

[00:00:00] **Jarek:** So this is Jarek Zaba for the AMP Kingston Project from Creative Youth exploring art, music and pop fashion heritage in the Kingston borough and beyond. Today is the 7th of December, 2023. I'm with Ali Parcell. Is it Parcell? Yes. Who co runs the Fighting Cocks in Kingston. Ali, do you mind stating your name for the tape as well as your date and place of birth?

[00:00:23] **Ali Parcell:** Yep, I'm Ali Parcell, 23rd of the 9th, 84, and I was born in Rainhill, Merseyside.

[00:00:28] **Jarek:** Lovely. Um, well, I just want to actually just get a sense of your relationship to music before we move on to Fighting Cocks. Um, what are some sort of your earliest memories of music? Um, your tastes growing up and, um, maybe your earliest memories of live music specifically as well?

[00:00:45] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I mean, it's definitely very embarrassing to be honest. As a rock pub owner, looking back at some of my earlier music memories, I'd love to have some really very cool ones. I think Matt's uh, Matt, my husband, who co owns the place, has a great story about going to watch Meatloaf. And [00:01:00] mine's just really not that cool, to be honest.

[00:01:01] **Ali Parcell:** I think I watched a lot of pop bands, uh, a good friend of mine when I was growing up, her dad used to work at the Manchester Evening News Arena. I grew up on the outskirts of Liverpool, so I went to a lot of gigs there. Definitely saw 5ive. I probably saw Steps. It's all, it's all pretty cringeworthy, to be honest.

[00:01:16] **Ali Parcell:** And then there was a kind of moment of realisation, I think, as, uh, as I hit about 16, uh, um, friends of mine would start to share music with me and, um, yeah, really kind of transitioned really there into kind of more alternative music. Um, certainly when I was kind of old enough to start going to nightclubs and stuff like that, going to the Crazy House in Liverpool was, was definitely my go to on a weekly basis.

[00:01:39] **Ali Parcell:** And then as soon as I reached university, I was, uh, I was straight into the Rock Music Society and that was me then.

[00:01:45] **Jarek:** Where did you say you were brought up?

[00:01:47] **Ali Parcell:** So I was brought up on the outskirts of Liverpool, and then I went to Nottingham for uni.

[00:01:51] **Jarek:** That's an area with a rich musical heritage, of course.

[00:01:54] **Ali Parcell:** Massively so, yeah.

[00:01:55] **Jarek:** I mean, I imagine growing up in Liverpool, are you always surrounded by The Beatles?

[00:01:58] **Ali Parcell:** Always, always, yeah. And [00:02:00] I'm a massive Beatles fan as well, so yeah, I think you have to be.

[00:02:02] **Jarek:** How about your parents? Were they big music lovers?

[00:02:04] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, definitely. Mum's a massive Motown fan, so grew up listening to a lot of Motown.

[00:02:09] **Ali Parcell:** My dad, big into things like the Eagles, uh, Eric Clapton and stuff like that. So, yeah, definitely remember kind of growing up listening to a lot of music and was always really into it. My mum always tells, I think my dad told the story at the wedding of like, I was, as soon as I was even in a baby bouncer, I was dancing to the jingles on the TV and the music on the intro to the news and stuff like that.

[00:02:30] **Ali Parcell:** So, yeah, always, always into music, really.

[00:02:32] **Jarek:** And did you say you went to music in, uh, the music? Uh, uni in Nottingham, was it?

[00:02:37] **Ali Parcell:** Yes, I did. Yeah.

[00:02:38] **Jarek:** Yeah. Was there much of a live music scene there?

[00:02:40] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, massively. So I, um, I went straight into the Rock Music Society and made some great friends there really, really quickly.

[00:02:49] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I think that the fact that Nottingham has Rock City was a big draw for me 'cause I, I knew there'd be a good music scene, good live music scene, and, and a good nightclub to go to anyway. Um, but yeah, there was, there was lots. [00:03:00] And, um, the Rock Music Society was a big lifeline for me in terms of meeting new people and getting out, going and watching bands and having a ready made group of people really to kind of hang out with and enjoy music with.

[00:03:12] **Jarek:** Yeah. So it was around the uni time that your love of rock started to develop?

[00:03:17] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I think so. I think probably the couple of years before that in, in the Crazy House in Liverpool was really the formulation of it, but I think kind of, um, yeah, really s- university really cemented it, I would say.

[00:03:28] **Jarek:** What were the earliest sort of rock bands that you recall enjoying?

[00:03:33] **Ali Parcell:** Oh, um, I mean again, it's not cool at all, but I remember when I went to the Crazy House, there was like, there's three floors and they play different types of music on each floor, and the DJ on the ground floor played the sort of rock and metal stuff, and I just- he was just a bit of a guru for me, really.

[00:03:49] **Ali Parcell:** I would just go up to him and be like, I don't know what this song is. It's amazing. And he would make me like a little mix CDs and stuff like that. But, um, yeah, I was definitely, definitely really into Incubus.

[00:04:00] Um, a lot of, Hoobastank. It's not cool, but it is what it is. A lot of Rage Against the Machine, that sort of stuff, System of a Down.

[00:04:08] **Ali Parcell:** So, a lot of kind of gateway into perhaps the heavier stuff as well, so.

[00:04:12] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, fair enough. Um, and so what brought you down south way in the end?

[00:04:17] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I've been a bit all over the place to Nottingham for uni, stayed there for a little while, went travelling for a year in a campervan, uh, went back to Nottingham for a little bit after that, uh, moved to Gibraltar for a few years and then, um, when I wanted to, to leave Gibraltar I, I just thought I'd give London a go, um, and that was sort of six years ago I think, so yeah, sort of settled in from there really.

[00:04:39] **Jarek:** Whereabouts in London did you first start?

[00:04:41] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I actually, I didn't really know London at all.

[00:04:44] **Ali Parcell:** Um, and I was going to go and work for a digital marketing agency that had been a partner of the company that I was working

for, and they were based in Old Street, so I knew Old Street, so I was like, I'll just move to Old Street to start with, get a six month lease on a place, and I'll So, it's a bit of a mad place [00:05:00] to live because it's very loud.

[00:05:01] **Ali Parcell:** Except for the weekend where it's a complete ghost town. It's like one of those zombie movies. No one's around anywhere. Um, but yeah, that was a good place to kind of find my footing. And obviously just kind of stroll over the road to work. Which is a pretty fortunate situation to be in in London.

[00:05:14] **Jarek:** Yeah, I know the feeling about the ghost town on the weekend.

[00:05:17] **Jarek:** I remember just being in like, I don't know, around Liverpool Street on a Sunday or something, you know, just in the office area, the business area.

[00:05:24] **Ali Parcell:** It's crazy, isn't it?

[00:05:25] **Jarek:** Absolutely nothing there, yeah.

[00:05:26] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, you wander around Bank and it's just nobody.

[00:05:28] **Jarek:** Yeah.

[00:05:29] **Ali Parcell:** It's fascinating.

[00:05:30] **Jarek:** And so when did Kingston kind of first come on your radar?

[00:05:33] **Ali Parcell:** Um, so, I think really when, when Matt and I got together, um, so we actually came to the Fighting Cocks on our first date. Um, which is a really nice story. We came to a very sweaty Knuckle Puck gig, um, which was really, really good fun and he'd been living in this neck of the woods for a little while, he'd been doing some work here as well. So he's a hospitality consultant, so he's been doing some work with Jamie over the years, helping him with various processes and bits and bobs. [00:06:00] Um, and so, yeah, we kind of would start coming to more gigs here, coming to the quiz, things like that, and just getting a bit more familiar with the place and enjoying it, really.

