

# 23

Southwark  
after dark



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# Editor's letter

A lot has changed in Southwark since the publication of 23 Magazine's first issue in June 2021. The remaining Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted and nightclubs finally opened their doors for the first time after 16 months of closure.

We decided to celebrate the return of nightlife in Issue 2 by shining a light on Southwark after dark. From the vibrant late-night food and drink scene (page 10, page 26), local art (page 14, page 56), theatre (page 6, page 46), and, of course, Southwark's famous nightclubs (page 30), this magazine celebrates the rebuilding of Southwark's night-time economy.

This magazine is also a love letter to the people who make the night-time economy happen. In these pages we recognise the bus drivers and late-night commuters (page 50), the vigilante litter-pickers (page 36), the tireless food sellers (page 18), as well as the DJs, entertainers, and event organisers who sacrifice their sleep to keep everything running.

However, a magazine about Southwark after dark also must acknowledge the challenges faced by the borough's people and institutions at night. Read about the safety issues faced by women and queer people after nightfall (page 44, page 50), as well as the threats to Southwark's clubbing and music venues (page 40), and disappearance of LGBTQ+ nights, pushing queer people out of the borough (page 22).

Sadly, some of Southwark's clubs, bars, and restaurants didn't survive the pandemic; Covid-19 compounded issues of rising rents and growing demand for land for development that have troubled the borough's nightlife for years. However, the pandemic gave us a new appreciation for the night-time economy and late-night workers. Moving forward, we hope this will remind us all to support and safeguard our local arts and culture after dark.

We couldn't have made this magazine without the kind support of Southwark Partnership and London College of Communication, as well as all the people and organisations featured in these pages. Thank you to the talented writers, photographers, illustrators and designers who made 23 Magazine possible.

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# A Midsummer Night's Performance

Words: Rob Wallace  
Images: Globe Gallery



mer, you're unlikely to find a more enchanting or brilliantly unique night-time experience than the midnight matinée performances at Shakespeare's Globe. As the rest of the city settles into sleep, within the open-air wooden 'O', audiences are transported into worlds of choices, forests, love and tragedy, set within the awe-inspiring reconstruction of the original Elizabethan theatre, underneath the dramatic backdrop of the pitch-black Southwark night sky.

Introduced by then Globe boss Mark Rylance in the early 2000s, these special late-night performances (or early morning for the pedants) have since become a South Bank summertime staple at the Bankside home of the Bard, allowing theatregoers a fascinatingly unique opportunity to revel in the magical atmosphere of Shakespeare's work under the stars.

Technically beginning at 11.59pm, assumedly to save audiences from turning up on the wrong day, the midnight matinées present an extraordinary opportunity to experience Shakespeare's timeless plays

under the blanket of moonlight. Maybe it's to do with the mid-night air, but there is something intoxicating about watching the Bard's plays in the witching hour. Everything is heightened: the battles feel bigger, the secret lovers seem sneakier; the stakes are higher, the laughs are louder; just as the plays themselves, watching them feels larger and more vital under the guise of night.

Some might even say the mid-night performances are about as close as you can get to watching a performance in Shakespeare's own time. Of course, in Shakespeare's own day, before the advent of electricity, both the stage and audience were lit by broad daylight. This led to a notoriously heavy interaction between Elizabethan theatregoers and the players themselves. The audience would move around, clap for the hero, boo for the villain and cheer for the special effects.

Whilst times have obviously changed, in the early hours, the now much-more-discreet modern Globe crowd becomes almost primal: undoubtedly

**Midnight matinées are back at Shakespeare's Globe this summer. Are Shakespeare's plays more magical when the performance starts at 11.59pm?**

Through the literary lens of Shakespeare, there's something magical about the night. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, four lovers get lost in a fairy woodland under the bright, revealing light of the moon. In *Hamlet*, it's when old ghosts return to haunt the darkest corners of our tragic

hero's mind. In *Macbeth*, the titular character's noble friend Banquo contemplates how 'the instrument of darkness tells us truths.' In Shakespeare's nights, the material gives way to the mystical: all fears, wants, secrets and haunts are on full display as darkness creeps over into night.

'The iron tongue of Midnight hath told twelve lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time. I fear we shall outstep the coming morn as much as we this night over-watch'd.'

When looking for a late-night adventure of your own this sum-





louder, rowdier, and, dare we say, boozier. The theatre bar remains open until the interval, allowing you to get your drinks in both before and midway through the show. Shakespeare's Globe also allows the unique offer to bring your own booze! (Just as long as you don't bring glass bottles.) The late-night atmosphere of these performances seemingly gives licence for the after-dark audience to properly go for it, so if you're looking for a merry midnight treat, you'll be hard pressed to find a more respectfully rowdy night than at the Globe this summer.

And this summer, the Globe has programmed two single performances from their season offerings for the night-time stage. First up, on Saturday 13th August, is Shakespeare's blisteringly relevant political thriller, *Julius Caesar*.

In this new production, helmed by award-winning director Diana Page, themes of conspiracy to kill, public broadcast of cunning rhetoric, and a divisive fight for greatness and power aim to hold a mirror up to our own familiar political landscape: the dark deeds taking place in the shadows feeling even more corrupt and nefarious played under the vast blanket of the London night.

'For now, this fearful night  
There is no stir or walking in the streets;  
And the complexion of the element  
In favour's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.'

The other option this summer is a reimagining of one



of Shakespeare's finest and funniest comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Following her acclaimed production of *Titus Andronicus* in 2015, stalwart director Lucy Bailey returns to the Bankside playhouse with the promise of a righteous garden party in this new production of the classic comedy.

Relocating the action to 1945 post-war Italy, expect a celebratory atmosphere as young lovers have their wits tested in a wild mix of games, pranks, and mischievous plots guaranteed to delight even the most hardened of theatregoers. The midnight matinée performance of *Much Ado* takes place on Saturday 19th August.

The Globe Theatre is at 21 New Globe Walk, London SE1 9DT. There are two midnight matinees this summer: *Julius Caesar* on Saturday 13th August and *Much Ado About Nothing* on Friday 19th August. Tickets via: [www.shakespearesglobe.com](http://www.shakespearesglobe.com)

For the most authentic replication of the Shakespearean experience, opt for the standing tickets, which, as always at the venue, offer the best view and cost only £5 (cheaper than a pint at any nearby riverside pub!).

Of course, for those unable or unwilling to be on their feet for what can be up to three hours, there's always the option of seated tickets in the rounded galleries of the Globe, offering a unique bird's-eye perspective on both the play, and the equal dramatics of the Groundlings.

The midnight matinées at the Globe truly offer a theatregoing experience like no other. Whether you're a Shakespeare-stan or English literature-phobic, you can be assured you'll find something to enjoy in the atmosphere and electric energy of these



specialised programmed performances. Shakespeare's plays elegantly encompass all that it means to be human: love, death, sadness, hope, power, conflict, rage and laughter. All heightened against the starry London sky, you'd be hard pressed not to feel renewed as you emerge

through the grand oak doors of the auditorium into the middle of the night. Walking home along the riverbank as the first streaks of sunrise begin to paint the Southwark night sky, there's nothing quite like this particular night-time theatre experience in the capital.



# How Peckham is Making Wine Fun

With a scene that favours funky 'natural' wines, Peckham is establishing itself as a hub of wine culture

Words: Gabrielle Dixon  
Illustrations: Pat Thomas



London, once dubbed the 'world's wine-tasting capital' by the Financial Times, has always had an appetite for vino. But wine culture in the city is entering a new age. With new wines described as 'biodynamic', 'organic', and 'natural' on the rise, traditional wine bars are losing their grip on the market. Instead, an unpretentious stream of wine bars selling 'natural' and other funky wines in places like Peckham are flourishing.

Peckham is making a name as a gastro star of London, with some of the city's best independent food and drink retailers on its doorstep. Among these is Queen's Road resident Peckham Cellars, selling wines to go and by the glass in their airy, greenhouse-style bar and restaurant. 'We've always wanted to make wine more fun,' says co-owner Luke West-Whitely. 'Love wine, hate pretension.'

Rooftop local Forza Wine, just opposite Peckham Rye station, is another beacon of delight in vino. Their rooftop views, careful minimalism, and walls of chic wine bottles are enough to certify them as one of the coolest bars in the world (28th, according to Time Out) – let alone their all-natural wine list. 'We make a concentrated effort to have something for everybody,' says founder Sebastian Redford. Joined by head chef and co-owner Michael Lavery, they tell a story of a bar doing wine differently. 'We just want people to feel welcome... One of the problems with the natural wine industry is that it's pretentious. You get talked down to if you don't understand.'



Natural wine has struck a chord with a younger generation of wine drinkers. Lacking an exact definition, 'natural' is usually associated with low-intervention, organic and biodynamic wines; no pesticides, extra yeast or sulphites, and an ethical farming approach both to the land and the people who work on it. Natural wines sometimes have a funkier or 'natty' taste that can be disarming. Grapes take on a flavour unlike any conventionally produced version. 'Some people like it, some people are like, "This is disgusting,"' laughs Luke. 'If you've been drinking conventionally produced wine for forty years, it is going to be quite challenging.'

Sebastian sees a shift in the way people interpret wine. 'I like Chablis, Pinot Noir'... that's going to be completely different in the hands of a natural wine maker. It's a bit more led by flavour profile or experience profile. So it's about, "it's a hot day so I'd like a chilled red. It's a hot day so I'd like a very clean, crisp white wine." Crisp and clean is generally a by word for like, it doesn't smell too natural, it doesn't smell of feet.' Luke attributes certain wine trends to 'Vinfluencers'. 'Instagram has had a weird effect on wine... flexing with your Domain



De L'Octavin label, starting to slowly trickle down to your everyday consumer.' While wine may not be a primarily visual product, the chic labels of natural wine appeal. Over at Forza Wine, Sebastian says that 'people fucking love labels'. Michael agrees – 'they point at a label on a shelf and go "that one!"' Claire Lancaster, of trend forecaster WGSN, told Refinery 29 that 'natural wine's label art is really benefiting from this conflation of what's natural and what's authentic. The small producers, the independent wineries and unique artists – it's all tapping into that same exact interest'.

The rebellious implications of doing wine differently, paired with beautiful bottles and funky taste has settled in well with Peckham's independent restaurants. Peckham's young population (the average age of a Peckham-ite is 32) knows their wine. 'People used to send it back all the time,' says Sebastian, referring to a particularly farmy bottle of red on their menu (Alesandrino Rosso, Valli Unite). Now, they recommend it to people curious about natural wines. But Luke believes the beauty of Peckham Cellars is that they stock natural and traditionally produced wines. 'The younger audience think we're a natural wine bar when they turn up, and I'm like "Bro, I've got Rioja made in '98 that has a tonne of sulphites, but it's delicious... I don't buy anything because it has a cool label and it's natural. For us, it's about how it tastes, and does it stand up as a wine.' Stocking over 150 wines, Peckham Cellars train their staff to decipher what the customer wants. 'We have people coming in like, "I'm not even going to look at the menu, what's good?"'

Luke has noticed that for Peckham Cellars, their clientele shifts. 'Earlier in the week, I'd say the age range might range between 30 and 50, and they're coming in for sit-down dinners, buying bottles, talking about the producers... Friday to Saturday we're much more a bar. The average age drops slightly from 25 to 40, the venue's slightly darker, the music's slightly louder. We get DJ's to curate playlists for us.' During the week, Forza Wine specialises in seasonal small plates and natural wine. But take the elevator up to visit on the weekend, and the doors will open on a party, home to Ross From Friends, house cocktails, and a who's who of Peckham. 'It's people who wear Ganni, with heat on their feet', laughs Bash.

Walk down Peckham high street and you'll find a host of restaurants embracing the trend. Local favourite taqueria Taco Queen stocks Chin Chin Vino Verde, a white wine so popular it's practically a symbol of the natural wine movement, as well as an English rosé. Modern European restaurant Levan offers an incredible selection of wines, carefully sourced by their in-house curator Ellen McDougal. Being served great wine with dinner is standard here, whether it's with tacos or Peckham Cellar's insane, Bib Gourmand-winning sandwiches.

