



# SOMEWHERE I BELONG

*HEAVY METAL THERAPY*

*Guide to Gigs and Inclusivity*

*2026*



## Contents

---

1. Title Page
2. Contents & Introduction
3. Mental Health - Surviving a Festival
4. Emotional Support Metalhead - Trauma Responses at Gigs
5. Social Class and Disadvantage in Metal
6. Physical Disability and Events
7. Screaming into the Void - Accessibility and Heavy Metal Therapy
9. The Queer Metal Scene
11. LGBTQ+ and Autism
12. Neurodiversity
13. WEIRDO
14. Satan Not Hatin
15. How to Make the Moshpit Better for Everyone
16. Finding My Somewhere I Belong - Volunteering with Heavy Metal Therapy
17. TONIC Music
18. Themes in Somewhere I Belong

## Introduction

---

*Here we present a collection of experiences from the followers/roadies at heavy metal therapy, about gigs and other music spaces, and what might be challenging about them in terms of feeling accepted, being able to access them, and having a good time.*

*It is designed to be helpful to fans, musicians and venues around how we can all work together to make gigs and music-related spaces as inclusive as possible.*

*However, we recognise these are only a subset of experiences, positive and more difficult, and won't reflect all of the spectrum of what can be hard about gigs. There are some bits we would like to cover in more depth so we'd hope to add to this over time.*

*We've packed this thing full of resources though, so if you want to explore more, you can. There are some parts of these stories that might be triggering for some, with references to trauma, discrimination and emotional distress – so please be careful as you go.*



# MENTAL HEALTH

**BEN**

*SURVIVING A FESTIVAL*

## IN A GIST

*Was everything worth it: Fuck. Yes. Do it. Go somewhere metal alone and curious. We are all mad here and if you are feeling judged and strange we don't give a fuck.*

I love festivals. At the late age of twenty five I discovered them and it's an event that I get both excited about and dread. Excited because I love the music, the press of bodies, the chants, the jokes, the 3am putting the world to rights with strangers sitting in fishing chairs, the A-pocalyptic mosh pits and the intense vibration in the air of several thousand happy metalheads.

Dread is a feeling it took me a while to understand. I have always been apprehensive about going to festivals. At first I put it down to the difficulty of camping away from home but it isn't that. I was an Army Cadet for years and have no issues living off nearly no sleep and eating ration packs so old they could legally have sex.

At most festivals, like most gigs I have a constant underlying fear of being judged. Yeah, weird I know. After decades of headbanging with a culture of wonderfully acceptable people I still have that feeling of being out of tune, out of place out of the same experience others may be feeling.

So what do we do when we have thoughts like that... we fucking challenge them. We take the little bastards to a metal court and we prove the fuckers wrong.

Bloodstock 2021. Signed up for it as soon as tickets went out. I also avoided my usual behaviour of checking who was going and basically having more confident people hold my hand. As it happened a lovely chap and now good friend said he would be there.

Here is where it all fell wonderfully apart in the best possible way. Bloodstock is a black spot for telecommunications. If you don't have a CB radio, signal flare or voice like Brian Blessed you will lose people. I did not know this and it was great. I couldn't camp with friends and promptly lost them for all of 2 hrs over 4 days. Upon entry a lovely chap called Ashley helped me with my bags. When I got to my site I was met by lovely strangers who fed me beer, helped me with my tent and we went to see bands together (Lawnmower Death was the first live act I saw in two years and I am not ashamed to say I cried with joy).

Was everything perfect; No. I left early Sunday cos I struggled. In hindsight I was really low that week anyway and if I hadn't gone I probably would have spent that weekend in my dressing gown trying to distract myself from the horrible thoughts bouncing in my brain-meat. Doing three out of four days at a festival was heroic.

Was everything worth it: Fuck. Yes. Do it. Go somewhere metal alone and curious. We are all mad here and if you are feeling judged and strange we don't give a fuck. We love you and will feed you rum and jump around with you. Go somewhere metal. Have fun and do what you find value in.

So Ben's top tips for attending festivals with a mood disorder and more issues than Marvel Comics:

- Don't drink too much or do too many drugs: The atmosphere is awesome, you are awesome, everyone is awesome. Try and enjoy it with minimal intoxicants.
- Pace yourself: Miss a band or two, It's okay. If it gives you time to crash out, freak out or just chill, embrace it. Plan your festival around it though.
- Get out of the fucking tent: Get up. Get out. Throw some water in your face and get back on it you magnificent bastard.
- Accept that something will fuck up and be okay with it. I arrived late and the ticket company lost my ticket. My tent broke. I forgot the sleeping tablets I was on. It was okay tho. I asked people for help and you know what they became?

My festival friends.

Get out there and remember: No thought of misery is universal. Metalheads get you. You are amongst friends. Prove your thoughts wrong and if they don't take no for an answer, tell them to go fuck themselves.

# EMOTIONAL SUPPORT METALHEAD

**SANJAY**

## TRAUMA

This is a video story, Sanjay tells Kate about his experiences of being a trauma survivor in a moshpit environment and how venues can be more trauma informed

TRAUMA RESPONSES AT GIGS

### IN A GIST

*"I didn't realise how much trauma history would impact my experience at gigs"*

*"We are all here to have a good time but we don't actually want to hurt anybody, and we are all agreeing to be community and take care of somebody if something happens"*



When I was going to gigs, the experience was overwhelmingly positive. That can be down to security, the crowd and of course the performances on stage. But I know that experiences differ from person to person. I have seen videos online where the crowd can be bad (over intoxicated fans or people standing on the edge of a mosh pit getting dragged in when they don't want to get dragged in, or security mismanage a situation or a woman in the crowd gets groped (something I'm totally against). Security and venue organisers are responsible for ensuring safety, but the crowd should also look out for one another.

But regarding inclusivity in Metal, strangely enough in a few recent videos I've talked about this subject and I honestly believe it will be an ongoing issue as bigotry is an unfortunate fact of reality that needs to be tackled. The English premier league should be a benchmark for where the metal scene should be looking towards in regards tackling bigotry. One of the things I say in my videos about this is that, as a fan base as a scene we can't stay stuck in the past. We have to move forward, I'm 30+ now, tomorrow isn't promised, where's the next generation of metal fans and bands coming from?

