

TRUST The DOC



Edition 120: 30th September 2026



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THE HOTTEST NEWS FROM THE GRASSROOTS SCENE:

- **NEWS AND INFO FROM GRASSROOTS MUSIC**
- **OUR NEW BOOK ON ETHICAL MARKETING & PROMO**
- **[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: LATEST UPDATE**
- **THE PORTSMOUTH HUB: SOUL OF THE SOUTH COAST**
- **OVER 70 REVIEWS OF NEW INDEPENDENT RELEASES**
- **SHOUN SHOUN & KEVIN EAST ALBUM REVIEWS**
- **NEIL & SHERRY REVIEW FIFTY3FRIDAYS GIG IN BALHAM**
- **SHERRY & NEIL REVIEW PIANO SMITHFIELDS SHOWCASE**
- **ARTS FUNDING ROUNDTABLE: NEIL'S FEEDBACK**
- **OUR THOUGHTS ON THE MONTHS GONE BY AND AHEAD**

INTRODUCTION:

September has been a full-on month in so many aspects. A new academic year has begun at ICMP where Neil lectures and Sherry is an alumnus and it has arrived amid a sea of late changes and a jobs merry-go-round the details of which we will not bore you with! But it has meant a lot of work and change in order to hit the ground running.

Meanwhile we have co-authored a new book. ***Ethical Marketing And Promotion For Independent Music Artists*** started out as our response to the noise on social media that is putting unacceptable pressure on artists to become almost full-time content creators. But the research took us in many directions which, added to our own knowledge and experience, has resulted in a book we hope will give independent artists and those in their support networks a positive and wide-ranging evaluation and analysis of the marketing and promotion landscape. You can read about it in greater detail in Part One of this edition.

September also saw **Fresh on the Net** return from our summer hiatus with the inevitable ensuing deluge of tracks from artists who had been waiting for the chance to submit again. Accordingly, the standard has been very high as reflected by

the reviews of the tracks our readers have voted into the *fresh faves* each weekend. We were not on the reviewing rota in September but we are jointly reviewing the next *fresh faves* (5th October) so look out for that and don't forget to go and browse the Listening Post (open every Friday lunchtime until 6PM on Sunday) and vote for your favourite five.

In this issue of Trust The Doc, we have over 70 new releases in Part Two. There is also more news on the Arts Council and Lottery funded project **The Portsmouth Hub** and news about the forthcoming single by **[The] Music Of Sound**, out on 9th October and representing our most explicit attack on the far right yet.

Also there are reviews by Sherry and Neil of gigs put on two of our favourite promoter friends. You will find those in Part 3.

Ed 120 has a special ring to it! So we hope it provides a thorough and satisfying read. Thanks so much for reading it and for helping us all to keep supporting independent music.

**NEIL MARCH & SHERRY
SAHAYARAJ**

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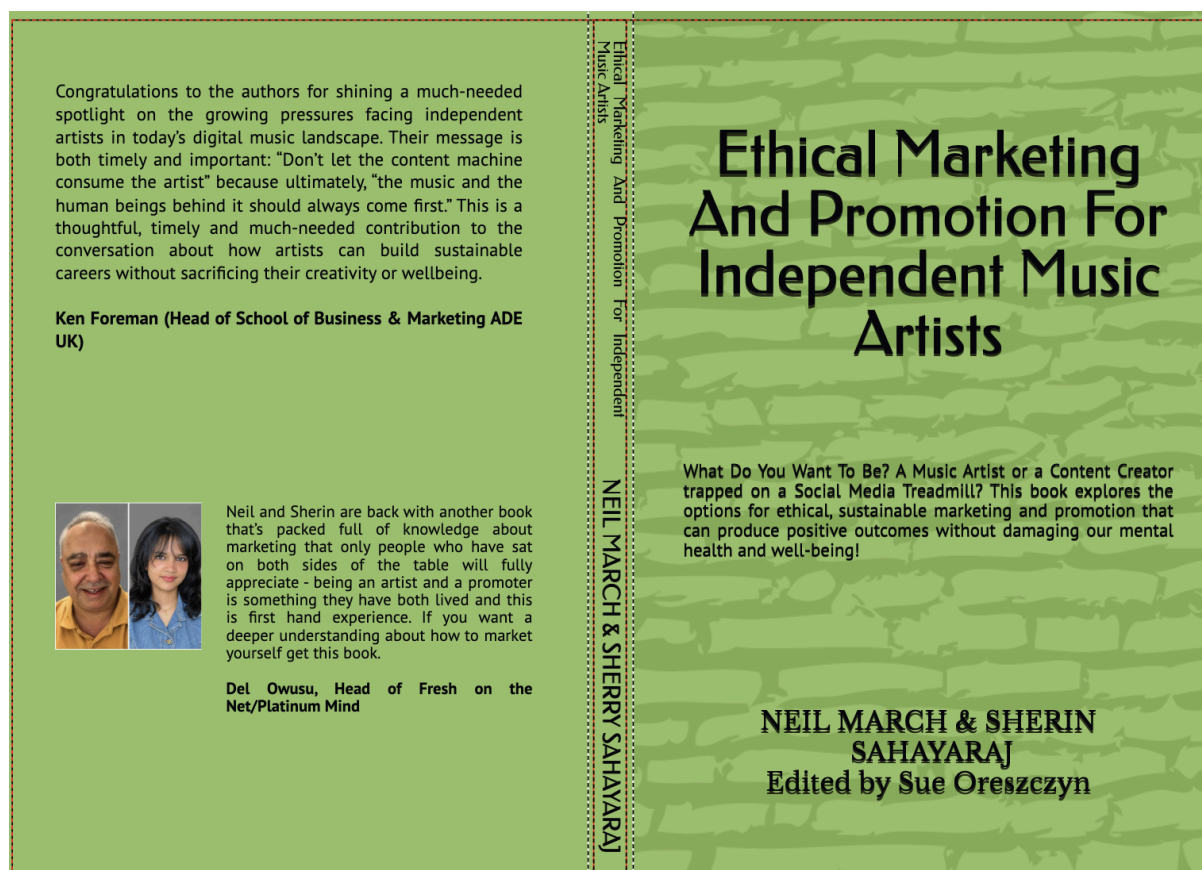
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PART ONE: NEWS AND INFORMATION: EDITION 120

OUR NEW BOOK: ETHICAL MARKETING AND PROMOTION FOR INDEPENDENT MUSIC ARTISTS



We are really pleased to unveil our new book, the first one to be co-authored by **Neil and Sherry**. ***Ethical Marketing And Promotion For Independent Music Artists*** (Trust The Doc Media, 2026) is our response to all the advice and information being spewed out on social media and web pages about how artists should be spending hours of their time creating multiple daily TikTok content etc. But it is actually a lot more than that. It is an attempt to provide a thorough evaluation of the marketing and promotion

landscape for independents in 2026. As ever we are indebted to the amazing **Dr Sue Oreszczyn** for her thorough editing of our text.

We have spent months researching the vast topic of how best to be able to market and promote your music without undermining your mental health and well-being and this book is our attempt to provide as much useful advice and information as possible on this subject. That period included presenting to academics and students and debating the issues,

something we will continue to do as we try to lead a debate on this issue across the independent music sector and music academia.

Our aim, with the book, was to objectively challenge the narrative and not merely to discredit it. Our research took us in a lot of directions, revealing that there has been an argument brewing about that core topic for four years and a great deal of literature that raises serious questions about both the accuracy of the information being disseminated on social media and the impact on mental health and well-being for artists and others involved in marketing and promoting them in supporting roles.

We also assessed the threat of AI. And we looked at the constantly shifting landscape of digital music marketing. We considered how we can try to navigate it and maintain control of our music and our journeys. We also looked at the role live music activity can play in marketing and promoting music and building a fanbase that is identifiable and interactive. We equally looked at how sync can be both an opportunity for income and another avenue through which artists' work is marketed to new audiences.

Contents include an introduction to the subject and chapters on Cutting Through The Noise, The Global Picture, how to use all the social media and related platforms, dealing with the threat of AI, putting your marketing and promo campaigns together, what can be achieved independently, when you might want to use a PR outlet, plugger or other external service, the new services and what they do, using live music as part of your marketing and promo and how you can approach sync and other areas to promote and monetise your music. So this is a wide spectrum of information and advice and an attempt to show that, while there is no indisputable 'right' way to approach your marketing and promotion, it is certainly worth planning and implementing campaigns that cross all these disciplines and utilise every available avenue to maximise the opportunities for exposure and fanbase building.

The rear cover also carries kind endorsements from our Fresh on the Net/Platinum Mind soulmate **Del Owusu** and ICMP's Associate Dean, Head of Business School and former Thrashing Doves frontman **Ken Foreman**. Ken has also moved to get ICMP to endorse the book, helped by a podcast interview with its authors and possible funding for us to present it at academic

conferences. Neil lectures at ICMP but Sherry is a success story from our first ever MA Music Business cohort and Ken was the one who interviewed and recruited her as student in 2022. He is understandably very proud of her and all her subsequent achievements. It was also Ken, along with our great friend Yannis Iliopoulos, who recruited Neil to be a tutor and module leader.

The book costs £10.00 on Amazon.co.uk in paperback (by

print on demand) or £6.00 for the e-book version. The link is [HERE](#). We hope it will prove useful to anyone involved in putting out or supporting independent music in any context who wants to be able to build effective marketing and promo without undermining their or their artists' mental health and well-being. Equally, anyone who wants to have some additional insight into this wide topic.

