

Frontline Festival Scotland is About More Than Just a Virtual Gig

Friday 16 October, 2020

The year 2020 will go down as a year where many of us were searching for purpose. With most sectors closed down, limited interaction with our family and friends, it would be fair to say that we were feeling the strain and our mental health and wellbeing was taking a huge hit.

Back in April, Ceangail had signed up to all National and local volunteering initiatives, yet had not been contacted to discuss where its staff and 40 volunteer base could possibly help. So, the event's organisers decided that the way they could contribute to the fight against covid-19 was to look at hosting a gig!

The Scottish music scene has been decimated this year and with both established and grassroots artists not being able to carve a living from gig's, it was one of the projects aims to make sure that enough budget was secured to at least cover artists expenses, so they weren't out of pocket. The Project would give artists a purpose back, improving their mental health and wellbeing and helping change their outlook for the rest of the year.

Frontline Festival Scotland Campaign Ambassador, Kieron Achara adds, "I wholeheartedly believe giving these artists an opportunity to do what they love will allow them to have a sense of purpose and self-worth. These two facets are key to staying on top of your mental health. I think it is great that we are trying to adapt during these testing times and creating a positive outlet for these artists to do what they love."

When you consider the wider benefits of the Frontline Festival Scotland event, it doesn't just give us all something to look forward to, it's clear that this virtual gig is way more than just about artists supporting the frontline charities. It's about everyone involved being part of something bigger, working together, creating an uplifting experience that makes us feel better and that our contribution can be worthwhile again.

One of our amazing grassroots artists Damien Hendry from Ocean of You, an advocate for mental health awareness, was kind enough to share his experiences from this year and what it means for him to be part of the Festival.

As someone who has a history of mental health issues, namely anxiety and depression, it has played a part in his life for over a decade. Damien believes about being open, honest and vocal about mental health issues so as to increase understanding, relate to fellow sufferers and break the stereotype that adult males can't or shouldn't talk about their feelings.

Damien tells us that following some setbacks in 2019, gigs were already booked in for 2020 where the singer/songwriter was looking to recapture his mojo but as everyone now knows the pandemic wrote off any chance of bands playing live, possibly this whole year and beyond. The uncertainty and worry of it all on what the future holds for the sector plays a lot on artists minds. Once again both confidence and self-belief took a bit of a dent which probably all artists may feel but it does affect everyone differently.

Building on some of his coping mechanisms Damien keeps himself busy with writing and recording new material. He also turns off the TV when the Governments press conferences come on as he felt that although informative, they were rather anxiety-inducing and it was easier to stay level-headed and cope by switching them off, returning to read the key updates in his own time.

When Damien was told that he would feature in the Frontline Festival Scotland line up he was excited about being able to do a live set, all be it a virtual one. He also pays tribute to one of the other Artists involved by saying, "I was extremely grateful to learn that artists such as JJ [Gilmore] whom I look up to and respect were willing to help out grassroots artists like myself, particularly at such a difficult time for all of us in the arts. It's hugely appreciated, and it's gone some way to restoring that self-belief that has been somewhat lacking since the pandemic struck."

Indeed he, like many of the Artists, have paid tribute to Ceangail organising the event and consider it an honour to being able to show their support of our frontline charities whilst giving some focus to themselves again.

When asked what he would say to other artists in need of support he replied, "Think of your art as your

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happy place. If you do that, nothing can hurt you while you're in that zone. Whether you're writing, recording, rehearsing, or even doing a Facebook Live to 10 of your mates, you're adding something positive and unique to the world that didn't exist before. You're untouchable."

You can catch Damien at the Frontline Festival Scotland as the organisers are delighted to announce that Ocean of You will open the virtual event on Monday 30th November. More details can be found on the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/frontlinefestivalscotland

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