

The logo features the word "PHLEXX" in a bold, dark teal, sans-serif font. Below it is a small ampersand "&" with a white dot in the center. Underneath the ampersand is the word "mimmam" in a stylized, rounded, dark teal font with white dots on the 'i' and 'm's. The entire logo is centered within a circular graphic that is split horizontally into two orange semi-circles.

PHLEXX
&
mimmam

**YOUTH
MUSIC
INCUBATOR**

2022-23



The Phlexx x Mimm Collective is a new collaboration between creative organisations, Phlexx Records & Mimm Studios. This is the second time the project had been funded by the Youth Music Incubator Fund. Similar to the previous year, the scheme has proved popular with 46 applications leading to the recruitment of 8 mentees. However, this second round of the project was delivered face-to-face at Mimm studio.

Phlexx Records is one of Nottingham's most active and prolific record and event labels, who have been a central point of the Nottingham music scene for the last 8 years; releasing music, running various events, festivals, and art exhibitions in every nook and cranny of the City. As a label, they boast a diverse roster of artists representing acts such as Bru-C, Do Nothing, Soft Girls & Boys Club, The Afterdark Movements, Yazmin Lacey, and Lowrie. The label has seen artists achieve international record deals, radio 1 and 1extra airplay, and featured on television channels such as BBC 1, Channel 4, and Sky. Since the last application, Phlexx Records has continued growth signing their first out of Nottingham act Marco Woolf, and their first overseas act, with Copenhagen group Doula.

The new partner for this project, Mimm has combined the worlds of fashion, music, and art, creating a unique, independent clothing brand, audio-visual events, and a community radio station for the last 10 years. Acting as a central creative hub within Nottingham, Mimm has been an important stepping-stone for up-and-coming creatives offering a platform for emerging talent to grow. Mimm was instrumental in introducing local artists such as Yazmin Lacey, Snowy, Medikul & Congi, to Gilles Peterson's (BBC 6 Music) 'Future Bubblers' program, where all acts positively developed their careers. Recently Mimm has launched a series of monthly events in their studio space that shines a light on up-and-coming Black artists from Nottingham and have collaborated with Hockley Hustle to launch the event brand Lushlife, the first event held at Nottingham castle, coordinated by local creatives.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Young people joined the scheme for 9 months, starting in November. The first phase of the project focused on learning about the record label, the kind of work that the label does and different roles within Phlexx Record. As part of the first phase, young people took part in masterclasses, which included Yazmin Lacey (Recording and Touring Artist), Mark Ashton (Professional Photographer), Noah Ball (Festival & Events Organiser), Selassie Tevie (A&R & Label), Jamie Logan (Music Sync), Maddy Chamberlain (Local Events Promoter).

Within the second phase of the project, the Collective put into action the industry knowledge they had acquired in phase 1 by carrying out work for the label. Creative Industries related tasks included supporting with events, festivals, radio shows, branding, and social media.

For the final phase, young people were mentored and supported with micro-projects, for which they had a £500 budget. These projects were created by the young people and were designed to move their artistic and music practices to the next level by developing tangible outputs, audiences for their work and legacies from the scheme. This year, projects included recording and launching EPs with a wide range of Nottingham Producers, performing at a series of gigs, planning and hosting a series of events under the brand 'Queer Utopia', creating a marketing and branding package including design, animation and merchandise to support the release of new music and live podcast/videocast talks.



PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

100% Aged 18-25

75% Female

25% LGBTQ

100% Working class background

37.5% Neurodivergent

50% Combination of the above

This project aimed to support those who are underrepresented within the music industry. This strategy was applied at the mentee selection panel to ensure that the Collective was both gender and ethnically diverse, as well as accommodating of those who were neurodivergent or disabled. A conscious decision was made this year to support female artists, who face the most barriers in breaking into the music industry. As a result 6 out of 8 of the mentees were female.

During the evaluation process, young people shared positive stories about how being involved in the Collective had made them feel included and had supported wellbeing, queer identities and neurodiversity.



Sometimes you don't know that you haven't been completely comfortable and open and free until you're in an environment where you can be. When I first started hanging around very large queer friend groups, the freeness with which I like spoke and acted, it was like... oh, I just didn't realise that I was not fully releasing that before. But when you are in a room with people that are all on your page and have the same references, I think there's a lot of power in that.

