

Feb '26
Free

Gan On

**music in
Sunderland**

**A look back at the highlights of 2025,
and what's to come in the new year.**



JANUARY ONWARDS '26

INDEPENDENT LIVE

GIG LISTINGS

- | | | | |
|-------|--|-------|---|
| 24.01 | INDEPENDENT
NOISE POLLUTION & RAREBREED
+ FRACTURES & HELLDWAG | 13.02 | THE SHIP ISIS
TOM REMON & JOHN MORIATY
VAUX ROOM JAZZ NIGHT |
| 27.01 | INDEPENDENT
CREATIVE CAREERS PANEL
FREE PANEL ON INDUSTRY JOBS | 18.02 | INDEPENDENT
THE HOWLERS
+ ABOUT FACES |
| 28.01 | INDEPENDENT
GENERATOR CONNECTS PANEL
A PANEL FOR MUSICIANS ON INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS | 20.02 | THE SHIP ISIS
SPACECADETBLOOM
+ HOSUE PROUD & MISTING |
| 29.01 | INDEPENDENT
THE LAST TIME
+ RISCO & SLATE LABEL | 21.02 | THE SHIP ISIS
LOTTIE WILLIS
+ SPECIAL GUESTS TBA |
| 30.01 | INDEPENDENT
SOUP KITCHEN CHARITY GIG
FT. RED REMEDY, CRITCH, BLACK RAIN & MORE | 26.02 | INDEPENDENT
ROBIN RICHARDS
+ SPECIAL GUESTS TBA |
| 30.01 | THE SHIP ISIS
AIMEE
+ JACOB KINGSTON & LYLIA MAE | 27.02 | INDEPENDENT
RED REMEDY
+ SPECIAL GUESTS TBA |
| 31.01 | INDEPENDENT
KLANG X MUSIC CITY OPEN DAY
ELECTRONIC MUSIC OPEN DAY | 27.02 | THE SHIP ISIS
ALICE COSTELLO
+ FATHER HELL (MATTIE VANT) |
| 31.01 | INDEPENDENT
TOM A. SMITH
+ SPECIAL GUESTS TBA | 07.03 | ZEROX NCL
THE VOYD SOLD OUT
+ CRAIG REDPATH |
| 01.02 | INDEPENDENT
RED RUM CLUB SOLD OUT
+ CHERRYHOLT | 03.04 | INDEPENDENT
BARSTOOL PREACHERS
+ DEAD WET THINGS |
| 13.02 | THE SHIP ISIS
KLANG
ELECTRONIC MUSIC OPEN MIC | 11.04 | INDEPENDENT
THE POLIS
A TRIBUTE TO THE POLICE |
| 13.02 | THE FIRE STATION
MICKEY CALLISTO SOLD OUT
+ CHAT | 24.04 | INDEPENDENT
UK SUBS
PINK FLOYD TRIBUTE SHOW |
| 13.02 | INDEPENDENT
LABYRINTHINE OCEANS
+ SUPPORT TBA | | |



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WWW.INDEPENDENTSUNDERLAND.COM





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Eee hiya! Fancy seeing you here, its been a while,
hasn't it?

I'll start off by addressing the big fat elephant in the room...

You might have noticed we've been away for a spell, as our team has been incredibly busy behind the scenes, immersing ourselves fully in everything the city has had on offer for the last year. But worry no longer, we're back and more excited than ever to keep you up to date on the goings on in the local music scene. 2025 was a great year for Sunderland; with the year of music in full swing, some incredible touring bands stopping off at our venues, and community spirit staying strong throughout. So let's celebrate with an issue packed full of the best of the best; what we loved last year, and what we're looking forward to in the next few months. We've got reviews, interviews with artists and local traders, as well as our regular quiz feature making a return with a new guest host.

So strap in, and get yourself caught up with everything going on, and then go and brag to your mates that you know more than them about local music.

But before you race ahead, I'd like to give a big shoutout to our contributors; there's some new faces in the mix along with some old favourites, and this wouldn't exist without them and their dedication to shouting about our wonderful music scene. Thank you team, and thank you reader for picking up this little magazine, keep showing up and keep supporting however you can.

We plan to release issues quarterly from now on but we're always posting new pieces on our website. Check it out at www.ganon.co.uk and catch us on Instagram @ganonsun

Jenny



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Jenny Dean

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Jenny Dean

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Kieran Whitfield

Special thanks to:

Otto Cafe, The Bunker, The Saltgrass, Ritch Steadman (HMV Newcastle), Julia O'Neill, Ben Hughes



CMS

Live Music

Always putting artists and venues first to deliver quality live music across the North East

MIX
'N'
MATCH

KOJI

2 FOR 1
ON ALL DISHES

*cheapest item free

BAO BUNS

Chicken Katsu Bao Buns | £9.50

Panko fried chicken, katsu curry, kewpie mayo, Asian pickles & a hint of spice

Chashu Pork Belly Bao Buns | £9.50

Crispy pork belly with a chashu reduction & Asian pickles

Teriyaki Duck Bao Buns | £11.00

Shredded Duck Leg, Teriyaki sauce & Asian pickles

Sticky Korean Tofu Bao Buns | £9.50

Fried tofu, sweet & spicy sauce, Asian pickles & sesame Vg

Salt & Pepper Chicken Bao Buns | £9.50

Fried tofu, sweet & spicy sauce with Asian pickles & sesame Vg

SMALL PLATES

Chicken Gyoza | £8.50

House made dumplings, pan steamed with a ponzu dressing

Vegetable Gyoza | £8.00

House made dumplings, pan steamed with a ponzu dressing Vg

Sticky Korean Wings - Chicken or Cauli (Vg) | £7.50

Crispy coated wings with a choice of glaze:

(Sticky Teriyaki, Sweet Miso, or Korean Sweet & Spicy)

Koji Fried Chicken | £9.00

Buttermilk chicken tenders with your choice of mayo: Japanese Kewpie, Citrus Yuzu or Koji Spicy Crack Mayo!

