

THE NOTTS REVIEW

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Review*



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EDITORS' LETTERS



GEMMA COCKRELL

Welcome to Zine 4! This issue is a particularly exciting one because it comes alongside our very first launch gig at The Grove. Putting on a live show has been a dream of mine for years, so I'm incredibly happy to have finally made it a reality. If you're picking up a copy of the zine at the gig, I hope you enjoyed all of the performances and love reading the interviews with Lucy Crisp, EMiDORA and El Rashid just as much as we loved putting them together. See you next time!



GEORGE WHITE

This one's a special one – for the first time, we're launching the zine with an in-person event at The Grove. Three amazing acts, one amazing venue. We're super lucky. Thank you to everyone for your support with both the Launch Party and The Notts Review more generally – especially superphotographers Nigel King and Luke Brennan, who have helped us out massively with their incredible images. Enjoy them, and some words in between, throughout Zine 4!



music

A CRISP SOUND



by Gemma Cockrell

photos by Nigel King

LUCY CRISP

From BBC Introducing beginnings to a Radio 1 play, the Nottingham via Derby singer-songwriter reflects on early wins and bigger stages ahead...

Lucy Crisp found her voice long before she found a stage. “When I was little, I always had a passion for writing songs. Performing in the playground to Charli xcx [and Icona Pop’s] ‘I Love It’... quite iconic, really!” she laughs. “I always came back to it somehow and was able to express my feelings on paper. That’s how I honed my craft. Then I started at Confetti” - part of Nottingham Trent University specialising in the creative industries - “in 2018. It was a bit of a long shot but it paid off.”

That early instinct has carried through into a career now beginning to accelerate in real time. “A lot of things are coming to fruition,” she smiles. “I wrote a manifestation page at the start of 2025 and none of it came true in 2025 - but one of those things was being played on BBC Radio 1,” she says, a goal that recently became a reality when her track ‘Snakes and Ladders’ was selected for the ‘For Fans of Robyn’ segment.

Her first brush with radio support came through BBC Introducing and East Midlands music figure Dean Jackson. “I met Dean Jackson when I was at Confetti. I introduced myself and I ended up uploading my debut single to BBC Introducing in 2020. It got played straight away.” The Radio 1 moment followed six years later. “He messaged me on Instagram and I spotted ‘Radio 1’ in the message preview. He told me I was being played on BBC Radio 1 that evening... so many emotions came over me. It felt like a big moment for me. I stayed up until late at night listening. I was so amazed by it.”

Now based in Nottingham after growing up in Alfreton, she is stepping into bigger rooms with growing confidence, including Derby’s Vaillant Live, which opened in 2025. “I’ve never played in an arena before and I’m so excited to perform to that many people,” she said ahead of the show. “And the fact it sold out, that was insane in itself. Playing to 1,000 people is mind-blowing.”

Alongside the highs sits a more serious reality that shapes both her outlook and intent. Lucy has cystic fibrosis, which affects breathing day to day, alongside diabetes. “It’s a battle everyday but I’m proud that I can be an advocate for people with the condition. The average life expectancy is 35. Raising awareness is important to me, but also being that role model. I want to leave a legacy for that reason. Even though I have a disability, I have so much to give to the world.”





Her lived experience feeds directly into her songwriting, which moves between personal snapshots and wider reflections. “Some [of my recent singles] are a little older - ‘Ghostin’ was the first song I created for my upcoming project. I wrote it around the time I released my debut EP, ‘65 Roses’. It came together naturally on the keys. I was heavily influenced by Holly Humberstone around that time. I wanted a sassier pop song about boys and how they simply can’t keep to arrangements. ‘Maze’ came a bit later on and ‘Snakes and Ladders’ was inspired by a conversation I had with my mum, about life being a game of snakes and ladders. In a way, it highlights the hustle [of being an independent artist].”

That mindset extends into how she navigates the industry itself. “Always have a plan B. Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,” she advises. “But also, don’t be afraid to reach out to people. You can’t have an ego, thinking you’re going to get picked for everything. Because when you’re starting out, you just can’t expect that. You need to make yourself known to everybody. I struggle with social anxiety so sometimes I have to push myself. But you never know what’s going to happen and that’s how some of the most amazing relationships I have in the industry have been formed.”

