

THE NOTTS REVIEW

*The Notts
Review*



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EDITORS' LETTERS



GEMMA COCKRELL

Almost a year ago, The Notts Review started as a casual conversation on WhatsApp, quickly growing into a Substack, Instagram page, and now our first zine. Once George and I have an idea, we can't rest until we've made it a reality, and I'm lucky to work on this project with someone as motivated (and hard-working/insane) as I am. Nottingham's creative scene is thriving, and I'm excited to highlight some of my favourite new artists here, like KAP and Jude Forsey. You'll also find some great film content - curated by George, since my taste in films is admittedly terrible. Enjoy!



GEORGE WHITE

Welcome to the first of (hopefully) many The Notts Review zines! Since starting up our Substack earlier in 2024, I've had a blast working alongside the super talented Gemma to shine a spotlight on Nottingham's upcoming and established creatives. I love the city, and I love the passionate people who call it home - I hope you enjoy reading all about them as much as we enjoyed chatting to them!



A YAP

by Gemma Cockrell

photo by Nigel King

WITH KAP

music

It's been a landmark year for rising star KAP. From winning the Future Sound of Nottingham to performing on the iconic Rock City stage during Dot to Dot Festival, her journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, and this autumn marked another milestone with the release of her long-anticipated EP, 'Still the Girl'. As she looks ahead, she shows no signs of slowing down. Here, she reflects on her whirlwind 2024 and shares what's next on her horizon.

Hey KAP! How are you doing?

Hey hey heyyy. I'm fabulous, thank you!

This has been a huge year for you. It feels like the first big moment was winning Future Sound of Nottingham. What did it feel like to win that? What did that mean to you?

It really has! I started the year with my first ever BBC Radio 1XTRA play and it's been upwards since then! It felt amazing to win FSN as I had applied two years in a row beforehand and didn't make it as a finalist. I feel like it showed me just how much I've grown as an artist and person and to keep going.

This led to an appearance at Dot to Dot on the Rock City stage, as well as other festivals over the summer. How was festival season, and the summer in general, for you?

Rock City really was one of the coolest moments of my life, and the dream is to headline there one day! Festival season was great and summer was a super creative one for me. I spent a lot of time making new beats and trying out new sounds, which I'm so excited to share with you!

As we came into the autumn months, you didn't slow down at all, starting with your EP launch at Saltbox. How special was it to perform alongside so many of your friends and fellow Notts artists?

It was amazing. I have so much love and respect for Notts artists! EMIDORA is an absolute babe and so talented, I would love to collab with her one day! Nikko is just the performer of the century, his vibes are immaculate!

It was also so amazing to have Love Celestene and Created by MiMi have their stalls there too, it just feels like the community coming together.

We had to wait a bit longer for the EP, but it was released on Halloween. How did you feel once it was finally out, especially in light of the delay?

It felt so good to finally have it come out, and I'm so glad I delayed the release date as it wasn't sounding exactly how I wanted it to originally, so that extra month of perfecting the sound was totally worth it!

You teamed up with Project Zeus for the EP, which you described as "so fun and easy". What was it like working with a team who understood your creative vision, and how do you feel this has helped your sound to progress?

I think it all came down to us just vibing well together and our shared love of music! It was cool to put a production idea to them and see how they turned it into something magical.

Of the four tracks on the EP, do you have a particular favourite, or one which is extra special to you for any reason?

I think 'Crazy' is my favourite because it came so naturally. I had the main melody and drums there and wrote the full song in five minutes, and then got Project Zeus to put their magic on the production and it just felt so right.

Finally, what's next for you, as we head into 2025? Have you got any plans at this point in time?

I recently received Youth Music Next Gen Funding, so I'm working on a brand new self-produced EP which will feature one of the tracks as a live recording with the band! I'll be releasing a few singles in the meantime too.