Sticky Glazed Pork Spare Ribs | £8.00 **Chefs Choice**

Spare ribs served with your choice of glaze:

(Sticky Teriyaki, Sweet Miso, or Korean Sweet & Spicy)

NIBBLES

Edamame Beans | £5.00

Edamame beans in the pod, served warm with salt & spicy togarashi seasoning Vg

Smacked Spicy Cucumber Salad | £5.00

Marinated & pickled cucumber, served with crispy chilli oil Vg

Spicy Kimchi | £5.00

Spicy fermented Chinese leaf with mochi & carrot

Extra spicy! Vg

Seared Beef Tataki | £9.00 **Chefs Choice**

Seared & peppered rare beef fillet, thinly sliced with a ponzu drizzle. Served with Japanese pickles & spring onions

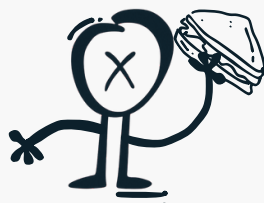


otto.

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9 - 5
Sunday
9 - 2

open late for events

SPECIALTY COFFEE
LITE BITES
NATURAL WINES
COCKTAILS
& CAFE CLASSICS



29 Stockton Road, SR2 7AQ

MEXICO 70
SUNDERLAND



ABOUT US

Est. 2018, Mexico 70 shook up the Sunderland dining scene with its blend of World-Mex tacos, strong cocktails and eclectic playlist. Known for its dark ambiance, loud music & red lights, theres truly no other place like it. Our tortillas are authentically made using Mexican Organic Masa Harina and each one is pressed by hand, on the day of serving.

312 HIGH STREET WEST

CONTACT@MEXICO70SUNDERLAND



roulette



ripples



FESTIVAL 2025



euphony

A DON'T NEED SEE
INTERNAL KIDNEY
KIDNEY STONE
CRAVE SALT
CRAVE SALT
LIVER COLLECTORS
PISTOL THE WALLS
PINK FLOYD



summer streets



TOURING BANDS



The K's



The Fire Station



Pale Waves



@ The Fire Station



Marketplace



Inde-P



*** Overpass



@ Independent

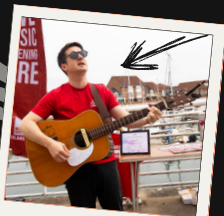
LOCAL ACTS



24 Hours in Paris



WOOL



Marty Longstaff



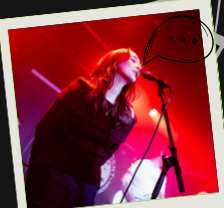
CRITCH



Patrick Gosling



Swindled *.*.*



One Month Apart



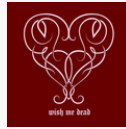
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A YEAR IN RELEASES

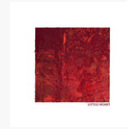
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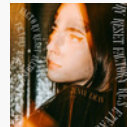
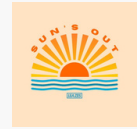
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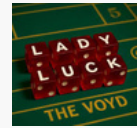
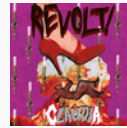
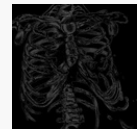
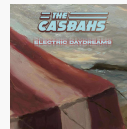
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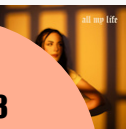
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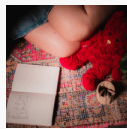
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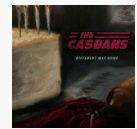
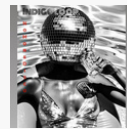
OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER



INTERVIEW

Red Remedy

Sunderland based nu-gaze band Red Remedy share their 2025 highlights, and what we can expect from them this year.



Image by @andichrist19

Tell us about your 2025. What were the highlights for you as a band?

This year has felt massive for us and like everything's finally clicking. Releasing Hollow Cage in September was a huge moment – it was produced locally in Sunderland at The Bunker by Phil Jackson – and it really marked a step forward in our sound. Supporting Villanelle on their sold-out UK tour in December was another standout, playing Glasgow, Stockton, and Sunderland and putting our music in front of completely new audiences. Supporting Bad Manners at The Fire Station was pretty surreal too. Our growth recently has been insane, and it feels like we're moving with real momentum towards our headline show at Independent, Sunderland on February 27th.

How would you describe yourselves to a new listener?

We're northern, loud and emotional – that's at the core of everything we do. Our sound is built around big guitars, heavy dynamics and honest lyrics that come from real experiences. We like things to feel raw and powerful but still melodic and relatable. There's a lot of intensity in what we do, especially live, where we aim to give everything and leave nothing behind. We want people to feel something when they listen to us, whether that's release, connection, or just getting lost in the noise. If you like guitar-driven music with heart and edge, that's where we sit.

You've had a bit of a line-up change. Do you feel stronger as a unit now, and how have things changed?

The lineup change has honestly made us stronger. Everyone involved now shares the same vision and work ethic, which has brought a new level of focus and confidence to the band. Writing feels more natural, rehearsals are tighter, and there's a real sense of trust between us. We're pushing each other more creatively and not second-guessing what we want to sound like. It's given us clarity and belief, and that's coming through in both our new material and our live shows. We feel like a solid unit now, moving forward together.

What's your process for creating music?

