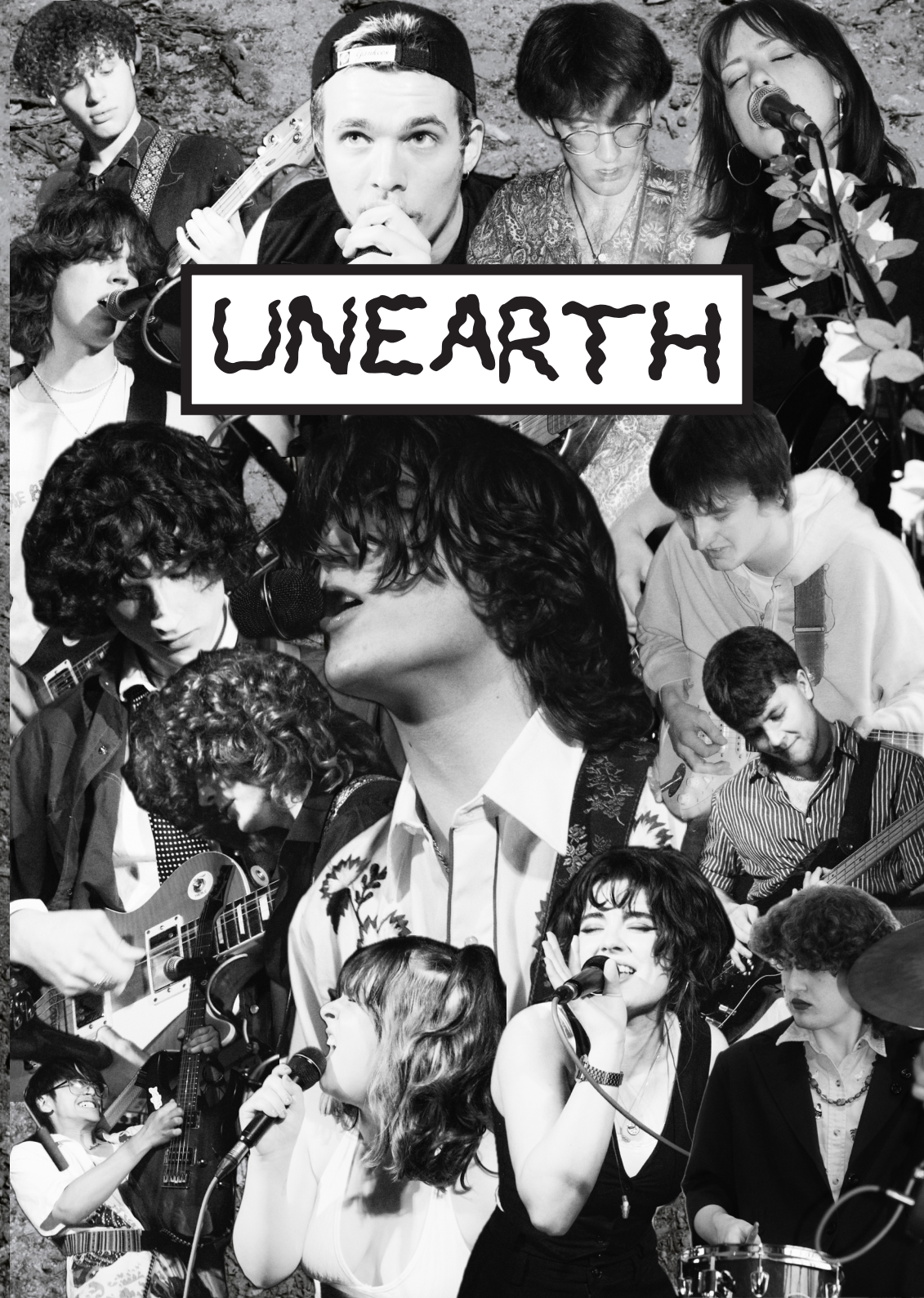


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LINEARTH



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Before I even knew or understood the music scene in Exeter, I knew that I wanted to create some form of magazine to draw it out of the cracks. I knew a local music community had to exist, but it wasn't immediately visible to me, so I wanted to unearth it not just for myself but for people like me who come from music communities which feel more connected and integrated into the community at large.

Before coming to Exeter for my MA in Publishing in September of last year, I spent most of the previous five years in Isla Vista, California, home to my alma mater, the University of California Santa Barbara. UCSB is known for being a party school – thus, IV is a party town – and live music is a main feature of that party culture. Nearby festivals such as Shabang SLO, UCSB's own annual festival Extravaganza, and alumni like Steve Aoki and Jack Johnson have solidified IV as an epicentre of music. Exeter, on the other hand – despite being where Thom Yorke of Radiohead studied English and Fine Art – is not known from the outside as a city of music. However, even though there are differences in visibility, every town contains music, whether it is a single pulsating vein or the entire vascular system; the music scene in Exeter seems to lie somewhere in between.

The problem is, there are barriers to entry: First, much of the music community is made up of student bands who sprouted from campus music societies, so non-students and even non-society members have less access to and less awareness of these bands (this past year, I had the privilege of being both a student and a member of the Campus Bands society, factors which ultimately allowed me to execute this zine). Second, there is poor advertisement – student bands aren't actively gatekeeping the music community, it's just that no one is stepping up to the task of giving these bands coverage within the wider community. This is where I come in, albeit in a small way.

Regarding my limited means, I want to make it very clear that this is not a magazine. Such a title carries with it



the traditions and conventions of a business trying to make money. I am no business. I'm just a girl. This publication is personal to me – I am the sole journalist, editor, and designer. I do not want to make money from this – I want to introduce community members to each other. There is value in that. Considering my non-commercial, do-it-yourself approach, this publication most closely resembles a zine, and I am honoured to join the ranks of zine creators.

As V. Vale wrote in *Zines! Vol. 1* (1996), zines “are a grassroots reaction to a crisis in the media landscape,” and the crisis I am reacting to is the alleged death of music journalism due to commercialization and due to the rise of music streaming services, which is why I discuss these topics with those I interview. I hope *UNEARTH* shows you that music journalism is not dead – as long as it grows from the grassroots. Picked flowers die faster; to restore the garden's beauty, let us plant some more.

– Lana Danzeisen

# INTERVIEWS

# ANDY DOERSCHUK

Interview with former music magazine publishing industry professional.

In the early stages of developing the framework of my master's dissertation, and thus this zine, I would frequently rant to my dad over the phone. "It would be great if I could talk to someone who worked for a music magazine," I would say to him, wanting first-hand insight into the industry. "Say no more," he figuratively replied – my dad, a long-time professional drummer, happened to know Andy Doerschuk, the co-founder of *DRUM! Magazine*, and put me into contact with him.

