



Digital Tenderness

SPECIAL EDITION

A FREE ZINE TALKING ABOUT IMPORTANT STUFF

Hana and Ste here!! We're super happy to bring you the third ever issue of our little 'zine about important stuff - and this one's a super special edition!! Some of you might know us already, but if you don't, there's a little drawing below of us and here's a bit about what this is...

So what is No Borders Zine? Basically we've both travelled around with Ste's band 'Mouses' and have seen lots of cool 'zines around other parts of the country - but we felt the North East didn't have it's own! We've both suffered with social anxiety and depression ourselves as well as not really believing gender is a thing - people should just be able to be who they want to be! We decided to make our own 'zine and get everyone involved and that's where No Borders Zine was born... (with a little help from our good friend Tommings - who created our beloved little logo!)

We wanted to create a platform where there were NO BORDERS - it doesn't matter who or what you are, if you have something to talk about, whether it be mental health problems, LGBTQIA+ issues, discrimination of any kind, sexual abuse, body positivity, gender stereotyping etc. you can talk about it. We wanted people to be able to draw pictures, write articles, poems, create comics or do whatever they felt comfortable with to get their message across. We wanted there to be NO BORDERS getting in the way of speaking out.

This super special edition has been put together as part of a wonderful project with Tees Music Alliance. It features loads of amazing creative people from our local area and acts as a reflection on this difficult period in our lives. There are interviews, poems, articles and lockdown artworks that truly encapsulate the feelings of our creative community this past year. We hope it gives you as much hope reading it as it gave us putting it together!

Lots of love

Hana + Ste





PICASSO BABY

Introduce yourselves/your art!

B: Hey, I'm Bobby. I'm a visual artist from Middlesbrough working predominantly in found objects and paint. I'm also co-director of Pineapple Black Arts and co-curator of Picasso Baby – an ongoing collaborative arts project.

JJ: Hey, I'm John James Perangie, a north east Queer working class based artist currently working in Middlesbrough. My work is playful, colourful, gestural, and transformative. I work with found object and the alteration of materials through painting, sculpture, installation and performance.

It's been a very difficult time recently for the arts with Covid-19 and numerous lockdowns, not being able to host the events we are all used to - how has this affected you both?

B: The last year hasn't been easy – I felt quite futile at times. Honestly, there were times where I felt like walking away from the arts altogether but then someone pops up like “I've got an idea” and I'd just throw myself straight back in. That's what's cool about the scene round here, at grass roots level, artists are so open to working together and sharing ideas.

JJ: Its definitely been different to what we are used to, usually we would be hosting Picasso Baby at Disgraceland but as a reaction to Covid-19 we moved everything online and we have really enjoyed it but we can't wait to get back to live events again!

You've adapted well and have been doing some really cool stuff with virtual exhibitions and the digital Picasso Baby magazines, do you want to talk us through what Picasso Baby looks like in non-Covid times?

B: A bunch of artists let loose with paint in a two-up, two-down, converted terrace house (Disgraceland) for a week and then a big party at the end of the week with live bands and no social distancing. We never have any idea what each one will look like but that's the premise at least.

JJ: It was amazing! A night of art, music, and expression. We'd have everyone come to these events - musicians, artists, students, drag queens and all that is in between. It was one night every so often where the whole community were welcome to come together and share ideas and just catch up while looking at some amazing art all across the walls of the venue, sometimes we would we even have projections of work, and of course the live music! Something I miss a lot, a chance to just let go and party!

How did adapting it digitally come about?

B: We work with so many different artists on Picasso Baby and we just wanted to do something to document this and also to try and connect these artists with each other in some way. It was important to us to maintain the ethos of our live event and the magazine format was ideal – instead of offering people a wall to do whatever they want on, we offered them a page instead.

JJ: Yeah! We have adapted Picasso baby into an online digital issue 001 and 002, currently working on issue 003. It came about as a reaction to the pandemic. We still wanted to showcase artists and musicians somehow, so we had to figure out a way to do that. We decided that alongside the PICASSO BABY digital issues we would also release a playlist comprised of music from local artists and some familiar tunes which we think embody the event.

What other creative processes have you been working on? Do you feel these have helped with your mental wellbeing during these times?