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: LATEST UPDATE



Pics by Del Owusu

September was a slightly quieter month than August as the campaign on our single ***Shimmer***



scaled down and a new one got underway for ***Danger Danger*** which is out on 9th October. This is our most direct lyrical attack on

Farage and the far right to date. You can read the lyrics [here](#).

RECEPTION TO *SHIMMER*

We are stoked by the reception to *Shimmer*, helped by the, as always, stalwart support of our talented friend **Serge Wenus** and his awesome playlists and hard work by the amazing **Jade Perry** of **Memphia Music Management & PR** who got us into media we have never previously cracked including the likes of **RTE's *Behind The Music*** feature, the **Post-Burnout** podcast, reviews in so many titles including **Fame, Pop Journal, Music News Monthly, The Whole Kameese, 1st 3, Occhi, Afternoiz**, and **Angami**. We had lovely reviews from our great friends **Tony Hardy (Fifty3Fridays)** who also put *Shimmer* on his August playlist and **Del Owusu** who not only reviewed the track but made it Track of the Day for **Platinum Mind** and played it on the **Songbird Sessions** on **Exile FM**. We also had amazing radio support from the super talented **Michelle Ward (Eat My Brunch, Phoenix FM)** plus airplay from our good friends **Chris and Jamie (Tuesday Club, BGFM Radio)** **Space Is The Place Radio (Cando FM)**, **Good Music Radio**, **Indie Centric** and various others too.

PLAYLIST PERFORMANCE

It would be remiss of us not to also give credit to **Emiel Van Bruggen** at **YouGrow Promo**. This has been the eleventh campaign on which he has represented us in playlist pitching and, once again, he struck a great balance of going after playlists that might not yield the huge streaming volumes we had when we first started working with him but were much more suitable in terms of genre and, as a consequence, contributed to the numbers of listeners saving our tracks to personalised playlists and libraries and becoming repeat listeners. *Shimmer* passed 10,000 streams (and is about to pass 11K), meaning we now have 10 tracks in 5-figure streaming figures on Spotify in addition to an 11th one on over 7K.

171,000 STREAMS AND 17.5% ENGAGEMENT !!!

More exciting is that, using Spotify's rolling daily 12 months' statistics, we have passed 171,000 streams with an astounding engagement rate of 17.5%. So 17.5 in every 100 people who have streamed our music in the past 12 months have saved it to a library or personalised playlist. That means more than any other statistic as far as streams are concerned.

DANGER DANGER

We are super excited about ***Danger Danger*** because it is such a political lyric but set to probably our most accessible track. The far right are the inspiration for the lyric but it could easily be about Farage, Trump, Yaxley-Lennon, Jenrick and various other narcissistic hatred-stirring con artists.

The lyrics also take a swipe at the gullible army of supporters who uncritically back these conmen with lines like 'You're just the sewer rat who dies when the work is done/Left at the end with no

friends when the thieves have run' before returning to the refrain of 'Danger Danger/There's a faker on the loose again/Getting plainer/That this hater's getting more insane. The lyrics also compare the political strategies and propaganda of these racist liars to the Nazis and warn that, by the time their supporters realise they have been mugged off, it will be way too late and the thieves will have made off with all the money and left chaos and collapse in their wake. Despite this, it's our poppiest track to date!!

THE PORTSMOUTH HUB: SOUL OF THE SOUTH COAST



The work of **Dom Elton** and the amazing team at **Mayfield Records** in relation to the Arts Council England and The National Lottery UK supported **Portsmouth Hub** continued through September with the release of stunning singles by **Jodie Vinall** and the legendary

Mayfield Records House Band featuring the gifted singer **Mary Red**. Both were reviewed in Ed 119 and played on the Trust The Doc Radio Show. **Del Owusu** heard the latter's track ***Fear Of Ordinary*** on the show and picked it to be **Platinum Mind's Track Of The Day**

as well as playing it on the **Songbird Sessions** show on **Exile FM**. Both tracks also made it onto **BBC Introducing** and Dom gave an interview to local station **Star FM** as did **Mary Red**. This month sees our review of **Southerlies'** heartfelt new single ***Enough Is Enough***, dealing with the crippling impact of mental health issues.

October sees more top quality releases recorded in the Mayfield Studio with **Samhain Carter-Brazier** (aka **Noodle**

Beard) producing. They will be finding their way onto our radio show and getting reviewed in this journal too of course, And we (**Neil** and **Sherry**) will be running the first of three music business educational workshops with the artists involved with the project.

Look out soon for news on the live music element of the project too, some of which has already been happening. This is a project that keeps on delivering for artists.

NEW ARTS COUNCIL CHAIR APPOINTED (Neil Reports)

The Culture Secretary **Lisa Nandy** has appointed the new Chair of the Arts Council. Following the departure of **Nicholas Serota**, who I knew personally although not especially well (originally through my trade union work when Nick was CEO of Tate Galleries and later, through my brief work in the charities sector). His replacement is **Dawn Airey** who has had a long and varied career, mostly in media organisations including Channel 5, ITV, Sky and Getty Images. She has come into the 4-year tenure stating that she wants to connect young people with the arts which

sounds a lot like a pretty archetypal statement from a new Chair! Sorry to sound cynical but when you have heard it all before ...

Airey's track record is of being somewhat more interventionist in approach compared to Serota's laid back style. It is too early to speculate as to whether that will be good, bad or indifferent for the Arts Council and its applicants. For now, congratulations to her and let's hope she presides over a period where they are better funded and better managed than in recent times.

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. Sometimes just a selection of most well known tracks by a classic artist or band.

September has seen the likes of Cocteau Twins, Queen and Radiohead as Whats The Word tracks and show closers involving En Vogue, Suede and albums released 50 years ago this month. It has also seen plenty of grassroots artists with new singles out plus new albums featured by Ezra Collective, White Flowers, Alabama Shakes, Laura Misch, Fontaines D.C. and Mary In The Junkyard.

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

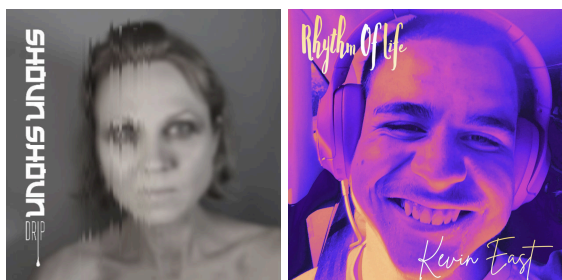
where listeners comment on the music, chat about a variety of topics, share pics of their food and all sorts of other things plus the shoutbox is there for those who prefer to send messages just to be read out on air.

We are seriously contemplating breaking with X (where the thread has run since the show's inception in 2020) and moving to Threads because of sheer exasperation at the antics of Musk and his shower! They have wrecked what was such a good platform in Twitter years, robbing us of really good scheduling tools, messing up our DMs and trying to make us put up with far right propaganda and a diet of insane ramblings and hate spreading by some of the most vile, despicable people you will ever have the misfortune to receive content from. We avoid engaging with them but our patience has been worn thin to say the least!

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. And the atmosphere they help create is supportive, upbeat and fun. If you miss the live, interactive show, you can catch the podcast for 7 days [here](#).

PART TWO: REVIEWS OF NEW MUSIC: ED 119

ALBUMS & EPs (by Neil)



It is always exciting to have new material from Bristol's Alt Rock warriors **Shoun Shoun**, led by the super talented Berliner **Annette Becker**. So to have a whole album is a real treat. **Drip** was also a recent single and now gives its name to an 11-track album, their first in 4 years since the 2022 set *Monsters And Heroes*. Over that time, **Shoun Shoun** have honed their dark, daunting and sometimes dystopian vision, carving out their own niche as a post-Gothic Art Rock band drawing on a range of influences, often with earth shattering sonic episodes and a glorious aptitude for capturing the energy and intensity of their music in the studio in a way a lot of bands struggle to match.

The album kicks off with **Mir Ist Heiss**. Clanging metallic guitar, sliding bass and heavy drums introduce Annette's German spoken word. Then comes some tremolo violin and synth plus a siren-like guitar. This is so intense and brilliantly unstable, like a dark

daunting dream you somehow don't want to escape from. Then it's the title track which was a recent single, drums and bass syncopated, underpinning watery synth and ghostly melody against which Annette's vocals are dramatic and backed up an octave down in the main themes. **Black Widow** places a slower moving melody atop a frantic instrumental backdrop and tribal drums. **We Do** is slower and syncopated with crisp beat and some mind-spinning synth figures and machine-like ambient textures. Annette's vocals sound teasing, taunting even before she explodes into anger in a kind of chorus. Again, the music goes through so many smart, small but nuanced changes so that events never stand still. The vocal production, with its short echo effect, is great too. **L'Écrivain** builds around instrumental interplay that recalls Joy Division but is too intricate to be them! A heavy backdrop clangs and crashes around Annette's single spoken words before some sumptuous chord sequences ensue

and take us into a Banshees-like chorus. Again, there are so many events that keep things fluid and full of invention while retaining the intensity that characterises the whole work.

Flight is in a mid-tempo triplet time and makes great use of contrasts between sparse and opaque. This is one of the more poppy tracks, if such a word can be used about such biting Alt Rock music. **Ugly Mouth** has more spoken word and otherworldly sounds plus a brilliantly unstable beat and ghostly sounds. **Work** starts sounding like a band warming up in the next room before a fast-paced beat and running bass drive things forward. This was also a single and another example of Annette's ability to build an engagingly intense and sometimes breathless vocal around such a hard-edged metallic Post-Punk and semi-industrial backdrop. Shades of Lene Lovich in places.

