

TRUST The DOC



Edition 116: 31st May 2026

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THE HOTTEST NEWS FROM THE GRASSROOTS SCENE:

- **NEWS AND INFO FROM GRASSROOTS MUSIC**
- **[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: CURRENT & NEXT SINGLES**
- **ICMP PRESENTATION ON CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE**
- **REVIEWS OF OVER 50 NEW INDEPENDENT RELEASES**
- **SHERRY REVIEWS THE FRESH ON THE NET FAVES**
- **MARK EVANS ON DIGITAL Vs IMMERSIVE MARKETING**
- **SHERRY ON WHY GRASSROOTS VENUES ARE STRUGGLING**
- **NEIL ON WHAT ELECTION RESULTS MEAN FOR GRASSROOTS**
- **OUR THOUGHTS ON THE MONTHS GONE BY AND AHEAD**

INTRODUCTION:

Five months into 2026, it has certainly been a chaotic period so far. Thankfully, despite the ongoing horror show that is the political stage both globally and here in the UK, music has continued to be, to paraphrase Average White Band, the queen of our soul.

This month saw another shed load of great new tracks by independent artists, over 50 of which are reviewed in this edition. It was also a strong month for single *Paradigm* and we are excited for the new one *Ebbw Vale* which is out on 12th June. It's not the first time the unique socio-political history of the Wesh Valleys has inspired us, this time providing context for another rallying cry for unity in the face of the current far right onslaught in the media.

We have a guest article in Ed 116 by the amazing Mark Evans who, like Sherry, was one of Neil's MA Music Business students at ICMP and is now carving out a career in the

music industry. Mark looks at whether, with all the focus on social media content creation, the industry is overlooking the power of immersive marketing.

Neil also delves into the aftermath of the most depressing UK election results in history and asks what next for the UK and how does this impact on grassroots music? And Sherry considers why so many grassroots music venues are struggling financially. There is also Neil's damning verdict on Eurovision that asks why BBC license payers' money continues to fund such a disgraced debacle.

NEIL MARCH & SHERRY SAHAYARAJ

31st May 2026

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

(TTD Logos by **PaulFCook**)

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PART ONE: NEWS AND INFORMATION: EDITION 116

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: SINGLES LATEST



The new single by [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) is *Ebbw Vale*; a song that places our call for unity and rejection of the far right narrative in the context of the proud political and industrial history of this magical Welsh Valleys town. More on that later.

We had quite a few ‘wow’ moments in May. The release of *Paradigm* in late April went as well as we could honestly have hoped for. Pitching early meant we were on all the target Spotify playlists on release

day which, along with the stalwart support of **Serge Wenus** and his amazing Prince playlist, saw the single reach **6,000 streams in 21 days** and achieve a literally astonishing statistic with **15% of listeners saving it to personalised playlists or libraries** (over 1.5 in every 10). This showed that we were hitting the right playlists where listeners get our music which is far more useful than achieving huge streaming numbers through mainstream pop-dominated playlists where most of the streams are

'passive' and don't lead to engagement.

Release day was also made all the more special by our awesome friend **Tony Hardy** providing this lovely and incisive review in [Fifty3Fridays](#). Tony's eloquent words and analysis of our anti-fascist lyrical message underline why he is such an important voice in independent music.

It was also helped by the [video](#), filmed and directed by the amazing **Del Owusu** whose choice of the Woolwich Ferry for the location was an inspired one. Sherry did the editing and it hit YouTube 5 days after the single was released. As well as notching up nearly 17,000 views, it has enabled us to sign up more than 3,500 new subscribers to our YouTube channel, taking the figure to nearly 14,000.

The single has continued to rack up the streams and saves and this has also caused the Spotify algorithm to keep placing it on radio playlists and individuals' Release Radar lists. Big

thanks are due to the aforementioned Del, Tony and Serge and our awesome label boss and fellow music artist **Andrew Hartshorn** as well as the hard-working **Emiel** at **YouGrow Promo**, the always supportive **Nami** at **Introvert Disco** and the teams at **Flex**, **Illustrate**, **The Interviewist**, **Beach House**, **Sistra**, **Indie Noise Nation**, **Radio Armazem** and **Musosoup**.

The reviews have been beautiful and our interview with The Interviewist was a joy. We are impressed by the effort all these writers put in to ensure they know our history and understand the lyrical content. You can read them all and a lot more at our [EPK](#).

The next single is **Ebbw Vale**, out on Monochrome Motif Records on 12th June and we think it is our strongest and most ambitious track yet. So we are super excited to share it. If only our budget stretched to taking the band and Del to the Welsh Valleys to film the video. Hmmmm, now there is a thought!

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND TO PLAY ICMP VENUE

The **Institute of Contemporary Music Practice** (ICMP) has agreed to allow **Trust The Doc Media** to host a gig at its state-of-the-art venue on the newly built **Queens**

Park Campus where work was only finished in 2022. **[The] Music Of Sound** will headline the event with probably three support acts, all with direct links to ICMP (as

students or staff or both). We will ask Polly Mackie (Artschool Girlfriend) but I doubt we can afford Polly even though she is a friend and ICMP colleague! The gig

is likely to happen around October/November 2026 and will be free entry but spaces will be offered to students and staff first. More news on this will follow soon.

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>.

TTD
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Public Playlist

Trust The Doc New Music Playlist

The Trust The Doc New Music Playlist is back starting with all the tracks I can...

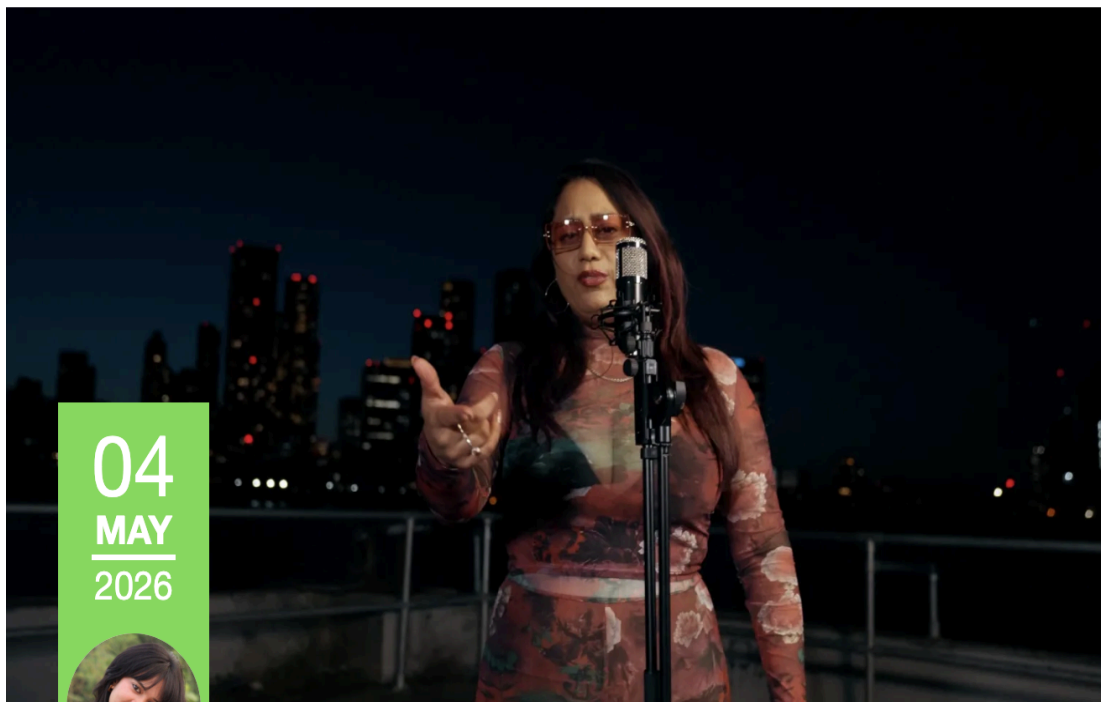
drneilmarch • 22 saves • 21 songs, 1 hr 18 min

SHERRY REVIEWS THE FRESH ON THE NET FAVES

Monday 4th May saw Sherry reviewing the Fresh on the Net [Faves](#). In her unique poetic style, Sherry reviewed tracks by Anna Blaise, Austel, Cat Rose, Emily

Mercer, Floe Brown, Mama's Gun, MT Jones, NX Panther, Thomas Wallaker and V Sign Olah.

