

ASTRO

CROYDON ISSUE



FASHION — MUSIC — STREET — ATTITUDE

CONDITIONS

a low cost studio programme for artists

CROYDON

conditions.studio
conditions.shop

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Londoners have deep-rooted loyalties to the areas from which they come. Throughout the making of this issue of ASBO, I have learned that those residing in Croydon are no exception. With its ever-growing population of nearly 400,000 people, it's not difficult to see how this multicultural, diverse town is bustling with community spirit and synergy. A fourth of that number is comprised of young people, who act as the lifeblood to progress ideas, beliefs, and culture forward in society. Despite the many myths surrounding its reputation, floating above Croydon's South-London skyline of polarising brutalist architecture lies an undeniably auspicious future.

With the status of the pandemic in the UK seemingly coming to a close, fashion, art, and culture are now being re-injected with an influx of new ideas born in this strange time. I'm sure many artists are eager to show precisely why they didn't retrain. Boris, your next job could be out of office (you just don't know it yet).

All jokes aside, we at ASBO want to send our heartfelt condolences to anyone and everyone who has been affected by the difficulties of this past year. The global tragedies it has brought and continues to bring are a devastatingly

cruel reminder of the fragility of human life. Despite the negativity, people of all ages have gained a newfound appreciation and understanding of the importance of life, love, community and friendship. Through sheer resilience and the ability to keep calm and carry on, many of us have reconnected with our most intrinsic and inherent values, even if at times the uncertainty did drive us insane.

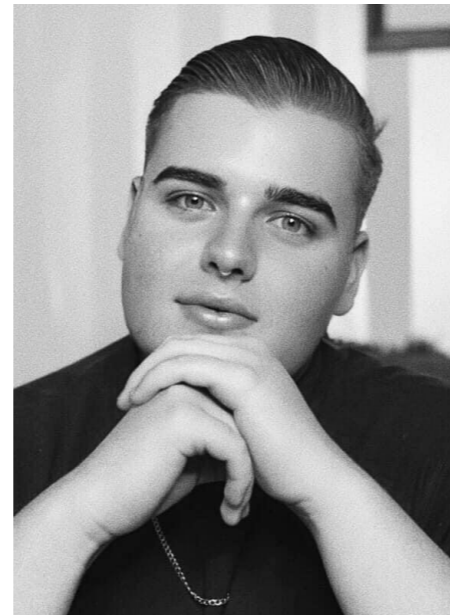
With much of this issue being created and discussed on rainy coffee-fuelled morning zoom meetings, the importance of meaningful work also arose, and our mission statement of representing a diverse collection of up and coming UK talent became more prevalent than ever. We commend the designers, artists and collectives featured in this issue for not letting the setbacks of the last year slow them down in the slightest. Similarly, they refuse to let the connotations forced upon their hometown stop them from being proud, innovative and unapologetically themselves in their artistry, something we feel needs to be showcased.

While I'm reluctant to say so, there has been a sense of calm in the chaos. You can find proof of this in the works of each and every artists featured in this

issue, as well as the continued support companies like SDS have provided to artists in these strange and confusing times. I truly hope that going forward we can continue to show this support to one another and be more creative, bold and ASBO than ever.

Yours sincerely,

Connor Aiden Fogarty



SDS EDITORS LETTER

Here at SDS we strive to 'SET DA STANDARDS' by making a real difference to the artists within the community we support. To most, its known as Croydon. To others, it's CRO, Endz and Cronx. The memories we hold of this place are endless, especially the many nights clubbing in the infamous Tiger Tiger (RIP). If you're from Croydon, you know this was the place to be every Thursday night and walking down the high street hearing and seeing the legendary Uncle Bearnard jammin away.

Towards the end of 2020 ASBO Magazine called upon the SDS team with the opportunity to take over their Croydon issue, and we were honoured by the prospect. The Croydon issue is all about celebrating and showcasing the numerous creatives, businesses and projects that reside or take place within our borough.

Perception is a crazy thing and we know the reputation and perception our borough has. You always hear 'you've got to catch a plane to get to Croydon' and 'Croydon isn't London' trust us, everyone from CRO has heard it all. It's crazy because we're not even as far as people think, a straight train from London Victoria, and you're here

in 15 minutes! As we said, perception can be crazy, but we digress.

Croydon is a place that often gets looked down upon and you rarely hear positive things associated with it. Being from Croydon, we know, live and see different. Croydon is home to a plethora of talented artists and initiatives formed within this borough each of which deserves recognition. Through this issue, we intend to shine the biggest and brightest light on them that we can.

In this month's ASBO you can expect to read features on Croydon artists Flintz and Siobhain Kane, our 'Ones To Watch' list of creatives you need to know who are about to take the world by storm, and the initiatives that are providing our young people with the tools and resources to better their mental health. You will also get to hear all about SDS, the hows and the whys to our existence, and finally, all about those who were involved in helping to make this issue.

We strive to 'SET DA STANDARDS' and that's what you'll find in this issue.

THE SDS TEAM

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

Andrew Cleminson

GUEST EDITOR

Connor Aiden Fogarty
connor.fogarty@asbomagazine.com

FASHION

Shanice Palmer
Mamady Diana

HAIR & MAKE UP

Meagan Jessica Ross @hairbymeaganx
Georgia Ellen Collender @gcdoesmakeup_

MUSIC

Connor Aiden Fogarty
connor.fogarty@asbomagazine.com
Amal Mohamed
Amal0410@hotmail.com
Andre Darby
andre@asbomagazine.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Reiss Tolga
reiss.tolga@asbomagazine.com

WORDS

Amal Mohamed, Andre Darby, Connor
Aiden Fogarty, Jade Reid, Makeda
Bennett-Amparbang, Mayfield Ngondonga

PHOTOGRAPHY

Arron Watson-McNab @facesplaceslaces
Joli Mai
Max Auberon @auberonfilm
Lee Fry @lee_fuxk_
Kirsten Hart @hearheart_
Elise Heron @j.u.s.t.e.l.i.s.e

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Imani Bahati, Kim Lang, Mikezbee,
Shaiheim Allen, CZ FILM

ASBO TV

Maddie Troy @madeleinejtroy
Ellesse White @elle_angeles
Tionie Jebison @tee_nayah
Mekenzie Ford
Lucy Shafi @lucyshafi
Dwayne Green Jr @DGrillzTV

THE D FOUNDATION

D-Foundation supports young potential entrepreneurs in creating and promoting their work. ASBO magazine assists with this by providing access to its print and digital platforms.
Mark Pauls mark@thefoundation.com
Tyhe Egar tyhe@thefoundation.com

THIS ISSUE IN ASSOCIATION WITH:

CREATIVE ENTERPRISE ZONE

MAYOR OF LONDON

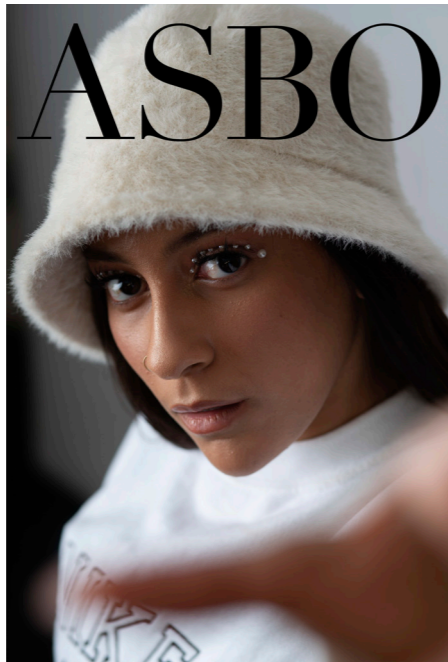


ASBO

COVERS



P34 DEANNA CHASE



P52 SIOBHAIN KANE



P64 FLINTZ

C O N T E N T S

SDS	08
HYPE	10
ONE TO WATCH	14
MARC JONES	19
BOY NASH	20
tone-0	22
YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT LIKE THAT	24
ASHA ELIA	32
DEANNA CHASE	34
DXVL	38
SOLAARISS	39
STREET STYLE	40
JUST ISAIAH	48
JAY SNAGGZ	50
SIOBHAIN KANE	52
GENERATION F YOU	56
FLINTZ	64
PINS	68
DJ SASHI	70
SEE OUR 7	74
ALECLDN	76
RAP THERAPY	78
NAOMI	80
WRIGHTS ACADMEY	82
RECKLESS Demeanour	84
SDS X PUMA	86

ESDS



SDS Entertainment (Setting Da Standards) is a community arts company led solely by 2 young black females within the creative industry. Founded in 2018 by Makeda Bennett-Amparibeng who works at British Underground, responsible for taking the likes of Shakka, Knucks and many more to Atlanta to perform at the A3C Festival. Makeda is also a co-founder of BAFA UK (Black Association for the Arts) alongside the likes of Jazzy B, Mykaell Riley and Cleveland Watkiss MBE. BAFA UK is a network and union for black professionals in creative & cultural industries. In addition, Jade Reid is co-founder of SDS and is artist manager to singer/songwriter Deanna Chase who has notably graced line ups alongside artists such as Yxng Bane, Ms Banks and K- Trap. In just over 2 years SDS has been on BBC Radio 5, contributed to The Ends Festival, been awarded The National Lottery Project Grant funded by The Arts Council England and Cultural Partnership Fund by Croydon Council. SDS has also collaborated with Puma to give local talent the opportunity to record at their state of the art PUMA Suede Studio.

The origins of SDS Entertainment was birthed by Makeda's integral role in the abolishment of Form 696 in 2017, the form was a risk assessment document issued by the Metropolitan Police stating that only DJs and MCs performing to a backing track had to fill out this form 14 days prior to events taking place. The form discriminated against music associated with ethnic minorities, which in particular left Croydon's art scene scarce. 2016 saw Croydon police use Form 696 to their advantage to impose a so called 'bashment ban' within local bar/club Dice Bar after it was announced by the boroughs police that Jamaican music was deemed an 'unacceptable' genre. This saw the venue having to place signs next to the DJ decks reminding them to play bashment music, those that did unfortunately received the sack. Though the ban did not last the effects of this echoed and continues to echo throughout the borough.

When Makeda approached a local music venue about hosting open mic nights she was informed by the venue manager that for some reason 'urban' events do not work within Croydon and that more security would need to be hired along with filling out Form 696. After hearing and researching more on the history of the form and knowing about the recent troubles Croydon had faced she realised that not only was the physical Form 696 stifling the black community but the culture surrounding it too. Witnessing firsthand the effects this was having, she knew she had to do something about it.

Through the help of British Underground numerous meetings with music industry professionals and government officials were set up they included, The Musicians Union, UK Music, Bimm University, Department of Culture Media and Sports, Mykaell Riley, Pete Todd, Jonathan Badyal, Feargal Sharkey, The Metropolitan Police and Culture Minister at the time Matt Hancock.

A letter was then sent to the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan by Matt Hancock expressing his concerns over the form stating that he was, 'concerned that the form is not only potentially stifling young artists and reducing the diversity of London's world renowned musical offering, but is also having a negative impact on London's night time economy by pushing organisers and promoters of urban music events to take them outside London.' (<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/culture-minister-form-696-matt-hancock-sadiq-khan-met-police-risk-assessment-grime-dj-mc-open-letter-night-czar-a7652291.html>)

Months later the Mayor of London and Deputy Mayor For Culture and The Creative Industries issued a review of the form, 'following concerns that the form unfairly targets grime, garage and R 'n' B acts'. (<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-orders-review-of-form-696>)

After a meeting with the Metropolitan Police of which Makeda attended it was announced that Form 696 was scrapped.

Through this process Makeda vowed to support young creatives in Croydon - especially those from the black community (most affected by the form) to rehabilitate the art scene through live performances, workshops and exhibitions, SDS Entertainment was then born.

The rest of the SDS team consist of; Isha Davis - Creative Strategist/Host, Mica Reid - Social Media Assistant, Nicole Oteng-Agyei - Communications and Relations, Tybert Mhlanga - Head Of Graphics and Shaiheim Allen - Head of Photography. Together, they have been able to facilitate (pre Corona) successful monthly hub nights which have had performers such as OSH, Inkra Debelle, Fred Fredas and Ebi Pamere. The aim of the hub night is to encourage grass-root talent within the borough to network and have a safe space to express themselves, whether it be through rapping, singing, poetry and comedy.

Since receiving funding from Arts Council England, SDS have strengthened Croydon's Creative Hub network through a wide range of art forms. Firstly, producing a virtual live community festival entitled 'The Bop Live' the first Croydon has ever seen, curated to utilise the very few spaces available in the centre of the borough as an array of venues have been closed leaving local talent with limited access to safe creative spaces. Each stage was filmed at one of Croydon's iconic venues, partnering with The Floor Mag and Yes Gurl to execute this. To further amplify Croydon's creative scene, SDS worked with a local animation artist to produce a short comic video series touching on mental health within the black community, a YouTube series titled Signature 60 giving local up and coming talent the platform to showcase their best bars within 60 seconds.

H

Y

P

E

EDITOR BHARATI MANCHANDA



**Kato Sunglasses £231,
Oakley, www.oakley.com**



Organic Hoodie £55, Tomorrow,
www.tomorrowcreates.com



Baseball cap £60 and socks £22, Harem London,
www.haremlondon.com



Watch £119, G-SHOCK,
www.g-shock.co.uk



Pride T-shirt, £19, Hollister, co-created by student activists at GLSEN who rally for LGBTQ+ inclusion



Dua Lipa wears PUMA Mayu trainers £90, size? www.size.co.uk

ONE TO WATCH



PHOTOGRAPHY Kim Lang
STYLIST Kashmir Wickham
PUBLICATION A Pink Prince

SW
FASHIONWORKS INTERNATIONAL

SHANICE PALMER

WORDS: MAYFIELD NGONDONGA

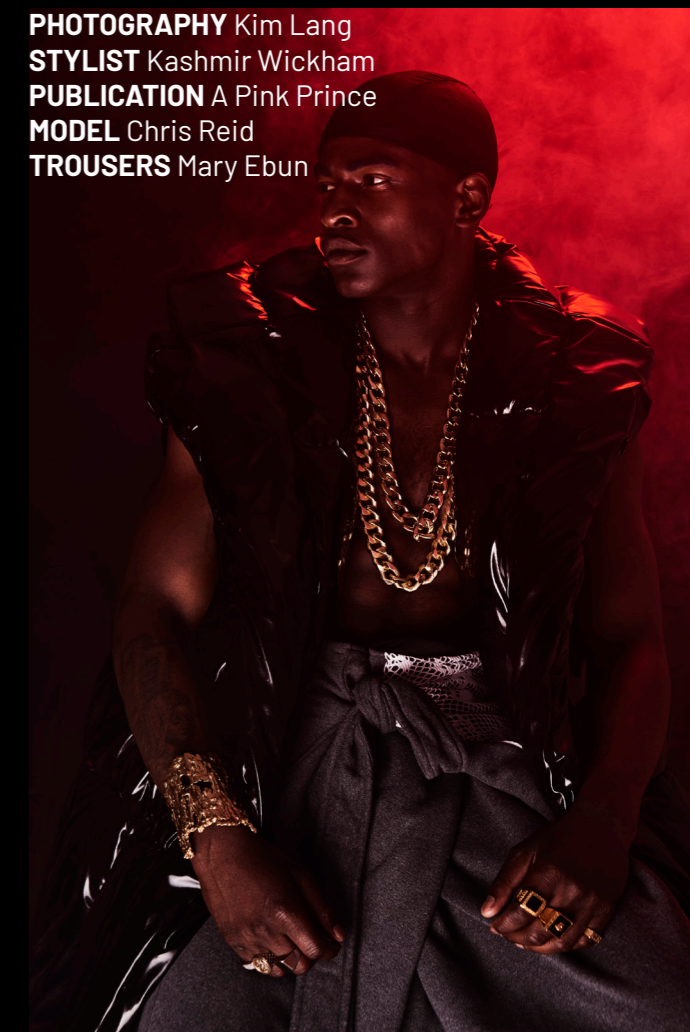
What is the source of inspiration from your designs?

