



Organising a Conscious Club or Gig Night (Dance Upon Injustice)



Concept 1

Conscious club or gig nights combine great music, a chance to dance and enjoy a good drink, raise awareness about justice issues, and give people a chance to respond to those issues.

What You Will Need

A theme – conscious club or gig nights work best if there is a clear theme or issue being presented, for example corporate responsibility or government support for the arms trade. This theme gives focus to the night otherwise it would just be another ordinary club night. It might be appropriate to have a specific campaign action for the night, e.g. collecting MP3 messages in support of SPEAK's Unfinished Business campaign.

Fundraising – you will need some money to make this event happen (unless you get a great venue deal and lots of favours with PA equipment!) The event may require a large investment up front, which can then be recuperated through charging an entrance fee, asking for donations, selling fair trade refreshments or other items (ask the venue first!), or other means. Alternatively you could do fundraising events beforehand, such as sponsored challenges or fair trade cake sales, to raise money for it. All of this must be carefully considered before any decisions or commitments are made so that you know what you're getting into!

A date and a venue – often one will determine the other. You may want to schedule your event for a particular date, e.g. to tie in with an important world summit or significant time in the student calendar, or to avoid clashes with other events. You may have a particular venue in mind that is a favourite hang-out of activists or students, or would make a particularly great venue for your event. It may not be possible to get your first choice venue on your first choice date, so be prepared to be flexible. It is good to think carefully here about the kinds of people you think would be interested in coming to your event, how many you are expecting, what kinds of music you will be playing, and what your budget is. All of these factors will influence your choice of venue. You will need to book this up to 8-12 weeks in advance to give you time to give out flyers.

Musicians/DJs – a key ingredient of any club or gig night! Think about people you know who are musicians or DJs; they are likely to be reliable and cost less than well established acts who don't know you! Hopefully they will also know what the issues and campaigns are about and be able to incorporate those in to their set. There are many talented musicians in the SPEAK Network, so if you need some top musical talent get in touch with the Network Support Team who may be able to put you in touch with some. You could also involve other local musicians, but if they don't know you then they will probably charge quite high fees. It might be good to think about cohesion in the line-up – potential punters might be put off if a death metal band is followed directly by a smooth house DJ for example! However, you might find that more eclectic combinations work better! Variety within reasonable boundaries is usually the best policy.

PA / lighting equipment – usually these are not included in the venue hire. However, the venue may be able to supply them to you for an added premium, and can often provide a sound engineer as well. If you know someone with a good PA system (at least 1000W or 2 x 500W stereo pair) who is willing to lend it to you and be sound engineer for the night, this may work out cheaper but is generally more hassle. Make sure that at least a couple of microphones are included. The venue may be able to provide a lighting rig but if not, one can be hired from a local disco/event hire company. The size of the setup required (and therefore the price) is dependent on the size of the venue. If hiring, discuss your requirements with the hire company first since they will know exactly what will help.

Creative décor – this is really important for creating a good atmosphere, and can be used to effectively communicate the issues your event is focusing on. Banners work really well here (if the venue has UV lights then white paint looks great!). Sculpture, collage and other kinds of art installations can also be used. Be creative! Décor used well can really help engage people in the issues you want to communicate, getting them thinking but not simply relying on monologues from the front that (if not done really well) can destroy the atmosphere!

Publicity – the amount of publicity you are able to do depends on your budget, but try to distribute as many small flyers and large posters as possible! Also think about local or student events listings, newspapers, websites, email loops and bulletins, plugs at the meetings of other campaign groups (check with the leader first!) and anything else you can think of! Ask the SPEAK regional support worker to invite other SPEAK groups and Links in your area – this can be a really good way of forming deeper connections with others in your region in SPEAK. You may need to position people outside the local train, bus stations or other club nights to flyer in the two weeks leading up to your event. Promotion is one of the most important aspects of preparation, but is easy to neglect. If you put in loads of work on the event but neglect publicity, people won't come and everyone involved will feel demoralised, and there won't be as many people taking part in the campaigns and learning about the issues. So publicity is really a win-win situation! In preparing the flyer and posters, make sure you ask a designer early and give them the correct text and a good amount of time to design it, and then enough time for you to print and collect and distribute them to your publicity team. Perhaps you could make friends with other local promoters and learn some tips from them.

During the event – It is important that there are plenty of SPEAK people or campaigning friends on hand to chat with people, to encourage punters to sign the creative petition or campaign action you are doing etc. It would be best to have separate people responsible for liaising with artists etc, looking after the practical side of things, and being available to chat. One idea that has been used by people in the network at conscious club nights is to dress up as angels and go round giving out gifts of fairly traded chocolate etc, with a quote or a statistic related to justice or spirituality.

Timeline – this depends on how much money you plan to raise beforehand, and also what venue and artists you are planning on booking. From start to finish it may take about three months:

Week 1 – Meet to plan. Choose a theme, and a few possible venues and dates, and some acts.

Week 2 – Book the venue. Make sure you talk to them about PA and lighting, and if you are able to sell

refreshments etc.

– Find a designer and write text for your flyer

Week 3 – Book artists, PA and lighting equipment etc if you need it.

– Fundraising activities

Week 4 – Once artists are confirmed, start producing publicity.

Week 6 – Begin to distribute publicity, invite friends etc

– Begin to create décor

Week 10 – Check with venue and artists that everything's ok

– Finalise timetable for the night and communicate to artists

Week 11 – Massive publicity push. Get outside other clubs, in bars and cafes, shops etc.

Week 12 – Final round of last minute publicity

On the day – Pray at the venue together

– Install décor etc, set venue up

– Leave time for artists to sound check before doors open (half an hour for each at least)

– Be available to chat with punters, engage people in creative campaign actions or discussions etc

Post-event – Tidy up!

– Return borrowed/hired equipment

– Thank artists

– Write a report and send it to your SPEAK regional support worker! Send in any campaign messages you recorded and photos.

Follow up

During the event you may get into interesting conversations with people about the issues you are looking at, the motivation for your activism etc. It might be a good idea to have the date of your next SPEAK (or other) meeting sorted so you can invite people along. If people want to sign up to your mailing list then you can contact them afterwards and invite them again, or simply be keeping them in touch with campaign updates.