

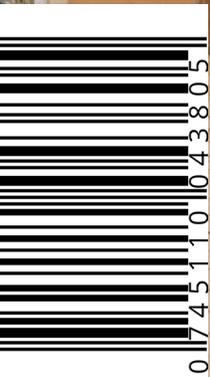
HATC

ISSUE ONE

CULTURE & MENTAL HEALTH



A LOCKDOWN
SPECIAL FEATURING
SPORTS TEAM
THE HUNNA
TOM GRENNAN
ANDRO
BANG BANG ROMEO



£4.00 GBP

FOUNDER & CURATOR

ALICE GEE

DIRECTOR

JADE MARIE

EDITOR

ALICE GEE

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

JAKE MAC

@jake.maccy

ASSISTED BY

ALICE GEE

CHARITIES SUPPORTED

www.mind.org.uk

HATC TEAM

ALICE GEE

JADE POULTNEY

BRONTE EVANS

ELOISE ADGER

A SPECIAL THANKS TO

THE HUNNA

ANDRO

TOM GRENNAN

SPORTS TEAM

SID STONE

BANG BANG ROMEO

SPRING TIME IN BROOKLYN

ROSS BUCHANAN

OLLIE BARBIERI

TWISTED TAYLOR

INDIE LDN

MEG ATKINSON

JESSIE ATKINSON

CONTENT CREATORS

ALICE GEE

BRONTE EVANS

JADE POULTNEY

CONTRIBUTORS

MEG ATKINSON

JESS ATKINSON

THE HUNNA & ANDRO**SHOOT PHOTOGRAPHER**

BETTY MARTIN

THE HUNNA & ANDRO**SHOOT STYLIST**

SOPHIE BASSETT

SPORTS TEAM COVER**PHOTOGRAPHER**

LAUREN MACCABEE

ADVERTISERS

MIND

LES GIRLS LES BOYS

CINTA

UGLY DRINKS

HOTEL CASPER

SOPHIE BASSETT STYLING

ASATA MAISE

CONTRIBUTORS**EDITORS
NOTE**

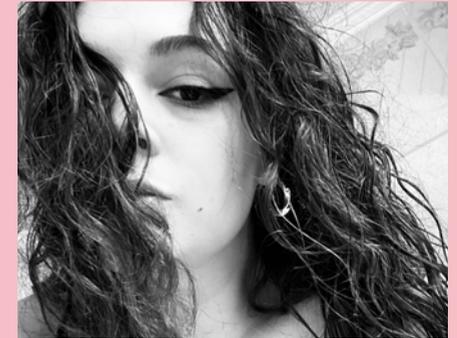
ALICE GEE

Welcome to a whole new era of Head Above The Clouds. We are beyond excited to be able to finally share with you the launch issue of our magazine. Over the past 4 years we've been working extremely hard to bring you safe spaces, content and support to help promote better mental health. It has been our goal since day one to tackle the stigma surrounding mental illness all whilst paving the way for a brighter future where such topics aren't avoided or labelled as shameful. Instead, we propose it to be an element of life that although it may be tough, can be approached and tackled with positivity.

For the past 4 years we have focused on supporting mental health within areas of our expertise and knowledge in a variety of industries including music, fashion and film. We have and will continue to grow and work within a range of cultural backgrounds. We have implemented our search for better mental health in areas including gigs, festivals, podcasts and campaigns and continue to work towards new areas where our message can be spread.

As someone who has suffered with a range of different mental health illnesses including Bipolar Disorder for over 12 years I have experienced both the good and bad associated with my conditions and the constant struggle for mental health to be taken not only more seriously but on more than face value and the negative ties associated with it. With our team having a variety of experience and knowledge surrounding mental health, it is something we not only work towards but better mental health is something we are extremely passionate about.

With the global pandemic and quarantine, our lives have been stripped back to their most basic with the rest of the world's every day noise almost coming to a standstill. While it's been a time of true reflection, it's been a time of true panic, anxiety, and tough decision making. For instance those on the front line who have had to choose between seeing their vulnerable loved ones and leaving the family home, to those in the final stages of their lives



“OUR TEAM ALL HAVE A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES OVER THE SPECTRUM OF MENTAL HEALTH MAKING IT NOT ONLY OUR WORK BUT SOMETHING WE ARE EXTREMELY PASSIONATE ABOUT.”

deciding their final wishes. We have seen such sacrifice and dedication from all those on our frontline to the public staying home to protect the NHS and others around them. Within the first weeks of lock down we saw a staggering 750,000 volunteers sign up to serve their community, whether it be delivering food parcels for the vulnerable, crucial PPE to NHS staff or simple joy to their neighbours.

With all the good will, I'd like to think I wouldn't have been shocked if someone had told me this last year, but the truth is I would have been sceptical. This isn't because I don't have faith in the good of humanity but more so I know in times of panic and uncertainty it is easier to withdraw. I couldn't be more proud of our public putting themselves aside for those who need priority support. I think sometimes in difficult times we really do see the light in our society and how we can and will pull together to help and support others. This time has been a beacon of light for many other difficult topics. It ultimately highlights how we are one, and that other factors such as disability and race are conversations that are here to stay, unlike discrimination which has no place in our future.

It is time to move forward from this darkness with a new

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IT'S TIME WE
START AND
CONTINUE
TO LOOK
AFTER OUR
MENTAL
HEALTH
BETTER.

understanding that no matter your background, we are one and we are here to support one another more than ever like we have over the past few months. The truth is the pandemic will have exposed many to mental health struggles, not just those who already suffer. Therefore at the very heart of this issue you will find a call for collective action surrounding how we look after our mental health, touching on not only the changes we are and will be facing past our time in lockdown but essentially an evaluation of the world we currently live in. From this, I like to think that we will continue to progress when it comes to trying to understand issues like mental health and maybe just maybe now more than ever we will finally wave 'Au Revoir' to stigma and injustice associated with mental health. It's time we start and continue to look after our mental health better.

It's time for change.

Alice Gee,
Editor-in-Chief and Founder
Editors Letter



HATC & WHY?

Head Above The Clouds began to create safe spaces within the music industry for those with mental health whilst promoting better mental health issues and raising funds for key mental health charities.

Since HATC began we have run events including gigs, festivals and panel debates whilst producing online content including podcasts and campaigns. As Head Above The Clouds continues to grow at an incredible rate, we continue to reach a wider audience whilst branching into new areas within the creative industries and growing into a much wider media company.

Here at Head Above The Clouds we want our magazine to be an immersive experience. With that and the work we do, we understand the trouble that can arise when it comes to making a magazine that is accessible to those with learning and visual difficulties. That is why our magazine pages will compromise a range of colours and layout designs that will aid readers with such issues.

The magazine aims to not only produce content for readers to understand and tackle their own mental health struggles but to also give you the chance to hear from those who have and are still experiencing mental health difficulties.

Experts featured will provide readers a chance to learn about different mental illnesses, the stigma and policy issues surrounding them as well as information on how and where to seek help.

Here at Head Above The Clouds we want to provide for those suffering with mental illness a chance to not only learn and feel welcome but a chance to have a voice and a place to change prejudices surrounding the every day battle for better mental health.

THE PEOPLE INVOLVED



FOUNDER & CURATOR
Alice Gee



DIRECTOR
Jade Poultney



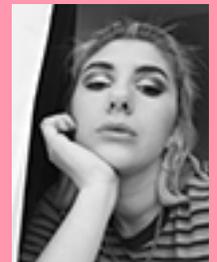
CONTRIBUTOR
Bronte Evans



CAMPAIGNS ASSISTANT
Eloise Adger



CONTRIBUTOR
Jessie Atkinson



CONTRIBUTOR
Meg Atkinson



CONTRIBUTOR
Charlotte Wood, Indie LDN



DESIGNER
Jake Mac

Want To Get Involved?
There's space here at HATC
Contact us at
contact@headabovetheclouds.co.uk

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MUSIC INTERVIEW

THE HUNNA



“As guys definitely it is hard to break it down and feel comfortable to let your selves be free and open, For us we offload to each other all the time. It has definitely been hard and mental health should be talked about”

Like the rest of us, The Hunna's faced a pretty blunt halt to their 2020 plans, with their upcoming album and touring placed on hold. But it hasn't all been a downer as the boys say they've enjoyed having the time off to kick back and enjoy the simple things "It's just like the old days playing Playstation" says Dan "Ryan has been teaching me how to play Fifa".

The group have all been relatively separated during lock down with only Dan and Ryan living together while Junate is down the road and Jack slightly further out of town. It's definitely a different setup to what they've been used to over the past four years, all on their regular tour bus gigging around the world for the majority of the year "Since we started The Hunna it's been non stop . Last year we had a small gap but once we got through that and we were back into touring. So it's been non stop." Touring for the band is just how they like it, on the road and connecting with fans. "That's just what our lives are. We're so used to it, so to now spend about a whole year at home is so strange especially when you've got new music and would be touring all around the world"

"Touring is what we love to do the most. We had a good couple of months at home before quarantine so It was an extension for us to be at home even longer"

Having previously interviewed the boys 3 years ago at The Boston Rooms in London when they were starting their journey this was a great opportunity to catch up, albeit socially distanced, and reminisce on the years in between and the venues played along the way. The boys have fond memories of the venue, being keen to get back to their roots where it all began, touring. They mention how to go back and do a small circle around

venues where they first performed would be a dream. To be able to go back to these smaller venues and to be on a personal level playing intimate gigs is something they'd love to organise following the easing of lockdown. What's great is the band have had the opportunity to play not only amazing festivals and tours around the world but expressed how much they love intimate gigs where their fans get to feel like a one family.

Although the world is moving towards opening up the band are completely aware of the difficulties the music industry faces post Covid-19. "Obviously we will have to see what unfolds with venues but the idea was that by October there would still be more potential that we could go out and perform." But for the band it's still about getting back to being able to connect, "whether social distanced or not. Like we mentioned The Boston music rooms or smaller venues that we can go back to and connect with our fans."

With their 3rd studio album due to launch in the middle of Covid-19 the boys made the difficult decision hold off for a couple of months alongside their touring schedule. "We were super excited for everyone to hear it and understand it and then for this situation to happen and not being able to go out and be around people you know you want to experience it was tough, so we wanted to take some time, there's no rush and we've got so many songs on the album that we love, so for us it's kind of fun, as we can release more songs from the album. We've also taken on the task of producing songs and videos during quarantine. We are going to start to try release things monthly, so it's something for fans to look forward to." I mention to the boys that it must be hard to invest so much emotion in the album, ultimately looking



forward to it with it all ready to go then all of your plans change. As individuals no matter the situation even in the grand scheme of things it must feel frustrating and disappointing to have change everything and the importance that that's ok.

Mental health can be tricky to manage in an industry where you can find your self travelling all of a sudden for the majority of a year. It's an industry with rigorous schedules where you can go months without seeing loved ones. Being able to hear how close the boys are, to the extent of growing up with one another, even being born in the same hospital, it's clear of the bond they all have. They aren't just a band but first and foremost friends, in fact their relationships could be said to be pretty much family. It's great, as a company, that focuses on mental health to hear men so openly talk about supporting each other especially with the stigma surrounding men tackling their mental health.

Curious of the how the boys adapted to the changes that came with their new found fame in 2016 and the art of balancing their life on the road it was positive to hear the band took it in their stride. "I feel like we took it quite well. There are always moments where you go up and down but like we said before we are literally a band of friends, we know each other really well and are comfortable with each other to express how we feel."

"We've always said it must be really challenging for solo artists, when you don't have those people who you rely on to fall back on when you need them. We've had our own times when it's been mentally challenging. For example a lack of sleep, where you don't know where you are or how far you're going. It's definitely a big struggle mentally for sure for lots of different reasons. One good thing we have compared to some other artists is like being family and so comfortable with each other, so if someone is having a really tough day we know about it, so we can either give them space of talk to them and see what's up."

"As guys it is hard to break it down and feel comfortable to let your selves be free and open, for us we offload to each other all the time. It has definitely been hard and mental health should be talked about. Especially over the past 2 years with things that have happened to us as a band and personally. At some point you start realising

it's been tough and when you start to come to terms with it you want to be open and to talk about it and not have that or feel that way again."

"Another thing is our crew. They're just as equally having a challenging life alongside the artist and the bands they travel with. They have so much pressure on them too. We've had crew in the past who have found it tough doing what they do, obviously they love doing what they do but the travel and the time schedules that come with it are often difficult on them. The industry is tough."

