



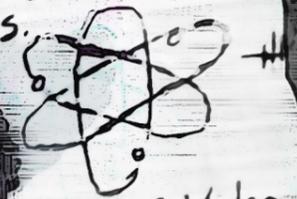
STRANGER
DAIS



STRANGER

DAIS

Everything is made
around us is made
up out of energy and
Atoms.



Music & Video
are basically
Vibrational
Artifacts

Now is the time
to start building
COMMUNITY



Oxytoxin in its purest form is about
creating NOISEY Sounds and
VISUALS

♥
TREES



TO CREATE
IS TO HEAL

In a Society
that Profits from Our
Misery and Self hate,
Loving ourselves is
Revolutionary Act



GIGS RAVES ARE
ESSENTIAL RITUALS
FOR HOMO
SAPIENS

Styles
Post Punk
ELECTRONIC
DUB
Industrial
FOLK
Psychadelic
TECH
AMBIENT
EXPERIMENTAL



Anything socially constructed
Can be socially deconstructed



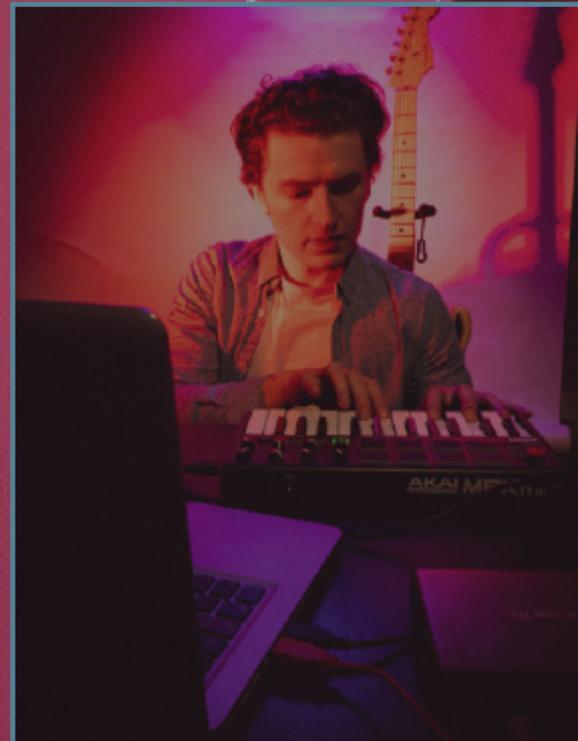
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NEW HORIZONS WITH BALCONY SUNRISE

Sick of the view from your bedroom window? BALCONY SUNRISE is here to whisk you away with some dreamy chillwave - guaranteed to give you the perfect escape. Pack your swimsuit: we're about to take a dip into the **'Velvet Ocean'**.

1) How did this project begin?

Well for the last few years I've really been wanting to learn how to produce music myself, especially since I was starting to really get into electronic music. It wasn't until around Spring in 2019 when I decided to buy music software to record some tracks. At the time I was working in music copyright, so I was able to just spend every day listening to a lot of electronic music and slowly developing an ear for arrangements and melodies.



However, after getting fed up with bosses pretending like they actually cared about their staff members and treating us all like robots, with the job itself being about as exciting as watching a marathon of *Cash In The Attic*, I decided to quit during the pandemic to just focus on music production. I put out three tracks of different styles in 2020, practising releases and seeing what worked, what didn't work and also what I enjoyed making the most. I decided I wanted to just solely focus on making chillwave music, as it's really fun to make but also it's the type of music that comes naturally to me when I try to sit down and create something. So I came up with an artist name that I thought matched with the style of music I was going to make. That's how I started Balcony Sunrise and I'm very excited to get my first track out there on 22nd January.

2) What inspires your music?

I would get a lot of inspiration from visuals, whether that be from simply taking a trip to the beach and looking at the horizon or looking at artwork - there's a Japanese artist called Hiroshi Nagai who makes these really amazing minimalistic paintings of oceans, palm trees, city lights, pools etc. It goes quite well with the whole chill wave aesthetic I think so I love looking at those paintings while I make a melody or something.

Movie and TV show soundtracks would also be a big inspiration for me, such as *Drive* or *Stranger Things* which both have that nostalgic 80s electronic sound but with modern

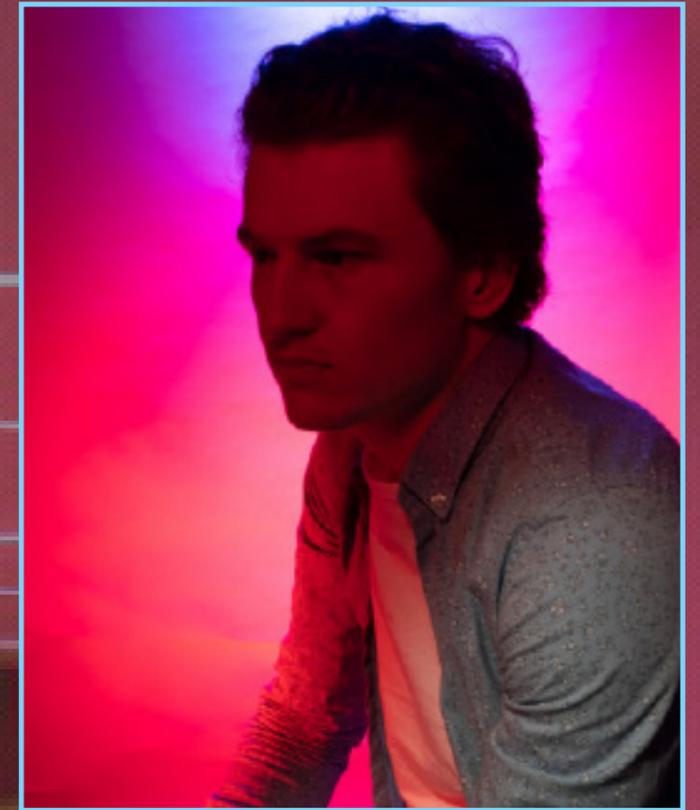
production techniques. Quite often I would have them playing in the background on mute and try to come up with a melody as I watch.

Sometimes just listening to music on Spotify and looking at album covers or reading the artist bios can be really inspiring to make a track also.

3) What is the backstory to your brand new single?

Well as we all know, it's quite an intense time at the moment, and so I wanted to make music to help relax not only myself but anyone who listens to it. Taking trips to the coastal areas around Northern Ireland played a big part in what inspired

this track. There's just something about looking out towards the sea and hearing the waves crashing, it's very comforting during times like these. I also get a sense of hope when I'm by the sea and so that's why I wanted to name my first track 'Velvet Ocean'.



4) What's next in the horizon for Balcony Sunrise?

I'll probably make another track, call it 'Horizon' and wash it down with a nice pint of Guinness.

The plan is just to keep making lots of music really and continue to learn more about music production. I've got so much to learn but it's a very exciting process - there'll be a 4 track EP out in April called 'Coastal Dreams' with each track inspired by my mixed experiences and feelings since the pandemic began. There will be a single out each month before then and "Velvet Ocean" is the first track on the EP. I'm also going to be releasing some demos and live loops too.

I'm just going to have a lot of fun with this project and see where it goes!

city song

by conn thornton

i see something in the city lights
the fire sets the sky alight as i
carry myself out into the dust

annie's on the radio
singing about how hard she fell
and i can't help but think that that same fate
awaits me

you told me everything's alright
or was that just another of your lies to keep you

safe from everything i'd give you
safe from all the love you had received
safe from everyone who sees you
safe from all the love you had received from me?

i thought that i had crossed the fires
when you told me that i would find someone
but maybe you were insincere
because you can't sympathise with the loser when
you've won

or maybe i was overthinking
or maybe you were running to be

safe from everything i'd give you
safe from all the love you had received
safe from everyone who sees you
safe from all the love you had received from me?

i read it in a book somewhere
that this too shall pass
but you held on to delicate things
and you shattered them like glass

but i thought that i would drive down to you
and say 'hey, i was just passing through'
and you know yourself these times are very strange

but it's the same thing every weekend,
you wake up bright then lay down bleak and
you think that nothing's ever gonna change

are you safe from everything i gave you,
are you cursed by all the love you had received?
are you hiding out so no-one sees that you've been
cursed by all the love you had received
from me?

you burned out those city lights.

LONG STORY SHORT

by KERRÍ TRUESDALE

so you sit there in his car
empty words and louder silences
and suddenly this man is just a boy
scared and swallowed by raw feelings
sea-storm eyes blink away the mess
of a beautiful thing that could never be

being in love with a thought
he thinks he guards himself so well
you were the only one that knew
a game like this has no winner
he hates the way you make him feel

it never ends in poetry
it ends

then we make it a story we can bear to tell
a book, a poem or not at all
the blood wasn't always beautiful
it used to just be

red

SUMMER IN DUBLIN

AN INSIGHT by Dale Armstrong

My love of music started at a very young age.

Being born with Cystic Fibrosis, I was in and out of hospital for long stays every other month, and music was always the one constant thing that was there to keep me company.

For some bizarre reason, I took a massive liking to Tom Jones when I was around 3 or 4. That was the first album I remember owning. I would play it constantly and perform the songs for the nurses on the ward.

Anyone who knew me from a young age probably wouldn't be surprised that I ended up going into music - the passion and love was always there.

I take inspiration from a lot of aspects in my life. Living with a chronic illness has taught me to appreciate everything you have in life.

2 years ago I took extremely ill and ended up in ICU on a ventilator with multiple organ failure. My family were told to expect the worst. But here I am, 2 years on and stronger than ever.

I'd be lying if I said inspiration has been flowing out of me the last 2 years. It hasn't been easy dealing with going through something like that, but it definitely has given me a different outlook on life.

The main thing I try to do now is just pause for a moment every morning and think about everything that I have in my life. My friends, my family, my career. And just savour that wee moment of contentment.



Unfortunately, I didn't write any of the tracks on this EP. I've always been a bit of a studio-phobe and was more comfortable in a live performance setting- thats where i really thrive. But over the years people at my live shows always asked if there is a CD they can buy.

A few months ago a fellow singer, Ryan McNicholl, reached out and asked if id be interested in recording an EP that he would produce under his MAC Media brand. So this EP was a way to kind of break me into a studio setting while also allowing me to pay tribute to some of my favourite songs.

The lead single from the EP 'Summer in Dublin' was written by the incredible Liam Reilly from Bagatelle, a lyrical genius, who sadly passed away at the start of the month. So that song has even more of a special meaning to me now.

I do have a book full of self written lyrics from over the last few years so who knows? Maybe they'll see the light of day sometime in the future.

So, as I said, the EP is my way of paying tribute to some of my favourite songs, and songs that people who come to my live shows always enjoy.

The EP overall is in the Country umbrella, but nowadays there are so many spectrums of Country as a genre. The EP touches on a few of the different sub genres, from classic love song country right through to rock ballad country.

One of my favourite songs on the EP is a duet with my singing partner Chloe Neill called 'Don't you wanna stay'. Its quite a heavy country rock ballad that just showcases Chloe's powerhouse vocals. Chloe also provided backing vocals on the other tracks on the EP.

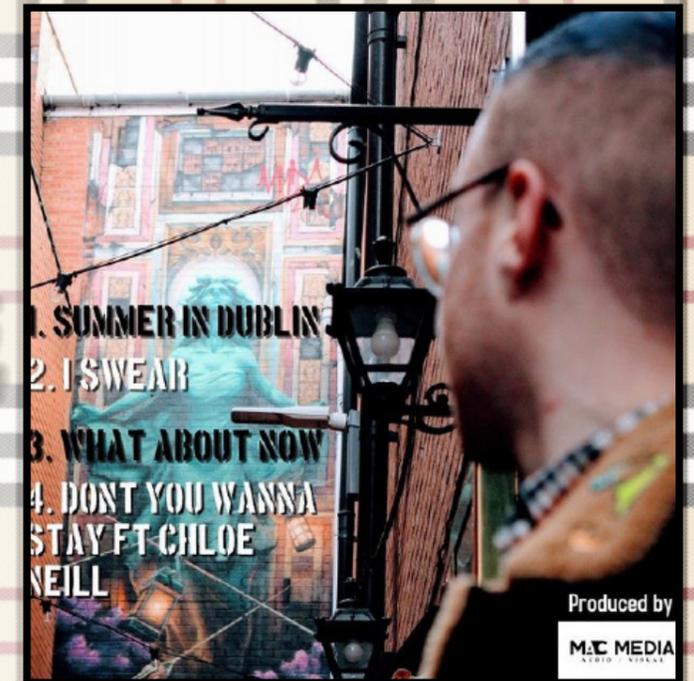
And what is next?