Most of our songs start from a simple idea usually a riff, melody or lyric that sparks something emotionally. From there, we build everything together in the room, letting the song grow naturally rather than forcing it. Lyrically, we write about real situations and feelings, which keeps everything honest and grounded. We're quite instinctive with our process; if something feels right and hits hard, we keep pushing it. Recently, we've focused on refining our sound without losing that raw, loud energy that defines us.



Red Remedy supporting Villanelle

What are your goals for this year, and what have you got coming up?

Our main goal is to keep building and not take our foot off the gas. We've got our next single The Line coming out around February/March, which feels like a strong statement of where we're at now. Our headline show at Independent is a massive focus for us and something we're really proud of. Beyond that, we're planning more releases, more shows and continuing to grow our audience. We want to keep pushing our sound, reaching new people and making every release count. Putting our new audience insights in mind, we're hoping to plan an EU tour, which will be Germany focused.

Find them online @redremedyband

WHAT'S COMING UP IN 2026

2025 was full of high notes, and this year will be just as jam packed. With multiple headline gigs and touring bands already announced, festival line-ups for the year getting booked, and big cultural events happening on our doorstep, the **Sunderland** scene will be hosting some incredible talent throughout the year.

Liverpool band Red Rum Club will be returning to Independent, Sunderland on Feb 1 for the first time since their headline slot at **Waves** 2024, and Sunderland legend and Britain's Got Talent star **Mickey Callisto** will be performing a sold out homecoming show at The Fire Station on February 13, supported by synth-pop duo **CHAT**

Here's the big one! BBC Radio 1 is bringing the **Big Weekend** to Herrington Park for the first year since 2005, making it the third site, along with Camperdown Park, Dundee, and War Memorial Park, Coventry, to have hosted the festival twice. Those who attended the first one will remember seeing **The Futureheads**, as well as bands such as **Maxïmo Park**, **Kasabian**, and **Foo Fighters**. This year's line-up is yet to be released, but since a BBC Introducing stage will be part of the festival, no doubt there will be some local bands and artists in with a shot to perform.

As for grassroots festivals, we're yet to find out if **Waves** will be making a comeback this year, due to a scaled-down version of the festival, **Ripples**, taking it's place in 2025, but regardless if we get a big wave or a little ripple, there will no doubt be some incredible bands booked for it. Hopefully we can also have events such as **Euphony** and **Roulette**, as well as the yearly **Summer Streets** festival in Roker to keep us entertained through festival season.

Ask the Experts

Image by Kieran Whittfield

So you want to book a gig?

For this edition of ask the experts, we have promoter Ben Richardson to give us his tips on how to book gigs as an original band or artist.

Who do I contact and how?

It's always best to approach via email when trying to speak to promoters, venues, managers, agents etc... If you're unsure of someone's email address, you can always message the venue or promoter, (or try finding an 'info@...' email on their website) but I'd always encourage people to stay away from personal social media accounts. The best way to approach and build real life relationships with these people is by attending shows. On a grassroots level, often the promoter will be at the show so turning up to gigs in your local venues, asking for people's email addresses and introducing yourself is a great way to start.

You can also approach artists directly, and this is usually good to do on social media such as Instagram (but please, for the love of god, don't ask 50 of your mates to comment on their post asking for you to support them).

What do I say?

When emailing a promoter it's important to include key information and introduce yourself well, but ensure it's not too long. Always attach a one-sheet/EPK to your email with links to all of your social media accounts, links to live footage and links to your music (make sure these are YouTube or Soundcloud rather than Spotify or Apple Music).

A short bio is always best, which should include a bit about yourself/your act, things such as where you're from, what type of music you make, FFO (for fans of - who you sound like). Include what you've done recently/have coming up: headline shows (inc capacity & how it sold), festivals, who you've supported, what music you have released/are going to release. If you're active and doing good things it's important to show it, but always pick the best few, we don't need a massive list. You should include this bio in your attached one sheet but also include an even shorter version of it (two sentences) in your initial email.

How do I say it?

When getting touch it's important to present yourself as professional and easy to work with, have all the information ready, be sure about what you're looking for (fest slots, booking a headline show, support slots) but also be realistic, if you don't have a song released yet and you've played one show then the answer is no, you can't support this sold out 500 capacity gig with a major touring artist.

I've booked a gig! What now?

When you're successful in booking shows with promoters/venues it's super important to keep in touch regularly and be professional throughout the process. Help market the show on social media, have all your assets at the ready (pictures, videos, bio and logo), respond to emails promptly, provide the promoter with tools to promote (up to date content, any big news or press articles, new releases etc), have a good clear tech spec ready, be easy to work with and nice to staff and bands at the show AND PLEASE watch the other artists you're playing with.

Ben is a promoter at Independent, Sunderland, and has booked gigs for hundreds of local artists and touring bands, as well as being a founder and organiser of Waves Festival.

He also runs the Brand New Club, a gig night for bands who have little or no gig experience, to help with building confidence on stage, as well as an opportunity to get live footage playing an established venue.

Want to play the Brand New Club?

Email benricho@independent-live.co.uk

Behind the Music

Social Youth Cult are an emerging goth band from Newcastle. Their new-wave style has received attention from fans in the North-East and beyond, as well as high acclaim from reviewers. Their recent album *The Lighthouse* was recorded at The Bunker studios in Sunderland with producer Phil Jackson. We caught up with Phil to hear all about the recording process, from influences, to happy accidents.

