

# Reviving the Chapel Evaluation Report

Prepared by

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420 Performers

13 Trainees

24 Sound engineer training sessions

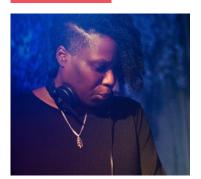
48 Events

230 Acts On Stage

12 Event Labels

25 Event Programmers

£9631.05 paid to artists



2474 Attendances to Shows

286 Volunteering Hours

5 Engineers Used





Reviving the Chapel, funded by Arts Council England, aimed to restore and modernise one of Nottingham's oldest music venues. Launching with a year of weekly events, the Chapel offered underserved, local acts and music technology students the chance to elevate their work. The project started during, and was delayed by, the various restrictions imposed by Covid-19. This context of social isolation and devastating impact upon the music industry, made the aim of this project to support grassroots music making and funding for Artists even more important. Five main beneficiaries were identified as local promoters, local artists, music students, audience members and the venue itself, the experiences of whom are captured in this report.

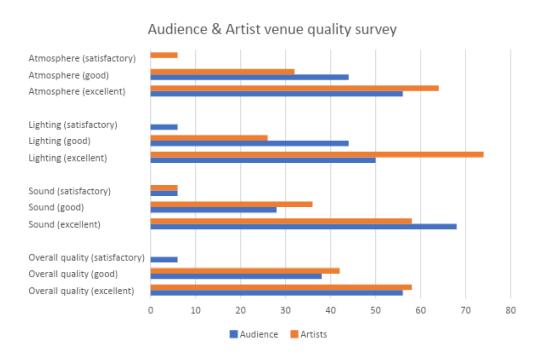
For NottinghamCAN, the project enabled a phase of organisational development, whereby new approaches such as live sound workshops with Confetti Institute and volunteering opportunities were trailed. The 52-week musical programme proved successful in supporting new Artists and reaching new or different audiences, as well as enabling grassroots music to flourish at a time when it has been under threat.

The evaluation methods for his project consisted of online surveys for the Audience, Artists (N#19), Volunteers (N#8) in addition to interviews with 10 Artists and Volunteers and a focus group for Promoters at the venue. A network map was created indicating music genre, Promoters and performances, which demonstrates the vibrancy of the Nottingham music scene, with the Chapel at its heart.



The principal aim of this project was to revive the Chapel and in doing so create a state of the arts music venue that is accessible and affordable for local Musicians. £18961.50 was spent on the refurbishment of the venue, including brand new mixing console and soundsystem, speaker management system, complete backline equipment, microphones, stand, cables, industry standard set of CDJs and an eco-friendly colling and heating system. Within this budget we also painted then venue and hung curtains and installed a range of lighting equipment that could be controlled by the engineer throughout the shows. Therefore, capturing venue quality: sound, lighting and atmosphere, was of key importance.

From our Audience & Artists' survey data, we gleaned that only 50% of the Audience had visited the venue before, and 88% of those found the venue improved. 100% of the Audience would visit again. In terms of the Artists, 84% had performed at the venue before, and 94% found the venue improved. 100% would perform there again. The below bar chart, taken from our survey data demonstrates a majority rating of 'excellent' for overall quality, sound, lighting and atmosphere for both the Audience and Artists.







## Artists feedback on the quality of the venue:



"Once covid restrictions end and we can have more people in the room, I'm sure it will improve what is already a fantastic environment, that the hosts managed to make work under careful social distancing regulations. Most respect, and much credit to them."

"It was nice and intimate because you are close to the audience and you can really connect with them. The feedback from the audience members was really good."

"Oh, it was amazing. Really nice decks, really good sound tech. Everything sounded really good."

"It's brilliant, the new PA monitors sound really good and it's a hard, tall room not made really for playing loud music in but I think they've done a really good job and I just hope it continues to be a thing because I like watching gigs there and I like playing there."

"Yes, it was great, I got a good 10-15 minutes to do a sound check, and I could constantly hear myself through the monitors. The guy doing the sound, was constantly checking whilst I was performing that I could hear everything and hear what I was playing. Having good equipment just shows their appreciation for music."

"Because of how stunning the interior of the Chapel is, a lot of the photos we have taken there get more likes because of the venue and the way they have designed it, it looks so aesthetic."