If nothing else good came out of 2020's pandemic, the willingness of people to spend a little more on wine did. Both Peckham Cellars and Forza wine sold bottles out of their closed restaurants; for Peckham Cellars, it has had a positive, long-term impact. 'People had disposable income for the first time and were buying £20 instead of £10 bottles of

wine.' Luke explains, 'People who had never tasted a retail £20 bottle of wine before... it's double the price, 15 times the quality. For us, people are now drinking as standard bottle of retail wine, about £17. Pre-pandemic, it was closer to £13 or £14.' In fact, a report by Nielson shows that on-line wine sales spiked by 234% in 2020 and sales have continued to grow throughout 2021.

Peckham Cellars are beginning their Sunday Sessions, part of their 'make wine more fun' platform that they planned before the pandemic. They will install a DJ booth in front of the wine shop. 'We give our kitchen team the night off so they can come to the party,' says Luke. The first Sunday Session was the official opening party of new Mexican takeaway Taquiza, and the one after in collaboration with modern Vietnamese-Chinese restaurant Ling-Lings. Planned throughout the summer, the sessions are walk-in only. Luke promises lots of dancing.

Sadly, not everywhere made it through Covid-19. Another victim of the pandemic was the original Forza Win, the Italian-seasonal, older sibling restaurant to Forza Wine. The restaurant – also serving natural wine since its 2012 opening – was sorely missed by the local community when it closed in 2020. But a new Forza Win will open in Camberwell later this year. Peckham Cellars, too, is working on a younger sibling for their Peckham residence. Despite all the disruption that the pandemic caused to the hospitality industry, there seems to be a beacon of hope for people who really enjoy a glass or two of excellent wine.





# Southwark, but not as we know it

Soul Complex Unfinished is the story of the borough through the eyes of interdisciplinary artist Daniel Oduntan

Words: Victoria Monari  
Images: Daniel Oduntan

Daniel Oduntan is an interdisciplinary media artist born and bred in the London borough of Southwark. Being a bit of a polymath, he often moves seamlessly between visual art, sound and performance media; Southwark being the background setting of all this movement, of course.

His work has been commissioned by the likes of V&A Museum, Warp Records, Publicis London and The Design Museum. (A CV anyone would envy.)

The project which is the focus of this piece Soul Complex Unfinished (SCU) is an ode to Southwark, through a distinctly Black perspective, consisting of an archive of content that was taken between 2010 and 2012. Safe to say that if you're looking for a unique perspective from Southwark, native Daniel Oduntan should be your first port of call.

SCU is a visual and sound-based storytelling project about the unseen and often overlooked Black creativity within Southwark. Without Black contribution towards the creativity of Southwark Oduntan stresses that the cultural landscape would be 'totally different'.

I would have to agree and even stretch this statement more broadly. Blackness or the Black perspective in any cultural setting in the world, often comes with huge amounts of diversity and nuance; whether that's in language, food or overall lived experience. Black people and people of colour often set the tone for popular culture in most realms within wider society and as Oduntan proves, Southwark is no different.

Oduntan is becoming a bit of a hometown name within Southwark as he is set to start a six-month R&D residency at Tate Modern, where he will further develop SCU.

Oduntan talks with me about his love of Southwark and its creative resilience even in the face of unavoidable upscale and gentrified change. Now years later since the conception of SCU, Oduntan expresses he often feels like a time-traveller in his own town.

We discuss the importance of Black cultural contribution in keeping Southwark authentic, the significance of SCU now and his favourite thing about Southwark at night.

## WHAT DOES SOUTHWARK MEAN TO YOU?

London is a world city. You have everyone in the world living here, all continents, all corners of the globe occupying a city, each person's cultural experience will differ but there's a level of understanding and patience that comes with navigating a place like this. You almost develop a new language or instinct which I feel in a way shows up in my work. South East London especially brings this out. I was born and raised here and it's always had this beautiful struggle to it, a love and hate relationship. It can look like a stunning widescreen movie in technicolour at times, sound like a 30-piece orchestra and all the while be totally subject to generational disenfranchisement, social apathy and mental instability. It's something I tried to explore with my unfinished project 'Soul Complex' and video study 'Did We Leave The Lights On'.

## WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES YOU'VE FELT OR SEEN IN SOUTHWARK?

Other than the major landscape and built environment changes, it's the conversations, the sounds and the faces that I've noticed more than anything. I feel this the most when I'm in Elephant and Castle. I grew up in Camberwell but moved to East Street market in the mid 90s, I've seen whole communities uprooted, whole cultural understandings shifted and slowly been replaced. I think the feeling of not belonging is also possibly one of the biggest changes I've felt. I no longer live in the area, but a lot of my work still involves the borough of Southwark and I often feel like a time-travelling outsider with each visit.

## HOW DO YOU THINK BLACK CONTRIBUTION, A BLACK CREATIVE PRESENCE, ADDS TO THE CULTURE WITHIN SOUTHWARK?

Black collective contributions to me has a huge influence on the attractive energy of Southwark, the innovation through adversity, the celebration of the sounds, smells and tastes from distant lands, the mixture of social housing and the amplifying of Black voices on a world stage all creates this whole new culture that is able to shape our way of life. Without a Black presence, the cultural landscape is totally different.

## WHAT DOES SOUL COMPLEX UNFINISHED SAY ABOUT SOUTHWARK THEN VERSUS SOUTHWARK NOW?

The project itself is made up of 35mm photography, sound compositions, voice notes and video art. I've had the images, ideas and demos from Soul



Complex Unfinished with me for over a decade on various hard drives, some have survived and some haven't. One of the biggest things I've learnt over the years is that it's important to tell stories before they disappear, before the memory adjusts, like a vivid dream that disappears after waking up. People move, buildings change but stories can capsuleise moments.

And, as Southwark continues into its duality of investment and memory loss, it's important the stories are made and captured, we shouldn't wait, or doubt our experiences. I recently wrote and directed an audio visual short play "Laarin Aaye [between space]" based on the life of a Nigerian night shift worker living in Peckham who has to come to terms with the price of migration for not only herself but that of her British-born daughter.

There are so many stories happening right now. There are

so many conversations I wished I'd captured, whole friends and neighbours that I grew up with and we don't even have photos from those times, life doesn't stop, it's important to document what we can, I'm still learning this, all these unfinished stories are valid.

### WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE THINGS TO DO IN SOUTHWARK AT NIGHT?

I no longer live in the area so not usually around at night like I used to but when I was I often would just cycle with my music on for a few hours, helped to clear my head cycling at night and with my camera to hand. Elephant to Peckham, Peckham to Camberwell and then back up to Elephant / East Street and even over the Thames by way of Waterloo Bridge.

Southwark has always played out like a movie to me, especially at night, the built environment is actually beautiful if you know

where to look and music has always been a special part of that.

### WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU IN SOUTHWARK?

I will be starting a 6-month artist research and development residency with Southwark Council and the Tate Modern, where I'll be re-imagining the development, production and exhibiting of my work. I will also be developing and expanding SCU into a full-fledged ready for commission exhibition series. The "I Create... Artist Research & Development Fund" which I applied for is part of a wider collaboration with Southwark Council and several other Southwark based cultural institutions, with each institution centring on a particular discipline, ie Music; The Philharmonia, Public Art; Bold Tendencies etc.

My category, Visual Arts with the Tate Modern, was highly contested and so it's a real honour to get this opportunity to expand

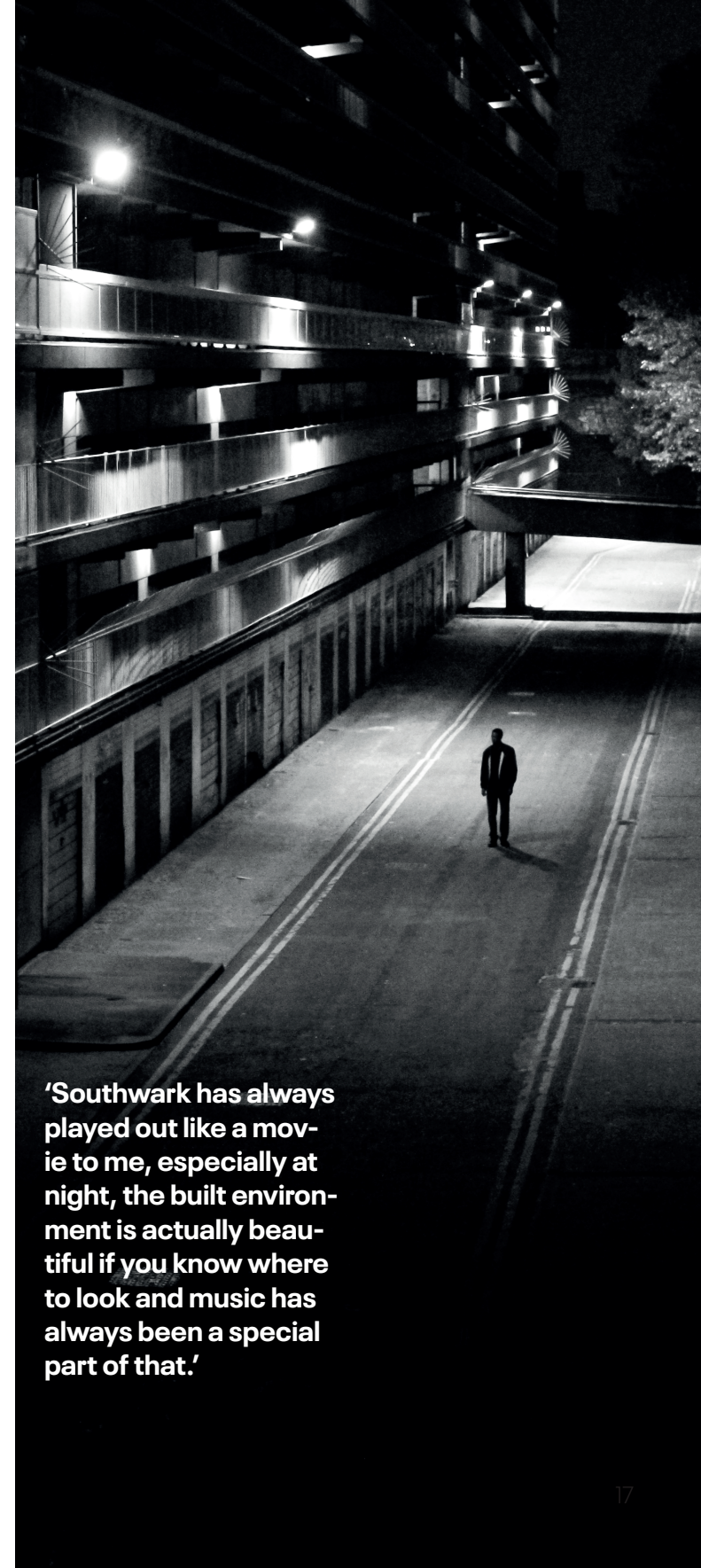
my work, a chance to complete this project about Southwark with one of the most known arts and cultural institutions within Southwark.

The aim is to also use the R&D fund to pursue my interest in participatory/spatial design and seek out methods that could speculate new possible solutions to growing problems in the creative sector, especially around creative workforces that lack the presence of different cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses.

In a borough that is as culturally rich as Southwark it's telling that these spaces are often not fully reflective of the communities they exist in. What barriers are being put up? What challenges are stopping the next creative innovators, who could easily be residing in social housing, displaying their work and curating within these spaces?

From the many voices I hear it can seem like a 'prophet has no honour in their hometown' experience at times. That's why working out of Southwark based collective spaces like the Livesey Exchange and Pempeople over the years has helped me to expand my understanding of the power of community as an enabler for support and innovation; they're currently building a new space on the Old Kent Road and it could be interesting to support some sort of cross collaboration with the Tate in that space.