FRESH FAVES: BATCH 605



04
MAY
2026



by Sherry

5 comments

ARTISTS AT A GLANCE

ANNA BLAISE

AUSTEL

CAT ROSE

EMILY MERCER

FLOE BROWN

MAMAS GUN

MT JONES

NX PANTHER

THOMAS WALLIKER

V-SIGN OLAH

CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE: ETHICAL MARKETING & PROMO - Sherry & Neil give presentation to ICMP colleagues



Tomorrow (1st June) sees ICMP's annual Research, Scholarly & Professional Practice (RSPP) Conference at the original London Campus in Kilburn and Neil and Sherry have been invited to give a presentation. It will focus on *Cutting Through The Noise - What Does Ethical Marketing And Promotion Look Like In 2026?*

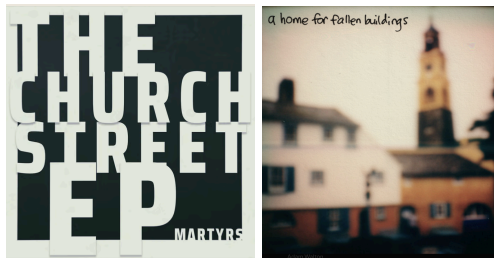
The subject of the presentation reflects a recurring theme in recent editions of *Trust The Doc*. Since Neil's first article about the 'TikTok Treadmill' and its threat to the mental health and well-being

of artists, especially but by no means only younger ones, this has been a debate we have been happy to lead on. Sherry's article, in Ed 115, about marketing options also contributed to the debate and this edition sees former ICMP MA student Mark Evans bring another angle to the discourse. Mark is now working in the music industry and building a reputation for leadership and advice to independent artists.

We will report on how the event panned out in Ed 117.

PART TWO: REVIEWS OF NEW MUSIC

ALBUMS & EPs



Merthyr Tydfil's [Martyrs](#) grabbed our attention with their last EP so it is great to have another EP from them. **Church Street** offers six tracks, kicking off with the title track, partly recalling Peter Gabriel-era Genesis with its cleverly configured chord arrangement, busy syncopated rhythms and striking tenor range vocals. Full of little nuanced changes and contrasts, this is a great opener. **He Breaks Horses** has a distinctly 80s feel, perhaps with nods to Depeche Mode and Welsh warriors The Alarm if such a combination can be imagined. Big synth slabs, spy movie guitars and a tune worthy of Neil Tennant. **Twist The Cap** is in half time but has an epic quality, high register vocals, long synth tones, bell like sounds coming in over ethereal keyboards while the guitar jingles and jangles softly around the mix.

You've been here before offers an ambient mid-EP interlude with lots of found sounds and fluid changes while synths bubble and pop around an eerie backdrop and spoken word samples add to this atmosphere. It picks up dynamically over the final stretch. **Having The Window Open Helps** then brings dark synths dominating at both registral ends of the spectrum. This is also instrumental with spoken word samples, this time more prominent.

The EP ends with the 'alternative version' of **Twist The Cap**, floating in on dreamy synths gradually increasing in volume as the chords fill out. This translucence then gives way to a Neil Hannon-ish vocal delivery and thoughtful lyric. It's a strong finish to another accomplished and musically diverse EP.

Staying in Wales, when he is not presenting the Saturday Night BBC Introducing extravaganza on BBC Radio Wales, [Adam Walton](#) is also a composer and artist. His latest offering is an EP entitled ***A Home For Fallen Buildings***, inspired by ‘... Clough William-Ellis, Portmeirion and The Prisoner’.

It kicks off with ***Many Happy Returns*** built around a synth melody and developing harmonic language that has shades of Wendy Carlos with a hint of Ron Grainer. There is also a Lynchian (Badalamenti comes to mind obviously) aspect, interestingly a comparison Adam made about our band [The] Music Of Sound when he played us on his show although this is a very different animal; warm but oddly unsettling. The next track, ***Joseph Serf*** is a complete contrast, kicking off with a straight ahead beat and a repeating bass figure against which we get guitar jangle, long chords and sounds coming in and out of focus, almost a little bit Public Service Broadcasting-ish before exiting on a quiet enigmatic synth pattern.

By Hook Or By Crook is next, definitely feeling like it references *The Prisoner* (original version of course with No 2's always identical opening words). More guitar jangle but darker with electronic beat and a keyboard melody that takes centre stage. Again, he adds more sounds and timbres as it progresses including some crystalline tuned percussion and Vangelis-like synths. ***The Lighthouse*** has a slow, trippy feel with tremolo notes and quietly evolving contrasts between almost bell-like synth and mellow legato undercurrent. As the timbres grow and the track shifts in tonality, we feel the sense of the sea and surrounding world waking as darkness gives way to early light. It ends quietly in spinning note patterns. ***KAR 120 C*** is the final track, introduced by bendy tones playing a sixties-ish melody with a spacy aura. The track lasts one minute and one second, a kind of intriguing outertude to an inventive and imaginative instrumental suite.

POP NOODLES



If you like bouncy, buoyant and quite funky Pop with passionate and agile female vocals, you will enjoy Paisley's [Anya Vincent](#) and **Closer**. Striking melody, punchy production, imaginative instrumental arrangement and a great vocal and backing vocal performance all add up to a quality Pop track.

Talented Londoner [Ama Adem](#) follows the highly acclaimed *Skin*

In The Game with **Walls**. It finds Ama in fine voice. The style, with strummed guitar and busy but appealing vocal melody, reminds me a little of early Gabrielle in a mash with Desiree. But it also has an unmistakably contemporary feel both in relation to the writing and the production. A great showcase for Ama's instinctive singing and writing talents.

ALT ROCK & INDIE



[Three Channel Television](#) say they blend 90s Indie Rock with modern influences although there is also an 80s Post-Punk aspect to the guitar playing on **Way Of The World** with its arpeggiogenic use of suspensions. The sound of the band is agreeably punchy with live sounding drums, pounding bass and reverberant fuzztone guitars accompanying passionate male vocals. The arrangement is cleverly nuanced and marked by subtle

changes in dynamic. It also has a great tune to boot.

From Leeds, Warrington and Scarfolk, [Things That Go](#) return to these pages courtesy of **Slip Away**. Engaging female vocals, cool harmonies and inventive interband chemistry mark this track out. There are lovely contrasts between busy single noteplay and long chords and the slightly mystical atmosphere created by the unusual

chord structure adds to the appeal of a really well-written and executed song.

It's always good to have a new track from Irish Indie singer-songwriter [Roe](#). **Adrenaline** is in a mid-tempo groove built around I - V - IIm - IV chord pattern with chunky fuzztone guitar chords and Roe's highly distinctive voice dominating. The melody is the icing on this very attractive musical cake.

It's been a while since we had a new track from Scottish Indie stars [Wojtek The Bear](#) so it was good to receive **Fly In Amber**. This is in a jaunty swinging triplet time with horns that remind me a little of the short-lived but excellent Jamie Wednesday. Jangly, thoughtful Alt Rock with some folky violin taking it in Dexys direction too, this is a

lovely slice of creative alternative Pop.

This has been popping up on our social media for a couple of days so it's good to have the latest single by Bristol's Alt Rock warriors [Shoun Shoun](#). **Drip** is, like all Annette's songs, intense, inventive and invigorating. It is also a little different to recent offerings. A ghostly synth riff and correspondingly busy, fluid bass play a prominent role while the guitars and drums provide a growing wall of mind-spinning sound. Annette's vocal is dynamic, dexterous and dark, becoming more desperate sounding and intense as the track builds to its shuddering climax. Shoun Shoun are one of the best bands out there in grassroots independent music and it's time they had the wider recognition they so deserve.



Rome may be the romantic hotspot of Southern Europe but [Feldspar](#) bring the noise on **Good Kids**. Fuzztone guitars, driving bass and drums and a little lead guitar tune accompany intense male vocal and contrastingly chilled female one. This is energetic, tuneful and invigorating.