@itskapkap





HEY JUDE

by Gemma Cockrell
photos by Nigel King

2024 has been a standout year for Jude Forsey, starting with a spot at BBC Introducing's Metronome showcase, and concluding with a performance at Hockley Hustle and a flurry of new singles. As he teases his upcoming EP, set for release in 2025, he tells us all about his evolving music style, his inspirations, and what's coming up next for him in the new year.

Hi Jude, how are you?

Hi, I'm all good thank you!

We're coming to the end of 2024 now and you've released a lot of music this year. Are there any particular tracks that stand out to you, or ones you're most proud of?

The song I'm most proud of is 'I'll wait for you'. I feel it's my most well-written song and it's written in a style that suits me.

Most recently you released 'i should be falling out of love' - could you tell us more about the track, what inspired it, and how it came together?

My newest single was written at the same time as the rest of the songs on my upcoming EP. It came together very quickly, and it is the last song I wrote for the EP. I focused on the visuals a lot with this release, making a lyric video edited by myself.

"MY MAIN PLAN IS TO KEEP EXPLORING NEW SOUNDS AND CREATE MULTIPLE EPS"

We've been really enjoying the lyric videos you've been doing for new songs lately. Your social media presence is very impressive - what is your relationship with these platforms like as an artist and how do you approach promoting your music on there?

Naturally, I don't enjoy social media too much, but with the newer videos I've been creating, I've been learning how to edit to get the visuals for my songs perfect and exactly how I want them.

Your sound has evolved a lot this year, as 2024 was the year you started incorporating guitar into your music and marked the first time you played the instrument live. What inspired you to do this?

I started incorporating more guitar into my songs as I was interested in more rock and alternative genres, which I have put my own spin on.

Going back to the start of the year, you performed at BBC Introducing at Metronome. How was that experience and how do you feel that opened doors for you for the rest of the year?

BBC Introducing is my favourite gig I have done. It definitely helped my online presence at the time and gave me more listeners.

There were plenty of other notable moments for you throughout the year, including Dot to Dot and Hockley Hustle, just to name a couple. What are your own personal standout moments of the year?

My standout moment this year was probably performing at Hockley Hustle. It was the first gig I have done with my new setlist.

Finally, as we approach 2025, what do you have lined up for the new year? Are there any big goals you want to tick off in 2025?

I'd love to get some big radio plays next year and play at some bigger venues around Nottingham. My main plan is to keep exploring new sounds and create multiple EPs.

@jude_forsey



SONGS OF THE YEAR

WHEN IT RAINS – CATMILK

This dreamy, atmospheric track blends indie pop with introspective lyrics perfectly. The ethereal vocals and calming instrumental backdrop culminate in a moment of epic emotional release at the end, which is truly a spectacle when heard live.



ALL MY FREAKS – DIVORCE

This raw, energetic anthem features gritty guitar riffs and a rebellious spirit, celebrating individuality and nonconformity. The lyrics speak to embracing one's quirks, rejecting societal norms, and finding power in being unapologetically different.



TANGLEWOOD – JOSIE BETH

The sounds of this evocative indie folk ballad are enough to transport listeners to a tranquil yet mysterious woodland setting, with delicate melodies and poetic lyrics that weave a narrative of longing and self-discovery.



TWENNY ONE (HAPPY BIRTHDAY) – EMIDORA

This upbeat track, instead of celebrating the excitement of turning 21, tells a story of fearing the passage of time and the pressure of unfulfilled expectations with a catchy hyperpop beat and playful lyrics.



NOT LIKE THE REST – GIRLBAND!

In 2024, we finally received GIRLBAND!'s first single. 'Not Like The Rest' is a high-energy punk-pop track that stands as a declaration of individuality. With its fast-paced rhythm and fierce vocals, the song rejects conformity and embraces self-expression.



ALBUMS/EPs OF THE YEAR



REDEMPTION SONGS – JAYAHADADREAM & ZOUTR

A powerful EP that blends hip-hop and soulful beats with socially conscious lyrics, Jaya's verses speak to resilience, empowerment, and the struggles of marginalised communities. Her storytelling is honest and urgent, adding depth to her uplifting, reflective rhythms.



