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**Arts Council England backs Toulouse Lautrec Jazz Club to launch
'The Jazz Ladder' talent incubator**

21st April 2026

Toulouse Lautrec Jazz Club, the independent venue in South London, is thrilled to announce the launch of **The Jazz Ladder**, a pioneering new talent incubator programme. Backed by Arts Council England's Supporting Grassroots Music fund, the initiative launches in April 2026 and provides a fully funded, three-step development pipeline designed to discover, support and elevate early-career musicians.

Expanding from a traditional live music venue into an active talent incubator, Toulouse Lautrec is tackling the financial and networking barriers that often hinder emerging artists. The Jazz Ladder moves away from passive open-call applications, which frequently favour those with industry connections or expensive EPK assets, in favour of a proactive scouting model based on live performance.

The programme guarantees Fair Pay at Musicians' Union (MU) rates across the events and is structured into three clear steps of career progression:

- **Flagship Jams:** A series of 22 open-access, non-judgemental jam sessions. Acting as the "engine room" of the project, these sessions offer a supportive networking environment where house band leaders actively scout raw, diverse talent directly from the jam session.
- **First Sets:** Standout musicians aged 18-25 scouted at the jams will be elevated to 15 paid support slots. Crucially, each artist will also receive professional-grade video showreels (EPKs) of their performance at no cost, equipping them with the vital assets needed to secure future bookings.
- **Spotlight Sessions:** The culmination of the ladder, featuring 10 headline slots for breakthrough artists ready to command their own audience.

How the scouting works: the primary route onto The Jazz Ladder is through the jam sessions. House band leaders will evaluate live performances and make direct recommendations to the Steering Group. Audience members will also be invited to submit recommendations for which jam participants they want to see booked for First Sets and Spotlight Sessions. Musicians attending the jams will be able to register their contact details in person, or they can apply directly online via the official application form: <https://toulouselautrec.co.uk/jazz-ladder-registration-form/>

To ensure the selection process is meritocratic, inclusive and reaches beyond usual networks, the project will be overseen by a newly formed expert Steering Group. This advisory panel features industry heavyweights: award-winning saxophonist and educator Tori Freestone, leading jazz manager Danielle White, renowned Latin pianist Pablo Barrios and Sebastian Scotney, editor of UK Jazz News.

Nolan Regent, Co-Founder of Toulouse Lautrec, commented on the launch:

"For over 17 years, Toulouse Lautrec has been a home for incredible live music, but we wanted to do more than just put on gigs and actively build the future of the London jazz scene. With the backing of Arts Council England, 'The Jazz Ladder' allows us to tear down financial barriers and offer genuine, paid progression for emerging artists, whether they are fresh out of a conservatoire or entirely self-taught. We are giving them the stage, the professional media assets and the fair pay they deserve. It's about pure talent, not who you know."

About Supporting Grassroots Music

Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as part of the UK Government's Creative industries sector vision, £5 million has been invested to support Grassroots Music.

About Toulouse Lautrec Jazz Club

Established in 2008, Toulouse Lautrec is an independent, family-owned jazz venue in Kennington, South London. With its distinctive red aesthetic, the club is inspired by Parisian cabaret culture while providing a modern platform for live jazz. It has earned a reputation as one of London's most authentic and welcoming jazz destinations.

Venue information

Address: Toulouse Lautrec, 140 Newington Butts, Kennington, London, SE11 4RN

Website: <https://toulouselautrec.co.uk/>

Contact: info@toulouselautrec.co.uk | 020 7582 6800

Link to images -

<https://e.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=kZekOIztNyMGATN4LhOPNw9X6az18W06A7X>

Social Media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/toulouse.london>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/toulouse.london/>

X (Twitter): https://x.com/toulouse_london

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@toulouse.lautrec.london>

Threads: <https://www.threads.com/@toulouse.london>

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