Next up for Lucy is a headline moment at our Zine 4 launch event at The Grove, where things are being scaled up once again. “We are absolutely cranking it up a notch. I’m performing with a live band. We’ve got unreleased songs, we’ll have some sparkle of course, because it’s me, and also some surprises. But I’m not going to talk about those yet.”

And there is more on the way still. “I will be making a little bit of an announcement very soon on social [media]. If you love ‘Mario Kart’... that’s all I’ll give away. We are in the final stages of getting that mixed and mastered but it will be the next single,” she confirms.

@lucycrisp_

“WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I ALWAYS
HAD A PASSION FOR WRITING
SONGS; PERFORMING IN THE
PLAYGROUND TO CHARLI XCX
[AND ICONA POP’S] ‘I LOVE IT’”



FEELING GOOD

by George White

photos courtesy of El Rashid

Experimental artist El Rashid regularly wows listeners with her stunning vocals and inventive arrangements – we hear all about her process and how she’s finding Nottingham’s creative scene...

You’re performing at The Notts Review’s launch gig at The Grove. What kind of experience can audiences expect, and why should people come along?

For this show, I really want to bring some of the Anthony Newley material to the stage. Performing a couple of those songs live gives me the chance to talk about the project, talk about Newley himself, and start building some excitement before the release. As most artists know, dropping a big track “cold” isn’t ideal – you want people to feel connected to it first. Playing it locally feels intimate and special, and it’s the perfect setting to build that energy.

I think people will really respond to ‘Feeling Good’ – everyone knows that song. I’m considering starting with a classic version, maybe something close to the Nina Simone interpretation, and then moving into my own arrangement so the audience can hear exactly what I’ve done with it. I love the idea of showing that contrast in real time.

I’ll also be performing ‘Happiness Hill’, which not many people know. My acoustic version is very lyric-focused and reflective, and I think it’s one of those songs that really makes you stop and think. It’s a special one for me.

Alongside that, I'll be doing acoustic arrangements of some of my own tracks – 'Truth', 'Time' and 'Silver'. 'Truth' and 'Time' have recently come out, and 'Silver' is a track I wrote in Nepal. It's unlike anything else I've released, but it connects beautifully with my version of 'Feeling Good', while 'Truth' and 'Time' feel like siblings. For the gig, I'm stripping them back because they're big electronic productions on record, and I love highlighting the songwriting and the lyrics without all the production around them. Live, you can really let that breathe.

So overall, it'll be a very intimate, thoughtful set – a mix of reinterpretations, acoustic versions, and songs that mean a lot to me. I'm genuinely excited to share it in person and to be part of The Notts Review launch. It feels like the right moment to bring all of this to a live audience.

You moved to Nottingham less than a year ago. How have you found the artistic community here so far?

I did – though in a way it already felt familiar. My mum and sister live in Nottingham, my dad's in Leicester, and my grandparents were from here, so the Midlands has always been home territory for me. But even with that, I was genuinely surprised by how much Nottingham has changed since I was younger. It's become so dynamic.

The Hockley Hustle development programme came at the perfect moment. It meant I met an incredible mix of artists really quickly – all at different stages, all doing interesting things. I found it so easy to get involved in the scene. Compared to London, which can feel quite gatekept, Nottingham is incredibly inclusive.

What I love most is how authentic it feels. No one's trying too hard to be cool; people just want to make good art and good music. That suits me perfectly. I'm not trying to project an image – I'm trying to create things that evoke a feeling, spark a reaction, start a conversation. And people here are really up for that. They show up to gigs, they engage, they care.

London's music scene is amazing, but it's definitely leaning more toward DJ culture at the moment. I love a DJ set, but Nottingham still puts real emphasis on live music, on musicians actually playing. That means a lot to me.

And honestly, the Midlands has this openness that I've always appreciated. People are friendly, collaborative and genuinely supportive of the arts. Moving here has felt completely right, and I don't regret it for a second.





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Looking ahead, how do you see your journey in the Nottingham scene developing?

