

**ISSUE
21**

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RABBIT**

**23 AUG
2020**

Arriving Somewhere But Not Here

Last Tuesday morning. There's sunshine blitzing through tent canvas and I'm awake. It's around 6am somewhere right on the Dorset coast. Outside the tent, there's a melancholy howling coming from out at sea; a plaintive whale song for the busiest sea lane in the world. Although it sounds like musical frequencies bubbling up from the depths of the channel, it's in fact an orchestra of huge, resonant manmade drones emanating from an unplanned fleet of cruise liners. It's one of the strangest sounds I've ever heard.

We've been here since Sunday and every day we've marvelled at the sight of this ghost fleet. There are five, sometimes seven, sometimes nine ships positioned one and a half miles off the coast at Weymouth. When the light allows, we can see that these sentinels are emblazoned with the names of their operators. P&O. Cunard. The two biggest ships are the Queen Victoria and the Queen Mary 2 – eighteen decks and home to nearly 2700 passengers when in service. Each boat is anchored by a 27 ton weight yet they still glide in perfect circles, in the slowest motion. Their graceful movements are like the hands of a clock, glanced at once in a while then forgotten, until the next time seen.



At night, a thin layer of light illuminates the lower decks of each boat. These low slung strings of fairy lights show that whilst they're going nowhere, they are still minimally manned. These are properties protected by live-in guardians; stateless staff who were only ever supposed to be here for a few days before the ships turned around and headed back towards Ellis Island. These people went to sea to see the world and now, thanks to our omnipresent invisible enemy and a tangle of tax laws, they're just sat there revolving round and round in front of a campsite on the south coast. When you think about the circumstances of those on board, Dickens' prison hulks moored in the Thames come to mind.

Just under 200 miles east, there's a very different flotilla in the Channel. That belch of human pollution Nigel Farage has described it as an invasion. As we pitch our tents and try to hide our chilled cans from direct sunlight, there are



camera crews from Sky News and the BBC pulling up alongside and shouting banalities to packed dinghies. These people, all huddled together on an inflatable craft, have practically walked all the way from the Middle East to seek asylum in the most COVID ridden country in Europe. Things back home really must be that bad. Their welcome is Breakfast News with a megaphone, a detention centre in Kent and the snarl of contempt from someone who failed to gain a seat in the House of Commons on seven occasions, yet still changes the weather every time he speaks.

A week later, back at home and my news feed fills up with the story of a 16 year old Sudanese boy who drowned attempting to make the journey across the Channel. For the past seven days, I've been trying to connect the two boat stories in my head since the camping trip, it's been bugging me like mad. At one end of the country, all that opulence has no place to go. At the other, there's pure desperation in an inflatable dinghy, a fixed destination and no welcome. One set of boats can't land because they're registered to tax havens like Bermuda, or the Cayman Islands. The other can barely get to land thanks to a Sky presenter in a life jacket bellowing into a megaphone.

Perhaps there is no connection to be drawn. Perhaps it just all sucks, and Cunard and P&O and the Sudanese boy are just victims

of different kinds of British bureaucracy. The kind of red tape that 52% of voters proudly voted to get rid of in June 2016 yet we're about to spend £705 million expanding on come January. The cruise ships are stymied by the boring kind of red tape, leaving them destined to spin on an anchor and slowly rust in an English summer. The boy was a victim of the cruel and deadly kind of bureaucracy, where all of the proper channels for asylum seekers are blocked or removed. The hostile environment as a physical space, 18 nautical miles wide.

Maybe the only connection is that as a country, we are insane and that stretch of water during the summer of 2020 symbolises so many of our wrong priorities. Like so much that's happened this year, you stare at it all for hours and you just end up feeling impotent; helpless and hopeless. Round and round and round.

