

Edition 118: 31st July 2026



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THE HOTTEST NEWS FROM THE GRASSROOTS SCENE:

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- [THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: ANIYA 'HAZY' SOFIA RETURNS
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INTRODUCTION:

Everyone's feeling pretty/It's hotter than July'. So sang Stevie Wonder in 1980 on his classic Bob Marley tribute *Masterblaster (Jammin')*. Well, we may not be 100% on the feeling pretty part but boy, has July been hot? Too hot to be able to work at an efficient standard at times! Although it didn't stop us writing and recording another new single (for October release) and beaver away with compiling and presenting the radio show, reviewing lots of new music, putting social media content out and trying, somewhat frustratingly, to organise a tour. Sadly, thanks to venues simply being so unlike the version of themselves that the Music Venue Trust would have you believe, the tour might now have to wait until at least February 2027.

Where we have had a lot of fun though has been with bringing the mighty Jade from Memphis Music in to run the media promo side of our single release campaign. She has had us doing cool interviews and being featured by some of the journals and radio shows we have never managed to get into before so that has been a blast as well as a cool learning experience. We definitely made the right call there.

It has been frustrating as far as Arts Council grant applications go

though. Although we had the super amazing news of Sherry achieving the Global Talent Visa, we also saw negative decisions on *Fresh on the Net Live* (yet again!) and *Grassroots Music - Better Practice*. The reasons for rejecting the latter were at least semi-logical if the reasoning was flawed. We probably knew it was the wrong fund. But the reasons for rejecting *Fresh on the Net Live* were the most pathetic, hypocritical and ridiculous yet.

Perhaps then, the advent of the government's new Music Growth Package will offer a better and fairer means of ensuring money gets to the most deserving people. Read Neil's investigation into it in Part 3.

Meanwhile, we also have another 60+ reviews of new releases by independent and grassroots music artists. Sherry writes about how artists can achieve a good standard of video making and editing without spending money and Del sets out his vision for *Fresh on the Net* as we go into the summer hiatus.

**NEIL MARCH & SHERRY
SAHAYARAJ**

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PART ONE: NEWS AND INFORMATION: EDITION 118

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: AN ANTI-FASCIST MESSAGE



shimmer
[the] music of sound

The new single by [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) is called ***Shimmer*** and it is out on **Monochrome Motif Records** on Friday 7th August. The lyrics carry the most explicitly anti-fascist message yet with lines such as 'Cowards Victimise/But the brave always are kind' which

follows a verse that also reads 'We can't live in fear/We have to be clear/As to whose side we are on/Listening to lies just/Misleads and divides us/Together through love we are strong'.

The track also highlights the band's signature sounds of spacious vocal harmonies, **Ellie's** virtuosic flute with trademark slow vibrato, **Neil's** guitar-like piano style and award-winning singer **Sherin's** pure, exotic vocals.

The band has engaged the amazing **Jade Perry** of **Memphia Music Management & PR** to represent the single to key media while, as usual, **Emiel Van Bruggen** of **YouGrow Promo** will handle pitching to Spotify playlists.

Sherin (Sherry) says: 'We are really excited about *Shimmer*. It is one of our catchiest songs so far but it also has a clear message about uniting against all the racism, bigotry and hate being spread by the far right. It is exciting too having Jade helping us to reach some of the media targets we have found it hard to get noticed by'.

The band are shooting the video this coming weekend and, as the next news item confirms, we are excited that **Aniya Sofia** will be joining us for the video. We cannot

call her our 'newest' member since she was in the band before Sherry or Ellie and has now rejoined having successfully graduated from Cambridge University. So we are very proud of her and stoked about what she will bring to the band.

In the meantime, latest analytics from Spotify show that, over the past 12 months, the band has achieved 155,000 streams but, more importantly, an astonishing 16% of listeners have saved our music to their personalised playlists and/or libraries. This is testament to the work we have done with YouGrow to put suitable playlists above sheer numbers of streams.

[The] Music Of Sound were planning to tour again in November but, due to the slowness of venues and promoters in confirming dates, this may now have to happen in the new year. We are now considering a one-off gig at the ICMP Venue in Queens Park, North West London in November and a tour in March/April 2027.

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: ANIYA REJOINS THE BAND



Aniya & Sherry @ New Cross House

We are stoked beyond words that **Aniya 'Hazy' Sofia** has rejoined

[The] Music Of Sound. Aniya originally joined as the flute player, aged 17, in the latter part of 2021

and her being in the band was a key reason why we were signed by Brian O'Neill's wonderful Dimple Discs label. But she took a step back from the band to focus on education in 2023, leading to her successfully getting into Cambridge University.

Now still only 21, she has graduated from Cambridge and has rejoined the band in a new role as second vocalist and keyboardist. This is something we really needed both because of the prominent role played on all our 2026 releases by multi-tracked vocal harmonies and also because it makes us less

reliant on the pre-recorded backing tracks for our live instrumental mix.

Neil says: 'Aniya was the obvious person we would reach out to given that she never wanted to leave the band, she has a similar vocal range to Sherry and is an accomplished keyboardist. Also, she is a good friend and someone who has already demonstrated her professionalism and talent in the band. Thankfully, she is really pleased to be back with us and is as excited about her new role as are we'.

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: MEDIA UPDATE

Thanks to **Jade Perry's** (Memphia Music Management & PR) hard work, we have had some cool articles and interviews as we build towards the release of Shimmer on 7th August. They include an eloquent review in [Afternoiz](#); and an interview (podcast) in the Dublin-based journal [Post-Burnout](#) with the lovely **Aaron Kavanagh** who is such a kind spirited, knowledgeable and interesting guy. There is also a review pending in

the prestigious **Fame** magazine once the single is released plus airplay on IndieCentral, Good Music Radio and others including Del's show on Exile FM in the pipeline. We are hopeful of airplay on RTE (Ireland's national broadcasting network) too.

Great work by Jade and all this is happening just as Aniya Sofia has rejoined the band. Exciting times ahead.

THE PORTSMOUTH HUB: SUPPORT IN MOTION



The Arts Council England and The National Lottery UK funded project **The Portsmouth Hub** is a collaboration between our close friend **Dom Elton's Mayfield Records** label and studio and **Trust The Doc Media**. July has been a busy month for the project with multiple releases by artists who are part of the project's cohort with tracks recorded in Mayfield Studios and released by Mayfield Records.

Led by the tireless hard work of Mayfield Records & Studios owner and musician-composer Dom and sound engineer and fellow talented musician **Sam Carter-Brazier (aka**

Noodle Beard), the project has already been supporting numerous talented artists. Included are new releases by **Joe Johnson (*Soon To Grow Old, We're Much Too Young*)**, **Mary Red (*You're Not Coming Home*)**, **Mother Shipton (*Avalanche*)** and more exciting new tunes in the pipeline with releases scheduled by **Brooke Star**, **Hannah Reem**, **Elysia Jade**, **Jodie Vinall**, **Neveah**, **Ross Murphy** and a 5-track EP by **Sabres**. This entire list underlines the cultural, ethnic and stylistic diversity of the project.

As well as supporting an array of talent, the project is also promoting

unity and love over hate and division. As Dom explains: 'The black and white checkered pattern on the Suffolk Road side of

Mayfield Records is there for good reason - it's there as a symbol of racial harmony'. Find out more about Mayfield Records [here](#).

NO BBC INTRODUCING STAGE AT READING FESTIVAL

The decimation of the once exciting BBC Introducing continues with no BBC Introducing Stage at the Reading Festival in 2026 while, in the meantime, resources are diverted into BBC 6 Music's Indie Forever show playing indie classics from 1980 to 2010, hosted by Steve Lamacq and Felix White. Festival Republic, the live music corporation that runs the festival has axed the stage despite the fact that **70% of the acts performing at Reading this year started out by having BBC Introducing support!!** Such a statistic says everything you need to know about the combination of stupidity and cynicism now prevalent in the sector including the BBC itself.

In one of the most breathtakingly arrogant and ridiculous statements yet by 6 Music's commercial pop loving Head of Music Samantha Moy she states 'If you want a version of 6 Music that's pure, unadulterated indie, then this 24hr stream is for you'. Yes, she actually believes that Indie music only means oldies by famous artists! So what does she think the music on the station's A, B and C Lists is then? It is, sadly, another measure of how little the modern far right BBC cares about supporting grassroots music. Precisely why it falls to people like us and our friends across the indie and internet media to fly the flag for new music in 2026.

TRUST THE DOC RADIO: UPDATE

The **Trust The Doc Radio** show goes out every Saturday evening at 5PM BST on Exile FM. It is presented by Neil and consists of two hours in which the primary content is current music, mostly by grassroots artists but always including some of the best current tracks by more well-known artists too.