"It was one of the first musical thing I'd done back since everything pandemic wise and it was really lovely. The sound was great the new layout of the room was really good because I'd done quite a few gigs there in the past and it's definitely a lot better than it used to be." Suggested improvements from the Audience included better signage within the building, different room set up including round table, less flashed strobes and a higher capacity. Suggest improvements from Artists included more atmospheric lighting or setting up some sort of digital project screen for artwork/logos, a more comfortable Green room and opening the upstairs bar.

Promoters commented on the future flexibility and viability of The Chapel as a venue, not just for musical acts, but also for artforms that require an intimate setting. The modernisation of the venue through higher quality sound, lighting and venue decoration has elevated the status of The Chapel, so that both grassroots Musicians and Promoters want to work with the venue in future.

#### Ben Rose

#### The Angel Microbrewery

The building is 420 years old, so the heating or the cooling systems were nonexistent. So we upgraded that. It went from cables and wires everywhere to literally nothing and then an air conditioning and heating system which completely changed it. So, instead of having really aggressive loud bass and sub coming through the building, it gave us more options for different types of gigs. So, it opened our opportunities for a broader range of events.

#### Nathan Simpson

#### Confetti Studios

A lot of this has now been modernized. This isn't just "oh, let's do a pub gig". Because we've got you know, R&B vocalists and singer, songwriters, and we've got pianists and flautists. We've got people that are going: "Yeah, I can't wait to play at the Chapel".

#### Holly Taylor-Gamble

#### Confetti Studios

You've gone from having a music venue to it being one of the places you want to play because you know you're going to get quality out of it. I think that was very needed, especially with like the way the industry is at the moment, with things needing to be invested.

#### Parisa Eliyon

#### Acoustickle

It was really nice to use a venue that had a brand new sound system. Really great sound and even though it's a small capacity, that's what Acoustical is about anyway. They felt very special. Everybody got paid, which is a bonus and I'd be happy to do some more. The quality was great, because when you're promoting live music events, the sound is paramount. We decorate every venue and we were allowed to kind of free reign to hang up our decorations. I was allowed to come in at a time that was early enough to set up because. it was well promoted enough between all of the parties involved, including the Chapel that it was busy.

#### Ioney Smallhorne

#### Gobs Collective

I think it's a really nice spot for performing spoken word poetry, an open mic type event. It's a cozy audience. It's welcoming space. It's not too intimidating for audiences, but it is still a nice place to perform. Aesthetically it's beautiful. Some people had been quite nervous about performing or being an audience, but they felt quite comfortable being in the audience, and they've been a few times. I think that the nature of the venue lends itself to spoken word well as it insights conversation and gets people's emotions. It's a nice place to hold that type of event where you feel supported.



One of the main outcomes from the Chapel project was support for and engagement with grassroots music. This included offering a free venue for first time performers, up-and-coming bands and platforms for those Musicians looking to grow the audiences for their work. The 52 events hosted at the Chapel between 22nd May 2021 - 19th March 2022 encompassed a wide range of difference genres from Grime to Folk to Neo-soul, Afro-House and Drum and Bass, alongside a variety of events from music gigs, poetry jams, charity gigs such as Notts for Afghanistan and Electronic DJ Nights.

Future Artists that Audience members suggested included: Catmilk, Alice Robbins, Daisy Godfrey, Torn Sail, Huw Costin, E.R. Thorpe, Matt Hill, Tenebrous Liar, Jayahadadream, Camille Christel, Ava Saint, Concrete Rose, Re Teu, Marco Woolf, Benjamin Ziec & The Rarebreeds. This show demand for musical venues that support grassroots musicians such as the Chapel.

Though the survey, Artists feedback that they think local bands and artists are getting an opportunity, in particular through the showcasing of upcoming talents with more established artists headlining. In future, several Artists would like to use the venue to release EPs and to host jams and open mic nights. Positive comments were also given about the model of hosting free events with donations options and opportunities to post local song releases on social media. One Artist commented that they would like to work with the venue in future to create an ambitious live music and visual projection experience.