Growing up and over the years I've seen how crucial a bands crew is to the whole process whether it be touring or producing. I can't help sitting and feeling such warmth from the boys as they think of those around them helping make their dream and their sacrifices. It's a rare moment when interviewing that a band so boldly brings up their crew and how much their crew are at the forefront of their careers, sacrificing so much more than it just simply being their job

"You sacrifice so much, your own families and love ones and being around them. That's where you make your own on the road family, which we have. Our crew is so funny and have been amazing since the beginning. It's one of our best and favourite times being out on the road, even in the hard times, it makes the days even better.

The band seem to be evolving with each album moving from pop-rock into harder rock and grunge. Having sold out Brixton twice in a row, playing Reading and Leeds main stage, a huge accomplishment and memory for the boys it 's no surprise the band are moving onwards and upwards with post lockdown looking brighter than ever.

Words: Alice Gee
Photography: Betty Martin
Stylist: Sophie Bassett
Campaign: Alice Gee
Shot socially distanced
Suits: Twisted Tailor



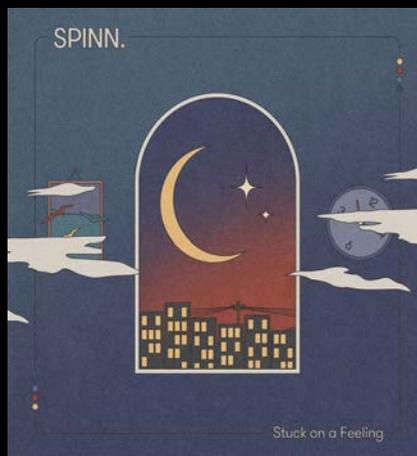
"IT'S ONE OF OUR BEST AND FAVOURITE TIMES BEING OUT ON THE ROAD, EVEN IN THE HARD TIMES, IT MAKES THE DAYS EVEN BETTER."

SPINN STUCK ON A FEELING

2019 ended on a massive high note for Liverpool lads SPINN, they closed out the festival season with sets at Reading and Leeds before embarking on a countrywide tour ending with a buzzing SOLD OUT show at Liverpool Academy and we've been waiting in anticipation for their next release ever since. Well, they blessed us with Stuck on A Feeling in June and it was exactly what I needed.

It's the kind of song you expect to hear as the credits roll on, so indie it hurts, a coming of age movie, or as the soundtrack to late-night summer drives. The melody holds all that nostalgia of youthful adventure while lyrically being the groups most 'grownup' track to date. It has classic SPINN vibes. Sunny, spangly semi-psychedelic guitar from Andy and Johnny's dreamy faraway vocals but the bass is bolder, the production cleaner and overall has a more mature lyrical composition building on what we could see towards the end of their first album from tracks like "July, At A Glance" and "Heaven Sent"

The lyrics in question tell that all too familiar story of getting stuck in a loop of anxiety and insomnia. Being kept awake by our overrunning brain until the sun rises to bring a day of further frustration due to the awful night before. It's a circle of self-destruction we can probably all relate to after the past three months trapped inside our bedrooms with little light at the end of the tunnel. Sorry was that too dark? Well, the music won't make you feel it, while the lyrics cry out for everything to slow down and chill out, the melody wants you to do the exact opposite, I can attest as



"I DANCED AROUND MY ROOM LISTENING TO IT AT 3 AM ON RELEASE DAY. IT HAS THAT SEAT-BOP-ABILITY THAT JUST MAKES YOU SUBCONSCIOUSLY MOVE ALONG TO THE BEAT AND NOT BE ABLE TO STOP."

I danced around my room listening to it at 3 am on release day. It has that seat-bop-ability that just makes you subconsciously move along to the beat and not be able to stop.

I honestly can't wait to see it added to their set, the moves Johnny pulls out on stage and the inevitable Girls on Shoulders in crowds when we are finally allowed to be close to each other again. It's been a horrible few months but SPINN always know how to put a smile on my face.

Words: Jade Poultney

RED RUM CLUB ELEANOR

Eleanor's of the world rejoice, you've got yourself another muse song. Seriously I am always upset about the 0 songs out there dedicated to some beautiful, mysterious Jade, are we not at all that inspiring? Scouse sextet Red Rum Club make a more than welcome return to our playlist with their latest single Eleanor. It's the first release of their 2nd second album which I was already excited for given how phenomenal Matador was but this has got me craving it's October release like nothing else.

Eleanor is a heartfelt love song dedicated to Guitarist Tom Williams girlfriend. Written as an aid to help her overcome an ongoing mental health battle, it is the perfect 'pick me up' song letting listeners know that others can always see the good in you even when you can't. Mental health's depiction in song is often first hand, introspective, dark and painfully confrontational. This is an upbeat lyrical safety net, a helping hand in times of struggle and it's summary tone, a slight shift away from Red Rum Clubs signature brand of 'Scouseicana' rock n roll, creates a perfectly optimistic piece of guitar pop.

It still has those easily singalongable lyrics, addictive melody and mind-blowing brass work that we know and love from RRC but the addition of some 80's style synths (perhaps due to the influence of working with Parr Street Studios Chris Taylor) creates a much warmer feeling reminiscent of Blossoms "If You Think This Is Real Life" (another song Taylor worked on).

Eleanor is another reason to mourn this year's lost festival season as it is where we should have been hearing it all summer long. It yearns to be screamed



"THIS IS AN UPBEAT LYRICAL SAFETY NET, A HELPING HAND IN TIMES OF STRUGGLE AND IT'S SUMMARY TONE, A SLIGHT SHIFT AWAY FROM RED RUM CLUBS SIGNATURE BRAND OF 'SCOUSEICANA' ROCK N ROLL, CREATES A PERFECTLY OPTIMISTIC PIECE OF GUITAR POP."

back to itself from inside a tent or a mosh pit, an undeniable festival banger alongside the band's other tracks "Would You Rather Be Lonely" and "TV Said So". Speaking to us at the start of lockdown Joe 'The Blow' Corby mentioned how eager he was to see the lads again and get back onstage and SO AM !! Their Liverpool Academy gig last year was one of the best I've been to in a long, long time. If you haven't been able to go and see Red Rum Club live I'd strongly suggest making it one of your first To Do's when lockdown is eased.

Words: Jade Poultney

ANNA CALVI HUNTED

Anna Calvi is an English singer-songwriter and guitarist with three Mercury Prize nominations, one Brit Award nomination, and a European Border Breakers Award. Whilst shy and articulate in interviews, she is the most powerful bad ass babe to be reckoned with when on stage. All I can say is THAT VOICE! She is one of a kind, a truly inspiring woman.



I feel it is essential that I mention Anna Calvi's album 'Hunted' which came out in March this year. An acoustic rework of her album that came out in August 2018 called 'Hunter'. Calvi collaborated with some of my favourite artists on this new record such as Joe Talbot from the band Idles and Courtney Barnett. For me this new twist on these original songs makes them increasingly gritty, raw, pleasing and valuable. She is a glowing guitar goddess.

Anna Calvi explores sexuality, identity, gender and challenges societal and cultural norms. What Calvi communicates is freeing, important and culturally relevant. Be attentive and alert to the lyrics. Listen up, times are changing.

THE MURDER CAPITAL – WHEN I HAVE FEARS

The Murder Capital, a post punk band from Dublin consisting of five charming Irish lads James, Damien, Cathal, Gabriel and Diarmuid.



Their debut record 'When I have Fears' came out August last year and became the significant other in my life. For me The Murder Capital are EVERYTHING. Seeing them live I felt sick to my stomach (in the most fabulous way). Their music completely took over my mind, body and soul. What they sing about is important-listen and feel the lyrics.

James as a front man is theatrical and artistically spellbinding. I was captured and in awe of his every move. 'When I Have Fears' came at a poignant time of my life where there was so much change going on, I was confused on who I wanted to be and where I was going. But The Murder Capital encapsulated me and transported me to an emotional, post punk universe which just made sense to me.

This record hits you in the gut and packs a punch. It is powerful, bold, dark, emotional, honest, passionate, iconic, captivating and beautifully chaotic. In the alluring, compelling tones of James... 'Failing this let's dance and cry'.

Words: Bronte Evans

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FASHION INTERVIEW

SPRINGTIME IN BROOKLYN



“It’s my salvation to be able to connect back with people and to have something that makes other people feel so good and to do it so personally”

As we join Zoey Tzfanya over Zoom in the midst of lockdown we are met warmly by her and her two children in the background. It appears to us that power mum Zoey is one brave woman to juggle not only two small children and her company but make time to host us whilst there boasts 5 hour time difference between Florida and the UK. Whilst we set up for our interview, Zoey beams making her day to day look meticulously smooth. With both countries in lock down and both of us being opposite sides of The North Atlantic Ocean, Zoom makes the distance feel minimal and within close proximity, something we are all relying upon more than ever.

Zoey having started Spring Time In Brooklyn 7 weeks prior to the loss of her husband and being mother to her two young children has just relaunched the company. Zoey is a simple breath of fresh air and on face value oozes taking things in her stride when really she is balancing about 100 spinning plates. We have been following Spring Time In Brooklyn for quite some time with it being impossible to not have the graceful, elegant and timeless dresses on our radar. Although simple the light weight dresses are timely with it possible to wear them at any occasion and frankly we’d make and find time to wear them all year round. Zoey designs the clothes with a personal touch, “I do everything personally with most dresses custom made” and takes real pride in the relationships she builds with each client. Spring Time In Brooklyn originally evolved from Zoey’s original company Disco Pony which launched in 2011, which focused on pointers where the dresses made out of sequins could be worn time and time again without the worry of them creasing or wearing. After living in Spain with a partner Zoey moved to Hong Kong where she

experienced the fabric markets after her partner at the times mother noticed her love for everything fashion. “She took me to the markets. You go over the borders and there’s all these markets and it’s paradise. So from my designs I had the pieces made up. At the time I wasn’t ready for it as I had them just drawn on pieces of paper, like on napkins. I showed them to this tailor and she sent them back 5 days later with these stunning creations”.

“My friend Natalie Suarez was coming to Barcelona to do a shoot, so she came to stay at our old house. I had bought back my samples and she saw one in the closet and was like “what is that?” It was one of my dresses . She asked if she could wear it on her blog and I was like sure! So she put it on and everybody went nuts and everyone wanted that dress, so really the business was born overnight and that business was called Disco Pony.

I came to Brooklyn, New York, to do a shoot with Natalie for the next collection. I stayed at a friends and met my husband and we fell in love and fell immediately pregnant. So I put the company aside and spent the next 7 years raising my babies. Last June I decided to start again as the kids were both going to be in school in September and I was itching to get back into it.”

“Seven weeks later is when my husband passed away so I closed.”

We sit and talk briefly about the difficulties not only losing the love of your life but how over night she then had two young children to also bring up. As we sit there talking, my heart weighs heavy not truly being able to image how one even approaches this mentally. Zoey moves forward expressing her grief all whilst explaining the changes

and how she had to take charge, and in that decided to put the remaining stock online for her company. As I sit and imagine how anyone wouldn't be interested in Zoey designs I can almost see the surprise on her face when she explained people became really interested in the designs and her stock sold out extremely quickly. She explains that she then decided to start to make a new collection and that's where the company was born. There was something truly humbling seeing her light up remembering how much people love her work and how she takes such personal pride in it in all whilst hearing the its origins.

"SPRING TIME IN BROOKLYN IS THE BEST MONTH. THERE'S NO OTHER TIME WHERE IT'S THAT GORGEOUS."

Before her relentless creations and bringing up two young children Zoey opens up about her struggles with her mental health. "I think I was always really susceptible to depression because my family all have experience. I also feel like creative types are really susceptible." She says "I had a pretty traumatic experience as a child which kind of started to gnaw away at my mental health, and by the time I got my period when I was 14 that's when the PMDD decline started to happen" She pauses "which I had no idea about and the connection. It took me a couple of years".

I got diagnosed with depression at 16 and they tried to put me on medication but I said no as I didn't feel it was right for me. I wanted to know when I felt happy. So I struggled with it forever, I just didn't realise for so many years it was coinciding with my period. It would literally start 10 to 12 days before and decline. Slowly downward and it was miserable."

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) is similar to premenstrual syndrome (PMS) which many experience but is in cases more serious. PMDD causes severe irritability, depression, or anxiety in the week or two before your period starts.

Symptoms usually go away two to three days after your period starts. It can be crippling and can be difficult to diagnose with many not noticing how the symptoms tie in with their menstrual cycle.

