

[00:00:00] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, okay. This is Jarek Zaba with the AMP Kingston, uh, heritage project from Creative Youth looking at art, music and pop fashion heritage in the Kingston borough and beyond. Um, today is Monday the 17th of April, 2023, and I'm with Julian Slawinski who runs the Bacchus nightclub here in Kingston, which is also the location for this interview.

[00:00:23] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, Julian, do you mind just stating your name for the tape as well as your date and place of birth?

[00:00:28] **Julian Slawinski:** Uh, my name's Julian Slawinski. My date of birth is 27th of the fourth, 1966, and I was born in Queen Charlotte's Hospital in Hammersmith.

[00:00:38] **Jarek Zaba:** Perfect. Thank you. Um, Julian I wonder if, just first of all, before we go into Bacchus specifically, um, I wonder if you could just talk about your relationship to, to this area.

[00:00:46] **Jarek Zaba:** When did you first sort of come to Kingston?

[00:00:48] **Julian Slawinski:** I, first, my, well, my parents first moved here in 1977, so I've been here for 46 years.

[00:00:55] **Jarek Zaba:** Yep. Yeah. And have you always been fond of the area? Did you like sort of growing up here?

[00:00:59] **Julian Slawinski:** Yes, it [00:01:00] was, it was, it was a nice area to grow up in. And, um, as I say, like then in my sort of like teenage years I was here as well, so those obviously getting to grips with the music scene that was going on in Kingston.

[00:01:12] **Julian Slawinski:** So I went to all the venues and stuff and, uh, including the, the one that we are in as well.

[00:01:16] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about Kingston's music scene, um, prior to sort of your involvement in Bacchus I mean, what, what are some of the venues you, you recall being?

[00:01:25] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, the one that we're sitting in, this was used to be called Jesters, and it was, um, the basement of a pub called the Old Crown, which is used, used to be above it here.

[00:01:36] **Julian Slawinski:** Um, and there were quite a few other venues that did do music, the Grey Horse in Kingston and, um, the Three Fishes, which was, um, a pub that was sort of near the Grey Horse and there was quite a vibrant, kind of like rock scene. And also there was a pub called The Dolphin, which had kind of like a mod nights and rock nights.

[00:01:57] **Julian Slawinski:** So it was a pretty vibrant scene in Kingston. Lots of [00:02:00] places for bands to play, lots of DJs doing rock nights, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:02:05] **Jarek Zaba:** Where was The Dolphin?

[00:02:06] **Julian Slawinski:** The Dolphin was actually at the back entrance of Bentalls and it's in Dolphin Street that's called now, but on the corner where, um, the big sports shop is.

[00:02:14] **Julian Slawinski:** That was a giant pub called the Dolphin Hotel.

[00:02:17] **Jarek Zaba:** Oh, that's interesting. Right. And you say this place was Jesters. I mean, what was the kind of character of, of of, of that place and, and, and

[00:02:24] **Julian Slawinski:** Not too dissimilar to this then, it was this underground bar here, but it was actually sort of linked to the pub that was above it called the Old Crown.

[00:02:31] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. And were you involved in sort of music promotion early on?

[00:02:35] **Julian Slawinski:** Uh, not at all. Nothing until the late eighties, early nineties.

[00:02:41] **Jarek Zaba:** Okay. How did that come about? How did you, how did you start getting involved in the,

[00:02:44] **Julian Slawinski:** well, I mean, I was in sort of like bands and stuff in the eighties and we played in all the places and, uh, That were in Kingston, the surrounding area, but there was no, it was just more kind of like for fun, for kicks, really.

[00:02:57] **Julian Slawinski:** But it was when I first started DJing in [00:03:00] the Yellow Heaven Soup Kitchen, which was a place in Kingston that we put on a seventies retro night, and it all kicked off from there.

[00:03:08] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Actually, could you tell us a little bit about the Yellow he, Yellow Heaven Soup Kitchen? I, I believe that's where the Bun Shop is.

[00:03:14] **Jarek Zaba:** Uh, uh, the Bun Shop used to be.

