

STRANGER DAIS



Hi.

We meet again.

A year ago, we introduced ourselves to you, and you to us.

This began in chaos, in protest - and, maybe, a healthy dash of desperation.

What blossomed forth has been a pure, unadulterated joy.

A year ago, the zine that followed was a shared effort amongst creatives from all walks of life, working together to ensure that everybody is seen.

This year is no different whatsoever.

Here's to you. Here's to collaboration. Here's to listening. Here's to being heard.

To platforming without compromise.

WE ARE UNITED.

WE ARE THE SCENE.





Leigh

FOLKING GREAT

Nylophone's newest release, 'Life Goes On' is set to stun!



Irish singer-songwriter Nylophone's newest release is undoubtedly special. Straying from synths and intricate production, the artist has decided to bare all with 'Life Goes On'.

Niall Woods is well known as an indie pop artist with a twist. With a swathe of recordings previously produced from his home in Wicklow, the move into a studio removed none of his prior edge. Instead, Nylophone has retained the charms of DIY artistry amidst a characteristically polished soundscape. Whilst his tracks are beautifully dreamy, his wistful vocal stylings often articulate themes of longing.

Niall has taken the stylistic choice to dip his toe in the waters of folk, which matches his latest track's candour and vulnerability to the letter. In shedding electronics in favour of a simplistically perfect fingerpicked melody, Nylophone bravely showcases bereavement, allowing the experience to take the lead - as well as the isolation oftentimes felt at that time.

Indeed, Nylophone's 'Life Goes On' is equal parts emotionally heavy, as it is hopeful. Whilst centred upon the lows of loss, the track is an exploration of the myriad of emotions that are whipped up by the tornado of tumult left in its wake. The uncertainty and alien aspect of mundanity after bereavement is lovingly knitted together with the promise of eventual acceptance and undeniable hope.

Whilst darkness prevails through the verses, the chorus offers immense comfort. Nylophone's lilting promise that 'life goes on' is impactful, and is followed by a beautiful euphony supplied by the cello, piano and drums.

Niall's vocals weigh heavy with emotion on this structurally symbolic track, creating not only a song, but a deeply meaningful one, at that.



ALL ABOUT A.N.J.A

by Megan Hopkin

Belfast is a big place, filled to the brim with incredible artists and musicians alike. Yet, tucked into one of the city sprawl's many crevices, you may spy the glint of a red guitar from the side of your eye...

And then the music starts. And it's amazing. This, is A.N.J.A.

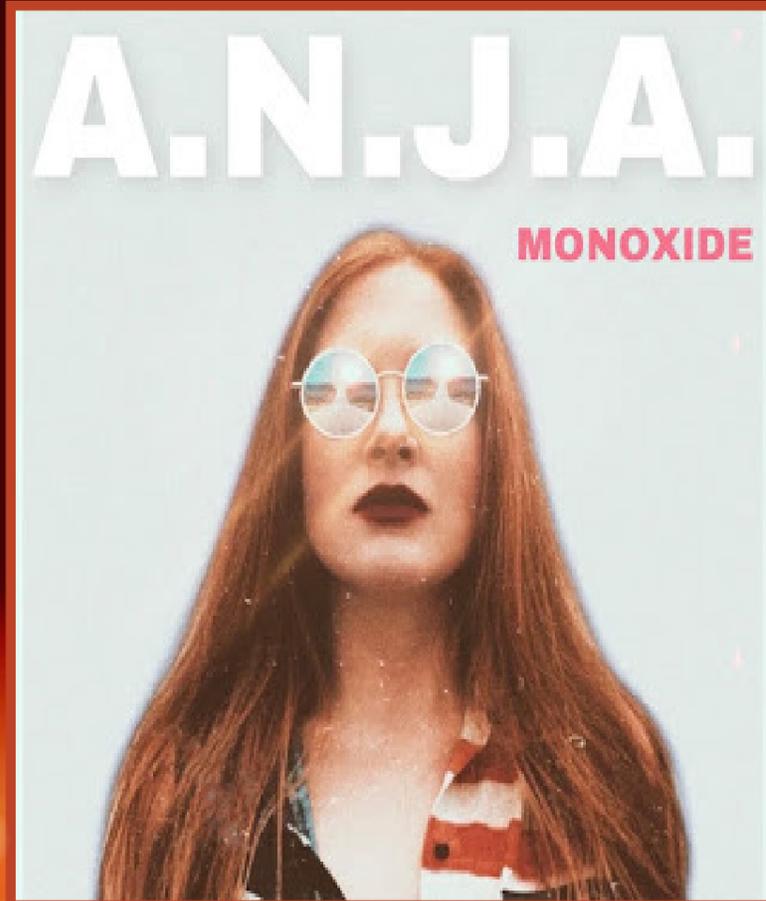
But how did this all begin?

"I've always been creatively inclined, but, even though my mum being a passionate singer for as long as I can

remember, my interest in music really only started a few years back after finishing my BA," Anja explains. "At the time, I felt a creative surge, picked up my old guitar that I hadn't played in years and I realized how much I loved connecting with people through singing."

Busking has never looked so cool, and that's because A.N.J.A is behind the steering wheel. Effortlessly combining the contemporary with a heavy dose of good ol' fashioned 20th century rock and roll, Anja Romer is not easy to forget - but what is it about the past that is so inviting?

"The spirit, the fashion, the aesthetic and a certain cool and free rock'n'roll way of life are all encapsulated in the psychedelic rock sound of that time, that thrills me," she enthuses. "The 60s and 70s were eras of change, uncertainty, sexual revolution and glamour. It's an exciting mix and you can hear that in the music."



"As singer St. Vincent said recently, we are currently finding ourselves in a similar time, things are happening and our mindset is changing. I want to bring the sexy, groovy acid sound back to 2021 but with a modern twist and an emphasis on female badassery and be part of a spiritual revolution."

Performing as a busker, Anja has cemented a following that extends far beyond a purely online scope. Yet, street performance is no walk in the park.

"Busking is great and it's terrifying," she says. "It definitely requires thicker skin and a lot of courage to go out there and place yourself amidst a sea of strangers that did not ask you to be there. It can actually make playing on stage feel like a piece of cake sometimes. But I have found people to be nothing but supportive and busking has been a lifesaver during the last year."

Indeed, after a tumultuous year for musicians, Anja believes that busking has given her a much needed boost.

"It has given me the mental strength and encouragement to keep going musically and reminded me that, despite what the governments might have made us feel, people value artists and live music very highly." Hailing from south Germany, Anja made the move to Belfast and pursued music. She holds a great deal of respect for her birthplace, yet embraces the sense of creative community found in Belfast.

"Germany, the land of poets and thinkers, has long been a fantastic place for creatives, and I think in the big cities that is still the case. Some great music has come from Germany in the last century."

"But even though with nowadays almost everything happening online (I mean, you can create and distribute your music from any place in the world, a log cabin if needed, as long if you've got internet!) where I grew up - a small town in the south of Germany called Ravensburg - I never found the place for me to create.





There is not much of a local music scene and live music is rare. Belfast is offering much more opportunities for me to play and connect on a local level."

When performing classic covers for the public, A.N.J.A never fails to give them a facelift. Her sultry vocals add a whole new meaning to familiar tunes that leave you with no choice but to stay. Yet, although fantastic, A.N.J.A is at her best when performing her self-penned originals. One of the songstress' greatest assets is her writing, integrating her dark

interests with darkly hypnotic riffs. "What inspires me creatively is true stories, tales and folklore. Within that it's especially the dark, weird, twisted and mysterious that draws me in. I am also an avid true crime fan because the abyss of the human mind fascinates me. I understand myself as a story teller. With my songs, I like to transport people into different worlds."

Which brings us nicely to her newest tasty song serving: 'Monoxide.' Released on the 25th June, the wonderfully fuzzy garage rock track makes for an extremely interesting inversion of the dangerous man/powerless woman trope oftentimes found in horror.

"Horror is my weakness!" Anja explains. "Even as a child, I always loved the thrill of a spooky story. We are voyeurs and we like to be entertained. I like to make my listeners feel that: a little tingle of unease from the comfort of your own safe space."

Inspired by night stalking serial killers and Tarantino's Death Proof, Anja takes control of the nightmare and instead embodies the driver and grabs the empowerment by both hands.

"In many of these horror plots and stories, as well as in real life crime, women are too often in the passive role of the victim. Before writing Monoxide, I had been on a true crime binge and felt frustrated. I was very taken aback by mainly male perpetrators recklessly ruining the lives of so many, especially women. I wanted to become their Lady Vengeance and bring a different angle to horror: the strong woman in the centre of power, toying with her victims. But also to have fun with it. Always the fun. In the end, I don't take myself too seriously. This is however not to lessen the seriousness of the reality of crimes against women in any way.

I hope young girls and women to feel empowered and inspired by my artistry. Don't go around abducting people, though. Listen to 'Monoxide' instead."

Thankfully, lockdown held no adverse power over the recording of 'Monoxide'

"I recorded 'Monoxide' at home with the help of my friend Jack McGarry who is an amazing audio engineer. To be fair, this had nothing to do with lockdown, it was always the plan to do it that way. My EP 'Digital Love Spells' was self-recorded by me in my bedroom, I like the DIY approach and to be independent."

"Now, for 'Monoxide,' however, I wanted Jack onboard to create a bigger, better and heavier sound."

Which, undoubtedly, has been achieved. 'Monoxide' is utterly triumphant, fun and atmospheric. A definite must have for fans of garage rock, as well as horror fanatics.

Anja continues to be incredibly busy, with ample plans to build upon her already impressive backlog of achievements.

"I am soon going to release the music video for 'Monoxide.' At the start of Autumn I will have another single out. I'm also hoping to be going back to gigging very soon and maybe put a live band together so that I can play festivals next year. Until then, you can probably find me busking in Belfast city centre on any half-decent day."

Brimming with stage presence, attitude and grit, Anja's brilliantly fierce femininity is a refreshing throat punch to the patriarchy.

Best Days with Hook

Hailing from Dublin, Hook are a three piece indie rock band destined for your record collection.

Their music's message is a simplistic one that packs a huge punch. Portraying the beauty found in the little things, Hook carefully perfects a tapestry of music designed to comfort and woo the listener. The mantra for Hook is beautifully frank - "focus on the positive, the light, the love that's out there".

We at STRANGER DAIS sit down with the band to discuss their track, 'Best Days', as well as the ins and outs of being Hook.

Who are Hook? And how was your name decided upon?

Hook are Eoin O'Donnell (guitars, vocals) Morgan O'Brien (drums) & Danny Spelman (bass, vocals). We called ourselves Hook because it was the shortest name we could think of. Short and sweet.

Who influences your band musically?



Each of us loves all types of bands. But the main list would be the Clash, Nirvana, Roisin Murphy, the Cure, Lou Reed, the Queers, the Smiths, Big Thief, Lucy Dacus. Loads more.