Before producing the album with Social Youth Cult, I had previously done Live Sound for them on two occasions; at a Bunker gig, and Roulette Festival, so I knew what they were about in advance of the recording – their music style and dress sense was a dead giveaway. We'd discussed the approach to the recording and what their vision was, and what we all agreed on was an album that felt like it belonged in a time when post-punk first began, we cited albums such as *The Scream* by Siouxsie & the Banshees, *In A Flat Field* by Bauhaus, and both *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer* by Joy Division as main influences for the vibe, recording techniques, and mixing reference.

For drums, we wanted to maintain an almost live feel to a lot of the songs, such as *Man In The Photo* and *Venus*, which feels like a full band performance rather than a slow build of progressively more guitars.

I also used an old trick from my production infancy days, using a piano with the sustain pedal constantly on and placing a mic inside, as a means of capturing the reverb from the string ringing out in unison after a drum was hit. This is most noticeable at the end of *Man In The Photo*; after the vocal finishes, you can hear a dissonant rumbling from the piano still reverberating from the last hit of the drums. I also chose to minimise drum sampling where possible, choosing to mix drums as close to what seemed appropriate to the musical era we were striving for.

Bass was the only time I played it safe, opting for a DI signal from both the Bass guitar and the distortion pedals (courtesy of Scott Hays). This gave me more freedom to blend either sound to what suited the song. A lot of the background effects created were from pick scrapes from the bass and guitar, on occasion, using the flattened edge of a 10p to really dig into the ridges of the strings.

My approach to guitars was based on my music history knowledge; we opted for a Fender Deluxe amp, running a Marshall JCM 800 pedal for the main guitar tone – the JCM 800 being the amp John McGeoch of later Siouxsie albums used – as well as Flanger effects, also famously used by John McGeoch.

The vocal style on the record changes from song to song, but stays consistent in the sense that the vocals are either mimicking Ian Curtis, Peter Murphy, or from what I could tell, Sisters of Mercy vocalist Andrew Eldritch, so to complement these clear influences I tried not to compress as much as I do on my other projects, helping create the feeling of a retro vocal recording, as well as the use of a very prominent short digital room reverb, noticeable in Bauhaus' Bela Lugosi's Dead and Joy Division's Heart and Soul. These are the vocal sounds I associate with 'Goth' music.

Everything that we could do practically however, we did. The long deep droning layered within the track *The Lighthouse* is the deepest notes on a piano all played at the same time, time-stretched to be five minutes long, thus dropping the pitch by around two to three octaves, creating an unnerving sub-bassy atmosphere.



Phil Jackson

This whole project was a labour of love for both parties. It was the first time in a long time where I've been able to actively recreate my more niche influences and apply knowledge that lies dormant a lot of the time. Rather than just a young band's first attempt at writing a few songs and making an album, this was methodically thought out, and I could see it clearly. It was a pleasure working on this album. I would say it is a project I am honoured to have been a part of. This is what I see as art, and it's projects like this that make me enjoy my job.

Listen to *The Lighthouse*, available on all streaming services now. And follow the band online to find out what they get up to next @socialyouthcult.



Community
Confidence
Change



Who We are:

'Not A Statistic NE' provides safe spaces for peer support - We are a **North East** based Community Interest Company determined to finding and filling the **GAPS**. To reduce suicide and social isolation.
#SafeSpacesStrongLives

Volunteering:

We're always on the hunt for volunteers give us a shout and **Come Join The Team!**

Who We Support:

'Not A Statistic NE' is open to **EVERYONE** aged 16 and over, No matter what you're going through. We are here for **YOU**.
#HereForEveryone

Empowered by the
'Not A Design Agency'
Project



Our Community based
design agency,
**Where Community
Meets Creativity**

Our Weekly locations:



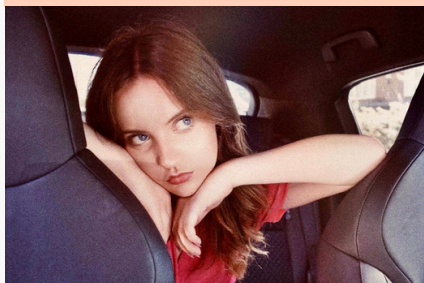
**Who are you
voting for?**

The Spark Local Music Awards are back for the third year running, and once again, the competition is tight. Throughout December, you, the music fans of the North-East nominated your favourites of the year, and the LMS team – in collaboration with Gan On – whittled the nominations down to just four per category.

And the nominees are...

BEST NEWCOMER

Scarlett Esme
Wool
24 Hours in Paris
spacecadetbloom



Scarlett Esme

BEST BAND

House Proud
Black Rain
Leazes
Dead Wet Things

BEST SOLO ARTIST

Lottie Willis
Patrick Gosling
Mickey Callisto
Seizure

BEST LIVE ACT

Wool
Critch
House Proud
Leazes



Leazes

BEST EP/ALBUM

House Proud - Choices
 Patrick Gosling - The Summit Push
 Nadedja - Daughter of the Equator Sky
 Social Youth Cult - The Lighthouse



House Proud

BEST DAY OUT

Roulette Festival
 Euphony Festival
 Summer Streets
 Stockton Road Hit Squad

LOCAL LEGEND

Scott Hays
 Phil Jackson
 Daryl Jenkins
 Adam Crookes



Daryl Jenkins

BEST SINGLE

spacecadetbloom - why would I lie?
 Red Remedy - Hollow Cage
 Lottie Willis - Rosie
 Leazes - Sun's Out



Lottie Willis

Keep an eye out on **The Local Music Show** **socials for info on how to cast your vote and when the awards ceremony will be held.**

Good luck to all of the nominees!