[00:03:16] **Julian Slawinski:** No, that's, um, the, the Bun shop is the one in Surbiton, the Yellow Heaven Soup Kitchen is the one in old, in, in Richmond Road.

[00:03:22] **Jarek Zaba:** Ah, right. Yes. Yes. So I've, I've heard that the, uh, the Bun Shop became Yellow Heaven Soup Kitchen but named after the one that was in Kingston.

[00:03:30] **Julian Slawinski:** That's right. Yeah.

[00:03:30] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. So there were. There were two essentially. Yeah.

[00:03:33] **Julian Slawinski:** There, there were, yeah.

[00:03:34] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. So what was, what was the sort of vibe of, of that place?

[00:03:36] **Julian Slawinski:** A really alternative, weird and just like, it was just covered in, there was a nun on the motorbike on the front of it, sort of like, uh, on, on the first floor coming out of the actual venue.

[00:03:48] **Julian Slawinski:** And um, and there was an underground bar was where we DJed and it was a restaurant as well. And it was just a completely different place. Those were wax heads hanging around all over the place. Um, [00:04:00] Just a mad, mad place and lots of people played there and, uh, not bands so much, it was more DJs or sort of like acoustic acts.

[00:04:08] **Jarek Zaba:** Okay. And you're saying this is around late eighties? Is it? Early nineties?

[00:04:11] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah. 88, 89.

[00:04:13] **Jarek Zaba:** Right, right. And, uh, who would've been running. That, that, that those sorts of places.

[00:04:16] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh gosh. There's a guy called Bow and a guy called Mark. They were two partners. They were completely different people. Chalk and cheese, but they, um, yeah, they ran it and it was a really un unusual place.

[00:04:28] **Julian Slawinski:** I actually have a DVD of it. Yeah. Live from 89.

[00:04:32] **Jarek Zaba:** I'd love to have a look at that at some point. Um,

[00:04:34] **Julian Slawinski:** It'll show you what Kingston looked like a bit.

[00:04:36] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. No, no. I mean, that's the one thing that we're, we're, we're probably a little short of a, sort of actual footage of, of, of all these things that we're talking about.

[00:04:43] **Jarek Zaba:** So yeah, we'd love to, we'd love to have a look at it. Any idea where the name came from? Yellow Heaven Soup Kitchen?

[00:04:48] **Julian Slawinski:** No idea. That was just, It's just what it was called. But um, I remember first going down there and sort of hooked and I became like one of the big regulars down there. There was even a hammock down there for me to sort of rest in [00:05:00] with my beer.

[00:05:01] **Julian Slawinski:** So it was a, yeah, it was a very unusual place.

[00:05:04] **Jarek Zaba:** That's when, you know, when you were a popular regular, if you've got your own hammock.

[00:05:07] **Julian Slawinski:** Yes, that's right.

[00:05:09] **Jarek Zaba:** Uh, where exactly on Richmond Road was it?

[00:05:11] **Julian Slawinski:** It was opposite really where the Sainsburys is now. So it was is just one of those little sort of like, um, entrances there.

[00:05:19] **Julian Slawinski:** And, um, yeah, it was, uh, really unusual. It was, as I say, they had a nun on a motorbike kind of like zooming out of the top floor on the top of it. So you kind of like, you just couldn't miss it.

[00:05:30] **Jarek Zaba:** I'd love to see some pictures of that actually. Yeah. Yeah. Sounds really interesting. And you say, and you say you, um, you played in some bands yourself.

[00:05:36] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, what, what, what, what do you play?

[00:05:37] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh, it was just, I was a vocalist and, um, it wasn't until later on with the bands that I was in that I kind of like got a bit more. Successful out at it. But with the actual bands in the eighties, it was just sort of silly stuff, really just wanting to be rock stars, but never, never managing it really.

[00:05:56] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. And in terms of other, [00:06:00] uh, musicians and bands, I know you, you, you are familiar with the, the guys from Cardiacs and

[00:06:04] **Julian Slawinski:** Absolutely. Cardiacs and Trudy sort of knew them quite well. And, um, yeah, but they already, by the late eighties, they weren't really playing in Kingston so much. They were already sort of like doing stuff in London and, uh, the Cardiacs had already kind of like become quite big by then, but it was really in the very early eighties as I think the Cardiacs and the Trudy played in Kingston a lot.

