

Meet Road Hounds, the metaverse rock club empowering new talent

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Chris Ingham, cofounder of Road Hounds about creating a metaverse project during lockdown, Rock'n'Roll 3.0 and growing the concept from a single club room to a zone to an entire city scape.

What was the catalyst for launching Road Hounds?

The catalyst was – like many a metaverse project of the moment – COVID lockdown and being bored by current offerings. Where was the space that I could hang out where I felt that I belonged? A question that I'm sure most of us felt at one time during those long periods. And more than that, given this upswell of decentralised momentum in the world could this place become a space where all those people who were active and passionate about their music and bands be able to make a difference to those carers in meaningful way.

From that initial point of recognition came a fortuitous chain of events with my business partner Frank McGowan approaching with an idea that was more NFT focussed. Between the two pillars we were able to really hit an early stride with forming Road

Hounds.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Road Hounds is, at its heart, a social platform. It is an avatar led space where you can select a rocked up version of yourself or simply be exactly as you are and meet like minded people. But it's all set in an environment that plays to your rock passions – there's a metal zone, a classic rock zone, a deep dungeon area, blues bar, the list goes on.

Above that it's a blend of music and gaming and above that still is the real possibility that you could help discover some new rock music talent and direct the investment into them. We do that in the Jam Room where there is a live stage where we can do volumetric capture of bands and have them perform and we have an array of listening booths where bands can upload their music.

In turn users can upvote on popularity in general but if you are an RH NFT holder you will sit on the A&R panel and can direct investment into specific bands as long as there is enough consensus. That helps break this cycle of debt that a lot of emerging talent finds itself trapped within. For example we have already funded a band called the Small Fortunes to record their debut album and another, Dead Man's Whiskey, were let down by a larger act promising to take them on tour when they'd already invested in time off work, merchandise etc. With our investment they were able to book a new, solo tour and debut their new material to fans and we ended up with some fantastic footage and a proof of concept.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

We haven't launched yet! June 15 will be the big day! But as to how it's changed, well, how long have you got? Originally it was one club room, which quickly became a zone which became a city scape. Add in the NFT element for early adopters and then the plan for long term subscribers who know little of Blockchain, NFT and what they do know of the Metaverse basically comes from Ready Player One and you have a tidal wave of creativity and energy swirling around. I'm not saying for one minute that this doesn't come with challenges when you are attempting to satisfy web 3.0 natives and new onboarders simultaneously every day but they are united by their passion for music and making a difference to the scene that they're in.

Tell us about the working culture at Road Hounds

Work hard, play hard. We essentially work across three time zones at any one time with the main bulk of the team in the UK. We take time to share ideas and we never want to waste a bullet. I fervently believe that there is no wasted energy when it comes to the creative path - it may be an idea that becomes something else, but it's always valid, it just needs to be often developed with others to make it practical.

How are you funded?

We are lucky in that our main investor is someone with a real passion for music and comes from a high level investment background.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Gaining any momentum as a brand before we have the product out there is always a toughie. Add to that is a natural scepticism from established artists that we can do what we have said we are going to do. They, just like other people, want to see some proof that the technology works. The ones that have seen it are blown away. And it's just the first step. I'm sure as time goes on volumetric capture of artists will increase and improve dramatically, especially with synch software and for drummers in particular! But at no point do I believe that this type of performance will ever replace the excitement and tribalism of the real thing. That's certainly not our aim whatsoever. We are aiming to create another avenue for performance only and make it accessible, dependable and fun.

How does Road Hounds answer an unmet need?

We are giving a tribal community a place to belong where they can be comfortable together and make a difference to the future of the music that they love. Simultaneously we believe we are creating a great shop window for emerging artists the world over to access and market themselves to motivated early adopters. It should become a very lively space.

What's in store for the future?

More expansion in the world, more connectivity, in world events, secret discovery areas – that's the thing about the metaverse – if you can imagine it then you can build it. There will be more roadshows – expect to see us at various festivals starting with Welcome to Rockville in Daytona, Florida where we will have built a great clubhouse to hang out in with a full volumetric studio rigged out for you to go and capture your digital self in all its rugged glory!

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Talk sense. Be reasonable. In your mind you can think revolution but communicating with the real world and real money to fund you then you need to be practical and have a real business plan.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

The daily routine needs more balance that's for sure! Big things are making sure I spend time listening to others and their ideas and improving how I communicate back to them as it saves energy, time and money!

I try to split my quality time between work and family at present. I've learnt that you can easily disappear down a rabbit hole of selfishness if you don't strive for balance in that regard. But I definitely need a better exercise regime! Maybe that's the new rule I should be looking to introduce!

Chris Ingham is the cofounder of *Road Hounds*.