I would say my mental health through being with others and having a voice creatively has improved. It's improved my hyperacusis, so, that's my super hearing. I used to have

lots of anxiety about excess noise, which was part of my brain injury. But through exposure and having that safe space, I think that's definitely improved my recovery.

One of my favorite connective moments was when we were doing the podcast and one person had a brain injury and I'm autistic and we found there's so much overlap between symptoms. I think it's been really nice to discuss with someone that has a different diagnosis, but then we can give each other tips. I've had all this time to life hack certain things, but then they'd very recently had this brain injury. So, there was a lot of skill sharing going on.



CAREERS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

JADE

“Mimm and Phlexx are really established in Nottingham and I've been going to their events since I've been going out. So, just thought it would be a great thing to do and I felt like what they do like aligns with what I wanted to do, which is community events. All of the master classes were really great, but the best thing about this project is the mentorship and advice. Ben and Nate are just so experienced in the specific space that I'm trying to work in, and that's invaluable, to have the ear of a 'pro'. The launch of my events brand 'Queer Utopia' was my micro-project and we held the launch event at Mimm. I got support with licenses, ticket sales and made some money on the bar, which you wouldn't normally with such little experience. So, I think that will allow me to hit the ground running and get some momentum when it comes to putting on the other events. In future, I want to be busy all the time and really get into promotion. I'll keep developing the programs, queer events, events shaped for neurodiverse people. And I also want to develop the freelance stuff I'm doing. So, I want to do more freelance writing that is paid, keep assisting of workshops because I really enjoy it and get more involved in educational and public speaking roles because since I graduated my lecturers arranged quite a few opportunities for me to talk with students.



DANNY

Two years ago, I suffered a brain injury, so the way I perceive sound is completely different. Hence, I've got headphones with me all the time, and I've got something called hyperacusis, which makes sound really loud. So this has led me to want to improve inclusion through music and accessibility in Nottingham. I'm also a young carer, have been for nine years, so I am constantly look for ways we can improve for our community and for the young people. Through the masterclasses, I've learnt about a bit more about contracts, split sheets and royalties. I've learnt how to work properly with musicians and singers and now when I'm working with or collaborating with someone, I'll send a split sheet before we even get working. So, things like PRS codes, royalty splits and fee, I'm doing it for the first time. My micro-project was to record several tracks for an EP that includes live recordings from Nottingham musicians: I worked with a flute player, a base guitarist and a saxophonist as well as two soul singers. I think it's been really good that we've got for money for the project itself, because it's given a longevity to that project. For me, my longevity has been learning new skills or paying for the equipment or the musicians, so that's really important.

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KATIE

“ I’d met Trekkah and Nate through the gigs they were doing and when I saw the Collective advertised, I thought, yeah, I’d like to work alongside them and be able to like develop my own crafts, especially within production and engineering, because it’s not many females that do that... I’m working at Pirate studios at the moment and I’m a technician, Engineer and just fix the site in general. I’ve been able to teach other people in the Collective my skills, especially within live sound, engineering and instruments. The Event Management masterclass, even though putting on events was something that I used to do it quite a lot when I was at college, was so helpful because I wanted to get more into it. There were some great top tips and things she said about different budgets and how to do it with big venues. For my micro-project I’m doing an EP that I produced myself, but then I’m doing a bonus track on it where I’m getting other Nottingham female artists to feature on it and I’m going to do a live showcase. So, like a listening party for the EP where everyone has their own little sets and invite the BBC down and other industry people to give exposure to female artists.



MEGS

I’m kind of new to the music industry and I’m very much self-taught. I do a lot of stuff on my own so I thought it would be cool to have a community. My favorite masterclass was been with Jasmine Lacey, because to hear someone who is where you to be is so inspiring. She was talking about the industry, how to manage working with people, and being business wise. It’s a weird transition because as well as being a Musician, you need to be a Business person... So, my project was to create an EP and it’s going to be supporting strong black women. I’ve interviewed and filmed a bunch of different black female creators that I know in the city and that is part of the EP. I’ve done two releases, one for the single and one for the EP and I’ve been doing much more live performing.