My source of inspiration is my experience. I constantly challenge mixing my reality with my imagination. I love creating fantasy with documentary tones. Culture, music, art, tradition, religion, family, friendship, love, anything that evokes feeling.

What lessons have you learned that has helped you throughout your creative journey?

I am constantly learning but the biggest one for me as a self-sabotaging perfectionist, has been my time management and approach to creative projects, it sounds so simple but for my creative mind this one took me a while to learn. I have broken it into three steps. Firstly, start from a place of inspiration, curiosity and interest to know more about what you're delving into. A well started project is half done. Secondly, my goal is to finish. After a thorough start to the point where I have realised the answers to my curiosities, I make a list of the bare minimum I need to complete a project, I have learned not to underestimate these steps, sometimes the bare minimum can be a lot of work, so I tell myself just get it done. Finally, the next stage after knowing I have completed my project, I go back in and work on the areas I want to improve; by meeting the visual representation I have in my mind. This allows me to focus on the finer details after exploring and meeting my minimum requirements. Dividing up my time to work on various areas to enhance it and perfect it to my standards.

PHOTOGRAPHY Kim Lang
STYLIST Kashmir Wickham
PUBLICATION A Pink Prince
MODEL Chris Reid
TROUSERS Mary Ebum



What more would you like to achieve in your career?

I would like to continue to explore the creative avenues of fashion, performance and art through various mediums like film and photography.

What would you like people to know about Croydon?

Croydon has always had loads of creative talent come out of it however those creatives usually move away. I see a vibrant hub of creatives coming together and staying in Croydon as more spaces and opportunities become available.

How does your background and life experience play a part in your creativity?

This links back into question one, it's everything. If I can't feel or connect to it I can't delve into it. Sometimes a distant memory of my childhood will become so clear and I'll know that's a cue to explore it more and that takes me on a whole journey.

What are your thoughts on the fashion industry?

I would like the fashion industry to move towards a space of uniqueness, allowing a space for upcoming designers and high street brands to produce what we need and not exhausting out natural resources. I hope consumers understand the impact of their spending power, and the chain impact that has on society and the planet. I also hope the fast fashion industry up-cycles the 6 generations of waste clothing its created.

We always leave our readers with a takeaway piece of advise, what would yours be?

Show up! Your truth and experience is valued have fun with it!

PHOTOGRAPHY Imani Bahati

PUBLICATION Ola Dada



PHOTOGRAPHY Kim Lang
STYLIST Kashmir Wickham
PUBLICATION A Pink Prince



WARREN
REILLY

"Obsession" Unisex T-Shirt, £28 from the MODERN HALLOWS collection. Designed by Warren Reilly (@wr.designs_). Artwork Copyright to The Weavers Factory 2020. Print on Demand & Manufactured by www.teemill.com - Model: Jayden Pyram @jaydenpyram wears size Medium - Photographer Kim L. Fraser (@iamfraserk) Shoes: Converse All-Stars.



MODERN HALLOWS

warrenreillystudio.teemill.com

MARC JONES



WORDS:
ANDRE DARBY
PHOTOGRAPHY:
MAX AUBERON

Croydon-born and raised rapper Marc Jones is an artist with a clear goal and purpose. That purpose, is to expose his listeners to something new, relatable and innovative through his music. Marc has become known for his unique style, which combines wholesome verses with topics such as commitment and faith, with more traditional drill beats. Serving killer visuals and a modern, insightful twist on contemporary UK Rap music, Marc has discovered a lane that he not only dominates, but thrives in also.

When was the first time you realised you had any musical talent?

I've always just really loved music. I grew up attending church a lot, so the first instrument I learned to play was the drums, so I guess when I started lessons in that. I played drums in the band at church and then learned some other instruments as well.

At what point did you decide to make music professionally?

It was after I came out of university about five years ago. I studied politics, and I spent ages going to interviews to find a job without much success. When I finished my studies, I decided I would commit to making music. It felt like the perfect time. For me, it's essential to make music that's truthful and speaks about my situation and what's going on in everyday life so that people can relate to it and identify with it on a personal level. I felt like there needed to be some sort of alternative voice on the radio and platforms wherever

it was; that was bringing real issues in a way that people could still get down with.

Who would you consider as significant influences on your style?

There are so many. I used to like JME and Skepta a lot. At school Boy Better Know were a massive influence because they were producing their beats and spitting. I don't remember many mainstream producers doing both at the time, so it inspired me to do the same. We used to make beats and rap over them and record them on this cheap microphone in my bedroom. I loved the do it yourself attitude from the start.

Many of your songs are from the perspective of the everyday person. You discuss your faith and other typically uncommon themes not found in contemporary UK rap. Why is it important to instill these values and morals in your songs?

Music is such a broad spectrum. There are so many genres of music, and they all touch on different things. Within every genre, there's a space for relatable lyrics that deal with everyday life. It may not be the most glamorous thing, but I make music that people can wake up and listen to and say, "Alright, let me just go and get this. Work is dead but let me go and get it". If you're doing work, zoning out, or just need to concentrate, I feel my music can serve those purposes.

I know you currently have a new project in the works. What can we expect from that?

Last year, everyone's lives changed so much with the pandemic. Different circumstances have hit people hard, so I wanted to reflect on that period. I want to tell the stories about how I'm feeling now and give people what they expect. It's nearly finished!

Talk to me about the relationship between you and SDS? How did you first connect?

I was trying to get myself out there a bit more by playing some shows. They were doing some events during Black History Month and asked me to come down. Then they told me about the Ends Festival and the opportunity to perform. It's good to see a group in Croydon supporting artists who are trying to break forward because it takes a lot of passion for doing what they're doing. It's not easy to keep going when you're trying to help the smaller acts. How they support people from Croydon and in general is fantastic. They always seem genuinely interested in what I'm doing.

BOY NASH

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY
PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON

Croydon-born and bred rapper Boy Nash uses his journey through music to put out a positively charged message back into the universe. A seasoned rapper with a penchant for consciously poetic storytelling, Nash continues to come into his own on his most recent project, 'Love And Frequencies', further expanding into his powerful artistry and growing his dedicated global fanbase of listeners. Rebelling against the industry blueprint, Nash drives home his belief in following his own narrative and doing things at his own pace and in his own authentic way.

Firstly, where are you from, how did you get into music and do you think your environment was a contributing factor?

So my family are Ghanaian by blood, but I was born in Mitcham, Croydon. I was first introduced to making music after seeing everyone rapping on the block, which resulted in me eventually joining in. It was the pirate radio era at the time, so it was seen as cool to rap. I started writing and rapping seriously at fourteen, first performing grime sets.

What do you wish more people knew about Croydon?

Croydon's cool, I spent a couple of years in Ghana, and when I came back to Croydon, it seemed like everyone's views had changed, but I've never looked at it like that. There's so much talent here. I think the way people talk about Croydon is a result of a lot of bad press. Croydon is home for me, and I know it inside out. I love the area and wouldn't change it. There's always been a lot of talent coming out of Croydon. Stormzy, Krept and Konan to name a few.

A lot of people praise your rap for being conscious, like on the track Gotham. Sonically your rap is quite different. How would you say it's unique to what's out there now? What do you try to give people with your rap?

As I've grown wiser, I've learned to approach things from a deeper perspective. For me, music started purely as a hobby and a passion, and now I'm lucky enough to call it a career and something I get paid for. Music has become a lifestyle. It represents me as a person. Everything I give to my listeners comes from my spirit and the way I think about things. Everyone follows the rules of the music industry, so much gets emulated. I'm not interested in any of that. I want to be making music until I physically can't anymore. My primary purpose is to spread a positive message and balance out the bad energy in the universe. Words are powerful, and they affect you. Whether you want to believe it or not, they do. I try to tell my story and be that balance. Some people rap about guns and knives as that is their experience in life. I rap about my experiences. I want to provide a message so that people have something to take from my artistry. It's intended to be highly conscious spiritual medicine. I feel like that's my purpose in all of this.

How would you describe your style? Who and what has influenced you?

It continually evolves because I focus more on my lyrical content, allowing the instrumentals to fluctuate. Predominantly, my sound is hip hop and rap, but I infiltrate other genres into that to further form my sound. Every track you listen to by Boy Nash aims to differ from the last. I'm significantly influenced by Jay Electronica because he has stayed true to himself in an industry where people

commercialise for money. I think J.Cole's influence has given the community a much-needed, positively aware message. I also really like Wretch 32, but Nas has to be my favourite. He helped inspire me on my journey for sure, and life in general, my thoughts, they all impact me.

Your fanbase has grown significantly since starting. What is your biggest motivation to continually expand on your journey?

Although I don't tend to focus on numbers, it's been exciting to see the growth on my journey. Love and Frequencies was signed to Chapter 8, so they were responsible for pushing that project further, and the feedback I've gotten has been global. As I've progressed with my career, I've learned how to promote and brand myself while growing into the artist I am. Before, I didn't know who I was. I feel like I haven't even scratched the surface of what I can do, considering I don't follow the narrative the industry tries to put on us about doing things by a certain age. There's so much more to uncover that way. Each of my songs is a spiritual moment. Looking back on each story is my motivation. Every time I make a song, it's a reflection of where I was in life and what my thought process was at the time.

Your lyrics are very poetic and symbolic. What's your creative process like when putting your feelings down on the page?

I first studied a book called the poetics of hip hop by Adam Bradley, recommended by Jay-Z in his book for helping him so much. It helped me better understand personification, similes, metaphors and imagery in a lyrical sense. You can focus too hard on the more clever stuff, so it's better to balance between a more freestyle and technical approach. I use a lot of descriptive language and imagery. I want the listener to be able to feel and visualise my stories in their head. I keep it simple but passionate, you know?

What Rap or Hip Hop album, old or new, does everyone need to listen to?

Nas - Illmatic, Kendrick Lamar - good kid, m.A.A.d City, Jay Electronica - A Written Testimony, J.Cole - 2014 Forest Hill Drives

Lockdown has become infamous for either sparking productivity or making it a struggle. How did you feel during this past year when it comes to the music-making process? Was it help or hindrance?

Sometimes I forget to observe my feelings because I'm always on the move. I recently took a step back and realised that I really feed off the energy of live shows. Lockdown has shown me I've really missed the simple things. Everything has become so digital. Having to write everything out gets tedious. I'm used to being in the studio and vibing with a producer and other people.

What's it like working with SDS? How do the team there support your work and artistry?

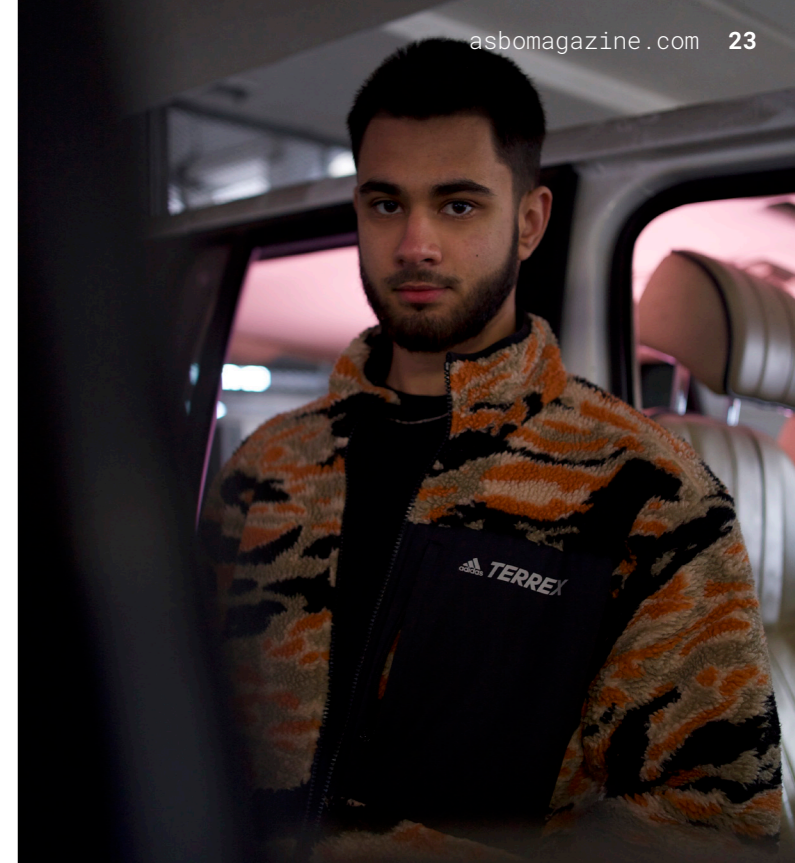
SDS has been a great support. I appreciate them a lot. Sashi, the DJ, and plays my music on Croydon FM. I also had the opportunity to perform at one of their live events, and they supplied us with footage and payment at a tough time for us as artists, so I appreciate that.

Finally, where do you want to be in five years, and what can we expect to see from you next?

I want to be alive and kicking, haha! As long as I'm breathing, anything is possible. If I told you in 2019 that we were all going to be locked in our houses, you would've told me I'm crazy! So just alive and kicking and making music, as long as I'm making music, there is hope.



South-London based videographer, digital content creator and music producer Antonio Lewis aka Tone-O, focuses on telling local and upcoming artists stories through music videos, short films and visuals. Through his love of music production, Antonio picked up a passion for the visual side of things, explaining how being exposed to Croydon's richly diverse culture has played a massive part in regards to his creative side. Inspired by the likes of Salomon Ligthelm and Gibson Hazard, Antonio pushes boundaries and creates a truly stunning, representational and unique final product, which shows off his individuality every time.



Firstly, what got you interested in choosing to pursue a career as a photographer/videographer? What's your story?

Music! I started as a music producer, and I still am. The camera and my passion for visuals were picked up along the way. What seems to work well for me is spending the winter hibernating in recording studios and then heading outdoors for the inevitable Summer music videos and events. The two art forms complement each other powerfully; I feel that my understanding of music brings my film work to life. Prior to my creative endeavours, I had a full-time job for a finance firm based in Croydon, let's just say I'm glad I took the plunge and followed my heart.

Whose work has influenced you most? What filming styles do you admire? Give examples.

I must say I love clean cinematography and the intelligent ways of achieving continuity that come with that. There is a director called Salomon Ligthelm whose work blows my mind. I'm inspired by his injection of cutting edge visual effects layered into thought-provoking direction & narrative (Ayia - Easy is an example of this). Another director is Gibson Hazard, who has redefined video transitions, which leaves you wanting to replay his work.

Among your works so far, which one is your favourite and why?

My current favourite is for an R&B artist called Ryan Carty. I produced promotional material for six of his tracks at The Front Room in Croydon

- who are close contacts of mine. We brought an impressive lighting rig together and then largely improvised the film shots - the results were beautiful. We weren't super rushed and had time to sit down and eat good food at the end. Food is what truly fulfils me.

What is your favourite subject and style to photograph and why?

Local or upcoming artists for sure. They are always so grateful, excited, energised and usually quite hyped when the final product comes through. Seeing that kind of energy reminds me of why we enjoy and choose to do our creative endeavours in the first place.

What is your dream project to take on and why?

It would be great to conceptualise and shoot a music video using a camera robot (Think Pa Salieu or Kendrick Lamar). You can achieve so many interesting motion tricks or different effects when you have that kind of creative control. I would love to do that with a Headie One track.