When he isn't lighting up *Britain's Got Talent* or delighting audiences at *Fresh On The Net Live*, Hull's most unpredictable master of quirky Art Pop [Graham Graham Beck](#) is always inventing new tracks. **It's A Joke** seems to be poking fun at a variety of tricks

and accessories associated with the average magician's routine. The musical backdrop is slightly funky with deep squelchy synth bass, clanging piano chords and syncopated rhythms. As ever, you don't know quite what's coming next but it is characteristically done with both a tongue-in-cheek smirk and highly accomplished musicianship.

Liverpool's fellow Goldsmith alumnus [Eva Layne & The Dolls](#) return with *Serious*. This is intriguing because it blends Eva's penchant for classic sixties-infused pop melody writing with a Massive Attack-like bassline and enigmatic sounds that lend it a Trip Hop sensibility. Meantime, Eva's distinctive vocal carries a tune that lodges itself in our heads while the slightly otherworldly late night aura of the track descends like a soft mist, engulfing us in its inescapable beauty. A truly outstanding track.

They don't have a 'brand'. So says the Spotify artist profile for [Young](#)



We love a surprise package and that is what we have with Brighton's [Elandra](#), pictured here on the instantly recognisable beach

[Martyrs](#). *Sugar On My Tongue* finds them in organic Americana territory. Sweet suspended chords, smooth sustained lead guitar and solid rhythm section are matched by big harmonies and a male vocal that recalls classic past masters like Bob Seger, Tom Petty and even Friends Again. It is cleverly crafted, avoiding the obvious and delivering an infectious, energetic and accomplished slice of timeless Pop.

Glasgow's [f.o.machete](#) bring us *Sleeper Cell*. It gets straight in our faces with a lovely bendy guitar figure followed by descending bassline before the band kicks in with driving fuzztone guitars and corresponding bass and drums. The female vocal is distinctive and playful but edgy and a strong melody is lifted by imaginative chord changes, additional bars to emphasise tonal shifts and great lead guitar figures growing in prominence towards the climax of the track.

in the South Coast's Capital of New Music. Right Wrong is sophisticated Alt Pop that has a retro element in its rich chords and tenor range

vocals that sweep and swoop up and down the octaves, recalling the likes of Danny Wilson and Ben Folds but also with a more contemporary nod to Tame Impala and Bon Iver perhaps. They do this in their own individual way, helped by accomplished musicianship and pristine production. A breath of fresh [sea] air.

... and no sooner do we review one fine Brighton band with cool retro influences than we receive the latest release by the Retro Pop

London-based Singaporean and ICMP graduate [Darius Oon](#) recently announced his departure from the Dream Pop band Coming Up Roses (for whom he was a guitarist) and his first foray into being a solo artist is Sense. This shows Darius taking on both a poppier direction but also one that wears his love of eighties Post-Punk Pop Jangle on his sleeve. Definite echoes of Aztec Camera in a mash with The Go Betweens and maybe even a sliver of Microdisney here. The harmonies that lift the chorus from midway into the track are sweet and Darius emerges both

masters from Brighton. Namely [Barbara](#). Isn't She Strange! has all the brothers' trademarks of clever chord changes, rich harmonies, lovely falsetto range vocals and unexpected twists and turns like the Latinesque mid-section. Shades of earlyish Steely Dan, 10CC, Wings and Hall & Oates combined with an unmistakably contemporary vibe and Barbara's by now very well established sound. Outstanding and invigorating. They continue to stand alone as Kings of their genre.

as an accomplished, expressive vocalist and a songsmith too.

Over the eight years or so that this journal has existed, our good friend [Kerry JK](#) may well hold the record for the number of different genre sections he has been reviewed in. This time he veers into Rock with the brilliantly titled Save Us (From Those Who Want To Save Us), a line he repeats throughout the track with almost Queen-like chords and harmonies although, this being Kerry, it has some unusual sounds and an underlying quirkiness about it too. It is also surprisingly catchy and a bundle of positive energy.

BEATS, RHYTHMS & RHYMES



From Mbeng in Canada comes [Super Freddy](#) with *All Of This Money*. He raps in a passionate triplet time flow with thoughtful, self-analysing lyrics against a jazz-infused backdrop whose distant echoing sax, rolling beat and fluid chord play add a late night City backstreet aura to the track, perfect for his yearning style and poetic realism.

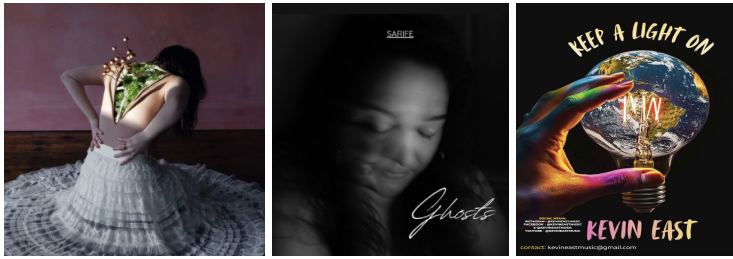
Birmingham's [Bookznnya](#) is pulling no punches on *Wild*. His distinctive voice dominates centre stage while a minor key synth-led backdrop and beat seems to add to the context of his stream of consciousness social commentary, part personal, part observational. He holds our attention throughout with the power of his words and the highly individual way he raps.

Versatile Londoner [Dr J](#) brings us *Foreigners And Exiles*. His highly distinctive deep voice dominates

from the outset while the instrumental backdrop is both a little jazzy and a little Old Skool in De La Soul meets Naughty By Nature territory. Dr J sets out his stall, pointing out that we are all foreigners and exiles in terms of our genetic history while retaining his cheerful disposition and delivering an engaging track.

It has been a little while since we had new material from the usually prolific Edinburgh-based Londoner [Conscious Route](#). So it was good to see *High And Mighty* in the in-box. Here he collaborates again with **Wends** but this time on a frantic Drum'n'Bass track with mind-spinning bendy electronic sounds, great beatz, slightly Eastern-tinged vocals from Wends and a great mid-track vocal interjection by Rolain himself. An absolute belter. Good to have them back.

SOULFUL SENSIBILITIES



London's [Gabriela Eva](#) is in an inventive mood on ***Lonely Bones***. Cleverly shifting rhythmic configurations match the shifts in mood, soft and understated one moment, harder and more intense the next. Jazz-infused chords float in and out of focus too while Gabriela's multi-tracked harmonies reinforce a sweet melody and the production is pristine and perfect to emphasise the dreamy nature of the track.

[Sarife](#) is back. ***Ghosts*** is laid back and soulful with definite elements of Gabrielle mixing in with a more R'n'B-infused vibe. Old Skool in aura but sufficiently contemporary to feel fresh with its repeating

chord pattern and echoing sweeps of BVs. Sarife's vocals are agile and expressive in a rich alto range, adding an extra layer of quality to a classy track.

Our close friend and super talented East Londoner [Kevin East](#) keeps the tunes coming with ***Keep A Light On***. A medium fast tempo groove grabs attention with lush keyboard chords and horn stabs. Kev is in fine voice, showing us his registral range and dynamic dexterity. As ever with Kev, there are echoes of Aaron Neville, Smokey Robinson and Maxwell but he has so much of his own style and with it the ability to turn out great tunes like this.

CLUB CULTURE



Leeds' [Cheryl Holland](#) could be lighting up a dancefloor near you soon with ***Arrival***. Glazed with quietly mixed spoken word here and there, this is otherwise one of

those gloriously loud Euro Trance-infused dance tracks that has big resonating synth riffs dominating with a pulsating beat

and spacious production. Uplifting and energising.

It's been a little while since we had a new track from fellow FOTN mod [Grubby](#). *From The Inside* finds Geoff back in familiar territory creating a monster of a track with big brash and booming Drum'n'Bass beat underpinning synth stabs and chords, quiet spoken word samples and an array of sounds. Full of invention and imagination but a floor filla in the right atmosphere too. Also check out the more enigmatic and ethereal *The Least You Want*.

Anna Haara Kristoferson is the artist [Roleplay](#). *True Spring* sits at

the poppy end of the Euro House spectrum with hints of Trance too about the semi-quaver synth chords that set it all in motion. The song is much more in pop territory though. It is also melodic, engaging and highly likeable.