"It still happens. It did stop, I had a nice two year break from it when I had my second child. After Benny, my first child I got postpartum depression really badly and really quickly, I just wanted to die. But I didn't recognise that. At the time, I just thought I was a new mum and I was struggling. Living in New York I was on my own but by the time I had my second child we were in a different position, much more comfortable. It was a lot more settled and a lot happier. I then had my second baby and felt amazing."

"Last year we were in Israel with my husband for a month and I remember sitting on the beach. There should have been nothing wrong, there was nothing bad about the situation we were in and I remember just thinking 'I want to die' and 'I don't want to live' and I was thinking oh no it's coming back. I'd had literally 2 years off of PMDD and that's just hormone related. Then it came back and then he died. So that really added to the stress of it all."

Coping as many know is difficult. Learning that you have to just 'cope' with something let alone actually doing it is beyond difficult and at the time crippling. Our day to day lives are hard work once again let alone having your whole world change overnight, then you add the struggles of mental health and it's no surprise the world gets a little darker. I sat with Zoey, feeling nothing but awe so when I asked Zoey what tips for coping does she have and she replied that she wasn't too sure she had any. I was taken back. So we approached the question a different way, instead of asking what advice would she give, I flipped it on it's head and asked what does she do on the daily that keeps her going.

"Well I have to say and I hear my husband's voice telling me all the time 'Zoey take your Ashwagandha'. I took it every single day after my second child and I was on cloud 9. It's a health product and it tastes awful but is so worth it. That really helps me. In terms of PMDD as you may know (aware of my diagnosis of PMDD) you forget once it's over and you stop researching and thinking about it and you get on with your life as fast as you can for those next two weeks. I hurry to get it all done in that time. So I haven't yet found a good middle ground yet. I'm an Aries as well so I'm all or nothing."

"I think that in some way doing what I love to do helps. In terms of the question, for me for a very long time I was being a mother and I was feeling really frustrated that I



"My children are learning that their mother is a strong woman who is going to get through this and that she's making her own way. It's a good example to set with them"

couldn't sing, create or design. In terms of trying to find myself again after having being in a marriage and being in a certain way for so many years. The only thing I could do was to dive straight back in as quickly as I could to doing things that made me feel like me again and almost as a kind of salvation. So in terms of it it's my salvation to be able to connect back with people and to have something that makes other people feel so good and to do it so personally. I feel like I'm providing for my children, which is the best thing and at the same time my children are learning that their mother is a strong woman who is going to get through this and that she's making her own way. It's a good example to set with them."

"I think for me, I don't have any time off, especially with this pandemic there is no ok Zoey go and get yourself a coffee for an hour, there is nothing, there is no school, like I had one week where the kids were in school and it was barely even a week. In terms of for me I know everyone says you have to take the time out for yourself, but mine is to be able to zone out in particular moments."

"I try and implement my own taking care of myself. Even

through lockdown I get up every day unless I'm crippled with grief and anxiety, which does happen. I still get up and dressed and put on some make up. I get dressed in something cute and if I don't do that I'm a wreck. If I get dressed and look ready for the day I can handle it. I need to be able to put on that strong exterior to be strong inside and I think that's a cliché but very true."

Hearing Zoey highlight that it's for her about "carving out miniature moments" is a eureka moment. There are so many different ways of approaching mental health, never mind coping with it but I really do think she's onto something, with the main need being to find these little moments, whether they be moments of relief, happiness of even peace. Our mental health is a daily endurance with many even not finding solace in sleep. For those out there with a full on life, especially where mental health is involved it can be impossible to find peace in our minds. So "carving out miniature moments" for whatever reason is like winning a war. You can't always win every battle but you can still win the war.

Words: Alice Gee

INDIE LDN

MARSICANS SOMEONE ELSE'S TOUCH

Set for stardom with their debut album, Marsicans gave us their final teaser in the form of the emotional 'Someone Else's Touch'.

Since their debut EP way back when in 2014 the Leeds-based indie band have been building a devout fan base and racking up 140,000 monthly listeners on Spotify alone.

For those who have been supporting the band on their journey, their debut album has been hotly anticipated for years, following a steady stream of noteworthy singles including the raucous 'Too Good', high energy 'Throw Ourselves In' and the vibrant 'Little Things'. The 16-track 'Ursa Major' has already provided us with 6 singles, the last of which being the recently released 'Someone Else's Touch'.

For a band known for their lively and bouncy tunes fuelled by just the right amount of guitars, 'Someone Else's Touch' is a complete departure from their comfort zone. Writing in an email to their fans, the band explained how "we all remember the night last summer, in a darkened room at Rockfield Studios, when James delivered a vocal that moved everyone listening, right in the feels". This same emotional energy is carried to the listener as James' lyrics tell the tale of a love that has somehow gone astray: "I want you and nobody else, I want you so I tell myself that someone else's touch will have to do".

Sonically, the track couldn't be more different than Marsicans' usual "indie banger" territory. Opening with a very subtle and low-level synth, James' vocals are allowed to stand almost bare for the first few lines. A gentle pluck



"For a band known for their lively and bouncy tunes fuelled by just the right amount of guitars, 'Someone Else's Touch' is a complete departure from their comfort zone."

of an electric guitar moves in to help frame the intro to the chorus and a beautifully layered vocal section takes over for the second half of the chorus, providing an almost glitchy harmony. The track maintains the same stirring and emotive tempo throughout, a faint background drumbeat helps frame the build to the bridge. Certainly a highlight of the track, the bridge is worth sticking around for. The guitar, a homage to their typical indie themes, takes centre stage in a stark and moving fashion. The glitchy harmony of the vocals peaks in an outpouring of feeling: "I'll pause and play our memories made, they don't sound the same as before". 'Someone Else's Touch' proves that Marsicans have got what it takes to produce a well-rounded album that is a contender to be an album of the year for many indie music fans!

LUCKY IRIS TURNS OUT WE SHOULD OF STAYED HOME



Newcomers Lucky Iris, an alt-pop duo from Leeds, are ready to shake things up with their debut EP: 'Turns Out We Should Have Stayed At Home'.

The duo, made up of Maeve Florsheim and Jasper Exley, take the listener on a night out they would rather forget with their 4-track concept EP. The listener is taken on a journey through hazy ups and downs without having to face the consequences themselves the next morning. That being said, we are still able to feel every moment of euphoria and heartbreak like it was our own through their clever use of soundscapes and poignant lyricism.

Opening with the urgent, bouncy 'Get Ready With Me', Lucky Iris instantly capture that nervous excitement which bubbles inside when you're preparing yourself for what the night may or may not have in store. Maeve's vocals are sassy and silky, weaving through sections of faster and slower pace that paint a perfect picture of the start of a night. Next, we drift into a more downbeat moment of the night with 'Take 5 (Why Can't You See Me?)'. While the opener featured synths, this

"MAEVE'S VOCALS ARE SASSY AND SILKY, WEAVING THROUGH SECTIONS OF FASTER AND SLOWER PACE THAT PAINT A PERFECT PICTURE OF THE START OF A NIGHT."

track is predominantly based on a brooding piano and Maeve's vocals move in a more ballad style, detailing how you can feel so alone even when surrounded by a heaving crowd and deafening noise. 'Glitter Vision' ups the ante once more with a foreboding finger click and pulsating bass line, encapsulating that moment in the night when you lose yourself in the music. The lyrics are still powerful and empowering: "I'll dance with me, I'll dance myself free" repeated almost like a mantra. The last track, 'I Fell Backwards', takes us to the end of the night, the moment when you regret your hazy actions with a stylistic move back to the piano used in 'Take 5'. Certainly an emotional moment, Maeve's vocals soar above and express an honest vulnerability: "I fell backwards, no one there to break my fall".

The balance of intensity and stark feelings is commendable for a debut EP and is certainly a bold move that has paid off for Lucky Iris!

Words: Charlotte Wood, INDIE LDN



SPOT LIGHT

BABY QUEEN

One of the most exciting recent rising stars, and with only 2 singles to her name, Baby Queen is set to be your next indie-pop obsession.

Born in Durban, South Africa, multi-instrumentalist and singer-songwriter Bella Latham adopted the moniker Baby Queen to write about her experiences of moving to London as a teenager. Finding herself immersed in a whirlwind of Instagram influencers and fashion parties, Bella took a satirical approach to the self-absorbed world she saw around her. The result became her "grunge-pop for the disaffected Gen-Z" that tackles issues of internet obsession and its subsequent mental health issues.

Raised on artists like Taylor Swift and The 1975, Baby Queen's sound is a riot of psychedelic synths and biting guitars that frame her acute dissection of today's youth culture. A name that is soon to be on the lips of every indie music fan, the music video for her latest single 'Buzzkill' was directed by Bedroom Projects, (who have already created videos and content for the likes of Alfie Templeman, Beabadoobee and The 1975) and she even received a visit on set from Matty Healy himself!

Her hazy alt-pop is all about "navigating your way through this world, whilst being so unhappy and equally disillusioned with the cyber landscape that we are forced to live inside, and the different ways people might numb themselves, or try to find a place where they can exist in amongst all of this fucking chaos." Recently released 'Buzzkill', is a dark and gripping take on just that feeling of unease and unhappiness amongst the seemingly perfect world of parties and socialisation. Opening in a spoken world style, the listener is able to get to grips with her direct lyricism. A foreboding drumbeat leads up to the glittery pre-chorus that mimics a friend being unsympathetic about Bella's desire to leave the party: "oh boy, here comes the killjoy". Infusing the ethereal vocals of dreampop with the grungy instrumentals found typically in indie, Baby Queen is able to create unique and exciting music perfect for fans of Lauran Hibberd, Holly Humberstone and Dream Wife. Stay tuned for more to come from this exciting young talent!



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AT YOUR BEST

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HATC COLUMNIST



BRONTE HATC COLUMNIST

For me music is as fundamental as taking a breath. I thrive when I can sit down, discover new artists and create a beautiful playlist which feels like a snapshot of my emotions and memories at a particular time. Music has played a vital role in my mental health and wellbeing. I may listen to a certain song or genre to enhance a feeling I may be experiencing at a particular time. Music can communicate to you like no one living person ever could. A certain lyric can make us feel less alone, a friendly hand to comfort and assist us through the darkness.

During this pandemic I found myself getting easily overwhelmed, irritated and emotional by the daily news briefings and updates. So I would end up blasting some music so I could manage those overwhelming feelings, release that tension, dance and sing around my room. My 'go to' is to listen to Madonna 'Like A Prayer' with a very long hot shower and a shampoo microphone. Or maybe some Matt Healy poses in the mirror singing to The 1975 'Robbers' throwing it back to 2013.

There is no better feeling than connecting well and truly with a song. When you are having a shit day and a track comes on that consumes you in that moment. It could be summing up a feeling at that time, fill me with a glimmer of hope or distract

me from the chaos going on in the world. But most of all whether that emotion is positive or negative- I feel inspired. I suppose what I truly mean is "Music speaks when words fail." At times I find it hard to articulate myself but a song can help you comprehend an indescribable feeling.

But my relationship with music hasn't all been smooth sailing. I have had quite the rocky relationship with the live scene. Due to crippling anxiety I found going to gigs exhausting and I would come home feeling like I had been hit by a car. I would be at the venue feeling like I was going to die and it would take days for me to bounce back, even when I had the opportunity to see my favourite artists with my best friends, it would still feel like one of the worst times of my life. So I had to find other ways to enjoy and experience music that didn't enrage my social anxiety. I've tried to learn an instrument, sing and write lyrics, but what I really enjoy is creating playlists for other people to experience. It makes me feel my most creative, passionate and inspired. I get in what I would describe as a 'Spotify hole' where I find a new band, scour the related artists tab and spend hours and hours listening to new music which I can then share with others. So, that is what I want to do for you guys!

THE OTHER BRONTE SISTER

I was able to take over the Head Above The Clouds Spotify page and curate a bunch of playlists to fit almost any mood. First up is 'Pick Me Up' filled with tracks that I would personally recommend listening to in the morning, getting ready for your day. These are songs that fill me with energy, make me happy, and want to bop whilst I am trying to tame my frizzy hair or eat a bowl of granola. Even if it's that particular day when you've 'woken up on the wrong side of the bed' you cannot help the unavoidable boogie that stirs within you. Not undermining the struggles people face daily, I know that beginning a day can sometimes seem daunting and a task. But my hope is that it can start your day with positive vibes and optimism to seize the day.