How do you think growing up in South London has affected your creative eye as a videographer? Have you captured many Croydon-centric stories?

I've always been surrounded by such vibrant culture. Croydon continues to be such a hotspot for talent. I've worked deeply with local artists, businesses, venues and initiatives. Notably, I've worked closely with a dance and hip-hop collective called See Our 7, who are real pioneers in the local area.

What're the most rewarding and challenging things about being a videographer?

The most rewarding aspect would be the flood of emojis that usually hit my WhatsApp after sending the first draft over. The biggest challenge for me is staying on top of several projects at once when things get too busy.

If you weren't making films, what else do you think you'd be doing?

Producing music full time.

Have you got anything we need to look out for coming out? It must be exciting knowing that lockdown restrictions are loosened and normal filming can restart.

I feel a boom of creativity on its way from restrictions easing. I'm currently producing a number of music videos for artists that work with the producer Kaey Music, such as Ben Hunter and Drawn Tide. Follow Kaey as a real journey is starting there. Also, The Front Room, Croydon sees artists visiting and performing from far and wide.

Do you have any closing advice you want to give others looking to get into film?

Be patient with yourself. It took me two years to make freelancing sustainable. Embrace the learning curve. Embrace the low budgets, sore shoulders, amateur equipment, crazy clients, late nights, parking fines, dropped hard drives, self-doubt, the dirt on your sensor, the overheads, the rain check & that fifth list of amendments. It will be worth it.

**WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY
PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAIHEIM ALLEN AND MIKEZBEE**

YOU'RE NOT
GOING OUT
LIKE THAT



LEE J FRY

CREATIVE DIRECTION: LEE FRY & KIRSTEN HART
PHOTOGRAPHY: KIRSTEN HART

ey, I'm Lee! I'm 23 and I am currently in my second year studying BA (Hons) Fashion Media & Promotion at UCSE. I've worked part-time as a digital marketing assistant, an events supervisor, and a fashion retail sales assistant for over 6 years now. Day to day work, I usually look at analytics, plan events, run budget reports, trend forecast and make media plans for the company I work for. Before I studied Fashion Media & Promotion, I studied many different courses to find my drive and to see what I have a natural connection to. In 2015, I decided to start my creative journey studying Art & Design, and moved onto an Extended Diploma in Fashion Design & Textiles. This gave me loads of opportunities, such as working alongside 'The Ragged Priest', to being a fashion show manager showcasing my peers' garments with all money raised going to Mind the mental health charity. Now I have been given fantastic opportunities from ASBO magazine from being a contributing street style editor and to you reading this right now!

In day-to-day life I am nowhere one of the most interesting people, I like to explore what makes other people interesting. What is their reasoning? What is their process? What is their reaction to my work? One of my biggest irks is when people refuse criticism, as a creative the only way I continue exceeding is from my peers, mentors, and clients' opinions and recommendations. Do not get me wrong, I am not saying do not stay true to yourself at all... It is always in your best interest to be as versatile as can be.

What attracted me to this industry is the freedom of expression, the challenge, and the constant process of perfecting your craft. I have always looked at fashion and the industry as a universe of innovativeness and uniqueness that goes against the cis-heteronormative standard. It has elevated people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and queer/ non-binary and trans people. This is so important that they are heard and seen. The majority of these people carry the industry and for someone who felt I do not fit into that 'cis-heteronormative' world at a young age, I found my universe when I started to look into the creative and



fashion industry. I'd also say popular culture has impacted me a lot growing up listening to Lady Gaga, Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé, and Shakira (what a stereotype I know, lol). With their work and visuals, they must be planted in my brain and show in some work without a doubt. I grew up in Essex, and at first, I was a bit blind-sided to how much creativity is actually around here. I never thought I'd even have opportunities to do half the stuff I have done! I just threw myself out there, took a step into the dark, and day by day I can feel myself having more of an understanding of the industry.

My aesthetic tends to use feminine commodities but also present masculine (I use that word loosely). I wouldn't say I have a staple aesthetic; it is more of a pick 'n' mix. I usually decide how I am going to look within the first 30 minutes of waking up. Unless there's an event and I want to make myself seen, then I will plan that for days and if not weeks in advance. However, it also is important to understand your clients' objectives and sometimes to push personal style to the side to receive the best possible outcomes.

During the lockdowns we've had, I have seen a silver lining for many people. For me, it gave me time to think of how I present myself. Does the way I present myself or work attract the company I want to be surrounded by? It gave me time to stay up all night looking at my work and look at feedback. A good 98% of the time, I am never content with my work or looks. That's just because I know, I have a hunger and I want to keep pushing what I want to do and enjoy. It isn't a bad thing, it just motivates me to do better after each brief, client, or whatever I am working on. Especially with social media and how hard it is to think of a new innovative idea, you only have to scroll through Instagram, and it has already been done. This is great as it is giving creatives a platform, but everything is becoming saturated and there aren't sub-cultures as such. I think this is because consumerism and trends are being driven at speeds we've never seen before! Now that's not saying I don't follow trends! It's a massive part of my discipline.






CREATIVE ENTERPRISE ZONE

croydoncreativedirectory.com

The new online home of Croydon's creative and cultural community



Open for business



ASHA ELIA

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON

If you have had the pleasure of discovering London's fastest-emerging yet humbly hidden gem Asha Elia, then you will no doubt have been entranced by the unique, dreamily intimate music she creates. Serving up a bountiful plate of dewy, bliss-soaked contemporary R&B, paired beautifully with her devoted spirituality, Asha has attracted a fanbase from all over the world, garnering support from lovers of Pop, R&B and Gospel alike. Asha's music immediately satisfies any listener with the radiating sense of inner peace it possesses. Harnessing her trademark calm confidence, listening to Asha makes for a welcome and refreshing affair every time, that you don't want to miss.

Firstly, where are you from, how did you get into music and do you think your environment was a contributing factor?

So I'm originally from Bristol, and although it's quite a musical city, it wasn't until I moved to London for University that I became interested in the art of making music. London was a massive part of my musical journey because it's where I first met other musicians and people with studios in their bedrooms. I started by just having fun with that.

Lockdown has become infamous for either sparking productivity or making it a struggle. How did you feel during this past year when it comes to the music-making process? Was it a help or hindrance?

If I'm honest, it's been one of the best things creatively that has ever happened to me because now I don't have to go out, and there's no excuse not to do the work when you are inside. I've loved it for creativity. There's nowhere to run and no reasons not to finish a track anymore.

How does your relationship with God and your faith trickle into your music?

I actually wouldn't be making music at all if it wasn't for God because I never thought of or saw myself as an artist. I wanted to hear a specific type of music, and it wasn't there. I complained about it all the time, so I just sprouted a little voice that said: "you make it then". It dared me to get into music initially. It's the reason behind it all.

How would you describe your music and fashion style, and do they correlate?

I think being in R&B, I sometimes feel the pressure to be really 'cool' as an artist, so it's encouraged me to be a bit more explorative stylistically and helped push boundaries with what I can produce. I always want my style to represent the music I make.

For most artists, writing music is a form of cathartics. Which song of yours released to date means the most to you and why?

I would have to say a song of mine called 'Evidence'. I wrote it as a love letter to my Mum, and it took in a broader meaning for many people. It holds a special place in my heart. The track invited her to explore spirituality. I wanted to welcome her into the space of healing I have found through my relationship with God. It was during my first year of university, I became both Christian and started music. I think it was a complete shock to some people.

What's the best and worst thing about being in the industry today?

I think the best thing has to be social media for sure. It gives artists the power to not need as much industry support, making it easier to get started, gain recognition, find a fanbase and connect with listeners. The worse thing by far is corruption, mainly at a corporate level. Many artists get swindled out of earnings that rightfully belong to them.

What's one piece of advice you would pass on to everyone?

My whole life changed when I started embracing failure instead of being scared of it. You have to validate loss as part of your journey. It's a stepping stone. Music is so powerful, and if you look at releasing music from the point of view of giving something to people that are desperately in need of it, it might motivate you even more. I felt so awkward releasing music at first, knowing friends and family were going to listen, but I knew what I was writing about always had the potential to heal others, which took priority.

Who are your biggest influences musically, and what does your creative process entail?

In terms of my sound, I would say, Jhené Aiko, Jorja Smith and Drake. I am also really inspired by Called Out Music in terms of the content and the heart behind his music. Some of his first tracks were what inspired me to start writing. Most of the time, I begin with prayer, and then I will have a play around via beats on youtube. After writing something, I bring the melody and lyrics to my producer and often base the idea around that.

What is it like working with SDS, how do the team there support your work and artistry?

I did a Livestream with SDS that they organised, and they were the friendliest team that I've ever come across! They were accommodating, kind, warm and welcoming. The way they operate makes artists feel special and appreciated, which is so lovely to come across.

Finally, where do you want to be in five years, and what can we expect to see next from you?

I know that I want to be doing music full time. I want to connect a lot more with my audience, expand and put more work behind the scenes to further my career, all while connecting with people. I'm also trying to release one track a month at the moment. That was my challenge for the year. Expect to hear something new from me soon if all goes right! I'm not pressuring myself, but I've kept up with it so far.





DEANNA CHASE

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY
PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON

Fiercely independent in every sense of the word, London-based singer-songwriter Deanna Chase is equal parts sincere and striking. Successfully making a name for herself in the UK Scene with her dark yet catchy pop tracks, Deanna's background as a fully trained dancer only further demonstrates her innately disciplined passion and determination. Detailing her life experiences, Deanna allows the listener to know only as much as she wants them to with her poetic wordplays. With an already vast discography accompanied by powerful, dance-heavy visuals, it feels only a matter of time before Deanna breaks through to mainstream success, further capturing the unwavering attention of her audience in the process.

Firstly, where are you from, how did you get into music and do you think your environment was a factor?

I'm from Northamptonshire originally. I grew up in a village with my family, and yes, it was very much a contributing factor to how I got into music. My mum and dad introduced me to performing arts when I was young. Amongst other things I did, they were never overly pushy, although sometimes my mum would get a bit excited about it because she was in the industry as a dancer herself. My parents were super into music, there was always music playing in the house. My dad was also a DJ, so we also had a massive collection of vinyl. The school I attended became well known for how much it nurtured dancers, singers and musicians. So yes, I was super influenced by where I grew up.

Lockdown has become infamous for either sparking productivity or making it a struggle. How did you feel during this past year when it comes to the music-making process? Was it a help or hindrance?

It was a help because I had time for my health which was essential for me this year. Working on my health mentally and physically translated itself into my music and observing other artists. It kept me open-minded. A hindrance? Now it feels a bit more like a hindrance to the third lockdown around, I'd rather be out sometimes, but it's what you make it!

What do you think that lockdown has taught you and the world?

It's made me think about how important time is and how I spend it. I'm so used to trying to cram everything in one go and worrying about running out of time. It's been a lesson in appreciating the more minor things in life. A friend of mine said that the day to day is way more romantic than people think, and that's become an analogy I've been coming back to.

How would you describe your music style and fashion style, and do they correlate?

The naughties heavily influence my music, and it's infused with this dark sort of eerie feeling. Bubblegum pop isn't my thing, and I find there's beauty in mystery and darkness, those silent spaces, you know? It does correlate to my fashion for sure. I like to look very strong. I don't know if it's a defence mechanism, but I love looking strong and having dark clothes. I think it suits me. I've played around with fashion a lot this year, and how I can still feel like I'm expressing myself even if I can't get to the studio or elsewhere, it's so liberating. I don't dress for people to look at me, but I think I'm doing something right if they are.

You recently shared an iconic Cher interview on Instagram in which she discusses women being painted negatively in the industry. Can you relate, and what would you tell other girls about getting into the industry?

It's something I've felt in the music industry and in life. I have strong opinions, a super open mind, but strong opinions and a level of taste. I like detail. In the past, I didn't want to be the person to put my two-sense in everywhere. If I have any advice for anyone starting, any young women, be open-minded and stay curious, you can learn something from everybody, and when it comes to your art, it's great to do the things that other people might be scared to do. You're not supposed to be the same as everybody else, and I think the most incredible artists are the ones who go to that place that other people are afraid to go to.

What is the best and the worst thing about being in the music industry today? And do you believe people have a "higher calling" in life?

Best, to have an outlet to be expressive and creative. The way it's brought me and so many creative minds



together is excellent. The worst thing is expectation and pressure to look a certain way, which can be draining. It's about the balance, knowing how to produce a good quality song, product, whatever while keeping it real. No one wants anything overly staged or stuffy, you know? Well, all the signs in my life have pointed towards this, but taking your calling too literally can result in everything else becoming void. Too much of anything can throw you off.

Name three inspirations, one in music, one in fashion?

Musically I love Chris Brown, Beyonce, Rihanna, Britney Spears, Usher, Justin Timberlake, Ne-Yo. Anyone who puts on a show, all the songs they released were just outstanding quality consistently. If I had to say one, it would be Pharrell. His approach to music was unique at the time. Moving to London further developed my relationship with fashion. People aren't afraid to go all out here. I love designers, I love the high street, I don't think I have one muse in particular. Life is my muse. I have a laid back approach, so sometimes I end up throwing on a bunch of gold chains and wacky nails and red lipstick. The mixture of I could wear this to the shop, but I could also wear this on stage is kind of what I'm into.

What role do you think music plays in culture? Who has inspired you the most?

We look to music to say or do the thing other people are afraid to do. You can do it safely. Doing something as an artist is like a safe form of packaging a message. There's a line in a Rihanna song where she says: 'I never play the victim; I'd rather be the stalker'. We all need a bit of crazy to be sane. Music brings people together. You could absolutely detest somebody and end up at a rave hearing a song you both like and dancing together before the nights over.

For most artists, writing music is a form of cathartics. Which song of yours released to date means the most to you and why?

There's one that's on my Soundcloud called 'Only Life', and I wrote it at a time where I was really at a crossroads. I was stuck on this cycle of life where nothing was changing. I didn't feel like I was making any progress with myself and many other aspects of my life. I decided that: 'If this is my life, it needs to be a good one, I can't sit here and stay in the same cycle'. You can't have anything different if you keep making the same decisions, so I just decided things would have to change. The beat is what I love its dark, chill, eerie and

hard-hitting. I let out anger while being vulnerable at the same time. I have a lot of fire in me, but only some of it is a big middle finger, haha. I could take that song with me through the rest of my life as a mantra.

What is it like working with SDS, how do the team there support your work and artistry?

They always put me on shows when I wanted them and believed in the power of my performances. They are all females (similar to my management), which is fantastic. They represent Croydon which is my second home, and I love it so much. Home is home, so finding somewhere that feels just like home away from home makes me feel safe and very accessible. They are great at being inclusive, showing people respect and giving their time, and making people shine.

So I know you are a dancer. How did you get into dancing, and how you translate that into your artistry?

My Mum put me into ballet when I was about four, and I ended up enjoying and being good at it, I trained further, and my training got to a higher intensity level. Dancing is where I'm used to expressing the most. It's almost like a sting. When I feel something, my body will show it, which enhances my performance more. I want to be able to move well and freely to my music.

You have created an impressive amount of music videos to go along with your music. It seems like something you enjoy. Why are visuals vital to you, and how involved do you get in the direction and choreography?

Because to me, they are an extra piece of articulation and expression. I get super involved with visuals, but I've learned as I've gone along to be freer with them and less structured. Not everything has to control on stage. I feel like visuals say all the things the song is unable to. Artistic connotations and some of the things I have coming next are pushing boundaries a lot further than I have before.

Finally, where do you want to be in five years, and what can we expect to see from you?