In between, there is the popular ***What's The Word*** feature where listeners try to guess the title of the track Neil has chosen from the three clues (all also tracks) provided and additional hints that are given as the show develops. And there is a **Show Closer** Poll based on a theme which might be

the anniversary of a classic album, the UK Top 5 albums or singles from 30, 40 or 50 years ago that week or a theme that song titles and artist names relate to. July included tracks where the title or artist name related to characters, crafts or symbols from the TV classic Thunderbirds, the 40th anniversary of a Steve Winwood album, a snapshot of the UK Album Charts (Top 5) from 50 years ago and the 30th anniversary of a Crowded House compilation.

The show always has live threads running on X/Twitter and BlueSky

where listeners comment on the music, chat about a variety of topics, share pics of their food and all sorts of other things plus the shoutbox is there for those who prefer to send messages in to be read out on air. The audience is an incredible community that includes a lot of popular independent artists and supporters of grassroots music, many of whom will be familiar to regular readers of Trust The Doc. If you miss the live, interactive show, you can catch the podcast for 7 days [here](#).



NEIL REVIEWS THE FRESH ON THE NET FAVES

FRESH FAVES: BATCH 616



20
JUL
2026



by Neil

7 comments

ARTISTS AT A GLANCE

ALAS DE LIONA

BLUE SCARR AND AIMÉE

BRITANNIA

COURTEOUS THIEF

JACKSON MATHOD

MIMIKA ORCHESTRA

NADINE HABERL

THE CLOUD

TSARZI

VIRGIN ORCHESTRA

WASUREMONO

On Monday 20th July, it was Neil's turn to review the **Fresh on the Net faves** as voted for by our readers

at the **Listening Post**. You can read his words about the ten winners [here](#).

PART TWO: REVIEWS OF NEW MUSIC

ALBUMS & EPs



The much anticipated new album by TTD royalty from the Nottinghamshire - Derbyshire borders, namely [The Happy Somethings](#), is here and it is out on 7th August. ***A Healthy Dose Of Hope*** is the title and that is, without any reasonable doubt, what we need right now.

The album opens with ***Something Good***, Joy's vocal leading the harmonic line against fuzzy guitar chords and long keyboard tones and no beat, giving the sense of contrast between the relative stasis of the undercurrent and the movement in the vocals and guitar. It's a striking start. ***Here & Now Becomes Then*** is in a fast tempo with a descending guitar figure and a Beatlesque melody. The bridge-cum-chorus is particularly lovely in the way Joy's voice blends with the instrumental backdrop. The familiar ***Meanwhile*** is laid back, the band in full harmony delivering a pleasing melody over sweet chord sequences that make imaginative use of extensions and

suspensions. ***You'll Grow Up Quick*** is sparser but very melodic too with almost a Marine Girls vibe although with a more contemporary feel. ***Fragile The Heart*** has an intriguing intro and the harmonised vocals that follow over pretty guitar jangle are quite beautiful. This track also contains the album title in its lyrics. The key changes add another level of quality to a great track. The halfway stage is reached by ***Just Being With You***. Again the guitars are used to mix melodic and jangling chordal content and the harmonies are gorgeous.

Recent single ***Consolation Street*** follows with trademark story telling lyrics, energetic instrumental mix and Joy's highly distinctive voice at the heart of the track. Then comes ***All It Takes***, opening with striking harmonised vocals, organ chords and guitar jangle. This is an interesting and engaging track. ***Love To Be Found*** drives forward with choppy sounding guitar chords and quiet keyboards

accompanying Joy's harmonised vocals. ***Straddle The Moon*** takes things into triplet time with lovely bluesy harmonica and strummed chords. The boys' vocals are more prominent here and there is a spoonful or more of Americana included here. This is the bassiest vocal we have heard on a Happys track to date. Recent single ***Heaven Is Divine*** needs little introduction except to say it is not an alarming conversion to Born Again religious nutcasery but a song expressing hope that heaven exists and is worth waiting for. The album ends on its funkiest note with wah wah guitar chords that have a 70s vibe and Joy leading the line in a funky semi-Discofied track but still with trademark Happys production and interplay. It's a strong and optimistic end to an album that showcases their versatility and songwriting craft while also bringing some cautious hope in an era that has too often lacked that very element.

Another artist who merits the tag of being TTD royalty is Polish artist and fellow supporter of grassroots music [Serge Wenus](#). Since we have got to know Serge, he has been quite a prolific releaser of new music but he has deliberately been cautious and taken his time about finalising the track list for his new album ***Heaven***.

The opening wind sounds, syncopated beat and attractive synth melody on ***Phenomenal End Of The Show*** set the scene before semi-whispered spoken voice gives way to a melody built on long tones. It offers a slightly spooky late night backstreet aura. He is then joined by **Patricia Trixie** on ***Girl (I Love You So Much)***. Again it has a syncopated synth-funk current and Serge's intense vocals are contrasted by Patricia's honey-toned hook. It develops through the addition of more ambient sounds and clever little synth melodies playing off against Serge's expressive vocals and Patricia's soulful counterpoint. Then comes the familiar sound of ***Crash*** with its suspended keyboard chords, locked in bassline and beat and Serge's quietly compelling vocal performance. Latest single ***Close (Don't Cry)*** shows Serge at his most melodic and pop-oriented, using the lower register of his voice to good effect before rising into a catchy chorus.

Come Te Llamas sees Serge being joined by **Crazy J** for an almost slightly Latin-tinged slice of mid-tempo Synthpop that appears to mix some Spanish into the otherwise English language lyric. Crazy J has a slightly drawling vocal style that recalls early Shaggy and adds something appealing to a great track as does

the popping synth figure that responds to the call of the main vocal theme. Another familiar track is **Mr Heaven**, showing us another side of Serge's creativity, built around a four chord pattern and using arpeggio guitar as a key sound accompanying a laid back vocal with great low and high call and response in the chorus. **Will You Save Me** then brings a Prince-like contrast of repeating keyboard pattern, onbeat bass and beat and spoken word whisper that leads into more melodic waters. The third and last collaborative track is with **Adrian Smith** on the also quite Prince-infused **Secret Romance** with striking spoken word, swishing beat and little rocky moments creeping in here and there, including in the catchy hook.

Serge gets into more serious lyrical territory with **Break The Chains (Anti-War Song)**. The contrast between the minor key intensity of the verses and the major key mellowness of the chorus is very effective here. **Eyes Of Few (I Still Love You)** provides a great choice of finale with long sweeping synth chords and contrasting popping keyboard melody setting the scene. The verses have a translucent texture as Serge's vocal is fragile and fractured before the chorus adds another layer of synth and a hook to grab our ears. Midway through, we get a cool key change

and two attractive synth melody lines that fade out gradually as if Serge is slowly riding off into the sunset. Until next time then and, for now, his best work to date in our opinion.

It is always good news to have new music from the talented and unique composer and artist [Madil Hardis](#). Madil writes a lot of music for soundtracks and her dark cinematic style is ideal for that genre. Now she has a new album out entitled **An Atomic Relationship** and, you guessed it, this is the soundtrack for a motion picture of the same name.

It is never difficult to see why Madil is so in-demand for soundtrack music. Here we have eight short but imaginative tracks of her cinematic music. The opening credits theme is sparse, spacy and mystical, synths joined by arpeggio harp and the chords thickening. Then **Half-Life** is chunkier with staccato chords bobbing about in a semi-contrary motion before the enigmatic **Artificial Mind**, machine-like and repeating with small variations around one central drone pitch as its tonal centre. **Ionization** is a complete contrast, light textured, rapid two-note crystalline figure and accompanying chords in stabs before quintal-quartal figures occasionally pop up on the synth.

Fusion is an enigmatic pattern of notes in a slightly psychedelic style, underlined by unstable buzzing synth tones that help to produce some delicious dissonances. **Containment Field** opens with sumptuous deep squelchy synth tones that have an aura of Wendy Carlos about them, then the extended ninth and seventh chords that are placed atop them are just gorgeous before a repairing single tone pattern completes the arrangement, also introducing little arpeggios. This is my favourite track. **Radiation Leak** starts with a stressed ambient single notes and bleeps precede a triplet time figure in thirds and fourths with a tritone element that adds to its eeriness. The album ends with the almost tranquil futuristic intro of **Critical Mass** before a synth melody in a lower register and bell-like sounds combine to create a darker atmosphere. It gradually grows in dynamic volume as more sounds are thrown into the melting pot. It is a striking and strong finish to a unique and engaging work.

TTD friend and regular **Jim Purbrick**, Brighton-based East Midlander is [Alien Alarms](#) and he has a new album out entitled **Tuned To Different Frequencies**.

15 tracks in total, it kicks off with **Another One In A Million** with

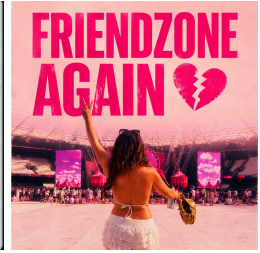
sampled voice, ambient tones and three-note melody before a crisp beat ensues. **The Handles Turn** is a familiar track with its Massive Attack influenced slow Trip Hop vibe and lovely melodic figures. You can see the single review of **A Day Like This** which is unlike anything we have heard by Jim previously but is another welcome example of his versatility.