Alternatively I have made a playlist called 'Thoughtfulness'. It consists of powerful songs with powerful lyrics that will make you sit back and think. We are so consumed and stimulated constantly it is important to kick back and relax to regain some perspective on things. These songs calm me down, make me feel grateful and show how powerful music can really be. Be prepared to get in touch with your emotions, sometimes we need that from ourselves. It is ok to cry, sometimes a cry can make us feel a little lighter.

I believe music brings us together and creates a sense of community. Whether it is your much loved local music venue, a fan page or a mutual interest in a band with a friend, it can create a place where you feel less isolated. It is a peculiar time for us music lovers, that community we get from gigs has been taken away. For a lot of people that was their safe place, one full of family and friends. The unity we get from this has been put on pause because of the pandemic so I have been curating these playlists to make us feel more together. Here at Head Above the Clouds we want you to feel connected with one another and create that feeling of union and safety.

That's where you guys come in. I have been in the process on social media of asking you lovely people what song makes you happy. A song that evokes a wonderful feeling and memory. So many of you have touched me with your amazing stories, I would love to hear more and talk about it in my next article and

“DUE TO
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OR HIT BY A CAR.
I WOULD BE AT
A GIG FEELING
LIKE I WAS GOING
TO DIE AND IT
WOULD TAKE
DAYS FOR ME TO
BOUNCE BACK”

include some of your stories. Please get in touch by emailing myself at bronte@headabovetheclouds.co.uk. I welcome all genres and bands...educate me with your music suggestions. Next time this page will be a little piece of all of us.

Check the last page to see Bronte's playlist for Issue one.

Words: Bronte Evans

MUSIC INTERVIEW

ANDRO



“I THINK SPOKEN WORD IS REALLY IMPORTANT. SAYING KIND THINGS TO YOURSELF, BEING AWARE WHEN YOU’RE ABOUT TO OR HAVE SAID BAD THINGS ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT YOU SAY TO OTHERS”

Just over three months into lockdown it still felt incredibly strange interacting and interviewing via webcam while I was waiting for Andro to join our Zoom meeting room, but we still both seemed to be very much looking forward to meeting each other even if it wasn’t in our usual style. As we began our chat it was hard not to ask how he had been keeping in Lockdown, after all “how are you coping?” has become the new “what have you been up to?” Which is when I learn, unlike myself, Andro has been staying completely on his own since March 23rd. He is used too and quite comfortable spending time on his own he tells me, getting into his own element and writing as music as he can however like many of us when the 12 week mark was looming ever closer he staring thinking ‘how long is this going to go on for?’

“I’m actually feeling quite lonely because I can’t hug, touch or see my friends, also there’s that sense when you’re having that video call it kind of becomes an event and you’re spending more time on your devices but it kind of becomes even more apparent that you can’t see your friends or family in person. So even having video calls was quite draining.”

“By week 8 I started to wonder how long is this actually going to go on for. The idea of not being able to see my friends and my family had started to get to me. I think because of that everyone seems to be reflecting at the moment, but once I started to look internally I was starting to question my own skills and having a lot of self-doubt. I then realised I had a fear of failure and not because I don’t think that I’m going to achieve my dreams, but I think there was a sense of when I achieve them, will it then fail.”

This feeling of pending failure is something I’m sure we can all relate to at the moment. The pandemic has put a lot of pressure on a lot of peoples career plans, it’s created a need for balance and stability in time where it has never been less available. Trying to set and keep our own pace while the virus seems to be outrunning us can make it incredibly difficult to stay on top of our mental health.

“I’ve been writing and recording when I can, but the creative motivation has been stifled because of what we were talking about before. I guess I’ve also been trying to

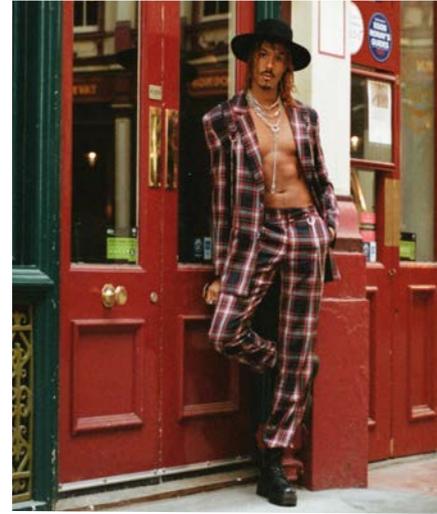
“You have to be 100% committed to being there for that person because they need that. There are times where you have to put down whatever you’re doing and go and be there for that person. It’s absolutely imperative”

go on as many bike rides possible around the city which has been really beautiful because the city, which has gotten much busier now, but when it was very quiet, all the roads were empty and you saw a different part of London.”

“I know there’s been this notion that whilst we are in the middle of a pandemic that especially us as creatives we shouldn’t need to write that next new amazing novel or write that new album and I totally understand that and it’s important not to put too much pressure on ourselves. But for me I was like this is the perfect time to get in the zone and write and produce.”

Andro isn’t new to the music industry and the pressure creatives find to constantly create, he started producing his own music from a young age living in Liverpool before moving to London to study and eventually joining Jungle as a vocalist and ever since bursting onto the scene in 2013 he has been part of their growing success.

“I was training as an actor in London, once I graduated I joined Jungle. Right in the very early stages they’d only released about two songs. My friend asked me as I knew one of the other members who played the bass. They asked if I wanted to do backing vocals for this band and sent me the songs. I really liked them. Once we started, the dynamic was never really a few singers on a podium at the back dressed in black, like you can’t see us, it was never like that, we were very much at the forefront of Jungle’s brand from the get go”.



person because they need that. There are times where you have to put down whatever you're doing and go and be there for that person. It's absolutely imperative. So that's one thing I've always held onto and tried to instil in other people. On the other hand in terms of the term mental health I started not saying and relating myself to it. If I was having an issue, I was not using the word mental health and using mental clarity instead. I felt people started to use it to flippantly when feeling perhaps not the full gravitas of those who have full mental health issues, so I think that's another thing that could be addressed. I think people need to definitely be mindful of their mental health but not to always label it because some people use it in the wrong way as a joke for example."

In our interview it was clearly important to Andro that management should be the focus of healing, finding habits and skills that help us manage those low moments are to him, the key to living. Having been alone in a corner for all of lockdown he highlighted the importance of pushing through the monotony that can come with the relying heavily on a structured routine.

"I realised that I'm not meditating which I always do and that really helps me. But I think it was the monotony of doing that every single day, the same movements and the same routine and I've always been like that, once I'm in routine I start to, I guess, get that sense of how routine stability starts to make me feel unstable."

"I feel like people roll their eyes whenever I say this but I really do think meditation is really important. That doesn't mean sitting there with your hands like this "mimics a hand gesture" and chanting. There are so many ways of meditating and it's just about connecting your mind to your body. I think another tip may be and I need to be careful when I say this, but don't be afraid to indulge. There are some things that people just really love doing or eating and I think that's important. Finally, I find sometimes it's really hard to filter out thoughts but I think spoken word is really important, so saying kind things to yourself, being aware when you're about to or have said bad things about yourself and what you say to others."

Words: Alice Gee

Photography: Betty Martin (Shot socially distanced)

Stylist: Sophie Bassett

Campaign: Alice Gee

Both Andro's own solo music projects and Jungle have traces of the same influences ranging from soul to disco and put a-lot of emphasis in the overall aesthetic of their output which just as much focus being placed on the identity of artwork and video's which allows him to mix his love of Music, Art and Fashion.

"I'm going to start with what the problem is. I always think in terms of having a 10k budget (which never happens for me at the moment) that I always have these huge ideas but executing them isn't always as easy, financially, as I would like. But a lot of the imagery you see in the video were just natural. It all just came naturally. Aesthetics are really important for me because fashion is an art form. I love it. Dance is also really important to me and just having an emotion, a mood and sometimes a narrative gives the visual and the building blocks to portray a message". It's this awareness and passion that gives the building blocks to 'Lost Cause'.

Being immersed in such creative industries from a young age, he is more than aware of the struggles and stresses these worlds have on individuals mental health and all the other side effects that accompanies the low moments. He is a firm believer in supporting those who are suffering completely whilst also being very aware of how he uses the term "mental illness" and the damage being so flippant with that term and self diagnosis can be. These are real illnesses not trends.

"You have to be 100% committed to being there for that

MUSIC INTERVIEW

SID STONE



“THIS IS A SILENT KILLER FOR MEN IN PARTICULAR. THE LACK OF SPACE FOR MEN TO TALK TO EACH OTHER ABOUT HOW THEY ARE FEELING... IT BREAKS MY HEART. [THESE MEN] HAVEN'T BEEN TAUGHT TO BE EMOTIONAL OR HOW TO BE SENSITIVE AND AS A RESULT THEY DIE.”

With his soulful, syncopated single 'Better Alone' and the six-track Inside/Outside mixtape that followed this June, multi-instrumentalist Sid Stone made his debut. “Maybe I'm better alone” Stone sang over plinky-plonk keys caught between jazz bars and the charts. But, I find out in an interview with the newcomer, being alone is sometimes actually...worse. “The nature of reality has changed [and] there is no one who has escaped,” he says of a post-Covid world. “I've been very lucky to be in Somerset where I can just toddle off into the fields” before confirming that forced isolation is a negative that he believes fundamentally “leads into your mental state.”

Staking his claim somewhere between Sam Smith and Chet Faker, Stone has an easy way with singing that is rare - though, it seems, at least partly connected to depth of beard. (I don't understand that sentence) But in getting to where he wants to be, as most humans on earth can agree, it hasn't been a song and a dance. Though Sid grew up with a musical therapist mother, it was a turbulent household to exist in. “Sometimes the teacher doesn't always follow his own lessons,” he says, indicating that despite having an in-house therapist, it still wasn't always easy to get help with some of his mental health issues.

“My parents are now divorced, but they didn't like each other very much. Home life was always some sort of scandal and saga.” Plus, at just seven, Sid had been packed off to boarding school. From trauma at home and trauma at school, Sid was caught between a rock and a hard place: proof that mental illness transcends every barrier, including class. As you might expect, heading to boarding school before the age of ten isn't the best arena for a child to test their resilience. “Having your family send you away - which is what it felt like - is hard. I was a really sensitive child and it cut me deep. For me to cope I had to cut off from a bit of myself.”

Years of drugs and depression characterised an adolescence marred by the kind of partying that seems fun while you're doing it, but devastating in hindsight. “I wasn't really aware of my emotional life in a serious way until I was twenty. There wasn't any space for my emotions [before].”

Like many men, particularly of his age, Sid experienced the singular devastation of losing a close friend to suicide. “It all came with a crash and a bang when a

“Music's been a huge part of my mental health.”

friend of mine took his own life six years ago. Suddenly I was struck with the issue of mental health.” It's testament to the extent of the knowledge he has acquired since then that brings the insight he gives on the matter. “This is a silent killer for men in particular. The lack of space for men to talk to each other about how they are feeling...it breaks my heart. [These men] haven't been taught to be emotional or how to be sensitive and as a result they die.”

It's refreshing, though increasingly common, to hear the subject of suicide discussed in terms of what it really is: a symptom of a disease. As publications and individuals consciously move away from the accusatory verb “committed” in reference to suicide, Sid's summary makes for a good explainer. And this move away from an archaic insinuation of blame could be testament to a higher level of understanding society as a whole is coming to. Sid certainly thinks so. “I've had chats in the pub the past few years with 60 year-old welders about them being upset - and emotional chats. I think it's getting better.”

By the end of this, it's inaugural issue, a presiding theme of this magazine will have become abundantly clear: engaging with music makes for better emotional wellbeing. We'll reiterate it again in the words of Sid Stone: “Music's been a huge part of my mental health.” Not many people can say that music hasn't been a source of comfort in hard times, and Sid, who was cut off from his family at an early age, is no exception. “Before I even knew about mental health, music was helping me understand the world and myself. I'd love to make some music that cheers people up in the way I love being cheered up.”

His debut EP may be his only release to date, but Inside/ Outside is a good place to start. In sonics alone, it's a firing amalgamation of sparkling pop and fortifying jazz. There are even elements of Big Band in the swing of some of his deliveries: just the kind of

FUNDAMENTALLY, YOU NEED TO BE PRACTICAL, BUT IF YOUR OVERALL BELIEF SYSTEM IS IN A BAD WAY THEN IT'S ALWAYS GOING TO TRICKLE DOWN INTO YOUR DAY-TO-DAY MENTAL HEALTH. [I TRY TO] SEE THE WISDOM AND BEAUTY OF THINGS AROUND ME AND UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN I'M GOING THROUGH HARDSHIP, IT'S A WAY FOR ME TO LEARN."

melodies that play out on speakers in spots where joy is the ultimate goal: pubs, water parks, shops. Sid Stone's music may be smart, but it also has mass appeal. "It's such a beautiful exchange to be part of", Sid says of the relationship between artist and listener: "when someone says 'oh, that song made me feel better when I was feeling bad' - it's an amazing and humbling thing to be a part of."

