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**B-SIDE'S BIG WEEKEND: BOLD,  
UNEXPECTED ART AND A SPECTACULAR  
FRINGE COME TO PORTLAND THIS  
SEPTEMBER**

*- b-side's Big Weekender finishes summer with a bang! -*



Photo Credit: Section 28 and Me by Tom Marshman

Every year, the rugged, intriguing island of Portland in Dorset becomes the stage for [b-side's Big Weekend](#) - a series of events that transform the Island with surprising and thought-provoking contemporary art.

From 11th to 14th September 2025, audiences are invited to explore installations, performances, films, and interventions created especially for Portland's distinctive landscape and communities. The Big Weekend invites everyone to see this place differently, uncovering hidden corners and unheard voices through art that connects people, place, and ideas.

Past editions have seen works hidden in quarries, projected onto cliffs, or popping up in unexpected places, with international artists and local collaborators weaving stories into the stone and landscape of the Island. This year, b-side's Big Weekend honours the spirit of Portland and Weymouth as Towns of Culture 2025, revealing untold stories from our island.

With inspirational artists and communities as your guide, discover memories from the armed forces, moments of joy and resilience in LGBTQ+ lives, and heartfelt testimonies from those seeking asylum.

Whether you're joining a mass stitching workshop to complete the Portland Dress, or dancing in a boxing ring, come celebrate the extraordinary people, captivating stories, and creative spirit that make Portland truly unique.





Photo Credit:

### **This year's highlights include:**

- **Pub Grub by Luke Wright:** fun and filthy poems from someone who knows what they're doing. If there were any justice he'd be Poet Laureate - or King. After selling out shows across the country with *JOY!*, Luke Wright is back with a sticky-floored celebration of the ordinary, conjuring up Tuesday lunchtimes and small-town boozers in poems that burst with inventive language. Forget your "best life" - come and live your worst. Wright's audacious rhymes, sonic trickery, and big-hearted storytelling will leave you light-headed, with loads of laughs, a few more coins in the swear jar, and a sore head in the morning. Doors open 7pm, age advisory 14+ (includes swearing).
- **Excess Baggage:** a video and sound installation exploring the overlooked stories of military families, centring on Portland's naval past. Drawing on the artist's own childhood in Wyke Regis during the 1970s and stories from local people, *Excess Baggage* captures the textures and contradictions of life in this often-invisible subculture. Presented in the dark chambers of High Angle Battery, the immersive installation invites audiences to re-think what service, family, and memory mean when the personal and national are tightly entwined.
- **MAS(S):** a powerful new sound art project by Tristan Shorr and Rae Champion (CONCRETE) with Lomond Campbell, exploring migration, refugees, war, and loss through the human voice. Generative sound sculptures turn the audio testimonies of refugees into a multi-channel immersive experience, culminating in a voice siren that calls out along the British coastline - inviting audiences to walk together with the siren, mapping our borders in sound.
- **Parade 2025:** now in its fifth year and getting weirder every year - just the way we like it! Everyone is invited to this free, celebratory parade through the streets of Portland, led by artists, b-side volunteers, and you. Bring your friends, family, sports team, knitting club, or just yourself, there's a warm welcome for all. Dress up in your weirdest, meet at Easton Gardens at 6pm, and parade like you mean it to the upbeat live soundtrack of *Tongues of Fire*, playing New Orleans grooves, ska, funk, and more. The route runs from Easton Square to Portland Museum and back, with a road closure providing space for everyone to dance and celebrate. The route is fully accessible, and anyone who identifies as disabled is especially encouraged to take part, access support is available by contacting [catherine@b-side.org.uk](mailto:catherine@b-side.org.uk). If you can't parade, come and wave and cheer the Paraders on!
- **The Portland Dress:** come and see *The Portland Dress* make its public debut. Inspired by *The Red Dress*'s visit to Portland in 2024, a sister dress has been slowly and gently collecting the stories of Portland - thread by thread. In the spirit of *The Red Dress* and the 1978 Portland embroideries, this textile narrative of community voices is an archive of this time and this place. Over 300 local people and those with connections to Portland have

contributed through free public workshops, home visits, and meetings in community groups, coffee shops, and a pub - with the call to join in travelling far and wide.