Andy launched Enter Music Publishing, the parent company of *DRUM! Magazine*, with his business partner Phil Hood after they were both laid off from Miller Freeman Publications, where they worked on a bimonthly called *Drums & Drumming*; Miller Freeman was owned by the British publisher United Newspapers. According to Andy, even though *Drums & Drumming* always met its financial projections and was on course to begin turning a profit, when the recession of the early 90s began to shake up the worldwide economy, United Newspapers sent out a notice to its subsidiaries that it was going to shut down all titles that weren't yet profitable. Thus, Andy and Phil received their pink slips.

"We had worked hard to forge friendships in the drumming community and build trust with drum and percussion advertisers," Andy told me. "Phil and I recognized the value of those relationships and began to discuss how we could continue to develop and benefit from them." So, they



Andy; photo by Rick Malkin.

assembled a team, sent out press releases, created rate cards and media kits, and began work on the first issue of *DRUM!*, which hit newsstands just two months after *Drums & Drumming* shut down, in 1991. Andy, now in retirement, was the editor of *DRUM!* for 26 years. I was very privileged to be able to send him questions via email about his experience within and his view of the industry, the answers to which appear on the following pages.

**What are some of the positive and negative aspects of the magazine publishing industry that you encountered?**

I derived a lot of satisfaction from seeing our business grow into a successful and well-recognized brand. I enjoyed the process of taking every issue from content planning, story assignments, and art acquisition to copyediting, design, and final proofreading, and to eventually holding the printed version in my hands. I felt privileged to oversee such a talented and motivated team of editors and graphic artists and enjoyed the relationships I developed within the drum industry and with my coworkers.

Two negative things come to mind: 1) We were underfunded from the start, which made us feel as if we were always trying to catch up to the company's growth. Since it took years to lighten the workload by investing in human capital, thanks to our cash flow, we had to compensate with sweat equity. I spent many Thanksgivings and Christmases in the office working toward the next deadline and took a total of two vacations during the quarter century I spent at *DRUM!*. 2) We overestimated how quickly the company would turn profitable enough to pay ourselves adult salaries with benefits. I personally worked for more than a year without either and paid the bills by playing as many drumming gigs as I could around the San Francisco Bay Area. I remember how proud I was to receive my first paycheck, which was for \$80 a week. I was 41 years old at the time and lived in Silicon Valley, where most guys my age were making six figures.


These challenges sorted themselves out over time. By the turn of the decade, we were fully staffed and could pay our employees (and ourselves) competitive salaries with great benefit packages. I can't tell you how wonderful it makes me feel when former members of our editorial team reach out to tell me it was the best job they've ever had. That makes it all worthwhile – it just took much more effort than expected to reach that point.

**What insight can you give into witnessing the transition from the print to the digital age? How did that affect the magazine?**

We hoped to orchestrate a smooth transition to a symbiotic print/digital format by creating websites and video content, establishing a social media presence, and repurposing archival content from the print magazine online. We even established an ad network with other developing drumming websites to create a one-stop-shopping opportunity for advertisers. It had its own rate card and frequency discounts, so manufacturers could make multiple placements across the internet with a single ad buy. I moved out of my job as editor-in-chief of the print magazine to oversee our digital efforts and promoted our associate editor to managing editor so that he could take on my former responsibilities.

In the end, I don't believe we even repaid the investments we made in our digital properties. We had been in the business of writing compelling long-form articles and did it well, but we learned that most of the younger drummers who constituted our core readership weren't interested in reading 3,000-word articles online. (I get it – neither am I.) They wanted quick answers to questions, which made them less interested in curated content and more interested in lively chat rooms where they could interact with like-minded users.

Social media largely shut down those chat rooms, and sites like ours that offered written articles were abandoned for video channels that provided similar information in a more easily digestible format. In the process, the importance of crisply written copy – our bread and butter – was devalued. The only drumming websites that make money today offer video drumming lessons, and some of them make lots of money, like *Drumeo* and *Mike's Lessons*. By the time we recognized that trend, it was too late to reconfigure the company to meaningfully compete with them.



So, we became dinosaurs, but kept publishing the print magazine, even as newsstands and bookstores disappeared, and tended to our web presence largely because it would send a negative message to readers and advertisers if our virtual footprint faltered. With our positioning in mind, we launched a series of annual “DRUM! Night” drumming expos at the San Jose Repertory Theater in San Jose, California, where we presented live clinics with famous drummers in the theater and rented booth space to drum and percussion companies in an adjoining exhibit hall. Our attendees loved it, but, once again, they barely made money – in fact, we donated the tiny amount of profit we made above our expenses to local music education programs in San Jose, which helped us get the Repertory Theater for free – but the events did succeed in creating a buzz around the *DRUM! Magazine* brand, which probably bought a little more longevity for the company.

### **When and why did you leave the magazine?**

I retired in 2018. We sold the company’s assets to another music magazine publisher called Stringletter Media in 2016. Stringletter has published the magazines *Acoustic Guitar*, *Strings*, and *Ukulele* since the early 90s, and believed that print magazines would experience a resurgence once the Great Recession began to ease. I stayed on for the next couple years, working remotely from Nashville, to help Stringletter make the transition.

### **I see that *DRUM! Magazine* went out of print in 2019 – what are your thoughts on this? Do you feel that it is important for magazines like *DRUM!* to exist in the digital age?**

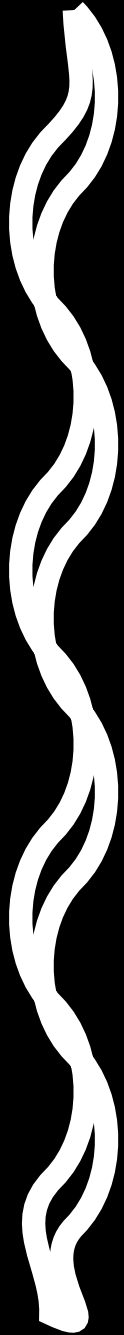
I was sorry but unsurprised to learn that Stringletter discontinued *DRUM!* after I retired, although I was thankful that the magazine survived as long as it did. The financial crisis that triggered the Great Recession of the late 2000s all

but decimated print advertising, which had already begun feeling the effect of new advertising and promotional opportunities on the internet. But unlike big consumer magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Time*, we were lucky that there weren’t many successful drumming websites in the early 2000s, where drum and percussion companies could divert ad revenue away from print – although many of our advertisers had already begun to tap into marketing budgets to build and maintain their own corporate websites.

However, once the Great Recession upended the worldwide economy, companies in nearly every field began cutting marketing budgets. I understand why they did. There was no practical reason to spend lots of money on expensive print ads when markets were crashing and consumers were either paying down debts or hanging onto cash. If parents wanted to buy their child a drum set for Christmas, they looked for used gear on Ebay instead of new models at Guitar Center.

