

PERFORMING RECOVERY

ISSUE 10:
FEB-APR 25

**DOGS AND
MONSTERS:**
DAVID G.
TAYLOR'S
ARTISTIC
JOURNEY

**PASSENGER
STORIES:** CREATIVE
WRITING FROM
DETROIT

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ALBERT TALKS TO
MADDIE KITCHEN
FROM SOBRIETY
FILMS



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WAKE UP, SAMMY! THE DETOX FACTOR TALK ABOUT THEIR NEW PLAY

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PLUS: NEWS, POETRY AND THE DIRECTORY

FEB-APR 25



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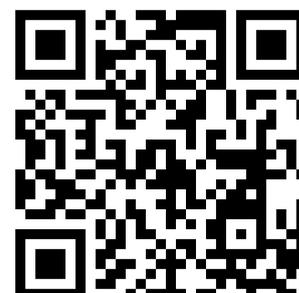
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WELCOME

to the **10th** issue of

Performing Recovery

I've spent the majority of my life obsessed with publishing. As a child, I had my local newsagent hold back a copy of *The Beano* every week just to make sure I didn't miss an issue. When I got my first computer, I wasn't interested in computer games, but I did do odd jobs to earn money to buy a desktop publishing programme.

With that computer programme and a dot matrix printer, I made my own newspapers and newsletters, and I later made fanzines for local bands. I remember my first ever paid printed work for a graduate job-hunting magazine. I got almost no money, but the printed copy was like gold. I still get a buzz when I send something off for print. There's something special about it.

In my decades as an editor, I've seen how professionals build communities around publications. I've seen how ideas and partnerships spread as experts are interviewed and contributors analyse their respective specialisations. I've seen how sectors are represented and celebrated by bringing ideas, organisations and personalities together.

When, at the end of the 2022 Performing Recovery conference, Dr Cathy Sloan and Leon Clowes asked the question, "How do we foster collaboration, how to make sure we're connected?" something clicked in my brain. I started to think about how my skills could help my community. To be honest, when I pitched the idea of a magazine-directory to Cathy, I wasn't really expecting to even get to one issue, let alone 10. And yet here we are.

Having reached 10 issues, it's worth taking a moment to step back and look at what *Performing Recovery* has done and where it's going. Through the magazine, website, and online and offline events, we've helped people become published poets and writers, and we've fostered new connections between arts groups such as Vita Nova and Fallen Angels, or The Detox Factor and SUIT Wolverhampton. People have used *Performing Recovery* in funding bids, impact reports and academic research. The directory helped serve as a basis for the [Creatively Minded and in Recovery](#) report by The Baring Foundation.

I remember our first editorial board meetings, when we were planning the first two issues, and I was thinking, "This is fine, but are we going to run out of stories by the third issue?" I needn't have worried. It seems like every week we're being contacted by or discover another person or project in the world of recovery arts.

At 10 issues, *Performing Recovery* is young, but we're starting to see real recognition. We've been nominated for a Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance award, and have been asked to partner with Tarento Productions on the London production of *The White Chip* (see the News section for more details). That 10-year-old-me, making his first one-page newsletter can scarcely believe it.

Last month, as part of the partnership Tarento Productions, we held our first online workshop with Sean Daniels, the writer of *The White Chip*. It was a great success – not only was Sean his usual witty and insightful self, but we also had a half-hour session of networking and met a number of groups and people for the first time. We look forward to featuring many of their stories and projects over the coming issues.

In these pages, we have interviews with Maddie Kitchen, of Sobriety Films, poet Praise Jourdain and David Collins, a recovery coach using the Ubuntu philosophy. The Detox Factory tell us about their new show, and Rein Carnation talks about her experiences at the Essex Recovery Festival. We also have poetry from Gugu Keswa.

This is also my recovery arts project. It keeps me close to my people and my community. It reminds me that I am not alone in my mental health struggles, the stigmatisation of addiction and the marginalisation of outsider artists. It reminds me that true happiness comes not from material gain or recognition, but in the building of bonds. It reminds me that in a world of clickbait, generative AI and 24-hour propaganda, in the publishing world there's still a place for the authentic voice of real people. Long may it be so.

The Editorial Board: Cathy Sloan, Leon Clowes, Bernadette Molton, Zoe Zontou, Molly Mathieson, Alex Mazonowicz

NEWS & EVENTS

THE WHITE CHIP OPENS IN LONDON IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PERFORMING RECOVERY

Performing Recovery is proud to announce that it's an official partner of Tarento Productions on the *The White Chip*, written by Sean Daniels. The show is produced by Danielle Tarento (*Titanic*, the musical) and Tony Award-winning Broadway star Annaleigh Ashford. It's about living with addiction and coming alive through recovery. For more details on the play, you can read an interview with Sean in Issue 8.

The play opens on the 9th of July at Southwark Playhouse in London. In the run-up to the opening, Tarento Productions and *Performing Recovery* are hosting a series of online workshops and networking opportunities. The first session, *How to ... Write a Play*, with Sean, took place on the 27th of March. The next session takes place on the 30th of April, and it will be a conversation with Danielle. In this online conversation, Leon Clowes will be asking Danielle about how she became a producer and about the elements of producing a hit play. Danielle will also take questions from the audience, and there will be time in the second half for breakout groups, so addiction recovery artists and facilitators can network and share about their practices with others from across the UK.

During the play's run, Leon Clowes will be doing card readings from his special Alcoholic's Tarot (as pictured on the back page).

To sign up for the session, visit: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/addictionrecoveryartsnetwork/1643750>

For more information on *The White Chip* and tickets, visit: <https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/the-white-chip/>



NOT SAINTS T-SHIRTS

This issue's cover, *Sober Is the New Rock & Roll*, created by David G. Taylor, is also available as a T-shirt from sober music label **Not Saints**, along with a number of other incredible designs: <https://www.notsaints.co.uk/store>

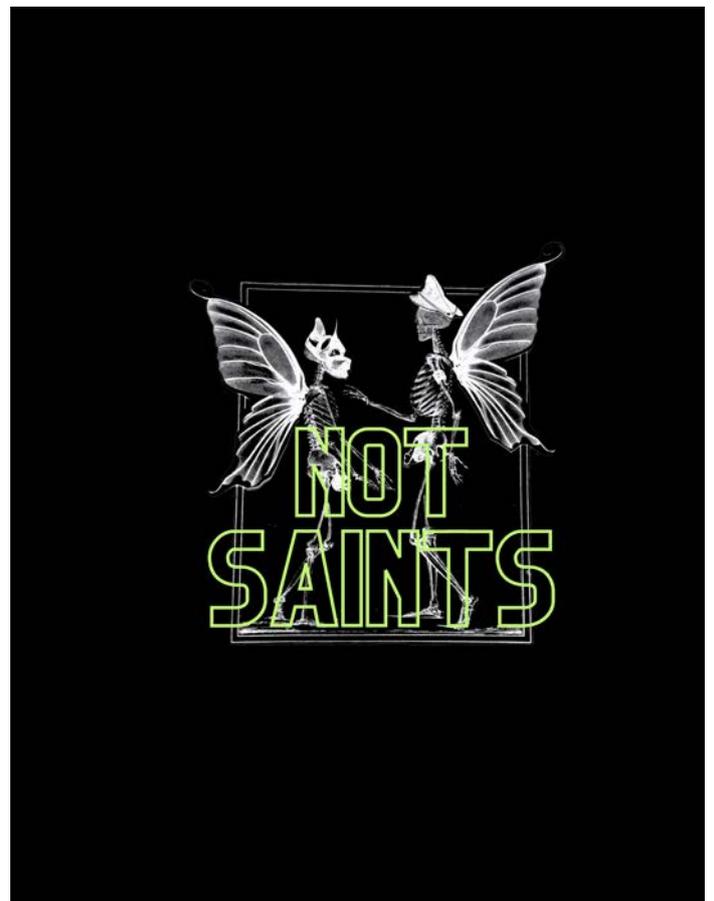
Founder of the label, Chris DeBanks, was featured on the award-winning *Believe in People* podcast last March. You can hear Chris talking about the work of Not Saints and his own recovery journey at <https://www.believeinpeoplepodcast.com/notesaints/>

Chris De Banks

"The world's first not-for-profit record label supporting people seeking a life free from addiction"



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BECOME A FILM STAR! ENTER THE 2025 RECOVERY STREET FILM FESTIVAL

The Recovery Street Film Festival 2025 opens for entries in May. This year's theme is Creative Healing. The new creative director and founder of Sobriety Films, Maddie Kitchen, told *Performing Recovery*: "Creativity has the power to heal, to transform and to reconnect us with ourselves. This year's theme, Creative Healing, explores the profound ways artistic expression can nurture the soul. From painting to poetry, theatre to dance, music to meditation, creativity serves as a powerful holistic tool for recovery."

Previous winners of the festival include *The Detox Factor*, in 2023, and the film *Never Underestimate a Woman in Recovery*, in 2024.

You can read an interview with Maddie Kitchen on page 6.

The contest is open to anyone in, or connected to, addiction recovery. For more information, visit: <https://rsff.co.uk/>



(UP)BEAT SURRENDER

UP(BEAT) is a new production from the **Speakbeat collection**. Written by Sarah Huckin and directed by Ella Zgorska, the play tells the story of A, a London DJ who finds herself at rock bottom. She explores how complex relationships, substances and shame have led her there. *UP(BEAT)* weaves DJing, live sound production and text to tell the story. It lives at the intersection of gender and addiction, emphasising the misplaced shame women experience. The show runs from the 14th–17th of May at Southwalk Playhouse.

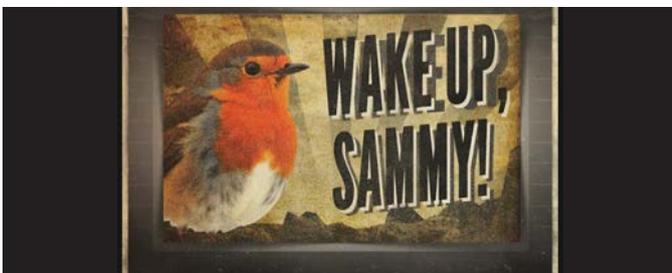


For more information and booking, visit: <https://southwalkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/forge-festival-upbeat/>

WAKE UP, SAMMY!

The **Detox Factor** will be performing a new production, *Wake Up, Sammy!* on the 24th of May at the Crown Wharf Theatre in Stone, Saffordshire. *Wake Up, Sammy!* is a story of recovery and community, told with love and laughter. It includes music and variety acts, as well as contributions from Chase Recovery and SUIT Wolverhampton.

Tickets are available from: <http://www.crownwharftheatre.org.uk>



JOIN THE GEESE TEAM

Birmingham-based social welfare theatre company Geese is looking for one actor and group-worker to play a range of male characters as part of their team of theatre practitioners delivering projects across criminal justice and social welfare settings. Participants will be asked to create and upload a self-taped film of one short monologue. This film doesn't need to be professionally created and can be filmed on a phone. Participants will be assessed in terms of their ability to create an authentic, believable and grounded character with a range of emotions.

Completed applications must arrive by the 2nd of May. Auditions will take place on Saturday the 17th of May with a callback on the 19th of May. Auditions and callbacks will take place in Birmingham.

For more details, visit: <https://www.geese.co.uk/news/we-are-hiring-actor-groupworker/>



GET IN TOUCH!

Performing Recovery wants to feature your stories, creative writing, art, poetry or anything else that you have been working on in recovery.

Contact us at: editorial@recovery-arts.org

SPOTLIGHT ON...

MADDIE KITCHEN

SOBRIETY FILMS

Maddie Kitchen is a lived-experience filmmaker. In 2019, she formed the social enterprise **Sobriety Films UK**, which uses film to champion recovery from addiction, mental health and trauma. She spoke to **Warner Albert**, a Brighton-based filmmaker in recovery from addiction and PTSD, along with Performing Recovery's **Alex Mazonowicz**, about the power of film as a medium for recovery, the complexities of filmmaking in trauma-informed environments and her own exciting news.



Above: Maddie Kitchen

Alex: How did you start Sobriety Films?

Maddie: I set up Sobriety Films as a Community Interest Company in 2019 to use film to champion recovery from addiction, mental health and trauma. I'd shot my first independent film, *How I Got Sober*, in 2017, and I have a degree in media studies specialising in TV production, and I've always been a filmmaker. It has always been a great passion of mine, keeping me alive at times. My two great loves in life are recovery and film, so I'm lucky in that I've been able to put them together as a social mission organisation.

Alex: How has filmmaking kept you alive?

Maddie: I came into recovery on the 2nd of August, 2006, and as you know, the first year is quite challenging. Throughout my recovery, filmmaking has been important for my mental health and my emotional sobriety.

When you're doing something that you love, you get in a flow state, and you can give your brain a break. I've suffered a lot from depression and anxiety in the past, even in recovery, but I find the hyper-focus of filmmaking incredibly calming and healing.

Alex: How does Sobriety Films work with other people in recovery?

Maddie: Firstly, we make films around the subject of recovery, then we work with people in recovery who have

filmmaking skills, either paid or as volunteers. We also run filmmaking workshops, which I love doing as much as actually making a film. I love working with people and bringing out their ideas, and I'm pretty good at it. You might have an idea, but you're not quite sure how you're going to make it happen. It's my job to ask you the questions that will draw the film out of you.