Tooth & Claw has a three-note guitar figure that punctuates much of the song while mind-boggling sounds build around this and a tribal triplet time beat. Suddenly we are treated to some gorgeous single guitar chords and lower mixed but screeching synth figures (or they could be the violin). The penultimate track is **Muddy Waters**

but no, this is not a blues pastiche. Distorted bass, shifting time signatures and surf-style tremolo guitar all accompany the upper register vocal as it leads into a wordless but power-driven hook. Later this is given words and lengthened to provide a climatic point that maintains its overwhelming presence for the duration. The album ends with another familiar track and recent single **We Woke The Monster**, an ocean of competing sounds and full-on beat accompanying Annette in more spoken word drama before the melody makes extensive use of tritones to emphasise the dystopian nature of the lyrics. When the drums drop out, you really get a sense of the production and how the instrumental players achieve such an incredible combined noise with the attention to detail that lifts their songs to such a high level of emotional impact, sheer excitement and yet a sense of foreboding too. That atmosphere of gloriously grating sounds, on point interband chemistry and their sonic uniqueness enables Shoun Shoun to subsume influences from a lineage that reaches back to the likes of Siouxsie & The Banshees, Public Image Ltd, Wire etc. through the decades, grabbing bits and pieces as they go, maybe a little of Bloc Party, Savages, White Flowers, who knows? And who cares? Shoun

Shoun have a well established sound that is unequivocally their own and this album is another masterpiece of inventiveness and imagination that you really have to listen to all the way through and then do it several times more. Fantastic.

Our close friend and sometimes musical collaborator [Kevin East](#) has a new album called ***Rhythm Of Life***. Inspired by dealing with the loss of his lovely teenage son **Maxwell** and his brother **Mick**, this is a deeply personal work but also one that is imbued with the kind of generous love and fighting spirit that those of us who are friends with [and, in my case, have written, played, performed and recorded with] Kev have come to know him for.

The album sees Kevin working once again with producer and keyboard wizard **Jules Chown**. It kicks off with the familiar funky groove and cool synth bass and horn stabs of ***Funky Eastman*** before the also recent single ***Keep A Light On*** with smooth sax and Kev in agile, rangey voice. Another familiar track ensues with ***Cold Heart***, more sax and funky chords over buoyant bass and Kev's voice swooping and circling the mix. ***Be With You*** has a little of Sade in a mash with Motown about its mid-tempo groove, sax noodles and piano

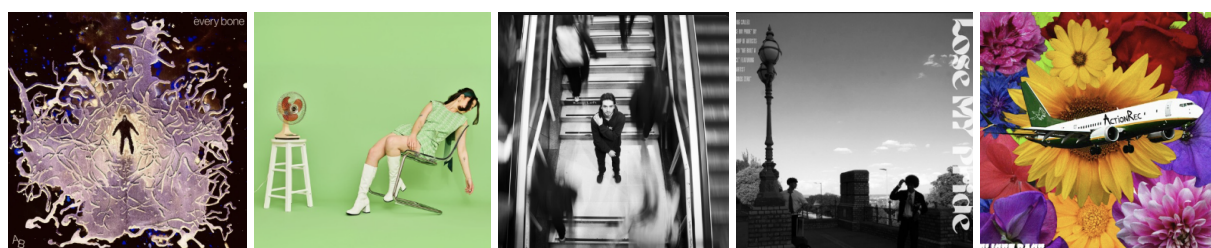
chords. The lyrics are touching and lovingly crafted while Kev is in more of his middle register here. A loving tribute to Max. ***Shining Light*** continues the 80s vibe, a little of Champaign and a touch of Luther about this. Again, Kev deals lovingly with the tragedy of his loss and delivers a goose-bumping melody in his soulful tones.

Rhythm Of Life brings jazzy electric piano and more sax as a dance groove ensues and Kev gets into sassy mood. ***Live 4 It Now*** is slightly slower but still has a funky dance feel and Love Unlimited-like strings. Kev's lower register is beautifully demonstrated here. The harmonies are gorgeous too. ***Watching Over Me*** is another recent single with a slightly laid back dreamy feel and groove with a sweet chord sequence and Kev singing about looking to the night sky and picturing Max there. The chorus is stunning. ***Dead Affair*** is a track we used to perform back when I was Kev's keyboardist and MD back in the mid-2000s but this is a complete reworking of the track with some great picked staccato guitar, jazz-infused keyboard chord changes leading into a soulful killa hook. ***Too Hot To Touch*** takes us back onto the dancefloor with some great retro sounds and funky electric piano accompanying Kev's laid back vocal delivery.

The album concludes with ***Hoping***. The sax in the intro has shades of *What's Going On* although the song is something quite distinct. Mid-tempo, slightly funky with a rich arrangement accompanying Kev's dexterous vocals. The harmonised chorus is beautiful

both in terms of its musical qualities and its simple but important message of hope. It is a fantastic finish to a really lovely, highly personal but never indulgent album. Kev has done Max and his brother (and everyone else in his life) proud with this superb set.

POP NOODLES



When she isn't running the indie PR outlet Decent Music PR, **Anna Stephens** is the artist [Anna Blaise](#) and her new single is ***Every Bone***. This is dark pop, built around buzzing electro drone bass, rich and contrasting layers of synths and Anna's distinctive, dexterous alto range vocals, adorned by harmonies. As it develops, the track becomes more and more cinematic. Full of expression and perfectly produced too. This is substantial and its intensity and emotional power grow throughout the track, sucking you further and further into its grip (in a good way obviously!).

Brooklyn, New York artist [Adelide](#) has a track called ***Circles***. This is a mid-tempo, breezy Pop track with warm synth chords and squelchy

bass accompanying Adelaide's agile soprano range vocals. Instantly melodic and topped off with a killa hook and lovely BVs, this will get inside your head before you can say get inside your head! So catchy and beautifully executed.

[Isaac Neilson](#) returns with ***Follow Me***. Set to a buoyant backdrop of strummed guitar and crisp beat that has shades of Cornershop, he mixes satirical semi-rap spoken word with an absolute belter of a chorus with multiple voices in choir-like style. That hook is impossible to hide from. Resistance, my friends, is useless!

From London and Coventry come [We Built A Place](#) with ***Lose My Pride***. This has a lovely R'n'B undercurrent and a funk-gilted

edge too like Damage jamming with Fun Loving Criminals while Bruno Mars throws ingredients into the pot. The melody is infectious while the harmonies and keyboard chords add a real richness and there's even a rap to add something extra to it. This is fresh and enchanting.

The new single by Irish band and TTD regulars [ActionRec](#) represents a dramatic shift in musical direction. **Fight Back** mixes a slightly dark minor key Pop-Hop sensibility with some lovely falsetto and octave-apart vocals and reflective rap. It takes them into new territory but it really works.

ALT ROCK & INDIE



TTD regular **Lara** aka [Never The Bridle](#) returns with **Funny Bizarre**. A clever lyric is set to an equally clever rhythmic configuration that instantly grabs attention as the track builds from quiet beginnings and takes on a more full-on Alt Rock sensibility although Lara's vocals and harmonies have an Indie-Folk aspect to them too. This is so well written and performed with a twinkle in her eye. Superb.

[G.Inc](#) are three female musicians from Ukraine and **Fuksia** is their latest single. This is a mind-spinning combination of clever rhythmic shifts, ambient sounds accompanying fluid instrumental play and stark contrasts. At times, they offer an intense spoken word over evolving

semi-electronic riffs and punchy uptempo beats; at others they slow the tempo to half time and bring alluring melodies over descending chords. All the while, their style is unique, original and inventive.

The artist formerly known as **Burr Oak** is now [Savanna Ruth](#) and her latest offering is **In Your Orbit**. This is a mid-tempo track that starts with strummed guitar and ascending synth melody before the rest of the instruments kick in. Vocally and style-wise, there are echoes of Phoebe Bridgers in a jam with Sharon Van Etten, tough-edged and organic but with a strong pop sensibility too. Her voice is engaging and the harmonies lift it further.

Described in their press release as ‘... one of the UK’s beloved queer indie bands’, [The Spook School](#) bring us ***Falling***, another release by the always dependable Alcopop! Records label and it is the band’s first new music since they played a ‘farewell tour’ in 2019. This has a very American feel like The Strokes in a mash with Dinosaur Jr. It is fast, energetic but very tuneful with a tight instrumental chemistry plus little melodies that counter the

vocal one and a chorus that keeps coming at you.

New Jersey’s [Quiz Show](#) have a new single called ***Xono***, a first taste of an EP which will have the same title. This brings a slightly sarky and dramatised spoken word over chunky guitar-driven Punk Pop with a surplus of infectious positive energy and matches it to a catchy tune in the chorus. Substantial and fun.



Brighton’s [Seadog](#) bring us ***Into The Night***. This is an intriguing hybrid of Indie Alt Rock jangling guitars, syncopated bass and drum rhythms and a vocal that has echoes of Folkrock and a little of West Coast Americana too. There is a dreamlike quality to it that is engaging and atmospheric. Maybe even a little of The Byrds lurking in the shadows of its more contemporary sounds and style. Well worth checking out.

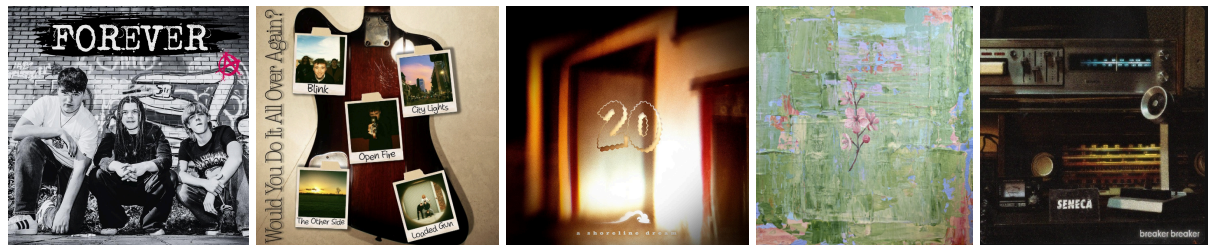
punchy instrumental mix with some cleverly nuanced contrasts and stops and starts. There is an aura of Americana living within its poppy Alt Rock landscape. The harmonies are cool too.

