**Gig Buddies team up with major UK band IDLES to increase access to live events for people with a learning disability**

Music fans with learning disabilities are the focus of an online event that is being organised by the major UK rock band, IDLES.

The virtual fundraising gig is being organised by IDLES bassist Adam ‘Dev’ Devonshire to support Gig Buddies, a network of befriending projects across the UK. Gig Buddies tackles loneliness and increases access to live events and culture by matching adults with learning disabilities (and/or autism) with a volunteer who shares the same interests so they can go to gigs and events together.

The online gig will feature comedy from Stewart Lee, Seann Walsh, and Josh Weller, and music from Mclusky, Willie J Healey, TV Priest, Fenne Lily, Dogeyed and Wilderman. IDLES singer Joe Talbot has designed an exclusive t-shirt in aid of Gig Buddies, while an online raffle will feature prizes from major acts, including The National, Sharon Van Etten and Mogwai, and a signed guitar from all the artists playing.

IDLES bassist Dev said:

"After witnessing first-hand what vital and wonderful work Gig Buddies do, it has been an honour and a privilege for me to be working with them and raising awareness of the wonderful service that they provide. Music and live events provide us all with so much happiness and catharsis and everyone deserves to have that joy in their lives.

“The Cardiff chapter of Gig Buddies has recently expanded into North Wales and have rebranded as Gig Buddies Cymru and are now looking for a number of new volunteers and extra funding to help with this. Hopefully we can raise enough to provide them with what they need and then, fingers crossed, we’ll be able to also raise enough to then start a Bristol chapter of Gig Buddies. But that’s not ignoring the other chapters in the rest of the country, of course!”

The event will be streamed from Exchange in Bristol on Sunday 20th June. Tickets are available to purchase now for a suggested donation of £5 with an additional option to enter the raffle.

Money raised from the event will be split between Gig Buddies Cymru, which is run by the charity Learning Disability Wales, and developing a Bristol chapter of Gig Buddies. Proceeds from sales of the t-shirt, designed by IDLES singer Joe Talbot for Gig Buddies, will go to Gig Buddy projects across the UK, plus Gig Buddies Sydney, in Australia.

Kai Jones, project coordinator with Gig Buddies Cymru, said: “The pandemic has forced the whole country to experience the loneliness and isolation that many people with a learning disability face in their day to day lives. Gig Buddies is a simple concept that creates new friendships through shared interests, whether that’s going to a gig or the theatre, watching sport or visiting a museum, but it can have a powerful impact on someone’s life.

“We’re overwhelmed by the support we’ve had from Dev. During the pandemic we’ve been keeping people connected through online events and supporting people to meet outdoors whenever it has been safe. Now that restrictions are being lifted we are putting all our efforts into supporting new Gig Buddy friendships, and we need lots more volunteers to do this.”

The Gig Buddies scheme was founded in Brighton by the charity Stay Up Late in 2012 and has since spread to 11 other chapters across the UK, plus one in Sydney, Australia.

To purchase tickets for the event and/or buy raffle tickets, please go to: <http://hdfst.uk/E64312>

For more information on Gig Buddies, and to find your nearest Gig Buddies project, contact Stay Up Late: [www.stayuplate.org/gigbuddies](http://www.stayuplate.org/gigbuddies) / Phone: 020 3920 8471.

For more information on becoming a volunteer for Gig Buddies Cymru visit: [www.frindiaugigiau.org.uk](http://www.frindiaugigiau.org.uk) / Phone 029 2068 1160.

T-shirts are available from: [www.idlesband.com](http://www.idlesband.com)