Sobriety Films also holds screenings around recovery and raising awareness, often including question and answer sessions afterwards. We've screened my first film, *How I Got Sober*, as well as some of my short films. We've also screened *Medicating Normal*, *DOSED* and *Flee*, which is the Riz Ahmed-produced animated documentary. It's an incredibly powerful story about refugees.

For me, film has always been about having a social message, communication and truth. With all the challenges that we have to go through as human beings, films can help with healing.

Warner: How did you go about producing and directing your own projects?

Maddie: With *How I Got Sober*, I worked with a good friend in recovery who is a cinematographer. It was a short documentary about two people's journeys shot in only two locations. All you need to make a film is a camera, sound and light, and then the magic happens.

I'm very excited because I'm going to be the new creative director of the

Recovery Street Film Festival. I want to extend the reach and impact of the festival and make sure we have films from all over the UK.

The competition is open for entries from May to the end of August, so I am calling out to people in recovery to get involved.

I also want to make it a public film festival, because we in recovery can make amazing films, that should be seen. One of my hopes for the festival is that we can hold some touring filmmaking workshops in areas across the UK.

“ I'M VERY EXCITED BECAUSE I'M GOING TO BE THE NEW CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RECOVERY STREET FILM FESTIVAL. ”

Alex: We found The Detox Factor through the festival, and through them, other groups in Staffordshire.

Maddie: Yes! That's a little hub of people making their own films about the issues that we deal with in recovery. I have this dream of all these little hubs all over the UK, all empowering each other. There will be people who are experts with a camera, people who are better at directing and everyone could have different roles and help each other.

Warner: How can a filmmaker go about showcasing their work?

Maddie: If you've made a film, and you want people to see it, you first need to think: "Who's my audience? Is it a documentary? Is it a drama? Is it a music video?" There are a number of ways that you can get your film seen. For example, you can do your own screening and invite people you think will enjoy it. You can consider entering it in film festivals.

Depending on what the message of the film is, you should be promoting it to the right people. I do some of this work myself, but I don't work on my own. Sobriety Films has some amazing people. One of our long-standing volunteers works in film exhibitions and she has really helped us.

Have you got a film, Warner?

Warner: I have some films in process and a couple finished. But it's not easy to find people in recovery to help you put it together, and it sometimes can get frustrating when it's just you.

Maddie: Yes, I agree 100%. The key is finding a network of filmmakers who can support you. One place you can try to get your film seen is the Recovery Street Film Festival.

Warner: I also suffer from mental health issues, and I get anxious. I get afraid of what people think, and I panic. Getting over that barrier is difficult.

Maddie: I totally relate to that. I don't know whether you have severe anxiety, but I certainly do. But do you know what? Even professional filmmakers or people who don't have mental health conditions or anxiety get nervous about having their stuff watched.

In filmmaking workshops, with a group of us meeting once a week, we all support each other. And because we all have lived experience, then there's not as much pressure and not as much anxiety involved. People can make incredible films without fantastic cameras, but we need to overcome the barriers within ourselves. It's about having the courage to say, "I'm going to let people see this." It is scary, but the more you do it, the easier it becomes. Like most anxiety-provoking situations, for me it is a mixture of desensitisation and repetition.

Sobriety Films held a filmmaking workshop project in 2022 as part of the North West London Suicide Prevention Programme. The workshop had 15 people in addiction recovery who, like myself, had coexisting conditions. They all made short films about getting through really difficult times or suicidal ideation. At the beginning of the course, everyone was terrified because it was the first time that they

had made a film. But once we got into the power of the group and the creative process, all the difficulties that we had to deal with in day-to-day life fell away. Working as part of a creative group is transformational for everybody.

“ YOU HAVE TO BE VULNERABLE TO SHOW YOUR CREATIVITY ... BUT YOUR ACTORS WANT TO BE IN THE FILM, AND THEY'RE FEELING THE SAME THING. ”

I got so much out of doing that project. We ended up with about 10 short films, which we then screened at the Lyric Cinema in Hammersmith, with the group doing question and answer sessions afterwards. Everyone felt so empowered.

Isn't that a shame that we have these societal and personal barriers that stop us from doing these amazing things? That's what I want to confront. I think I have the best job in the world.

Warner: How can I, as a filmmaker, be mindful about working with people

in a project but also be very definite about our own creative visions?

Maddie: The way that I work is always trauma-informed, because I'm somebody who has suffered trauma. When I'm making a film, I'm always aware that I may be working with people who have the same experience, so I have to be mindful of other people's feelings. It's a mixture of being a diplomat and a dictator.

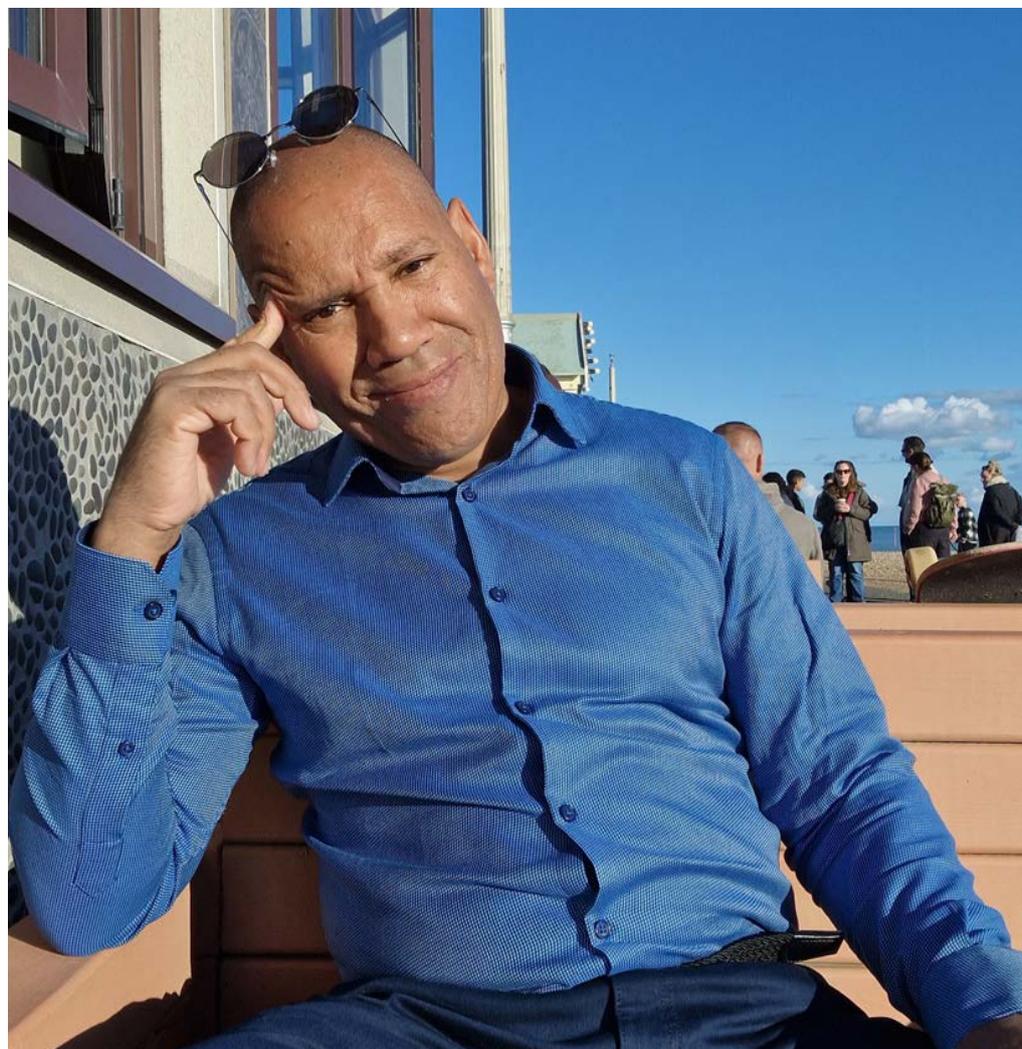
It's really important that people have ownership of their own voices or craft. What they produce should be owned by them. However, the filmmaking process is a group process. So, if I am working with a group of actors who aren't trained, we first sit around and improvise to develop trust in the group.

I don't know whether you can relate to this, but I have been a really bad people pleaser in the past, though I'm much better now.

Warner: Me too!

Maddie: You too! It's hard to ask people to rein it in, isn't it? Because you don't want to upset them, but you have this creative vision, and you need to take control to a certain degree. You need to push beyond that barrier of people pleasing. If they have confidence in you, they will do what you want.

Below: Warner Albert



SOBRIETY FILMS UK PRESENTS



HOW I GOT SOBER

A FILM ABOUT RECOVERY



1st London Screening 18:00-20:00 Monday 28th October 2019.
Followed by Q&A with Dir. and contributors.
The Horse Hospital, Colonnade, Bloomsbury, London WC1N 1JD
Free tickets Eventbrite.

Above: Poster for the film *How I Got Sober* by Jade, released in 2019 (source: Sobriety Films)

There's also a lot to be said about having a mentor or buddy supporting you in your role. On big films, directors have loads of assistant directors. They're doing basically all the legwork, and all the director is doing is looking at the monitor.

I've worked on big projects with a production assistant whom I really trust. At any point during intense, dialogue-heavy scenes, I could turn to her and say, "I'm feeling really anxious; what do I do?" And she would say, "It's okay; just breathe," and the anxiety would pass. Also, when you're working in an inclusive, trauma-informed environment, the people in the film should have people who support them.

The people pleaser in me wants to tell you, Warner, "I'm going to come and help you. I'll be there. I'll stand behind you!"

Alex: You're touching on the idea of showing a little vulnerability to other

people to create trust, which is something that I'm discovering when I'm making *Performing Recovery*. As I said before this interview, "This might not work, and if it doesn't, it's my fault!" It helps people relax more.

Maddie: I totally agree. If you take the example of the director Mike Leigh, the actors he works with will hang out, improvise and get to know each other. People will come to trust you if you can show vulnerability.

You have to be vulnerable to show your creativity, and that is really scary. But your actors want to be in the film, and they're feeling the same thing. They're probably intimidated and scared of you. They're probably thinking, "Warner is the director, I've got to keep him happy."

Alex: Why do you think it's important that people in recovery are making their own films?

Maddie: One of the things that used to drive me mad, and one of the reasons that I wanted to get into filmmaking and empower lived experience filmmakers, was because I'd see these documentaries made about the issues that were affecting me and the people around me by people who didn't have experience of them. Everyone seemed to come from Oxbridge.

We should be getting rid of the stereotypes of messy addicts and the stigma around how we're bad or weak people. There is so much more to us – people in recovery can have a hell of a lot more awareness of the whole process than the people who haven't experienced it.

What we go through is extremely painful, and that's why it makes us creative people. I've got a million films in my head. I don't have time to make them, but one thing that gave me confidence in early recovery was knowing that there was something I was really good at.

When you're making a film, no one can say to you that it's wrong. It's my film and I'm making it work my way. I think that people with lived experience should have access to cameras and they should own their own stories. They should have their own voices heard, and their story shouldn't be appropriated by somebody who doesn't have that experience. I feel that so strongly.

Alex: What else are you working on at the moment?

Maddie: I'm currently working on a women's project film about how art and creativity is a superpower for recovery. Then in June, I'm starting a film in Leicester with Aunee Bhogaita, who is an amazing and inspirational recovery advocate from the South Asian community. It's about the community stigma around addiction, domestic abuse and transgenerational trauma. We've been in development for that for nearly 2 years. Films take a long time to be made.

As people in recovery with living and lived experience, we have such an important voice. We need to express it. We're flipping amazing!♦

For more information on Sobriety Films, visit: www.sobrietyfilms.com, www.instagram.com/sobriety_films/

For more information on the Recovery Street Film Festival, visit: <https://rsff.co.uk>

PLAY IT AGAIN, SAMMY!



Above: Rehearsals for *Wake Up, Sammy!* (credit: The Detox Factor)

Set at a wake, *Wake Up, Sammy!* is part play, part variety show. The project is being put on by Staffordshire-based *The Detox Factor*, and it also involves groups from rehab centres, as well as *SUIT* Wolverhampton. It was conceived and created by Director and Producer Cara Cox, Assistant Director and Producer Alex Black and Musical Director JP. Here, they talk to Alex Mazonowicz about creating more relatable stories, finding motivation and how self-esteem impacts theatre.

Alex M: What's the story behind *Wake Up, Sammy!*?

Cara: *Wake Up, Sammy!* is the story of the lead character's journey through addiction and recovery. The tagline of the play is "Robins appear when loved ones are near," because I've spoken to a lot of people who've been in treatment and have had this lovely moment when a robin appears.

This is not your typical addiction story. It's not about homelessness or intravenous drug use. It's more centred on Sammy's inner turmoil. For instance, at the beginning of the play, there's a scene where Sammy is playing football and the coach is shouting at him, feeding into his low self-esteem and insecurity. I think a lot of people relate to that feeling of never wanting to get told off or feeling like you're letting people down. We see him at his first jobs, and then we see him go through treatment.