B: Painting. I've always been interested in the materiality of paint and used it in a very non-traditional way, but during lockdown I began using paint to actually paint with. My practice is generally quite large scale but painting gave me something I could work on from home rather than my studio, which kept me sane. The paintings themselves, as commodities, probably kept me alive too – they're all I've had to live off during lockdown.

JJ: I've been in the studio a lot during this still making and planning projects for the future. I've had a lot of time to develop and investigate certain areas of my practice. Mental wellbeing is so important, and I wish it was acknowledged a lot more, so many people struggle and during these times people need all the support they can get. For me being creative and planning these events have help with my mental wellbeing a lot.



Do you have any other favourite tips or anything else you've been doing to cope with the struggles of lockdown?

B: Lifting lots of weights and reading lots of books seems to work well for me but it's all about what makes you feel good as an individual. If that's playing video games in bed and eating lots of cake – that's fine too! Speaking of cake, I must recommend the BOSH!

Luscious Lemon Cake. It's vegan friendly and delightful.

JJ: I'd just say keep being as creative as you can but don't burn yourself out, it's okay to take breaks and relax until you feel ready to make work again. This is a strange and unpredictable time for everyone to live through; my art and the gorgeous friends I have in my life have kept me powering through! Just surround yourself with what you love and focus on that.

Do you have any other plans for the near future? Is there anything else you're working on?

B: We are looking into the possibility of making our Picasso Baby magazine a more regular occurrence – maybe bi-monthly – so watch this space. Over at Pineapple Black we're developing a whole programme of new exhibitions with Let Us Eat Cake, an exhibition in celebration on International Women's Day and curated by Wild Lamb x Slutmouth, opening on March 8th in our new virtual space PBVArts. I've got a solo exhibition coming up at Crown St. Gallery in Darlington too this year, and I'm developing a new exhibition for ARC Stockton this summer.

JJ: I have so much I want to do for the future, we are currently planning a Picasso Baby for after the lockdown - which I cannot wait for! I will be exhibiting my first ever video piece for Pink Collar gallery opening 16th March online as part of "What does it mean to be working class?" and I am hoping to curate and plan some shows of my own too which is exciting!

And finally, is there anything you've done this past year to adapt to the current climate that you think you might keep after this? Some things you maybe would never have thought of if we hadn't been in this situation?

B: All of the above really. I'm gonna keep painting, I'm sure we'll continue with our Picasso Baby magazine regardless of Covid and Pineapple Black's virtual gallery is so much fun – I think that's here to stay too. I do find masks quite aesthetically pleasing - everyone walking around looking like bandits - it's kinda cool. I'm pushing for the introduction of compulsory capes in '21 too.

JJ: Due to the current climate, I have been thinking about space a lot and the amount of space we have to take up as artists even if that happens to be outside in your garden or in your front room, both spaces I used as exhibition spaces for projects during the lockdown, and I do love this idea of using alternative and mundane spaces to show work and curate exhibitions. I think this is something that I'll take with me onwards after the lockdown. Also, collaboration, I think it's so important to work with other artists when you can! Each artist has their own set of skills and it's really interesting to see what happens when artists combine work so I'll be definitely looking to collab. Now more than ever I think it's important to come together and create work and new projects!


You can check out everything they're up to on social media!

@bobbybenjamin / @john_perangie




John James Perangie

LAST SPRING



I fell in love with a blackbird.
She did not sing, only shouted for food
and company from her perch next to fat
pigeons, an angry robin. So I sang for
us both, sat in the garden with my guitar,
tent overhead, mealworms spread on the grass,
music spilling easily like tea from an overturned
cup. Joined by full-throated thrushes, white-static
starlings, sweet cheeps of darling wrens and finches,
we chorused under hot skies, comfortable behind
the fort of the garden fence, singing nonsense
loud enough to drown the news and keep these truths
at bay:

- that, indoors, conversation was faltering
in the fluff of repeating days
- that my family's faces were becoming a
pixellated haze
- that rent and bills still needed to be paid
- that threats ignored do not go away.



... which is how a black dot hovered
unseen until it
dropped
through
the
blue
for
an
unclean
kill.

Small beaks scream loud. ShriII.

By the time the sparrowhawk had moved on,
so had the other birds. So had the songs.



