

FOR RELEASE ON THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER AT 10AM BST

## RUTHVEN RELEASES NEW SINGLE “ITCH”

TAKEN FROM HIS FORTHCOMING DEBUT ALBUM ROUGH & READY  
OUT 25 OCTOBER VIA PAUL INSTITUTE / XL RECORDINGS

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Ruthven by Buster Grey-Jung ([download](#))

Today - Thursday 19 September - Ruthven releases “**Itch**”, the latest single revealed from his hotly-anticipated debut album ***Rough & Ready*** which is out on **25 October 2024** via **Paul Institute / XL Recordings**. Written, performed and produced in collaboration with **A.K. Paul**, “**Itch**” is yet another shining example of the South London-based ex-firefighter's flawless vocals and sleek funk-inspired productions.

Speaking on the new music, **Ruthven** says “*‘Itch’ was one of the first tracks I wrote but the last I knew was going to be part of the album. It all started at the first station at first but evolved over a few years. After the album came together I found that “Itch” fit kinda perfectly as an injection of fun. I had a lot of fun creating it and leaning heavily into Rick James and Cameo-inspired funk - I think that energy comes across in the track*”

BUY / LISTEN TO "ITCH" [HERE](#)  
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**Ruthven** - aka Sean Nelson - has always had a certain fervour associated with him. He first broke in 2017 as a founding member of **Paul Institute**, the label founded by **A.K** and **Jai Paul**, while also working as a member of the London Fire Brigade. In the long hours awaiting call-outs, when the truck was fully serviced and his breathing equipment was ready for the next job, Ruthven wrote the foundations of his debut album, ***Rough & Ready***, which includes the previously released "[I Can't Go There](#)", "[123 Days](#)", "[Don't Keep It To Yourself](#)", and "[The Window](#)". Across 12 tracks, which featured collaborations with A.K. Paul and Francis Anthony 'Eg' White, Ruthven seamlessly blends classic songwriting with lush, modern instrumentation. It stands as a bold confident statement of Ruthven's artistic vision and versatility, marking his arrival as a truly distinctive artist in his own right.

After selling out his debut headline show at **Peckham Audio** on 25 October, Ruthven announces two additional shows in Paris (9 Nov) and Dublin (30 Nov). Tickets for shows go on sale on **Friday 20 September** at **10 am**. For more information or to buy tickets, head to [ruthvenready.com](http://ruthvenready.com).

**25 October** - Peckham Audio, London **[SOLD OUT]**  
**9 November** - La Boule Noir, Paris  
**30 November** - Bello Bar, Dublin



Album Artwork ([download](#))

Ruthven  
***Rough & Ready***  
Paul Institute / XL Recordings  
Friday 25 October

**Tracklist:**

1. Cautious
2. Indulge
3. Don't Keep It To Yourself
4. [Itch](#)
5. Thru The Walls
6. Afterglow
7. 123 Days
8. POV
9. Space = Time = Money
10. [I Can't Go There](#)
11. The Window
12. Drive It

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**ABOUT RUTHVEN:**

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Ruthven aka Sean Nelson has always had a certain fervour associated with him. The South London musician first broke onto the scene in 2017 as one of the first signees to Paul Institute, the label created by enigmatic brothers A.K and Jai Paul. With a distinct mode of expression underpinned by infectious playful hooks, he quickly caught the attention of critics - Pitchfork called him *“an antidote to lazy, laid-back pop music”* adding that *“Hypothalamus”* packs *“as much punch as they do dulcet melody”*, while The Fader said he *“creates Prince-like jams with the contours and sleekness of sports cars.”*

Having gently unravelled his unique blend of classic R&B-influenced soulful maximalism with careful consideration, Ruthven has found himself supporting and touring with Sampha (including a performance on [NPR's Tiny Desk](#) and Later...with Jools Holland). His recent work with Sampha and Little Simz on *“Satellite Business 2.0”* sits neatly alongside his collaboration with electronic music sensations Overmono, who sampled *“Hypothalamus”* on the new single *“Gem Lingo (ovr now)”*.

