

# THE NOTTS REVIEW

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#3

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# EDITORS' LETTERS



## GEMMA COCKRELL

Welcome to Issue 3 of The Notts Review! Every time we put this together, I'm reminded just how much creativity and talent there is in this city. This issue, I spoke with JayaHadADream and LYVIA about their new mixtapes, as well as catching up with Dan and Cam from The Grove as the venue celebrates its first birthday. Thanks to everyone picking up this zine, reading it and sharing it, and to The Hustle Collective and The Bonington for supporting it. Don't forget to check out the video content online, catch some live shows over the coming months, and continue to support Nottingham's brilliant music scene.



## GEORGE WHITE

Every time I think we've peaked too soon here at The Notts Review, we go and gather together another who's-who of leading local talent from the worlds of music and film - with some of the city's brightest and boldest within these pages. A huge thanks to The Hustle Collective and The Bonington for making it happen, and to Gemma for some excellent interviews. We hope you enjoy!



# DREAMING BIG

*music*

by Gemma Cockrell

photos by Nigel King

**JayaHadADream reflects on how she found 'Happiness From Agony' on her debut mixtape - with the 11-song project featuring big industry names like Big Zuu, Capo Lee and Frisco...**

JayaHadADream is sitting at a train station, waiting for her platform to appear on the board, sending us voice notes in response to some questions we shared in advance. Two days prior, she won two Youth Music Awards – Lyricist and Rising Star – and her mixtape ‘Happiness From Agony’ is set for release in exactly one week. It’s safe to say she’s on the cusp of something special: a moment where years of craft, confidence, and conviction are beginning to pay off.

“I’ve been overwhelmed, but in a really good way. Really booked and busy!” she says. “Immersing myself in this roll-out period, I’ve learnt a lot. Doing a lot more press and radio... I feel like I’ve got the industry now. 2025 has been really busy - it feels like five years in one!” Standout moments include bringing Big Zuu to Glastonbury, winning the Youth Music Awards, and collaborating with Frisco on recent single ‘Hideout’.

“Both awards meant a lot,” she says, reflecting on the ceremony that took place earlier that week. “I didn’t think any of that would happen. I felt like I needed it. There’s a lot going on and to have an actual physical award that holds weight was really cool. It was a reminder - you’d be surprised, but the imposter syndrome thing is continuous - so it was really nice. It continues to drive me. Hard work pays off. I’m super grateful.”







**“I’ve been overwhelmed, but in a really good way. Really booked and busy!”**

On ‘Redemption Songs’, there were no features, but on ‘Happiness From Agony’ Jaya collaborates with industry figures she’s long admired. “It’s cool to still have the project mixed and mastered by Andy [Zoutr]. They all came around from them showing love for me on social media. Coops is a UK rapper - when I used to BMX, skaters showed me him. I love his blend, so I’m excited for people to hear that. I think that’s the one people aren’t expecting. It’ll be the focus track for the project when it comes out.”

‘Repackage’ with Capo Lee was made “before anything got big for me”, with Jaya admitting she couldn’t relate to his bars at the time – “but now I actually relate,” she says, citing the lyric, “I’ve done Glasto, they think that I’ve made it.” When making these songs, Jaya wasn’t thinking about the project – she was just thinking about making music. “I just make music and it happens. It’s an attentive process, depending on what’s going on, and how I’m feeling. I get a strong sense of ‘this should be on the project’ but I have to make a lot of music before I get to that point.”

The mixtape is “a level up in so many ways”, she explains, reflecting on how she previously limited her sound on her EP ‘Redemption Songs’. “I learnt so much about what sound I want to bring. This time, I’ve owned the space I want to own - garage, grime, hip-hop, everything put together. A very socially conscious space. I showed humility before on songs like ‘Ur In Love’, but on this project I’ve brought songs that add a whole layer to that. I’ve made an effort to create more moments, and invested time and energy in trying to do that. I was inspired by Big Zuu and Capo Lee’s project.”

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Elsewhere, 'Bug' sees her working with producer New Machine, who is half Irish and half Jamaican – just like Jaya. The song will be BBC Radio 1Xtra's Track of the Week when the mixtape is released. But despite reaching these new heights, she still returned to Nottingham for this year's Hockley Hustle, which took place five days before the mixtape dropped. "[It] feels like a homecoming," she says. "I don't get to spend as much time in Nottingham anymore, but being able to touch base with everybody and celebrate all the acts, raise money, and we're going for a set that makes people move their bodies - it's going to be exciting."