THIS WINTER

I am caught between numb and raw.
I cannot find the sound or words to
shape a path through a world so much
smaller and further away. Nose pressed
to the glass of a fish-tank life,
I watch the skittish magpies in
their black and white jackets,
making a racket - socially distanced
shouting is their natural state.

They seem happy to wait in
endless grey, to pounce on every
opportunity and carry it away.

I let my hair grow silver. Fantasize
about swallowing foil; painting
my skin with glitter and oil;
persuading the magpies to pick me apart.

I play with paintbrushes and crayons. Try to
fill short days and silence with doodles not
too close to my heart.

It's not really art.
But it colours the dark days
like light on a magpie's wing.
Sparks recollections
of past nights that
seemed unending, the
relief and reliability of the
seasons rolling in,
and the way that

always

the songbirds sing again.



what does it mean

to be alive

and live your life?

Simon Shaw

This is a question I ask myself regularly when I get free time or just a spare moment to really think and process that which is happening around me. I have been asking myself this question more frequently than usual, as I try to break down the boundaries within my own head when it comes to creating and doing work, while also living my life.

What does that mean - to live your life? Let me explain what I have discovered so far and help give you an insight into myself.

My name is Simon Shaw, I have been a live music promoter and events manager for almost 10 years. I play bass in a few local bands and my other hobbies include photography, film making and trail running. Last year I found myself jobless, with my long term employer ringing me to tell me to down tools and prepare myself and my home for what was coming. I had worked myself into a flow up until that point and I felt like I was verging on burning out. I was working a lot, while also trying to retain value as an employee. It is a difficult balance and anyone who is in a creative or self-employed role will know this feeling all too well.

It was March 2020; I was jobless, without a purpose, and totally burnt out. So, I take time to relax. I enjoy my one hour walks at 6am, and just take in whatever I can on social media to feel some kind of connection with people. I knew from ultra marathons I had completed what it would take to recover from a struggle, and it wasn't going to be a quick process.

"The pace is the pace" is what a good friend would say to me in times of struggle, but it was never about physically struggling and neither was this feeling I was experiencing. It was also never about resting to feel better, it was about making peace with how I felt. Accepting I could possibly feel like this for the rest of my life and if that was the case am I moving forwards. Until that point I knew that everytime I faced a struggle I would just push through as hard as possible, even if that meant going to my limit. Everytime I did this I seemed to hit a kind of mark in my life, which expanded my limits further. With that in my pocket I was doing okay all things considered; it was a pleasant time for mindfulness.

One month later and I'm working with three other people on developing the idea of a community lead platform. I was thinking about the word community a lot at the time and was trying to figure out my own role within the community - and very specifically how I treat people on the daily. I wasn't seeing anyone I knew due to restrictions at the time so I thought I was missing an opportunity. In my head I was putting a boundary around people I didn't know. Why has culture made it so saying hello to someone as you walk past them a weird thing to do? Is it because we are so busy all the time? These were the questions I asked myself. Gradually I started to say hello more, I would compliment the weather to passersby, or simply tell a person they had a nice dog.

I began to feel more connected to people; I felt the fire in my belly warming daily. Looking back, they were such simple gestures, but I found myself having small pleasantries with people everyday. We all feel like we all don't fit in at times, and in that same sense we all have something in common. When I'm talking to people I figure out the ways in which they fit into my life, and everything starts to fit into place. To me, these people were not strangers anymore, to me this was what I felt community was. I am still trying to push this process - delving deeper into my work and creativity by resetting and evaluating what it is to be alive and the roles we play in each other's lives.

The community lead platform is called The Tees. It has a simple goal of championing the good and taking action against the bad. I see it personally as a place to feel less. Feel less isolated. Feel less lonely. Feel less anything. I want to talk to people, without the boundaries I have placed on them in my own mind. I want to hear their stories and learn as much as I can about life and living in these moments, and being a part of The Tees has allowed me to do just that.

Everyone you meet has a view on what it means to be alive, in this sense we are all the same so why are we considered strangers? From new creatives to people in the street, by speaking to many different individuals I have realised that none of us have quite figured out this living thing, and there is something beautiful about that you know. I have no idea what life holds for me next, but I have become so much better at being okay with that discomfort.