What makes a gig great to you?

When we can hear each other. And when people show up! You never know when a song will connect with people but when it does, its magic.

Tell us about your track, 'Best Days'! What is it all about?

Best Days is about the idea that when you're young people say they are the best days of your life. But more often than not they are days full of anxiety and worry. It could be for any time of someones life. Sometimes you're not having a good time and that's okay.

Is there a lyric from the song that stands out to you the most?

"Got my music and my headphones. Don't need anything or anyone. Not tonight I'm staying home. Big Thief, Ben Folds, The Ramones". Music can save your life!

What is Hook's ideal Best Day ever?

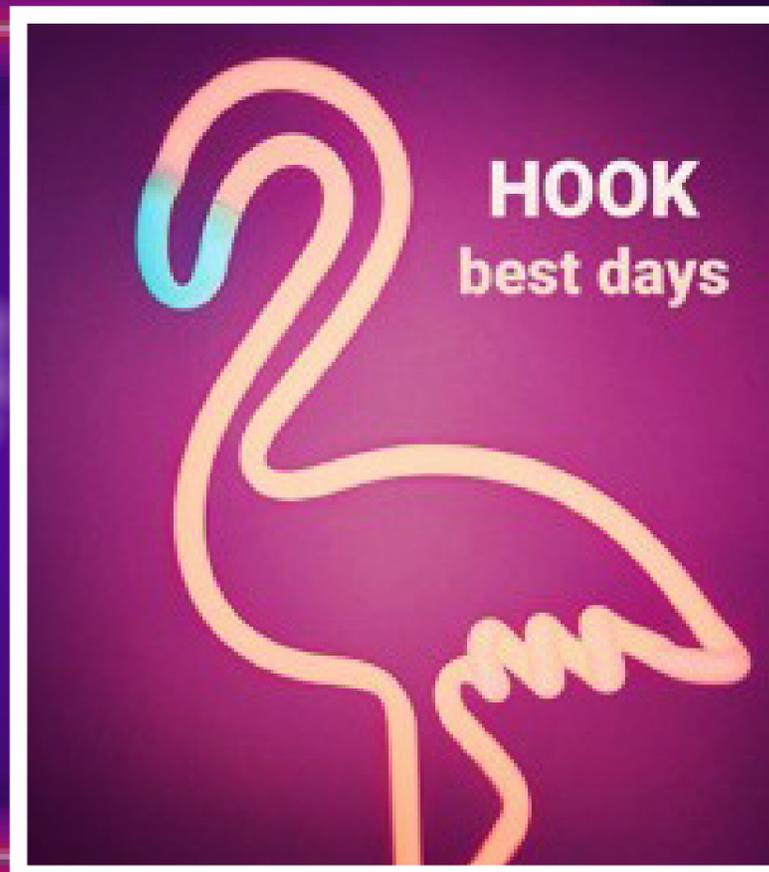
A show. On stage about 9pm. The crowd are up for it. The songs sparkle. A cold beer after.

What is next for you guys? How do we support you all further?

Our video for Best Days released on the 28th May.

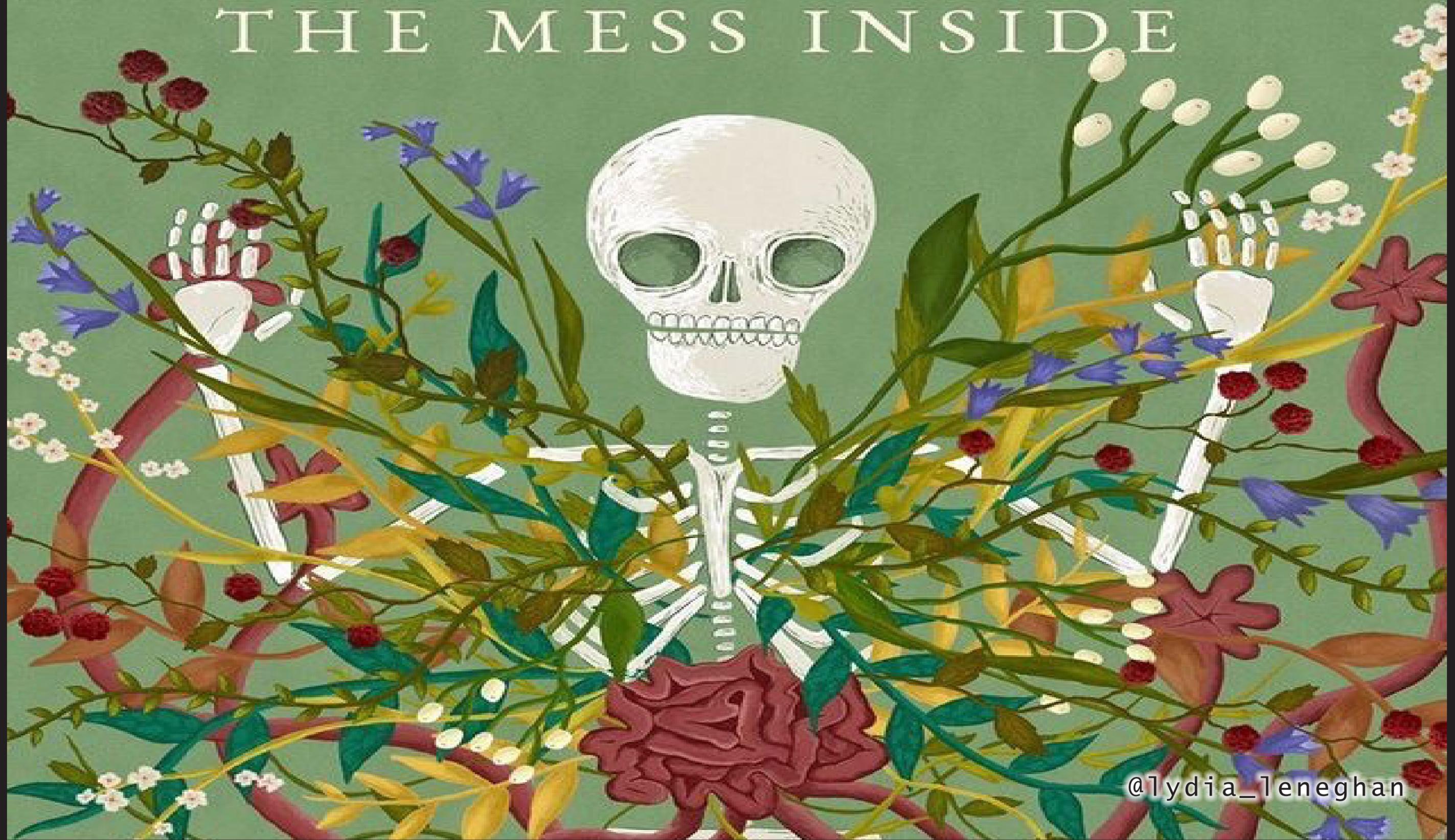
Check it out here. Hook - Best Days (official video) - YouTube

Lots more music coming soon. Follow us on twitter, instagram, facebook. Our handle is ListentoHook





THE MESS INSIDE



@lydia_leneghan

"AN IMAGE CANNOT REJOICE": In Defence of the Monkees,

by Jack Hopkin

Even today, more than fifty years since their mid-1960s heyday, there still exists a contingent of crate-digging music snobs who will snort derisively at the mere mention of the Monkees.

Conceived in 1965 by television producers Bob Rafelson and Bert Schneider to star in a 'Hard Days Night' style musical situational comedy called- of course- 'The Monkees', the band is seldom discussed with the same hushed reverence afforded to other recording artists of the day. The artificial nature of their formation and their cutesy initial image continue to conspire against them reputationally so that, in some circles, they still aren't taken seriously.

They didn't even play their own instruments, the critics might say. They were manufactured stooges with no creative control over their music. The 'Prefab Four', as the Monkees became known, were just exploitative imitations. They were bootleg copies of the mop-top era Beatles. They were bubblegum for children, not the real deal, far too squeaky clean and innocent to truly soundtrack the tumultuous times.

Such charges have hounded Micky Dolenz, Davy Jones, Mike Nesmith and Peter Tork since 1966, but the reality was- and is- that their band was among the very best of that fabled decade. And, despite the decidedly unhip and non-organic origin of the band, the Monkees nonetheless grew to become one of the most well-connected and subversive recording groups of the era.

Don't believe me? Here's what the F.B.I had to say:

"The television show 'The Monkees' is {REDACTED};" begins the recently declassified 1967 document warning of the anti-establishment dangers posed by the wholesome hitmakers.

"This series, which has been quite successful, features four young men who dress as 'beatnik types' and is geared primarily to the teenage market. During recent weeks, the four stars of the show have been making public appearance tours throughout the U.S."

"{REDACTED} that 'The Monkees' concert was using a device in the form of a screen set up behind the performers who played certain instruments and played as a 'combo.' During the concert, subliminal messages were depicted on the screen which, in the opinion of {REDACTED}, constituted left wing invocations of a political nature. These messages and pictures were flashes of riots in Berkeley, anti-U.S messages on the war in Vietnam, racial riots in Selma, Alabama, and similar messages..."

Of course, we're getting ahead of ourselves. For the sake of clarity it's for the best that we flash back two years earlier, to September 8th 1965, when Daily Variety and the Hollywood Reporter published the following advert:

"Madness!! Auditions. Folk & Roll Musicians-Singers for acting roles in new TV series. Running parts for 4 insane boys, age 17-21. Want spirited Ben Frank's-types. Have courage to work. Must come down for interview."

Interestingly, the Lovin' Spoonful of 'Daydream' and 'Summer in the City' fame had been considered for the project, but, what with them already signed to Kama Sutra Records, there was too much red tape to cross to seal the deal and a new group would instead need to be created fit for purpose- with some assembly required.

By the time the casting call hit the shelves, Monkee Number One had already been chosen, with the involvement of twenty-year-old Mancunian Davy Jones in the as-yet unnamed project having already been announced that July.

With his strong Manchester accent- then very much in-vogue given the proliferation of bands from 'across the pond' then filling the U.S charts, what with the so-called 'British Invasion' in full swing- his diminutive stature (allegedly at one stage he had been a jockey) and his youthful, non-threatening good looks, Davy Jones was an obvious asset given the project's objective of catering to the adolescent market. He was to be the band's teen idol, the pinup, the sensitive heartthrob lining the bedroom walls of swooning adolescent girls.

But Jones was not without musical merit, having already cut his teeth in 1962 playing the Artful Dodger in Broadway's production of 'Oliver!' Trivia fans will be intrigued to know he even performed in this role on the very same episode of the 'Ed Sullivan Show' that saw the Beatles' iconic American debut.