Londoner [K8](#) teams up with **James Getting**. Her appealing vocals adorn a punchy mix of reverberant synths, sustain guitar soloing and a drum'n'bass underlay. It works well thanks to the nuanced dynamics and intensity of the production, K8's yearning voice and a cool hook.

SINGER-SONGWriters



Londoner [Kitty O'Neal](#) is the artist formerly known as **March** and she has been a regular in these pages for a long time. She also played a wonderful live set for us at the Amersham Arms a few years back. *Can I Let This One Go?* is Kitty at her creative best. Imaginative chord structure, cleverly configured rhythmic shifts, lush harmonies and her distinctive, dexterous vocals setting out a delight of a melody

and thoughtful, reflective lyrics. With an impressive live itinerary and increasing recognition for her talents, this could be an exciting year for her.

Our lovely and talented friend **Alice Hale** is [With Sun](#) (along with her lovely partner Stu Readman when playing live). Alice is probably still very much recovering from and coming to terms with the sad loss

of her highly talented dad Keith and this track ***Go Lightly*** clearly responds to this. The video shows she collaborated with a Cellist and fellow female singer plus a male backing singer so I am not sure whether they are on the recording or just in the video but there are lovely sounds intertwining with Alice's picking guitar play and beautiful harmonies reinforcing a soft but assured vocal performance and a touching melody and lyrics. Like all her songs, this is gorgeous, refreshingly individual and a must-listen.

[Charlie Forrest](#) returns with ***Phish***. This is a kind of contemporary Psychedelic Folk with strummed guitar chords, spy movie lead play and dreamy backing vocals. Against this backdrop, Charlie's distinctive voice brings a sparkling melody and the track is punctuated by clever rhythmic shifts and contrasts between major and minor.

Cambridge's [Navina](#) brings us ***Rain (Overcoming Anxiety)*** and, if this is a representation of that



Nottingham's [JJ Lovegrove](#) teams up with [Ed Harcourt](#) on ***Signal***

journey, it is done cleverly. The song starts quiet and translucent, with long tones and strummed chords against organic percussion while Navina's soft but strong vocals take centre stage. As the track develops, the arrangement fills out, fortified by vocal harmonies and rich synths before ending with gorgeous picking guitar and Navina's soulful but folkly voice signing off a great track.

[Sharon Lazibyrd](#) follows hot on the heels of *If* with ***Quand Je Vois Le Monde***. The chorus may be in French but the lyrics are otherwise in English and echo a theme many of us have been moved to write a lot about lately, combating the tidal wave of far right drivel that comes at us relentlessly from a f***ed up media. She does this to a Latinesque chord pattern with piano at the centre of the instrumental backdrop and Sharon utilising her upper register to deliver the hooks. As ever, she infuses it with her own distinctive sound and style.

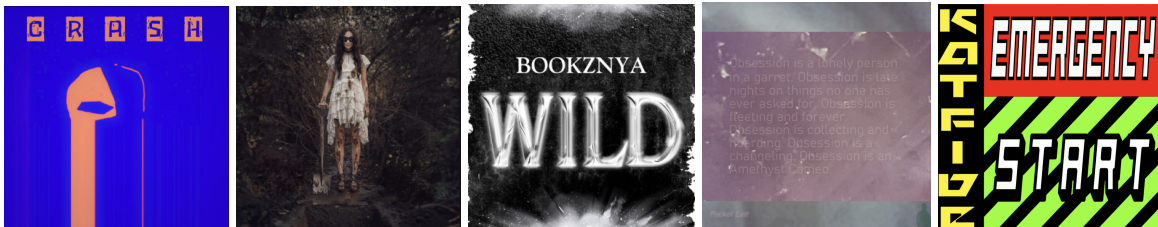
Loss. Waves of quintal-quartal piano and drone bass provide the

main accompaniment to Judi's distinctive and expressive voice, sometimes harmonised or answered by Ed's razor-sharp (not pitchwise obviously!) voice. It is so cinematic, atmospheric and vast in its spaciousness. Perhaps a shade of Julia Holter in a mash with Lana Del Rey although it sounds like neither. Judi has been building an impressive catalogue of emotion-stirring songs and this

one, aided and abetted by Ed, is a true banger.

Exeter's [Stuart Wills](#) returns with ***The Unknown***. Featuring an uncredited female vocalist, this builds in layers with thoughtful piano, cinematic synths and a crunching syncopated beat driving matters along. It is dramatic, emotionally charged and catchy too.

SYNTHEMATIC



With his new album dropping soon too, Poland's prolific artist [Serge Wenus](#) hits us with ***Crash (She Got Me Now)***. This rolls along in a mid-tempo groove with a cool bassline and corresponding synth riff while the chords are extended and rich. Serge is in fine voice, his unique style leading the line and reinforcing a strong hook. There is a late night back street aura to this too. One of his best yet. Also check out the intense but melodic and danceable ***Irresistible*** coupled with the quirky instrumental ***Tokyo***.

The latest single from TTD favourites [Roundtrip To Tiny](#) is ***Of Opposite Gardens***. This is more in explicitly synthpop territory. A half

time beat plays off against electro-bass riff, floating chords and some interesting string swipes. The female vocal is not in such high register as some of their tracks and shows the richness of her vocals. It has an unusual melody too and grows on me as it pans out. Lovely track.

From Warsaw via London, [Dlina Volny](#) brings us ***Bliss***. Built around a fluid staccato synth pattern and straight-ahead electro-beat, this is an intriguing combination of very contemporary sounds and vocals (male and female) with an underlying eighties synthpop vibe. The vocals are breathy and echo across the mix, adding to an

appealing melodic sensibility that contrasts the crisp mechanistic instrumental background.

With his new album due to drop on 26th June, **Mark Heffernan** aka **Pocket Lint** brings the single **Amethyst Cameo**. This is in a medium fast tempo with trademark cinematic synths intertwining against unobtrusive beat switching between full and half time. The chorus has echoes of Heaven 17 in a mash with Depeche Mode and shows Mark's voice in its full rich tone, a little of Phil Oakey and a little more of Marc Almond. Also rich is his spoken voice in the verses, very English actor-like in its clarity and command. This is one of



Leicestershire's TTD favourite **Chris Mills** aka **C-Beem** has been a busy boy lately and, with his new album set to drop in late June, he hits us with another single in the form of **Castle Cellophane**. This is electro-synth Alt Pop with popping synths, slightly ghostly legato tones

Mark's best offerings to date and whets our collective appetites for the new album.

Terry Tyldesley is the creative force behind **Kat Five**, closely associated with an amazing group of mostly women involved in grassroots music that includes our good friend Caffy St Luce and the Rocklands team. The new Kat Five single is **Emergency Start**. This is dark but melodic synthwave with a shifting drone-like electro bassline, siren-like synth sweeps and a vocal that is yearning and intense, keeping our attention with the energy and atmosphere of this fine track.

and a vocal that has a semi-conversational aura particularly in the verses while the chorus is nonetheless catchy. This fizzes and flickers as it grows, bringing a positive energy and intensity.

ELECTRONIC & AMBIENT

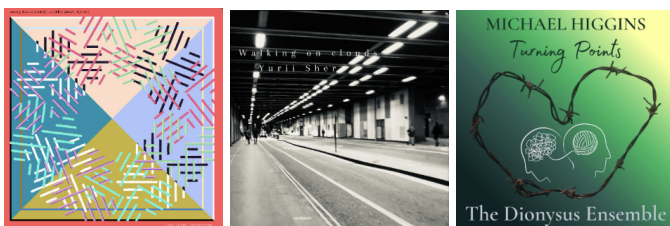


TTD friend and regular [Roger Burke](#), as well as recovering from a nasty accident in Chester recently, brings us a new solo track in the form of ***Legacy***. This is a particularly clever track. It begins as a calm, gradually building piece of electronica while a spoken male voice asks a child what kind of world we have created, lamenting the ills the human race has dumped on future generations. Then, as the track stretches out dynamically, there are mild dissonances, particularly in the form of single synth tones that sweep across the mix in a daunting, unsettling fashion, eventually transforming

this from its chilled beginnings into something more scary and, at all times, compelling. One of Roger's best yet.