## INCLUSIVITY

### THE NON-CONFORMIST METALHEAD

FOLLOW ON [YOUTUBE](#) FOR  
MORE PERSPECTIVES OF  
BEING A BLACK AND AUTISTIC  
METALHEAD



# SOCIAL CLASS

*HMT ROADIE SAM SHARES HER REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL CLASS AND DISADVANTAGE IN METAL*

Metal music is stereotypically known to represent heterosexual, white, working-class masculinity. As a white, working-class woman who identifies first and foremost as a metalhead I have always felt comfortable with the thought that I am surrounded by likeminded people from similar backgrounds in the metal culture. I realise this is a privileged position to be in and that I make many assumptions about the metal community that make me feel comfortable. These are that everyone is from a lower-class background, that it is a safe space for all and that everyone has had similar background/childhood experiences which have led them to metal.

Many punk/rock and metal bands are associated with those who are from lower class backgrounds (although this may not be the case across the board), but what does this mean and why is it important for inclusivity? Heavy metal music incorporates an undercurrent of social inequality and injustice which I personally resonate with. Being working class comes with stereotypes around behaviour and personality traits such as being aggressive/violent, unkempt, disrespectful whereas research has found that metalheads tend to be creative, often introverted and may suffer from mental health struggles such as low self-esteem. Misconceptions around who metalheads are and where they come from may darken the doors for newcomers who struggle with their mental wellbeing.

We are aware of mental health struggles being a huge problem for those in more disadvantaged positions which typically places them in a lower class system e.g. increased loneliness and isolation. Live music provides us with social capital, public engagement and identity which are integral to combat common symptoms of being part of a lower class in society but who does this benefit? Typically, those with enough money to engage in the subculture which is mostly centred around buying music and tickets to gigs and festivals.

Some researchers suggest that heavy metal music helps people to self-socialise and cope with difficult life events which may be one of the reasons why people like me engage in this type of music. 'People' in this context ignores social inequity in those from lower class systems, so there are things we could be doing to change this. I am likely not the best person to comment on other areas of disadvantage, but here are some reflections on how I would have liked support to engage more with the metal subculture when I was younger from a position of financial disadvantage:

- Differing prices for events – consider making some cheaper or free dates within a tour schedule (not all) to offer to identified people from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to engage with live music on a budget. These monies can be made up in other ways e.g. merch or a slight increase to prices elsewhere.
- Virtual gigs – offer the opportunity for people to tune in for free virtually (although there would be obvious implications for those who cannot afford access to technology).
- Free access – Alternatively, if there are leftover tickets offer these out to identified disadvantaged communities. See <https://ticketsforkids.org/about/> for a similar idea, but it would be great to see something like this in the metal community.

---

# SOUNDSPHERE



*I think my philosophy has always been to find workarounds for stuff, even if that means being uncomfortable, but that doesn't work for everyone, of course.*

*I mean, toilets could be more accessible, but there are viewing platforms with ramps at most major festivals now, and there's usually one toilet there. I would of course encourage everyone to get your applications in for accessible tickets early, because I hear a lot of horror stories of people forgetting, and I have done too in the past.*

*I think as a journalist for Soundsphere magazine, rushing about to do interviews at festivals like Leeds, and Download, I've encountered pretty much horrible terrain that is possible from mud to big crowds pushing into me! I mean, people have bands that they want to see, so I get it!! Still, I do wish people were more mindful when moving/rushing about, sometimes. I've taken the odd knock!*

---

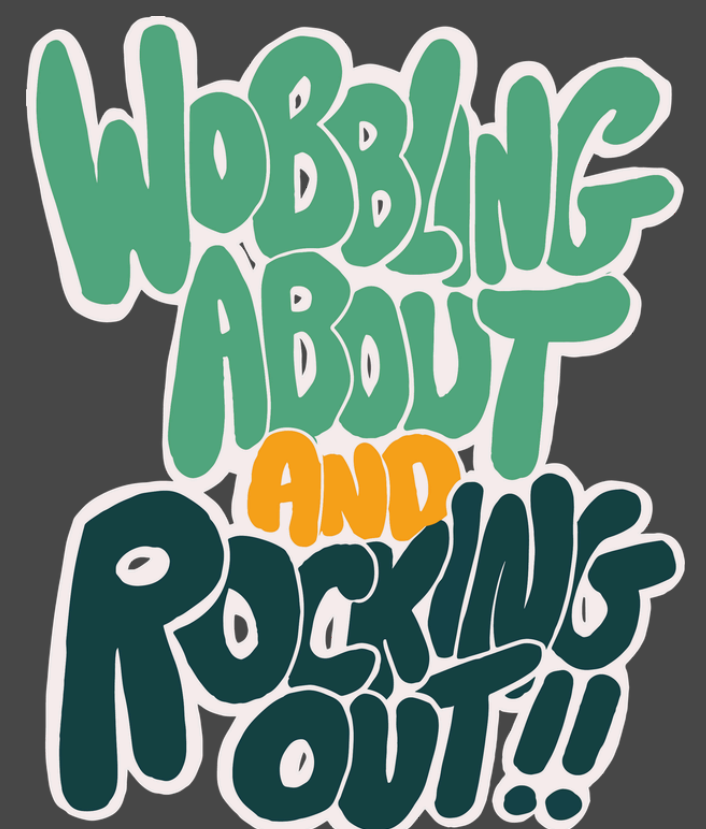
*It's helpful that festivals do have a Disabled Access team to offer support. I'd like to see more BSL at gigs, and I think that's becoming more and more possible. Also, any venues on the touring circuit that aren't accessible, or as accessible as they'd like to be, there's still time to make changes!*

*I do always appreciate the accessible spaces, ramps and platforms at festivals, and the staff that tend to them, and offer support throughout each day - I've met some wonderful people over the years.*

*Take any knowledge you can from a range of resources (including HMT), or customers and learn. More and more bands and artists with additional needs are going out on tour and coming to venues to enjoy live music, and it can only be a positive if you research who's coming, and how you can adapt, or offer support.*

*There are companies like Attitude is Everything working really hard to improve accessibility, and awareness. WARO (Wobbling About and Rocking Out) is also spotlighting mental health and diversity in the music industry, gaming and sports.*

*There's also a local resource here in East Yorkshire called Elephant In The Room Disability Inclusion that is doing lots of amazing work in collaborating with events and spaces around the country, to improve accessibility, and more specifically BSL representation at gigs and live events around the country.*



# SCREAMING INTO THE VOID - AND BEING HEARD

INDIA

ACCESSIBILITY AND HEAVY METAL THERAPY PEER SUPPORT - PART ONE

## Breaking the silence

Heavy metal may look like chaos from the outside – loud and aggressive. But for those living with invisible struggles, it's a lifeline – providing structure, release, and the proof that pain can be transformed into connection.