A lot of the album is in more familiar Alien Alarms territory of electronic experimentation and use of sampled voices, sometimes returning to themes from earlier tracks. **Disconnected** and **Keeping On** are different examples of how Jim combines melodic sensibilities with frantic electro-Drum'n'Bass style beats and popping electronic sounds and tones. The theme of radio communication from different perspectives and places is also used as on the fluid instrumental play of **Radio Sans Frontières** with ambient noises coming in and out of play. Recent single **Model Collapse** mixes interestingly modal keyboard patterns with an almost trap-like beat and spoken word samples contrasted by extended chords. After more sampled recordings on **Radio Panoptican Police**, the final track is **Silence Breaks** with frantic beat and busy bouncing, sliding sub-bass contrasted by some semi-comical choices of sample

and crazy strings figure. The break into Tin Palley Jazz sample and back to the main theme is a great and unexpected touch. So many ideas and samples are packed into this ending, its delicious dysfunction providing a fitting end

to an album that is daunting, sometimes difficult but full of invention and shrewd observation. There's only one Alien Alarms. Make sure you cherish his existence. The album is out on 2nd October

POP NOODLES



Alex Hall is [City Limits](#) and, although ***Hanging By A Thread*** does have a Drum'n'Bass foundation, it doesn't feel as though it belongs in the Club Culture section. The frantic beat plays off against dreamy atmospherics, single chords on the synth and picking guitars and Alex's pure tenor tones with a reverberant effect. The tune is instantly engaging and the production is imaginative and perfect for the track.

Manchester's [Muridae](#) brings us ***Crushed***. A popping synth-driven instrumental backdrop and crisp, crunching beat accompany a clever lyric that grows in intensity as she tries to process how she feels about the unfolding events. The melody is instant and infectious. There is an element of Leona Lewis's *Bleeding Love* about the hook but that is not

a bad reference and she does it in her own way.

Romanian language Dance-Pop is a first for TTD and it comes from [Alexia Smerea](#) on a track entitled ***Basu'N Barabia***. Swirling synths play very Eastern sounding motifs while the beat is big and bustling and Alexia's voice is commanding, compelling and occupies centre stage, delivering a catchy melody to a punchy electro-pop backdrop.

It is hard to be sure where to review [Hapin Usuwo](#)'s ***For You***. It has so many flavours with elements of Pop, R'n'B, Synthpop and even Folk all adding up to a refreshingly individual sound with crunching beat, light bell-like synths and Hapin's (or Kwame's as his Soundcloud page suggests) highly distinctive and appealing upper register voice taking centre stage.

Straight out of **The Portsmouth Hub**, the Arts Council project we are involved in with **Mayfield Records** comes the latter's release of [Brooke Star](#)'s ***Friendzone Again***. Based around a staccato syncopated synth figure and crisp beat, it is a perfect showcase for

Brooke's distinctive dexterous voice, harmonised in parts and delivering a melody that is infectious from the outset. The hook nails it and Sam Carter-Brazier's production adds an extra sparkle. This will be released on 14th August.

ALT ROCK & INDIE



[Bottlemoth](#) bring us ***Lilac***. This switches between glorious wall-of-sound style shoegaze guitars over solid bass and drums foundation and a more translucent texture in the voices. The male vocal climbs up and down the register accordingly while a subtly harmonised female BV rises in prominence from the mid-section. The layering and build-up of dynamics really keeps you hooked and the melodies are appealing and laced with emotion. All superbly done and a demonstration of what a lot of thought and imagination enables you to do with your music.

[Soft Cotton County](#) bring us ***Hippo's Circus***. Andy and co are in a dreamy mood, a descending bass under sweet chord arrangement

with little synth melody repeating underneath the soft but distinctive female vocal and story-telling lyric. There is an ethereal mix which takes the dreaminess into trippier territory. Both versions are lush and have a heart-rending aura of subtle melancholy. Beautiful.

From Bradford-on-Avon come the always intriguing [Wasuremono](#) with ***Welcome Back***. Something we never would have expected to be saying is that the intro recalls Kenny's *Heart Of Stone* but that is where any such comparison ends. Deep dry male vocal leads the line in the sparser verses and then everything builds including some lovely little instrumental moments and the epic harmonised chorus which is so infectious. Full of clever contrasts and subtle twists and

turns, this is a real breath of fresh air. Welcome back indeed.

[Knots](#) bring us ***International Brigdes***. This is a fascinating hybrid of Devo-ish vocals, helped by a great short echo effect, choppy guitar inventiveness that could almost be Wilko Johnson in a mash with Crack Cloud while Pottery wait in the wings. The track has an easy rhythmic looseness that underlines the interband chemistry and its energy is perfectly and punchily produced and thus captured. Catchy too.

[Cordelia Gartside](#) has grabbed our attention with ***X-Ray***. A syncopated triplet time drum beat with curvy,

choppy guitar and bass interplay accompany an expressive vocal that has shades of Mary In The Junkyard in a jam with Man/Woman/Chainsaw while Pillow Queens lurk in the shadows. Striking and emotionally charged, filled with nuanced changes and dynamic leaps and dives, this track keeps us on our toes and commands our attention. It is easy to see why Cordelia is playing some cool gigs and getting enthusiastic support from BBC Introducing.



Working across Sheffield and Manchester, [Plasticine](#) bring *Pink Sky*. This is a lovingly layered echofest of shoegazey guitars, underpinned by buoyant bass and drums with male vocals poking through the cracks and sometimes delivering triadic harmonies. Definite echoes of Ride in a jam with Lush while Been Stellar bring flavours. Inventive, intricate and intimate despite the size of its sonic ambition.

Londoner [Domi Hawken](#) has a track called ***YB2M*** which has a driving chunky guitar-driven energy that supports her alto range, gritty vocal style and contrasts of texture and dynamic, enhanced further by some clever changes of rhythm and a catchy hook to boot. A definite one to watch on the evidence of this invigorating track.

[So Good](#) are in a playful sardonic mood with ***Orange Juice & Milk***. A semi-spoken verse and catchy

melodic chorus tells of a self-absorbed, difficult lover. Chopping on-beat guitar chords and descending licks play a prominent part but the chemistry within the band is clear and contributes to an imaginative and energetic arrangement.

[Idyllic](#) have captured our attention with ***Side Eye***. Uptempo, punchy powerpop with crisp beat, busy bass and snarling staccato guitar, this has some great and unexpected twists and contrasts. Exuberant male vocal is sometimes adorned with harmonies and the band kick the arrangement around,



TTD regulars Michael Featherstone and his band [The Rumble Skulls](#) have a new single out. ***Ballistic*** has an old school Pop Rock sensibility with the root bass and shifting chords as a familiar but effective approach. The melody floats appealingly at the top of the mix. In one sense, it has echoes of late seventies New Wave but it also has a fresh contemporary sound and a tune that will grab you by the ears.

[Asgard Raven](#) is in nostalgic mood on ***Those Were The Days***. The lyrics tell their story of carefree times of youth. This is set against

having fun but also delivering a well-thought-out track.

Courtesy of Lee at Wall Of Sound PR comes another single by Rome band [Feldspar](#). It jingles and jangles at uptempo pace with plenty of drum fills, driving bass and attractive patterns on guitars and keys. The contrast between the melodic female vocals (sometimes female and male an octave apart) and the shouted gruff male voice responding to the catchy choons is intriguing. Punk Pop with power and precision. Hard to resist.

an Oasis meets Cast type melody, swinging guitar and bluesy riff and a dash of Americana. It feels fresh and energised with a big chorus and call and response BVs.

[SusAF](#) caught our ears with ***Molotov Rose***. Sung in male harmonies throughout, almost like an early Motors track but with a more contemporary sound all round, perhaps a little of 86TVs too, this drives forward with indie rock melodic intent and carves out a place in the ongoing summer vibe of 2026.

[The Mirror Trap](#) bring us **A Painting Of A Building On Fire**. It manages to kick off like The Jesus and Mary Chain in a jam with Been Stellar but then introduces a little synthpop melody to offset the reverberating, ricocheting guitars, bass and drums. Vocally it is melodic with a subtle intensity and the track roars towards the finish line with epic ambition.

Named after an East London recording studio, [The Mustard Seed](#) have a track called **The Birds**. Dom Clark's vocal is quite dreamy and has a soulful undercurrent. The chords are extended, using a lot of major sevenths etc. to create a hazy late summer evening vibe and the band's interplay is perfectly laid back and not over-egged at any point. Very tuneful too.



TTD friends and our favourite Aussie exiles [Fendahlene](#) follow the excellent *Looking For A Break* with **Blind Faith**. It kicks off with a I - IV chord pattern and Paul's distinctive voice which rises up the register in the bridge. The energy is superbly captured as always seems to be the case with their tracks. Ash's bass underpins the arrangement while Paul's guitar is fuzztone driven and complemented by some cool lead play. Bolstered by harmonies, this has the trademark Fendahlene blend of driving Alt Rock with a large slice of Americana.

