



# Busker Idol winner

By Hannah Eisenman-Renyard

East Finchley resident, **Andrew Pisanu, 25**, has won Travel Lodge's first ever Busker Idol competition. A passer-by told him about the competition, and handed him a card with the details, on the very last day of the competition, which he entered online. Despite the gimmicky name, Andrew says the audition process was straightforward, with the final six performing for an audience of Travel Lodge employees and the other hopefuls.

### Songwriter

Asinger-songwriter, Andy's first gig came while he was at university, and he's been busking for about two years in London. He describes his style as "poppy-folky and melodic," and cites Bob Dylan, early

David Gray, and "maybe some Joni Mitchell" as influences.

The prize for winning the Busker Idol competition is a year's free accommodation in the Covent Garden Travel Lodge, worth roughly £30,000. The competition was in May,



Andy Pisanu in action. Picture by Hannah Eisenman-Renyard

but Andy still hasn't taken them up on the offer. "I only moved here (to East Finchley) recently, and I don't really like the idea of living in a hotel. It's a bit impersonal." A keen cook, he doesn't like the idea of living without a kitchen, or having to worry about the volume of music. "I like loud rock, at all hours of the day, and you can't really do that in a hotel." Unfortunately, Travel Lodge are not offering a cash alternative.

### Rock band

Andy's still busking. Blackfriars Bridge is his favourite spot because of its great acoustics. It's easier to get a spot in the winter- in the summer there's more competition, but

the public are also more willing to stay and listen. At best, as many as eight or nine people stop to hear more, but at the other end of the spectrum, he once got a parking ticket for £50, having just made £27 busking.

Andy is now licensed to busk on the Carling Underground patches and also fronts a band, Eddyfink, whose sound is "very much rock." Their website ([www.Eddyfink.co.uk](http://www.Eddyfink.co.uk)) is full of rave reviews and comparisons to Radiohead. Eddyfink will be playing the Metro in Oxford Street on 19 November- and look out for Andy on his own if you're around Blackfriars Bridge.

# Artsdepot opens

By Sheila Armstrong

**Alison Duthie, director of Barnet's new arts centre the Artsdepot at Tally Ho Corner, gave a well-attended talk to the Finchley Society on 30 September at Avenue House. She outlined the work of the new centre which is part of the regeneration of North Finchley, on the site of the old Gaumont Cinema. At the Artsdepot there are two theatres, one with seating for 400, the other a studio space for educational and local groups (both with disabled access). Facilities are such that plays from the West End will be able to transfer to the larger theatre, with the first to do so being *Stones in His Pockets*.**

### Local talent

Local groups are already planning to make use of the Artsdepot. The Mill Hill Music Group's winter programme will be held there and the local disabled theatre group Community Focus and the Barnet Folk Club are to be based at the centre. There is a gallery, a dark room and multimedia space. Exhibitions by local visual arts groups, and community workshops and courses are planned. With a café and bar included, it is hoped that Artsdepot will become a meeting place for the local community.

Unsurprisingly, questions were asked about parking. There is no parking at the Artsdepot: the underground parking is only for Marks and Spencer customers or residents of the flats above the centre, but there are public car parks nearby at Lodge Lane, Stanhope Road, Woodhouse Road and Castle Road.

The new Artsdepot programme for October to January is widely available. To see the varied and exciting first programme, including Evelyn Glennie, Paco Pena, Sikhs in the City, Mark Thomas, and Benjamin Zephaniah, log on to the website at [www.artsdepot.co.uk](http://www.artsdepot.co.uk) or get details from the box office on 020 8449 0048.

# Finchley Forum

Report by Daphne Chamberlain

The meeting took place at The Green Man Centre, 20 October.

### Allotment rents

There were protests about the rise in rents for allotments, and a petition has been delivered to Cllr Offord. The rent rise was justified as bringing Barnet into line with other local authorities. Forum Chair Cllr Sussman said that the new rents would not come into effect for East Finchley Allotments until 2006, as their existing lease runs until then.

It was said from the floor that many rents remained uncollected, as no demands had been made. If all rents were collected, would that make it unnecessary to raise the amount? The response was that as budgets were set on the assumption that all rents were being paid, it would make no difference.

### Tally Ho pollution

Barnet Cabinet had adopted Air Quality Control recommendations in 2003, and it was hoped that this would move the pollution level downwards.

### Access to flats on former TA site

Regarding access from the High Road into the flats on the former TA site, Peter Hayle from the Traffic Group drew attention to the cycle lanes, and expressed annoyance that the Group had not been consulted. He was told that the safety aspects of the access road would be reviewed in

November.

### Parking spaces if M&S go?

If Marks & Spencer close their Tally Ho shop, would that free up significantly more car parking spaces beneath the Artsdepot? The questioner was told that Barnet had very little control over that, as it was not the Council's car park. (The questioner then hoped that the Artsdepot would not become a white elephant and be turned into a casino!)

### The Torrington and Iceland

The Forum was told that no planning applications had been received for this site.

### Friern Barnet Day Centre

There was continued disagreement about whether the proposed move into Friary House was entirely voluntary, or whether Age Concern was coming under pressure.

### Reduced Council tax for pensioners?

It was asked why the Council tax could not be adjusted for pensioners. If "inhabitants of £30million palaces" in The Bishop's Avenue paid more, then ordinary pensioners could pay less. Cllr Sussman said this should be referred to Rudi Vis.

The next Forum will be at 6.30pm at Avenue House, N3, on 19 January.

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