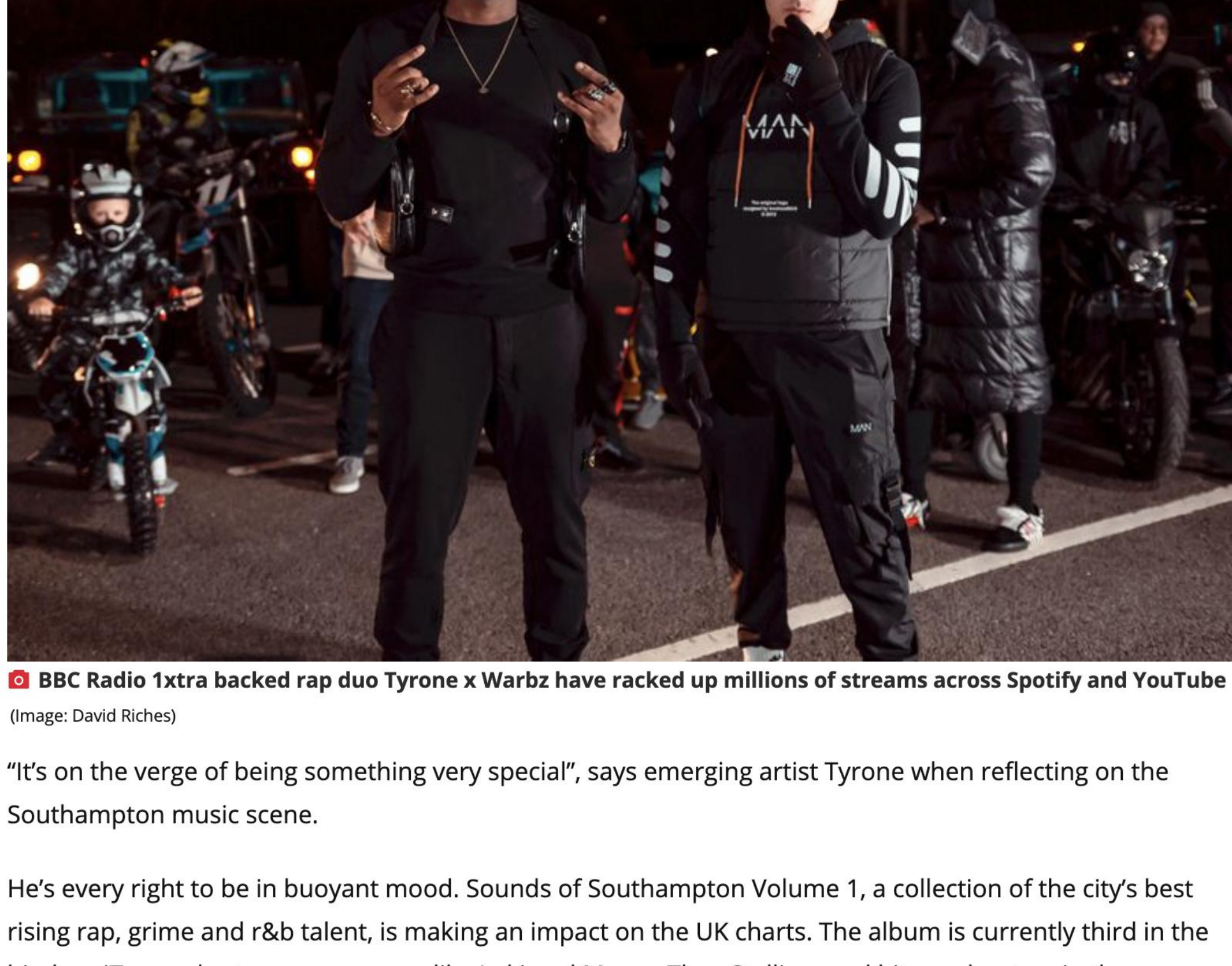


Sounds of Southampton: Meet the collective taking on the charts and putting city's talent on the map

Sounds of Southampton Volume 1 showcases the best emerging grime, rap and r&b talent the city has to offer. Daily Star Online's Rory McKeown caught up with Tyrone, of rap duo Tyrone x Warbz, to talk about its release and how he hopes the collection will put the city on the map

SHARE COMMENTS By **Rory McKeown** Assistant Editor 13:17, 24 NOV 2020 **MUSIC**



BBC Radio 1Xtra backed rap duo Tyrone x Warbz have racked up millions of streams across Spotify and YouTube (Image: David Riches)

"It's on the verge of being something very special", says emerging artist Tyrone when reflecting on the Southampton music scene.