[Spearmint](#) return with the intriguingly titled **Stop Singing Baker Street**. If this was the late seventies, it might be a more

obvious statement to be screaming! Anyway, despite its plea for no more Gerry Rafferty and associated sax motif, this has a laid back, even slightly melancholy feel with strummed guitar, expressive male vocal and rich harmonies. A driving syncopated beat, busy bass and melodic, colourful keys all add to the vibe and the band's chemistry is evident. It builds cleverly and has a subtly nostalgic feel similar in that respect, although not stylistically so, to their last single. Infectiously catchy too.

[The Stevenson Ranch Davidians](#) are in retro mode on **Love, Light, Beauty And Truth**. Shades of Allman Brothers in a jam with Delaney & Bonnie with sliding and growling guitars, a male vocal with

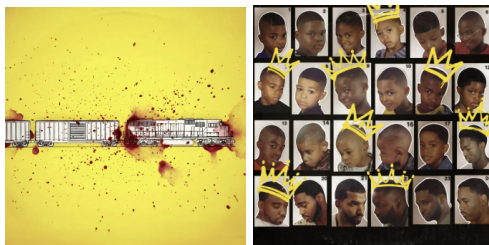
what sounds like an appealing Southern twang and an organic, energetic Rock sound that is bluesy, a little countrified and makes this blend of classic references into something that is fresh and highly enjoyable.

In the press release for [Junior VP's](#) **Red Cardigan**, Memphis Music's Jade Perry explains how the band's name reflects their reverence for late 80s/early 90s US College Rock and Indie and that is immediately evident. The Glasgow band have a sound that takes us back to They Might Be Giants, Dinosaur Jnr and various others. They infuse this with a freshness and smart contrasts of texture and dynamics. The harmonised chorus is the highlight in an inventive, energetic and entertaining track.

Brighton-based East Midlander and TTD friend **Jim Purbrick** is [Alien Alarms](#) and his latest offering is **A Day Like This**. Jim explains that

the song describes a walk through an appealing landscape towards the sea where people are bathing and how he is wanting simultaneously to join them but also to warn them of the dangers as we continue to fail to do enough to save our endangered planet. If you are familiar with Jim's work, this will really surprise you. Arpeggio guitar and a syncopated beat are at the heart of it and the vocal is a reminder that Jim can deliver an agile and expressive performance that is less intense than his usual electro-synth driven style. The BVs even have a hint of Beachboys (which is kind of appropriate to the scene he is setting). Another example of his talent and versatility. (See the review of his album in **Albums & EPs** too)

BEATS, RHYTHMS & RHYMES



It is good to see new material from the inimitable [Lewca](#). **Freight Train** is a hybrid of Drum'n'Bass, Reggae Dancehall and Hip Hop with the

frantic D'n'B beat shuffling manically along against single chopping Reggae chords and Lewca's energetic vocal, part

melody, part spoken word. There's even a hint of Fatboy Slim in a jam with Mr Vegas if the latter was a Londoner (kind of!). Plenty of flavours mixing together to create a sound that is fresh and has a real spark.

Recommended to me by the mighty Del Owusu with whom he is friends,

[Deacon](#) has a single called **King**. This is a heartbreaking tale of tragedy presumably about a friend. It has a laid back Old Skool vibe. His rapping style is rhythmically clever and goes against the grain of the beat and keyboard, growing in dynamic and intensity as it develops. Excellent choice by Del.

SOULFUL SENSIBILITIES



[Short Sharp Scratch](#) return with **Remedy**. Jak and his colleagues are on funky soulful form with an agile female lead vocal and clever BVs riding atop ascending and descending squelchy synth bass, tasty guitar licks, extended chords and crisp beat. They pull off a smart mix of retro references and fresh soulful pop sensibilities.

From Atlanta, Georgia in the USA, [Travis Hall](#) has sung everything from opera to R'n'B. On **A Day**, the vibe is very much Old School Soul with a funky, syncopated edge. His voice is fulsome and rich in tone, dancing dexterously around the instrumental backdrop, bolstered by harmonies and lifted by some sumptuous chord sequences. Catchy as hell too.

[Charlotte Branson](#) delivers some Old Skool nineties flavours on **Make Up**. A crisp beat and extended electric piano chords provide the main backdrop for her contrasts of vocal timbre from soft and sweet to powerful, punchy and soulful. Great hook and cleverly configured backing vocal arrangement add to the quality. A fresh contemporary take on classic R'n'B.

Released by **Mayfield Records** as part of **The Portsmouth Hub** (Arts Council supported project), the [Mayfield Records' House Band](#) team up with [Mary Red](#) on **You're Not Coming Home**. This is a heartbreaking tale of a young person's suicide (lyrics by his dad) which **Dom Elton** has set to a

thoroughly beautiful combination of classic sixties melody and lush strings, goose-bumping piano and Mary's platinum-toned alto voice. Even if you didn't know the background to the song, it would move you with its sheer depth and beauty but, knowing what inspired it and hearing how this has been worked into such a clever balance between profound sadness and longing and an oddly sunny aftermath atmosphere is just so emotion shredding and stunning. Sam Carter-Brazier's production is superb too.

... and also from **The Portsmouth Hub** comes **Mayfield Records**



Rising star of British R'n'B [Grace Carter](#), courtesy of our James at Plugged In PR, delivers ***Bittersweet Escape***. Swirling strings, a crisp beat and Grace's sweet soprano tones, harmonised and sometimes tracked combine to bring a clever balance between Old Skool Soul

stalwart [Hannah Reem](#) with ***Drowning Pretty***. It was hard to know which section to review this in. Based around Latinesque jazz-infused extended guitar chords and a bossa-ish beat, it is dominated by Hannah's highly recognisable voice, rich and soulful, packing a punch as she swoops and soars above the instrumental backdrop and draws us in with an appealing melody and agile performance. Once again, Sam's production is spot on. This is out on 7th August.

sensibilities (think Deniece Williams in a jam with Angie Stone) and a dreamy contemporary R'n'B vibe. The melody is striking and soon gets inside your head and the production is spot on as is her effortlessly agile vocal performance.

CLUB CULTURE



Usually the [English] West Country's king of deep house and related music, Andrew aka [Siddhartha Says](#) is in dreamier downtempo mood for much of ***Far With You (Chill Mix)*** although, once the four-to-the-floor beat kicks in properly over the second half of the track it feels more like a floor filla than an afterparty track. Whichever you prefer, it is full of colour, chord extension and hazy sunshine synths.

No ambiguity however about London-based Liverpoolian producer [Portamento](#)'s latest offering. ***Good For Each Other*** is chunky, funky Deep House with a cool beat, little ambient sounds coming in and out of focus along

with vague vocal samples and some sweet synth chords. Portamento once played a gig for us at AMP Studios and was superb live. Here is a taster of why he is so highly rated.

After releasing a bunch of tracks in relatively quick succession, there has been a bit of a break leading up to the new release by TTD friend **John Davis** aka [Arpraxis](#). So it is good to have ***Technoid***. A fairly live sounding drumbeat is contrasted by more ambient noises while the track thunders along with sped up Spaghetti Western motif and looped sounds relentlessly come at us. It's a great combination of elements and an energetic floor filla of a track.

SINGER-SONGWriters



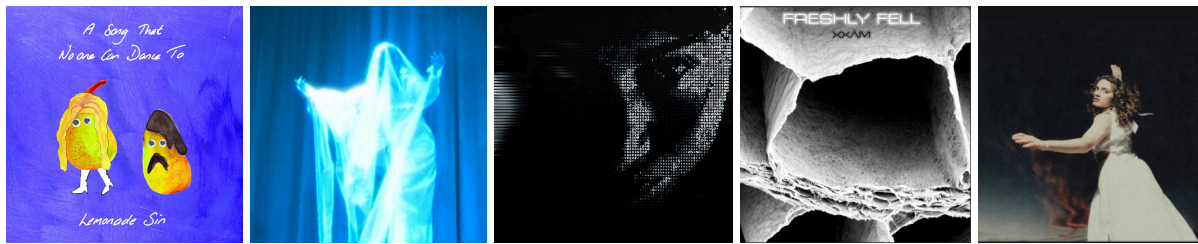
From Margate on the Kent peninsula comes Hugh Fothergill aka [Meru](#) with the song **Somar**. This has an enigmatic aura, driven mainly by piano and other keyboards while Hugh's vocal is upper register, reverberant and trebly with a distant feel to it. Something about it has echoes of Bon Iver although perhaps in a jam with Father John Misty while Daniel Powter throws ingredients into the pot. It has an appealing dreaminess and lightness of texture, helped by distinctive vocals and attractive melody.

After the dark pop of *Monique*, TTD friend and talented young Londoner [Freya Everest](#) returns with **Honey TV**. It begins with strummed guitar and soft-toned vocals but, as Freya introduces piano, deep strings and haunting harmonies, the intensity builds and the lush chord patterns and commanding melody take us over. This is really quite beautiful in its dark, daunting and slightly eerie way.