Simon



I have spent a lot of
time staring at my
guitar yelling "DO
SOMETHING" to
myself, honestly.

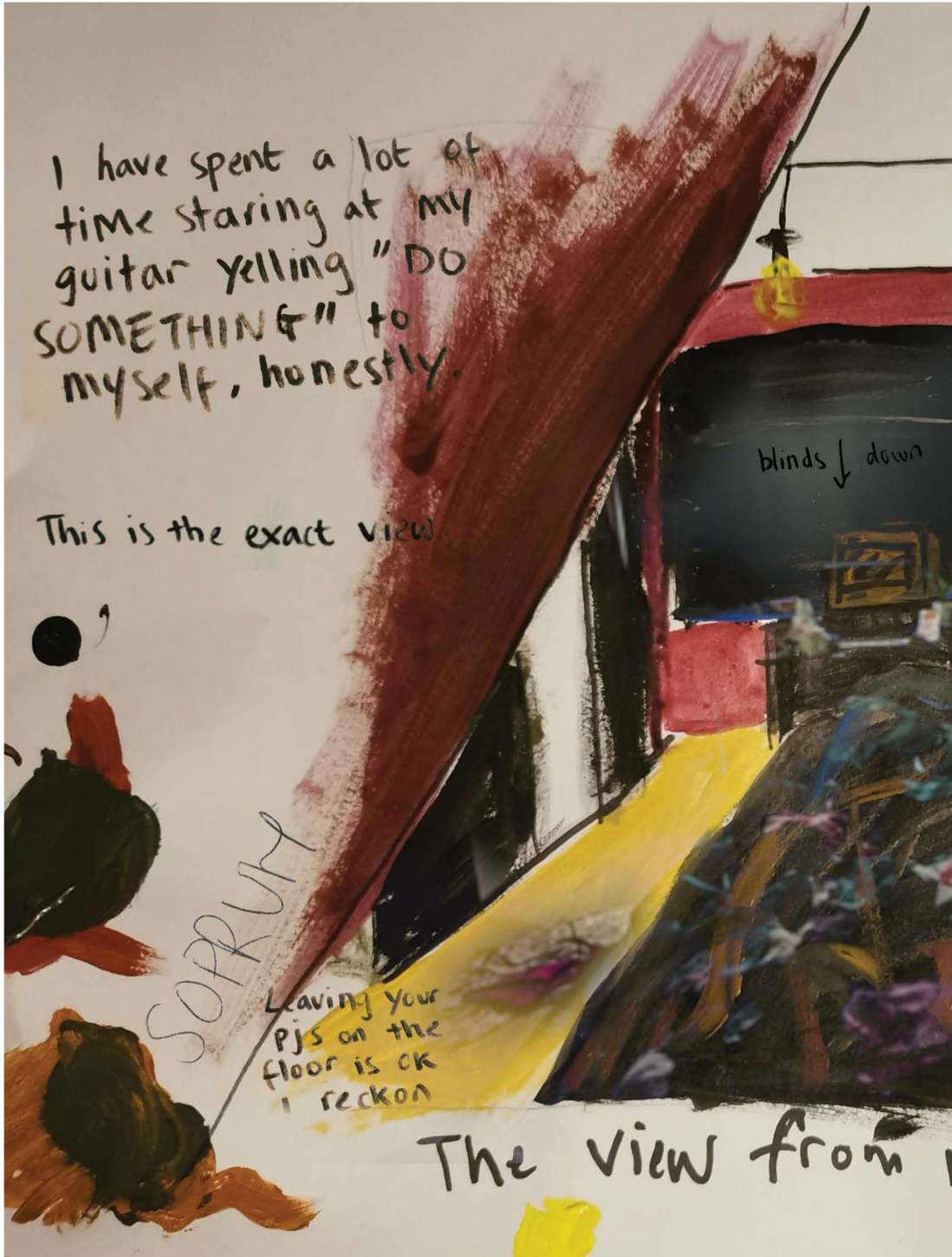
This is the exact view.