STILL THE GIRL – KAP & PROJECT ZEUS

This project combines KAP's confident vocals and style with the polished production of Project Zeus, creating an effortlessly captivating listen. KAP's self-assured energy makes up the EP's core essence, as her vocals and artistry shine throughout, delivering one of 2024's most memorable releases.



INCOMMUNICADO – EXPRESS OFFICE PORTICO

Express Office Portico blend indie-pop and electronic influences to create a unique sound. With layered synths and guitars that evoke both nostalgia and a sense of freshness, this project still stands the test of time, despite the fact that vocalist Tara Freeman has since departed the band.



NOTHING MUCH TO SAY – KATIE KEDDIE

This lo-fi folk-pop project embodies simplicity and introspection, as Katie Keddie's gentle vocals and minimalistic arrangements provide a soothing backdrop. The stripped-back style evokes a warm and sincere feeling throughout, making it the perfect listen for fans of heartfelt, intimate music.



MAID MARIAN WAY – LYVIA

This EP is named after the iconic street in Nottingham, demonstrating that LYVIA is nothing but proud of her roots in the city. Her unique lyrics and poetic, spoken word-esque verses capture themes of WLW relationships, identity, and resilience, creating a deeply personal and resonant experience.

literature

MIDNIGHT IN WATERSTONES



by Andrew Tucker



LEFTLION
LITERATURE EDITOR

In this guest column, LeftLion's Literature Editor Andrew Tucker dives into just why our city's literary scene is a magical place to spend time in - even at midnight in Waterstones...

ANDREW TUCKER

“Do you know how long a year takes when it’s going away?” asks a character in *Catch-22* - Dunbar, who’s become obsessed with leading a life as thunderingly-dull as possible - “this long”. Then he snaps his fingers, dramatically. By eeking out a humdrum existence, says Dunbar, we’ll live longer, or certainly we’ll feel that we have.

I’d been flirting with this for a while, but it was during lockdown that I first fell head-over-heels with being boring. If you were so possessed to open my jam-stained diary which began and ended in those two years, you’d find memorable epigrams like: ‘Made jam sandwich. Messy.’ As I was beginning to feel like a bit of a NEET dropout, I’d been drawing up plans to go back to university - but in the meantime I’d found the reading list for a literature degree at Oxford, posted by some joyless nerd on Reddit, and that moment was when I first jumped into dullness with two tartan-slipper-wearing feet. I thought, ‘I’ll just read as many of these books as possible, then I won’t need to hang around on any quadrangles, try on a black tailcoat or change my middle name to “Tristram”.’ So I just read that Oxford reading list, mostly, and in doing so I strung those years out into decades.

The past year, on the other hand - since I started as Literature Editor for *LeftLion* mag - has gone by with the snap of a finger. That’s because things are fizzling away again in this town. It’s hard to know how to measure it, but I’m imagining patenting some kind of Geiger Counter for a town’s literary radiation. Every event you go to right now, from the Playhouse’s Neville Room, to the Carousel, to the new Central Library, you can hear it crackling; I went to one poetry open mic last year, at the King Billy, where a bartender had to come upstairs to ask us to stop stamping our approval, because a painting had just leapt off the wall and showered the carpet with a new patina of smashed glass. That’s the energy people have, ruffled up, radioactive, you can see teeth glow in the dark.

If I made a stab at a ‘who’s who’, I’d trip myself up by forgetting someone, but I’ll risk giving three: there’s the wonderful UNESCO City of Literature team here, who spend their weeks ensuring that we’re still relevant despite being north of the M25; we might also celebrate GOBS Collective and the searing confidence that they give to new poets; in the publishing realm we have Bad Betty Press, who most recently have found a natural home for literature in a packed-to-the-rafters jazz club.