That left three more parts to be whittled down from the 437 hopeful applicants. Mike Nesmith, a tall and slender Texan with a southern drawl and a wry sense of humour, had been working as a musician since 1963 and endeared himself to Rafelson and Schneider when he arrived at the audition with his laundry bag in tow and wearing a wool hat to keep his hair out of his eyes. Both Nesmith and his hat made the cut.

Next up was Micky Dolenz, a former child actor who had starred in a 1950s children's show by the name of 'Circus Boy.' With some recording experience behind him as a member of a short-lived and unsuccessful band called 'The Missing Links,' Dolenz was alerted to the auditions by his agent and earned a place in the Monkees after he sang Chuck Berry's 'Johnny B. Goode' for the producers. He and Davy Jones would take turns- depending on the song- in assuming the role of the Monkees' lead vocalist.

Last to be cast was Peter Thorkelson, known professionally as Peter Tork, a Greenwich Village folk musician recommended to Rafelson and Schneider by his friend Stephen Stills, who had auditioned for the part earlier but had been rejected. The producers had asked Stills if he knew anyone with a similar "open, Nordic look" to his to take on the persona of a "loveable dummy" for the show, not unlike the comedic characterisation of Ringo Starr in 'A Hard Days Night' and 'Help.'

"For three months we practised our music. When you don't know a thing about music it's a little hard to keep the beat," recalled Davy Jones years later.

"I had never even picked up an instrument, but Mike, Micky, and Peter were great on guitar. We just played for something to do, and Screen Gems rented the instruments for us. We decided someone would have to play the drums and Micky volunteered, though he couldn't really play them- he couldn't keep rhythm. Peter got to be the bass guitarist because Mike didn't want to play it."

Early rehearsals showed promise, but with filming dates for the first series fast approaching in the spring of 1966, Rafelson and Schneider deduced that the band were not quite ready to handle the reins of musical freedom just yet. To that end, songwriting team Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart were enlisted to provide the band's material, and veteran session musicians 'The Wrecking Crew' hired to lay down backing tracks for the band to overdub their vocals onto.

The rest, as they say, was history; the first episode of 'The Monkees' aired on September 12th, 1966 on NBC and was an immediate ratings success. From the opening chords of that iconic theme song- and its prescient declaration of intent, "we're the young generation, and we've got something to say"- 'The Monkees' injected a playful blast of youth culture into staid television listings that still resembled those of the dusty 1950s, with Rafelson and Schneider utilising avant-garde filming techniques- jump cuts, improvisation, and breaking of the fourth wall- in the programme's production.

In typical campy mid-1960s fashion, the plotlines were colourful and fast paced, and any given episode could find the hapless Monkees embroiled in madcap scenarios involving spy rings, haunted houses, gangster's feuds, and robots as they struggled to make it as big. But, of course, it was the music that took centre stage and elevated the Monkees from copycat gimmick to pop cultural phenomenon.

Naturally, their early sound very much aped the Beatles, but what rock band in the middle '60s can claim to have not taken inspiration from the Fab Four's copybook? Anyhow, the show's writers wore their hearts on their sleeves and never shied away from reminding viewers that the similarity was very much intentional- one scene in the first episode even had Mike Nesmith take aim and throw a dart directly at a Beatles poster.

The first two albums, unimaginatively titled 'The Monkees' and 'More of the Monkees,' were released in quick succession, ostensibly intended as soundtrack albums for the television series to cash in on its huge success. They were eclectic affairs that reflected much of what was going on in the contemporaneous music world.

There may have been slight evidence of teeny-bopper pandering schmaltz (spoken-word Davy Jones vehicle 'The Day We Fall In Love' is difficult to defend unless you happen to be a teenage girl from 1966) but at their best these two L.Ps, effectively a single double album released only a couple of months apart, remain downright infectious even today in 2021.

Together, they included the Neil Diamond penned global hit 'I'm A Believer,' the proto-psychedelic sunshine pop of 'Saturday's Child,' 'Take A Giant Step' and 'When Love Comes Knocking At Your Door,' the country rock stylings of 'Papa Gene's Blues,' the fuzz guitar comic relief of 'Your Auntie Grizelda' and the garage rock snarl of the frenetically punkish 'I'm Not Your Stepping Stone.'

And, even in these embryonic stages, there was already a witty generational cynicism embedded within the songs chosen for the Monkees, even in their debut single, Boyce and Hart's 'Last Train to Clarksville.'

A near-perfect encapsulation of all that was great about the jangle pop of the era, the sunny façade cracks a little if you take the song's Clarksville to be the same Clarksville that homed Fort Campbell, headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division- then embroiled amidst the relentless meatgrinder of the Vietnam War.

It's a reading that certainly lends more weight to the lyric "and I don't know if I'm ever coming home." With the records flying off the shelves and millions tuning in each week to catch their latest antics, the Monkees seemed set to conquer the pop cultural world. There was just one problem: initially, the music was not entirely their own, something the Monkees themselves were not shy to own up to- they were only playing characters, were they not? Nonetheless, it was a revelation that fuelled a sizeable backlash when it came to the fore in the weekly music magazines.

The use of ghost songwriters, and, particularly, session musicians, was common in the mid 1960s, with bands such as the Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas and the Beach Boys all enlisting the services of the famed 'Wrecking Crew' at varying points of the decade for help in cutting some of their most enduring recordings. Why, then, were the Monkees so reviled for doing the very same thing?

The answer, in part, is because of misguided choices on the part of the band's management in attributing credits on the sleeves of their first two albums. Mike Nesmith in particular was not impressed. "The first album shows up and I look at it with horror because it makes us appear as if we are a rock 'n' roll band," he remembered.

So faint, in fact, was the input of the Monkees into their own recordings at this early juncture that the second album was rush released without their prior knowledge.

"Some girl came up with an album and said, 'Will you sign this?'" remembered Davy, "and we went, 'What is that?' She said, 'It's your new album!'"

"There's no credit for the other musicians. I go completely ballistic," Nesmith continued, "and I say, 'What are you people thinking?' The powers that be say, 'Well, you know, it's the fantasy.' I say, 'It's not the fantasy. You've crossed the line here! You are now duping the public.'"

"They know when they look at the television series that we're not a rock 'n' roll band; it's a show about a rock 'n' roll band. Nobody for a minute believes that we are somehow this accomplished rock 'n' roll band that got their own television show. ... you putting the record out like this is just beyond the pale."

The unlikely metamorphosis of the Monkees from miming sitcom characters to real gigging band was a transformation famously likened by Micky Dolenz as being akin to if Star Trek's Leonard Nimoy suddenly became Mr. Spock overnight. But that is exactly what happened.

Even as they began to be shunned by 'serious' music fans for their supposed lack of authenticity, the Monkees continued to practise and rehearse and bid for their own creative freedom and, before long, they were even playing live shows. Backstage prior to one gig two months after their debut concert appearance in Hawaii in December 1966, Mike Nesmith was approached by a reporter who asked if it was true the band did not play their own instruments, to which he responded "I'm fixin' to walk out there in front of 15,000 people, man. If I don't play my own instruments, I'm in a lot of trouble!"

Some of the backlash against the Monkees went beyond clipped dismissiveness and verged on outright hostility. Davy Jones remembered leaving an interview at the BBC during the Monkees' first tour and greeting a young intern with a cherry "How you doing, mate?"

"I'm not your mate," came the gruff response.

Tellingly, little of the ire directed at the Frefab Four came courtesy of their contemporaries within the music industry. If anything, many of the most prominent recording artists of the era counted themselves as fans- including the Beatles themselves, those "four kings of E.M.I sitting stately on the floor" as characterised by Micky in 'Randy Scouse Git,' the first of his self-penned song to be released by the band.

In fact, upon the Monkees' arrival in London, the Beatles even threw them a welcome party at the exclusive Speakeasy club.

Micky met with Paul McCartney one a one-to-one basis in early 1967, and the pair quickly became friends, often smoking marijuana together and, it is sometimes rumoured, dropping acid- one such trip apparently culminating with Dolenz hugging trees in London's Hyde Park during the night. "Paul turned out to be a tremendously real and likeable person," Micky told one interviewer in 1967. "He said that he watched and enjoyed our TV show and that he liked our records. That I think is a tremendous tribute."

"Micky knows what it's all about," added Paul. "I fully expect the Monkees to go from strength to strength. This is no here today and gone tomorrow group. The Monkees are going to surprise everyone."

George Harrison also praised the group, observing that "it's obvious what's happening, there's talent there. When they get it all sorted out, they might turn out to be the best." Indeed, Peter Tork would even go on to contribute to George Harrison's soundtrack for the film 'Wonderwall' in 1968. Mike Nesmith, meanwhile, became close with John Lennon, attending a number of sessions for the epochal era-defining Beatles album 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.' During a break between takes in recording the epic L.P closer, 'A Day In The Life,' Nesmith asked Lennon "Do you think we're a cheap imitation of the Beatles, your movies and your records?" to which Lennon reassuringly replied,

"I think you're the greatest comic talent since the Marx Brothers. I've never missed one of your programs."

Of course, the Beatles weren't the Monkees' only admirers from the rock deity strata. Peter Tork lived in Laurel Canyon and his house became a heady microcosm of the notorious late 1960s scene there, hosting wild parties attended by the likes of Cass Elliot of the Mamas and Papas, Harry Nilsson, Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy and Jimi Hendrix- the latter of whom supported the Monkees during their summer 1967 tour, much to the consternation of the squealing schoolgirls hoping only for a glimpse of Davy Jones. According to an ex-lover of Micky Dolenz, a party at Peter Tork's house meant that inevitably everyone would get obscenely high and, most probably, naked. Especially Tork.

Perhaps most curiously of all, even Frank Zappa, maybe the most outré underground counterculture personality of the day, was a self-professed fan, with Nesmith recalling that "when people hated us more than anything, he said kind things about us." Zappa even featured memorably in a cold-open interview sequence in a December 1967 episode of 'The Monkees' entitled 'The Monkees Blow Their Minds.' The scene in question had Zappa and Nesmith trade places and act in the role of each other. The former wore a wool hat and Nesmith donned a cheap wig and moustache and an even cheaper fake nose (with an amusing proclivity for falling off of his face) and, at the culmination of the 'interview,' Zappa (the actual Zappa, that is) demonstrated his musical abilities by 'playing' a car- smashing it and setting it alight- to the tune of 'Mother People' by the Mothers of Invention.

Such connections meant that it was only inevitable that the Monkees themselves began to associate themselves with the counterculture, and their very image began to shift from that of four wacky but ultimately clean-cut boys from next door to something altogether more bohemian in nature. Spines appeared along the back of a defensive hippie movement convinced that the Monkees were appropriating their subculture to cash in and remain relevant, but not only was their conversion to the flower power movement genuine, it was also alienating to their intended demographic- children. If anything, it represented the opposite of selling out.