Regular readers will know we love a bit of ethereal ambient electronic music with found sounds and that is what we have with [The Snowball Effect](#) and ***Midnight Rain***. The sound of rain is, in itself, very appealing in this context and the synths float, flutter and bend their way around the slowly layering sounds to create a quite tranquil but mystical atmosphere.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL AND SOUND ART



Sweden-based UK artist, friend and versatile composer **Harry Perry** aka [rryrry](#) returns with ***When We Could Touch***. Some soft spoken word talks of 'we will meet again' so this may be a tribute to someone no longer with us but then

it also talks about emerging into a better future ('more normal times'). Meanwhile it offers an absolute chocolate box of musical ideas and moods, intense at times with choppy strings playing chords, sometimes cinematic and dark

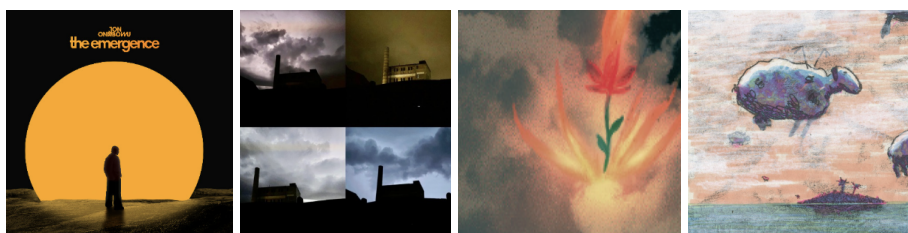
before a strange downward bending figure that sees it out. The way the track develops from unusual chords and intense interplay before staccato brass chords add another layer and the full arrangement pans out is all highly inventive and takes Harry into harmonically adventurous and sophisticated territory. More here than I can try to condense into a short review but go and listen to it. So much to savour.

I could have listed the returning [Yurii Sher](#)'s track *Distances* in the Electronic & Ambient section but it feels fully 'composed' and contemporary classical at heart. Enigmatic sounds appear and disappear, forming chords before melting away, creating an atmosphere that is, as the title suggests, distant. Synths and piano

rolls punctuate the track as it develops texturally and dynamically, all in the space of a minute and a half. Yurii is proving to be an artist of interest to us here at TTD. Also check out the quiet enigma of *Seconds Away*.

The ever-reliable [The Dionysus Ensemble](#) bring us **Michael Higgins' Moments**. This is a richly harmonised, cinematic piece that, with its romantic chord sequences and dreamy glissandi, has a classic movie feel yet also throws up some unusual harmonic ideas and very clever utilisation of the timbres and textures of the [often muted] strings and what sounds like a quiet harp plucking notes in contrast to the vibrato strings. Beautifully played and lovingly crafted.

JAZZ & INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS



Nigerian drummer and bandleader [Jon Onabowu](#) brings a retro Jazz Fusion vibe with *The Emergence*. The musicianship in the band is evident from the outset and there is some mind-spinning synth play that reminds me a little of Joe Zawinul in a jam with Santana

while Stevie Wonder's *Contusion* lurks in the shadows. Music like this is timeless though and the combination of creativity and virtuosity here is a breath of fresh air.

Brighton's [Richard Brincklow](#) is at

it again with ***Ghost In The Corner Under The Cupboard***. Slow-paced but energetic, this uses some deliciously unusual chords and mild dissonances with ghostly glissandi and synth tones, haunting sax and spine-tingling piano not to mention the fluidity of the bass and drums underpinning the whole piece. It lives up to its title and takes us into some scarily beautiful waters.

Talking of jazz-based music that utilises extended chords and clever dissonances, [The Death Particle](#) return with ***Lying Lips/Deceitful Thoughts*** and they turn up the intensity button from the outset with committed interplay between the musicians, a plethora of mind-boggling piano chords, rasping, acrobatic sax and the kind of accomplished musicianship that means they can take off in any direction, infuse their writing with plenty of improv and never lose the thread of what makes their music

exciting. Superb stuff.

From Tel Aviv, Israel, a reminder that there is a world away from the f***ed up politics of Netanyahu and co via the excellent [Floating Sheep](#) with another mind-spinning piece of fluid modern Jazz Fusion entitled ***WOW***. Cleverly shifting rhythmic configurations, dreamy synths, tuned percussion, inventive drumming are just some of the attributes on this excellent and superbly executed track.

We don't usually associate Leicester-based artist [Andrew Van Garrett](#) with Jazz but he shows us another side of his versatile creativity and instrumental prowess on the track ***Sun Waves***. Lush piano chords, some quite Mike Sembelo-ish guitar play and melodic content that never lapses into self-indulgence. A reminder that Andy is a real talent and always full of surprises.

FOLK & COUNTRY FARE



Norwich duo [Garfield & Nico](#) describe ***Find Another Way*** as Folk but it is almost classical at times with its piano chord extensions and dissonances mixing with clever,

understated guitar. When the piano begins to add more fluid scales and arpeggios, this classical element is all the more emphasised but then there is some sort of Celtic pipe

sound that twists and trills around the mix and the male vocals are mellow and mystical. This is an intriguing track that packs a lot of ideas into 3 minutes and 18 seconds of music.

Indie Folksters [Honey & The Bear](#) bring us ***Company***. Vocally it reminds me of Staves with the tone of the female voices and the goose-bumping close harmonies contrasted by robust unison lines. The backdrop is organic and there is some tasty string play in true

Celtic style. All in all, it offers a clever and original mix of influences to create something quite magical.

Cardiff's [Mared](#) returns with ***Numbing***. This one has lyrics in English but has Mared's trademarks of unusual and haunting melody, organic sounds mixing with more ambient ones and ghostly BVs. The arrangement is nuanced and full of contrast and unexpected little twists and turns. Complete with a killa hook too.

PART THREE: OTHER COMMENTARIES

DIGITAL Vs IMMERSIVE MARKETING. GUEST WRITER MARK EVANS ADDS HIS VOICE TO THIS KEY DEBATE



I've been asked by artists I work with and in job interviews about my thoughts on [#socialmedia](#) in [#marketing](#) campaigns.

The question is usually primed to test how well-versed I am in online

culture, but it offers me the opportunity to talk about the biggest gap in the [#musicmarketing](#) zeitgeist. Digital tools must enhance analogue, real-world experiences that reflect

the contemporary world, and not be the core basis of a campaign.

Although the main spending power of [#music](#) listeners comes from 40+ year olds, the fascination with youth culture and appealing to younger audiences is as strong as it has ever been. My generation of Gen-Z, who reached coming-of-age milestones in the pandemic, are watching corporations jump onto TikTok trends and dance routines to prove their relevance. Instead, music marketing in particular should be capitalising on the lack of immersive experiences offered to a generation still feeling the loneliness and isolation of the post-pandemic world. Connecting with audiences has always been the end goal, no?

This doesn't mean campaigns should be getting sad - on the contrary, Charli xcx's brat wall was

a piece of pure genius. Unveiling release details and track lists on a public wall created an exclusive immersive experience, that went viral online due to live-streaming and a countdown effect. The outcome? Brat summer is an evergreen cultural frenzy.

It's perhaps time that the music industry stops seeing social media as the one true launchpad for marketing campaigns, and instead as one tool to amp up the community outreach of the full campaign.

My gut instinct tells me that sharing this, my prized idea, is not the smartest decision, but I'd like to think the network I've built values my ideas. I'd also like to think that this shows the tip of the iceberg that I can offer - pending further opportunities to work on!

Mark Evans has a Masters (MA Hons) Degree in Music Business from ICMP and he is available for grassroots music marketing consultations [here](#). You can also find Mark on [Instagram](#).

THE FUTURE OF MUSIC STARTS IN SMALL VENUES

Sherry considers why small venues are struggling

I was reading an article on [Now Then Magazine](#) a while back about the state of grassroots music venues in the UK, and to be honest, it really had me thinking about the future of live music.

The music industry is typically discussed in terms of streaming figures, arena tours, and viral artists, but the smaller venues that keep the whole scene together are rarely discussed. Before moving on to larger stages, artists learn how to perform, gain confidence, and engage with actual audiences in these intimate settings. But right now, many of these venues are struggling just to survive.

