

HEADLINERS

Local Band Makes Good

Headliners reporters find out how a local festival in South Leeds is helping develop the potential of its young musicians.

With the sun blistering down on the travellers' backs and half an hour's trek round run down streets and alleyways, it was finally made worthwhile when we stepped through the big door way into Old Chapel Studios.

Old Chapel in Holbeck is a hidden paradise for many Leeds bands including Kaiser Chiefs and Pidgeon Detectives. "Out the way" is just the way studio chief Mark Hubbard likes it, which means while you might get lost trying to find it, there are no complaints about noise either!

Captivating beats are travelling down the corridor, a catchy bassline draws us in closer to find Minor 4th, a young grime outfit, putting the finishing touches on their latest song.

The drums get louder, Ashley brings in the keys and the MC's pile in with their chorus with such passion, it knocks us back:

"I got talent and I ain't gonna lose it!"

After a blistering rendition of the new track the band, comprising MC's DG, Mickey H and bassist/MC Master T and keyboardist A.C, are congratulating each other on the tunes they've assembled in two short sessions with their mentor, Cham, who looks over them like a proud father bird having just taught his chicks to fly.

The band, all aged 15, have been friends since they started high school but formed the band after they all chose B-Tec Music in Year 10. When they heard of "Local Band Makes Good", an opportunity for young musicians to hone their craft under the guidance of an experienced mentor, the lads jumped at the chance.

The scheme is part of the Leeds City Council funded "I Love South Leeds" festival, one of 22 workshops around LS10 and LS11 aiming to engage young people in positive activities over the summer.

So what have they learned?

"We've learned how to properly structure a song," says DG (aka Dale Grayston), "Like before when we planned it originally it was too long, there were too many lyrics, too many choruses. He's like, broken it down and made it easier for us to understand."

For A.C (aka Ashley Cheetham), the course was especially challenging – coming in just for the second day - but such is the dedication of the band he quickly got up to speed.

"When I came in today I had all this stuff to learn straight away," he tells us, "but I got it and put the chords together with the melody and it just worked out."

"I've learned all the chords and the structure of the bass guitar and a few riffs I can play," adds Master T (Tawona Chifamba).

We asked their mentor, Cham, how he thought the band had done:

"I think they've behaved themselves reasonably well," he jokes, "Mike's a bit of a rascal there on the drums but they've been fine. They've improved a heck of a lot considering we've only had four hours rehearsal."

"They've got a lot of talent. All we did was capitalise on them a bit, turn their music into a regular song structure like professional producers would do. We've changed the bar counts, things like that, and just put a few extra chords and grooves into it. They're loving it."

Do the band think what they've learned will help them in the future?

"Hopefully," deadpans Dale.

"It's made us work a lot better as a team and we've come up with some new stuff," says Mickey H (Michael Hart), "it's made us a lot more confident in planning stuff."

Tawona chips in, "It's gonna help with our music in school too 'cos we get marks for the way we plan stuff. If we can show that we know this, we're gonna pass!"

Mark Hubbard is delighted to be part of the project and was clearly enjoying seeing fresh young musicians in the studio he started 15 years ago.

"It's exciting, especially during the school holidays, to see the place being used in the afternoon," he explains. "It tends to get busy with professional bands in the evenings so I'm doing what I can to get some youngsters down here."

We think South Leeds is very lucky to have a project like this because it helps young people get a head start in getting into the music industry before they're even in their twenties. Cham has clearly helped them become a proper band too.

If they're this good at 15, who knows how good they'll be by the time they're 21.

About this story

This story was produced by Natalie Cieslik aged 14, Becky McGreavy, aged 14, Charlotte Smith, aged 14 and Hildreth Acheaw, aged 14.

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