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## Babylon Gamelan

by Rag & Bone, created by Dave Young  
With Spencer Jenkins and Julia Snowdin

26-28 September 2024

Miners' Memorial Park, Bedworth

[Download media images here](#) or contact [Anna.Vinegrad@artichoke.uk.com](mailto:Anna.Vinegrad@artichoke.uk.com)

**“It made me happy!” Overwhelming audience response to three days of joyful experiments with noise and sound in Bedworth’s Miners’ Welfare Park**



Babylon Gamelan finale with Heavy Beat Brass Band, 2024.  
Produced by Artichoke as part of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council's Creative Explorers programme. Photo by Andrew Moore

**Local families gathered last Saturday evening in the Miners' Welfare Park, to say farewell to Babylon Gamelan, as the four-metre-high mechanical sound machine jammed along with the [Heavy Beat Brass Band](#), while exhaling clouds of coloured smoke and sparky blasts of pyrotechnics.**

Produced by Artichoke as a pilot project as part of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's Creative Explorers Programme, **Babylon Gamelan** was an exhibition of joyful sound sculptures and interactive installations, largely inspired and made by the local community.

The finale as dusk fell on Saturday night, rounded off three days of sonic fun, which saw around 1,500 local people of all ages come to take part. Children and adults alike delighted in strumming, drumming and playing the various community-made artworks, experimenting with sounds and making as much noise as possible.

Consisting of an art trail, interactive sculptures and a mechanical sound machine, the artworks that made up **Babylon Gamelan** used an array of scrap metals, found materials and recycled objects, harking back to the area's recent industrial past.

Local artists **Julia Snowdin** and **Spencer Jenkins** worked in collaboration with 350 people from the local community, including Aspire in Arts, Khair in the Community and Race Leys Junior, to design and make the art trail and interactive sculptures.

Rag & Bone's 4-metre high sound machine was built by **Dave Young**, with makers Ian Broscombe, Nick Sparks, Jane Gaffikin and Bill Wright, and closed the event with a special fanfare, alongside the Birmingham-based **Heavy Beat Brass Band**.

"*It made me happy*" was the overwhelming response of visitors when asked how the artworks made them feel. Others commented on how the event brought back the joy of childhood, as they rattled rainmakers and banged recycled cans and oil drums, all beautifully decorated by the local community.

**Helen Marriage, CEO of Artichoke** said:

*"The response to **Babylon Gamelan** has been wonderfully enthusiastic and it's clear that there is a real appetite here for art, which we know really makes people happy. It is a pilot project as part of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's Creative Explorers programme, funded by Arts Council England and it's been a great way to test for some kind of regular future event in Nuneaton and Bedworth that also considers the local heritage of the area. Thank you to everyone who took part and to our funders and sponsors who helped make it happen".*

**Beth King, Head of Learning & Participation for Artichoke** said:

*"It's been a joy working within the Bedworth and Nuneaton community on **Babylon Gamelan** and seeing everyone get involved in creating, painting and designing. Around 350 people aged between 5 and 90 years have taken part through workshops in schools, libraries and local groups. From turning recycled cans into colourful artworks on the art trail, to the collaborative co-design and invention of three interactive installations made by Spencer Jenkins, the community can definitely say that they are part of the art."*

Just as all the artworks in the project were made from recycled materials, many elements are being donated back to the schools that took part, whilst the wooden structures are being donated to a charity for repurposing.

Babylon Gamelan is supported by Arts Council England, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council, National Lottery Community Fund, The Alan Edward Higgs Charity, Everyone Active, Nuneaton Signs, MPL Fabrications and Philip Bates Trust.

Babylon Gamelan is dedicated to the memory of George Kessler CBE, who was a long-term supporter of Artichoke's work and a particular fan of all things technical.

Find out more about **Babylon Gamelan**: [artichoke.uk.com/project/babylon-gamelan](https://artichoke.uk.com/project/babylon-gamelan)

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## Editors' Notes

### About Artichoke

Founded in 2005, Artichoke is one of the UK's leading creative companies and a registered charity, and is part of Art Council England's National Portfolio. The company's aim is to work with artists to create unique, large-scale experiences that appeal to the widest possible audience and to use art to disrupt the everyday to create a new kind of world that we'd all like to live in. They believe the arts should not take place behind the closed doors of theatres, concert halls or galleries. Instead, they work in the street, public squares, along the coast and in the countryside across the UK, bringing communities together through learning and participation work leaving a legacy of skills and new-found potential behind.

### About Creative Explorers

Creative Explorers is an 18-month cultural programme led by Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council in partnership with Imagineer, Warwickshire County Council and arts organisation Artichoke.

Local artists and communities in Nuneaton and Bedworth are coming together for a programme of cultural events during 2023-2025. The hope is to give profile to an existing and often hidden network of artists and creative activity, engage all sectors of the community and inspire people to value and embed creativity into their lives.

Nuneaton is the most populous town in Warwickshire, but residents of the county's largest urban centre do not have the same quality of life as their neighbours. Five neighbourhoods in the Borough are within the 10% most deprived nationally and residents of Nuneaton & Bedworth generally have less disposable income compared to the rest of the county.

Funded by an Arts Council England Place Partnership award, the Creative Explorers programme forms part of NBBC's long-term strategy for sustainable regeneration in the Borough.

### Aspire in Arts (Nuneaton)

Aspire in Arts aim to inspire and empower young people to reach their full potential. Their mission is to provide a safe, social, and creative environment that supports their transition into adulthood. They offer a variety of programs and resources designed to help young people discover their passions, develop their skills, and build self-confidence. Through art, music, and other forms of creative expression, they aim to foster a sense of community and belonging among young people.

### Khair in the Community (Nuneaton)

Khair in the Community was setup in 2012 to continue serving the needs of the elders within the Muslim community through day care provision. They suffer from a number of different health conditions, some have mobility issues, some require 1-1 support and some are suffering from early stages of dementia. They offer a safe space in the heart of the community where they can meet their friends, eat fresh home cooked style food, share life experiences, and hope to breakdown any isolation they face in the day to day.

### Race Leys Junior School (Bedworth)

Race Leys is a vibrant and exciting school, where students are given wonderful opportunities to learn, develop and shine. Race Leys is built on the three Pillars of the Griffin Schools Trust which are: Proud Traditions, Wide Horizons and High Achievement.

### Heavy Beat Brass Band

Billed as the UK's most authentic New Orleans-style brass band, Heavy Beat Brass Band are passionate about bringing the vibrant, soulful sounds of Mardi Gras music to life, just as it was meant to be played. Comprising eight young, professional musicians, our band has been personally mentored by Keith Frazier of New Orleans' own Rebirth Brass Band. [www.heavybeatbrass.com](http://www.heavybeatbrass.com)