AMY

“ I wanted to meet like-minded people and I wanted to integrate myself into the music scene, because I realized that music and fashion, they go really well together. I would say I’ve bought good knowledge of the fashion industry and knowing how to intertwine music within that. With the A&R masterclass, that was something that I really wanted to explore, I’m not sure at what point in my career, but like it’s something I definitely would like to carry on with. Also the podcasting masterclass, made me start thinking about the prospect of presenting and hosting. My micro-project was also a podcast, where I interviewed musicians in Nottingham. I chatted to them about what they do, and the music that they’re putting out just to try and give them a bit more of a platform. I wanted to give them a chance to raise their profile, and my own in terms of being active in the music scene. I wanted to feel like I’d got industry eyes on me, as that would draw attention to my Instagram, as that’s where my podcasts will predominantly be posted. And hopefully that will have some sort of traction locally and create a little bit of a buzz around the creators and possibly be a springboard to presenting.



MOLLY

The main thing that I wanted to focus on is learning how to produce music and with all the different people here in the Collective, I’ve definitely picked up a lot of ideas. Ben is really keen on getting people working together on different things, so I’ve done a collaboration with one person who is a DJ and another who is a Producer. My idea was to fund small gigs in coffee shops, and I came up with the name: ‘Coffee and chords’. I wanted to have a little stage and have live performers come in and do a set and the money made from the coffee would go to charities. But I found that co-ordinating across lots of different venues was difficult. I actually work in the coffee shop, so they said that they’d let me use that... Now I’m trying to get the people that are going to perform and I’ve created a little logo so I can start to get some promo materials.

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CHERELLE

“ The best experience for me was ‘GAG’ give a gig week. That was fun to do together, as we had got experience of working as engineers. I was hosting on the event and then of course you have artists singing. Some of the Collective were doing photography and capturing that. So, I think was a great point where you could see everyone’s skills come together. I learnt so much from the festival masterclass, particular because my previous events were very DIY. It was amazing and I actually got to hear about the scheme they run as well, so I could apply for that. Even though I’d done events organising before, doing this project has given me better connections. So, I changed my micro-project to focus on promoting myself as a DJ a bit more. I’ve done ten DJ sets over the last ten weeks and I recorded two of the live sets, which I’m going to share on my SoundCloud. I’m now thinking about setting up a website and launched my music subscription.



TOM

I’m mainly a studio engineer, but Trekkah showed me some live sound engineering which I wasn’t really too confident in. So getting to sound engineer an event at The Angel was really great. So, now I’m comfortable doing that as a job and doing that ‘on the side’, as well as DJing. I also live sound engineering as well. For my micro-project I’ve designing T-shirt artwork and also designing the marketing materials and accompanying aesthetic around my music, so the ads design for the music. For example having a QR code that directs people to a website and that will have landing page with my music on. It’s multi-artform, and I want to show that I’m able to create an entire package. I want to show that I can create a branding package so I can work with companies and other designers to be employed by them to help make their business better. The most important thing I like to do in my life is make music. That’s my driving passion, to perform it and all things related to it. Now, unfortunately the way that life works, is there’s an industry. There has to be an industry if you want to make money and make it sustainable. So, what I found valuable from this collective is it helps you understand how to have a sustainable career and create some longevity out of the music industry. So, the main problem right now is earning a living and sustaining myself and through events, promotions, gigs, streaming, and hopefully down the line some royalties.