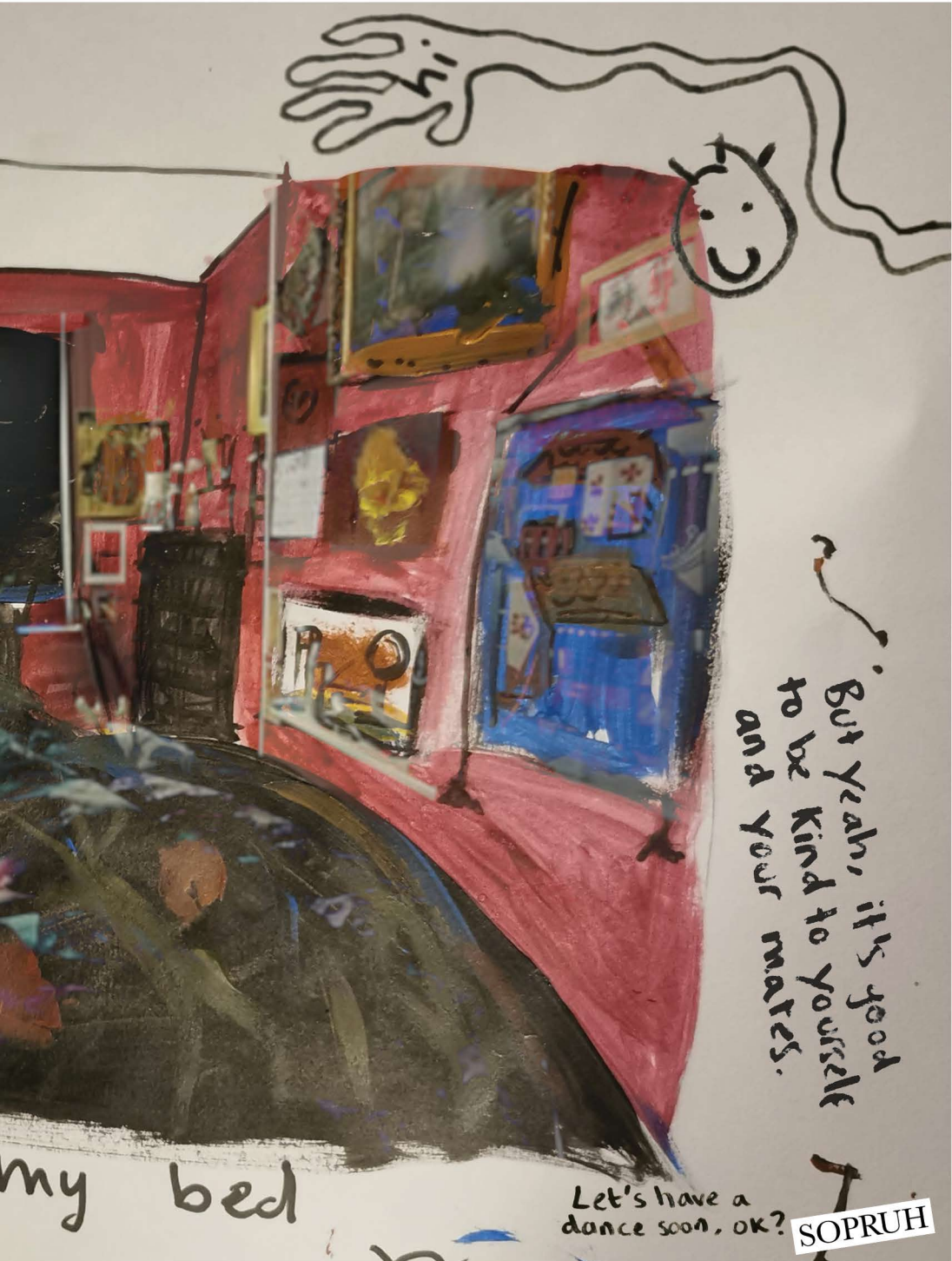
blinds ↓ down

SOPRANO

Leaving your
PJS on the
floor is OK
I reckon

The view from





But yeah, it's good
to be kind to yourself
and your mates.

my bed

Let's have a
dance soon, OK?