I've been in the studio working on new music and visuals to release, which is exciting. In the next five years, I'd love to be on tour! I'm just itching to be on stage. Educating myself on new cultures grounds me. You can't be in your own space for too long. I need to get out there, see things and meet people.

DXVL

**WORDS: ANDRE DARBY
PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON**

What first inspired you to want to become an artist?

I first started producing music in 2016. I listened to lots of cloud type beats and listened to Icytwat, Lord Fubu, with my friend Jordan. He's from America and kind of helped me make the wavy sound I've been listening to from years back. So yeah, it inspired me to create something different and new.

As one of the headliners on 'The Bop Live', can you tell us about your relationship with SDS and how you connected?

SDS contacted me, saying they had heard of me before. Their main act dropped out for their festival, and they wanted me to headline their stage. I was shocked because I didn't even know that a company would even know about me in that way. So I was glad when they reached out. They are very nice people. I would love to continue working with them.

Your most recent release, 'Winter 16', impressively reached over a million Spotify streams. It seemed like this tape was a dedication to your supporters; would that be fair to say?

I just love to create music and art. I didn't plan this EP much. I just wanted to drop a classic, a project for the fans that supported me throughout these times; even during the lockdown, people have still been listening to my music even more than before, so I just wanted to show them that I appreciate them. I'm making music so that everyone can understand the art.

Winter seems like a consistent theme in your work. Would you say Winter 16 is the last instalment of the Winter Collection?

I never actually thought of it that way, you know! That's interesting you say that because, to be honest, I just take things as they come. The aesthetic kind of goes with the music. So I just think of whatever is suitable for me and go from there.

Your production style is unique and pretty much unheard of in the UK Rap scene. What made you want to deviate from the norm?

I mean, I know a lot of people are tired of hearing the same thing over and over again; it's about time that people step out of their box or step out of their lane and try to mix it up. It's kind of needed at this point; hopefully, people will start to gradually get into it and start recognising the type of music that other people and I are making.

You are currently working on a new project. Is it another EP, or is this a full-length project?

The project that I'm working on now is a three-way project with two of my artist friends. It's a short EP that we've been working on for a little while now. So it should be coming up in a few months or so.

What would your advice be to young people coming into the industry?

I would say stay true to yourself and try to step out of the box. Try and make something that you haven't heard of before. Don't just conform and make music that you're hearing or that you know has a higher percentage of blowing than making something more organic.

Drawing his influence from the ever-growing Cloud Rap scene, proclaimed UK rapper and producer DXVL concocts a melodically ethereal sound pretty much unclaimed within the UK Rap space. Filled with unique beats and samples, DXVL abstracts and recontextualises his various influences, such as Icytwat and Lord Fubu, to craft his one of a kind sound. First beginning his journey as a producer, DXVL delved into rapping later, utilising his production knowledge at every turn to compliment his multifarious flow and style. Following the release of his latest project, 'Winter 16', we sat down with DXVL to discuss his latest project, his recording process, and future plans.



SOLAARISS

**WORDS: ANDRE DARBY
PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON**



Hailing from South London, singer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist Solaariss melds the sounds he was exposed to growing up to form a genre he defines as alternative RnB fusion. Juxtaposing flavours of classical music, afrobeat and jazz, Solaariss creates something utterly unique and as packed full of personality as himself. After a successful campaign to get his newly released single, 'Up Until Recently' to 10k streams, Solaariss has inspired several renditions, remixes and covers from aspiring and established musicians such as Ama Lou, Safiyyah, Lex Amor and Octavian. In addition, the South London instrumentalist is making a successful transition into a lead vocalist, leaving no avenue untouched on his musical journey.

When did you start playing the saxophone?

So I started playing the saxophone back in secondary school. You would get an extra half hour out of class if you picked up an instrument, so I was like, let me pick up as many as I can then, haha. I then started playing it more seriously once I got into college and have been playing ever since.

Are there any artists in particular that you can think of that influenced your sound style early on?

Labyrinth was a hugely significant influence upon me growing up. He was and is still one of my biggest inspirations. When he came out, he was so different and had such a unique sound and a fantastic producer. If you remember his track 'Earthquake', production-wise, it was crazy! How do you even think of making something like that?

You did a "Road to 10K" campaign for your single 'Up Until Recently', were you overwhelmed by how viral the challenge went?

I was so surprised because, first of all, I'm a saxophonist and cellist dropping my first track where I'm singing. My mindset was like, who am I to ask these people to start a campaign? I'm not even that big, but I believed in the song. So I thought about it in a way where people would want to get involved. Not because of some big prizes or because of a big name but because I needed to

know the song was good, and I wanted to make sure that the music was engaging.

Can you tell us about your recording process? Do your tracks usually start with a direction, or is it completely spontaneous?

I try not to go overboard with my music. If I find something generic, I probably won't use it, but if I find something with substance, then I will want to create lyrics and so forth. I usually just grab my USB mic and record into my laptop, mumbling and freestyling to make the proper flow and get into the pocket musically. Once I have an idea, I develop the concept or theme and convey that message the best way I can.

You recently performed at the SDS event 'The Bop Live'. Can you tell us about that experience?

It was fun. All the acts just enjoyed themselves on stage. After performing at the event and meeting the SDS team, I can't help but respect them, and I love what they do.

What can we expect next from Solaariss?

I want to show people more of my creative side, and I want to show that I can do a full-length project. So I am offering people all the hands that I have in this music game. I can't reveal much because I'm currently working on some stuff, but it's coming soon.

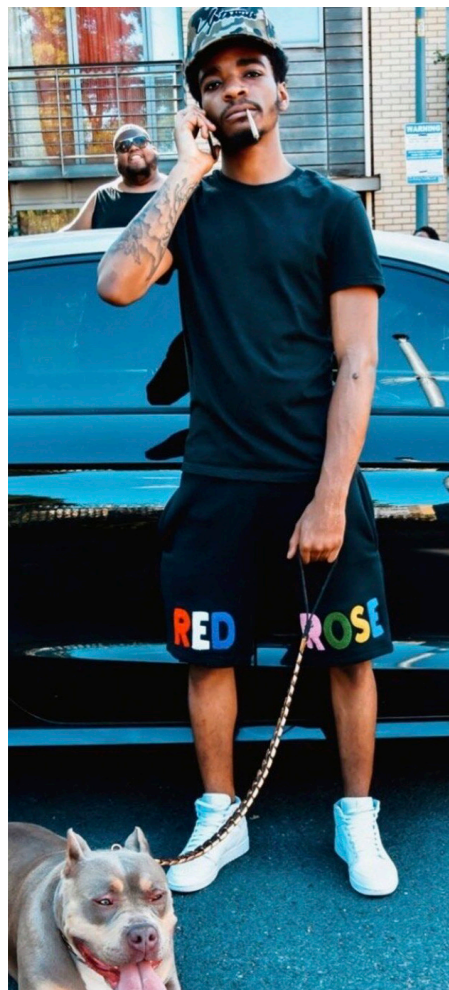
STREET TELETYPE



PHOTOGRAPHY:
 Lee Fry
 @lee_fuxk_
 Kirsten Hart
 @heartheart_
 Elise Heron
 @j.u.s.t.e.l.i.s.e.

ZOMBIE PUNK4, 25
OCCUPATION Punk
LIKES Sex, Cedar & Punk
HATES Boris Johnson
 & Having no cider

FAV SONG Twinkle Twinkle
 Little Star
FAV FILM Mad Max
FAV CLUB Anywhere I can
 get in for free



JBOY & JUGG, 25
OCCUPATION Musician
LIKES Music, Fashion & Football
HATES Thieves, Liars & Laziness
FAV SONG Jordan
FAV FILM Godfather
FAV CLUB Man United



PETE, 24
OCCUPATION Sales Assistant
LIKES 60's Pop Culture, Star Wars & Classical Music
HATES Croydon Chavs, Meat & TV
FAV SONG Beethoven symphony 3
FAV FILM Clockwork Orange
FAV CLUB The Pink Toothbrush



WEZ, 17
OCCUPATION Apprenticeship
LIKES Music, Flashing & Work
HATES Seafood, Slow Walkers & Bad Music
FAV SONG ON & ON by Divine
FAV FILM Pulp Fiction
FAV CLUB Costa



BELLE, 16
OCCUPATION Student/Marketer
LIKES Gothic Style, Lolita dresses & Vintage
HATES Big Blrd, Loud Noises & Chairs
FAV SONG 'Sleeping Powder' by Gorillaz
FAV FILM Devil
FAV CLUB Starbucks?



AMANDA, 22
OCCUPATION Student/Waitress
LIKES Family Guy, Vegan Food & My Nan
HATES Meat, Donald Trump & Primark
FAV SONG Babylon by Lady Gaga
FAV FILM Legally Blonde
FAV CLUB Max's



KAZ, 22 & RUBY, 23
OCCUPATION (KAZ) Stylist, (RUBY) Medical Student
LIKES Champagne. Vivienne Westwood. Goldfish
Weird Album & Clothes
HATES Champagne. Vivienne Westwood. Goldfish
FAV SONG (KAZ) The Boss by Dian Ross (RUBY) Gettin Jiggy With It by Will Smith
FAV FILM (KAZ) Mahogany (RUBY) Frozen



CAELEN, 19
OCCUPATION Sad Boy
LIKES YungBlud, Weird Album & Clothes
HATES Chavs, Me & Tracksuits
FAV SONG Love Song
FAV FILM Dark Knight
FAV CLUB Pink Toothbrush



JOSHUA, 17
OCCUPATION Student
LIKES Playing Guitar. Gaming & Punk Rock
HATES Dying. Hospitals & Pineapple on Pizza
FAV SONG 'Full Metal By BVDLVD
FAV FILM Harold & Maude
FAV CLUB The Pink Toothbrush



ALEX, 19 & PEARL, 20

OCCUPATION Students

LIKES Skateboarding, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes & McDonald's Fillet of Fish

HATES Tomatoes. Boris Johnson, Lockdown & George Jackson (Pearl's Ex)

FAV SONG Anything by Crash Test Dummies (Alex)

Ziggy Stardust by David Bowie (Pearl)

FAV FILM Aquaman (Alex)
Party Monster (Pearl)



DREW, 26

OCCUPATION Graphic Designer

LIKES Skateboarding, Money & Fishing

HATES The Taxman, Rain & Traffic

FAV SONG I'm Living By Lutan Fyah

FAV FILM Back To The Future

WILL, 28

OCCUPATION Tattooist

LIKES Art, Gaming & Fishing

HATES Litter, Being Cold & Reality TV

FAV SONG Still Dre by Dr Dre

FAV FILM Resident Evil



GOLDY LOXX, 18
OCCUPATION Student
LIKES Piercings,
 Platform Shoes & Tote Bags
HATES Spinach, Rom Coms &
 The Laughing Face Emoji
FAV SONG Wuthering Heights -
 Kate Bush
FAV FILM Oceans Eleven
FAV CLUB Wetherspoons

JACK, 21
OCCUPATION Recruitment
 Consultant
LIKES Football?
 Video Games & My job
HATES Brussels Sprouts,
 Cleaning & Musicals
FAV SONG Man Don't Care
 by JME Giggs
FAV FILM Home Alone
FAV CLUB Unit 7



JON, 20
OCCUPATION Student
LIKES Punk,
 Salted Peanuts & Cider
HATES Donald Trump,
 No Gigs & Cabbages
FAV SONG Babylon's Burning
 by The Ruts
FAV CLUB Pink Toothbrush

Casper, 17
OCCUPATION Student
LIKES Fashion,
 Basketball & My BMX
HATES Birds,
 Fake People & Football
FAV SONG Union City Blues
 by Blondie
FAV CLUB The Mudd Club



ELISE, 19
OCCUPATION Student/Waitress
LIKES Old Music, Adventure & The
 70s/80s
HATES Mushrooms?
 The World Now & Posers
FAV SONG You Make My Dreams
 Come True by Daryl Hall & John
 Oats
FAV FILM The Lost Boys
FAV CLUB The Pink Toothbrush

MEGAN, 22
OCCUPATION Fashion Student
LIKES Illustration, Platform Dr
 Martens & Bratz
HATES White trainers with Black
 Tights, American comedies &
 Tories
FAV SONG Under My Skin
 by Avril Lavigne
FAV FILM 10 Things
 I Hate About You
FAV CLUB Queen Of Hoxton



MEG, 18
OCCUPATION Student
LIKES Piercings, Platform
 Shoes & Tote Bags
HATES Spinach, Rom Coms & The
 Laughing Face Emoji
FAV SONG Wuthering Heights
 by Kate Bush
FAV FILM Oceans Eleven
FAV CLUB Wetherspoons

JUST ISAIAH

WORDS: AMAL MOHAMED

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON

Following the success of his debut EP 'Glow In The Dark', East London born rapper Just Isaiah utilises his many life experiences to produce a vibrant blend of UK Drill and Afro-swing. Known for his versatile rap style, Isaiah applies his vast knowledge of different genres to shape his uniquely poetic freestyles and flow, often speaking on deeper topics and themes. Now on a journey to represent himself in the most authentic way possible, Isaiah spoke to us all about how he crafts his sound, the power of authenticity and future plans.

Firstly, could you tell us a bit about your background and how you discovered your initial passion for music?

It's something I've always had in me. When I was seven, my Mum bought me my first album, 'Confessions' by Usher, which I think kickstarted my love affair with music. As I hit my early teens, I realised that I loved creating music just as much as I loved to listen and get lost in it. When I realised I could craft something that would resonate with people in the same way I resonated with my favourite artists, it was game-changing.

You spoke of your love for all different kinds of music. Who are your biggest inspirations artistically, and what inspires you when songwriting?

That's always a tricky question because so many different things inspire me! Most prominently, I would have to say Kanye West, Skepta and Kendrick Lamar, especially when I was growing up. I still have a long way to go, so I feel like I'm still growing up as an artist metaphorically. Recently I've been really into Ghetts, his latest album 'Conflict Of Interest' has been on repeat.

When writing a song, where do you look for inspiration?

Inspiration can come from anywhere. Often, it's just life in general and all the situations we constantly experience or to which we are exposed. I also love wordplay. If I find something I feel hasn't been tapped into yet, I want to be the first to do it. I'm always trying to say something in a way that it's been said not before. My audience also inspires me a lot. Knowing there will be a reaction and response to my work is consistently mind-blowing.

You released your debut EP, 'Glow In The Dark', last year. What knowledge have you gained since regarding the music industry and your style?

The biggest lesson I've learned is patience: timeless music will always pop off a week or a decade from now. It's vital to take the time to execute your ideas properly because they deserve that attention to detail.

What impact did the past year have on you as an artist?

I think it just reminded me to stay true to myself. Before 2020, I was trying to make music that wasn't me, and it was always a struggle connecting with people. I came into my power as soon as I made a conscious effort to be more genuine and unfiltered about my life, and it's been night and day.

What genre do you tend to lean towards most? Who do you wish to collaborate with in the future?

Whatever genre reflects my mood and my experiences – it's not uncommon for me to switch from drill, afro-swing, melodic rap and back again. I define the genre, not the other way round. At the moment, I would love to collaborate more with my friend and previous collaborator, FÉROCE. I can see myself on a track with Shakka or Ling Huddle too.

How has it been working alongside the team over at SDS?

SDS has shown me so much love from the beginning. My song 'Cupid's 9ine' received its first play on one of their live streams, and the reception to the music was just confirmation to keep going. I feel like we will have a long-term thing going on together, which I like. We have shared and discussed ideas over time and kept in touch. It's time to execute now.

Where do you want to be as an artist in the next five years?

I want to be financially and creatively secure, as well as building a legacy for myself. I want my artistry to be bigger than the art itself and for my work to open doors for my people and me. Accolades are nice, but records are broken every day. No one can break a legacy.