My name is India, I have attended the Wakefield Heavy Metal Therapy (HMT) group since January 2024. I am someone that has lived experience of both mental and physical illness - I am also a manual wheelchair user. As a result of these factors, I have gone through periods in my life of social isolation but this isn't uncommon for those that struggle with these issues.

According to the 'Left Out of Life' research campaign, conducted by the national disability charity, Sense, almost two thirds (61%) of disabled people are now chronically lonely, rising to 7 in 10 (70%) of young disabled people (Sense, 2021).

*“Heavy metal may look like chaos from the outside...but for those living with invisible struggles, it's a lifeline”*



## Heavy Metal, Mental Health, and Finding Belonging

At the end of 2023, following the end of a long-term relationship, I quickly realised I had no in-person social interactions or friends, other than the support of my family and a few online friends. It may sound silly to some, but it may be relatable to others; there has always been a part of me searching for belonging amongst others. Something that could provide a sense of community and mutual respect, which is where Heavy Metal Therapy (HMT) comes in!

HMT is a self-help and peer support community of people who find metal music helpful for mental well being that began online. HMT was founded by a group of metalheads with either lived experience of mental health struggles and/or expertise by training in mental health professions.

I was first introduced to the group by my mental health support worker. Initially, I wasn't so sure about attending as I had a head filled with fears of everything that could potentially go wrong. In spite of this, after reading about the community online I changed my mind. However, I still felt there was a lot of mental preparation to do.

For me, preparation is a form of self-care. This included going to the venue ahead of the first group session, with someone that I trust and that has been a constant source of support – my mum. But for others this may be a friend or carer.

There were two main reasons I wanted to visit the venue ahead of time; primarily to do with my access needs. As someone with a physical disability that uses a wheelchair, I needed to know if I could even get into the venue.

# SCREAMING INTO THE VOID - AND BEING HEARD

## INDIA

ACCESSIBILITY AND HEAVY METAL THERAPY PEER SUPPORT - PART TWO

## Continued

Of course, I could have just made a phone call, which my mum and I would normally do in advance of going somewhere new. However, we chose a day to visit when we were going to be in Wakefield City centre anyway, so if the unfortunate, yet often inevitable did happen – that I couldn't access the venue – we would still have plans.

Fortunately, the venue (which at that time was Throwback Coffee House) was accessible via a portable ramp! However, the doorway entrance was fairly narrow, and I do recognise whilst this may have been accessible for me, as a manual wheelchair user, this doesn't mean it would have been accessible for wheelchairs of all sizes. An unfortunate downside to the venue was that they did not have grab rails in the toilets, which is something I rely on to safely transfer so this was rather disappointing.

## A Community of Noise and Support

The first time I attended the group I was feeling very anxious and panicked, which I think is to be expected when meeting a group of new people. Remember not to trick yourself into thinking you're not allowed to have negative or conflicting feelings about new situations, this is a typical experience, but that's not to say it can't be heightened by your own internal struggles.

Upon arrival, I was greeted very warmly by the facilitators of the group, which I greatly appreciated. I was then welcomed by three other attendees. We began to connect over shared interests and struggles. They were the first HMT attendees I met and they were very open about their experiences, which was refreshing.

A feature of the HMT group that I've always thought was a good, unconventional icebreaker was the information sheets referencing mental illness, neurodiversity, and symptoms different people may encounter throughout their life whilst tying these experiences to music. These sheets are always placed on the tables of the venue, at each group meeting, and continue to open discussions to this day – especially with newcomers that may need a little nudge of confidence like I once did when it comes to conversational skills with new people.

Another great aspect of the group is the HMT Spotify page, which features the music on the information sheets plus so much more. The playlists give thought to some quite difficult feelings. This can be validating for some people, however this may not be the case for everybody. Therefore, you should only listen when you feel it is most appropriate to.

*“information sheets referencing mental illness, neurodiversity...and tying these experiences to music...continue to open discussions”*

## The Journey Forward

Ultimately, attending the Wakefield Heavy Metal Therapy social group, once a month (almost every month), has had a significant impact on my character as a person. It has built confidence that was once nowhere to be seen and I have carried that into other areas of my life. As a result of this I have taken on volunteering opportunities that I once thought would have never been possible for me as a person facing the mental and physical illnesses I live with day-to-day.

I have also found the strength to reconnect with people, after shutting that part of myself off for a short period of time, and made new friendships both online and offline that I value dearly. Loneliness doesn't have to be permanent.

Lastly, as obvious as it may seem to some, I have learnt that living with illnesses doesn't make you weird or somehow different. In fact, the majority of the world struggles with some kind of struggle daily. They just don't talk about it, but it is actually perfectly okay to ask for help when you need it. We are louder together.

## References

Sense (2021). Loneliness rises dramatically among disabled people. [online] Sense. Available at: <https://www.sense.org.uk/media/latest-press-releases/loneliness-rises-dramatically-among-disabled-people/>.

*“it is actually perfectly okay to ask for help when you need it”*



# LGBTQ+

NATALIE

## THE QUEER METAL SCENE

As a queer person in the metal scene I've had a mixed response when I've tried to be who I am in the scene. A lot of the time I've just had shrugs and acceptance and it making about as much difference as what job I do. In other extremes I've been rejected (along with another member) from a band because of our sexualities. I've also experienced the whole spectrum between these two extremes, with people being dismissive, but not caring, to wanting to question and know how it all works.

