

# CALM'S LOVE TRIANGLE

**ESCO WILLIAMS, STEPHEN LANGSTAFF  
and ANTON POWERS come together  
for a unique musical collaboration**

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Valentine's Day can be a drag. However, as couples struggle under the pressure to find the perfect gift, and singles fight off the relentless barrage of amour, this year will see a welcome musical respite for all.

This 14th February will mark a unique event – the release of a new piece of music from an exciting project called the CALM Love Triangle, involving three of Liverpool's strongest talents from the far corners of the musical spectrum. Those three home-bred talents are DJ Anton Powers, singer-songwriter Stephen Langstaff and self-confessed 'soul powered nerd' Esco Williams – a trio that Stephen describes as "like the weirdest boy band ever!"

The project comes under the umbrella of CALM - or Campaign Against Living Miserably - the charity that exists to prevent male suicide in the UK. For those who aren't familiar, a quick visit to [theCALMzone.net](http://theCALMzone.net) website provides a staggering insight into how far-reaching the issue of male suicide is. The jaw-dropping statistics speak for themselves: about 75% of all suicides are male. It is the largest cause of deaths for males aged 15-35 in England and Wales. We lose more young men to suicide than to road accidents, murder and AIDS combined.

The Love Triangle idea is this: get these three musicians into the studio to write a piece of music on the spot, to be released on the CALMzone website on Valentine's Day. And not just any studio: the track will be recorded at the Motor Museum Studio in Liverpool (where the likes of Jake Bugg and Two Door Cinema Club have been committed to tape), with in-house producer Al Groves at the helm. And as if there weren't enough people of Liverpool pedigree involved, established filmmaker Lee Isserow will be documenting the whole process for a making-of style video.

As the Merseyside coordinator of CALM, Simon Howes points out that the charity has a long history of linking into the music scene, a logical way of connecting with a demographic that is at risk of suicide. He mentions the fact that in our culture musicians are allowed to open up about their emotions in a way that often isn't as socially acceptable for ordinary blokes – hence the

popular concepts of the 'tortured soul' or the 'twisted genius'. A major part of the charity's aim is to challenge the stereotypes that prevent ordinary men talking about the issues they face. According to Simon, as individual ambassadors for the charity, the three musicians involved "capture the essence of music in Merseyside" and appeal to men from all different scenes, highlighting that there is no 'one size fits all' model for what men should be.

*Bido Lito!* caught up with soulful folk singer Stephen Langstaff, one of the city's brightest young voices, in a café on Bold Street ahead of the recording date to chat about the project.

Stephen admits that he wasn't aware of the statistics around male suicide until meeting members of the organisation, whom he describes as being "very passionate" and "on a mission". From there it was an easy decision to get involved as an ambassador.

"It's crazy because there must be people who have committed suicide who literally would only needed to have spoken to some mates about it. Whatever's on their mind, get it off their chest. And it helps. It's such a simple thing. CALM is offering a hand to people who either feel that they can't initially talk to a friend – or maybe even don't have someone."

While the three artists who make up the Love Triangle have met briefly, Stephen admits he has no idea what the musical output might sound like. "It's like a food experiment: let's see if chorizo works with peanut butter!" he laughs. "I'm excited about it. Esco's got a great energy about him, and I like that. He's got a soulful voice which I can relate to, but he's also got the hip hop thing going and it will be interesting to see if he pushes that. It will be good to get out of my comfort zone!"

For artists, music can be the obvious outlet for the kind of emotion that many others might struggle to express. Stephen agrees: "Absolutely, it gets everything off your chest. Sometimes you write something that just has to be written, because if you don't write it you'll go nuts. You just have to let it out." However, he says he's careful not to get bogged down in the negativity.

"I try not to be too confessional. If you come to a gig I don't want to be just 'woe is me' onstage. You have to bare your soul and I believe in that big time. But I want to have some fun as well."

As Simon Howe of CALM explains, now can be a confusing time to be a male: "bombarded with conflicting messages telling you simultaneously to man up, be more in touch with your feminine side, to be a better partner, to moisturise regularly." He says there are urban myths that perpetuate certain stereotypes – such as the idea that when a relationship ends blokes will just go to the pub and say 'oh well, plenty more fish in the sea'. Part of the idea of having a project focusing on Valentine's Day is about highlighting the reality that relationships hit men hard too, and talking about the rarely focused-on frustration and loneliness that can accompany the day. The project is all about turning potential problems into something positive.

As Stephen says: "Everyone gets low. The truth is things are so much bigger in your head than what they are outside. So when you tell someone you're actually able to reduce the size of it, just through talking to someone. So that's the first step. To just draw a line and say 'I'm moving on now'. You can work through any problem; I do believe that, definitely."

For the listener and fan, music can often function as a kind of catharsis and source of inspiration, as well as a constant companion. Stephen says: "That's one of the functions I think of a real artist, to say things that other people can't, which enables them to go on the same journey with you. Obviously if you're able to write music, or poetry or whatever, and you've been given that gift, there should be a reason for it. And I think it is to write things that say something that other people can relate to, that will release something in them."

To keep up-to-date with the CALM Love Triangle project, to see the making-of video, and to stream the finished track on 14th February visit [thecalmzone.net](http://thecalmzone.net)

Gig Guide and Ticket Shop live at [www.bidolito.co.uk](http://www.bidolito.co.uk)