

**They left  
the room  
empty.**

**We can build a new one.**

A manifesto for musicians and the people who give a damn about music.

***They gave us infinite access and called it a revolution. What they actually did was tear out the walls, turn off the lights, and tell us to be grateful for the wifi. This is about what was left in the rubble — and what we're building instead.***

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Every town has one. The venue everyone can name without thinking. Not because it was clean — it wasn't. Not because it was profitable — it definitely wasn't. Because it was the room that made your local scene visible to itself. Two hundred cap. Sticky carpet. A monitor wedge held together with gaffer tape and optimism. A queue around the corner on the right night.

You didn't go there because it was convenient. You went because something was happening — something that was not happening anywhere else. Bands finding their sound in front of thirty people who cared. Promoters taking risks on acts they'd heard about from a mate. A bassist answering a message on the noticeboard at the back and turning up to rehearsal three days later. That room was infrastructure. It just didn't look like it.

Those rooms are closing. Have been for years. And we're told this is inevitable. That the world changed, audiences moved online, and there's nothing to be done. Inevitable is a very convenient word for decisions that were made by people with money, leverage, and a metrics dashboard showing exactly what they wanted it to show.

***Don't tell me it was inevitable. Tell me who made the decisions. Tell me whose quarterly figures looked better when the room went dark.***

## **What streaming actually sold you**

Here is the story they told. Streaming would democratise music. More listeners than ever. Global discovery. Your music, anywhere in the world, instantly. And yes — technically, some of that happened. The library got bigger. The access got easier.

What they didn't put in the press release: the pay cheque for a million streams that doesn't cover a month's rent. The A&R; department quietly replaced by a playlist curator who has never been to a gig. The recommendation algorithm that learns what you already like and serves you more

of it — safer, flatter, quieter — until the definition of what music can be quietly narrows around you without you noticing.

They took music — which has always been physical, communal, risky, and alive — and they turned it into content. A word I cannot type without feeling something die slightly. Content. As if a song is the same category of object as a recipe video or a productivity hack. As if the point of music is to fill time between ads.

***£0.003 per stream. Build your brand, they said. Ten million streams. You still haven't paid your rent. But the playlist looked great.***

And the artists — the ones actually trying to build something — were handed a new job description. Not musician. Not songwriter. Social media manager, content producer, algorithm-whisperer, TikTok personality. Be relatable. Post consistently. Make sure the hook lands in the first three seconds or they'll scroll. Go viral or go home.

Nobody asked if this was a good deal. It was just the deal.

## The rooms that went dark

While we were all marvelling at the library, the rooms were closing.

Hundreds of grassroots venues shuttered across the UK in the decade after streaming went mainstream. Not because live music stopped mattering. Because the infrastructure around it was hollowed out. Promoters couldn't compete with the cost of advertising to people who used to just walk past and see the poster. Local press that used to tell people what was on had been gutted. The algorithms buried local gigs under personalised feeds full of content the platforms had decided you should see.

The venues weren't just stages. They were the rooms where scenes happened. Where a band played twelve people on a Tuesday and one of those twelve people turned out to be the right person at the right moment. Where you heard something for the first time and it changed what you thought music could be. Where the connective tissue of a local scene — the relationships, the word of mouth, the sense that something was building — actually formed.

***You cannot replace that with a Spotify playlist. You cannot replace it with a TikTok. You cannot replace it with a Discord server where people post memes about music instead of going to see it.***

The music press went the same way. NME. Melody Maker. Select. The weeklies that used to tell people not just what to listen to but why it mattered, what it connected to, what it was in conversation with. Replaced by streaming playlist descriptions written by people who have never stood in a 200-cap venue and felt something shift.

And the musicians were left with nowhere to go. No community that was theirs. No practical tools for the actual work of being a musician — finding collaborators, listing gigs, reaching the industry contacts who might actually move the needle. Just a TikTok algorithm and a prayer.

## **The moment it became personal**

I finished my second album and felt genuinely proud of it.

That feeling lasted about a week.

Then the reality landed. To get anyone to hear it, I needed to make content. Short-form video. Reels. TikToks. Behind-the-scenes. A journey. Ads. Boosted posts. An algorithm that would decide, based on engagement in the first hour, whether anyone ever saw it at all.

I'd spent months making something I believed in. And the system's response was: great, now perform for us.

***That's what broke me. Not the streaming rates. Not the venue closures. The specific, soul-crushing experience of finishing a piece of art and being immediately told your job now is to sell it like a brand flogging trainers.***

I looked around for somewhere to go. Some platform, some community, some room where musicians could exist as musicians rather than content producers. Where you could find a collaborator, list a gig, reach an industry contact without a six-month cold outreach campaign. Where the music came first and everything else served it.

There wasn't one. So I built it.

# The thing nobody bothered to build

For all the disruption and innovation and venture capital and breathless tech journalism of the past twenty years — nobody built the obvious thing.

Not a streaming service. Not another social network where musicians exist alongside everyone who has ever posted a photo of their lunch. Something specifically, deliberately, exclusively for musicians and the communities around them. A place with the tools they actually need. Built around their actual workflows. Not designed to maximise session time or serve targeted ads or keep you in an engagement loop until you've forgotten what you opened the app for.