At it's best the metal community is welcoming and acts like family, and the same is true for the LGBTQ+ community, if not stronger due to biological families rejecting us. When both coincide there is an even greater sense of community, with queer metalheads rallying together with an even greater sense of unity, sharing cool new bands, who are either queer themselves or vocally supportive. This queer metal family also exists for protection. Despite what a lot of people say and think, the metal family is not always as accepting as it claims to be, the example of it being described as a "metal brotherhood" for one shows it's emphasis upon masculine stereotypes. The queer metal scene offers a safe space for people to be themselves and share new music, but also to share info on who is safe to be around and which bands to avoid for their homophobia and transphobia. Sadly in my, and others, experience, this scene within a scene is necessary because I've often been met with blank stares, shrugs or even hostility when I've called out bands for their homophobia, sexism or racism. It is sad that for many people good riffs always trump bad opinions, and so many

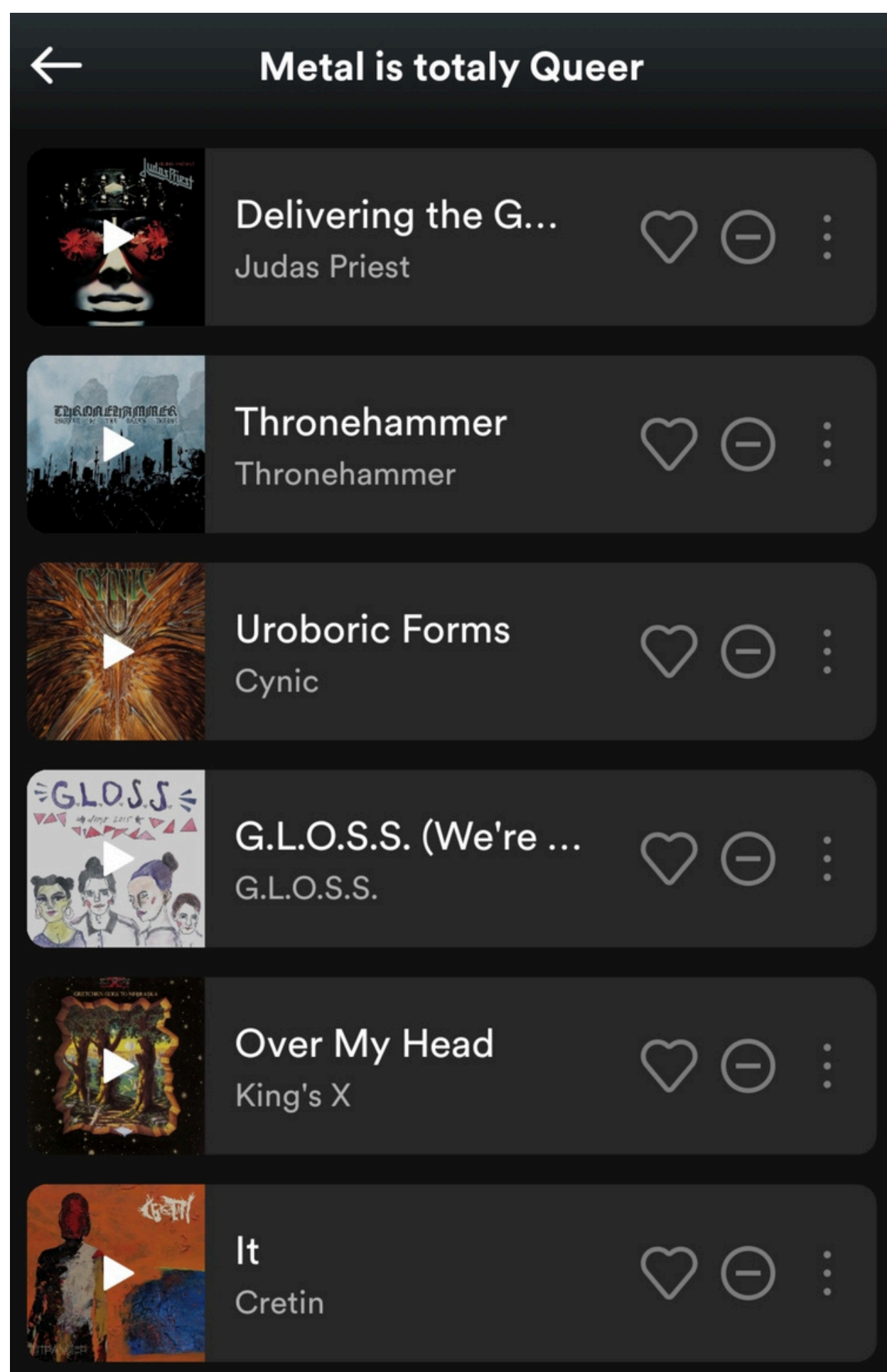
## IN A GIST

*"The queer metal scene offers a safe space for people to be themselves and share new music, but also to share info on who is safe to be around and which bands to avoid"*

homo/trans/queerphobic bands continue to gain popularity, sell records and get booked on festivals. Until this changes I think there will continue to be people afraid of coming out in the metal scene, which is a shame because as most metalheads say, metal is family and welcoming and for everyone. My experience is that we're not quite there yet.

Including the queer outsider in the music genre for outsiders doesn't need to be difficult. For me the thing that makes me feel most included, be it at gigs, festivals, in publications or by bands is simply people being vocally in support. Not just by saying "everyone is welcome here" but in explicitly saying Gay, Queer, Trans ect. people are welcome or in calling out homophobic language or views. That's what elevates it from just being a simple platitude to actually meaning something. Likewise the opposite is true, nothing turns me off a band or gig or festival than seeing them platform people who have been vocally anti LGBTQ+. For me it's as simple as that, explicitly say that I am welcome, and don't book people who actively want to exclude me. Others may need more, such as to see more queer artists given a platform, though there is a danger of tokenism with that. There are plenty of queer artists out there who deserve to be heard because of their music, not just because they are queer. Though there is something to be said about looking at a metal magazine or website or going to a festival and seeing diversity in who is represented, because it shows more of an open mindedness instead of just the usual same old 4 bands that all look and sound the same.

The main thing venues and organisations can do to be better allies is to stop booking homophobic/transphobic bands. People complain about cancel culture and de-platforming, but until we as a scene say there is no place for hateful views and stop supporting those who hold them, the metal scene will never be a safe welcoming place for everyone. Often this requires a bit of research into a band and its members, as many hide these views from mainstream coverage, but use other bands or fronts to spread their views. In a more practical simpler vein, venues and organisations can offer things like gender neutral restrooms, avoid using gendered language when referring to everyone and be vocal in their support of the LGBTQ+ community. Visible messages of support go a long way when queer people are deciding whether or not they feel safe to go to a venue or not. If you're going to a gig be respectful of others. Don't assume people's genders or pronouns. If you need to know pronouns then either ask, or use they/them until you're corrected, if you don't need to know then don't worry about it, go and enjoy the bands! Shouldn't need saying, but don't use slurs to talk about bands, music or anything. We have a rich colourful language to talk about how much a we think a band may suck without having to resort to childish misuse of labels.



# LGBTQ+

NATALIE

CONT...