@spark_localmusic

Tune in to The Local Music Show every Sunday 4-6 on 107FM

Gan On QUIZ

1. Which UK city is widely regarded as the birthplace of drum & bass?

- A. Birmingham
- B. London
- C. Bristol
- D. Manchester

2. Which of these labels is most closely associated with early UK dubstep?

- A. Hospital Records
- B. RAM Records
- C. DMZ
- D. Metalheadz

3. Which drum & bass DJ is famous for the long-running UK club night 'FabricLive'?

- A. Andy C
- B. Grooverider
- C. DJ Zine
- D. Roni Size

4. Which band had a UK No1. album in 2005 with 'You Could Have It So Much Better'?

- A. The Futureheads
- B. Franz Ferdinand
- C. Kaiser Chiefs
- D. The Golden Virgins

5. Field Music was formed by which pair of Sunderland brothers?

- A. Gallagher brothers
- B. Brewis brothers
- C. Reid brothers
- D. Wilson brothers

6. Which Sunderland band was shortlisted for the Mercury Prize in 2012 for the album 'Plumb'?

- A. Frankie & The Heartstrings
- B. Field Music
- C. The Futureheads
- D. The Lake Poets

This month, our guest quizmaster is local legend and drummer of Dead Wet Things, Chinni!

You can usually find him hosting music bingo at The Saltgrass, amidst the chaos of a gig, producing tunes, or watching the match.



7. Which Sunderland band were closely associated with the Pop Recs record shop and label?

- A. The Futureheads
- B. Field Music
- C. Frankie & The Heartstrings
- D. The Lake Poets

8. Which manager led Sunderland to the 1992 FA Cup final?

- A. Malcolm Crosby
- B. Terry Butcher
- C. Peter Reid
- D. Mick Buxton

9. Before moving to the Stadium of Light, what was the official capacity of Roker Park at its peak?

- A. 41,000
- B. 45,000
- C. 54,000
- D. 63,000

10. Which Sunderland player scored the winnig goal in the 1973 FA Cup final?

- A. Bobby Kerr
- B. Vic Halom
- C. Ian Porterfield
- D. Billy Hughes



INTERVIEW

Ugly Criers

Erin Jones interviews Greg, Luke, and Nina, members of Sunderland's newest punk band, ahead of their headline show at The Ship Isis on January 24 to launch their debut album.

On breaking up the monotony of parenthood with punk

Find them online
@ugly.criers

You guys are fairly new to the DIY scene - how would you describe your sound? What are listeners in for?

G: It's quite poppy. It's punk but it's got a lot of melody to it. It's probably in the same vein of stuff like American Steel or Against Me, maybe a bit of The Replacements.

L: I think we've got so many different musical tastes. A lot of punk, a lot of hardcore... We've both come together with Greg to give an amalgamation of loads of different things.

N: We're a bit daft as well, but adding fun little bits and the way Greg writes specifically, you can't always track what the next bit's going to be. There are always little surprises you wouldn't expect.

G: We don't take it too seriously; we try to have fun with it - we're not trying to do a blueprint or anything. I've played in punk bands for a very long time and it's quite easy for me to write a three-chord punk song, but then to bring in other influences and not be too tied down to what a punk sound is - so what if we want to have cowboy vibes or a chicken sound?

How did the band come to fruition?

G: When we started, we knew each other because we're parents; we have kids who play together, or have swim classes together, and we started the band because we wanted to make a noise. We wanted to get in the room and just break up the monotony of being parents. It was all quite organic. We decided to make a bit of noise in the January and kind of had the bare bones of a song, and then we wrote a second song, and we just kept going. It's like making hay while the sun shines, you know? Even now it's exciting for the three of us to get together and just make music.

You played your first gig at The Ship Isis - how did it feel playing in front of an audience and out of the studio?

N: We were so nervous before, I can't remember.

L: We'd all gotten ill, so I was shivering, cold sweats, and I had to disinfect everything, it was that bad!

G: I was just eating, like, raw ginger, and I was so sick the next day just from that. But as far as first gigs go it's probably the best one I've ever done. We had a really good time despite being sick. We've been excited about writing and recording the songs, so to finally play them in front of an audience - it went well.

How has the local music community been treating you so far?

N: Mint. There's such a good community, especially in the punk scene. Even my drum kit, I got off Chinni from Dead Wet Things... didn't charge us a penny, and everyone's been offering us gigs and I've just found it lovely. Everyone's been so supportive so far.

L: All the other bands share each others music and tell each other about gigs, and there's room for everyone and we're all supporting each other.

G: There's always been a vibrant scene in Sunderland, not just for punk. Nowadays it seems more inclusive and people want to champion each other. It's a breath of fresh air really.

You're writing about coping as a parent, relationship wars and those 'toys' in your head. Has the writing process been cathartic so far?

G: 100% We joked initially when we first got together saying that you get businesspeople going on really expensive retreats to scream at trees in the woods and that...this was like our penniless version. We literally said it was like that because we were paying 20 quid to scream at each other in a room for three hours on a Monday night.

L: For me, personally, it's really helped with mental health struggles as well. There's been times when I've come to practice and I've not been ready and these guys can notice it, so we've just sat down and chatted, and it's helped get us back into it, and bring me back into it. It's definitely cathartic but also therapeutic, great, and really fun.

It began as a new years resolution to get in a room and play. What's the next resolution, and what are you looking forward to in 2026?

G: I'd like to play more live. Sharing the album with people and having them hear it because it's been just them few gigs we've done. It's nice to get people excited about it so I'd like to do that more.

L: I feel like we've been teasing it for so long. I'll be excited when they can fully listen.

G: But, it's doing it on our terms, it keeps it fun. Making sure it doesn't become something that's pressure and not enjoyable because, at the end of the day, we just do this for fun.