Finally, when can we expect next from you? Do you have any exciting projects set for release this year?

December 2021. I can't give the title away yet, but I will say it's undoubtedly the most authentic music I've ever made and a level above 'Glow In The Dark'.



JAY SNAGGZ

WORDS: AMAL MOHAMED
PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX RUBERON

Transitioning into a fully-fledged grime rapper was never the intention of former insurance worker Jay Snaggz. The Croydon-based rapper first encountered the music scene in 2014 after attending a studio session with some work colleagues, an outing that would spark the initial inspiration Jay needed to start writing. Known for his seamless freestyle skills reminiscent of Wiley, Kano and Stormzy, Jay Snaggz Grime-centric sound has already attracted large audiences. Despite facing the challenges of being an independent artist, Jay has shown no signs of slowing down with a work ethic reflected in both the quality and consistency of his releases. We spoke to Jay all about his humble beginnings, independence and the Rap music of today.

You have quite an interesting story in regards to how you first got into music. Can you tell us how that came about?

I never really had the desire to explore the music scene and was first introduced to the idea in 2014 by a colleague. I worked for an insurance company and became friends with a couple of the guys working there. One day, I got asked if I wanted to hang out with them as one of them had a producer friend with his own recording studio. I went along just for the sake of it and ended up leaving on a high. That night I started searching for hip-hop and grime beats to write too. I had no flow and didn't know anything about connecting lyrics properly, but I began to write nonetheless. Afterwards, trips to the studio became a habit. I began picking up different lessons and eventually learned to create a whole song.

Who or what are some of your biggest inspirations, and who influences your style now?

When I first started experimenting with Grime, my biggest inspiration was Screwfacer. He raps really fast, and I liked how he would connect his bars together. I started to grow as a musician over the years, opening my eyes to different genres, that affected my style. My biggest inspiration has to be Drake, just because of his versatility. UK-wise, I'm inspired by Stormzy and Skepta. They've come so far and have a lot done for the culture.

What inspires you in terms of songwriting?

In the early days of writing, I always tried to come up with the craziest punchlines. Now I tend to be more inspired by my surroundings and what I feel connected to in the moment. I avoid creating false narratives and aim to speak on the rawness of what I'm going through.

Drill artist Loski said in an interview with Zeze Millz, 'Most artists rapping about crime, violence and shooting are portraying a fake lifestyle'. Would you agree and how do you feel about this topic?

Yes, to a certain extent. There's plenty of rappers selling a 'lifestyle' and lying on their songs. Honestly, many of these rappers exaggerate and overdo it with their lyrics because they know it translates into sales. I keep my songs as close to my reality as I prefer to be authentic with my audience.

The urban scene is often blamed for inspiring children to create turbulence in their environment. Would you say that rap negatively affects younger generations?

I think the scene is blamed by default when it comes to crime. It's embedded in our culture. You can't solely blame one music genre on creating conflicts that would probably happen anyway. Gangsta music back in the early nineties had people speaking on the same topics - murder, robbery, shooting, etc. Those issues have always been around. I feel

like you need to look into the environment these children are from before you jump to the conclusion that either grime or drill is the 'kryptonite' weakening the children and pushing them into crime. Rapper's with a certain background are bound to rap about what they've experienced, and since I'm not familiar with that background, I can only speak on the things I know.

How did the past year affect you as an artist?

2020 was such a rollercoaster for me. Luckily, I had filmed many music videos, which I've gradually been releasing online. I even released an EP titled Swim or Drown - and it did well on the different digital platforms. The only thing I would complain about, and considered a massive setback in 2020, was performing. Getting on stage and performing is one of my favourite things, and not being allowed on stage was an enormous blow for me. I could've easily performed my EP to different crowds and connected with a new audience.

Do you prefer being independent as an artist, or do you aspire to be signed one day?

I was signed to management a year ago and can honestly say I enjoy being independent now. I prefer doing this solo, as I have more control as a creative. I run my own wheels, decide which track is getting released, who I want to collaborate with and most importantly, what type of music I feel like doing at the moment. Maybe in the future, I could see myself being signed, but as of right now, I'm focused on getting my music out to the masses.

What impact did SDS have on your journey so far?

I can only say positive things about SDS. They're an excellent platform for upcoming talent in Croydon. I was supposed to perform for the last year, but due to COVID, it, unfortunately, got cancelled. They're a great support to Croydon artists.

What hopes do you have for the music scene in Croydon?

The problem with Croydon is its bad reputation. Even people I talk to from different parts of London quickly point out their negative views on Croydon. There is a sea of talent in Croydon. I hope that we'll be known for the positives rather than the negatives in the future.

Finally, what can we expect to see next from you?

I have an album in the wings entitled 'Work Or Work'. It drives home the message that if you don't put in the required hours, the chances of you getting trapped in a 9-5 for the rest of your life are a real possibility. I'm currently working on the album cover, and since this album needs a lot of promotion, I need to work extra hard before introducing it to the world. So I'm excited to see what the future brings.



SIOBHAIN KANE

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY
PHOTOGRAPHY: ARRON WATSON-MCNAB



After moving to the UK from Zimbabwe at just three years of age, Siobhain Kane has worked hard to become one of South London's fastest rising stars. After appearing on The Voice UK in 2019, Siobhain received widespread attention throughout Britain, subsequently winning a place on Team Will. Raised in a household where her late father often practised with the famous Irish Skiffle band he was a part of, Siobhain's destiny to develop a love and respect for music from a very early age was evident. For Siobhain, music is the universal language she uses to communicate with her inner self and listeners, painting with the words she cannot conjure in everyday conversation. Each story Siobhain crafts is instilled with both her charmingly authentic vulnerability and one of a kind South London confidence, proudly worn like a beloved piece of jewellery.

Firstly, where are you from, how did you get into music and do you think your environment was a contributing factor?

Area wise I'm from Croydon, South London. I was born in Zimbabwe and came to England when I was about three years old, just after my Dad passed away. He was probably the most significant influence on me in terms of my music. There was always music in the house around me and I grew up in a very musical environment.

What is something you wish more people knew about Croydon as a whole?

That you don't have to take a plane to get down here, everyone thinks it's so far away. In all seriousness, Croydon is a very creative place that's full of life. South London has a reputation for being 'ghetto', but so many musicians and actors have come from Croydon. There are many of us here, and we work hard to get where we are, despite the wavering lack of recognition. We may be quiet, but we are here.

How would you describe your style in your own words? Does it correlate with your fashion and visual style? If so, how?

I'm currently trying to understand my style more as both an artist and a person. I try to match my style with my personality, which can be pretty quirky and out there. It's important to me to be relatable to people, even when trying to elevate things. My music style is very chill and emotional. I occasionally make fun songs, but I'm a very passionate person emotionally, which comes out in my music a lot more.

Who or what are some of your biggest inspirations?

Snoh Aalegra, Jhené Aiko and Sabrina Claudio all inspire me musically. In life, it would have to be the people around me, my best friends and family. With celebrities, you only get to see the good parts, whereas, with the people around you, you get to know that they go through things, pick themselves up. Seeing my loved ones doing that inspires me to act similarly.

What was it like competing on The Voice, and what's something unexpected you learned during that time?

Contending for The Voice was such a great experience! Being on TV was always a goal of mine and something I wanted to experience creatively. The Voice was a good fit for me as it felt more authentic and concerned with the talent versus rival shows. The biggest thing I learned is that even if an opportunity doesn't end the way you wanted, it's merely the start of something better or different. If I didn't take that opportunity, I wouldn't be here at a higher stage artistically with my career.

For most artists, writing is a form of catharsis. Why do you write, and what does your music-making process generally entail?

I write to talk. I'm great when it comes to helping other people, but I sometimes find it hard to talk about things regarding my emotions. Music is very much still my way to speak and communicate my feelings. I usually start by looping a beat and then write down some thoughts before formulating them into lyrics. It all happens quite naturally. Leaving yourself open to any topic of conversation is vital. That's when the good stuff shows up.

What's one piece of advice you would give to young people starting in the music industry today?

It's a lot tougher now than it's ever been. The distribution of music has changed so much, the music industry itself is easier to access and therefore oversaturated. If your passion lies with music, you must be rooted and consistent with it and build up a thick skin. There will be many rejections and places you don't fit in. It's just the nature of the industry. There is that place, people, and team for you out there, so be persistent and take lessons from all the yes and no's. Keep pushing to do what you love.

You seem to walk the line between being an independent artist while achieving some mainstream attention. Both have their obvious benefits, but which side do you veer towards and why?

I lean more towards the independent side for sure, there are positives and negatives to both, but I like to have more control and ownership over my work. Labels allow some freedom, but they still have to run you like a business. If you are independent, you have to work a lot harder, rely on yourself and know that you aren't getting as much external help.

What song from your discography means the most to you and why?

It's would have to be an unreleased song called 'The End', taken from my upcoming EP which set for release later this year. It's a simple, stripped-back song that serves as an interlude of sorts. I remember playing a particular beat, and the words just came out so effortlessly, they wrote themselves. It's not the most obvious song to decipher, but it's easy to connect if you were ever in a similar situation.

Can you tell us a bit about working with SDS and the team there, and can you give us any information on the Puma Collaboration?

I've worked with many teams in the industry, and SDS are one of my favourites! They see potential and add value to each collaborator. They are honest, understanding and there to help you grow. I went to the Puma Suede studios to record the lead single off my EP and was lucky enough to have them send me a few things you will most definitely see rinsed out on my Instagram.

You recently released your latest single, 'Admit It'. Can you tell us a bit about that and what is next for you career-wise?

'Admit It' is out now accompanied by a music video that sort of teases what is coming next from me. It's one of my more lighthearted songs. I didn't want to hit everyone with too much emotion right away. I have to ease the people into that, haha. My number one priority and goal now is consistency; that's something I've struggled with as an artist for sure. I've been teasing new music forever! I've prepared myself and have so much to come going forward. There's a rise coming for sure.



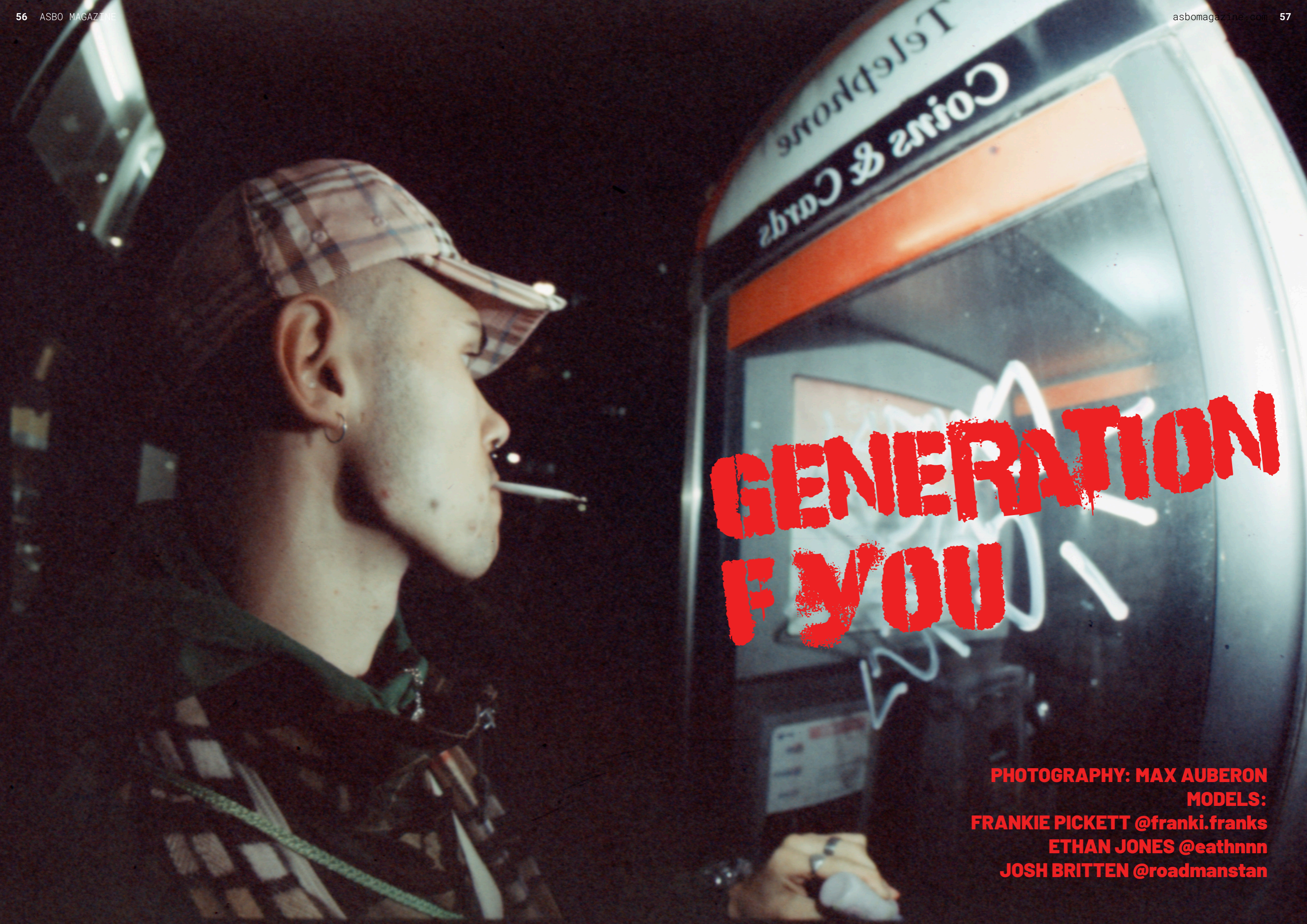
CANVAS OR CONCRETE



ALECLDN is an artist from London specialising in mixed media painted figures and typography murals. Alec's work is always bespoke and custom designed for your space and needs.

Do you have a beautiful idea you would like to bring to life? If you would like a one-off piece of art or mural created for your home or business, we will work together to create your masterpiece.

Incorporate your brand identity, values or ethos and transform an uninspiring blank external, internal wall or hoarding into a focal talking point.



GENERATION F YOU

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX AUBERON

MODELS:

FRANKIE PICKETT @franki.franks

ETHAN JONES @eathnnn

JOSH BRITTEN @roadmanstan







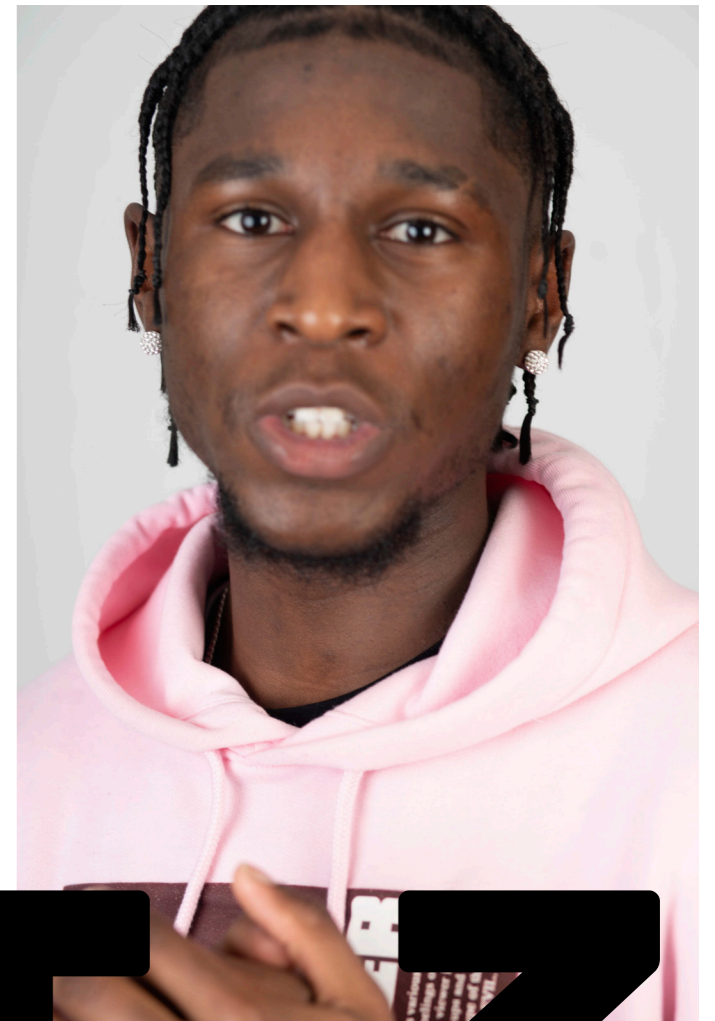
Hidden beneath Limitless VR is Croydons' best kept secret - V Bar. A 120 capacity venue with premium livestreaming facilities, gaming booths, an in-house record & vintage clothing store and a specially curated line up of DJ club nights and artists showcases, championing the rising underground scenes.