## IN A GIST

*“Metal won't be family until everyone who loves metal is welcomed”*

If you're a queer person and you're going to a gig but are unsure about it, take a buddy! If you don't have a buddy into the specific niche extreme metal subgenre you want to go see, put posts on social media and see if there are others going you could tag along with and make new gig friends with. There's always safety in numbers. Dress how you want that makes you feel safe. Occasionally we may feel pressure to be visibly queer in the scene to show that we exist and flag to others, but we don't have to do that if it puts us in danger.

For both queer and straight gig goers another way to build LGBTQ+ support at gigs is to go and speak to the bands, especially if they are queer or say something in support of the LGBTQ+ community and tell them how cool it was, likewise call out any bad behaviour. The more of us that speak up and make our voices heard the easier it will be for others to stand up and be counted.

Remember especially that we are not alone, there are so many queer people into metal and the vast majority of metalheads are not against our inclusion, they just need help in making the space safer. The best resource I've found on the LGBTQ+ community in metal is the Hell Bent For Metal Podcast, which has been going for nearly two years now. They talk about all things queer and metal dealing with the positives and the negatives as well as sharing really cool new music. They also have a discord server with other queer metalheads to meet as well! There are also loads of social media pages you can go to to find lists of awesome queer music and bands to listen to. (I have MANY recommendations if you need any)

Like most metalheads it felt like finding a second family when I first discovered there were other people who liked this silly music genre and having long hair and always wearing black even in the summer. This great feeling of us against the world, and they don't understand this special thing we have and it's for us outsiders. Sadly I started to get disillusioned with the metal scene years later when it felt like the scene was so far behind when it came to it came to social issues. Metal seemed to have lost its bite when it came to speaking out against injustice and this frustrated me. This coupled with me beginning to expand my musical horizons with punk and Hip Hop made me begin to resent the elitism of metal.



I stopped engaging with new metal bands and the scene for a few years before volunteering with the welfare tent at Bloodstock and falling madly in love with metal all over again. I've returned to it with a critical eye and get frustrated when (almost exclusively) men talk about the metal family or brotherhood and how everyone is welcome, but fail to see that the majority of people are still white, able bodied cisgendered men. I've always faced pushback whenever I've pointed out to those same men that metal isn't as inclusive as they think it is and that many people don't feel welcome. It's not just queer people that are often left out of the metal family gatherings, women and POC are also frequently absent.

This is a reflection of society as whole of course, and needs to be addressed and challenged. I truly believe that metal should be for everyone and can be, but not until we've faced up to our prejudices and made a space for everyone. I also believe that those who talk about the metal brotherhood have got the best intentions and do want to welcome everyone. The best way for us to do this is to do what we do best, and get excited about new bands and albums with queer members, and share them with everyone. Buy their merch and wear them until they fall apart and sew patches and messages of support onto our battlejackets. People demanding more space in the mosh pit is not a new outsider influence, its just people trying to do what metalheads have always done, demanding to be heard and given a space and supported by those who share our taste in stupid aggressive music.

Metal wont be family until everyone who loves metal is welcomed.

Check out Natalie's LGBTQ+ celebratory metal playlist [here](#)



*“Remember especially that we are not alone, there are so many queer people into metal”*

# LGBTQ+ AND AUTISM

**FRANKIE**

*ART OF ALIENS*

## **IN A GIST**

*"I also wear a battle jacket to every gig as this makes me feel safe and I can hide my hands in the deep pockets with fidgets and nobody can tell"*

I have been attending gigs since 2010 when I was just 15, predominantly metal and punk. Being an Autistic Female who is also LGBTQ+ and attending most on my own has provided ethereal experiences. Quite often, there have been cases of young men approaching me and trying to drag me into the mosh pit and due to not being able to understand these social signals (later learning that this is a method used to flirt), it has caused me to become dazed and confused in that moment, precariously retreating to the smoking area for a moment to calm down, then I begin asking myself: "Do I really belong here?" The answer is yes! And so do you, never let one person ruin your night, enjoy the music and the reason you attended in the first place, asking that question is a case of Imposter Syndrome and I'm fairly sure they can be battered in the mosh pit!!

It is unfortunate that often you are forced to shout when ordering at the bar as anxiety and inability to talk before a show can create a stressful situation and I feel that those who are neurodivergent are not considered in venues, it is strongly affected through the ways of a neurotypical social structure with ability to vocalise effectively and have the confidence too. I have had panic attacks at gigs, not very often but the underlying cause is invariably the same. Obscured shouting and chattering, each voice dichotomising another.



When there are many conversations happening at once, plus security shouting for the next pat down (also horrible, but necessary) and people at the merch stand shouting for their goods it can get to a point where you struggle to bring your mind out of an overload. I have dealt with this by having someone with me, I always wear my earbuds to gigs and will not remove them until the bands begin. I also wear a battle jacket to every gig as this makes me feel safe and I can hide my hands in the deep pockets with fidgets and nobody can tell.

Resources I have found helpful to deal with dark thoughts, my differences and anxiety are:

- Heavy Mental podcast – A self help podcast focussed on keeping you mindful with personal experiences from the hosts themselves who relate often to metal music.
- Hardcore Humanism podcast – This podcast discusses mental health with various rockers and musicians, psychologically and neurologically adept, I love this one.
- Heavy Metal Therapy of course!

All this has never stricken reluctance towards gigs however as the predominant atmosphere is overwhelming with compassion and acceptance. When you enter a small venue and see the merch stand and everybody gathered for one unifying event it is truly admirable and contagious to feel included, I specifically recall seeing Alestorm and Gloryhammer with my best friend who is also on the spectrum (undiagnosed) at Brixton O2 Academy and we felt safe there. I was extremely precautious due to new places and big crowds, but the fans are so welcoming and you can wear your battle jacket with pride as you storm to the front of the crowd to chant with hundreds of others, all demographics, race, age. I truly love the reciprocity of kinship in a metal crowd!!



# NEURODIVERSITY

## *MELISSA SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF GOING TO GIGS WITH HER AUTISTIC SON AIDAN*

Most of the time has been very positive, we find the more gigs we go to, we tend to find our people and cross paths with friends. We look out for each other – I tend to be the mom of the group and keep an eye on if anyone is too spirited! I even met my husband at a show, Aidan picked him out of the crowd! We were friends for a few years and met up at the shows.