[00:06:26] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. I mean, how would you describe Cardiacs as a band?

[00:06:30] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh, um, very starty stoppy kind of like. English whimsy meets kind of like madness meets kind of like xtc, totally individual, very kind of almost fair ground ridey. Very, very, very odd.

[00:06:54] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. And I gather they, you know, they, the, their sound shifted and changed quite a lot [00:07:00] over time and it very difficult to pin them down.

[00:07:02] **Julian Slawinski:** Absolutely, yes.

[00:07:05] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, and, you know, what, do you get a sense of why they grew in popularity? Why they came, became, you know, such a cult outfit?

[00:07:14] **Julian Slawinski:** There was a big scene sort of like in the early eighties, uh, which was kind of like, heralded even in the Young Ones, really

like Hawkwind, Marillion and all those kind of old hippie bands sort of came back to the fore a bit and somehow the Cardiacs managed to get themselves sort of involved in that scene a little bit as well.

[00:07:33] **Julian Slawinski:** Playing in Stonehenge, as I saw, I saw them there and obviously Hawkwind played there and, and all those sort of bands that were sort of like, um, on the alternative per per periphery, if you like.

[00:07:46] **Jarek Zaba:** Mm mm And, um, so you've mentioned this place as, as, as Jesters. I mean, were you, were you here just regularly as a punter before

[00:07:55] **Julian Slawinski:** I came here probably a couple of times.

[00:07:57] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. And who and who was, who [00:08:00] was running it back in the, in the, you said there was a pub upstairs called The Crown. So the, the pub would run the, the venue downstairs.

[00:08:05] **Julian Slawinski:** That's right. Yes. I'm, I'm not sure who it was who ran it, but I know then what then happened afterwards is when the pub was knocked down and the flats were built.

[00:08:15] **Julian Slawinski:** Then this became Bacchus and there was a guy with a beard and it was just had little blues musicians playing in here and stuff like that, and it was literally actually a wine bar, and that all kind of changed. Then when I came along and we started to put DJs in here and we started to put sort of like proper sound systems into small venues.

[00:08:39] **Jarek Zaba:** So when the pub went, it was, so is it flats above.

[00:08:43] **Julian Slawinski:** Above it's flats, above, yeah.

[00:08:45] **Jarek Zaba:** Right. And and, and those are flats that came about to replace the, replace the pub.

[00:08:49] **Julian Slawinski:** That's right. Yeah.

[00:08:50] **Jarek Zaba:** That's, so that's, that's an interesting time for you to come along cuz you would've had residents up, up, up upstairs.

[00:08:56] **Julian Slawinski:** Uh, I know. Yeah. But luckily we never really had an issue. [00:09:00] We got on with them all quite well. Really. Obviously the sound deadens down here quite a bit.

[00:09:04] **Jarek Zaba:** Yes. Yes. I guess that's the, the advantage of being a basement, basement club. Yeah. Yeah. Um, yeah. So, yeah. So tell us, uh, in a little more detail about, um, that, that, that moment when you decided to, to, to get involved with running this place.

[00:09:21] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, did you work here in other roles first, before you

[00:09:24] **Julian Slawinski:** No, not at all. I was working elsewhere and, um, we, we. At the Soup Kitchen because they had neighbors and stuff there. Our sound system down there was just too loud. So they got, got us to stop doing the sort of seventies disco thing that we were doing down there, and I just came along here once in 1990 and March, 1990 and spoke to the owner, then a guy called Vince Healy.

[00:09:50] **Julian Slawinski:** And, um, I said to him, I've got an idea for doing something different down here. And bear in mind, this is 1990, so it would've been a bit different. [00:10:00] And um, he said, sure, give it a shot. And like a few weeks later we'd, what we had done in the Soup Kitchen we put down here. We had, um, the 1210s, we had the mixer and the ev speakers, bass bins and the light show and that, and no one had really done anything really quite like that.