 @vbar_croydon



Cronxlive is V Bars' Livestream channel, broadcasting on Twitch, Mixcloud and Facebook. Give us a follow!

 @CronxLive 



FLEET



WORDS: ANDRE DARBY

PHOTOGRAPHY: ARRON WATSON-MCNAB

Most musicians wouldn't attribute their talent and success solely to divine intervention and often habitually portray themselves as excruciatingly virtuous and committed to a fault. Croydon native and rapper Flintz, on the other hand, has no problem admitting God's truth. Already building a presence and dedicated following in the UK, the twenty-year-old MC blends different elements of R&B, Hip-Hop, Grime and Trap to create a truly unique sound that has proven to be popular with the masses. Whether you believe it's divine intervention or pure coincidence, one thing is clear, Flintz' rise to prominence these past two years is nothing short of a miracle.

Could you tell us about your upbringing in New Addington?

New Addington was quite nice. It's a moderately small area and can be pretty lively, so it's one of those places where everybody knows everybody.

In one of your songs, 'In My World', you talk about nearly being a victim of knife crime. Can you talk about how that experience affected you?

Yeah, so for me, the incidents I was in were nearly at the level where I could one of these people you see in the paper or on the news. It's almost happened to me three times, I was a lot younger the first time it happened, and it hit me a little more. I was pretty worried. As I grew older, these feelings continued to persist. So, I decided to channel those feelings into the music instead.

When did you first realise you wanted to be an artist?

It's funny because many members of my family are musicians. However, my skill and talent seemed to develop randomly. I call it God's gift because it's a thing that randomly came to me, and since then, I've just kept going. I don't really know my initial inspiration or why I started, but whatever it was, it came very naturally.

Which artist would you consider crucial influences on your sound as an artist?

Back in the day, I listened to quite a bit of Biggie, Eminem and 50 Cent. When I started, I used to listen to a lot of Meek Mill. I like him because he focuses on the hustle. He's more about stacking up his paper and motivating people. I'm

also really into Rod Wave, he's genuine, and all his music is authentic. You know it comes from a real place.

Tell me about your recording process? How do you decide the direction of a particular song? Do you already have a concept in mind?

I write based on emotion. If I'm writing a deep song, it'll be more like a Rod Wave or a Lil Tjay type of beat, but it all depends on the emotions I'm feeling that day. If I'm not in the headspace to write anymore, I leave it and then return to it when I feel like I'm in that zone again. Some days when I'm feeling inspired, I can quickly bang out four to five songs in a day.

You recently performed at The Bop Live. Talk about the affiliation between you and SDS?

I've been in contact with SDS for a while. I met them at another show I was performing at, and they said that they liked my stuff, and they were fans of mine. When we met to perform at the Bop Live, it was during the lockdown thing, so it was mad, and I appreciate them putting that on.

Through your connection with SDS, you were able to record at Puma's Suede Studios. Could you touch on that experience?

So that whole experience was a dream come true. That day was nuts. I remember going into the studio, and I didn't even know how to act. I was there smiling away. I remember speaking to one of the guys there, and he said, "Have a look around the studio like this is your domain for the day". I smiled the whole session. I was working the engineer hard, and we ended up recording five songs that day. It was crazy.

So you're currently signed to Factio Music (CEO Sophie Beeching). Can you talk about how she's helped you in terms of your music career?

Sophie has been my manager for over a year now. I remember the first time she messaged me. She said she'd seen me on Instagram and told me she wanted to manage me. I've had people in the past trying to manage me, but they're often full of empty promises. I gave her a trial run, and she really pulled through. She connects me with a lot of people and has helped me a lot in the last year. It's only going up from here.

What can we expect next from Flintz?

I don't want to give away too much, but all I can say is that something is coming out in the next coming months. You just got to keep an eye out for the next couple of months and see what happens.

SEE
OUR7

croydonvoluntaryaction

SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON

THE
STUDY
THE
STUDY

@seeour7
#thestudy

FREE URBAN DANCE CLASS

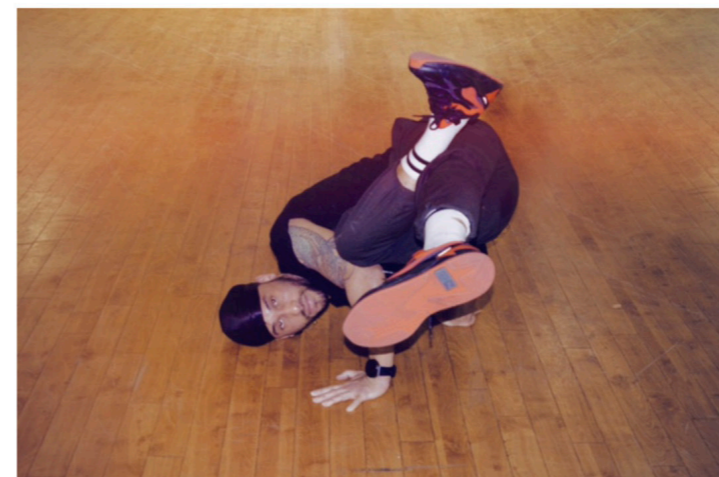
7 PM - 8 PM
Ages 18 - 24

FREE FREESTYLE DANCE
SESSION

8 PM - 10 PM
Ages 18+

EVERY THURSDAY

82 LONDON ROAD, CROYDON, CR0 2TB





PINS

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAIHEIM ALLEN AND MIKEZBEE

Exploring notions of mass-consumerism and the status of image through art, London based multi-disciplinary artist PINS has an insatiable desire to engage the minds of others through his tongue-in-cheek pop-culture inspired work. Finding his way into the industry on his terms, PINS developed an entrepreneurial mindset when faced with a lack of opportunity after gaining a BA Hons in Fashion and Business. Through trial and error, PINS carved out his own space in the industry while developing his skills and making a name for himself along the way, working with countless high profile clients. Continuing to push creative boundaries through personal, community and charity projects, PINS strive to help people explore, develop and nurture their creativity.

Could you tell us a little about your background? How did you start making art, and why do you make art?
I'm an artist based in Croydon. I attained a BA Hons in Fashion with Business at Croydon College. So, a degree in hand, mum & dad proud, but then couldn't get a 'job' way back in 2005 - I've always had this crazy creative urge, so I then started painting designs on New Era baseball hats for a boutique down St. George's Walk (non-existent now) in North End, Croydon High Street. As my creative urge continued, my natural ability to connect with people, especially young people, became apparent. This started my journey into exploring youth work and working with youth clubs across various sites across Croydon and other parts of London, using my creativity as a constant tool for inspiring others to express themselves through art. This has now led me to become a professional artist, designer, educator and activist for positive social change. I believe we should all have access to space to create, connect and nurture our talents.

What does your work aim to say?

To use your entire being to fully express yourself in the most human & creative way possible, in the hope to connect & empower others to do the same.

How does your work comment on current social or political issues?

Through humour and alternate perspectives using print, digital & textile mediums.

Who are your biggest influences?

Mum for her background in textiles and overall support throughout my career, including Dad for his early artistic guidance and encouragement.

How have you developed throughout your career?

I've become more centred through my work with an overarching mission - To connect and empower humanity through creativity. I've just kept pursuing the urge to create & trusted my Pintuition more as time goes by - this has led to super lived moments along the journey, creating connections

that would have never been possible had I overly tried to plan things. There was/is no plan, just BLAM!

What is your dream project, e.g. working with a particular brand, place, person, type of project?

To deliver regular artistic activity in local & international disadvantaged/low-income areas in the hope to empower people to see beyond themselves and their environments.

What's something you wish more people knew about Croydon?

Croydon,
It's where I reside,
Green spaces galore,
Concrete-ish inside,
The raw beauty within,
The talent,
Where to begin,
Come a little closer,
Sink in,
Raw states of mind,
The beauty,
Ain't hard to find...

How have you responded creatively to the 'global pandemic' this year? Did it inspire you or less so? I've seen you've put on a lot of workshops for local youth, which is amazing!

Thank you! Not a fan of using the 'GP' word, as often we put energy into things which often we ain't got a clue about ourselves, so we tend to just run with it and then the 'thing' becomes a 'thing' based on our validation of whatever's said the most - I digress. My activity in the last year has been pretty much the same as the previous year, with the only exception of my physical engagements being halted as a result of the lockdown. I focused on the needs of society as I do with most of my work/projects and how best to serve them - the need to feel human again as a result of the 'separation of society'. I activated 'Sketch The Vibe' workshops in various council estates across London, complete with free Sketch Packs for young people to get creative in their own areas. This is something I will be continuously building upon moving forwards.

You work with many different mediums. If you could only use one, which would it be and why?

Acrylics are super versatile, quick-drying and work on anything.

Do you have any advice for hopeful young artists wanting to get into the industry? Also, do you have any upcoming projects, collabs or information to let our readers know?

Don't try and get into the industry. Explore your current urges, really tune in to what your body/mind feels to do. Create based on that feeling and continue. Share that feeling, once satisfied enough to do so with others through whatever platform. If the 'industry' finds you, cool, if not, carry on building your thing. The key is not to try and get in anywhere but to flow with something you can take with you everywhere. For more of my work and upcoming projects, feel free to check out my website: www.pinspired.com or Insta: @PINS_Artist



DJ SÁshi

WORDS: Amal Mohamed
PHOTOGRAPHY: Max Auberon

Well-respected female DJ and Tastemaker SÁshi first began her journey as a DJ after a period of re-evaluation and self-discovery. Originally from East London, SÁshi found herself involved in Croydon's vast music scene after featuring her radio show 'Hidden SNDS' on Croydon FM. Describing perfectionism as her inner saboteur, SÁshi has used her artistry to transform many aspects of her life, explaining how the decision to embrace the vulnerability and patience required to trust the process has helped her flourish. Using her influence to get her daily listeners out of their comfort zone, SÁshi strives to provide sonic escapism at every turn, all whilst advocating for independent artists. Inspired by free-spirited artists such as Ari Lennox, Erykah Badu and Solange, SÁshi proves the importance of being true to yourself and not ever allowing self-doubt to cloud your potential.

When did you start DJing - and who or what were your early passions and influences?

My journey of self-discovery blossomed towards the end of 2017 and birthed all my current interests. I hadn't formed a clear vision of what I wanted to do in life but realised that being in university wasn't leading me to it. Understanding my true self and exploring what resonated with my spirit became a priority. I wanted to experiment creatively and figure out what I found joy in doing. I've always created playlists for different moods, genres and events, so my boyfriend suggested that I try DJing. I eventually grew to love it. I found purpose in discovering and sharing different sounds and musical expressions.

I love music so much. Different genres and artists have influenced various aspects of my life. Reggae, Lovers Rock and R&B were the sounds that filled my household as a child and allowed me to feel the power that music has to invoke emotional resonance. I discovered an appreciation for lyricism in my teenage years whilst listening to grime, rap, and artists I would find on SB.TV. When I began DJing, all I wanted to play was UK Garage and Funky House. A state of happiness and escapism was what I wanted to create for others through my selections, so it all started there. Overall, I connect to free-spirited music, currently on rotation are Sorceress, IAMDDDB, Black Coffee, Erykah Badu, Twelve Sound, Ari Lennox, Drake, Amaarae, Nujabes & Solange.

What were some of the main challenges and goals when first starting out?

PERFECTIONISM! Accepting that there's always room for growth and improvement is still something I'm learning. You'll end up blocking your blessings by constantly hiding your craft from the world. It's easy to get trapped in a cycle of not thinking you're good enough and wanting to continuously perfect imperfections. It took me so long to accept my first booking because I felt that I hadn't found my sound, didn't have the tightest transitions, didn't have enough music etc. But life is about learning and growing. It's essential to find joy in the journey. I mean, who is genuinely completely happy with themselves, their career, salary, physical appearance, etc.? There's so much vulnerability and honesty in making mistakes and not shying away from imperfection. My purpose is to aid global healing and spiritual rebirth, so music is just one of my pathways to that.

How would you define your job, and what influence do DJ's have?

I'm doing what I love, so I don't even see it as a 'job'. For me, DJing is like saying to a friend, "omg have you heard this song?!" but just to a crowd full of people all at the same time. DJ's have the power to alter moods and dictate the atmosphere of the space just by being intentional with their choices, bringing a song in at the right time or reading the crowd and making the decision to wheel it up.

What was your first set-up as a DJ?

Big up my boyfriend. He was the one who pushed me to start DJing and taught me the ropes using his DDJ-SB2 controller and KRK speakers. I used to be shy playing in front of him because I wasn't at the level that I knew I could reach, so I decided to purchase a controller to practice privately. I searched on gumtree to find the cheapest Serato controller, which ended up being in the sticks of Essex, my sister and I drove over an hour journey because the Capricorn in me was determined to get a bargain. Still, thinking about it now, it probably added up in petrol, haha.

How is Croydon reflected or represented when building a set?

This question is funny because unknown to many, I'm actually an East London gyal. Having my radio show 'Hidden SNDS' on Croydon FM meant that I received a lot of music from Croydon-based artists, spent time discovering local artists and have in turn worked with Croydon-based platforms. Hence, it makes sense that people think I'm a 'Croydonian'. I hadn't stepped foot there before 2019. I now have a lot of music from Croydon-based artists in my catalogue, so naturally, their music seeps into my sets.

How has your set-up evolved over the years? What are the most important pieces of gear for you?

A wise man once said, "It's not the equipment, it's the brain". I recently upgraded my speakers and got some other equipment but more for recording and production, as that's something I want to hone in on. What's most important is feeling. You can have all the gear and no idea. The meta is to immerse yourself in the music and allow yourself to be free creatively.

How would you describe the relationship between your choices and goals as a DJ and the audience's expectations, desires, and feedback?

Many say that you have to play for the crowd and not yourself, but to be honest, I trust in my taste of music so

much that I tell myself that the audience can't help but vibe. When I first started, many self-doubts arose because I thought I wouldn't get bookings as I don't necessarily play what's 'current' or 'trendy'. But in deciding to stay true to me, I've learned that good music is good music. I've tested the waters and been experimental in my sets, and the response has always been dope. I select my music based on how it makes me feel and how I want others to feel in that moment. I want people to feel free and explore sounds that they may not have delved into before.

What is it like working with SDS, and how do the team support your work and artistry?