I try to call ahead, and if I can go and case the joint on my own. If I can't go I might look on google street map and do an internet based tour. The one time things have gone wrong is when I didn't call ahead (we got thrown out due to a misunderstanding, they tried to make it right but couldn't really due to the pandemic). I ask a lot of questions about accessibility, even stuff that we might not need – bathroom and parking, because it shows how committed the venue is to it. I tend to use the female disabled bathroom and explain why we are there, no problems so far (I have found women tend to be more understanding) but I would be in support of gender neutral bathrooms, not just for our situation but accessibility for everyone.

The noise cancelling headphones have been a must. When we get there Aidan kind of finds his safe area and escape routes himself, it usually goes smoothly once he has these in place.

---

## *AN ANONYMOUS STORY ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY*

Hello everyone, I'm an autistic person and I'm also questioning my gender identity. I love going to gigs and shows, even if it can be stressful sometimes.

For me it's really helpful to know in advance what kind of security checks they're going to do. I get anxious when they have to scan me or my bag, even if I know that I don't have anything to worry about (no forbidden objects, no liquids/spray...). I also would like to find gender neutral toilets at the venues.

I like to bond with people at shows, the metal community is really inclusive and I never felt the need to tell everyone my diagnosis because it's ok to be a little weird. Let me elaborate it: none of my metalhead friends has never judged me for my shyness or my dark twisted sense of humour.

# WEIRDO

*WEIRDO is a UK-based zine and platform documenting and celebrating the experiences, perspectives and contributions of South Asian people in the alternative scene. Members of their collective share some of their thoughts on how venues and promoters can all help make gigs more inclusive.*

- Venues should have a safer space policy that is visible throughout the venue and can be accessed online. Bands should also be made aware of this prior to being booked and all staff members should receive training and be responsible for upholding the safer space policy
- Bands from a diverse range of backgrounds should be booked for each lineup. This helps to create a more welcoming environment and draw in more diverse audience.
- Venues should host more daytime shows! Most gigs happen in the evening, but not everyone is able to go out in the evening (e.g., due to living in a conservative household) and see their favourite bands.
- Promoters should consider mixing it up and putting some of the bigger bands in earlier slots. People have to leave early for all sorts of reasons and end up missing out. This can also help pull more people to come earlier and give smaller supporting bands the chance to play to a bigger audience than normal!
- Venues should try to have seating available for gig-goers with mobility issues and disabilities as well as spaces for wheelchair users. It's important to remember that not all disabled people are wheelchair users.
- If you state that your venue is "accessible", this should include disabled facilities/toilets - some venues will state they are accessible but neglect to mention facilities are not always accessible.
- Venues should state whether strobe/fast lighting will be used during a show – this goes for all gigs from tiny venues to stadiums. It is often unclear and even when contacting promoters and venues it is almost impossible to get an answer
- Promoters should consider putting on dry/no alcohol shows. Many people are unable to drink (e.g., for medical or religious reasons) or worry about being around people who drink and/or are drunk. Putting on dry/no alcohol shows means more people can enjoy their favourite band or discover new bands in an environment they feel safe in.
- Promoters should try to put on more gigs in venues that aren't pubs or bars. It is still taboo for many cultures to go to places like pubs – it's awkward having people turn to stare at the one brown person or person wearing a hijab (headscarf) crossing the pub to get to the music area at the back.
- Venues should employ staff from diverse backgrounds where possible - this includes venue staff, security and sound engineers.
- Regular diversity training for gig promoters and venue staff can help with creating a safer and more welcoming environment for all, as well as knowing how to act if any problems arise at a show.
- Promoters and venues should regularly share content on social media about diversity, inclusivity and safety at shows. This content should be created in collaboration with people from groups frequently made to feel unwelcome in these spaces.

[www.weirdozine.com](http://www.weirdozine.com)

[Instagram: @weirdo.zine](https://www.instagram.com/weirdo.zine)

[Twitter: @weirdozine](https://twitter.com/weirdozine)



# SATAN

---

# NOT HATIN'

## THE GLOBAL ORDER OF SATAN

Satan Not Hatin' is a multi-Order campaign by the Global Order of Satan to combat the rise of bigotry, hatred and right-wing extremism in the alternative music and social scenes we hold dear. Current participating Orders involved are UK, Sweden, Pittsburgh and Seattle.

Sadly, recent years have seen increased incidents of racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and ableism, as well as far-right extremism and fascism, in these scenes. Satan is a motif and concept used frequently in alternative music, and as the Global Order of Satan, we're here to say that Satan won't stand for Hatin'!

Bands, solo artists, record labels, music collectives, promoters, venues and festivals as well as artists, merch illustrators, designers and sellers can all support our campaign by joining and participating with the campaign and displaying our pitchfork logo as a signal that hatred and bigotry will not be tolerated. We want the pitchfork logo, designed with explicit connections to antifascist logos, to indicate an understanding that prejudice and extremism have no place within alternative music scenes - and over 280 have done just that and we intend to keep growing! Potential participants can apply via the 'join in' page of our website.

In 2024 Satan Not Hatin' released a compilation album we called 'Contra Odium' comprised of music from thirteen participating bands to raise money for organisations across the world who tackle hate and extremism or who support grass roots musical efforts. Next year, in 2025, the campaign will be represented by GOS UK members at Depravation Festival in Swindon as part of their commitment to making their Festival inclusive and welcoming to all.

Our intention is to demonstrate, through the formation of a thriving ecosystem, that fans have many options when it comes to extremism-free and bigotry-free alternative music and to also demonstrate to the music industry that there is a huge appetite for bigotry-free music scenes. We want this to become the norm and make our campaign unnecessary.

The Global Order of Satan is an international atheistic/nontheistic Satanic organisation with Orders across the world. As a group, we proudly stand against those who would use religion and privilege to oppress others, including people from all traditionally marginalised and oppressed communities. We promote a progressive form of atheistic/nontheistic Satanism that stands for social justice and we believe strongly in the worship and care of the self as opposed to slavish adherence to commandments issued by an arbitrary authority. With many members who have been affected by prejudice and intolerance we are powerfully motivated to work towards minimising the harms caused by bigotry and extremism.

Further information about the campaign, can be found on our website and social media accounts.

Hail Satan!

#SatanNotHatin  
#S8NnotH8N  
#ProtectedByThePitchfork

Links:

Website: <https://satan-not-hating.com>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/satannothatin>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/s8nnoth8n>

Mastodon: <https://metalhead.club/@satannothatin>

# HOW TO MAKE THE MOSHPIT BETTER FOR EVERYONE

**DR ROSEMARY HILL**

SOCIAL RESEARCHER

## IN A GIST

*But we can do something to improve everyone's live music experience. When some people's actions cause harm to others, it's down to all of us to step up.*

The moshpit is idealised in heavy-metal culture as a place where anyone can go and if you fall down someone will pick you up again. It's a lovely utopian vision of community.

