

ARTS

When 2020 looked bleak, these were the creative crusaders adding the jazz and the sparkle to get us through it all

Q&A

89 Yolanda Brown

TV presenter, musician and Big Issue columnist Yolanda has created an online project for primary-aged children to boost their music education out of the classroom and alleviate poor mental health.

The Big Issue: You've doubled your initial target of 500 schools, signing up 1,000 to your project. How does that feel?

Yolanda Brown: It is overwhelming and I am really excited by the reaction. It is absolutely brilliant to know that this campaign has the potential to affect over a million children and their experience of music making.

“Music education is not just about learning to play an instrument. It's an outlet for expression”

What kind of materials will youngsters get?

Colourful, ready-to-use music lessons from lesson plans and activity sheets, access to specially recorded pupil messages from me, my music videos and tracks from my album. Schools that register will have a chance to be selected for a visit from my band and me.

Why is it important to start music education from a young age?

Music education is not just about learning how to play an instrument. It is an outlet for expression that more structured curriculum lessons don't always offer. Music making builds confidence, promotes teamwork and is a subject that encompasses so many others including English, maths, science, geography and more.

90 Twinkle Troughton

After foodbanks across the nation saw their funding pulled overnight when the pandemic hit, Margate artist Twinkle Troughton saw the growing queue at her local foodbank. A painter and curator who specialises in inky landscapes set up a sale: make a donation and take a piece of art. Raising thousands of pounds, she now collaborates with other UK artists after nearly running out of her own works. Twinkle's advice for anyone wanting to use their talent to help their community is to keep it accessible and "don't underestimate how many people around you will jump on board".

91 Lizzie Jordan

Social enterprise ThinkzSpeak has shipped colouring books all over the globe in 2020. With each book bought another is sent to a vulnerable family. The colouring books spark the imagination and encourage children to start conversations. The organisation works towards helping communities and their young people to talk about issues like gender identity, sexual health and HIV/Aids. Lizzie Jordan, CEO and founder of the Gainsborough-based organisation, said the "spirit of camaraderie and kindness has been heartwarming to see" but lockdown has left some cut off from essential support. The pandemic has turbocharged the enterprise's plan to digitalise its training methods and it is launching a new training platform to help beat exclusion.

92 Light Entries

New record label Light Entries is selling electronic music with the proceeds going to charities like Chayn, Samaritans and Black Lives Matter. The brainchild of Sheffield band Broken FM, they teamed up with other collaborators like Algorave, an event that gets people dancing to algorithm-generated music, to help charities and social enterprises recover from the Covid-19 crisis.

93 Hercule Van Wolfwinkle aka Phil Heckels

Phil Heckels of Worthing, better known as Hercule Van Wolfwinkle, posted a "horrendously awful" drawing of his dog on Facebook and was shocked by the enthusiastic response. He has now raised more than £35,000 for homelessness charity Turning Tides, exchanging pet portraits for a donation.

The Big Issue: Why do you think people have loved your work so much?

Hercule Van Wolfwinkle: People like pets and it's funny. I'm my own biggest critic but I can admit that it is funny and people do get a laugh out of it. And people like the idea that they're giving to charity. I'm not an artist, I've never drawn in my life and art has never even been a hobby for me. I literally use my son's pencils and draw on printer paper I've nicked from work. I think it's just a good mix of things, where everyone needs a bit of a laugh right now and it's been a welcome distraction.



“It's bonkers that someone has one of my pictures as a tattoo”

What surprised you most about people's response?

I don't think anything is going to top the shock I had to open a message and someone had one of my pictures tattooed on them. I'd drawn a picture of his dog then a couple of days later he'd had it tattooed on his leg. It's absolutely bonkers to think that someone's walking around with one of my crappy pet portraits on their leg, but hey, that's 2020 right?

What advice would you give to someone who wants to do something good for their community?

Just do it. I've discovered a passion for it and I think it shines through with what I'm doing and people want to get behind it. Once you start raising the money, you think, we're making a difference. So if you're thinking about it, just do it. You'll raise some money, have some fun and you might inspire someone else to as well.