SOPRUH

I was really worried that I hurt the Crow that I made the Crow come here because I was writing about a crow

play it with the weather it was a wind blowing through the trees that knocked out the Crow you can't control the weather can you know I definitely know I can't control the weather I can control many things but the weather is not my superpower well there you go then you didn't hurt the Crow

I know because apparently it's fact they definitely didn't Direct the birds in the sky just by blinking and the traffic lights weren't talking to me but quite frankly just as yellow is yellow and green is green and that cloud is in the sky they were real and I only know they weren't real because people tell me they weren't real but right now there are people walking around with masks and 2 m apart and rules and I like rules and the supermarket was barren and bare and I don't know if I'm making this up or not and I don't know how to stay safe in this world that feels more unreal than my brain does and the birds and the traffic lights feel more real than what's happening right now and I don't want to sit on somebody's garden 2 metres apart and pretend that that's real because quite frankly right now the edges are blurred my Reality is Blurred and I don't know where the end

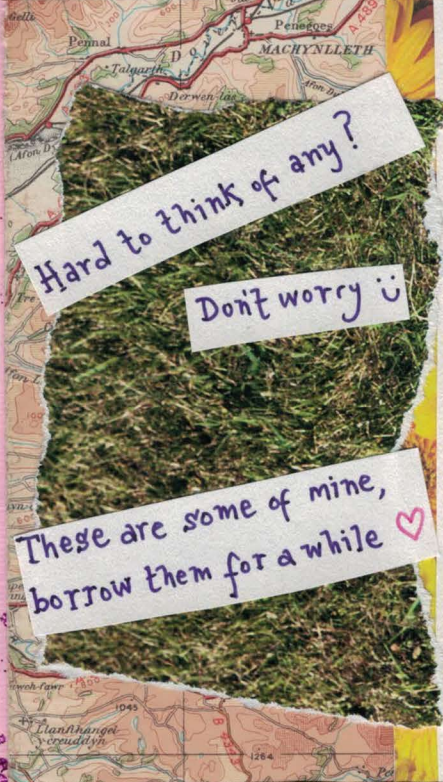
I wouldn't change me for the world it allows me to see the world and so many different ways in different colours like fly eyes and films and painted in colours and cinematic and the world is rich and my imagination is so close to reality and with rules in place and people protecting me I am safe everyone is safe and that's why

Stay well list. Make one. Fill it with

cheap happy easy Joy

Joy

NETHSHIRE



Hard to think of any?

Don't worry i

These are some of mine,
borrow them for a while ♡

Collage. walk. meditate. drink tea.
Sleep. daydream. stay in bed. Clean
sheets. Doodle. live small. books.
radio. watch trees. Have a RAGE
hour. Only one. Eat a biscuit
afterwards. Make a list. In colour.
Do flicky tidy letters. Like these.
make an instant book. Google it. Dead
easy & cheap. Title page. 7 pages left.
Doodle your walk for a week. Walk.
Amble. Potter. Breathe. Joyful flail.
Imagine. Make something. Eat.
Find a nice stone. A nice leaf. Post
it. sort out a drawer. Label
things (not people). write a letter.
send it to yourself. You got post!
Write me a letter. I love letters. I'm
off to write a letter. A list in a letter.

Dear Me
My House
My Street

grateful for it just right now I need a little bit of

bubble wrap so if I'm not around so much at the moment you'll no way I love you I just
need to work out what's real and what's not real

or maybe I'll realise that doesn't really matter

Joy. by Lisette Auton.



Danielle GG



Bobby Benjamin



Introduce yourselves/what you do!

We're Spooker Rekkids, a DIY record label & gig promoter based in the attic of the legendary Westgarth Social Club in Middlesbrough. We are a group of friends who love music, with lots of the Spookers also makers of music in bands including Dressed Like Wolves, Nel Unlit, Gamburtsevs, Dymphna, HJM Bradshaw, and Benjamin Amos. We are Siobhan, Rachael, Jon, Dan, Rick, Paul, Ben, Aaron, Dan, Clare, and Harriet. We put on gigs, support our local music scene, sometimes do a podcast, sometimes make videos, have a newsletter, make some Spooker merch, and promote the wonderful music of the Spooker Rekkids bands.

You used to have a little base upstairs in the Westgarth that obviously we haven't been able to visit in a little while now. What have you all been doing when venues have been forced to close, to help you deal with your mental health and cope with the struggle of lockdowns?