Unfortunately going to a metal concert isn't quite that wonderful for everyone. Our research shows that gigs and concerts are sites in which groping, sexual harassment, and assault take place, even within really strong communities and scenes.

Such incidents of sexual violence are not inconsequential or one off occasions. Our interviewees told us of numerous occasions on which they had been groped. These incidents had immediate effect. People who had been targeted would move to the back of the auditorium, or they would leave the gig altogether. The effects lasted for many years. One of our interviewees said that she had stopped going to gigs after being repeatedly groped. Others remained angry and upset when they remembered what had happened even if it had been many years previously.

This does not speak of communities in which everyone is accepted and supported. Rather, it indicates that some people are treated as very much second-class music fans, and that their enjoyment of the music is not taken seriously. Those most likely to perpetrate sexual violence are men, and those are more likely to be targeted are women and LGBTQ people.

But we can do something to improve everyone's live music experience. Because this is not just a problem of individual horrible men (although they need to address their own behaviour), it is a problem for the whole community. When some people's actions cause harm to others, it's down to all of us to step up.

So what can we do? As music lovers we can become active bystanders. If we see something that looks 'off', we can approach the targeted person for a chat, even if we don't know them. Or we might, if we think it is safe, begin a conversation with the harasser. This should be a distraction, not a confrontation. And if they still don't get the message, we can use nonconfrontational non-aggressive body language to tell the person to stop.

And if it's one of our friends whose behaviour is out of line? Then it's even more important to be a good bystander. And later, when we're all sober, talk about the behaviour.

For those of us who run a venue or put on events, getting training for all staff is a really powerful way to take action to make music more fun for everyone. Good Night Out Campaign run excellent bespoke training for venues.

And fundamentally, we need to respect everyone's right to enjoy music in peace, without having to fend off unwelcome intrusions. Because everyone has the right to freedom, and to fun, and to love metal without fear of violence.

## Further resources

[Good Night Out](#) is a community interest company that offer anti-violence training for venues including DIY spaces. [Making Spaces Safer](#) by Shawna Potter provides a guide for DIY venues to improving the safety of your space. Potter also provides training. [Our Five Step Guide To Writing A Safer Spaces Policy](#) for venues



# FINDING MY 'SOMEWHERE I BELONG'

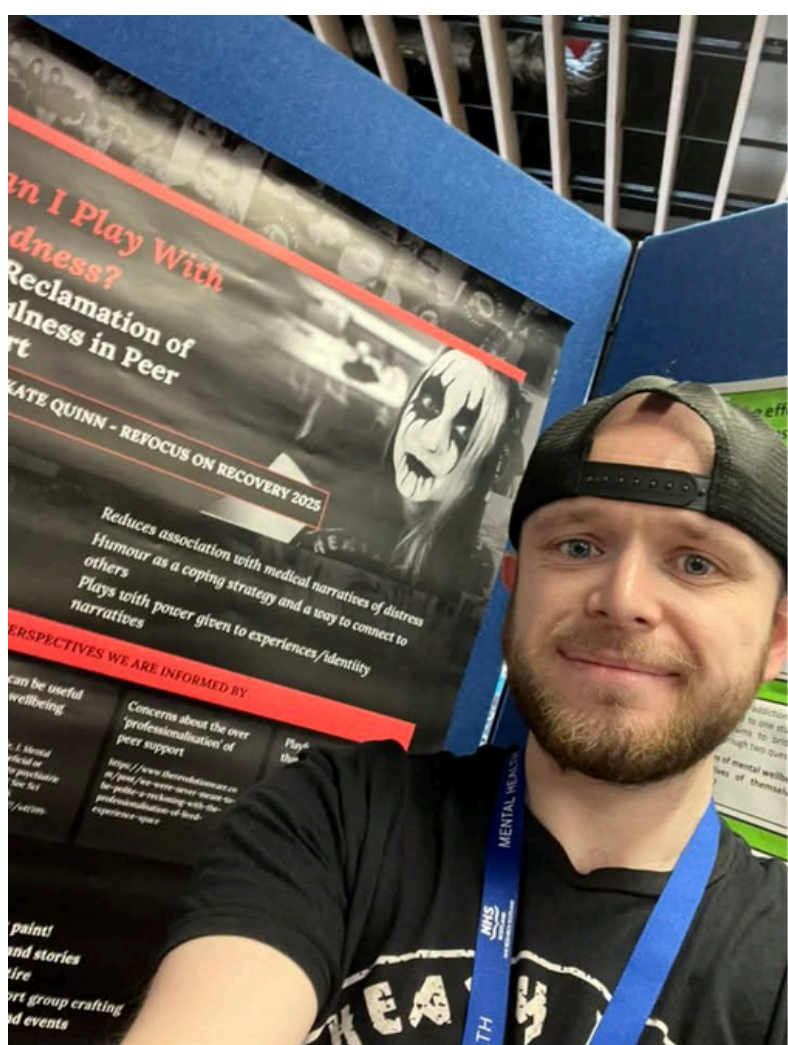
**MATT**

*VOLUNTEERING WITH HEAVY METAL THERAPY & MAKING CONNECTIONS IN THE METAL COMMUNITY*

The key to self confidence and growth for me lay behind finding a place to call home, 'Somewhere I Belong' if you will. I've been a fan of rock n' roll, hard rock and heavy metal music since I was a teenager, now in my 20's I've been to a lot of shows up and down England and Scotland. I've been a member of Heavy Metal Therapy (HMT) for quite some time now, it's given me a lot of opportunities to challenge myself, push on out of that comfort zone and sit in that shadowy area. At first even the thought of discomfort and pushing myself to give new things a shot was something I'd never do. Finding excuses to shield myself from the inevitable failure I told myself lay behind doing something new, terrified of making mistakes. I was diagnosed with Dyspraxia as a young child, with that came a lot of confidence issues, never feeling like I quite fit in, coupled with a struggle maintaining friendships and relationships.