"Dear Monkees, please don't become HIPPIES!" wrote one young fan in a letter published in a 1968 issue of the magazine 'Monkee Spectacular.' I love you just the way you are. Don't ever change, because I couldn't stand it all over again. You've always made me smile and laugh, that is, up until now. Now I'm worried about what's happening."

Another complained, "I think the Monkees look like hippies! Before, I thought they were the greatest, but now I'm not so sure. Since Micky has his hair curled and wears that thing that looks like a rug, he's not my favorite anymore. Mike and Peter aren't too bad but their sideburns are too long."

But the wider counterculture scene on the ground still wouldn't accept them. Despite being the best-selling band of 1967, the Monkees weren't invited to perform at the now famous Monterey Pop Festival in June 1967, and, by some accounts, some in the audience even laughed at Peter Tork and Micky Dolenz- both adorned in beads and the latter wearing full Native American headdress- when they nonetheless attended.

They were established enough in the mainstream, however, that hit records kept coming at incredible pace throughout the year. On the bestselling albums 'Headquarters' and 'Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn and Jones Ltd', the band could be heard growing more and more self-assured in both the realms of writing and performance, with 'Headquarters' track (and series two closing theme) 'For Pete's Sake' enshrining the ethos of the Summer of Love every bit as well as Jefferson Airplane's 'Somebody to Love,' and the latter's truly psychedelic 'Daily Nightly' featuring one of pop music's very first usages of the Moog synthesiser.

Lyricaly, "mountain sides put arms around the unsuspecting city" couldn't be further away from the "and then I saw her face- now I'm a believer" of six months prior.

They also continued to dominate the singles chart, albeit admittedly largely via recordings of songs penned by ghost songwriters.

"There was, in a way, two Monkee bands," Dolenz later observed of the strange disparity between the Monkees of the album chart and their hit parade doppelgangers.

"One was the cast of the television show that the producers had cast, and that were singing and playing on a lot of the early stuff- but we had no control over what was going to be recorded. And then, after we fought for the right to do the music and did 'Headquarters' - that was the other Monkees group. That was like, the Monkees group that was just us singing and writing and playing the songs that we wanted."

That the Monkees' singles were often not self-penned is not to their detriment- remember who wrote 'Twist and Shout'? Not Lennon-McCartney but Phil Medley and Bert Berns. How many 1960s bands and solo artists struck it big with songs written by Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell? What of the Holland-Dozier-Holland songwriting team behind the Motown hit steamroller?

Besides, it must be said that the Monkees and their producers had excellent taste when selecting their choice of material. Their superlative reading of Gerry Coffin and Carole King's 'Pleasant Valley Sunday' was excellence incarnate, peppered with barely concealed social criticism aimed at the the ever-present apathy of the 'status symbol land' inhabited by the American middle classes.

The John Stewart penned 'Daydream Believer,' meanwhile, may have been something of a return to the more conventional pop of the 'I'm A Believer' era, but the sheer joyous ebullience in Davy Jones' performance remains undeniable- even if British-born Davy later admitted to being unsure at the time of what a 'homecoming queen' was.

In the promotional video, the band can't help but to, once again, showcase their own meta self-awareness and dismantle the artifice of their own oft-mocked early image. Micky often, seemingly intentionally, misses the beat with his tambourine, sometimes even throwing his hand through the instrument's empty middle section, whilst Mike lets his tie drape over the strings of his guitar, making it all too clear that he is not actually playing a single note.

'Daydream Believer' was to be the penultimate U.S number one of 1967, usurped only by the Beatles' 'Hello Goodbye.' It was also the very last Monkees single to top the charts, their public high-water mark, the crest of the wave.

When the Monkees' television programme was finally cancelled in February 1968 (trust American TV executives to roll out the red tape when they're on to something good), the Monkees- with producer Bob Rafelson in tow- decamped to a resort in Ojai, California where, with the help of Jack Nicholson, they planned for a last ditch play for critical respect and countercultural integrity. Over the course of their weekend stay at the resort (apparently aided by a quantity of marijuana and L.S.D) they brainstormed into a tape recorder the basis of what would become the feature-length movie 'Head'

Released in November 1968, 'Head' saw those loveable Monkees finally cut their strings in brazenly angry fashion to such extent that the film begins with perhaps the only psychedelic suicide scene in cinema history.

Dashing panicked through a municipal ribbon-cutting ceremony for a brand-new suspension bridge, Micky Dolenz vaults the railing and tumbles in slow motion into the water below to the stately opening chords of the woozy 'Porpoise Song.'

"A face, a voice, an overdub has no choice, an image cannot rejoice" intone the song's lyrics as an unconscious Micky slowly descends into the depths. The frame becomes solarized and glows with glorious neon colours as a shoal of beautiful mermaids race to revive him.

The outcome of their efforts is left to the imagination as the scene shifts to that of a pretty young hippie woman kissing each member of the Monkees before declaring them all 'even.' Then comes a blast of scathing bile in the form of a montage disorientating in its resentful spite:

"Hey hey, we're the Monkees," the band chant altered lyrics to their theme song as a montage of TV screens display scenes from later in the film. "You know we like to please- a manufactured image, with no philosophies!"

Then comes undoctored footage of the infamous televised shooting of Vietcong suspect Nguyen Van Lém in Saigon. "The money's in, we're made of tin, we're here to give you more!" A woman lets out a bloodcurdling scream, apparently in terror, before the shot reveals she is a young fan at a Monkees concert.

The rest of 'Head' is no less psychotically weird nor less scorchingly cynical, a swirling bitter tapestry shot largely in clichés of old Hollywood sets, with the Monkees constantly breaking the fourth wall to comment on how fake it all is. Sonny Liston, Frank Zappa, Annette Funicello and Victor Mature all make cameos, Peter the loveable dummy punches a waitress, gentle heartthrob Davy freaks out and rampages through a studio after a swami tells him "I know nothing," and, all the while, the band are constantly pursued, assailed and imprisoned in a 'black box' by a myriad of mysterious antagonists.

That graphic footage of Nguyen Van Lém catching a bullet to his brain recurs throughout the film, which finally ends with the entire band jumping off the opening scene's suspension bridge to the cold waters below.

This time, however, there are no beatific sirens or chimeric colours- instead, the four Monkees are depicted trapped in a water tank on the back of a flatbed truck, beating their hands frantically against the glass walls as the truck pulls away.

'Head' was an avant garde masterpiece very much ahead of its time, but it eluded and confused audiences in 1968 with its drastic tonal shift from the television show- one can only imagine a twelve-year-old girl's reaction to such sour strangeness from the cuddly Monkees, whilst, once again, the hippies and heads it was devised to impress neglected to show.

It recouped only \$16,000 from its original \$750,000 budget- a box office bomb of unbelievable scale. 'Head' effectively marked the last unified gasp and the commercial death knell of the now faltering Monkees, but, at long last, they had made a coherent declaration of independence away from their "manufactured image with no philosophy."

'Head' also saw the Monkees look into the eye of the storm of a darker side to the Swinging 1960s. As was impossible to ignore, the '60s were days of rage and rapture wrapped in a sunny veneer, but, until 'Head', the Monkees had never been given the license to fully add their voices to the dissent.

One year before 'Head', a bag full of largely identical envelopes mostly comprising letters written by eager teenagers excited to make their impression upon their favourite Monkee arrived. One particular letter in the bunch, however, shook the group to the core.

"Dear Micky," it began.

"I'm nineteen years old. I have had one year of college... I always wanted desperately to be a singer and musician. I've appeared on television several times. Maybe if Vietnam hadn't entered my life I would be a TV star now.

"Everything was going fine for me. I had my girl, my education well under way, and I was making money on the side, singing and playing guitar. Then I got an invitation from Uncle Sam...

"I lost my best buddy over in Vietnam. A guy I had gone to high school with. He died in my arms in a muddy trench never knowing what it was all about... All I can remember is shouting, 'Medic, Medic!'- but no one heard me, Micky. It was like some terrible nightmare...

"The next thing I knew I was being jostled into an ambulance to a field hospital. The pain was awful at first, but, then, my legs just went numb... You see, I lost both my legs, both of them, above the knees.

"You've given me courage, believe it or not. I read where you have a chronic bone disease, yet you keep going on from day to day, never complaining. "Listen, Micky, we'll never meet," the unnamed author of the letter concludes, "but, maybe somehow through this letter, we will have a bond that will last between us that will last over the years- Vietnam. Signed: A Fan."

Even today, fifty years since their split- not counting the sporadic reunion concerts springing up from the 1980s onwards- and despite their enormous cultural impact and reach, the Monkees have still yet to be inducted into the prestigious Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, even though they have been eligible for inclusion since 1991.

In the time since, the Hall has elected to snub the Monkees, choosing instead to heap praise on many of the lesser bands from their era and beyond. For Davy Jones, who died in 2012, and Peter Tork, who passed in 2019, any eventual accolade- if there ever is one- already comes too late.

That the Monkees continue to be ignored is largely a result of the same musical snobbery that saw them ostracised by hip circles in the 1960s- half-baked criticism over their supposed inauthenticity and their bubblegum tendencies. Even though they did indeed play their own instruments, write their own songs, and forge their own image.

After all, the true Monkees story is not one of manufactured dishonesty and plastic artifice- it is of the machine becoming sentient and overthrowing its master. Original music advisor Don Kirshner was so incensed by the Monkees' unplanned autonomy that he ensured his next project, the Archies, were cast by cartoons- at least cartoons couldn't revolt.

In the sensible words of respected rock journalist Jon Stebbins, "The Monkees should've gone in that next class after the Beach Boys and the Beatles. And when it got into '66, '67, they should've gone in right then. Because, yeah, they were here and gone really fast, but their impact was massive. Massive.

"They dominated the biggest year in rock n' roll. They dominated it not because their stuff was, like, rammed down our throats and it left a bad taste; it's like their stuff was rammed down our throats and it left an awesome taste because it was so good!"

Its about time the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame swallowed their portentous pride and inducted the Monkees, that they received their deserved critical dues. They were undeniably one of the very greatest bands in a time of great bands.

Those four funny guys and their imaginary band that so desperately wanted to be the Beatles were, and remain, a vital cultural force not to be sniffed at- and, with 75 million Monkees records sold worldwide to date, it's abundantly clear that there are legions more daydream believers out there than serious critics would care to admit.



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SAM DINEEN AND SMILEY CLAYS



First of all, we're talking a year later! How have you been?

The past year has been a lot! For me this time has really meant a little bit of growth for The Jumble and time to take on creative projects, I've got back into creative writing and painting, and I've also started clay making (which is when Smiley Clays comes in).

How did the idea first spring to mind to take up clay work?

I'd seen a lot of videos online of people working with clay and it seemed so relaxing, I love the feeling of having something that I have created in my hands and I found that it was a process that allowed me to really switch off. Its hard to look at your phone when your hands are covered in sticky clay!