I think, like everyone, i'm just taking life one day at a time at the moment. The uncertainty in the music industry currently is a bit of a punch in the gut for plans i had for this year. But the plan is to hopefully get a full album recorded towards the end of this year and have a proper launch night for it!

I also put on facebook live shows every other week so if youre missing live music make sure you tune into those!

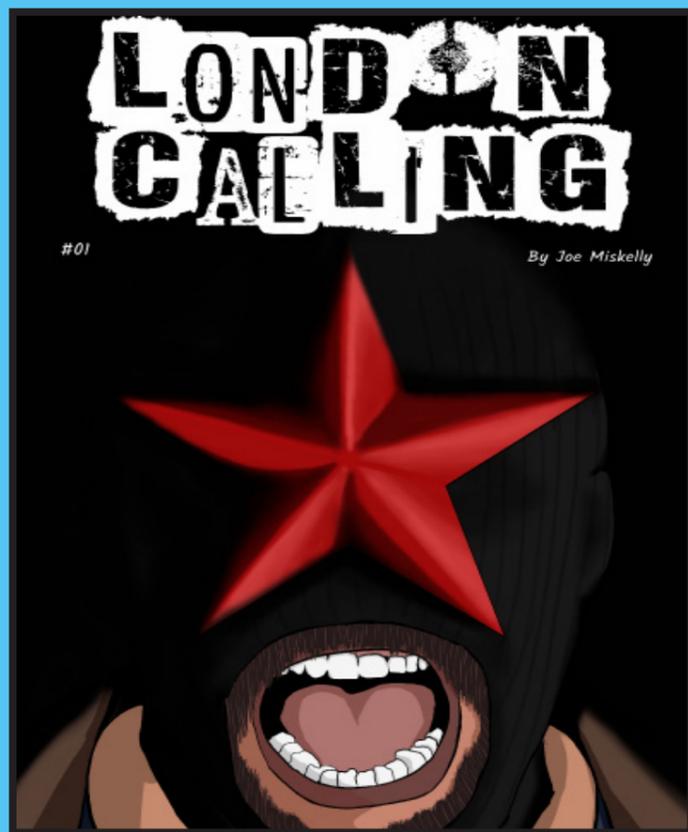
The EP is available to stream on all the major platforms now. You can also buy physical CDs from dalearmstrongmusic.com.

To keep up to date with my music escapades, you can find me on facebook and instagram at 'Dale Armstrong Music'.



LONDON CALLING

An Interview with creator Joe Miskelly



What is London Calling? How did the idea arise? London Calling is a limited series webcomic that launched 31st Jan 2020

I came up with the idea around 5 years ago. I had decided to try and get into Doctor Who, and watch it from start to finish (I did not succeed). One episode I watched was set in London during the blitz and there was a moment where Billie Piper was wearing this union jack t-shirt while hanging from a rope over the Thames. There's this slow-motion birds-eye-view shot of her grabbing at air as she slips and falls, getting smaller in the frame as she reaches the water's surface. There was something about the visual of the union jack moving further away into the blackness of the Thames during an air raid. I found this image to be somewhat profound, although I

expect the shot was more perfunctory in the context of the show (once again, I could not get through the show). It stayed in my mind for a few years and that one image eventually turned into the world and characters of London Calling.

Is there a brief synopsis you could supply? Or is this to be an ever-changing story, ie, no overarching storyline and instead focusing on incidental moments and characters?

In dystopian England, central London has become a slum filled with violence, and music of the disenfranchised. Punk and metalhead gangs have pushed the police out and now run the streets and bars, collecting their protection money and working as hired muscle and killers.

Our story begins when a vigilante called Red Star ambushes Freddy Casbah and members of his gang the Punk Dragnets. His friends are killed but Freddy is rescued by a young woman, Charly Hendricks. Charly decides to help Freddy take down Red Star and his group which the newspapers have dubbed "The Four Horsemen."



Meanwhile, Management has tasked two scouse agents Terry Kingston and Nicholas Washington to head to London from Liverpool and figure out what went down between Red Star and the Punk Dragnets.

What starts as Charly's naive wish to rail against an absentee government and to be part of the punk and gang culture quickly spirals out of control into clashes with rival gangs, terrorists, and shadowy organisations. Filled with brutal violence, Neo Nazis and Vengeful killing sprees, it is only a matter of time before the city is torn apart.

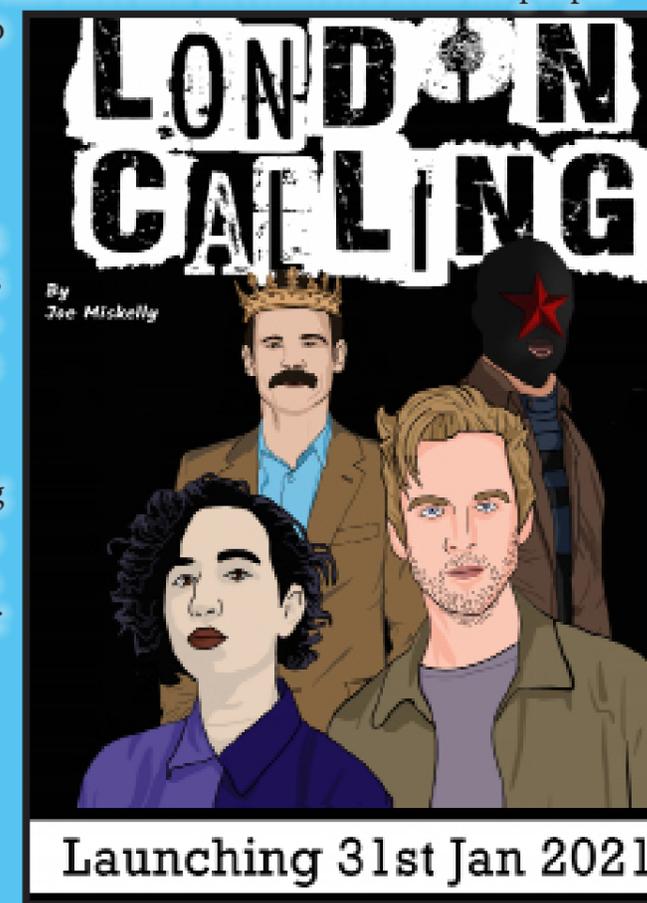


How did your interest in Internet comics begin? How did you start this art form?



My background is in film and I've always felt that the ideas I'm most passionate about aren't doable on indie budgets and time restrictions and I've become quite impatient. Ideas like London Calling were put on the back burner until I felt like I was in a place to do the job exactly how I envisioned it. But then in October 2020, the government put out an ad with a ballerina and text saying, "Fatima's next job could be in cyber. (she just doesn't know it yet)". I was enraged dude. It was so dismissive and disrespectful to so many people in the arts. It revealed once again that the upper class, elitists that form the majority of the government's hegemony are out of touch and all round disconnected from the people they claim to serve. This advertisement told people that their dreams and passions meant nothing. Because

cyber is the most financially viable industry for the UK to embrace so all these independent artists must stop working. 'You, stop doing something you love for meagre financial gain, and get a job in cyber! Shut up! You're wrong, your art is worthless and meaningless get over here, get behind this desk and get a job in cyber, you stupid art nymph!' The ad campaign was quickly disowned by the politicians that headed it up as they pointed fingers at vague government branches and even that was the wrong move, it was so cowardly and even





more evidence that these privately educated cabinet members do not understand life for the average person, and what drives that person to succeed in their life. So it was in this moment the image of the union jack falling into the Thames started playing in my head again, and const-

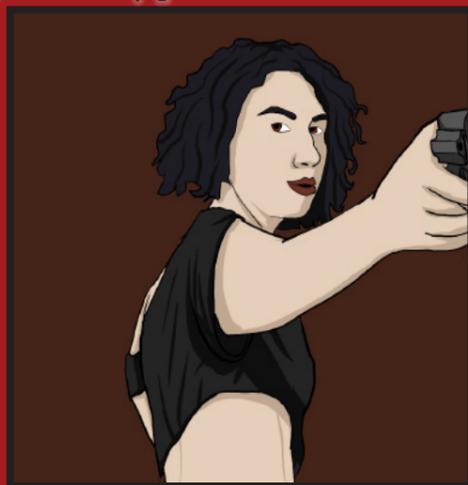
antly. Every time I've seen Rishi Sunak's face or political indecision I've seen it again, the British flag falling and drowning the in dark waters that snake through the capital. In the world of London Calling anti establishment rhetoric and punk culture iconography is rife and I knew it was time to dust off the story and make it my next project. I'm not an artist but I also didn't

want to be constrained and have to rely on someone else to draw and colour everything. So I thought fuck it, I'll do everything. I'm a colour blind dyslexic and I'm writing, drawing and colouring a comic book. I'm someone who knew next to nothing about the comic book industry, but what's more punk than that? From that 80's epoch of punk the saying was if you want to start a band just pick up a guitar and start one, and I feel I'm bringing that ethos over to London Calling. Not really knowing anything has really become free

ing concept for me. Normally I don't show anyone my work until it's absolutely perfect. But London Calling allows me to be brave and bold, make mistakes and apply changes that then become part of the story and part of the landscape in each comic panel, and also contributes to a larger ideology. I'm really proud of this series and I know being able to see the progress in ability and style from the first issue to the last is going to be something I truly cherish. But who knows, it could be a colossal failure and my next job could be in cyber. (I just don't know it yet).



LONDON CALLING



Do you feel this is a medium that has been overlooked in Ireland?

Truthfully, I have no real idea. As I've said previously I had no real prior knowledge of the industry side of things. But also I mentioned having come from a filmmaking background I know a lot of people in that industry are interested in comics. Also with film and TV franchises from Marvel and DC saturating the market audiences are definitely more open to reading comics than ever before. Then we also have one of the greatest comic book writers of all time, the mad lad himself Gareth Ennis hailing from Bangor. And that boy is killing it at the minute with the tv adaptations of his comic



books "The Boys" and "Preacher". Though having said that I don't feel like he is ever mentioned when people on TV talk about renowned people from here and I feel he should. I feel a lot of his work has seeds of ideas that were planted in his mind during his youth here, violence and religion being the main ones. And I've kinda only realised that I'm just rambling about Gareth Ennis now even though my initial answer to the question still stands, "Truthfully, I have no real idea."

Where can we check out the comic? How can we support your process?

I have a website www.londoncallingcomic.com and you can buy the comic there or sign up and support me on patreon at www.patreon.com/joemiskelly and you can also follow me on

instagram at www.instagram.com/joe_miskelly I'll be posting most of the updates there and also have links to the other things.



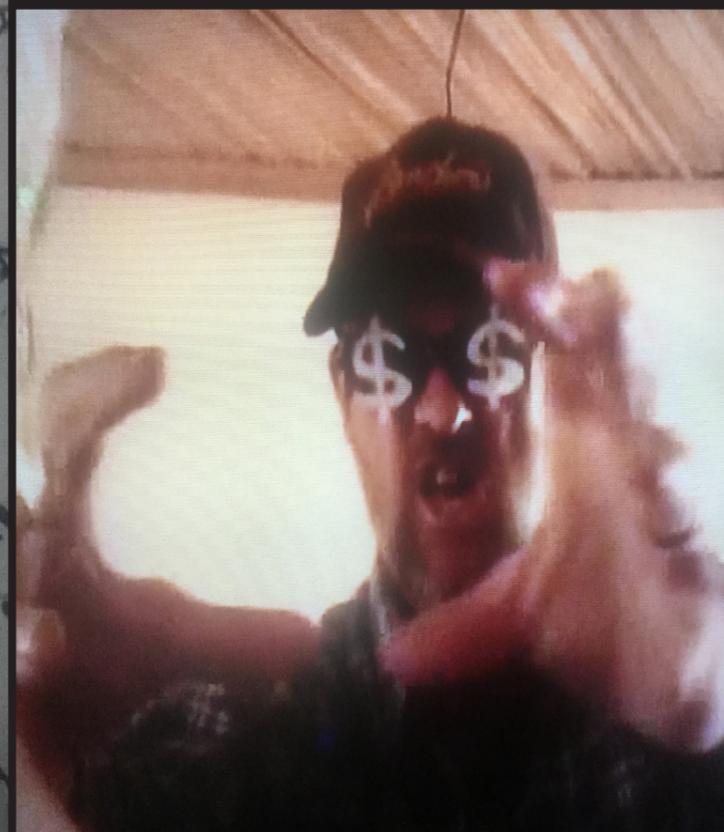
one path to

fire

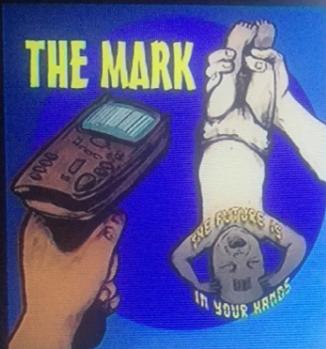


age
of

subliminal *tyranny!*



Help The Movement



• The Mark



The Law

Music Videos



It was a cloudy January afternoon in 2019 when I was approached by the Man from the Movement.