Our ad revenue dropped every month for most of 2008, forcing us to cut costs wherever we could. We downgraded to a thinner, duller, and darker paper stock, cut our page counts, replaced our book-bound covers with saddle stitching, reduced the number of bind-ins and blow-ins in every issue, and stopped adding fifth colours to the cover. We moved to a more cramped office space and gradually, and reluctantly, began to lay off employees. We negotiated lower rates with long-time freelance photographers and illustrators. Phil, his wife Connie (who was our office manager), and I took reduced salaries.

We kept telling ourselves each month that we’d finally hit a plateau even as our numbers continued to sink, albeit at a more gradual pace as the economy improved. I spent every day and many nights for about eight years wondering when we would have to shut down and declare bankruptcy, so it was a welcome and unexpected twist of fate when Stringletter expressed an interest in buying our



assets. Besides *DRUM!*, the package also included our mailing lists, a website and consumer expo, a bimonthly drumming title called *TRAPS Magazine*, and an annual special issue called *HOW TO PLAY DRUMS*. We shut down both titles at the beginning of the recession.

I still subscribe to a couple magazines and enjoy the tactile feeling of turning pages rather than scrolling on a phone, but I know I'm a dying breed. I had to undergo about eight months of phototherapy for a disorder I wrestled with for a couple years. Whenever I showed up for my twice-weekly appointments, everyone in the waiting room stared at their cell phones. Meanwhile, I paged through the latest issue of the *New Yorker*, somewhat smugly. Of course, I assume I was the only one in the room who gave a damn about that.

So, please excuse me for saying that, to a great extent, I don't believe that the question about whether it's important for magazines like *DRUM!* to exist in the digital age is pertinent. They simply won't. Instead, I'll address the things I think are most important to retain from the pre-digital age of journalism in my answer to the next question, and I'll share my opinion in the last question about the future of print periodicals – and I do believe there's a future. It just won't resemble the experience we had with *DRUM!*.

**Do you think that print publishing and its tactility has more value than digital? What was the value in the print circulation of *DRUM! Magazine*?**

I love print but have trouble with the idea that it has more value than digital media. They're both information delivery systems, each with its own set of benefits and attributes. While you can find nearly anything about any subject on your phone or laptop, print conveys a feeling of permanence that isn't inherent in digital media. Compare the difference between typing a subject into a search engine and hitting "return" to walking into a multi-story library packed with

stacks of books and periodicals. The first is performed almost subconsciously. The second can take your breath away.

However, I often felt guilty for contributing, even to a minor degree, to the deforestation of the planet at a time when our changing climate demanded more trees to suck up carbon monoxide. That's an admission, by the way, that we couldn't afford the increased costs of recycled paper stock, especially while we looked for every possible way to cut expenses as our cash flow dwindled. So, in that sense, I believe digital is a more ecologically friendly method of conveying ideas.

My primary concern relates to the egalitarian eruption of opinions that accompanied the digitization of citizen journalism, which has greatly upended the traditional model of curated and fact-checked reporting. On the surface, it appears to be a glorious breakthrough for free speech and has been a remarkable thing to witness. In practice, though, at least in my opinion, it has made it more difficult to find truthful, accurate information – or, more specifically, to tell the difference between fact and opinion. When everybody deems themselves an expert, expertise is devalued.

**Do you feel that *DRUM! Magazine* fostered community? If so, where was this community primarily located?**

*DRUM!*'s worldwide readership was a community, only on a smaller scale than you'd find for a popular drumming website or social media page. I'd argue, though, that by paying for a subscription, our readers became qualified as active drummers and consumers who were eager to invest in good, curated information to improve their technique, sound, and knowledge of drumming history. By contrast, liking a post on a social media page or providing an email address to an online newsletter is a comparatively passive action that doesn't necessarily indicate the respondent's level of engagement.



**Do you think that the music press is dying/has died? How do you feel about the “perceived death of music journalism”?**

I believe the music press is still in transition rather than dead or dying, and in fact may face an exciting future. Nonetheless, glossy “player” magazines such as *DRUM!* are all but extinct, largely because our three primary avenues for distribution – brick-and-mortar music shops, bookstores, and newsstands – continue to steadily fade from the retail landscape. I feel very lucky to have enjoyed such a long run during what turned out to be the last couple decades of the golden age of print magazines, but you’d have to put a gun to my head to convince me to launch a similar title today.

I have a hunch that a DIY form of music journalism will track a course similar to the limited one faced by musicians in the age of music streaming. When there’s almost no chance of making a living from songwriting or performance royalties, musicians have fewer reasons to conform to commercial standards of the day. That’s a good thing, because with those restraints removed, a lot of interesting new music is appearing on platforms like Bandcamp, coming from creators who appear to be making music for exactly the right reason – because they’re artistically compelled to do so.

It strikes me that emerging independent music zines are bound to follow a similar path. Since there’s little hope of making a living by publishing a zine, those writers, editors, and graphic designers who do are free to take as many chances as they like. I expect results that are striking and innovative, and there’s plenty of precedent for that prediction – the 70s underground magazine *Oz* comes to mind as well as *Slash*, the L.A.-based 80s punk rock zine that evolved into a record label. I doubt either publisher walked away with much cash, but both had a huge influence on the music and the scene that developed, which would make anybody proud.



# ISAAC SABEL

Conversation with local guitarist.

When I moved to Exeter, I had to leave my beautiful Art & Lutherie electro-acoustic guitar behind. Knowing that I would quite possibly combust without a guitar, I had saved up some money to buy one second-hand once I was here – enter Isaac Sabel (22, he/him). In September, Isaac was working at a guitar shop on Fore Street in which I purchased a Vintage VE330 electro-acoustic; we’ve been friends ever since. He has since left the guitar shop, but after working there for over a year, during which he set up the guitars of and maintained relationships with local musicians, I figured he must have valuable insight into the music scene.

Isaac and I sat down and talked for hours, but I will try to synthesize everything we discussed, from the local scene to music journalism and Spotify. To begin with, Isaac grew up in Newton Abbot and studied Business at Plymouth University while his girlfriend was in Exeter, so he’s been bouncing around the South West for his entire sentient life. If you think this couldn’t get any more South Western, think again: his mum’s all-time favourite band is Muse, she saw them in a Battle of the Bands in Teignmouth before they were big, and his older brother slept on a sofa with Matt Bellamy at a house party back in the day. To this, I told Isaac that Muse’s first album *Showbiz* changed my brain chemistry, and he told me that *Origin of Symmetry* did the same for him.

Upon being asked if he thinks there is an identifiable music scene in the South West, Isaac answered, “Definitely. I think there is a kind of micro-climate of music here. I wouldn’t



*Isaac; photo by Matthew Kitchener.*

necessarily categorize it as like – you know how you would say California is surf-rock or Nashville is country-pop? Here, I feel like every time I go see bands, it doesn't seem like there is a running theme. From my experience of interacting with these people, I'm always a bit like, "This guy is completely opposite to the last." Apparently, he's even been to a few jam nights in which genres pivoted dramatically, such as death metal to folk. Referring to Exeter specifically, Isaac described the music scene as "friendly and uplifting of one another, an environment that nurtures growth and unique bands"; like the region as a whole, there is no singular genre that defines

the locality, and no agenda to enforce a particular genre. Also, Isaac said, "There's not an air of 'You weren't good? Then you should feel ashamed.' I have friends who have felt like they had tough gigs and all their recounts from those nights are getting off the stage and all the other bands going, 'That was sick, man. I didn't even notice it, don't be silly.'"