- **[Almost Synchro:](#)** a lively and inclusive open-water synchronised swimming performance and workshop by a Bristol-based team. Taking place at high tide in Portland Harbour, the team will perform two choreographed routines and invite members of the local sea-swimming community to join an on-land workshop and take their own short routine into the sea. With colourful swim caps, laughter, camaraderie, and the joy of synchro swimming, the event welcomes experienced open-water swimmers to learn, take part, and even form their own teams in the future.
- **[Section 28 and Me:](#)** theatre-maker Tom Marshman invites audiences into his creative process as he unpacks the legacy of Section 28 - the law that silenced LGBTQ+ voices in schools from 1988 to 2003. Part performance, part presentation, this special edition reflects on stories gathered from queer communities across the UK, including a powerful gathering in Portland hosted by b-side's LGBTQ+side group. Through humour, memory, and deeply personal reflections, even from his dad, Tom examines how Section 28 shaped him and others. The result is a moving and mischievous celebration of queer resilience, challenging the shame and silence of that era with honesty, warmth, and pride.

This year's Big Weekend also forms a key part of the [Portland & Weymouth Towns of Culture 2025](#), an ambitious programme celebrating the creativity, heritage, and communities of both towns. The Big Weekend embodies the spirit of the Towns of Culture initiative, showcasing local talent alongside international artists and bringing residents and visitors together to experience the area's rich cultural life in unexpected and inspiring ways.

Alongside the main programme, this year also sees the return of the [FRINGE](#) - a parallel series of independently-organised events showcasing even more of Portland's vibrant creative community. The Fringe includes exhibitions, performances and pop-up happenings that complement the main programme and invite further exploration.



Photo Credit: Jump James

Workshops and opportunities for participation remain central to the Big Weekend, ensuring events are accessible and co-created. All events are free or low-cost, welcoming everyone to join in and experience art in ways and places they might not expect.

**Rocca Holly-Nambi, Director of b-side, said:** *"The Big Weekend is about bringing people together to see Portland afresh - to listen, to look, and to take part. This year's programme invites visitors and locals to discover new spaces, meet artists, and experience the stories that make Portland so distinctive. The addition of the Fringe and the spectacular Parade show just how much creative energy there is here."*

**An Arts Council England spokesperson said:** *"We're thrilled to see b-side - one of our National Portfolio organisations – continue to celebrate and showcase creativity on the Isle. The Big Weekend is one of many exciting activations across Weymouth and Portland this year and emphasises the power of place-inspired programming. Thanks to public investment, we can support projects like this up and down the country, ensuring everyone everywhere can access high-quality cultural experiences where they live."*

For visitors, b-side's Big Weekend is an opportunity to explore Portland's wild beauty, local folklore and history, and the very essence of the land and stone that has crafted some of the world's most iconic buildings - all through the lens of contemporary art.

The full programme, including Fringe events, can be found here: [www.b-side.org.uk](http://www.b-side.org.uk)

## **ENDS**

Issued by **In The Bag PR** on behalf of **b-side**

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**Dates:** 11th to 14th September 2025

**Location:** Portland, Dorset

b-side is an arts organisation producing projects and events on Portland that respond to the Island's history, environment and community

### **About b-side**

b-side is an internationally recognised and locally loved arts organisation that both embodies and enriches its place of origin - the Isle of Portland in Dorset.

This island is the beating heart that inspires b-side's work, but our projects and opportunities extend all over Dorset and beyond.

We work with and commission artists who are as excited by the bigger picture as the smallest detail. We invite artists, residents, and researchers to create unique and inventive projects inspired by the themes of 'people' and 'place'. We host big discussions on topics that affect us both locally and globally and create art that exists in unusual and unexpected places.

### **About Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our vision, set out in our strategy Let's Create, is that by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467 million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live. Until Autumn 2025, the National Lottery is celebrating its 30th anniversary of supporting good causes in the United Kingdom: since



the first draw was held in 1994, it has raised £49 billion and awarded more than 690,000 individual grants. Visit our website to learn more about our work.