

On the Record, with Leonie Cooper



- 1 Last week, Metallica launched their new album, 'Hardwired... To Self-Destruct', at an unusually 27 show at London's House of Vans. For a band normally found playing stadiums and headlining massive festivals, a show in an 850-capacity underground vault is utterly and totally unmissable.
- 2 I was only able to lay my hands on one ticket, so I headed off to the venue alone. Upon arrival I began to weave my way through the testosterone-heavy crowd in order to get a better view. During my mission I encountered that annoying guy who seems to be at every concert ever — the guy who's still surprised to find that women have been allowed to leave their homes unaccompanied and enjoy something other than cooking anaemic lasagne for their grumpy husband. Let's call him Patronising Gig Bloke.
- 3 Sadly, I found myself standing right next to Patronising Gig Bloke, who evidently assumed that because I am a woman, and because I was dressed a bit like Dolly Parton (red gingham shirt — check; cowboy boots — check), I must have accidentally got lost on my way to the south London rodeo. "You might need to watch yourself, love. Things might get a bit crazy when the metalheads kick off," he offered, unhelpfully. "It's alright, I have seen live music before," I responded tersely. And if you're thinking he was just being friendly, then ask yourself if he would have said the same thing to a man. Because he wouldn't. Hello, sexism. I'm sure Patronising Gig Bloke won't like it, but of course women belong down the front and in the mosh¹⁾ just as much as dudes.
- 4 There aren't many places where I feel truly comfortable, but the front of a gig is one of them. I've lost shoes in mosh pits¹⁾ at Brixton Academy (RIP purple suede Vans, c. 2004), left the Kentish Town Forum drenched in sweat — my own and other people's — been on the receiving end of pints flung through the air at Reading Festival, crowd surfed at the dearly departed Astoria and stood in front of so many speakers that tinnitus is inevitable.
- 5 Although the same can't be said for pop and indie shows, there are certain kinds of gigs where the crowd is overwhelmingly male. Last year, a female friend and I went to see stoner metal band Om, known for their epic sets, at the Electric Ballroom. We went to top up our drinks halfway through the show and as we walked through the crowd to the bar, a 40-something man exclaimed, with a chuckle: "I knew they wouldn't get it!" Pal, I'm a professional music journalist, I probably know more about that music than you ever will. Though, to be fair, you probably know far more about computer programming and living with your mum, so I suppose that makes us even.

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noot 1 mosh (pit) = plaats, vaak vooraan bij het podium, waar wild gesprongen en gedanst wordt