He's every right to be in buoyant mood. Sounds of Southampton Volume 1, a collection of the city's best rising rap, grime and r&b talent, is making an impact on the UK charts. The album is currently third in the hip-hop iTunes charts among names like Loki and Megan Thee Stallion, and hit number two in the pre-order list just behind rock behemoths AC/DC.

The Jojo F recorded compilation is fronted by BBC 1Xtra backed duo Tyrone x Warbz, who've enjoyed millions of streams on tracks like SO, How About Now and Can't Relate, and features Cam Keddy, Charmz14, Melina Greene, and AK, among its line-up.

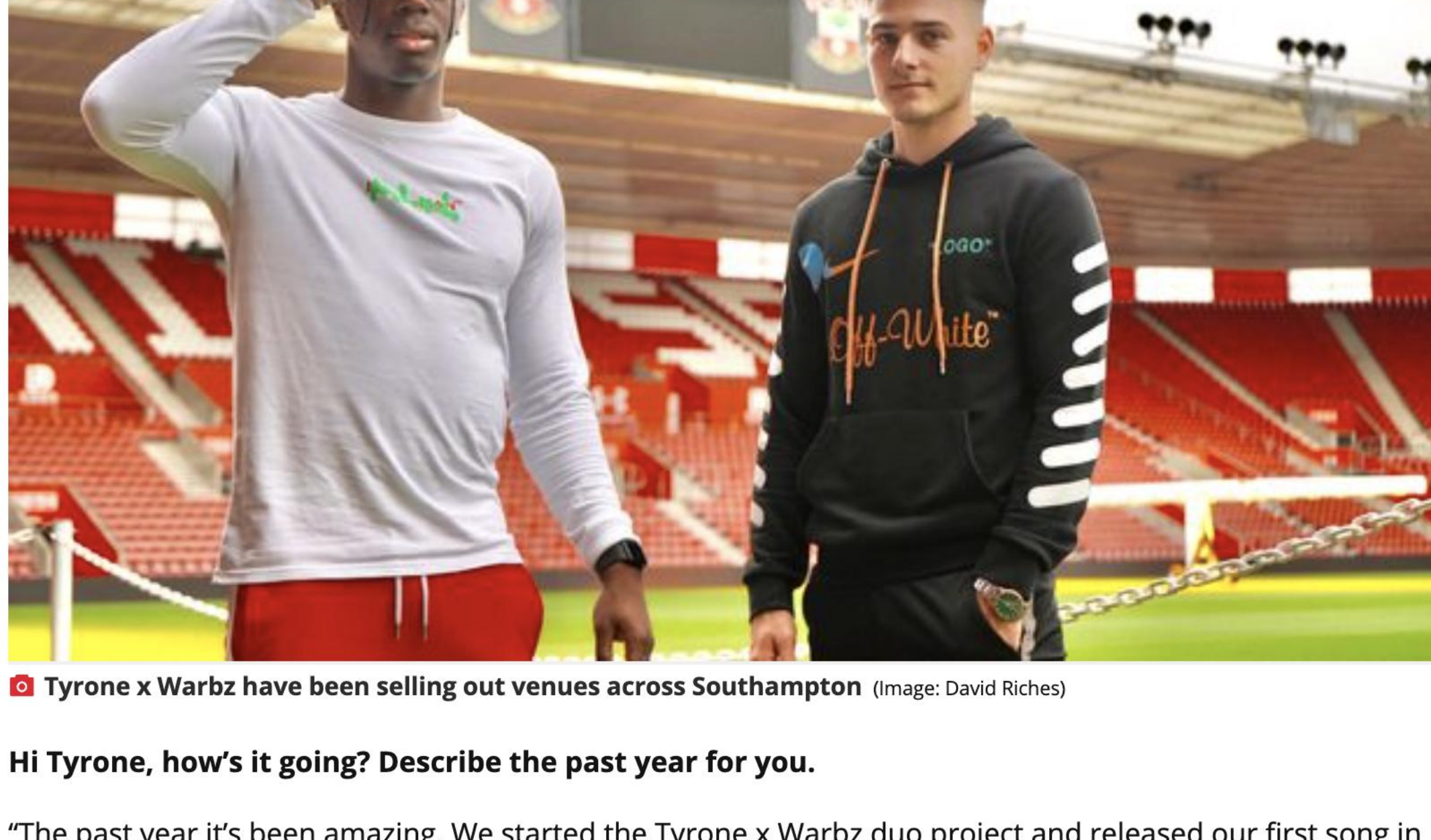
Sounds of Southampton Volume 1 was made possible thanks to the charity SoCo Music Project and SO Movement, which offers a platform to help nurture and develop young artists and musicians.

