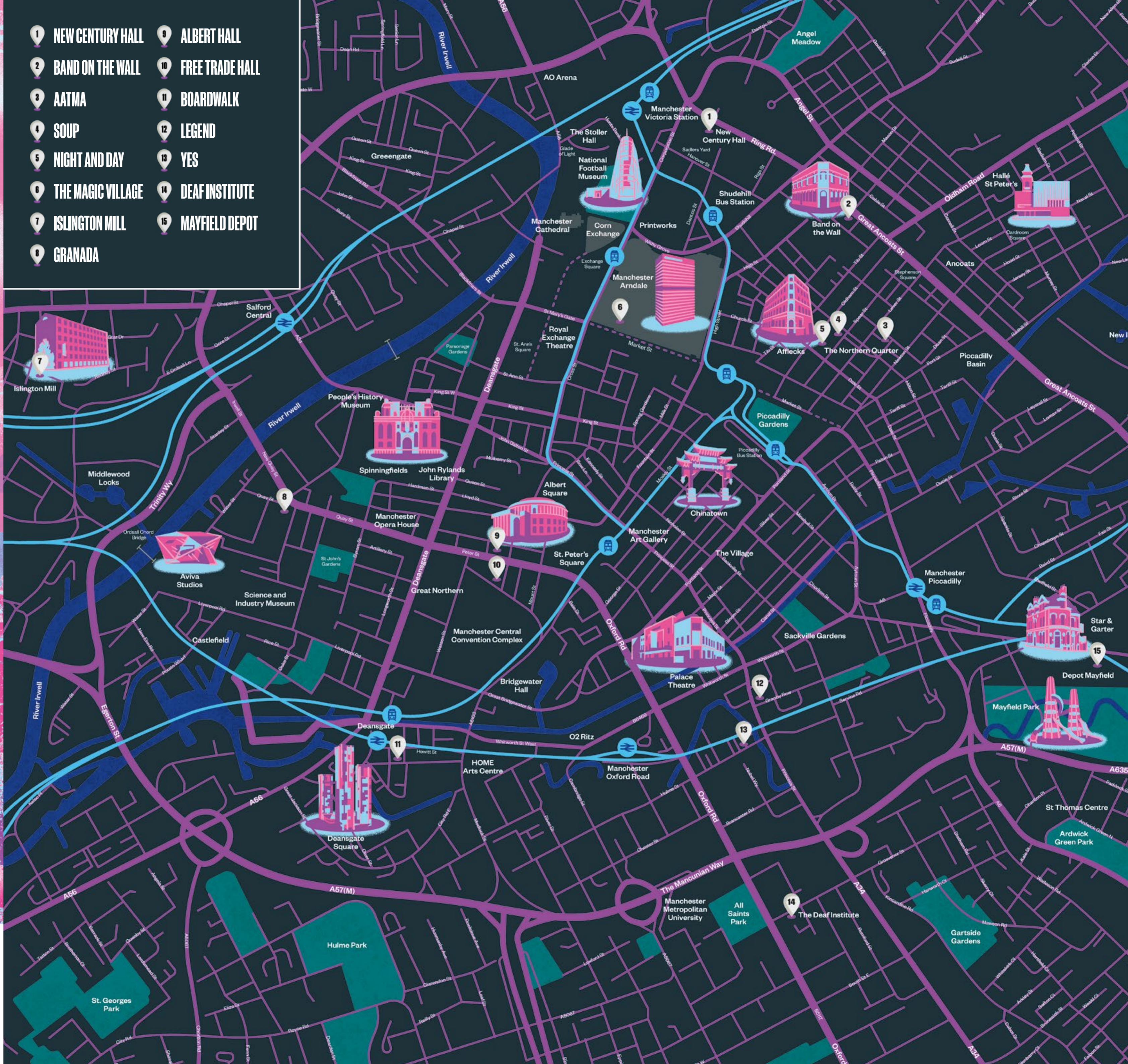


# MANCHESTER MUSIC MAP



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The Manchester Music Map is written by Hayley Flynn. Hayley runs critical thinking tours of Manchester as Skyliner, as well as working as a cultural placemaker and researcher.