[00:06:10] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, that's where the love story started.

[00:06:13] **Jarek:** Yeah, that's pretty amazing, and did you, on that first date, did you ever think, I might be owning this place with this guy?

[00:06:18] **Ali Parcell:** Absolutely not, no, didn't cross my mind in a million years, no. Um, but yeah, it's a really nice story, and yeah, it's really nice for it to come full circle.

[00:06:27] **Jarek:** What were your first impressions of the place?

[00:06:29] **Ali Parcell:** I just thought it was really fun. I thought it was such a great atmosphere. Everybody just seemed to be having a fantastic time. Um, the gig was incredible, just the energy. And seeing a band like that in such a, such a tightly packed venue, because it was a really, really busy night and everyone, it just went off.

[00:06:46] **Ali Parcell:** It was just such a great, great live show. Um, so yeah, I had a great time.

[00:06:50] **Jarek:** What year was that?

[00:06:51] **Ali Parcell:** Uh, 2017. I was going to get in trouble then, wasn't I?

[00:06:56] **Jarek:** Um, I mean, yeah, [00:07:00] we'll sort of move, move on to, uh, your personal relationship with this place in a little more detail. But just before that, I wonder what do you know about the Fighting Cocks prior to your involvement?

[00:07:10] **Jarek:** I mean, like, it's early history as a building and as a venue.

[00:07:14] **Ali Parcell:** Not a great deal, to be honest. I know that it's been around for a really long time. I know that it was, you know, quite the go to venue in the 30s and 40s. Eel Pie Island scene was, was massive here, um, there's, Wikipedia tells some exciting stories about some people that were here in that sort of era and later, and the likes of the Rolling Stones being here, and Eric Clapton being here as well, there's some fantastic stories about that, so, uh, yeah, I think it's, it's always been a, a key part of the, the scene, I think.

[00:07:45] **Jarek:** Yeah, sure, um. So, yeah. And those, so did you, you, you and Matt, presumably, you know, as your relationship developed, you started coming here as, as, as, as, as just punters.

[00:07:55] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, just enjoying more of the gigs and, um, the various different [00:08:00] nights. We were, uh, often here at the quiz, uh, very competitive, love a quiz, uh,

[00:08:04] **Ali Parcell:** So, yeah.

[00:08:05] **Jarek:** I'm not familiar with, is there, is there a, a weekly quiz? A pub quiz?

[00:08:08] **Ali Parcell:** It's a month. It's a monthly quiz,

[00:08:09] **Jarek:** right.

[00:08:09] **Ali Parcell:** Uh, yeah. Sorry, someone's having a very exciting game of pool out there.

[00:08:16] **Jarek:** Oh right, is that what that was?

[00:08:17] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah.

[00:08:17] **Jarek:** Thought it was just someone having a breakdown for a second.

[00:08:20] **Ali Parcell:** No, no, just getting very competitive over the pool table.

[00:08:24] **Jarek:** Um, yeah, uh, what was I- oh yeah, is that a music based quiz?

[00:08:28] **Ali Parcell:** It's a little bit of everything, to be honest. But it's just a really good fun quiz and it's, uh again, I think just a good kind of, uh, indication of the atmosphere of the place and, uh, yeah, it's always just a, a real laugh on a, on a Tuesday.

[00:08:40] **Jarek:** Yeah.

[00:08:41] **Jarek:** And how would you sort of describe the character of the place when you were coming here. How do you describe the customers and the sort of culture that Jamie was overseeing at the time?

[00:08:52] **Ali Parcell:** Um, yeah, I think it reminded me a lot of the Rock Music Society from Nottingham really. Just this kind of like ready made group of people [00:09:00] that all seem to- Not everybody knows everybody, it wasn't like Cheers or anything, but like, there just seemed to be a good vibe, like lots of friends here, it was always a really welcoming place, um, and always just kind of like busy and loud and everything you want from a venue like this, really.

[00:09:15] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, and uh what kind of music were you seeing? I mean, obviously it's known as a rock venue, but yeah, what sort of things did you recall seeing?

[00:09:25] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, so I definitely, the gig that Matt and I came to was Knuckle Puck. We definitely came to quite a few sort of like, skate punk kind of shows. And Matt playing plenty of his own shows as well in his band, Resuscitators.

[00:09:40] **Ali Parcell:** So yeah, he'd be on here quite a bit and I'd be coming down to watch those shows as well, which are always fun.

[00:09:47] **Jarek:** Knucklepuck. Describe Knucklepuck to me.

[00:09:49] **Ali Parcell:** Um, again, just kind of like skate punk type, type music really. So, uh, yeah, they're, they're good fun. Um.

[00:09:57] **Jarek:** And the same for Matt's band?

[00:09:58] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, melodic skate [00:10:00] punk kind of stuff.

[00:10:00] **Jarek:** Is he frontman or

[00:10:03] **Ali Parcell:** He is, yeah. He's bassist but also singer. Um, so yeah, he's the only one doing the talking on the stage. The other guys are a little quieter.

[00:10:11] **Jarek:** And they're still going?

[00:10:11] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, absolutely. They've got a new member now who's who's recently joined, so they're a four pieces these days, but yeah, it's been a bit of a weird one because obviously when we took over the place we didn't want Matt to be playing too much because it would seem a bit weird to just be like, yeah we just bought a pub so that he could get gigs, was, was the joke that

went around at the time, so we've been quite careful about making sure that he's not on the bill too often.

[00:10:31] **Jarek:** Yeah, I actually had a similar, we were planning our concept for this exhibition and I was like, well we should be putting Creative Youth and FUSEBOX in, it was like, is that a bit self serving if we're, you know, putting ourselves front and centre. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:10:42] **Jarek:** Um, uh, so were you, did you become staff here before you owned it or did you go from essentially customer to owner?

[00:10:50] **Ali Parcell:** I had very little to do with it to be honest in that sense but as I say kind of Matt in his role as hospitality consultant did a lot of work with Jamie and was here quite, quite a [00:11:00] bit being local and playing in the band as well. And yeah, I think Jamie had just started to make some noises about potentially going back to, to Australia and what might happen to the pub in, in that instance.

[00:11:12] **Ali Parcell:** And Matt had kind of raised it a couple of times to me at home and I, I'd taken it with a bit of a pinch of salt if I'm completely honest. Cause I just thought, that's Jamie's baby. He's never, he's never going to not be here. It just, it just seemed like he was part of the furniture and that was never going to be a thing.

[00:11:26] **Ali Parcell:** And then one day he just turned around and was like. We need to decide whether or not we want, we want to take on the Fighting Cocks or not. Um, and so it became very real, very quickly. Uh, we had to kind of figure out, uh, how to make it work.

[00:11:39] **Jarek:** Um, yeah, so, uh, you said Matt was a hospitality consultant?

[00:11:43] **Ali Parcell:** Yes.

[00:11:43] **Jarek:** What, what does that, what did that involve?

[00:11:45] **Ali Parcell:** So, um, it's something that he's still doing now. He just goes in and works with businesses on helping them be as efficient, as effective as possible, really. So it might be setting up processes, figuring out if they've got the right staff, are they charging the right amount for things, are they [00:12:00] getting their stock from the right places, and just helping people, yeah, um, be as profitable as possible, really.