My family! Large up the SDS team, they're full of good vibes and have given off nothing but genuine energy from the jump. Working with like-minded people is always a blessing, so I've got to give thanks. When working with them, they've trusted me with complete creative freedom, which I appreciate. I'm grateful that they always support my projects and bring me in on opportunities. The work they're doing to showcase black creatives is phenomenal, and I know a lot more is in store for SDS.

What hopes and future aspiration do you have for the music scene in Croydon?

Croydon has a real sense of community which is reflected in the rise and traction of their music scene. Many people get lost in the sauce and don't bring their people up with them. I believe a lot of greatness will come from the togetherness of the community. I want to see everybody win, to be honest, so in whatever way I can help that, I'm down.

STANLEY ARTS

**STAND
OUT**



Stanley Arts is a premiere arts and performance venues in South London.

As a radically inclusive space, we seek to foreground under-represented voices, providing artists of colour and LGBTQ+ creatives with a platform to reach out to audiences across South London and beyond.

For more info visit:

[STANLEYARTS.ORG](https://stanleyarts.org)



WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY

SEE OUR 7

Drawing from the vibrant cultural energy of Croydon, SeeOur7 showcases the diversity of skill and talent rising from the notorious South London borough. An art and music collective consisting of rappers, DJs, dancers, and beatboxers, SeeOur7 explores creativity through sounds, visuals, and movement. Seeking to resurrect the bassline-heavy vibrations of its creative community after years of stagnation, neglect and venue closures, SeeOur7 are back and better than ever.

Firstly, I know you guys have been taking some time off due to lockdown. How does it feel to be back?

It feels great to be back. We're eager to get the ball rolling again. COVID was devastating for the arts and especially live performance and events. It was pretty tough not being able to do anything but talk on Zoom and watch everything fade. Saying that, though, we pushed to promote local artists and continued with some informal interviews and performances on our Instagram platform. We still have many plans and are looking to build momentum to pick up where we left off.

Can you tell us a bit about how and why See Our 7 started and the meaning behind the name?

SeeOur7 started as a reaction to negative stereotypes about Croydon and the culture of our area. We were aware there are many artists and talented people and a strong community, and we wanted to bring this together and demonstrate that there is more to place than what you might hear. SeeOur7 plays on Thornton Heath's postcode (CR7) as we have all lived or worked in the area.

How did everyone meet and first come together?

A few of us knew each other from when we were younger, some in secondary school and some in college. We all had various paths of life that brought us together in Croydon quite coincidentally. Art was our unanimous link, through our training professions and hobbies. Throughout the years 2008-2009 and onwards, Croydon was founded to be a hot spot for artists looking for a voice, and by events, jams, and simply being out on the high street, several creatives became connected. In 2018 enabled the creation of SeeOur7, a collective of creatives who aimed to mould Croydon into the Artistic Hub it deserved.

Can you tell us about some of the group's key members, what they do, etc.? I know you feature dancers, rappers, beatboxers etc.?

As I mentioned, we all had an artistic buzz around us and naturally searched any avenue we could find, either short term and long to pursue our passion. Some of us grew up together, and we had space and tenacity to try lots of things as we went through university, such as basketball, archery, trampolining, parkour, gymnastics etc. I would say the main crafts we kept running were beatboxing, rapping, dancing and gymnastics from our teenage years into where we are now.

The love of art has led to having the expertise we can now share producing, rapping, singing, events management, fighting art forms, dance to even calories and yoga! We feel when keeping a creative hour (no matter what you like), it encourages a sense of youth and immortality because what you expressed at that moment is forever engraved in your surrounding, so I think it's imperative to try everything.

What has been your favourite performance/project you have done to date?

There's been a few that has been memorable to date. The Endz festival was fun. It left an imprint on our mind while helping expose us to local eyes. To be a part of the relaunch of Fairfield Halls was an honour as it felt like it was a milestone performance for us in the heart of our hometown. We came with something different, incorporating dance and spoken word, which we don't think many people expected. We also loved being a part of 'Nature Needs Heroes', where we didn't only perform but had the chance to programme the performances for the event, which was cool because it gave people to see what Croydon's talent has. Looking forward to future performances is an understatement.

What would be your dream project as a collective?

A dream project which I think we all share is the chance to create and perform our theatre piece, ideally starting at home in Fairfield Halls then tour. We would love to incorporate all the disciplines we're passionate about and include the network of artists we have. Having complete creative access in a theatre space would be incredible. It would allow us to create art that speaks about current affairs and the current happenings that affect us, hopefully, to inspire, encourage and inform our audience.

What kind of events have you created? Are there any you are looking to put on now that the lockdown is over?

There's the study, a space for the dance community to train, network and catch a vibe with. We also have the SeeOur7 show and SeeOur session, both of which will be coming back, but we will be revamping it, which is exciting. The best way to describe them is that the show is like a hip-hop based chat show where the audience gets to experience the artist's talent and music through Q&As and games. The SeeOur session is the best way to party and network with like-minded creatives. We usually have rap cyphers and dance battles break out in the night.

What do you think more people need to know about Croydon?

Croydon is the youngest borough in London, meaning have the youngest people. We at See Our 7 believe that this is a fact the whole of London should know. If all of London knew this, maybe the bad rep we have here may be that much more understandable. Imagine looking after one young person or five. Imagine one class or an entire school.

With young people, there can be immaturity, naivety and a level of uncultured and uneducated choices but there's also the innocent fearlessness of not taking no for an answer. The ability to believe in oneself and stop at nothing until ambition and dreams become a reality. If this was common knowledge, the city would soon realise that we have the most relentless creative resolve of all the boroughs, deserving of: more positive attention, more funding and more understanding.

Why do you think it's important to give back to the community and provide creative spaces for Croydon's youth?

Without Croydon, SeeOur7 would not be what it is today. Due to its raw life lessons and humble environments, we learned our art forms and how to express them. Some of us at SeeOur7 were schooled by the breakers and rappers of Black Sheep Bar in 2010, like Sockz and Oliver Sudden. They learned from the breakers and Dubbers of 2005, and they learned from those who were with the Rock Steady Crew when they came to the U.K all those years ago. The knowledge must be handed down like a torch. Otherwise, it will go out, and then who will shine the light on the Croydon streets that we love to walk.

A L E C L D N

**WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY
PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAIHEIM ALLEN AND MIKEZBEE**

Croydon-born and raised urban artist Alec Saunders, aka AlecLDN, has made quite a name for himself with his often politically charged street art, murals and paintings, which acknowledge, highlight and celebrate the different cultures, peoples and human stories. Inspired by artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Rone, Ser, Obey, and Banksy, Alec focuses hugely on creating opportunities for the youth of tomorrow, involving himself heavily in charity work to both raise awareness and give back. Alec's persistent mindset and drive only help break down the societal walls he strongly rejects while he makes incredible art on the real ones.

Could you tell us a little about your background? How did you start making art, and why do you make art?

Growing up and living my whole life in Croydon has allowed me to experience a life of great diversity and awareness. My artistic journey started before me. It's in my veins. My father was an artist, illustrator and thinks like one too. Growing up around him and his craft inspired me to do the same. I remember spending many weekends in his cool office just off the cultural hive of Brick Lane in the nineties. Being around all his pens and pencils and large mood boards would get young Alec very excited and raring to create. I would enter competitions and do small jobs for him and his company. Some of his projects would be high profile and could be seen by millions of people, which was always an early thrill for me. I first exhibited at six years old in Fairfield Halls after winning a competition while at school, and a year later, some of my poetry published. My father has always asked my brothers and me to think for ourselves and

not follow the crowd; we always had an education from him about social matters that weren't taught in schools at the time. We were never the wealthiest family, so as an artist, it made me very resourceful growing up, which is reflected by the collage mix media style I developed using recycled materials. I would always have a plastic bag on my person whilst at college to pick up found items, metal, wood etc., to use in my art.

I believe art is a way of expressing oneself. It presents reality in a way that may change the vision and perspective of the audience towards the world. It can work as a catalyst that sifts facts from assumptions and blends these with imagination so that fresh meanings can be created. It's a form of communication that can be felt deep within your core. I'm always thrilled to from an idea into something physical.

Whose work has influenced you most? What styles do you admire?

Graffiti & Street Art dominated my

second renaissance of inspiration. I love the thrill of graffiti and the raw communication it allows. There's no filter or censorship, you can say what you like, and it's, for me, the truest art form. This naturally evolved into street art which I believe is a chance to take one's time to better express oneself. Anselm Kiefer, Rone, Ser, Obey, and Banksy were my favourite artists growing up for either the technical ability or message behind the work. Going to Paris and visiting the Pompidou Centre was very inspiring as a teenager, not just for the gallery but also for the graffiti and architecture surrounding the gallery. Travelling, in general, allows you to experience so many different forms of art.

Among your works so far, which one is your favourite? Why?

It's hard to say as while I can be happy with the outcome of a piece, the reception or legacy it achieves is a bigger thrill for me. Technically, I think the First People Mural on Park Street was my favourite. Legacy wise,

I created a piece at Dubai Airport for Absolut (a company Andy Warhol and Keith Haring also created for). It would have planted tens of thousands of trees and created jobs in South America due to the art being made from recycled plane waste and was painted in Air light pollution absorbing paint.

What does your work aim to say? Is it a statement or more self-expression?

I wouldn't tie myself to either. I paint something political, someone I admire, something to help a specific group of peoples or simply something I think is beautiful. I like to acknowledge, highlight and celebrate ethno-racial differences & recognise that each tradition has something invaluable to offer. I'm not afraid to see how others have suffered as a result of racial conflict or differences. I try to represent the unrepresented. I believe it is paramount that we do not inadvertently deny the racism that still exists or the cultures to which people belong. This quote from Audre Lorde clarifies my points quite strongly:

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences".

What is your dream project, e.g. working with a particular brand, place, person, type of project?

I have been lucky enough to have been chosen for several projects I would say would have been dream ones when first starting. One is the resident artist for Ends Festival, where my work was displayed all over the festival, and one of my pieces was given to the late Ermias Asghedom's (Nipsey Huddle) family. I got to represent two of my all-time favourite musicians, Nas & Wizkid. I was due to do a twelve-story building of Nipsey, but it fell through due to the council not confirming it in time. Personally, doing a large scale piece like this or possibly some overseas work with a more prominent exposure would be my ideal. Art is meant to be seen, after all.

What are the most rewarding and most challenging things about being an artist?

I would say the most rewarding part is getting to make a positive change or impact on society through giving back or creating awareness. It's all very well moaning and complaining about issues, but if you're not really doing anything positive to make a change, then you're not helping. Working for charities is excellent too. I'm working with several charities behind the scenes at the moment and doing pieces for free for public organisations like Croydon FM or Matthews Yard, who elevate the whole community. The hours of hard work are worth it when you can see it making a change. I'm always learning and evolving, and the most challenging thing for me is to try and stick to a specific style. I enjoy experimenting and having fun, so locking down a signature style is challenging.

I know you strive to inspire and create opportunities for tomorrow's generation. Can you tell us how you have done/ do this and why is it important to you?

I think this is the most important thing anyone can do. I started doing an art workshop for children at the school I used to go to as a child. I then had a conversation with the Headteacher to create a role for me permanently at the school. I took a significant pay cut from a managerial job to take the artist in residence/ Head of Art job.

The world is racist, and the world is ignorant. Nobody is born that way. It's taught. Education is crucial, and growing up in Croydon, which is a very multicultural place, we were not taught about the subtle cultural differences enough, if at all. It was my own interests, exploration and my family who

would open my eyes to the diversity in our world. Nobody is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. I admit when I've made a mistake and try to educate or re-educate myself. Some children are exposed to such negativity and hate. Education is so important as this generation of children that I teach every day are hopefully going to be the ones to distinguish hatred. Education has a central role in creating new values and attitudes and provides us with essential tools for addressing deep-rooted discrimination and the legacy of historical injustices. It can empower individuals and groups to lift themselves out of poverty.

I have spent the entire pandemic with vulnerable children, giving them opportunities, even though this put my family and especially my baby daughter born in the pandemic at high risk. I've spent every day with these children. I've also been lucky enough to help feed these families in poverty, even serving them food when they were not eligible to come into school. I have given these young people chances to experience & achieve things the average child can only dream about, such as going to galleries, exhibiting in the Tate and at my exhibitions, speaking at city hall in front of the Mayor, competing in national sports competitions, going to Wembley to watch England, entering and winning Art competitions, meeting inspiring individuals, the list goes on. One group of girls had never really played football before competitively. My colleague and I managed to train and guide these girls. They beat all the teams in South London, going further than any school in Croydon's history. They competed in Leicester's King Power Stadium against schools around England and Wales, where they came 5th out of thousands of schools. Many of the girls won full scholarships to private schools due to this achievement & hard work, which would be beyond the average families means to afford these fees. They were also signed for Crystal Palace FC, which really changed these young people's lives dramatically. I am also a trained Art therapist using an initiative called 'Talking & Drawing' using symbolism to help the most vulnerable children (mostly living in extremely toxic environments) to accept trauma, move on and become positive students, which did not exist when I was at school.

Finally, Education can only prevent and combat sexism, homophobia, racism and xenophobia if its access and quality are also guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equality. It is important for Governing bodies to ensure that their general curriculum, and not only the curriculum devoted explicitly to human rights education, contains adequate and balanced information on the contribution of a diverse amount of people, cultures & other non-dominant groups, not just ticking a box to appease certain people. How do we know we exist if we cannot see our reflection?

Do you have any closing advice you want to give others looking to get into art?

We live in a time where now more than ever, there's a possibility to be seen and heard. With social media, we can be noticed, spread a message and awareness easier than ever. Be genuine and focus, work on yourself and know that nobody gets sustained success overnight without putting in the years of work beforehand. So don't look at what others do and compare yourself to them, which I understand is hard. Everyone has a talent. Everyone is world-class at something they enjoy. The tricky bit is finding it and unlocking it. If you're from Croydon, you're lucky enough to be in a potent melting pot of culture and creativity like no other.



RAP THERAPY

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAIHEIM ALLEN AND MIKEZBEE

Founded by Bhisma Asare, Rap Therapy is a community interest company that offers a series of workshops that use rap as a tool to teach young students how to positively express themselves, become more creative and in turn improve their mental health. Already working with over 4700 young people, the company targets schools with students that are most at risk of being excluded and put them back on the right path, effectively preventing young people from falling victim to social tragedies.

Firstly, I just wanted to say how excellent the work you are doing is. Using music as a force for positive change for young children in a fun and innovative way is an extraordinarily commendable feat. What sparked the initial idea to start the company, and why did you feel inspired to create the company?

Thank you. So Rap Therapy is a community interest company that I started in early 2018 after a late 2017 release of my EP 'Invisible Guidelines'. The EP got a lot of media attention, and it spoke about my area and the problems within the area. Putting my words into actions, I wanted to make a company that can teach young people to express themselves positively through Rap.

What was your journey in music/rap, and how did it help you growing up?

I started making music when I was eleven years old. Although I don't make music now, I performed in churches, concerts, competitions, radio and the playground. Making music was something I enjoyed creating, and from a young age, I nurtured that talent. I also found that I could write about events and incidents in private, even if no one ever saw the lyrics, which ultimately allowed me to express myself positively and strengthen my mental health.

Do you have any particularly fond memories of a specific school or young person positively affected by the workshops you put on that you could share with us?

To date, we have worked with over 4700 young people, and our workshops impact many young people. There is a lot of

talent within the schools and youth establishments we enter. As a company, we are less concerned with raising rappers and more concerned with giving young people the practical tools to learn how to express themselves positively.

During the lockdown, we saw a certain disregard for the importance of creative roles, which was then ironically counteracted by a lot of the nation turning to creativity for relaxation and mental stimulation. Why do you think creativity is essential in our day and age? What role is it playing for young people now?

