

FAQ Matilda Gig Space

Why have you created the Matilda gig space?

The gig collective is a group of people involved in radical/underground music scenes who wanted to create an autonomous space for music in Sheffield, which was self organised and run to meet our needs as lovers and makers of music rather than the needs of commercial venues. A free or guerrilla space (or even rebel enclave!) where we could set our own agenda outside the usual limitations and controls placed on us. As more and more public space in our urban environments is handed over to businesses for money making activities, the space for ordinary people to get creative and make something fantastic happen is getting less and less. Starting Matilda and its gig space is us taking action to fight back and reclaim some of this space in Sheffield, claw it back from shopping, business parks, luxury flats and swanky pubs and clubs and hopefully enable new and exciting things to happen! Grassroots independent music, untainted by the profit making motives of the big corporations, has always had the best ideas, pushed our boundaries and had the most genuine things to say - we wanted a space in Sheffield where this could continue flourish.

What do you mean by DIY?

Exactly what it stands for - DO IT YOURSELF! It's about us ordinary people realising that we have the power and ability to make the stuff that we want to happen happen! Rather than being passive consumers of products thrown at us by businesses who care only about making money, it's going out there and creating alternatives, for no other reason than being passionate about music, loving the way music brings people together, creating community and friendships, creating culture and self expression that is meaningful to us and our mates! Doing it DIY style is about doing things in a different way. Traditionally it has been about breaking down barriers between audience and performers, enabling anyone to start a band, perform, record who wants to, rather than self expression and creativity being the sole preserve of a selected few artists/musicians chosen because money can be made from them. It's putting on that gig that no one else would because no money could be made from it. It's cheap door prices or doing things for free, kids writing fanzines to share their ideas, running record labels from their bedrooms and distributing recordings of their mates bands. It's anything that we do ourselves, without exploiting or ripping off others, that fights back against the boring, homogenised, money grabbing exploits of mainstream culture!

What do you mean by saying you are a not for profit venue?

It's about being a space where things are NOT done just for the sole purpose of making money. We want to work with people and performers whose motivations are purely about making cool grassroots art and music happen.

More complicated is the debate around whether people and performers should be able to profit from doing events at Matilda even if it is of minor consideration to them. Some people who are part of the wider Matilda collective think that making extra money is OK if it hasn't exploited or ripped people off, and people have chosen to contribute their time or money paying in return for the performers entertaining them and it constitutes a fair exchange. But other people argue that because it is a volunteer run space, some one making loads of money at their event for themselves doesn't feel right and removing money from the equation as much as possible and doing things completely differently from the norm should be the goal in Matilda. The debate continues! Anyway in the context of this unresolved debate, but recognising that at the very least bands and music scenes need money to flourish - there is no getting away from travel costs (particularly for touring bands), equipment needs, materials, practice room space - the gig space collective aims to work with people who are doing benefit gigs or events with low door prices where performers/organisers won't make excessive amounts of money, but enough to cover immediate costs and use the extra to re-invest back into their band or gig collectives activities etc. so they can continue (in our experience - cover previous losses!) So if you want to put on a band from Newcastle who want £500 for playing, it is really not a gig for Matilda, but may of course still be a really cool thing to do at another venue!

Can I do a regular DJ/club night at Matilda?

Sorry but no. As a volunteer run space we don't have the capacity or energy to facilitate lots of regular DJ/club nights, and regular nights would stop other people from being able to book the space for a wide variety of stuff. There is also limits to the regularity to which we can do late night events, in order to preserve the space from being shut down and the gig space compromising all the other cool art and activism stuff going on in Matilda.

How do I book a gig at Matilda?

Email the gig collective at matilda_gigspace@yahoo.co.uk and let us know what you want to do. The collective most weeks meets down at Matilda at 7pm to discuss stuff, so you could alternatively drop in and see if we are about. It is best to try and meet up with us, it makes things so much easier for all of us and we can help you get the best out of the space! Plus it makes things more fun to get know each other and share ideas and enthusiasm! The next step is to propose the event to the main Matilda Monday meeting, where the inner workings of the social centre are worked out. Hopefully they will agree to it and then we can work together on getting it organised. Read on!

Do we have to pay to hire the gig spaces?

The space is essentially free, but where possible we need a donation towards electricity bills etc. If you make extra money and can spare more to help with the on-going development of the gig space and the social centre in general that would be really fab!

What are the door policies?

Given the nature of the space you can not advertise an entry price on flyers and posters, or issue tickets. To do so would compromise the space. For more details on this it is best to talk to us face to face.

The main outside doors at most gigs need to be shut at around 10pm. We are in the heart of the city and more particularly in the heart of club land and need to secure the building as things get late. This doesn't mean that people can't get in after this time, but enables us safely to use our discretion as to who comes in at this time. Encouraging your friends etc. to come down before this if they can help ensure their safety and ours and we can all be securely inside enjoying ourselves!

We expect the gig organisers to run the door in terms of taking money etc. but volunteers from Matilda will help with door security - see below for more details.

What time can events go on till?

As mentioned above we have to balance what we do in the space against trying to keep it open for as long as possible. For this reason we only have gigs on until midnight. Loud music after this too often causes too much attention and trouble to be drawn to the space. We are also all volunteers and we have to safeguard against burning out too quickly! (to help out preventing this happen you could always volunteer at matilda to help keep it going?) We would really appreciate it if you would respect this midnight finishing time and not hassle the collective to change this - every one says 'just let it go on longer, just this once, just for us', or 'we have got delayed, we need to go on to 1am'. We hate having to be put in the position where we are made to justify ourselves and have to be the bad guys - we are just nice people trying to make a space happen! Remember the space is not just about your event, but all the other things that go on in the space done by loads other people - and its unfair to push us to jeopardise this just for you! If a 12am finish doesn't suit your event, then don't use Matilda!!! Sorry!!!