Above: Outside Chase Recovery in Stafford (credit: The Detox Factor)

“ THIS SCRIPT WORKS BECAUSE IT'S NOT FOCUSED ON DRUG USE OR DRINKING. IT'S MORE ABOUT A GUY WHO'S STRUGGLING TO COME TO TERMS WITH HIMSELF. ”

Alex M: Why did you decide to approach it this way?

Cara: We wanted to create a different kind of narrative to the one people are used to – using comedy and more tenderness. We wanted this play to be more accessible, and for people to understand that anyone has the potential to be an addict. It doesn't matter if you work as a lawyer, doctor or teacher – you can still have that same inner turmoil that leads you to self-medicate.



Above: Rehearsals for *Wake Up, Sammy!* (credit: The Detox Factor)

Alex B: This script works because it's not focused on drug use or drinking. It's more about a guy who's struggling to come to terms with himself. He's trying to feel good within himself and feel a part of the world. I think a lot of people understand that struggle, whether or not they identify as addicts. Some people have a 9–5 life, but then they hit their 40s or 50s and experience a mid-life crisis. I think the audience will really relate to the main character.

Even the parts when Sammy is in rehab focus more on what he discovers about himself. We've all had that moment when we think, "Holy shit, I'm not like this or that – and I am worthy of love!"

JP: When Sammy gets shouted at by his teacher and feels he's not good enough – those things can happen to anybody. There are people in dead-end jobs just going through the motions. They can't wait for Friday so they can go raving. That's Sammy – he just took it to a different place.

Alex M: It's hard to write about our inner turmoil and emotions without coming across cheesy or didactic.

Alex B: I think we've managed a good balance. There's humour throughout the play. In Britain, we take the piss out of ourselves a lot, and we've done that in this play while keeping a serious edge.

Cara: Throughout the play, there are moments when Sammy shows his vulnerability, and then immediately it's, "Let's get back to calling so-and-so a prick." Rehab centres often have that dynamic.

Music is also a really important part of the play, and the second act has a kind of variety show feel to it. We've got a recovery choir. SUIT Wolverhampton are performing, and we have another rehab group performing too. We wanted

to celebrate what's going on in our area with other recovery communities. It's great to work with other creatives in recovery – it just brings a totally different dynamic and perspective to everything we do.

Alex M: What challenges have you faced?

Cara: Some of the cast have never acted before. Some of them have never even been to a theatre. So learning lines can be a challenge. We're setting aside time and space to do line-run after line-run. I'm terrible at learning lines! I'm always the last to get mine down in anything I do, so I understand how important it is to support people through it.

JP: The Detox Factor has grown into something a bit more organic. In the past, we'd only meet once a week on a Friday, but since Alex came on board, people have been coming in on other days to run through things – which makes a huge difference.

“IT'S GREAT TO WORK WITH OTHER CREATIVES IN RECOVERY – IT JUST BRINGS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT DYNAMIC AND PERSPECTIVE TO EVERYTHING WE DO.”

Alex M: Alex, how did you get involved?

Alex B: When I was at the rehab centre down the road, I kept hearing about Chase Recovery because they were running music and other creative activities. Then I saw The Detox Factor at RecoverFest and I thought, "Yeah! They're getting stuff done!"

I was always pushing for creative activities when I was in rehab. I'd try to start a music or art group, but it was difficult. People get a few months of sobriety behind them and want to do creative things, but then the enthusiasm fizzles out. It even does with me.

But with The Detox Factor and Chase Recovery as a whole, you can see things just going and going. There's a buzz that makes you want to be part of it and create stuff. I feel like I've found my people.

Especially when I was in addiction, nothing was really happening. Even if I was with good people, my head was all over the place, and I didn't have any way to channel myself.

Now all my friends are grown up with families and they're a bit boring. I'm just waiting for them to have a mid-life crisis so they can come out and start playing again.

Alex M: Cara, your background is in acting and theatre. Coming back to it in recovery – how does it feel?

Cara: I think I'm better at it all. I've had roles in a few plays since being in recovery, and I'm a much better actress because I work harder now. I also take more risks than I used to because I have better self-esteem. I used to be at auditions thinking everyone would think I'm a dickhead, so I'd play it safe. Now I don't really care. I'll go big, and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work.

For years, I'd get an audition or land a part and experience impostor syndrome. I'd be like, "Why has anyone invited me to be in this cast? I don't know what I'm doing here." Whereas now, I just take loads of risks. It's a lovely way to be. ♦

Wake Up, Sammy! will be performed at Crown Wharf Theatre in Stone, on Saturday, the 24th of May. For more details, visit: <http://crownwharftheatre.org.uk/>

Below: Left to right, Cara, JP, Alex B (credit: The Detox Factor)



I am an African Woman

by
Gugu Keswa

Born of the soil formed by the Great Creator Himself,
I rise, just like the sun, I rise.

I am not shook by the winds nor the storm.

Nor do I compete with the moon nor the stars.

For I shine bright, bright – brighter than a shooting star.

My radiance, my light a burning ball of gas when I wake I light up the world.

My presence brings warmth to those who are cold.

My mere existence lights up the whole world.

I carry the infinite wisdom of the great I am.

Infinite and eternal I've seen it all.

I carry the possibility the opportunity of a new day.

I bring light to those who have lost their way,

A new day, everyday,

Every day people bask in my splendour.

I do not worry nor toil in earthly pressures,

A divine heavenly body I am – I just be me,

I wake up and shine all day long I shine.

Till I set and rest in heavenly spaces.

I bring hope as they await my return.

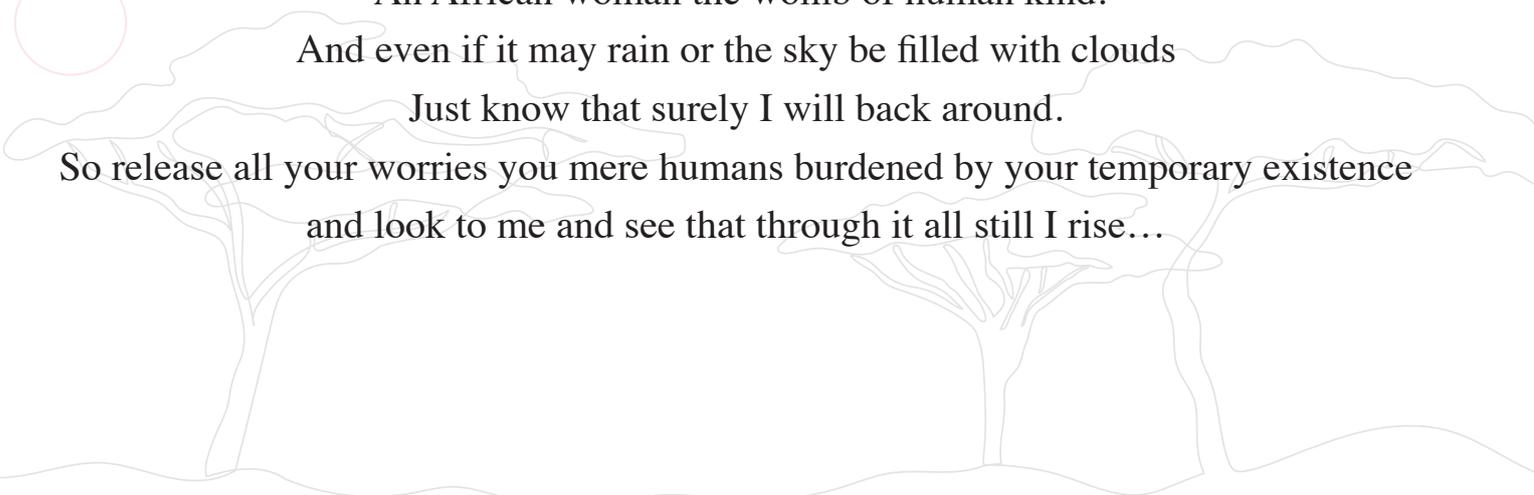
All know of me – I am famous, renown and respected by even the greatest of men.

An African woman the womb of human kind.

And even if it may rain or the sky be filled with clouds

Just know that surely I will back around.

So release all your worries you mere humans burdened by your temporary existence
and look to me and see that through it all still I rise...



CULTURE, & CONNECTION & COMMUNITY



David Collins is a recovery coach who integrates the Ubuntu philosophy into his coaching practice. Ubuntu is a Bantu African worldview centred on interconnectedness. Through his work at **The Foundation Clinic** and **U-ACT Ubuntu Academy of Coaching and Training (U-ACT)**, he fosters healing by embedding arts and cultural techniques into recovery support. He talked to **leon clowes** about how Ubuntu shapes his approach and the role creativity plays in building sustainable recovery communities.

leon: How does the Ubuntu philosophy influence your approach to recovery coaching?

David: Ubuntu is about community. Traditional Western models often emphasise the individual, but in South Africa, where I live and work, the collective is central to healing.

During apartheid, communities were deliberately divided, and while legal segregation ended in the 1990s, its effects linger. Nelson Mandela championed Ubuntu – “I am because you are” – as a guiding principle for rebuilding the nation, but it took me years to truly understand it.

In 2010, I was in Japan working with Red Bull, which was struggling to enter the market. Japanese business culture is rooted in *ma* space, which is an awareness of how one’s actions affect others. Social hierarchies shape interactions, and businesses operate with a long-term, community-focused mindset. Seeing this in action, I recognised its similarity to Ubuntu. Both emphasise interconnectedness, mutual responsibility and lifting each other up rather than competing for dominance.

This realisation transformed how I approach recovery coaching. Many treatment models focus on short-term, individual solutions such as with a 28-day rehab stay, for example. But when people leave, they often return to environments that contributed to their struggles. Ubuntu teaches us that recovery is a communal effort. We need

to create supportive networks where people are held accountable with compassion and understanding.

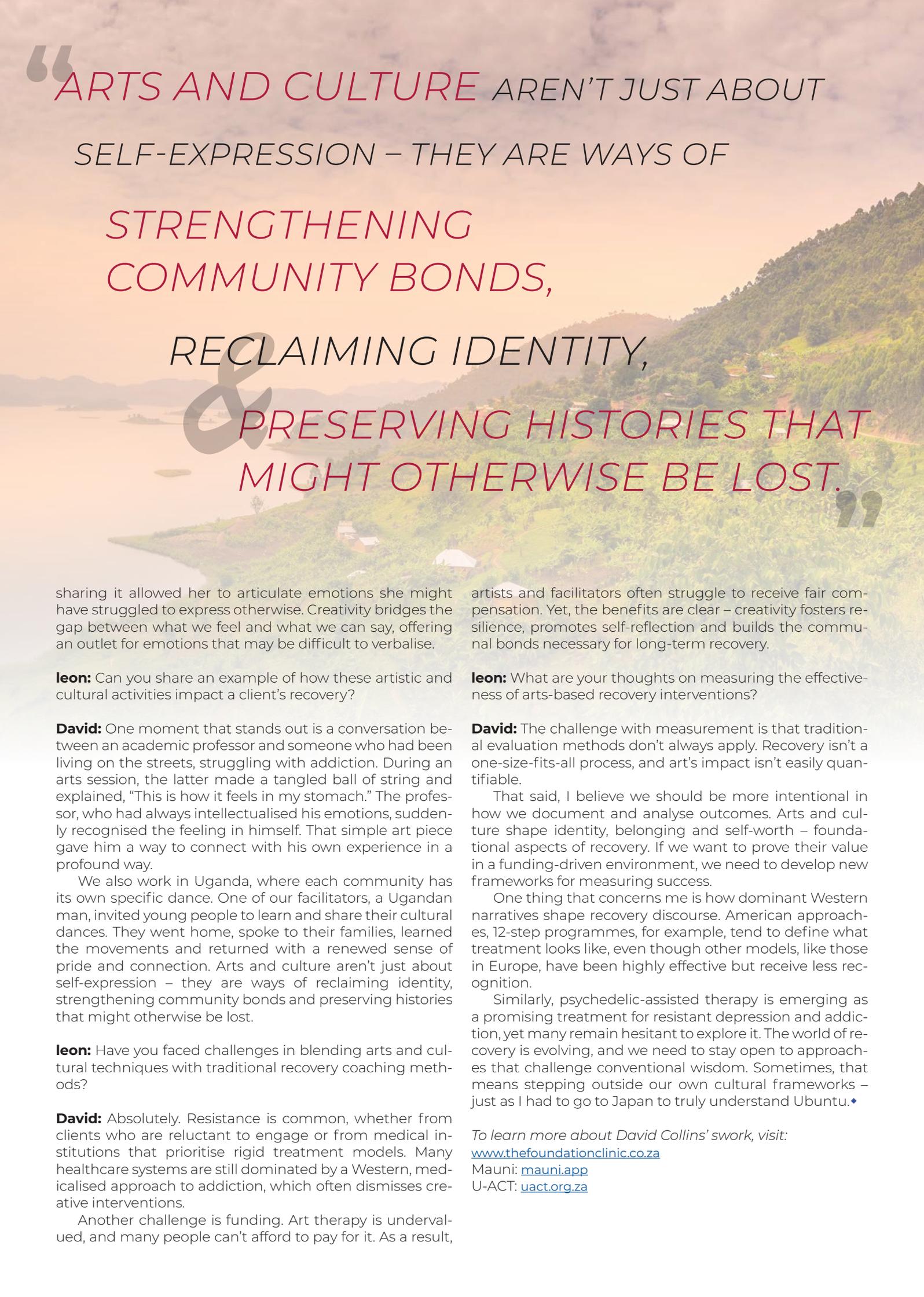
That’s why we train recovery coaches from within their own communities. A person from Soweto, for instance, is far more likely to trust and relate to a coach from their background than to me, a white, straight man, no matter how well-intentioned I am. When support comes from within, stigma is reduced, trust is built and recovery outcomes improve.

leon: In what ways do you integrate arts and cultural techniques into your recovery coaching?

