

Capital Coffee – Ground Floor

As specialty coffee spreads across the city, it's increasingly found in a variety of places. This includes good coffee spots popping up in cultural venues. The [MF Coffee Project](#) at Summerhall is a prominent example of this.

On a slightly smaller scale, we find a newcomer: **Ground Floor** on Great Junction Street in Leith. Opened this August, they had a belated launch party in early October.

Leith is one of the few areas in Edinburgh where cultural institutions are more integrated into the local community. These include [Out of the Blue Drill Hall](#) on Dalmeny Street, a community arts centre which also has a café. Ground Floor has a similar vibe, albeit it's focused much more on music than the visual arts. Other community arts related places nearby include the excellent, well curated Edinburgh Community Bookshop, which is just a few metres along the road.



This slightly Tardis-like location is something of a hub, playing hosts a variety of creative activities, as well as retailer Drum Central. As you enter you will encounter, just past the coffee bar, the impressive [new purpose-built home of EHFM radio](#). This online station previously broadcast out of Summerhall.

Founded in 2018, EHFM has built up a substantial community of presenters and volunteers. This allows them to broadcast 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With café customers being able to see the studio so easily, hopefully it will help promote the station and give it a higher profile. Proceeds from the

café go towards “powering” EHFM. You can hear the music and the DJ’s wafting through the space while you have your coffee. A nice calming background if you want to sit here and read, study, or chill. Several people seem to come to the place to write, perhaps absorbing the energy from the surroundings and turning it into literary magic.

Previously Spilt Milk Social Club and Café, the space itself is much changed. The interior has gone through something of a transformation, with a lot of stuff removed. They’ve created a less cluttered and airier space. Ground Floor staff got involved. “if you’ve never demolished anything I can tell you that it’s very satisfying...they even let me have a go with a sledgehammer!”



The coffee itself is well made, using specialty beans with satisfying chocolatey notes. While I was there, fresh sacks of beans were being delivered, roasted just a few days before. Ground Floor have recently started using beans sourced from Mutual Coffee, a very new roaster based in Edinburgh. Ground Floor is acting as something of a “guinea pig” for Mutual, to gauge customer feedback. So far they’ve had “really positive feedback” from Ground Floor customers. They plan to have retail bags of a range of Mutual’s beans for sale in the coming months. It shows how specialty coffee places promote and give business to other local businesses. Alongside the coffee and sweet baked goods they offer topped vegan focaccia.

This is baked by Alby's – the popular sandwich bar on nearby Portland Place.



The coffee bar at Ground Floor is not the main focus of the place but adds to the sense of a communal cultural hub. It's open to anyone walking in off the street. It also helps to caffeinate the presenters of the radio station and stimulate those using the extensive music studios downstairs in the basement.

In the 30 minutes I was there, at least 10 different musicians came and went, lugging their instruments through the doors.

All were given a warm welcome. The place acts as a meeting place for musicians. It plays a leading role in connecting people looking to form bands and looking for jam sessions to play at. Again, it all emphasises the community hub aspect of the place – as well as an undoubted sense of energy. You may well find yourself popping in for a flat white and pastry and getting caught up in something new. The spread of specialty coffee through Leith is a manifestation of the changing character of the area, though it retains its unique flavour. Ground Floor has added to that.

Ground Floor 125 Great Junction Street, Edinburgh, EH6 5JB

Opening hours:

Mon-Sat 9-5

Sun 10-4

https://www.instagram.com/groundfloor__