[00:10:20] **Julian Slawinski:** There'd been rock discos and stuff, but we came and decided to put a sort of club like vibe into the smaller venues, not just into large venues. And, um, it kind of just started there and he, he. I made so much money on the first one that we did that he decided to turn it around completely and have just DJs and stuff starting to work down here as opposed to his sort of blues musicians and stuff.

[00:10:47] **Jarek Zaba:** And was that, uh, when you started, was it seven nights a week or were you

[00:10:51] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh no, I was only doing one night every two weeks. Then I'd do the Friday as well, and that's when Dodgy got involved and I was DJ with the guy from, [00:11:00] uh, with their DJ from the Dodgy Club and um, I would do every other Wednesday. Every other Friday.

[00:11:08] **Julian Slawinski:** And then as time progressed, so it was every other Wednesday and every Friday. And then there were other DJs and stuff who came along and did stuff on the, um, on the other nights. Yeah.

[00:11:18] **Jarek Zaba:** You mentioned Dodgy there. So we, we, we interviewed Nigel in here and obviously 1990 is when that, that, that all happened for them as well.

[00:11:24] **Jarek Zaba:** The, the, the, the Dodgy nights here. So, um, so, so was that. So Dodgy came just as you sort of started?

[00:11:32] **Julian Slawinski:** Probably about a year after, maybe something like that. Or maybe six months after.

[00:11:37] **Jarek Zaba:** Right, right. And what do you remember about those nights? The sort of, uh,

[00:11:40] **Julian Slawinski:** Actually just the steam going up the stairs. Cause it was so packed,

[00:11:44] **Jarek Zaba:** Right.

[00:11:45] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah. And, uh, I just remember that, um, for, for Dodgy to get publicity on their first night here, they put their posters over all the no entry signs in Kingston. And so the council then fined Bacchus for it, [00:12:00] but neither Bacchus nor Dodgy minded because Dodgy got the publicity and Bacchus got packed.

[00:12:05] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. That's funny cuz Nigel alluded to that in our interview. He said, he said something about putting up posters where you're not supposed to, and he said we got into a little bit of trouble, but he didn't actually go into any specifics.

[00:12:16] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, I remember that. That was how it was.

[00:12:20] **Jarek Zaba:** Right. Interesting. Yeah. Uh, but yeah, so they were so they were popular right from the off?

[00:12:25] **Julian Slawinski:** Um, yeah. I mean pretty much. And uh, they decided to use this place as their base really for a year and a half, maybe, maybe two years. Well, maybe a bit less. I can't remember really.

[00:12:35] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. And were they attracting people from outside of Kingston or was it locals?

[00:12:39] **Julian Slawinski:** Not at first. At first it was the locals and students and stuff, but then as they got.

[00:12:44] **Julian Slawinski:** More popular and they were starting to sort of break out into sort of like radio and stuff then Yeah. They were attracting crowds from, from elsewhere.

[00:12:53] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. I mean, in terms of Bacchus overall in those early years, would you, would, would you say the student crowd is sort of your main

[00:12:59] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah, I'd say it's [00:13:00] always just generally the student crowd.

[00:13:02] **Julian Slawinski:** Um, and some I, I'll just remember it just being a right mishmash of some older people as well, and it was just, a, a complete mixture, but it's currently, it's still very much relies on the student base.

[00:13:19] **Jarek Zaba:** Sure. Sure. Um, and, uh, I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about the, sort of the, the, you know, today, the day, the day-to-day running of the place.

[00:13:28] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, I mean, do you, do, do you get to enjoy it as the owner or is it just a work, work thing for you?

[00:13:33] **Julian Slawinski:** It's, it's a work thing now, and I don't really come down here that often in the evenings because I'm too old for it really. And so we've got managers and stuff, and again, the DJs are here and they tried to get the stu- but it's changed so much over the years that like, it's not, not, not comparable at all to what went on in the nineties.

[00:13:53] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, it's now, you know, open seven nights a week. Is that correct? Um, and you have, I think you still have this [00:14:00] sort of, uh, alternating week system where like one, one Monday is the, uh, yeah. Is, is this club and then the next Monday is the other club.