What Isaac pinpointed as needing to improve in Exeter is the amount of rehearsal spaces: "We've got places like Stiff Crowd, which are amazing – I just want more of it. Jacob who runs Stiff Crowd is a lovely chap; you can tell he has a real passion for the music industry and for creating a space for people to go to, but I want more people to be able to do that. You shouldn't necessarily have to have this undying passion and desperation to provide space for people for it to be a profitable thing." I agree with Isaac here – Exeter musicians, especially student bands, have access to a couple great rehearsal spaces, and are very lucky to have Jacob of Stiff Crowd HQ, whom I also interviewed for this zine, but for Exeter to become a true creative hub, there needs to be more options. "I wish it was a bit more accessible," Isaac said, "like, 'We've got some space at the back of our coffee shop, why don't we make this into rehearsal space? Oh, it's not soundproofed? Cool, this is an acoustic rehearsal space.'" This is a compelling proposal – if local businesses were more involved in the music scene, that would be groundbreaking. That's part of the reason why I wanted to make this zine in the first place, because if it's publicly distributed and small business owners get their hands on it and can tangibly see that there are these people with these needs, then maybe they'll want to get involved, even if they're not musicians themselves. "And there's money to be made there," Isaac noted. "It's mutually beneficial. Say your coffee shop shuts at five and you've got loads of space until ten – there must be some kind of 'okay, ten quid an hour, it's not loads of money, but it's more than we were making with the coffee shop shut' scheme that can be worked out." I think the moral of this is

that if the community invests in the music scene, then the music scene will invest in the community.

Staying on the topic of spaces, I asked Isaac how he feels about Exeter's venues. "I wouldn't say that they are particularly inspiring and incredible, but they're certainly not bad," he said. "I love Cavern, but Phoenix is really good – the stage is such a nice height. Cavern's is slightly lower so if you're at the back you're not necessarily seeing the band, but that also serves to make you feel like you're with the band on the stage. Honestly, I'm neutral to it." As a concert photographer hovering around five feet tall, I understand what Isaac means about Cavern's stage – if I'm not at the very front, then I'm barely seeing anything. That being said, I agree with his neutrality, because in such an iconic, cave-like space, the stage's low height does not damper the atmosphere

**...if the community invests in the music scene, then the music scene will invest in the community.**


much. I then asked Isaac if he ever goes to pubs like the Angel or the Stoke Arms, since those are some of the main places where student bands play. In short, he doesn't: "I feel like advertisement is a problem – if you don't follow Stoke Arms or know anyone in the band, you're not going to know. If I could buy a music magazine that says what's on this week and where, that would be awesome." Aspiring magazine or zine creators, take note – a gap in the market has been identified.

Because music magazines were brought up, I asked Isaac if he ever reads articles from them or engages with music journalism in any way. "Absolutely, but not printed," he answered. "When articles come up on my phone, especially if it's about an artist I'm interested in, I always read them. I also really like reading reviews of albums, almost to see if I'm right – 'I think this about it, is this what everyone else is

thinking?'" Isaac also cited Reddit as a space of music discourse, especially regarding what setup a band is using to get a certain sound on an album. This is why music journalism is so valuable, I commented at the time, because it's a music journalist's job to critically listen, investigate, and answer your curiosity. This is what magazines like *Pitchfork* have

**...it's a music journalist's job to critically listen, investigate, and answer your curiosity.**

always done, but unfortunately, they were recently absorbed into men's lifestyle magazine *GQ*. I informed Isaac of this, and his reaction was, "They're like, 'Only men can listen to rock!'" – which is exactly how journalists have been interpreting the matter. Parent company Condé Nast is seeming to say that the audience for *Pitchfork* needs to be male, and the absorption of a specialist magazine into a broad lifestyle magazine has scary consequences. It means that *Pitchfork* has basically lost its autonomy to talk about all that it wants to, especially anything that isn't mainstream, and even if they do talk about non-mainstream music, the audience who cares has left. "Where do we draw the line between this being a male wellness brand and what was once just a blanket 'this is just music' brand? Does it then just become 'here's what to listen to in order to look like a cool man?'" Isaac questioned. This is the problem I see, too. Listening to music shouldn't be seen as just part of a male consumer lifestyle. At the same time, though, I think that *Pitchfork* should not have given in to conglomeration – the first mistake was founder Ryan Schreiber selling *Pitchfork* to Condé Nast. Isaac couldn't believe that, after developing such a snowball following of loyal subscribers, they would sell out to a company which doesn't have that audience's best interests in mind. However, it seems that the running excuse magazines like *Pitchfork* have given is



that they need to match their growing audience by growing as a company and thus becoming part of a conglomerate. I think *Pitchfork* has always believed in high-quality music journalism, but by becoming part of this commercial media landscape, they became part of its capitalistic school of thought, thus killing their independent values. Alas, I digress.

Lastly, Isaac and I discussed Spotify and its influence on people's music tastes. Isaac himself uses Spotify, but doesn't engage with their playlists because he's never discovered anything astounding through them. In fact, he has "a real beef with" Spotify's "radios": "I think it's very loaded with what's come out that month and with stuff I already listen to. Why does Spotify not go, 'Well, he's already got this saved, so he doesn't need to listen to this?'" Well, this is because their algorithm purposefully keeps you invested in the same thing – it recognizes a formula and keeps giving it to you. Which is a problem. "I feel very boxed in," Isaac went on. "Even when I'm looking for music in a similar vein, I'm not looking for something that sounds exactly the same. It's like red meat and a nice wine: I want [Spotify] to pair music for me, I don't want them to go, 'Here's your red meat, do you want some more red meat?' I know what I like, and I want to be shown

**"It's like red meat and a nice wine: I want [Spotify] to pair music for me, I don't want them to go, 'Here's your red meat, do you want some more red meat?'"**

new bands." When asked why he still uses Spotify, Isaac answered, "Because I have always used it and all my stuff is on there. I tried Apple Music, and it wasn't for me – mainly the user interface design. The black theme of Spotify has me in a chokehold." This is a fair point – Spotify's user

**"The black theme of Spotify has me in a chokehold."**

interface design is arguably the best on the market. Not to mention the fact that, compared to services like Apple Music, Spotify takes up very little storage space. Isaac and I agreed that Spotify has a robust set of unique selling points, but you can't ignore how poorly they pay artists. "At the end of the

**Spotify has a robust set of unique selling points, but you can't ignore how poorly they pay artists.**

day," said Isaac, "there's a horrible ethical conundrum where I really want these artists to get what they deserve, but this is the most easy and accessible avenue [of listening], and when I first got it and then spent seven years curating this profile they have of me, saving thousands of songs, I didn't know the ethics behind it." Here's his final take: "If something came along that was easily accessible, easily transferrable, more ethical, and came with a user interface that was just as good as Spotify's, I certainly wouldn't say, 'No, I'm staying on Spotify.' I'm starting to be a bit more like, 'Actually, no, I don't think I want to give my money to you.'" Hopefully, something else will emerge to suit our ethical, and aesthetic, needs. In the meantime, if we're going to use Spotify anyway, let's put more effort into supporting local artists, most of which have not released any music on streaming services – like Isaac and other members of Exeter's music community.



