

MEDIA RELEASE

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14-16 year-olds run the show, as Thamesmead Festival announces a line-up spotlighting young talent

This year's **Thamesmead Festival** is building on its growing reputation as a showcase for local talent. Funded by Peabody, which is putting culture at the heart of its long-term regeneration of Thamesmead, the event celebrates the young stars of tomorrow on the brand-new Wanderlust Hill Stage. Marking a first for the festival, it's a stage entirely programmed and co-produced by local youth collective **The South East Way** (pictured).

Over the past six months, **eleven 14-16 year-olds**, brought together by community arts project **Three Rivers**, have learnt about every aspect of putting on a show. This includes everything from prop making and set building to DJing and programming the young local acts, many of whom will be making their stage debut at the festival.

The 11 first-time festival producers chose an Alice in Wonderland theme. They collaborated with artist and musician Rosie Ridgway, and designer Leomi Sadler, to give Alice's adventures a Thamesmead twist that reflects the "magic behind the concrete" they can see in their area and want other people to see too.

Also launching at the festival will be a project commissioned by Thamesmead's **Black Culture Collective**. ***Our Story Our Song*** is an eight-week music programme which gives 15 young people the opportunity to write, record and perform original songs and create a music video.

Confirmed for the **Park Stage**, located on the eastern banks of Southmere Lake, include: South London's mighty **House Gospel Choir** with their rapturous repertoire of club anthems and gospel classics; retro-style soul and rock n roll from **Logan J Parker**; the return of festival favourite and local star **J Cocoa** with her sweet mix of jazz, soul and RnB; South London's favourite power trio **MTPockets** with their high energy covers of funk, soul, and rock & roll classics; **Afro-infused** energy of **UNCSS**; melodic quick-silver jazz guitar of **Edison Herbert** and his jazz quartet, plus an acoustic set by cajon drum and guitar musician **Ronniiee**.

Set in a grove of trees on top of a hill, **The Unplugged Stage** is the perfect spot for acoustic sets, magic and mindfulness. Audiences can expect to be: inspired by the socially conscious poetry of **Sam Castell-Ward**; empowered by South London singer, rapper and The Voice contestant **Redrum**; swept away by the beauty of language with local poet **Andrew Livingstone-Boyd** the author of two books of poetry — "Birchmere" and "An Open Window"; enraptured by the sublime vocals of South London-based folk-pop singer-songwriter **Sam Winston** and **Midori Jaeger**'s mix of indie vocals and cello. And if that doesn't sound chilled enough, audience members will be invited to create their own "floating bed" at **Kerry Ward's** mindfulness session and develop singing and breathing techniques with ***Our Story Our Song***.

Dance and performance is woven into the rhythm of life at Thamesmead, which is home to a number of dance companies including Greenwich Dance, The London College of Performing Arts and Dynamix Dance School. **Southmere Stage** is the place to witness Thamesmead's best moves. You'll get to see hip hop, Afrobeat and street dance from **Dynamix**; competitive cheerleading from **Utopia Cheer**; and Thamesmead-born TikTok dance sensation **Dancer Ras** who channels the Reggae, Soca and Dancehall culture of St Vincent. Following a performance of new choreography, **Melissa Rayne** and her dancers invite audience members to join in with a creative dance workshop. Southmere Stage will also see a special performance by 14-year-old **Ruky Star** whose debut single *Watch Me Now* was released to raise awareness about brittle bone disease.

Community stalls run by local groups and charities providing information about the work they do will run throughout the day. These will include: London Early Years Foundation, Crossness River Action Group, UK Latin Community, The Collective Makers, Thamesmead & Abbeywood Royal British Legion, Lauriann's Stem Club, Prostate Warriors, Treasures Supplementary School with Culture Club, Royal Greenwich Councillors and Greenwich Domestic Abuse Service.

Free workshops and activities for children and adults will run in **The Play Zone** and festival goers can meet and buy handmade goods from local artists and craftspeople. Throughout the day there will be a globe-trotting mix of **locally produced food and drink** for people to sample.

Once again, this **free, family-friendly showcase of local talent and creativity** is co-produced by local residents in partnership with event producers **Serious**. The entire festival is programmed and led by the **Festival Production Group**, made up of **14 residents** representative of Thamesmead's diverse



cultures and neighbourhoods. Together with internationally renowned event producers **Serious**, they have been working to deliver an **ambitious showcase of local talent**.

Lisa Drew, Peabody's Cultural Programme Manager for Thamesmead, said: *"From the start, the Thamesmead Festival — a flagship of Peabody's cultural programme which began in 2017 — was intended as a celebration of the talent bursting out of this part of London. This year we're excited to announce a new stage especially for young local talent — programmed and co-produced by South East Way, a talented young collective from Bexley."*

The South East Way collective said:

"During our time working on Wanderlust Hill we've learnt about how much teamwork and determination it takes to plan something for the community. It's been an incredible experience and at the end of the day it's all worth it. We've created a programme for young people in Thamesmead which we hope means they'll have a great time at the festival and we couldn't be more excited!"

The band Everything In Mono, who are performing on The Wanderlust stage, said: "We feel incredibly lucky to have been scouted for the Thamesmead Festival, especially by other kids who came to one of our local gigs and decided they wanted to have us perform. We've been pouring everything we have into this band during its short existence and thanks to groups like The South East Way we're able to continue chasing our pipe dream! We look forward to giving it our all on stage."

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