David: Creativity is central to our approach. We use symbols to represent key recovery concepts, for example headphones for conversation, glasses for perspective, a triangle for systems and other symbols to depict intelligence and community. These visual aids help clients engage with complex ideas in an intuitive way.

Beyond that, we incorporate drama, role-playing and constellations work. We encourage people to create videos, write poetry and express their experiences through art. These activities connect mind, body and spirit, making recovery more inclusive and meaningful.

One of our clients, Gugu Keswa, recently wrote a poem about the sunrise (see page 11). The process of writing, and



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sharing it allowed her to articulate emotions she might have struggled to express otherwise. Creativity bridges the gap between what we feel and what we can say, offering an outlet for emotions that may be difficult to verbalise.

leon: Can you share an example of how these artistic and cultural activities impact a client's recovery?

David: One moment that stands out is a conversation between an academic professor and someone who had been living on the streets, struggling with addiction. During an arts session, the latter made a tangled ball of string and explained, “This is how it feels in my stomach.” The professor, who had always intellectualised his emotions, suddenly recognised the feeling in himself. That simple art piece gave him a way to connect with his own experience in a profound way.

We also work in Uganda, where each community has its own specific dance. One of our facilitators, a Ugandan man, invited young people to learn and share their cultural dances. They went home, spoke to their families, learned the movements and returned with a renewed sense of pride and connection. Arts and culture aren't just about self-expression – they are ways of reclaiming identity, strengthening community bonds and preserving histories that might otherwise be lost.

leon: Have you faced challenges in blending arts and cultural techniques with traditional recovery coaching methods?

David: Absolutely. Resistance is common, whether from clients who are reluctant to engage or from medical institutions that prioritise rigid treatment models. Many healthcare systems are still dominated by a Western, medicalised approach to addiction, which often dismisses creative interventions.

Another challenge is funding. Art therapy is undervalued, and many people can't afford to pay for it. As a result,

artists and facilitators often struggle to receive fair compensation. Yet, the benefits are clear – creativity fosters resilience, promotes self-reflection and builds the communal bonds necessary for long-term recovery.

leon: What are your thoughts on measuring the effectiveness of arts-based recovery interventions?

David: The challenge with measurement is that traditional evaluation methods don't always apply. Recovery isn't a one-size-fits-all process, and art's impact isn't easily quantifiable.

That said, I believe we should be more intentional in how we document and analyse outcomes. Arts and culture shape identity, belonging and self-worth – foundational aspects of recovery. If we want to prove their value in a funding-driven environment, we need to develop new frameworks for measuring success.

One thing that concerns me is how dominant Western narratives shape recovery discourse. American approaches, 12-step programmes, for example, tend to define what treatment looks like, even though other models, like those in Europe, have been highly effective but receive less recognition.

Similarly, psychedelic-assisted therapy is emerging as a promising treatment for resistant depression and addiction, yet many remain hesitant to explore it. The world of recovery is evolving, and we need to stay open to approaches that challenge conventional wisdom. Sometimes, that means stepping outside our own cultural frameworks – just as I had to go to Japan to truly understand Ubuntu. ♦

To learn more about David Collins' swork, visit:

www.thefoundationclinic.co.za

Mauni: mauni.app

U-ACT: uact.org.za

DOGS AND MONSTERS

by David G. Taylor



Left: Aladdin Sanestein

David G. Taylor is a British artist in recovery. Originally from Merseyside, he relocated to Brighton from London in 2022. Here, he talks about his journey from rehab, through Vita Nova to exhibiting art.

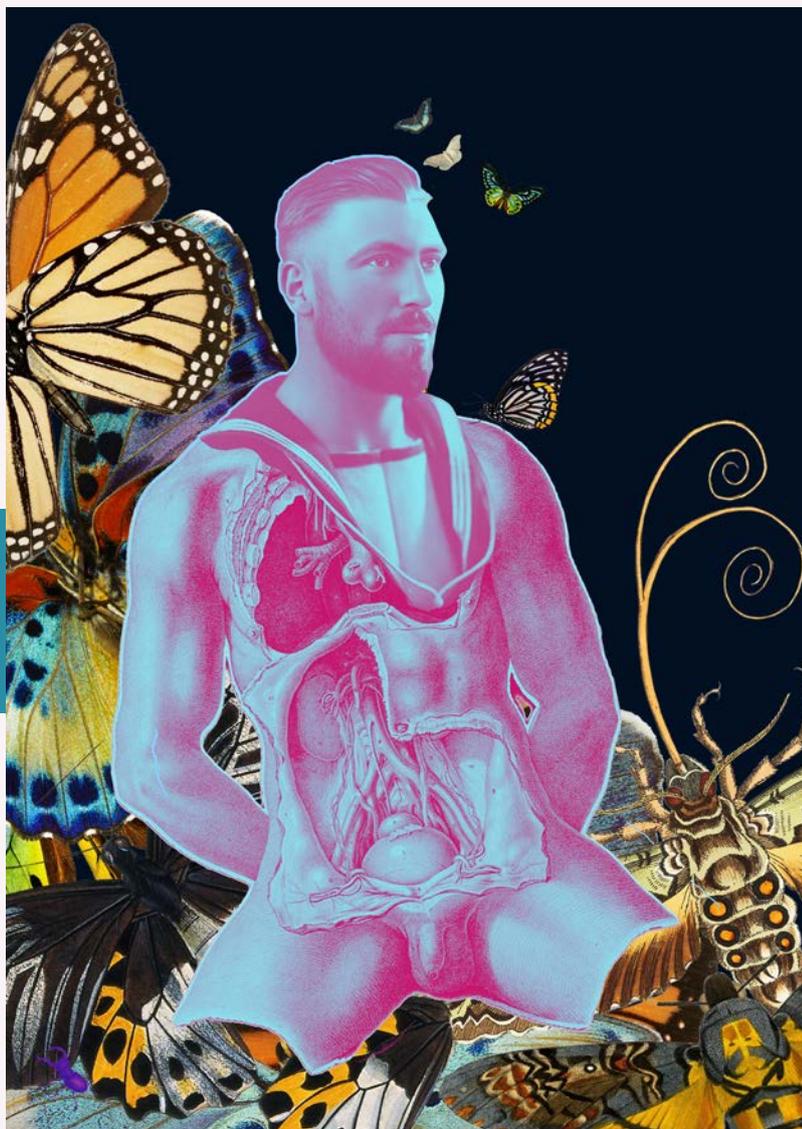
I really owe my artistic career to the Bournemouth arts charity Vita Nova. As a charity, it helps people in recovery find community, confidence, a means for self-expression and an opportunity to discover new passions through free creative workshops including drama, music, digital photography, art and creative writing.

I started attending Vita Nova while I was in rehab at Allington House, a facility run by StreetScene. When the world shut down during the 2020 COVID lockdown, they switched to twice weekly online meetings. We read scripts together as a group, including play versions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and shared about isolation. We became close over those difficult months. I showed Sharon Coyne, Vita Nova's artistic director, some of the art I'd been making to pass the time. She was one of the first people to show interest in my work.

Vita Nova gave me my first commission, a range of six postcards promoting the charity. I see addiction as a power struggle with an internal monster, so I created a series of collages drawing on Universal Classic

Monsters films from the 1930s–50s. In *Aladdin Sane*, I was inspired by Vita Nova’s music workshops and turned Frankenstein’s monster into David Bowie’s Aladdin Sane persona. This handmade collage seemed appropriate since Mary Shelley is famously buried in Bournemouth, and Bowie had struggled with addiction himself.

I’m very grateful to Vita Nova for championing me. After the lockdown was lifted, they even transformed their headquarters into the Fourth Wall gallery space, where I had my first public art exhibitions.



Left: *You Stole My Heart*

Facing up to my addictions while living in a house of 15 other clients – all withdrawing from their own combinations of alcohol and drugs – was tough at the time, but it’s also something that I look back on with enormous gratitude. The staff were amazing and Allington House was pioneering in treating chemsex clients. Afterwards, instead of heading straight back to London, I began chasing my dreams by enrolling in a master’s degree in creative writing and publishing at Bournemouth University.

As a former magazine editor and journalist, I’ve always written in some form.

I’d made art on and off in my free time, too, but it was only during lockdown that other people became interested in what I was doing. Something seemed to click, and during my writing degree, I gradually woke up to the fact that I wasn’t just a writer, I could also be an artist. Since then, I’ve had commissions including posters, logos, T-shirt designs, a CD album sleeve and two wall murals. One of them can be seen inside Bournemouth’s vintage clothes shop Bad Ass Retro, run by my good friend and former gallerist Elkie Yates. She has also supported my art by showing and selling my work without taking a commission.

I’ve had my work featured in print and online magazines (including *Performing Recovery* Issue 4). I’ve shown in group exhibitions such as Bournemouth’s Arts by the Sea Festival and Bournemouth Emerging Arts Festival (BEAF), the COIN Project, in Poole, with Socially Engaged Art Salon (SEAS) and at the Artists Open House festival – both in Brighton. I’ve also been shortlisted for the New Beginnings exhibition at Brighton’s new Pretty Neat Gallery this June. These are experiences and opportunities that I wouldn’t have dared to pursue before I went to rehab.



Left: *Bad Dog*

My art has often combined handmade collage, drawing and painting, but lately I've been developing my digital skills. I love reimagining old photos using modern technology. In *You Stole My Heart*, I took a Victorian anatomical lithograph and morphed it with a vintage photograph of a handsome sailor. The background is made of up entomological lithographs. It's a humorous piece about longing and regret. I love the absurd. Outwardly, my style is pop art, but it is also very influenced by the Dadaist and Surrealist art movements, as well as literary symbolism. I'm exhibiting this as part of Brighton's Artists Open House festival at The Rock Inn from the 3rd–26th of May (except the 16th–17th of May).

Bad Dog is a humorous digital collage inspired by the style of Andy Warhol's screenprints and the S&M fantasy of human-puppy play, in which a master controls a submissive dressed up as a human dog. The puppies drink from dog bowls and usually wear gear including leather or neoprene dog masks, padded paws and waggly tails. I first encountered the scene in 00's London, when the late club promoter and AIDS activist Spike Rhodes asked me to work the door of a new puppy playroom at his Vauxhall fetish nightclub, Sleaze. Dressed up in leather as the 'Dog Warden', I made sure only those dressed appropriately entered his safe space for puppy play. It was an eye-opening experience.

Despite the bright colours and humour in my work, I'm often tackling serious topics including neurodiversity, substance abuse, LGBTQIA+ struggles and body image. My *Bearmaids* series, for instance, is about bullying and body shaming. There's a famous internet meme featuring a photo of a large, bearded man bellyflopping into a swimming pool. I've seen countless variations of the meme poking fun at the victim's size. This made me angry, so I transformed him into a shoal of beautiful mermen, giving him a tribe and amplifying his power, beauty and sexuality.

The word 'bearmaid' is a portmanteau of 'bear' (gay slang for a husky, bearded, mature man) and 'mermaid.' It seemed fitting to make him into a sort of gay superhero, as large, bearded men are celebrated and fetishised in one corner of the gay community. Yet at the same time, the gay community can be very judgemental in terms of body fascism and ageism. *Bubble Bearmaid* and *Bearmaid 1.2* were exhibited outdoors last summer as billboards on Brighton and Hove Beach by SEAS.

During my master's degree, I did a project on the late British playwright Joe Orton, who was jailed in the 1960s for amusingly defacing London library books before going on to write hit comedies such as *Loot*, *What the Butler Saw* and *Entertaining Mr Sloane*. In tribute, I made my own box of playfully defaced ex-library books that referenced his life and works – such as a synopsis of *Entertaining Mr Sloane* written in Polari, the secretive gay slang prevalent in Orton's day. The piece was called *Larceny and Malicious Damage: Entertaining Mr Orton*.