If you can, maybe consider donating to one of these charities:

helprefugees.org / refugee-action.org.uk / savethechildren.org.uk

THE CAMP – THE STORY OF CHALET 15: PART 3

MADELEINE SWIFT

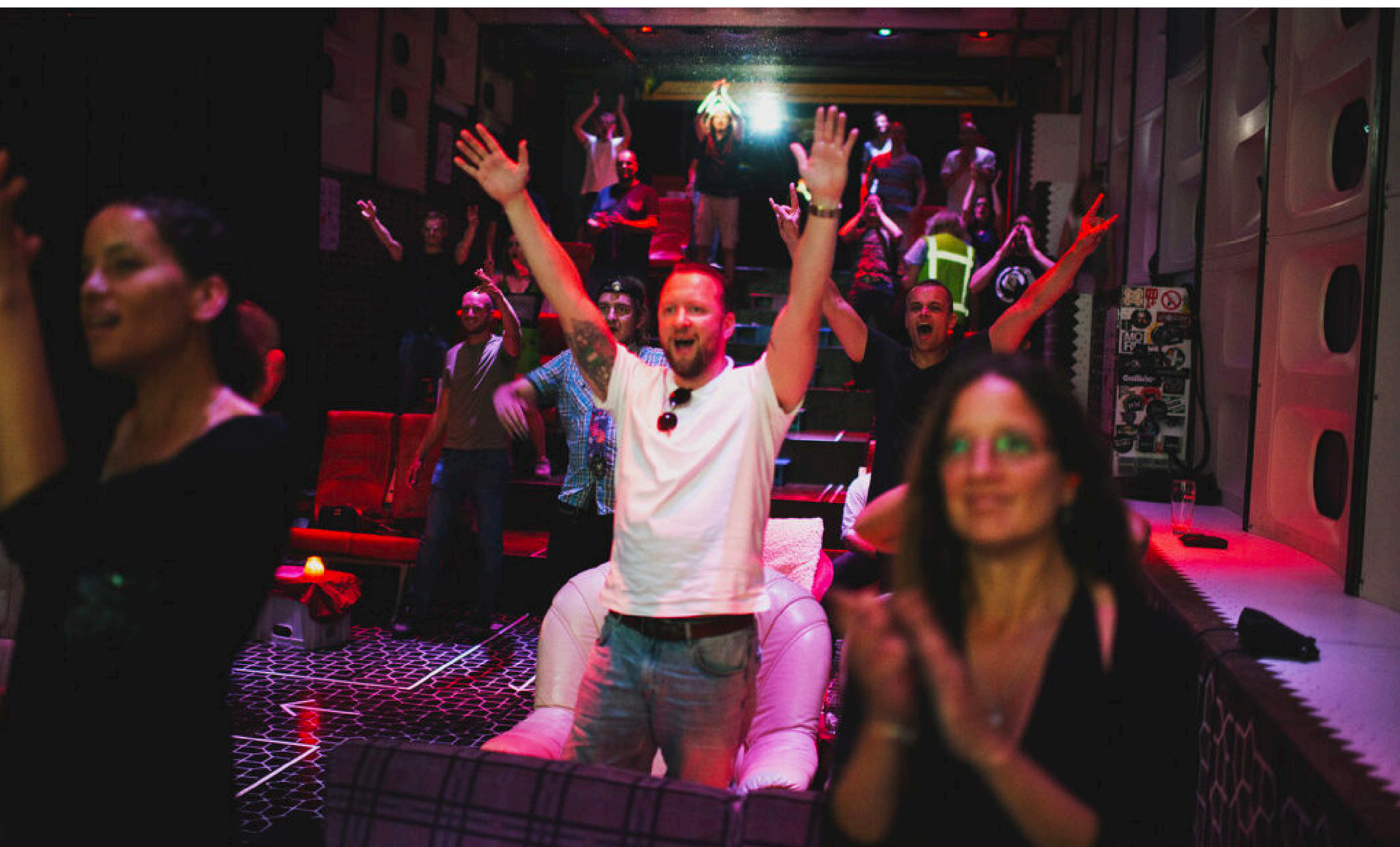
'It is sunny, I'm standing in the bar with my dad, my cousins are running around, my grandparents are busy organising the shop, the grown ups are chatting. Everyone is there, I feel safe, and the lights have properly come on again after a year of utter darkness.'



We're running extracts from **Madeleine Swift**'s glorious book *The Camp* throughout the summer – [Read the latest in full and catch up here](#)

THE VIEW FROM HERE: DOWN THE WORMHOLE V

RICHARD FOSTER



What news from the Continent I hear you cry?

Well, we enter into the arena of the unknown.

Rotterdam in particular has seen a dramatic rise in infections over the last month, leading some to question whether bars and clubs should be kept open. But as yet – mercifully – there is no concomitant rise in deaths or severe cases. Let’s hope it stays that way, forever...

