

Could these Suffolk shipping containers help you achieve your dreams?

This corner of the country is certainly a hub of talent, there's no doubt about that. Just take a moment to think of all the artists, musicians and other creatives who hail from this part of the world.

And to help ensure Suffolk keeps producing top talent for years to come, one local arts centre is in the process of launching a new programme that aims to empower the next generation of hopeful and ambitious professional artists.

Rendlesham's Old Jet – which was formed in 2014 by musician Jesse Quin – has just set up Airspace, an initiative comprised of various components that will provide the tools needed to help local up-and-comers establish their careers in a variety of creative fields.

Explaining how it came about is Old Jet artist manager Oliver Squirrell. He says: "My background is in artist management and mentoring, so outside of Old Jet I help mainly visual artists with the career and entrepreneurial side of their practice. So while the artists create the art, I assist them with planning and promoting it, as well as organising exhibitions.

"And someone I was working with, photographer Nick Ilott who is based at Old Jet, introduced me

Arts centre Old Jet has just launched Airspace – an initiative that aims to help young creatives get their foot in the door. **Danielle Lett** finds out more

to Jesse. Him and I got talking last autumn, and that's when I joined to help them develop the programme as it's something that's been on Jesse's mind for a while."

Oliver describes Airspace as an 'incubation programme for aspiring artists and musicians who want to make their careers', and there are a number of aspects to it that will help those involved achieve their dreams.

"There are three main elements to it. Firstly, the shipping containers are the core focus, as we plan to convert those into studio spaces so we can offer new artists a dedicated space they can utilise for a period of up to six months at a time, where they can develop their artistic practice," he says.

The second part of the project is a mentoring scheme. "The really nice thing about Old Jet is that it's a community of already-established artists and creative professionals – so the idea is that the more established artists will

help and nurture the next generation, and so on. We hope to create an ecosystem of artistic talent."

And thirdly, Airspace will develop a number of events to help said artists with their professional development.

"There will be a calendar of weekly events where a broader community of artists can attend workshops. We'll have people like digital art experts and gallery owners who will help a wider base of new artists who have ambitions of becoming professionals."

After noticing a recent influx of talent making its way to the region, Oliver thinks a programme like Airspace couldn't have come at a better time.

"Since the pandemic especially, Suffolk has seen a mass exodus from London, and we've gotten to the point where East Anglia has so much infrastructure in terms of contacts, facilities and networks. We've got the puzzle pieces to create this artistic ecosystem within the region, and



As part of the Airspace creative programme, Old Jet aims to convert shipping

Airspace will hopefully connect the pieces and put it together on a much larger scale.

"Historically, if you wanted to be a musician or artist, you'd have to go to London, or New York, or London, which is out of most people's means, but now we have all of these resources within the region to support these talents, and to help further establish East Anglia's reputation as a hotbed of creativity."

To help get this ambitious programme off the ground, Old Jet has just launched a Crowdfunder – with its first goal being £20,000. This will go towards converting the first shipping container into a free-to-use studio.

"Since launching the crowdfunding campaign, we're already being contacted by artists and musicians wanting to know more about it," he adds.

In addition, those who donate to the fundraiser will be thanked, with a variety of rewards available. "People can just donate if they wish, but there's also an

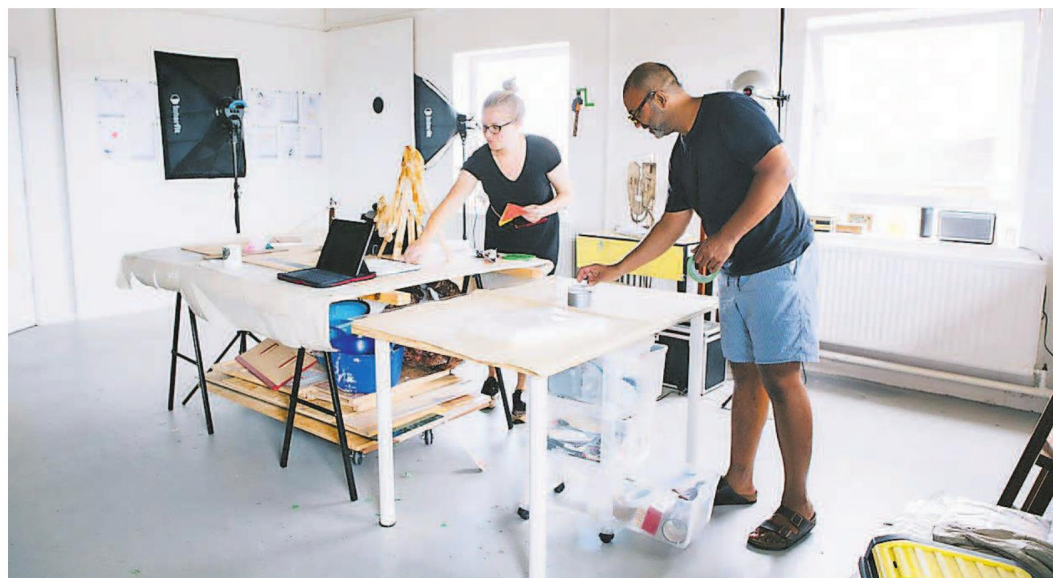
array of rewards on offer, such original artwork from some of the best artists in East Anglia, various creative workshops, or you can even have a professional pianist come and play for you in your home."

Other experiences up for grabs include a day in Jesse's music studio.

At the time of writing, the Crowdfunder has raised just under £4,000 – with many donations coming in from abroad.

"It will be great if we can get to that point where we have a self-sustaining ecosystem of artists in the region. Especially when you think of how rural Suffolk is, it can be a bit difficult to get around, but to have something like this right here in the county will be really exciting. There's so much talent, and the more we can do to support that, the better."

Founder and managing director Jesse Quin adds: "I set Old Jet up because I believe that people thrive when they work as part of a community. I think you produce



Since its formation, Old Jet has put itself at the forefront of creativity here in Suffolk

Picture: NICK ILOTT PHOTOGRAPHY



containers into studios

Picture: OLD JET



Jesse Quin, founder of Old Jet

Picture: NICK ILOTT

your best work when you've got the encouragement and support of like-minded people working around you. One thing we've always tried to do is encourage the next generation of artists with whatever support they need whether that's space or materials. We believe that Airspace will have a great impact on many emerging

artist's lives and also be a wonderful addition to a part of the UK that already has an incredible arts scene."

To find out more, visit oldjet.co.uk

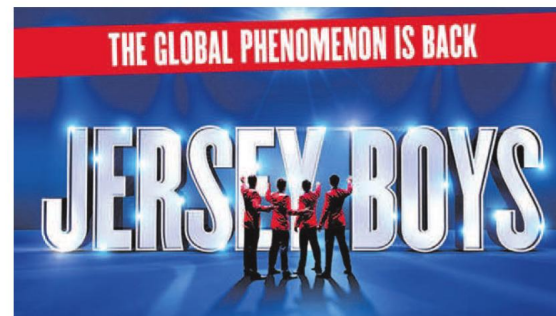
To donate to the Crowdfunder, visit crowdfunder.co.uk/p/old-jet-airspace-programme

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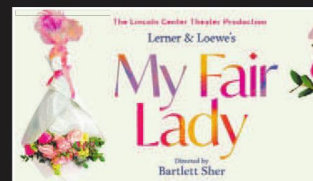
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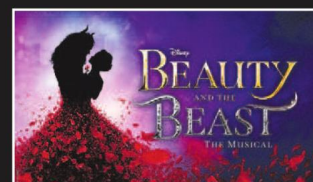
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