From Hertfordshire, [Margarita Helene](#)'s Spotify blurb says she is often compared to Lily Allen and Kate Nash. But on **Clingy**, there is a synthpop element mixing in with her buzzy guitar sounds. The Lily Allen comparison creeps into the vocals at times but there is also a hint of Laura Marling in the delivery. This builds really cleverly from quiet beginnings into a punchy hybrid of influences, always characterised by an infectious melody.

Released by **Mayfield Records** through the Arts Council supported **The Portsmouth Hub** project, [Joe Johnson](#)'s new single is **Soon To Grow Old, We're Much Too Young**. An arpeggio acoustic guitar figure introduces the song. Joe's vocal is melancholy and in baritone range. Around him, sounds begin to join the mix, punchy but long sustained tones, cinematic synths and a sense of expansion. His performance is compelling, in one sense understated and yet emotionally powerful. Sam's production is perfect too.

SYNTHEMATIC



Described by Mari from Get In Her Ears as 'indie supergroup', [Lemonade Sin](#) bring us ***A Song That No-One Can Dance To***, It rolls along, introduced by a descending piano melody and longer synth tones while there is a contrasting play-off between a deadpan male voice that is like a tenor Jona Lewie in a jam with a more elaborate female singer who leads the melodic line. The shift in the rhythmic configuration in the hook fits the title of the song and there is a slightly tongue-in-cheek aura throughout.

From the excellent 122 Music Management stable comes the latest offering from Iceland's [Virgin Orchestra](#). ***BDSM*** has a semi-gothic aura in the build-up of piano, synth and strings joined by a crunching beat and spacy guitar, topped by distinctive female vocals. Shades of Effervescence in a mash with Lorde while Chromatics bring the wine. But Virgin Orchestra have their own sound that is dreamy and has a brooding intensity that reflects the innuendo of the title. The melody is quite lovely and the arrangement is

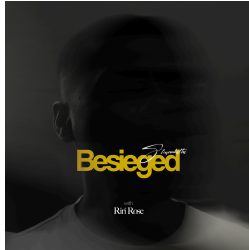
nuanced and dynamic. Another killa track.

Driving Synth Pop is possibly how we would describe [Hunter As A Horse](#) on ***Paradise Lost***. Whispery but distinct female vocals are accompanied by straight ahead electronic beat, staccato synth bass and an array of sounds, some enigmatic and eerie. The tune is soon reinforced and the track builds nicely and energetically.

[Xxäm](#) reliably informs us that TTD Radio is the first show ever to play them as a solo artist with ***Freshly Fell***. If so, that is a great pleasure. This is slow, sad synthpop with a dreamy tenor range vocal setting out a melancholy melody against reverberant synths and production. Echoes of McAlmont maybe which is no bad thing.

American artist [Annie Elise](#) captured our attention with ***Make A Wish***. Light-textured popping synths, dreamy sweeping chords and Annie's soft, ethereal voice, often bathed in harmonies, float and flutter through this futuristic sonic journey. It's catchy as mad

too and beautifully produced as well as lovingly crafted. An artist we need to keep a close watch on for the future. Del informs me that

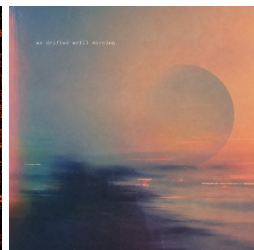


TTD friend and super talented South Indian artist and producer [Sharon Katta](#) teams up with Lincolnshire's (London-based) [Riri Rose](#) on *Besieged*. Built around semi-classical and clever piano, appended by crisp beat and cinematic synths, this begins quietly and translucently with Sharon's distinctive tenor range

she is from an Amish background. Wow, this is an artist with a tale to tell. She is also a classically trained violinist.

voice leading the line. As the dynamics and texture grow, Riri's expressive vocals provide a beautiful contrast and the song takes on a cinematic atmosphere, packed with ideas and superbly executed. Another belting track from Sharon and good to be introduced to Riri Rose too.

ELECTRONIC & AMBIENT



Electronic Industrial legends [Portion Control](#) continue their very welcome return to prominence with *Tex-Mex*. There are two versions, one recorded live in 1986, the other a 2026 studio remaster. Trademark sarky but passionate vocals ride over a constant staccato synth drone bass and sumptuous synth chords and counter melody. It builds joyously, introducing subtle changes and plenty of great

ambient washes of sound to round off a great track.

[The Snowball Effect](#) returns with *We Drifted Until Morning*. As the title suggests, the mixture of floating, gradually altering sonic textures and harmonic states with a distant sense of slow motion is very evocative and makes for a compelling listen. Once again TSE captures our imagination and takes us into a tripped out

ethereal world that is relaxing and intriguing to drift along within.

Super talented TTD regular [Lamia](#), from South London, returns with ***Requiem For A Dream***. Enigmatic vocals in different parts of her register, sometimes filtered through effects, weave in and around a

complex and deliciously uneven landscape of synths, beats and ambient sounds in a minor key but full of colour and invention. This is another high quality, sophisticated and futuristic journey into her unique sound world.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL & SOUND ART

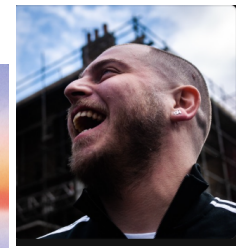


Skybaby Records play host to [Paul Terry ft Silas Miami & Lana Crowster](#) whose track ***This Is My Home*** has captured our attention. It begins with a repeating piano, quiet and deep and then louder and up an octave in a stop-start fashion before legato strings bring a high registral contrast and dreamy vibrato vocal harmonies float onto centre stage. The atmosphere is slightly otherworldly and strangely stirring, helped by the unusual rhythmic configurations and bar extensions, even creating mild dissonances here and there, bringing further intrigue to the harmonic language and texture. Before we know it, the track ends, leaving us feeling simultaneously satisfied but wanting more of the same. It is not clear who is contributing what on

the track. Possibly Terry is the composer, Crowster provides the multi-tracked vocals and Miami provides strings or piano. Whatever the division of labour and creativity, the results are stunning.

We are always saying how much we would like to have more Sound Art tracks to review and the ever-reliable Australian composer [Lawrence English](#) has duly delivered with ***One Line Sky (Alone)***. It begins like a pure field recording with ambient windy sounds intertwining before a beautifully vague chord of ambient sound drifts in like a beautiful kaleidoscopic cloud, its colours slowly fluctuating. Utterly compelling as it grows and quite beautiful too.

JAZZ & INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS



TTD regular [Josephine Pascoe](#) is back with *Sticklebricks*. Aided and abetted, as usual, by Neil Thom on Guitar and Bass, Josephine lets loose on the flute while her piano playing is measured and filled with lush harmonic development. It is, as ever, funky, smooth and Jazz-based, combining melody writing with tasteful, understated improv. Fresh as a daisy.

You can never be sure what Norwich's [SkinnyBoy Tunes](#) will do next but *Round And Round* finds Piers in collaboration with **Kiefer Wilton** on a free-flowing shuffling piece of instrumental jazz with tasty trumpet working closely with piano, often doubling the melody while adding sweet chords as a repeating bassline and busy drumbeat provide the foundations. Nicely done.

The super talented **Mak Murtic** is back with the excellent [Mimika Orchestra](#) on *Omen*. I cannot say with any authority what language the alto voiced singer is using but there has to be a strong chance it is Croatian. Either way, it is

sumptuously lyrical, set to an unusual and striking melody, cinematic instrumental backdrop, clever shifting rhythms and amazing chords and counterpoint. Towards the final section, there are some Thunderbirds-like harmonic moments and the ensuing vocal harmonies are exquisite. Another outstanding track from this amazing ensemble.

[Shane Sato](#) teams up with **Braxton Cook** on *Surfliner*. This is a very pleasant and polished piece of contemporary jazz with a plethora of spine-tingling chords and some superbly virtuosic saxophone play. There is a summer sensibility to this too.

It has been a while since we had new material from the super talented [Jackson Mathod](#) as it was good to receive *Axel Road*. The foundation of drums, percussion, bass and other sounds chugs merrily along while he stretches out on the trumpet with some lovely crystal clear-toned play and improv and occasional chord sequences that give it a briefly Steely

Dan-esque quality or maybe a Zawinul meets Hancock one. Anyway, it's beautifully executed.

FOLK & COUNTRY FARE



[Calvin Carrier](#) (aka **Sniggjamz**) delivers an unusual track in ***For Sale***. A repeating but engaging guitar figure dominates the instrumental backdrop while Calvin achieves a distant feeling with his vocals, as if singing from another room or behind a screen but with plenty of reverb. It lends the track a dreaminess that perfectly fits the hazy summer night feel of the tune and the way he sings it. Top marks for creativity and imagination.

Regular readers of **Trust The Doc** and **Fresh on the Net** will probably be aware of Midlands-based Welsh singer-songwriter [Susy Wall](#). One of the stars of the last Fresh on the Net Live festival (Day 2) in Leicester, Susy makes thoughtful, dreamy and skillfully performed music which is exactly what we get with ***Tomorrow & Tomorrow & Tomorrow (The Sky Becomes The Stars)***. A lovely picking figure on the lower, deeper strings of her acoustic guitar accompany a song that has shades of Judee Sill in a

mash with Janis Ian while Laura Marling brings chops. The track bulbs, adding rich harmony and extra layers, emphasising the dynamics and emotional intensity that is undeniable despite the quiet, mystical demeanour of the song. Susy's vocals are captivating too.