Creativity, now more than ever, is important and essential because not only does it offer self-expression, it provides the opportunity to be yourself in a safe space and create without the pressures of the world dictating what it is you must make. Young people are more creative than people give them credit for and creativity is a viable asset that we as adults should encourage young people to continue and aid them to achieve what it is they are aiming for. Young people create all the time, but often places like social media don't make it easy for them, as they often feel pressured to have a perfected piece of work, when realistically perfection is subjective and creativity in its raw form could still be deemed as perfect, depending on who is viewing it.

What is the most rewarding and challenging part of your job?

I think there are different challenges on a day-to-day basis; however, having a solid team around me allows me to do my role as the founder and director of Rap Therapy. The

teamwork resonates through everything that we do at Rap Therapy.

What is your proudest achievement with the company, and what is something you'd like to achieve that you haven't already?

Our most significant achievement is reaching so many young people in such an impactful way in such a short space of time. We want to reach more young people and eventually expand to further parts of the UK when the time is right.

What has been the most important lesson you've learned along the way?

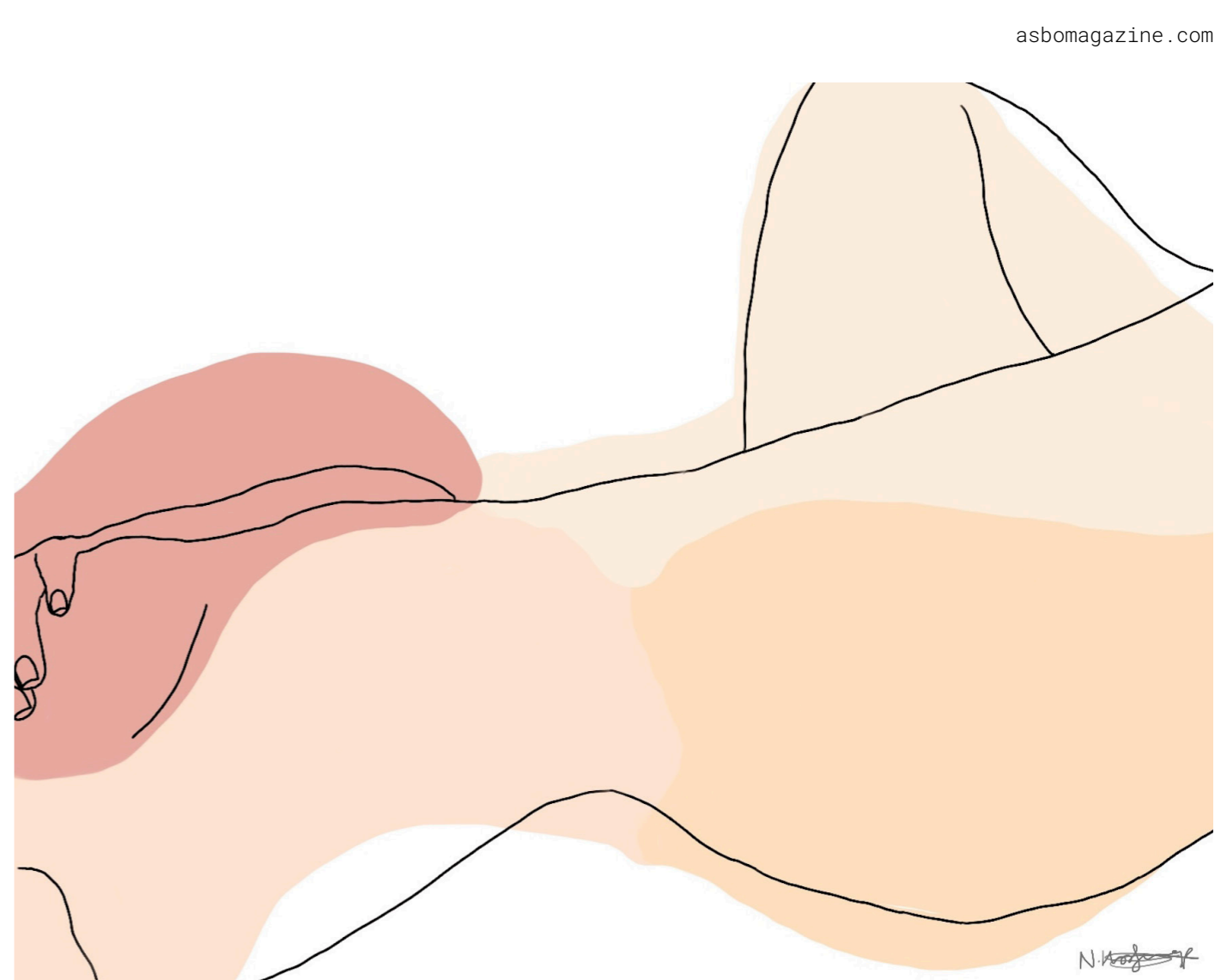
I have learnt that it is often perceived that I, as the founder of the company, have to be the most competent person in the room; however, part of being a leader is understanding that you are not always going to be the smartest person in the room and there is a beauty in that because you must always push yourself to learn about things you are not as familiar with. Part of being a leader is to ensure that you have the right people around you with an understanding of the vision and goal to help you make important decisions.

Finally, how would someone who wanted to help with the company apply or contribute?

If someone wanted to find out more about Rap Therapy, they can visit our website www.raptherapy.co.uk or they can follow us on Instagram @Rap_Therapy_100



NAOMI



How did you start making art, and why do you make art?

I first started making art when I decided to select it for a GCSE subject! One of the biggest influences I had at the time came from Frida Kahlo, I was so interested in how she portrayed herself and how she told a story throughout her work I was so inspired to do the same but in a different way, as at the time I never had an established style!

Whose work has influenced you most?

The other youths and art creatives in south London and at university in Coventry! All my friends on my course helped inspire me and influence some of my art pieces!

Among your works so far, which one is your favourite?

Why my favourite piece of work I've created is my most recent, The nightmare birthday is a 24 page book I had to create for my final degree submission but it presents a black character having anxiety about her birthday all because of the nightmares she had the night before! I really experimented with my artistic style and switched it up, so it re inspired me to keep making art work in a similar

way, especially for other children's books I may want to create

What's your favourite style of art to draw and why?

Commonly my favourite style of art is Modern, Digital & I would like to touch into Afrofuturism!

What would be your dream project to take on and why?

My dream project would be able to take part in illustrating images, art pieces for a company, where my work would be broadcasted online and in person, as well as collaborating with authors and other illustrators in creating an amazing, thoughtful children's picture book

What're the most rewarding and most challenging things about being an artist?

The most rewarding thing about being an artist and creating art work is the people you meet and those who support you in your journey! Seeing people enjoy the art you create and your art work serving a purpose is very rewarding. The most challenging thing about being an artist is sometimes having self doubts about what people

would want from you, the expectations you set as well as rejection! But I guess it serves a purpose too as rejection is a very humbling experience.

If you weren't making art, what else do you think you'd be doing?

If I weren't making art work, I'd definitely be more in public service / helping the youths of today

Have you got any projects we need to look out for coming out?

Have a look out for my most recent project, the nightmare birthday! I haven't published this but it is on the come up of being so!

Do you have any closing advice you want to give for others looking to get into art?

The advice I'd give to those who want to create art work is, no matter what route you decide to take to get into this industry, make sure you enjoy it & have a general interest in what your doing! Don't hold yourself back or be afraid of speaking to people, collaborating or going to networking events! This will really help you!

WRIGHTS ACADEMY

WORDS: CONNOR AIDEN FOGARTY
PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAIHEIM ALLEN AND MIKEZBEE



Firstly, can you tell us a bit about the different types of services you offer and what you specialise in as an academy?

At Wrights Academy, we provide music and sports services in schools, the community and privately. Our sports side includes after school clubs, holiday clubs and management of the Lambeth primary schools football league. Our music side is all things DJing. We provide workshops, after school clubs, holiday clubs, 1:1 DJ lessons, joint DJ lessons and DJs for booking.

We specialise in teaching multi-genre clean music and provide full support throughout the clients DJ journey from the Beginners Course up to and past the Elite Course.

What gave you the initial idea to start providing your services, what was the inspiration behind the company?

The idea was born during Co-Founder Gemma's maternity leave, boredom played a massive part whilst for Co Founder Jr it was frustration at wanting to do more in his teaching role. One day someone asked for a DJ lesson and that got the ball rolling.

What's the most rewarding and challenging part of your job?

The most rewarding part is seeing people happy, whether that's from a great time at our holiday clubs, the moment that DJing clicks for them or getting their first bookings. We also get a massive boost when we hear

comments from people on how we've had such a positive impact on them or their child.

Of course, we have challenges too. At the moment it's trying to fit everyone in for a DJ lesson, our Saturdays are booked solid for at least 6 weeks! It's also really tricky to recruit staff, we're just glad to have found some great people to work with.

What is your proudest achievement with the company, and what is something you'd like to achieve that you haven't already?

We are extremely proud of our clients. So many people walk in our door with absolutely no experience and leave with a career. We've supported at least five people to go on to run radio shows and recently had one client be signed by Ditto MGMT. Many more clients have taken on paid bookings from places such as Flip Out and other clients come barely able to look up from the floor and leave having grown so much in confidence after having their little bubble in the studio while learning to mix.

There is so much in our plans for the future, we've got more ideas than we have the manpower to deliver them! One thing we'd like to achieve is a bigger space to accommodate two studio spaces.

Can you tell us about your DJ's? What's your team setup like, and how have you managed to provide services through lockdown etc?

The Founders are Gemma and Junior Wright. Gemma manages all the behind the scenes and liaises with clients, while Junior manages all the hands-on work and writes the course material. We also have our Sports Team which is made up of three people who are excellent at what they do and all come from a teaching background. Then of course we have a trustworthy and supportive team of four DJ Tutors that we are really proud to be working with. Our Team cover Walthamstow down to South London and teach in clients homes as well as our Croydon studio. Lockdown has been tough, we've been grateful that our DJ Tutors have stuck with us and continued to provide DJ lessons via Zoom.

During the lockdown, we began Super Sundays. Using Instagram Live, we set aside one day a month for ten of our DJs to showcase what they can do. This has gained massive support from some big-name DJs as well as local companies and helped us engage with our clients and audience.

What's something you wish more people knew about Croydon, and do you have any favourite DJ's from the area?

That we have some amazing open spaces on our doorstep; Banstead Woods, Crystal Palace Park and

Aerodrome are some of our favourites for when you just need some fresh air. Our favourite DJ's from the area? Well, we have to say our homegrown talents such as Dimpz N Lawz, Cayden Denis, DJ Els and DJ SRae. In addition, we also have massive respect for all the DJs working hard at their craft and pushing to be their best.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to get into DJing?

We find that people purchase lots of equipment that they don't know how to use and try to figure it out themselves. Whilst that is an option, it's better that you get a solid foundation beneath you and really understand the fundamentals of mixing. Once you fully understand the basics you can mix any genre.

Have you got anything exciting planned coming up? Any events, workshops or details you can share? Where can we find out more?

We've got our very first Super Sunday being held in a venue! Sunday 6th June from 3-8 pm will see six of our DJs along with their friends and families come together to showcase their talents. There will also be 3 DJs on Instagram from 12 to help get the party started. We will also be running this over Instagram for those that can't make it. To watch, head over to our Instagram page @WrightsAcademy or visit our website www.wrightscademy.com

RECKLESS DEMEANOR.

WORDS: AMAL MOHAMED
PHOTOGRAPHY: CZ FILM



Croydon native and rapper Cameron Douglas, a.k.a Reckless Demeanor, knows no limits when it comes to experimenting and inviting different genres into his music. Forming an ever-growing passion for music at an early age, Reckless was first exposed to his love after attending church as a child, utterly mesmerised by watching the band playing. Drawing inspiration from all aspects of life, Reckless uses his determination and motivation for growth to catapult himself into a better musician, person and artist at full force. Using his undeniable on-camera presence, frequently connecting with his audience over social media, Reckless speaks on different topics, shares freestyles, clips, ideas and previews of his work over Instagram live, a format he has become well known for.



Firstly, can you tell us a bit about yourself and how the 'Reckless Demeanor' name came about?

I view myself merely as an artist who likes to experiment with different genres. So instead of being tied to a specific music genre, I refer to myself as a musician. I studied drums at college and started to make beats for other artists, which eventually led to me rapping on my beats on the side. I was initially given the 'Reckless Demeanor' name in school. My friends jokingly used to call me reckless, as when we were young, we didn't always make the right choices. I had 'Deamanor' in mind and connected with its aura, and I admired what it meant. Combining the two concepts just seemed to fit.

How did you get into music, and was your environment was a contributing factor?

Music has always been a big part of my life. My mom used to take me to church as a child. I was always fascinated by the drummers and the band, as it was exciting to experience the music. As I grew, my love of music grew with me. I first started playing the drums and then slowly transitioned into rapping. The passion has always been there.

Where do you draw inspiration from when writing songs?

I generally draw my inspirations from my surroundings. I might watch the news and get inspired, or I can have an intellectual conversation with

someone, and it'll stay with me - to the point where I can sit and write a whole song about it.

How did last year affect your journey as a new student and upcoming artist?

Ultimately, it changed a lot for me. I believe there will be positives and negatives in any circumstance. On a positive note, the lockdown forced me to come more out of my shell and post frequently on social media, increasing my social media following. The online opportunities are endless, and last year made me open my eyes to it. The whole lockdown pushed me to do more self-reflection and provided me with loads of alone time. Considering the alone time I had - it gave me the desired time to pin down more songs, release an EP and promote myself online.

Who are some of your biggest influences?

I've always been into many different types of music, especially growing up in church. There were a lot of Christian rappers and I remember buying their CD's and being stoked about it. Also, my brother was a musician, so I grew up exposed to the multitude of genres he would listen to.

How has it been working alongside SDS?

They've been great. SDS interviewed me in the first lockdown, and that was also my first introduction to them. I

salute them for the work they do for the community. Being a native of Croydon, I love any company that's promoting Croydon Artists. We also recently made a freestyle, which I was really proud of. I only have great things to say about them.

Being a Croydon native, what do you think needs to be done to help the music scene there thrive?

We're already making progressions, especially music-wise. Just look at SDS and Croydon FM. They're helping to promote a different narrative of Croydon - to show that we're more than Whitgift and knife crime. I've also noticed Croydon Council doing more for the community. I've seen more community engagement. I appreciate anything that helps us as a community to have more understanding. When you have a genuine love for your community, it's easier for problems to get resolved.

Finally, what is your biggest motivation?

I'm addicted to progression, and I always focus on the next step. Drake raps in one of his earlier records; "the rewards that I see from working make me an addict". I live by those words. It's not about the end goal for me. It's about how I don't want to be here. I want to be on the next thing, doing bigger and better things. The feeling that I'm not on the next level keeps me motivated. I can only look forward to the future.



S D S X P U M A

**PHOTOGRAPHY:
SHAIHEIM ALLEN
MIKEZBEE**



WE TOOK OUT A DOUBLE PAGE
SPREAD FOR MARKETING. BUT
SOME MESSAGES AT THIS TIME
ARE MORE **NEXUS**
IMPORTANT THE BUSINESS OF CREATIVITY

WWW.NEXUSCREATIVEHQ.COM

#FREEPALESTINE

**the tarmac
under foot
has the spring
of turf**

TURF

is Croydon's homegrown art space.

free exhibitions

local artist led

project space

low-cost studios

free workshops

opportunities

*@turfprojects
turf-projects.com
46-47 Trinity Court,
Whitgift Centre CR01UQ
'spring of turf' by Sam Cottrell*