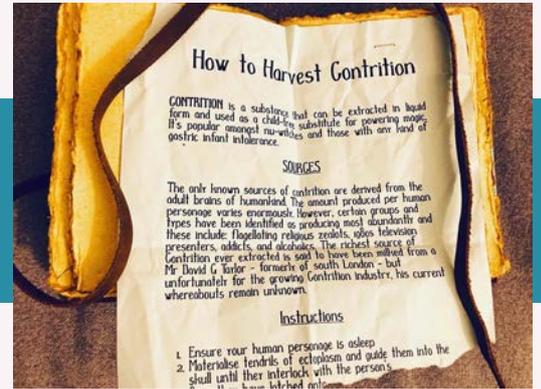
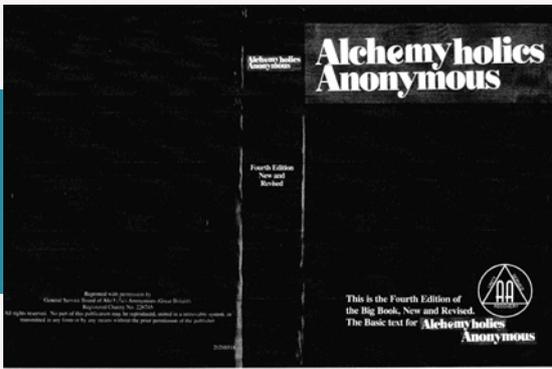
I enjoyed making it so much that I decided to do something similar on a larger scale for my final degree project, instead of writing a dissertation. *The Bedevilments* is a piece of interactive fiction, contained in a left-behind suitcase. A surreal mystery, it's about a rehab run by a coven of witches that are secretly harvesting a shame-induced brain chemical from its clients that I named Contrition. What richer source of contrition could there be than people in the earliest stages of recovery?



Left: *Bubble Bearmaid*

My non-linear story is pieced together in the minds of the 'readers' as they rummage through the suitcase's contents, encountering forgotten belongings, pieces of art, as well as fragments of writing, such as secret notes, letters, rehab forms, a grimoire and diary extracts. My story draws inspiration from real Dorset history, places and folklore, as well as 12-step culture.

The title *The Bedevilments* comes straight from a passage in *The Big Book*. I also invented a fellowship for my witches who themselves are addicted to magic, called *Alchemyholics Anonymous*. Most of the characters in my surreal story are addicts, including the kitsch artworks hanging on the rehab walls – they are alive. For example, one living portrait is Vladimir Tretchikoff's *Chinese Girl (Green Lady)*, who narrates some of the comings and goings she observes. It was great fun to create (and I earned a distinction!!)



Above: *The Bedevilmets*

I'm currently working on a new story in a suitcase. Housed in a white 1950s vanity case, my story is another mystery told through writing, art and objects. This time I'm creating a fictional backstory to the legend of the Grey Lady said to haunt the Theatre Royal Brighton.

The interactive artwork will be part of a *Story Maps* exhibition featuring members of a Sussex neuro-divergent arts organisation called Figment Arts and themed around local folklore. There'll be different Story Maps exhibitions all over Sussex this summer. However, this particular artwork can be seen at Marine Workshops in Newhaven from the 24th of June–5th of July and possibly also at Worthing Museum in October (date to be confirmed).

I created a birthday portrait of my friend, the amazing drag king Well-Hung Parliament (aka Dani Nowokunska). Brighton-based sober record label Not Saints saw it and liked it. They already had a bunch of slogans ready when they asked me to design a series of T-shirts. Not Saints supports a diverse selection of sober musical talents, so I wanted the T-shirts to be a dark, edgy and punky. I offered Not Saints a few existing images and created some new ones for them. Another, called *Skeletons*, is inspired by Vivienne Westwood's classic punk T-shirt design featuring two naked cowboys: *Tom of Finland*.

My mixed media portrait of Well-Hung Parliament was made using handmade collage with pen and ink drawing, then adapted digitally. Dani was kind enough to let me use their image for the T-shirt, and this is currently for sale in the Not Saints' online store. ♦

To see more of David's work, visit: <https://instagram.com/davidgtaylorart>

EXHIBITION DATES

3–26 May: Artist Open House at The Rock Inn, 7 Rock Street, Brighton BN2 1NF.

4–6 May; 10–11 May; 17–18 May; 24–26 May: Artist Open House at Chimera House, 18 Lower Rock Gardens, BN2 1PG.

June (tbc): New Beginnings at the Pretty Neat Gallery, 37 The Waterfront, Brighton Marina Village, BN2 5WA

24 June–5 July: Story Maps at Marine Workshops, Railway Quay, Newhaven, BN9 0ER

October (tbc): Story Maps at Worthing Museum. Chapel Road, Worthing, BN11 1HP

LINKS

Artist's Open House: <https://aoh.org.uk>

Arts by the Sea (Bournemouth): <https://artsbythesea.co.uk/>

Bad Ass Retro: <https://www.badassretro.com>

BEAF: <https://gotbeaf.co.uk>

Figment Arts: <https://www.figmentarts.co.uk>

Kemptown Arts: <https://kemptownarts.org.uk>

Marine Workshops: <https://newhavenenterprisezone.com/marine-workshops/>

Not Saints: <https://www.notsaints.co.uk>

Pretty Neat: <https://prettyneatgallery.com>

SEAS: <https://www.seas-uk.org>

Street Scene: <https://www.streetscene.org.uk/>

Vita Nova: <https://vitanova.co.uk>

Worthing Theatres and Museum: <https://wtm.uk>



Above: David G. Taylor

ENCOUNTERING THE DIVINE

Praise Jourdain's debut poetry collection, *ô delirious God*, is an immersive, visceral exploration of grief, addiction recovery, faith and gender identity. It refuses conventional form, enacting the ruptures of recovery and loss through fragmented language, radical typography and striking visual structure. Our conversation ranged from the genesis of the book to Jourdain's evolving relationship with writing, faith and performance.

leon: Your book opens with the striking line, "proto womb swapped for popped balloon." It feels cinematic: vivid, visual and immediate. How do you approach openings in your work, particularly in setting the tone for such a complex and literate collection?

Praise: Starting a collection is challenging. It requires time for themes to emerge and intersect. With *ô delirious God*, multiple themes were unfolding at once, and it took years of writing, recovery and therapy to understand where to begin.

Ultimately, recovery taught me to start with myself. The book hinges on fundamental questions, such as "Who am I?" especially in the absence of my mother and the god of my understanding. Initially, I believed the story was about them, but in truth, it was about me. The process of grief and recovery led me to examine my own body, my own presence.

That opening line was one of those rare, inspired moments. I approach writing visually, shaped by my media analysis background. Before this project, my poetry leaned more towards narrative. Over time, I became more interested in imagery; building scenes and then uncovering the language to match. I wouldn't call myself an emotion-led poet. Rather, I construct an image, experience an emotional response, and then work to translate that into words. It took years to arrive at that approach.

leon: What was the timeline of your recovery and your mother's passing? I'm also fascinated by your shift from narrative writing to the fragmented, formal style we see in *ô delirious God*.

Praise: The earliest parts of this book emerged in 2019, but the pandemic intensified everything. My mental health diagnoses became a factor. I had an assessment over the phone a year and a half after my civil partnership ended. I was struggling with emotional extremes and language breakdowns, which I tried to reflect in the book's fragmented form.

In September 2020, I moved to Norwich to start my MA in Creative Writing. Three days before the course began, I attended my first online AA meeting. I'd known for a while that I had to stop drinking. I'd spent much of the pandemic

alone, finishing my undergrad, barely holding things together. That summer, I saw my own patterns reflected in other alcoholics, including my mother.

When I moved, I planned to stop drinking and go vegan. The veganism lasted 10 days; the drinking ended in an accident. I ordered what I thought was a non-alcoholic drink, but it wasn't. That moment of doubt, that maybe I don't have a problem, led me back into drinking. I got involved with someone for whom alcohol was part of our relationship, and it spiralled. One night, after obsessing all day about whether to drink, I did. It turned into a night of trauma-dumping, therapy reminders and chain-eating Polo mints. At 2 a.m. I had a moment of clarity, it was something vivid and real, like a vision. The letters "AA" flashed

“ I SAT THERE, HANDS HOVERING OVER THE KEYBOARD, UNABLE TO WRITE. EARLY RECOVERY, PTSD, SHAME – IT WAS OVERWHELMING. EVENTUALLY, I JUST STARTED TYPING NONSENSE. ”



across my mind. I knew the game was up. The next day, I attended my first proper meeting.

Three days later, my MA began. In December 2020, my mother was diagnosed with terminal COPD. I was studying on a scholarship, with deadlines, expectations and a book to write. By January 2021, the weight of her diagnosis hit me. No one could tell me if she had months or years left. Uncertainty is torture for me. One day, I sat at my laptop, exhausted, and told God "I have nothing left. If this is going to happen, you'll have to do it for me."

I sat there, hands hovering over the keyboard, unable to write. Early recovery, PTSD, shame – it was overwhelming.

Eventually, I just started typing nonsense, recalling the idea that if you put a chimpanzee at a typewriter for long enough, it'll write Shakespeare. I thought of Rodin's idea that sculpture is already inside the marble, you just chip away to reveal it. That's how the book began, with total surrender. I turned everything over.

In March 2021, I got the call that my mother was deteriorating fast. I thought I'd be there for days; it took three weeks for her to pass. She faded through seizures, each one taking more of her mind. In those weeks, I sat by her, attending online AA meetings, writing because I had to. This book had to be written.

leon: The section on your mother's death really hit me. The shift in forms suddenly made complete sense: fractured words, spacing, typesetting. Before that, I was enjoying the book visually, but at that moment, it landed in a different way. It felt so powerful.

Given your background in performance poetry, how do you approach performing this work? Do you even see it as performable?

Praise: I have performed it, though it presents challenges. The written form allows for visual echoes. Things that would require a skilled sound engineer to replicate live, with reverb and delay. I haven't yet had the opportunity to perform it in a setting with those technical possibilities.

That said, I love experimenting. I don't think a piece has to exist in only one form. There's enough language on the page to tell a story, but when I perform, I might remix it so it doesn't always come out the same way. It depends on the room and the emotion of the moment. Some sections evoke laughter, others hold a more painful weight. Performing work like this means taking people into a space of deep loss, of witnessing. Not release but watching someone slip away who didn't want to go and couldn't express it. That's difficult to bring into a room.

Beyond the book, I have other visual representations of the work, things that couldn't be contained by the constraints of the page. I enjoy exploring different spaces and media. Perhaps it comes from preaching, but I move in and out of text when performing, much like a singer weaving between song and story. I see no reason a poet can't do the same.

What's on the page is just the tip of the iceberg. The privilege of being the author is that I can provide context and expand beyond the written words. A live reading lets me tell a bigger story than the book alone. Maybe, in time, there will be a more expansive version on the page as well because grief and death are such universal experiences, yet when you add in recovery, gender dysphoria and PTSD, it becomes a uniquely complex story.

leon: So, this shift in form, was it a completely new departure

for you? And how do you feel now about your older, more narrative-driven, spoken-word poetry?

Praise: In some ways, yes, but I don't see it as a strict divide. It reflects different aspects of who I am now. It's not dualistic. Just as my spoken voice and singing voice have different textures, so do these different modes of writing. Holding multiple aspects of self is something I live out daily, especially as a trans, nonbinary person.

For me, the story chooses the voice. When I try to impose a form from the outset, it doesn't work. I can feel my ego creeping in, trying to force an effect. That's especially true with narrative and lyrical poetry, where I have to be mindful not to slip into voices that aren't even mine.

I also see my life as having a kind of rupture, a before and after. It took time to reconcile those two timelines. My life was different, I was different. And alongside all of this, I came to faith in a deeper way, forming a relationship with the God of my understanding. That transformation shaped the work as much as anything else.

leon: It sounds like, in *ô delirious God*, you're stepping back and observing yourself. Would you describe your approach as autoethnographic, in it exploring your own queerness, addiction recovery, your mother's death and your evolving faith with a degree of detachment?

Praise: One of the great gifts of writing, and particularly studying it, is learning that to subjectify something, I first need to objectify it. I have to step back, detach from

the intensity of emotion and discern what's happening. What's my role? What are my motives? How is this serving me or others? That perspective has always been part of my creative work.

I once wrote a memoir that may see the light of day, and that process crystallised something for me. I am myself, but I also don't entirely understand myself. There's an element of human existence that is like a character we observe. The spiritual life, for me, involves witnessing that character, understanding where they come from and why they act as they do.

I fill in the blanks through faith, discipline, art and storytelling. Recovery, too, is about developing a clearer understanding of that voice and discerning its components. In that sense, my process is both visual and textual. I don't just hear words, I see them. They have texture and form, even when spoken. So I don't sit passively in truth, I search for it.

leon: The line "everything is profiteroles at a funeral" stopped me in my tracks. You have this ability to turn unexpected metaphors into powerful truths. As a musician, I found myself envious. *ô delirious God* is so rich, so visually and texturally engaging.

“FOR ME, THE STORY
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I CAN FEEL MY EGO
CREEPING IN, TRYING TO
FORCE AN EFFECT.”

Music, for me, is indefinable, but words create meaning. You play with punctuation, spacing and even capitalisation, as only pronouns and 'God' seem to be capitalised. Beyond that, you weave together nature, sex, gender identity, grief and faith into this huge, cohesive work.

How did you actually construct it? Was there a moment where you were just writing without knowing what you were writing, and then later shaping it into something? What was your process?

