

Shopping

London

The playlist

Five London LGBTQ bands you need to hear

Shopping

DIY supergroup featuring Andrew Milk, Trash Kit's Rachel Aggs and Wet Dog bassist Billy Easter. Excel at potent, energetic, post-punk grooves.
▶ **KEY RELEASE** 'Consumer Complaints' (album)
▶ soundcloud.com/shoppingband

The Dykeness

Faggot

Boy/boy duo singing "songs your father warned you about". Politicised, irreverent and potty-mouthed.
▶ **KEY RELEASE** 'Let's Get Worse' (album)
▶ faggottheband.bandcamp.com

Homosexual Death Drive

East London punk duo/girlfriends who make antisocial no-fi music that has reduced audiences to tears.
▶ **KEY RELEASE** 'Sunshine' (EP, out November)
▶ facebook.com/pages/Homosexual-Death-Drive/21870171474565

Woolf

Queercore punk foursome with ties to south London's Scumbag collective. Named in tribute to celebrated feminist author Virginia Woolf.
▶ **KEY RELEASE** 'Woolf' (album)
▶ woolf.bandcamp.com

The Dykeness

Draggy, spandex-wearing, feminist cock-rock covers troupe. File next to Vag Halen.
▶ **KEY RELEASE** None, yet. Best experienced live.
▶ facebook.com/thedykeness

Woolf

QUEER AS SMOKE

A "do it together" ethos binds the capital's thriving queer scene. Charlotte Richardson Andrews meets the alternative to the alternative

"D

DIY is the only music scene I've been involved in as something more than a passive spectator," says Andrew Milk. As a musician in post-punk trio Shopping, owner of Milk Records and promoter/booker at Hackney venue Power Lunches, he's fully immersed in the capital's queer DIY music scene – a small but active network spread across London's larger DIY community.

Queer DIY has its roots in the feminist punk of '90s riot grrrl, but owes just as much to that movement's criminally overlooked forebear: queercore, a cross-continent movement of zine-making, guitar-bothering LGBTQ punks that emerged in the '80s, with Canadian innovators Fifth Column, US-based Green Day affiliates Pansy Division and UK record labels Homocore, Local Kid and Everard.

Queercore was the work of uppity punks who felt alienated by both hardcore's homophobic machismo and the apolitical, consumer-driven gay mainstream. Generations on, commercial gay culture is still dire, says Milk – "terrifying and boring all at once". But that just makes the queer London underground all the more passionate about shaping its own alternative. "DIY is a way of saying [to the mainstream]: you haven't chosen us, but we also haven't chosen you," says Ray Filar, guitarist in rowdy, feminist cock-rock

outfit The Dykeness. "DIY says we stand against what you stand for, and the music, art and zines we make will be better, angrier and sexier." Charlotte Cooper, one half of no-fi east London duo Homosexual Death Drive, agrees. "HDD are people of the margins. We don't think that the centre is necessarily the place where the best stuff happens."

For queer outsiders, this amateur-friendly scene can be a haven. The community is supportive, says Cooper, but far from utopian ("It often replicates the usual hierarchies; it can be a popularity contest"), and on a scene populated by young people, Cooper and girlfriend/musical partner Kay Isagay stand out. "I'm not someone you would ever expect to be in a band: I'm fat, old, an unassimilated dyke – not exactly a guitar hero. But DIY

means I can make my own opportunities for self-expression."

With money tight and DIY spaces increasingly hard to establish, a sense of DIT – Do It Together – is essential. Nights like Power Queers (at

"DIY says we stand against what you stand for"

Ray Filar, The Dykeness

Power Lunches) and Scumbag – sporadic gigs set up by the south-east London collective of the same name – have encouraged a sense of togetherness and visibility, while queer punks active in the DIY Space For London campaign have galvanised DIY skill-sharing. "We're part of something bigger than ourselves," observes Cooper. There's healthy cross-pollination with other UK regions: Brighton's Tuff Enuff label feature London's finest queers on their Riots Not Diets compilations; a strong Glasgow connection comes via Shopping's Rachel Aggs, who plays in Glasgow band Golden Grrrls; and Liverpool's pop-punk hero Ste McCabe regularly brings his queer showcase Pussy Whipped to London's LGBTQ venue, the Royal Vauxhall Tavern (although, as the RVT has recently been sold, the future of its relationship with the LGBTQ community is uncertain).

London can feel like a small, overfamiliar pond sometimes, says Filar. "People can find that off-putting or cliquy, but I hope it's a friendly enough set of connected scenes that those who want to find a way in can." Filar's advice for people who want to join in or start their own local scene but don't know how? Utilise online resources, including Facebook groups like UK Queer Punx. "Learn to handle public humiliation and make a load of mistakes and you'll be fine," promises Cooper. ■

The map

Five key London DIY/radical landmarks

Power Lunches

The Dalston haven stages the best DIY gigs in the city, has a great café and offers a cheap rehearsal/recording space.
446 Kingsland Road, E8

Royal Vauxhall Tavern

South London's oldest surviving gay venue is now under threat; its sale threatens to turn it into a generic wine bar.
372 Kennington Lane, SE11

Freedom Press

This anarchist bookshop and publishing house was founded in 1886. It's the oldest of its kind in the English-speaking world.
84b Whitechapel High St, E1

56a Infoshop

A volunteer-run social centre offering a library, bookshop, free bicycle repair space, advice on squatting and more.
56 Crampton Street, SE17

Feminist Library

Archiving relevant literature, the FL is handily located near The Women's Library at LSE.
5 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1