The plan is to keep building live shows that feel distinct – something that blends the electronic elements of my tracks with stripped-back moments, visuals, and maybe even some operatic touches at the launch gig. I'm always doing a lot at once, but it all connects in my head.

I'm also very invested in the visual side of my work – films, videos, anything that helps build a world around the music. I've started making my own videos, which has been liberating. I've worked with labels and managers before, but I've realised how much I value having full creative control. I know exactly what I want things to look and feel like, so doing it myself just makes sense.

What would your advice be to those wanting to follow a similar path in the music scene?

I'm always a bit hesitant about giving advice, to be honest. There's a book called 'The Advice Trap' that really stuck with me, because it made me realise how easy it is to tell people what you think they should do, when really everyone has to figure out their own route. I wouldn't necessarily recommend my career to anyone unless they genuinely enjoy juggling lots of different things at once. It's not for everyone – but it's absolutely right for me.

I've never had a nine-to-five, and I've never done just one thing. I like the constant change, even if it's a lot to keep on top of. So if someone did want to pursue something similar, the closest thing to advice I can offer is more of a mindset: stay open-minded, say yes to different opportunities, and let those choices open up paths you didn't even know existed. Eventually you find the one that feels like yours.

The other part is staying true to yourself – really honest and connected with who you are. As I've got older, I've developed a deeper, almost spiritual connection with music. I see things a bit serendipitously now, and that works for me. It keeps me grounded in my voice and my instincts, and I trust that they'll lead me where I'm meant to go.

And ultimately, you can't copy someone else's path. You can't walk in their footsteps. You've got to carve out your own, and that comes from being open, curious, and genuinely yourself.

@elrashidmusic

**"YOU CAN'T COPY SOMEONE ELSE'S
PATH. YOU'VE GOT TO CARVE OUT
YOUR OWN"**

EMIDORA THE EXPLORER

by Gemma Cockrell

Following the release of her stunning new EP 'haunted by the outside', the pop artist tells us all about her journey from EM to EMiDORA.

"It's been a long time coming. I wrote the title track four or five years ago and built the rest of the EP around it," EMiDORA tells us a few weeks after the release of her new EP, 'haunted by the outside'. "I was sat on all of my music for a long time when I was releasing under a different name" - EMiDORA performed as EM until 2024 - "so most of them I've had for a while."

Although she still releases music as EM, treating it as a separate vocal collaboration project, EMiDORA has allowed her to establish her artistry in a completely new light. "It was a confusing and odd [time]," she reflects. "Rebranding has put me in a new community, I've made lots of connections in the hyperpop and alt-pop space, which has been lovely." This is a stark contrast to her work as EM, which was largely built through online collaborations and internet communication.

During her time known only as EM, she won the Future Sound of Nottingham competition, earning the opportunity to perform at Splendour Festival. "The music that I performed at [the final] was [unreleased] EMiDORA music," she explains, "but I think now I've done the full rebrand, it's a different feeling. I feel much more in control of what I'm doing [now]. I was so nervous and now when I'm on stage I feel whole and complete. It made me realise I'm meant to be on stage."



photo by Susan Geary

"NOW WHEN I'M ON STAGE I FEEL WHOLE AND COMPLETE. IT MADE ME REALISE I'M MEANT TO BE ON STAGE"

EMiDORA performs using live looping, something that contributed to her anxiety around playing live. "It [still] scares me every single time I do it," she laughs. "I'm like, 'Please let it go right.' But I love doing it. It shows that I can produce music." So how does she balance the intense concentration it requires with connecting to the audience? "It's just practice," she admits. "I played the Bodega in 2016 - I was 16 [years old]. I couldn't speak between songs. It's taken me a long time to get to where I am now. I'm always my weirdest self on stage and that naturally draws the audience in."

When it comes to her favourite songs to perform live, 'all i ever do is run' ranks highly. "It's really cathartic. The beat is really good, it's got a great dance section, a bit where I play the synths and a soft bit with angelic vocals. So, it's got everything really!" she says. In terms of crowd response, however, the EP's title track stands out. "A lot of people know the first line of the pre-chorus and sing it back to me," she says. Influenced by artists including Troye Sivan, daine and Charli xcx, EMiDORA particularly looks to emulate the latter on stage. "I'm always trying to channel [her] stage presence," she says.