Praise: There's a story about the 20th-century mystic and evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman. Someone asked her how much one has to give up living with God, and in her strange, Gollum-like voice, she answered, "Everything. Everything." That's also the essence of step 3 in recovery. You don't just turn over select things, like your diet or your

job. It's everything. For me, that meant surrendering not just my behaviours but also my language, how I saw myself, how I saw the world. I came into recovery with a sense of a higher power but no formal faith background. I had moments of deep, undeniable experience with God, but I was also carrying a lifetime of cynicism. Eventually, I even surrendered that saying, "I'm willing to hear God before I listen to the noise." And in return, I experienced an overwhelming sense of unconditional love, a door opening to peace.

I actually wish we could erase the word 'faith' from existence because it's so vague. Trust is a better word. Trust is muscular. It requires active participation and that's what my process was. Trusting what was given, not forcing it.

At the time, I was experiencing reality as fragmented. Language itself felt broken. I'd spoken to mental health professionals for years about this sensation, that the fabric of reality was splitting, that I was stepping between different planes. Writing had to reflect that. But to do it, I had to inhabit it fully, which was both terrifying and liberating.

So, I sat down, hands on the keyboard, and let go. No editing. No interference. Just letting the words come. Before recovery, I didn't understand receiving when it came to creativity. I thought writing was about control, about achieving objectives. But my best efforts had led me nowhere, so I had to turn that over too.

And everything was happening at once: grief, gender, addiction, faith. My brain wasn't processing them one at a time, it was struggling to hold five slippery things at once. So, I wrote as it came. Some sections happened naturally after my mother's death, especially dealing with the horror of those final days, what it did to her body. And then...I put it down. I had to.

For years after, I couldn't write. It was creative burnout, complete exhaustion. The work had required me to be so

open, so vulnerable, that I had nothing left. Therapy, EMDR and time helped me gain perspective. I became someone new, someone who could finally step back and objectify that experience, to make sense of it rather than just live inside it. But that process took years.

leon: Memory plays such a big role in the second half of *ó delirious God*, especially as you write about your mother's death. One thing I've found in my own craft, and in early recovery, is that distance changes memories. They fade, shift and even disappear.

Looking back at what you wrote, do you ever find yourself thinking, "I don't remember that"? Has your relationship to these memories evolved over time? Given how long this book took to write, was there a point where you just couldn't go near it?

“THE MOVEMENT OF THE WORDS ON THE PAGE REFLECTS THE EMOTIONAL MOVEMENT I WAS GOING THROUGH AS I WROTE. IT WAS A SPONTANEOUS PROCESS OF JUST ASKING “HOW CAN I BEST CAPTURE THIS FEELING?””

Praise: When I was writing about those final days, there was a strong element of documentation. A psychoanalyst could probably dig into why I felt the need to create a monument to that experience. But beyond that, these are indelible moments. I wanted to preserve them, and I'm grateful I was able to capture some of my mother's actual words in the book. That felt worth concretising, both as her child and as a writer.

At the time, I approached it almost like journalism. How can I make this visceral, externalise it? I didn't want to carry it all internally for the rest of my life. Writing it down gave me a sense of control, but with untreated PTSD, that work could also transport me straight back into a flashback.

So, if there's been any evolution, it's not in how I remember things, it's in how I've healed. I wouldn't say writing this was cathartic in the way people sometimes mean, where you let emotions out and they lose their sting. If anything, it put me in direct contact with my feelings, which in early recovery was overwhelming. I couldn't separate them out, it was just this avalanche of emotion.

Over time, I did the healing work, neurologically and spiritually. Now, when I read the book, I'm not re-experiencing the trauma. I can still recall the details, but I'm not being pulled back into that moment. The loss, the confusion, the need for a strong maternal presence just as I was losing one. It's all still there, but I can hold it with distance.

That said, there are still parts of the book that make me cry. I don't want to be separate from it, I just don't want to be destroyed by it. Witnessing a loved one die is the ultimate human powerlessness.

At the time, that powerlessness intersected with so many other things in my life that it felt unbearable. But through healing, step work, faith, being open to letting something new emerge from brokenness, I can now read it as both writer and reader.

leon: I'm fascinated by your closeness to the subject matter and how you inhabit it, yet also the distance you create by writing it, and then the further distance (or closeness) you experience when reading it back.

Tim Ingold, in *Lines*, talks about monks writing scriptures, physically embodying the act of writing as a form of inhabitation. And in step 4, we're told to "write it out". Resentment appears something like 27 times in *The Big Book*. Writing isn't catharsis exactly, but there is something mystical in transposing what exists in ego and thought onto the page.

I've experienced it myself. Writing instinctively, once in my life, pulled me back from suicide. So, you were going through all these complex, simultaneous states of becoming, and yet you couldn't write, but you had to. That paradox.

Praise: It was absolute agony – and add imposter syndrome to that. It was torture. When I say I turned my creativity over to God, I mean it literally. I had no other strategy. There was no backup plan.

Coming from a media analysis background, what's never left me is the visual, images in one form or another. During my undergraduate days, I became fascinated by colour in composition, especially its semiotic relationship to personhood. So, I tried to make my own process as sensory as possible.

Some parts of the writing had colours attached to them in my mind. Others had sound. I've always written with a kind of mini soundtrack.

leon: When I was reading it, I found myself paying close attention to the spacing between letters and words. They felt like sounds. It made me think about how this text is inherently performative. You hear it as much as you see it.

Praise: And I feel it. There's texture to it, texture to the words. The movement of the words on the page reflects the emotional movement I was going through as I wrote. It was a spontaneous process of just asking "How can I best capture this feeling?" I wasn't in a place where things were settling. Some people in early recovery experience calm. For me, everything was churning up even more. Capturing that on the page took away the opportunity for shame. There was no hiding, no deception. This was my reality, fully present.

And beneath that, when you scratch away at it, it's just a very scared person in a lot of pain. But not only that. There's so much love in this book: joy, humour, movement. I wouldn't call it insulation from the harder topics, but it reflects how we experience many things at once. Grief can coexist with curiosity. Identity can feel terrifying when you try to fit it into a linear hero's journey. But break it down into a scene, and it becomes something else. That's what interests me. What's the *mise-en-scène*? What's the character's motivation?

leon: You mentioned earlier that there was no editing, but surely there was some? Was it quite a light touch? Just refining things here and there?

Praise: Some of it was super light touch.

leon: Like it came out in its purest form?

Praise: Some of it, yes. Most of the editing was about spacing, adjusting for the formal constraints of the page. It was often just about how to fit things within the parameters.

I also wanted to strip away anything unnecessary, which is why there are so few definite and indefinite articles in the book. It's very image-based, noun-heavy poetry. That's partly influenced by my background in linguistics. I studied aspects of Asian languages when I was younger, and I was particularly drawn to Tang poetry and Japanese haiku.

leon: I picked up on the haiku influence.

Praise: There are definite elements of that influence in the work. But more than just form, it's also in the grammar. In languages like Mandarin Chinese, you often move between subject, object and verb without articles like the or a. That concreteness really shaped how I approached the text.

leon: So, was that something that naturally emerged, or was it a conscious editing choice?

Praise: It came out that way naturally. From the start, I wanted the process to be as easy as possible for myself. Articles carry so much meaning as a person versus the person creates an immediate differentiation. Removing them allowed for more fluidity.

That said, in later stages, I did go back and chip away at anything that felt too lyrical or where an article had slipped in. But during that intense period of writing, I was working within the constraints of my own mind. Outside of that, I gave myself a lot more freedom.

leon: So, the obvious question is: what next? *ô delirious God* contains so much. Where do you go from here? Do you see yourself following on from it or taking a different direction?

Praise: My writing has shifted massively since the bulk of *ô delirious God* was written. In the last few years, my literary focus has been much more tied to my faith, studying scripture, theology and writing talks. That's become a central part of what God has done for me through this whole process.

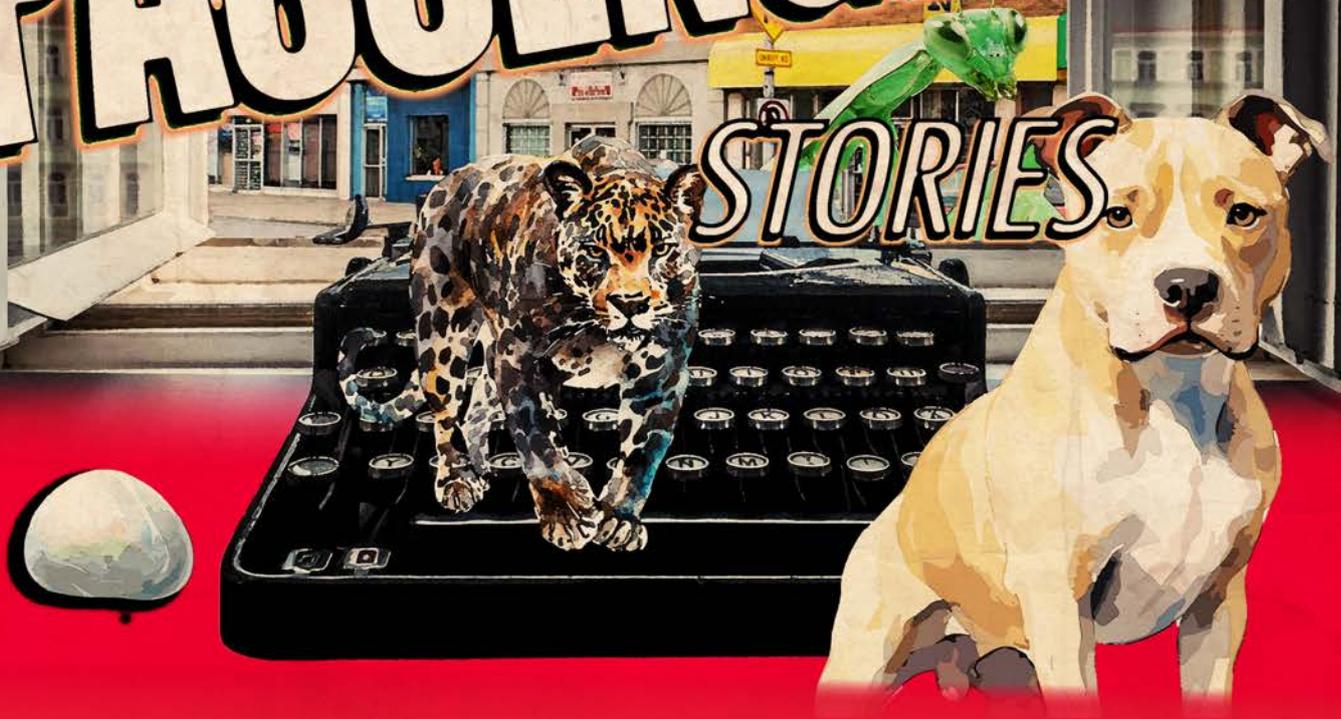
ô delirious God was about a moment of encounter, experiencing a characteristic of God I never knew was available to me. It was about letting go, not just of my mother, but of an entire version of myself.

So now, my spiritual work is my biggest focus. But things do still spill onto the page – to be determined.

One thing I've held onto is the discipline of listening as my primary mode of writing. I try to be open to whatever comes, to sit at the keyboard and let God do the typing rather than trying to control it. It's the most humbling practice I have. ♦

You can purchase *ô delirious God* from <https://www.the-bookhive.co.uk/product/praise-jourdain-o-delirious-god/> and other good bookshops.

PASSENGER STORIES



TALES OF ADVENTURE, DISCOVERY AND INTRIGUE, FROM THE PASSENGER RECOVERY WRITING GROUP

Passenger Recovery is a community addiction support system based in Hamtramk, a city in Detroit, Michigan. It was founded in 2016 to provide support for touring musicians, and it now provides resources to the local community using music, writing and other arts as a pathway to recovery.

As part of a recovery arts programme, author Jimmy Doom runs writing groups. Participants are given three prompts – a living thing, an inanimate object and a place both geographic and specific (i.e. Paris/bedroom or Lagos/furniture store). They then have 2 hours to write a story. Published here are four stories, from Autumn M., Jimmy Doom, Max Ryan and Christopher Tait.

PASSENGER STORIES

ONE STEP FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

by
Autumn M.

Ana peered out from her backyard over the valley packed with ancient adobe and crucifix peaks. The sunrise charging each pillar and beam with a most purifying vibration of love. Yes, energy filled her entire body, spiraling and cycling around in her torso with tingling warmth. To Ana, this was as close to God as she ever needed to be, cross-legged in the grass, in awe of the stillness and power of seemingly ordinary things.

Ana breathed deeply and heavily with intention, forcing every last gasp of air out of her lungs before desperately filling her lungs again. Barcelona seemed to have this effect on her, some mystical pull, as if she had been here once before, every frame of every villa familiar; weighted by a piercing ringing in the ears, a sense of urgency to get back ... back home, to a place where she knew who she was, where everything made sense.

