

The Father of Loud's Legacy

The Hanwell Hootie is much more than just London's largest one-day music festival, as **Carla Passino** discovers.

2018 AT A GLANCE...

90 BANDS 15 VENUES 400 VOLUNTEERS
 20,000 FANS £100,000s BOOST TO LOCAL ECONOMY LONDON'S BIGGEST FREE ONE-DAY MUSIC FESTIVAL



Fizzy Blood playing at the 2018 Hanwell Hootie.

The crowd streaming towards the festival stage at the 2018 Hanwell Hootie was as electric as rock band Rews as they warmed them up on the main stage with an edgy, energetic performance. "The reason we play (here) is that we want to inspire people, we want to get our name out there— so to be associated with the Hootie is just brilliant," said Rews' beat-rocker, Collette Williams, as she came off stage.

Although the Hanwell Hootie has grown faster than expected since it set up in 2013, its original spirit—to champion live music—is still intact. It remains a free festival so everybody, from all backgrounds, can join in.

It's this chance to relate to a broad, diverse public that appeals to bands like Rews. "We just want to connect with people and we seem to do that." "You get all ages at the Hootie," adds the other half of Rews' duo, songstress Shauna Tohill. "I think our music appeals to younger audiences and when you play in a club or a pub, it's over-18s only, so it's nice to be able to welcome families and those who may not usually be able to make it to our gigs."

The Hootie launched in 2013 by a group of friends as a celebration of the life and work of Jim Marshall, the amp legend known as the Father of Loud. Marshall had died a year earlier and the group thought the best way to commemorate him was to hold live-music events in small venues across Hanwell, where Marshall had opened his music shop and developed the guitar amplifier – which changed the sound of British music forever.

From the inaugural event's 13 bands in three pubs, around 90 now perform at 15 venues scattered either side of the former Marshall shop, on Hanwell High Street, to 20,000 music-lovers – making it the Capital's biggest free one-day music festival.

A cradle for talent

As the festival is the perfect springboard for musicians, several artists that wowed the crowds at the Hootie have since made it onto the world stage. The Raven Age played a couple of years ago and went on to support Iron Maiden on their world tour. Rews first played here in 2017 and later signed up with Marshall Records, who released their debut album, *Pyro*. "We found them before Marshall did!", explains June Martin, one of the organisers.

The Hootie team go out of their way to discover and nurture new artists. "Most bands come to the Hootie through application, because we are trying to find new and emerging talent," says Martin, "however our music team attend many festivals and gigs throughout the year looking for talent that we bring to the festival".

"Changing genre encourages people to experience a different type of music throughout the day,"

June Martin, Hanwell Hootie

The musicians panel deliberately sets out to choose a variety of styles and genres for the festival. "There's only one venue which has the same style of music throughout and that's Blues because we use a venue that was historically used in the 60s by Blues musicians, but in the rest the music is completely different every time."

Take the packed Green W7, where on the Ealing in London sponsored stage, the haunting, almost poetic melodies of folk singer Hannah Scott have just petered out when the punchy punk-rock of Concrete Caverns fills the wistful silence. On the Busking Bus, a converted double decker, Songsmith play a heart-wrenching ballad about a group of young men who perish at sea—just before local quartet OldSchool lift the mood with an acoustic set. "Changing genre encourages people to move to the next venue and experience a different type of music throughout the day," adds Martin.

A Council that backs culture

With around 20,000 people attending the Hootie, the boom to local businesses, such as convenience stores, takeaways, and restaurants, is immense. The Hootie also highlights Ealing's music heritage and culture, its history and its legacy, and the fact that the borough is promoting opportunities for young people and musicians to flourish.

Ealing Council, which has improving opportunities for young people as one of its priorities, is keen to ensure that community inspired culture and events flourish in the borough. It's why Ealing In London has been a key supporter of the Hootie from its beginnings.

While cultural events are often viewed as attractive 'add-ons' the reality is that UK festivals are big business and over the last three years contributed more than £1 billion to the national economy. Many local businesses can take as much as three months' earnings in one festival day. A business that is flourishing is the nearby Dodo Micropub, run by Lucy Do which hosts a silent disco during the Hanwell Hootie (see S12).



Hanwell Hootie Busking Bus.

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Hootie Pop-ups

The Hootie also run pop-up events throughout the year across Ealing borough. "We have just done one in collaboration with Hootie sponsor the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre," says Martin. "We support a three-day Buskathon—we brought musicians in to busk for charity. For us, it's about Ealing being a creative and cultural hub. By bringing that cultural life across Ealing, collectively, we are all working together to support Ealing music."

"The Hootie is a great opportunity for unsigned musicians to get out and play."

Charlie Kellie, Lycio

A community effort

The Hootie owes much to the 400 volunteers that take care of anything from running the Busking Bus to decking out the venues.

Belinda Newstead, a volunteer since the very first Hootie, has done both. Her job, she explains, is to, "recruit all the busking bands"— but, this year, she has decorated the meadow, "from the information and volunteers' tents to the Marshall Shack – the sponsors' chill out area." As the festival got bigger, so did Newstead's role. "The first year there were three pubs. Every year, a little bit more gets added. Not that she minds: "It's the spirit of the community. Everybody is willing to help out. I never want to leave this place."

Newstead is also part of the Hanwell Ukuleles and while performing earlier on, she realised just how much the festival means to the area. "I saw a two-year-old all the way to a 90-year-old. Everyone was happy, singing with us and dancing. The music brings us together and that's a wonderful thing." For her, the best moment is the last performance of the day. "At 11pm, everyone congregates in St Mellitus Church to watch the last band play. It's lovely because it brings us all together in celebration."

A special place

Indeed it does as the powerful notes of electro-hybrid band Lycio fill the church, firing up the throng that packs the pews. Dozens of lanterns hang from the ceiling, shimmering in the blue and purple lights that bathe the naves, as the last beams of the day filter in from the arched windows. Just as the band comes off stage, they are intercepted by a group of fans, who rave about their music and pledge to follow them on Spotify. It's an unexpected perk for the trio, who legged it all the way from Birmingham to Hanwell.

The Hootie, explains Charlie Kellie, who works the keys and laptop rig, is, "a great opportunity for unsigned musicians to get out and play—great venue, good, professional sound and playing in front of new people. From a performance point of view, when you get a nice reaction, it actually makes a big difference."