#### Other comments from Artists included:

"I think the continued trajectory that they find themselves on is a strong one. A lot of support and quality local talent will develop a great community around the best venue, it seems that the space is in good hands. Being able to secure performances on a daily basis would likely prove a winning formula; generating income for local music and art workers and building a strong sense of localised identity that the many different genres and backgrounds can be apart of all under one umbrella."

"I believe that the chapel has put on an open door for artists who haven't performed before and it gives them an opportunity to go there and try it out. It is such an intimate venue that it's not too hard to go there as a first performance. They make everyone feel comfortable."

" I saw the Chapel up and running with weekly events which was really good, and I think it is such a hub for Nottingham music and they have a bit of everything. They cater for everyone, it's a multiuse space, it adapts to whoever is there."

"If it hadn't had been there would've been a lot of good music which wouldn't have happened. Everything that is put on is not just for the sake of it, it has an artistic purpose which has been really nice and created a reputation that you know any gig there will be good. Sometimes when a place is starting it has a lot of teething problems, but I've not had that experience, it seemed great from the get-go. It's been vital in the last few months to keep people from going insane."

"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..."



Interviews with Promoters highlighted the impact of the project upon the reputation and identity of The Chapel as a venue for grassroots music. Opportunities for networking, often amidst Covid restrictions, connected new Musicians, not only to the venue, but to each other and to local labels. The impact of these opportunities was most keenly felt by Confetti Music Students. For local Promoters, the project represented a minimal risk to their programming and finances, at a time when live music was limited. Being able to support Promoters and Artists through providing a venue, sound engineer, promotion materials and income from ticket prices, helped to rebuild confidence within the local music scene.



#### Ben Rose

#### The Angel Microbrewery

It's gone from being a music venue, to being the Chapel, which has its own identity and now it's own separate being ... It's got stronger recognition, it's really ramped up having gone from having the ancient sound system that the punk venue had for about 50 years to a whole new set up with more organization, more structure and more event planning. So, it's really nice to see it come alive again and have a whole new refurb.

#### Nathan Simpson

#### Confetti Studios

We have been putting on a number of events throughout the last few months starting in October, but five events on in total, it's been really helpful in a couple of ways. We have students that are chomping at the bit to perform and limited space, so it's a cost saving exercise for me. Plus the level of detail in terms of the promo, putting the posters together and the liaising between the performers and the venue has been excellent.

#### Parisa Eliyon

#### Acoustickle

I was approached as a Promoter in Nottingham, of Acoustical, by Ben and he suggested, we did some gigs, offered a budget and said that the door would be split between the artists, so there was no risk to us. And they produced the graphic design and provided the sound engineer so very minimal risk. We promoted it and it was a weight off my shoulders that I was able to do that and it helped acoustical come back to life after the pandemic.

#### Catelyn Grundy

#### Phlexx Records

I was the Rep for 10 events, all upcoming music anyway, bands like Space Dolphin, Nicknack, Lorkin O'Reilly... In terms of the amount of people I saw come through the door at those, definitely helped them grow and grow our label. I talked to a few people that networking music industry. It's not always about the fan base, but more of a larger network can lead to a bigger fan base.

#### Holly Taylor-Gamble

#### Confetti Studios

As a Musician myself, doing gigs anyway through the Nottingham music scene, what's been really nice is being able to then be able to provide that for my students, because it's a community. Important thing to acknowledge is, although like we've saved money, the fact that we have been able to organise so many gigs, it's given so many students the opportunity to perform where they might not have otherwise. Particularly ones without confidence.



A major success of the project, for the Artists involved, was reaching new and different audiences with their work. Artists reported increases in social media activity, number of followers and new platforms for promotional material. Audiences have followed new bands and Artists to different venues and further opportunities to perform has arisen due to connections made during gigs at the venue.



## Artists reported that:

"The last one I went to it was called Plentiful Poetry and I got invited on stage to perform, from that night I reached 1000 followers and that was the first time I got to 1000 followers and it was from going there and people liking my music."

"It was really nice to see some people coming through and having a dance and be like oh what's your name? What do you do? I did get some followers on SoundCloud, which is nice. But also, it's just nice with a confidence boost to go on first and just have a go."

"I've gained a few followers in Instagram and with the band account that grew quite a bit after that. People from Confetti have asked the band to sing at the Christmas party. I did all my promotional stuff and the Chapel put it on their Instagram. I put some clips up from the gigs and they've had quite a big reach 1100 impression and I've got 609 followers."