London's [Hannah Scott](#) returns with ***Days To Come***. Picking reverberant guitar and legato keys accompany Hannah's striking, powerful voice, mostly harmonised, as she delivers an appealing melody that has echoes of Renaissance in a mash with Sandy Denny while Laura Marling brings ingredients. Classic but timeless.

Tillicoultry's finest [Tom Houston](#) is the Bard of Central Scotland. On ***Strange Birds***, he is in a darker mode. Built around a four chord pattern with a high drone effect on the lead guitar, Tom stays mainly in his lower register in this song of little people fighting for survival

and meaning. There is a definite air of melancholy that underpins this appealing tune. Also listen to ***As We Lay On The Grass*** which has the super talented **Me For Queen** on backing vocals and is a lovely summer folk tune built around picking guitar with beautiful double stopping descending scales and dreamy synths in a lengthy instrumental intro. When the vocals arrive, they are rich and harmonised, emphasising the blend of their distinctive voices.

From the combined forces of our friends at **Dimple Discs** and their regular collaborators **Bring Your Own Hammer** via the amazing



Red Guitars' and Agent Starling's Lou Duffy-Howard, from Hull, is an absolute bundle of creative energy as well as a good friend. Now she once again finds time for her band ***Loudhailer*** with husband Richard and others. The result is ***300 Kinds Of Blue***. This has a mystical Folkrock feel like she has taken a

Shauna McLarnon at Shameless PER comes ***Adrian Crowley*** with ***Quinn The Adventurer***. The song tells the dark enigmatic tale of James Quinn, a Belfast fellow whose travels take him both to the glamour of starring alongside comic legend Charlie Chaplin and dodging jail for burglary. Crowley's voice is deep and daunting, adding to the dark dynamism of the music. His voice dominates the mix, accompanied by strumming rolling guitar, spy movie lead figures and contrasting falsetto theme. The sounds build subtly and slowly around the ongoing story, reaffirming the eerie aura in which it is cast.

piece of Canterbury and brought it into the modern age with clever sound combinations, Lou's haunting alto voice and some spoken word to boot. The melody is striking and semi-hypnotic, reinforcing the hook as the track builds around it. Well worth taking time to check out.

PART THREE: OTHER COMMENTARIES

THE MUSIC GROWTH PACKAGE: HOW WILL IT WORK?

Neil investigates how it may change the funding landscape

If it felt a little like the decision to terminate the Arts Council's *Supporting Grassroots Music* fund while the government launched the *Music Growth Package* was somewhat sprung on us, that is because it was! In fact, it was when letters went out electronically informing applicants of decisions in the latest round of the Supporting Grassroots Music fund that the news was dropped that it would end for new applications that Friday (24th July 2026) and, in future, applicants should use the Music Growth Package. If the devil is in the detail, it is notable that the Arts Council is billed as the lead partner in this fund as opposed to the outright decision maker.

The Music Growth Package is clearly the Labour Government's attempt to partly respond to Baroness Hodge's report from last year and to demonstrate its commitment to supporting the creative arts. It emanates from the government's Creative Industries Sector Plan published last year. In this respect, it is particularly interesting that, whereas the Arts Council considers applications across the arts, this is a fund set up

exclusively for music. We have to hope this is a good sign, a first cautiously optimistic response to the horrendous problems brought about by the previous administration's decision to implement swingeing cuts to Arts Council funding in 2022. So how will it work?

The Music Growth Fund offers 'small' grants of between £1K and £40K or large grants of between £41K and £100K. The Arts Council web site explains:

'It is open to music festivals, music managers, music promoters, music publishers, record labels, recording studios, rehearsal spaces and grassroots music venues as well as the sector bodies and other sector support organisations that support them.

We define new music as original music (i.e. live performance, sound recording or musical work) recently or newly created or performed by living, UK-based artists or music creators'.

The *Music Creators Growth Fund* offers between £10K and £20K for

‘direct support for artists, bands, producers and artist collectives through grants designed to help develop and sustain creative practice’. Guidance will be available in September so, at this stage, I cannot tell you any further detail about how the process will work.

MUSIC GROWTH PACKAGE

The guidance states:

- Growth initiatives may include increased reach, strengthened business models, improved sustainability, skills development, or expanded capacity, and will be different depending on the context and ambitions of each applicant.
- Investment decisions are based on potential for growth, the effective use of funds, the contribution to a fairer and more inclusive music industry and the contribution to a climate resilient music industry. Please see the Decision-Making section for more details.

This does suggest the abandonment of the principle that applicants do not need to demonstrate the ability to become

profitable. However, when I try to go to the application page, it simply guides me to open my existing grantium account and, when I do so, the only Music Growth Package is the temporary one for Sector Bodies which is only active for one month. Presumably, the application form is not yet online.

MUSIC CREATORS GROWTH FUND

Guidance for this fund will be available in September but applications will not be enabled until October. The guidance then says there will be a ‘second round’ of applications enabled ‘later in the year’ which is curious for two reasons; one being that it suggests the October round will have a short window and the other being that there are only two further months that constitute ‘later in the year’.

They go on to say that it represents ‘... a new way of funding’ and they are inviting feedback and ideas on how they should go about this. Needless to say, we will be providing our feedback.

In the meantime, the Arts Council’s National Lottery Project Grants fund remains open. As soon as there is more detail about how the new funds will work, we will report on those. For now, let’s hope this

will be an opportunity for wider and fairer funding and not just an exercise in papering over the cracks.

NEIL'S FEEDBACK TO MUSIC GROWTH PACKAGE

The guidance specifically invited people to set up a new email using Outlook and provide feedback to the new scheme ahead of its implementation. In the interests of transparency, here is what I sent to them.

'I write as someone who has written a great many successful applications, either for my own activities or as a collaborator with others, to Arts Council England's now defunct Supporting Grassroots Music fund. As such, I have the vantage point of having experienced the best and the very worst of how the panels have made decisions, provided feedback and demonstrated their grasp or lack of it in relation to each application.

When Baroness Hodge was commissioned by DCMS to conduct a review of ACE, she rightly concluded that we need the Arts Council and replacing it would be a huge risk. But she also noted two important points. One was very obvious. Namely that the cuts implemented by the last government had been severely damaging and there was no scenario in which progress could be

made that did not involve new, additional investment for ACE to be able to fund more projects. The other was that ACE had become a 'command and control' body at the expense of being a supportive, nurturing organisation. That has frequently been my experience with feedback on rejections often appearing to represent a desperate scratching about for excuses to say no rather than coming from a principle of wanting to support innovation and talent.

So what, other than the obvious need for more money to be available for projects, do we need? First of all, we need decisions to be made by people who are competent to judge the applications, capable of understanding what they are reading and prepared to be thorough in their examination of each application. You cannot credibly convince me that the existing ACE panels live up to these requirements when I have seen so much feedback that is embarrassingly inaccurate, has missed key information and claimed it was not provided when it was and, moreover, demonstrated

a fundamental lack of knowledge about the subject they were dealing with.

There has also been an unacceptable moving of the goalposts. For example, it was clear that Supporting Grassroots Music was not exclusively a fund for live music projects and yet a rejection letter received just last week told me my application was not funded because it did not include any live music activity! That is two things. Another example of incompetence and an abuse of process. Yet, whenever I or colleagues of mine have raised complaints about the process and feedback, ACE has always failed to uphold those complaints and has whitewashed the entire matter even, for example, refusing to accept that inaccurate information cited as a reason for rejection merited criticism. It makes a mockery of the organisation and underlines the notion that you are a Command and Control body and, worse, one that is entirely incapable of accepting criticism no matter how justified it is.

You need to treat this new package as an opportunity for change. A change to your culture of denial and protectiveness. A change to the horrific inconsistencies in your decision-making. A change to having lazy incompetent panels making decisions for ridiculous reasons because they either cannot be bothered or are incapable of reading, analysing and understanding the applications. A change to being all about defending your honour at the expense of fairness and credibility. You need to approach this package with the positive attitude of wanting to help nurture talent and innovation and not wanting to find excuses to say no. You need to ensure you make it clear to government ministers that the fund will fail to have the intended impact unless they make some proper additional money available for you to give out. You have an opportunity to start making a difference in a good way again and to end several years of disappointing underperformance. Please don't waste it'.

YOU DON'T NEED A BUDGET TO MAKE GOOD VIDEO CONTENT - Sherry explains

Every independent artist hits the same wall. The song is ready. You know you need video content to push it. And yet there is no money for a videographer, no editor on standby, and no clue where to start.

Here's the truth. None of that is actually required. A phone, a handful of free tools, and a clear plan for what the content needs to achieve is enough to get started.

Before any editing app comes into play, the footage itself needs to be solid. This is where most people waste their advantage.