He looked only a couple of years older than me, and, if my memory serves me well, his mid-length hair was tousled and unkempt. His voice was jerky and nervous and the dark bags underneath his eyes brought out an intense Monster Energy gaze.

This being two years ago, I don't remember the specifics of our brief conversation. But, before he continued on down Botanic Avenue, he thrust a disc encased in a small paper cover into my hand.

The artwork on one side of the thin case featured the disconcerting image of a baby being dangled before a barcode scanner. It bore the title, 'The Mark.' The reverse side revealed a split picture of a judge with a hammer and a prisoner clutching at the bars of his cell. Both were enwreathed in a twisting series of chains. 'The Law,' read a small cartoon scroll on the top centre of the illustration. They were a pair of short films.

Having spent an adolescence stewing my brain in all matter of 'cursed movie' Creepypasta stories- and Spidey-Sensing the heavily hexed aura of the DVD- I bravely refused to watch the films and courageously kept a keen eye out for any more prophets with haunted faces to avoid on the streets of Belfast.

That is, until about a week ago- at the time of writing- when curiosity got the better of me and, sliding the DVD into my PS4, I settled in for the ride.

It was fucking weird.

For starters, the disc seemed to give my PS4 indigestion. The newly possessed console chomped and chewed on the DVD, initially refusing to play it and issuing forth all number of churning, groaning sounds. After a period of uncertainty, the tormented machine's gag reflex eventual-

ly calmed and I could, at last, begin my reprogramming.

'The Mark' opens with some foreboding white text.

"We expect more opposition as this message gets out," it says, "and so we ask viewers to make their own copies and distribute them far and wide before the axe falls on us."

So far, pretty spicy stuff, or so you would think.

But the 'message' in question- or at least what I could decipher of it- essentially boiled down to a prolonged 40-minute gurn about a non-existent science-fiction chip-and-pin arm implant for use in buying and selling. This chip, they wager,

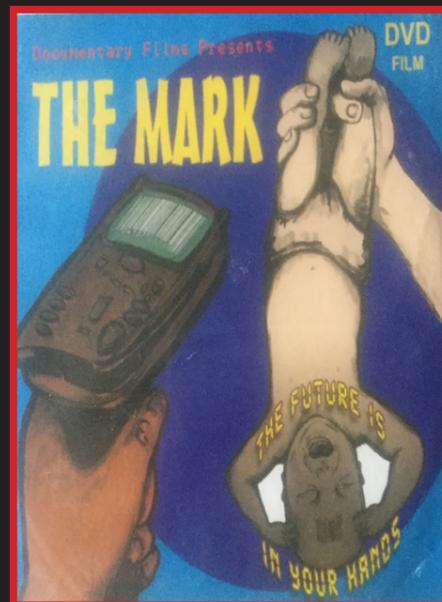
fulfils prophecies in the Book of Revelations pertaining to 'The Mark of the Beast.'

A number of people are interviewed on the street as to whether or not they would accept the chip if it allowed for speedier monetary transactions, and most say yes, they would. It seems pretty harmless and innocuous- a hypothetical exercise in practicality- until a man clearly disguised as a priest and belonging to an unnamed denomination appears and smilingly declares 'I too would take the Mark.'

Now, there are two problems with this. Firstly, it does not take a clergyman to know that priests aren't meant to openly state such things as 'I would take the Mark of the Beast' for much the same reason they don't greet their congregations with a cheery 'Hail Satan'.

Secondly, and more importantly, up until this point in the film NO-ONE has referred to this chip as 'The Mark,' and yet this is framed as the great "A-HA! GOT YOU!" moment that ties the hypothesis together and unravels the conspiracy.

It is almost as if some organisation is trying to force modern correlations with scriptures penned at a time when technology's greatest achievement was the sand-resistant loincloth.



The Movement By Jack Hopkin

Who would do such a thing?

'The Movement,' that's who. But who are they?

A good question, and one I can't fully answer. The greatest insight into the identity of the mystery sect comes at the very end of 'The Mark' film, in a chapter conveniently called 'The Movement.'

In this portion of the film, a group of four people- two women presumably in their mid-thirties, a young Hispanic man who appears to be somewhere in the region of nineteen, and a man who appears to be their leader, who speaks in an Australian accent, wears a black suit and sports a 'Three Musketeers' style goatee (we'll refer to him henceforth as 'Dartanian')- address the camera directly.

"Okay, here goes," Dartanian says, "So we don't normally live in houses like this."

The fanatic foursome elucidates that 'the Movement' is only a couple of dozen strong, that they subsist almost entirely on food and clothing attained from supermarket dumpsters and live and travel in vans fuelled by organic waste. Apparently, they are "preparing for a time when there won't be vehicles at all."

Cue stirring orchestral music as Dartanian explains they're 'training' and preparing for a utopian era in which the concepts of buying and selling are rendered obsolete.

Of course, a world without money means a world without supermarkets, but I'm sure the Movement will cross that bridge when the apocalypse comes around.

"Some of us WILL die in the process."

If we ignore Dartanian's frankly terrifying eagerness to leap off this mortal coil rather than have to use cash- and the fact that the missionary I met had indeed asked me for some of my supposedly useless and sinful money- the Movement ultimately sounds strange, but harmless enough. Right?

I'm sure by this juncture, many of you likely think I've been rather hard on this particular group.

If anything, ideologically, the philosophy is egalitarian and almost sound- their twin ethos of anti-greed and communal living, when stripped of the cringeworthy self-righteous persecution fantasy, seemingly simmers down to a quixotic form of anarcho-communism.

Don't get me wrong, I won't be joining this wacky band of brothers and sisters any time soon, but surely they can't be hurting anyone living in their



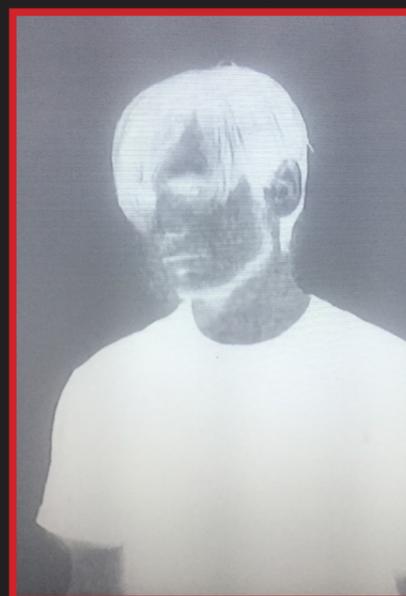
vans and pretending it's the End Times? Maybe this DVD wasn't as cursed as I initially thought?

Then I watched 'The Law,' the second film, which opens charmingly with an extremely graphic montage of real-life execution and torture.

We see death by firing squad, Saddam Hussein plummeting from the gallows, a prisoner with bound hands thrown from a roof and bouncing lifelessly off the concrete below, and tied-up men being flailed with nettles and doused in cold water. All accompanied with a sanctimonious 'What Is Crime?' monologue. What the fuck, Movement?

Not only is the intended message behind 'The Law' even more confused- its quickly descends from a stereotype ridden polemic about prisons and hating the sin and not the sinner into a whip fetishist's wet dream- but its content also comes wrapped in a far more sinister ambience. Where 'The Mark' shared the vibe of a beanie-wearing youth leader desperate to seem cool despite his inherent squareness, 'The Law' encapsulates the disconcerting mindset of babbling zealotry.

In one scene, even good old Fox News- the mouthpiece of the deranged- refers to 'The Movement' as a cult, which must have stung considering how the clip is shoehorned into the film in spite of its irrelevance to the alleged theme of crime and punishment.



There is so much whipping. So much. In one sequence that whiffs more than slightly of staged, Dartanian and a couple of pals decamp to China to take lashes on behalf of members of the persecuted Falun Dafa movement, or something like that- honestly, it is extremely difficult to understand why things happen in these fever dream films.

Getting comfy on massage tables adorned with pillows, the gentlemen are tickled so hard by the whips that their thin T-shirts from Binbag Boutique don't even tear.

"The Chinese government didn't turn up today," Dartanian says, wearing his very best 'turn the other cheek' expression.

Meanwhile, in Kenya, a Movement member named Fran- who looks and sounds a lot like a bootleg Bret from 'Flight of the Conchords'- witnesses police whip a man on the street and thinks to himself, 'Damn, I wish that were me.' That sentiment comprises the majority of the film; smug, self-satisfied people who enjoyed 'Passion of the Christ' slightly too much and for all the wrong reasons, desperate to be seen to say they thirst for the kiss of the whip.



It feels slightly like the martyr cult of Ignatius, the ye olde saint who begged authorities not to pardon him because he obsessed over the wild beasts of his persecutors becoming his tomb.

Except, for some reason, no one is allowed to be whipped on behalf of Kenyan volunteer 'Nicolas.' His crime was heinous- according to the film he needed to be whipped because he.... liked beer and.... sold a dictionary that he had stolen. Lord have mercy.

I can't help but feel if some of my own past actions were upheld to such an unforgiving justice system, I would be consigned to wearing a Jackass-model fart helmet for life- and even Fran wouldn't be able to save me.

Of course, there's the by now standard false platitudes and 'I wanted to get whipped for him so much uwu' sentiment, but they whip Nicolas anyway even though they could have just... not. Every moral quandary in 'The Law' ends up forking at the decision of 'Well, SOME-ONE has to be whipped for this and the Heavenly Father says it's MY TURN.'

In the end, Nicolas is given the option between taking five lashes himself or letting saintly Fran accept them instead.

The dictionary-selling fiend spares our boring hero and prepares to be whipped by his friends, who, as in any abusive relationship worth its salt, reassure him that they are doing it because they love him.

The moral of the story? Extreme Kenyan corporal punishment is good, akshually, because it gives people the opportunity to the ol' switcheroo and boost their Jesus cosplay.

This is emphasised unsubtly by the liberal usage of crucifixion scenes from 'Jesus of Nazerath' and 'Passion of the Christ.'

So, what we have is a small group of outsiders who live on the cusp of mainstream society, harvesting food from bins, preparing for the End of Days and over-analysing the Book of Revelations.

Throw in some undertones of grandiose Messianic delusion and a slightly questionable history of participation in violence against minorities and it's a wee bit Mans... no, that's unfair, it's not THAT Manson-y.

Didn't he and his followers try to spread their warped ideology through catchy songs like 'Cease to Exist,' 'Garbage Dump' and 'I'll Never Say Never to Always?'

Which brings me neatly onto the 'Music Videos' section, a treasure trove for fans of Pop 'N Roll.

These seven videos condense the extremely chaotic vibe of the DVD as a whole, and legend has it that each one harbours one of Satan's own horcruxes.



Dartanian transforms into the beanie-wearing youth mascot for his rap 'Don't Take The Mark'- which heavily resembles the nonce-repellent 'Keep Away' rap from 'Brass Eye'- and is already in his element throwing krunk urban shapes and mugging like fuck by the time he delivers one of the standout moments of the whole DVD, jarringly singing, 'WHAT IS GOING ON?' mid flow in a voice so beefy it made the Bisto Kids float into my room.

Elsewhere, on the saccharine 'Freedom,' the superstar singer-songwriter with the Guy Fawkes beard exalts his bin-hoaking lifestyle with a sickly-sweet song gamely delivered with a shit-eating grin perma-etched onto his face. It's more than slightly uncomfortable when he strips off his Hawaiian shirt and dashes into the ocean- presumably to look for the former Australian prime minister Harold Holt down in Atlantis.

In another noteworthy song performed by a band fronted by lovely Fran- the faux-Kerrang emo rock of 'You Took The Pain'- a floppy-haired young Scuzz enjoyer flails and mopes in a sepia coloured room, probably upset because he made you a cookie and then ate it, before his face quite literally transforms into that of a crown-of-thorns wearing Christ.

But, one of the strangest moments by far comes courtesy of the video for 'Three Women,' a Lou Reed-esque drawl sung by a curly-haired young troubadour about three women who come to a tombstone outside a cave which spookily reads 'Herein Lie The Foolish And The Brave.' At one early point an eagle offers to trade a golden feather- I promise you I'm just as lost as you are- in return for some meat to eat.