[00:14:08] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, I mean when, what, what was the point where it became the full blown seven, seven days a week sort of operation?

[00:14:14] **Julian Slawinski:** That would've been in the nineties, sort of like pretty much in sort of like,

[00:14:24] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah, I mean sort of by about 1992, 93, it was pretty much open because it got its two o'clock license in 94. So I suppose if when pinpoint a time where really it was seven nights a week, it was, it was around about then.

[00:14:39] **Jarek Zaba:** Sure. And, and how does it work in terms of your relationship to DJs and performers?

[00:14:43] **Jarek Zaba:** Is it a case of you have, uh, a handful of set DJs who come back each week or?

[00:14:48] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah, we have, we have got, got our sort of like our regular DJs at the moment and sometimes some of them leave and we have to replace them sometimes. Some of them have been here for a very long time, like, uh, Jon Tolley for instance, [00:15:00] he's been here since probably about 2000, so he's been here about 23 years.

[00:15:06] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. And he's, he's regularly DJing.

[00:15:08] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah. He still, he still comes down and does stuff on a Friday night.

[00:15:11] **Jarek Zaba:** Great. Great. Um, I mean, how would you, if you were to have to describe the character of Bacchus to someone, I mean, what, what would you say are the important things that make Bacchus? What it, what it is?

[00:15:22] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, the fact that it's underground is great. It's alternative as well. So like, it's got a bit of a safety aspect to it. It's, it's like, and um, It's, it's, it's student, student based and it's just the difference to anywhere else around - mind you, there isn't anywhere else around, now anyway, apart from PRYZYM there's, there's, there's us and them really.

[00:15:45] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. I was gonna move on to that. There's only, there's only two nightclubs left in Kingston as far as I'm aware.

[00:15:50] **Julian Slawinski:** They're the largest and the smallest.

[00:15:51] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. Interestingly, I mean, we've recently lost the Hippodrome. They used to be McCluskey's Ama-gi, these are these, these, these are all gone.

[00:15:59] **Jarek Zaba:** [00:16:00] Um, do you get, do you have a sense of why that is? Why there's so few, why so many closures?

[00:16:05] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, I think that, um,

[00:16:12] **Julian Slawinski:** I'm not sure if it's people, some when it was with all the clubs open and Kingston used to have 10,000 people coming into it on a, on a weekend, you know, because there was three of the largest nightclubs in Kingston. I'm not sure quite whether or not, um, the sustainability of it was. Good for, for the town or not because it, it turned into a nightclub town and I'm not sure if that's how certain people wanted that it to be, but, um, well, as I say, we're the ones that, we're the only ones left and it's a very different scene out there.

[00:16:49] **Julian Slawinski:** People don't come out as much anymore. Um,

[00:16:54] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, do you think, do you think things since the pandemic haven't quite picked up to the extent they're used to? [00:17:00]

[00:17:00] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, I'm not sure. I think it was pre the pandemic already. You could tell signs that people's drinking habits, people's sort of like lifestyle habits had changed dramatically.

[00:17:09] **Julian Slawinski:** The fact that, uh, the local bar wasn't the, the first place they looked to when they came into a student town, it was probably the gym.

[00:17:18] **Jarek Zaba:** Right. Yeah. And I think it's also true that young people have less money these days. Uh,

[00:17:23] **Julian Slawinski:** They do. Yeah.

[00:17:23] **Jarek Zaba:** And, and, and so they have less Yeah. Disposable money to spend on, on, on nightclubs and that sort of thing.

[00:17:30] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, I mean, um, uh, you know, going back to, uh, Bacchus uh, I mean, what are the biggest challenges for you? Uh, you know,

with other, other nightclubs closing around you, what have you found to be the biggest challenges in sort of keeping it a viable business?

[00:17:47] **Julian Slawinski:** Just getting people to come, come out now, especially in the early part of the week, what used to be a given is no more.

[00:17:55] **Julian Slawinski:** So, you know, PRYZYM does different things now. They've got the [00:18:00] bands and stuff playing there with, um, Jon Tolley from Banquet Records was doing their nights and stuff, and that has a, a different sort of like, base for it. But just to come to your local nightclub on a Monday or a Tuesday, it's, it's a lot more challenging.

