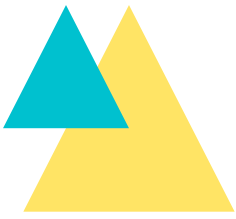


PHLEXX

RECORDS



INCUBATOR REPORT



INTRODUCTION

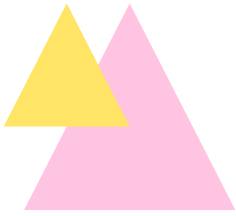
The Phlexx Incubator project, funded by Youth Music, aimed to support 8 young musicians, artists and creatives in overcoming barriers to their professional development following Covid-19.

The project consisted of three phases: a series of Masterclasses, bespoke work within the Phlexx Records label and individual projects realised by the Mentees. This project was run in collaboration with Nottingham C.A.N and Phlexx Records and aimed to support individual progression as well as the wider music scene in Nottingham. A series of final performances and a collective showcase event was held at The Chapel to celebrate the journeys and achievements of the young people involved.

7 Masterclasses were held in a variety of topics, featuring Jamie Logan from SKY SATV (TV Sync and placements), Ash Jones (Web design), BBC 1XTRA (Radio), Raphael Achache (Graphic Design and Branding), Double Six (Royalties and Collection Societies), Maddy Chamberlain (Music Promotion and Events - Bodega Nottingham) and Gina Felstead (Social Media marketing from the Social Teacup).

In total Mentees committed to at least 150 hours (50 during the masterclasses, 50 working on the label, 50 on their own project). During the 50 label hours participants looked at redesigning our website and branding, they looked into our music releases and promotion, taking part in sessions around writing and distributing press releases, networking, royalty collections and revenue distribution, music reviews, interviews and live events. We had a diverse range of personal projects from live music videos, studio recordings, live sessions, mixing and mastering, zine making, documentary making and more.





THE COLLECTIVE

After 54 applications for the first round of this scheme, 8 young people were selected as Mentees as part of the Phlexx Collective.



Rachel Halaburda



Will Goody



Ella Knight



Phoebe Patrick



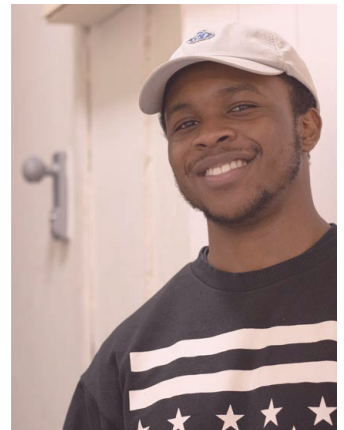
Gaddiel Nketia



Rosie Allen



Will Crumpton

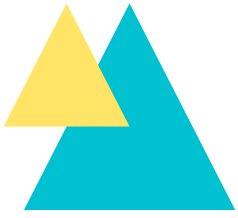


Malik Neale

Each of the Phlexx Collective had expressed the desire to become better connected, to meet with and work with new people from the Nottingham music scene. Working collectively and making connections with fellow musicians, writers and artists had been severely restricted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Several of the Collective had recently graduated University and felt unsure of where to start out on a career in the music industry. Several Mentees also had experience of creating their own personal work, but wanted to work on planning and running live events for the first time. All Mentees appreciated the time, and funding, to be able to work on their own professional practice in an environment that was supported by music industry professionals. Upon the initiation of the project there was overwhelming sense that these young people wanted to be part of a musical community, but also to give back to that community.

[Click here to view the introductory video here](#)





INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

During the Masterclass Phase Mentees experienced a wide variety of different themed workshops which were beneficial for their own individual progression as well as developing their understanding of the music industry.

For example, Phoebe Patrick, reflected that:

As someone that didn't really have any music industry experience, other than writing about and communicating with artists, all of the masterclasses have been really valuable. In particular, the social media one really stood out because that I think can apply to a lot of different things, not just music. It can apply to any kind of career. I also think that the royalties masterclass and where we learnt about PRS and who gets the different rights to music was really interesting as I had no idea about that... Even just seeing how the website works is really interesting, and also again very applicable. But doing that also help me understand, Phlexx more as a label. We've all been given access to the releases, the pre-releases and the press releases. So I'm getting to know the process of how these things materialize. I definitely know more about how a record label actually works...