From Yorkshire (in the North of England) and the Midlands come [Fever Dream Kills](#) with ***Gone By Surprise***, a song about finally breaking away from a relationship with a narcissist. A distinctive alto range female voice sits atop a

[Triers](#) have a track out called ***Common Goal***. Although their blurb describes them as indie/alt fusion, this is more Alt Rock with elements of synthemantic Pop thrown in. Bright instrumentation, driving beat, descending chord pattern and a passionate, tuneful male vocal. The chorus is big and has an epic sensibility and the energy is invigorating too.

The always dependable [Roe](#) returns with ***Team Player***. Jangling

guitars, melodic synth and solid bass and drums accompany Roe's distinctive voice on this introspective, yearning track. There is an undercurrent of Indie Folk about it too, maybe shades of Phoebe Bridgers jamming with Laura Marling while Angel Olsen brings extra ingredients. But that could be a misleading comparison. Roe's sound is her own and this is another engaging example of her work.



Hull's 'Skate-Punks' [Vagabond](#) have a new single called ***Forever***. This switches between half-time single crashing fuzztone chords and driving guitar figure over live-sound drums and rock-solid bass while the male vocal is youthful and passionate leading into an agreeably football terrace-like chorus chant. Tuneful and bristling with positive energy.

Brought to us by the amazing Jade from Memphis Music Management & PR, the latest single by Manchester's [The Falls](#) (yes, with an S at the end, folks, this is not life after Mark E Smith!), also not to be confused with a band of the same name on Spotify (*this* band is called The Falls Band on there), is

Laura and Paul aka [Broken Bear](#) return with ***Silence The Truth***. The lyrics are a bit enigmatic so we can't confidently say what the message is. But the music is trademark BB with fuzztone guitars playing chords and bendy riffs and the drums solid and providing a great foundation to build the track on. Laura's voice is as distinctive as ever and expressive too. Another strong track.

Blink, final release from their EP ***Would You Do It All Over Again?*** The verses keep the guitar to minimal stabs over a busy bassline and punchy drums. Then the 4-chord intro riff returns as a kind of substitute for the chorus. It is an interesting approach and the switches between half and full time make the bridge more prominent.

Colorado, USA based duo [A Shoreline Dream](#) bring us ***20*** as a taster for their forthcoming album. This has a driving reverberant beat with atmospheric guitars and bass accompanying a dreamy echoing male vocal that drifts in and out of focus, adding to the unmistakably shoegaze-infused aura of the track. Inventive and superbly ambiguous,

even down to the weird brief stop in sound! If you loved bands like Ride and Lush and current ones like Been Stellar, you will almost definitely like this too.

[Osaka Sun](#) return with ***Only In Your Dreams***. Bathed in layers of shoegazey reverberant guitars and bass with the drums driving events, it has a deepish register male vocal setting out the melody while the ensuing wall of sound builds around it. Slow but energetic, dark but dreamy.



Brought to us by the amazing Jade at **Memphia Music**, Norwich's [Takeda](#) have a new single out called ***Lion's Den***. This is in a slow-to-mid tempo triplet time with strummed guitars and more abrasive lead play plus some fantastically loud fuzzy bass in the middle and end. The syncopated beat keeps things moving and the male (tenor range) vocals begin gently but intensify emotionally and dynamically as the track develops. It is a cool hybrid of Grunge, Indie Folk and late 90s Rock, resulting in a fresh and impactful track.

[SENECA](#) describe their hybrid of influences as *Math Rock* and their track ***Breaker Breaker*** feels, at times, like a journey through the ages. There are elements that remind me of Prog Rock (although more Utopia than Yes), snippets of Fusion, imaginative Rock (like The Police in their best moments) and a whole lot more besides. This is great musicianship, highly creative contrasts between different song sections, gritty vocals, strong harmonies and a surplus of inventiveness. A real gem.

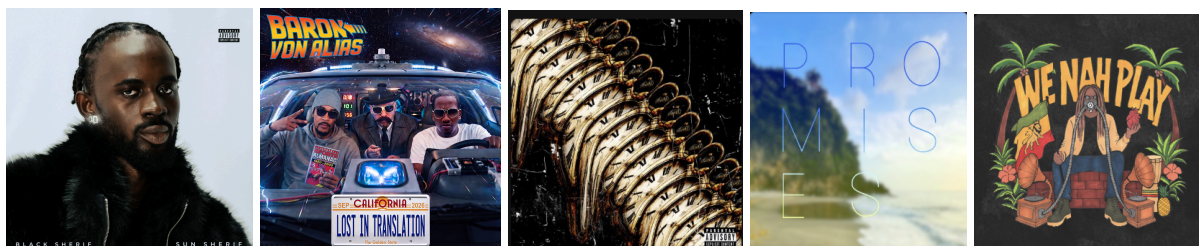
[Danxgerous](#) is the solo project of Irish-Czech artist **Daniela Mariti** and she has a single called ***Clairvoyant***. It mixes picking acoustic guitar with punchy electric play, colourful keyboard lines and a driving bass and drums undercurrent. All this provides a robust accompaniment for Daniela's distinctive vocals and expanding harmonies in a track that starts off rueful and reflective but grows into an emotional powerhouse as she ups the dynamics and intensity. There is an unmistakable folk element to her sound but it is also a kind of organic Alt Rock too.

The latest release by **Mayfield Records** as part of the Arts Council supported **Portsmouth Hub** project sees South Coast band **Southerlies** delivering a heartfelt tale of the crippling anxieties and effects of mental health woes on ***Enough Is Enough*** which also features Mayfield head and fellow musician Dom on the cover. The song is a slowish, thoughtful and touching track with acoustic and electric guitars mingling with a generally organic instrumental interplay while the vocal style has a large dose of Americana and a folky, country-ish undercurrent. The tune will stay with you and the words, including the line 'Just keep on living/Ain't no giving up' favour hope and endeavour in the darkness of despair and disbelief. A powerful message handled with loving care.

China-based Welsh artist **Blokeacola** returns with ***River Why***. I presume, given Will's Welsh heritage, that this is a reference to the River Wye that runs along the East and South East of the country. It brings the orange-helmeted one's trademarks of lilting psych pop sensibilities, simple but appealing guitar figure playing throughout much of the track and his distinctive voice. Cool hook too.

Brighton's **Matt Finucane** is an artist we have put on twice at live events and he returns with ***Dead Art Form***. Switching between sarky spoken word and deeper range melody, this drives along with punchy beat and fuzzy guitars aplenty plus a little streak of feedback at the end for good measure. Packed with energy and intent.

BEATS, RHYTHMS & RHYMES



Rising star of Ghanaian Afrobeat and High Life, **Black Sherif** teams up with Trinidadian artist **Full Blown** on ***Love Again***. This is a lilting mid-tempo track at the poppier end of the spectrum with an instantly infectious tune, almost

floating feel and lovely vocals, adorned by sweet harmonies.

Our good friend **Steesh** aka **Baron Von Alias** teams up with **Keith Murray** and **Tash** on ***Lost In Translation***. In essence, this has an Old Skool Hip Hop vibe with a

crunching beat, the vocalists swapping rhymes and overlaps plus some classic scratching going on. The sound is very contemporary though and it comes at you with intent. Great collaboration and well produced, encapsulating the spirited performances of the three artists.

I can find no information about [Konrad Birnir](#), not even on his Spotify profile, but **10 Mins** offers something refreshingly unique. I can't say what language the lyrics are in but he delivers them in a deep register drawl against swirling ambient synth-electronic backdrop but with a slow, persistent beat. Somehow it has the feel and aura of a Hip Hop track but it is definitely his own sound and very intriguing.



Two artists who I associate with collaborations on True Hold Records with Rolain (Conscious Route) are [Kryptik](#) and [Wends](#). This time it is the two of them pairing up on **Take Mine**. This is a frantic Drum'n'Bass track with Hip Hop chops. Kryptik's delivery and rhythmic flow are rapid fire, passionate and distinctive while Wends' harmonised vocals are the

From Basel, Switzerland comes another track by [Dr J](#). **Promises** starts off with an extended cinematic futuristic funk intro using some dreamy synths and punchy beat before the vocals come in and deliver a thoughtful lyric topped off by an infectious hook and some gorgeous instrumental play.

It is always good news when there is a new track by Manchester artist [J Chambers](#). **Fools Gold** uses his trademark Reggae backdrop to deliver a typically observational lyric in which he laments the violence and enmity and points out the foolishness of being ruled by money. His distinctive voice and rhythmic delivery add punch to this excellent track.

perfect contrast, soulful and gutsy. This flies out of the speakers at you with serious intent. You cannot fail to be dragged along by its energy.

US trap artist [Aiko Dover](#) has an unusual and engaging style. **Heathan** is more sung than rapped but in his own unique way while the music is swirling synth-dominated and dark. The lyrical flow is

punctuated by his 'Huh Huh' phrase and clever analogies. All in all, a refreshingly original track.

Bristol's TTD and FOTN regular [B Of Briz](#) returns with ***Shadow Play***. No, this is not a Joy Division cover. This *Shadow Play* is a pretty scathing attack on some fairly

sordid horrible sounding men set to a lo-fi piano playing on-beat staccato chords against scraping, scratching enigmatic ambience. This is a speech rather than a rhyme. A lecture rather than a rap. She sets out her stall unambiguously in the process.