[00:12:06] **Ali Parcell:** And he does that as well, um, with the Museum Venues Trust, actually, he's their profitability guru, so he kind of lends his services in that way as well.

[00:12:13] **Jarek:** So what were you doing professionally prior to this place?

[00:12:16] **Ali Parcell:** Working at a digital marketing agency.

[00:12:18] **Jarek:** Okay. Is that what you, is that sort of what you studied at university?

[00:12:21] **Ali Parcell:** Um, no, I did psychology and neuroscience, as you do.

[00:12:25] **Ali Parcell:** Um, but yeah.

[00:12:26] **Jarek:** I mean, that might be helpful for running a venue as well.

[00:12:27] **Ali Parcell:** Well, yeah, you never know. I mean, I think most people who kind of did that degree either went into HR or marketing and yeah, marketing was my kind of route. Um, and you know, now my involvement in the pub really is, is the marketing side of things and Matt kind of handles the operations.

[00:12:42] **Ali Parcell:** So it's quite a nice split between the two of us.

[00:12:44] **Jarek:** Yeah. Yeah. And, uh, you mentioned Jamie there. Um, I mean, when did you recall first meeting Jamie and, uh, getting to know him?

[00:12:53] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I imagine I probably met him in my various different visits here, but it was really around the time that, yeah, we started to [00:13:00] very seriously kind of talk about taking this place on, which would have been August two years ago, uh, 2021.

[00:13:06] **Ali Parcell:** Um, so yeah, I think we kind of came down and, and just sat with him and kind of just chatted through what that might look like really, and all of the various different what if this and what if that, because it was still a very sort of COVID y time, um, so we wanted to kind of make sure that we were just set up to set up for success really, regardless of whether or not we had to have another lockdown or whatever might come, uh, come our way really. But yeah, I think the big thing for Jamie was finding someone that was going to take his vision and keep the place as it is really, not not he didn't want anybody to change it, but I think you know there would have there would have

been other people that would have come in and turned it into a fancy wine bar or something like that.

[00:13:47] **Ali Parcell:** And he really wanted the live music to stay at the core of it. He still wanted it to be a rock and roll venue. And I think, yeah, he, he saw us as the people to kind of help make sure that it stayed. The place that he, he'd built [00:14:00] really because he'd put so much time and energy into it over 20 years. So it's understandable he wanted to make sure it was in safe hands.

[00:14:06] **Ali Parcell:** So I think it was, it was as much of a test of, of us and our ability to kind of be loyal to the place and kind of keep it what it is as it was for us to kind of figure out whether or not it would work for us as well.

[00:14:15] **Jarek:** Yeah. I mean, we'll get onto your, yours and Matt's sort of motivations for running this place in a second, but just, just, just still on Jamie.

[00:14:23] **Jarek:** I mean, running a music venue, I, I, I understand isn't easy. I was speaking to the, um, former owner of the Grey Horse yesterday, and he was saying that, uh, you know, there's almost no business or financial incentive to do it. It's there's, there's, there's, I mean, why do you think, why, I mean, but at this place, I think prior to Jamie taking it over, I think had sort of gone into a bit of a lull live music wise.

[00:14:46] **Jarek:** And he kind of helped, I think it was around 2000 that he, that he acquired it. What do you think his motivations were? I mean, I know you don't, you can't speak for him, but, but, but, but yeah, what do you think sort of drove Jamie to sort of turn this into [00:15:00] the place it is today?

[00:15:01] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I wouldn't know really.

[00:15:03] **Ali Parcell:** I think this, this place really is a bit of a, an extension of Jamie's hobbies and stuff like that, though, you know, he set up the, the Chopper Street Social, for instance, in the summer that was all about his love of bikes. And, um, yeah, I think it was a great, um, expression of all the things that he enjoys really.

[00:15:18] **Ali Parcell:** I think a lot of the bands that were on in the venue were bands that Jamie loved and yeah it was a lovely playground I guess for him in that sense.

[00:15:25] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah. So, uh, did you get a sense of why, why Jamie's time came to an end, or did he just, he just wanted to move back to Oz?

[00:15:32] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, he was literally just leaving the country.

[00:15:34] **Ali Parcell:** I think he'd still be here to this day, um, if it wasn't for that. But, yeah, I think, uh, being closer to family and, um, yeah, kind of, uh, that was the driver really for, for going back to Oz. And so, yeah, unfortunately, I mean, he still, still owns the building, um, and upstairs as well. But, uh, so, yeah, he's still got his, his hand in a little bit.

[00:15:53] **Ali Parcell:** Um, but, yeah, I think it's predominantly that, that shift back to upside down land.

[00:15:59] **Jarek:** Yeah. [00:16:00] Yeah. And, uh, so the process of, you know, him, him handing over the reins as it were, I mean, do you think, did he just sort of identify Matt as the, as the person he wanted? Uh, were there, were, were, were there were, did he have a short list or was it a case of he just went straight to Matt and said, or yourself?

[00:16:18] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I think there'd been conversations in an ongoing sense with Matt, where he'd just been testing the water of just being like, if I weren't here, would you be interested sort of thing over a little while, as I say and then I think he had been approached by other people for sure but yeah, I think the the big thing as I say for Jamie was just making sure that it was gonna remain a live music venue that it was gonna still be a rock pub and it was gonna be in the hands of people that really would give a shit about it really and yeah, I think hopefully he saw that in us.

[00:16:49] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

[00:16:52] **Jarek:** Um, uh, so those initial conversations, I mean, just run me through them. Uh, Matt comes up to you and says, how do you feel about running the Fighting Cocks?

[00:16:59] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah. [00:17:00] Uh, yeah. That was kind of it, to be honest. I think it was, yeah, we'd, he'd floated the idea a couple of times at home and says, oh, well, you know, Jamie said this.

[00:17:08] **Ali Parcell:** And I just went, ah, Jamie's never going to leave. You know, it's his baby. He's never going anywhere. He's never entrusting it to anyone. Took it with the largest handful of salt, um, and then one day he came home and he was like, right, Jamie's going to Australia. And it was, yeah, all of a sudden very, very real.

[00:17:25] **Ali Parcell:** Um, but yeah, I guess for me, it just seemed like a really exciting opportunity and, and just an important thing to protect more than anything. Cause I just thought, you know, if it's not us, who is it going to be and what are they going to do to this place? Um, it's not going to stay like this. Um, And that would have been really, really sad.

[00:17:46] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, um, yeah, I mean, yeah, so did you sort of -Oh yeah, that was what I was going to ask. Um, you didn't have any, yourself, didn't have any hospitality experience [00:18:00] prior, no?

[00:18:00] **Ali Parcell:** Never even worked in a bar.

[00:18:02] **Jarek:** Amazing.

[00:18:03] **Ali Parcell:** Let alone owned one. Never poured a pint in my life. To this day, still never poured a pint in my life, actually.

[00:18:09] **Ali Parcell:** Um, but yeah, I just Music has always been in my blood, I think. And, um, yeah, I think the sort of, the rock and alternative scene I just think is so, so important. That people have somewhere that they can go and feel like it's home, really. I think, you know, as I said, the Rock Music Society in Nottingham really was.

[00:18:29] **Ali Parcell:** I think it was a lifeline for me at uni. Um, I think if I hadn't have that, I don't even know if I'd have made it through the three years to be honest. And so, yeah, I just think these spaces and these kind of ready made groups of friends are just so vital for people.

[00:18:43] **Jarek:** And, um, tell me a little bit about the sort of handover process, um, I mean, uh, was there a time where you were here with Jamie, uh, was it closed for a while between you, uh, was, was, was he sort of shadowing you, or was it like, here's the keys, [00:19:00] off you go?

