SEARCHING FOR A MUSIC SCENE IN LONDON WITH CHILDCARE

SARA FEIGIN / DEC 28, 2017 / MUSIC

When you're a music fan, you grow up hearing about London and all the amazing music that has come out of it.

The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and David Bowie all started out in the culture capital of England. London is a huge city, spanning 611 square miles, so having a specific area to go to in order to find live music, isn't as easy as it is in other cities. New York City, including all five boroughs, is 302.6 square miles, making London about twice the size. Ask any New Yorker where to go on a Friday night to hear music, and they'll tell you the Lower East Side.

Ask any Londoner the same question, and they'll have at least 3 follow up questions to ask before they send you to a specific section of the city.

When I moved back to London from NYC, I wanted to find a community in music like I had in New York. I always knew any night of the week I'd be likely to see a familiar face if I went to a concert. Whether it be in the mecca of small venues, the Lower East side, or at a larger gig elsewhere in the city, you'd never go a night without seeing a friend. So when I stepped foot in London, I began asking London based friends if there was a London music scene.

Fast-forward a month and I'm entering to top floor venue at The Lexington in Islington. London based foursome, Childcare, are sound checking for their sold out show, which I'm hoping is a sign that will prove my hypothesis that a music community exists in these 611 sq miles.

I take a seat on a couch by the bar, while the band runs through the chorus of their opening song to get the sound right. They take a short break before they run through their lighting setup, and frontman Ed Cares comes over to introduce himself to me. I'm greeted with a friendly smile and a firm handshake, and I can tell that when I sit down to speak with him later he's going to have a lot to say. After a brief introduction he takes the stage again to run through lighting with the rest of the band. Bassist, Emma Topolski, is having issues seeing her bass frets due to the way her side of the stage is lit. The lighting tech adjusts a backlight and after a few minutes, everything is sorted for their last night of tour set. The band leaves the stage, and Ed motions for me to follow them into their green room.

We walk down a short flight of stairs to the green room to take some quick portraits before the rest of the band has to go off for pre-show meals. Drummer, Glyn Daniels, and guitarist, Rich Legate, join Ed and Emma on the couch in the green room. They're all chatting and laughing with each other, while I try and figure out which way is best for me to photograph them in the cramped space.

Ed and I take a seat on one of the couches in the greenroom. Ed Cares hails from Essex; so making the move to London was something he always saw in the cards for himself. He attended Leeds University, and started up a band called To Kill a King with two of his friends while at Uni there. When Uni finished, they all decided to move to London to pursue their dreams. *"London is the culture capital of the country, and you're also aware, sickeningly, that there is more industry in London,"* Ed explains. He then delves deeper into why the band felt they needed to move to London, *"In Leeds it was easy to make a little scene and we did that for a few years, so we thought we'd move on to somewhere a bit bigger; and if you can create a buzz in London, that will set you in good stead to work outwards from there."*

As London is such a big city, being noticed and gaining traction definitely does seem to go a longer way than bands gaining traction in smaller cities. Many bands who start out in major metropolises tend to grow in size much quicker than bands from smaller cities and towns. Childcare have only been on the scene since 2016, and they've just completed their first ever headlining tour. And to top that off, they did it with only six songs officially released to the general public. So to me, being based in the city that is your country's heart of the music industry seems to be the best bet.

Most bands that are London based don't come from here originally, which could be part of the reason why a defined local scene is hard to come by. Childcare tend to play where the venues take them, since none of them are originally from London, they don't have a preference to which sector of the city they play in. *"We do tend to play in the East London kind of area, so you do naturally sort of congregate in certain areas. Most of the venues are here, so that wasn't a conscious choice, and that doesn't represent a scene per say,"* Ed explains to me. The fact that Ed specified that all the venues existing in a certain area doesn't count as a music scene, makes it clear that there's much less of a community amongst London musicians than I had thought. I know I have to delve deeper, so I ask him if being based in such a highly saturated music market makes the band feel the need to tour more so than his Leeds based band felt they needed to.

"We played here and we tried to get fans here, but we also went out and about and tried to get fans elsewhere. I think it's harder to get your name known being in London. But no matter what city you're in, when you first start out you've mainly got your friends going to gigs," Ed tells me. "*I supposed that in London if you get a little bit of press, it does mean there are more people who are closer to you and can see you. But it's definitely harder to get heard, like in Leeds if you knew music, you'd have heard of us."*

Childcare's show tonight is the last gig of their first headliner around England. The band's sets have been going over really well, and there's a big buzz around them. They recently released their latest single single, 'Put Down Your Pen,' to a lot of positive feedback. Ed tells me that the band don't plan to release an album anytime soon, but more singles and EPs are definitely in the not too distant future. They also are heading out on tour with Ed's ex-bandmates in To Kill A King in mid-January for a short stint around the United Kingdom.

Childcare definitely have what it takes to make the most out of being a London based band, and it they're definitely taking every opportunity by the horns.

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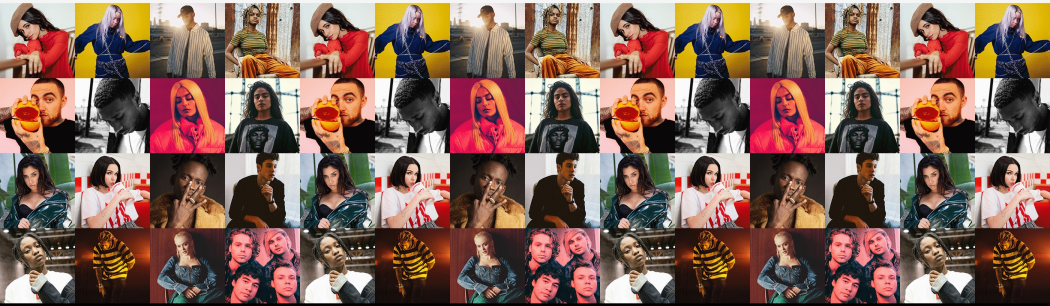

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