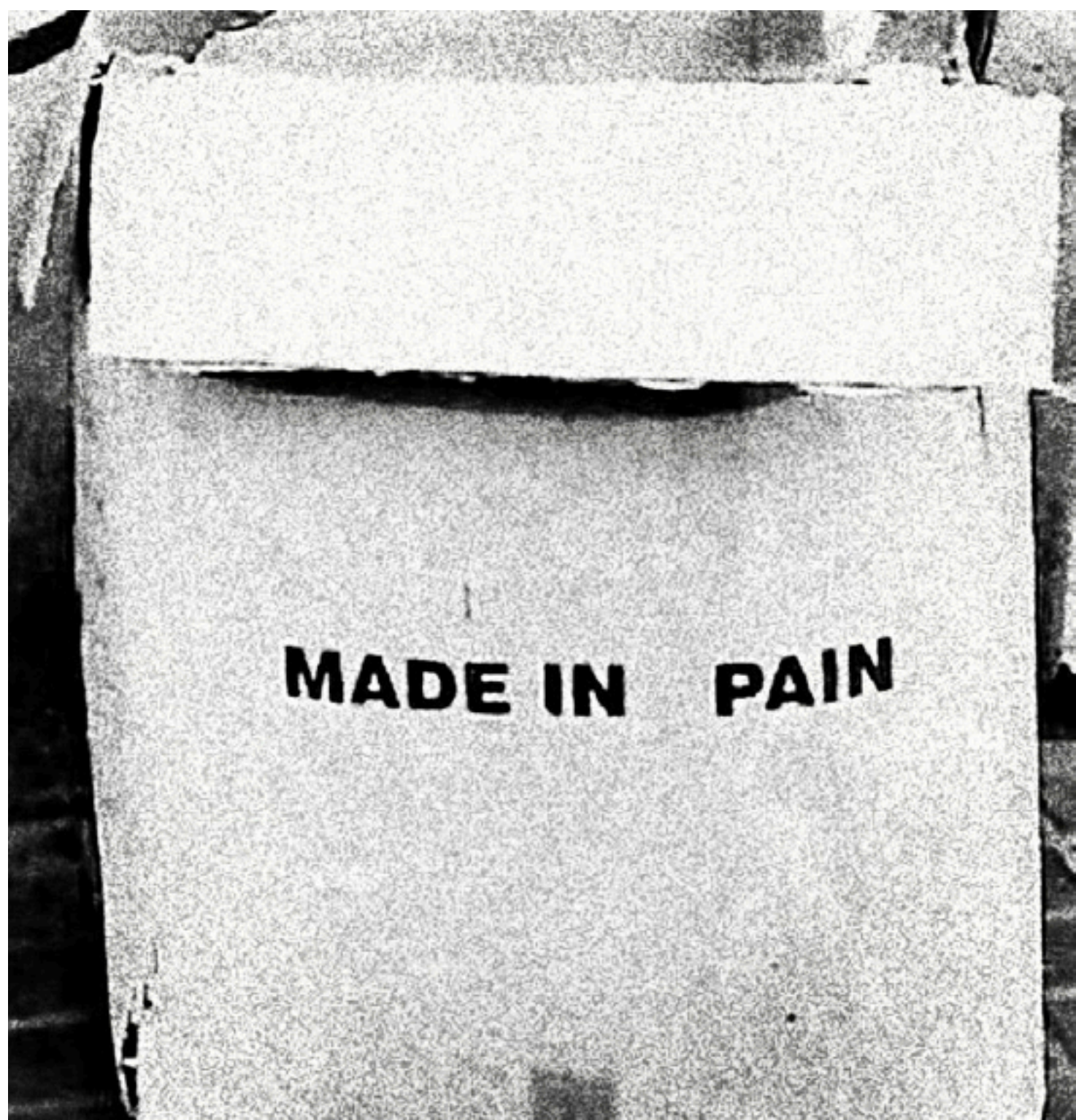
[Read the latest update from our friend in Rotterdam here](#)

THE VIEW FROM HERE: ELECTRONIC VOICE PHAENOMENA – BRING DA MOTHERFUCKING RUCKUS

JULIÁN VIÑUALES

Another update from a friend overseas: we asked publisher **Julian Vinuales** (Libros de Kultrum) to report back from his home in Barcelona, only to discover he had spent all of lockdown in Roses, several miles up the Catalan coast...