The R&D process will run from May to November and there will hopefully be an opportunity to display the work from the process in the months after that so keep an eye out for when I do.



**'Southwark has always played out like a movie to me, especially at night, the built environment is actually beautiful if you know where to look and music has always been a special part of that.'**



A man with short brown hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and a high-visibility grey safety vest, is smiling at the camera. He is holding a wooden crate filled with oranges. The crate has the text 'LA PARISIENNE DEPUIS 1970' on it. In the background, there are tall stacks of various colored plastic crates (green, orange, blue) and some produce like mushrooms and strawberries in other crates.

# A Night in Borough Market

As the day draws to a close, a decades-old family business is just getting started

Groups of tipsy friends are walking back home together, singing a tune out loud. You can hear the sound of bars and restaurants closing down. People quietly making their ways to the last night bus after long shifts. Keys jingling, distant voices, bottles crashing into bins... The city changes once it gets dark but whilst everything seems to quieten down and get ready for bed Grovers Wholesale is opening for business.

Based in Borough Market, Grovers Wholesale boasts more than 60 years of experience selling produce, eggs, and oil to restaurants everywhere in London. Yet despite such an extensive career, this business is only a youngster compared to the market itself, whose life started as early as 1014 AD. Due to its strategic location as a meeting point of all roads into the City of London, a bustling market life has always existed in or near the London Bridge area since its very first construction: where there is life, there are markets. In sync with the ever-expanding city, the unorganised stalls and sellers of

the first market in Borough grew so much and so quickly that by the 15th century, it had expanded all along Long Southwark (now Borough High Street), all the way to St. Margaret's Church on the west and the Swan Inn on the east. In 1549, the market stalls spreading along the river's banks meant that the butchers were discarding entrails directly into the water (but only with the high tide, as per regulation at the time!).

The market as we now know it, in its covered form, was erected towards the end of the 18th century. From that moment forward the market only grew in its importance to the local area, flourishing all the way to the present day, where we can find business owners James and Steve Grover – a father and son duo – and Sandor sorting orders. The third generation of the Grover family who established the business more than 60 years ago, their work consists of stacking and unstacking crates, double- and triple-checking orders, preparing the clients' requests, and filling up the vans.

Borough Market is at 8 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1TL, close to London Bridge Station. It is open daily from 10am to 5pm and from 8am to 5pm on Saturdays.  
[boroughmarket.org.uk](http://boroughmarket.org.uk)



Words and Images: Sara Romanin Jacur



Open from 10pm each night until 6.30am, anyone can pop by to stock up on juicy vegetables, fragrant herbs, fresh dairy and eggs, and even frozen produce.

When I spent the night at the market it was a quiet time as it was half term. As we were looking at trucks coming in, food being put in fridges, personalised orders being organised, and lorries being sent out again, I chatted to Steve about all the products. From the best exotic fruit, overpriced farmers markets, and the bureaucratic hellscapes that are the border checks when you're dealing with perishable goods. In fact, precisely due to unpredictable instances that may spoil thousands of pounds

of goods, everything has to be done as efficiently and quickly as possible. Their job is affected by fickle seasonal changes, holidays, and just the bustle and hustle of human life in general. It's a demanding job for sure, one that few can hold on to for long, but an essential one too. As James Grover puts it: 'we all have to eat.' The business of food will never go extinct.

And when it comes to food waste, the UK unfortunately outshines various other European countries, with a staggering 9.5 million of tonnes of food waste produced in the UK in 2018 alone. When compared with the data on poverty, homelessness, and hunger in the UK, these



**Open from 10pm each night until 6.30am the next day, anyone can pop by to stock up on juicy vegetables, fragrant herbs, fresh dairy and eggs and even frozen produce.**



numbers become even more nauseating. From the 2022 UK Poverty report carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, we know that more than one in five people in the UK (22%) are in poverty. That's 14.5 million people. Homelessness is set to soar as housing costs rise, with more than 66,000 people estimated to become homeless by 2024.

Knowing all this, I was shocked to see the sheer number of crates that had been rejected by clients for trivial reasons such as minor flaws, nicks or bruises or odd shapes. If just one of them in a crate is not up to standards, the whole lot is refused. Grovers takes pride in knowing that almost none of their food goes

to landfill, and Borough Market itself makes sure any surplus food feeds the local vulnerable people thanks to services such as FoodSave and Plan Zeroes. These services allow businesses to donate their unneeded food, reducing waste and hunger.

Food brings people together. Watching the family at Grovers Wholesale work all night, I noticed that they have an almost paternal love for their outputs. As the sun rises and the city wakes up again, the Grovers' job is done for the day. Next time when you are eating one of your five a day, thinking of the night life, the kilometres it covered, and who handled it before it arrived on your plate.



Words: Gabrielle Dixon  
Images: Liliana Zaharia,  
Louie Wittner

Fire  
exit

# Where have all the gay bars gone?

As Southwark's queer nightlife rapidly disappears,  
LGBTQ+ locals are losing culture and community

Suzie Krueger runs a fetish night called Hard On. In Suzie's words, it's 'mayhem. We have a dance floor with very good DJs, we have live sex shows from porn actors from across the world, I have two playrooms full of equipment that I own.'

With shows in Amsterdam and Berlin, Suzie used to run London's Hard On out of Pulse, a gay nightclub in Blackfriars railway arches (Pulse was also known as XXL after its famous bear-friendly night). Owned and run by Mark Ames and James McNeil, Pulse had resided in the railway arches since 2000. 'Pulse was an institution,' Suzie explains.

In 2018, Pulse's owners learned that Southwark Council had sold the land the club was on to make way for a £1.3 billion new housing development: 34 storeys providing 489 apartments, a hotel, offices and shops, planned as part of Southwark Council's bid to build 2,355 homes a year. Despite a long fight from Pulse and its patrons, the club closed forever in September 2019. The council promised the owners that Pulse would be rehomed within the borough, but as of May 2022, any plans to reopen Pulse have been kept private. Hard On has had to relocate to Vauxhall.

Elsewhere in Southwark, people could once escape to a queer night at Camberwell's The Chateau. Hidden behind the Virgin Mary stained glass windows of their ex-cocktail bar residence, organiser Laurie Belgrave told Time Out that 'On Saturday night, we had two guys making out in front of Jesus. If there is a God, I think he made this space to be a gay bar!'

Performers at the club included drag queen and DJ Vivian Bam Bam. 'She's like if Paris Hilton and Courtney Love went on a crazy bender and had a baby,' Vivian describes herself. 'Let me tell you, drinks go flying. The girls cannot cope when you play Paris Hilton.'

When The Chateau closed its doors in April 2020, it came as no surprise to Vivian and the other performers. Their holy grail party space had been a temporary home between its founding in 2018 and the Covid 2020 pandemic. But when the Chateau relocated in 2021 to Set in Woolwich, it marked a bigger change in the area than the shifting of one queer nightclub out of Southwark. Following the closure of Pulse in 2019, The Chateau's departure represented the last of Southwark's permanent queer clubs closing for good.

As the borough with the second-highest density of LGBTQ+ residents in London, Southwark's loss of its queer venues is worrying. Southwark LGBT

Network lists the closure of Pulse and the Chateau as a concern in their 2021 report on the borough, stating that 'in planning matters you have to be alert to hidden homophobia when people are objecting to, say, the hours of some bar or club.' These spaces are especially important to Black and minority ethnic members of the queer community, who are twice as likely to attend LGBTQ+ specific events, Stonewall reports.

Cameron, 24, is a University of the Arts London student living in Camberwell. 'I moved thinking it'd be a hot bed of culture, and it is, but not really queer culture,'

they say. 'My friends are like, oh, this queer night is fifty minutes away, let's go to Corsica (in Elephant and Castle) instead.'

'It's not bad - I guess if you put enough queer people in a room it becomes a hostile takeover. But I'd love to support a queer party instead.'

Hard On's Suzie Krueger is a nightclub veteran, experienced with Southwark Council's attitude to club nights as part of the team responsible for Camberwell nightclub Imperial Gardens. When Imperial Gardens closed in 2004, the Guardian lamented the loss of a 'talent factory', citing Mas-





sive Attack and Daft Punk on their lineup and audience members like Björk and Lauryn Hill. 'They shut down my club after eight years,' Suzie reminisces. 'Again, it was gentrification because if you look at Imperial Gardens now, there's a flat built about two feet away from the frigging front door.'

Suzie believes that some police officers have issues with queer nights – especially fetish nights – because they simply don't understand what they're dealing with. 'They absolutely need training on LGBTQ [nights],' she says. She also suspects that the police acceptance of queer nights varies between boroughs. 'I've never had a problem [with police] in Lambeth. They're extremely open minded and much more liberal probably than any borough. Islington is getting better, but isn't... you know, they need training.'

The loss of queer night culture is not a story unique to Southwark. Queer parties across London are suffering in boroughs such as Tower Hamlets, where local authorities are attempting to completely ban kink and fetish nights. In March 2022, Vice reported that Tower Hamlets' council had threatened venues hosting Klub Verboten and Crossbreed, kink and fetish club nights that focus on safe exploration and consent. Leo Charalambides, a leading sex establishment licensing barrister, told Vice that 'Many councils have a narrow and incomplete understanding of the role of adult and sex entertainment within their night-time economy', stating that their policies were dated and poorly informed. '(Klub Verboten) are at the forefront of tackling issues around safety, consent, diversity and inclusion'.

Suzie explains that there is now a monthly gathering at the Colour Factory in Hackney where LGBTQ+ club promoters discuss the concerning state of queer nightlife. 'I don't understand why people move to central London and then say, "You don't want a club there, it's too noisy." Well then, don't move to central London,' she says.

Suzie isn't alone in this view. When Islington electronic club Fabric was threatened with closure in 2016, purveyors of night culture including Trainspotting author Irvine Welsh emerged to slam Islington council for what he called 'the beginning of the end of our cities as cultural centres'.

'It's all about property development.... Cities need to be kept as sterile and unthreatening as possible. The tent cities and makeshift communities that will grow up on the outskirts of cities, like in the developing world, will be the places to go for a proper party,' the author told the Guardian.

Welsh's comments ring true. While central London boroughs like Southwark suffer from a night-time culture exodus, DIY clubs and venues (that are often friendlier to LGBTQ+ club nights) are finding their way to the city outskirts, where they're less likely to be bothered by police or property developers. SET in Woolwich, new home of The Chateau, is over an hour farther south-east on public transport than the former Southwark location.

'Queers kind of like the idea of it not being central', Vivian laughs. 'It's like an adventure'. Suzie and Vivian also both name Deptford's Venue MOT

as personal favourites. However, neither SET nor Venue MOT are permanent LGBTQ+ venues.

While Southwark's queer residents come to terms with long commutes to the club, however, queer performers are trying and failing to stop the resegregation of queer culture to the margins of society. Curating a club night is expensive enough, queer parties are especially expensive. Vivian describes TRASH CHIC, the 'shit pop, hyper pop, drag queens being really stupid' night curated by her since 2019. 'We came back from lockdown and tried a couple of times, but queer venues are really just trying to stay afloat. When you're asked for like a £100 fee, when you're a really small party, that's



cutting out potentially two performers ... A lot of these places don't have the best equipment, so you might need to factor in hiring decks.'

'The venues can't afford to stay open. We've had to stop doing it because we can't afford to... Warehouses are just more accessible.'

All is not necessarily lost for Southwark and other more central London boroughs. Pulse nightclub has been assigned another venue by Southwark Council (although the location has not yet been publicly announced). Vivian believes the solution could be existing venues more frequently handing the reigns to queer promoters for the night. 'Why haven't they got like a queer nightlife mentoring programme where they just give people a room and they're like, fill it?' Vivian says.

'But even then, in my head every time I go I'm

like, how much longer do we have this venue? 'Cause I know someone's going to come and rip this down and put some shitty flats in there'.