I started volunteering with HMT as an online contributor doing blogs and writing lived experience pieces. In April 2023, I challenged myself to go along to Primordial's Annual General Mayhem at KK's Steel Mill in Wolverhampton, where my friends at Heavy Metal Therapy had a stall. I used this to push myself to travel alone and get down to meet the team, thinking I'd spend a little bit of time with them, then go off to see some bands. I loved being at the stall so much I spent the whole time there, talking to people about HMT and enjoying every minute of it. This was one of those big life moments of finding your tribe. Even though this was my first time meeting most of the team, I was made to feel part of the gang and welcomed with open arms, handed a t-shirt and everything. I was a shy person, or thought I was, never thinking I'd be comfortable talking to complete strangers representing an organisation, yet there I was. I enjoyed it so much so that I returned to do it again in 2024, having just as good a time. Making that journey gave me the opportunity to find these skills within that I never knew I had.

*"This was one of those big life moments of finding your tribe"*



Another experience of volunteering with Heavy Metal Therapy was attending Bloodstock 2023 and working alongside the welfare team. I said yes, inside I was scared. I'd never even been to a music festival before let alone work at one. It turned out to be a good character-building experience, making friends in the process.

I find myself now in the position of podcast/interview host alongside Ben for HMT. Having the opportunity to interview bands and members of the metal community which is shared on our channels. This is something that came about after my appearance on the podcast as a guest (Church Of HMT: The book of Noise, alongside Stu from The Noisy Brain). I've been on a number of media outlets to talk about the work we do at the CIC, finding a sense of enjoyment talking to about my own experiences as well as what we do as HMT. Then in a natural growth the roles flipped, and I found myself asking the questions interviewing on behalf of HMT.

In my time as a volunteer I've grown as a person, especially in confidence. If the shy little boy I once was could see me now he wouldn't believe that I'd grow up to be doing something like this. All thanks to finding a community where I belonged.

*"I was made to feel part of the gang and welcomed with open arms"*

# TONIC MUSIC

## WHY WE NEED TAILORED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR MUSIC FANS

**JEORDIE SHENTON**



There are a multitude of things that are synonymous with music, for the heavy metal community this may be band t-shirts, battle jackets, mosh pits, the devil horns, and... mental health. Yes, that's right, mental health. Many of the most iconic songs of all-time have been inspired by mental health experiences, and in turn (or even, as a result, music is beneficial to the mental health of listeners. For anyone reading this, the impact of music on emotions no doubt has a subsequent influence upon your experiences of identity and culture. The relationship between music and mental health has subsequently led to services providing music therapy and music workshops, yet tailored mental health support for those engaging recreationally in music (i.e. as a music fan) is surprisingly lacking.

As a registered charity, the aim of Tonic Music is to establish good mental health within music communities, by providing tailored mental health support to music professionals and music fans. Alongside our friends Heavy Metal Therapy, an organisation we greatly admire, Tonic Music is one of only a few services offering music fans tailored mental health support, that does not require the ability or desire to play music. At Tonic Music, we launched our music fan programme to address the unprecedented challenges music fans encounter accessing music communities, in particular due to the closure of music venues and record shops. Once upon a time, these spaces were thriving cultural epicentres, where people would come together and express their identity.

Within our music fan programme, we provide a series of online groups and workshops which are free to attend for all music fans. This includes six-week album clubs, which are based upon the concept of a book club, but with a focus on music and mental health.

Each week, participants listen to, reflect upon and share their thoughts and emotions about a chosen album. Last year, we facilitated four albums clubs covering indie, punk, rock and ska. Alongside this, the workshops are designed to equip music fans with essential skills within music contexts, including gig anxiety, and festival survival. These workshops recognise that whilst recreational engagement in music is beneficial for mental health, there are stressors and situations which can have a detrimental effect.

Although tailored mental health support for music fans is still in its infancy, thanks to organisations such as Tonic Music and Heavy Metal Therapy, spaces to revitalise music communities are emerging. A long-term goal for Tonic Music is that in a similar vein to football and its community of supporters, music fans across all genres are aware of and engage with mental health support designed around their identity and culture. Maybe such an approach will not only benefit music fans, but also a greater impact on the music ecosystem as a whole - music is a culture in crisis, and therefore, community in need of specialist mental health support.

*“As a registered charity, the aim of Tonic Music is to establish good mental health within music communities”*

Click the link to check out Tonic Music

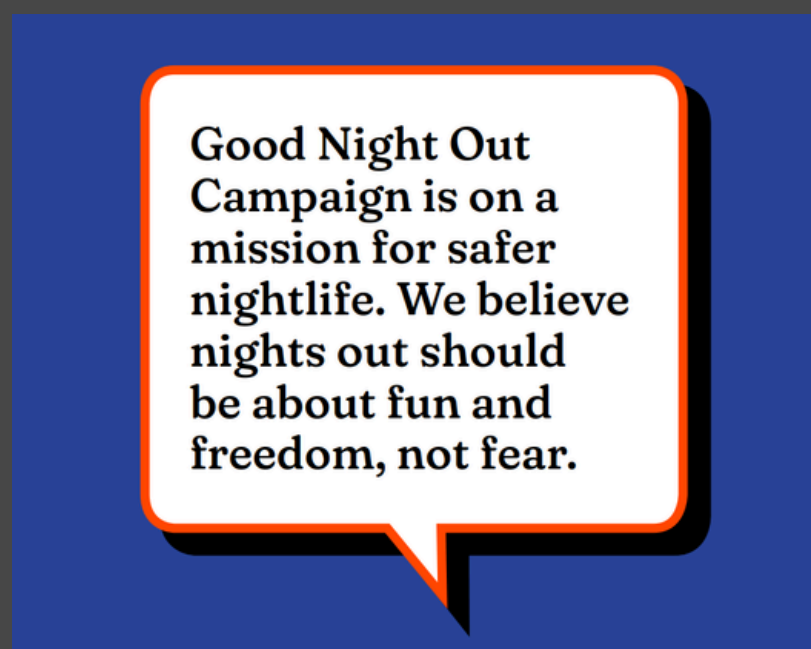


## *Big Themes of Somewhere I Belong*

---

- *Protected spaces including quiet areas*
  - *Planning/calling ahead*
  - *Buddying up (online or in person)*
  - *Allies are important - stand up for people*
  - *Be careful on the drink and drugs*
  - *Venues/festivals having clear inclusivity policies*
  - *Look out for each other*
- 

*The good folks at Good Night Out have given us access to their bystander guide, click the pic to see it*



---

## *Some Small Print Stuff*

*All of the contributors have agreed for their words and associated pictures to be shared here. Thanks to them. Additional picture credits to: James Clarke (emotional support metalhead) & hell bent for metal*