What is the significance of the name @smileyclays?

I thought it was cute! Some of my pieces have a little smiley face on and I took it from there. A lot of them are smiley little food items!



What was the first thing you made - and why? What has been the most special, sentimental thing you've made?

The first thing I successfully made was a little egg dish, but the most sentimental is probably my little family of cats! I made them on a really nice afternoon, sitting with my partner and listening to music I love.



How do you find time between your busy schedule with The Jumble to still be creative?

Its difficult! I hadn't made any items for a while there but I am getting back into the swing of things now. I've recently taken on an online part time diploma, so thats another thing to work on. I guess my genuine love for both The Jumble and clay making makes it all the easier, I love doing things that make me happy, even if they do make me super busy too.

Was it scary to announce a secondary creative venture, after carving a name for yourself as a journalist and writer? Or was it liberating?

It was liberating! I don't think there's any limit to creativity.

Finally, do you have any words of encouragement for people interested in taking up a new creative skill/hobby?

Do it! Or at least give it a go, if its not for you that grand- at least you tried! I think its amazing when people jump right in and see what they are capable of!



Me, The Made of Sea

By Megan Hopkin

I am water,
And therefore,
I am all.

My heart is not hard,
But it is vast
And filled to the brim
With unabashed bounds
Which ebb and flow
To the call of the Moon.
Quiet tempests crash and wreck
Havoc upon my requests
Yet, in so,
My coasts ache
Irrevocably.

I've known peace like no other.
When the sky is full,
I turn to glass -
Not fragile,
But beautiful.

My head is full of carnivorous.
White sharks
Call me 'home',
The same safe that feeds the dolphins
And seals
And seaweed.

I fall and fall back,
Into you, and out,
But you will always know where to find me.

Predictable?
I prefer punctual.
At the bottom of a glass,
Guarding islands,
Or ever within you.

Tides may change, yet I am always.

Me, the Made of Sea.

@meganmegusta

A Message From



by
Jack Hopkin

Cast your mind back, if you can, to the halcyon days before the Great Plague. The summer of 2019, more specifically, and a big ol bash at Ballymully Cottage Farm. You know the one.

Perhaps you were lucky enough to be there in the thick of it at Karma Valley back during the ninth Stendhal Festival and, no doubt, if you were, you can still recall all that made that distant August weekend so very special- the music, the colours, the children pirouetting in the straw. Most keenly of all, though, you probably remember the rain.

Oh, there was so much rain. Sporadic rainstorms of biblical ferocity slashed the site time and time again as though Moses had accidentally bum-dialled a plague on us. It wasn't long before parts of the Limavady countryside resembled the battlefields of Passchendaele, the fields sodden as they were with a sucking layer of mud that gripped your feet and begged you not to go.

Yet, the flexible resilience of Stendhal's organisers, the drive of the performers and the happy-go-lucky hardiness of the attendees coalesced to ensure that what could have been a disastrous wash-out instead took on a beatific life of its own. The town of tents became a community bound by shared endurance, mud-caked strangers sharing smiles and supplies, and, when it was all over, many even took the individual initiative to help clear the litter around the campsites.

As the citizens of Stendhal laughed and danced and slid through the mud to a varied soundtrack laid down by some of the finest live acts to grace Northern Irish stages, something became obvious to all involved: where there is a will, there is a way.

Of course, the difficulties overcome in 2019 were of small calibre compared to the hardships faced by the live events industry over the annus horribilis that followed over the following twelve months. For reasons no one needs reminding of, the tenth Stendhal Festival- without doubt the very best festival in Northern Ireland- could not proceed in 2020, and an already bare calendar for live music was all the poorer for it.

Undeterred, the Stendhal team nonetheless worked around the clock- in close cooperation with the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Help Musicians NI- to prepare for the festival's return in 2021, even as confused, conflicting, even downright indecipherable guidance pertaining to live music's fate this summer sputtered forth from the perennially out of touch Stormont bunch.

That is, until July 1st, when music fans and the good folks at Stendhal finally got the news they were awaiting with bated breath: live music would be allowed to resume from July 5th onwards.

With the Executive confirming the relaxation of COVID regulations in relation to outdoor gatherings, the Stendhal team say that they are ready, able and excited to welcome 2500 music lovers to Limavady's Ballymully Cottage Farm this July and a further 5000 on August 12,13 and 14. Stendhal will be the first major music festival to grace Northern Ireland in 16 months.

"We are buzzing to finally, finally be able to say we are 100% on for July," said event Director Ross Parkhill, "and I know that it's not just us that feels the same way. At long last our indigenous musicians, technical staff, crew and everyone else who works in the industry can start climbing the ladder back to normality. There is a way to go but knowing that the process has now started in earnest is an incredible relief."

Stendhal's July Event will celebrate the festival's 10th anniversary with performances from And So I Watch You From Afar, Lyra, Kila, Ciaran Lavery and over 60 musicians, comedians and family performers in total. Of course, whilst it does represent a step back towards normality, Ross was keen to point out that there will still be a few differences at this years' events.

"Obviously the biggest difference is capacity," he said.

"In 2019 we had 10,000 visitors on site and for July it will only be a quarter of that. We could run for more people in July, but we want to ease ourselves back into things because there are a number of new protocols around social distancing that we have to implement and manage, and we want to ensure that we get that spot on.

"Social distancing will be required, masks outdoors are optional but recommended, while masks in any indoor spaces will remain mandatory. We must ensure that campers remain in their bubbles in the campsites at all times and that people do not enter other bubble's tents. There is quite a list of things we must put in place and that our visitors must adhere to in order to make sure everyone follows all the protocols, which we will be publishing on our website and across social media very soon, so yeah it will be different but happily it will be."

"We cannot wait to celebrate the return of live music with everyone."

"We have an opportunity to get music back on the agenda and to keep it there, without any backward steps.

We have an obligation to ourselves, to the musicians and staff and to the public to make sure that we run this correctly and we are determined to do that," added John Cartwright, another key organiser for the event.

"It might not be our biggest event ever, but it will be one of our most important," he said.

Of course, at the time of writing the Stendhal Festival has not yet happened, but, by the time you read this, the first of Stendhal's two events scheduled for this summer will have already taken place over July 9th and 10th 2021.

Maybe some of you will have been there. No doubt it was beautiful. Many more of you will be there in August- we certainly will. To quote the apt half-century old words of Andrew Kerr, "it's a young year and a younger decade. Wear a hat made of happy thoughts."



Where there is a will there is a way. See you all in Karma Valley.



An Ode to Ódú

By Megan Hopkin

As many a yummy mummy would post on Facebook - the best things in life are worth waiting for. And, following a brief hiatus, Ódú is back to prove the proverb entirely right!

The pop singer-songwriter has cultivated a bright and beautiful persona through years of dedication to her craft. In 2016, Ódú released her debut single 'Different' before releasing her first EP 'Conversations' the following year - to great acclaim. In the years that followed, her shine only grew brighter - with UK and Ireland tours, extensive radio play and myriads of music to show for it.

Bursting back onto the music scene with her single 'Men Like Me', Ódú is ready to take you back to the 70s for a disco floor filler - with a twist. Indeed, Ódú's blend of floor filling synth and dazzling percussion, paired with emotionally vulnerable lyrics is a refreshingly modern ode to the past. Her soaring vocal performance cements 'Men Like Me' as the anthem for the summertime soiree we've all been dying for.

**Or, if you're like me, drinking with your friends with lots of sequins on.*

We are delighted to chat with her about her track, what it means to be Ódú, and how crying on the dancefloor is the hallmark of a great bop.

Tell us a little bit about yourself! What music do you love, what influences you as an artist creatively?

I have always loved pop music from an early age. I love pop music now, and I don't subscribe to whether pop is "good" or "bad"! I love a chorus that sticks in the head so I try to write with that in mind but overall melody is just really important to me as well. For me it leads the song above all else. I particularly love to marry heartbreaking subject matter with the soaring music and hooks because sometimes it's the best way to process the emotion. I'm inspired a lot by the nature of adulthood (cos it sucks a lot at times!) and how we navigate becoming the person that we are.

How has lockdown impacted your approach to creativity?

It's been interesting so far. To be honest I struggled a lot with creativity during lockdown. For me, songs come out of daily interactions with people, with sights, with experiences and with most of that novelty taken away and days bleeding into each other, I found myself stagnating a lot. It wasn't until I started collaborating with other artists through various side projects I got involved in that it started to pick up again. Sometimes knowing you have a deadline or only a certain amount of time to complete something really does focus the mind! After that, I started to get back into writing for Ódú again in a big way.

Your music evokes a lot of nostalgia, with a very modern twist - do you write with the past in mind? How do you manage to blend eras to make a sound so new?

Well first of all thank you! That's a lovely thing to hear.



I am hugely inspired by music from the 70s and 80s. It's the kind of music I grew up with in the house, and disco in particular was a genre I remember hearing a huge amount of as a kid. I particularly enjoy the specific sounds of 80s pop music with those almost kaleidoscope synthesisers, and bouncing funky bass lines like those in Madonna's early stuff produced by Jellybean Benitez. I aim to utilise elements of those sounds

but not to the point of pastiche and combine them with rhythms that are quite dynamic. I want the songs to be grounded in reality so the melodies and lyrics bring that element of modernity to it as well I think.

Your new song, 'Men Like Me' is dripping in disco - and we love it! How did this song come to be?

I have always had a particular love of sounds and rhythms that make you want to move in some way, so the rhythm guitar and bass you hear in most disco songs like Chic is something I've always tried to emulate even in very small ways, either by having a lot of movement in the basslines, or adding guitar flourishes here and there. For Men Like Me, I had the lyrical concept in my head for a few years, and I knew what the chord progression was going to be. But it wasn't until much later that I realised I should combine these two together. In my head I always thought it was going to be a mournful synth pop song but then I realised all the best sad songs make you want to cry on the dancefloor (or at least I think so!)

The track begins with the striking lyric 'I've been in love with men like me' - what is the significance of the lyrics of your track?

That line was inspired by how we trap ourselves in toxic patterns especially when it comes to how we treat people and how we treat ourselves. It can be quite easy to be cavalier about other people's feelings and rationalise it away but if the same happens to you, it completely floors you. You have to re evaluate all your past behaviour up until now and it's an ugly process. We can end up being just as bad as the people we demonise in our personal lives and when you come to that realisation, it's a very hard pill to swallow.

What does the future hold for Ódú - and how can we support you further?

The future is somewhat uncertain but in a good way! I think in the past I have weighed myself down with too much rigid planning but in light of covid and the fact that life can throw you a lot of curveballs, I just want to enjoy the writing and releasing process again and I think I am now! I recently signed with a publisher and I have a few more singles up my sleeve though so keep an eye out for those, and for now just keep listening and sharing the music with everyone you know! Every potential new fan is so valuable and I never take that for granted.