Masterclasses also build upon Mentees existing experiences and filled gaps in their music industry knowledges. Will Crumpton describes his learning in relation to social media, royalties and getting paid for future work:

I've been involved in music releases on the production side, but always really struggled to promote it socially and especially with understanding Instagram's algorithm and stuff like that. I literally had no clue half of it existed until the masterclass. So that was a really good help as I found you were building your knowledge as well as your profile. Also learning about royalties, as that's where my work is going, with music production or production engineering, I've learnt that it's definitely important to get it all licensed and get all the relevant rights back to me, otherwise that most of the work is pretty pointless if you can't get paid for it!

In addition, Mentees were able to shadow live events to build up experience. Rosie Allen reported that:

I really enjoyed shadowing at the Chapel. With COVID it has been really annoying that we've not been able to do as much practical work as we'd want to. I went to the Local Healers event and was at the back on the decks and I was doing my interviews there as well. It's nice to see the behind the scenes of it all because I'd only ever been the consumer of events.



For those Mentees who were not from Nottingham, being part of the Collective has enabled the opportunity to network and introductions to music scene infrastructure such as local recording studios. Here is Gadiel Nketia reflects on the experience of being part of live shows:

I've also enjoyed the live shows as well, the singing at the Chapel. I've not really been part of live shows before. Because I'm from Manchester, I'm trying to do this project with some local people and I'm trying to get on the local scene and everyone has just been helping me, introducing me to people and everything. So when I do this live recording session I see that as a chance to network...

Other Mentees, such as MK, reported valuable learning from detail event planning and being 'on the ground' running events as a new experience:

I can't say I was unfamiliar with running an event, because I've been to events where I performed so I had an idea of how they run. But it was nice to see the small intricacies, like loading up the ticket for entry and things like that. It reminded that for every event, every small thing needs to happen. It's almost like a spider web...



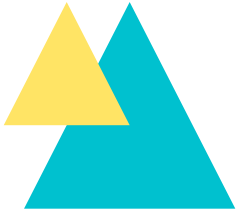
With the work on the Phlexx label, Rachel Halaburda emphasised the beneficial experience she got from working on re-designing the logo and being part of the Collective:

I enjoyed working with the graphic designer to make a Phlexx logo. It was interesting and I hadn't done anything like that before. It was good to actually see what goes into it and understand what we want people to see in this logo. It's not just something that looks cool, it has to give off the right impression... Phlexx is known around Nottingham to be pretty cool, so for myself as a music journalist in that sector, it has definitely looked too good for me to be part of it. It gives you a bit of an edge, while I'm in this you're someone that's part of something related, so it just gives you a bit of a step up in terms of your reach of what you can. Other work for the Phlexx label that Mentees benefitted from included social media takeovers and promoting artists and events.

Will Goody describes the event he shadowed at the Chapel:

The Acoustical event, which was great, coincided with my social media takeover of the Phlexx Instagram account. So I timed it where I would promote the event on social media as well as actually work at the event...





FUTURE CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Having followed Mentees development over the short project timescale (Feb 2021-November 2021), longer-term impacts of this scheme have become clearly evident. For many of the Collective, industry connections and work experience led to paid roles and full time jobs.



For Ella Knight this was being employed as in Events Marketing for Hootenanny in Brixton:

I put on my own event called Ella Knight and Friends and the learning from the masterclass on the events was so helpful for this: the costs, budget breakdowns and stuff like that. I was able to utilize information I took from those workshops to put it into my own events. And from that experience I spoke about that in my interview for this job and they were really impressed.

For Rachel Halaburda, she was able to draw on experience from her work with the Collective to secure a permanent role with Notts TV and Journalist and Producer. Pheobe Patrick was able to take up an internship with Youth Music.