[00:19:00] **Ali Parcell:** It was a little bit more like the latter, to be honest, but I think because Matt had been so involved in, in some of the other stuff, you know, like, he knew the till system, because he'd helped Jamie get it all set up and stuff like that. So it certainly wasn't like a completely novel thing in that sense.

[00:19:15] **Ali Parcell:** And I think because of when we took it over with it being kind of after the lockdowns, there was quite a new set of staff anyway. It wasn't that we were taking over people that have been working there for ages,

because unfortunately the people that had been here during lockdown obviously weren't here.

[00:19:30] **Ali Parcell:** So it was quite a fresh start in that sense anyway, um, for everybody. Um, So, yeah, it, it, it wasn't, um, it wasn't completely stuck because Matt had that kind of run up, but at the same time, yeah, there wasn't a, there wasn't a hugely long period of handover, and obviously Jamie was leaving the country, so he had plenty of other things he needed to be doing as well.

[00:19:51] **Jarek:** Yeah, of course. Um, for someone who didn't have prior experience in hospitality, taking over a, a music venue [00:20:00] post covid, uh, you didn't, didn't make it easy for yourself, eh?

[00:20:03] **Ali Parcell:** No. No. Uh. Yeah, it wasn't, it's not the most, uh, obvious thing to, to jump into. Uh, and it's a bit scary. It's very scary, but yeah, it just felt like the right thing to do.

[00:20:14] **Jarek:** I mean, what are some of the challenges as we emerged from COVID and lockdowns and are those challenges still, still there today?

[00:20:23] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I think so. I think as we took it over in sort of 2021, that next Christmas was still, London was in Tier Four, whatever that meant at the time. Um, and so Christmas and new year was just rubbish and obviously that's the kind of period that even I knew was going to be really important from a hospitality perspective and it just, it was pretty terrible. Um, we're still, I think we've seen things pick up, we're still seeing people a little hesitant when it comes to buying tickets for gigs in advance and stuff like that.

[00:20:54] **Ali Parcell:** We're seeing more people just coming through the door and kind of keeping their plans a little bit more flexible, I'd say. [00:21:00] Um, but I think the big challenge really has been the whole cost of living crisis. You know, our, uh, utilities bills are like four times what they were. Everything else is way more expensive as well.

[00:21:09] **Ali Parcell:** So the whole kind of COVID plus cost of living has been a real one two punch.

[00:21:14] **Jarek:** Yeah. Um, just to sort of focus on the music side of things, um, how does it work? In terms of Fighting Cocks and booking artists, do you just have a, do you have a little black book of artists or do, do musicians come to you and say they want gigs?

[00:21:28] **Ali Parcell:** It's a little bit of both to be honest. So we have Tash who looks after bookings for us, she's fantastic and she and Matt had worked together historically quite a bit as well so we've been fortunate to be able to bring through people like that.

[00:21:43] **Jarek:** Yeah, if you don't mind just saying that again, yeah, thank you.

[00:21:46] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, we've got Tash, who looks after our bookings, and she's worked with Matt historically on a few different things, so we knew she'd be a really safe pair of hands for taking over all things bookings, and yeah, it's a little bit of a mix of both, to be honest. [00:22:00] We do get a lot of email inquiries from people wanting to play, which is fantastic.

[00:22:04] **Ali Parcell:** Um, and then we also do some outreach for the kind of people that we want to bring in as well. We're also very fortunate to have the partnership with Banquet. Uh, Banquet Records around the corner, so they put shows on with us as well. We also have the partnership that we sort of inherited from Jamie with, um, Outside the Box on their comedy.

[00:22:22] **Ali Parcell:** So they come in every Monday and they've been running that for 18 years. Um, so yeah, we've got quite a few different avenues in which kind of bands come to us and that's, it's great for kind of exposing us to new people and, um, yeah, building up some fantastic bills.

[00:22:36] **Jarek:** Mm. Um, do you sort of, uh, aim for a specific, you know, again, obviously, rock pub in its image, but I mean, do you sort of sort of aim for specific genres, or are you quite open to what you can have on?

[00:22:54] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I think it's probably more varied than people might anticipate. Um, I mean, we definitely [00:23:00] have a lot of, um, a lot of rock bands, a lot of metal bands, a lot of punk stuff as well, some indie um, bands on as well. And then kind of Banquet does broaden out the scope a little bit further as well. They do tend to bring us the slightly heavier people within, uh, but within their roster, but still that kind of extends it a little bit.

[00:23:18] **Ali Parcell:** So yeah, there's a good variety, but it probably involves a guitar.

[00:23:21] **Jarek:** Yes. Yes. And the last, the last gig I was, uh, here at was, uh, friends of mine in Tankus the Henge I dunno if you're familiar with that band,

[00:23:28] **Ali Parcell:** yeah,

[00:23:28] **Jarek:** yeah, yeah, um, but they're, they're by no means a heavy rock band at all, um, they're kind of, I mean, they're kind of a bit of everything carnival influenced and, uh,

[00:23:36] **Ali Parcell:** yeah, they're a weird, yeah, they're a weird mix of stuff, yeah, really fun,

[00:23:39] **Jarek:** yeah, yeah, I was very drunk that night, uh, um,

[00:23:42] **Ali Parcell:** That's the Fighting Cocks for you

[00:23:45] **Jarek:** yeah, yeah, yeah, um, friends of mine insisted on shots, I always seem to, whenever I end up in here, the friends I'm with always seem to sort of, that's when, that's when they go into crazy mode, you know, um, maybe it's just because of these signs saying free shot, but

[00:23:58] **Ali Parcell:** It helps, yeah.

[00:23:58] **Ali Parcell:** It's the leopard [00:24:00] print walls, I swear. Just, just turns everyone a bit feral.

[00:24:05] **Jarek:** I mean, talk to me a little bit about the, uh, the venue itself, um, I mean I think, uh, it's, it's, it's been described as a sweatbox in the, in the past. I mean, I

[00:24:13] **Ali Parcell:** It can get moist

[00:24:14] **Jarek:** How would you describe your, because yeah, just, just, uh, uh, for anyone who doesn't know, it's, it's sort of separate from the main pub itself.

[00:24:21] **Jarek:** Um, so yeah, just describe the venue to us.

[00:24:24] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, sure. So it is separate from the venue itself. You go down, down a little ramp to it. We've we've done a bit of a rejigging of the venue, um, since we took over to kind of move the sound desk and open it up a little bit. So it's slightly larger capacity now, but it's still kind of, uh, 140 or something like that.

[00:24:40] **Ali Parcell:** So it's, it's not massive at all. Um, but yeah, the rejig has allowed us to fit a few more people in and also build a sort of specific merch area, which I think is really important for the bands as well. Um, and yeah, we've done, we've done quite a bit of work through. In the venue, so we got a new PA system, well, it's the PRYZYM's old PA, so as you can [00:25:00] imagine that is loud in a 140 cap venue, so do please bring your earplugs, although we've got some on the bar.

[00:25:06] **Ali Parcell:** Um, so that's been really helpful to just really kind of amp that up. We also, the Music Venues Trust very kindly helped us with a new sound desk as well, as ours was kind of getting onto its last legs, so that's enabled us to do some recording as well, which is really nice of live shows and stuff like that.