# STIFF CROWD HQ

A den of sonic rebellion.

When planning this zine, I knew that I could not truly embody Exeter's music community without including any of the spaces in which music happens. One such space is Stiff Crowd HQ, a rehearsal and songwriting studio independently owned and operated by Jacob Horton (26, he/him), the frontman of local band Poppyshow. I corresponded with Jacob on Instagram before meeting him for an interview at Stiff Crowd HQ, located on Lower North Street in central Exeter.

My first impression of Jacob was that he was incredibly warm and welcoming off the bat. After listening to him talk about how Stiff Crowd HQ serves the community, I was certain that anyone who takes advantage of the space he has created would be in good hands. "I wanted to create a space people could feel included and themselves in, because a lot of kids don't have a place in which to do that, especially with the way the world is at the moment, and I wanted this to be a safe space to create in," he said, "which is why we've got these pictures and posters [on the walls]. A lot of the posters are of bands and events that happen involving our closest friends, and you'll find photos of bands that rehearse here as well as the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Radiohead."

Jacob acquired the space, one of the "Cellars" under Iron Bridge, in March 2023. "It should have been ready by the summer," said Jacob, but they ran into legal issues: "We had to change the use of the building and it was a real pain in the ass – because of that, it took way longer. So, we were open at the end of September." Which was perfect timing as the



*Jacob in Stiff Crowd HQ; photo provided by Jacob.*

school year was starting and new student bands were forming, I commented.

Aside from being a rehearsal and songwriting space, Stiff Crowd HQ rents out gear. If a band wants to put on a show and they don't have a car or a drum kit, they can rent a kit through Stiff Crowd and Jacob will deliver it. They've got loads of kits and amps, the former of which can be rented for £80 and the latter for £30. You can even rent a full setup for about £150. As far as day rates for the room, they charge £12/hour, but it's only £10/hour for university students who are part of a music-related society in the Guild. In Jacob's own words, "I don't want just random uni bands who are jocks

and dickheads to come in and be like, 'Give us a discount.' I want them to be in it."

Stiff Crowd HQ has also begun recording! Jacob informed me that his band just recorded their second EP in the room, so watch out for news from Poppyshow. "For studio stuff, we're charging about £300 per day and then £100 for a song to be mixed," said Jacob, "so if you come in with your band and can record ten songs in a day, you can get an album for like £1200. We use a really good guy who people call Izzy the Bard, and he's an amazing producer." Jacob also noted that if you want to shoot a music video or do a photoshoot at Stiff Crowd HQ, you can do that, too. He wants the space to be a creative and cultural hub, "a place to cultivate really good, underground music acts, to cultivate their sound, their songs," a headquarters within which people feel safe to create. "I think this is a place where bands can become great, go off into the scary world, and know that they can come back," Jacob said.

**"...this is a place where bands can become great, go off into the scary world, and know that they can come back."**

Asked whether he thinks Exeter has an identifiable music scene, Jacob answered, "Definitely. I think you're always going to have outliers, but I think that the core of Exeter, musically, is totally punk. Every band, in a lot of

**"...the core of Exeter, musically, is totally punk."**

ways, at least the way they play instruments, starts off in a

very punk style. The ethos of doing something yourself always begins there. The Cavern is a fantastic music venue and they've had a load of bands, but they are a punk venue, and they pride themselves on that. There's the DIY core of doing it for yourself, learning your instruments and going for it and giving it your best shot, which I love. I much prefer seeing a band who just learned how to play but really mean what they're saying than a band who have been playing all their lives and don't really know what they're talking about."

Lastly, I asked Jacob what the future of Stiff Crowd HQ is, and he had a clear vision: "I want some famous songs to be written in here, I want some credits, I want to record and film some live sessions, I want to record a lot of bands in here and start seeing if I can live off of this place and use it as a way to make money for myself, because I hate working bar jobs. I just want to keep improving it, keep making it better for people." If Stiff Crowd HQ sounds like the place for you –

**"I just want to keep improving it, keep making it better for people."**

and I fully believe it will be a safe space for anyone who enters it – then I urge you to support this den of sonic rebellion.



# THE ROXY REVIVAL

Q&A with the winners of Campus Bands' Battle of the Bands 2024.

I first encountered The Roxy Revival at Campus Bands' Battle of the Bands in March of this year. By the time of their set, I had made my way through the crowd at Cavern and was stationed with my camera at the barrier in front of the stage. The Roxy Revival were the only 3-piece band, composed of singer and bassist Daisy Carbin (19, she/her), guitarist Bert Addison (21, he/him), and drummer Panki Pancorvo (19, he/him). Daisy's vocals and the band's sound immediately reminded me of The Sundays, despite the 90s group belonging to the realm of alt rock and dream pop while The Roxy Revival align themselves more with blues and psychedelia.

In the months that followed Battle of the Bands, I befriended Daisy, Bert, and Panki whilst attending and taking photos of local gigs, including theirs. I have found that their talent, humility, and senses of humour are unmatched within the community, and I was delighted to have them sit down with me for a conversation that was much longer than what appears on the following pages. Without further ado, let me introduce you to The Roxy Revival.

## Biggest musical inspirations?

**Daisy:** Bikini Kill, Dead Kennedys, Angel Olsen, Mazzy Star, Fiona Apple, and Mitski.

**Bert:** Albert King, Buddy Guy, BB King, Bob Dylan, Joni



*Daisy at Battle of the Bands; photo by LD.*

Mitchell, JJ Cale, and Jimi Hendrix.

**Panki:** System of a Down, Joni Mitchell, Sui Generis, John Coltrane Quartet, Miles Davis's Second Great Quintet, Elvin Jones, and Vinnie Colaiuta.

## When and how did The Roxy Revival form?

**Bert:** [Daisy and I] met each other in fresher's week, and then in our first year we'd jam together quite often. From the start of second year, we wanted to form a band, but we knew there

was a fatal piece missing, and never did we know that we'd find that piece teaching Daisy Spanish!

**Daisy:** Yeah, I took Spanish this year, and in one of my lessons this dude [Panki] was there, I thought he was a student and asked why he was there, and he was like, "I'm working here, I'm a teacher." I didn't just ask him to be in a band at the time, but Bert and I were looking for a drummer.