SOULFUL SENSIBILITIES



The ever-reliable **Ed Blunt** aka [EDBL](#) teams up with **Ady Suleiman** and **Dan Whitlam** on *When You Were Mine*. Assuming Dan is the rapper, he sounds uncannily like Loyle Carner (which is no bad thing obviously) and has that same smile in his voice. Ed and Ady create the dreamiest of soundscapes and Ed's vocals float atop this sea of sounds with rich synths and Spanish-style guitar picking. Soulful and cool.

[Oreagonomics](#) have a song called ***Work Not Heart*** that blends falsetto male vocals with an Old Skool Soul vibe that leans both towards classic Motown and Neville Brothers but also a hint of later artists like Lenny Kravitz and even a little of Charles & Eddie. The syncopated rhythms, sweet chord extensions and melancholy melody

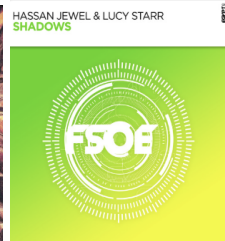
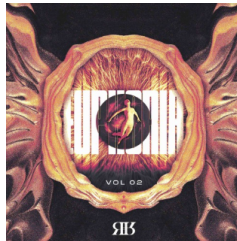
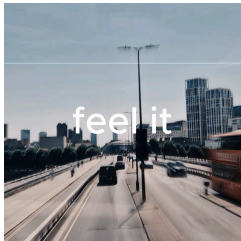
all work well along with the yearning soulful vocal delivery. Like this a lot.

[June Holland](#) brings us ***Get Outside***. This is described in the press release as 'Indie Soul' but it's actually more retro Soul-Pop with jangling upper register guitar and a Motown-influenced backing track to a melodic track with June's distinctive voice at its core. Shades of 80s Blue Eyed Soul acts like Big Sound Authority and even a little of the Style Council about this.

Brighton's [Short Sharp Scratch](#) return with ***That Summer Sun***. This is Old Skool Funk mixing with falsetto vocals that dance around the mix with a Chairmen Of The Board meets Mark Ronson vibe (or something like that anyway!).

Funky, fast-paced and full of cool staccato figures and close harmonies, this will lift your spirits.

CLUB CULTURE



It's been quite a year for [Roger Burke](#). As well as making some great tunes, the Londoner was involved in a nasty car accident that took him out of action for some while. So it is good to know that he is fully recovered and back at it with new single ***Feel It***. This mixes Roger's deep spoken word with soulful female vocal samples in a kind of call and response against warm synth chords and staccato figures that make use of some sumptuous sounds, creating a dreamlike atmosphere while the beat pumps at times and drops out at others like a classic Euro Trance anthem mixing with something more melancholy. Accordingly, this is a track you could groove your arse off to but equally one you could chill out to. Beautiful and perfectly produced.

London DJ and producer [Sef Kombo](#) teams up with vocalist [Zola Marcelle](#) on ***In The Center***. This is a rich combination of Afrobeat-infused House (verging

on Trance in terms of the hypnotic sounds and dreamy synths) and Zola Marcelle's soulful, yearning vocal performance which could almost be from a Massive Attack track. The consequence is a lovely song that maintains a club vibe but is also a perfect radio track.

Riot Records' [Sinzi & Joy Doc](#) are at the poppy end of the Drum'n'Bass spectrum with ***Move***. An array of sounds dance around the mix throughout the track while female vocals deliver a catchy tune and persistent hook. Lots of energy.

From **Future Sounds Of Egypt** come [Hassan Jewel & Lucy Starr](#) with ***Shadows***. It is listed on Soundcloud as 'Trance' but sounds a lot more like Electro-House to us. High tempo, lots of sharp-edged synth and electronic sounds bobbing around a persistent beat with plenty of long fills and female vocals that take into poppier waters. Catchy too.

Geoff Ruby aka fellow FOTN mod and the artist [Grubby](#) brings the vibes on **Horror**. It veers between a daunting spoken word over buzzy synths and then long bursts of funk-edged Drum'n'Bass (or what



South East Londoner and TTD royalty [Pimlican](#) is keeping the tracks coming at us and the latest is **You Gotta Love**. After the success of using his own voice on the last single, this one is basically instrumental with some vocal sounds but no decipherable lyrics. All the same it sounds like he has again used his own voice which is good to hear as he grows in

might be deemed Liquid Funk) with persistent, high tempo beat, synth bassline descending in octaves and other sounds drifting in and out of focus. This could be tearing up a dancefloor near you soon.

confidence as a vocalist where his past catalogue has tended to use female singers. It is also in the much more electro-house side of his output with a big buzzing electronic riff repeating at various points although the slightly syncopated but persistent beat is classic Pimlican. Another guaranteed floor filla.

SINGER-SONGWRITER



It is always good news to have new material from the super talented [Kitty O'Neal](#). She is the artist formerly known as **March** but has been performing under her actual name for the past year or so. After an enigmatic start, almost like the musical equivalent of trying to tune

into a few different radio stations on an old transmitter radio, **Not At The Same Speed** develops into a piano-dominated ballad in which Kitty's dexterous voice has echoes of Phoebe Bridgers in a mash with Lucy Rose while Samantha Crain lurks in the shadows. Only at the

end does everything crash into action with drums, guitar etc. providing a short but impactful climax to a lovely and thoughtfully written track.

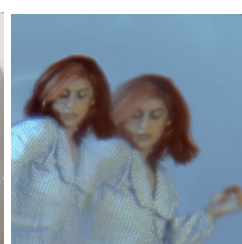
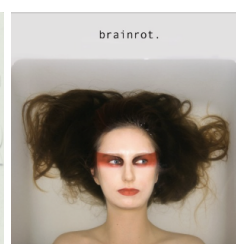
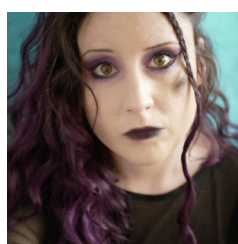
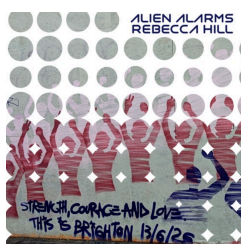
The latest single by [Asgard Raven](#) is ***The Shadow***. This is in a slowish triplet time with strummed acoustic and electric guitars while Asgard's bendy vocals have something of Richard Ashcroft about them and the big multi-tracked harmonies really add to the weight and power of the chorus. This has elements of Alt Rock, Americana and Indie Folk and is characteristically well written, produced and executed.

Dave King aka [Gurry Wurry](#) returns with ***Dented Heart***. This is in his usual sophisticated retro pop style with some clever switches between half and full time, a typically engaging melody and

buoyant chords popping over an unobtrusive beat. There are shades of Danny Wilson in a mash with Ben Folds about this. Another fine example of his uniquely honed craftsmanship.

Super talented Welsh artist [Freyja Elsy](#) brings a slow Trip Hop vibe on ***Control***. Atmospherically, this reminds me a little of Massive Attack when they were working with the likes of Tracey Thorn and Elizabeth Fraser. But then it also has a very contemporary feel with dreamy layers of synths and half time beat. On top of all this sits Freyja's goose-bumping voice, adorned by lovely harmonies and a hook that is irresistible. Also check out the dreamy and thoroughly lovely ***Another Life***. She just keeps on delivering at such a high standard.

SYNTHEMATIC



TTD friend and regular **Jim Purbrick** aka [Alien Alarms](#) teams up with **Rebecca Hill** to tell the story of a clash between racist thugs and anti-fascist protesters on ***The Battle Of Trafalgar Street***. Rebecca provides the spoken word,

telling the tale of what happened on a day in June 2026 while Jim provides a funky synth-driven backdrop complete with some belting beats and sweet chords in between the grooves. All proceeds go to Brighton Antifascists.

Londoner **Jessica English** is [Strange DNA](#), a project described as 'dark electronic pop' inspired by '... the feeling of being an outsider'. **Cry** lives up to that brief and has a driving synthwave energy that, along with Jessica's octave jumping, agile soprano range voice, is instantly striking. She says her music explores themes of alienation, identity and fear and the vibe here is unsettling and yet touching at the same time. Comparisons are difficult. Imagine if Chvrches got darker and added a gothic aspect while jamming with Girl As Wave and Catbear brought the wine. Or something. But Jessica's music has its own distinct sound and her vocals are the icing on this very appealing cake.

Merthyr Tydfil's finest [Martyrs](#) return with **The Long Goodbye**. This is a punchy uptempo but syncopated slab of synth-driven Pop with trademark upper register male vocals, big reverberant synth stabs and counter themes and power-driven rhythm section. The melody will grab you by the ears

and the energy and imagination in the music is irresistible. Jon and Michael are on a role at the moment. New EP on its way too.

London-based Swedish artist [YELF](#) returns with the intriguing **Brainrot**. A slightly disco-infused Synthpop track with a mix of high register, ethereal vocals floating atop a buzzy synth-dominated backdrop. Add to this a crunching beat and hard-to-decipher spoken word, verging on rap. The melody begins to overpower you and her voice manages to be both slightly haunting but strangely comforting too. Absolutely love this.

From Oslo, Norway, the inimitable [Crybaby Claire](#) returns with **Pretty Cool**. This is infectiously catchy melodic synthemantic pop with a lovely keyboard figure playing in open fourths over a crisp beat and running bassline. Claire's vocals are yearning with a touch of melancholy as she sings 'We used to be a thing/Pretty Cool' and, at one point asks 'Will you even remember me?'. Great to have her back.