[00:25:22] **Ali Parcell:** Um, and then we've also set that area up to be able to use it as a rehearsal space. Um, cause it just seems like a really natural extension when we've not got bands on in the venue for people to kind of come and be able to practice and then they can practice, but also kind of practice a stage show a little bit as well, which is a nice opportunity too.

[00:25:40] **Jarek:** Yeah. Yeah. Um. And in terms of, I mean, you sort of made it clear that, you know, your motivation for taking over this place was to continue sort of in the tradition that Jamie had already established.

[00:25:54] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, it's quite the legacy.

[00:25:55] **Jarek:** Yeah, absolutely. But did you sort of have any changes in mind anything- any [00:26:00] any of your own touches that you wanted to add to it?

[00:26:02] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I think for me as a digital marketer, it was always about what can we what can we really improve in that sense? Um with no disrespect went to Jamie. The website was atrocious It just wasn't his bag

[00:26:13] **Jarek:** I'm sure he won't be offended

[00:26:16] **Ali Parcell:** Oh god no. I mean it was blue text on a lime green background in places and it was, it was leopard print everywhere and it was, it was impossible to read and it was really difficult to update. Um, and so my, my first goal was literally just how do we create a place where if someone goes, I wonder what's on at the Fighting Cocks this week.

[00:26:34] **Ali Parcell:** They know where to go and they can find that information. It is, it's such a low bar, but it, it, it wasn't being met at the moment. So the big opportunity for me was like, let's rebuild the website. Let's think about building a bit of a mailing list. Let's really just make sure people know what's going on.

[00:26:49] **Ali Parcell:** Cause we're putting all this time and energy into putting on incredible bands and no one wants to play to three guys and their dog. So yeah, for me, that was, that was where I felt I could have the biggest impact. And I think for [00:27:00] Matt, it was about what can we do to kind of mix up the, um, the menu a little bit?

[00:27:05] **Ali Parcell:** He's really into his craft beers and that was something that wasn't really kind of catered for all that well at the time. Um, so that was a big focus for him. And then together it was like, right, what can we do with the venue? You know, it is really all about the live music here. So how can we make sure that the sound's really great, that we've, the lighting's really great.

[00:27:22] **Ali Parcell:** We had some soundproofing to do for sure. Um, so yeah, it's been about kind of how can we make those tweaks without it. You know, feeling like it's gone super corporate or that we've massively changed it or anything like that because yeah, there's if it ain't broke, don't fix it. But

[00:27:39] **Jarek:** yeah, yeah, I think it's safe to say you haven't gone super corporate

[00:27:44] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, looking around. No, absolutely not. Um, but yeah, I think that's where I felt like, um, I could, I could help.

[00:27:52] **Jarek:** Have you done anything with the, with the decor? You mentioned the leopard print, uh, does that go back to Jamie's time?

[00:27:56] **Ali Parcell:** There's a lot of that, but yeah, the leopard print is, is here to stay, I think. [00:28:00] Um, yeah, decor wise we haven't really done a great deal, um, to be honest.

[00:28:05] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I'm just trying to think. Yeah, only just kind of tidying up bits and bobs that have um, needed the work to be honest. We kind of did a bit of work in the venue. We've got like a whole wall now that's kind of old gig posters, which is quite nice. It's a bit of a mosaic of all sorts of stuff that we've done.

[00:28:20] **Ali Parcell:** But, yeah, broadly, um, broadly keeping that largely the same.

[00:28:24] **Jarek:** Yep. Uh, I'm just gonna stop. That's off. Um, These, uh, these windows, do these go back a bit, do you know?

[00:28:32] **Ali Parcell:** I wish I did, to be honest. I mean, I imagine they do, don't they?

[00:28:35] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, no, I'm just intrigued. Because the name Fighting Cocks goes way back to its Victorian heritage.

[00:28:42] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, it's been here a hundred years or so, yeah.

[00:28:44] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, it's interesting. Um, so, um, yeah, what would you say is your favourite thing about running this place?

[00:28:55] **Ali Parcell:** I think it's the, I think it's the stories that we hear from people to be honest, like when [00:29:00] we took this place over I knew there was a I knew there was a legacy, I knew people loved it, but I didn't quite know how much, to be honest.

[00:29:07] **Ali Parcell:** And we just, the first week we put up a social media post just introducing Matt and myself, and we were frankly terrified because Jamie had been running the place for 20 years, and people cared so much about this place. I was like, what if people think we're gonna ruin it? Like, what if people don't want us to be doing it?

[00:29:23] **Ali Parcell:** What if everyone's like, oh god, Jamie's going? Um but the reaction was so, so positive, but so many people just reached out to us to just tell us stories about what the pub meant to them, um, from, um, a local guy that we've come to know quite well now who's a wheelchair user talking about how it's one of the only places in Kingston that he feels like he's, he's at home and he doesn't feel like his wheelchair is a problem at all. From a friend of mine who's back up in Nottingham who's like it's actually the last place I saw a friend of mine who passed away and I've got really fond memories of that evening and it meant so much, to people [00:30:00] who've met their lifelong partners and just knowing that it's such an important part of people's lives I think is important.

[00:30:06] **Ali Parcell:** It's something that made me feel like, yeah, it was the right decision to take on this absolutely terrifying legacy.

[00:30:12] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, well you mentioned people meeting their lifelong partners, including yourself of course.

[00:30:16] **Ali Parcell:** Including myself, yeah, so, uh, yeah.

[00:30:18] **Jarek:** I mean, other than that night, are there any standout sort of evenings, uh, maybe since you've started running the place?

[00:30:25] **Ali Parcell:** Oh, yeah, there's so many. Um, I think The Chopper Stre- there were the first Chopper Street Social that we did, I think was really, really nice because that had always been Jamie's baby. Um, and he was, he was around for that actually. So that was a kind of quite nice transition one. Um, so it was really early doors, but it was just, it was so busy.

[00:30:45] **Ali Parcell:** It was such a great atmosphere. Everybody had an absolute blast. And I just remember at one point being stood in the bar, a song came on at the jukebox. I think it was uh, Tribute by Tenacious D, and virtually everybody in the pub just started singing along. [00:31:00] And it was just this absolutely crazy moment where I was just like, this.

[00:31:04] **Ali Parcell:** This is what I wanted like that like this is the atmosphere that you just you don't get anywhere else And it's so important to protect. It's such a great moment

[00:31:11] **Jarek:** You certainly don't get that atmosphere from running a gastropub.

[00:31:14] **Ali Parcell:** You don't get that in Wetherspoons. No, maybe you do with I don't know Mr. Brightside or something but it's not quite the same.

[00:31:18] **Ali Parcell:** But yeah, it just felt really, really special. Um, and it was the end of a really fantastic day. Actually, we'd had sort of like stalls out on the street and like the road had been closed and it had been a whole big thing that was just really nice and a lot of work had gone into it. And it just felt like a really nice transition point between kind of us and Jamie.

[00:31:38] **Ali Parcell:** And, uh, yeah, I think that was the point at which he was just like, yeah, this'll be all right.

[00:31:44] **Jarek:** I mean. Uh, in terms of sort of your, your, your regulars, I mean, how, how, how, how wide is that pool? How, how, you know, how many,

how many people do you think, um, are, are, would you, would you, would you class as some sort of, yes, regular or semi-regular here in the,

[00:31:57] **Ali Parcell:** oh God, I just, yeah, I think Matt would [00:32:00] be better giving you, giving you the numbers, but it's a, it's a massive variety of people for sure. So obviously like Kingston is a big uni town and we have our kind of student cards, which, which give those guys a really good cost at the bar and stuff like that.