Natural light makes the biggest difference. Filming near a window, outdoors in the early morning or late afternoon, or under any soft, even light source works best. Harsh overhead bulbs should be avoided; they flatten the face and read as cheap on camera, regardless of how good the phone is.

Reels, TikTok, YouTube Shorts they're all vertical. So footage should be shot vertically from the start rather than shot horizontally and cropped later, which reduces resolution and framing control.

Audio needs separate consideration depending on the type of content. Phone mics pick up

room noise and lose warmth, so for a lip-synced promo clip this doesn't matter much, since the phone audio gets swapped out in editing anyway. For a live acoustic take, audio recorded on a separate device even a second phone synced up afterwards gives a far cleaner result.

Keeping your camera steady is just as important as having good lighting. A shaky handheld video can look unprofessional, even if your performance is great. Using a cheap tripod can make a big difference. If you don't have one, you can simply rest your phone on a stack of books or a mug to keep it steady.

Your phone's native camera is genuinely enough for 90% of short-form content. The guide below can be used to achieve the desired video output(iPhone)

Resolution and frame rate

1. 1080p/4k 24fps - for that cinematic look (shoot in cinematic mode)
2. 1080p/4k 30fps - for regular content
3. 1080p/4k 60/120fps - for slow-motion edits

After editing, always export the project in the same settings as it

was filmed or the standard (1080p). So that when uploading the video, it doesn't lose data due to compression.

Grid lines- Turning on the camera grid helps frame shots using the rule of thirds instead of dead centre, which reads as far more intentional on screen.

Lock focus and exposure- tapping and holding on a face locks focus and brightness, so the camera doesn't hunt or re-expose every time something moves in the background.

Turn off auto-flash and beauty filters. They mess with colour consistency between takes and make later colour grading harder.

Free Recording Tools Worth Knowing

DaVinci Resolve -It is a free, desktop-based software used on real film productions. If you're building anything longer, like a lyric video or a proper single release trailer, it's the strongest free option out there for colour grading and multi-track editing.

CapCut - this is the one most artists end up living in. Free, mobile and desktop, built specifically around short-form vertical content.

Auto-captions, beat-syncing, transitions, templates that are actually usable rather than gimmicky. If you only learn one tool, this would be it.

InShot - A simpler alternative to CapCut if you are using Android. Good if you want speed over depth. Handles trimming, text, filters, and basic sound mixing without a learning curve.

Editz - Instagram's built-in editing app, this has all the necessary features required to create a shot from content which can be easily posted online.

Canva - This is also a best editing app if you are looking to create Instagram and creative thumbnails for YouTube long-form content, promo graphics for your Instagram grid, all with free templates you can restyle to match your artist branding.

None of this replaces a great song or a strong visual idea. But it removes every excuse standing between an artist and posting regularly. Free tools cover almost everything needed to record and edit good content. The rest comes down to practice and a bit of consistency.

A WORD FROM DEL:

Fresh On The Net's Leader On Change & Good Practice



Hey everyone! First of all I'd like to thank everyone who's supported FOTN so far in 2026, from sending us tracks to voting on the listening post as well as spreading the word about the site. On behalf of the team we can't thank you enough.

AI GENERATED TRACKS

Since the beginning of the year, we've made some changes - for instance the big one being we will not be accepting AI generated tracks. This has not gone down well with those who advocate for it. There are various reasons for this, chief among them being that initially we asked for those

submitting AI tracks to be upfront about it but then they took advantage of this by submitting multiple tracks under different names potentially taking up slots on the LP and faves that could have gone to artists that hadn't used AI.

There are no exceptions to this rule, and we don't intend to remove it, any submissions found to be using

AI including results that show up as inconclusive will be removed.

ONE MINUTE TEABREAK

One thing we've added is the one minute tea break.

What's that you say?

Well that's a good question - It was an idea that I came up with while out on a walk. Basically, an artist who's made the faves can record a video of one minute or less talking about how they made the faves, the story behind their track and what's next. One minute is pretty good as it helps to get the word out about the artist, and doesn't take long to do. I always encourage the artist to be as true to themselves as they can when recording these videos.

The initial idea was that it's bite size, enough for people to watch and get the word out about themselves. The idea of the one minute tea break came from the 'tea biscuits and a chat' interviews that I do and based on the core questions that I ask - the story behind the song and what's next. I gave the idea to social media genius **Sherry Sahayraj** and she made it happen. I am truly grateful to her as she's the one that edits the videos together in quick turnaround time.

SUPPORT FELLOW ARTISTS

One thing that I find incredibly frustrating is that artists really

aren't good at supporting each other.

Case in point? If you look on social media for example at the BBC Introducing page when they ask who you're into at the moment. 9 times out of 10, people will say themselves. Never another artist. Why am I bringing this up? Well, when we publish the faves I DM each artist in turn via instagram to let them know they've made the faves, and to wait 90 days before submitting another track and most importantly to come and support their fellow artists on the following week's listening post. Only a few do this, and it's quite disheartening. We keep the listening post open from Friday morning around 9:30am to 6pm Sunday evening so you can visit the listening post at any point and spend a maximum of 30 minutes checking out tracks. I've had all kinds of pushback on this. The way I see it is that likes and reposts seem to be currency on social media and if we could all make money on likes and reposts we'd all be rich but we rely on people coming to actually check out the posts. If I was to expand on this further, we've had it where artists on the listening post actually tell their fans to come and vote for them - left unchecked, they'd spend the entire weekend getting everyone they know to do it, which is against everything that we stand

for. It's not a popularity contest - you're trying out your tracks on a new audience. So where's the enthusiasm for each other?

Anyway on a brighter note, while the inbox is closed I'll be publishing articles from different sources, as

well as posting videos - if you fancy writing for us let us know!

Until 7th September then...

Try not to burn the place down while we are away!

LOSE THE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT says Neil !!!

Those of us who spend a lot of time writing about and supporting grassroots music artists have noticed a growing sense of entitlement and lazy arrogance creeping into the conduct of artists. It is a worrying sign and it is clearly no coincidence when it is the same culprits who frequently act as if they are far too important to acknowledge supportive reviews and articles unless they consider them to be prestigious enough to merit so much as a 'like'.

No doubt the usual suspects will rush to defend themselves and offer the same tired excuses but the overwhelming evidence says excuses are what they are! If you are hoping to build careers in this intensely competitive industry, you better lose the attitude now and sharpish because no-one loves a narcissist.

Let's start with Fresh on the Net, a platform founded and, for many years, funded by the music and broadcasting legend Tom Robinson,

a man whose commitment to supporting grassroots artists and providing platforms for new and emerging talent goes back decades. Every weekend, other than when we have a hiatus (Late Summer, Easter and Xmas/New Year), our team of moderators sifts through the 150 tracks received that week from grassroots artists and, through a democratic process, we pick 25 to face a public vote at the Listening Post. The 10 winners then become the *fresh faves* and one (or sometimes two) of the team writes up the reviews which are published on the Monday following the poll. The winners are tagged on all the usual social media platforms. On Instagram, the tagging is not just within the post itself but on the accompanying image to ensure they will receive the notification. The posts go out on Instagram, Facebook, X, BlueSky and Threads.

When we write the reviews, we also do the background research so we can talk about the artists and their

biographies and achievements as well as reviewing the tracks that our readers have chosen. So a lot of effort goes into our own time (as unpaid volunteers) in the interests of supporting independent artists and promoting new music.

Yet, over recent months, fewer and fewer artists are even so much as hitting the 'like' button in regard to the posts they are tagged in. Fewer still are bothering to respond with a thank you to our readers and even those who do comment often seem to imagine they have been chosen by some greater prestige figure (BBC 6 Music is the most popular fantasy link!). They must surely know how the platform works otherwise why would they have submitted a track? And yet they do not even mention the readers who voted for them. In all of these cases, it is disappointing to see artists behaving this way. It costs nothing to 'like' a post and it takes the bare minimum of time to post a positive comment.

A similar issue exists with this journal. It is impossible to tag over 60 artists on the image that accompanies the Instagram post although we pick out 20 to tag anyway and everyone else is tagged within the post. With this edition, we are considering putting out three Instagrams so that we

can tag all the artists on the accompanying image.

They are also tagged, if available to tag, on Facebook, X and/or BlueSky. But again, there are always a significant number who cannot be bothered even to like the post. The problem is, before you plead that you never got a notification, some of you are serial offenders and others always acknowledge the review so we know that simply doesn't wash as an excuse. The result? We probably won't bother wasting our energy on writing up reviews of your music in the future. Support is a two way street but the culprits appear only to be interested in receiving, not giving it. And you may think we don't notice you bigging up reviews on your socials about what you imagine to be more prestigious media. But, trust me, we notice! And sometimes we even have a good snigger as you fawn over a publication with a fifth of our readership because you think it is a bigger deal for you.