[00:18:15] **Julian Slawinski:** People don't, aren't thinking that way anymore.

[00:18:18] **Jarek Zaba:** It's, it's funny you say that cuz when I was, when I was at uni it was, Monday nights was always the one we, we, we'd- Pound a Pint at the Mill, followed by Bacchus was the absolute, uh, routine.

[00:18:27] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh yeah. Oh, that's a long time ago that is.

[00:18:32] **Jarek Zaba:** Well, yes. Getting, getting a pound a pint absolute is a long time ago.

[00:18:35] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yes. It was 2006 that we came here, so, yeah.

[00:18:38] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh, right. So yes, yes. So we was still been doing, yeah. Yeah. Monday night would've been the student night in Kingston then.

[00:18:44] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:18:45] **Julian Slawinski:** Boy, it was, it was rammed. But now on a Monday night in Kingston, it's, it's very different.

[00:18:53] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's, that's interesting that, um, yeah.

[00:18:57] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, and you know, I mean, do [00:19:00] you, presumably when somewhere like the Hippodrome closes, I mean, that's a competitor to you, but is it also, you know, a bad thing that we're losing, you know, other, other options?

[00:19:09] **Julian Slawinski:** I think so because it makes the town emptier to you, so, you know, like it's, the footfall is, is a lot quieter.

[00:19:19] **Julian Slawinski:** And so basically there's the, the two little parts of town that are sort of like, who've got their lights on on a Monday night. And it must be quite strange being a student and coming into the town and seeing it that quiet.

[00:19:32] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah.

[00:19:32] **Julian Slawinski:** Weekends may be a little different.

[00:19:34] **Jarek Zaba:** And, and, and you've mentioned, um, Banquet Records.

[00:19:38] **Jarek Zaba:** Um, I mean they, they, they used to use the Hippodrome as as, as one of their main venues for also,

[00:19:44] **Julian Slawinski:** Obviously the PRYZYM is now. They've taken over with that.

[00:19:47] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. So, I mean, I wonder if we could just ref, you know, you mentioned Jon comes down here and, and DJs, uh, I wonder if you could just reflect a little bit on Banquet and, and their, their, what, what they do for music in the town.

[00:19:58] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, how important are they? [00:20:00]

[00:20:00] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh, I think they're, they're, they're, you, you know, they're bigger, especially putting on the live performances. It's, um, Jon's really done a good job there.

[00:20:14] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah, some incredible names as well, you know?

[00:20:17] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah, I know. Yeah. Some

[00:20:19] **Jarek Zaba:** storm Stormzy and

[00:20:20] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah, I hear, I think that Shania Twain's playing as well, and, but um, you don't have to include that until I, something I heard.

[00:20:30] **Jarek Zaba:** That's fine. That's fine. Um, yeah. And, you know, in terms of the live music, do, do you ever still have a, have a band on in here?

[00:20:38] **Julian Slawinski:** I mean, very, very rarely. We used to a lot, but now it's an awful lot of aggravation to get all the kit down here and get it out. So it's probably just more reliant, purely on the DJs and the DJ booth.

[00:20:49] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah, I mean, I was gonna say, yeah, I think, I think I once came down here and, and saw a band. I remember thinking at the time blimey how did they get the drum kit down here and all of that stuff.

[00:20:57] **Julian Slawinski:** It's, it's, it's a, it's a challenge.

[00:20:59] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. [00:21:00] And it must have been back in the, the Dodgy days as well, you know, getting that kit down.

[00:21:04] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah. Well, they, they went for it, so, yeah. Sometimes some bands, if they were more regular, would store their equipment down here anyway.

[00:21:13] **Jarek Zaba:** Mm-hmm. Um, yeah, I mean, does the, are there, are there other challenges that come with running such a, a small venue? You know, it's, uh, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, uh, yeah. I mean, it's always been one of my favorite things about this place is, is that it's so cosy if you like.