# "IT'S GOING TO BE A CONTINUOUS GRIND, AND LOOKING TO THE NEXT PROJECT"

Jaya's UK tour saw her return to Nottingham again in November for a headline show at Metronome. "I've tried to choose people from the cities to support, but also people the cities will appreciate but they might not get to see often. I've got a lot of special guests, people from the project. I'm carrying the grime energy of doing cyphers." Glasgow is one she was particularly excited for, having only done one show there: "The promoters were handpicked, and people I've worked with previously. I'm currently designing the merch."

Hiding away for a bit after the tour would be Jaya's preference, but she knows that might not be realistic. "It's going to be a continuous grind, and looking to the next project. In 2026, I want to take more of a break and get better at balance, and saying 'no'. I've learnt a lot about marketing and distribution. Building my team has been cool, so I want to keep working with the same people and build it further. That's my focus."

**'Happiness From Agony' is out now.**

## LIVE AND DIRECT

**Looking back at JayaHadADream's headline Metronome show...**

Jaya flowed effortlessly from high-energy, garage and grime-infused tracks to some of the more mellow, heartfelt moments. On 'I Know', her favourite song from the mixtape, she bravely tackles "the outbursts we all have" head on. 'Nothing's Changed', the closing track of the project, sees her reflecting on family and home - the track has the social media seal of approval of Emili Sandé and Ghetts, to name a few.

Special guests were promised, and the final song of the set, 'Twiggy', saw Leicester rapper, singer and songwriter Queen Millz join Jaya on stage to perform her verse that was featured in a remixed version of the song earlier this year. Then, a live grime set took over the stage, featuring a range of local artists as well as East London support act Armor - an artist who, similar to Jaya, had an interest in teaching before going on to pursue a career in music.

Jaya has done many live performances in Nottingham over the years, but the feeling this time was different. No longer is she a hidden secret or an underground artist; she's taking the industry by storm.



# HONEY, SHE'S HOME!



by Gemma Cockrell

Nottingham's sapphic soul-pop star Lyvia is back with a new mixtape - she tells us how Nottingham's spoken-word scene and her hometown producers helped shape her sound...



# "I WOULDN'T BE DOING THIS IF IT WASN'T FOR THE SPOKEN-WORD SCENE"

**Back from a whirlwind run of shows and still riding the high of a hometown crowd, Lyvia sounds content – and maybe a little relieved – to finally be able to talk about her new release.**

"It's been really nice to finally have it out. I've been sat on it for a long time now," she muses. Her tour included a headline show at Rescue Rooms. "They knew the words! The mixtape wasn't even out yet," she laughs. She'd headlined the venue last year, but this time felt different. "This time, I enjoyed it more because I was less nervous so I could take it all in a lot better."

Lyvia hadn't set out to make a mixtape when she first started writing. "I went down to the countryside and couldn't write anything. I called my friend Chawe [of Nottingham-based duo 80p&Chewsdays] and asked him to come to the sessions – I needed familiarity. I had a few things on my notes app I wanted to write about, but not put out. 'Little White Lie' was made – I sent it to my team and said 'it's not coming out' and they were like, 'What are you talking about, this has to come out!'" she recalls with a grin. The same thing happened with 'Kiss U', which also appears on the mixtape.

Lyvia describes herself as shy, despite being a performer. "When I first signed with my management, I was being put in sessions in London and I found it really confusing to open up to someone I'd never met before. My boys in Nottingham, we've been working together for seven years. They just get me. That nervousness at the start of a session isn't there. It feels like my safety." She often writes in her bedroom or in Chawe's living room, "rather than an intimidating studio space," recording her vocals on the sofa. "I needed to bring it back to what I knew best."

That sense of comfort and connection runs deep in her creative process. Comparing it to the collaborative shorthand of Billie Eilish and Finneas, or Ed Sheeran and Jake Gosling, Lyvia's relationship with her producers feels equally instinctive. However, there is one exception. "I wrote a lot of the mixtape with a writer called Florence [Arman]. She walked in singing, and I warmed to her straight away. After that, she came to every session. It was nice, as it proved I can do this, it just takes the right connection. It was nice to write with someone – it's always just been me."