"The Chapel has definitely helped me not only can I reach an audience that probably wouldn't look at me, it's also gaining experience. It's also learning how to control a ground for example, which was very fun. The audiences were singing along which was great, there were a few people who knew the words."

"From my experience with playing at the Chapel is that it has always gone down really well. The audiences that go to the Chapel are more engaged with music than some. A lot of people who go to these gigs love music, they aren't just there for a night out and to have loads of drinks, they are there to see new music. It is really hard to get a venue like that where people will come to gigs when they don't know the artist. The people from the Chapel are really loyal music lovers and I love it, it's so great. At the Chapel they appreciate the artists, even if the artists are up and coming. With some venues if you aren't massive and not bringing loads of people in, they aren't bothered. With the Chapel no matter who you are, they will always support up and coming artists which is great and what we need."

# Reaching New and Different Audiences



"We have definitely reached new audiences, we have had quite a few people from those gigs, that have come to other gigs since, which is such an amazing thing and what you need as a musician to be able to grow is those loyal followers. Because of the sort of people who go to the Chapel you have more of a chance to find those loyal supporters that love up and coming music and want to support it. The people that have started following us haven't been dormant followers, they have been true followers. Every time we have had a gig or talking over social media, they are always really responsive, the hospitality is amazing. They support up and coming artists so much, which is really rare to see. After we got some music out, the Chapel was the first place we played when we put our band together and that was such an amazing place to play our first gig. Because before we played, we were just a duo, but now we are in the middle of touring with the Libertines and we just played O2 Sheffield, without the show at the chapel, it gave us that confidence."

"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 that opportunity. It's really helped me to flourish in the music scene that there is in Notts."

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For Artists, the project boosted their social media following, either through SoundCloud or Instagram, but also to offer a springboard for Audiences into diverse musical acts hosted by The Chapel. From Artists playing at the venue as their first gig, to those who then went on to do national tours, having the opportunity to perform at The Chapel impacted upon their musical careers. Promoters commented on the wide networks and diverse genres that the Project Manager was able to tap into and connect with the venue. For those organizing events around poetry, performance and mental health, rather than solely music, they saw the value in building up their own 'communities', which will continue to exist beyond the life of the project.



#### Ben Rose

#### The Angel Microbrewery

I think because of the quality of the sound system, it really opened up more people appreciating it because before that it was kind of recognized as somewhere that was really based around punk because they didn't really care about feedback and stuff. But then, since having this new sound system, we've got people coming in saying this has got to be the best sound system for a small to medium sized venue with people want to move their gigs to us because they've come to listen to a gig and they've heard how good quality it is. That's really expanded our audience. Because of Ben's ability to network with different groups of people, it's opened it up more and then on top of that, because it's got its own branding and its own identity in the branding that's really captured more interest with people. We've had a lot more singer, songwriters or three piece, instead of just big bands, which is focused towards the quality of the of the sound for the vocalist.

#### *loney*

#### Gobs Collective

Members of Gobs, so people that have been through the spoken word program, who needed a platform for their poetry films, they actually had an outlet for performance. They needed the experience of getting on stage. So, it was a really nice way of bringing those communities together.

#### Michaela

#### The Angel Microbrewery

We've had a lot of new customers and new people coming to see the gigs as well as organizing them. We widen our audience in general, because the Angel used to be the 'Metal Rock pub' and so we were going through this transition for a couple of years now already, but this was the breakthrough.

#### **Bridie**

#### Gobs Collective

There's been quite a few people that have come through that we've never met before that have seen the event on social media and we've added them to our mailing list. They've come to other events of ours, like our poetry book club. There's been people that come on their own that don't know anyone, and then suddenly they're having conversations with people in the breaks and after the event, so it's really building their community. There are people that are coming into this Community now and they're getting curious about our organization and they're building friendships as people that are naturally interested in the same thing.