[00:32:15] **Ali Parcell:** So we definitely have like a good student turnout all the way through to some of the old guys that are in here during the day, propping up the bar and yeah, it's a fantastic mix to be honest that I think will surprise some people.

[00:32:26] **Jarek:** I was going to ask you about the daytimes actually, because you know, I'm sure you have all the people who come to the music and the evenings quite regularly, but you have a steady trickle of people that sort of, you know, here in the day.

[00:32:34] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, absolutely, we've got those people. Those guys having a great time at the pool table that we heard of, but yeah, it's, it's good and for us I think we've, we've tried to kind of encourage that a little bit as well with food, so we actually took over the Old London Road Cafe, which is next door but one, um, so that we could offer some food during the day because we were finding, particularly as people were doing more working from home, um, they just want to just work from the pub instead, not necessarily to have a [00:33:00] beer, just to not be in the silence of their own homes, really, or to get out of shared houses and stuff like that.

[00:33:05] **Ali Parcell:** So, we wanted to just make sure it was as welcoming as possible during the daytime for people to come and bring a laptop and pick up a pew for a few hours.

[00:33:13] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, I was going to ask you about the cafe, actually. Um, when did that sort of acquisition happen, and then what was the sort of story behind it?

[00:33:20] **Ali Parcell:** That was about a year and a bit ago. Um And it was really just because we wanted to be able to do food at the pub, um, uh, was, was the main kind of driver behind it. We, we haven't got the space or the money, frankly, to kind of turn- we'd have to, we'd have had to turn this area into a kitchen or whatever and figured out extraction.

[00:33:39] **Ali Parcell:** And Matt started talking about all sorts of things that sounded very complicated and expensive and that just wasn't really going to work. Um, so yeah, when the cafe, when the guys at Jack's decided that they didn't want to be kind of running the place anymore it seemed like a phenomenal opportunity to take over the lease and be able to kind of just bring the food literally [00:34:00] next door but one, kind of try and change the menu so that it was you know super portable stuff like nachos and burritos and but also you know really good pub food basically so yeah those guys that are coming in for, you know how- grab a lunch bring a laptop and yeah made sure that we could kind of cater for that and obviously the cafe in itself is a lovely little business as well.

[00:34:21] **Ali Parcell:** So, yeah, it enables us to kind of do the two things side by side and hopefully we'll start to do a few more events there as well. We've now got the alcohol license. It's never going to be a rowdy pub type atmosphere at all. Um, but it does just mean that if people want to come in the evening and play some board games, they can have a nice glass of wine alongside it.

[00:34:38] **Ali Parcell:** And we've got a acoustic night on this Sunday, which is our first kind of proper one. And hopefully we can make a bit of a bit of a habit out of that in the next year.

[00:34:47] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, no, it's a really, really nice thing, because, um, yeah, I think. Um, one of the, one of the things that I hear is, is, is, you know, the money's, the money's not in, uh, music, uh, [00:35:00] venues, the money's in food.

[00:35:01] **Jarek:** Um, but if you can, if you can marry the two, then it's, then it's nice.

[00:35:04] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, it also just means that if people come on a massive Sunday session that they don't get, don't get particularly ruined and they can still go to work on a Monday.

[00:35:11] **Jarek:** That's probably what, what I needed.

[00:35:12] **Ali Parcell:** Which is, which is really helpful.

[00:35:13] **Jarek:** That's probably what I needed at that Tankus the Henge night.

[00:35:14] **Ali Parcell:** That's what you needed at Tankus the Henge, yeah. Should've got some nachos, that would have sorted you right out.

[00:35:20] **Jarek:** Um, yeah, I think we've, uh, I've asked you. Oh, actually while we're talking the local, the immediate vicinity. Is there also a link up with the tattoo parlour? Am I right in thinking that?

[00:35:31] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, so, um, at the time that, um, Jamie was moving to Australia, so those guys moved in at basically the same time as us. So yeah, it's great to have the connection, um, with them and, um, yeah, so the guy that, that runs it, Vlad, he's often here with his band, Scandal. Um, they played a great punk show, I think, last week, actually.

[00:35:54] **Ali Parcell:** Um, so yeah, it's fantastic to have the connection and, uh, yeah, they're good neighbours.

[00:35:58] **Jarek:** Yeah, good stuff. Yeah, um, [00:36:00] speaking of neighbours, um, I mean, I was going to ask you about some of the challenges. Do you ever have issues with neighbours and complaints and that sort of thing?

[00:36:07] **Ali Parcell:** Um, very occasionally. I think a few people were concerned with the cafe and having an alcohol licence for the cafe.

[00:36:13] **Ali Parcell:** And I think just because they knew that it was owned by the people that own the Fighting Cocks. And I think they were just worried that the cafe might turn into a pub, which is really not the intention at all. We're just thinking, as I say, you know, just come in the evening, play some board games and have a chilled out craft beer.

[00:36:28] **Ali Parcell:** It's not, not the same sort of atmosphere at all, but I think people were a little bit concerned and yeah, we've, we've done a lot to hopefully allay those concerns and yeah, we're very careful about the events that we put on and particularly if people want private hires and stuff like that, just making sure that it's, it's not going to, you know, contribute to noise in the area.

[00:36:46] **Jarek:** Yeah. I mean, I asked you about, uh, what your favourite things about running the venue. What are some of your not so favourite things? What, what, what are some of the the challenges you wish you could do without?

[00:36:56] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, um, after the utility bills, they [00:37:00] are an absolute nightmare at the moment. Um, that's a, that's a real challenge, um, that hopefully will resolve itself at some point.

[00:37:09] **Ali Parcell:** But that, that definitely makes things quite difficult. Um, that's about it, to be honest. I think, um, it's, it's, it's a lot of fun. It's not, it's not always smooth sailing, but, um, yeah.

[00:37:25] **Jarek:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, do you think, I mean, the conversation I had with the former Grey Horse owner yesterday, he was talking about when, when he was moving on, he was doing something similar to Jamie and, um, that he really struggled to find anyone who wanted to run a music venue.

[00:37:39] **Jarek:** Um, and, um, and, and basically everyone he spoke to, wanted to turn it into a gastropub, which is kind of what the Grey Horse has become now. It's still got the Ram Jam out the back, but it's primarily a food place now. Um, it's - why do you think, you know, so few people might, might, [00:38:00] might want to do, do what yourself and Matt are doing.

[00:38:02] **Jarek:** Why do you think that's such a challenge? And, and you know, is it, is it the, is it just because there's no money in it or is the, is there other reasons?

[00:38:10] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I, I think the money is a big part of it. I think we're fortunate in the, you know, we are not expecting the Fighting Cocks to pay our bills. We've got other things going on and it wouldn't be paying our bills if we didn't, frankly.

[00:38:22] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I think you, you have to really love it. Like, because no, no one's getting into this business for fame and fortune. Um, you know, it's, particularly if you're a sort of owner who's on the ground, it's, it's long hours, it's, it's tiring, it's a lot of work. Um, but the payoff is, is fantastic if you can, if you can find the right way to make it work for you.

[00:38:47] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah. Um, I just want to talk about how Fighting Cocks sits within Kingston. I mean have you got to know Kingston more through, through, through, through your interactions with the Fighting Cocks?

[00:38:58] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, absolutely.

[00:38:59] **Jarek:** How, how do you [00:39:00] describe Kingston as a, as a town?