Add in thoughtful lyrics to the mix and Sid's debut statement is one of emotional completeness. "And the darkness comes/and the tears are streaming from the place you know well" he sings on EP closer 'Know Well', both acknowledging the struggle of emotional turmoil and reaching past it, certain of better days ahead.

As you might imagine for a young artist with one EP under his belt, Sid is "only just getting started" with Inside/Outside, which was recorded at Mick Jones' (The Clash) studio earlier this year. "I've got a large number of songs that I really love swimming around in my head and I'd love nothing more than to get them out in some meaningful way" he notes. As an artist who's been musical in some way or another since the age of four, it's no surprise. Working with friend Joy Anonymous and Stormzy collaborator Fred Again has only fired him more...getting hammered with Ed Sheeran and hanging out with Stormzy himself are just bonuses along the way.

But as any conscientious artist knows, health must come before anything else. For Sid, there are a few tactics at work here. "Fundamentally, you need to be practical, but if your overall belief system is in a bad way then it's always going to trickle down into your day-to-day mental health. [I try to] see the wisdom and beauty of things around me and understand that when I'm going through hardship, it's a way for me to learn."

In practical terms, Sid also practices Holotropic breathwork, a New Age term for mindful breathing with roots in Buddhism. "It releases a lot of hormones to help create a clear mind," Sid says of the practice, "Look after the breath and the moment and that's the only thing you've got to think about. It's the only real vessel that can save you in the storm. I've been through some wild times when the only thing that carries you over the stormy seas is breathing."

It may sound simple, but Sid's trust in finding the breath is perhaps the simplest technique for finding mental calm. And it works. "It sounds trivial: breathing your way through chaos. Bonkers. But if you experience it, sometimes you find it's true."

Words: Jess Atkinson

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A SOUND TRACK TO MY EMOTIONAL SIDE

We all have those tracks don't we, those that make us reflect about how turbulent our lives can be. It can be the simple start to a melody or specific lyric that transports us back to a certain event or feeling of the past. During lockdown, I have been reflecting a lot on my life so far (which is only 20 years long, so not that much) and thinking of the tracks that I have connected with in this way. They have even helped me process these emotions or realise they exist. So, this is my soundtrack to my emotional side.



BOTH SIDES NOW JONI MITCHELL

Firstly, we have a classic that I feel many of us will connect to. Emma Thompson baring her raw emotions in the iconic 2003 'Love Actually,' is forever engrained on our brains. However, this track sticks with me because of the specific lyrics, 'but now old friends, their acting strange, and they shake their heads and they tell me that I've changed.' When I was younger, as most teenagers are, friendships end and change and mine most certainly did at the time. This mellow reflective track from Joni brings me back to those times, luckily now I am older and have grown, these friendships have forged back together.

GRANDFATHER CLOCK THEA

This 2018 debut single from the not so heard of artist Thea (seriously it is hard to find any info about her) just encapsulates 21st-century dating, generation Z style. I think we have all been in a situation where we are unsure of how we want to play our intentions. There is an air of guilt within the lyricism from Thea. She is looking retrospectively at her actions with a guy and understanding that she was a bit of a "bitch." There is a quirky Britishness to her vocal style which is most prominent within her spoken middle eight. We are eavesdropping on a conversation she has with a friend which syncopates then fits perfectly with the music.

I have picked this track to go in my soundtrack to my emotional side because I feel like I have been in this situation too many times. The times when you chat for too long, leave on read or do not understand their intentions. This is the track will most definitely release these feelings in you.

EASY TIGER FLYTE

Flyte's 2017 debut album 'The Loved Ones' has been the soundtrack to my lockdown experience which just overflows my heart with love and sorrow. So, when Will, Jon, and Nick released 'Easy Tiger' on the 13th of May, I think it broke me emotionally. This song was a relief to release from its writer Will Taylor. He stated on @_flyte_ Instagram, "This is a deeply personal song conceived during a particularly dark time. Please take it, give it your own meaning, and with many repeated listens and for years to come, make it completely yours." This beautifully raw statement has made the melancholy track even more emotional for me. I cried in a field, yes, that did happen. Will performed Easy Tiger on an Instagram live while I was on a walk in the countryside. I sat down to watch, basking in the heat, being alone with the scenery that surrounded me, overcome with love and sadness of the song. Probably a moment I will not forget.

BREAKUP BREAKFAST MATHILDA HOMER

Ever feel like a song is genuinely your thoughts in musical form? Well, this new single from Mathilda Homer is just that. It is actually a little bit scarily accurate and has made me feel a mixture of ways. Mathilda looks retrospectively at a breakup that she instigated, her reasons for the breakup and knowing she is the "certified destroyer." What I love about this track is the flippancy to Mathilda's emotions, she does not seem sad and remains strong, this has helped me process my guilt and sadness that I felt of events that happened last. I highly recommend this track, one of my top picks this year.

EVERYONE IS HOME FERRIS & SYLVESTER

Every Musician and their dog are releasing these 'lockdown tracks,' produced and recorded at home during lockdown. To be honest I am not a fan of a lot of them. But, 'Everyone Is Home' from folk duo Ferris and Sylvester just hits differently. The chill folk instrumentation to this is sublime and the vocals are so soothing. I've added this to the soundtrack to my emotional side as my heart resides in the middle eight which rolls into the outro of the song. Pure optimism. "I can feel you in the light. Rolling down the window, I recognise you. We will meet again, we will." These lyrics resonate with me with the lack of contact with friends and family, but the reassurance that that will not last forever, and we will be reunited.

Stumbling across music that captures your heart and feelings with pure emotions, I feel, is cathartic for mental wellbeing. Whether that is wallowing and overflowing yourself with these emotions of love, loss, guilt, and anger plus many more, allows us to understand ourselves and process these feeling. Or, it could be music that makes you feel a sense of empowerment making you stand up and move forward with life. All of this, I find, is important and healthy. What is your soundtrack to your emotional side?

Words: Meg Atkinson

“STUMBLING ACROSS MUSIC THAT CAPTURES YOUR HEART AND FEELINGS WITH PURE EMOTIONS, I FEEL IS CATHARTIC FOR MENTAL WELLBEING.”

RECOMENDATIONS

LOW GIRL



Low Girl-ICU

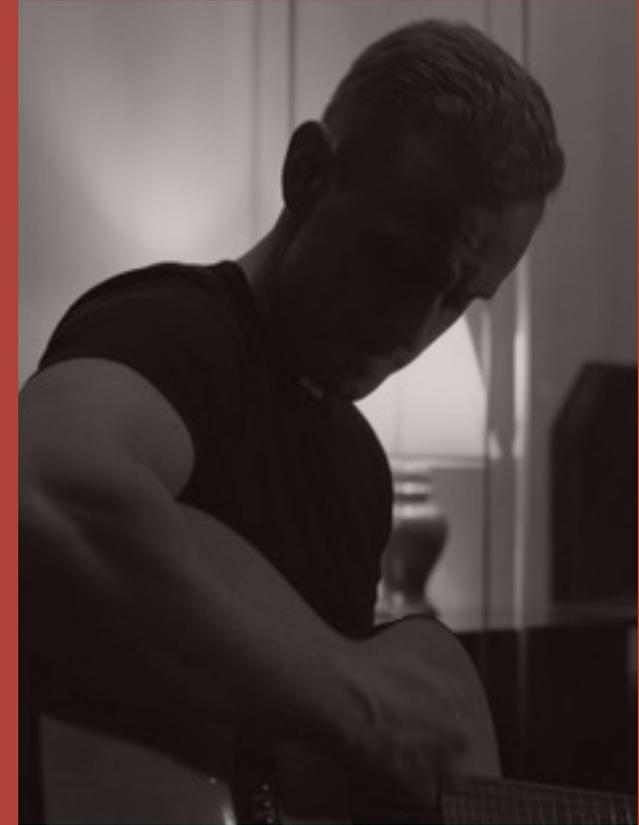
'ICU' is the debut offering from Low Girl, a very honest account of a highly emotive time, where the father of her love was taken away from the world. For a debut single it is breathtaking, haunting, strong and established. It's a song that sadly is a tragic reality for so many who have had loved ones cruelly taken away from us due to COVID-19.

Low Girls recount of this tragic loss has been made into something beautiful and honourable. Prepare for a tear or two and a moment of reflection and thoughtfulness.

'ICU' will be available on music streaming platforms from Friday the 7th of August.

RECOMENDATIONS

JAMES BILLET



James Billett – Faith Over Family

'Faith Over Family' is the debut offering from James Billett, the man with the balls to walk away from a decade-long songwriting career thanks to the guidance of none other than Elton John, praise from Noel Gallagher and a writing session with John Legend. After ten years of working for other people he is finally able to "write a song I love" for himself.

From a gospel, haunting beginning through to the poignant heartbreaking lyrics, this track tells the tale of a son whose father puts his religious beliefs above the love for his son. The song goes from the high of coming out as a gay man to the lows of feeling rejected by his father who will not accept him. The highly emotive ending of the track ends on the repetitive lyrics of 'only you can change'. Love is love and no one should ever feel afraid to express the love we all have within ourselves.

MUSIC INTERVIEW



TOM GRENNAN

MUSIC INTERVIEW

“MUSIC IS MY SAVIOUR IN MANY WAYS SO EVERYDAY I’M WORKING IS THERAPY. I LOVE IT, AN INCREDIBLE RELEASE ON EVERY LEVEL”

Tom Grennan’s soulful tones first caught our attention on the Chase & Status track ‘All Goes Wrong’. We were then hit with ‘Lighting Matches’ which went on to be one of the best selling debut albums of 2018. Since then Grennan has been touring the world and working on some incredible new music. As fellow Bedfordian, I have seen directly the impact him and fellow local artist Don Broco, The Scruff and Sarpa Salpa have had on our little town, specifically putting local venue Bedford Esquires (which is where I had the pleasure of meeting him for the first time) on the map.

While we were unable to meet up with Tom for this interview, due to increasing lockdown rules, as well as his incredibly packed schedule rehearsing, he graciously answered our questions to show how music has impacted his mental health over the years.

Lockdown has given us all a chance to rest, readjust and reset, to examine ourselves and our well being. For many, including myself, it has been a rollercoaster handling all these changes along side struggling with my own mental health issues, so first of all I wanted to check in with Tom and see how he has been coping with this incredibly difficult time.

“On the whole pretty good you know. Being cooped up like an animal initially filled me with dread. But in truth it’s been a nice mental cleanse and I’ve become proactive and focussed.” And after creating a new routine and focus plan it was easier to adjust to the ‘new normal’. But what does he miss most? “friends and family of course. I didn’t realise how much human contact I had until now. I miss hugging my nan and grandad and seeing friends etc. I’m sure it’s the same for everyone.” He tells me he is most looking forward to “a meal with all my nearest and dearest” post the Covid Chaos.

It seems foolish of me to say things are going back to normal as it does feel like we are entering a ‘new way of

living’ where the pre-leave patdown now includes a face mask and hand sanitiser as well as your keys, wallet and phone. Life has definitely shifted to say the least. I asked Tom how he is feeling about going back to some sort of normality “It’s like coming up from a deep dive and taking that first breath of air. We take a lot for granted as humans, don’t we. It’s been a good lesson and reset. I feel positive moving forward in every aspect.”

Head Above The Clouds primarily focuses on breaking the stigma around mental illness and being in the music industry can be extremely demanding on our well being. From intense moments of creativity in the formulation of music, to a room full of people and the highs of performance and travelling all hours of the day. Tom kindly opened up with us about his experiences with mental health.

“I’ve had my dark patches over the years. I call it ‘the well’. It kind of hovers around and above me and brings huge anxiety and fear. But it all stems from an attack I sustained when I was 18 outside a takeaway spot in Bedford. I was badly beaten for no reason and ended up in hospital for a week. Then came the anxiety, the fear, the depression, the agoraphobia. With the help of friends, family, music and CT I came through this and now know what to do when the darkness tries to defend from time to time. I talk openly about it and try to help others as they seem to be surprised that someone like me could have suffered in any way. In truth, I think everyone has a patch at some point in their life.”

But it was music and getting into writing and performing that helped him heal the most. “As I previously said, cathartic and life affirming words. It bought solace and focus. And my inner circle as well as the NHS were also an incredible support mechanism to have.”