Supported by funding from Arts Council England and PRS Foundation, it's enabled the programme to provide mentorship and coaching in the hope of leading a new generation to stardom.

If he's not impressing as part of a rap duo, Tyrone is also part of dance powerhouses and Warner Music signees Foor, who enjoyed success earlier this year with their track Fresh being picked for a Coors Light national TV advert.

"I think it could be a very historic thing", Tyrone adds. "It seems crazy saying it but it could be a thing where we look back in 10 years time and there's a Sounds of Southampton Volume 10 and it's showed the development of it."

Daily Star Online's Rory McKeown sat down with Tyrone to talk about Sounds of Southampton Volume 1, developing talent, his hopes for the city's scene, and why he wants Southampton on the UK's rap map.



Tyrone x Warbz have been selling out venues across Southampton (Image: David Riches)

Hi Tyrone, how's it going? Describe the past year for you.

"The past year it's been amazing. We started the Tyrone x Warbz duo project and released our first song in February. It picked up really well. It then stemmed on to us releasing an album and headline show at The Joiners, which we sold out in 12 hours.

"That stemmed to us putting on our own shows at The Brook. Not just only for us to perform, it was for other up and coming artists to give them a platform and audience to be in front of.

"I'm part of a group called Foor. Good things happened for us at the start of this year. We had our song Fresh, from the Friends of Foor album, used as the music on the Coors Light advert. It went on to Fresh being signed as a single to Warner Music Group.

"There have been so many little different things which have been great. With Tyrone x Warbz, we did a music video and asked people to be outside the Guildhall with four hours notice. There were 200-250 people outside there. We couldn't believe it.

"What stemmed from these live shows was to release and develop different artists in Southampton and the south.

"We've got Cam Keddy releasing his stuff. Now it's about developing the talent in Southampton, which has come up to this project. We've linked up with SoCo Music Project. They got the funding and we combined ideas. We said let's put this album compilation together with all the up and coming artists in Southampton.

"We called it Sounds of Southampton Volume 1. It's a celebration of the different up and coming musicians in Southampton. This has 24 artists on it, including myself and Warbz. It wasn't a case of someone sending a song and we'd put it on there. It was more of a process. With a lot of the songs, people sent them in as solos. We'd pair people together to make them collaborate and create a new song.

"Most of them were recorded with Jojo F, a platinum selling producer living in Southampton. He's worked with so many of the big names in the industry right now.

"We hope to do it every year but also make a bit of noise nationally. We want it to be like 'oh wow, this is what's going on in Southampton - this is really good'. Hopefully next year it will have taken on a wider spread and do some kind of documentary with it."

Do you think this project can be a landmark moment for the city's music scene and cultural identity?

"Yeah. I think it could be a very historic thing. It seems crazy saying it but it could be a thing where we look back in 10 years time and there's a Sounds of Southampton Volume 10 and it's showed the development of it. Maybe there will be a BBC Three documentary of it. It could be a thing like The Rap Game. I want it to be like auditions and people get to perform their content live.