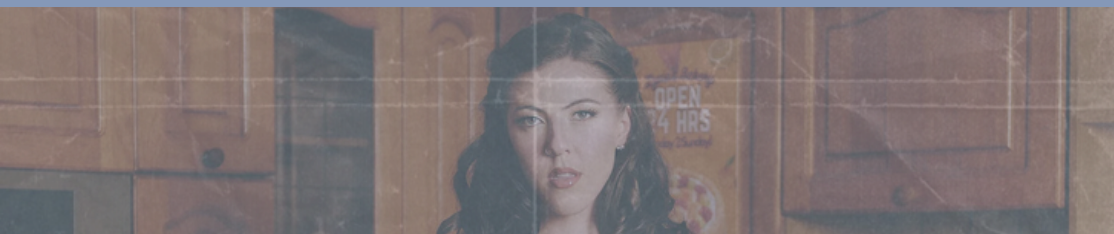
"I wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't for the spoken-word scene. My mum has believed in me since I was able to speak, she's always said I should be singing but for a long time I didn't have confidence. Jah Digga was fundamental in getting me to where I am, and Nick Stez. It's all because of that. They gave me confidence to get on stage and recite my poems." Those early experiences soon bled into her music, too. "They would also use me for hooks in songs. It spiralled from there. My sound is born from the Nottingham sound, it'll always have that in there, whether it's my accent, rhyme scheme, or my skippy flow. That's from Notts."

A lot of artists, from Raye to PinkPantheress, have recently spoken about how being from the UK sets them apart. For Lyvia, it's Nottingham that gave her the confidence to embrace her individuality. "It's hard not being from London, and breaking into the music scene. But I see it as my superpower. People compliment my accent – a lot of Americans on TikTok! People seem to like it, so I continue to use it. Being completely myself is working, so I need to keep doing that."

She writes "for the girls who like girls, and the ones who don't know it yet", as her Instagram bio proudly declares. "Representation is so important to me." Lyvia cites Hayley Kiyoko, Demi Lovato, and Kehlani as key inspirations when it comes to being open about her sexuality. "Even if it scares me, I need to be honest about who I am, because I wouldn't be who I am without the representation I had. So, I need to be that for younger girls." Her live shows reflect that spirit of pride and belonging – a rainbow flag often draped across her shoulders. "It's something I've intended. I want my shows to feel like that. I went to a Hayley Kiyoko show when I was younger and was stood in the middle but didn't feel scared... I want people to feel like that at my show."

Looking ahead, Lyvia's already back in creative mode. "This week, I'm doing fun things with my friends, but starting from next week it's time for me to lock in again. It's time to write some more music. I'm excited to see what it's going to sound like. Getting back to basics, figuring out what it'll sound like next. That really excites me. We've said we're going to write 20 songs a day!" 'Honey, I'm Home!' may have only just landed, but it's clear Lyvia still has plenty more still to say.

**Lyvia's new mixtape, 'Honey, I'm Home!', is out now.**



# GROVING UP

by Gemma Cockrell

**We catch up with owners Dan and Cam to reflect on intimate music venue The Grove's first year and their standout moments, from hosting all-dayers to the legend that is Peter Doherty...**

The Grove has been open for a year, but plenty of work went in before it was even launched. "We spent about three months building the place," Dan says. "Building the acoustic treatment in the place, and turning what used to be a storage cupboard into a bar," Cam adds. "A lot of the core of the venue was in place before we even opened."

They started by contacting "really cool" bands, asking if they wanted to perform at the venue - assisted by their own involvement in the Nottingham music scene. Their launch event sold out weeks before the date: "It feels like more than a year ago, we've done more than 120 gigs since. It's mad to think how much we've achieved," Cam reflects.

"We learnt a lot, but most importantly, all the music ran smoothly and sounded great from the get-go. That's helped our reputation as a small venue that sounds good. We're musicians first, and I don't think it would have been as successful without those connections. It felt like a strong start," he adds.

The venue has been set up by musicians, for musicians, and The Grove always puts artists first to make sure they feel comfortable and have everything they need to put on their best performances. "It's nice they feel listened to. Other musicians value that we can see things from their perspective. We anticipate what they need, which helps a lot," Cam says.

The Grove has just hosted a one year anniversary event, which felt very different to the first time around. "It was less stressful!" Dan laughs. "We knew the steps to make sure everyone felt comfortable, the bar was stocked up, we had more people helping. It was actually really chill, and really smooth. We kept looking over at each other like 'this is great!', whereas for the first one we were running around a lot."