ELECTRONIC & AMBIENT



London-based artist and producer [Noé Solange](#) has a new track called ***Just Stay***. A haunting melody sung in her distinctive and dexterous voice is set to a kind of hybrid of Trip Hop and cinematic electronica, shifting between full and half time beats, sounds echoing into the distance, creating an aura of vast open landscapes. It builds, introducing a variety of rich synths and vocal echoes within which the hook keeps coming at us. Great track.

London-based Singaporean artist [Suki Quasimodo](#) uses a fairly minimal electro-synth backdrop to accompany a track called ***Power*** that is really about the vocals. The power here is in the aura she conjures up through agile harmonies and contrasting vocal techniques, making for compelling listening on a quiet but commanding track.

‘Dance music for the sedentary’ is how [Openmode](#) describe their music. ***How Do I Stop*** could well be an example of such a concept but it is essentially an ambient arc

of sound that begins and ends in quiet reflection and, in between, builds in layers of synths and enigmatic sounds, some quite crystalline, to create a uniquely ethereal and inviting atmosphere.

Meanwhile [Colin Seddon](#) may not be trying to also create dance music for the sedentary but he does remind us of the power of stasis when surrounded by floating, evolving sonic events on the track ***Still 1***. That combination of firmly rooted central theme but bell-like and generally resonant sounds drifting dreamily around the core of the track keeps us hooked. This is a 3 mins 1 secs ‘radio edit’. I wonder how long the original is.

Oregon, USA is home to [Dismantled](#). ***Zero*** is a mid-tempo electronic synthwave track with a stressed spoken word male vocal, straight ahead beat and driving staccato electrobass underpinning synth chords and suspensions, some occasional samples and a melody mainly on one tone. It works though and has atmosphere.



We are not sure whose face is on the new single by our amazing friend [Hannya White](#) but it certainly does not look like Hannya! Anyway, it is great to have a new single from her and **#Freak** has been worth the wait. From the opening echoing wordless vocal and gradually increasing dynamics of the beat and electrobass as she counts to three and repeats 'You are my freak' followed eventually by 'You belong to me' all in deadpan spoken word, this sucks you in. Minimal synths, ghostly voices and ambience float about in the background while the persistent beat is joined by bass sounds that are fluid and atmospheric. Like all Hannya's, nothing here is as random as it sounds and she builds a sonic framework around these simple but effective methods. At one point, the electrobass and beat lock into a slightly frenzied loop as if the computer has stalled but then normal order is resumed and more sounds and voices are subtly introduced to keep events moving. All on a basic monotone too. Great stuff, like a strange unsettling dream but one you want to experience again.

[The Actions](#) take a dramatic diversion from their dreamier recent tracks with the driving electronic soundscape that characterises **Container**. The vocals sound filtered and the instruments do battle with some fuzzed up and trippy ambience and distortion. But it's a fascinating unfurling of ideas and refreshingly individual.

TTD regular, Norwich's **Matt Couchman** aka [Lost Signal](#) returns with **Grass Is Greener**. Occasional sarcastic spoken word appears but mostly this is an engaging instrumental track in which Matt weaves together a basket of synths and electronic sounds to create a warm and unusual piece that keeps events moving with its array of ideas and timbres.

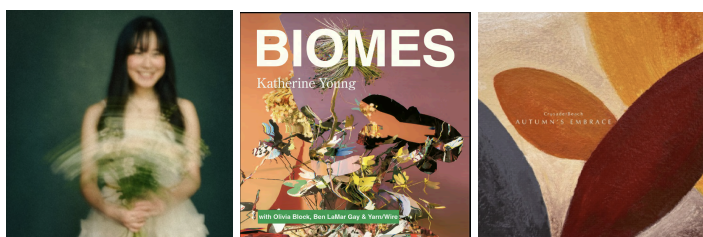
Canadian duo [Delerium](#) bring us **Into The Light**. Building on a slow, semi-tribal beat, deep long synth tones and a host of unsettling ambient sounds, this works in classical arpeggios, occasional dramatic female voice (wordless) and eventually a crunching electro beat. Slightly ghostly and full of

ideas that dance in and out of focus. Intriguing.

Welsh wizard **Clive Newlands** aka [The Fantom Man](#) hits us with ***Move Away***. The staccato electro-bass(ish) riff in fifths sets

the scene, playing off against ambient sounds and some bright spacy chords. It builds in a sonic art that climaxes at the mid-point and gradually winds down while incorporating plenty of ideas and synth figures along the way.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL & SOUND ART



Japanese-Australian (but London based) pianist and composer [Rieko Makita](#) has a track out called ***A Forgiving Summer***. Style-wise it is quite romantic and impressionistic but harmonically explorative enough to get away from diatonic cliché. Her piano playing is mostly soft and delicate, making dreamy use of arpeggios and melancholy melodic lines accompanied by sweet chords. Later in the track, more sounds are added to give it a more ambient floating feeling but it is her piano performance throughout that is quietly captivating and beautiful. Looking at her Instagram account I (Neil) see that she has played live and been interviewed recently on BBC Radio 3 (that makes two of us!) and she is playing an EP launch at St James's, Sussex Gardens in London on 24th October. Unfortunately it starts as my radio show is finishing

which means I won't be able to attend. Otherwise I think that would be in the diary.

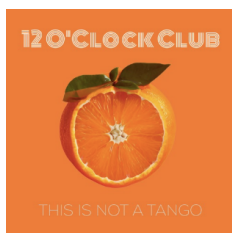
American Bassoonist, improviser and sound artist [Katherine Young](#) has an album out consisting of three tracks all entitled ***Biomes*** (6.0, 8.1 & 7.4). ***Biomes 8.1*** builds from sparse quiet beginnings with long ambiguous tones that overlap and produce the most sumptuous sonic atmosphere while what sound like individual reverberant deep piano notes play sporadically and more crystalline tones appear in a high register. Then we suddenly get a quiet but striking cluster chord, a feature that returns every so often and there is a growing use of bell-like tuned percussion. There is an explanation of *Biomes* which suggests a montage of many items that can exist in the past and present. What she creates here is

ethereal, brilliantly unsettling and strangely beautiful. I recommend the album which you will find on Bandcamp using this same link.

Australian [Ensemble Offspring](#) have a track called ***Ocean Sunfish***. This is a quite romantic but also slightly filmic piece that makes imaginative use of a variety of timbres - strings, woodwinds and percussion - to create a series of engaging melodies, sometimes a little Eastern influenced, that sound like the soundtrack to some form of colourful animation.

Adrian Webster, from the North East of England, aka [Crusaderbeach](#) returns with the suitably seasonal ***Autumn's Embrace***. A simple format of chords in the left hand and melody, sometimes in two-part texture, in the right captures the pensive, slightly melancholy autumn aura, using suspended notes to bring more colour to the harmonic language too.

JAZZ & INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS



Two of our favourites [Matarison](#) and [Richard Davies](#) hook up on the mind-spinning instrumental Berlin 1933. Richard's haunting, hooping and hovering saxophone circles around Matt's rich orchestration and brilliantly unstable and sometimes dissonant harmonic language, keeping our interest and intrigue in an edge-of-the-seat manner. There is an urbanness to this too that is very appealing.

Led by London-based Bass Guitarist **Antonio Val**, we are not

entirely sure why [12 O'Clock Club](#) appear to have made us wait over a year before sharing ***This Is Not A Tango*** but good that they did. This is a superbly well executed slice of modern Jazz fusion infused with South American influences. Led by some sumptuous sustained guitar alongside dreamy Fender Rhodes, robust and funky Bass Guitar and generally excellent musicianship throughout the band, this is timeless, tantalising and full of unexpected twists and turns.

FOLK & COUNTRY FARE



The extraordinary Estonian trio [Õtekse](#) have a new single out. ***Tõnu Ja Manni Lugu*** is the first track to be released from their forthcoming (30th October) EP *Rannapiigad*. The three sisters are on fine form, their voices combining in appealing unison, rich harmonies and joyous shouts and rolled sounds. Their combined violins mix earthy staccato chord play with long legato tones and repeating themes. The singing is agile, expressive and quite beautiful. So much imagination and creativity. I can confirm that the EP is going to be a real treat.

[Before Close](#) joins forces with TTD favourite [Amelia Coburn](#) on a song called ***Roisin***. This is lush acoustic folk with rich harmonies and a melancholy air. Amelia's honey-like vocals cut through (is cut the right word when the analogy is honey?) and there is a softly ethereal feeling about the song that yearns for another chance of love. Gorgeous.

From the North East of England come twins **Hannah** and **Grace**

and they are [Twayn](#). ***Wouldn't It Be Better?*** Is a robust slice of Indie Folk built around a descending chord pattern and the twins' perfectly matched voices in harmony. Shades of Staves in a jam with I SEE RIVERS while Phoebe Bridgers drops by with ingredients.

It was hard to decide in which section to review [Agent Starling](#)'s ***Procession***. It has a drone quality and is instrumental, Quentin's hypnotic hurdy gurdy playing around Lou's organic guitars, Dexter's folky violin play and echoing percussion crashes. It has an Eastern element with the way the melody is configured and lots of interesting sounds keep events moving throughout.

Londoners [Forever Forever](#) have a track out called ***Water Baby***. The picked acoustic intro sounds a little like The Carpenters but what follows is a subtly rueful tale. Gentle vocals and soft string synths bring a genuine beauty.