[00:21:29] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah. But, um, you know, sometimes we'd like to be a bit, uh, get more people in. So yeah, the challenges lie there. And, um, But the fact that you're small also means that like you can weather certain storms as well. Like, you know, like with, with, uh, well, with the pandemic for instance, we sort of had the chance to sort of like redo the floor and do everything in here and, uh, we just managed to sort of get through it.

[00:21:57] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah. Had we been 10 times as big? I don't [00:22:00] know.

[00:22:00] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. That's a, that's a, yeah, an interesting point. Um, and. Is ventilation an issue down here? Did you

[00:22:08] **Julian Slawinski:** No, we got a full air con system down here and we, uh, yeah, it's just fine actually. And.

[00:22:15] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. Good stuff. Um, and then, um, in terms of, um, you know, the Kingston music scene more, more, more broadly.

[00:22:23] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, are there other venues you, you continue to frequent? Uh, the Grey Horse, that sort of thing?

[00:22:28] **Julian Slawinski:** Yeah, I, I still DJ occasionally myself and the Willoughby Arms, and that's the upstairs there. They have DJs and stuff sometimes and bands playing, but, um, Less so. I mean, the Fighting Cocks obviously has bands playing and stuff and I, I used to go there and, uh, I actually DJed there as well in the early nineties.

[00:22:50] **Julian Slawinski:** So, um, we kind of like kicked off there alternatives scene little bit, myself and another guy.

[00:22:56] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, the Fighting Cocks obviously another one that's been, that's, that's kept [00:23:00] going for, for quite a while now and, and, and has survived as, as others have closed, has closed around them. I mean, what, why do you think that, that that venue has been able to endure

[00:23:08] **Julian Slawinski:** Again, because it's an alternative venue, it's sort of reliant on it's, uh, the alternative rock clientele and so, They're getting all those people in one place, so

[00:23:20] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yep, yep, yep. Those people, those people need somewhere, so,

[00:23:24] **Julian Slawinski:** Absolutely. Yes.

[00:23:25] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, and are there any of those venues that are no longer with us that, that, that you particularly miss, that you reflect on fondly?

[00:23:34] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh, I'm not sure really. Cause I was always stuck here all the time that like, um, if there's anyone, I mean the Yellow Heaven Soup Kitchen.

[00:23:45] **Julian Slawinski:** Because that was so different. That was, uh, sort of like that. That's one that, uh, if, if that, if that reopened in any way, shape, or form, that would be quite interesting.

[00:23:56] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. It sounds interesting to me. Um, and do you, you know, [00:24:00] do you recall any particular memorable gigs or experiences? Uh, any, any, any particular, you know, live, live acts that you, that you recall seeing?

[00:24:09] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh gosh. Um, well, I'm just trying to think now. Well, apart from the ones that Jon puts on in, I did put on, there's a, he puts on quite a lot of memorable gigs, but, um, it was, again, probably going back to the early eighties, seeing bands like the Cardiacs and the Trudy in some of the smaller places in Kingston. Those was quite sort of exciting really.

[00:24:36] **Julian Slawinski:** And see how, you know, what, how things developed for them.

[00:24:43] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah, I mean, we, we actually, we, we, we meant, we spoke a little bit about Cardiacs but, but, uh, but the Trudy was sort of a, um, a spinoff from the card. Well, former members of Cardiacs were formed the form. And then what sort of, what sort of music would you say the Trudy?

[00:24:56] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh gosh. You know, I, I, again, [00:25:00] sort of, I. Alternatively, kind of like happy, it's diff again, these two bands are very difficult to describe. You'd have to check them out on YouTube to sort of like, really?

[00:25:15] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Fair. Yeah, fair enough. Fair. I mean, I, I find music impossible to describe at the best of times anyway.

[00:25:20] **Jarek Zaba:** But yeah, you do get certain acts that make it even, uh, even harder. Um, and, uh, yeah, just so last couple of questions really. Um, I mean, I. Go back to Bacchus and its role within Kingston. Um, what kind of person do you think Bacchus is for?

[00:25:38] **Julian Slawinski:** Um, it's for someone sort of like, who likes to have a bit of an alternative to the norm, really.