Lockdown hasn’t just been difficult for us as individuals

but our industry as a whole has really been facing its most trying time. Independent venues up and down the country have had their doors closed for months, with no income and no guidance on when or how to reopen. In our shared home town Bedford Esquires is universally loved by patrons wishing to catch a new band on the Main Stage, dance the night away at a classic Pad Club Night or just grab a drink in the Bar. The atmosphere is electric and eclectic and the future generations of musicians in the area would be lost without it. The Save Our Venues campaign is something Tom has been a huge supporter of on social media since it launched and his passion for securing the future of this local institution came up in our chat. "Without them how do we exist? How do we make the mistakes that make us better, how do we road test songs, how do we become the performers we are today, how do we build fanbases? Live music is an incredible release for me and crucial in my story. Without the seed we have no flower."

The success of Grennan, transcending from local jam nights to sold out stadiums and festival stages, reminds us of the very real importance of going out to engage with and invest in our local music scenes and venues that give artists the platform to begin their musical journey. It is essential that we support these venues at this time more than ever before.

While rehearsing for his return to the stage he and his team have also been planning the release of his second album, which I asked if COVID has also had an effect on. "Well we are still a fair bit off from it being released yet. I've been sitting on it now for months and it's quite frustrating, but to release a record in this climate makes me feel uncomfortable. Once it's out though it's going to be special, I'm incredibly proud of that body of work and I can't wait for everyone to hear it." The release of the singles 'Oh Please' and 'This Is The Place' earlier on in the year gave us our first snippets into the vibe of this release which comes from a very real, raw place. "I went through a serious break up with someone I truly loved. It was such a hard thing to exercise and divulge the magnitude of. I just channeled my heartache, love, and fresh beginning into the record. It was very cathartic and a blessing in many ways. It's a love letter and a goodbye letter rolled into one."

"I went through a serious break up with someone I truly love. It was such a hard thing to exercise and divulge the magnitude of. I just channeled my heartache, love, and fresh beginning into the record. It was very cathartic and a blessing in many ways. It's a love letter and a goodbye letter rolled into one."

Clearly, lockdown hasn't put his projects on hold but balancing this work load, a global pandemic and maintaining his mental well-being hasn't been easy. "Music is my saviour in many ways so everyday I'm working is therapy. I love it, an incredible release on every level." Lastly we asked Tom for his top tip for looking after mental health and wellbeing. He recommends "exercise, exercise, exercise, good food, good people and positive goals." We preach that Tom!

Words: Bronte Evans

HATC CLUB

ROSS BUCHANAN

Welcome to The HATC Club where we will be getting to know a few of our favourite (creatives/industry insiders/tastemakers) and their mental health journeys a little bit better.



What's your name?

Ross Buchanan

What do you do?

I'm a radio presenter for Absolute Radio, but I also like to bake free bread for my Instagram followers and occasionally write for Vice.com.

What area of the UK do you reside?

I live in a little place called Nunhead, just below Peckham in South East London.

What's your experience with mental health?

I think I've always struggled with mental health, but only

really found and understood the language behind truly expressing how I feel and why I feel that way. In 2017, I hit an all-time low of depression and, through the help of a good friend and the NHS, got the help I needed to get a diagnosis of anxiety, depression and ADD.

What part have you found particularly difficult?

I think the thing that a lot of people struggle with, myself included, is identifying when you're having a bad day because of your mental health or whether you're just in a shit mood because something has genuinely annoyed you. Knowing my triggers and identifying when to avoid them and when to push those boundaries is a constant struggle for me but I'm getting better at recognising that.

Have you received support? If so what?

I've had cognitive behavioural therapy, which helped me learn breathing exercises and mindfulness techniques to get me through a panic attack. I also take sertraline (an SSRI) and propranolol (a beta-blocker), that help me with the general chemical imbalance in my brain. I've recently started seeing a therapist over Zoom and that's helped with the release of past traumas, and understanding how events have shaped my sometimes unconventional reactions to stuff like being in a crowd or reading the news.

What was a time where you were worried about your mental health affecting something?

It's difficult to juggle the charisma of being a radio presenter and my mental health struggles. There are times when I've hosted events in front of thousands of people, only to walk on the stage, straight into a panic attack. It's absolutely terrifying, but it's part of the job and it's something that I want to be better at.

How have you coped with any negative's you've experienced?

Hard work. It sucks that to get through something that has already affected you to the point of fatigue, that you then have to put in more effort to move past those experiences, but that's life, and if I allow negative experiences to shape my future in a detrimental way then it's probably not going to get any better for me.

What do you find helps your mental health?

I love being around dogs. They are so perfect. Any dog. Even a big scary, drooling hound. Just love the way they look and act. Dogs get it because they're never looking at the bigger picture. All they do is think in the present and love you unconditionally. Shout out to Riley, Biba and Pickle.

What do you find unhelpful?

I struggle to deal with people who talk about mental health from anything other than their own perspective, or start to talk about themselves when somebody starts to open up about their struggles. To move forward, we need to learn the art of listening without judgement.

What would you like to see that may help change when it comes to mental health stigma?

It'd be nice to see people talking about the less 'sexy' mental illnesses like PTSD or BPD. It's all

well and good to say "it's okay not to be okay", but what are you doing past that?

What are your top tips when it comes to mental health?

Treat yourself like you would treat the ones you love the most in the world. Give yourself a break and feel the compassion towards yourself that you truly deserve. Love yourself even when it doesn't feel right.

“I STRUGGLE TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH FROM ANYTHING OTHER THAN THEIR OWN PERSPECTIVE, OR START TO TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES WHEN SOMEBODY STARTS TO OPEN UP ABOUT THEIR STRUGGLES. TO MOVE FORWARD,” WE NEED TO LEARN THE ART OF LISTENING WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.

NATALIE LEE

(Style Me Sunday)



What's your name?

Natalie

What do you do?

I'm an influencer/ content creator. My main platform is Instagram

What area of the UK do you reside?

I live in East London

What's your experience with mental health?

I have a significant amount of experience with mental health - my brother has been institutionalised for the majority of his adult life. He has schizophrenia. My two sisters have borderline personality disorder and bipolar. My mum has suffered with depression. I could go on. I have been around people with severe mental health issues my whole life. I have suffered with mild bouts of depression but nothing too extreme.

What part have you found particularly difficult?

Knowing how to support people close to me has been the most difficult thing.

Have you received support? If so what?

We have received support as a family - however sometimes we have either had to wait a long time or paid a lot of money to go privately.

What was a time where you were worried about your mental health affecting something?

I have been worried about my mental health affecting my relationship with my children, especially when I felt devoid of any emotion.

How have you coped with any negative's you've experienced?

I have talked to people around me and I have been to counselling. I haven't found medical professionals much help.

What do you find helps your mental health?

I have found counselling incredibly useful - any type of talking.

What do you find unhelpful?

My GP

What would you like to see that may help change when it comes to mental health stigma?

I would like people to talk about it more and not be ashamed. It's not your fault. I would like the government to invest more in services so that the resources and support is there when you need it, not 8 months down the line.

What are your top tips when it comes to mental health?

Talk. Know that you are not alone and these feelings are not permanent. If you are struggling to smile, know that one day you will laugh again and you will really feel it with your whole body and not just fake it. Know that you are loved.

ILL FITTING PUZZLE PIECE

It's time to accept that the ill-fitting puzzle piece won't ever fit the puzzle perfectly, and let me tell you, that's because it's not supposed to.

Did you know that 1 in 8 men suffer from a common mental health problem? No? That's because for the past thousands of years we've been told by society that there is no problem man can't face. But the truth of the matter is that to solve a problem, the problem must be observed...

Think to yourself briefly, what is being a man to you? Is it strength, is it control or maybe even success? For years upon years we've been told by society that to be a man you must possess certain qualities that elevate you to a higher order.

When asked what it is to be a man, does it come to mind that you play the traditional role of a family man perfectly, to balance work, order, family and more whilst managing to spin 10 thousand plates? Or perhaps balancing the life of a bachelor, the wind in your hair as you simply do what you want when you want? What would you say if I asked you about how you feel about that?

You see so far I've asked questions that you are pre-programmed to answer, questions that might not rouse a moment's thought after years of you practicing and knowing your answer to yourself in the mirror, let alone another person. Just like women men have had fictional roles placed at their feet, however without emotions, delicacy and vulnerability playing a role in any of them. Since stepping into my own story about my own mental health I've not only witnessed but I've stood side by side men battling their inner demons and mental health.

The typical man, to many, is one who is strong and doesn't show their emotions. Well I'm here to tell you that it's time to let go of those misconceptions. You see mental

health is like the foundation of a house. This foundation is key to every other element that weighs on the home, comes in the home and leaves the home. If the foundation is cracked the home will move, if the foundation is sodden the house will slide. Foundations build strong houses.

For years men have been told that showing emotion exposes weakness. This has petrified men to fall in line with the most dangerous mental health epidemic we've ever seen. In the UK men are three times as likely to commit suicide. Is this because men don't realise the risk of mental health or is this because it's one of the only ways men feel they can escape predispositions, like being seen as weak. Can anything be done to combat this statistic? You see I think it can be pretty hard to be the family man who is supposed to be strong and emotionless simply because society tells us that to feel is wrong, that to feel is weak and that to feel makes you less of a man.

To be vulnerable is hard, I for one although a woman have had to learn over the years how to bring down my walls. I've had to learn that to be honest and open sometimes is hard and scary and at times leaves you open just like Leeds Manager Marco Bielsa, who at a crucial moment in a crucial game allowed Aston Villa to walk a goal in to an open net. It takes time to see the open goal as it is, that it's not the end of the world and that you can still win a cup from losing one open goal.

From experience I spent years burying how I felt in fear that I'd be side-lined or even worse undermined that what I was feeling was ridiculous and I should just 'man up'. And there it is, there we go, we finally get to it, the dreaded phrase 'Man Up' that undermines everything being a man. But that's the problem, I felt that overwhelming fear as a woman, a woman where I wasn't questioned when I cried, where when I broke I wasn't having to break a male outline built over 100's of years.

“Together we can make male mental health something that isn't based around shame. Together we can approach it earlier and in numbers so that no man feels that taking his life is easier than feeling this idea that he will be less of a man if he seeks help.”

The problem isn't just these walls we've built but it's the fact that without us talking about how feel and what's weighing us down we aren't establishing there's a problem and because of this problem men are unnecessarily dying.

It is time that you are told that it's ok to feel, it's ok to cry and from a woman you are no less a man for doing so. I can't promise that what you are feeling isn't going to be a difficult journey at times, but I can tell it will get easier, especially with those around you being able to help whether it's friends, family or maybe a doctor. By talking about how you feel doesn't make you weak. If I was to come to you and tell you I was struggling with feelings that weren't my fault and were out of my control, would you love me any less as a person? It's time to take the gender out of mental health and it's time to observe the issue.

Together we can make male mental health something that isn't based around shame. Together we can approach it earlier and in numbers so that no man feels that taking his life is easier than feeling this idea that he will be less of a man if he seeks help.

So I want you to do something for me. Whilst we face one of the largest problems of our generation, covid-19, reach out to another man and check in on him. Let him know how he feels is more important than societies idea of masculinity as you never know who's struggling.

The puzzle can't be complete without the right piece and trying to force the broken piece that is toxic male masculinity into it won't finish the puzzle.

Words: Alice Gee

SUMMER STAYCATION

For many, now may not be the time to be considering travelling off outside of the UK. We are currently still in and still trying to navigate a global pandemic and for many including ourselves anxiety is rife.

However, the time has arrived and for those who might of been jetting off for some blissful sun across the globe it's time to consider a staycation.

The UK has some incredible spaces to offer from boutique hotels to rented accommodations. Whether you're feeling comfortable with a city break or perhaps something more personal and remote we've got some of the best picks for you to try.

KIP HIDEAWAYS



ARTIST RESIDENT

KIP HIDEAWAYS

A brand-new membership site for style-seeking adventurers who want a little hideaway to escape to – a unique collection dedicated to the very best small, beautiful and affordable rentals in the UK.



ARTIST RESIDENT

Located in Brighton, Penzance, London, Oxford and soon to be Bristol, The Artist Residence offers the best from all over the UK. Whether you need a blissful break by the beach or you're seeking a piece of the London lifestyle, the boutique hotels will offer you a home away from home.



MIDDLETON LODGE ESTATE

Middleton Lodge is a lovingly-restored, independently-owned, Georgian country retreat set within 200 acres of rural park land in north yorkshire. The destination provides a refuge for chaotic city life with infinite outdoor pursuits.