The venue has been involved in other all-day events, such as Dot to Dot and Hockley Hustle: "Not only do we love being able to put bands on, but we love seeing bands play, and it's another excuse. Nine times out of ten, it's local bands, and that's one thing we try to push - whether they're new or established. That's the best part of those day festivals."



# "WE'RE TRYING TO BALANCE BEING DIY AND PROFESSIONAL"

Located in Sneinton Market, the venue get their beer from Neon Raptor, adding to the community feel of the avenues. "I don't think we would have built the venue as successfully as we did otherwise. If we ever needed to borrow a ladder or a tool, our neighbours are very generous. We help each other out, and it's nice to know you can always knock on people's doors and they'll be ready to help out," Cam says.

Nottingham's independent scene lost a great venue with The Chameleon in 2024, and The Grove brought hope back to the city when it opened later in the year. "It wasn't intentional that we opened close to when The Chameleon closed. It was really sad, I went to so many gigs there. To note, the sound guy has opened a new venue called Mist Rolling Inn, which is amazing!" Dan says.

"We were just trying to do our own thing. We knew that it's hard to get into venues like The Bodega, Rescue Rooms and Rock City. It's important to have these small venues like The Carousel and JT Soar. Without them, artists can't grow to fill those bigger venues. That was always the goal. We love watching gigs, and we get to do that all the time, which is really nice - and drink beer! It's just great," he adds.

Venues are often dark spaces, but The Grove's white walls set it apart and give it a brighter interior. "We knew we wanted a stage so artists could feel they were really performing in a special spot. The walls were already white but we leant into it, making it feel light and open and a bit bigger. The acoustic treatment has different coloured panels - more of a functional thing but it's become an aesthetic thing, too."

Cam adds: "We were trying to balance between being DIY and professional - we're a small space and we're doing it ourselves but we want to come across as proper. It doesn't mean everything has to be falling apart and falling off the walls." This professionalism attracted Peter Doherty to perform there: "That was amazing - a little strange, to be so close in this environment," Dan says.

"Fans took more appreciation for him - we had a support act on and he stood in the middle of the crowd watching it. We love that he did that. That's what we pursue, everyone supporting each other, not a ladder you're kicking other people off. We're all going up it together."

**Read the full interview on The Notts Review Substack.**

**@thegrovenotts**

# HOCKLEY HUSTLE AT 20

words by Tommy Farmyard  
photos by Will Banks

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**Two decades ago, Hockley was a pocket of Nottingham known for its independents, its edge and its creative grit. Then a new festival arrived - scrappy, collaborative and unmistakably local - and changed the area's cultural rhythm for good. Hockley Hustle, celebrating its 20th birthday in 2026, has become one of the city's defining annual events: a multi-venue carnival of music, art and community that raises thousands for charity and turns the streets into a living, breathing stage.**

Today, the festival sits under The Hustle Collective, an organisation that has quietly become one of Nottingham's most influential and exciting cultural forces running multiple festivals and projects throughout the year. It connects artists, venues, community groups and charities, producing events rooted in the same values that have sustained the Hustle from day one: creativity, inclusivity and collective joy.

Hockley Hustle began in 2006 with a handful of venues, a handful of artists, and a simple idea: use creativity to bring people together and support good causes. It worked. The festival grew year after year, fuelled not by corporate ambition but by Nottingham's own cultural ecosystem.

From musicians and poets to craft makers and circus artists, the Hustle became a platform where emerging talent shared space with established names. At its heart was, and still is, a philanthropic mission, with the festival raising substantial sums for local charities.

The Hustle Collective has developed into a creative network supporting events and artists across Nottingham. Its work extends far beyond one weekend by nurturing emerging artists, forging collaborations, supporting grassroots venues, delivering community art projects and steering fundraising initiatives that directly benefit the city.





Hockley's pavements will pulse with life: roaming musicians, walkabout performers, dancers between venues and spontaneous street stages that turn everyday corners into theatre. It's the joyful organised chaos that has always made the Hustle feel more like a citywide block party than a traditional festival. Collaboration has always been the Hustle's secret recipe, and the 20th birthday will push it further: musicians with poets, DJs with painters, circus artists with choirs, and filmmakers projecting onto unexpected surfaces. The sense that anything could happen, and probably will, remains central to the magic. From hip-hop and folk to spoken word, comedy, craft, dance and digital installations, the anniversary Hustle will showcase the full spectrum of Nottingham's cultural scene. Families, ravers, art lovers and curious wanderers will all find something that feels made for them.