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Memoir of
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The
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Memoir of
a Diagnosis



“A toast now to Nottingham, and to years that go by with the snap of a finger”

The real wealth, though, the hard currency in the till, are the writers here - craftspeople who work with a quiet flourish. Most days I'll open my inbox to find a promising writing project or a new book which has come from someone who's never been on my radar before. I really regret that we can't get them all covered, but that's the nature of anything, particularly with a voluntary role like this. I also have one persistent emailer, who may or may not be a bot, who takes care to alert me about books about tropical birds - which have no discernible relation to Nottingham - and who seems to know me by the name of Alan.

Long before I was Alan, there are many fond bookish memories I have of Nottingham as I grew up, one of which is imagined, because I wasn't there. It's me picturing my dad. He has never had time for fantasy fiction of any variety (if anyone starts levitating, he's out of the room), but he did once queue up for the midnight release of one of the Potter books at Waterstones, about 20 years ago. I knew he'd done this because I found the book downstairs on the sofa at six in the morning, tossed onto a cushion - but I know what it cost him to get it. My dad at midnight, courageously elbowing trainee librarians dressed as Hagrid - that's Nottingham's literary scene in microcosm. We can put up with anything as long as there's a book waiting at the other side. Our Notts, this hardy Mercian rock, we've come through the long, silent Covid years and it's just made us weirder and wordier.

These thoughts came together quicker than I thought they might - I could talk about the lit scene here for hours - but that's how time clips by when you're having fun. A toast now to Nottingham, and to years that go by with the snap of a finger.

leftlion.co.uk

screen

WE ROBOTS



by George White

photos by Adrian Villeschi



THE CORRECTION
UNIT

Diving into the very real threat of AI, especially to the younger generations, Derry Shillitto is bringing a Notts-heavy film with a universal focus. We hear from some of its upcoming stars...



ELLESE BRADSHAW

What made you want to sign up to this project?

After being approached by someone working on the movie and recommend to the director, I was sent the synopsis and a part of the script to draw inspiration from for my audition tape, and I was immediately intrigued as the topics are so current and could happen a few years from now with the rate that technology is developing.

How was your experience on the film?

I love working on set with everyone involved in this film; both the cast and the crew are incredible people to be around, and always very supportive and caring. The actual premise of the film is also very exciting, and I'm interested in the topics that 'The Correction Unit' surrounds, so I would be constantly learning on the job.

As a young person breaking into a creative industry, do you worry about how AI is going to affect your work and your career?

Due to its constant evolution, I believe it's only right to be wary about what AI could be capable of and how that may affect myself as an actor and dancer.

How can people help to make sure the arts remain healthy as technology develops?

Knowing what the pros and cons are around AI technology is definitely important for the arts. Knowing how we can utilise it while also maintaining awareness of how it can be exploited and used against those in the industry is vital to making sure that the arts don't suffer from new technology advancements.

Despite this being a sci-fi, it touches on real issues affecting cities like Nottingham right now. Is it important for you to work on projects with purpose and messages that can get people thinking and spark conversation?

I believe that being a part of these projects is important in the way that they visualise what people may afraid to speak about. By showing these very relatable and important issues, you can very easily initiate a conversation that is much needed about the topics that may be difficult for people to hear, therefore creating an outlet for those to engage and discuss their thoughts on the importance of real-life experiences they may have had.

“I want to make sure I’m maintaining a motion in my career so I can take on loads of interesting opportunities like this film”

What’s next for you and your career?

I want to learn and grow as a performer in the industry, and not only expand my portfolio with more projects but also network with people in all fields of performance in order to broaden my knowledge and experiment with what path I want to go down.

I’m aiming to always stay busy, whether that’s booking a dance job or going to an acting or modelling casting - I just want to make sure I’m maintaining a motion in my career so I can take on loads of interesting opportunities like this film.



ANIQUE TAYLOR

What made you want to sign up to this project?

I'd say the concept is what drew me in first. The film addresses two issues that aren't discussed or acted on enough: the misjudgment of the younger generation and how AI can be harmful if used in the wrong way. I haven't really seen many creative projects tackling these topics before, so I'm happy to be part of a conversation that society needs to have.

How was your experience on the film?