PART THREE: OTHER COMMENTARIES

FIFTY3.NET @ THE BEDFORD, BALHAM City Limits/Dear People/Mia Wilks Review by Neil & Sherry



Mia Wilks



Dear People



City Limits

Tonight was always destined to be a special occasion. A live show promoted by the amazing **Tony Hardy**, fellow **Fresh on the Net** moderator, good friend and one of the most energetic supporters of grassroots music through his incredible weekly blog [Fifty3Fridays](#), the gigs he puts on and his work with the Glastonbury New Talent Committee. Three recent Fresh on the Net *faves* (as voted for by the readers) on the bill in one of the most attractive venues in London. And in attendance no less than 5 FOTN mods (us two plus Tony, Mia Wilks and fellow artist Alan Dreezer) as well as regular guest mod Sue

Oreszczyn and Abi and Tadj, husbands of Sherry and Sue respectively. Sadly Del Owusu was unable to join us due to a bereavement.

NEIL: First up was Fresh on the Net's youngest ever mod [Mia Wilks](#). Mia, who recently turned 18, was accompanied on guitar by 17 year old **Lucas Hill**. It is a measure of Mia's (and Lucas's) talent and self-confidence that she was so easily able to translate her songs into this minimal acoustic framework. This was particularly evident on ***Masterpiece*** where the vocal flourishes were agile and natural sounding. She explained

her well-documented story about the music teacher whose negativity had such an impact on the resilience that has become a key part of her journey and then performed **Supernova** as Lucas navigated the tricky overlapping bass-style riff with the acoustic guitar. The dynamic **Drive** sounded very different as an acoustic track but lost none of its passion. She ended with another single **LYI** with its swinging rhythm and dexterous vocal performance. All in all, it was an accomplished and compelling performance that reinforced everything we already knew about why Mia is a unique talent.

SHERRY: I really enjoyed Mia's and Lucas's performance. The acoustic setup suited the intimate vibe of the venue, especially as the opening act, and gave out a very warm vibe to the audience. Mia's songs carried out a sense of liberation and positivity. Her vocals were flexible across the set, soft and delicate when the songs called for it and more dynamic and powerful on songs like **Masterpiece**. I liked how she balanced the emotions of each song naturally with her vocals. The whole performance had a very warm and uplifting energy.

SHERRY: [Dear People](#), aka Bex Green, was one of those performances where I kept

wondering how she was managing to pull everything off live so seamlessly. Performing the whole production live could easily become overwhelming, but Bex made it feel effortless. Every track had its own atmosphere, keeping the audience curious about what was coming next. Her ethereal vocals worked beautifully with the synths and the sound of the venue, while the lighting added another layer to the whole experience. It felt almost like being taken into a different space for a while. A really beautiful and immersive performance.

NEIL: Bex Green aka [Dear People](#) travelled up from Brighton to bring her unique synth dream pop to The Bedford. She has built her sound around a love of unfashionable keyboards (me and her both!) but her sound tonight was cinematic and rich with warm harmonic tones, unobtrusive beat and her reverberant yearning vocals. So far unreleased track **Borderline** was a demonstration of how she is able to create something that is both melancholy and hopeful, building an emotionally charged vocal and striking melody over ripples of synths and occasional percussive hits. She also used two different types of mic to create harmony. She managed, in her imaginative cover of Elbow's **One Day Like This**, to make a melodica resemble

bagpipes! Bex chatted amicably and slightly apologetically at times in relation to dealing with all her 'buttons' but her songs and performance displayed a quiet confidence that was absolutely justified by the quality of her work.

NEIL: Alex Hall aka [City Limits](#) is a musical chameleon in the best of ways. I last reviewed a performance of his, also at The Bedford and also for Tony, in 2022. He has been on quite a musical journey since then. Tonight, he had a live drummer who had a click and backing track to keep up with (and which clearly didn't inhibit his lively playing). Alex, donning a guitar, launched straight into ***Hanging By A Thread***, his distinctive dreamy vocals delivering its memorable melody before grabbing his trademark trumpet. His sound was a hybrid of breezy pop, synthpop and electronic dance undercurrents veering into Drum'n'Bass. He was joined for one track by a saxophonist too, the trumpet and sax intertwining in the instrumental section. It was an energetic and accomplished set.

SHERRY: Neil showed me a review of Alex Hall (before he became [City Limits](#)) performing at The Bedford back in 2022 and told me how fantastic he was live, and after seeing City Limits myself, I could completely understand why. Alex's

vocals were really strong and had a lovely dreamy quality to them, while the live drums brought so much energy to the set. The combination of saxophone and trumpet added even more colour. There was so much happening musically, but it all worked really well and made the performance feel lively from start to finish.

SHERRY: Overall, I had such a lovely evening at The Bedford. It was great to spend time with friends, discover some beautiful music and meet so many lovely people along the way. I'm really thankful to Tony for inviting us and bringing everyone together. Good music, good conversations, and of course some delicious food and drinks made it a really enjoyable night.

NEIL: Congratulations to Tony and all the artists on a thoroughly enjoyable, entertaining evening in a beautiful venue. Big praise also to our talented friend **Richard Hunt** who has been the sound engineer at The Bedford for 7 years now and always ensures the sound is not just pristine but punchy and widescreen (so to speak). Great to see Mia's mum Steph too and to meet Tony's wife Jill for the first time. Last but not least, the gig was a snapshot of how Fresh on the Net shines a light on so much upcoming indie talent.

VENUE SHOWCASE @ PIANO SMITHFIELDS, LONDON

Matt Kent/Daisy Chute

Review by Neil & Sherry



Piano Smithfields is a venue we have visited on several occasions but tonight it is a showcase for the revamped version of itself, promoted by our good friend and amazing grassroots music entrepreneur **Lorraine Solomons** of **Success Express**. It is also great to see our friend and fellow ICMP alumnus **Amal Mhamdi** firmly in place as Artist Development and Business Manager.

SHERRY: It had been quite a long time since I had been to a gig this year, so it was really nice to be back at a live show again. I really enjoyed being at **Piano Smithfield**. The venue itself has such a lovely atmosphere, and I genuinely loved the space. It was also really nice meeting **Amy**, my friend from ICMP, after what I think was almost three years. Neil and I also had a brief but exciting meeting with **Ray Jones** from **Talentbanq**, which was a really nice surprise. A

big thank you to **Lorraine** for inviting us to the gig.



DAISY CHUTE @ PIANO SMITHFIELDS

NEIL: First up this evening was [Daisy Chute](#). She has an ability to get a lot of timbres and dynamics from a single acoustic guitar and her dexterous vocal abilities. She also switches to piano, demonstrating a classic style that stretches across the decades in terms of influence as well as bringing some rich jazz chords into her songs. At one point, she managed to combine playing guitar and piano on the same song despite the trip across the stage to make this work!

Daisy mixed an engaging manner and songwriting craft with echoes from a historic lineage running from Judee Sill and Janis Ian to Laura Marling without sounding especially like any of them. The

final track was the most energetic; lyrically stirring and anthemic.

SHERRY: The first act was [Daisy Chute](#). Her performance gave me a very calm and intimate experience. Her vocals were beautiful, and I really liked the way she moved between the piano and guitar during her set. She also made the performance feel very engaging and interactive, which made it easy to connect with the songs. I really enjoyed all the tracks she played, and there was something very warm and personal about her performance.



MATT KENT @ PIANO SMITHFIELDS

SHERRY: The next act was [Matt Kent](#) and **Liv Lester**. I was really impressed by their performance, especially the piano and violin parts. They worked really well together, and as a combination, the two instruments sounded beautiful live. Matt Kent's vocals were also very dynamic, with a different feel across each of the tracks they performed. My personal favourite was **Lacrimosa**, which I later found out is also their most streamed

track on Spotify. Hearing it live made me understand why it has connected with so many listeners. The combination of the vocals, piano and violin created a really strong atmosphere live, and it was one of those performances that stayed with me.

NEIL: The second act on was London-based New Yorker [Matt Kent](#), an artist already gaining a formidable reputation, particularly in jazz circles, and amassing mouth watering streaming numbers.

The guitar-toting singer-songwriter was joined on stage by talented pianist **Liv Lester**. Matt had a lightness of touch with his mix of picking and chord play while the piano brought a classical edge, not least in a song based on a Mozart piece. His style was an intriguing blend of contemporary and baroque pop with jazz and a vocal style that veered between soft, agile, rangey and loudly dynamic. He wooed us with some impressive electric violin play (although it could be viola given the mellow alto tone). Meanwhile Liv hit the perfect balance of unobtrusive colour and harmonic extension but

equally provided robust classical piano when Matt abandoned the guitar and added more violin.

NEIL: It was also great to see the amazing **Ray Jones** of **Talentbanq** and legendary songwriter **Keith Ames** at the gig. Sadly we were unable to stay for the final act, a musical comedy duo, which sounded highly entertaining. In the meantime, a big thank you to **Lorraine, Amal** and **Christian** at Piano Smithfields for inviting us to this vibrant event. It is great to see a unique indie venue in the heart of London thriving and offering such a range of entertainment. Long may that continue.

SHERRY: Overall, it was a fantastic experience. It had been a while since I had properly been to a gig, so being back in a live music environment, discovering new artists and simply enjoying the performances was really refreshing. Unfortunately, we couldn't stay for long enough to experience the final act, which was a little sad. But even with the time we spent there, it was a really lovely evening, and I'm glad I got to be there.