Amidst the rising costs of living in London, frustration with the lack of queer nightlife is at the forefront of residents' minds. Southwark has a reputation as a creative place for queer people, home to queer communities and experimental queer nights. However, with the loss of erotic thrillers like Hard On or DIY pop-ups like the Chateau, Southwark risks losing this community to more welcoming pastures.

'I want campy, I want dykey,' says UAL student Cameron. 'I pay more to live in Camberwell than I would to live in Deptford, but there's maybe one queer party a month at Bussey (Building) or Tola (in Peckham).

'Eventually I'll just leave.'





# Midnight Feasts

Havens for night workers, party-goers and insomniacs, Southwark's late-night food joints have something for everyone's taste buds

## KATIE'S KITCHEN

165 Peckham Hill St, London SE15 5JZ

Opening hours: 11am-12:30am Monday-Thursday, 11am-1:30am Friday-Saturday, 12pm-12:30am Sunday

If you're wandering around Peckham undecided on what to eat at 1am on a weekend night, look no further than Katie's Kitchen. With vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, from sweet and savoury pizzas and waffles, pasta, wings, burgers and garlic bread to desserts, salads and milkshakes, this place has it all at affordable prices.

Mostly suited for takeaways, the place has two small tables with a seating capacity of four. It's an extremely small but oddly comforting space with aromas from the kitchen wafting through the air, frequently opening and closing doors and happy (usually young) faces enjoying their food.

'I like this. My cousin recommended it to me and the food tastes really nice,' says Nita, a young customer waiting for a pizza with two friends.

If you want to challenge your taste buds with a unique combination, try Katie's Waffle (£5.50 for half; £10 for full) which features boneless chicken, fried egg, bacon and plantain sandwiched between waffles. It's the perfect combination of sweet, savoury and salty!

[katieaskitchen.uk](http://katieaskitchen.uk)

Words: Advika Reddy  
Images: Angela Tozzi







### BAGEL KING

280 Walworth Rd, London  
SE17 2TE

Opening hours: 8am-1:30am,  
Monday to Sunday

If you talk a walk down Walworth Road, you'll find a small but bustling takeaway right next to a Chicken Cottage. The bright lights read 'Bagel King' and when you open the door, the chatter of young, old, sober and drunk customers and the fast-moving hands of smiling workers greet you.

Bagel King is home to over 30 varieties of filled bagels including variations with seafood, chicken, pork, lamb, egg and plantain. Try the fusion options such as the chicken tikka bagel (£4) and feel the creamy, tomato taste of the chicken tikka blend with cheese and perfectly reach your taste buds, sandwiched in between the pillowy soft bagel bread.



Beyond bagels, they also serve large samosas, patties, box meals with rice, and drinks. Their large Jamaican jerk chicken pieces (£2.50 each) are undoubtedly some of the best in the area, perfectly charred with the right amount of spice.

Bagel King is a well-known gem in the locality, but not just for post-rave savoury food. 'I've been here three times already for their marble cake and custard,' says Nikki, a young customer from the area visiting with her friend. 'It's local, it's tasty, it's quick and easy, it's got variety so it's good.'

Usually open 24/7 and equipped with bouncers at the entrance, Bagel King will always be there, waiting to satisfy your late-night cravings.

[bagelking247.co.uk](http://bagelking247.co.uk)

### BOLU RESTAURANT AND TAKEAWAY

7 Camberwell Church St, London  
SE5 8TR

Opening hours: 11am-3am  
Sunday-Thursday, 11am-4am  
Friday-Saturday

If you're hankering for Turkish food, Camberwell's Bolu Restaurant and Takeaway is the place to go. Eat in or take away (the cheaper option), the scrumptious taste will make you forget about any other kebab shop you have been to.

In addition to lamb and beef kebabs, they also serve vegetarian and meat burgers and wraps, chips, and drinks. The falafel wraps are a popular bargain, stuffed with vegetables, falafels, and spicy chilli sauce for just £3.50.

Weekend nights often see the small takeaway segment at the entrance packed with both young and middle-aged customers on their way home from



nights out with friends, but the queues are sure to be worth it.

'I love this place. I keep coming back. Their portion sizes are very good for the price, not just the non-veg kebabs but also their vegan options like falafel wrap. It is huge, filling and very yummy,' says Reuben, a student who popped in for some grub on the way home from a house party.





# Chinese Night

## 中国之夜：MOS华人趴

**How the Ministry of Sound became a home from home for students from China**

Words: Kunyue Wang  
Images: Ministry of Sound  
文：王昆月  
图：Ministry of Sound

Let me make a wild guess, even if you have not been there before, you might probably have heard of Ministry of Sound - one of the world's top 100 nightclubs located close to Elephant and Castle station. Founded in 1991, Ministry of Sound was once a derelict bus garage in South London - an area that, at the time, was more infamous than famous. The first event had no alcohol, three flashing lights, moody security and unless you knew the names of at least half-a-dozen Chicago house DJs, you were never getting through the menacing, prison-like, gates.

Much has changed since then. As one of Southwark's iconic entertainment venues, when night falls, music is on, alcohol is served, and young souls are released for hours under the hammer of electronic music and drums.

来，让我大胆猜测一下，即使你以前没有去过，你可能也听说过Ministry of Sound——一个位于伦敦传媒学院旁边的世界百强夜总会。MOS成立于1991年，曾经是伦敦南部一个废弃的公共汽车车库——在那个时候，这个地区的名声不是很好。他们举办的首个活动并没有售卖酒水，只有三个闪光灯和一定的安全性保障，除非你知道至少六名芝加哥家庭DJ的名字，否则你永远无法通过像监狱般的大门。



As a Chinese student at London College of Communication, when I first arrived in Southwark, the name Ministry of Sound would be one of the first things we were introduced to. The Chinese students' freshman parties would be held there several times a week at the beginning of the semester.

As well as that the Chinese Singles Day event, Chinese Halloween event, and Chinese Christmas events all become reasons for my friends to urge me to go and find out. Among them, the audio equipment, music, DJ, and the faces of the same race around you can especially feel immersed in the atmosphere created by Ministry of Sound. But while enjoying the music and alcohol, are you as confused as me - why do we rarely see western faces here?

In general, the Chinese people here in London are mostly Chinese students, where they only stay for one or three years for their degrees. This phenomenon has also led to a very common situation: Chinese people in London come and go, there are new people coming and old people going every year. Therefore, for a nightclub, the promotion campaign targeting specifically for the student group can almost cover 95% of the Chinese population in London.

作为一名前LCC的中国学生，初到Southwark时便久仰Ministry of Sound的大名。开学季每周数次的中国学生新生趴，或者是一票难求的华人光棍节活动、华人万圣节活动、华人圣诞节活动都成为了身边朋友催促我前去一探究竟的理由。其中的音响设备、音乐、DJ、身边簇拥的相同种族的面孔尤其能让人沉浸在Ministry of Sound营造的气氛中。但是在享受音乐与酒精的同时，你是否也像我一样有过疑问——为什么我看不到西方人的面孔？

总的来说，在伦敦的中国人多是中国留学生，他们大多数只在伦敦停留一到三年的时间。这也导致了一个很普遍的现象：在伦敦的中国人来来去去，以年为单位，每年都有新的学生，老的学生也离开回国了。因此，对于一家夜店来说，一年一轮的学生群体的推广方式几乎可以覆盖伦敦95%的华人。



## THE PARTY

On the 17th of April this year, the Easter special event for the Chinese was held at the Ministry of Sound as scheduled. Stepping into the crowded security check area, the coldness of the early spring night almost forced people to look forward to the excitement of the combination of sweat and perfume after stepping onto the dance floor. What catches the eye are countless East Asian faces, although it is difficult even for people born and raised in East Asia to differentiate whether the person in front of them is Korean, Japanese, Chinese or Singaporean. Most of them are students who have only flown here recently to receive education in London and these Chinese events make them feel as though they were at home. The western faces almost hidden in the thousands of people there, will not stop their minds returning to cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Shenzhen.

The DJ on stage was also allegedly a young face from East Asia and the surprisingly powerful energy consumed the crowd on the dance floor. With couple shots of alcohol, young souls gradually sink into the shining lights, and at that moment intuition replaces the vague will and intellects. 'We are here because we know a lot of Chinese people will be here tonight.' After a few drinks, the girls next to us started to talk about themselves, which is probably a very common thought and a significant marketing factor. She then added: 'It feels good to see a lot of familiar faces, really feels like home.' And of course, the whole conversation happened in Chinese, which leads to the point that we can speak our mother tongue comfortably and no one will judge us for speaking broken English.

今年4月17日，MOS华人复活节趴特别活动如期举行。踏进人头攒动的安检区，初春夜的寒冷几乎逼得我们期待踏上舞池后那一抹汗水与香水的交融。

映入眼帘的是无数东亚人的面孔，尽管即使是在东亚土生土长的人也很难分辨眼前的人是韩国人、日本人、中国人还是新加坡人。他们中的大多数是最近才飞到这里来伦敦接受教育的学生，这些中国活动可以让他们立刻有回到家的感觉。那些极个别的、几乎隐藏在数千人中的西方面孔，不影响他们的思绪飞回北京/上海/杭州/深圳。

舞台上的 DJ 也是一张来自东亚的年轻面孔，他身上 惊人的强大能量吞噬了舞池中的人群。年轻的灵魂逐渐沉入闪耀的光芒中，在那一刻直觉取代了模糊的意志和理智。

“我们来这里是因为我们知道今晚是中国的活动。”几杯酒后后，我们旁边的女孩开始跟我们闲聊，这是一个非常普遍的想法，也是一个重要的营销因素。她接着补充说：“看到很多熟悉的面孔感觉很好，真的有家的感觉。”当然，整段对话都是用中文进行的。直接用母语进行交流的顺畅和舒适是在伦敦的学习生活中非常罕见的，没有人会因为我们会说英语不好而对我们评头论足。



## MYSTERIOUS CHINESE EVENTS

The Chinese music director of Ministry of Sound, Wei Siheng, was also the DJ on the main stage of the Easter event. He says, 'I loved playing discs very much when I was young, but when you grow up, you will find that interest cannot be used as the mainstay of the economy.' To my surprise, I also learned that this was the music director's part-time job with his main job being a programmer. Wei Siheng started playing discs when he was a sophomore and started to be a regular DJ at Ministry of Sound when he was a first year student at uni in England. Later, because of the pandemic, he returned to China and toured several cities as DJ.

'Every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday are the active nights of Ministry of Sound. As a part-time music director, I am responsible for every Friday night targeting local market. But for Chinese nightclub activities, they are usually outsourced to other entertainers or companies on special days in the week such as weekdays.'

'HD Life has been established for ten years and I joined as a partner not long ago.' Because of Wei Siheng's joining and his position in Ministry of Sound, the scale of events undertaken by HD Life has been significantly upgraded. From the originally smaller-scale party event, it has been upgraded to a nightclub party with a maximum capacity of 1,600 people. The cooperation between them, the student unions of various universities in London and other Japanese and Korean associations have also enriched the variety of activities undertaken

有志者事竟成，带着对华人趴来龙去脉的好奇，笔者直接采访到了Ministry of Sound的华人音乐总监，也是复活节活动当天主舞池台上的DJ——魏思衡。刚一坐下来聊到他的在夜店的职位，他戏谑的笑了起来：“我年轻的时候非常热爱打碟，但是长大一些之后你会发现，兴趣是不能当作经济支柱的。”笔者惊讶过后了解到，音乐总监只是他的兼职，他的主业是一名程序员。魏思衡大二的时候开始打碟，大三的时候开始在Ministry of Sound做驻场DJ；而后因为疫情，回国探望家人，顺便在中国的几大主要城市进行了巡演。

“每周的周二、周五、周六是Ministry of Sound自己负责的活动。我作为兼职的音乐总监会负责每个周五的晚上。而像针对华人的夜店活动，通常是外包给别的娱乐公司的。”

“HD Life创立有十年了，我才加入成为合伙人不久。”因为魏思衡的加入与他在Ministry of Sound的职位，HD Life承办的活动规模得到了很大的升级。从原先较小规模的派对活动，升级为最高容纳1600人的夜店派对。与伦敦各大院校的学生会的合作和与其他日本、韩国社团的合作，也让HD Life承办的活动种类更加丰富多样。在Ministry of Sound举办的华人趴，通常是由HD



by HD Life. Chinese events held in Ministry of Sound are usually hosted by HD Life. They normally rent the venues or organise the event together with Ministry of Sound.