We are all missing our little home-from-home, the Spooker Attic at the Westgarth Social Club. We were lucky enough to adopt this unused space in the club and have been fixing it up for the past few years and putting on some incredible shows up there (if we do say so ourselves!) Obviously, this hasn't been possible over the last year, especially given how intimate our space is; but we are incredibly excited to get back to putting on shows. We had started to build a lovely community of music lovers who attended the shows and brought some really great acts to the space.

We've been enjoying the live streamed shows a lot! Of course, it's not quite the same as getting out to see some live music, but it has been an amazing thing to have this new online community developing to allow musicians and music lovers to share music in a new space.

During the pandemic, while the gigs haven't been able to take place, our bands have actually been pretty busy! Just before the first lockdown hit last year, Nel Unlit released their first Album "Wake for the Dreaming" at a big all-day launch party at the Westgarth. Since then, they've been busy working on their second album, and have just pre-released a new joint 7"LP with Dressed Like Wolves in collaboration with the local label Butterfly Effect. The track from Nel Unlit is a brand-new tune, called "6 Nights", while Dressed Like Wolves' new track (first time on vinyl!) "Big Pool" is about our hub, the Westgarth. Not only that it features so many amazing musicians: it's incredible. We're really excited for everyone to hear the tracks and see the video for Big Pool too - it's a beaut!

Any new creative processes happening?

We're converting three rooms of the attic into a walkthrough audiovisual art installation to be experienced along with Nel Unlit's next album which will be coming late 2021 / early 2022 (TBC!).

We're also hoping to put out a new album by Dressed Like Wolves later this year too!

We know you've been doing some really cool things to fundraise for the Westgarth, and it was amazing to see it smash its target! - do you want to explain how this came about and why this was such an important thing for you to do?

Like so many places, the Westgarth has been unable to open its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been closed since the first national lockdown in March, and they've been unable to find a way of re-opening which would follow government guidance and ensure the absolute safety of both its members and of local gig-goers. However, it became clear that for the club to be able to reopen to anyone, live music would be needed!

Until that is able to happen, the Westgarth will struggle to reopen and stay open.



Heather Story

So, we set our sights firmly on what gigs might look like over the next 12 months, and what we could do to help get shows back to the club, thinking about how to encourage promoters to start being able to book shows with confidence. We came up with the idea for a crowdfunder, so we could do just that! We wanted to thank people for their donations and thought a crowdfunder with rewards would be a lovely way to do that too. We were so grateful to the local promoters who also offered some great rewards too, including Big Figure and Down by the Jetty promotions, The Kids Are Solid Gold, and local music legends Pellethead for offering up some brilliant rewards too; alongside out tees, totes and Spooker Christmas Sampler, among other rewards!

Our initial target was for £3000, and after hitting that in the first week, we increased it to £5000. By the end of the fundraising period, we had managed to raise £5262! We are absolutely over the moon and can't thank everyone who donated enough. People's generosity has been amazing, and we are so excited to put the money to good use to bring music back to the Westgarth and get the place opened up again! Through the Crowdfunder, we have been able to set up a live music fund to support the safe and sustainable return of live music and events to the club. The fund will go towards subsidising the costs associated with putting on shows and will go a long way! We want to ensure that, whatever happens next, bands, promoters, music lovers and the whole community are supported and have a place to safely enjoy and participate in live music and events.

Is there anything new on the horizon for Spooker?

For now, we are just focusing on helping others get their shows back to the club. Can't wait to get back to going to some see some live music again! We've missed it so much. We really hope to be able to bring some of our own shows back to the Attic later in the year though, so watch this space! We already have one show in the works, with the absolutely brilliant Haiku Salut returning to play a Spooker show in November. Plus, some new releases along the way...

And finally, is there anything you've done this past year to adapt to the current climate that you think you might keep after this? Some things you maybe would never have thought of if we hadn't been in this situation?

As a gig promoter, we haven't been able to do any of our usual work, sadly! But as for some of the other things we have done, collaborating with loads of the wonderful people in our local music scene lately is something we absolutely will be keeping going as much as we can. We have a brilliant community in Middlesbrough and across the North East and will just continue doing all we can to support the shows of other promoters and record labels, just as they have supported our bands and the Crowdfunder project.

You can find out more about us on www.spookerrekids.com

Facebook: @spookerrecs

Instagram: spookerrekids

Twitter: @SpookerRekkids



Sorry everything
is a bit shit at
the moment!