It was amazing. Not only because it's my first time working on a feature film, but also because I got to learn and share so many memories with the cast and crew. Every day was filled with laughter and creativity. The crew did an incredible job making the set a place where I and the other young actors could feel free to experiment in scenes. When I wasn't filming, I loved sitting on the sidelines, watching the scenes come to life. Seeing how hard everyone worked to make the film the best it could be was inspiring, and I hope I'm lucky enough to experience something like that again. There wasn't a day I walked on or off set without feeling inspired.

As a young person breaking into a creative industry, do you worry about how AI is going to affect your work and your career?

I think it's natural to worry about it sometimes. Technology is constantly advancing, and the industry is starting to rely on AI to cut creative corners. I don't dwell on it too much, as actors aren't really being replaced by AI, but I do worry about writers, who are such a crucial part of the industry.

"SOME OF THE GREATEST FILMS, MUSIC, AND PAINTINGS DIDN'T NEED AI TO LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION ON AN AUDIENCE"

At our first table read, Derry asked if we had any suggestions or thoughts on the script, as he wanted the language to feel authentic to how young people speak. It was reassuring to know our opinions were valued and would be listened to, which is so important for young actors. I can't say any of us would have been comfortable having that kind of conversation with a robot – it just wouldn't have been the same.

How can people help to make sure the arts remain healthy as technology develops?

I think by remembering what in the arts inspired them. Some of the greatest films, music, and paintings didn't need AI to leave a lasting impression on an audience. Attending museums, galleries, concerts, and live theatre keeps the demand alive and encourages artists to continue their craft. A few months ago, I saw a ballet performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' with a live orchestra, and the music was incredible.

Despite this being a sci-fi, it touches on real issues affecting cities like Nottingham right now. Is it important for you to work on projects with purpose and messages that can get people thinking and spark conversation?

I think it's incredibly important for me, and for all actors, to work on projects that aim to deliver a meaningful message. This film gave me a strong sense of responsibility to do justice to the issues we're addressing. It also sparked an internal conversation for me, making me realise how quick I've sometimes been to judge characters like the ones in this story. Now, I have a deeper sense of compassion and empathy for them. If we can evoke that same understanding in the audience, then we've succeeded in our job.

What's next for you and your career?

Right now, I have another two years left of training at The Television Workshop. We have some exciting projects lined up throughout the year that will allow us to explore other areas of filmmaking, so I'm really looking forward to that. I'm not sure what's next for me career-wise, which is both scary and exciting – that's part of being in this industry. You never know what's around the corner, but whatever it is, I'd like to think I'll be ready to face it.

'The Correction Unit' is coming soon.



TIM TO TALK

by George White

photo by Michelle Jeffery - © Tim Bryn Smith

As founder and director of The Actors Workshop Nottingham & Online, Tim Bryn Smith has helped plenty of aspiring stars to bank roles in projects both local and global. Now, he talks about the latest of the Workshop's own projects, feature film 'Surrender to It'...

You've described Surrender to It as a "whopping great big movie project". What can audiences expect from the film?

It's a relatable film with something for everyone, featuring stunning locations, cinematic camera work and fantastic performances. The story has elements of comedy, drama, mystery and suspense. Audiences can expect tears, laughter and plenty of twists and turns.

It looks like a really fun mystery thriller - why was this the approach you wanted to take, and where did the idea come from?

Inspiration for the film came from the emergence back to normality after the Covid lockdown, and the feeling that life often doesn't go the way we hope it will. I really wanted to explore the key themes of acceptance and how sometimes you just have to surrender to where life seems to want to take you. Although the film has some extremely serious storylines, with comparison made to independent British thrillers like 'Eden Lake', it's also packed with a lot of fun mystery akin to an adult-style 'Goonies' adventure.

It was obviously a major production - how did you find overseeing that? What were the biggest highlights and challenges?