#### Jay

#### Truth Mental health

I run a male focused mental health gig and because of my creative background I wanted to get the whole host of different types of men on stage. So, like comedians, mixed with little bit poetry in the middle and then music, there was acoustic music. Then amongst that we had panels were people were asked questions I'd prepared and the audience felt comfortable enough to ask questions. It's the first time I've seen an all male line up that was for male mental health and there were females there and some of them were saying to me it was really interested in seeing it from their point of view because they could relate it to their brothers, their cousins, their nephews and understand what's going on in their head.

now it's like a force to be reckoned with I think.

With the people that come to acoustical, they don't always know the artist. They just show up because they know it's going to be a quality artist, so our performers are constantly building new audiences, but because the of the rebrand of the Chapel, because it had its own

smaller, I managed to do something where I'd interview

them as well, so it became an 'introducing' night. Even

though these artists you might have heard of get to meet

this audience that haven't seen them before. Plus you get

to see a bit more about them. And given the location,

marketing, that also brought people through who hadn't heard of acoustical or that any of the artists.

#### **Parisa**

#### Acoustical

The venue is city centre and it allowed for grassroots music on a weekend. So, a lot of venues don't like that they want to keep that for their own in-house programming or for a club night or something. We managed to do a prime time show bang in the center of Nottingham with almost unheard of artists coming to the stage and then having a decent sized audience. And even lock down restrictions on the audience capacity, the way it was laid out, it still felt busy and like very vibrant. Because it was a small capacity, that meant ticket revenue would be



Offering volunteering experiences to young Musicians, Confetti Institute students or any other young people interested in learning about event management and the music industry was an important element of the project. From the Volunteer survey, we gleaned that only 48% had volunteered before and 88% rated their experience of volunteering as excellent. Volunteer tasks and skills gained included working front of house – scanning door tickets, directing people to the venue and welcoming people. Volunteers also supported with technical set ups, learning how to sound and lighting checks, set up live show PA systems, mixing desks, microphones and instruments, as well as helping to clear equipment away at the end. 100% of Volunteers rated their level of confidence at doing these activities again as high and 100% were interested in volunteering at this venue again.

Supporting volunteers in this way, in turn, helps to develop the next generation of Artists and support grassroots musicians. Volunteers felt that it was important to be introduced to venues 'early on' and some saw this as getting 'a footing in the industry' and the experience they need to progress deeper into the industry. Volunteering brings great experience to those to work in these environments and helps the venue and musicians on the day, a 'win win' for everyone.



### Volunteer comments included:

" It is really important to volunteer at these venues as we are supporting the local venues and the musicians, helping with the running of the gigs and experience for the fans."

" I really enjoyed the volunteering at the Chapel as 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 one when Ben was at the back on the decks and I really enjoyed that. I was doing my interviews there as well and I'm gonna be doing that again this week, but it's nice to sort of see like the behind the scenes of it all because I'd only ever been the consumer of events. And I would like to get involved even more actually working with the venue and doing ticket sales and stuff."

" 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 did this volunteering, I saw that as a chance to network..."

" I volunteered at the Chapel for the Acoustical event, which was great. It was just before restrictions were lifted so I think it the last sit down event but it was really good to be involved in that. It coincided with my social media takeover of the Phlexx Instagram account, so I timed it where I promote the event on social media as well as actually work at the event... So initially I was the ticket boy, but you know, we've all gotta start somewhere! Then I did move on to do some sound engineering and stage setup and stuff like that..."

" I volunteered at an event, which I did the sound, doing front of house mixing and then I got booked to do the sound again on my own for another night at The Chapel. So I've been doing a lot of sound engineering there at the moment, so it's really nice to be involved, and getting paid work from that now as well..."

#### Nathan Simpson

#### Confetti

Now there is decent engineering gear to learn on, the students have been able to have opportunities to learn the technology is different environments. There's been around opportunity to volunteer at some of the live events. Students have now took a sense of ownership over this because they feel at home here. And now we've got students want to put on their own gigs also here. So they feel comfortable, they feel safe. They know the inns and outs and the logistics of it.

#### Ben Rose

#### The Angel Microbrewry

With Confetti coming in, if anything that's kind of opening it up for people in the future. So, as the audience gets older, they're going to recognize this as a venue, so that's kind of setting the foundations for future musicians, which is incredible because we've never had that before.



