



## Home-grown hero

Izzy Abidi and the team behind Freshly Ground Sounds are on a mission to bring home-grown musical talent straight to you

### What is Freshly Ground Sounds?

Freshly Ground Sounds is a non-commercial initiative that provides a platform for independent musicians and more importantly, a community for lovers of independent music. Since Freshly began in November 2013, a natural side effect is that it also brings together community-based venues and independent brands in the UAE.

### What prompted you to start it?

One of the many things I missed about living in London was the local music scene and the community associated with it. I missed pop-up gigs from neighbourhood bands in local coffee

houses. Some of the music was excellent. Most of them had day jobs or had a hugely successful DIY release of their music online and didn't want to go beyond playing intimate gigs around select venues in the area. As an amateur musician myself, I also enjoyed taking along my guitar, jamming with other musicians in the area and being part of a community of like-minded individuals.

### Where does your love of music come from?

I can't put my finger on one aspect. I suppose I really like the powerful effects of music. Music can trigger an emotion or memory, it can be really personal

or simply something you tap your feet along to. Music can create an instant connection with other people, regardless of language, race or culture. It builds bridges, it breaks down barriers, it breeds creativity.

### How often do you arrange concerts?

The team behind Freshly all have full-time jobs. We try to run, on average, two Freshly-hosted gigs a month and in between that, if we have time, we take requests for mini pop-up Freshly features at events hosted by local brands.

### Can the community get involved?

Visit [freshlygroundsounds.com](http://freshlygroundsounds.com) and get in touch. It's not just about musicians. Freshly has helped local independent venues, start-up local brands, photographers, graphic designers, videographers and illustrators.

### Which bands are involved?

We have over 120 artists on our books at the moment, many of which are bands. A quick browse of our Soundcloud page illustrates the variety and we keep getting more signing up. We have no audition process, so when an artist plays with Freshly for the first time, it's usually the first time I'm hearing them and occasionally, the first time the musicians have performed in public. It's a great feeling being blown away by new talent.

### What's next?

Opportunities have been coming to us and the growth of Freshly has been organic. We've had some inquiries from outside the UAE about promoting original talent this country has to offer. We're also going to be featured in Season 2 of the Peeta Planet travel TV series and have been recognised by a film festival for the work we have done for Dubai. We've just launched the website and we will continue to develop that as a portal for the local creative community. It's such a satisfying feeling to be able to give back to the place I grew up in, and being able to provide a platform that showcases the UAE's diverse music scene and encourages the local creative scene. My rule is that as long as it's fun to run, I'll keep going.

[freshlygroundsounds.com](http://freshlygroundsounds.com)