"I feel like it can be a big cultural, Southampton thing where it's pushed at schools, colleges and the unis. If you're a musician, this is a good direction for you to go. This is the next level up to go."



The popular Sounds of Southampton Volume 1 album showcases the best and emerging talent the city has to offer (Image: David Riches)

The album itself flew up the pre-order charts, hitting number 2 behind AC/DC - what was that like?

"It's huge. We were above Miley Cyrus, Gary Barlow, a Ministry of Sounds album. How the pre-order chart works is in volume. It's the most that's selling in the time that it's updated. For us to be out selling people like that, we're only local artists. We've got supporters that love what we do.

"What I've always seen in Southampton is there's always been people's over there doing their thing, or down there doing their thing. All these little pockets trying to do the same thing. We want to bring it all together because I feel there's strength in numbers. It makes sense bringing it together. If this could officially chart, that would show what happens with just working together."



"The next milestone is putting Southampton on the rap map. That's the main goal", says Tyrone (Image: David Riches)

What's the Southampton music scene like at the moment? What else is going on there?

"In terms of what we've been building with SO Movement, it's on the verge of being something very special. Before it was confused in a sense of what's going on. People have always done music and you can go back to the days of Craig David and the Artful Dodger, but you've got to move on from their moments and have to start looking towards the future of the city.

"It's always had the potential but not the right infrastructure to make it work. I feel like it's getting to that point where it can be something special. People are looking at our city like they do to Birmingham or Nottingham.

"In December there's going to be a Southampton takeover on BBC 1Xtra. They've never done one in Southampton.

"As a city, what we've got to remember is there are hundreds of thousands of different people doing the exact same thing in other cities. Why do they need to come to Southampton when they've got a thousand people doing the same thing in London? We have to move as a unit and a team because nobody is coming into Southampton saying 'come on, here you go'. I'm talking from an urban music point of view, not from a jazz or rock point of view. I'm not in that scene."

It got funding from Arts Council England and PRS Foundation - how important was it to have their backing?

"Everything we'd done before was from our own pocket. I didn't know that up until March that funding existed. I didn't realise that, as an artist, you can get paid to do what you do. Here's us spending thousands on stuff we were already doing.