The 'Meat' in question flashes joltingly onscreen in the form of the realistic, bloodied, decapitated head of a unicorn.

Musically, however, the star of the show is definitely 'Money Made Man Mad,' a repetitive acoustic earworm that proudly sits atop the brainwasher's hit parade. Performed robotically by a geography teacher with a harrowed thousand-yard stare disguised by kooky dollar sign sunglasses, it even has its own dance routine straight out of the Happy Hands club from 'Napoleon Dynamite!' It's definitely not weird or pseudo-colonial when we get to watch impoverished African children sing and dance to a song about the evils of money! No, sir! Whip me!

Well, we laughed, we cried, we learned, we ate from bins and we whipped each other, but we didn't get any answers as to who 'The Movement' really are.

The credits for the two films simply request you use the contact details printed on the paper sleeve if you want to know more.

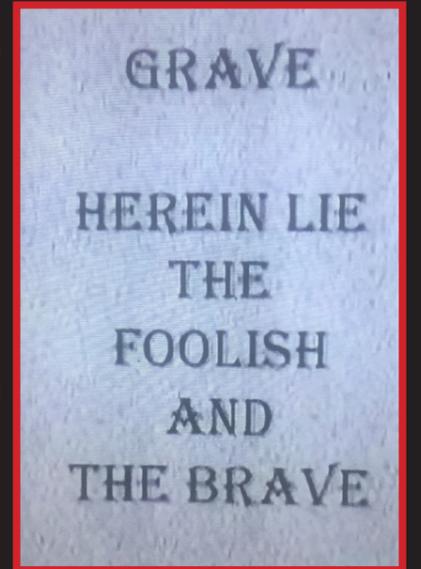
The eerily nondescript contact information in question, for the curious, comes in the form of a single cryptic email address: getaholdofus@hotmail.com.

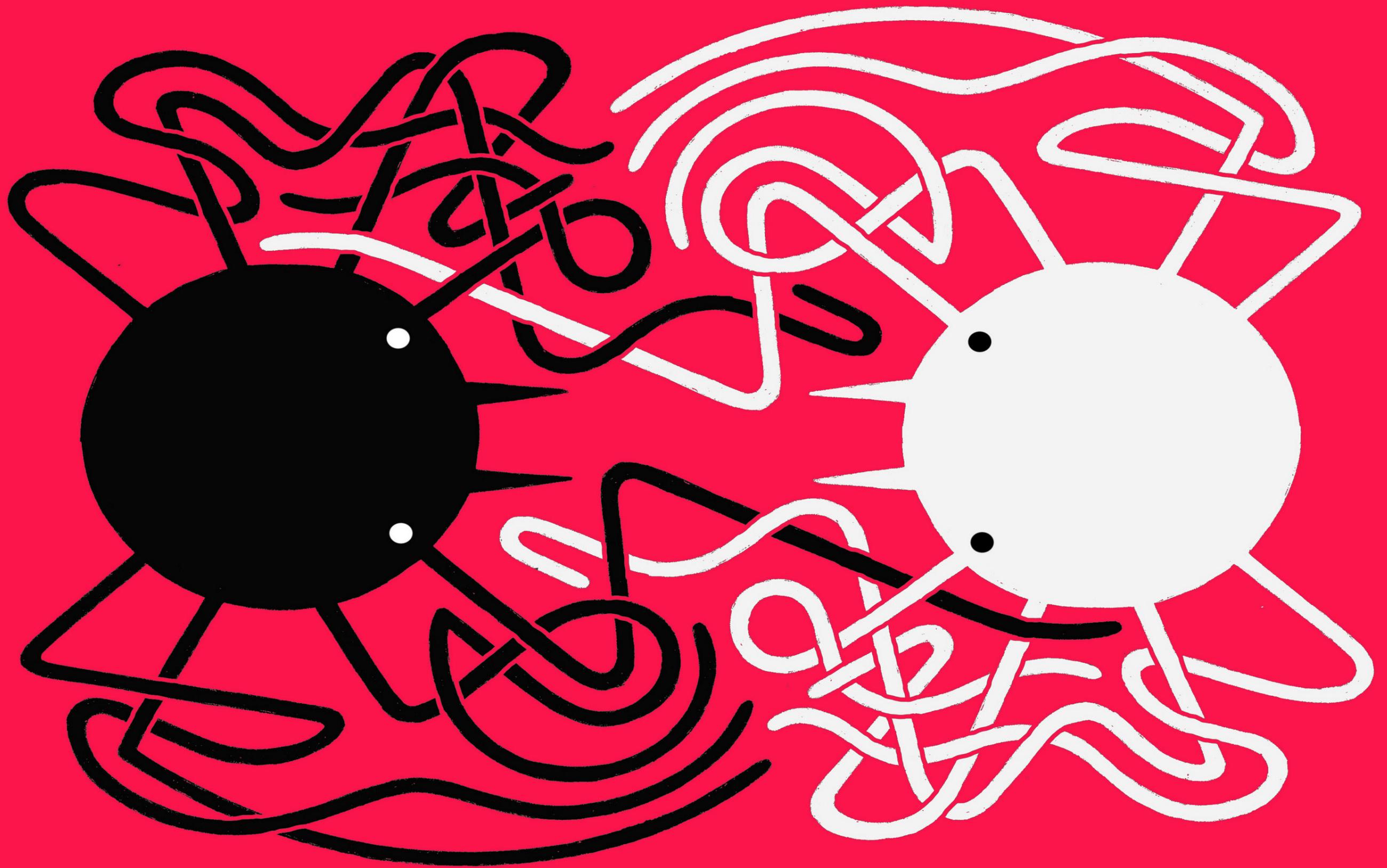
Should you choose to contact them, and I don't advise that you do, please do not harass, bully or threaten them- and, for the love of Zeus, don't tell them I sent you. I'd rather not wake up to a plague of locusts and toads making a mess of my precious wheat. You're braver than I. Godspeed.

As for the films themselves, they are available to watch at www.dailymotion.com/docfilms. I include this link in the event someone believes this bizarre DVD to be a load of fabricated and sensationalised balls, and would like to experience the weird for themselves. Enjoy- and feel free to draw your own conclusions.

In providing such information, I have now fulfilled my role in the Grand Scheme and ensured my place at the head of the table of the Feast of Foul. I have distributed the Message far and wide, and long before the axe has fallen. Valhalla awaits me. Long live the Movement. Sing it with me, one more time-

GOD MADE MAN, MAN
MADE MUNNY
MUNNY
MADE
MAN
MAD.





ILLUSTRIOUS ILLUSTRATION

A conversation with Louis Nelson



Have you always done graphic design and art? What was it that sparked your interest in it?

I have been drawing as long as I can remember, I really have been doing all sorts of art since I was no age. I used to watch Art Attack everyday afterschool, draw and write comics in primary school with friends, and have just carried it on to today.

I don't really know what 'sparked' me into drawing, none of my family members are professional artists, so it's not like I was constantly surrounded by it.

I think just from a young age I loved watching all sorts of cartoons, the little made-up worlds, so I got a real kick (and still do) in creating my own worlds and characters. In the past couple of years however, I've been doing more commission work for local musicians, like album artworks, which has been a real big drive and directed me more specifically into illustration lately.

How do you find the difference in creativity from being in a band making music and making your art pieces?

That's an interesting question. A lot of music inspires me to create art, but art doesn't really inspire me to create music. I think because being in a band you are always sharing ideas, making sure the other guys are on board with your idea before you move forward, whereas art for me is a very personal thing, I don't need to check if a certain idea for an illustration suits them, the only opinion that really matters is my own. When it is only yourself judging though, it can be a real pain in the ass, the level of self-doubt is insane sometimes. Some ideas just don't work no matter how many times you try, and you've only got yourself to blame! But on the other hand, when an idea works, it feels really good.

Do you want to convey a different message with your designs than with music or is there any overlap there?

There are different messages, but some overlap. When I'm designing artwork for a musical piece, I want that artwork to express what I felt from the music, I literally would ask myself, 'if this music was a piece of artwork, what would it look like?', and sometimes I just want to create an image that will just come across as funny, or evoke a specific emotion. I don't really mind if people don't get what I'm trying to get across in my art, because that's the joy of it all, hearing someone else's take on what you created, that's the coolest thing.

How long does it take for you to make a piece from start to finish and what's your process?

This is very varied. Some pieces I can sit from the afternoon right through into the next morning, still scanning things through and making edits on photoshop, and I don't mind that, I think I've produced my best work during those really long sessions. On the other hand, I can think an idea is going to look really cool, until I actually try to execute it, and then it all messes up, and then I make a million more mistakes. Days and weeks can go by before I eventually get somewhere. Lately I've been trying to minimise those terrible scenarios by sketching a wee bit every day, not really caring what I put down, I always sketch on little scrap bits of paper which really help me get into a flow of drawing.

What would you like to achieve with this part of your creative side?

Well, I'm currently studying Graphic Design and Illustration at the Ulster University, so I would like to firstly gain a whole lot more experience within the world of art. I'd like to use different techniques and become a whole lot better at the graphic side of things. Then maybe someday become a full-time illustrator, creating art for all sorts, album covers, magazines, beer cans, menus, if I'm able to create my own images, and work for dead-on people, then I'm really up for anything at this point.

How can people support your art venture?

I've recently started selling my own prints online, and that's the main way I've been able to get some income as a freelance illustrator, and I also take on commissions. Just hit me up for buying a print or a commission on Instagram @illoustration__, or my email: mrlouisnelson@gmail.com.

THE CRAIC WITH G A C K

Yes, we all know 2020 was a write off - but, as Mulan's da beautifully expressed, "the flower that blooms in adversity is the most beautiful of all". We're not sure if he was interested in hip hop happenings, but to us? G A C K's confident stride into the NI Music scene was a very beautiful bud to behold opening up.

So mon. Let's take a tour of G A C K with the multi talented label head, Jay Suttin,



G A C K is a new label with a heartfelt mission. Jay explains that the group began with "the simple aim of helping new and talented artists get their music out, and to support those already making top quality hip hop on the island of Ireland".

"We have been operating for around 6 months and already have a good smattering of content on our YouTube channel (with stacks more ready and waiting) and a small, but steadily increasing, following."

The collective aims to reject the widespread caricature of hip hop artists and instead boasts a more positive message.

"We may be currently a hip hop only label, but rest assured, we are less about bitches, gun crime and gang signs and more about good craic, word play and head nods," Jay says.

*This
dumb
blonde
ain't nobody's
fool*
- Dolly Parton

@curiouscalligraphy



The ranks of G A C K consist of Jay Suttin - a rapper, producer, videographer and, of course, the head honcho of the collective. There's also the Belfast boys in Waking Android, consisting of David Gilmore and Kane Couchman, and "Bangor based, Filipino born, female emcee" Don Chi. Next up, the Derry two piece Craicpipe, who Jay describes as "young, not so dumb, but definitely full of something". Last, but by no means least, comes the recently announced Donegal pair Shane Deane & Amanda Healy.

It's a label by name but a collective is a better fit."

The team is vibrant, talented, and immensely passionate - and undoubtedly ticketed for success. Their tenacity and work ethic is easy to spot with the onslaught of virtual goodies being churned out.

As a label, they have already released 4 EPs which are all available on Digital music stores and online streaming platforms.



But just how did the team behind G A C K each meet? And when did the decision to form a label swing around?

"Actually, pretty proud to say I met every one of them at a gig or a party. I first met Shane Deane many moons ago when he booked me and Danny Droppit to play in Mason's in Derry. Shortly after that, Danny, Corey (didyeaye drugba) and I held the first GYRO event in Portrush and gave a first opportunity for a lot of the talented hip hop artists in this part of the country to play live and meet each other and I met both the Waking Android lads from that."

"We've all remained good friends and hip hop cohorts ever since and once I had decided to push on with forming the label and recruited the 'new blood' in Don Chi and Craicpipe, it was a no-brain-er to invite them on board."



"It's an idea I've had for a while, I wanted to build a sense of community and a support network for a group of artists, putting all our content out through one channel to help build a bigger audience for example is something we can all reap the benefit of, plus when it comes to battling algorithms and pushing music many hands make light(er) work.



Each of the members of the collective have at least one video to showcase just what they're about - and these videos are of an amazing quality.

In order to cultivate a vibrant online force, did Jay have to develop new skills in order to further the label?

"Yeah definitely, I wear the videographer label a little abashed and prefer the title 'man with a camera and a can do attitude,'" Jay explains.