THE RECTORY HOTEL

The Rectory is a bolthole for the stylish set looking for a cool but understated, design-led place to escape. With proper cocktails, an unusually astute art collection and hide-and-seek gardens, it's just the right sort of house-party backdrop for any would-be Bloomsbury set.





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CINTA

MUSIC INTERVIEW



SPORTS TEAM

“I’m really pleased to see the strides we’ve made as a country in normalising how we talk about mental health.”

Following the much anticipated release of their debut album 'Deep Down Happy' it felt essential that the team at Head Above The Clouds got to speak all things music and mental health with Sports Team. My first introduction to the Cambridgeshire based six-piece was their incredibly cool and chaotic set at Truck Festival 2019, and while I may have already been a few months late to the party, I definitely knew I was watching the birth of something amazing and this group would be destined for greatness. But who would have thought then that a year later they would be battling it out with Lady Gaga for the UK Number One Album?

It is an unnerving time for the music industry right now, with the familiar comfort of a sweaty, glorious beer filled mosh pit a distant memory, it has forced musicians to be more creative with their time and how to engage with their fans. Releasing an album during this time couldn't have been easy and it was the first thing on my mind when I caught them for a chat.

“We are coping pretty well, our time has been split up a bit by studio time to work on the second album but we’re all a bit restless. Exercise has helped a lot, me and Oli have at least been running every day. I’ll be taking the 6 pack in 30 days team to court at some point too.” The restlessness can't be helped by the fact the group were supposed to be embarking on an extensive festival and touring season to promote their new release. “Last year we did 150 shows and you don't quite realise how cathartic that is until they're gone. After shows is usually the time I feel calmest. It's just trying to replace that feeling with something healthy.” The sudden come to halt of a jam packed schedule has been something a lot of the artists we have spoken to for this issue have raised as being a significant factor in their depreciating mental health, but I imagine being in a group of six has the benefit of a much wider and stronger support group to fall back on.

I was interested in that dynamic of larger than normal group, you must think it's harder to work together and divvy up their individual roles with so many voices and opinions flying around.

“I think the appeal of our band has always been that it feels a bit like a group you'd recognise amongst your

own friends. Everyone is a very different uniquely flawed person so we're all interested in different aspects. I like putting together the live show, speaking to press, Rob does a lot of writing, playing around with sound, Henry works on our label Holm Front, Al's been mentoring and writing, Ben and Oli are doing designs for merch today.” The release of 'Deep Down Happy' was hotly anticipated and critically acclaimed, receiving the highest first week sales for a debut album by a British band in four years (thanks to the help of some very inventive merch bundle deals) and just beaten to number one by Lady Gaga in a chart race widely compared to that of Blur and Oasis. But how did the response go down in camp? “It's a strange one, we're so proud of the album and taken back by how well it's gone down with the charts and support. It all feels very abstract when you can't get out and play it to people though. We still wake up in the same house together, live the same lives. We got a screenshot of our chart position and that was about as real as it got.”

It is no surprise that the media liked to focus on the chart race and the negative “beef” being stirred on twitter from some of the bands and Gaga's fans rather than the music being produced itself. But Sports Team aren't a band that have shied away from controversy nor did they try and quell the online spats that were popping up in the trending tab, rather they leaned into it gaining support from other artists such as The Wombats and Lewis Capaldi. I asked them if there has been a shift in the media response following the release of their debut album.

“I think the press have always been really good to us to be honest. The idea that we're fully formed characters getting everything right on album one always seems odd to me, you're watching us grow up on stage, and in person. For our fans I'd hope that's part of why they follow us. You're right about album two though, it's a chance to flesh out our sound, ideas and the way we talk about them. It's constantly reacting to what's going on around us.”

What is going on around them currently being the pandemic and the inevitable stress, panic and paranoia that it has brought especially to those working industries



that have seemingly ground to a halt. Working in the creative arts isn't easy for your mental health at the best of times, never mind being told your main source of income is now potentially banned until early next year. And while a lot of negative stigma still floats around these topics its something the group have been very open about sharing with their fans.

"For me the hardest bit is the juxtaposition between these ecstatic highs on stage and all the deeply mundane stuff in between. Trying to find a mindset. I'm sure it's different for everyone though. There's enough risks though. Lack of structure, certainty, supposedly being a public figure. And then there's access to all kinds of terrible ways to deal with things. I always think we're lucky to have each other. We've always lived together, toured together, shared everything so you don't feel like you're on your own."

Our mission at Head Above The Clouds is to educate and inform. Yet despite mental illness becoming increasingly normalised in pop culture and more open and honest communication is encouraged across society, we still see evidence of the demonisation against particular diagnosis's and their harmful stereotypes. I asked the band what changes they would like to see in the world regarding mental health.

"I'm really pleased to see the strides we've made as a country in normalising how we talk about mental health. For me it'll always be a political as well as a health issue though. You've got a rate of suicide in this country, especially amongst young men that's horrible, and countless people who feel unsatisfied with their lives in between. There's something about the society we've created that fundamentally fails to make people happy. I think it's about a lack of sources of community, unfair expectations made of people, social media, low wages, exclusion and discrimination, the amount it costs to just live. Mental health isn't as political as the Tories so often make it out to be." And speaking of the misinterpretations Alex has faced personally "In general it's just the expectation that I'd be a well formed and well-adjusted character just because I'm the singer in a band. I'm not. We play for the fans though, we meet them, we know them, and they trust us. It's always comforting when people treat you like a human."

It is bitter sweet that their album 'Deep Down Happy' has been released during this time. While we haven't had the joy of being able to experience it live, and probably won't

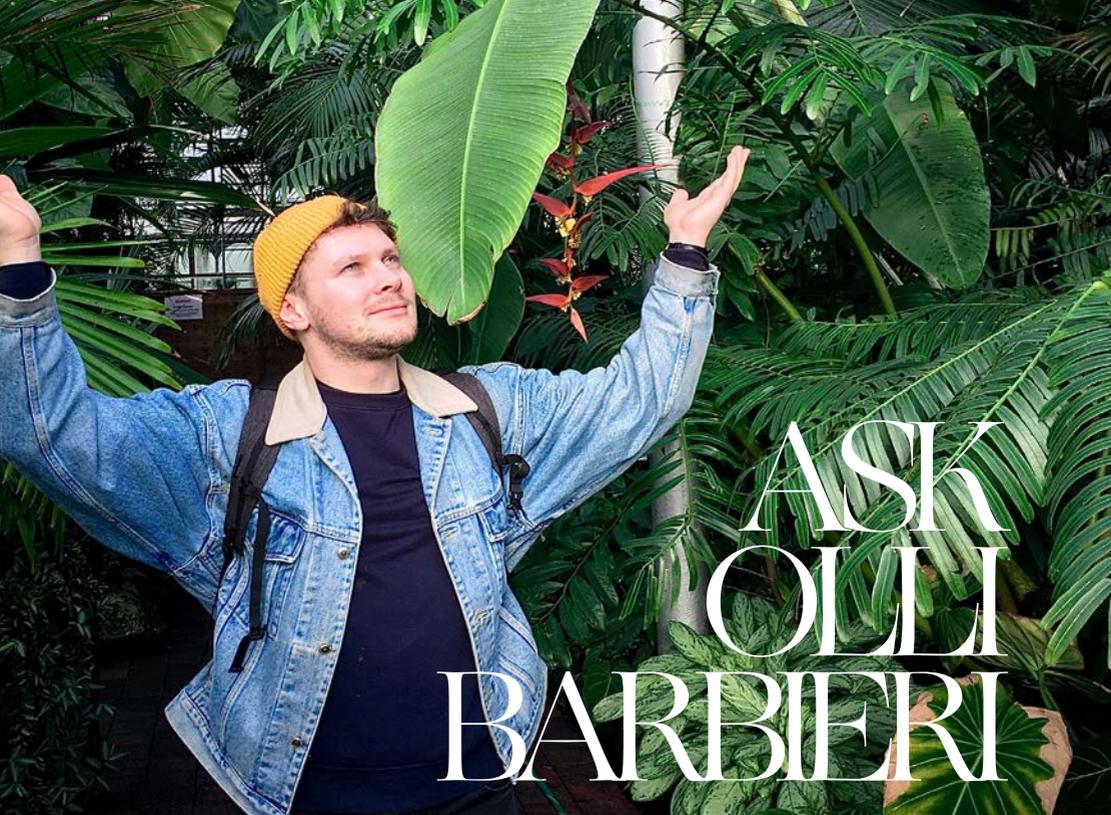
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any time soon, we have been granted the time and space to give the album the attention it deserves. To immerse ourselves in it completely rather than in the background of busy commutes. Sports Team are beautifully bizarre and like a lot of people, their chart success has filled me with hope for the future of British Indie Guitar Music. Without sounding unbelievably cringe..deep down this album makes me very happy.

Words: Bronte Evans

Photography: Lauren Maccabee

Shot pre-lockdown



We asked you to ask actor and skins alum Ollie Barbereri any thing. Yes anything! We selected our favourite questions and he answered them below. Stay up to date with our socials to see who you can be chatting too next.

What was your first audition like?

My first audition was actually at school. I had heard there were auditions going on at my school. I actually hadn't planned to go, I'd heard of skins at the time of course, but I was being contrary and deliberately didn't watch it purely because everyone else did (classic). I actually had one of those minor, secondary school fallouts with a mate so in a fit of pique I decided I would go to the casting instead of hanging out with my friends at lunchtime. In the casting we did various drama class stuff and a few of us got called back to Bristol for a second casting the next day. Day off school = Result. I went along, and kept being called back. The rest is history I guess.

Do you have any audition tips?

I'm probably not the best person to ask at this point seeing as I've not been to an audition in years, but I think

one thing I learned but never quite applied was to go in hard. It's easy to dial back overacting, but hard to give more if you're playing it too subtle. Also, obvious tip but it can't be understated just learn the lines first like the back of your hand. Bring the performance in once you know them.

How did you go about getting an agent?

Well it was certainly a lot easier as I had Skins under my belt, but I would suggest getting a showreel together with everything you've done to send to them. Focus on doing as much acting as you can in any capacity to add to it. Cast the net wide and far.

Did anyone ever tell you to "have a back up plan" outside of acting and how do you respond to people not believing in your dream?

All the time! To be honest, I can't in good conscience say that acting was my dream. I was lucky. I got to do it by accident, and ran with it for as long as it felt right. I would say to anyone who (unlike me) is thinking of going for it deliberately: if you can truthfully say to yourself that acting is what you want to live and breathe, then you owe it to yourself to go for it and give it your absolute best. In my case, I had backup plans but none of them ever happened either (what was I thinking trying to study economics!). In the event, I had to completely pivot my life away from acting and find something else I loved. And it turns out, that's okay too.

What is something you wish you knew at the start of your career?

That it would all be okay in the end. I'd have wasted a lot less time worrying about the future.

How do you balance auditioning and having to work a "normal job"?

Well as I mentioned that's not really a problem for me anymore but when I was working, it was in retail so fairly flexible (pro tip: work weekends so you get more weekdays free. Castings normally happen in business hours). The key I found was honesty, and doing your best to get along with managers / co-workers so that when you got a call for the next day you could rely on people to help you out and swap things around.

What is the best way / where is the best place to network?

Very good question. Again while I was working I didn't really realise I was networking (I realise now I'm not great at it). I would imagine drama groups, local short film groups on Facebook (you never know which budding director or producer will blow up). In short the best networking you can do is working with people in any capacity you can.

Are there any casting websites you would recommend?

Spotlight is the obvious one but it's spenny and don't know if you can get membership without representation. There's tonnes of groups on Facebook for short film

“It would all be ok in the end. I'd have wasted a lot less time worrying about the future”

directors looking for roles (I'm going to sidestep the working for free issue as it's a true can of worms. All I'll say is try not to get mugged off). There's also starnow.co.uk which does a similar thing. There's certainly others too if you have a good search.

Did you feel a pressure to get another role straight after skins finished or did you allow yourself some time off?

Absolutely. There is a lot to be said for striking while the iron is hot. I never thought to take time off for a break though. I had to finish my A levels (fucked them up due to being away filming half the time. Turns out I didn't need them in the end) so that took up the time I wasn't acting.

Skins was known for producing a great alumni of talent from the first ten was there a pressure to live up to that and go on to book bigger and more prominent roles?

