

# **HUSHTONES**

**David Roskin enters band's vulnerable and steadfast world as they pick up the pieces ahead of live music's return.**

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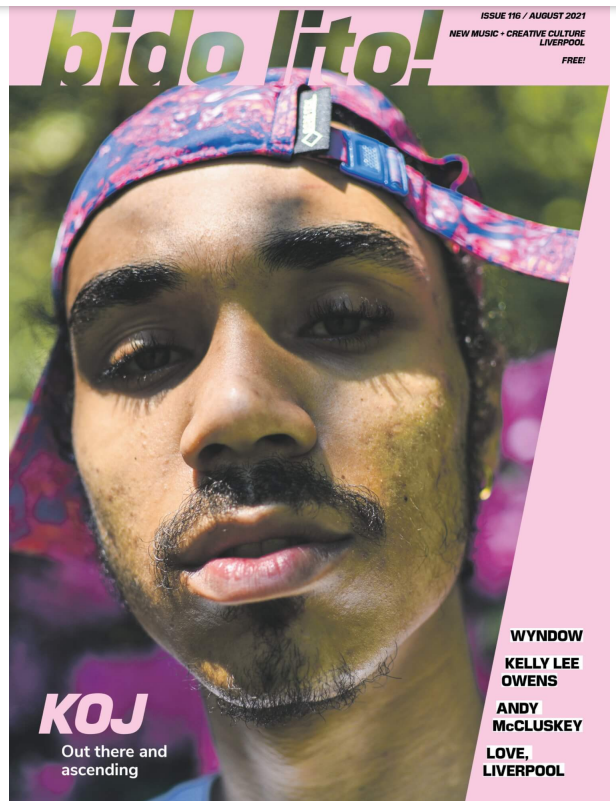
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Resilience, nostalgia and navigating uncharted waters. David Roskin enters the vulnerable and steadfast world of Hushtones as they pick up the pieces ahead of live music's return.

Three out of five HUSHTONES arrive at Hope Street's Liverpool Arts Bar where they immediately greet bar staff before ordering drinks and seeing to the order of the day: reminiscing about recording acoustic sessions in this very space. It's clear that this is a home away from home for the Scouse indie-pop band, and quite possibly one of few haunts bravely eschewing the screening of England v Germany in favour of airing classic indie tunes to soundtrack our interview.

Kicking off in late 2017, Hushtones combine melodic, nostalgic indie sounds with soulful vocals and big beats. Hearing them now, you'd think their polished sound comes from a perfectly constructed quintet, but a series of coincidences and chance encounters is what brought the group together. Martha Goddard and Mick Campbell met while working in a restaurant on Bold Street. "We kind of realised that we were both songwriters and decided to have a jam," Mick tells me, casually. The two continue to play regular cover nights, with one confirmed at Liverpool Arts Bar right before we sit down.

Mick then bumped into Caitlin McPaul on Christmas



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days, and brought her into the fold. The three began to perfect their sound together, doing the rounds with Fleetwood Mac at open mic nights. At a regular pub, they soon met Abe Tesfachristos, a keen-eared bar manager who recognised their potential and continued to book the three-piece before stepping aboard as their drummer.

“He was such a perfect fit because we had drummed with other people before, but it just didn’t work,” Martha reflects. “When it just gels, it’s so good and drummers are so hard to come by as well. So, we do feel hashtag blessed,” Martha laughs, and Abe reflects on his self-titled musical sabbatical for a few years before meeting the band, only interrupted due to how incredible he found the then three-piece.

***“This is obviously a multi-billion-pound industry which is different to football, but that’s all allowed to go on. Music’s being left behind.”***



After a period of window shopping for a suitable guitarist, there came something of a eureka moment for the group. “We went through a couple of guitarists and stuff until we found Joe [Dillon],” Mick says. “And that’s when it started to feel like this is gonna work, now we’ve got the last jigsaw piece.”

At this point, Mick, Martha and Abe recognise what a difference completing the quintet made, and although we’re missing Caitlin and Joe today (due to work commitments and a Pfizer-induced day of rest), it’s clear how together they’re a force to be reckoned with. Teaming up with BBC Introducing’s Dave Monks and producer Steve Levine, the band began to really find their rhythm complimented by the much more professional edge they had once dreamed of.

“Thanks for coming to our TED Talk,” Martha jokes, but hearing their story provides a fascinating educational resource. Whether crying out for a change in circumstances ([I’ve Got Time](#)) or sharing their origin story over a couple of pints in the back of a bar on an uncharacteristically sunny day, Hushtones thrive in evocative imagery. Their charm is continually captivating and entirely true to themselves, it feels effortless. Hushtones know who they are, who they’re going to be and what they’re going to do.

But, like most of us in the creative sector, much of Hushtones’ livelihoods was destroyed by continued lockdowns. Blighted by the misfortunes of the hospitality industry, the band were left to sign on and



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remained isolated from any studio set-up, let alone a stage and a crowd.