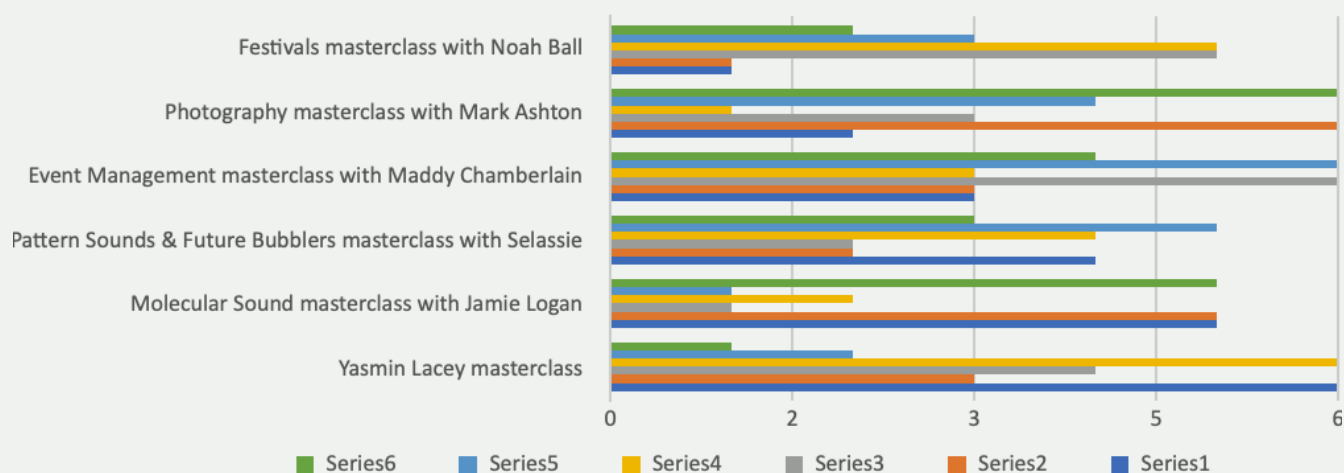
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EVALUATION FINDINGS

An evaluation was conducted by Dr Frances Howard, Youth Research group led for Nottingham Trent University and consisted of mid-way and end of project interviews with participants as well as an end of project survey.

The survey asked mentees to rate which masterclasses they found most useful to them. The results, with respondents in different colours on the chart below, show that different masterclasses were valued by different mentees. This shows that the diversity of the masterclass programme is meeting the different needs, interests and futures directions of the mentees.

RANK IN ORDER THE MOST USEFUL MASTERCLASS, WITH THE MOST USEFUL AT THE TOP



A second question from the survey asked participants to rank in order what they found most valuable about the scheme. These responses were pre-generated from the benefits stated by participants from the first Phlexx collective. Being rated most valuable, with each colour representing a different participant on the chart below, was 'hands on experience of running gigs and events'. Having these experiences were reported as vital, even for those who had taken creative courses before the mentorship and had not been able to develop practical experiences.

RANK IN ORDER WHAT MENTEES FOUND MOST VALUABLE ABOUT THE SCHEME





When asked to recall their 'proudest achievement' through the scheme, responses included creating an EP that has been self-written and produced, the launch of their microproject, engineering their first festival and being able to create a range of music and design pieces. Other quotes included:



My proudest achievement would probably be pushing myself out of my comfort zone to connect with people within the local music scene (collective), as well as attaining more confidence in public speaking on radio, panel talking etc. I'm also proud to have been in a space with others to share ideas and find more confidence in working within groups of people who were not familiar to me before starting the programme and making some good connections which have broadened my perspective of what it means to be an artist.

It's hard one to pick. I'm proud of the whole journey, and how each bit has impacted me, so I can't pick one. Every interaction I have with fellow creatives, develops my artistic skills and techniques, and is my driving force. So being able to meet numerous creatives, has not only provided a scene where I feel seen and heard, but also allowed me to bounce off and learn from others. I'm proudest of the next steps, making positive changes in the community and hopefully making a strong impact on other people.



BUILDING ARTISTS

One of the main outcomes from the Phlexx x Mimm collective has been to build young people as artists. This was enabled through exposure to industry professionals through series of masterclasses, and opportunities for networking. The development of young people as entrepreneurs and young promoters was apparent. Social connections were also important to the young people who often received support with social media profiles and cultivating their image as an artist. Trekkah said that:



It's about the networking, because we have built that up over many years, and in just a couple of months, young people can get connected with venue owners or musicians or they're learning how to get gig licences, learning how to do tickets and all that stuff. So it's the network, the support, and the mentorship, but also the finance. They can use any venue in the city, pretty much, because we have done events there and know the people, and we've got all the gear, we've got all the PA systems, we've got everything they need...