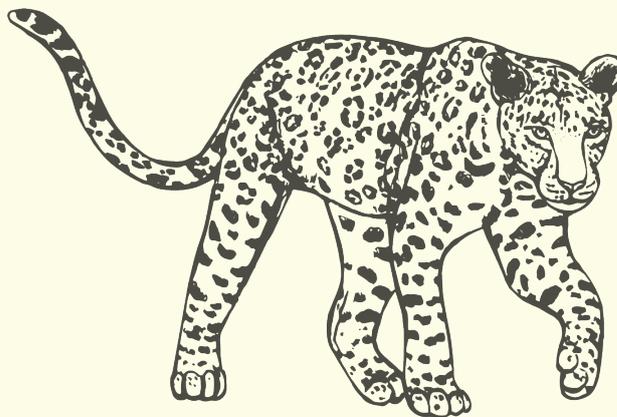
At times this urge was overwhelming, distracting her from her daily chores and necessary obligations as they did today. Ana wiped the dust off the glass knob to her office building peppered with stained glass portraits of old saints and Semites, many steeples and spires adorning the ceiling, the toroidal spin of ashen air, burnt smudge and old holy water blessings. After months of searching, this space shared in a church basement seemed the only willing and affordable partner for her therapy sessions. A long day of listening, writing, analysing and affirming for others, when in herself there lay this open void of anonymity. Ana was someone so keenly aware of the goings-on of others, trained by years of schooling and practice, and yet did not know her own soul.

At sunset Ana would return home each evening in time to climb an old repurposed pool ladder onto the roof again to bask in the luminous revolution of the sun which bookmarked the spiritual practice and energetic clearings of her day. Again, she lay breathing deeply, feeling the red dust of clay tiles mark each point of contact. In the stillness of her meditation some small vibration began to catch her attention, a dancing of the red powdery dirt as the pool ladder scratched gently upon the mission tile covering.

A jolt like thunder, the pool ladder slamming on the roof ... someone seeking to corner her perhaps beneath? Soon the sun would sink under the horizon and darkness would blanket the city. Quietly, Ana crawled on hands and knees as she spoke under her breath a prayer of protection, "St. Michael, the archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil." As she climbed nearer to the edge, two yellow orbs like the sun glowed enrobed in black like glass, like water, emerging over the boundary of the clay edge and the grass below. As soon as her eyes met his, Ana's hands and knees froze, a vision of a Phoenician man, settling the ancient beginnings of Spain, holding a Torah, leading the study in the very same office her therapy took place now. The man was cloaked in old cloth robes and sandals, but when she looked into the Jaguar's eyes, and this man's eyes, she knew this man ... those eyes were her eyes.

With a screech like death, the jaguar leapt toward Ana and she pushed the ladder off her roof as it crashed downward,

cracking and slamming, along with her understanding of all she understood about reality. She lay on the roof in relief and terror, as it slowly began to rain.



ONE FEAR AT A TIME

by
Jimmy Doom

They had done some mean tricks with a digital camera to make the cramped bedroom look spacious. The place felt like four shoe boxes taped together, with the cacophony of the city streets of Kinshasa like a megaphone on Josh's balcony. What they called a balcony, more like three two-by-eights taped together with the tape left over from the shoe boxes.

Josh's hosts weren't malicious, just tended toward hyperbole when it came to his accommodations.

Malcolm and Savannah had left a jigsaw puzzle for him, which he thought was sweet.

It was sweeter that they had somehow found a jigsaw puzzle from his home state of Kentucky. It was not so sweet that they had chosen a puzzle showing an assortment of bourbons.

His alcoholism had done a marvelous job of curing his agoraphobia, but nineteen days dry, the agoraphobia was back and dancing on the grave of both his social and financial possibilities. A tickling heat crawled up his neck. It was a feeling he was being watched, but had there been another human in the room, that human's breath would have fogged his glasses like a jigsaw puzzle of the Golden Gate Bridge at dawn.

Claustrophobia did not pair well with agoraphobia, and as Josh's eyes darted around the tiny room, he rang the third bell on his phobias: entomophobia.

He hated bugs.

And there, on the still shrink-wrapped Big Book Veronica gave him at the airport, was a massive praying mantis.

Josh gave the green creature some credit. At least he was no longer bored. He had a mission. Kill the praying mantis.

Do praying mantises fly?

Do they not fly but pray that they can?

Is there a real praying mantis god that would smite Josh for destroying one of his acolytes? Josh pulled apart his drapes for the first time in a week and looked around the streets to see if the French colonisers had left behind a bistro.

He saw nothing that suggested he could find booze or wine in the neighborhood, and he knew his agoraphobia wouldn't allow him to go more than one block.

PASSENGER STORIES

Who would win in a fight between alcoholism and agoraphobia? Stan Lee and Marvel had cheated him out of those particular superheroes.

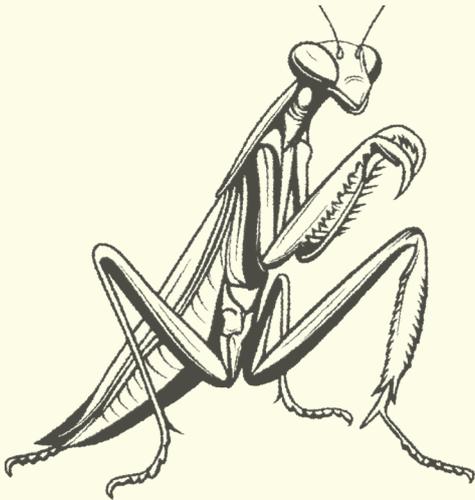
His sudden motion to the drapes had disturbed the mantis, who had jumped, flown or walked to the still shrink-wrapped copy of Augusten Burroughs's *Dry* that Ethan had given him for Secret Santa.

Josh grabbed the Big Book the mantis had been perched on, and with a two-handed downswing the Hulk would have been proud of, smushed the insect into a green paste like watered down wasabi.

Flopping onto his bed, Josh gave himself credit for conquering, albeit briefly, one phobia. He pulled the gooey shrink wrap off the Big Book and discarded it.

Looking at the back cover of the book, he came to a realisation.

Though it would be far more challenging and time consuming, he could attempt to complete the jigsaw puzzle upside down, gray side up, so that the bourbon bottles didn't stare back at him and mock him for being phobic, though right this second, he thought maybe that was conquerable too.



THE LAST WHITE PEBBLE

by
Max Ryan

The landline rang in the flat where Marly was staying in London. She lifted the receiver and waited.

"This is Fish," a voice spoke. "This is Hawk," she answered.

She waited through the usual connections until her true caller came on the line. "Hey, there, Hawk," he said.

"Hey, Ox."

"Are you ready for a brand new day?"

Marly Clark thought about all she'd gone through on her last assignment. She had been ready to burn it all down before it was finally over. But then, having the past three months to herself made her realise she was good at her job. She liked it.

She was ready for a brand new day and that's what she told Ox. "Great," he said. "The usual time."

"The furniture store?" she asked. "Obviously."

The line clicked.

The usual time meant three hours from the phone call. The furniture store was code for the nearest iteration of Cheddar Dave's Best Burgers.

Three hours. Was she really ready? She examined her decision and knew she was.

She cleaned her already spotless sniper rifle. This time it would not matter that she was using a weapon she'd used before. She packed her kit and backpack, dressed and walked calmly from her temporary home for the last time. This pattern repeated through her life, and she could picture each place: Singapore, Berlin, Amsterdam, Detroit, Memphis, New Orleans and Montreal.

They were all cities she was happy to walk away from.

She watched the restaurant from the bus stop across the street and moved into the surrounding brush and trees. When Ox arrived, she slipped into the shadows in the brush and trees. He always went in first. She timed her entrance to when his food was delivered and would pass his table, picking up the napkin he had dropped. The name and location of the target would be written on it.

She watched him order, and when the waiter returned with his food, she took a measured breath in. Taking half a breath out, she squeezed the trigger, and Ox fell face first into his soup, splashing tomatoes and blood in his hair, the tablecloth and the back of the booth.

After sliding the rifle into its case, she dug her last white pebble out of her pocket, dropped it on the ground and walked away.



AUTOSUGGESTION

by
Christopher Tait

A cold day in Philadelphia was still cold. It wasn't "Chicago cold," but it was enough to make Jimmy's toes go tingly, despite having had to walk three miles to his destination. Coming back here was worth it, necessary even. While his friends and colleagues were mourning T's passing across town and celebrating her online from all over the world, Jimmy had to go back to where so many seeds had been planted for them. Where they'd done so many gigs and dreamed up so many dreams that it started to feel like they'd be spinning their wheels forever. Two years on, however, T was to be touring the world, doing sound for an old Goth hack. Jimmy would be drying out in a godforsaken burg near St. Paul. T would be on a yacht in the Mediterranean, Jimmy would be giving talks in badly lit church basements over cold coffee.

PASSENGER STORIES

And then, recently, T would be found early one morning in her bed in Park Slope. Shortly thereafter, Jimmy would be back in Fishtown, celebrating her quietly and by himself.

“I can’t believe I’m back here,” he thought. He absolutely could believe he was back here. While he may have been outwardly dismissive of their dumpy Fishtown flat, this had been where most of the creative seeds that would ultimately sprout for both of them had been planted.

This apartment was his Strawberry Studios, his Abbey Road. No one else would ever celebrate it, but the flat held the kind of magic for him that pushed the boundaries of realistic recollection – nostalgia for a time that may or may not have ever existed. As he approached the building in the cold, thoughts appeared of comfy warm bonfires, Dean Martin records, Christmas lights and Irish whiskey warming his guts. The reality, of course, was a broken radiator, blackout curtains, dirty dishes and enough coke residue on every flat surface to get them through the next day’s hangover.

Wandering through the neighborhoods, he felt different chapters of his life lighting up in his head. Like fragmented acts of a play, on a dimly lit stage in the back corner of a wet brain. The Khyber Lounge, where Jimmy’s shitty high school band played before he was old enough to drink legally. While the Khyber held firm to age restrictions, there was a liquor store a block down that would sell to anyone who’d graduated diapers. A few streets north of there was Johnny Brenda’s, where he’d met T for the first time. The Ponys, a band from Chicago, was playing that night. She had been doing FOH sound for them on an East Coast tin-can tour and had showed up at JB’s to fill in as a friend doing monitors. Jimmy and T may never have met otherwise, even though doing “monitors” at JB’s simply meant making sure the lead vox and kick drum mics were not screeching back at the audience.

It was at Johnny Brenda’s where Jimmy and T discovered a shared love for Jameson’s. But it was behind Johnny Brenda’s that they met Dreyfus.

As soon as the image of Dreyfus’ raggedy face entered Jimmy’s head, he winced. He had readied himself to grieve for T, but he was blindsided by the mutt. Fuck.

Dreyfus was a blue pitbull they’d found wandering the alleys behind Johnny Brenda’s very shortly after meeting each other. Their triumvirate of ragtag nomads was complete when the pooch showed up. Dreyfus’ history was almost literally written on her sleeve – from the pellet in her ribcage, to her sagging teets from early breeding (and later starvation), to her swift departure whenever anyone raised a broomstick to clean the flat. This animal had experienced pain – her body and personality were a reflection of past traumas. Her gentle demeanor and fear of everything were sad reminders of how humans can shape or destroy an animal’s universe.

Dreyfus was a hero story and inspiration for both he and T over the years. The mutt had been starved on the streets, then overstuffed on the scraps of Johnny Brenda’s dumpster leftovers. The fluctuations in weight, mixed with an inner ear infection, left Dreyfus looking like Bambi on an ice rink when scuttering down the alleys. Human abuse can produce different outcomes to different animals. For this animal, what looked like rage was actually intense fear. After being bred early, then starved, then ejected, Dreyfus was left to fend for herself without much of an actual physical defense.

I’m going into great detail about the dog because this is how Jimmy’s brain processed the life and passing of Dreyfus. Every time he saw the pain in the dog’s eyes again, he had to remember that they’d done everything in their power to make her remaining years her absolute best. If he didn’t go through this process each time, if he didn’t remind himself that they’d given her a better life, his heart would break all over again. Equally as bad, his disgust for the human race would increase just a little.

The dog was a great inspiration to them both. Each time they felt as though their endeavors were in vain, or a case of the “fuck-its” started to brim, Jimmy and T would press on by remembering what Dreyfus had gone through and how still-happy she was just to eat, sleep and shit in their dumpy flat and neighborhood. Perseverance won out for her, and her perseverance those many years back would propel him to keep going through many of his deepest trenches and darkest hours. Being back in Fishtown at the moment was right near the top of that list.

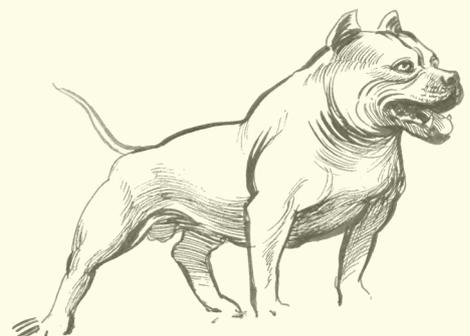
There was not so much a front or back yard to the complex they lived in, as more a cobblestone patio with garbage piled high, and a chorus of street cats that screeched like banshees during sex and altercations. Before Jimmy turned the corner to see the old place, the cats greeted him with a *Silent Hill* version of a Mary Poppins song and dance, where the tap-dancing, rainbows and jangles were replaced with shrieks of sorrow that sounded like the seventh level of the inferno. Jimmy was home.