SPOTLIGHT

The Bunker Christmas Gig @ Sunderland Minster

The historic Sunderland Minster recently provided a grand backdrop for a deeply moving performance by The Bunker CIC's Band Clubs. A cornerstone of the city's music scene since 1982, The Bunker demonstrated exactly why its mission is so vital.

The atmosphere was one of inclusion, welcoming young performers, the elderly, and those with additional needs into a shared cultural space. Family members and the minster community were out in force to support. On stage, the tension was palpable; young musicians nervously scanned the pews, only to be steadied by a supportive nod or a simple wink from their tutors. These small gestures of mentorship transformed nervous energy into a powerful debut. At the centre of it all, seemingly in 100 different places at once was the boss of the Bunker, Kenny. A man whose drive has transformed the Bunker over many decades.

For some participants, this gig represents a once-in-a-lifetime moment under the spotlight. For others, it is the spark of a lifelong obsession with music. By bridging the gap between practice rooms and public performance, The Bunker Band Clubs provide that essential first step.

This showcase was more than just a concert; it was a testament to the power of community music in fostering confidence, belonging, and the next generation of Sunderland talent.



Words by Scott Hays
Images by Kieran Whitfield



The hosts of The Local Music Show share their top picks for the best local tunes from 2025

CHRIS' PICKS



The Hemp Queens - Cum Laude

This ambitious effort from Callum Wilson and his Hemp Queens is a true genre blender, merging folk and gospel to make this tongue-in-cheek track go way harder than it has the right to. This band is criminally under-promoted and hence under-appreciated, so show them some love and maybe they'll even do a live show in 2026!

Jenny Dean - This Show of Yours

Jenny is known for her charming foot tappers and ear worms, but this track grows into a more theatrical style that shows off her powerful vocals and ability to weave serious themes into pop bangers. Her 2025 EP 'In The Ruins' gives a good account of her songwriting range, and this is the showstopper. Wkd for good.

LUCY'S PICKS



House Proud - Choices

If aliens came to earth and I had to present one band to them, it would be House Proud. They've got the look, the sound, the presence, and the mullets. The title track of their debut EP is a standout – a heavy, yet still danceable tune. All of the components in this song work together perfectly, and I could listen to it in any mood.

Lizzie Esau - Day in the Life

The perfect combo of modern day pop, and 2000's indie sleaze. It makes me want to smudge on black glittery eyeshadow and pretend I'm Kate Moss, yet its gutting lyrics tacking day to day tasks and just scraping by slap me in the face and make me realise I am, in fact, just a normal person. The juxtaposition is untouchable, yet relatable.

JENNY'S PICKS



Social Youth Cult - She's Dread

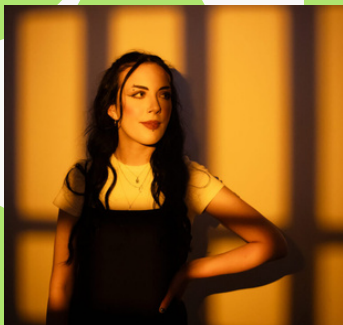
This piece of art is a true masterpiece, alongside every other track on this band's debut album. The staunchly gothic influences that shine through will transport any listener, age irrelevant, to a time when bands like Joy Division and Siouxsie & The Banshees had the alternative community in a chokehold (consensually of course).

Nadedja - Fake Ceremonies

She doesn't come around often, but when she does, we're blessed. Nadedja bares her heart and soul in the opening track to her 2025 album 'Daughter of the Equator Sky' which explores themes of feeling overwhelmed in a harsh world, and learning how to stay afloat in rough waters.

Some of our favourite recently released tunes

Single Reviews



Celadore - All My Life

Sunderland alt-rock band Celadore continues to impress with their newest single, All My Life.

With powerful, relatable lyrics, lead singer Rachael Small takes us on a journey through the experience of believing something will change, only to realise it never will, and the uncertainty of where situations could lead. The ethereal vocals alongside the dynamic instrumentation remind me of Fleetwood Mac and Evanescence combined, making this riveting, mystical tune one that sends you far away from this earth.

I can promise you... this won't be the last time Celadore impresses us with a hit like this. All My Life, available to listen to on streaming platforms now.

Ebony Jade



spacecadetbloom - playing cards

Noisy, shoegaze rabblers spacecadetbloom are back again with their new single, Playing Cards. Fresh off being named one of BBC Introducing's best of the Year, Playing Cards combines hazy, dreamlike vocals with fuzzy, atmospheric guitar to create an otherworldly wall of sound.

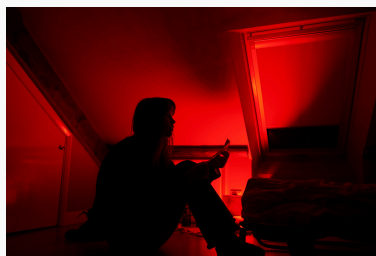
It you're a big shoegaze fan or you're just in the mood to be immersed in nostalgia and to feel a deep sense of melancholy and longing, this is definitely the release for you.

Erin Jardine

Polyvinyl - Running From Home

Running From Home channels the soft-focus glow of 80s new-wave through a modern dream-pop lens, unfolding as a slow-burning, introspective indie cut. Swells of shimmering synth and subtle rhythmic drive wrap around a fragile yet assured vocal, evoking longing, distance, and emotional release. Cinematic, somewhat energetic and immersive, it feels designed for moments of reflection rather than immediacy, revealing a band more interested in mood and feeling than hooks alone.