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# GREATER MANCHESTER'S MUSIC SCENE IS MANY THINGS AT ONCE.

Firstly, it's loud and proud; self-assured and monolithic, the side of the city you've no doubt come to know. However, it's also something more obscure and constantly evolving; it's found in basements, fraying Victorian mansions, and in (barely) converted mechanics' garages.

In the Victorian city, zones were set aside for culture and you'll see evidence of those today through streets such as Concert, or Trumpet, Lane. However, in the 20th century, deindustrialisation changed our access to live music. Whilst in the 50s and 60s you could find beat clubs in the labyrinthine streets that would soon be replaced by the Arndale, night times in the city were a quiet affair. Lunchtime discos were commonplace, and big names such as Otis Redding, would perform early enough that you'd still be home in time for tea - a far cry from the Northern Soul all-nighters of Wigan.

The suburbs and surrounding towns became the home of music. From the mid-60s, the *Clifton Grange Hotel* in Whalley Range, owned by Phil Lynott's mother Philomena, became the place to be for musicians and the only hotel that would put up *The Sex Pistols*. *The Reno* in the 1970s was a Moss Side cellar-club exclusively for mixed-race folk. In the 1980s, *The Kitchen* in Hulme was a squat venue in former social housing which took inspiration from West-Indian Blues parties. In the 1990s, the post-industrial landscape attracted artists back in with an abundance of affordable practice rooms in former mills which brought a creative force to the boundaries of Manchester and fortified our status today as a city of artists and musicians.



## 1 NEW CENTURY HALL

Sadler's Yard, M4 4AH

New kid on the block, *New Century Hall*, actually has an impressive musical heritage. By day the venue hosted recruitment fairs, antique auctions, and conferences on smog, by night it was something altogether more captivating with regular Northern Soul DJs and dances (and like another Motown hotspot, *The Ritz* on Whitworth Street West, it has a sprung dance floor). World-famous acts came to New Century Hall, predominantly in the 60s, such as *The Kinks*, *Tina Turner* and *The Rolling Stones*. By the 80s, it was the unlikely location for the burgeoning acid house scene with regular nights put on by *808 State*. After a long period of dormancy, and a peculiar stoicism surrounding its place in our musical heritage, the hall has returned as a glorious modernist venue with promoters *Now Wave* at the helm.

## 2 BAND ON THE WALL

25 Swan St, M4 5JZ

Named after the fact that the stage was effectively a perch on the wall so as not to use up precious drinking space, *Band on the Wall* has come a long way since its days as a pub for the carters, fishmongers, and barrow boys of the Smithfield Markets in the 1930s. The venue was conceived as a home for jazz, although it was always a more mixed bag than that, with a reputation for 'world-music', as well as regular nights like *Craig Charles' Funk and Soul Show*, and *Mr Scruff's Keep It Unreal*. Short-lived Icelandic art-punk anarchists, *Purkkur Pillnikk*, performed here in 1982 (rumours have it, with a teenage *Bjork*). The venue also works closely with local charities and initiatives such as *Brighter Sound* to bring music to the new generation with events like *Junior Jam* and early-years session *Shake, Rattle & Roll*. *Manchester Jazz Festival* has strong ties with the venue, as well as with nearby *Matt & Phreds*; an intimate music venue full of soul.

## 3 AATMA

14-16 Faraday St, M1 1BE

Located down a distinct alleyway in the Northern Quarter, *Aatma* (formerly *Kraak Gallery*), established itself as a site for DIY culture for the region. Just next door sits the *Peer Hat*, a popular gig venue and bar continuing in a similar vein as *Aatma*, as a home for local promoters and bands. Both venues have managed to retain their dive bar charms, and *Aatma* has an electric atmosphere. Experimental local bands are at home on the stage here, including the likes of *Locean*, who mix the spoken word of *Roy Fisher Prize*-winning poet *Lauren Bolger* with powerful psychedelic sounds. Notably though, is the work of a much-missed musician, performer and leader of local DIY culture, *Louise Woodcock* was *Kraak's* first curator, and was a bedrock for institutions like *Islington Mill* and *Fat Out*. She shook up the music scene of Manchester from the early 2000s and was a role model and instigator for queer music, women, and noise.