Having an industry focus meant that young people valued the programs as preparation for self-employment and freelance work, often through the undertaking of individual projects such as making EPs, developing brands and hosting gigs, that would build identity and longevity for the young people as artists. For some young people this was learning how to balance creative work alongside other work and still maintain self-care:



It's like gaining insight into the work ethnic I want. To see like the future for me and inspiration through seeing others in the collective as well as making an impact. And I think that's been important to consistently learn to improve my creative ability and add breadth to my skills.

BUILDING CREATIVE COMMUNITY

The Phlexx Collective strongly referred to themselves as a creative community and there was value in bringing diverse artists together for collaborations and skill sharing. Collaborations ranged from producing music tracks, creating vocals to add to instrumentals, supporting events with documentary photography and film and promoting each others' events. There was also high levels of encouragement and support from others in the Collective for young people sharing ideas or new work. The below quote from a participant shows the importance of being part of creative communities such as these for building confidence and supporting mental health:



What pops into my head when I think about the Collective, is that there's a lot of benefits to mental health from building community, building relationships and just like taking a load off. Everyone here is about showcasing each others' talent, just finding people that are maybe outside of the typical networking bubbles. Those that you come across that are not super integrated and obviously it can be hard to burst through sometimes into a scene. So, I think showcasing people like that is important.



I've learned that it's good to be in a community or community-orientated. What I'm learning, but haven't quite got there yet, is that I'm starting to tie in my love for mental healthcare and accessibility into music, education and community. And those skills interlink very much, so I want to be a clinical nurse specialist and I want to do lots of medical research, tying in nursing and special educational needs with the music part, as well as community.

BUILDING THE LOCAL SCENE

One of the objectives of this scheme has been to project young artists onto the next level, a level where they might start to see some financial gain from their musical ability and creativity. When discussing what the Collective values about the project, young people consistently referred back to the social connections and tapping into the 'scene'. They saw the project as a stepping stone to their longer-term future plans in the creative industries. For Phlexx Records and Minn, this scheme has been about maintaining their local cultural scene, through developing and nurturing future talent and young creatives. This was supported through access to their network, access to venues, partners and funding. The focus on job roles aligned to the creative industries, through the masterclasses, enabled young people to picture themselves as part of the Nottingham scene:



I think a lot of young artists don't realize how many different avenues where they can really apply the skills they know. Because I started as a rapper and I realised there wasn't so much longevity in it, as well as I didn't like the whole image-based aspect of it. So, I began learning how to produce and then from producing began learning how to engineer and put on events and from that it just kind of snowballed into becoming this member of the industry that can support himself and others in within that.

Wanting to help others 'in the scene' was also a strong outcome where members of the Collective chose to share skills, organise community projects or position themselves so that they could promote the work of others. It was clear that many regarded being part of the scene as a cycle that repeats itself, based upon helping others to thrive:



Once I have my own studio space, then I can start using the connections that I've built through being in the industry myself and I can begin publishing artists from my studio the same way Trekkah does it. But with my project at the studio, right now we can't publish and so, that's what I want do for other people. Yeah, so then I'd be earning royalties and throwing events to pay for my own studio and helping other younger artists to come and do the same thing and the cycle repeats.



ADVICE FROM MENTEES FOR FUTURE MIMM X PHLEXX COLLECTIVES



Don't be afraid to ask silly questions in the masterclasses! If something interests you but you've never done it before, try it anyway, pick up new skills.



Talk to the other collective members, network with each other because this scheme is a really great way to develop a circle of other likeminded people and you can all help each other with whatever you've got going on.



Keep on taking risks when you're in these supportive spaces, and continue to celebrate learning from failures and adaptations, especially whilst we're young.



Explore as much as possible in creative boundaries, encourage collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas from different perspectives and backgrounds.



Stay humble and polite always as that will take you far and whilst you have mentors and experienced industry people around, ask as many questions you can, so you can become your true self.



Have a plan in place in terms of the timeline of the collective. A lot of stress can come if you leave it all to the end and you may lose out on unused funding.



Embrace all parts of the programme to allow yourself to find yourself whole heartedly as a creative on the programme ready to enter to the real world and industry.



Get hands on with everything and take part in as many possible opportunities presented that you can.



Use the programme to level up your quality of art. If you're a Producer, it'd be more useful to learn how to create one amazing song rather than an EP of slightly better songs.

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