Milly Nicholson



Ugly Criers - Kick Down the Ladder

The Sunderland DIY scene? Straight ahead... Take a left at punk rock and keep going till you see Ugly Criers. Their debut tune Kick Down the Ladder is a no-frills, guts or glory anthem from three mackem marras who cope with the demands of adult life by making tunes. It's a combination of weather-worn vocals, gritty guitars and a driving, uptempo beat. It's hard, it's fast, it's working class and it's coming to a town near you.

John Knox



Live Reviews

A look back at some of the most memorable gigs of 2025



By Kieran Whitfield

Overpass @ Independent

I don't think I've ever seen a crowd at Independent so hyped for a band before, and having supported bands like Wunderhorse and The Wombats, Overpass are well accustomed to big crowds and maxed out venues. The band was extremely tight and had a strong rapport, and since their tunes varied significantly from each other, it was important they were able to keep up with the constant changes.

Their newest EP 'Dependent' was a focal point of the night, a real crowd pleaser, with the audience singing and shouting along to the new tunes.

The stand out for me was one of their slower songs, aptly named 'Slow'.

It reminded me of early Coldplay and was ideal for sitting back, taking it all in, and just appreciating live music as a whole. **Jenny Dean**



Marrafest @ The Museum Vaults

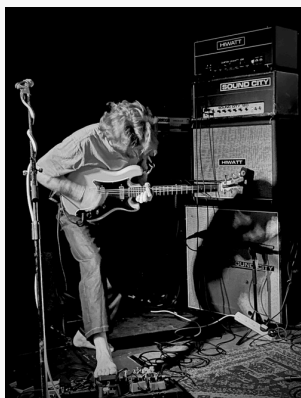
The third iteration of Marrafest, held in the subterranean sweatbox of The Museum Vaults, packed to capacity and then some; a visceral dose of North East DIY punk.

Kicking off the night were Newcastle's Tin Ribs, a punk rock outfit known for their sardonic wit and breathless, hook-filled tracks. Their set was tight and rumbustious, serving as the perfect icebreaker, blending sharp social commentary with an absurd, uniquely Northern humour.

Next up, Tyne and Wear's punk icons Irked grabbed the evening by the throat.

Their sound is confrontational, politically-charged, and fiercely anti-establishment. Drawing from the hardcore and noise-rock end of the punk spectrum, Irked delivered a cathartic wall of noise, satisfying the craving for something urgent and snarling.

Sunderland's Slalom D took the momentum built from their performance at rebellion festival and channelled it into a powerful, socially conscious statement. With their strong roots in the DIY scene and a commitment to community welfare, their performance felt like a call to action. **Scott Hays**



By Alex Ritchings

Nëwsün @ The Lubberfiend

Warming the stage Sage Over Syringe clamber gracefully through their second ever live performance. A captivating barrage of hideous nightmare jazz projected relentlessly outward. Next up; Yoke. A heavy psych, noise punk project of Daniel Foggin of Smote fame. Yoke shares some similarities with Smote, but it's louder, fuzzier and grosser. With biting hooks lulling you into a fitful trance state. Personally, I only discovered Yoke earlier this year, so I consider their self-titled 2023 record a contender for my album of the year 2025. Nëwsün took to the stage last; hailing from a time and place where rock was hairy and metal wasn't born yet, Nëwsün capture lightning and present it live in the form of a raucous set dripping in fuzz and decibels. A massive wall of sound from the three piece who should be on the radar of any desert rock fan who always wished that Kyuss were able to channel the density of Electric Wizard and the gloopy textures of Mars Red Sky. **Alex Ritchings**

ONES TO WATCH IN 2026

The Gan On team have been in heated discussion, and have compiled a list of who we think is going to do big things in 2026.

Do you agree?

Keep a close eye on these **5** acts throughout the year and see if we were right.

1. WOOL



A newcomer to the scene last year, Wool has members that have been active in many previous projects, but this combination of musicians shines particularly bright. They have amassed a loyal fanbase already through live shows alone, with their first releases set to come out later this year. While taking inspiration from bands like The Cure and Smashing Pumpkins, they have a comforting sense of familiarity, whilst maintaining

their own style. From the outset, this band has shown a true dedication to their craft.

Follow them online @woolband_

2. THE LAST TIME

The Last Time is an up and coming local band born out of the Young Musicians Project. They were part of the last Summer Sessions cohort at The Bunker, where they recorded their first single Feel It Now, a heartfelt ballad, cementing this bands solid emergence onto the scene. They've been working on their project for a few years now and were a featured artist at the Mercury Fringe event at Pop Recs last year. Their first headline show of 2026 at Independent on January 29 will be the start of what we think will be an incredible year for the four-piece.

Follow them online @thelasttime_band



3. THIEVES OF LIBERTY



The Thieves were steadily making their way to the top before taking a bit of a bit of a break during 2025, and we have no doubt they'll pick back up where they left off. With their album Shangri-La getting into

the top 10 of the rock charts, new music on the way, and a string of festival slots lined up for 2026, these boys will undoubtedly be going from strength to strength now that they're back in the game.

Follow them online @thievesofliberty

4. HOUSE PROUD

Another great live act; House Proud released their highly anticipated EP Choices in late 2025 and are geared up for plenty of live shows in 2026. Their sound has been honed for a number of years and the boys are incredibly strong as a unit, which shines through in their music.



Follow them online @houseproud_band

5. MARKETPLACE



The Hartlepool band made waves in 2025 with a collection of singles and their debut EP Marketplace Mean Business. They also made it on to BBC Introducing's Top Songs of 2025 with Reddit Man. We've seen them in Sunderland a couple of times last year, and they were very well received. This band knows how to put on a great live show.

Follow them online @marketplaceband

THE BUNKER RADIO



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What's Goin' On at...

The Ship Isis

Iconic venue The Ship Isis is playing host to some equally as iconic live shows in February, including headline slots from touring artist Alice Costelloe, and local lass Lottie Willis.