Following her performance at our Zine 4 launch gig at The Grove, EMiDORA is looking forward to collaborating with more artists across the hyperpop and alt-pop scene. "I'm also working on my next project," she smiles. "Which is a body of work that will be coming out next year." But for now, make sure you've given 'haunted by the outside' a listen. It's a strong contender for Nottingham's EP of the year.

@emidora__



photo by Nigel King



Dot to Dot 2026
photos by Nigel King
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screen

GREEN SCREEN



by George White

photo from Prime Video

SAFIA OAKLEY-GREEN

@SAFIAOAKLEYGREEN

We've been massive fans of Safia Oakley-Green ever since we saw her line up alongside Bella Ramsey in powerful short film 'Requiem'. Since then, she's gone from strength to strength, picking up BIFA and BAFTA Scotland awards and performing in three major features in the past 12 months - 'Anemone', '100 Nights of Hero' and 'The Bluff'. Oakley-Green runs through her roles in each of them - with Nottingham's rising star, who we feel is destined for the very top, also teasing what's next...

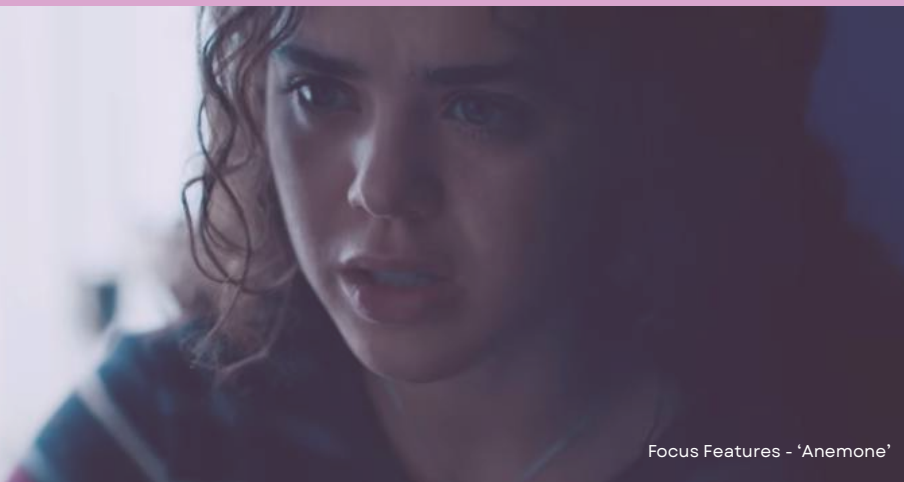
‘Anemone’ – Hattie

I was in Australia when this came through as a self-tape. I don’t think I knew Daniel Day-Lewis was involved yet, but I knew his son Ronan was directing, and Shaheen Baig was casting – she’s so brilliant. The script was quite a beast; you had to read it a few times to make heads or tails of it. Ronan has such a visual style that when you watch the film you understand it and it’s beautiful, but on paper it took a while to get into his brain.

I auditioned, and maybe a week later Ronan and I had a FaceTime. He’s the sweetest guy, and he was saying how he and his dad were going to make the film in the garden during lockdown before it grew into something bigger, but I didn’t realise Daniel was going to be in the final film when I signed on. Sam Bottomley joined the cast, who’s one of my best mates. Then Samantha Morton, who I’ve worked with so many times – including on a project she’s written in Nottingham over the past few years – we’ve got a great relationship. Then Sean Bean. And then Daniel Day-Lewis confirmed he was going to star. I was like... wait, what is going on?

I had all of my scenes with Sam and Samantha, so I felt really at home – I was working with friends. I also knew the cinematographer, Ben Fordesman, from my first film, ‘Out of Darkness’, and I just instantly feel safe when he’s behind the camera. But I definitely had the thought of, ‘Okay, Daniel Day-Lewis is in this film and then they’re going to cut to us – so we have to be really good! It’s going to be obvious if Daniel and Sean are performing at this incredible capacity and then they cut to us and we’re rubbish...’ Thankfully, I think we delivered!