Grief was a curious thing – at the same moment that he was blaming himself for the time they spent in squalor, for the toilet nearly falling through the floor, for attempting to burn the place down after passing out with a lit cigarette for the hundredth time, for so many things – Jimmy knew that she’d be looking down on him wanting him to remember the joy that they’d both experienced there, artificially induced or otherwise. That it wasn’t about whipping himself for good times, bad times, all the above – he’d never get that time or energy back, and the only thing she’d have wanted was for him to move forward. Yeah they lived in shit – it was one of the best times of his life. Yeah they partied, who cares? It’s remarkable how we can focus on the negative aspects of things we can’t change anyway. Personalities over particulars, always – when they were looking forward to what was to come, he had no idea that he’d eventually be looking back at those times with great fondness. Maybe he was just trying to crawl out of his own skin, maybe he was tired of running away from everyone and everything. It could just as easily have been her standing there today and him looking down from above, cackling about wild times.

“Save your prayers,” he thought, “she would have laughed at them anyway.”

“Save your regrets,” he thought, “she would have mocked you for looking anywhere but in front of you.”

With Dreyfus on one shoulder and T on the other, he turned the key and opened the door to the flat.



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OUT OF THE WOODS

BY
REIN CARNATION

The first Essex Recovery Festival was held in 2024. It is organised by the Essex Recovery Foundation (ERF) and held at the Lambourne End Centre in Essex. In this article, Rein Carnation reflects on how her experiences at the 2024 event gave her confidence and strengthened community bonds.

I was 11 months clean, sober and had returned to sanity when my friend and I set off for the first Essex Recovery Festival. It was the first festival that the ERF had organised. I'm still so grateful for being able to go to this festival, and I'm proud to say that I am now a volunteer with ERF. Even in my excitement for the next festival, I am still reaping the rewards of going to the event.

I remember arriving at the festival, setting up camp and saying hello to our new neighbours, who were sat down and having a cup of tea. The sense of community was felt from the very start. Everyone I met was there for the same thing – fun, connection and personal growth.

The staff and volunteers were friendly and helpful. Organisers, Laura and Jo, introduced themselves and explained how the mission behind ERF is to create a movement where people in Essex are proud to understand addiction and support recovery. The ERF is a place where lived experience can benefit the still-suffering alcoholic and addict, their families and even people working in the recovery field. It is a vision that I believe in. We can help people by arming them with the facts about addiction. It is an illness within the mind, body and soul, but there is a solution, and the festival and ERF are part of that solution. They are some of the gifts of recovery – gifts that just keep on giving.

Looking back on that first festival, there are a few highlights. Firstly, the climbing wall and zip line got my adrenaline pumping – perfect for a thrill seeker! I saw the sense of achievement in others as they pushed themselves, encouraged to face their fears. There were stalls selling crafts, and I especially enjoyed getting henna tattoos done by Pinky.

Since I'm already involved in some female drumming circles, I was excited to go drumming in the woods. I wasn't disappointed – the instructor running the session was brilliant, and the setting in the woods was perfect – a circle of unity!

It was nice to cool off in the Lambourne End Centre's pool, and a group of us quickly had a game of volleyball going. What a fun way to strengthen new bonds!

The gong sessions and meditation left me feeling grounded. They were run by Lisa, who also ran an energising chakra dance in the woods.

Of course, no festival would be complete without a dance to live music on the big field. There was also a DJ by the pool, with a dance floor that we all made full use of.

This was my first experience of dancing sober, and enjoying the music and atmosphere sober has shown me another level of freedom. I have since attended several sober events, all because of the confidence I gained at the festival.

Although there was always something to do at the festival, there was also plenty of space to have a quiet moment. This was important because it meant that the festival wasn't overwhelming.

I would like to thank the organisers; I know how hard you work and I would highly recommend being part of this growing community in Essex, and there's no better place to begin your journey with ERF than the Essex Recovery Festival 2025 – I already have my ticket! I can't wait!♦

For more information on ERF, and to book tickets for the festival, visit:

<https://www.essexrecoveryfoundation.org/festival>

Below: Rein Carnation (right) and Emily Feeley (left) at the 2024 Essex Recovery Festival



THE DIRECTORY

ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WORKING IN RECOVERY ARTS

UNITED KINGDOM

BDP Creative Communities

Bristol



Part of the Bristol Drugs Project (BDP), the Creative Communities include Bristol Recovery Orchestra, Oi Polloi Theatre Group and Rising Voices Recovery Choir.

Website: www.bdp.org.uk/creative-communities/

Cascade Creative Recovery

Brighton



A community-based, peer-led charity. Projects include a community choir, open mic nights, drama and creative writing

Website: cascadecreativerecovery.com

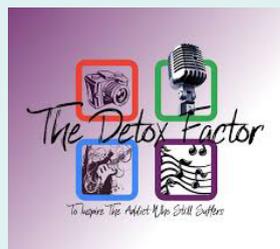
Cysylltu/Connecting

Bangor

A Bangor-based project seeking to address mental health and addiction issues with conversation through the arts

The Detox Factor

Staffordshire



A creative hub using music, theatre and other arts with the primary purpose of inspiring the still suffering addict.

Website: www.facebook.com/thedetoxfactor

Eleanor Cowell

East London

A visual artist exploring mental health through arts and well-being classes.

Email: eleanorcowellart@gmail.com

Website: eleanorcowell.com

Edinburgh Recovery Activities (ERA)

A project set up to provide fulfilling and enjoyable experiences for those in recovery. The activities include meet-ups and a creative writing group.

Email: mickmccarron@cyrenians.scot

Website: www.facebook.com/EdinburghRecoveryActivities

Essex Recovery Foundation



A visible recovery community that runs a number of arts-based recovery projects as well as the Essex Recovery Festival.

Website: www.essexrecoveryfoundation.org

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre

Chester, Liverpool, Greater Manchester



Fallen Angels Dance Theatre supports those in recovery from addiction or mental health adversity through dance, performance and creativity.

Website: fallenangelsdt.org

Geese Theatre Company

Birmingham



A theatre company enabling people in criminal justice and social welfare settings to make positive changes through performances and training events.

Email: info@geese.co.uk

Website: geese.co.uk



Horizon

Brighton

Supporting those in recovery from addiction through the medium of creative film, media and photography. Horizon offers free courses and workshops led by media professionals.

Email: annie@editsweet.rocks

Website: myhorizon.rocks

Lost Souls Poetry Night

Wandsworth, London



Sober-friendly open-mic nights for poets and other wordsmiths.

Website: instagram.com/lostsoulsventures



New Central Media

NCM will publish with people who have lived experience of addiction, as well as academic literature on improving practice and policy. No previous writing experience is necessary.

Email: d.patton@derby.ac.uk

Website: drdavidpatton.co.uk/new-central-media

New Note Projects

Brighton



The New Note Orchestra is made up of musicians in recovery from addiction. Also includes a weekly guitar group and New Note Dance.

Email: molly@newnote.co.uk

Website: newnote.co.uk

The Mixed Bag Players

York

York-based theatre group associated with York in Recovery.

Website: [facebook.com/groups/835222381575024/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/835222381575024/)

Not Saints

Brighton



A record label and events company that releases music from bands in recovery.

Website: [notsaints.co.uk](https://www.notsaints.co.uk)

The Outsiders Project



Boscombe

An organisation working with outsider artists in the community.

Website: [facebook.com/outsidersprojectboscombe](https://www.facebook.com/outsidersprojectboscombe)

Outside Edge Theatre Company

London, E1

A theatre company and participatory arts charity supporting recovering addicts and those affected by addiction..

Website: [edgetc.org](https://www.edgetc.org)



Our Space (Theatre Royal Plymouth)

A creative programme for adults who face challenges, like homelessness, mental health and substance misuse.

Website: [theatreroyal.com](https://www.theatreroyal.com)

Portraits of Recovery

Manchester



Visual arts charity supporting people and communities in recovery.

Website: [portraitsofrecovery.org.uk](https://www.portraitsofrecovery.org.uk)

The Recovery Collective

Glasgow



A community interest company formed to use music to promote recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

Website: [facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/)

[recoverycollectiveic](https://www.recoverycollectiveic)



Recoverist Theatre Project

Islington, London

Part of Islington People's Theatre project. It uses applied theatre and creativity with vulnerable and marginalised groups, including adults in recovery.

Website: [islingtonpeoples theatre.co.uk](https://www.islingtonpeoples theatre.co.uk)

Small Performance Adventures

Brighton



Workshops, performances and events in partnership with recovery, mental health, criminal justice, homelessness and education organisations.

Website: [smallperformanceadventures.com](https://www.smallperformanceadventures.com)

Sobriety Films



A social enterprise that uses film to raise awareness of recovery and champion recovery for those that need healing from addiction, mental ill health and trauma.

Website: www.sobrietyfilms.com

Status Creative CIC

Saxmundham



Carries out creative activities to benefit wellness and the community with people with adverse life experiences including addiction.

Website: [statuscreativecic.com/](https://www.statuscreativecic.com/)

SUIT (Service User Involvement Team)

Wolverhampton



Service supporting vulnerable adults in welfare and addiction recovery with lived experience. SUIT's art collective meet every week for practical and applied work.

Website: [suitrecoverywolverhampton.com](https://www.suitrecoverywolverhampton.com)



Vita Nova

Boscombe

A creative arts organisation and recovery community, run by members and volunteers.

Website: [vitanova.co.uk](https://www.vitanova.co.uk)

Voodoo Monkeys

Devon

A theatre company based in Devon committed to working with and for marginalised communities.

Website: [facebook.com/voodoomonkeys](https://www.facebook.com/voodoomonkeys)

INTERNATIONAL

The Creative High

USA

A documentary film created by Adriana Marchione and Dianne Griffin focussing on nine artists in recovery from addiction.

Website: [thecreativehigh.com](https://www.thecreativehigh.com)



Passenger Recovery

Worldwide

Resources, articles and support for sober musicians, including a tool kit for touring and travelling musicians who need help and support while sober on the road.

Website: [passengerrecovery.com](https://www.passengerrecovery.com)



Turn Up For Recovery

"Like Macmillan coffee mornings but for music and recovery," Turn Up For Recovery promotes fundraising gigs anyone around the world can put on.

Website: [turnupforrecovery.org](https://www.turnupforrecovery.org)



The Recovery Project

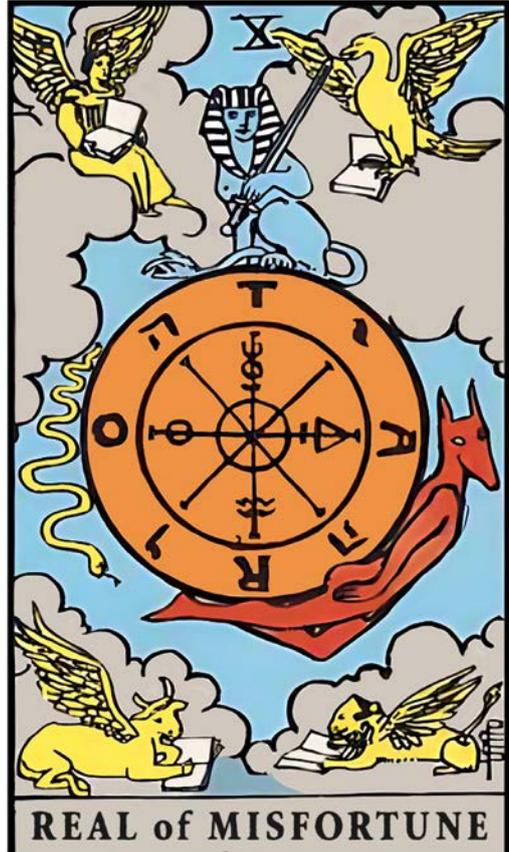
Florida

Florida-based projects using arts to help reduce stigma and help people with addiction.

Website: <https://www.floridastudiotheatre.org/support-us/therecoveryproject/>

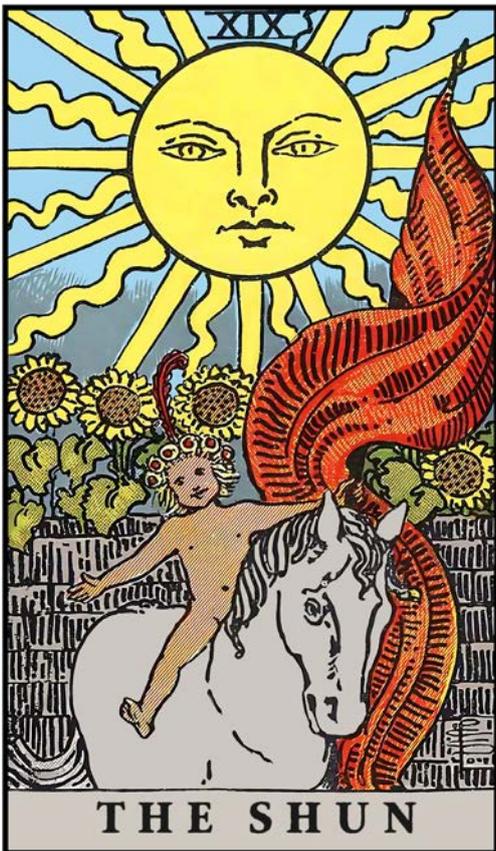


THE COMPLETE FOOL



REAL of MISFORTUNE

THE ALCOHOLIC'S TAROT



THE SHUN



THE DEMON DRINKER