"For a lot of years, I was solely a lyricist and only recently started producing my own music. Then followed making videos and other little necessities that come along with putting music out in this brand new world."

"It's been a nice gradual progression of adding spokes to my wheel and has been particularly well timed, what with so much enforced isolation as I can still be productive without having to depend on anyone else. I think the accumulation of these skills was a big part of the reason for forming the label, once I found myself self sufficient the next logical step was to see who else I could help get on."





What is the best thing about the hip hop scene in Ireland? Are there any negatives which G A C K aims to challenge?

“There certainly are negatives, it can be a very ego driven and narcissistic adventure being a hip hop artist, too many monkeys do what monkeys see and I personally think a lot of artists take themselves way too seriously trying to be something they’re not and it does a disservice to their potential creativity.”

“At G A C K it’s less about being ‘on trend’ and more about being dead on.”

“On the positive end, the best thing for me is its accessibility and potential. There are a lot of great and weird people making hip hop in Ireland right now and while there will always be that strange allure of copycatting UK and US culture I’m hearing more and more hip hop music coming out of this island that is distinctly Irish. We have different stories to tell and a hundred different accents and dialects to tell them in and I look forward to the future of Irish hip hop being more influenced by our own culture.

It’d also be nice to see that reflected in the attitudes of the gen pop of Ireland too, a little more respect for their modern poets would do the scene no harm at all.”

Are there any announcements for the coming year that could be shared with STRANGER DAIS?

“I’ll be releasing my new album ‘Yodecahedron’ on CD very soon with a full digital release to follow,” Jay says.



“We have just finished recording a couple of Don Chi guest verses and Shane Deane has his ‘Brewed in the hills part 2’ ep almost ready. Aside from that, I am currently in the process of designing some G A C K merch and then videos, L O T S of videos.”

“Oh, and not an announcement as such, more of a threat/promise. When they finally let us put a gig on it W I L L be the messiest, sweatiest, most take your trousers off and throw them at your friends-iest night of Irish hip hop the occupied six has ever seen.”

Understandably, we are very excited about G A C K from the sidelines - - - but for artists, this opens a very exciting opportunity. How can interested artists get involved with the label?

“We ask not what you can do for us but what we can do for you? If you can slice mustard and your head’s not full of marmalade we can help. If you need beats for your bars, bars for your beats, vocals recorded, mixing and mastering services, videos shot and or edited or just advice and guidance please get in touch with us via our zuckerberg accounts or drop us a line at its.gack.music@gmail.com.”

And finally, the question on everyone’s lips.

What IS the craic with G A C K?

“If you mean what is up with the S U P E R C O O L way in which we use capital letters and spaces in our writings in a sometimes annoying and pedantic way?

Well, because it keeps us D O W N W I T D A K I D Z of course, but probably not really.”

“I feel that when I’m asking for a bit of interaction online or I guess when communicating at any time i like to keep my instructions clear and concise, so with that being said...

LIKE -
FOLLOW -
SHARE -
GACK & STRANGER DAIS



A UN T I E VA L E N T I N E

DEAR AUNTIE VAL,

I have always woken up before my wife, and a few months ago I got up and made her a cup of tea. Now she expects this as a matter of course, taking it for granted that i will bring her a cup in bed.

A non

AND YOUR
POINT IS??

DEAR AUNTIE VAL

Will playing with my breasts make them bigger?
My boyfriend insists it will?

A non

YES THERE IS TRUTH IN THIS!
(But make sure he asks permission.)



DEAR AUNTIE VAL,

I really like this girl at work but I'm not sure how to tell her. She always seems interested when we talk, but I've heard she has a boyfriend. Should i send her a picture of my penis?

A non

DO NOT SEND A PENICKS
PIC WITHOUT CONSENT!

(Find out if she would like to see
it first.)

DEAR AUNTIE VAL

Twice I've walked in on my husband masturbating in the bathroom. What should i do?

A non

KNOCK!

DJing and Delectables - Getting To Know Julie Adams

For anyone who hasn't met you yet, could you introduce yourself?

Hey! I'm Julie or DJ Time of the Month. (I'll try my hardest not to make this sound like a job interview). I'm 27 years old and I've been living in Belfast for the last 9 years. I moved to Belfast back in 2012 for university and just never went home again. I think when you're growing up in a small town in Ireland, you move to the city and find places and people to nourish your strangeness. Once that process has begun, it can be difficult to ever go back.

How did you get your name, DJ Time of the Month?

It started as something of a joke. Me and my partner would play this game where we'd try to think of the most mundane or bizarre names. DJ Tupperware, DJ Pound Shop Pads, DJ Tesco Bag for Life. I came up with DJ Time of the Month. We both laughed. Afterwards, I thought, no wait, that's what I'm going to call myself! It definitely makes some people uncomfortable when they ask you what your DJ name is, but in a way, I like that. There's still a lot of stigma around periods, we grew up in an era where you weren't encouraged to acknowledge or talk about them, so discourse is good. I've been plagued with really severe periods since I was a teenager, so it's helped to remove some of the negative feelings around it. There's an acceptance. I'm a woman, I bleed, I play music. It's healthy to not take myself too seriously.



How would you describe your style, for anyone who hasn't heard you DJ?

Eclectic would definitely come to mind. I tend to play music that is very energetic and rhythm-heavy, stuff that you can dance to all night. I'm not very good at sticking to genres or rules; the type of set I play just depends on the night and the crowd. It could be lots of disco and funk, it could be heavier, more acid and techno. It's always a bit of a lucky dip. I'll be mixing Donna Summer into Daniel Avery and hoping for the best, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But experimenting is half the fun. It's like those witches potions you made in the bath when you were a child, you'd pick up what looks interesting and just throw it all together to see what turns out. My main goal is that the crowd enjoy themselves and people feel uninhibited.



How did you come into the music scene?

I started going to clubs when I was 16 (shout out to The Coach in Banbridge), and I found the music the most intoxicating part of the whole experience. When I moved to Belfast, there was a thriving underground scene of live music and electronic gigs. It sounds so cliché, but honestly, some of those first nights in The Menagerie, The Bunatee and Gigantic at Laverys (all RIP) were like discovering a missing piece. I've felt really weird and like I don't quite fit for most of my life, but I finally felt at home. As time went on I made new friends, discovered new

genres and found that my appetite for music just grew and grew. I joined Queens Radio back in 2013 and started my own weekly electronic radio show called Resonance, which was

kind of a precursor to DJing in a way. It's funny because I grew up in a family of women who loved country and western music. I can't say that it's what I listen to now, but all the leg slapping definitely gave you an early lesson in how to count along to a beat, which in its most stripped back form is a lot of what DJing is about. For how small Belfast is, there is a crazy amount of seriously talented musicians, promoters and artists out there. Nights like Twitch and PonyHawke (and the old Drone Mansion parties) have been integral to nurturing my passion for music and raving; they create spheres where people can just be themselves. It was Marion Hawkes (of PonyHawke) and Claire Hall's (Venus Dupree) open deck session in The Oh Yeah Centre that gave me my first access to a pair of CDJs and the encouragement to actually think 'yes, I can do this'.



As a woman in the club scene, has there been any tribulations? Do you feel that female DJs are given the same opportunities in NI?

The short answer is yes, there are tribulations. Any woman can tell you that. What's good is there's less tolerance of it now. People no longer feel as much trepidation about calling shitty behaviour out. In regards to the second question, gender disparity happens, especially with women in technology.



There are just more barriers to entry, unfortunately. It's something I've talked (and ranted) about a lot in the past, and I'm trying to move away from it now. It's important of course, but I want to be considered a DJ first, my gender secondary. If men aren't asked about what it's like to be a male DJ, then we probably shouldn't ask women that much about it either.



As well as your music career, you've developed a separate blog/profile dedicated to plant-based, gluten-free culinary. How did this begin for you?

I've always been a big lover of food. Cooking, baking, eating - I can't get enough. There's something strange but wonderful about putting all this effort into making beautiful things that only last for a few minutes, there's something quite ephemeral about food.



In regards to the plant-based stuff, I've been dealing with a bone-disease called Freiburgs since I was about sixteen. Over the past few years, it had worsened and I had surgery. I also started to develop arthritis and struggle with joint pain in other parts of my body. Chronic pain was impacting my life really badly, I'd lie awake in agony at night. None of the regular treatments seemed to be doing a whole lot; physio, painkillers, anti-inflammatories, steroid injections into my joints (they are as bad as they sound). I started doing some of my own research into ways of managing the pain, and a wholefood diet cropped up a few times. I thought why not, it's worth a try.

Gradually, I started to phase different things out of my diet to see if it had any effect. I found that switching to a less refined, more plant-based diet gave me relief, and improved other areas of my health - migraines and period pains particularly. It's not a miracle cure, and I still have bad days, but it does help to manage the symptoms and give you back a little control. I found that some of the plant-based recipes out there were quite inaccessible, so I started The Plant Girl blog as a way to document the recipes I had tried and tested; the ones that were both good for you, easy to make and didn't taste like



absolute shit. I'm not trying to convert anyone or force them into an ideology; I just want to share the food that I love to make, and that makes me feel good. If you can make other people feel good, that's all you ask for. The same applies to playing music.

Do you have any advice for anyone interested in becoming veggie?

Firstly, I'd say take it slow. Go gradual. There's often a pressure for us to 'overhaul' our diets or make a drastic change, but eating is a habit, and habits take time and effort to establish. If you're too hard on yourself or set yourself very strict goals or rules, you're only going to set yourself up for failure and feel miserable.

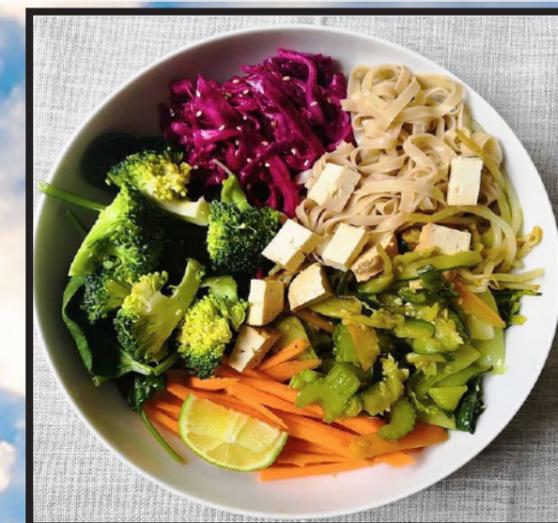
Eating should be joyful, don't beat yourself up over the odd slip or bit of meat. Everything in moderation - including moderation. At the start I was very strict with myself, guilted myself for having some chocolate or a regular pizza. It's not a kind or helpful way to speak to yourself. I think there's a real binary mindset with a lot of the vegan/veggie influencers we're exposed to online - of course, it would be amazing for the environment to have every one eating a 100% plant-based diet, but the reality is that isn't going to happen. It's better to have more people eat veggie or plant-based part of the time than none of the time.

Secondly, I would say ask for recommendations. When it comes to meat and dairy replacements and veggie recipes, it can be so hit and miss. A bad experience of a product or food type can make you write it off completely - I know a lot of people hate tofu, mainly because they said they've never had good tofu. Ask your veggie friends what brands they use, they'll be able to tell you what to avoid. I think you also need to experiment with your cooking, it'll take a little time, but you'll learn how to substitute things like cream and butter, and discover what herbs and spices to use to dial up the flavour when you're not using meat (you can never have enough paprika in my books).

A few good cookbooks make all the difference too. The Happy Pear cookbooks, Leon and Jamie Oliver's Veg are really approachable if you want to try cooking some tasty, easy veggie meals.

@_djtimeofthemoth

@theplantgirl



EMBER TRAILS BACK BLAZING

with new single 'Neon Jungle'

After a lengthy hiatus, Ember Trails are set to fan the flames of their prior success into an even greater inferno. Their come back single, 'Neon Jungle', is an all too welcome return to form from the boys - and will inevitably leave its mark on listeners.

Initially formed in 2016 as an instrumental band, Ember Trails have established themselves as exceptionally refined musicians with a loyal fan base to boot. After bringing vocalist Simon Storey into the mix, the band went from strength to strength.

From then on, Ember Trails consisted of Simon as the lead singer and rhythm guitarist, Thomas Ferris playing lead guitar, Jonny Kerr slapping the bass, and Chris Allen on drums. Paving a name for themselves through big choruses and intricate melody, the group garnered much attention - even opening for Olly Murs in 2018.

However, the group took a 2 year hiatus.

Like a Phoenix from the ashes, Neon Jungle has emerged in 2021 to lead the boys back into the scene once more. And it is triumphant.