It is one of the key messages I continually reinforce with my ICMP students. Always take the time to acknowledge and show some love for people who are making the effort to provide you with positive exposure. Our own band [The] Music Of Sound have received scores of reviews in independent

publications over the past two years alone including everything from little known blogs to significant indie media and from radio shows on small, emerging stations to national ones. But, in every single case, we have posted on all the social media platforms thanking them and publishing the link. It is called common courtesy. And it costs nothing.

A similarly warped perspective has been a reason why certain artists have shunned Fresh on the Net since Tom Robinson's retirement from the BBC because, for them, it was only ever useful as a potential means of getting played on his BBC Introducing Mixtape Show on BBC 6 Music. But that is short-sighted. Why do they think our moderators were invited to join the team in the first place? The team includes people who have links to festival stages, radio shows, journals and blogs, live events curation, indie labels, artists who may need support acts and more. When you submit a track, all of us have to listen to it so you hit all those people in one submission.

It is not uncommon for artists who fail to make the Listening Post to still be reviewed in these pages or

by someone else on the team, to be offered a gig, to be played on a radio show and so on. But hey, if you only want to bother submitting because you think Tom Robinson might like your track, that is your prerogative.

So come on people. This simply is not good enough. We all need to support one another and many in grassroots music are stalwart supporters of fellow artists, writers, radio shows etc. Indeed, if you follow the message threads the community gets involved in and look at the reaction to those people on social media including the weekly threads for our radio show (on X and Bluesky), you will see that those who take the time to give out lots of love soon get that love back in spades when it is them who have music or content to share.

That is how it should be. It is hard enough out there without people behaving in a narcissistic, arrogant or aloof manner towards people who are trying to help them. Make that little extra effort to be a good community member and you might be surprised how much love you find yourself getting in the future.

AND FINALLY

Summer is far from over but please let's hope the energy-sapping heat and humidity has peaked and is retreating into milder temperatures now. Has it been a hot month for new music news too? Hmmmm, yes and no. In terms of the new music by grassroots artists that has come at us though the Fresh on the Net and Trust The Doc Media in-boxes, it most definitely has. Another 60+ new releases reviewed in this edition, same as June. Anyone who still peddles the tiresome view that there is a lack of talent in new music clearly is not looking in any of the right places. Either that or they are just determined to live in the past!

The sheer breadth of talent never lets up and so it will always be, no matter how AI, social media manipulation and corporate cynicism might put obstacles in the way of genuine creativity and innovation. As we are always saying, new music never sleeps!

BBC MISPRODUCING !!!

It is a shame then that some of those who are in a position to add their influence, resources and reach to supporting new talent seem hell-bent on undermining it in the interests of cheap populism and cynical profiteering. One such organisation is the BBC. The cuts in local BBC broadcasting in 2023

represented the beginning of the end for BBC Introducing. The latest decision to divert resources away from BBC Introducing shows into a pointless oldies show on BBC 6 Music is shameful as is the pathetic comment by the station's Head of Music Samantha Moy about it representing 'pure indie' as if indie is something from past history!

Now we see there will be no BBC Introducing Stage at Reading despite 70% of the acts performing at Reading this year having started by having BBC Introducing support!! It is a sad reflection of a once really promising and welcome facility that has become lower and lower priority as the BBC's own leadership has continued to swing to the right and become more conservative and entrenched, not to mention driven by a desire to compete with commercial rivals like Heart, Capital and Smooth instead of focusing on the role of a public service broadcaster. That is supposed to mean educating people, nurturing talent and innovation and providing the means for artists outside the commercial mainstream to put their art in front of new audiences.

The appointment of Samantha Moy as Head of Music for BBC 6 Music in 2022 was hailed as a great moment for women in broadcasting but her

reign has been characterised by attempts to turn the BBC's alternative channel into something much poppier and more commercial. It started with the disastrous decision to axe Tom Robinson's popular and brilliant three hour Saturday Night show and replace it with an EDM show fronted by the Blessed Madonna, a show that belonged on 1Xtra and had no appeal to 6 Music listeners. It was eventually axed amid terrible listening figures, a fact that was hurriedly brushed under the carpet.

There have been other strange decisions such as bringing Radio 1 reject Nick Grimshaw in to host the 6 Music Breakfast Show; hardly a presenter known for his knowledge or understanding of the non-mainstream and its history (which does matter when it comes to context).

There was also the inexplicable decision to reduce the station's most popular show (by far), Radcliffe & Maconie, to 2 hours on each of the weekend mornings it airs on (a reduction by a third of its total broadcasting hours). The show had more than a million more listeners than the station's average of 2.8 million (now down to 2.6 million). But presumably it didn't fit Moy's pop-eyed vision to have two highly well-informed icons of

alternative music and journalism presenting a show that is characterised by highbrow and laconic humour and wacky but popular features. Imagine trying to explain the appeal of (and humour behind) their *Crisps On The Radio* feature to a bland BBC executive whose idea of alternative music is probably Dire Straits!

This lack of vision and intolerance of innovation is reflected in the pathetically poor programming of BBC Introducing Shows in the regions and localities. Pop, Hip Hop and EDM rule the roost while there is little room for alternative bands, experimental artists, contemporary classical, world, ambient and sound art etc. Their interpretation of diversity is simplistic, bordering on perverse.

Our band [The] Music Of Sound kick started our career by having BBC Introducing support, performing on the BBC Introducing Stage at Latitude in 2017 (before any of Neil's current bandmates were in the band or had even finished school!) and being played on four BBC 6 Music shows, BBC Three Counties and especially on BBC Radio 3's now defunct Late Junction, a once 3-nightly show that was also axed for being too inclined to support innovation and originality.

We will be forever grateful to the likes of Max Reinhardt (who was instrumental in putting us forward to play Latitude), Tom Robinson, Nick Luscombe, Fiona Talkington, Stuart Maconie and Anne Hilde Neset for the support we received.

Sadly, it seems inconceivable that the BBC will ever attempt to rebuild BBC Introducing to the level of priority, influence and impact it once enjoyed. But we can live in hope.

ARTS FUNDING IN 2026

The sudden disappearance of the Arts Council's Supporting Grassroots Music fund in the light of the government's new Music Growth Package is a little bit worrying. For all its faults, it was the fund that Trust The Doc Media has and our collaborators on specific projects have relied upon for the past 7 years and it has enabled us to confidently adopt a not-for-profit ethos in relation to our events. But, in truth, it has been poorly and unfairly run for a long time and the reluctance of those in charge ever to accept any criticism has enabled a lot of incompetent and unprofessional panel members to be paid to make poor decisions based on lazy misinterpretations of thorough applications and to apply reasoning that does not even reflect the rules of the funds they

are controlling which is pretty shocking.

Of course, since we have so little information about how the new funds will be managed, how decisions will be made and what the application process looks like, we cannot say whether there will be any improvement. We just have to hope there will be and hope that, although they are the lead partner, the Arts Council may have to be a bit more accountable for their future conduct and not just in terms of how much money they can save for ministers.

THE PORTSMOUTH HUB

If you want to see real support for grassroots music and enthusiastic endorsement of rising talent, you should spend a day with Dom Elton and the team at Mayfield Records with whom we have the pleasure of being involved in an Arts Council funded project, The Portsmouth Hub. The energy and commitment they are showing to getting all these artists into their studio, where the talented Sam Carter-Brazier (aka former fresh fave Noodle Beard) is engineering and producing their tracks, are infectious. We are proud to be part of the project and looking forward to when we can start delivering the music industry education element to the cohort and getting involved

in the live shows further down the track.

This is precisely the type of project the Arts Council is right to be supporting. It took enough failed applications before we got a yes by the way but at least we got there in the end and now a load of talented music artists are benefitting from that decision.

TO ORGANISE A TOUR !!!

You might think it would be fairly straightforward organising a little tour of grassroots venues for [The] Music Of Sound, especially having done so last year. If only! The Music Venue Trust presents an evangelical picture of its *artist-friendly* venues. But contacting them reveals a somewhat different picture.

The whole point of trying to set up dates in November as early as June was to ensure there would be plenty of notice for the venues and plenty of time for Trust The Doc Media to launch a lengthy and effective marketing and promotion campaign. But the prevarication and failing to answer opened emails (and yes, we can see if they have been opened!) has meant we are now looking at putting the tour back to possibly as late as April 2027 when the second trimester at ICMP has ended and we can be

sure all the band members will be in the country at the same time!

For now, watch this space. We may play a one-off London gig in November anyway. Otherwise we will have gone the whole of 2026 without playing a gig!

WELCOME BACK ANIYA

Unquestionably, one of the absolute high points of our July has been officially welcoming back our former flautist and now second vocalist and keyboardist Aniya Sofia to the band. Still only 21 and now a proud graduate of Cambridge University, Aniya never wanted to leave in the first place but was forced by educational pressures to do so. Now she will bring so much to our live set-up and to our sound in general. We are super stoked to have her back on board.

So let's end on that happy note. Have a wonderful month ahead everyone. Thanks so much for indulging us and reading this journal. We hope you have found content in it that is interesting and maybe even entertaining. Let's all keep on flying the flag for grassroots and independent non-mainstream music.

NEIL & SHERRY xxxx