## 4 SOUP

31-33 Spear St, M1 1DF

Formerly *Soup Kitchen*, *Soup* encapsulates the authentic heart of the Northern Quarter. It's steadfastly welcoming, unassuming, cool, and unpolished. The gig space is a low-ceilinged, dark basement, and captures the nature of the city's iconic at-home parties (shebeens). Their regular nights and overall ethos as a venue has put them on the map. For 11 years, *Soup* was home to *Swing Ting*. The night was experimental and diverse, reflecting the people it opened its door to. The music was afro-bashment, dancehall, hip-hop, and garage, and there was nowhere centrally quite like it. Whilst *Swing Ting* ended on a high in 2022, the venue has kept the same vibe going. They pride themselves on 'forward-thinking' music, including techno, and have set an affordable price cap on tickets, keeping music at the heart of the city.

## 5 NIGHT AND DAY

26 Oldham St, M1 1JN

When *Night and Day* opened in 1991, the Northern Quarter wasn't even named yet, much less a thriving neighbourhood for musicians. The former chip shop soon became a vital part of the music scene, crucial to the careers of many local bands including *Elbow*, and early career appearances from *Manic Street Preachers*, *Wet Leg*, and *Arctic Monkeys*. There's an eclectic line up at times, and the venue has even attracted the likes of Keanu Reeves there to see *Joseph Arthur*, supported by Manchester's *Liam Frost*. *Night and Day* undoubtedly led to more music venues opening in the area, and today, *The Castle*, *Gullivers*, *Stage and Sound*, *33 Oldham Street*, and countless others sit alongside it. Whilst it's uniquely Manchester, there's more than a hint of New York about this pillar of the neighbourhood. Always cool, always alive with potential.

## 6 THE MAGIC VILLAGE

15 Corporation Street, M4 3AG

Today we have *Manchester Psych Fest*, but in 1968 if you wanted to enjoy psych music then it was slightly more underground. *The Magic Village* opened on Cromford Court, a Victorian backstreet, and unusually for a venue, it had no alcohol licence. Reeking of incense, it had a permanently leaky ceiling (which patrons would traverse by a rope swing), and it was one of the only venues in the city that allowed men with long hair. It was also the place to pick up underground press publications, including mystical magazines such as *Gandalf's Garden*. In between sets the bands would sit with the audience. Sometimes the two lines would blur, choosing to continue their set on the floor, and audience members included the likes of a young *David Bowie*.

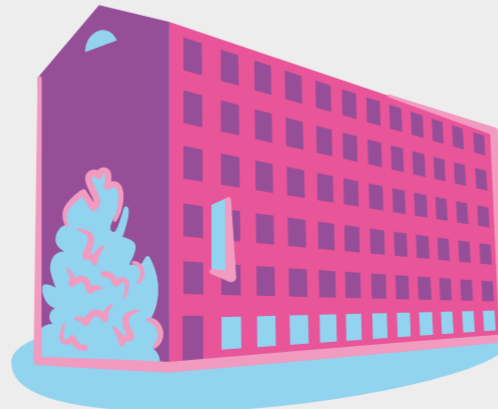
Typical bands to The Village were blues band *The Groundhogs*, American psychedelic rock band *Missunderstood*, folk singer *Bridget St John*, Manchester freakbeat band *St Louis Union*, *Jethro Tull*, *T-Rex*, *Slade*, *Roy Harper*, *Pink Floyd*, *Captain Beefheart*, *The Fairport Convention* and *DJ John Peel*.

It was short lived. In the 1970s it was bulldozed, along with the rest of Cromford Court and surrounding streets, for the Arndale. The street lived on in name by way of 60 flats on the roof of the Arndale from 1981 to 2004, and true to its namesake, was a popular location for after parties.

