

Mark's Concert Venue Guide

Mark has very kindly updated his guide to local venues.

“Hi all, here’s my latest contribution about the suitability of concert venues for people with disabilities. Sorry I haven’t been to many meetings lately. I’ve been busy wearing myself to a frazzle, going out to rock concerts all over the place. Oh well, when I eventually drop it’ll be with a smile on my face!”

Hammersmith Apollo, London.

Went to see Mott the Hoople there last year (yes, I’m afraid I am that old). This is a really good venue, with good facilities for the likes of us who have special needs. The disabled viewing section is on a nifty little platform that mechanically rises at the back of the stalls on the ground floor. Excellent view and access. I took a cab to get there, though, as parking is more or less non-existent. Well, it is central London. Cabbies have always been very helpful to me, however.

02 Arena, London

Saw Peter Gabriel there earlier this year. The car park is quite near the entrance, and, once inside, facilities are very good. Staff were particularly helpful, letting me in early and allowing me into a members bar. The disabled section is on an easily accessible platform very near the stage – positions are on a ‘first come, first served’ basis, but everywhere on the platform has an excellent view.

NEC, Birmingham

This venue has been revamped since I saw AC/DC there last year. I went to see Bad Company a few months ago and was pleased to find the disabled toilet has been improved, and the viewing area still very close to the

stage. The car park is closer to the venue than it used to be, although still a bit of a trek if you are, like me, walking with a stick. The place is a bit soul-less, but staff are very helpful and professional.

The Assembly, Leamington Spa

Saw Goldfrapp and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club there a couple of months ago. This is a great venue, with a first floor viewing area overlooking the stage and ground floor. This venue is standing only, but staff really do go out of their way to be helpful. I've been there a couple of times and have found it's best to get there fairly early and go to the front of the upstairs viewing area, directly facing the stage. Staff members have brought me a chair to sit on throughout the show, and have checked up on me regularly to see if I want help to visit the disabled toilet etc. Wheelchair users would be fine – there's a lift and staff members are exceptionally helpful and sympathetic to one's needs. 'Thumbs-up' to this venue!

I've attended various other events as well as the rock shows, and have regularly visited Cheltenham Town Hall, Cheltenham Everyman Theatre, Chipping Norton Theatre and Warwick Arts Centre. All of these venues are 'disabled friendly', although building work has recently been going on at Warwick Arts Centre, meaning that parking close to the venue wasn't easy. In a few months I'm off to the New Theatre at Oxford to see Status Quo (yet again!), so I'll let you know about facilities there.

Mark"