**Panki:** I thought [Daisy] was cool, but we never really spoke again. I saw her at a Campus Bands jam night in December of last year, then we met at a friend's house and spoke and realized we were both musicians; she told me to come to the Angel, where I played with her and Bert.

### **What inspired the name of the band?**

**Bert:** It was actually frowned upon when I first suggested it.

**Daisy:** We didn't like it.

**Bert:** I was like, what about "The Roxy Revival" after Roxy, the beloved dog at the Angel?

**Daisy:** Roxy's the owner's dog, and for the early jams, she used to just wander about – she's blind and deaf, so she's a bit confused. It's a tribute to her and to the place where we started.

### **I know you have some original songs – how many, and what are their titles?**

**RR:** We have 4 – NYE (Dog Song), Nobody's Child, Angel Blues, and Blazy Susan.

**LD:** And none of them are released on any platforms?

**RR:** No.

**LD:** Do you intend to release them?

**Daisy:** Yes.

**Panki:** We need to record them.

**Bert:** But Daisy's gone [this next school year].

**Daisy:** I'm going to Mannheim for a year, so [The Roxy



*Bert at the Stoke Arms; photo by LD.*

Revival] has to go on hold.

**LD:** So you intend to record and release these songs once Daisy's back?

**RR:** Yes.

**Daisy:** But I am worried that I'll get back and [Bert and Panki] will have totally different –

**Bert:** Hair. [Everyone laughs.]

**Daisy:** – totally different styles to me to the point where it was just a thing we had, but that's just an anxiety thing.

**Bert:** And even if that does happen, it will happen for the



best.

**Daisy:** Yeah, and we'll do the projects that we're supposed to do.

### **What are you all studying?**

**Daisy:** English.

**Bert:** Mathematics.

**Panki:** Anthropology.

### **What do you guys want to see in the future of The Roxy Revival?**

**Bert:** Headlining Reading and Leeds 2025. [Everyone laughs.]

**Daisy:** There's a part of me that does really believe in [The Roxy Revival] and thinks that maybe we can sustain ourselves off it, but that's not easily done, and we'd have to cut off limbs in penance.

**Panki:** And I have to find a way to keep living in England.

**Daisy:** Just get married to Bert.

### **Do all of you, or some of you, want to pursue music as a career, or do you want to lean into what you're doing academically? What do you want to prioritize the most?**

**Panki:** I'd love to do both. My perfect plan would be having both Anthropology and whatever I want to do with it, maybe research, and music.

**Bert:** I think animal rights activism will be a big part of my life – doing research in that field and climate science. Music if it can be something, who knows.

**Daisy:** There's a lot of cynicism in this circle. Music will always be integral to your lives whether or not you do that. I'm at a bit of a crossroads these days – I think the fundamental thing is that I don't believe in myself. I can be surrounded by people who believe in me, but I don't have the guts, really. I don't



*Panki at Feria Bar (Lima); photo by Mariano Saettone.*

know, I need to see. I need to sit down with my parents and talk about it, but I do also really like English. I like writing, reading, films, TV – my kind of ideal is maybe music journalism, what you do.

### **Do you guys ever engage with music journalism, music magazines, anything like that?**

**Daisy:** Not enough.

**Bert:** I keep refreshing *Rolling Stone's* "250 Greatest Guitarists" until they put my name on it. [Everyone laughs.]

**Panki:** *Rolling Stone* occasionally.

**Bert:** I subscribe to the mailing list and then read whatever sounds interesting in each email.

**Panki:** I love *Modern Drummer*, that's a great magazine.

**Daisy:** Does YouTube count? Like *NPR*?

**LD:** I mean, yeah, it's still broadcast journalism.

**Daisy:** I'd say that's the most heavily I engage with music journalism, then, but recently have gained more interest in magazines and publications.

**LD:** Do y'all ever buy physical magazines?

**Panki:** I think I might have some physical copies, but I never buy them regularly.

**LD:** So you prefer online magazines?

**Daisy:** It's just easier, more accessible.

**LD:** True, and for many, you don't have to pay for them as you would for print.

### **What would having an article about your band in a music magazine mean to you?**

**Panki:** The feeling you get being in a magazine of any kind is, "Woah, we're famous!"

**LD:** Would having exposure through music magazines, being given that opportunity, give you more confidence in your ability to actually pursue music?

**RR:** Yes.

**Daisy:** These days it's just so hard – you have to have TikTok and Instagram and you have to have this viral song – and I just don't think that's in any of us, really. It's soul-killing.

**LD:** It's nice to know that the community believes in you and helps to uplift local groups. That's kind of the point of what I'm doing [with *UNEARTH*].

**Daisy:** At the end of the day, you need to believe in yourself, though.

**LD:** If you solely rely on other people uplifting you, then you're going to get to a high point and then crash because

you don't have the personal will power to keep that image. The music industry is not for the weak.

### **Who or what has influenced your music taste and discovery of new music? (E.g., family, friends, articles in music magazines, playlists on streaming services.)**

**RR:** Friends.

**Daisy:** When [Bert and I] started hanging out last year, it kind of completely blew up my music world. I've always listened to loads of music but stuck to the same genres. One of my favourite things from our friendship is the music [Bert] shows me.

**Bert:** When I picked up the guitar during COVID, I started learning songs and checking out more music. I was solely into hip-hop and reggae, influenced by friends – it was big in the skate community, and I was a skater – but when I learned to play the guitar, I was exposed to Hendrix and loved the sound he was making. Mainly just YouTube suggesting videos [influenced me].

**Daisy:** Yeah, the algorithm. I can relate to that. Also, Panki has influenced both of us. Like, Esperanza Spalding and stuff. I'm learning bass now for this band, and I actually love it more than I've liked guitar.

**Panki:** For me, family and friends. I really have struggled with discovering new music by myself – I fall back on my comfort zone – so my way to learn about new music is getting into bands of people who play different stuff. I learn those songs and then listen to those bands.

**LD:** Do y'all listen to Spotify playlists like Discover Weekly?

**Daisy:** All the time, Discover Weekly is my favourite.

**Bert:** I love listening to artists' Spotify "radios." It's all made for you, so [the algorithm] tailors the playlist to you.

**Daisy:** Which is kind of cool, but a bit restrictive because it's just what the algorithm thinks you want to hear, but you still find stuff.

**Panki:** I'm sort of against that, but that's also why it's hard for me to discover music. I need to listen to whole albums and go song by song. I'm not going to touch Spotify playlists.

### How do y'all feel about Spotify as a company?

**Panki:** I use it because it's convenient, but I really don't think they're fair to artists. So convenient, so easy to listen to music, so easy to discover new stuff, but it's not ethical.

**Daisy:** It's become a bit of a social network, hasn't it? Especially when Spotify Wrapped comes around.

**Panki:** It's a way to show your social status.

**Daisy:** Yeah, I've noticed that it's not about the music, it's about what it shows about you, for a lot of people. [Spotify] is in the money-making business at the end of the day.