It wasn’t really until after the film, during festivals and so on, that I spent more time with Daniel and Sean. During post-production, Daniel was in the edit all the time, and whenever I met up with him he’d chat to me about the choices they made for the film and why they made them. I learnt a lot from those meetings. And it’s really reassuring having someone of that calibre believe in you – saying, ‘I watched your tapes and I picked you for this.’ It made me believe in myself more.





‘100 Nights of Hero’ – Kiddo

This one was exciting because it was the first job I’d ever been offered out of nowhere. It just came through in an email: ‘Do you want to be in this movie? You’re playing this god character in the first couple of scenes.’ My friend loved the graphic novel and was like, ‘No way – this is the most amazing graphic novel ever,’ and she gave it to me. I thought it was so cool. It was only a couple of days’ work, but it was great fun and it all felt so natural.

The director, Julia Jackman, was very kind, very enthusiastic, and happy for you to bring what you want to the scenes and try new things. The costume design was amazing too, the sets were amazing – everyone felt like they fully bought into Julia’s world. I only worked with her for three days, but every time I meet someone who’s met her, they say, ‘Oh, you worked with Julia? I love Julia!’ Which is always a great sign. She really cares about her work – she’s definitely one to watch.

‘The Bluff’ – Elizabeth

This was my first time doing something with a lot of money behind it, and you could really see that. They built entire houses, entire villages – you’d walk inside a room and there’d be plastic fruit in the kitchen, so much detail in every scene. They basically created a whole world where they could film anywhere, any time.

On an indie film, very little can change from the script because you can’t afford it. You have to nail as much as you can as quickly as possible. On this, the morning of the shoot they’d go, ‘We’re doing this instead, here are your new sides,’ and you’re like... what? It was so much fun to play in this big-budget world. At The Television Workshop we learnt to be completely natural and feel everything and be present. But on an action film, you have to be a bit more out-there, while still remaining believable and real. The director would give me some really ‘Hollywood’ lines of dialogue and I’d have to make it feel genuine, which was a fun challenge.

Watching Priyanka Chopra work was amazing. She knows how to position herself, get the shot done quickly, make the right face – then she gets up and says, ‘I think this script change needs to happen.’ She’s producing while starring in it. Karl Urban was also brilliant, but Karl and I mostly spent our time eating ice cream and chatting...

Coming soon...

I’m in a hilarious comedy called ‘It Gets Worse’, which will be coming out later this year on Channel 4. It’s super camp and a lot of fun. I always love doing comedy! I’m also filming ‘Legacy of Spies’, and the cast keeps getting more and more amazing. It’s mind-blowing.

I’m excited about things coming at the end of this year too, but I can’t talk about them yet.... When I can, I’d love to come back and chat to you all about them!



by George White

A LENS ON NOTTS

We at The Notts Review have been raving about Nottinghamshire's screen scene since the day we were created. But in the East Midlands Film Office, there's a far more professional organisation ready to bang the drum – offering the “definitive database for the East Midlands Screen Industry”. We find out more...

For those who don't know, what is the East Midlands Film Office and what is your ethos?

The East Midlands Film Office is a developing initiative focused on unlocking the region's potential as a place to make film and television. At the moment, we're operating as a connector and an enabler, bringing together locations, crew, partners and opportunities, while actively building towards a more traditional, fully operational film office model. Our mission is to make the region more visible, easier to navigate, and to support and retain the amazing filmmakers we already have here.

It feels like the East Midlands is often overlooked for its film facilities and offerings. Why do you think that is, and how are you working to make sure it gets the respect and attention it deserves?

We are overlooked, and it is frustrating, but it isn't because of a lack of offering. It's more about a lack of visibility, coordination and investment, which feeds the perception that less happens here than in other parts of the UK. The East Midlands has a very rich creative base. We have strong locations, experienced crew, world-class acting talent and training, but since EM Media, the previous screen agency, was disbanded, the region hasn't had proportionate infrastructure and funding or a unified voice.

That said, being underfunded has shaped something quite special. There's a genuinely maverick and independent spirit here. People make things happen on their own terms, and a lot of exceptional work has come from that. To borrow a phrase used recently by Lucy Askew at Broadway, we need to shed our cloak of invisibility! We're still early in the formal journey, but we've been collaborating and pushing this forward for a long time, connecting people, championing the region externally, and starting to build the foundations for something much more joined-up and visible.