‘Our own Chinese events at Ministry of Sound are all about finding DJs and artists for the night. We just rented their venues. Selling tickets or promotions has nothing to do with Ministry of Sound.’ The atmosphere element is absent on the official website - if you go to the website to check the list of events, you cannot tell which are Chinese parties and which are local. During the Chinese nights, you probably cannot tell the different from the music or DJ since western music is better known for everyone; but you will recognize this must be a Chinese event once you started queuing up outside - you will be surrounded by Chinese faces!

### CALLING OUT TO CHINESE

‘The event information is mainly pushed towards our target audience in the form of articles on the WeChat official account. The WeChat official account HD Life and the major student unions in London will forward it and promote it together with us.’ As soon as he finished speaking, he added, “And our promoters... are mostly our friends.” Just like popular advertisement methods generally used here using social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook etc.

Ministry of Sound’s Chinese party uses the mainstream Chinese publicity methods; WeChat public account and word of mouth. Those unfamiliar with Chinese social media may heard about with WeChat. This is a mobile application that integrates instant messaging, dynamic posting, public accounts, built-in application, electronic wallet and other functions.

The organiser uses HD Life’s official WeChat account to publish event information, other public accounts that have cooperative relations will forward the article and then forward the article on the WeChat account to the Chinese student’s community.

Chinese parties will be held in certain festivals - especially at special times related to students, such as the freshmen month, special Chinese Singles’ Day, Chinese Valentine’s Day, etc., which are all in cooperation with HD Life and Ministry of Sound.

Life租下场地承办，或者与Ministry of Sound一同承办。

“我们自己在 Ministry of Sound 举办的活动都是我们自己找当晚的DJ和艺人，我们只是租了他们的场地，如何买票或者进行宣传都和 Ministry of Sound 没什么关系。”华人趴中的“华人”元素，其实在官网上完全没有——也就是说，如果去官网上去查看夜店活动列表，并不能分辨出哪些活动是华人趴，哪些是本地夜店活动。

“活动信息主要以微信公众号文章的形式推送给我们的目标群体。微信公众号HD Life和伦敦的各大学生会都会转发并与我们一同进行宣传。”话音刚落，他又补了一句，“还有我们的 promoter.....主要也都是朋友。”相比于在英国流行的

Instagram、Twitter 与传统媒介的宣传方式，Ministry of Sound 的华人趴使用的还是中国国内主流的宣传方式——微信公众号及熟人传播。不熟悉中国社交媒体的人可能对微信并不熟悉。这是一个集合了即时讯息，动态发布，公众账号，内置应用程序，电子钱包等功能的手机应用程序。主办方使用 HD Life 的官方微信公众号来发布活动信息，有合作关系的其他公众账号转发文章，再将微信公众号的文章转发到中国学生的社群中而熟人传播的模式则是一传十、十传百，广而告之。

华人趴在一些特殊节日会集中举行——尤其是一些与学生相关的时间节点比如开学迎新月，或者中国文化中特有的文化节日比如光棍节、七夕节等，都是 HD Life与Ministry of Sound合作的绝佳机会。

同为夜店，其实中国的夜店文化与英国的夜店文化有极大的不同。英国的夜店多为“舞池文化”，前来放松享乐的人们聚集在舞池中央靠近DJ的位置，跟随DJ的指引享受音乐和鼓点。

### THE MIX

It’s a fact that the Chinese nightclub culture is very different from the British nightclub culture. British nightclubs are mostly ‘dance floor culture’. People who come to relax and enjoy their night gather in the centre of the dance floor near the DJ and follow the DJ’s led to enjoy music and drums. On the contrary, Chinese nightclubs that are based in China more following the ‘cabinet culture’ - people who come to nightclubs to relax will have a corresponding booth and play drinking games with friends in a specific area. Compared with the UK, the ‘cabinet culture’ will charge a higher fee per capita; at the same time, the ‘cabinet culture’ has higher requirements for DJs - DJs need to make more of an effort to reach out to people who are immersed in interaction with friends. More often, the Chinese friend group will not pay attention to the instant interaction here in the UK like other races. If you have experienced both, you may think that British nightclubs are a lot more fun, because there are more opportunities to talk to strangers, more enthusiastic dance floor atmosphere and more unified and coordinated crowd feedback. From this point of view, the Chinese events held in the UK are more like a mixed product - both the enthusiasm and openness of local nightclub activities with the conservative and ‘shy’ nature of Chinese nightclub culture.

相反地，中国的夜店更多地遵循“卡座文化”，前来夜店放松的人们会拥有对应的卡座区域，在固定的区域与朋友们玩喝酒游戏。相比于英国的“舞池文化”，“卡座文化”会收取人均更高的费用；同时，“卡座文化”对DJ有更高的要求——DJ需要付出更多倍的努力才能带动在卡座中沉浸在和朋友间的互动中的人们。更多时候，中国的夜店群体不会像英国一样关注现场即时的互动。如果你既体验过中国的夜店，又体验过英国的夜店，你可能会觉得英国的夜店“好玩”很多。因为有更多的和陌生人交谈的机会，更热情的舞池气氛，更统一协调的人群反馈。在这个角度来说，在英国举办的华人趴，更像是一个混血儿——既有本地夜店活动的热情开放、又有中国夜店文化的保守与“害羞”。





# Stepping up to clean our streets

Responding to the slashing of street cleaning budgets in Southwark, volunteer group Litterati walk the streets at night to pick up our litter

Words: Stella Schmieder  
Images: Angela Tozzi

Empty coffee cups on a table, cigarette butts deliberately discarded on the pavement – living in a big city, such as London, comes with the responsibility to clean after yourself. But let's face it, among the skyscrapers and crowds of people, the opposite is the case.

Despite the waste collection efforts of the borough, Southwark ranks amongst the worst areas in London for fly-tipping. Fly-tipping. It sounds like a fun phrase, but it describes the incorrect disposal of unwanted things, making it a far more serious concern. Every little plastic wrapping flies around in the wind like tumbleweed in western movies and doesn't end up in designated bins like they are supposed to.

London is known for the limited amount of bins around the city, which is annoying at times as walking for an eternity to throw away your cup of coffee is not ideal. Bins are scarce in tube and train stations, a deliberate security decision after they became a favoured drop-off point for bombs in the 1990s. Knowing that a potential threat of an attack gets reduced makes the prolonged walk to the next litter more bearable. Even then, the typical black bins are filled to the brim with stacks of pizza boxes and cans next to them.

Plastic waste remains a fundamental issue for the environment, which is discussed among the community and political powers. Why do we still have to deal with it when the awareness is there? It is the education and perhaps laziness of society.

We live in a culture where we expect somebody to clean up after us. The empty coffee cup is disposed of by the café waitress. The messy takeaway boxes get separated and recycled by the people picking up the bin bags. The rubbish in public areas is cleaned by the street cleaners. But according to Southwark News, the budget for the street cleaning service in the borough has been cut, leaving the responsibility to a reduced number of people. The growing number of inhabitants living in Southwark, together with the smaller group of cleaners, makes it unimaginable to find a long-term solution for the cleanness of the borough.

To tackle this issue, Roger Mallett and his team from Litterati walk the streets of Southwark picking litter to make our surroundings cleaner. 'That's what we do - we collect litter. Southwark council donate bin bags to us. And we fill the bin bags and leave them, hoping for the council to come and take them away. They are aware of us, which is great,' Roger says.





atmosphere, in Roger's opinion. Business people, noisy cars, and loud construction sites lie low at night, allowing him to walk around the borough peacefully. Especially as summer approaches, the slight coldness of the night is more appreciated than the freezing, dark winter nights. But there are the usual occurrences that could happen at the late hours of the night. Drunk folks stumbling out of the pub come across Roger's hunt for refuse, but they hardly cause any problems. What brings a greater concern is the drug abuse in the city – not just because of health and safety, but due to the little drug bags scattered across public areas. From laughing gas canisters to plastic bags, Roger is familiar with the remains of parties in the park.

However, picking up refuse is not an easy job. It is not only the smell and the consciousness of the state of the borough. The freshly cleaned area being polluted again as if nothing happened leaves the volunteers restless. This never-ending cycle needs to be tackled. 'It is depressing sometimes. You can walk down the street, clean it all, and get three big bin bags of rubbish. And then when you walk back home, there'll already be some drink cans on the floor and a couple of bowls,' Roger says. 'We just keep going.' The bins and their surroundings are full of polyester takeaway boxes and half-empty beer bottles at night. And as the sun rises and the hectic nature of London returns, the progress that Litterati made is back to zero.

But cleaning does not have to be boring or discouraging. Southwark is known as the borough for arts and culture, and there are numerous possibilities to make litter picking more interactive for the community. Starting from the design of the bins to make them more noticeable to placing them in a visible location instead of behind the corner, as Roger comments: 'In a park, they just blend into the greenery anyway. So our vision is to educate people, but also we want different coloured bins, we want bins that make a noise. You know, you can have a poster with a sign saying, "I'm over here," and we need to be in that type of thing.'

With this year's Earth Day on the 22nd of April, the issue concerning our environment was the 'Hot Topic'. Quite literally, global warming and climate change pressure the condition of our future. And it is on us how we approach the cold reality of our climate. Recycling is something that should be familiar to many: bottles, cans, paper, and card-

Litterati is an independent group of people that came together last year during lockdown. Since then, the group of volunteers have gained a lot of recognition in the neighbourhood and hope to bring education and awareness about litter to the community. The vision of Litterati is essential and shows how we as a community can change the narrative. However, the group is missing sponsors and equipment, such as jackets, to differentiate themselves from council cleaners. 'We don't want to be associated; we want to be ourselves. We want to be a bit more independent. That's our dream – to be a bit more independent and have a bit more of a visible presence in the community. People know us, but we want people to recognise us a little more,' says Roger.

Roger starts litter picking in the early hours of the day or after dark. Like most of the volunteers at Litterati, he goes to work during the day and dedicates his free time to cleaning the busy streets of Southwark. The city after dark has a different



board; no food and liquid, no loose plastic bags and bagged recyclables. Those are basic rules to keep in mind, but many people don't.

'Around London City, some of the biggest sites all got recycling bins, but they're just overflowing consistently. As soon as they're empty, they've filled again. But again, that's down to education because you look at them, they're not full of recycling products, but full of anything else,' Roger says. A common misconception about recycling is that disposal site workers will separate recycling. This false belief slows the recycling process. Roger expresses his frustration that people do not think further about what happens to their empty packet of crisps. The comfort of just throwing it away and forgetting about it outweighs this thought process.

And then it is on Litterati to conquer this challenge even though the reward is unsatisfying, considering seeing the clean area for a short time before it returns to its usual state. 'It can be a bit dispiriting, but we will keep going because we care about the community where we live. We want it to be clean, look neat, and tidy. And we would hope that people around us, which as I said, most people are quite positive about it, we would hope that people felt that. But what we can't understand is that if we see it, we pick it up. Why do other people see it but don't pick it up? Why do other people see it but are happy to drop it?'

Next time you take a stroll around London, divert your eyes from your phone screen and take in the scenery of the city. Not just the blossoms that fill the boroughs or the buildings that stand tall above you. But also the state on the ground with the plastic spoons, canisters and plastic bags. One might say that all this comes with a big city, but that doesn't mean it needs to stay like that.





Words: Freddie Hill  
Images: Berenice Guzzo



# Sounds of Southwark

The closure of warehouse electronic club Printworks is the latest casualty in a battle between developers and nightclub owners over late-night noise

**'We need to keep music alive. It would be an absolute tragedy to lose this unbelievable music venue to develop offices.'**

'The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on London's nightclubs,' Sadiq Khan wrote in 2021. However, the struggle of London's night-time venues is nothing new: almost half of this city's nightclubs have closed since 2005.

The most recent casualty is Printworks, a legendary 5,000-person capacity venue for electronic music. Last year, it was announced that Printworks would permanently close its doors in Autumn 2022 to be converted into office blocks.

First opened in 2017, Printworks is regularly ranked as one of the best nightclubs in the world by major outlets such as DJMag and the International Nightlife Association. The fact that it is sharing lists with international titans of the club scene such as 'Berghain' and 'Hi Ibiza' is not to be sniffed at; many people flock to London for a top-tier clubbing experience.

'In this country we have an incredible history of electronic music... the Printworks space is really unique and important to that,' says Will Gooddy, a part-time DJ and producer. When it was announced that the land would be developed into offices space, Gooddy turned to Change.org to create a petition in 2021 to save Printworks from closure.

'I saw that no petition had been made yet, it was just an initial impulse.' At present, it has surpassed 10,000 signatures. Since creating the petition, Will has received messages from other fans of music and art, all expressing their concern that the culture is being shoved aside for

monetary gain: 'We need to keep music alive,' says Will. 'It would be an absolute tragedy to lose this unbelievable music venue to develop offices.'

Will believes that developers are not considering the positive impact of tourist revenue when assessing the financial possibilities of large venues: 'I'm no business expert, but thousands of people travelling to London from other parts of the country, and internationally, surely that would benefit the local economy much more than office blocks.' Karlina Valeiko, a travel expert from LoveExploring.com, weighed in. 'Both business and nightlife can attract different types of travellers and are valuable to cities in different ways, however, the heritage and cultural aspect of a place like Printworks has to be considered too.'

Printworks has struck a chord with the electronic community as a result of its legendary status, and it is often described as a 'cultural landmark' by attendees. By shutting it down, fans argue that we are losing an important part of British culture.

What makes Printworks unique in London is its sheer size. Large warehouse-like clubbing experiences in London are rarer than in other parts of the country, simply due to the price of land. But Printworks never rested on its laurels, providing unique visuals and a vast range of genres to appease eclectic music fans including House, Jungle, Garage, and Grime.

Nightclubs that have managed to remain open provide similar experiences. Underneath the tracks of the Elephant & Castle



overground you can find a variety of small businesses benefitting from the cheap location, one of them being Corsica Studios; a smaller but equally important venue for electronic music fans. Jaded's Raymundo Rodriguez told Pitchfork: 'To me, the very walls feel like they are suffused with power from all the magic nights - and days - they've held.' Would Corsica have the same power were it moved to a different venue? Looming over Corsica's shutters is a luxury multistorey apartment complex, part of the ever-changing skyline and an example of gentrification throughout Elephant & Castle.

One factor thought to be contributing to the closure of music venues is night-time noise. Haryce Bailey, a young supervisor on the frontline of the Elephant and Castle pub situated underneath a block of flats, says that noise complaints from local residents have led to them making minor changes: 'we don't play music outside anymore' - a small sacrifice for this small venue but necessary to remain open.

On hearing about what was happening to Printworks they expressed dismay, 'But it's only



just opened... people are working from home now - we don't need more offices.'

The battle for night music extends further than pubs and clubs. In 2020, on the South Bank, buskers were recently asked to turn 180 degrees to sing towards the river, instead of towards the tourist spot of Tate Modern. Yet in 2018, Southwark news reported that 'a period of monitoring between July and August 2018 found that most of the noise was not loud enough to spark enforcement action.'

Now an admittedly peaceful walk along the South Bank is permeated by signs forbidding the act of busking - 'THIS IS A RESIDENTIAL AREA' - but where in London isn't? It seems the council themselves are the ones doing a 180, leaving workers in the music and arts industries wondering what can be done to avoid losing the sound of London.

On the other hand, Will Goody argues that the conflict is not about noise at all, but rather an excuse to shut out nightlife. 'There is a constant threat from land owners, they can make more money from office blocks,'

he says 'I wouldn't say there is a noise issue, no.'

In 2014, the esteemed electronic music venue Ministry of Sound nearly faced closure due to noise complaints from nearby residents. The legendary reputation of the 'MoS' brand, once a plethora of unmixable 'sound of summer' CDs and now extending to fully operational fitness studios, enabled the club to strike a one-of-a-kind deal with the developers of nearby flats that allowed music to prevail. As well as leading the developers to install noise reduction features such as acoustic glazing, new residents of these flats are now required to sign contracts that relieve them of their right to complain about noise. Ministry of Sound was able to remain.

However, deals such as this one are few and far between. In order for the nightclub industry to regain its hold on the London music scene, smaller venues will need to open like Corsica did in the 90s, but this becomes less feasible for aspiring event managers year by year.

Certain buildings are protected from change by becoming 'list-

ed', with Historic England writing that 'the older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to be listed.' This protection has extended to unlikely places including the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, a former Victorian hall turned into an award-winning LGBTQ+ venue, ensuring its future remains secure.

Other venues have not been so lucky. Pulse, known for being the one of the last remaining LGBTQ+ venues in Southwark, closed its doors in late 2019. Whilst office developments were once again to blame, the club's co-founder Mark Ames argued that it was a form of 'social cleansing'. 'There is no room for difference; everything has to be sterilised and the same. This is being done by people who don't care about London's community. All they care about is turning a buck,' he said.

Will Goody tells us that 'this sort of thing has been going on for years', and not just in Southwark; it is commonplace nationwide, with clubs in Oxford and Bristol closing for many reasons, mainly as a result of the need for sustainable multi-purpose developments. Moving forward, travel and tourism expert Karlina Valeiko asserts that there would be much to gain 'if developers



found a way to grow the business sector while allowing entertainment and nightlife to thrive, rather than making the decision between one or the other.'

Nevertheless, the future of Printworks remains uncertain approaching the end of its events season. As the rumour mill keeps on churning, employees at the venue are reluctant to discuss the imminent closure. 'As you can imagine this is a very sensitive topic,' says one.

Other clubbers argue that Printworks was never meant to be a permanent venue, nor has it ever promised to be. Whether these people are cynics, missing the point, or are simply level-headed depends on where you stand. Whilst the physical space itself may become unavailable soon this year, we can hope that the 'Printworks experience' may one day live on elsewhere.





# Keeping women safe

## How a Camberwell pub protects female customers from danger on a night out

*Trigger warning: This article contains mentions and descriptions of sexual harassment, sexual assault, murder and violence towards women.*

In 2016, the Southwark council launched the Women's Safety Charter Initiative in collaboration with the Good Night Out Campaign which works with licensed venues to set out principles in order to ensure women's safety and address sexual harassment in their premises. To this day, over 100 venues have signed up. In the context of the post #metoo movement, we spoke to The Tiger, a community-based English pub situated at the heart of Camberwell, and a small group of women customers to examine common concerns that women face on a night out and the effectiveness of government initiatives on women's safety.

Like many venues which signed up the Women's Safety initiative, The Tiger has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment on their premises and staff members take a proactive attitude on the safety of their customers. The Tiger's manager, Rebecca stated that 'we pride ourselves on being forward for women and making it a safe space for everyone going out. It's about being observant, and keeping an eye on things before situations get too far.'

Everyone has a different definition of what harassment means. 'The issue is that it can be

very subtle,' from explicit behaviours like verbal abuse, catcalling, groping, forcing a hug or a kiss to anything as subtle as keeping an uncomfortable distance with someone. For Rebecca the most important thing is 'checking that everybody is fine with the situation they're in.' If someone gets thrown out for harassment at The Tiger they're not allowed back in, and that information is circulated within a network of other pubs in the area. Having a women-led team also has an impact on the atmosphere of the pub. 'We're all girls so we all know what it's like to go out and not feel safe. We all drink here, so we want to make it somewhere we would feel safe to go to as well,' Rebecca says. 'We don't put up with anything behind the bar. If someone makes us feel uncomfortable, we just put our hand up and the bouncer comes up and gets rid of them.'

In the past year Rebecca observed that more people are willing to speak up and report incidents of harassment directly at the pub, rather than sending an email about it two days later as had been common before. 'People feel comfortable coming to us, because we've created a culture where we'll check in on you to see if you're okay.'



Words: Hester Yang  
Image: Norbert Braun on Unsplash

This inclination to speak up could be attributed to a shift in the public perception in regards to women's safety following the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 which sparked public outrage and called for radical changes on issues of male violence against women.

According to customer Sophia\*, 'girls have less tolerance for people's bullshit now... After Sarah Everard last summer, the public became more conscious of the issue. I think people were fed up. Everyone was so angry and rightfully so. We shouldn't be treated like that when we're outside.' Her friend Jess\* added, 'I think the problem stems from it being allowed for too long. Centuries of people being conditioned that it's fine and allowed and appropriate. Now with social media everyone has a voice, and women are sick of it.'

Another customer, Chloe\* said, 'I don't think women feel safe with the police at this moment, there's a history of mistrust there, and it's not going to change overnight.'

'If you report sexual harassment to the police, it can take weeks. Someone verbally sexually harassed me on the street last year. I called the police and it took three or four weeks for them to call me properly for me to make a statement. And they said that there was no point in even pursuing this because they'll never find him. If that man had physically assaulted me, that situation would've been treated very differently. When it's only verbal it doesn't get taken seriously but it still had the same effect, it was still very traumatic,' Sophia said.

Aside from the Women's Safety Charter in Southwark, in recent years a number of policies and initiatives regarding women's nighttime safety were introduced, including the ongoing 'Ask for Angela' campaign and the Good Night Out campaign. As the matter of women's safety is underpinned by deep rooted issues like misogyny, stereotypical media representation or toxic narrative of victim blaming, it raises the question of whether these campaigns and measures are too superficial.

Some customers argued that the key lies in prevention, education or in raising public awareness.

'We should be taught at school about harassment. It needs to be a priority. I think men don't really fully understand the impact of it,' Chloe said. 'A lot of women feel like nothing's going to be done until something actually happens to them. And that's the wrong way to do it, we should be preventing the problem and not addressing it afterwards.' Jess agreed: 'generally, culture wise, people have to be proactive and wanting to learn about the issue.'

On the other hand, Sophia argued that laws need to change. 'There should be more strict laws about it. It should be a crime to sexually harass someone on the street, wherever you are.'

We asked the women if they carry any self-defence tools or any objects that they would choose to use for self-defence.

While most of the Tiger's customers said that these tools brought them reassurance and a sense of security on a night out, some felt that it could also be problematic. They were worried about questions people may ask them after an incident or harassment, questions that stem from the toxic culture of victim blaming: why didn't you use the alarm?

'In the investigation, the first thing that they're going to ask is "Did you use your self-defence tool?"' said Jess.

Going back to the issue of harassment in venues, Jess argued that 'it's the little things that actually work and have a real impact, like the "Angela" thing rather than any campaigns or movements in the broad sense. It's more of the little things we need that bars should do for women's safety and women in minority.'

And from a management point of view, it's about enforcing the rules on harassment so that it builds and builds, as put by Rebecca: 'It's about trying to every time something happens to make sure to do the right thing and get the person kicked out. Just so that people know, they don't get away with it.'

*\*Some names have been changed for anonymity*





# Sleepless on stage

**Southwark Playhouse's new play, *Five Characters in Search of a Good Night's Sleep*, highlights the little-known connection between insomnia and ageing**

Everyone knows the feeling. Lying stark awake in the early hours of the morning, thoughts racing, overthinking, memories competing as you drift into the deep recesses of the mind, when all you long for is the feeling of closing your eyes and getting a simple good night's sleep.

It's something we've all experienced, but few people are aware of the relationship between sleeplessness and ageing. According to the Great British Sleep Survey (2012), 49% more people over 60 suffer from long-term sleep problems than those in their twenties.

Words: Rob Wallace  
Images: Southwark Playhouse

This was the catalyst for ViSiBLE Theatre Company's new play, *Five Characters in Search of a Good Night's Sleep*. Premiering this spring at powerhouse fringe-venue Southwark Playhouse, the play follows five older insomniacs as they try to make it through the night. Increasingly conscious of their shortening futures and lengthening pasts, they fill their nights with distracting activities, desperate sleep techniques, evaluations of their lives, delusions, and fears, as they prepare to face the day ahead.

I join the production team on a busy Tuesday morning in a rehearsal room just off The Cut. I'm greeted by Sonja Linden, the founder of ViSiBLE. As well dressed as she is well spoken, she speaks excitedly of the play as she escorts me into the large rehearsal room where five chairs lay abandoned across the wooden floor.

*Five Characters* is the third major production by ViSiBLE Theatre Company. Founded in 2013, Linden created the company in response to her feeling that 'there was a huge number of older actors in the country, and they were very often getting very minor parts. I wanted to address the representation of older people in the media as something that's actually often negative,' she explains.

'I know amongst fellow actors, particularly female actors, that they go up for auditions and they're always asked to play somebody with Alzheimer's or a little old lady. And it isn't concurrent with the way people are.'

ViSiBLE's mission is to create new theatrical work that offers meaningful, strong roles for experienced and often overlooked older performers, as well as encouraging audiences to re-evaluate what it means to be older in our society today.

'The idea of sleeplessness came about because I have found a lot of trouble sleeping in my later life, which I never had before,' says Linden. She realised she wasn't alone: 'Every time I have a conversation with a group of friends or a new group of people, so many people seem to have the issue of finding difficulty in sleeping.'

It was this connection that drew acclaimed international theatre director Mike Alfreds to helm the project. A giant of the industry for almost seventy





years, 88-year-old Alfreds carries gravitas in a deep, assured voice that is contrary to his slim, tall frame. A wealth of theatrical knowledge and experience, his students include renowned stage and screen actor Mark Rylance, whilst Ian McKellen has hailed him as one of the best directors in the country.

These questions drove Alfreds and Linden's theatrical exploration of the issue. As Alfreds jokes, 'sleep is not a very dramatic thing', leading the pair instead to delve deeper into the existential question of what it means to be older, exploring the struggle to find meaning in the lonely hours of night.

When Linden first approached Alfreds, he was intrigued by their shared experiences of insomnia as they both grew older. 'What interested me, experiencing this myself now, is what happens to people when they can't sleep? What's going on in their minds?'

'As you get older, your past gets longer and longer and the future gets shorter and shorter,' Alfreds says. 'What is that doing to you? You feel intensely some of your failing capacity to do things and the frustration of that, and the feeling of isolation sometimes, or inadequacy, or lack of autonomy.'



As is consistent with Alfreds' directorial style, the play takes an experimental and fluid form. Its minimalist set uses only five chairs, highlighting the characters' thoughts rather than their surroundings.

Also unique to this production is its devised theatrical format. Instead of writing the script ahead of the show, ViSiBLE invited five actors to workshop their own characters and stories that explored the theme of sleeplessness. The workshops with actors Geraldine Alexander, Andrew Hawkins, Sally Knyvette, Gary Lilburn, and Vincenzo Nicoli were recorded and transcribed by Linden, providing the basis for the narrative structure of the play.

Alfreds describes this format as 'giving [the actors] the ingredients and they cook their own character'. He explains, 'what's so amazing for me is that when you allow actors to be creative, they're imaginative and surprising. Hopefully this will be very freeform... The actors have to create fresh every night.'

While researching the play, Linden and Alfreds delved deep into heaps of research about overcoming sleep problems and insomnia but found little consensus.

'It was overwhelming, it all sort of got more and more confusing the more one read actually,' says Alfreds.

Linden recognized that audiences might also want to learn more about how to recover their own sleep. Therefore, ViSiBLE programmed post-show talks with sleep experts, researchers and psychologists, which may help audiences develop a better understanding of their own relationships to sleeplessness, and hopefully discover ways it may be managed and overcome.

Whilst the play will certainly resonate with older audiences, Linden speaks of their first performance as a revelation for viewers of all ages. In audience feedback, Linden explains, 'a lot of them said that they developed more empathy for an older person. They hadn't thought of life from their point of view.'

Theatre at its best builds bridges and empathy between people. Five Characters in Search of a Good Night's Sleep explores the universal theme of sleeplessness but puts a new spin on it through the perspective of ageing. This latest production from ViSiBLE, like their previous efforts, reminds us that stories about later life are stories worth telling.



Southwark Playhouse is at 77-85 Newington Causeway London SE1 6BD. A full list of their forthcoming productions is on their website. [www.southwarkplayhouse.co.uk](http://www.southwarkplayhouse.co.uk)



# Last bus to London

Words: Stella Schmieder  
Images: Kathy Robinson

## Long after the last train has departed, London's bus drivers continue through the night

Being stranded somewhere in the late hours of the night is not unusual in London. People feeling the morning on their skin after a busy night dancing or working mums rushing home to their families after a shift. A place where everyone comes together during that time is the night bus.

London is not exactly small with its 32 boroughs, one of them being Southwark. Since the 15th century, Southwark has

been known for its wide variety of entertainment places, inns and bars. Nightlife in Southwark remains popular among many people, and the interconnection of different transportation systems among the boroughs makes it easy to reach. But what about those who stay up, working past the hours of the tube service? Taking an Uber is not an option for everyone, especially not for every day. Luckily, one way to get home is by bus. Run-

ning 24 hours a day throughout the entire week, the typical red buses mean much more to those people commuting during the late hours.

Shortly after midnight, the tube closes. But London's nightlife does not stand still. Traffic does not sleep as the night is filled with car honks and jams. The bus services at night seem like the most effective way to wriggle through the chaos. As I stand at the bus station in Peckham, just a few minutes into the next day, I let my mind wander about what it would be like to stand here every night. Anticipating the arrival of the bus while standing tiredly in the cold, gripping my coffee.

'If I could change anything, maybe make sure that it's runs more frequently. So, you are not reliant on like one night bus every half hour,' says Annie, who depends on the night bus to get home from Waterloo Station. Her journey is tiring, especially after her 12-hour shift at work. Although Annie agrees that the night bus service is important, she would prefer taking the tube as it is quicker and more efficient. 'Even

waiting at a bus stop for half an hour sucks. If I would miss one, I would have to wait in the cold.'

The transport phenomenon of 'bus bunching', as many would say, also known as the saying 'You wait ages for a bus – and then two come along at the same time,' feels as if it is not exactly adequate for the night bus. Minutes feel like hours, and the ungrateful coldness makes it even harder to withstand the wait. But the appreciation of the continuous service through the night makes it worth the wait.

What would be the other choice since the tube is closed at this time of the day? Certainly, the train would be much faster, but without the night bus, the pain to get to your desired destination would be much greater.

Looking around Peckham bus station, there are not many people around, mostly those finishing their work. But on week-ends, I can vividly imagine drunk folks taking over those places. The night bus offers a place for everyone, but precisely that can lead to conflicts. Thinking about

odd or even scary situations on the bus, Annie describes: 'most experiences were just men trying to get my attention, which was really obnoxious. There was one time when a mate told his friend off because he kept trying to get my attention.' Sometimes, even physical fights break out at the bus stop, as Annie recalls. Usually, authorities or the bus driver make sure those situations are settled quickly to ensure the safety of about 6.5 million passengers that travel on the bus every day, according to Transport for London.







But you would meet very few of these unfamiliar faces on the nightly bus ride around Southwark. One of them is Hope who works in a pub and take the bus at night to get home. 'I live in Camberwell. The only station for trains is the Overground. Obviously, the Overground, historically, never runs 24 hours a day,' they say. 'Even if it were to run 24 hours a day, the bus drops me off significantly closer to my house than the train would. I would not be very safe to get from the

train station to my house at two or three o'clock in the morning, which is usually when I end up getting the bus.' The safety of women and queer people in London continues to be an issue, especially at night.

Hope recognises the bus being a safer alternative to the tube as the bus driver can directly step in to resolve conflicts, and there is more room for the passengers to move away to another seat or the other deck.

Thinking about how cramped the tube can get, I felt much more at ease, not having to squeeze through masses of people, especially during a pandemic. 'Honestly, I feel like I have a lot of admiration for bus drivers. I think they were the main form of transport that people used through the pandemic,' says Hope, agreeing with my thoughts. 'I think people were very scared of using the tube, and so I really think bus drivers are the backbone of London in a way.'

I'm taking a moment to look outside the window, mirroring the pose of the woman four rows ahead of me. Silence. That is what surprises me the most. The motor sounds and the occasional hissing noises are nothing compared to the nerve-racking sounds of the tube which often sounds like someone crashing metal together. And Southwark at night feels different to during the day. The lights of the buildings, the silent atmosphere and little to no people on the streets make me feel as if I'm in the 2022 version of the music video for 'Love Is A Battlefield' by Pat Benatar.

Of course, the bus in the video was much more older than the one I'm sitting in. Although a lot has changed since the bus service in London first started operating in 1913, self-driving vehicles remain a futuristic imagination. Acting as unappreciated heroes in the midst of London's dynamic nature, bus drivers work every hour of the day to ensure safe travels for every passenger. Hope explains how they sometimes think about how lonely it may be as a bus driver. During the day, people seem much more appreciative and thank



the driver when they get off. But at this time, many passengers blankly stare outside the window, fight their closing eyes to stay awake or listen awfully loud to their music to make the bus ride go by quicker. Upon arrival, a short 'Thank You' might not even be on their minds.

Hope makes sure to always leave the bus with at least some kind of grateful goodbye to the driver. They describe how they usually have good experience with the bus drivers, although there were some situations that caused some frustration. 'My card declined, and it was like 3:00 o'clock in the morning. The bus driver didn't let me on, and I was like: "It's £1.50 versus my safety, and you are not letting me on the bus." And it just seems a bit ridiculous.' But Hope had other situations where they encountered more positive behaviour.

'I've had my card declined on other routes, and they have been like: "No worries, just get on", because they know that someone's safety is more important. I don't think London would be the same place without bus drivers. And I think a lot of them are very caring, generous people.'

Going by bus at night is a different experience than using public transport during the day. As the bus service never sleeps, you do not have to chase the bus if you ever miss one. It might require patience to get home at night. But, there for sure is no last bus in London.





# Modern insomnia

## It's not easy to get a good night's sleep

Words: Yasmin Ali Ahmed  
Illustrations: Poan Pan

It's half past eleven in what I would call evening, because this year night time is reappropriating its schedule and itself. South London is new for me; I'd visited Brixton only a few times and was always eager to come back. In Camberwell, where I begin my journey, cars are temporarily parked on the edge of the road for drivers and passengers to make quick stops to grab a takeout, there are steamy windows and dimmed lights of restaurants and pubs with groups of people relaxed by their second glass of fizz for the night, delivery drivers posted outside shops like runners behind the line waiting to hear the gun fired before sprinting, apron-wearing employees sneaking a cig break before it gets hectic, the usual group of men outside betting shops with speakers sometimes substituted by their conversation around the same decibel; it all makes you wonder whether there is anyone in bed sleeping.

Nights stopped during the pandemic; they became dark tranquil days outside. Empty peaceful havens for cyclists and anxious pedestrians, night skaters and bus drivers. Oh, the good ol' days – admit you miss some bits of it. When London looked like a strangely tidy battlefield lacking actual superheroes and fights, except nothing but cement, buildings and lamps; behind doors, past those very walls and tucked into rooms was anyone really sleeping?

Sleep is an essential factor of human health and performance, yet it does not seem to be valued as other primary needs such as eating or exercising. Insomnus, from Latin for 'not sleep', later morphing into insomnia is a sleep disorder including trouble falling asleep or staying asleep for as long as needed. The romanticised culture of sleeplessness stirred with night life (hustle, work, grind and repeat) where every minute must be used to its maximum capacity as seen on big screens and read on thousands of IG posts under the hashtag #motivation, can only peak to its highest point once before turning into an actual nightmare.

The pandemic with its regulations and lockdowns played a part in an increase of sleep-related issues as routines changed and people spent more time indoors. The University of Southampton published a survey collected in 2018/19 showing a rise in the number of people having trouble sleeping, from one in six to one in four. To put things in perspective, it has been illustrated that being awake for 18 hours can have the same impact on your ability to drive safely as being over the drink-drive limit, whilst vehicle accidents caused by fatigue symptoms are often associated with high injury levels.

Stress and worries over financial, emotional and psychological issues ended up having a rendezvous in your mind, which can cause anxiety and distract both mind and body by not allowing them to rest properly. The aftermath can be a combination of low energy, irritability and depression.

But as the tables have turned around with schedules bursting from events once postponed, venues reopening after secret reconstructions, our bodies are not adjusting to such drastic changes. 36% of adults in the UK struggle to fall asleep at least once a week. 43% of UK citizens stated that poor sleep made them irritable or angry, and one in three people is sleeping less than before the pandemic.

But there are a couple of things that can ease the sleeping process. Studies show that exercise helps you fall asleep more quickly, although you may want to consider the timing of your activities. Some people struggle to sleep when exercising close to bedtime. Aerobic exercise releases endorphins which are chemicals naturally produced by the nervous system in response to stress and pain. Therefore it is recommended to exercise at least one or two hours before going to bed, giving the



brain time to wind down. In terms of diet, experts suggest eating kiwi, nuts, fatty fish and turkey. It is best to leave the coffee and caffeine for any time before midday.

Taking time for yourself before sleeping can be helpful, whether a hot shower, reading a book or journaling. The state of the room you are in could also contribute to the quality of sleep. Comfortable bedding, a supportive mattress and pillows could simply be the solution for sweet dreams. Weighted blankets are suggested for those suffering from anxiety as the deep pressure stimulates the production of serotonin – a neurotransmitter that regulates mood and helps us to feel calmer.

For those who cannot sleep in absolute darkness and quiet, then perhaps have a go at sleeping with no blinds or curtains. And, if you are like me and find rain sounds and noise from dishwashers, hairdryers, washing machines, tumble dryers soothing, then consider turning to white noise just before bedtime. This is a sound that contains all of the frequencies an ear can hear at once. It acts as a cover from unwanted sounds travelling from outside, it is also said to help prevent infants from crying as it mimics the sound heard in the womb.

Let's not forget the most valuable lesson we learnt as a collective during the pandemic – to listen to our bodies. As things go back to normal, it's easy to get carried away with life and its side missions. However, resting and reflecting is still essential.

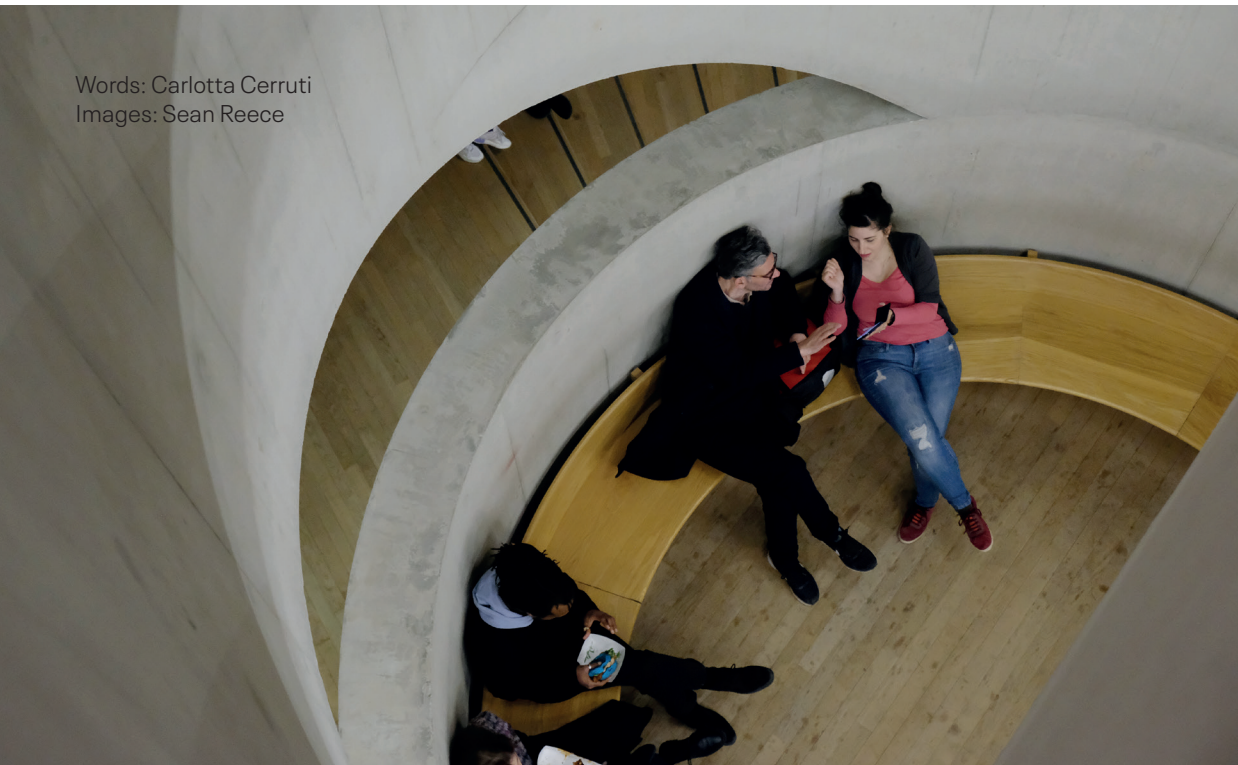
*If you are having sleep problems, speak to your GP.*



# Art after dark at Tate Modern

On the last Friday of every month, the gallery opens late for an evening of art, music and fun

Words: Carlotta Cerruti  
Images: Sean Reece



London by night can be fascinating, if you are a night owl like me, you will agree that cities have a different taste if you see them after dark.

Tate Modern offers the opportunity to enter the art gallery at night, offering an art event dedicated to everyone. The event

is on the last Friday of every month (except December) and it offers a fun and a unique way to embrace art with live music, films, workshops, drinks and much more.

We decided to attend the event on Friday 25th March. For that night, Tate Modern opened its

door overnight exploring the dreamlike world of surrealism, in celebration of the gallery's major new Surrealism Beyond Borders exhibition, which will run until 29th August 2022.

According to Liat Rosenthal, Senior Creative Producer of Tate Lates, the event was launched in

October 2016. 'We had evening events at Tate Britain for some years and knew these were successful in welcoming younger audiences into the galleries. The organisation was interested in creating a similar offer at Tate Modern, delivered at scale, and increasing younger, local, London-based audiences. So, it was an organic development from an existing model,' Rosenthal said. The Tate Late Producers work closely with the Curatorial department to understand the exhibition themes, research, and framing. 'From this conversation, some key themes emerge, for Surrealism we were interested in the experience of dreaming, of practices such as tarot and witchcraft, and of positioning surrealism as a global movement,' Rosenthal explained. 'From this starting point, the programme content is developed. We always draw upon the expertise and ideas of different teams in our research process.'

The event started at 6pm with the amazing performance of Tate's guest music curator and multi-award-winning artist

Celeste in the iconic Turbine Hall. The artist debuted her new song To Love A Man together with visual and artwork directed by the artist's collaborator Jesse Crankon. The performance was also livestreamed in her social channel, and we had the exclusive opportunity to view the special screening of Celeste's new music video alongside the Tate Collective Reframed Video. The energy was contagious; it was a great experience to see people of all ages, from all over London, getting excited to celebrate art in all its forms by dancing and talking with various artists.

Tate Late followed with different shows and activities, as a digital display exploring Cabin Fever, an audio-visual artwork from Esmeralda Conde Ruiz. The artwork featured singers from ten countries as they document dreams and transform their screen into a mosaic of colours. Another interesting part of the event is the Art Chats, a series of short talks exploring different topics about the theme of the event through different artists and experts sharing various topics.

Next up, was a talk about women in Surrealism with Katy Hessel, art historian and founder of The Great Women Artist, and Carine Harmand, assistant curator of Surrealism Beyond Borders discussing and explaining the exhibition.

The exhibition brings together objects, photography, film, painting, everything that goes around the world. As Carine Harmand said, surrealism is a revolutionary cultural movement, that prioritises the unconscious and dreams over the familiar of every day. The art show is a seven-year project, the curatorial team started before the pandemic, but as Harmand explained, Surrealism was a movement for political liberation, and it has always been relevant. It is not a movement of the past, is a movement that is still very much alive. The exhibition is not just female artists only, but the curators' team have been incredibly thorough in terms of spotlighting so many different artists from all over the world. 'What we wanted to do in this exhibition was talking about these women artists not as the





partner of or the wife of these other artists, as unfortunately has been done in the past in a lot of exhibitions, we wanted to show them as artists who had their own right, who had also shaped the movement.'

The event continued with other series of short talks with Suhaiyla Shakuwra exploring Tarot cards and how their visual language can help open a space for reflection. We had the chance to learn cards meanings, and someone volunteered to have their cards read for the first time. The art chats followed with Gemma Rolls-Bentley, chief curator at Avant Arte and coven member of #SistersoftheSanitaryCloth and Jessie Makinson, visual artist, explaining Witchcraft and its connection to their creative practice. The last talk was with Dave Green and Tree Carr about Lucid Dreaming, we explored how we can use this unique process to explore different aspects of our dreaming mind.

After a while sitting in the talk room, we got a little thirsty, so we decided to grab a drink in The Turbine Hall, there are a lot of different choices, from craft beers



to cocktails along with food. Food brings company and we started talking to some people about the event. This type of initiative brings together a really big community, people from everywhere around London and beyond are thrilled to join a great and creative experience. We met two girls from Paris who joined Tate Late for the first time. They heard about the event by following Carine Harmand on social media and they were very interested in the initiative of discussing women in Surrealism as it represents a dear and important topic to them. Many people believe it is a great idea to be able to join the art gallery by night, have the chance to

participate in different activities and meet new people.

'I love the buzz and experiencing the open space at night. It is a completely different atmosphere when you know others have set aside and evening to walk through the galleries together,' said Annika, an art student based in London. As mentioned already, the event is made for everyone and after the last two years it is so appreciable be able to enjoy and experience like this one again. She added, 'we should make all art publicly available. I genuinely think a country should be also measured by the ways in which it supports its art and culture. It is an enriching



Tate Modern is at Bankside London SE1 9TG. Tate Lates are the last Friday of every month (except December). There are Tate Lates at Tate Britain on the first Friday of every month.

[www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)



experience, and even if you don't know anything about art, a good exhibition will still make you feel welcome and like you belong.'

Another attractive part of the event are the workshops. We decided to participate at the Dream Mapping workshop. The initiative is run by Mia and Alex, together they created U:STUDIO. The activity consisted of manifesting and drawing our dreams as we map our collective unconscious.

They said: 'It is like a fantasy island, a fantasy world even for people to kind of express their dreams, something they may have not been able to get or a dream they had last night, and they have the opportunity to show it on our map.'

'It is like a snapshot of people's subconscious from different events. It is quite interesting watching and read other

drawings.' This was the first time U:STUDIO created this initiative, as a studio and artists they barely ever repeat the same ideas.

We are thrilled to join other Tate Lates events and discover new shades of art and especially learn new topics and share the experience with other people. Liat Rosenthal said the Tate Lates team is always thinking about ways to develop the events, make them bold, meaningful, and culturally relevant. 'We also want to keep testing new ways to further our audience reach. Our 'wish list' includes innovative digital projects, off-site content and to deepen our work with emerging artists,' she said.

As an art institution the main message the Tate Modern wants to spread to the younger generations is that 'art is for everyone. You are welcome here; to enjoy, participate and create.'

**'Even if you don't know anything about art, a good exhibition will still make you feel welcome and like you belong.'**