**Bert:** I think the consumers have some responsibility as well, though. Buy the music if you want to support the band.

### Favourite local band(s)?

**Daisy:** mindbaby, Various Artists, and Halfcut.

**Bert:** The Post.

**Panki:** Sid Plus One.

### Favourite local venue(s)?

**RR:** Angel.

### How would you describe Exeter's music scene in 10 words or less?

**Daisy:** Do-it-yourself, fun but challenging, needs more spaces.

**Bert:** Like a newborn baby with lots of potential.

**Panki:** Small, welcoming community, but needs diversity of people and genres.

### What would you like to see happen or improve in the local music community?

**Bert:** More jazz.

**Panki:** Yeah, definitely.

**Daisy:** More jazz, more soul.

**Panki:** More everything. It should feel more like a scene than a small, friendly community.

**Daisy:** More people coming to gigs.

**Bert:** Better help for promotion.

**Daisy:** More venue spaces. People need to learn respect for musical spaces, as well.

**Bert:** If you [have a university music membership or are in Campus Bands and] see newer equipment's been damaged, and you sign up for a committee role, and you've got a big fund from the university coming in and you're not changing it –

**Daisy:** That's the problem.

**Panki:** It's also discipline – there are no efforts to find out who did [the damage] or to punish anyone.

**Bert:** Maybe there should be a two-strike thing, and then [with the third strike] you get banned from the society.

*Community members, take note. A big thank you to The Roxy Revival for sitting down with me! Watch out for them in the autumn of 2025, when Daisy returns to Exeter.*



# WHITE ROSE

Q&A with a local indie pop band.

Like my experience with The Roxy Revival, I first saw White Rose perform at Campus Bands' Battle of the Bands in March of this year. Nestled between taller figures in the crowd at Cavern, I took photos through the gaps between shoulders, and was enthralled by the image of singer Sienna Baber (18, she/her) as she sang "Glory Box" by Portishead. With her bleached, light blonde hair and pale blue eyes, contrasted starkly against an all-black outfit and black nails, Sienna looked to me like an elegant second coming of Sky Ferreira. Over the course of the next month, I had the privilege of running into Sienna and the rest of White Rose – guitarist Cam Challis (21, he/him), bassist Emily Evans (22, she/her), and drummer Jake Nelson (21, he/him) – around town and at gigs, and was delighted by their friendliness as well as their supportive nature within the local music scene.

By the end of spring term, we had all followed each other on Instagram, and I approached them via direct message about doing a band interview. Unfortunately, everyone went away for summer break, but we were able to collaborate anyway via email and WhatsApp. The following Q&A is what became of that collaboration.

## What are you all studying?

**Sienna:** Biological and Medicinal Chemistry.

**Cam:** Engineering and Management.

**Emily:** Applied Clinical Psychology.

**Jake:** Computer Science and Mathematics.



*Sienna at Battle of the Bands; photo by LD.*

**Where does music list on your rank of priorities? Do you think you'll be pursuing music as a career, or are you set on pursuing what you're studying? (Or a combination of both?)**

**Sienna:** Music is very important to me. To claim that a life dedicated solely to something else would fulfil me would be untrue. I think I'll always pursue music. For the community, the performing and songwriting – the dream is to be able to do this full-time, but I understand the rarity of such a life.

Just to share and play music with my friends is a privilege. **Cam:** During my second year, I was fortunate to be able to prioritise music quite highly, albeit behind my academics and relationships. Though I see it taking a bit of a back seat next year as my workload increases significantly. I never envisioned my music as being more than a creative outlet as well as a bit of fun for myself and my bandmates. Having said that, I recently found myself researching careers bordering both music and engineering, and I was pleased to hear there are many.

**Emily:** Unfortunately, due to how hard it is to get into the industry, I've found music reducing in priority. I'm currently training to be a therapist and really love that line of work, but if I could do music full-time, I would in a heartbeat. I'll continue to pursue it as a hobby and see where it takes me.

**Jake:** Music has always been a big part of my life, so it's quite near the top of my list of priorities. I'd love to pursue music as a career. However, this is quite a hard thing to accomplish. Whatever I end up doing, I'll always keep up my musical skills. Maybe teaching or being a session musician.

### **Biggest musical inspirations?**

**Sienna:** I come from a very musical family, particularly my dad who is a musician – a keyboardist – in a band himself. Having our living room essentially be a music room is something that always leaves me inspired. My bandmates inspire me, as well.

**Cam:** I have a variety of musical inspirations, but the sound I've tried to achieve with White Rose is inspired by Johnny Marr (The Smiths), Mac Demarco, and even Robert Smith (The Cure).

**Emily:** Currently, I love the work of Ethel Cain and Eliza McLamb. Fleetwood Mac will always hold a special place in my heart, too, and growing up I was influenced lots by



*White Rose at the Stoke Arms; photo by LD.*

heavier artists such as Motionless in White.

**Jake:** I started learning music through Kodály training, which I think is my biggest inspiration – being able to understand music the way that I do is what made me love being a musician. Also, living in a musical home and being able to compose/play with others from a young age inspired me to keep pushing forward.

**Who or what has influenced your music taste and discovery of new music? (E.g., family, friends, articles in music magazines, playlists on streaming services like Spotify.)**

**Sienna:** My parents influenced and continue to influence my music taste substantially. There's such a high volume of accessible music nowadays; I find it really refreshing to listen to music that my parents found growing up.

**Cam:** Overall, it is the friends around me who have shaped my music taste the most. Unless we're at the pub and aren't allowed to, we constantly have music on whether we're

drinking, playing games, or just chatting.

**Emily:** I think my queer identity influences a lot of my music taste, as it can be a place to really resonate with these feelings and connect with the community.

**Jake:** My brother is my biggest influence. We started Kodály training at the same time, so we'd always be playing music together. He was always interested in classical music, so I would hear him playing it and came to really enjoy listening to and playing it myself. My dad is also a musician – a drummer – and would play with his band when I was younger. They would play older R&B and rock. When he wasn't physically playing the music, there would always be something on the record player which was more of a jazzy style.

#### **Preferred streaming service?**

**WR:** Spotify.

#### **How do you all feel about Spotify as a company?**

**Sienna:** I can't say I'm the most informed on Spotify as a company, but I think the collaborative playlists and recommended songs are great features. Of course, the subsequent decline in physical album copies is sad to see, but I can't fault the app too much for this.

**Jake:** Other than using the service for music I don't know too much about it, either; I think it's one of the best streaming companies, and with the student discount, it's not too expensive.

**Cam:** I'm a fan of Spotify's discovery system – through playlists and "radios," I think that Spotify not only expands one's musical horizons but also gives smaller artists a chance to be discovered, and who doesn't love opening their Spotify Wrapped at the end of the year? On the other hand, not only do they not pay their artists very well for streams but also actively try to draw streams away by creating fake artist



*Cam at the Stoke Arms; photo by LD.*

accounts. This barely scratches the surface of their moral ambiguity as a company.

