

Live & Kicking

Venues that put the live in music

The Northcote Social Club, Melbourne, Victoria

[For readers unfamiliar with your venue, can you tell us a little about the Northcote Social Club? How long has it been open, and what sort of music/punters do you have coming in?](#)

We've been open since September 2004 as The Northcote Social Club in what was the old Commercial Hotel. We're in the heartland of the inner north in Melbourne a vibrant arts and music loving area. Beside the band room, we have an old school public bar, beer garden, and for mine a pretty tasty little kitchen. It's a pretty diverse mix of folks; the shows ensure that every day has a new core crowd base. Lots of locals in for a drink, and yes Northcote is the lesbian capital of the universe.

[Why does the Northcote offer live music? What do you see as the benefits?](#)

Music offers us an identity, a brand. It's not all that we do, but it is what we're known best for. We do live music because there is a market that supports us doing so and we love it. The benefits of live music are the constantly changing demographics through the pub, involvement in the local, national & international music scene, connecting with our local area which is very supportive of live music, and importantly the sense of fun it brings to what is after all your workplace. There are entirely too many pubs operating as leeches with poker machines chasing profits over community and it pleases us to have a business model doing live music that's both viable financially and socially relevant.

[When it comes to offering live music, what are some of the challenges that venues such as yours face?](#)

Getting the mix of music right, maintaining the standards we've set for supporting each act, accepting technology like e-ticketing to keep pace with the way punters want to interact with the venue, not overstepping the boundaries in regards your relationship with local residents, not having all your eggs in the musical basket, the rest of the pub has to stand on its own as a destination as well.

[How do you decide which acts you're going to book?](#)

We employ a booking agent, Richard Moffat, who we've been associated with for years. His company, Way Over There, provides booking services to a few select venues and he's also involved in booking for some of the bigger music festivals. Programming the different acts through the pub is such a specialised role, I'm amazed constantly by the breadth of Richard's music knowledge. It really is his ability to keep his finger on the pulse of the music scene that keeps our band room so fresh and interesting.

[What music performances or acts have you personally found the most enjoyable and/or memorable? Why?](#)

There have been so many shows that I've loved at Northcote, Jose Gonzales & Martha Wainwright would be two standouts for me. Most memorable though would have to be The Pixies. In March 2007 The Pixies toured Australia for the first time to headline the V Festival. Before the festival show they decided to play

an intimate pub gig to tune up. We were fortunate enough to be the venue that hosted their first ever show in Australia. To see such a seminal act in such an intimate setting, to be so close to one of the all time great rock acts was simply amazing. From the time that the truck started to unload the road cases with Pixies written on them in the morning it was one of the most full-on vibed up days I can remember in all my years doing live shows. I've never seen so many beaming people overjoyed to be seeing a band. Myself included.

What advice would you give to venues that are considering putting on live music?

Decide on what level of music you want to do and concentrate on getting that as right as you can, whether it be originals or covers, local stuff or touring acts. Get your infrastructure right before you start. If you need to do soundproofing to the room do it before you begin getting complaints for noise. Get the best sound system you can afford, don't try and skimp on quality of the audio. Most importantly decide whether you are in it to create a long term identity for your venue, putting on live music requires a lot of hard work to do well and has high overheads to maintain.

Three words that describe the atmosphere at the Northcote when there's a live performance?

Involved, Cathartic, Appreciative.

Your dream line-up for an evening at the Northcote?

Mid Youth Crisis (playing the whole Happiness and Authority album) & Peeping Tom (the original Melbourne band before Mike Patton from Faith No More appropriated their name) supporting Clutch (playing the whole Blast Tyrant album).

How would you describe the Australian live music scene at the moment?

We're about as jammed for shows at the moment as at any time I can remember. I guess that speaks to the scene being pretty vibrant. It feels like we're getting to saturation point presently with the amount of festivals going around, but, being so far from Europe & The States whatever encourages the range of international artists to tour Australia is probably a good thing overall. Locally there are loads of amazing Australian acts gigging and it's great to see punters getting out and supporting the home grown.