Now, with his debut album *Rough & Ready*, Ruthven further enters the rarified air of these artists. The album's title is a play on words on how Ruthven is pronounced - *“Rough'n”* - while introducing listeners to his intimate world. Across the 12-track project, he leans into classic songwriting while maintaining lush instrumentation to create a portal that traverses decades. *“It's jazz-influenced, but it also takes from so many genres,”* he says, *“even Yacht Rock artists like Michael McDonald and Steely Dan, deeply influenced me.”* The result is an album that blends all the sharp angles of early Prince b-sides like *“17 Days”* with the smokiness of Voodoo-era D'Angelo's *“Africa”*.

Growing up in Catford, South London, Ruthven was surrounded by music: he can list off with ease the many relatives he has who are musically gifted. His mother's jazz lessons to her students provided the soundtrack to his childhood with these formative experiences setting him on a path to explore his musical talents. Thanks to his family of pianists and multi-instrumentalists, he was influenced from an early age to create, compose, and appreciate the intricacies of music.

His connection to his father's side of the family came later in life. Ruthven's father wasn't a major part of his childhood but they managed to reconnect before his passing in 2020. Ruthven would go on to discover his father was part of Sun Ra's Arkestra and he had 28 half-siblings. The album opener, 'Cautious', reflects this experience, incorporating family sayings and the rich history of his father's side.

Ruthven's lyrics, often narrative-driven, are sometimes autobiographical, but usually draw instead from his imagination. *"When I started writing songs," he said, "I was making up these scenarios and trying to tell stories through this fictional character in my head. Some of the stuff was relatable, and I put myself into someone's shoes and tried to empathise with this made-up character."* While much of the album is open for interpretation, the Lewisham-born artist acknowledges that the lyrics found throughout were written under the pressure of external forces, from the sense of a looming deadline ('123 Days') to imagined scenarios he created as a new father trying to make ends meet ("POV").

Despite the weighted lyricism, there is a lightheartedness that cuts through his work. The 32-year-old credits A.K Paul's support in helping him to lean in that direction. "We work well together," Ruthven says. "We bounced off each other and found that out pretty early on when we did our first sessions together... Plus Anup is a bad boy guitarist - He just gets my taste! " Ruthven and A.K Paul would sit in the studio together laughing at their musical choices, finding various musical flourishes they were creating humorous. Recording so much of the music, specifically the myriad of instruments himself, this bit of collaboration, of stepping outside of himself, became an important full-circle moment for Ruthven.

Ruthven's introduction to the Paul brothers came in 2016. He was serving as a member of The London Fire Brigade at the time, experimenting with production and recording tracks at the fire station during the long hours awaiting a call out. Balancing the demands of the job and spending quality time with his young family led to Ruthven making the tough decision to step away from music, promising himself that when his children were old enough he would come back to music seriously.

After hearing Jai Paul's early singles, he saw the potential to create music that resonated with his influences but with a unique twist. He followed the Paul Institute closely and reached out with some early demos. This led to a pivotal meeting in West London where Ruthven felt a sense of breaking free from his routine and embracing the creative opportunities before him. In 2017 the Paul Institute released the debut Ruthven single "Evil", meaning Ruthven was a musician once again and so began the journey to his debut album.

The process of creating *Rough & Ready* was not without its setbacks. Ruthven lost a significant amount of material due to technical mishaps, including a lost laptop with early demos on it. He viewed this loss as a catalyst for creating even more potent work like 'The Window' which emerged from sketches that survived these challenges. Despite the uncertainty of recent years, including the impact of COVID-19 and financial instability, Ruthven remained committed to creating deeply personal and universally relatable music.



Ruthven has admittedly taken the “long way around” to get to the point of releasing his debut album. He draws inspiration from artists like Bill Withers, who also made significant life changes to pursue music, leaving his job in the Navy at age 27 and releasing his first album, *Just As I Am*, at 32. In an era where creativity is often rushed, Sean Ruthven Nelson exercised patience, and the album is in a better place for it. “I figured out that I wanted to do music full-time after having spent the better part of a decade in a career that had nothing to do with music,” he admits. “I’m ready to step into it.”

Throughout *Rough & Ready*, Ruthven’s presence is strong, even though his voice, at times, just adds light touches to the scenery. He skates between sounds without ever sounding disjointed, structuring his work with precise, intentional moves. Rare is a debut album that sees a musician control their image and an audience's investment, yet Ruthven has managed to do just that.

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