

## CHASE

## FEATURE

**N**OOR Salih, a 29-year-old British-born Yemeni lass, is a true embodiment of excellence, creativity, and inclusivity.

Her passion for all things grassroots and her vibrant personality make her an instantly recognisable figure in her hometown of Rotherham.

With her vibrant wardrobe and her powerful voice on women's rights and inclusion, Noor has captured the hearts of many in the community.

Whether she is at a gig, striking up conversations with those around her or participating in community groups, Noor is always working to bring people together and her love for her town and its people is what keeps her motivated and inspired, as she learns from their stories, struggles, and successes.

Noor's drama degree lit a fire in her, sparking a deep love for event management and production.

She was dedicated to giving back to her community, but felt something was missing. Fate stepped in when she stumbled upon a job posting for the WOW – Women of the World Festival – producer in Rotherham. This was her chance to merge her passions for activism, events, and community work. Without hesitation, she applied and was overjoyed to land the gig. Despite her initial nerves, Noor quickly realised this was her true calling.

The WOW Festival is a celebration of the achievements, strength, and resilience of women, girls, and non-binary individuals worldwide. The WOW Foundation works with partners worldwide to create local WOW Festivals.

The festival travels the world, showcasing inspiring speakers, musicians, comedians, and activists who come together to create meaningful experiences. Through its thought-provoking discussions, amazing performances, and interactive workshops, the festivals amplify the voices of women and offer a platform for attendees to connect, find support, and celebrate female power.

In 2022, the WOW Festival made its



# A shining example for all to follow

LEIGH DE VRIES of Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR) meets Noor Salih and finds out why she is passionate about the WOW Festival

way to Rotherham, hosted by the local council and FLUX Rotherham in support of gender equality. Noor was given the opportunity to show off her producing skills and was excited to be a part of something bigger. She embraced the chance to



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her interactions with the people of Rotherham are what shape her projects and keep her inspired.

Noor's work is heavily influenced by her heritage. She encountered many challenges throughout her twenties that attempted to stop her from pursuing her passion for creativity and getting involved in her community. But Noor came to understand one day that she needed to open doors for others who shared her sentiments and tear down obstacles that stood in the way of her achieving her goals. Thanks to her perseverance, Noor has been able to positively influence the lives of numerous people.

Noor's mother had a significant influence on her beliefs and values. She instilled in her the value of inclusion and speaking up when something isn't right. Her work as a producer and community leader has benefited greatly from this lesson. Noor has the ability to blend in and be accepted in most places she visits, which she uses to her strengths when working in different community settings. She understands the importance of the environment, context, and approach, and she wants everyone to feel their voice is important.

Producing the WOW Rotherham Festival presented Noor with a number of challenges, especially as a freelancer who was unfamiliar with the financial, logistical and administrative aspects of the job. Thankfully, with the aid of her team, Noor was able to tackle these issues head-on. Once the festival was over, she was proactive in avoiding post-event demotivation by scheduling a debriefing session with her colleagues. This gave her a chance to reflect on what had been achieved and to look forward to the next project.

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inspire others and bring the festival to life.

Balancing her community work with her role as a festival producer can be challenging, but Noor has found a way to make it work. She recently quit her day job to focus on creative work as a freelancer, which has allowed her to focus on her creative projects. She stays organised with a spreadsheet for everything, even her household tasks. Her work as a community producer feeds into her role as a festival producer, and





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admired drag and wants people from all walks of life to come together to experience its talent.

To stay inspired and motivated in her work, Noor steps outside, speaks to people, and listens to their opinions. She feels that there is a lot of excitement in Rotherham, and people are eager to change the agenda, remove stigma, and show that

Rotherham 2023 will be very different from the previous editions.

The programming of the festival is crucial as it creates conversations that people wouldn't have thought of having otherwise. Noor considers WOW to be a vitamin supplement that will one day become a multivitamin. The buzz after the festival hasn't stopped, and Noor is already working on exciting projects outside of the WOW Festival.

Noor is exploring the possibility of starting a drag night in Rotherham, which will be a fully accessible venue with local drag queens and kings. She has always

their town is an important place to put on the map.

Noor wishes that her 16-year-old self could see what is coming up in Rotherham and would have been involved instead of dreaming of moving to London to "be creative".

Noor Salih is a truly remarkable woman who is making a real impact in Rotherham and beyond. Her passion for community engagement and her commitment to inclusivity make her a shining example for all to follow.