We are a very compact team, so the production schedule was very intense, often with individual crew members working across a variety of production roles. Having besq on board as our production company was an absolute blessing, and they have been the driving force behind the project and getting it to where it is now. As all independent filmmakers know, financing any film is a challenge, but we are very lucky to get great support from family, friends and staff at Confetti, plus some amazing backing from our initial Kickstarter campaign pledges. Pulling off an extremely ambitious project like this alongside the thriving and talented community at The Actors Workshop Nottingham has truly made it a dream come true.

It's led by talent from The Actors Workshop, which you've run for almost 15 years now. How important is it for aspiring actors to get the chance to put their training into practice on projects like this?

Although this is by far our most ambitious project to date, The Actors Workshop Nottingham has been providing opportunities like this through our Screen School courses and casting links with film and TV since 2010. But as all actors know, winning a lead role in a feature film is the holy grail of the profession, and it's an extremely difficult and rare opportunity to come by for most actors. That's why 'Surrender to It' is such a special experience for those involved, as it's not just a practical exercise for up-and-coming local actors to put their training into practice, but also a vehicle that will potentially launch their careers by putting them on screens in homes around the world.

Actors Workshop graduates like Lisa Ambalavanar have gone on to star in global productions. How do you plan on helping this group to take those sorts of steps off the back of Surrender to It?

'Surrender to It' has just started being entered into film festivals around the world, where it is hoped it will increase its profile and continue to create an exciting buzz on the independent film scene. Taking the cast over to the 2025 Cannes Film Festival will definitely be a highlight for everyone involved, and a phenomenal networking opportunity. Once it's done its festival run, we will be talking to potential sales agents and distributors about where the film might be available across streaming platforms in 2025.

'Surrender to It' is coming soon.

"ALTHOUGH THIS IS BY FAR OUR MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECT TO DATE, THE ACTORS WORKSHOP NOTTINGHAM HAS BEEN PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES LIKE THIS SINCE 2010"

THE BEST OF NOTTS ON SCREEN



ALIEN: ROMULUS

Featuring The Television Workshop's own Spike Fearn in a major role, 'Alien: Romulus' is a wild ride that both pays homage to the original movies of the franchise while also trying new things itself. Definitely one worth checking out.



OUT OF DARKNESS

This film put another of The Television Workshop's own, Safia Oakley-Green, firmly on the map - with a British Independent Film Award no less. This talented rising star is tipped for big things.



MR LOVERMAN

Nottingham-born acting legend Lennie James tugged on the heartstrings in the BBC's adaptation of this Bernardine Evaristo novel, which sees an Antiguan-Londoner finally come out to his wife of several decades.



INSOMNIA

You can't really discuss Notts on screen without mentioning ar' Vick, and McClure has had another stellar year - with her haunting turn in Paramount+ thriller 'Insomnia' emphasising her stunning range.



SHERWOOD SEASON 2

'Sherwood' features a whole host of local talent - what, with it being set in Notts and all - but very few shone as brightly as The Television Workshop's Jorden Myrie as (**spoiler**) snitch Marcus Clarke.

FILMS OF THE YEAR

THERE'S STILL TOMORROW

This stylish Italian drama made waves at the domestic box office - bringing in more than any other film in 2023 - and it was worth the wait here in the UK, telling an urgent, powerful story in a quite phenomenal way.



DUNE: PART TWO

Following up 2021's groundbreaking (or sandbreaking) sci-fi epic felt like an impossible task, but director Denis Villeneuve manages it with aplomb, going bolder, weirder and more beautiful with this operatic tale of revenge.



MONKEY MAN

Speaking of revenge, 'Monkey Man' is a proper bloodsoaked blast of it, as director/star Dev Patel slashes, slaps and smashes his way through enemy after enemy in this all-timer of an action epic.



THE IRON CLAW

A shocking family drama based (loosely) on the true story of the Von Erich brothers, this is one that will stick with you long after the credits roll - with Zac Efron proving his acting chops in a layered leading role.



THE SUBSTANCE

Well, what can really be said about this one? It's definitely one of those 'if you know, you know' sort of movies, with Coralie Fargeat's jaw-dropping body horror taking bold swings and landing most of them. Insane(ly good).