Art Mouse

GEMINATE MERCURY RISING

I am a healer,
I am a harmer,
I am duly respectful of karma.

I am narcissistic,
I am self-loathing,
I am a wolf in black sheep's clothing.

I am naïve,
I am wise,
I am the bad moon on the rise.

I am crazy,
I am sane,
I am the full moon on the wane.

I am eccentric,
I am the norm,
I am the calm before the storm.

I am diaphanous,
I am opaque,
I am the swell that did not break.

I am a deep ocean,
I am a shallow stream,
I am a complex human being.

I am honest,
I am underhand,
I am free, uncharted land.

I am worthless,
I am rich,
I am a circuit without a switch.

I am on the defence,
I am on the attack,
I am the straw that broke the camel's back.

I am tranquil
I am wild,
I am the forgotten child.

I am not your son,
I am your daughter,
I am the lamb you took to the slaughter.

I am articulate,
I am dumb,
I am. Cogito, ergo sum

CEILING DEMONS X ART DEMON

THE WAVES OF MELANCHOLY MOODS

WITH A HEAVY HEAD AND A SUNKEN HEART, THE SHIP LEAVES THE HARBOUR ANCHORED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN; NO BEAUTIFUL ESCAPE ON THE HORIZON. LOST IN THE WAVES OF EMOTION, WE GAVE INTO THE RHYTHM OF DEVOTION DRIVEN BY THE MOONLIT REFLECTION PULLING OUR SOULS IN ALL ITS DIRECTIONS. SCATTERED LIKE THE ASH OF THE PAST, AS IF SEEDS WOULD GROW AND OUTLAST US. CLINGING TO IT ALL LIKE A CRAB, AS IF, CANCER COMBINED WITH TAURUS.

DONT LET YOUR DEPRESSION DROWN YOU, DARLING NOW, IT'S ALL AROUND YOU.



THE WATERS OF DESTRUCTION DRAGGED US DOWN UNTIL CREATION WAS THE ONLY FORM OF SALVATION, THE SHIP HAS SAILED... BUT THERE IS A RELATION ON THIS RIDE, RIPPLES RISE FROM WATER SIGNS, EMOTIONALLY ALIGNED - TIMES CHANGE LIKE TIDES, PHASED OUT - THE MOON GUIDES SO DIVE INTO THE BLUES IN THOSE EYES, THESE SOULS BECOME SUBMERGED WITHIN THE CHAOS THAT STIRS INSIDE, UNTIL THE DAY THAT WE DIE. SUBMERGE WITH THE SOUL; LET THE CURRENTS CARRY YOU HOME. RIDE THE WAVES OF MELANCHOLY MOODS DROWN THE DOOM - ALL TRUTHS ARE BUT HALF TRUTHS

AVOID THE VOID OR BE DESTROYED AND CREATE YOURSELF AGAIN...

COVID helped me regain my
creativity as I had been in a creative
block and routine for what felt like
forever.



I have never felt
more at one with
my art since this
break in reality.



Privilege won't save YOU.
Eton won't save YOU.
People who speak Latin will not save YOU.
That stiff upper lip will crumble, that silver spoon will be sold, you'll be forgotten.
You're nothing to them, NOTHING.

benefits **FLAG**

a word from
Tees Music Alliance

We're really pleased to be able to bring you this special edition of No Borders 'zine - which brings our best wishes to everyone following a tough year for us all.

We've all been forced to miss things - whether it's been a particular person, place or thing. Somehow not being allowed to do stuff - makes us want it all the more; and after months and months, it's been quite wearing on our emotions.

It's been really great then to be able to curate this collection of creativity as part of our #DigitalTenderness project; bringing together some amazing content - providing a beacon of positivity as we (hopefully) move towards better times.

We're all looking forward to being able to gather in music venues and creative spaces once again - possibly appreciating them all the more for their enforced absence.

Big thanks to The National Lottery Community Fund and The Key Fund for helping us to make #DigitalTenderness and this 'zine happen. We hope you enjoyed the read and we can't wait to see you all in person very soon.

Lots of love from everyone at Tees Music Alliance and all of our contributors.

X

Tees Music Alliance

developing. promoting. enriching.