@jackhopkin

FACING THE MUSIC

ANONYMITY, THE INTERNET AND ROCK

It all began with my passion for heavy music. I'd always loved heavy music, and written heavy music - but I'd never released it or attempted to form a band for it. So, during lockdown, I began to experiment with new gear and new technology that allowed me to rerecord songs that were years old to a standard that I was finally comfortable with. I could finally be proud of them. I learnt so much from when the songs had originally been written, that I was sure that I could do it all myself.

I've always loved acts where there's no true 'figurehead', such as Burial and SNTS. I feel like the mystery brings about a type of allure that isn't there when you can put a face to the music. I also believe that it relieves a lot of the pressure and nerves that could come from having to 'face' the music.

There's a freedom in knowing that people don't know.



FIVEPOINTFIVE

@fivepointfivemusic

Anonymity may come with a price. It may be harder to grow an audience from being an internet only 'band', but that isn't my worry. FivePointFive isn't a conventional band, caught up in growing numbers. My only goal is to be proud of whatever I put out there, and if people enjoy it and want to support it along the way, that's a huge bonus.

I would love to play live, but I know I will never - because I want to play all the parts! I wouldn't want to sacrifice any of the instruments in order to play another. Maybe, in the future, a FivePointFive hologram could be in the works. That, or maybe Hatsune Miku can mime the songs for me.

The goal? To finally release the back catalogue of songs that have built up over the years.

My debut EP 'ONE' will be released on the 16th of July, and I'm currently working on a follow up concept EP called 'TWO' which I hope to release before the end of the year.

TIDES OF INTENSITY

Christopher Owens on Aeon Appropriation

- WHO

I'm Christopher Owens, writer/reviewer and spoken word extraordinaire. Having written reviews for The Pensive Quill, Metal Ireland (RIP), Chordblossom and The Quietus, I figured the time was right to start pushing my own works into the world. Such works includes my poetry, my prose and Aeon Appropriation, my spoken word project. Although I had previously been published by the excellent Bobby Walsh (in his book 'Voices', published in 2010), I have mainly focused on reviewing for the past ten years. Now, however, the time is right, thanks to Punk Noir magazine publishing some of my work and the imminent collapse of the Western world. The two may not be related.

- WHAT IS AEON APPROPRIATION

It's my spoken word project that entails whoever I choose to collaborate with. Such collaborators have been Ian Pearce (Devonian, Organs among many others), Matt Crothers (Man's Hands) and Kelvyn Williams (Mwydu). There are other collaborations lined up, one which I'm hoping will involve dub reggae, but we'll see. Ultimately, however, the collaborators must have a certain intensity to their sound that matches my writing. Of course, intensity can take many forms, be it drone, metal, punk, grime, which is why it's important to keep the project an ever shifting one, sonically speaking.

In terms of the name, I wanted something mythical, eye-catching and contemporary. And it sounds a lot better than The Hawaiian Shirts.

- THE BEGINNING

I have been playing with the concept since 2012. When I first started promoting gigs (under the name Down by Law Promotions), I envisaged myself up on stage, Bukowski style, reading to a room filled with punks, metalheads, indie kids, hip-hopers and techno types. Then the reality of promoting gigs in Belfast hit home fairly quickly! So it wasn't until 2017 whenever I decided to give it a go. Thankfully, Ian and Matt stepped up to the plate and delivered music that fitted the words 100%

- THE INFLUENCES

Influences would range from Eoin McNamee, Charles Bukowski, TS Eliot through to Killing Joke, Swans and Cabaret Voltaire. There are others, of course, but those are the ones that not only changed the way I read literature and listen to music, but they also put me in the mood to write and get me thinking. Within their works, there are endless universes that I connect with and am able to draw from for my own work.

With regards to an overarching theme or message, I like to think not. The reason I write this is because it can be possible to get bogged down in dealing with "important" themes and subjects, meaning that the craft and imagination end up taking a back seat. You can also find yourself closing off other avenues which could lead to the death of your creative spirit, as you find yourself endlessly rewriting your own work. However, I have been informed by some that they detect the theme of post-conflict Northern Ireland in my writing, and how the facades we see in our everyday life are often a lot more fragile than we think. Whether you get the same.

- LOCKDOWN

We were supposed to perform in the Black Box last April, but obviously that didn't happen. In a way, it gave me more time and more of a focus to write. Hence I was able to complete a book (and I'm currently talking to some publishers about it). I don't think the lifting of restrictions has altered my work, as I've now got myself into a routine that means I can balance work, writing and fun.

- SUPPORT AEON APPROPRIATION

By liking the Facebook page and checking us out at Bandcamp. Also, check out the Christopher 'Author' Owens Facebook page as well for all my writings.

SEE THIS TV?

By Christopher Owens (previously published in Punk Noir Magazine)

I'll keep running down these alleyways and underpasses until I obtain some kind of clarification, or purpose.

An old gambler eyes me up on Oswald Street, wondering if I'm worth tapping for £10. His devastated eyelids suggest intent, but the eyes denote longing.

Back on Jamaica Street, I walk onto the bridge, lit dark red. Both seedy and grandiose, the seeming contradiction of style registered.

I ponder how many times I have tread the same path in search of some form of salvation, or even euphoria.

My wrinkled hands hurt.

Time will come, but will it be what I need? Or even what I want it to be? Am I destined to sleep off the afternoons in search of nightly energy?

The old gambler has collapsed into a shop doorway. He eyes up the gutter, before mumbling about how he is a dream dad.



Elvis Aaron Presley was one of the most recognisable cultural figures of the 20th Century, affectionately dubbed 'The King of Rock and Roll.' Maybe you just had to be there to get it, because I think he's shit. 50 million Elvis fans can, as it turns out, be wrong. Of course, hindsight is a fine thing- and I don't profess to be an academic expert in 1950s music- but, to my ear, the music of Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Fats Domino sounds far more, well, 'rock' than the syrupy sop like 'Heartbreak Hotel' and 'Love Me Tender' that Elvis had a propensity for churning out. The 'King' was no pioneer, but he sure was whiter than the real granddaddies of rock, wasn't he?

Even on better recordings like 'Hound Dog,' 'Viva Las Vegas' and 'Devil In Disguise' (you know, the 'Lilo and Stitch' soundtrack), that big guitar of his was no more than a prop, something to hold and ham with whilst session musicians and ghost writers did all the heavy lifting. All the resultant free time and free money left our man free to shove peanut-butter slathered hamburgers down his throat, star in truly terrible films like 1965's 'Harum Scarum,' and release albums of concert 'banter' with all of the actual songs cut out (1974's very un-fun 'Having Fun with Elvis On Stage'), all the while getting wasted on pills and behaving so erratically that even Richard Nixon- lying, cheating, baby-killing madman Nixon- was weirded out to fuck by him. You see, Elvis wasn't just shit on record; he was also a full-blown shit himself, leading a life of excess, debauchery and noncery that famously ended trousers-around-ankles on a harrowed Graceland toilet seat. Maybe you already agree, but if you don't, allow me to elaborate a little before you hunt me down. We'll start our evening roast by pointing out that the big man had a juvenile fixation with police officers of officers and the authority they wielded, often affixing a blue light to the top of his car and pretending to 'patrol' Memphis.

This behaviour went beyond childish hobby.

He pulled over those he suspected of speeding and listened to police radio, even going so far as to unhelpfully and inappropriately race towards accidents and crime scenes to fulfil his fuzz fantasy.

Obviously, impersonating a police officer is very much illegal- and, in the case of the notoriously erratic Elvis, it was downright dangerous.

See, Elvis was a major gun nut. He was also paranoid as fuck- a Sims character combination that never tends to mix well.

It's a minor miracle in itself that the King never blew anyone away on the pavement over some perceived violation, what with how he even felt it necessary to pack concealed pistols in his boots when he played live- just in case one day, after carrying out an ocular pat-down on a room full of his

adoring fans, he'd deem it necessary to unload two full clips into them.

Mr Presley's obsession with cops is what brought him to the Oval Office on December 21st, 1970, when he pleaded with the President to give him a badge from the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

"The narc badge represented some kind of ultimate power to him," Elvis' long-suffering wife Priscilla Beaulieu later wrote in her memoirs. "With the federal narcotics badge, he believed he could legally enter any country both wearing guns and carrying any drugs he wished." Ever the hypocrite and ass-kisser, Elvis also

wanted to be promoted to the status of 'federal agent at large' to infiltrate the then-widespread hippie-oriented drug culture- an unlikely proposition what with how unfit he already was by this stage, his own opiate induced unreliability, and the fact that the only thing more conspicuous than someone wearing a wire at a drug deal would be fucking Elvis Presley wearing a wire at a drug deal. Arriving at the White House in a purple velvet suit with a huge gold belt buckle, Elvis' present for Nixon- a mounted Colt .45 pistol- was immediately confiscated by the Secret Service, but the King was granted an audience with the president anyway. Elvis proceeded to show Tricky Dick his collection of police badges like a child showing off a nearly finished sticker album. Apparently, no one had thought to tell the King that the Beatles had broken up some eight months ago, because



he then proceeded to complain about how they represented a "real force for anti-American spirit." Nixon agreed, arguing that "those who use drugs are also at the vanguard of anti-American protest"- probably unaware that the suck-up bitchboy in front of him was essentially a walking pharmacy.

Elvis got emotional and came *this close* to getting on his knees and kissing Nixon's feet, declaring "I'm on your side" and claimed to have studied the drug culture and "Communist brainwashing"- which in reality likely means he had slightly more drugs than usual for breakfast one morning and watched John Wayne's 'Green Berets.'

Then he swooped to seal the deal- "can I please have a Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Badge," he probably asked, pushing together his ample cleavage to soften Pharoah's heart.

"Can we get him a badge?" the Vietnamese butcher asked his aide. It was Elvis' lucky day! Hurray! The King threw his arms around the President- no, he actually did- and everyone lived happily ever after!

Of course, the badge gave Elvis no real jurisdiction but, rather pathetically, he was content to believe it did. Do you think Elvis is a shit yet? Not fully convinced? He's just a bit eccentric? Okay, maybe I've been a little too gentle thus far. Let's delve into the more sinister material.

As the widely circulated stories go, the only thing Elvis loved more than his dear old momma was young girls. Its common but conspicuously ill-discussed knowledge that Elvis was 24 when he met his future wife, the then-14-year old Priscilla, and that he had an intense preoccupation with virginity- even when the two eventually got married in 1967 as historian Joel Williamson writes, he treated her virginity as if it was something he needed to maintain and the pair would "make love in various ways short of full intercourse."

As goes without saying, however, Priscilla was far from the only young girl Elvis had eyes on. Once, he asked the mother of another 14-year-old girl he liked if she could move to Graceland with him, reasoning that he just wanted "to raise her. ... I want her there as my wife."