According to the article, the grassroots music sector still brings more than £500 million into the UK economy every year, which shows how important it actually is. But despite that, most venues are barely making profit. More than half of grassroots venues made no profit at all during 2025, and many are only one unexpected expense away from shutting down completely. That part honestly feels scary because once these places disappear, they are very hard to bring back.

The article also mentioned that around 30 venues closed permanently last year, while thousands of jobs were lost across the live music sector. What stood out to me most is that many of those jobs belonged to younger people trying to enter the industry. Behind every venue there are sound engineers, promoters, photographers, lighting staff, bartenders and creatives all depending on these spaces too.

Another sad reality is how touring has reduced across smaller towns and cities in the UK. A lot of artists now focus mainly on major cities because touring costs have become so expensive. Fuel costs, transport, accommodation, equipment, insurance and venue expenses have all increased massively over the past few years.

And because of that, smaller venues are stuck in a difficult position. They either raise ticket prices and risk losing audiences, or keep prices affordable while making almost no money.

One line from the article really stayed in my mind: “One light bulb left on a little too long and the profit’s gone.” It sounds dramatic, but honestly it explains how fragile

things are right now for independent venues.

At the same time though, there are still positive signs. Millions of fans continued to support local performances, and more people attended grassroots events in 2025 than in prior years. Through emergency funding, support initiatives, and campaigns like Own Our Venues, which seeks to prevent independent music venues from going extinct entirely, organisations like the Music Venue Trust are also assisting venues.

Additionally, I thought it was great to see musicians like Wolf Alice, Sam Fender, and Coldplay endorsing venue initiatives and ticket levies to assist the survival of grassroots music. When more established artists recognise their roots and make an effort to help the next generation, it feels significant.

In my opinion, grassroots music is more important than ever.

While streaming made music more accessible, it also gave the

impression that everything was happening more quickly and transiently. Songs become popular on the internet for a few days before fading. However, it still seems authentic to hear live music in small spaces. It produces possibilities, communities, and memories that algorithms cannot match.

It's likely that several of today's greatest performers began their careers performing in small spaces in front of 20 people. These venues are crucial because of this. They are more than just structures. They are an integral aspect of music culture.

The grassroots scene in the UK still feels precarious at the moment, particularly in terms of money. However, it also feels committed to surviving. To be honest, I believe that the reason the scene is still going strong today is the enthusiasm of musicians, venue owners, and music lovers.

Reference:

<https://nowthenmagazine.com/articles/has-recovery-now-plateaued-for-the-uks-live-music-sector-grassroots-venues-ticket-levy>

ELECTION NIGHTMARE: WHERE NEXT FOR THE UK?

by Neil



The recent national (in the Welsh and Scottish Parliaments) and local (across much of England) elections produced the nightmare many of us were bracing ourselves for. There were bright elements; most notably the success of the Greens in London and other metropolitan areas. Correspondingly, Reform UK's continuing inability to win meaningful support where people live in ethnically diverse areas and can see for themselves that integration works and immigration is not a particular problem speaks for itself.

Nevertheless, results across the country signalled a triumph for Farage and his far right propagandists. Even Wales, traditionally seen as Socialist territory and certainly loyal to Labour for the past 100+ years, saw Reform UK win the second most seats. Again, there was relief

that the left-of-centre Plaid Cymru won the most seats with a campaign and agenda that was as quiet on its traditional priority of Welsh independence as the Greens were on the environment. It would be a tough thing for Plaid Cymru to admit but independence is deeply unpopular in the Valleys and they unquestionably benefitted from promising the kind of fundamental progressive change that Labour would usually be associated with.

Inner London proved to be especially fertile ground for the Greens as expected. They won overall control of Lewisham Borough Council (where I am resident) and the Mayoralty just as they did in Hackney. Prior to this election, Labour had won literally 100% of the seats in the previous two local elections and had controlled the council for decades. Hackney has a similar history. The

Greens also won the most seats, although not outright majorities, in other London Council elections.

The Liberal Democrats also had a good night, increasing their share of council seats for the fifth consecutive local elections, reflecting the record number of parliamentary seats they won in the 2024 General Election. Whether this is good news may depend upon your opinion of the traditional 'centre party' but it is possibly some small reassurance that, at a time when more extreme politics seem to be in the ascendancy, they are still making ground. Their leader Ed Davey, a man who has become more well-known for his self-mocking 'good old Ed' antics than for his policies, spent most of the day serving coffee and giving the occasional interview.

Okay, you may be thinking, but what does any of this have to do with a journal about independent music? Actually, a lot is the answer. I will come to that but firstly we need to consider what just happened and why. The rise of the far right has historically tended to go hand in hand with disillusionment with a left leaning government. But to dismiss the success of Reform UK as simply being a protest vote would be a mistake. After all, even at the height of their popularity and

widespread thuggery, the National Front never came close to enjoying any election success back in the nineteen seventies. Their greatest electoral 'triumph' constituted coming third in a by-election in the West Midlands. Later the British National Party did win some council seats in the East London area but again, they were never anything approaching the electoral threat that Reform UK has become.

The BBC's in-house election analyst, John Curtice, offered some interesting insights into how changing voter habits were playing out. According to Curtice, the bulk of vote switching that benefitted Reform came from previous Conservative voters with a relatively small number of Labour ones pushing the numbers up. According to his evaluation, it was the Greens who primarily benefitted from traditional Labour voters changing allegiance. This is actually a very important distinction because it tells us a great deal about the fundamental reasons for Labour's disastrous performance.

In short, Labour has to stop trying, in vain, to court Reform UK voters (who, incidentally, are laughing at Starmer's efforts on social media). Instead, it needs to reconnect with the hundreds of thousands of

disillusioned core Labour voters who have switched to voting Green.

Journalists and political pundits love to talk about a 'battle for the soul of the party' in relation to political affiliations. But, in this instance, that is what we are dealing with. Labour is at a crossroads. If it takes the right turn (and no, I don't mean politically right!) and convinces its real voter base that it can focus on progressive change, fairer wealth distribution, better public services, lower utilities bills and more secure jobs while ending the racism, cynicism and acquiescence to Trump and Netanyahu, it can recover from this terrible two years and still be capable of winning a second term in government.

If, however, it takes a wrong turn, elects another political opportunist who is in the pockets of private health profiteers and the pro-Israel genocide deniers and thinks demonising hard working immigrants is fair game, it could be the death of the party and, with the Tories also struggling to find an identity and reconnect with their own core supporters, the biggest beneficiaries are likely to be the far right. If so, that is bad for all of us.

... which is where the importance of what happens for grassroots music comes into play. Farage has made

it clear that he sees investing money in supporting the arts and creative industries as a waste of money. His party is hellbent on implementing cuts wherever it can in order to cut taxes for the super rich. Farage, a multi-millionaire grifter, would use being in government to feather his own nest even though he would also be the first absentee Prime Minister in modern UK history.

It would signal the end of the Arts Council, the principal body funding independent music in the UK. It would also mean no more deals for grassroots venues on business rates and levies. It would also kill off any prospect of closer working with the European Union, leading to hardcore tariffs that would make touring Europe unaffordable for most independents. And he would be looking to drive out immigrants by whatever means are available. He would love nothing more than to sabotage cultural diversity and integration.

He also wants to ban working from home which shows he has no clue about how businesses function in 2026, many of them needing their staff to work from home to save money on accommodation and all the associated costs of renting office space and providing various facilities. Working from home also enables aspiring artists to waste

less of their day travelling and have more time to work on their creative projects before and after work.

The Labour Government, as regular readers will know, commissioned Baroness [Margaret] Hodge, former Cabinet Minister whose roles included overseeing DCMS, to conduct a thorough review of the Arts Council resulting in a report and recommendations. It was published in November 2025 and is yet to be implemented. Whoever is going to lead the government over its remaining term needs to find the money to give ACE significantly more funds to increase its support for creative projects. They also need to ensure ACE finally responds to the criticism in the report that it has become 'a command and control' body instead of one that supports and nurtures arts talent. The evidence so far suggests the organisation is in denial about the need to improve its practices. Unless the government takes direct action, that is never going to change.

