

“Everyone Is Working Class...”

Words by Colleen Considine

59 Cheapside
Luton
UK

A 52-year old record owner with a 26-year-old record shop in the UK's most loved 'dreadful' town, Luton. Talking about vinyl, opinion culture, and fighting with Noel Gallagher before he was Noel Gallagher.

There are many record shops about, some having closed but a lot still remain open. One of them being Vinyl Revelations. Having “always wanted to have a record shop” the music is eclectic to say the least.

Now, being a 20-year-old music lover where else would I spend my Saturdays? Of course, I am in a record shop full of 50-something year old men conversing about vinyl. Casual.

Having opened the shop many moons ago it has an atmosphere fuelled by music of all kinds. Something you just don't get anymore. You enter as if you're going home, music home that is. Now if you want a real Luton welcome, don't stop at the airport, head to Andy's. Sat on the corner of Cheapside, a black and white sign with a tall red chair placed on the steps outside the front door. Windows painted with posters of events.

Entering the shop reggae is blasting, the atmosphere is electric, bounce and laughter. Every corner is heaving with records. First starting off as a merchandise shop in Luton market. Selling records, but mainly t-shirts. He's moved a fair few times, and now focuses on vinyl over merchandise while also selling cassettes and CDs.

Vinyl is, “a real tangible item you can hold, a physical way of listening to music, looking to the artwork.” You can share your music interests through a product. The “same people who are into buying records also buy books, they don't want a Kindle, they want a proper book.”

Something to put on your shelf and display.

A link between all record buyers, all different yet connected through sound, “My oldest customers are in their 80s. So it's from 10 years old to near 90 years old.” There's “no demographic on age on race, or financial situation, there'll be a street cleaner talking to a QC about music, both into the same thing.” Anyone can enter the shop, there isn't anything that separates you.

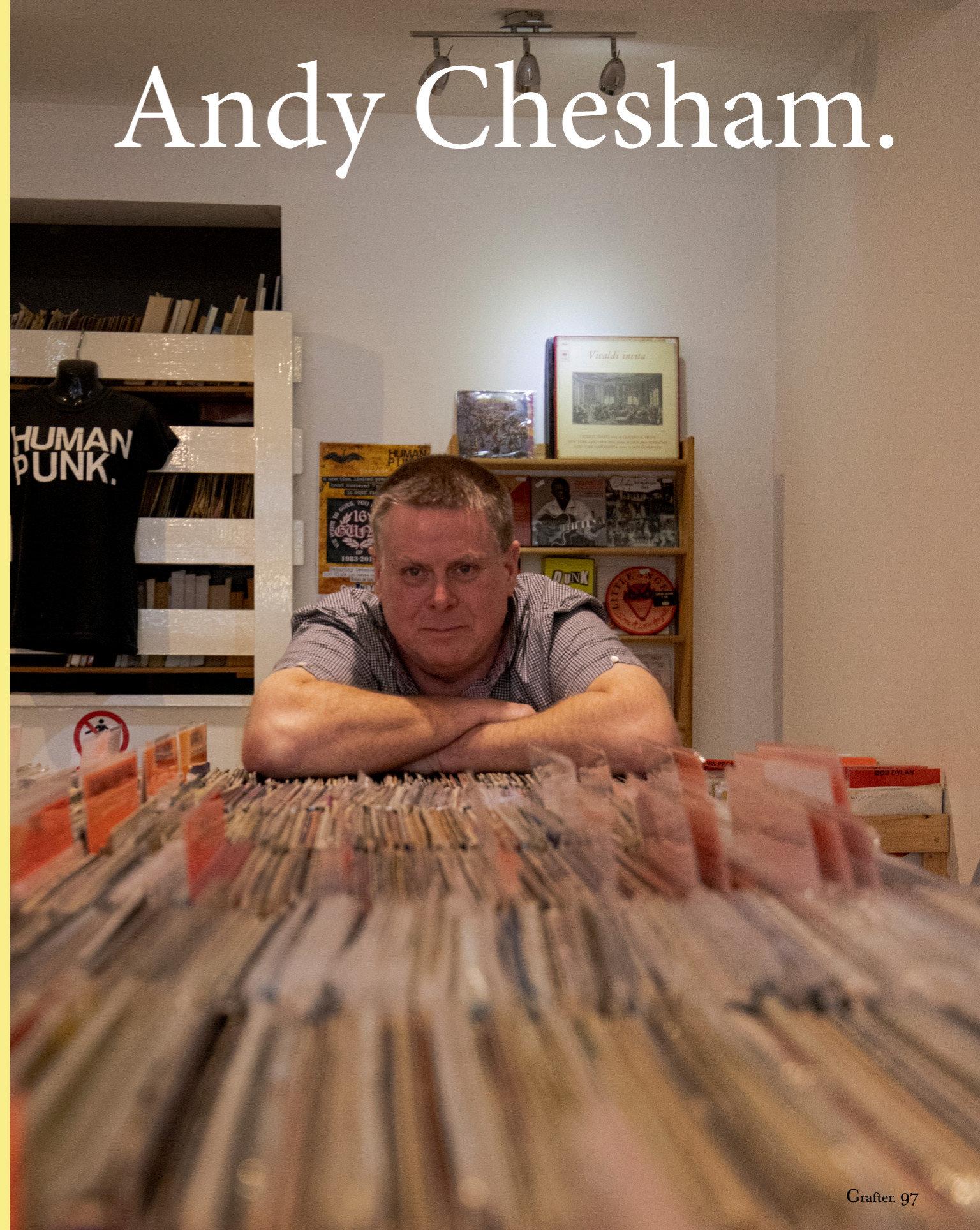
That's what's great about Andy's you have so many people, all various ages and backgrounds. All while not knowing the difference.