[00:39:01] **Ali Parcell:** I love Kingston. I think it's just got a, an incredible atmosphere. I think there's, it's really hard to beat a sunny weekend down by the river.

[00:39:10] **Ali Parcell:** I think that's just a, it's just a really nice atmosphere. Um. Yeah, it certainly beats East London, where I'm living at the moment, so yeah, we're keen to, keen to up sticks and get over to this neck of the woods sooner rather than later, yeah.

[00:39:21] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, I was gonna, yeah, that was gonna be my next question, was sort of how it compares to other parts of London that you're familiar with, and I guess how it compares, specifically culturally and musically, how does, how does it compare, I mean, is there more, where you're in East London, is there more going on in terms of music and

[00:39:34] **Ali Parcell:** Um, yeah, I think so, I think there's a lot going on, um But not necessarily within the kind of alternative music scene.

[00:39:43] **Ali Parcell:** I think that, you know, those, these venues are fewer and further between than they've ever been before. Um, and I think, um, Kingston has, because of venues like this, has, you know, a fantastic scene in that sense. And, and it's well served, um, [00:40:00] rather than I think where, where I am, there isn't really quite so much.

[00:40:03] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I think we, Matt and I went to a, uh, a sort of board game pub type place the other week and I was like this is where all the alternative people were and they were playing some like really generic kind of, uh, early 2000s Green Day or something like that and I was like this is, this is all we've got, this is it, you know, um, and that's a, that's a real shame.

[00:40:25] **Ali Parcell:** Um, but yeah, I, I really like Kingston. I think it's got a, it's got a great atmosphere.

[00:40:30] **Jarek:** Yeah.

[00:40:30] **Ali Parcell:** And a lot of sirens apparently.

[00:40:32] **Jarek:** Yeah, well this, this road, yeah. Um, so I'll just wait for that one to go by. Um, uh, oh yeah, uh, so, uh, you mentioned, uh, earlier, uh, working with Banquet, um, are there, um, I mean, first of all, Banquet do, do, do a lot, uh, to sort of maintain that live music culture in, in, in this area, don't they?

[00:40:52] **Ali Parcell:** They're so important. So, so important. And, um, yeah, they put on phenomenal shows. I think, uh, yeah, they're a great force for good [00:41:00] in this area.

[00:41:00] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah.

[00:41:01] **Jarek:** Um, are there other sort of local partners that, that, that, that you work with?

[00:41:05] **Ali Parcell:** Um, we've got quite a few, yeah, different partners. So whether that's kind of, um, local, um, providers, so like Bone Idle Gin, for instance, we have behind the bar.

[00:41:16] **Ali Parcell:** Siren are only over in kind of Reading sort of area. They bring us some lovely, lovely, um, craft beers. We also do some stuff with Signature Brew, who obviously are sort of dotted around various different places across London. And then, um, yeah, we try and work with sort of other, other groups as well, so like Loud Women, who put on fantastic female fronted bands.

[00:41:38] **Ali Parcell:** Um, we've got a sort of monthly LGBTQ night as well, so really trying to kind of, yeah, put ourselves into the community and create a space for, for people to, to enjoy and get together.

[00:41:50] **Jarek:** Mm hmm, yeah. Um, and just sort of looking, looking to the future, I mean, we've, we've, we've spoken about the challenges of running a, a, [00:42:00] a venue and it seems that, uh, the venues are going to be the preserve of the, of the, it's almost a passion project for, for, for people now, rather, rather, rather than a business.

[00:42:11] **Jarek:** I mean, how do you, with that in mind, how do you see the future of live music in towns like Kingston and this sort of area.

[00:42:17] **Ali Parcell:** I think it's, I think it's really challenging and I think it's so important that these grassroots venues exist because ultimately no one goes to playing arena rock venues from scratch.

[00:42:28] **Ali Parcell:** You know, people have to start in these smaller venues and earn their stripes a little bit, practice their craft, build up an audience. And, you know, without them, how does that happen? You know, you, you strip out the lower few rungs of the ladder really and then it's just impossible to get anywhere so I think it's so so important that places like this exist for people to

kind of apply their trade and get their first shows and, and- well we're really fortunate in that we get, particularly through Banquet we get some you know fantastic artists that want to just play a more uh intimate show as [00:43:00] well which is really really nice but yeah I think it's I think it's just really important that people you know continue to support the scene.

[00:43:07] **Jarek:** Yeah, I mean from the artists that you've got, you book here, do you get the sense that they're playing elsewhere locally? Are they on a circuit of venues?

[00:43:15] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, people tend to be doing a little mini tour, um, and we get some fantastic bands that are kind of coming in that are doing, that are sort of international bands as well that might be coming over to do something like Manchester Punk Festival or something like that.

[00:43:30] **Ali Parcell:** And we'll be a kind of nice warm up show for that sort of thing as well, which is, which is great, um, to just be a little bit of a stop off. Um, it's very handy in the location that we're in when sort of people come, come in from the south and they're heading up to various different festivals up north as well.

[00:43:42] **Ali Parcell:** We're kind of a handy, handy stop off point on the way.

[00:43:45] **Jarek:** Lovely. Any, any tips for artists that we should be looking out for that have played here?

[00:43:49] **Ali Parcell:** Oh gosh, now you're talking. Um, up and coming. You know what? We had a fantastic local band, actually, [00:44:00] that came and supported Miss Vincent, who are, it was a real passion project for me.

[00:44:04] **Ali Parcell:** I absolutely love Miss Vincent. I don't think they toured in a while, and I was like, sod it, let's just send them an email and see if we can get them to come play. And then they ended up doing a five, six day tour, but they were supported by a local band called Bats, Bats, Bats, who are great. Just really, really good fun.

[00:44:19] **Ali Parcell:** Really new band, um, just starting out. I think they're based in Kingston. Um, the drummer's actually in a band with, up in Nottingham with some of my old uni friends. Um, so yeah, it's a small world, um, but those guys are really great. Um, really enjoy them. It'd

[00:44:34] **Jarek:** be interesting to see them on the same bill as Pigs, Pigs, Pigs, Pigs, Pigs.

[00:44:37] **Ali Parcell:** Yes, and Wolves & Wolves & Wolves & Wolves.

[00:44:39] **Jarek:** Oh, I didn't know that.

[00:44:41] **Ali Parcell:** We could definitely create some sort of zoo based lineup. I've really got my eye on

[00:44:47] **Jarek:** Maybe that's the future, thematic nights.

[00:44:48] **Ali Parcell:** Maybe it is. I've really got my eye on, there's a few bands that I really like and they're quite small. I think they're both Canadian bands, but one of them's called Winona Rage and one of them's called Nicholas.
[00:45:00] No, sorry, Nicolas Rage and Winona Fighter, and I really want to put them on a bill together because I just think it would be fantastic.

[00:45:09] **Jarek:** I was nearly ready to wrap up there, but then I'd forgotten two key things that I wouldn't have forgiven myself if I didn't ask about. One of them is stand up comedy. You have quite a lot of stand up comedy here, and I was looking at the list of names that you've had playing. It's some of the biggest names in -

[00:45:23] **Ali Parcell:** Unbelievable.

[00:45:24] **Jarek:** Yeah, so talk to me about some of the names that have played here, and what is that relationship with comedy, where did that come from?

[00:45:29] **Ali Parcell:** Yes. So, it's been going for a really long time, it was literally the 18th birthday about 2, 3 weeks ago. Um, we had Jess Fostekew and Harry Hill playing that show, which is really fantastic.

