

# KENT MUSIC

## YOUTH-LED SPACES

### About the Folkestone Lab from the perspective of a tutor

*We spoke to some of the tutors at the Folkestone Music Lab, getting their thoughts and opinions on it as adults facilitating a youth-led music space.*



### In your own words, what is the Folkestone Music Lab?

Music Lab is a space where we provide musical equipment and tech to young people (11-18) for 3 hours on a Saturday morning. There is no ability threshold - if you can't play a note, you are as welcome as the most confident player.

Music Lab is a space where young people can congregate and share their interest in music with others. It's not a place where kids who aren't interested in music get lessons.

We spend as much time talking and discussing music and creativity as we do playing it. There is learning but it comes through the backdoor and is generally experiential rather than directly taught.

### As a tutor, how do you see your role in the Lab as a youth-led space?

My main role is to make sure that everyone feels comfortable, safe and willing to take part in the creative process, whatever their initial confidence and ability level. I help with all aspects of "the band room" and help also with music tech and recording.

This has been the way I have done youth workshops since I began as a teacher. However, working at the Lab has leaked a little into my whole class teaching, e.g., allowing the class to make some of the decisions regarding content.

*"...the group pulls together and has near total control over their experience. All we do as tutors is tweak and facilitate."*

### **How do young members impact their experience at Folkestone Music Lab, day to day and longer term?**

The young members bring the content and material. We then rotate whose song or piece we work on, and everyone plays together and finds their own part. If they are struggling, we offer suggestions, but we try to let them do their own thing. We also encourage the writer to express how they want things to sound, encouraging gentle feedback and polite direction and discussion. Mutual respect is key.

We also ask if individual members whether they want to do some recording and then they decide if they want to involve the group or not.

Ultimately the group pulls together and has near total control over their experience. All we do as tutors is tweak and facilitate.

### **What are the challenges of running a youth-led music space like the Lab?**

Sometimes decision making can be a little slow and not everybody wants to contribute or feels they can contribute as much as others. Over time participant confidence improves and these problems iron themselves out.

*"Mutual respect is key"*

### **How do you see that the Lab makes a difference to the young people that attend?**

It gives them a community to be part of something different from school. Dare I say it, the Lab is "a place for the outsiders to be inside". It helps them find themselves both musically and personally. It helps them establish the value of their opinions and ideas and brings them to the forefront.

Some of the members even have their own WhatsApp group and communicate outside of Music Lab through that.

## How might having access to a similar space when you were young have changed things for you on your musical journey?

I would have loved it. It would have made me more confident at an earlier age that I had a musical contribution to make.