Volunteering was valuable from the Promoters point of view because the new technology installed within the venue was utilized by young Musicians, who would be future Performers and Sound Engineers at the venue. Again adding to the value of The Chapel as a grassroots music venue, volunteers were able to take ownership of the space and to feel comfortable in that environment.



The management of the project was extremely tricky and complex in the beginning due to the pandemic. With restrictions in place we wanted to still launch the project and worked closely with the venue to ensure that our events followed the guidelines and that everyone was in a safe space where they could enjoy the music.

We setup an initial system for the first 8 shows where only 1 act played. As ticket money solely went to the artists we decided that with limited capacity of 24 - the act should do an evening and night time show, meaning that we didn't need to wipe down and change stage equipment and that our artist could play two sets to an audience of 48 in total. This worked really well and acted as a soft launch to the new space - all shows were completely sold out to 48 audience members which was brilliant.

Another issue that we hit due to the pandemic was due to the late start of the project Nathaniel from Mimm (the co-promoter) was unable to commit to the initial expectation of the project. This actually worked in our favour - and meant that we put a callout to a whole host of promoters making a more diverse programming of multi genre.

The final management issue came with the traineeship. Due to Confetti students not attending college/ university in person. We contacted our grant manager saying that we could use our Phlexx Collective to take part in volunteering, running and promoting shows,, shadowing and engineering shows. This worked really well and then once the confetti students came back we began weekly training sessions in the space and monthly confetti shows where our young trainees shadowed and by the end of the program our trainees were competent to completely running the engineering side of the shows!

In terms of finance we had looked at using a pay what you want style approach to the events, with 10%

of bar takings adding to this to go towards the artist performers fees. Unfortunately due to covid this could not come to fruition. Initially, We had to track numbers of audiences members for the shows so we could run inline with restrictions - we did this through ticket links and then at the same time the venue nearly closed in the pandemic to the point where they did an emergency crowd funded. This meant that there was no way the venue could offer 10% of bar takings at every show as they we in a dyer financial state.

Instead we just used the model of artists keeping all of the tickets fees split between all performers - we could offer this as the promoters, engineers and door staff where paid for within the project and we ended up making alot of door money that went directly to artists at an extremely crucial time where the money would of truly support their working in and coming out of the pandemic.

#### Parisa Eliyon Acoustickle

It's made me rethink as a Promoter about how to do deals with Artists and venues. At the moment, with Acoustical, we go into a venue and either we pay for the venue and we take all of the risk and we pay for the sound engineer, the marketing, the artist, the DJ, the photographer and everything. But with this, because some of those costs were alleviated, I managed to keep the tickets at a reasonable price that it was accessible to a lot of people. And everybody still got paid. So, I thought it was a really good deal.

#### **Nottingham C.A.N Organisational Development**

The biggest area of learning and expertise from this project was the set up and installation of the new equipment, lighting and sound within the venue. This process had to be co-ordinated across a large amount of partners and promoters, with complex management of finance and invoices. This experience has solidified NottinghamCAN as an organisation in relation to venue refurbishment. The project encouraged the venue to diversify acts, as venue staff commented on the value of having someone to 'curate' events at The Chapel, which helped to open up different styles to the venue, different kinds of gigs. NottinghamCAN also developed expertise in programming and promoting grassroots music, which had beneficial impact upon the Angel as a venue.

#### Nathan Simpson Confetti

This was the first gig that we did post pandemic, so got 180 students, six members of staff, and we really struggled during COVID. We were teaching over a webcam and we weren't able to do proper performance and we did the best that we could at the time. But to be able to come out the other end and be on stage, the students all jumped straight at it, and one of the things that came off this that was probably something that we didn't anticipate was the huge social aspect of it.

#### Ben Rose

#### The Angel Microbrewery

If we still carry on supporting the younger artists of Nottingham and getting them a springboard into the music scene, then to me that's enough. The venue is doing what it should do, which is basically opening it up to younger musicians that might not get an opportunity in bigger or medium sized venues around the city.

#### Mikalea

#### The Angel Microbrewery

Everything was planned on a monthly basis, and this has given the impression that things are actually happening now. People feel like they can come in and that there are events in here and now we can continue doing them as well. We're very glad if there's someone from the outside helping the venue, growing the audience, getting the people involved in projects that matter, so I that's what we're trying to continue.