What are some of Nottinghamshire's greatest strengths?

One of Nottinghamshire's biggest strengths is its diversity of locations. You can achieve a wide range of looks within a very small radius. We're also centrally located, which makes us an accessible and practical base for production. There's a strong base of skilled crew, many of whom currently travel elsewhere for work but would love to work closer to home. Because of where we are, we can also pull in crew from across the surrounding region.

The pipeline of talent is strong too, supported by Nottingham Trent University, the University of Nottingham and Nottingham College. The Television Workshop is a real standout. It's a BAFTA award-winning organisation that develops exceptional acting talent, with alumni including Bella Ramsey, Samantha Morton, Anjali Mohindra and Vicky McClure. It's a genuine hotbed for talent. We also have facilities like the Virtual and Immersive Production Studio and TankSpace, alongside a wider creative and digital sector that's growing quickly, from gaming to animation. That broader ecosystem gives the region real depth.

"ONE OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S BIGGEST STRENGTHS IS ITS DIVERSITY OF LOCATIONS. YOU CAN ACHIEVE A WIDE RANGE OF LOOKS WITHIN A VERY SMALL RADIUS"

What are the greatest challenges facing Nottinghamshire's screen scene and the East Midlands Film Office, and how can they be overcome?

Sometimes it feels like our DNA is part of the challenge. We're very good at what we do, but not always great at talking about it. There's a tendency to just get on with things, which is a strength, but we do need to turn up the volume. More practically, infrastructure is a challenge, both in terms of physical facilities and the systems that support production, like coordinated processes and permitting. We also need more investment into production, particularly flexible models that support both individual projects and the wider growth of production companies.

These are exactly the areas we're working on. It will take time, but by building partnerships, demonstrating demand and showing the value production brings, we can unlock more formal support and long-term investment.

You've had some great support from the local film community recently, including the likes of Foyle River Films. How important is that community and how are you aiming to strengthen it?

This initiative was kickstarted by people from within the industry who were frustrated that something like this didn't already exist. So the community is absolutely central. The support we've had, from groups like Foyle River Films, Broadway Cinema, and a lot of individuals, shows there's a real appetite to collaborate and build something meaningful here. Our role is to bring that energy together, create more opportunities, and make sure that as things grow, the community grows with it.

On that, you're based at Broadway Cinema, which is such a vital institution for Nottingham's screen scene. How important is it to be based there and how does Broadway support you in your mission?

Broadway is a cultural anchor and a natural meeting point for the screen community. They are supporting the whole mandate in an unbelievably comprehensive way, from profile and flag flying to hosting Film Hub Midlands, BFI initiatives and screenings, to welcoming a wide variety of audiences and customers. The support for the Film Office's work is so appreciated, and we love the whole Broadway aura!

Despite often being overlooked, Nottinghamshire has provided the backdrop for so many amazing films – just last year, 'Hedda' was shot at Flintham Hall, for example. What makes the county so compelling on screen?

Nottinghamshire offers a rare combination of visual variety, accessibility, and relatively low friction compared to saturated filming regions. From historic estates to city environments and open countryside, there's a lot here that hasn't been overused on screen. It is fresh and diverse. You need a country home? Yes, we can do that. You need an urban car park? Absolutely. You need a windmill? Yes, we have one of those... But not only do we have fresh places here, the ease of movement between locations is incredibly helpful, and proximity to locations outside of the patch too.

What are some of your favourite productions shot in or featuring Nottinghamshire?

There's a strong history to choose from. 'This Is England' is right up there, and 'The Dark Knight Rises' of course, and I thought 'Sherwood' and 'Without Sin' were excellent too. Last year, we supported Keane Pearce Shaw's film for Nottingham Forest, which was the most gorgeously moving love story/call to arms. And a new one that I haven't watched yet but am very keen to see is 'The Correction Unit'.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell The Notts Review readers?

There's a real opportunity here. We're building the thing that should probably already exist, and doing it in a way that reflects the ambition and capability of the region. With the right structure and continued collaboration, we want the East Midlands to be the easiest place in the UK to film. That's what we're working towards.

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