

IN THE LOOP

Hear and Now

Fancy a lager with a side of loud? Chris Canty lists Melbourne's top music pubs



THE TOTE

Located in the gritty pub heartland of Collingwood, The Tote is loud and alive with passion. When it closed last year due to controversial government taxes, thousands took to the streets in support, becoming a catalyst for policy change. It reopened under new management and from Wednesday to Sunday each week, it showcases great local and international acts that tend to set their amps to 11. The beer garden often hosts free barbecues to keep the punters happy. Entry: \$5–\$15

71 Johnston St, Collingwood,
tel: (0)3 9419 5320,
www.thetotehotel.com



THE EMPRESS

This music pub might be off the tourist radar, but it holds a special place in the hearts of the locals. On a nightly basis, folk and indie performers ply their trade on what must rank among the city's tiniest stages. On Tuesdays, it's open-mic night, when customers can live out their singing-star dreams. With an old-school horseshoe-shaped bar ideal for kicking back with a pint, and a big kitchen serving up cheap meals, The Empress is a must-visit for music fans. Entry: Free–\$10

714 Nicholson St, Fitzroy North,
tel: (0)3 9489 8605,
www.theempresshotel.com.au



WORKERS CLUB

Fitzroy's trendy set calls this watering hole home. Genres heard in the intimate band room here range from ska/punk to acoustic folk and there's always a crowd of passionate devotees on hand. The pub also offers accommodation for the bands upstairs, meaning there is a good chance that on any given night the performers will hang around after the gig, drinking and socialising with patrons. Mondays are especially popular as meals are just \$8. Entry: Free–\$15

51 Brunswick St, Fitzroy,
tel: (0)3 9415 8889,
www.theworkersclub.com.au



THE RAINBOW

Situated in a quiet Fitzroy backstreet, this little gem is a stalwart of Melbourne's vibrant live music scene. Under new management since late last year, the venue has only improved – with a larger band room and a new beer bar upstairs. The blues, country and western and solo acoustic music are the mainstay genres, and the Sunday afternoon performances tend to be a weekly highlight. If that isn't incentive enough, there's also a popular Sunday roast. Entry: Free (usually)

27 St David St, Fitzroy,
tel: (0)3 9419 4193,
www.therainbow.com.au

The northern inner suburbs are the undisputed home of Melbourne's music bar scene, but try these pubs in the west and south, too

WEST

THE DRUNKEN POET

Like most cities, Melbourne has its fair share of *faux* Irish pubs, but this little watering hole is actually Irish-owned and is about as close as you're likely to get to the real McCoy. Most nights, you'll hear a bit of rockabilly and blues here and the occasional lock-in does occur. This pub makes for a great stop after you've run yourself ragged in the Queen Victoria Market across the road. Entry: Free (usually)

65 Peel St, West Melbourne,
tel: (0)3 9348 9797

SOUTH

THE ESPLANADE HOTEL

Home to the city's most famous stretch of sand, St Kilda is also the location of this celebrated rock outpost. With three dedicated band areas (the Gershwin Room, the Basement and the Front Bar) the Espy is a fun house of noise and creativity every night. The kitchen staff makes a mean burger and the front room overlooking the bay is the ideal spot to throw back a few beers. Entry: Up to \$3

11 The Esplanade, St Kilda, tel: (0)3 9534 0211, www.espy.com.au