What about security in the building while it is open for my event?

Events at Matilda need people from the gig collective and/or the wider Matilda collective to be present to ensure the security and safety of the building. If there are no people from Matilda who can work the event then it can not go ahead on that date. Matilda people will primarily be responsible for the main gates to the building, letting people in and out etc. The gig collective will organise on your behalf Matilda people to volunteer at the event. Where possible the event organiser should also have people volunteering to help out with running the event and make sure it goes smoothly. We can discuss more about this when we meet up.

What rooms do you have we can use?

We have three rooms to choose from. A large space with a stage, a smaller room for an intimate gig for about 50 or so people and one somewhere in between with raw appeal! Check out the pictures on the website (www.matilda.aktivix.org/collectives/gig-space), and/or come down and check it out. The building is always open on Monday nights for the meetings (7.30pm onwards), or on Thursdays at the same time for the social night (with food for donation if you are hungry) - just ring the bell on the front and some one will let you in and let you check out the gig spaces.

Do you have an in-house PA?

No not yet, but we are trying to raise money for one, or at the very least a vocal PA! We can help you with contacts to hire one from if need be.

What lighting do you have?

At the moment we only have the main overhead lights, but we aim to try and get some more subtle lighting in the near future. So you may want to consider to bringing in some stage lights etc. if you have access to them. Gigs without them have been fine. Just depends on your taste, but nice lighting is something we aspire too!

Is there a bar at gigs?

The gig collective can provide refreshments - talk to us about this.

Can we provide food for the bands at the venue?

Yes! As people who have been on tour with bands, we positively encourage the feeding of touring bands! Feel free to bring food along and feed the bands. Even better why not talk to us about using the Matilda kitchen and cafe area before your gig to feed people. With advance warning we might be able to get the Cafe collective to rustle up dinner for you, the bands and volunteers for donations before your event starts. But please note the Matilda kitchen is a vegan food only space.

Is it possible for touring bands to sleep over at the venue?

The general rule is that no one sleeps over at Matilda. However exceptions can be made, like when people are having a weekend gathering of activists from all over the country. Exceptions can be made for touring bands, but really if there is no other option and we have volunteers willing to sleep over too.

What health and safety issues do I need to keep in mind when running a gig?

We have already mentioned security on the gate. Also need to consider keeping the fire escapes free from the clutter of equipment and instruments. Note where the fire exits are and also the fire extinguishers. We will advise you of this when in the venue. Having friends milling about keeping an eye on things for you is also a good idea, as it is a big space.

Who does the tidying up after events?

You do!! But we will help!

What other practical considerations are there when running a gig?

The main one is that we try to do as much recycling as possible and we do separate out glass, plastic, cans etc. So if putting out extra bins/bags for rubbish please label them for different materials and endeavour to continue separating them out when sweeping up after the event!

What does Matilda expect from the event organisers?

Ideally to talk through with the gig collective what you want to do with the space before hand. It is a collective responsibility - Matilda and you guys. Particularly ensuring there is going to be enough volunteers on both sides. Anyhow all this prep makes for a smooth and safe running of the event for all, and usually double the fun!

Not everyone wants or has time to be heavily involved with the running of the social centre, or be part of one of the collectives within it, e.g. the gig space collective. But what would be really cool if people using the space were up for feeling that they were part of the Matilda community, rather than just seeing the space as somewhere they rent and don't really care about. It would be fab, if through our love of music and making shit happen that we could end up being a cool network of Sheffield DIY promoters and artists in and around the Matilda space, with loads of cross fertilisation of ideas and effort and build up further the rad DIY music community in our city.

Obviously we expect the organisers to have respect for the building. It is not a squat to be trashed, but something we want to hold on to for as long as possible and be a radical community space, which means trying to make it clean, friendly and welcoming to all people.

To be friendly and patient with us - running a space like this together for the first time is a steep learning curve, and to some extent we are making it up as we go along. Matilda has a wide variety of people involved and view points, but we strive to find the cool common ground on which we can move things forward in Matilda. As Matilda has a non-hierarchical structure and uses consensus decision making, decision making can take time - but the principle is worth the time it takes. Sometimes it can be frustrating though, the place has its ups and downs, as all groups of friends, work mates do etc.! But please bear with us

Can the Matilda gig collective help out with publicity for my gig?

We have a Matilda events announcements list and we can send emails out about your event. At most events we try to collect new email addresses for the list, so hopefully this will continue to be a growing resource. Also feel free to put up posters in the Matilda building and leave flyers. We also will update the Matilda website with the event.

I don't know much about how to put a gig on - can the gig collective help me out?

Yes we can, but doesn't mean we will sort it all for you. But between us we have many years of experience doing gigs - from the early 1990's onwards. We would be more than happy to share our skills and work with you to do your first event. Just get in touch, give us enough warning and come down and meet up with us!!!

Who is involved in the gig collective?

Helene, Kathleen, Pancho, Chris, Nick and Gav are the main folk doing the day to day stuff. But there is a wider collective of people contributing in a variety of ways - helping out at events, helping us fix up the space etc. Between the main folk we have mostly been involved in the punk scene over the years. Some are currently in bands. We have also done record labels, organised gigs, weekend festivals and tours, fanzines and record/zine/book distros and artwork for posters and records/cds.