With vocals akin to Alexisonfire's Dallas Green and beautifully intricate guitars, Neon Jungle is a welcome edition to the band's discography.

Having three guitarists, it can be difficult to achieve a delicate touch, yet Ember Trails have managed to meander a fragility to their tone before coming to a hard chorus. Chris' drums are excellently crisp and hard hitting. The introduction of a glockenspiel within the mix adds a juxtaposing, twinkling softness amidst the rockier elements. A blistering guitar solo towards the end of Neon Jungles begs the question: how could they have stayed away for so long, yet retained so much freshness?

Simon Storey gave STRANGER DAIS and insight into Neon Jungle's conception.

"I wanted the song to be a more classic 'pop' song than our previous singles off of our last album, Electric Shadows. At the time, I was heavily influenced by retro-wave themes, and more specifically the aesthetic.

I had visualised this idea of a city skyline but with purple and pink colours scattered throughout it, similar to what you might see in Blade Runner. The lyrics more or less just describe the every day going-ons of the city and a desire to explore myself which rings particularly true in these times considering we can't go anywhere!"

It just goes to show how bright embers can shine when given enough air!



SHINE PRESENTS

DAVE ELLIOTT PILLOWTALK

"WHY NOT?!"

An Interview with Dave Elliott

Stranger Dais had the pleasure of talking to comedian Dave Elliott about his upcoming Ulster Hall show, how he balances a busy lifestyle and we uncover his obsession with a famous rapper...

What sparked your interest in standup? Who are you inspired by?

I just wasn't good at anything else really... Apart from wrestling, but I am too fat for that, so stand up it was. I'm inspired overall by 50 Cent but my favourite comedians are Ricky Gervais, Katt Williams, Jerry Seinfeld, Bill Burr and Dave Chappelle.

You're a recent father of two (congratulations), you work full time, do standup and run a successful podcast, where do you find the time to write material and balance everything? What's your process for writing?

Thank you... I am just used to it now really. Thankfully I like to keep busy and the girls make sure I always am whether I want to be or not. So it's just about making time really, which means sleeping for 2 hours a night and bringing a pen and paper to the toilet with me...

You recently announced your biggest show to date in the Ulster Hall, how did this come about and how is the show shaping up?

It was booked on a bit of a whim! I was discussing possible venues with the promoters and when Ulster Hall came up I just thought "why not?!"



'FANTASTIC'
JOHN BISHOP

'A BIG DRAW'
DAILY MIRROR

FRI 17TH DECEMBER 2021
ULSTER HALL BELFAST

DOORS 7PM TICKETS FROM ULSTER HALL, WATERFRONT HALL BOX OFFICE & WWW.ULSTERHALL.CO.UK



If 50 Cent can play there so can I. I have the guts of the show figured out now I just need to be allowed to gig again to see if what I think is funny really is!

How do you get in the mindset to perform? Do you get nervous and if so how do you combat them?

I don't really get nervous, I just get really grumpy... Which can only be cured by a pre gig Nandos.

How has your podcast helped during the pandemic when live standup hasn't been able to proceed? Has it given you a positive creative outlet during this time?

It's been great outlet for me, I accepted that I wasn't likely to be gigging for a while so I put my energy into trying to grow the podcast and writing up projects that had maybe taken a back seat.

"I would like to be well known enough that I can meet 50 Cent."



What's been your favourite gig that you've ever done and what made it stand out for you?

My DAD show at the Limelight. It was the last show of my first ever tour, in a sold-out room and I remembered all my cues! That and I got a great pizza in the green room...

What would you like to achieve with comedy in the future?

I would like to make a good living making comedy that people love and that I can be proud of. Failing that I would like to be well known enough that I can meet 50 Cent.

How do you like to unwind after a long day? What other hobbies and interests do you have?

I am a boring old guy now, the only hobby I really have is playing the Chase on my phone, listening to 50 Cent and reporting neighbours who break covid rules to the PSNI.

Do you have any romantic plans for Valentine's Day?

No... Two kids are enough....

Tickets for Daves Ulster Hall Show 'Pillowtalk' can be purchased via ticketmaster

Follow him on social media:

Instagram - @daveelliottcomedy

Twitter - @TheDaveElliott



A Review With A View- **HEART SHAPED 'SECOND HAND'**

With commentary from Kendall Bousquet.

Welcome to Heart Shaped: the power-pop project of the Belfast-based, Houston born songwriter, Kendall Bousquet.

Blending guitars fuzzy enough to run your fingers through with lyrics that tug heartily on the heartstrings is no easy feat, but Heart Shaped has more than delivered with Second Hand - a confident stride of a debut EP that's already sent ripples throughout the local music scene.

Released digitally on the 4th of December (and with cassettes available, too!), 'Second Hand' is a must have for your music collection.

"Musically, I was really inspired by artists like Go Sailor, Marine Girls, Teenage Fanclub, and Big Star," Kendall explains.

"When I was writing this EP I kept thinking about the relationship our feelings have with reality. Especially feelings that are based on projection - like crushes, or on memories - like heartbreak, or on absence - like grief. Obviously reality is subjective and in the end it all comes out in the wash but I think when you're really IN those feelings you're kind of always grasping for proof of substance."

"The more honest I am with myself about my songwriting, I also think that writing about romantic heartbreak is kind of a small-scale, microcosmically palatable way of thinking and writing about capital-Q Grief."

Amazingly, Kendall discloses online that the EP was created amidst the 8 months of learning to play guitar and self record!

"The recording process was definitely a learning experience for me because I had never recorded by myself before. I bought a digital interface at the start of lockdown and just recorded straight from that onto Garageband, so it was about as DIY and low budget a set-up as it comes. I recorded the demo vocals through my phone headphones because I didn't have a real mic to record with."



Produced and mixed by the ever talented Shannon O'Neill of Sister Ghost, 'Second Hand' is an incredibly accomplished edition to pop.

"Most of the vocals were recorded in her attic. 'Handsome', the first Heart Shaped single that came out before the tape and then made it on, was recorded entirely in Shannon's kitchen."

So, how can I describe Second Hand? This EP left me feeling as if I had been transported to a fifties style dance hall, filled with cigarette smoke. The punky yet poppy sound of Heart Shaped is distinctive and beautifully unique. Whilst delivering a dreamy vocal performance, Kendall divulges the cutting reality of many a modern day love - thus striking a perfect dichotomy.

Although titled Second Hand, this EP is a breath of fresh air. Filled to the brim with earnest story telling, beautiful melodies and an excellent beat behind the songs, the end result is a tapestry to the not so pretty side to romance, threaded ever so lovingly.

The EP begins with 'Sometimes', which opens with a grim realisation. The start of the song is, quite literally, the "Beginning of the end". Guitars guide you down a path of unrequited love that feels like a Valentines anthem from the offset. It makes me think of Princess Chelsea's 'I Love My Boyfriend', with an added edge.

'Handsome' and 'Dizzy' are feathers in Heart Shaped's cap, and highlight both Kendall and Shannon's ability to make DIY music sound radio ready. A highlight is "In My Dreams", which houses lyrics that feel like they jumped out of a poetry book. The EP is dripping with the kind of love you are never warned about. A love that's full of questions, empathy, paranoia, rejection. An open ended feeling that we can only hope to call love. Titular track, "Second Hand", enraptures the listener and cements the EP as a must have for music fans.



Kendall is hoping to take Heart Shaped to the people as soon as possible.

"I really hope to play gigs with a full Heart Shaped band, whenever that's possible. Trying to put that aspiration out into the universe."

Be sure to show Heart Shaped some love this Valentine's Day. You won't regret it.

PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT



GET TO KNOW... SHERBA

We at STRANGER DAIS are always on the hunt for fresh new acts, and we are very excited to introduce to you Sherba - an artist from down South that's on the up and up! With big plans, and even bigger tunes, Sherba is sure to have you hooked.



Who is Sherba? How would you define your sound? Who influences you?

Sherba is a solo musical effort of a 21 year old songwriter from Dublin. I was writing songs around 2019 before I decided to release my music at the beginning of 2020 and it hasn't stopped since! The main reason for writing my own songs was because I wanted to mash the sounds of lyrical genius and the upbeat nature of Oasis and Noel Gallagher with the melancholic sarcasm of Mac Demarco, two of my biggest influences as a musician. I want to say that my sound can be defined as songwriting boldness being held inside an intimate bedroom in the North side of Dublin, as wanky as it sounds I do believe I have achieved my sound

When did your love for music begin?

I've always had a very musical family with both sides of my family being able to play at least one musical instrument but I've always heard music in the house either it being the skipping of CD's or the scratchiness of a cassette tape of all kinds of music from Elvis to dance beats of the 90's courtesy of my ma. Even though I was around music since my childhood nothing really clicked with wanting to be a musician until I hit my teens and everything was just absorbed. My first musical obsession was Bob Marley, all of his soft reggae tones just made me feel alive when listening to music instead of auto pilot. At age 16 I got my first guitar off my grandad, a blue 90's Fender Telecaster and that's when I started learning guitar on an electric not even plugged in but I knew it was what I wanted to be and I fell in love with music in a different way all over again.

Do your songs hold a continuous message, or do they each hold special meaning in themselves to you?

The way I write my music is sort of odd in comparison to most people. All of the songs I have written were almost spontaneous, I never tried to bog myself down in all the intricacies of



what this word would match with what I just wrote down whatever felt right and it was only when I showed them to friends that they would pick apart the song and make sense of it all you know, it's mad how the subconscious works when you don't pay that much attention to yourself. I mean, most of them share the same emotions, feelings of loneliness and uncertainty are definitely buzz words when describing my songs but they're all different to me in some shape or form. Some might have the same chords as other songs but they all mean something slightly different and they're all very important even the crap ones! I have thought about that maybe a couple could be apart of a story but I don't know, I'm not ready for my experimental storyline within music phase yet so right now they're all contained.

Your recent single, 'To Be Alone', is absolutely brilliant. What inspired that song?

I wrote 'To Be Alone' during lockdown this year as I did with most of my other material and I think it shares a lot of similarities with lockdown itself. Not just the fact that 'alone' is in the title, which is somewhat ham-fisted, but it's all about wondering when all of the bad shit that happens will stop or if it will ever stop. It's inspired by being involved in everything good and bad about life and just getting overwhelmed and at the end of the day you give a sigh of relief like 'it's finally over time to relax and not worry about tomorrow'. I also wanted to write a song in the style of The Cranberries, I was listening to them a lot around the time and I was fascinated by how they made such beautiful music with simple open chords and the beautiful of Dolores O'Riordan, and I tried my best to emulate them as a way to give a homage to their excellent sound

What are your plans for the coming year?

If I was to get my way my plans for this year would be to get in some studio time that isn't my bedroom and perform my music live and see how it fits in with the scene itself, but since it looks like this year isn't going to be as normal as we wished I just have to sit tight like everyone else until all this blows over and then get back to normal. My plans for this exact moment however revolve around recording a single every month and releasing it that month, releasing 12 songs for 2021 on Spotify and Soundcloud, your readers might even be able to see the first 2 if everything goes to plan.

How should interested parties support you, or check out your music?

If you listen to my music and if it doesn't make you want to cry out of hatred then please listen to my Spotify and Soundcloud (the latter is barren but that'll change soon), follow my instagram @sherba-music and shoot me a line! I would love to talk to people about anything and everything either it be my music or their own I'd be more than happy!

NOBODY WANTS DEAD LOVE

SACHA.

My feelings render me foreign

Nobody wants dead love

Nobody wants dead love

If I fall in love with you, I'm sorry

Nobody wants dead love

Nobody wants dead love

Escapism is ineffective

Six Feet Under binges, forcing feeling

As Morrissey whinges of soil falling over his head

And I don't think about her anymore

Sounds good on paper but she's settled down in my subconscious

She's in every stranger

Nobody wants dead love

Nobody wants dead love

Nobody wants dead love

Nobody wants dead love

A currency once so strong

(What does one do with dead love?)

These bags weigh over a ton

(Set them aside and move on)

Only one way to be wrong

(Only one way to be wrong)

To suffer, to remain in the darkness

To suffer, to remain in the darkness

(And I thought I was a mess before)

(I thought I was depressed before)

(Thought I knew anxiety)

(Now what? Now what? Now what?)

(I thought I was depressed before)

(I thought I was a mess before)

(Thought I knew the bittersweet)

(Now what? Now what? Now what?)

My love is a burden

My love, is it broken?

My love is a burden

My love, is it broken?

My love is a burden

My love, is it broken?

My love is a burden

My love...



LYRICAL DEEP DIVE

by SACHA.