## 7 ISLINGTON MILL

James St, M3 5HW

A bold and progressive cultural centre which secured funding to protect the venue from encroaching gentrification in the Chapel Street area. The mill is synonymous with *Fat Out Festival*, and *Sounds From the Other City*, a music festival at the start of May. Brilliant, friendly, subversive and euphoric, it's surely the most fun you can have along the River Irwell. The festival has operated in and around the Mill since 2005 and is touched by the genius that is *Riv Burns* - a legitimate cultural hero for Greater Manchester who brings her musical ideas not only to the mill but to *Manchester International Festival* and myriad other gigs and events. *The Mill* is neighboured by *St Philip's* and *Sacred Trinity*, both regular live music venues - the latter is home to *Manchester School of Samba*.



## 8 GRANADA

Quay St, M3 3GS

It may be an icon for television, but the studios at *Granada* aren't to be overlooked in our musical heritage. In 1962, *The Beatles* made their first TV appearance here performing *Love Me Do* live. In 1976, the show *So It Goes* was broadcast from the studios. Presented by *Tony Wilson*, the music show honed in on punk and became a launchpad for new music. *The Sex Pistols* first TV appearance was on the show, and acts like *Patti Smith* and *Iggy Pop* also appeared. The show didn't just help punk bands reach a wider audience, but it also established the North as a place of burgeoning creativity. In 2023, a new wave of music returned to the area, at *Factory International's Aviva Studios*, the new home of *Manchester International Festival* and the global artists and musicians which it platforms. Not to be missed nearby is *One Mic Stand*, a music and slam poetry event at *Blues Kitchen*. The event's run by *Young Identity* - one of our most thriving institutions, who nurture young spoken word artists such as *Isaiah Hull*.

## 9 ALBERT HALL

57 Peter St, M2 5QR

With the introduction of the weekend by William Marsden in 1843, the working class had time, for the first time, to socialise. As a result the city's music which had previously catered solely for 'esteemed gentlemen' became open to all as it spread up Peter Street and Oxford Road. *The Halle Orchestra* at the *Free Trade Hall*, now found itself cheek by jowl with raucous music halls. This wave of often quite bawdy entertainment was countered by the introduction of Temperance concerts; alcohol-free music events located in purpose-built temples that were designed to look like theatres or concert halls in the hope of converting Mancunians to tee-totalism. *The Albert Hall* is the most striking example of this, and when the former Wesleyan chapel reopened as a music venue in 2013, it hit the ground running - a breathtaking venue with a varied line-up, often favoured by indie artists like *Jeff Mangum*, *PJ Harvey*, *Angel Olsen*, *Sleater Kinney*, and *Big Thief*.

## 10 FREE TRADE HALL

The Edwardian Hotel, Peter St, M2 5GP

Originally a home for political discourse as well as music, the concert hall was the birthplace and home of the *Halle Orchestra* from 1858. The building is famous for its gigs in the 60s and 70s too, where *Bob Dylan* was called 'Judas' for playing the electric guitar, where *Kiss* played their first UK show, *Pink Floyd*, *The Moody Blues*, *Simon and Garfunkel*, and where 40 people went to see *The Sex Pistols* first gig, which started a domino effect leading to the creation of the *Hacienda*, and the formation of bands such as *The Fall*, *The Smiths*, and *Joy Division*.

In 1996, the *Halle* moved to *Bridgewater Hall*, where they are until this day, but have also brought their symphonies to Ancoats with their dedicated rehearsal and recording space at *Halle St Peters*, and a community space at *Halle St Michaels*. The latter is used for contemporary bands, including the utterly unique and compelling Oldham-born *Keeley Forsyth*, who embodies the dark and haunting sounds of the surrounding moors with an elemental voice akin to *Scott Walker* or *Anohni*.

## 11 BOARDWALK

Little Peter St, M15 4QH

*The Boardwalk* is well-known as the first venue *Oasis* played, and outside the acid-house smiley face on the plaque firmly establishes its credentials amongst the Madchester subset of musicians. The opening night featured *James*, *The Charlatans*, and *Happy Mondays*, and its regular clubnight *Yellow* was from DJ *Dave Haslam*. However, it wasn't as simply defined as Madchester, it could be altogether noisier and international with acts like *Sonic Youth*, *Rage Against the Machine*, and *Hole* gracing the stage. It was renowned as one of the spiritual homes for what was known as *C86*, predominantly a type of guitar music which heralded the first wave of indie. *C86* was the name of a compilation tape made by NME in 1986, which connected the dots for a lot of DIY acts around the country who were silenced by difficulties in connecting with other musicians across the country except through small-runs of zines, or word-of-mouth.

