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# March to the beat of your own drum at city's Rokzkool

Music helped Rokzkool co-founder, **Rod Shannon**, find his confidence and now he's sharing that passion through creative classes for children and adults

Small Business Focus  
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**Q How would you describe your business to a stranger?**

**A** We are a grassroots charity who focus on helping people to be creative, learn new skills, build their confidence and meet new friends. We run creative classes for kids and adults who want a space to socialise, learn, play and create.

We believe in the power of music, art and creativity to help people's mental health and wellbeing but the magic really happens when people come together and have fun.

**Q What inspired you to start the business?**

**A** Music was a huge part of my life growing up and it helped me to find my confidence and discover lots of friendships along the way.

I wanted to give young people the same opportunities I had to learn instruments and to have fun with music.

**Q How has your business developed?**

**A** When we started we had no idea a pandemic was just around the corner. During lockdown we decided to focus our attention on supporting people by delivering emergency food parcels and running a food bank. This was hugely rewarding and we met so many families we are still in contact with now. For many years, we loaded up all our gear and travelled around schools and halls all over the Highlands.

This year we opened Studio 58 in the Eastgate Centre which has given us a place to call our own and allows us to take Rokzkool to the next level.

By being in a central location, we have been able to start more regular classes for all ages so a wide range of people can come to us and enjoy the space.



Kay Ewen and Rod Shannon, Rokzkool Academy co-founders.

Picture: James Mackenzie

**Q What are your plans to develop your business in the future?**

**A** We have big plans for the next year. We are extending the classes we offer for kids so we now have art, music, building and games clubs. Our Rock Club for Grown-ups has been great fun so we are continuing it and adding some art classes for adults too. We are launching an instrument library so everyone can have the opportunity to learn to play if they want without the financial barriers and we hope to extend this to a lending library for lots of creative hobbies and skills. Our team is also getting ready to start our leadership programme for secondary kids which will empower them to plan and lead their own projects within the charity to benefit others in the community. Our studio is a great creative space so we have been working with many local schools, charities and agencies to open it up to different groups who would benefit from using it.

**Q What lessons have you learnt from your time**

**in business?**

**A** It's a cliché but when you are doing what you love, it doesn't feel like work. When you are motivated by helping people and you see the positive impact you can make in the lives of families, it is so rewarding that it gives us the energy to keep going.

**Q What do you love about working in Inverness city centre?**

**A** The people. We have such a variety of visitors coming into our studio every day, locals and visitors from all around the world. It is lovely when people come in and have a try on the many instruments we have, sketch a picture, have a game of chess or choose a song to play on our jukebox. We love Saturday afternoons when we open the doors for families to come in and play in the studio for free as you see them having such fun together.

**Q Can you tell us something interesting about yourself?**

**A** I can play over 20 different instruments – some just the basics – I hope to learn at least another 20!

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