

BAND TIPS: RUNNING A CHARITY GIG



A charity, or benefit gig is one where musicians donate their services either for nothing or for a percentage of their normal fee.

Charity gigs have been known to lose money before now, either through bad production or bad luck. Therefore it is important to decide at the outset why one is running the gig: is it for publicity or fundraising? Gigs are quite a good way of publicising a cause, but an uncertain way of raising funds. Have you a network of ticket sellers or do you depend on your artists drawing power?

Some examples of approximate production costs:

1. Pub venue: €100 to €600, depending on printing and advertising costs.
2. Largish ballroom (capacity c.800+): €4,500 to €10,000, depending on size of PA, number of crew, advertising costs and insurance.
3. Theatre: €3,800 to €8,000, depending on size of PA, number of crew, advertising costs and insurance.

Timing is important in two ways:

1. Try to find out what other concerts are planned around the time of the benefit, and be prepared to change the planned date if necessary. Your gig is doomed if the biggest draw is a singer/songwriter who already plays down the road once a week, while the opposition is featuring a “flavour of the month” band and publicising it three times a night on television.
2. Give yourself two to three months run up to the gig. The advertisement in the newspapers on the day of the gig should confirm what people already know: i.e. do not rely on a newspaper ad to fill a venue - you need to have:

- posters designed, printed and erected.
- a press release sent to music press, local and national newspapers, a few weeks in advance of the show, followed by
- telephone calls to music journalists
- as many mentions as possible on local radio stations,
- handbills left in pubs, restaurants, colleges etc.
- word of mouth - perhaps use the “grapevine” which is part of the charity for which you are running the gig.

If, on the other hand, you can get a church or community hall free, fill it with no publicity at €5 a head and have a local band with its own PA play for nothing, go for it.

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