Another Hustle hallmark is its playful use of space. Over the years, stages have appeared in barber shops, cafés, courtyards, warehouses and tiny basements. The 20th edition promises more pop-ups, spaces repurposed as DJ booths, and independent businesses becoming micro venues for the day.

Two decades in, the Hustle's spirit hasn't aged. If anything, it's grown bolder. The 20th birthday Hockley Hustle won't be just a festival, but a testament to what a city can build when its creative and community energies pull in the same direction.

Nottingham has watched the Hustle grow from a quirky DIY event into a cultural institution without losing its roots: local talent, shared spaces, open doors and generosity in every sense. Twenty years on, it still feels like something Nottingham makes together, and something Nottingham simply wouldn't be Nottingham without.

We might be growing up but we refuse to lose our spark. Fundraising remains at the core and the principle stays the same. Art can make a difference, and Nottingham is strongest when it acts together.

See you in 2026.

@the.hustlecollective

"WE MIGHT BE GROWING UP BUT WE REFUSE TO LOSE OUR SPARK"



# RELEASES OF THE YEAR



## **JOSHUA TODD – I NEVER DID (SINGLE)**

Joshua Todd has been on the scene for a little while now, performing since he was a teenager. 'It Never Did' marks his first official release; a heartfelt piano ballad forming part of a trio of retrospective songs supported by Youth Music UK. Recorded, mixed and mastered at The Grove with Cam Worne, the song is emotional and beautifully crafted.



## **VONA VELLA – CARNIVAL (SINGLE)**

Taken from their highly anticipated album of the same name, Vona Vella's 'Carnival' arrives with a high-profile sync already confirmed for basketball video game 'NBA2K26'. Its verses, set in a nervy 5/4 time signature, lurch forward like a waltz in a wind tunnel before snapping sharply into place.



## **DOROTHY ELLA – FEELING SO FREE (EP)**

Dorothy Ella's 'Feeling So Free' EP is a radiant exploration of courage, freedom and rediscovery. Inspired by a life-changing road trip across New Zealand, the five-track project charts her journey from heartbreak to healing. 'Version of You' shines as a standout: a breezy, sun-soaked track that carries summer warmth into the colder months.



## **ESTELLA – ALWAYS SPINNING (EP)**

This dreamy, four-track EP from estella is her first release since 2022 - and we are very glad she's returned. A sparkly, mellow collection that glows with late-night warmth and introspective shimmer, it drifts between lush textures and heartfelt melodies, perfectly capturing that hazy space between motion and calm.



## **MIDNIGHT RODEO – CHAOS ERA (ALBUM)**

There are few bands that blend genres and soundscapes as effortlessly as Midnight Rodeo, with 'Chaos Era' combining elements of 'Daisy Jones & the Six'-esque '70s rock with hints of shoe-gazey, Siouxsie and the Banshees-like energy. It's easily one of the best albums of the year.

Anyone who's dipped their toe into Nottingham's horror scene will have heard of - and likely from - Monstrous Flesh's Clelia McElroy, an insightful voice in the study of the genre. We chat to her about all things spooky...

# MONSTROUS ENERGY

by George White

photos from 'Carrie' (MGM) and 'Jennifer's Body' (20th Century Studios)

**You've run so many fascinating horror courses over the years. What's your process for putting them together? What inspires each idea, and how does it evolve from idea into reality?**

Honestly, it always starts with a passing thought that turns into a full-blown obsession. I'll get fixated on a theme or a pattern I've noticed in films – like women who devour, or the way cults keep resurfacing in modern cinema – and I start pulling at that thread.

I'll make a longlist of films to watch or rewatch, dive into essays, articles and podcasts, and start mapping the connections across genres and decades to see what conversations emerge between them.

I want each session to feel alive to the present moment – topical, but also emotionally resonant. The goal is to build something that provokes, that makes people laugh or squirm or see a familiar film in a new way.

That said, I do have a tendency to get a bit overexcited about the discoveries I make along the way – the weird trivia, the strange parallels, the things that shouldn't connect but somehow do – and I want to share all of it at once. I'm just really grateful that people keep coming back to the courses. Hopefully it's because they can feel how much I love doing this, and how much I care about these films and the conversations they open up.

