

# DIT Free School: How To Run A House Venue

March 10, 2018

## What is a house show/house venue?

### a) Why run a house show?

- ☐ *Accessibility*- younger people can attend, safer spaces than bar venues, preferable atmosphere for those who don't want to be surrounded by drinking culture
- ☐ *Comfortability*-
  - Having more control over the situation at hand—coordinating with folks who work at bars can be difficult
  - Have more influence in creating a positive and pleasant experience for everyone involved
- ