

FOREWORD 4 WIZ

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"ALDERSHOT"

by
Parachute for Gordo

with
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Barney Jeavons



I have lived in Aldershot my whole life. The streets of this town are like a map of my own life and are filled with experience and meaning at every turn. Streets, old homes, traces of a life lived mostly within a few square miles. It's a place where taking a trip down memory lane can be literal, every road has a story. Here's where I had my first job, here is the alley we sprinted down away from the police as teenagers with bottles in hand, here is the park where I had my nose broken, there's the room where I lived as a teenager, barely 100 metres from the same spot. These are the layers of crisscrossing history that make up a life in a small town.

Aldershot is by no means a big or impressive town, and features that were once imposing or overwhelming now feel small and quaint. Tice's Meadow, the estate I grew up on, seemed like it was an entire universe contained in those short, parallel cul-de-sacs. Once I found a ninja star in the bushes.

And then there was the town itself. It might surprise you to hear, but before the turn of the century there were actually shops in this town. When I was around 13, The Galleries shopping centre opened up and was a treasure trove for a teenage boy. It had poor lighting and a pet shop in the back that made everything smell like a hamster's cage. It had the Cart Club, an independent videogame shop where I'd later sell my SNES collection to buy a bass. There was a CD shop where I'd buy Weezer's Pinkerton, snuck in the back like a passport to a new, noisier world.

This noisy world opened its doors to me in style when I went with my friends to see our first ever live show, a Nirvana tribute band at the West End Centre sometime in 1998. We stood next to the speaker all night and screamed at each other how amazing it was on the way home, the first taste of temporary PA-induced tinnitus proving intoxicating. We were lucky to have arrived in time for what is affectionately referred to as "oh man wasn't

British rock music amazing in the early 00s??", and would soon be there to catch bands like the Reuben, Hundred Reasons and Vex Red and more frequently forgotten groups like Caretaker and so many others.

The best clichés are true, and it's certainly true that the Westy is a family. It's been going since 1975 and has been lead by Barney Jeavons since 2001 after he started working there as a promoter in the 90s. I remember being around 16 and thinking "who is that guy dancing at the front for all these bands?" that was Barney. We spoke to him for this zine and I asked about the dancing first: "I used to always dance to bands because I'd book bands I thought were great," he said.

Today, the town of Aldershot is a shadow of its former minor glories. The Galleries has stood empty for the best part of a decade. It's the ghost of a town. Barney is optimistic for its future though. "I think it's coming back, soon," he told us. "Did you see the video [Rushmoor councillor] David Clifford made? He walked around the town, 'we've bought this shop and this shop' – they're really going for it. I've got faith in this town. That said, I've been saying this for the past five years so we'll see!"

Barney also has faith in new artists, which makes sense given this was how we met him when we started Parachute for Gordo. The Westy is a vital resource for musicians in the town, new and old. "I'm always thrilled by new bands, I'm thrilled by people trying to do something," he told us. "One thing that I'm excited and frustrated by is I know there's a load of other musical genres out there and because I'm not tapped into those scenes I don't know about them. Someone in this town is making music on a laptop that will blow my mind and I don't know who they are and I don't know how to find them. I think sometimes people will assume that we don't want them to play, and that's not the case,"



We asked Barney about the music from Aldershot and what he thought was special about it. "Although we've had scenes all the bands have been pretty different and they've been out of step with the rest of the country as well. It's not really following a fashion, it's following your interests."

Aldershot is a town that even now punches way above its weight in the alternative-music stakes. When we started playing gigs we were joined relatively early on by a band of sweaty reprobates called thowtritytwo (now known as Dead State) and I realised that I went to school with their frontman Andy Clift. He was in all honesty a weird kid who has grown up to be a marginally less weird man, and it is always stunning to see him morph into the iconoclastic figure that confuses and terrifies

audiences in equal measure. Our original drummer Johnny parted ways with us a few years ago to form Moper and has produced three amazing LPs in the time since. I Plead Irony, who pack a set full of ear worms you'll be singing to yourself all week. Our Lost Infantry with their ambitious post rock operatics and then, born from their ashes, itoldyouiwoulddeatyou seemingly poised to take over the world. We got to play with members of Reuben and Hundred Reasons in their great new bands. Parachute for Gordo have been honoured to be a part of the ongoing musical story of the town for the past five years, aided and abetted by our friends in the Forward 4 Wiz Trust.

The F4WT are an organic extension of this scene-as-family. We first met them early in

Parachute for Gordo's existence, and my understanding of what they do came along gradually. In one of our very early shows at the Westy we were on the bill with I Plead Irony, and my first impressions of Rauf Jordan were of a lovely chap with a great bass amp and an odd way of spelling his name. Karina Fraser was this amazing local artist who Johnny somehow convinced to paint the cover to our second record for the price of some booze and a hug (she also provided the colour art for this very page). Gerry Bryant was the top bloke who runs The Rooms rehearsal studio and sings "I'd love to be in PFG" to us whenever we come in the building. They were all great friends we made along the way when we started our band.