[00:25:44] **Julian Slawinski:** I think it's, you come down here, it's safe, it's underground, and it's sort of just feels a very special place to be in. Um, and, uh, it's just very different to anywhere else really in Kingston.

[00:25:59] **Jarek Zaba:** Sure. [00:26:00] Sure. And, uh, just finally, um, in terms of Kingston and, and music, um, what, what direction do you think we're, we're traveling in, in terms of music in the area?

[00:26:09] **Jarek Zaba:** I mean, we've talked about the fact there's only two clubs. Do you think that will remain the case? Do you think we're, um, how do you, how do you see it going in the, in the, in the near future?

[00:26:18] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, it's really difficult to tell really, because I'm not sure if there are gonna be any other venues opening up.

[00:26:24] **Julian Slawinski:** It's, it's possible I suppose. But, um, the fact that there's just the, the two of us left really obviously the Fighting Cocks obviously is still open as well. And, um, There's a few others, like O'Neill's I think has some DJs in it and bands, but I, I guess they're just gonna work out to see what's the safest for Kingston, really, because it depends on, on, on what their strategy is for the town centre and then whether or not that includes more or newer live venues, or less even possibly.

[00:26:56] **Julian Slawinski:** I don't know.

[00:26:57] **Jarek Zaba:** Do you think, um, I mean you [00:27:00] mentioned that you, you, you were fortunate with the people who, uh, who lived upstairs here, but do, did you think residents' complaints are a, are a factor in venues closing and that sort of thing?

[00:27:08] **Julian Slawinski:** I'm not sure really. I, I, you know, I, um, I don't think it's been, it's been, it's been a huge problem in Kingston actually. Generally, everywhere's pretty safe and everyone sort of adheres to the rules, so it's, it's been okay. So I, I don't think that the residents, not, not that I've been made aware of anyway.

[00:27:30] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. But another factor that I've, I've heard about is, is business rates being, uh, enormously high?

[00:27:35] **Julian Slawinski:** Is that Oh, they are. Yes.

[00:27:36] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah, so, so that's probably, uh, more, more of a factor.

[00:27:39] **Julian Slawinski:** It's more financial stuff. That's probably the factor for places not being able to survive or. Maybe new ones opening, I suppose. Yes, definitely.

[00:27:48] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay, great. Um, I mean, Julian, unless there's anything that you, you feel, uh, in the Bacchus story you haven't, you

haven't mentioned that you'd like to mention, um, or anything to do with Kingston's music [00:28:00] scene, um, n now's your chance.

[00:28:03] **Julian Slawinski:** Now's my chance. Yes. Well, no, it's just been sort of great to see just the fact that Bacchus survived throughout all this time now and, um, Yeah, I mean there were times when I think Supergrass once were standing outside selling their demo tapes here when Dodgy played down here one night. And it was just, just to see that there was such a vibe going on in, in Kingston in one small place.

[00:28:30] **Julian Slawinski:** And that was made it very exciting. And the fact then that when the two o'clock license was granted that, um, we managed to um, sort of like turn it into sort of like this big kind of like. Well, a big, small clubbing kind of like nest really. And uh, it's survived so far. But as I say, times have changed an awful lot to the sort of great days, which was probably sort of like in the nineties and the two thousands really.[00:29:00]

[00:29:00] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean, um, I didn't actually ask, uh, did you get, did you have an, a sense of what it was before it was Jester's? I mean, has it, has it, how, how long has it been a venue for? Do you,

[00:29:09] **Julian Slawinski:** Oh, I'm not sure how long it actually was a venue for, but I don't think it was too much further back than when it was called Jester's.

[00:29:16] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. But you're talking what, thir 30, 40 years ago.

[00:29:20] **Julian Slawinski:** 40 years ago.

[00:29:21] **Jarek Zaba:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, uh, yeah, his, his to another 40 years, I guess.

[00:29:26] **Julian Slawinski:** Well, I guess so, yes. We'll see.

[00:29:29] **Jarek Zaba:** Julian, thank you so much.

[00:29:30] **Julian Slawinski:** Thank you very much.

[00:29:31] **Jarek Zaba:** Cheers.