

# TURNING THE TIDE

**After some turbulent and stormy years for hospitality everywhere, Hastings is fortunate that a new wave of young promoter blood is washing onto the south coast shores. This fresh, brave group of self-starters are working against the sometimes challenging education system for young creatives to truly represent their lane in the very purest of ways. We meet Reuben, Elliot and Nye who are riding this wave high into your town.**

Reuben, a pioneer for his 18 years, has his own label *YWG (Young Winning Group)*, a music promotions company *Sound of The South* and his own clothing apparel brand. Born in London but raised and still living in Hastings, finding support and an outlet for his boundless ideas has proved a challenge: "Opportunities aren't great and lots of people are trying to make it in the scene, which is already so hard to find suitable opportunities within. We understand why UK Rap Music isn't taken seriously here in a predominately white area, but the appetite and talent for this genre of expression is not going to go away. YWG is about a collective home to grow up around music and look out for everyone. Not self-centred; an inclusive genuine community full of artists, editors, promoters and creatives that have a voice and deserve to be heard."

Inspired by his DJ father Dougie Reuben, who moved to Hastings on the promise of much DJ work in the town, Reuben's label YWG's door is always open. His *SOUND OF THE SOUTH* night at The Pig in Hastings, is, he believes, a much needed platform for his 'people' to shine: "The aim of the night is to create a relaxed carnival style vibe celebrating different genres like UK Rap. A positive reflection of the scene that is currently not represented in this town. Think high energy next gen open mic!" February's *SOUND OF THE SOUTH* line-up included Reuben aka R9Z, and yes he's an artist as well, MC Tekky, born in north London raised in Hastings too, bringing his American drill Jersey twists plus MICKA, a family friend from London known for his playful drill. With a knowing and wry smile Reuben promises to "totally go against the grain of Hastings' melodramatic scene" and we believe him.

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# REUBEN

**"YWG is about a collective home to grow up around music and look out for everyone."**

— Reuben

# ELLIOT

In contrast, 20 year old Elliot from Bexhill had a very different journey to becoming a promoter. After writing songs for 'something to do' during Covid he formed the band *The Tellums*, writing original indie punk rock lyrics that relate to us all. Post lockdown, finally playing his first live gig at The Grove in Eastbourne, this became a major turning point of what his future could be, but how? "Performing live was such a different feeling to anything in life," going completely against the grain of the experience of his crucial early teens being so socially restricted, "engaging with a crowd, that sense of uniting as a community."

After leaving college with a diploma in music he believed "in Hastings, if you're young and not connected it's almost impossible to break through" hence he immediately jumped at the opportunity to join the De La Warr Young Promoters Programme and launch his night at the Printworks called *HAVE YOU HEARD*. "This night is for all upcoming music artists like myself. As a promoter and artist myself I want to support the amazing music venues and scene and this night is about experiencing original music content with a narrative from all our surroundings. We need more opportunities for young creatives and I genuinely want this to be one of them."

**The cultural heart of Hastings beats strong providing the ideal receptive training ground for careers to develop in the arts, something normally associated with much larger towns or cities, but venues and funding continue to be constantly under threat; can these young music entrepreneurs turn the tide?**



**"Performing live was such a different feeling to anything in life... engaging with a crowd, that sense of uniting as a community."**

— Elliot

Well *LIT UP* promotions is certainly mixing things up. Nye, 20 born in London raised in Hastings, started *LIT UP* because his taste in music (old skool RnB, Hip Hop, Soul and Funk) was not represented in his area. "Popular music culture references this era and samples it often enough but I wanted to own it. I soon realised that other than Elisha Edwards and Kinsella there weren't many others so I had to take the DJ route to be heard." After being part of the Hastings Fat Tuesday Young Curators Panel in 2023, Nye met Alfie (Atmospheric Derrick) who, already a fan, became a huge inspiration for him to put his ideas into practice. In Nov 2023 *LIT UP* had its first DJ night at Printworks selling out. "Hastings has one of the best music scenes in the south, especially given its size. There is an enormous amount of support for music here despite a general decline in funding for the arts. If the talent, scene and enthusiasm was matched financially who knows what could be achieved. The creative music path for young people is not that clear we have to make our own path. There should be more of a horizon that music is an industry that can provide long term careers for young people and give many the hope they need."

Nye is also bassist for the Amy Winehouse meets Jamie T band Dakka Skanks, from Brighton, and is just home from a European tour. He joined the band after "putting myself out there" with a profile on Join My Band where the manager spotted his talent. "Everyone always talks about lack of earnings as a promoter or musician, we know this, it is the enjoyment of it that fortunately compensates" Nye states. He joined the De La Warr Young Promoters Programme last summer: "It's such a good project. You are instantly propelled into the industry surrounded by unparalleled access to music professionals and contacts. You are assigned an experienced personal industry mentor and I've honestly never met so many relevant people to accelerate my goals and passions as I have in the last year."

# NYE

**Reuben, Nye and Elliot despite their very different tastes in music were all united as part of the De La Warr Young Music Promoters. The organization offered a paid one-year programme to discover and empower eight emerging music promoters to develop their careers within the vibrant live music scene of coastal East Sussex, from Eastbourne to Rye.**

**So perhaps this is not the generation that Covid forgot, that despite all odds this is a generation of self-starters, appreciative of and immersed in their cultural community and town who rightly know their creative worth.**

**LIT UP & HAVE YOU HEARD – Sat 6th April @ The Printworks, 14 Claremont, Hastings**

Young Promoters is supported through Youth Music's Incubator Fund thanks to funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery. ●