Of course, there is, in theory, the potential for the Green Party to continue its meteoric rise and be in a position to win the next General Election or at least to be the largest party in some form of coalition. But their success has intensified the scrutiny on their popular leader Zak Polanski whose social media

savvy approach has been a major factor in their success. Polanski now finds himself and his leading colleagues being asked to defend their position on whether women can have male genitalia, whether they want open borders and whether they are sympathetic to Islamic Fundamentalists etc! No-one else is being asked similar questions about hardline positions they support, least of all Reform UK whose candidates can be caught red-handed posting racist and misogynistic filth and laugh it off;

It is already clear that the right wing media and the Greens' opponents, including the Labour Party, are looking to turn the screws on the Greens and present them and Polanski as unelectable extremists. They still have a mountain to climb to turn success in diverse inner city areas where Reform struggles to connect with voters into nationwide success on a scale big enough to replace Labour as the left of centre party of choice.

The Green manifesto at the last General Election was not as explicit in its support for arts funding as we would have liked. In fact, it was more focused on the localisation of support which could be a progressive alternative to what we currently have but could also be a complete disaster if not managed

tightly from central government with limits on local autonomy. It has the potential to provide a service that becomes a post-code lottery with some areas thoroughly committed to supporting grassroots talent and others using the money irresponsibly for selfish ends. However we look at it, what takes place on the political stage in the UK between now and 2029 is going to have a hugely significant bearing on independent music.

Labour won the 2024 election with a thumping majority which ought to enable them to be bold in passing policies that pursue a vision for a fairer society. In fairness, some of what they have done on bringing rail under public ownership and introducing stronger workers' rights is good and demonstrates that desire for a better society. But these positives have been overshadowed by the mistakes, not least the folly of trying to appeal to racists with the Prime Minister making speeches that clearly paraphrase the racists' most celebrated historic figure Enoch Powell. The best outcome for most of us would probably still be a new leadership that can get on with making the next three years of Labour Government something to shout about.

The sacrifice made by Josh Simons, giving up his seat so that Andy

Burnham has the chance to return to parliament through an early by-election and run for party leader is an extraordinary one. The fact that the same NEC members who blocked his candidature for the Gorton and Denton by-election because they knew he was a threat to Starmer have approved him this time speaks volumes about how the party is reacting to its catastrophic performance in the recent local (and national in Wales and Scotland) elections.

If Burnham is successful both in the by-election and in a subsequent leadership challenge, that would seem to offer the best hope for Labour's renewal. Wes Streeting will have different ideas and money from some pretty questionable sources to run his campaign. If they mess this up, we will be in uncharted territory, praying that Farage doesn't scoop up the stray votes and hoping the Greens can hold it together in the face of a media backlash. For now, we must wait and see.

There are question marks over Burnham too of course. He has been a great success as Mayor of Greater Manchester and is seen as having the authority and gravitas that Starmer so desperately lacks. But Josh Simons was previously a Starmer loyalist and there is some suspicion that Burnham will be

prone to the same questionable and shadowy influences that Starmer and Streeting are seen as being controlled by. Burnham, if elected (first by Makerfield's voters and then by Labour Party members), needs to start as he means to go on, setting out a re-evaluation of Labour's priorities, committed to fairness, bringing down prices and rewarding hard working people instead of punishing them. He also needs to be openly critical of Trump and Netanyahu. The British people don't want a PM who is a sycophant.

For grassroots music, what we need is a government that recognises the opportunity for job creation, promotion of UK talent, platforms for artistic development and opportunities for collaboration and innovation all of which can be made possible with proper funding and commitment. The likelihood is that, tempting as it is to write Labour off and throw our lot in with Polanski's Greens, it is still a Labour Government that is most likely to be able to provide what we need. But they have an awful lot of work to do to win back the support they need to stop Farage

AND FINALLY

ARTS COUNCIL: USUAL EXCUSES!

In Ed 115, we expressed our deep concern that Arts Council England, six months on from the publication of Baroness Hodge's report, was showing no signs of wanting to respond to its criticisms let alone implement any improvements. The appalling feedback provided with the rejection of the last application by Fresh on the Net Live was a case in point, getting key facts wrong yet again. We have now seen their response to the ensuing complaint and it is yet another in a long line of apologist whitewashes, refusing to acknowledge any blame and in complete denial about the quality of the feedback.

The only useful information it did divulge was the ludicrous ratio of applications the panel had no choice but to reject due to the continuing impact of Tory cuts. The Labour Government commissioned the report which clearly highlighted how essential an increase in funds was for the Arts Council and those who rely on it for support. So far Starmer has turned a blind eye and it is not clear what Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy has done to bring pressure for money to be made available. Perhaps they have forgotten the arguments Starmer himself was making about the impact of better arts funding on

the economy, jobs and talent development. But, of course, that was when he was leader of the opposition and didn't know a General Election was about to be called early by Sunak.

Returning to the response by ACE though, it is precisely when an organisation puts its hands over its ears and refuses to listen to criticism and the need to change that it risks being deemed unfit for purpose. They cannot be blamed for the slow response from DCMS in securing significant new funds but that is not an excuse for not addressing the need for change; in particular Baroness Hodge's words about being a 'command and control' body instead of one that seeks to support and nurture talent.

The Arts Council is demonstrating a complete inability to change and, if that is the reality, the previously unthinkable alternative of its wholesale replacement by a more localised funding regime might be closer than they realise. If that happens, they will have brought it upon themselves but it may not spell good news for any of us.

MARKETING DEBATE RAGES ON!

Tomorrow (Monday 1st June), we will be giving a presentation to ICMP's Research, Scholarly & Professional Practice (RSPP)

Conference at the Kilburn Campus where Neil teaches and Sherry was once a postgraduate student. Our subject is *Cutting Through The Noise - What Does Ethical Marketing Look Like For Music Artists?*

Given how many column inches in this journal have been given to discussing the issues around what music artists should or should not be doing to market and promote their work, it is fitting that we should be bringing this debate to a Higher Education institute that exists to prepare people for working in the music industry. That is one of the platforms where debates like this need to happen.

It has developed into a long and detailed presentation because we are determined to cover all the key points and support our ideas with research evidence. We will challenge the prevailing industry demands on artists to spend unsustainable hours being content creators on TikTok and flag up both the potential mental health epidemic this could create and the truth that it is not the only game in town as far as impactful marketing and promotion are concerned.

We will also challenge the oft-repeated misconception that artists should gig relentlessly regardless of rationale. In

particular, we will argue against excessive performing in the same geographic locations, relying unreasonably on the loyalty of friends to keep spending their money and time on going to their gigs and, in relation to audience size and types, simply facing the brutality of the law of diminishing returns. In short, better to play fewer but more meaningful gigs [and festivals if you can get them] that genuinely offer opportunities to build a fanbase.

We will look at all the established social media platforms and consider their advantages and disadvantages. We will also consider the advice given out by the Musicians' Union and Independent Society of Musicians that artists should identify the social media platform that works best for them and focus their marketing there.

We will consider the options for paid marketing including where it requires people to think outside the box and not be dragged down by traditional viewpoints. Naturally we will also look at why streaming is so important to modern music marketing and how to approach streaming and playlist pitching including how to make use of the information provided by Artist Spotify accounts.

We will conclude by stating that there is not a one-size-fits-all answer to the enigma of what constitutes a successful approach. Nor are there right or wrong ways of identifying priorities. There are, however, things you definitely should NOT do and we will highlight those. The debate that emerges on the day will be fascinating as will whether we find ourselves coming up against resistance or hostility to some of our ideas. We will report back on how it went in Ed 117.

ROYALTIES: WHAT'S GOING ON?

We have recently taken advice on what the approximate value of our annual streams for the past 12 months and the previous 12 should equate to in terms of UK publishing royalties. It is hardly a fortune but it is nevertheless considerably more than we have so far received from PRS. A query has been raised with them so we will be interested to see the response, especially after reading Alan Dreezer's highly informative article in Ed 115.

EUROVISION IS A DISGRACE!!!

The debacle of Eurovision 2026 really was a horrific example of international double standards. A collective blind eye was turned to the conduct of Israel on the international stage. And people trying to confuse criticism of a rogue government guilty of multiple war crimes with

anti-semitism are, at best, extremely misinformed and, at worst, deliberately dishonest and determined to defend the indefensible.