Most of 'Nobody Wants Dead Love' was written back in 2016 as a purge of emotions following the dissolution of a long-term relationship. Its lyrics describe an unsettling train of thought: Could my approach to love be fundamentally flawed?

The song isn't about missing someone or lamenting the end of a relationship; it's set at least one stage of grief later. I remember wanting to move on, but feeling encumbered by the additional weight of new baggage. I had started to use dating apps for the first time, although with hindsight I clearly wasn't ready. I concluded that doing so required a kind of suppression, as everyone has baggage of their own and no one wants to be reminded of it. Hence the title.

Escapism is ineffective

Six Feet Under binges, forcing feeling

As Morrissey whinges of soil falling over his head

I remember binging Six Feet Under at the time, which is a great show but it's all about death. This might not have been the healthiest coping mechanism. The line about Morrissey is a reference to the song 'I Know it's Over' from The Queen is Dead by The Smiths, which I remember playing on repeat. Even at the time the predictable, stereotypical nature of this was a source of dark humour to me: I had never liked The Smiths until that break-up, then suddenly I couldn't stop listening. Empathising with Morrissey was as low a point in my life as you might expect.

Only one way to be wrong

To suffer, to remain in the darkness

During my university days I was really into existentialist philosophy, particularly the works of Albert Camus. One of the many excerpts that resonated with me was: To suffer is the only way to be wrong. I can't seem to find the source now, but it may have been from The Myth of Sisyphus. I think about it often, even though I'm still unsure whether I agree. I think his point was that we should distinguish between hardship and suffering, as suffering is the psychological damage we do to ourselves as a result of hardship. It may not apply in every case, but it's a thought-provoking concept. For the true fans: this is the second reference to Camus' work in a Sacha song. 'Deperson' references his much more familiar advice to 'embrace the absurd', the tagline of his absurdist ideology, with the line: I embraced the absurd but its indifference remains towards me.

My love is a burden

My love, is it broken?

When I read these lines, I want to give past Adam a hug. To question one's own love, whether it is pure and good or instead somehow tainted, is to question one's ability to emit positivity: to question whether you are the type of person worth spending time with or merely a drain of other people's emotions, energy and time. Big sad.

Musically, I am proud of the chord progression in the final movement of the song. Its fluctuation between the use of D minor and D major strengthens the story of emotional instability told by the lyrics. The first use of D major happens at 3:31, halfway through the sustained 'darkness' harmony at the end of the chorus, foreshadowing the turbulence yet to come. The 'My love is a burden' sections even feature rather dissonant chords despite being in a major key, with the vocal melody emphasising the spicy flat 5 note of the chord. To me, these sections represent the kind of manic energy emitted by someone trying too hard to appear happy or thriving after a break-up. I might release a video explaining this concept in more detail, so keep an eye on my social media. (IG: @adamsachaweston) x

YEAR SPACESHIP ART COLLECTIVE

Since it's Valentines Day, I thought it would be best to set a mood. I'm going to start off by dimming the lights, firing up some scented candles (mmm strawberry), slipping into my silkiest underwear (they make me feel good about myself) and consuming an entire share bag of Flaming Hot Cheetos in this dimly lit ambiance while reciting one of my favourite passages by the Poet 'Haddaway', in a piece from a simple time also known as 1993. Come with me as we transport ourselves into the world of one of the most important wordsmiths of a generation.....

“WHAT IS LOVE?
OH BABY, DON'T HURT ME
DON'T HURT ME
NO MORE
OH BABY, DON'T HURT ME, DON'T HURT ME
NO MORE
WHAT IS LOVE?
YEAH”

Hello friends, I'm Mike Ledgerwood representing and occasionally embarrassing our small team at the Year Spaceship Artist Collective. This is my first time writing

for the amazing humans over at Stranger Dais and it is so cool to finally be here (looks around with glowing admiration as if this magazine was a tangible entity that I was standing inside). Now that I have permanently damaged most of the Stranger Dais readers by painting an all too vivid word picture of me screaming a 90's dance song at them in my underwear like a raving lunatic, it's time to brush off the Cheeto dust and put my pants....um no....trousers? back on (Sorry I grew up in Toronto, Canada and therefore struggle with Briticisms. Pants aren't underwear and I'll fight anyone who tries



to tell me different.) I digress...I am now fully clothed and ready to tell you about Year Spaceship, our Podcast Sick Set Bro and maybe talk about love some more because we're full of it here at Year Spaceship.

Year Spaceship is an artist collective with a love for music and the arts. "What in the hell is an Artist Collective!?" I hear you cry, well essentially it's a cool sounding buzzword for people who really don't know what the hell they are doing. On our best

days we are trying to be an open resource for artists North and

South to share not only their projects but their stories and experiences with an audience outside of their current circles of reach. We all strive to avoid the long fall into the dreaded echo chamber which is a fear every artist has. We hope to provide artists with an engaged audience of potential new supporters to promote their latest project to. You make the art and we'll put it in front of their eyes and ears.

We are a small team of working musicians alongside some very cool and supportive friends with a belief that we are stronger together as an artistic community and that collaboration is the key to squeezing the rest of the world's collective butt cheek this Valentine's Day, giving

it a cheeky little wink and whispering "Hey world, look at how cool our art scene is" *kissy face*. Potential harassment lawsuits from planet Earth aside, we are here shouting loud for anyone trying to get their voice heard within the community and we are always striving to be as approachable (albeit digitally in these current times) as possible.

So, what is it we ACTUALLY do to try and promote and support the arts in our area? Well...anything we can really. As a collective we are constantly pooling resources and talents of anyone who has floated into the orbit of the Spaceship. Since inception, we have shot music videos for bands, penned



reviews, filmed album breakdowns, designed logos and album art, photographed PR photos and live gigs, produced music and the list goes on. What we do exactly has always been a bit of a grey area. People ask for help and where we can find the time to do so, we help. As much as any average Joe with a full time job and too many bills can help of course. Remember earlier when I said we were full of love at Year Spaceship? Well it wasn't just a bad joke. We wholeheartedly love our music and arts scene that we have been a part of for so many years and we feel many in it are slipping through the cracks trying to get their voices heard. We want to be a positive force in changing that (be the change you want to see and all that jazz).

In the past year or so we've really started to nail down what we're doing well and although we still endeavour to provide the periphery skills mentioned above (when we can to those who ask) our main focus right now is growth for the purpose of allowing artists to put their projects in front of more eyes and ears as quickly as possible without them having to chase leads endlessly which takes them away from the process of creating. That's where we feel we can do the most good for artists, freeing them up to focus on making cool shit. We have a steadily growing audience on both our Instagram and YouTube pages where we would love to showcase all the new music, art, poetry, short films and whatever else you've got going on. You make the cool art and we will try our damndest to get people to experience it. Our weekly Music and Entertainment Podcast hosted by Don Maple, Andrew Fernandes and myself is called "Sick Set Bro" and it has

found a loving home in the music community over the last 2 years. We thank all of our regular listeners for tuning in to our long form chat show which mixes worldwide news with independent news from our arts scene. We regularly have special guest episodes with members of the artistic community sometimes co-hosting, sometimes in a more traditional interview style format and we literally just talk at length about the cool stuff people are doing



in our part of the world. What I love about Sick Set Bro is that it has become a real hub of discussion, more so than we ever could have hoped for. A place to share ideas about PR, production and mixing, song writing, equipment whatever people are itching to talk about. A place to share experiences good and bad about everyone's individual journeys within the art community, a place to listen and be heard. Back before lockdown we were filming episodes straight out of my living room and it was amazing to have all these cool bands and artists jump on the sofa for a chat. We've had the pleasure of chatting with Brand New Friend, Ethan Hanna, Ferals, Sarah McCreedy, Reasy Arjarro, SACHA, Romeo Indigo Romeo and too many more to mention. For the time being, we're trying to keep up the guest slots remotely via Skype because they are such a cool part of doing the show!

With the collective being made up of working musicians, we also regularly

release music via our own label Year Spaceship Records which isn't so much a record label in the traditional sense, but again something made possible by the collaborative nature of the collective. Through the label we've managed to put out some very cool records including Hit The B Button's single 'So Bad It's Good' featuring Dick Valentine of Detroit rockers Electric Six, the debut Cosmic Crows record, the collaborative music producer duo SLAW, The Inner Circle by SACHA and our Halloween Mixtape Vol 1. In the past few





months Don Maple has dropped his highly praised Sad Boi EP and made his way onto the NI Music Prize longlist. On the horizon we have an upcoming release from yours truly, trying to stay somewhat lo-key in 2021 under the pseudonym 'hungry ghost' and of course the release I'm most excited about this year, the follow up to Don Maple's Sad boi, the

much hyped Good Boi EP coming first half of 2021. As with everything we do, our record label is open for all to use. We don't have contracts and we're not looking to take a cut out of your hard work and creativity. If we can help bring eyes and ears to your music, if it legitimises your music to say you're releasing on a label in today's fickle world then we are happy to give you a home for as long or as short as you want. As long as you've done your homework and your shit fits with ours we'll get your music up on our website and socials, get your videos onto our YouTube and Spotify playlists, link back to your Bandcamp or platforms of choice so you alone get the sales and generally try and help you get heard.

Year Spaceship and the Sick Set Bro Podcast are a constantly evolving and growing endeavour. We are always working hard to shape this into something good and virtuous, a useful tool for the whole of the

arts community. We want to have conversations with you all, we want you on our podcast and we want people to experience all that you are creating. We love all those who create and we know that it can sometimes be a lonely and strenuous task to get your finished creations into the eyes and ears of an

ever more disengaged and content bombarded public. We constantly find ourselves trying to think outside the box of ways to remedy that, we are open for collaboration, discussion and the exchanging of ideas.

To answer that most difficult of questions posed by the poet Haddaway at the top of these mad ramblings "What is

love?". Well, to me and the rest of the team at Year Spaceship, we feel that pure, unrequited, dedicated and underappreciated love is the type of love that only an independent artist understands. They have to have that kind of love and passion for their craft or else how could they keep going when faced with so many roadblocks? On behalf of all those creatives having to deal with cliques, nepotism, rejection, echo chambers, juggling 100 different roles to promote themselves, social networks, underpayment, ad platforms, streaming platforms and the billions of other negative points that come attached to something as positive as creativity; we cry out into the dark night.....

"Baby, don't hurt me, don't hurt me
No more"
- Haddaway (1993)



To connect with Year Spaceship you can tag @year_spaceship on Instagram and get your new projects / news featured on the feed. DM any of our socials if you would like to make an appearance on the pod and subscribe on YouTube for all additional content or if you would like your music videos featured on the channel. If you think we could collaborate in any other way just ask!



"ONLY WHAT YOU THINK I AM:"

An Interview with
Sonja Kristina



Foreword by Jack Hopkin



Few performers can claim to have enjoyed a career quite so eclectic as Sonja Kristina's. From beatnik folk singer to electronic experimentalist, from delicate wide-eyed flower child to sultry cosmic vixen, and all the way from West End stage to the Top of the Pops studio, Sonja has been and done it all over the course of her almost sixty years in the limelight. The granddaughter of renowned Swedish actress Gerda Lundequist, Sonja (born Sonia Christina Shaw) debuted as live performer at Romford's Swan Folk Club, aged only 13, amidst the burgeoning folk boom of the early 1960s. Before long, Sonja had accrued such a reputation within the scene that television appearances beckoned in the form of several appearances on the British children's programme 'Song and Story.'

By early 1968- whilst still undergoing studies at the New College of Speech and Drama- she was both playing at and helping run Wednesday evening sessions at London's renowned Troubadour Folk Club, at the time hosting such acclaimed genre names as Sandy Denny, Davey Graham and Bert Jansch. Later that year, Sonja was to play a major part in theatre history when she joined the original London cast of the seminal, zeitgeist-encapsulating 'Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical.' The musical, which spawned such anthemic hit songs as 'Aquarius', 'Good Morning Starshine' and 'Easy to be Hard,' broke new ground with its mixed-race cast, its prescient commentary on the upheaval of the late 1960s, its candid depictions of the liberated sexual ethos of the era, and its insistence on audience participation during the climactic 'Be-In' scene.

When 'Hair' opened at Shaftesbury Theatre on September 27th, 1968- after the Theatres Act of 1968 successfully lifted prohibitions on profanity and nudity- a 19-year-old Sonja assumed the role of a young, soft-spoken, headband-wearing hippie nymph named 'Crissy', alongside a troupe- or 'tribe'- that included Marsha Hunt, Peter Straker and Tim Curry.