It wasn't until a little later that I put together that all these people were connected through the tragic death of their friend Wiz, and his place in the history of what makes Aldershot such a special place. I'd heard of Mega City Four (mostly through the dudes in Comics Plus who were fans – another lost treasure of Aldershot past) but I never realised that so many of the people we were meeting through PFG were so intimately connected to it all. The Forward 4 Wiz Trust is the definition of a grassroots charity, and Wiz's legacy is something to be massively proud of. It is literally just people from a small, kind of mediocre area, doing their best to spread their reach beyond themselves to the wider community. Above all they encourage creativity, because that is what sustains the soul of this town.

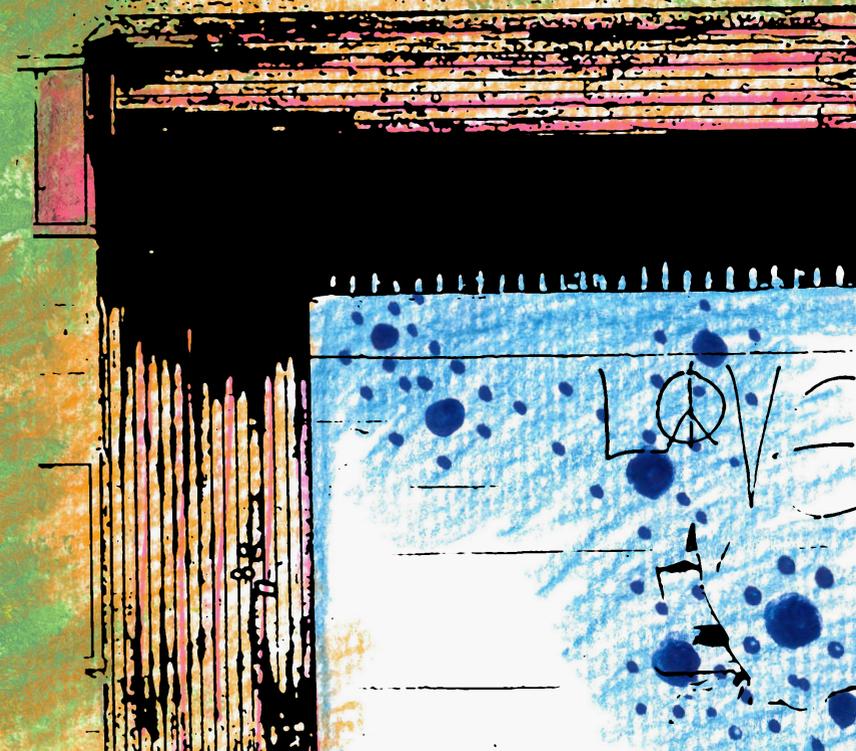


When we started Parachute for Gordo, it was important to us that we represented the town truthfully. As a band who don't have many words in our songs, lots of meaning is conveyed through our album art and videos. Our recent album Possibility of Not was accompanied by a video for every track and many of these feature Aldershot as a central character. We gatecrashed Matt Brown's legendary Wobblefest garden festival, made sure to get a shot of Malcolm's beautiful ramshackle junk shop on the High Street, scared ourselves walking around Rowhill copse in the dark. In our own small way, much like with this issue of the Foreword 4 Wiz zine, we wanted to honour the town and maybe add to its mythology just a touch. Like many other towns in Britain, it has its failures but it has its successes too. Those little things that make me realise that while it's not perfect, it's a place I think of fondly nonetheless.

Barney Jeavons is optimistic for the future of the arts in Aldershot and told us about a new scheme to open the Westy up to unusual artists. "We're putting on a new stage in the gallery room and we're going to open it up to people who want to do a thing. It's anything that we wouldn't normally be able to do. It all came from this triumvirate who put together a thing called Yellow Box and needed a space to work in. A spoken word artist, a musician and a visual artist working on one piece. It went really well and was really inspiring and we thought "we need to do more of this". It means that anyone can come and do their stuff in here. So if it's someone who has written a book and wants to do a book launch, or wants to come and share their banjo music with someone. And then whatever we earn, we can just put back into nurturing new stuff,"

I can't pretend that just because we have some very talented artists Aldershot is saved and we can fix the whole town just through the power of creativity and positive vibes, life doesn't work like that too often. It might be that the local council and businesses can do something if they see a profit in it. There is a 10-15 year renovation plan being proposed right now, so maybe one day our children will be able to shop at a Primark and we can return to the warm embrace of Marks and Spencer. We have to dream big after all. But until then, it's up to us to keep creating just for the joy of it. Because really, what else is there to do in this town?

— John Harvey, November 2017



The **Forward 4 Wiz Trust** supports new music at grassroots level by way of mentoring, advising and assisting aspiring musicians to drive forward creativity and strengthen community.

Revolution must begin at home.

This edition of Foreword 4 Wiz is the first in a series of zines curated by local artists on behalf of the Trust.

Parachute for Gordo are a post-rock band from Aldershot who have been proud to collaborate with the Trust since their formation. They are Laura Lee (Guitar), John Harvey (bass), Mark Glaister (drums). They released their album Possibility of Not in 2017 through Rose Coloured and Beth Shalom Records.

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