Israel should not have been allowed to participate in Eurovision and, when they were allowed to, democratic countries should have been lining up to boycott the event. Some did but not the UK of course. Starmer is a long-time apologist for Israel as is their paid parliamentary propagandist Wes Streeter.

The BBC, still under far right leadership after Starmer chose to do nothing about Johnson's political appointments, is also determined to protect and promote the Israel government and deliberately misreport on and underplay events in the Middle East. That includes the latest despicable piracy, hostage taking and torture of aid workers in neutral waters. As the truth emerged from undeniable footage of IDF thugs and a leading government minister torturing, beating and humiliating aid workers, the BBC remained in 'See No Evil, Hear No Evil' mode, describing these latest breaches of international law as 'allegations'. Is there nothing this disgusting far right regime in Israel can't get away with thanks to the

acquiescence of US and Western politicians and media?

The Eurovision crowd must have been wetting their lederhosen with laughter at how they managed to make mugs of the Brits for the umpteenth consecutive year; taking our licence payers' cash to fund their festival of mediocrity, corruption and genocide denial while humiliating our entrants as they do every year. Granted, the UK's ill-advisedly sycophantic entry was possibly the worst and most embarrassing in its largely very poor history. But then the days when major artists like Sandie Shaw, The New Seekers, Cliff Richard, Olivia Newton-John and Katrina & The Waves were prepared to represent the UK are long gone. It is rightly seen these days as career suicide.

It is not only the British entries that represent a long history of mediocrity though. In more than half a century since I first watched Eurovision, there has only ever been one good song even *entered* for the competition, let alone winning it. That was *Waterloo* by Abba in 1974. It won probably because the judges were shocked to hear such a good track in such a terrible tournament! A year later Dutch band Teach-In won the final with *Ding-A-Dong* and Eurovision bosses could breathe a sigh of

relief as normal mediocrity was restored.

The music has not improved. These days it is one after another absurdly over-dramatic cod actors supposedly bearing their tortured souls to the backdrop of bland 90s synths and beats. Big on gestures, small on talent and oddly outdated. It doesn't represent what fans across Europe listen to outside of this hideous event.

Every year the BBC pours thousands of pounds of our license fees into this event only for our entry to be routinely humiliated and placed at the bottom of the leader board. But this year was the most stomach-turning of all. Russia was rightly banned when it invaded Ukraine. But Israel can continue its relentless genocide against the entire nation of Palestine while also starting fights with Lebanon and Iran and no action is taken. It has now emerged that Israel funded Tommy Robinson's recent racist extravaganza in London and the IDF founded and registered the racist English Defence League. The Israel Eurovision team also attempted to bribe their way to Eurovision victory, another act that has gone unpunished.

Shame on Graham Norton too. He earns an enormous salary and could have afforded to take a

stand by refusing to be involved. But he was there, playing his part in the genocide denial and collective corruption blindness.

The BBC has brutally stripped away the once top rated sports coverage it offered and reduced its music programming to the rehashing of obscure clips and TV shows from the last century. Even BBC 4 has stopped commissioning good quality music documentaries that were once its forte. The recent two parter about black British music at the BBC was a case in point. Instead of classic performances of the artists' best tracks, we had a mixture of obscure tracks and dreadful clapped out performances from late careers such as the clip of The Beat with only one original member still in the band.

Presumably this is because the BBC has sold all the best footage to the likes of Brit Box and Amazon Prime. So, if we want to watch the real vintage performances that were on the BBC when they originally happened, we now have to pay some private profiteering subscription broadcaster to see what was meant to be free to license payers when it was conceived!

Meanwhile this disgraced debacle continues to be fully funded from our money. Get your priorities

right, BBC and the UK Government. Time to kick our contribution to Eurovision into permanent touch and use the money for far better programming and purposes.

FRESH ON THE NET: GET ON BOARD !!

In Ed 116, we talked about the important work being done by Fresh on the Net. Music and broadcasting legend Tom Robinson founded the platform, named after his previous show on BBC 6 Music, in 2012 and it has had a proud history of being a platform and, in some cases, a stepping stone for exciting new talent. Among those who have had FOTN support en route to bigger things are Fat White Family, Chiedu Oraka, Martha Hill, Lauran Hibberd, She's In Parties, Artschool Girlfriend, Bleach Lab, Alt Blk Era, Bored At My Grandmas House, Lexie Carroll and lots more.

When Tom retired from the BBC and took a back seat as leader of Fresh on the Net, he made one of his wisest decisions by handing over responsibility for the platform to Del Owusu. Tom saw the energy, enthusiasm and balanced approach to discussions that all marked Del out as the right person to lead FOTN into the future.

Since taking over, Del has recruited the youngest, in terms of age

spectrum, and most diverse team of moderators and reviews writers we have ever had. We now have moderators from different ethnic backgrounds, our largest ever ratio of female mods to male ones and our youngest member is just 17 years old while the oldest is in his 70s and still playing a proactive and important role in independent music.

The backgrounds and experience of the team are also diverse. These include signed and unsigned recording artists (including at least one who runs her own label), DJs, promoters of gigs and small festivals, broadcasters (online radio and TV), bloggers and journalists, playlist curators, two members of the Glastonbury Festival's New Talent Committee and fans of new music who bring their unique perspective to the table. We will soon be able to add podcasters to the list.

We were never just about being a way of getting onto the BBC 6 Music Introducing Mixtape even if, for some, that was the incentive for submitting tracks. That diversity is reflected in the consistently high standards and wide spectrum of music we put out on the Listening Post every Friday. And, even if your track doesn't make the Listening Post (or it does but it isn't voted into the faves), you might still end

up getting a review, some airplay, a gig or some other opportunity as a result of being heard by members of our team.

Del has also had to oversee this transition against the backdrop of Tom's departure meaning we have lost the direct link we had with the BBC Introducing Mixtape show that Tom presented and used FOTN as one of the avenues for picking tracks. Despite this, we continue to receive a fantastic array of tracks by aspiring artists week on week.

But we need more engagement. Firstly, if you are an independent artist and you only bother voting at the Listening Post when you have a track there, you are not only failing to support fellow artists while expecting them to support you. You are also missing a trick. When regular readers see the same names voting every week and leaving supportive comments about other artists, that registers with them and makes them more inclined to make the effort with those artists and bands when they need support.

Of course we don't just want artists to come and vote every week. We want as many lovers of music as possible to come and have your say in who makes the 'fresh faves' and gets a published review the following day. We get far more

people reading the reviews than we get voting in the polls. In one sense, that is good because it means those who make the faves are being exposed to a wider audience. But the more people who vote, the more democratic and representative the results will be.

Likewise, this journal is achieving around 650 readers per average month. We are hugely grateful to everyone who reads it. But hey, imagine if all those people were voting at the Fresh on the Net Listening Post every week. It would be unequivocally the place to discover new music.

So come on everyone, get on board. You don't have to listen to every track all the way through. Browse them and focus on the ones that appeal when deciding your five. It is an amazing way to hear how much exciting, largely undiscovered talent is out there.

AND ACTUALLY FINALLY !!!

Last but definitely not least, a big heartfelt thank you to all of you who bother reading Trust The Doc. It still amazes us to see the stats about how many readers are engaging with it each month.

We will continue to try to involve as many guest contributors as we can so that you are not always reading our perspective on everything. We

have a few lined up for the next two editions. And if you are someone who fancies writing something for TTD, get in touch. You don't have to hold any position in the industry or media and you don't need to have experience. As long as you have something interesting to contribute on a subject of relevance to independent music, we would love to hear from you.

There are others who contribute to the debates and news as well as providing reviews and linking to broadcasting within our amazing

community including the likes of Del Owusu (The Songbird Sessions/Platinum Mind), Tony Hardy (Fifty 3 Fridays/Fifty 3 Promotions), Michelle Ward (Eat My Brunch, Phoenix FM), Caffy St Luce (Rocklands Art Beat, The Zine etc.). Mark Gee (122 Music Management/24: 1900 Festival) and many more. We are pleased to play our part alongside these important friends and allies. As we always say, new music never sleeps! Till next time then, folks.

NEIL & SHERRY xxxx