LABOUR ROUNDTABLE ON ARTS FUNDING by Neil

It had been my intention to attend the second annual roundtable meeting held by my MP Vicky Foxcroft (Labour, Lewisham North) as I did the previous year when I was the opening speaker. But the pressures of preparation for the new academic year amid a lot of uncertainty about exactly what was happening meant I made the last minute decision to stay home and continue working instead. I did send my apologies to Vicky and her parliamentary secretary Jennifer. In my email to them, I did also provide the following summary of what I had intended to say at the meeting:

‘It is great that, in the time since the last round table, there has been some progress and we welcome the government’s Music Growth Package with £15 million per year for 3 years. However, this is with two very important caveats. Firstly, £45 million over 3 years is nowhere close to the cuts made by the Johnson government in 2022 and more money will be needed to make the creative industries the best in the world again.

The other is that this MUST be accompanied by a significant change of culture within Arts Council England, in line with Baroness Hodge’s report from November 2025 in which she said

they had become a ‘Command and Control’ body instead of one that focuses on supporting and nurturing talent. The performance and the ensuing feedback from their panels over the past two years has been, at times, appalling, entirely inappropriate and has demonstrated a lack of attention to detail that borders on arrogance. This, along with their refusal ever to accept any criticism or admit to any wrongdoing, makes them in danger of being ‘not fit for purpose’.

I welcomed Baroness Hodge’s opening recommendation which was that we need the Arts Council and replacing it would be a huge risk. I still think that but it is also a risk to allow it to continue being in a trench mentality and to refuse to take the steps to become much better and more consistent in its application of the assessment process and considerably better at communicating with applicants.

So the bottom line, for me, is it’s great to have this new package as long as it is administered in the right spirit and by competent assessors. But we still need more money to be available for grants. This is only a start and not a solution’.

I am pleased to report that Vicky has subsequently replied to my email detailing these points and has assured me that she will be taking my views back to the DCMS Select Committee. Let's hope enough of the politicians are prepared to listen. And let's also remind ourselves that this is why it is worth having proper constituency MPs who work with the people who elect them to make

things better, something the people of Clacton-On-Sea might have thought about before electing the most workshy politician in British history for a second time!

AND FINALLY

OUR NEW BOOK

Well, September has been an eventful month for us at Trust The Doc Media and [The] Music Of Sound. So let's start with our new book. This has been particularly special for several reasons. Firstly, it is the culmination of a discussion we have been involved in since the beginning of 2026 when we first heard teenage students at ICMP complaining of 'burn-out' through attempting to maintain an unsustainably intense degree of daily content creation on TikTok. We had, for some time, felt inclined to challenge the narrative that was putting artists under this pressure. But these conversations with such young artists really brought it home to us that something had to be done. So researching the subject along with the wider picture of how artists can deploy their marketing

and promoting strategies has been hard but rewarding work that has included presenting to students, academics and fellow artists.

It has also been special because this is Sherry's first book (Neil's sixth) and another in this ever expanding list of milestones for Sherry since arriving in the UK almost exactly four years ago. And it has been another book that has benefitted massively from the thorough editing skills of Dr Sue Oreszczyn.

Now we need to market the book with a greater level of energy and seriousness than has been the case with our past books. Why? Because this is one that really does need to be read to be everyone involved in the promotion of independent music; especially artists who are currently struggling with trying to

create insane quantities of TikTok content in the hope of achieving virality. The book is available as a paperback for just £10 from [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) (or the e-book is £6).

OUR NEW & RECENT SINGLES

The campaign around our last single ***Shimmer*** came to a natural end in recent days although it continues to pick up streams and should reach 10,000 soon. When it does, it will mean we have 10 tracks with 5-figure streaming numbers on Spotify for the first time.

The most exciting aspect of the campaign has been the level of media coverage generated thanks to the hard work of **Jade Perry** from **Memphia Music Management & PR**. Jade's efforts and contacts saw us chosen as the featured artists on ***Behind The Music*** on **RTE** (Ireland's national broadcaster), interviewed on the **Post.Burnout** podcast by the wonderful **Aaron Kavanagh** and reviewed in a host of cool media including **Pop Journal**; **Fame**; **Music News Monthly** and lots of others. And on top of this, we had the privilege of being reviewed by **Tony Hardy** (Fifty3Fridays) and **Del Owusu** (Platinum Mind). Del also played us on his Songbird Sessions Show and we had amazing rotational support from **Michelle Ward** (Eat My Brunch)

plus Jade got us onto some cool radio shows and, of course, we had support from the legendary **Chris Phillips & Jamie** on the **Tuesday Club** on Welsh Valleys station **BGFM Radio**.

Now our new single ***Danger Danger*** is out on 9th October on **Monochrome Motif Records** and Jade has already landed a review in [Spiele Magazine](#) with more stacking up for October including another feature in **Fame** and some more titles we have never been in before.

Danger Danger is our most directly political track so far; a vitriolic attack on Farage and the far right in general. So we are absolutely dying to share it with the world.

OUR NEXT TOUR

We have been able to officially announce the first three dates on our tour taking place in April 2027. So big thanks to **Andy Cordle (The Barbarian Horde)** and **Jude Montague (Montague Armstrong)** for putting us on at the **Jenny Lind** in **Hastings**, to the amazing **Elaine McGinty** for booking us to play the beautiful **Fiery Bird, Woking** (the only venue we are repeating from the last tour) and to the wonderful **Ray Jones** and co at **Talentbanq** for allowing us to headline at **21 Soho**. The dates are on our Spotify profile.

OUR AI NIGHTMARE

Researching for and writing our book included, among other things, assessing the pros and cons of AI in music. We approached the topic as objectively as possible, recognising and reflecting the fact that there are tangible benefits and we are all using AI for a multitude of small tasks already.

The issue is not AI itself but the repeated failures by governments, including the UK's, to recognise the threats and take appropriate action to regulate and restrict how AI can be used. Some of us have been calling for an international legislative framework to be agreed for over a decade. Sadly, given the attitude of world leaders in the USA, Russia and China, the prospect of such an agreement looks more remote than ever and it is probably too late for it to have the impact needed now anyway.

Politicians in the UK in all areas of the House of Commons have shown themselves to be incapable of grasping the threat to musicians and creative artists. They have only listened to the big corporates who are only too happy to have slack regulation so they can steal artists' work and use it to train their AI models to create music without the need to pay human beings. The lack of respect for intellectual

property and rights ownership is scandalous.

A few weeks ago, Google's former lead on AI development warned that, unless action is taken to slow its development and restrict its usage, AI will take over the internet within one year. That threat ought to be up there with the threat to the planet from environmental destruction (which, of course, is also not given sufficient priority because short term profits matter more to these profiteers than whether their grandchildren will be able to have clean air and a planet that is not under water). The existential threat from AI goes far beyond music but the collective ignorance of and neglect towards how AI is being used to replace human beings with robots capable of plagiarising their creativity is a reflection of the wider abdication of responsibility by government and industries.

The Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, loves popping up all over social media demonstrating what a sincere guy he is and how he is all about getting things done. If he started expressing a desire to rein in the AI profiteers and make the AI criminals a target, he would win a lot of support and precious little opposition. Perhaps someone in his team needs to have a word!

OUR COMMUNITY

We are very proud to play a part in a vibrant independent music community. It is a privilege for us to have hundreds of people tuning into the radio show and reading this journal. It is equally a privilege to have so many people in grassroots music listening to our advice and opinions and treating us as a legitimate voice in the big conversations affecting us all.

Part of that opportunity for us to support grassroots music is through our work with Fresh on the Net. Del has done a remarkable job since inheriting the leadership of the platform from its founder and music legend Tom Robinson. Firstly, he managed the transition from being a platform with an informal link to BBC Introducing to being one that no longer has that direct impact on what gets played on shows like the Mixtape on BBC 6 Music. By populating Fresh on the Net with content through the Alt Picks, Tea and Biscuits interviews, live reviews and other articles on relevant topics, Del has enabled FOTN to become more like a journal (or the blog it was always intended to be) in which the weekly Listening Post is not the only focus. Accordingly, we are still attracting new regular readers who vote at the Listening Post and comment on articles despite initially losing some

who were only ever interested in us as a gateway to national airplay.

Del has also recruited a mostly new team of moderators that is the most diverse we have ever had with two black and one Asian mods and an age range from 19 to early 70s. Within that group, a range of interests across the music industry and media are represented. We have absolutely no doubt that this has been reflected in the consistent quality and diversity of tracks picked for the Listening Post each week. Gone are the days when FOTN was too heavily weighted in favour of white older males with a passion for guitar-driven Indie Rock bands!

So we just need one thing from our amazing community. Namely more of you to come and vote at the Listening Post every weekend. 30 minutes is enough time to browse the 25 tracks and decide which 5 you like best. Adding a comment is optional so no pressure to do so but some like to explain their choices. More readers of articles in general would be great too. So, if you can, please come and vote each weekend and encourage fellow musicians and fans to participate. The more people who engage with the platform, the greater the exposure for all the artists and the more likely that the industry and media will still see it

as somewhere they should be checking out new talent.

will bring some cheer and good fortune. Until next time

We are still on the radars of some of the BBC Introducing people including those who were guest mods a few years ago when Tom was trying to rebuild the team and needed some extra people to step in for a short period. Let's all use Fresh on the Net as the resource it is meant to be, a place where grassroots talent has a voice and an outlet.

NEIL & SHERRY xxxx

OUR THANKS

As always, we owe a huge thank you to everyone who reads *Trust The Doc* and ensures we are being seen and heard in our efforts to provide support and exposure to grassroots music. This month there were less individual articles on specific subjects but then there were two live reviews and a report on the Labour Party round table on arts funding and, of course, over 70 reviews of new releases. It means so much that all this work has a purpose because people want to see what we have to say. Incidentally, we always welcome opportunities for guest writers. So, if you have an article you would like us to include that is relevant and appropriate, please get in touch.

Otherwise thanks so much for reading this and let's hope October