It's best described as a day-care centre for music enthusiasts living out their teenage years. “The people who are into music are more open as people”. The whole atmosphere is unlike anything written in High Fidelity; customers bond over sound. You could spend quite literally a whole day there. Then return again and not realised that you were only just left.

Andy has a basement, a cave of nearly 100,000 records. Sorted by a number system for the online website, “shipping to France, America, even Russia!” There is a good chunk of Carpenters and Barbra Streisand down there. Perhaps 30 of the same record, don't judge him though. His collection ranges from reggae to ska, jazz to Swedish jazz, indie, punk folk, punk. You name it he probably has it.

A guy with whom you could talk about anything. Such a diverse taste, he “loves reggae” but he's also a “punk”. Then there's folk, blues, rap, dub, northern soul, Motown, everything and anything. A hustle and bustle of people, all various ages, sexes, classes and backgrounds in the shop. You enter some record shops and there isn't a vibe. No one chats to each other, it's all about the music and that's it. That's not Andy's, there's a merge of people

Andy Chesham.



“There’s nothing new and ground-breaking coming out”

all interested in one thing, sound.

But it wouldn't be Andy's if it wasn't for Andy. Andy in fact isn't from Luton, he's an honorary Lutonian. He's lived there since he was 7 or 8, but he's a North Londoner really.

Encased in music, surrounded by subcultures, “punks, mods, teddy boys, casuals”. Being a huge jazz lover himself it all goes back to his dad. He “loved jazz, a huge jazz fan”, he happened to be a “jazz musician within London for various bands”.

Growing up, rather than attend local Luton gigs, “I went to London more than I ever did in Luton, it is the place for music.” His first gig just happened to be “The Clash's last London gig”, pretty impressive. The album that shaped him most of all of course, “London Calling.” 12 years old, “I was into The Clash, up to that point they were a punk band, but London Calling was all over the place.” The album itself was “really eclectic, reggae, funk, rock, rockabilly, all chucked in together.”

His favourite line from a song, “Death or Glory, ‘I believe in this and it's been tested by research, he who fucks nuns will later join the church’. That's the most unbelievably good line, it's great.” Andy's not a religious guy so to say the least the line doesn't come as a surprise. Loving all types of music, as the album itself “opened my mind to different types of music in the way you grow and meet different people in life.” Really getting into music from “about 11-16, you start developing from there. Music you get into changes from that moment”

Music all connects, “jazz and blues, blues, comes from folk, which is Celtic and British music that's then spread out.” People outside of music won't understand but, “it all links together. No one ever comes up with

an original piece of music, it comes from somewhere.”

Take Elvis, “rock and roll really started when he kicked off.” But “it wasn't brand new, there was already country and hillbilly music & R&B.” What happened was, “those influences came together and was suddenly being sold in a mass way.”

A constant adaption of the past, music today, “has gone about as far as it can go unless we start using totally different instruments.” There's still very good music coming out, but “There's nothing new and ground-breaking coming out”. New as in, something unique and fresh, never heard before. “I don't want to be sent something that's got 25 million views. If it's new to me and it's got 25 million views, it's not new.” It's the not knowing, “constantly searching”. Even if it's not ‘brand new’, “I might be listening to something that's from 1920. If it's new to me, it's new.”

There is a big class issue in society at the moment, “Everyone who has to work to have a decent life is working class. If you have to work to support yourself in a good way, you're working class.” And it is true, if you can't retire and live on the beach somewhere then “you too are like everyone else”. Boundaries created from money, “People have this greed thing, they think they are better than them, ‘I'm better than them below me’.” However, “Ignoring the politicians, the people behind them with real money, they look at us all as peasants.”

Money, is the leader in everything, “People vote based on the amount of money they are earning and how they perceive that.” Looking at Luton, a working town, “Real people, when they are struggling look at politicians thinking, what do they know about us?” If you've never worked an honest day in your life, “how can you make claims to know how difficult it's been?” That's the problem,



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people think they know what it’s like but really have no idea.

Music can bring people together as “not everyone is the same, but people are changing.” And “how they divide and conquer people is to try and separate that.”