Gadiel Nketia, following the masterclass with SKY, he was employed to create music soundtracks for TV and film:

Last year I just finished Uni and I was just thinking whether to go home or just stay in Nottingham, but with the work that I've been getting from SKY, I managed to move out with that money to go, and buy a place to live so that I'm not renting and I feel like working for them, it's really like having a nine to five job. I'm also going to be working on the BeatNotts project as Trainee Music Leader, so that's another thing.

As well as developing new skills in event organising and their own musical progression, several members of the Collective designed their own projects which culminated in final products and physical outputs. For example, Will Goody, produced a 7inch vinyl EP:

I've produced a small four track EP. It only runs about 7:00 or 8 minutes long and I wanted to release it on vinyl exclusively as I think it's important to kind of maintain that like physical format, especially when everything that is digital. So that has been completed, it's mastered and it's been sent off. The artworks done, so now it's just a matter of waiting for it to be pressed and for me to get it back and then I can send it out to people. I ordered 50 overall, 7 inch records and 30 of them I'm selling to the public under the Phlexx label. I think about 20 have now gone within the first week, which is good. And the other twenty, I'm going to send off to radio stations and other labels and people in the industry and hopefully I can gain some traction through doing that. Obviously I DJ myself so it'll be perfect for me just to bring it out and share with other DJ's as well. It's nice to have a physical object, which I can show people what I've done. And also, my mum did the Artwork. It's a small collage with the word 'hope' on it. And I thought, it's my first release, it needs to be my mum's artwork...

Will Crumpton also produced an EP, which was recorded at Abbey Road Studios, and held a launch night at The Chapel:



My EP came out and we had a launch at the Chapel. Recorded five tracks for the EP and then mixed it myself over the end of July. Went to Abbey Road Studios to master it and then it was submitted to Phlexx. So, I've been in band for years and we've released singles, but I've never had so much involvement in the actual production process of it all, it was always just us going in and recording and then handing it over to the engineers to do. So, it's the first time that I've done every portion of it myself...

In addition to musical outputs several of the Collective were involved in other forms of media: photography, film and zine-making. Pheobe Patrick produced a zine which captured some of the projects from the Collective and the wider Nottingham music scene:

So, starting the Zine thing I hadn't an idea of what it was going to be like, it sort of evolved more naturally and different people were involved. I'm going to distribute them around Nottingham and hopefully people get to enjoy it. I've done 100 copies, so it's kind of exclusive and people should actually be able to engage with the material rather than just pick it up and just like a leaflet type thing... It's definitely taught me about how to fill the space because I've never done any editing before, only writing. But probably the main thing that I'll take away is that you should never go into something with the end product like in your head because it's always going to change from that and it took me a while to get to grips with my idea changing. Rachel Halaburda produced a mini-documentary of Nottingham's music scene that had different artists who were interviewed with a music track from each of them flowing in the background.

Some Mentees developed new recording techniques for live events such as Rosie Allen's GoPro photography

it was always just us going in and recording and then handing it over to the engineers to do. So, it's the first time that I've done every portion of it myself...

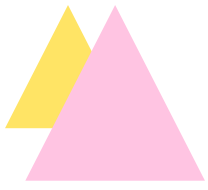
and film. From her event 'Grime and Wine', she was able to capture live event footage, interviews with artists and musical performances:

So, I'm uploading a series onto YouTube and it's started off my new thing that I'm going to do, events in Nottingham. They look wicked and it captures the vibe of the gig, but I also took loads of other videos where I was talking to the Artists, MCs and I did close ups and behind the scenes. I want to start putting out videos of up and coming DJ's and Artists, put them on YouTube because it's a better way of grabbing people through socials and then attracting the people to come to Nottingham... All Mentees reported the importance of the future connections they had made during the programme, whether that was with industry professionals during the masterclasses, local artists during the events and the other Mentees themselves. Each of them had developed different pieces of work and ideas for projects going forward.