Meanwhile, on tour, he liked to keep a small harem consisting of three 14-year-olds kept at hand for pillow fights, tickling, kissing and cuddling. Sometimes, Williamson also records, Elvis liked for them to dress down into white panties for mud wrestling sessions in which he would also compete.

One 17-year-old fan that Elvis seduced almost overdosed in his Palm Springs house when the King plied her with drugs. She suffered permanent brain damage but wouldn't sue out of loyalty to The King- who also had a sordid propensity for spying on other unknowing couples whilst they engaged in intimate acts, even having a two-way mirror installed in one of his houses in Hollywood.

With such a stellar track record, it isn't at all surprising that Elvis was also prone to violence. On one occasion, he threw a pool cue at a woman who interrupted a pool game, severely injuring her breast. Later, in the mid-1970s, his then-girlfriend tried to leave his estate to visit friends, prompting him to take out one of his many guns and fire shots at the car. On another occasion, he had an aide let out the air in her tires and threatened to lock the gates of Graceland to keep her in.

Elvis' death on August 16th 1977 at the relatively young age of 42 preserved his aviator-glasses-and-jumpsuit-wearing caricature in ether. Nostalgia and grief amongst Elvis' fans continue to conspire and to smoke-screen- often unintentionally so- the less savoury elements of Elvis' life (of which there are many more than recorded here) to the extent that he has become one of pop culture's ultimate unkillable sacred cows. He's dead but he won't die.

Elvis is shit. I said what I said. Bring forth the pitchforks. I'd much prefer to listen to the Monkees anyway.



ELVIS PRESLEY IS SHIT

By Jack Hopkin

IF AND WHEN, BACK AGAIN!



Almost a year has passed since we last chatted with If and When - a five piece from Cork that simply oozes alt-pop prowess. The group captured our hearts with their dedication to their craft, their incessantly catchy tunes and infectious enthusiasm for music - and this year they have not failed to deliver more impressive musicality to the people.

Indeed, If and When has us all dreaming with their debut EP, Head in the Clouds. Full of spacey guitars, groovey melodies and impressive vocals destined for the festival stage, If and When are set to hit live venues hard once limitations are lifted.

What follows is a catch up with the wonderful folks of If and When, celebrating the now and bracing themselves for the future.

It's been a year since we last spoke! How have you all been? Has If and When evolved in this time?

It has indeed been a year, quite a one at that ! I believe lockdown and the current world fandango has knocked everyone flat on their backsides, especially musicians. However, I feel our EP release retained some of the momentum and kept things alive !

You released your first EP this year, Head in the Clouds - congratulation! How did you come up with the concept of this album? Did lockdown impact the recording process at all?

Thank you! Our EP release has been amazing- the response we've gotten has been incredible, and really helped raise our spirits given that live performances

have been off the table for quite some time. I suppose our band doesn't tend to begin with any particular concept- rather just a collection of ideas that merge over time. We'd like to think our songs are just individual pieces of ourselves- ideas, writing, beats and melodies that synchronise! In a way, the concept is a mosaic of our musical abilities and life experience. This EP focused a lot on self discovery- both how that can be a beautiful and terrifying thing at the same time, and finding yourself in that period.

Is there an over arching message to the EP?

Hmmm.. an overarching message. I suppose that self discovery is a journey, and not always the prettiest road. It will have its ups, and for sure downs, but every section of our lives exists to teach us a lesson. Collectively, our experiences make us who we are, and that isn't always the worst thing.

Is there a song you're most proud of?

That's a tough one. Is it appropriate to say we love them all? Jokes aside, the song we are most proud of would be Mislead my Mind. I feel the song has an almost running feeling to it- and is written from the perspective of someone who struggles with understanding their identity and place in the world. As a band, the overall feeling was that was the song that would be the most relatable to our listeners, especially given the positions we've all found ourselves in throughout COVID.

Since we're almost free from lockdown, what awaits If and When?

It's been a LONG time coming ! We're pretty excited as a band to get stuck into anything and everything as soon as lockdown pays us its goodbyes- with the easing of restrictions it's become much more of a possibility for us!



Dear Darren Shan (Or, if you prefer,
Daken O'Shaughnessy)

I know you probably hear this a lot, but
I'm ~~your~~ your biggest fan, I'm not just
saying that, I am. I'm an eleven year old
girl called Megan Hopkin, and I adore your
books. No, I'm not a boring idiot who
never goes out, I'm normal. But my friends
don't understand when I talk about the Demonata
Saga and start to talk over me about football
or Hockey. They want to be footballers or
actors or singers when they grow up, but
I want to be a director or writer of
Horror novels or films. Am I weird? I don't
think so. One girl, though, who sits beside
me and really likes your books too!
PLEASE can you give me and
Yes I think her back names hard to spell too!
With loads of admiration,

Megan Hopkin. P.O. +

I live at

REDACTED
REDACTED
REDACTED

If ya send the auto graphs to my
house, ~~that'd~~ that would be great!
Post code REDACTED



UNRAVELING ORIAN

Having previously cut his teeth performing as Joey Ryan for close to a decade, 2019 saw the artist morph into ORIAN. Shedding his previous folky roots in favour of a more alternative and atmospheric flavouring, ORIAN has certainly not disappointed. Enjoying ample accreditation from national and international radio as well as playing alongside more musical heavy weights than you could shake a drumstick stick at, the indie artist's rise to fame is on the up and up.

ORIAN's latest musical offering, 'Jewellery Box', is yet another credit to the rising star's discography. Working closely with Grammy award winner Erik Alcock (who has worked with an eclectic mix of Eminem, Celine Dion, and Pink!), the introspective and heart touching track is a love letter to his past. Slow building and beautiful, the song's stirring sentimentality is sure to cement the importance of ensuring love spans distance - especially amidst lockdown.

We at STRANGER DAIS caught up with ORIAN, discussing his illustrious career and the new track.



How would you describe ORIAN to someone who hadn't initially heard you?

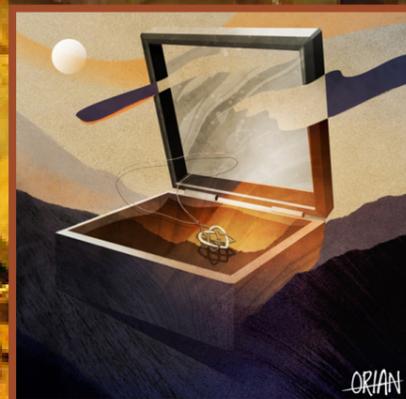
ORIAN is a indie pop fusion of guitars, vocal layers, synths and electronic soundscapes, with lyrics that focus on emotional subjects from my life, thoughts and the world around me. I love strong and memorable melodies, and try my best to create a soundscape in each song that drags the listener in.

If we were to have a mixing pot of artists to curate ORIAN, who would you throw into the artist soup?

I think ORIAN definitely has a mix of indie/singer songwriter but also some rock in there. Some artists that make up the ORIAN soup would definitely be The National, Phoebe Bridgers, Bon Iver, Nina Simone, Bruce Springsteen and Metallica. I think whilst some of the influences mightn't be so easy to hear, to me they are in there in subtle ways. Perhaps on some tracks it is more evident than others, but I think the above mentioned artists are always close to my heart when I am writing and in the production process.

Many may have known you as Joey Ryan, your name and also the title which you had performed under for a significant amount of time. What was the significance of ORIAN as a name change? What does the new identity mean to you?

After performing as Joey Ryan for so long, I started to feel restricted creatively and musically by using my own name. It also started to be somewhat embarrassing for me when people asked me what my 'band' name was, and I had to explain to them that it was just my own name. I felt really uncomfortable saying this, and over time I guess I built it up in my head. The idea to change to ORIAN came from wanting to explore a new sound, and in a way to be able to creatively hide behind the name so that I could say what I wanted to say with a bit more of an anonymous vibe. And technically, it is still my last name as Gaeilge, so while it does provide me enough distance to write honestly, it still is a personal and meaningful name for me.



What influenced your decision to sway from your folky roots into a more alternative style?

I think moving to Germany and having the freedom to completely start from scratch on not only my musical identity, but also my personal identity really encouraged a massive change in my attitude towards things, and influenced big changes in my taste of music, food, art and general interests. Moving to another city alone changes you, and challenges you in ways that you might not have been challenged before. Certainly for me it was both terrifying and thrilling, and it changed me in a positive way as a person. After a while, I just suddenly realized that the music I was enjoying listening to was miles away from the music I was writing. I realized that I had outgrown and felt restricted by the classic singer songwriter route that I had been following. It was a scary yet liberating feeling I guess. I didn't really know what way I wanted to go, and to be honest I don't think it was until my third single Ask You twice that I really felt I had found my path.

In your time, you have toured with some huge names (JET, Bastille, Georg Ezra, to but name a few). Is there a standout artist for you that you enjoyed working with most?

One of the earliest artists that gave me support and offered me support gigs with them were Mick Flannery and John Spillane. Both those guys are incredible writers and performers in their own right, but they also treated me so well and gave me the confidence to grow on stage by giving me those slots, at a time when if I am being truly honest, I probably didn't have the skills to be sharing stages with them both. But I ended up playing support for both Mick and John multiple times so I really appreciate the exposure and opportunity they gave me in those early developmental years.

Your track Jewellery Box is a stunning ballad dedicated to family. How was the writing process for you? Was it easy to be as emotionally vulnerable in your lyrics, or was it tough? How was the song recorded amidst restrictions?

I was very lucky in the sense that we recorded all the material that we had planned to release in 2020/2021 in December 2019. It was mixed and mastered by the time my German tour in February 2020 was over, just before Covid hit. So thankfully we were able to proceed with our release schedule as planned without having to deal with working remotely or worrying about putting people's health at risk. I wrote the song with my friend Erik Alcock, who also happens to be a Grammy award winning songwriter who has worked with Celine Dion, PINK! and Eminem to mention a few. I think it was our third writing session together and as always with Erik it was a very fun and pleasurable experience. I think we just spoke about how we were feeling on that day, and I told him about this old Jewellery Box that my mom had when I was young and how I remember seeing her get ready for work when I was waiting for her to drop me off at school. That sparked the idea of the first verse, and it went on from there. I am super proud of how this song turned out.

Finally, what are your plans for the future now that gigs are becoming more viable once again? How can we support your work?

I still have some shows that have been rescheduled in Poland from May 2020, so I am hoping we can get some solid dates in the book for that soon, but otherwise I would of course love to go back on tour, but I do think it is going to be difficult for the foreseeable future for artists to arrange tours until the total recovery from the pandemic subsides. However I am hopeful and will appreciate being on stage so much the next time I am offered the opportunity. The next thing for me is the release of my EP in July, so I am just looking forward to getting that out into the world before starting on the next phase.