[00:45:40] **Ali Parcell:** Um, otherwise this year we had Bill Bailey, which was amazing. Massive, massive Bill Bailey fan. Um, Sarah Pascoe's been on this year. Joel Dommett's been over a few times. Um, and yeah, I think as I was saying with some of the larger bands, really, it's just a massive opportunity to see someone that really otherwise would be in a much, [00:46:00] much bigger venue and in a really small setting and, and see those kind of work in progress shows really we get.

[00:46:07] **Ali Parcell:** Sometimes Lee Mack just turns up with some scribbles on a piece of paper and he's just hilarious for half an hour. Um, and so, yeah, you never quite know who's going to pop in. Um, and that's the fun of it, really. It's usually, you know, five, 10 quid a ticket and you know, you're going to have an absolute blast.

[00:46:22] **Ali Parcell:** Uh, whether you've heard of the comedians or not, but yeah, sometimes we just get some massive names just swinging on by and it's great fun.

[00:46:28] **Jarek:** Yeah. Um, is that, that's because they, they, they want a smaller venue just to try their material somewhere?

[00:46:34] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah. It's, it's largely kind of work in progress stuff. Um. And yeah, I think quite a few of them are quite local as well, so it's, um, yeah, it's something to do on a Monday night.

[00:46:43] **Jarek:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, not half. Um, and yes, the final thing was, uh, something we spoke about, uh, before I switched the mics on, which is, uh, you're, you're a filming location for Marvel as well.

[00:46:53] **Ali Parcell:** Yes, as you do.

[00:46:54] **Jarek:** So, uh, tell me that story.

[00:46:55] **Ali Parcell:** Um, yeah. So that was about, it was [00:47:00] August last year, I think. Um, so yeah, I put it- when I redid the website, put a page up about being able to hire the venue for all sorts of stuff.

[00:47:07] **Ali Parcell:** And we have people coming in for birthday parties. We've had a couple of weddings this year and people just hire out the venue for various bits and bobs. And I put filming and TV locations. I just thought, yeah, why not whack it on there? And then, yeah, um, They got in touch. They were very, very, uh, cagey about what the project was and what it was all going to be about.

[00:47:29] **Ali Parcell:** Um, but yeah, it was very exciting. They just wanted to kind of learn a bit more about the venue and how it all might work and what facilities we had and stuff like that. And then, yeah, they decided to book the place. So, yeah, we had to sort of figure all that out. They came for, I think it was about five days.

[00:47:43] **Ali Parcell:** Did quite a bit of work to kind of make it feel like it was sort of, I think, 1970s, 1980s, midtown America. But it's still very recognisable. Um, so yeah, it turned out it was Season 2 of Loki, which is on Disney Um, so yeah, we had [00:48:00] Tom Hiddleston um, in the house, um, for four or five days doing some recording.

[00:48:05] **Ali Parcell:** And, um, yeah, finally was on screens a couple of weeks back. So it's been, it's been a long waiting game of not being able to speak, tell anyone, which is super hard as a massive Marvel fan and a terrible secret keeper. Um, but yeah, it was finally, finally on the TV and I think it was about Episode 6 of the season as well.

[00:48:22] **Ali Parcell:** So every Friday we were tuning in being like, is this our week? Is this our week? Maybe we've dreamt it all. Maybe they've cut the sequence. Like it's really hard not to get too excited about it just in case. Um, but yeah, finally it came on and, um, you know, it's. It's just a conversation between two people at the bar, but it's quite a poignant, uh, conversation.

[00:48:42] **Ali Parcell:** I don't want to spoil it for anyone, but it's quite a nice- you see another side to Loki as a character as well, which is really cool. And, uh, yeah, even with the work that they did, it's still very instantly recognisable as the Fighting Cocks. So, yeah, we're part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which is crazy and incredibly exciting.[00:49:00]

[00:49:00] **Jarek:** Amazing. Were you a fan of the show before?

[00:49:01] **Ali Parcell:** Massively, yeah. I'm a big, big Marvel nerd. Um, and yeah, really, really love, um, Tom Hiddleston as Loki. I think he's, he's doing a fantastic job. So, yeah, I would have been watching anyway, but, uh, I've been watching with bated breath.

[00:49:15] **Jarek:** Yeah.

[00:49:15] **Ali Parcell:** My phone at the ready. Um, as soon as we were, we knew it was going to be coming out.

[00:49:19] **Jarek:** That's amazing. Um, did you have to shut the pub for the filming?

[00:49:23] **Ali Parcell:** We did, yeah. They were, they were very good in that they decided to do it largely, I think it was like a Sunday through to Thursday or whatever. So it wasn't our kind of Friday and Saturday nights. Um, but yeah,

they had some big scaffolding up outside and big black sheets so that you couldn't see in.

[00:49:38] **Ali Parcell:** And, um, yeah, it was all very, all very secretive, lots of security and we obviously had to keep quiet about it for a very long time. Um.

[00:49:47] **Jarek:** And that must have been amazing, that moment where that scene came on.

[00:49:49] **Ali Parcell:** Finally, yes! I think all the team have been waiting for it to come on and I got a message from one of the guys at about 9 o'clock in the [00:50:00] morning, I don't know who's really up early and watching Loki with his breakfast but he's like, it's our week, it's finally here!

[00:50:06] **Ali Parcell:** So yeah, we were desperate to watch it and we've got a little plaque now at the bar and a little photo beside it and stuff like that. So just to commemorate it, we've had a few people coming in and trying to sit at the bar and take pose for their own pictures and stuff like that, which has been really fun.

[00:50:20] **Jarek:** That's brilliant. That's brilliant. Yeah. Yeah. I'm sure you'll be, uh, yeah, you'll be one of those places that the, the, the, the, the absolute, uh, mega fans go and visit.

[00:50:30] **Ali Parcell:** Yeah, I shared something on, on Twitter and yeah, the, uh, there's a massive community. I was, I was really quite shocked at how much, how people, how excited everybody was about it and people already talking about coming as a bit of a Loki pilgrimage, which is really sweet.

[00:50:43] **Jarek:** Incredible, incredible. Um, yeah, I, I think that's, that's mostly everything I wanted to ask in this. There's, if there's anything, um, that you didn't think we covered in terms of, you know, uh, running a music venue, running this music venue specifically, anything that, uh, any stories that you didn't tell that you, uh, you think are [00:51:00] relevant?

[00:51:00] **Ali Parcell:** Um, I just think one of the other things that, um, is really nice about this place I think is, I sort of mentioned like that it's a key part in people's stories, but I think one really nice example is, is one of our regulars, Jodie, who met her partner here.

[00:51:17] **Ali Parcell:** they now have a little one together and then they came along to our Youth Anthem shows, which we have, um, on a Sunday afternoon.

They're all family shows, so people come along with their kids and big ear protectors. Obviously the kids get to have a go on drums and there's face painting and stuff, and it's a real kind of family friendly activity.

[00:51:35] **Ali Parcell:** And for them to kind of meet here, have a little one come along to like the baby's first gig, um, in a little Fighting Cocks bib, I think, which is really adorable. Um, I think it's just really the epitome of like, what I mean at this place being really special at different points in people's lives. And hopefully, you know, once that little one is, is grown up, they'll be, they'll be in here for their first pint.

[00:51:57] **Ali Parcell:** And that'd be pretty cool too.

[00:51:58] **Jarek:** Lovely. Lovely. I [00:52:00] think that's a lovely note to end on. Thank you so much, Ali.

[00:52:03] **Ali Parcell:** No worries. Thank you.