**Emily:** I agree that Spotify does not pay its artists anywhere near enough, but unfortunately due to ease of use this is the streaming platform I have gone with for many years now.

#### **Do you ever engage with music journalism? Any particular music magazines? What would having an article about your band in a music magazine mean to you?**

**Sienna:** I was recently interviewed alongside the few other girls fronting bands in Exeter for an article, written by

Amelia Jones, about female-led indie bands, which was very lovely to have been a part of, as I think it's important for women and girls not to feel discouraged to pursue music, with the community being predominantly male. Before this, I hadn't really given music journalism much thought, though the film *Almost Famous* did give me an appreciation for it and I think it has a special place in today's world. I think it'd mean a lot to musicians to be celebrated in such a way.

**Cam:** Apart from reading a couple of *Rolling Stone* magazines and using their "500 Greatest Albums of All Time" article to spark debates with my friends, I've never fully engaged with music journalism.

**Emily:** I think music magazines are highly underrated and are a great way to see what's going on around you. I sometimes like to look at local magazines where I live in Bristol as this allows me to see what's going on in the local music scene. I think they are a great form of exposure, so it always means a lot to have anything about our band promoted.

**Jake:** My relationship with music has always been just playing and messing around – I've never done much research into the bands I like or looked for magazine articles on them. Although, if *White Rose* had an article, that would feel pretty surreal – I do understand the significance of people writing about you and then others wanting to learn more about you.

### **How did *White Rose* form? How did each of you become part of the band?**

**Jake:** Cam and I met in 2021 and became friends. I then left Exeter for a year to work and when I came back for uni in 2023, one of the first things he said to me was that he wanted to start a band. So, pretty much from the first week, we had started what soon became *White Rose*.

**Cam:** We went to a 70s-themed Campus Bands social to hunt down a singer and bass player.

**Sienna:** That's where I met Cam and Jake. I very anxiously



*Jake at the Stoke Arms; photo by LD.*

auditioned for the band a couple of days later and was given the privilege of forming the band with them and our former bassist Aman Rizzman.

**Emily:** While drunk at Cavern, Max from Halfcut introduced me to Cam when they were looking for a new bassist and it just sort of went from there!

**I saw that you guys just released your first single, "Vanilla Sky," on Spotify – do you have any other original songs, and do you intend to release them in the future? Is an album in the works?**

**Emily:** I think I'll let the others answer this question because unfortunately due to being a fourth year my time in Exeter is nearly over and with that my time in White Rose. I have had great fun with them, and I think they'll continue to smash it!

**Cam:** We have another original song we've played live a couple of times that we are hoping to record this summer. We may have some exciting news to follow about that so do keep an ear out; lyrics and title are still in the works.

**Sienna:** We have a few original songs in the works, and many ideas I'm excited about, so an album/EP may very well be on its way.

**Jake:** I would love to get an album done, it's just a matter of getting our originals sorted. Some are more finished than others. We aren't the best at picking names, so none of them actually have titles set in stone.

#### **What future would you like to see for White Rose?**

**Sienna:** I'd love to make music with the band for as long as I can. To be able to release albums and share them with people through music platforms and gigs would be surreal.

**Cam:** I'll be happy as long as White Rose continues to be a vessel of fun and creativity for me and my friends.

**Jake:** I'd love for us to be able to keep our band together for as long as possible as everyone involved is truly an amazing musician. I'd like it to be something that we can always keep doing together; however, I do understand that this will get more difficult after we have finished our degrees as not everyone lives close together when we're back home.

**Emily:** I hope big things! They're great people with a lot of talent, and I think they'll go places. I just hope their next bassist can keep up! ;)

#### **Favourite local band(s)?**

**Sienna:** King Louis and mindbaby.



*Emily at the Stoke Arms; photo by LD.*

**Cam:** Vienna Youth, King Louis, mindbaby, The Roxy Revival, and Halfcut.

**Emily:** King Louis, Psyche, and The Roxy Revival.

**Jake:** The Roxy Revival, mindbaby, and King Louis.

#### **Favourite local venue(s)?**

**WR:** Cavern!

**Jake:** The Angel is nice, too. Also, the Stoke Arms has become quite popular for Campus Bands jam nights, which are always a blast.



**How would you describe Exeter's music community in 10 words or less?**

**Sienna:** Welcoming, supportive, and diverse in genre.

**Cam:** Vibrant, underrated, and full of talent.

**Emily:** Growing; I think it'll keep growing thanks to Campus Bands.

**Jake:** Diverse, energetic, welcoming, and supportive.

**What would you like to see happen or improve in Exeter's music community?**

**Sienna:** I think the community is pretty strong, but I'd love to see more support for solo artists.

**Emily:** More LGBTQ+ bands/artists in the spotlight!

**Jake:** I'd love to see more brass instruments around – I really enjoy that style of music and think more bands should be picking it up. I would also like for bands to get a bit more praise from venues for bringing so many people to them, as some of these bands really do deserve it. I believe Exeter's musicians are doing something right at the moment!

*I'd have to agree – more support for solo artists, more queer acts, and more instrumental diversity would be fantastic to see. Thank you White Rose for your time and thoughtful responses!*



# SONG REVIEWS

# Japan, Man

“Keep Calm And Carry On” – notes of: dancing through life; sunshine peeking through rain clouds; fingers drumming against hardwood.

**Rating: 8.5/10**

# mindbaby

*Summer '23 EP*

“Now” – notes of: an empty city at night; the space and darkness needed to think about past loves.

**Rating: 9.6/10**

“Jam Ranch” – notes of: confident strides; revenge.

**Rating: 9.3/10**

“Confess” – notes of: gently falling stars; bus rides through the countryside; telling secrets to the moon.

**Rating: 9.1/10**

“Feel It (Cynthia)” – notes of: thrashing bodies; distorted lights; stumbling home.

**Rating: 8.8/10**

# Poppyshow

“Needed Ur Bed” – notes of: late nights alone; the reflection of city lights on water.

**Rating: 9.3/10**

“I Don't Mind” – notes of: liberation and laughter; dancing like nobody's watching (because nobody is).

**Rating: 8.4/10**

“Unscrewed” – notes of: pounding hearts; sticky skin; constant nodding; passing through graffitied tunnels.

**Rating: 8.5/10**

# PSYCHE

“Take Me Home” – notes of: garage jams; classic cars on dusty roads; fringed leather; dive bars.

**Rating: 6.9/10**

# White Rose

“Vanilla Sky” – notes of: cracked mirrors; sweet smoke; grass stains.

**Rating: 7.3/10**





**Lana Danzeisen** is a writer, photographer, and folk singer and guitarist from Burbank, California. You can find her music on Spotify under her full name, and you can find her on Instagram at @l.r.d.



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