**What is it about horror that leaves it open to exploring such a wide array of topics? Why is there so much to discuss within the one genre of cinema?**

I think horror is endlessly rich because it's the one genre that's never afraid to look directly at what we fear – and fear touches everything. Whether it's the body, technology, religion, gender, or politics, horror is always in conversation with whatever society is trying to repress or deny. It's not just about what scares us, but why it scares us.

"NOTTINGHAM'S HORROR SCENE HAS REALLY EVOLVED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS - IT'S BECOME MORE VISIBLE, CONNECTED, AND CONFIDENT"

It's also incredibly flexible. Horror can be visceral, tragic, poetic, and political; it can happen in a studio apartment or on another planet. That elasticity means filmmakers can smuggle in huge ideas under the surface of something thrilling or grotesque. You can talk about motherhood and generational trauma through 'The Brood'; desire, appetite and control through 'Jennifer's Body'; or collective trauma and female survival through 'Yellowjackets'.

For me, horror is the most honest genre – it exposes our anxieties rather than disguising them. That's why there's always so much to talk about. Every generation gets the monsters they create.

**I first spoke to you on the 'LeftLion Screen Podcast' back in 2022 – how would you say the horror scene has changed in that time? Have you noticed a shift in the films and TV we're getting now compared to a few years ago?**

I think what's changed is the industry's attitude, which in turn brings a wider audience to it. Studios and production houses have recognised that horror isn't just creatively rich, it's commercially viable. You can see that in the success of 'The Substance', which became a genuine box-office and cultural event; in the spectacle surrounding 'Nosferatu' at the start of the year; and the buzz around Guillermo Del Toro's 'Frankenstein' recently. Even a full-blown body horror like 'The Ugly Stepsister' is getting mainstream attention – and that's thrilling.

At the same time, the genre still falls into familiar cycles because it's so tied to our collective anxieties – and those anxieties repeat. So for every film that feels daring or transgressive, there's one that ends up rehashing the same old moral panic, just with better lighting. Films like 'Longlegs' (Oz Perkins) or 'Weapons' (Zack Creggers) feel like that to me – horror that uses tired old tropes about women and/or monstrosity and sells it as something more profound. Don't come for me, it's just my opinion!

So yes, the landscape feels bigger and more confident than it did a few years ago, but it's still caught between the exciting and the exasperating – which, honestly, is part of what makes horror so alive.

**It feels like Nottingham's horror scene has evolved in that time too – would you agree, and if so in what ways have you seen it develop?**

Absolutely – Nottingham's horror scene has really evolved over the past few years. There's always been a strong undercurrent of people here who love the strange, the spooky, and the subversive, but it's become so much more visible, connected, and confident recently.



You've got incredible grassroots and community energy alongside the bigger cultural fixtures: Mayhem remains the flagship event at this time of the year, Waterstones' Women in Horror Weekend is now in its second year and growing beautifully, and collectives like The Nottingham Horror Collective are doing brilliant, thoughtful work.

The film club scene is so rich as well, and always expanding: to name but a few, Fortune & Glory Film Club, Behind The Screen, The Loft Movie Theatre and Dead Duck Film Club all do very exciting things with their programming, and of course Broadway Cinema continues to be this vital creative hub – a place where filmmakers, programmers, academics, and audiences actually meet, talk, and collaborate.

Through the events I worked on with Monstrous Flesh, I've seen how eager people are to engage with horror in a communal way. There's this shared sense that horror isn't just entertainment; it's a lens for exploring identity, art, and politics. What I love most is that Nottingham's horror culture feels generous – curious, collaborative, and gloriously weird. It's not just surviving between festivals anymore; it's thriving all year round.

### **What other areas of horror would you like to explore going forward and why?**

There are so many threads I'd love to pull at next – if only there were more hours in the day! Right now, I'm especially interested in how horror and violence continuously intersect with desire in female-centred narratives – not just sexuality, but the violence of longing, obsession, and intimacy. We often talk about fear and disgust in horror, but not enough about seduction, pleasure, and the dangerous emotional textures that live alongside them.

I think part of the reason this is so compelling is that monstrosity makes women visible in a world that constantly tries to suppress, soften, or silence them. To become monstrous is to become undeniable – to take up space in ways that aren't palatable or pretty. Horror understands that instinctively. It gives women permission to be unruly, grotesque, and furious, and to find a strange kind of power in that visibility.

Ultimately, I just want to keep finding new ways to think about the body, belief, and fear – and how horror keeps evolving to express the things that words alone can't quite contain.

**@monstrous\_flesh**



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