[Read Julián’s update](#)



UNDER THE GOLDEN EYE OF SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN

MARTHA SPRACKLAND

The smell of woodsmoke and heavy, Welsh mud, and the mist lifting off the field as I cross it in my wellies to buy a cup of coffee, the first squeals of soundcheck feedback from the main stage.

That could be any mid-August weekend of the last thirteen years, each of which I've spent at Green Man Festival in Brecon Beacons, an annual pilgrimage with my dad and my brother, the ritual of which is now so embedded it feels absurd not to be there now, in this altered and unwelcome year. The routine is sacred...

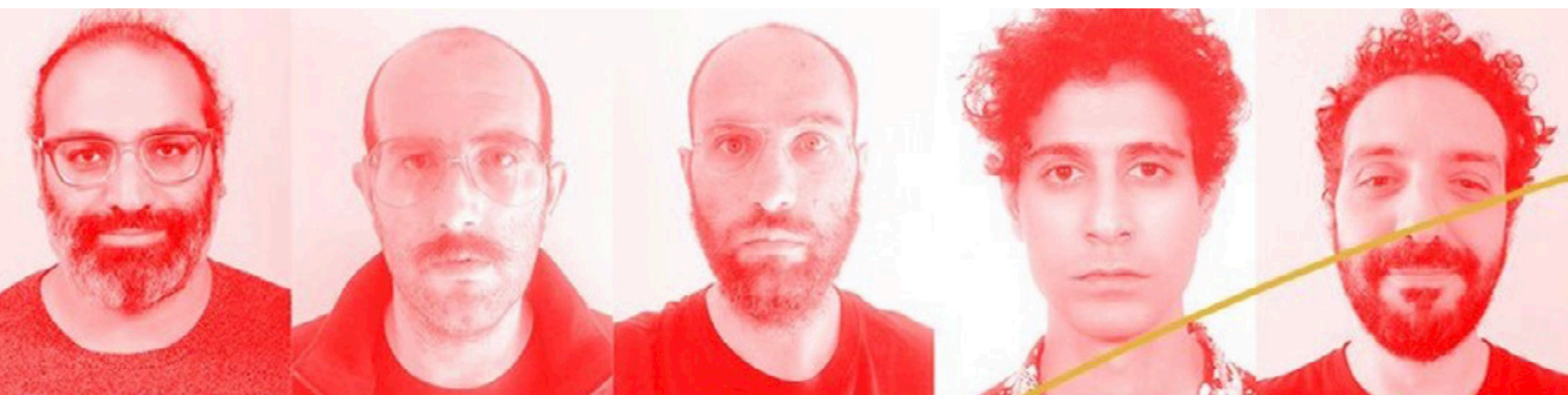
Martha Sprackland shares memories of the inimitable Green Man Festival, where we all should be this weekend.

[Read more here](#)



RADIO AL-HARA: ACCEPT IT OR NOT, THERE WILL BE VIBES

LIAM INSCOE-JONES



Thirty years ago Radio Al-Hara couldn't have existed at all. Before the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993, licensed Palestinian radio was illegal. For the founders of the station, it's a feeling of fresh contact which goes both ways. Yazan says it's the kind of international community he's never felt part of as a Palestinian: "because of shut downs and road closures, at live shows you're unlikely to even see people from other parts of Palestine there" he says.

We were pitched a piece about a radio station in Bethlehem whose slogan is “accept it or not, there will be vibes”. How could we resist? Read **Liam Inscoe-Jones’** [*piece on Radio Al-Hara here*](#)



THIS WEEK HAS BEEN POWERED ON BY...

Lovecraft Country / party metal / Bannon in cuffs / TVG deal / Angerland, and all work by Mark James / Songs From The Big Chair / the pub next door's miserable bloody cat / James Dean Bradfield's *Even In Exile* / The Peanut Butter Falcon / Eat Out To Help Out for every fucking meal / plague raves / *Watchmen* back on Now TV / Will Burns' Bandana / Berkhamstead / Being taken home drunk / Campfires with rm / Tent with Woodburner / The Twig Collector / Red Kites, Wood Pigeons, Clouds, Stars and Smoke / Chinese delivery to the tent in the rain / *Once Upon a Time In Iraq* / Escape At Dannemora / Gordon Dalton / 4 pint growler / Green Man Field of Streams

The Social Gathering Broadsheet is brought to you with love from Lee Brackstone, Carl Gosling, Tom Noble & Robin Turner.