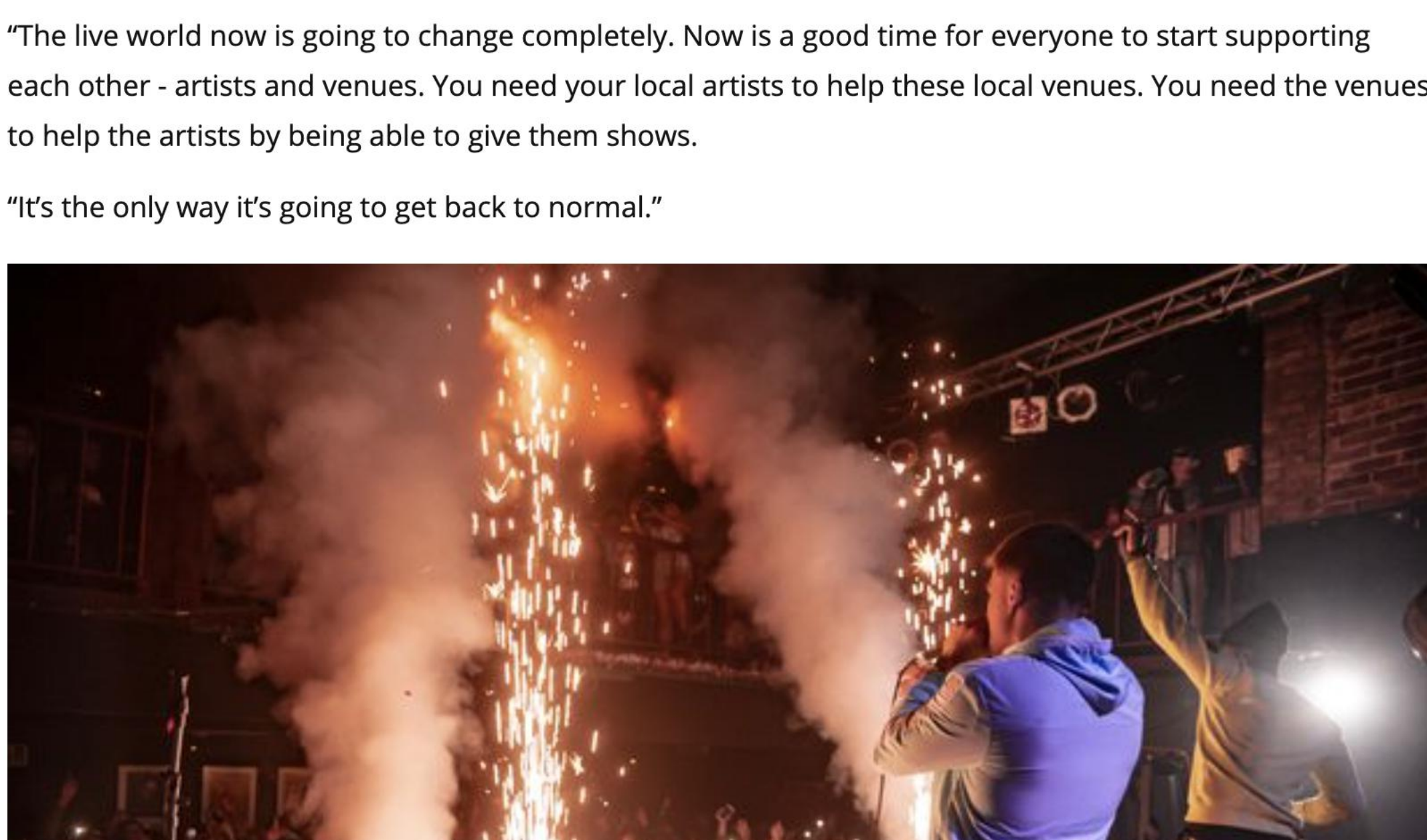
"I didn't realise that people nowhere near the reach we have are getting thousands of pounds to release their music, which is good on them.

"It is very important, especially in times like now. As artists we have to keep this credibility up. We're involved in the City of Culture bid. We're seen as ambassadors and role models. We've got to be able to survive. It is very important because people like myself couldn't exist for much longer. There isn't a lot of money in music sales as an independent artist unless you're streaming millions and millions. If you're already doing that, it doesn't really matter."

Do you think venues are going to need a lot more support coming out of lockdown? Have you thought about what needs to be done to ensure emerging talent has a platform at venues looking ahead?

"The live world now is going to change completely. Now is a good time for everyone to start supporting each other - artists and venues. You need your local artists to help these local venues. You need the venues to help the artists by being able to give them shows.

"It's the only way it's going to get back to normal."



On Tyrone x Warbz, Tyrone said: "We wanted to make songs that show we're from the south, not London or the north" (Image: David Riches)

You're part of the rap duo Tyrone x Warbz. How did that partnership form and what have you experienced so far?

"We had a track before we decided to be a duo. We have a track called Get Gassed, which is part of the Friends of Foor album and streamed something like 2 million. It's a bass, garagey track. Our first rap track was in February 2019.

"It led on to How About Now. This was the one that changed it for us and gave us a vision on where to go forward. The whole song is about growing up in the south. We wanted to make songs that show we're from the south, not London or the north.

"Part of the lyrics say 'still at it from the SO', referring to the postcode. That lyric wasn't even going to be on there. People would come up to us saying they were from the SO. It then rolled into us keeping it going. It led to the album Welcome to SO and the headline shows."

What's next for you and the project?

"The next milestone is putting Southampton on the rap map. That's the main goal. To be seen as a Birmingham or a Manchester. That's the next step.

"It will be then branching out of the city and being known in the other areas. We want to take it in steps. We want to build from the in to out."

Sounds of Southampton Volume 1 is out now