MK reflected on the value of these connections:

After this mentorship has finished I do want to reach out to certain people from the collective to see if we can see if we can work on something. I've definitely got that in mind.





DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

This project has enabled 8 ethnically and culturally diverse young people to gain experience and understanding of the music industry.

Within the collective the demographic of the project included 1 Black African, 1 Black British, 1 Mixed Race, 4 females / 4 males and 1 LGBTQ young people. Within the masterclasses, these were led by 3 female and 1 Black British music industry professionals.

In addition to diversity through representation, Mentees reflected upon the 'inclusive' environment of the programme and their developments in confidence at feeling 'part of that scene':

I think the whole experience has definitely given me more confidence. I think just being different environments, meeting new people all the time and the industry professionals has definitely given me confidence to approach people in the industry now. Working with the collective has helped a lot with networking and how to communicate, so think it's been very beneficial in that sense (Ella Knight).

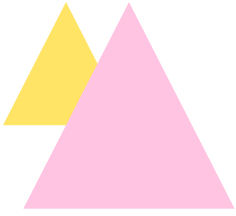
Rachel Halaburda, for example, commented upon the importance of social connections for feeling included within the Phlexx Collective and beyond:

Immersing yourself in that crowd of people, within the music industry, within music and media and films, I can now say that if I need anyone do this or that, I will know someone that can do it. It's just really nice to get to know people who you feel similar to through mutual interests and who you can share with and go forward in the same way...

Feedback from Mentees also reflected the diverse experience of being part of the Phlexx collective compared to other internship programmes. Pheobe Patrick stated that:

Even though we weren't able to meet regularly, it's been great to work with people, even virtually. And they're definitely connections that I will lean on in the future. Generally, being surrounded by people that are like-minded and also in the same sort of position as you, is like really valuable, because I think like as a young creative it can be very stressful. So, having the support and network around you in a time where like I was finishing Uni and I didn't really know what I was going to do. I'm doing a bit of an internship type thing now, and I've done internships before where it's just you and it can be really daunting and it's like you're the only new person, you're the person that knows like the least about what you're doing. But with the Collective, it worked well because everyone was in it together. This approach to diversity and inclusion within the music industry is notably more impactful due to the collective nature of learning and progression and mutual support.





DEVELOPING NOTTINGHAM C.A.N

As the first Youth Music funded project NottinghamCAN has taken on, and in particular during turbulent times of covid-lockdowns and social distancing, the organisation has learnt a lot.

Firstly the incentive for young people working with a bursary, after several months of unemployment for many had greater impact upon engagement and outputs, with all mentees achieving ambitious and career-building outcomes in relation to musical futures.

This was facilitated my high quality masterclasses and the power of 'artist-mentoring', whereby young people were connected with relevant practicing artists impacting their cultural, social and (future economic) capital. For example, Rosie Allen reflected that:

I feel like my 'Grime and Wine' night has definitely been the start of something new. I've already had promoters in Nottingham, approach me saying that they want me to collaborate on their events. So, I think it's just been a pinpoint to start my career so I'm really happy with it all. I wouldn't be in the position I am, I won't be the person I am in without flex helping me. It's really helped me to sort of flourish in the music scene that there is in Notts and I would not have been able to do that without Phlexx, so I really appreciate it all.

Mentees also reported on the valuable experience of undertaking 'real-life' tasks with a record label, as well as the benefits of working with a venue: *Putting on an event, for the first time, was just great. To have that space, the Chapel, without any extra costs, providing a space for me to put on an event and seeing all the people come together and just listening to live music was great. It was definitely a highlight for me* (Ella Knight).

Despite the high number of applications of young people interested in the scheme a future project should work with less young people, as the time needed from Nottingham CAN and Phlexx staff was under-valued. Looking forward to NottinghamCAN's next music mentorship scheme retaining the bursary, connection with Phlexx label, masterclass professionals and a venue would be recommended as enabling valuable opportunities and experiences.

Project Evaluator: Dr Frances Howard, Nottingham Trent University

