Sennheiser look to the future with new Liverpool City Region project

Pictures: Robin Clewley



Future Yard is a brand-new, 300-capacity community music venue in Birkenhead, near Liverpool. This new space aims to bring some of today's most exciting new artists to the Wirral region, while at the same time providing key early performance opportunities and training for emerging local musicians and technicians. A diverse range of acts including Nubiyan Twist, Gruff Rhys, Pongo and Mono Neon have recently played the venue, while an exclusive autumn highlight featured synthpop legends Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, giving their first Wirral performance since 1979. Craig Pennington, co-founder of Future Yard, explains the community space represents a framework, and not just for future OMDs. With Sennheiser's help, it offers a learning opportunity for future sound engineers and event staff.

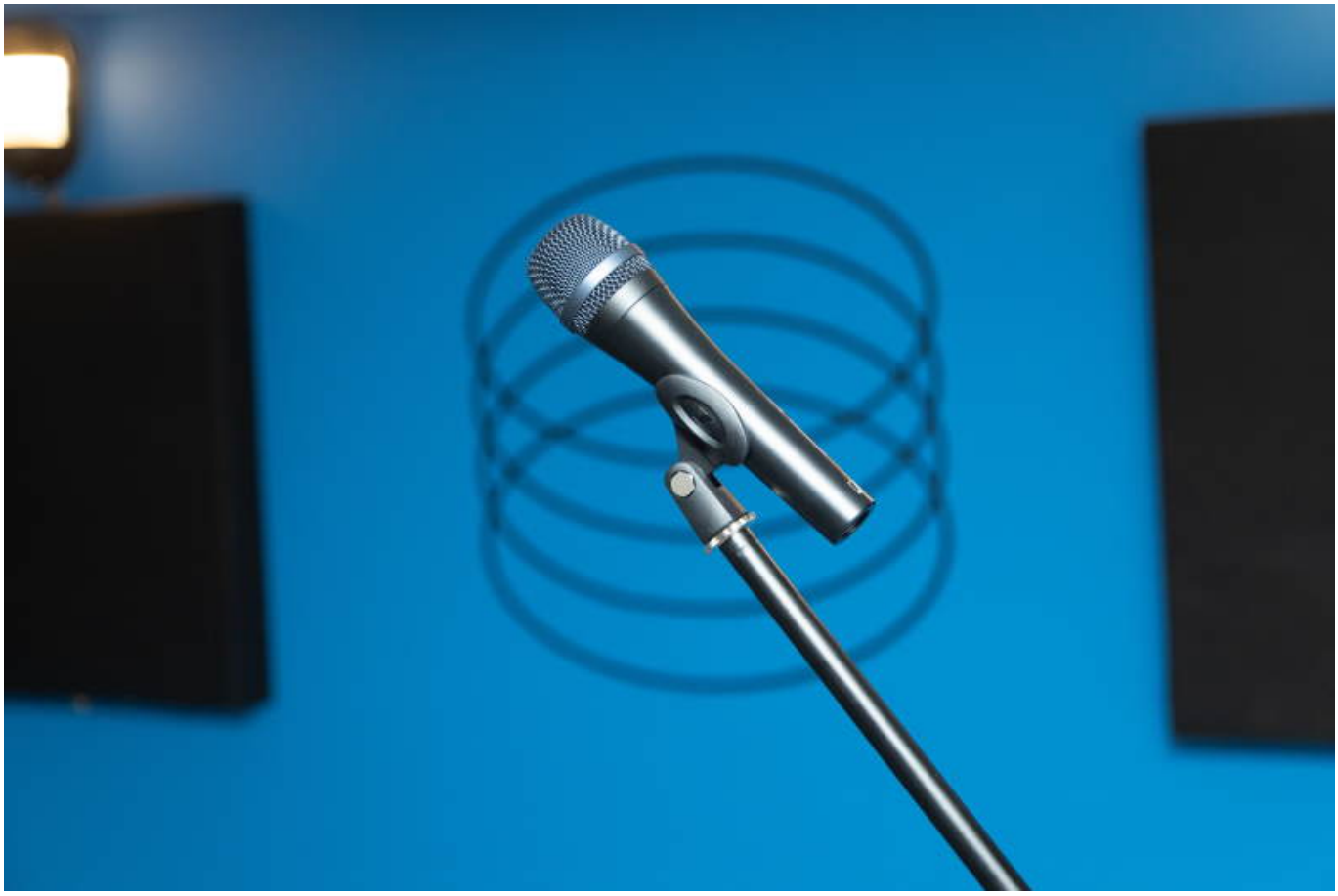
'Propeller' is Future Yard's programme stream for emerging musicians; an innovative new incubator model which sees artists enjoy dedicated mentorship shaped around an individual development plan, access to an in-depth programme of workshops, masterclasses and seminars, as well as use of quality rehearsal space. Contributions to the Propeller programme so far have come from representatives from Bandcamp, Redlight Management, Partisan Records, The Musicians' Union,

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Warner Music and more.

Sennheiser are supporting the programme with a full suite of microphones for the venue's performance and studio spaces, while also leading a specialist training day with aspiring engineers and artists this coming April.

"'Sound Check' is the new training programme from Future Yard, designed to introduce young people to the skills they need to pursue careers in the live music industry," says Pennington. It is open to young people aged 16 to 24 from the local area, providing a new pathway into the live events sector. It is a chance for young people to learn how to put on a show; from sound engineers to event managers, lighting designers to box office, this programme will introduce the range of job roles and skills needed to make a career in the live music industry. A new version of the programme for 14–15-year-olds kicked off in early 2022, taking place on Saturday mornings within a new Music Centre at Future Yard.



"The Sennheiser team will be joining us for the first time in April," Pennington adds. "They will deliver some training appropriate to our programme members. It's a multifaceted approach from Sennheiser – we really understand how Sennheiser can add value with in-depth training on industry-standard hardware." Training from Sennheiser includes microphone placement and technique courses, several Wireless Essentials courses and a Wireless Masterclass delivered by the RF experts from the

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Sennheiser Technical Application Engineering team.

Sound Check is certainly a unique concept: practical ‘hands on’ experience in a real venue and on live gigs with a paying audience. “We’re going to do training with local artists and emerging event production staff. We look at the variety of needs, different backgrounds and circumstances and we want to build and shape these programs over time,” Pennington continues. “We work with a diverse range of local young people, some of whom face a variety of challenges. The course is also fully accredited through the Arts Award from Trinity College London.”

There are three pillars to the Future Yard project: the venue and core music programming (touring international jazz musicians to school bands and everything in between); artist development for emerging artists through Propeller, with five studios in the basement of the venue; and mentorship to develop cross-genre skills. Now, the Sound Check programme opens the possibility of accredited training for potential future technicians in the music industry, delivered in a region scarred from decades of economic decay. Future Yard is located in one of the most deprived wards in England, (ONS, 2015) according to IMD (index of multiple deprivation). Using a living, breathing live music venue gives purpose, demonstrating how performance works and offering young trainees the opportunity to use that experience in their future careers.



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“Sennheiser is a forward-thinking brand that fits with the ethos of Future Yard when it comes to supporting artists, engineers and up and coming projects,” says Pennington. “There’s a natural synergy there. Some of the Sennheiser team are from this part of the UK and share our vision for putting music venues into local communities. That’s genuine with Sennheiser, not just lip service, and they’ve been very supportive. They’ve helped us with gear and resources, addressing the lack of current training pathways available.” As OMD’s Andy McCluskey said: “Future Yard offers an opportunity for the creative kids on Wirral to test their dreams out in reality, like OMD did 41 years ago.”

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