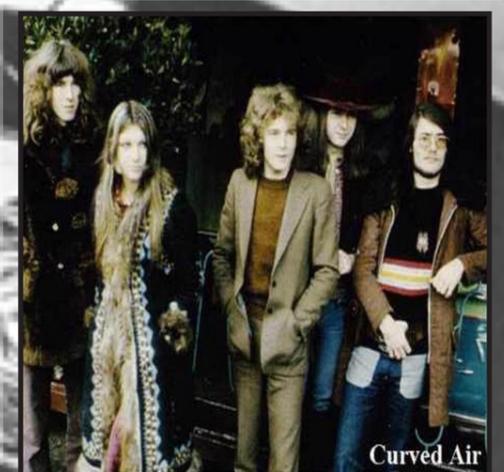
Sonja's solo song in the production, 'Frank Mills'-a yearning ballad in which Crissy pines over a George Harrison-resembling Hell's Angel in a white crash helmet who once borrowed two dollars from her- was hailed by critics as one of the stand-out performances in the show. Her crystalline rendition featured not only on the best-selling original cast recording album of 'Hair', but was also released as a stand-alone single.

Amidst a whirlwind of sell-out appearances on the West End- and also on the club and festival circuit- Sonja found herself rubbing shoulders with 1960s rock royalty like Jimi Hendrix, the Who and Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones. When future Fairport Convention singer Sandy Denny left folk ensemble the Strawbs, Sonja stepped in on a temporary basis to bolster the band's depleted ranks- but, at the turn of the decade, she would find herself at the helm of an altogether different band.

A group named Sisyphus had been employed by 'Hair' writer Galt McDermott to provide the soundtrack to his new play, 'Who the Murderer Was.' Mark Hanau, an aspiring band-manager, saw the show and, whilst impressed by the virtuosity of the band, believed there to be something missing from their sound and image- a female presence. Sonja Kristina, whom he had seen portraying Crissy in 'Hair', was his candidate, and on January 1st, 1970, she received an official invitation to join the band. 'Curved Air' was born. Curved Air holds a hallowed place in the annals of progressive rock history, not only for the sheer force of intuition and pioneering spirit of their music (which blended folk, electronic and classical music with post-psychedelic rock sensibilities) but also as one of the few female-fronted bands within what was a very male-dominated genre. Sharing bills with the likes of Black Sabbath, Genesis, Steppenwolf, B.B King and Slade, the band was simultaneously utterly singular and in-tune with the spirit of counterculture-era creative freedom.

A powerful, ethereal force of nature on-stage, Sonja received Sounds Magazine's Top Female Vocalist award in 1971- the year of her first marriage, to Malcolm Ross, and the very same year Curved Air's slinking single 'Back Street Luv' struck gold and landed at number 4 on the U.K singles charts.

When the first lineup of Curved Air disintegrated in 1973,



Sonja took up work as a card-counting croupier bunny at London's Playboy Club. Her brief tenure working at the club was influential upon her stage persona, and by the time a new iteration of Curved Air returned to the live circuit, gone were her early trademark hippie flares and blouses, discarded in favour of a sensuous, exotic and celebratory new plumage of feathers and sheer lace. Another hiatus for the band in the late 1970s saw Sonja make a theatrical comeback, landing roles in 'The French Have A Song For It' alongside Helen Shapiro, a leading part in a production of 'Romeo and Juliet', a return to 'Hair', and an appearance in the 1978 T.V musical 'Curriculee, Curricula.' A solo album, backed by hard-rocking backing band 'Escape', followed in 1980, before, two years later, Sonja married former Curved Air member -and current drummer for the Police- Stewart Copeland.



The couple split in 1991, the same year Sonja released the acclaimed album 'Songs from the Acid Folk' together with her new combo, 'TY-LOR and Friends.' The L.P- born of immersion in the New Acoustic Folk Movement at the Troubadour from 1987 onwards- marked the beginning of an ongoing creative renaissance for Sonja, who has continued to perform and record up to the present day, with her later body of work ranging from the highly experimental ambient MASK project to Curved Air reunion concerts and albums. All the while, Sonja's influence in musicality and stagecraft is apparent within the oeuvres of the many female artists who followed -not least of all Kate Bush- hence her recipiency of the 'Guiding Light Award' at 2014's Progressive Music Awards.

We here at STRANGER DAIS were delighted to speak with Sonja Kristina, counterculture icon, female rock pioneer, and a living legend of stage, screen and music, for an exclusive conversation about her influences, her illustrious past, and about some of her exciting upcoming projects...

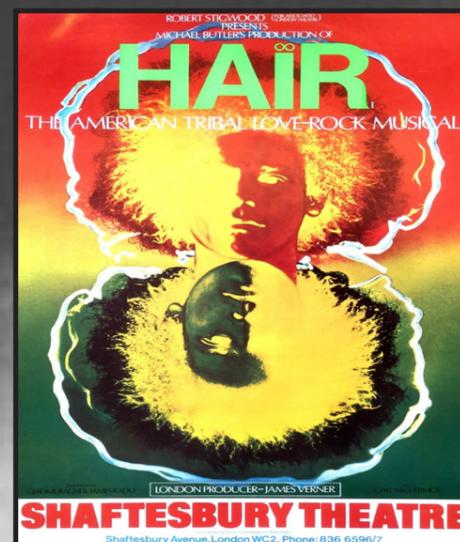
Growing up, did you always aspire to be a performer? Who were your primary musical influences?

Yes, I loved poetry speaking, theatre and Swedish folk tunes, and followed the pop music programmes on T.V. I loved Dusty Springfield from when I first heard 'Island of Dreams' by the Springfields. She said she loved living out of a suitcase, and I could imagine myself living being a performer on the road. Dusty sang soulfully- she was more than a pop singer. When I was 12, Buffy Sainte-Marie became my next main influence. She wrote passionate songs and played acoustic guitar and sang with a strong vibrato. An exotic and eloquent activist. She was an inspiration. I learned guitar and taught myself American folk songs, and borrowed L.Ps from the local library. I listened to many albums from the new stars of the New York Coffee House folk scene, and I learned songs by Buffy, Tom Paxton, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Bert Jansch, and, later, the Incredible String Band and Sandy Denny. I read Jack Kerouac and the Beat Poets and listened to Piaf and Billie Holiday and Jacques Brel.

So, at the age of 13, I headed out to play in folk clubs in this buzzy, beatnik, pre-hippie world. By 16 I was a committed hippie musician singer with representation by the top agency and management company, Folk Directions.

How did you go about securing the role of 'Crissy' in 'Hair', and what would you consider to be your defining memory of performing in the iconic production?

I was in my manager's office after dropping out of college. He said that there was an ad in the paper that I should respond to. It read, 'Hippies wanted- must be good movers- equity members only.' There were eight recalls to gather the 'Tribe.' On the last one, I



brought a friend and his keyboard and grooved to and sang 'Can I Get A Witness'- a Dusty Springfield track- and Donovan's 'The Trip.' Once the cast was assembled, we didn't work on the script until not long before we opened. We started with relaxation, communication and inhibition-releasing sessions, along with learning the group songs. One day, I was asked to prepare the song 'Frank Mills' and a couple of days later was given the part of Crissy. Every show was a defining moment, attended by gentry and celebrities who came onstage and danced after the show. The controversy it provoked! The audience came onstage after 'Let The Sunshine In'- the end of the show. Our brief nude scene was after the Be-In at the end of the first half of the show. Some Sundays, the cast made guest appearances at events and festivals. Playing the show in Amsterdam. A Royal Variety Show performance where I sang my solo heavily pregnant.

What was it like to be part of John Peel's Christmas 'Carol Concert' (alongside Marc Bolan, the Faces, half of Soft Machine, etc) in December 1970?

John Peel had been very supportive of Curved Air throughout our first year. By December, we had been earning press accolades and had recorded our first album. This concert was a moment of personal recognition, singing with legends of contemporary music. Rod Stewart's singing on 'Away in a Manger' was stunningly beautiful. I shall never forget it.

Were you and your Curved Air bandmates (then comprising Darryl Way, Francis Monkman, Ian Eyre, and Florian Pilkington-Miksa) at all surprised when 'Back Street Luv' became such a hit, considering the 'underground' credentials of the band?

Somehow, I knew it would do well. It sounded great on the radio- and the band had a large following by this time.

How did you deal with attaining 'sex symbol' status in the early 1970s? Do you feel this status distracted from the music at all?

It felt wonderful to be loved by all these young men. I adored performing to them, I immersed myself in the drama and story of each song and gently shared truth and loving contact. In the early 1970s I do not feel I was being overtly sexual, but as time went on, I adopted a 'space gypsy' persona which allowed me to explore bohemian nightclub passionate exotic performances. All shades of female humanity.

With progressive rock in the 1970s being such a predominantly male-dominated genre, did you notice any challenges unique to being a female frontperson at the time?

No. I fell into the role of spokesperson for the band, I lived with the other band members, we were family, and I was totally at ease both on and off stage. I felt very proud to be a powerful female leading a male group. I loved our touring life, conquering city after city.

What was the most enjoyable Curved Air album to work on, and which, to you, fully encapsulates the band's vision? Conversely, which album was the most challenging?

The first album, 'Air Conditioning' (1970) captured the band perfectly. We had performed the material to appreciative audiences many





times, so each song had been honed and each member was confident and fully expressive. 'Midnight Wire' (1975), conversely, was a nightmare! It was myself and violinist Daryyl Way with a young Stewart Copeland and Phil Kohn- a bass player who had joined the original lineup in late '74 for a spectacular reunion tour. On guitar we now had a brilliant blues player, Mick Jacques. The band was excellent, so we wrote some lively and quirky material together with lyrics by a poet friend of mine, Norma Tager. We recorded. There was a guest appearance by José Feliciano, who had passed by the studio. We were very happy with the new album.

Then the record company Decca turned it down. They wanted

a more 'commercial' sound, so brought in American brother producers who had us rearrange the songs, and made Norma rewrite some of the lyrics.

These producers made the band very unhappy by cramping their style and individuality. A miserable experience- although I was not personally bullied because they didn't change my approach to the material.

Who has been your favourite artist to collaborate/tour with, and why?

This is hard to reply to. There has only been one long-term collaborator, the ambient composer and cellist Marvin Ayres. I heard his music online- as part of an installation in an art gallery in Wales- and invited him to add some beauty and colour to some tracks I was recording.

From 1998 to 2008 we collaborated on material for two more albums under the name 'MASK', 'Heavy Petal' (2005) and 'Technopia' (2009). So he introduced me to the arena of ambient music, and also to Arvo Pärt and Cesária Évora, minimalist classical (Berg and Satie) and 1980s pop music- we were both long-term and ardent fans of David Bowie, Brian Eno, Lou Reed et al.

What do you think young people today- particularly artists, musicians and other creatives- could learn from the youth movements of the 1960s-70s? Do you have any particular tips on catalysts for inspiration?

Each generation brings its own counterculture, which is the expression of the experience of coming of age in the culture of an era. Stylistically, norms change or become absorbed. It is a totally organic symbiotic process.

'Scenes' evolve where like-minded souls inspire one another. The internet is like a city where there are many hives of creativity.

So, see where your intuition leads you, and learn from and adapt from what you identify with and what appeals to you on a deep level.

Do you have any future projects lined up that you'd like to tell us about?

Curved Air are working remotely together to create a new album to follow on from 'North Star' (2014). Concerts are planned for when lockdown ends.

I am also Zoom-rehearsing with an acting group. We plan to perform 'Six Characters in Search of an Author' in April.

Recently, I was invited to join Arthur Brown with an all-stars group to make a charity video performance of the Free song 'All Right Now,' in support of Help Musicians UK. It has turned out very well and will be available on YouTube shortly. There is a growing list of tracks I have guested on over lockdown.

My personal Facebook page is where I announce upcoming releases and share positive views for the future. I have a couple of channels on Spotify, and Curved Air has a website and a Spotify page.



Official Sonja Kristina Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/6vl7a7WifJu5SzSlhD4TYK>.

Official Curved Air Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/3UtSTTCQ0EMUQxmsfZ3Px1>.

Official Curved Air website: www.curvedair.com.

Sonja's recent collaboration with Arthur Brown and friends- the 'Crazy World of Lockdown' can be watched at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsctFWm2knA&ab_channel=PaulMitchell

Donations to Help Musicians UK can be made at:

www.helpmusicians.org.uk/support-our-work/make-a-donation?cp=IG-COVID-WISHYOUWELL#:~:text=Make%20a%20donation%20Phase%20one%20of%20Help%20Musicians,musicians%20are%20facing%20by%20offeri-ng%20one-off%20£500%20grants



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