Freedom of speech isn’t tricky to understand, “People are racist, homophobic, misogynistic. If you want freedom of speech, you have to let people like that speak as well.” You can’t speak your opinion without having one in return, “you have to be able to speak what you want. However offensive, however horrendous.” When someone says something “just plain wrong” then, “they are showing themselves for what they are.”

You may not agree with it, but, “it’s the old punk ideals that I don’t like censorship.” We have gone so far with PC culture that “when people are deemed outspoken, they become a hero for it. Rather than being allowed to just come out with whatever they like.” Freedom of speech is set in place to listen to people, and “if people are offensive, they should be brought up for it.”

Andy has been an atheist from the age of 8, “the teacher was waffling away at the bible, I thought, that’s bollocks!” Brilliant that at the age of 8 Andy thought, “that’s bollocks!” Lucky for him, Andy had quite open-minded parents. Not actually realising his dad was too “an atheist until I left school.” Having “never actually been to church or been christened” so “I can’t count myself as a ‘fallen Christian’”.

“Religion is to keep people in their place. Control, and it’s still control.” This control aspect of religion will fade, “It will be a cult, not a religion.” There is a sense of judgement on both sides regarding religion, “anyone who has religion isn’t as intelligent, I don’t understand how anyone of sound

judgement can look at that and think that’s real.” However, “I know I shouldn’t think like that, because I have friends who are religious.”

Religion, “is just a control thing, I used to get very upset about it. But it’s up to people themselves.” In terms of morals and religion, “you don’t have to be religious to be good, be kind and good to everyone no matter who they are.” The problem is, “you have people who aren’t kind or good, and that’s not a religious thing, that’s human nature.” Some people are simply “cruel but people won’t be changed by force; they will be changed by good.”

Like veganism, you can’t force it, there’s a vegan café called Monstera Canteen across the road from Andy’s. They, “do great food and its run by nice people”. Showing options to meat-eaters “changes people’s perceptions on what’s right, influences people in the right way.” Andy cut meat out bit by bit, he’s now a fully-fledged veggie, “I’d go vegan, but I love cheese too much”, cutting down to “two meat meals a week”. Thereby reducing “a vast majority of meat out.”

He has a superb work ethic, having “always wanted to own a record shop”, that was the dream, “even when I was younger.” He grew-up working on building sites and “working men’s cafes” with his dad. He’s got a burger and chips down in a couple of minutes, “there’d be big Irish blokes nabbing food off your plate! so I learnt to eat quick.”

Having met some interesting people through his time gigging, in the early 90s he went to a gig in London. Around the time of “1988, when the Manchester scene was taking off big time before really hitting London”.

Then, “in London, I went to see Spiral Carpets, a bit bigger than The Stones or The Mondays at the time, perform with a group of





“People who are into music are more open as people, I love reggae music, which is Jamaican music, it’s not West Indian music, it’s Jamaican music.”

-Andy Chesham

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mates” there was “a ridiculously cheap bar, 0.75p a pint, half-price what you’d pay here nevermind London, so we got rat arsed!”

Going into the event, “the band come on stage, do two songs, then leave, of course what had happened, this was the encore, and we missed the gig.” So, “in our drunken state we thought they’d only played to songs.” And “we’re giving them all sorts of abuse, shouting, screaming.” Then, “their roadie, come merch man, come everything, at the time we don’t know who he is because he’s just a roadie. Well, he’s Noel Gallagher.”

The band leave, “we continue to give him abuse, he’s throwing amps at us, and we’re throwing stuff at him. It all kicked off.” It ended with them saying, “if they’re only doing two songs, then we’re having a t-shirt each.

So, we nicked a shirt each.” In the matter of a year “the t-shirts became really iconic, which was a cow having a spiff, with ‘cool as fuck’ written on the bottom.”

After leaving the venue “drunk as ever.” They “staggered off to The Astoria” where there was a “regular indie night” but, because “we were so drunk, we got into the wrong queue.” They “ended up at an early rave, in its infancy, not knowing anything about the rave scene, well before raves really begun.”

So, “crawling in, we start jumping around, fast electronic music, we’re all dancing around in these ‘cool as fuck’ t-shirts. We claimed we started the indie/dance crossover. Apart from us there’d be no one there that would’ve been into indie in that club.” And “only when Noel Gallagher and Oasis really kicked off when we found out he was the geezer we had a set two with.”

Andy’s Top Five:

1st gig:
“The Clash’s last London gig”.
Age 12.

1st band he put on:
The Price

Favourite Line from a song:
“He who fucks nuns will later join the church.”

- The Clash.

A claim to fame:
Fighting with Noel Gallagher before he was Noel Gallagher of Oasis.

His current go to playlist:
Mod Kicks
Daddy Long Legs
In the car: listening to compilation tunes of Northern soul
The Early Beatles:
‘Please, Please Me’
‘Help’

But Andy has a “constant stream of music that is always changing by the minute.” So no doubt the above list which was rather difficult to get out of him in the first place is completely different this very second.

To find more about Andy and Vinyl Revelations head over to Grafters magazine’s website.