Mick, in particular, struggled in 2020. “Me and Martha got into this rhythm: I’d write a little bit of a song or she’d write a little bit of a song. We were on sort of separate sleeping patterns throughout each lockdown and obviously we couldn’t see each other. We spoke on the phone, but I’ve become really nocturnal. I was so worried about everything at the beginning of the pandemic.” He turns to face Martha. “You were sleeping normally. So what happened is, I’ve written a bit of a song, and I’d send it over, and I went to bed at about four or five. She’d wake up, start working on it, get it back to me by the time I woke up, and we got this dead weird rhythm down, and we’d be writing songs around the clock. There was just like, 24 hours a day where we’d be working, it was bizarre, but we’d compile it into this little folder. We got about five or six songs and then sent it to Steve who was like, ‘This would make a great LP!’”

Abe, on the other hand, relished some time away from manic work in hospitality to focus on music. He speaks fondly about this creative process. “They were constantly writing music. I had all this time on my hands so they would send me tracks and they could just work on, you know, a new laptop or whatever but I didn’t play drums for the whole of lockdown! I was literally writing them on my computer. It didn’t stop just because I didn’t have access to drums, we still managed to put the songs

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Despite the pandemic forcing a precarious hand onto the group, Martha offers a concession. “It just goes to show what you can do when you have music to help two people moving, rather than having to spend time working in a job that you’ve been doing to get by, alongside working around everybody else’s schedules. Most of the time we work out a way around it, but in an ideal world, everyone would be working part-time. But, you know, that was the compromise of lockdown. It’s like, ‘Oh, we finally got this time, but we can’t do anything with it. Again, we found a way to kind of work around it.”

Their resilience in the face of adversity is consistently inspiring, and their debut record, Greetings From The Other Side, landing 6th August, is a true testament to this Cover era. Wild wishes to live on the wild side eventually – something simply impossible as of late – while I’ve Got Time looks deeply at how we feel we’ve lost so much of our lives and focuses on the future; how we can enjoy our lives again, even if that feels out of reach. Mick describes his thinking in the depths of the first lockdown: “Well, you know, we don’t really have much money, but we’ve got this great thing that we can do.” And they continue to do it with tracks including their latest single, Sinking, recorded between national lockdowns with two members at a time. With an accomplished smile a world away from fear, they reflect almost fondly on this time as just another struggle they’ve had to overcome together as a band.

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As we hurtle in earnest towards the so-called summer firebreak, the band and I lament the cancellation of further gigs and another year of waiting for Michael Eavis to open up Worthy Farm. And it's at this moment – just when a roar of cheers nearby could only mean another England goal in a packed Wembley Stadium – when our attention quickly turns to the disappointing display of government support for the music and hospitality industries.

Hushtones are facing continuous delays to their first gig back. “We were supposed to have our first proper gig as a band this Saturday,” Mick explains. “And that's being moved now. The guy who booked those sent us an email the other day, saying at the moment this is a gamble. We don't know whether this is going to be happening. But that's the best you can do at this point.” The anxiety caused by this is palpable. But it's old news and, quite frankly, the sort of thing we have come to expect from a government that looks to have muddled their priorities over the last 18 months.

“This is obviously a multi-billion-pound industry, which is different to football, but that's all allowed to go on. You know, music's being left behind,” Mick shouts over the cheers of England fans. The recent botched government campaign urging creatives to explore alternative employment – embodied by Fatima the ballet dancer encouraged to retrain in cyber security – ultimately fell on deaf ears with

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that is out of touch with those it purports to help.

“That’s the thing about being an artist or a musician.

It’s not for everyone, but it is for a lot of people.

That’s your passion. And not only that, it’s a massive part of your identity. So, you can’t just suddenly be like, ‘Do you know what, I’m going to go into fucking cyber.’” The passion the band have for their industry and local music scene lends itself equally to the frustrations they share at feeling powerless. They’re continually championing this sector and pushing on, but this never translates into more than the hopeful glimmer they present for want of structural change from above.

“It’s absolutely comical,” Martha notes in disbelief.

“So, if you were to flip it on the football industry and say, ‘Well, just stop what you’re doing there and go on to something else’. As if any of those people are going to just stop what they like doing!”

Nevertheless, all remain hopeful for their record launch party at EBGBs. As far as coincidences go, [Greetings From The Other Side](#) is truly an apt title to ring in what will, hopefully, be the first of many reintroductions to a normal live music environment. I ask the band to imagine it’s definitely happening, and Mick immediately lights up: “We’re gonna play as long as we want. It’s like a reward for what we’ve all been through. And you know what? Let’s have some fun!

[Greetings From The Other Side](#) is available from 6th August via Hubris Records. Hushtones play EBGBs

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on 20th August.

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