## 12 LEGEND

121 Princess St, M1 7AG

Before the city became more nationally recognised for contemporary music and dance thanks to the likes of *Paradise Factory* and the *Hacienda*, there was *Legend*. Known more usually as *Legends*, the interior was made up of 2000 decorative lights designed like a spaceage fairground. The club promoted itself initially as a 'futuristic disco club', though it became far more than disco. It was a space for a wealth of subcultures, new romantics and goths amongst them. DJ *Greg Wilson's Electro-funk* night brought the jazz-funk of New York to the dancefloors of Manchester, and with it, *Legends* became an essential venue for the Black community, especially the young folk of Moss Side.

*Legends* was also a student haunt, and later the building reopened as *5th Avenue* - if you studied in Manchester anytime since the early 80s, you've danced in *Legends* or *5th Ave*.



## 13 YES

38 Charles St, M1 7DB

2018 brought us YES. A place that takes all the most essential, intangible parts of the city's favourite bars and venues, and brings them together making something totally unique and reassuringly familiar. With gigs six days out of seven, the child-friendly, dog-friendly, affordable cultural space has an ambitious calendar of music that is united not by a genre but a feeling of excitement. Across four floors, the idea is to capture the feeling of a music festival with something different on each level. A dark basement for intimate gigs, DIY nights and a free entry policy at the weekends goes hand in hand with the affordable ethos at the bar. The ground floor hosts DJs and it acts as a breakout space from the gigs it finds itself sandwiched between. The main space is on floor three - *The Pink Room*. Pink walls, pink ceiling, pink floor, a simple idea that sets it apart from anywhere else and a space that attracts the likes of *Self Esteem*. The variety at YES is the attraction, and the promoters have unerring ambition, which they have to with a sound system approved by NASA.

## 14 DEAF INSTITUTE

135 Grosvenor St, M1 7HE

In 2008, if you weren't on your way to indie disco *Underachievers Please Try Harder* at Rusholme's *Saki Bar* (later relocated to *Roadhouse*), then chances are you were headed to the *Deaf*. In fact, anyone involved in the music scene from the late 2000s on has spent time here. The ornate and striking small venue, established itself as the place to catch a gig for the indie hipster scene and it took off immediately with a jam-packed gig calendar from the likes of *Bill Callahan*, *Sunset Rubdown*, and *Edwyn Collins*. It's been a vital space for local bands too, and the layout of the gigspace has allowed for social connections between music lovers in a way most venues don't achieve. In terms of adoration and reputation, consider it a twin to Leeds' *Brudenell Social Club*. Location-wise, it's a gateway to the *Academy* venues on Oxford Road, the *Apollo* at Ardwick, and across the road is *Bread Shed*, where metal and emo finds itself at home.

## 15 MAYFIELD DEPOT

11 Baring St, M1 2PY

*Mayfield* was an abandoned train depot for many years, and it sits besides the cultural icon that is the *Star and Garter*. The pub, known since the 90s as a grassroots gig space, but for much longer as a working class boozer, consider themselves the last truly independent music venue in Manchester. *Mayfield Depot* next door is now a cultural hotspot for the city and is home to the *Warehouse Project*. *WHP* is a huge, seasonal nightclub operating three months a year (inspired by the busiest months at Ancoats nightclub *Sankeys*) and in its colourful history has seen *Aphex Twin*, *The Prodigy* and *Skept*a. Considered by many to be the best club in the UK, it offers a mix of established DJs and upcoming acts.

*Mayfield* is also the current home of *Homobloc*, an annual festival version of *Homoelectric*, a queer-friendly night which began in earnest as a space to unite Mancunians by holding mixed parties for 'homos, heteroes, lesbians and don't knows'. The club night was one of a few, including *Flesh* at the *Hacienda*, and *Club Brenda*, that moved the gay club scene away from aesthetics and house music, to something more casual, more eclectic and took inspiration from the come-as-you-are attitude of the punk scene.



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