

An iconic red door marks the entrance to The Dublin Castle Inn, a lively British pub tucked away in the heart of Camden Town.

Decades before the pub was the legendary venue it is today, the Dublin Castle served Irish labourers who worked at the nearby railway. This changed in the 1960s, with the arrival of Peggy Nolan and her husband, who transformed the pub into a cornerstone of London's music scene. Since then, it has seen an endless stream of musicians, from the likes of Madness to the Arctic Monkeys. Countless well-known names have taken the first steps of their musical career on the small stage behind the main bar, and plenty more who never quite made it out of the local scene. Even Muse were known to jam it out here in shaggy haircuts and oversized blazers, long before they found later success.

The live shows are still decently priced—almost suspiciously so for London, which could explain why so much new talent tries their hand here. In fact, the last show I attended was priced at a total of £10 to see four incredible acts. That's the price of two coffees in London nowadays, or perhaps a cocktail if you're lucky.

The bands tend to play a mix of old indie rock and rhythmic funk, with ABBA covers often sneaking their way in.

The music is loud, raw, and slightly chaotic in the best way possible. It's easy to see why this venue is so beloved and how it has quietly shaped London's music scene for decades.

The crowd is just as eclectic as the music, an assortment of ages and backgrounds with first timers standing by regulars who might've seen the place in its prime. Once, I was at a Thursday night show and

noticed someone my dad worked with performing on stage. His band, aptly named the Unfunkables, played catchy MIKA numbers and upbeat covers by Ray Charles, bringing a funk twist to the classics. Corporate suit turned indie rockstar indeed.

After the live sets finish, on Fridays through to Sunday, a DJ is usually seen flipping vinyl records into the early hours. The stage is cleared of band equipment, and people flood the dance floor with terrible dancing and spilled beer. Unlike the other clubs I frequent in London, there's a shared understanding that bad dancing is accepted, if not encouraged.

Dance-offs on stage are not uncommon, and though I'm not sure I've seen anyone win, I'm equally sure no one cares enough to try.

# THE DUBLIN CASTLE

*written by Nicole Bowen*

However, what I find to be the most special about The Dublin Castle isn't just its rich history, but the atmosphere it still has. According to regulars, the worn leather seats and outdated posters on the walls have barely changed over the years. Depending on the night, it is not uncommon to see punks clad in leather jackets and steel-studded boots, or on a particularly lively Saturday, the sequined purple shirts characteristic of the 80s. It's clear that no matter your music taste or style, there's a real sense of belonging to this bar.

It's hard to pin down the exact charm of The Dublin Castle. It's undeniably scruffy, but perhaps more importantly, it wears its history proudly. Camden has no shortage of bars, but if you happen to be walking past an unruly crowd spilling out of a bright red door, I encourage you to take a look inside. You could find the next Amy Winehouse, or new favourite band.