A place to find a bassist at 11pm on a Tuesday when the tour starts in three weeks. To list a gig and have it found by the hundred people who would actually show up. To reach a booker or a manager or a studio without a six-month cold outreach campaign. To talk to other musicians — actually talk, in real time — about what it is to be doing this right now, in 2025, in the landscape we actually have rather than the one we wish we had.

***Complaining about the empty room won't fill it. But nobody had built a new one. So we did.***

## What Neufia actually is

Neufia is not a streaming service. It is not trying to be Spotify with better values. It's a room. Built specifically for musicians, with the tools musicians actually need, and without the machinery that's been working against them.

There are chatrooms. Real ones. Genre rooms. Local scene rooms. Rooms where people talk about music because they want to, not because an algorithm decided to show them this content at this moment. Not a feed. Not suggested posts. A room where the conversation belongs to the people in it.

There's a gigs board. You list your show. People who go to gigs find it. Not because you paid to boost it. Not because the algorithm decided you deserved visibility this week. Because you listed it and it was there. The radical simplicity of a thing that just works.

There's a collab board. Need a drummer? A producer who actually gets what you're trying to do? A photographer who shoots gigs rather than lifestyle content? Post it. Find them. The back pages

of the NME, rebuilt for a generation who never got to use the NME back pages.

There's a contacts database. Labels. Managers. Bookers. Studios. Press. People you can actually reach — not a cold DM into silence, not a LinkedIn connection that goes nowhere — a database built on trust, in a community of people who are there because they give a damn about music.

***No ads. No algorithmic feed. No targeting model. No recommendation engine pretending to be culture.***

***Just tools. Just community. Just the room.***

## Why Factory Records matters here

Factory Records did not start with a business plan. It started with Tony Wilson watching a band in a pub and deciding that what he'd just seen needed to exist in the world. He was right. The infrastructure came later. The community came first.

Rough Trade was a record shop before it was a label. A place people gathered. A room where the conversation was the thing, and the records were the evidence of the conversation. Geoff Travis didn't build a recommendation engine. He built a room with good taste and let people find each other in it.

John Peel played records nobody had asked to hear. Some were terrible. Some were The Fall, Joy Division, The Undertones, and half the bands that defined British music for a generation. There was no data behind those choices. Just someone with genuinely strange taste and the conviction that music should occasionally make you feel like the floor had moved.

***The algorithm would have buried every last one of them. That is the difference between a platform built around discovery and a platform built around confirmation.***

Healthy music scenes have always been built by people with strong taste and low patience for what already exists. Neufia is built for those people.

The tools change. The principle doesn't. Use technology to connect people to each other. Not to trap them in an optimisation cycle. Not to extract attention and sell it to advertisers. To get the right people in the same room, then get out of the way.

## This one's for you.

Not the labels. Not the platforms. Not the streaming executives wondering how to extract another quarter-point of margin from the back catalogue.

You. The musician who finished something last week and immediately felt the dread of what comes next. The fan who turned up to a Tuesday night gig for a band nobody had heard of and felt the floor shift. The promoter still taking risks on acts that haven't got a following yet because you trust your own ears. The kid with a four-track and a bedroom and something to say.

The music industry has spent twenty years building infrastructure for everyone except you. Platforms optimised for advertisers. Algorithms optimised for engagement. Discovery systems optimised for acts that have already been discovered. A system that rewards having already made it — in a landscape that makes it harder than ever to get started.

***That system was not built for you. It was built around you. There's a difference. And it's worth being angry about.***

## So here's what we're asking.

**Join.** Not as a user. As a community member. There's a difference. Neufia is only as strong as the people in the rooms. Come in, say something, find your people. The platform doesn't work without you in it.

**List your gig.** Every show you put on the board is a show that gets found without a boost, without an ad budget, without an algorithm deciding whether you deserve to be seen this week. Do it every time.

**Post on the collab board.** The bassist you haven't found yet is on Neufia. The producer who gets what you're trying to do is on Neufia. Post what you need. Be specific. Find them.

**Use the contacts.** The database is there. The industry contacts are real and reachable. Stop cold-DMing into the void. Use the infrastructure that was built for exactly this.

**Tell another musician.** Word of mouth built every scene that ever mattered. It still does. If Neufia is useful to you — tell one other person. That's the whole growth strategy. That's the only one that builds something real.

**Show up.** The rooms only stay open if people are in them. Factory Records survived because people kept showing up to the Hacienda even when it was half empty. The Joiners in Southampton has been open since 1968 for the same reason. Neufia needs the same energy. Show up. Come back. Bring someone.

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The industry will catch up. They always do — once the room is already full and they can see what they've been missing. Let them. That's not cynicism. That's how every scene that ever mattered worked.

The Hacienda wasn't built for the majors. Rough Trade wasn't built for the charts. John Peel wasn't broadcasting for Radio 1's demographic research department. They built something real, for people who cared, and eventually the rest of the world noticed.

***We're not getting the old rooms back. That's not the argument. The argument is that the need those rooms served — for community, for practical tools, for the connective tissue of a music scene — did not go away when the rooms did. It just had nowhere to go.***

Neufia is where it goes now.

# The room is open.

## *Come in.*

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**Jason Hughes**

Founder, Neufia

# JOIN NEUFIA

Chatrooms · Gigs board · Collab board · Industry contacts

***No ads. No algorithm. No excuses.***

**neufia.com**

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