Am I Right by Telquist

And in the end, I will lose - am I right?
Bread and circuses will tranquilize me and you
And you believe it's me
In five years we will take other placeholders to the sea
Am I right? Am I right?

She will touch his ears and his eyes and his heart and she
means it
They're sharing inside jokes and they're talking of the same
things
They have travelled seven seas, stunning blue seas, blue and
wild
As drunk lovers they became reconciled

I'm fighting the feel / I will lose
Am I Right? The world is big and I'll be gone (2x)

Oh who knows what the future will bring, yeah
Tonight we won't think about it
Let's be drunk boys, drunk boys sing
And drunk people talk and drunk people flirt and drunk people
feel
Now he takes another girl to the sea

I'm fighting the feel / I will lose
Am I Right? The world is big and I'll be gone... (2x)
Am I Right?



Hailing from Regensburg, Germany, Telquist has successfully bridged the gap into international waters - with his prior track, "Mojo", being Shazamed over 20,000 within the last year. With mainstream radio charts to his staggeringly impressive Spotify following, the pressure was sure to have been felt to deliver - and "Am I Right" ensures that Telquist's reputation remains intact.

"Am I Right" is a self-assured step into trap, brimming with melancholic beauty and urban chic. The modern production behind the track infuses bittersweet laden lyrics with an atmospheric vocal from Telquist that's sure to peak the interest of listeners.

One thing's for sure - we at STRANGER DAIS hope to see Telquist on stage in Ireland some day soon!

Want more? Be sure to check out Telquist's new album, "Wild Haired", released just last month!



The stage is set for an unforgettable homecoming - and Sebastian Eggerbauer is ready to take on the world!
Performing under the pseudonym Telquist, the young musician has been working incredibly hard to build upon his impressive backlog of inspiring indie hits.



@matthew_mcvicker

WAITING FOR LIFE TO HAPPEN

a foreword by John 'Wohn' Wisener

Hey!

So, the EP is titled "Waiting For Life To Happen".

It comes out on the 16th July.

The general inspiration for the EP came from the incessant desire to release an EP that was more professional, polished, and, overall, a better representation of the sound I'm trying to achieve.

I worked with my dear friend: producer and mix engineer One Eye - who has helped me with previous releases 'Glass Eyes' and 'Refuse Relapse'.



Each song sort of has its own separate meaning, lyrically and musically. But the overall theme revolves around using alcohol and other substances to cope with mental health and life issues.

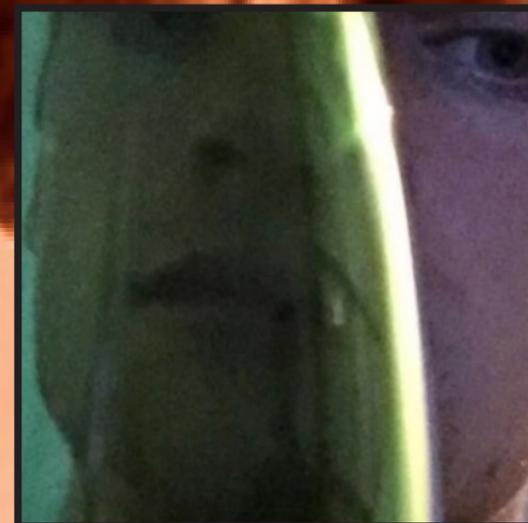


My favourite (personally!) from the EP is 'Get Away Stay Away', which lyrically describes the absurdity of life and the utter confusion of existence. Especially, the transition from teenage years to adulthood, and the depression that blended through. It's quite an emotional song!

The first track, 'Junjito', is about an ex friend of mine who was recently ousted as a sex offender. The song was driven by pure anger, written on the night I found out, and conveys the utter disgust me and my other friends feel towards him.

Another notable theme lays within 'Fuzz Face Happy Place', which is about being depressed, and, in turn, bringing those around you down.

The EP, fortunately, didn't present many issues. Except when the DAW I used to record decided to delete one of the tracks files (Fuzz Face Happy Place) the night before I needed to send it off! I had to re-record everything.



The whole EP was written and recorded from home, and, in turn, sent over to my mix engineer to mix it!

WHAT ITS ALL ABOUT

*Dale Armstrong on
Miss Belfast Sunshine*

In early 2021 I decided to ever so slightly dip my toe into the recording music scene by releasing a 4 song EP.

I had been a part of the live music scene for 6 years and while I had always had ambitions to record music, it was never something I actively pursued. But along came our new viral foe, Covid. The live music scene came to a stand still, artists were out of work and out of their minds. So what does someone who spends the majority of their time singing to people do when that all goes away? They go into a nice cosy studio and sing into a microphone for a producer.

When I released the EP I really didn't expect the response that it got. And I know that's such a "musician" thing to say, but it's true. I expected the majority of streams would be from my mum, and to be fair they were (Thanks mum). But around a week after the release I started to get messages from radio DJs around the country asking me to send them the tracks, then from DJs worldwide. The phone started ringing with journalists who were interested in my story, including the lovely folks from Stranger Dais.

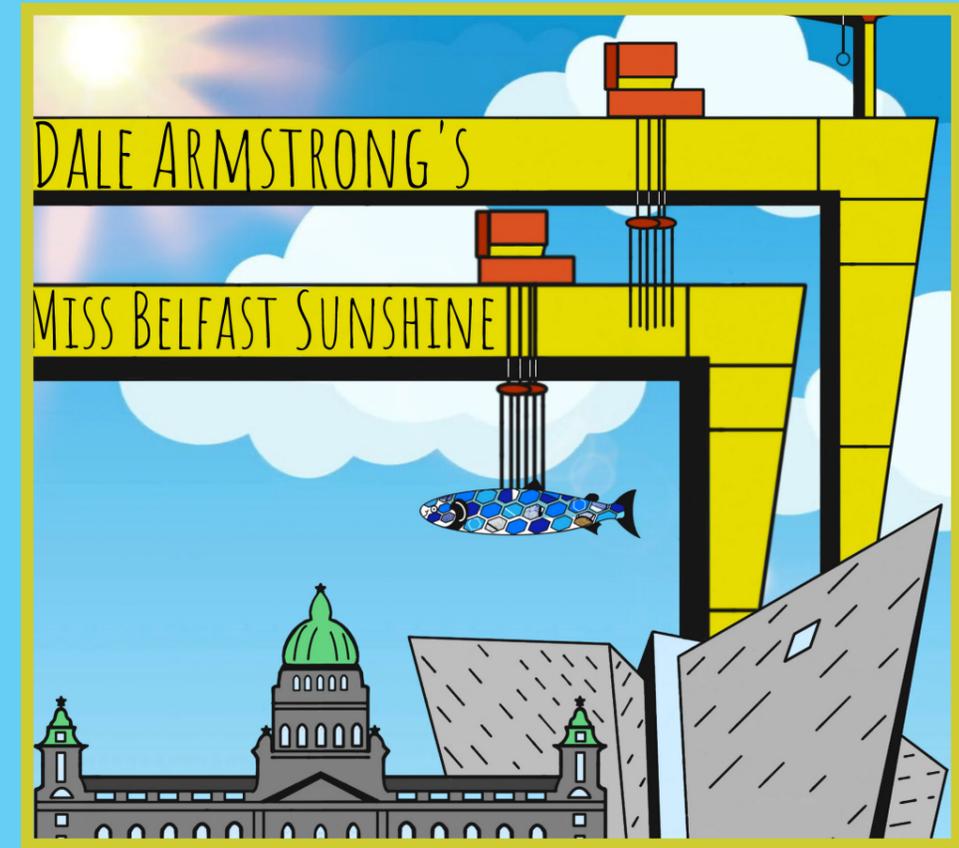
Throughout the whole process the one question that kept coming up was "When are you going to release your own material?"

When indeed.

I had been writing lyrics for years. Some were full songs, some just random lines scribbled down in a book, some were country, some were prog rock. But were they good?

The thought of putting something out into the world that is so personal is a scary thought. But if this past 15 months, and certainly my own personal journey over the past 26 years, has taught me anything its that you have to go for things head on because one day you might regret not taking the opportunity.

I had an unfinished song that kept jumping out at me and begging me to finish it. The chorus was catchy, but the verses were scattered and messy. I finally decided that it was time to get moving, I sat down and finished the song that had tortured me for years in 15 minutes.



The song became a story about a lonely man in a Belfast bar who falls in love with a beautiful woman that lights up the room when she enters. 'Miss Belfast Sunshine' had finally come together.

I got working with a fantastic producer and composer called Seamus McPeake and we came up with a bouncy irish sounding melody. It took me right back to my early memories of listening to the irish country legends in my Nans house. The song is also a homage to my hometown too. The people and places of Belfast have given me so many of my best memories. And theres no denying the craic is always mighty on a night out.

And so here I am now, getting ready to release the single officially on 9th July. Already it has had an amazing response both with radio play and youtube views. My friend and work colleague Barry Killen has designed a fantastic piece of artwork featuring some of Belfast's most famous landmarks.

I couldn't be prouder of the song. Is it a lyrical masterpiece? Absolutely not. But is it fun, does it make you want to dance, most definitely. And for me that's what it's all about.

the
rainbow



project

JUST CAUSE: THE RAINBOW PROJECT

"The Rainbow Project is devoted to promoting the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people and their families in Northern Ireland, as well as those questioning their orientation or gender, through partnership, advocacy and the development and delivery of appropriate support services."

Established in 1994, The Rainbow Project was conceived by a group of volunteers who were eager to curb the spread of HIV within the gay male population in Northern Ireland.

Armed with information, the volunteers sought to support men who had had sex with men about HIV and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, as well as committed themselves to research amidst the gay and bisexual communities regarding what type of information and support services were required.

As a result of this research, the project expanded to also tackle the lack of information regarding sexually transmitted infections through the distribution of safer sex materials and leaflets at commercial gay venues and LGBT events.

It soon became clear that service-users required additional support needs relating to their physical health, as well as their emotional well-being.

From then on, The Rainbow Project offered professional counselling services to gay/bisexual men, and those unsure of their sexual orientation. They also sought to offer practical interventions, including advocacy support, for men who had been discriminated against or been assaulted in any form due to their sexual orientation.

To this day, The Rainbow Project is continuing its crusade in prevention of HIV and STI transmission among men, yet are also committed to addressing the physical, mental, and emotional needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people in Northern Ireland.

The Rainbow Project are dedicated to the cause of HIV Awareness, marriage equality, supporting refugees and asylum seeker support networkers, challenging the discriminatory barriers of blood donation and conversion therapy - amongst so many more issues that challenge the LGBTQ+ community.

To follow their work, make a donation or to get involved, be sure to check out The Rainbow Project's website.

<https://www.rainbow-project.org/>



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STRANGER DAIS

