

FOOT IN THE DOOR

AMBASSADORS



Thomas Vernal
32 from Lozells

Thomas is an actor, currently starring in the Bob Marley musical 'One Love' at the Birmingham Rep. Once a part time professional footballer and part of a popular R&B duo that opened gigs for the likes of Amy Winehouse, he lost his way and eventually took to acting for some professional training and qualifications – putting himself through three years of drama school as a mature student with two young children to support. Thomas says: "It was tough and an amazing course like this would have saved me so much time and effort and opened lots of doors, so if it sounds like you, jump at the chance and grab it with both hands."



Jordan Walker
20 from Newtown

Jordan is a junior web developer at Birmingham advertising agency Bareface. His journey began when at 18 (after a successful two week work placement at Bareface) he landed a full blown apprenticeship there as part of the BBC Academy's 'Make It Digital' initiative and quickly progressed to permanent employment. Jordan says: "I'm really glad I grasped my opportunity, because I worked out going to university for three to four years would put me £50,000 in debt. Plus, this way I'm getting lots of proper experience on the job with an agency that's really going places and I reckon employers value that even more than a degree."



Jodie Mason
23 from Bournville

Jodie joined Creative Alliance via the same initiative as Jordan and hasn't looked back. Having volunteered and worked in the mental health sector and suffering with physical and mental health difficulties herself, she is particularly keen on supporting talented young people with disabilities and those with mental health issues applying. Jodie says: "There's a lot of untapped creative potential out there and disadvantaged young people who think this sector isn't a viable option, but my own experience and journey proves that's just not the case - so why not give it a go, put yourself forward and you might just surprise yourself?"



Tom King
27 from Erdington

Tom is an established model for the likes of Adidas, ASOS and Harvey Nicholls, but he started out on the factory floor at Dunlop Aircraft and only got into modelling because his family and friends pushed him and saw something in Tom that he didn't see himself. Tom says: "The penny finally dropped that I could do this when I saw my face on a billboard at The Fort Shopping Centre, but it was a real slog before and I didn't get anything for the first six months. I was very low on confidence - and a course like this would have prepared me so much better for what was to come."



Amerah Saleh
24 from Sparkhill

Amerah is Head of Campaigns & Experience at Young Giant, part of The Beatfreaks Collective, but started out as a spoken word artist doing open mic slots wherever she could. An Arts Award was her foot in the door to bigger and better things and she now describes herself as a facilitator and education change-maker, with a particular passion for empowering women in Muslim communities. Amerah says: "Having programmes like this would have given me permission to step into the creative industries. I was lucky and bold enough to make my mark in the scene, but had I had the support beforehand I may have learnt skills I am still learning today."



Namiwa Jazz
23 from Birmingham

Namiwa is a singer, songwriter and applied artist who speaks her truth with a fearless lyrical approach - describing her sound as Afro Twang with an even blend of Nu-soul, African Jazz, Hip-Hop and R&B. In 2016 Namiwa became the founder of Nawima Change Foundation (NCF), which works holistically in the community empowering people and spaces through the art, with a particular focus on raising the voices of BME women and girls. Namiwa says: "Back in the day, this would have helped me out big time, if all you need are the resources, because you have the ideas, then go for it. A program like this is a quicker, less expensive and more proactive step to being the creative person you dream about!"