The Ship Isis is a regular haunt (literally) for Sunderland locals, largely due to its incredible multi-functionality. On a regular day, it serves up drinks to pub-goers looking for a relaxed spot to catch up with mates and take in the wonderfully Sunderland themed decor, while Nobody grafts away in the kitchen, dishing out the best burgers and fried chicken in the city, and you can trust me on that.

On a weekend, though, the upstairs room becomes a cosy 60 capacity gig room, with both standing and seating space available – although you best get in early if you're wanting to sit down – and plays host to intimate, memorable gigs, which have previously included: Waves, The Stockton Road Hit Squad, Sofar Sounds, and on Tuesdays past, it was the home of Patrick Goslings songwriter buskers night (RIP).

On February 21, local songstress Lottie Willis will be headlining the first show of her new era, where her rapidly growing fanbase will be able to sing along to her latest release, and hear all the gems she's been working on that she has tucked away.

And Lottie is no stranger to the venue...

"I'm buzzing to do my first headline gig in over three years in the Isis which is literally my favourite pub in the world and does the best pint of Guinness in Sunderland. I chose the venue because I wanted my first one back to be a cute intimate one where I can play the new tunes with my band to the people who have been enjoying the first of the new releases, Rosie."

She's also seen her fair share of gigs at the venue over the years. *"Some of the best gigs I've been to at the Isis would have to be the Hit Squad gig, Mickey Callisto at Waves, and Bigfatbig."*

Also playing the venue just a week later on the 27th is Alice Costelloe, on her first UK tour, supported by Mattie Vant. Alice has received praise from the likes of BBC 6, DIY, and Clash Magazine, and will be bringing her dreamy, shoegaze sounds to the stage.

"I've got lots of friends in Sunderland who recommended The Ship Isis to me as a great place for new music. Independent venues always have a better atmosphere and if we don't support them, we're going to end up with only soulless venues left."

Venues like The Ship Isis are integral to our scene and rely on the community to be able to keep putting on grassroots shows, so show your support to local venues, and artists, and get down to a gig. Tickets are available at www.independentsunderland.com or you can pay on the door – and get yourself a pint or two while you're there, and see if Lottie Willis is right about the Guinness being the best in the city.



Lottie Willis



Image by Mattie Vant

WHAT'S ON AT

The Bunker



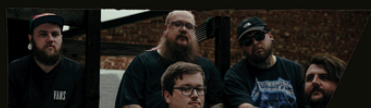
LIMERANCE + THE CORNASTONES
ONE MONTH APART + THE FRY UPS

31/1
£8



NEW WAVE + HELLDAWG
MIDDLE MANAGENT + DOSSERS

7/2
£8



SORROW + HIJACK MANTIS
DEATH BY KANCHO + KAMPUS

13/2
£8



MARRICK + TOURNIQUET
BUSES + LUMINOUS

21/2
£8



PHANTOM BAGMAN + CHRIS NORRIS
DIAGO + 24 HOURS IN PARIS

28/2
£8



AZIZ IBRAHIM
@ INDEPENDENT

7/3
£8



APRICITY + STOCK IMAGE
THE CALLOWS + AZALEA

14/3
£8



SEXX HOOF
EBBIAN + CHAAV

28/3
£8

COMING SOON: THE CHERIBOS - 4/4 BEHIND BAND - 18/4
SLATE LABLE - 16/5

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**Feb-
April**

GIG LISTINGS

01/02

Red Rum Club
Independent

04/02

Sound of Springsteen
The Fire Station

06/02

Odyssey
The Globe

07/02

The Wednesday
Flowers
Scarlett Esme & Sadie
May
The Halt

07&08/02

Baz Warne
Pop Recs

08/02

Royal Northern
Sinfonia
The Fire Station

13/02

Labyrinthine Oceans
Independent

13/02

Mickey Callisto
with CHAT
The Fire Station

14/02

Utah Saints
Pop Recs

15/02

Jazz Sundays
Free Entry
The Fire Station

18/02

The Howlers
with About Faces
Independent

20/02

spacecadetbloom
The Ship Isis

20/02

Alex Clarke
w/ Dean Stockdale Trio
Sunderland Minster

21/02

Lottie Willis
The Ship Isis

25/02

Ron Sexsmith
The Fire Station

26/02

Robin Richards
Independent

27/02

Alice Costelloe
The Ship Isis

27/02

Red Remedy
Independent

28/02

The Big Indie Tribute
The Point



GIG LISTINGS



28/02

24 Hours in Paris
The Bunker

28/02

Black Rain
The Fulford Arms

01/03

Nightingales
Pop Recs

04/03

Slate Label
Wool
The Cluny

07/03

The Voyd
Xerox

07/03

Indie Scene
Proposal
Pop Recs

14/03

Black Rain
Little Buildings

20/03

Heavenly
& The Cords
Pop Recs

21/03

Tankus
Pop Recs

03/04

Bar Stool
Preachers
Dead Wet Things
Independent

07/04

Cheerbleederz
Pop Recs

18/04

Aelius Fest
Multiple Venues

18/04

T'Pau
The Fire Station

23/04

Berry Hagman
The Ship Isis

24/04

UK Subs &
Crashed Out
Independent

26/04

John Smith
The Peacock

28/04

Kate Rusby
The Fire Station

Got a gig coming up?

Let us know!

Email areet@ganon.co.uk

or message @ganonsun

to be included in the May-July listings



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Sunderland based music blog & magazine

Are you a band or artist and want to submit something for us to review?

Are you an aspiring writer, photographer, content creator, or just want to get involved?

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