigns. There is no right or wrong answer though. Probably the best guide to whether you are going too far by agreeing to do something you have been leant on

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

So April has been an interesting month. The Easter [or Spring if you prefer to keep religious references out of holidays!] Break meant less tracks coming into Fresh on the Net although the flow of tracks from pluggers, labels and artists for our radio show continued. For Neil, dealing with family-related duties has taken up an unusual amount of time but he still managed to perform a once-in-a-lifetime Elvis Presley impersonation for a student event [for which Sherry filmed plenty of evidence!]. Meanwhile,

to do by your manager, label, promoter etc. is how it makes you feel. If you really don't feel right doing it, then don't do it.

Otherwise spending money as wisely as you can and continually experimenting with marketing ideas and opportunities to see what works is not selling out your principles. It is sensible and might help you to move forward, however painstakingly slowly, towards the next level in your music career journey. You should never be damned for trying. And the only person who can ultimately judge what is acceptable to do in the name of career promotion is you.

our new single came out on 24th April and two days later, under the direction of Del, we shot the video on the Woolwich Ferry which was a blast.

### **TikTok Debate Rages On**

It is notable that some of those influencers who have faced criticism over their tendency to pressure aspiring artists to spend hours on TikTok when their own TikTok videos only take a few minutes to produce seem to have picked up on the backlash and

started trying to respond to it. Sadly they still don't seem to get how much work goes into artists creating good quality audio-visual content and their excuses sound much like the same idle threats as before about artists who are not prepared to stay on the TikTok Treadmill having no chance of being successful. Our advice is don't listen to these people. There is something particularly distasteful about people demanding that others should put in a level of effort and commitment they themselves will never need to match.

### **Arts Council In Denial?**

It is now some five months since the publication of Baroness Hodge's report on Arts Council England. Granted, the government has to take a lot of the blame for the lack of response so far. It is incumbent on DCMS to work out how it can get more funding to ACE and also provide the policy support and guidance to bring about the key recommendations in the report.

Nevertheless, ACE should also be looking at the report and, in particular, the key criticisms of their approach and trying to address and do something about them. But, looking at the lamentably poor feedback and inaccuracies in relation to recent grant applications, especially Fresh

on the Net Live where they got their facts spectacularly wrong for the third time, there is no sign that ACE sees any need to change. This is deeply disappointing. At a time when we constantly hear about the struggles in grassroots music, we need a grant-awarding body that wants to support the sector, not look for reasons, however silly and spurious, not to.

The very first [and arguably most important] of the recommendations in Baroness Hodge's report was that we need the Arts Council. But, if they continue to be in denial about the need to change their culture and address the accusation that they have become a 'Command And Control' body rather than an organisation set up to support and nurture arts talent and ideas, they will prove not to be fit for purpose. If so, perhaps it is time they were replaced by a more progressive, in-touch model that is responsive to actual needs instead of hiding behind pathetic excuses to say no.

### **Fresh On The Net: Get On Board**

Fresh On The Net is one of the most important platforms supporting and giving exposure to grassroots music in the world. Tom Robinson's decision to take a back seat in 2024 and the loss of our relationship with the BBC Introducing Mixtape Show that he

had presented for 17 years on BBC Radio 6 Music do not alter that fact.

On the contrary, since being handed the leadership of the platform by Tom in 2024, Del Owusu has done a fantastic job in so many areas. He has recruited an ever-evolving team of moderators and reviews writers who are, overall, younger than ever before, much more ethnically diverse and have a much better gender balance.

Talented singer-songwriter Mia Wilks is our youngest ever mod at 17. Our Sherry is the second youngest mod and the first ever Asian member of the team. NX Panther is the first black female mod as well an exciting young Hip Hop talent and we have also seen the likes of Tony Hardy, distinguished writer and publisher of the amazing *Fifty 3 Fridays* and a member of the Glastonbury New Talent Stage committee, singer-songwriter Alan Dreezer, artist and curator John Michie, blogger Chiana and FOTN regular Sheena Cameron all join the team under Del's leadership. We also still have mods who have been there longer than me like Sharon Pearce, Steff Lane and Paul Kerr and I have been on the team for eight and a half years now.

It is not just a more diverse team with a greater age range that has evolved under Del's leadership. He has also increased the number of articles and features on the site including live music reviews by us (Neil and Sherry), Del's *Tea And Biscuits* interviews and the Alt Picks where the individual mods choose and say something about tracks we liked that missed out on the previous weekend's Listening Post.

So we now need more people to get involved with coming and voting every week at the Listening Post and having a say in who makes the fresh faves and lands a published review as a result. We need more people to read the articles and interviews we share on the platform, supporting and exposing grassroots artists. And we are also always up for people contributing articles and, if they want to, acting as guest mods sometimes too.

Let's start with more people turning up between tomorrow and Sunday (1st - 3rd May) and voting at the Listening Post. We put 25 cool tracks up every weekend for you to listen to and vote on. You can browse them without having to listen to every track in full if you like. Then you can decide which ones you want to hear all the way through or listen to again. Come

and be part of this unique platform and help support grassroots music.

**And Actually Finally!**

So that wraps up another edition of our monthly journal. As ever, thanks so much for reading it and we hope you have found interesting and

enlightening content in it. Your support means the world to us so thank you so much. Take care everyone and keep enjoying the music. Hoping for better news around the world soon too.

**NEIL & SHERRY xxxx**