

DIGGING FOR GOLD

PHIL TRIPP'S HINTS ON HOW TO FIND THE BEST LIVE MUSIC... IN ANY CITY.

Whenever I'm overseas, I haunt the local venues looking for new music discoveries and great live shows but I first do advance work from home to line up acts, dates and venues for when I am in town. I spend a few hours on the computer to start researching cities, known venues and contacting people in the know from concert promoter staff to music writers, often making a call rather than just sending an email. We're bombarded by emails and that old hardware of hand-set and software of soft voice often beats out another email in a long line.

The way to get the most exhaustive and accurate list of shows by city, artist or date range is using Pollstar Magazine's free online database of events which is what the promoters, venues, agents and managers add to daily. It's <http://pollstar.com> where you can link to buy tickets and even get contacts for promoters and venues for an added tier of paid access.

Street press is mostly online now with gig guides of local venues updated constantly. Usually, the local newspaper will have the same facility. You may want to Google 'gig guide _c_i_t_y_' for your destination in case there is a non-media related online guide.

To source the magazine sites, use the members' list of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (<http://altweeklies.com/aan/Directories/Newsweeklies>), which directs you to more than a hundred US city papers and their sites. In New Orleans for example, I always check the gig guide of monthly *Offbeat Magazine* (offbeat.com) and *Gambit* (bestofneworleans.com) to see which clubs have residencies for the regulars I love to see - Bonerama, Dumpstaphunk, Trombone Shorty, Cyril Neville or Walter Washington - as well as the websites of the artists themselves. Even further, I'll check out the venue sites for oft-used rooms such as Tipitinas, Chickie Wah Wah, d.b.a., Howling Wolf, Rock 'n' Bowl and The Maple Leaf for heads up on who's appearing far in advance.

One of my particular faves is Jon Cleary, who alternates between Chickies and d.b.a. as well as a few other venues. I've altered my flights to be in a day early so I can make the date and found a couple of special events that he played at with Allen Toussaint and Dr. John.

Tourism authorities are often wired into gig guides or operate their own which cover all styles of music. A quick email to a city or country tourism site may unlock the doors of local venues, festivals or concerts. When I go to Amsterdam for example, I want to make sure I know what's going on at the clubs Melkweg, and Paradiso, Bimhuis and other fringe places. I use the official site <http://iamsterdam.com>, which

has links to all local shows.

Back to old fave N'awlins, the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau has a top site at <http://neworleanscvb.com/things-to-do/music/> but that's only the start. I also cultivate music writers I know from the local papers and street press who are happy to pass on tips of new bands, reformed acts, special events like benefits as well as new clubs. Approached with respect and brevity, I always find them happy to share their love of music and local acts.

In New Orleans my go-to gals would be Cate Root and Alison Fensterstock - entertainment writers of The Times Picayune newspaper - and Jan Ramsey, publisher of *Offbeat Magazine*.

Often there is a weekly entertainment section on the city paper that is the case with TGIF in Honolulu on Fridays and its editor Elizabeth Kieszkowski who I regularly hang out with on my many trips through Alohaland.

In strange cities it's often the hotel concierge who has his or her finger on the throb of local sounds. They can source tickets for sold out shows, make sure you get transported safely in dicey areas in town and VIP you into local clubs inside the velvet

rope. It doesn't even have to be your hotel concierge, use a five star that you walk into, informing the concierge that you're not staying there but plan to soon and make sure to tip.

Sometimes it's the little jazz and blues or other genre societies that can turn you on to real local flavour. Take our own Sydney Blues Society at <http://www.sydneyblues.org/> which also has a Facebook page. Members can often turn you on to the underbelly in towns like Chicago, Nashville, Kansas City and Memphis and also serve as local ambassadors of music.

Music conventions and showcases can expose you to a number of regional, local, national and international contacts by being a delegate. By being an attendee at South by Southwest for example, you have email access through the SXSocial database of delegates to filter by city, occupation, state or other parameters to make contacts more easily for later trips.

You may find yourself being in a city when a major Festival is happening such as New Orleans for French Quarter free fest, Miami for Winter Music Festival, New York City during CMJ, San Francisco during its Blues Festival or Toronto during Canadian Music Week. Look up 'music festival' and '(city)' online to find Wikipedia links or actual URLs of many destination cities or nearby festivals. 