Yes, but it's important to understand that that pressure comes from within. It's only natural to measure yourself by your peers and their achievements. It's a dangerous thing. Acting, like all performance is an occupation to which many are called but few are chosen. That's its nature. It can be really tough seeing others you know going on to bigger things while you perceive yourself to be languishing or not hitting the same successes. It goes back to the point about asking yourself if you want to act because you love the process of acting for its own sake. If you do, then your own "success" as measured against others' becomes less important than your pursuit of enjoyment in what you do. And that's what you want really.

Words: Ollie Barbieri

POPPING OFF

Each issue one of our writers will be 'popping off' about something that has been really grinding their gears and let it all out of their system. This quarter it's the governments response to the music industries calls for help during the lockdown that's been getting us riled!

By now the detrimental effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on the global music industry is painstakingly evident. But while other nations provided their arts and culture industries with vital support from the early stages of lockdown our Tory government let the future of (number of venues) independent music venues hang in the balance until for some it was too late.

Westminster continuously ignored the multiple calls from industry leaders for assistance. In April when the Music Venues Trust #saveourvenues campaign was launched to help over 700 venues immediately facing threats of permanent closure, the Government and Bank of England were handing out £18 billion of taxpayers money to super polluter fossil fuel companies. In June when the Musicians Union general secretary Horace Trubridge claimed before the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee that without immediate intervention 70% of the countries music venues would close before the end of the year the government gave 30% of their bailout funds to "British" firms based in offshore tax havens. And in July when the #letthemusic play campaign was begging for £50 million to prevent the complete extinction of the live music industry as we know it, it was revealed £600 million had been given to billionaire Lord Anthony Bamford and his company JCB, who had donated to Boris Johnson's Tory Party Leadership campaign in 2019.

ARE YOU SURPRISED?
NO, I DIDN'T THINK SO.

Oh but the government didn't send us completely into the wilderness blind, no we had Culture Secretary Oliver Dowdens "five-step roadmap" to recovery which was ridiculed by anyone who had stepped foot in their local music hall. Then there was the go-ahead for drive-in gigs which came only days after we were all discouraged from doing a Cummings and having a jolly old road trip around the country. And who could forget "just have socially distanced indoor gigs" a completely impossible idea that would plummet almost all venues into bankruptcy unless ticket and bar prices were increased by 300%!

It wasn't until The Royal Albert Hall announced it would go bust by the end of the year without a serious influx of cash and all those millionaire MP's and their rich donor buddies would lose their velvet-covered private boxes that the magic money tree spouted a lovely £1.57 billion support package. But after reading the small print many industry insiders were holding out very little hope that this money would reach the places that needed it most. The main concerns, that this funding would probably be kept within "high brow" cultural institutions based in the capital city were seemingly proved valid when in the space of 24 hours 4 separate venues in the North of England went into administration.

Manchester's Gorilla and Death Institute announced they would be closing on 16th July shortly followed by The Welly and The Polar Bear in Hull, which is still the UK's official City of Culture until the end of this year, followed a few weeks later by Liverpool's

The Zanzibar. For a region that has birthed some of the greatest musical acts in history, the institutions and live scenes of the north have been viciously ignored and underfunded compared to those in the South East. Now I'll save my much longer pop off about the North/South divide for another day, for now, I'll just direct you to the 2017 IPPR North report that found the Arts Council funding gap between Northern Cities and the Capital has reached £700 million and our governments' lacklustre response has made it pretty clear its goal for a "Northern Powerhouse" of industry, innovation and culture is no longer (if let's be real, it ever really was) a priority. And if you're shocked you haven't been paying attention. This is the same party from which multiple MP's claim their favourite band is The Smiths but cut music funding for schools in Trafford. This is the Prime Minister who claims he loves the Beatles but believes it's London who made them famous and called scousers victim wallowers for continuing to push the JFT96 Campaign. This is not a government who cares about Northern Working Class people and the art we create.

But it is one that cares about property. And that is my biggest concern, that these struggling venues will most likely end up the same way The Hacienda did and Parr Street Studios will - flats. I swear the Tories won't rest until we are a country built on shoddy quick rise "investment buys" with a 7% returns rate and all these struggling venues or "promising commercial buildings" are not full with Russian and Saudi billionaires who don't live in the UK so shouldn't pay tax. Elbows' Guy Garvey spoke to the NME on the day the news broke about the need for legal protection preventing buildings of cultural relevance like venues and theatres from being turned into private residential spaces and

"I believe in this industry and the thousands of people that make it work, they are defiant enough to get back up again."

it makes sense. If you are using your live music, theatre or club scene to encourage investors to build homes and young people to move in, why tear down the buildings and institutions they are relocating for?

And to the people I saw on social media saying "well it's only two clubs why are you making such a big deal out of it" it's because independent venues are the foundations that the whole music industry is built on it's where bands like The Beatles, Oasis and The 1975 made their name and built their fan base before they were ever noticed by the big wigs. Because if this support package doesn't get to the venues that need it in time and more close down, it won't be the executives at major labels or millionaire singer-songwriters (who signed a letter but failed to put their money where their mouth is) who suffer. It will be the future generation of musicians, those who rely on touring to get by, who probably have a second job in the hospitality industry and still live with mum and dad that will face the brunt of it. That's dreams squashed and careers derailed because our elected officials once again felt lining the pockets of their boarding school buddies was the main priority.

I believe in this industry and the thousands of people that make it work, they are defiant enough to get back up again. I feel for those who have and will look in other directions for income, I hope they will be able to return one day. But those of us who remain will be pushed through by the skin of our teeth but we will do so in spite of the Government's help, not with thanks to it.

UPDATE: Since the initial writing of this piece both Gorilla and The Death Institute have been saved from closure and will continue to operate as music venues when lockdown is lifted. It appears the combined work of Greater Manchester's Night Time Economy Adviser Sacha Lord, Mayor Andy Burnham, The Charlatans Tim Burgess and local promoters SSD Concerts managed to secure an investment from Tokyo Industries who will now take ownership. This is a brilliant light at the end of what felt like a very long dark tunnel and a case study for all local councils and stakeholders in how to band together and support your local scene.



BANG BANG ROMEO



“When it comes to mental health the ignorance if bliss mentality, is so dangerous because it just makes it worse and there is no bliss at the end of that tunnel. It’s just a very long tunnel”

As lockdown progressed, leaving spring behind and ruining all hopes of a merry summer spent in muddy fields I stopped trying to keep track of what day or even month it was. The only solid indication I would get were thanks to my phone’s calendar notifications painfully reminding me of another cancelled gig I should have been at. The earliest of which was Doncaster’s Bang Bang Romeo who’s April UK tour was pushed back until October. So rather than dance in the mosh pit at Gorilla I sat down over zoom with lead singer Anastasia to talk about what she’s been getting up to now being on the road is off the table.

How have you been coping with lockdown? Are you back at home in Doncaster?

I’m alright, plodding along. I’ve been with my partner during covid, kinda isolated in my dad’s annex. I moved in just before lockdown, so it was bizarre all this was happening in the middle of a house move. I’m here with my two kittens. They are good lads. I’ve only had them for about a month but they’ve brought new life in the house. It’s so nice, as when you’re cooped up for so long and you’re kinda used to being with you and another person, it’s nice to have some fresh life.

Has being in isolation and out of your normal touring routine affected your mental health significantly?

I’m normally alright, whatever that means. The first month or two my mental health took a massive nose dive, I started developing anxiety and having panic attacks, stuff that I never, luckily, had had a run in with before. I think it was because of the crazy year we were supposed to have, doing a UK and European tour and then going to SXSW and then playing Glastonbury. It was supposed to be like our year, if you like, in terms of getting through the next door and phase of our career. So I think having that all disappear, it did affect me in a way I never thought it would.

I’ve always been such an advocate for mental health and have done loads of charity work because it’s been so important but I’ve always been lucky because I only had to deal with that stuff when I was like 16 and then it kind of disappeared but now it’s reared its ugly head again. I always thought “I’m so lucky but it’s going to come back and bite me on the arse one day” and it did and the only

“It’s a new way of working for us we’ve always been so lucky, we’ve had the opportunity to get into a studio and as a band we are very lucky for that.”

way I can describe it is there’s this demon in the room and I’ve been ignoring it until it got to the point where I couldn’t ignore it and now I’m terrified.

I just think when it comes to mental health the ignorance is bliss mentality, is so dangerous because it just makes it worse and there is no bliss at the end of that tunnel. It’s just a very long tunnel. I’ve realised that I can’t keep ignoring it and I need to talk more. Isolation has made us all talk more because we’ve had to since we can’t see each other physically, I’ve had conversations with people I haven’t seen in ages which has been healthy.

How have you coped with that?

The best way I can describe it is you know when those people who go long distance running for like days at a time, then they have to like wean off of it for their body. I’ve been doing it (gigging) non-stop so to have it completely stop was a massive nightmare in my head, it was such a mess especially with the year we had planned to go all over the world again. We all made a conscious decision, the goal hasn’t changed, we still want global domination, we are just going to have to do it from our bedrooms. It’s been such a weird situation, we were like right are we going to sit on our hands and cry about this or are we going to actively do something and design new ways of doing it. So instead of looking at it as a bad thing we’ve looked at it as a challenge and I’ve enjoyed me and the lads doing that, it’s really kept me going to come up with all those different ideas.



You know what, other than the music thing, I can't wait to hug my Grandma, I cannot wait. I'm so excited to hug my grandma and grandad. She's just figured out how to use facetime so it's lots of these conversations with the camera super zoomed into her face. I want more than anything else to be able to go into her living room and sit with a cuppa with them.

Last year you supported Pink on her tour which must have been one hell of an opportunity for you?

It was the most amazing experience of my life ever. But it's messed up interviews now, when people ask what our dream venues are I just sit there thinking we've just played it. I can't express the feeling of walking out to 65,000 people and saying "Hello Wembley" two nights in a row. I can't explain that, it's something I still dream about today. The goal is to be able to do that as the headline act, so we've got to get our arse into gear.

Do you have any top tips for people reading this who may be struggling with the 'new normal'?

Find what you loved doing before this pandemic went down and throw yourself into it. I don't mean like drinking or socialising like before but I guess you've just got to find new ways to do that too. Throw yourself into something you love as what's the worst that can happen?

Bang Bang Romeo's new single Stone Cold Superstar is available to stream now and remaining tickets to their October tour are still on sale.

Words: Jade Poultney

So you've been keeping busy, even working on new music?

I wasn't doing anything in the first few months because singing reminded me of what I could have been doing. I know lots of people in different industries are going through similar things but I suppose when you're on your own in terms of, I'm the only person in my house that's a musician, you do feel very isolated. Like when they called it isolation they meant it. I am starting to feel better, and I think it's because I threw myself into my writing. I threw myself into the thing that made me the happiest and I think I've written the best music I've ever written in my life by a long stretch. It really is the best I've ever done. Me and the boys have set up a home studio if you like in each of our houses. It's a new way of working for us. We've always been so lucky we've had the opportunity to get into a studio and as a band we are very lucky for that. But honestly it's the best we've ever written and the best we've ever worked. So having to change and flip everything on its head was quite bizarre but I'm happier for it now. I know it sounds quite dramatic but it's saved my life. I was in a really bad place.

What are you looking forward to doing most post covid?

SUMMER 20 ISSUE ONE PLAYLIST

CURATED BY BRONTE EVANS

SCAN BELOW TO LISTEN

Every issue we will be collating some of our favourite tracks that we've featured into one easy to listen to playlist! Scan the code below to get listening and don't forget to follow for updates.

1. MR MOTIVATOR – IDLES
2. A HEROES DEATH – FONTAINE'S DC
3. SAFE IN SOUND – ORLANDO WEEKS
4. FASHUN – WILLIE J HEALEY
5. THE PRAYER – WHENYOUNG
6. PARTY FAVOURS – SOFIA WOLFSON
7. MORAL OF THE STORY – ASHE, NIALL HORAN
8. WAIT FOR YOU – TOM WALKER
9. PHYSICAL – DUA LIPA
10. EVERYTHING I WANTED – BILLIE EILISH
11. DON'T WANNA – HAIM
12. YOU SHOULD BE SAD – HALSEY
13. I'M JUST AS SCARED AS YOU ARE – TRUNKY JUNO
14. IF YOU'RE TOO SHY (LET ME KNOW) - THE 1975
15. I WIN EVERY TIME – THE MYSTERINES
16. OVERKILL – HOLLY HUMBERSTONE
17. RIGHT WAY ROUND – SAINT RAYMOND
18. A BILLION HEART BEATS – MYSTERY JETS
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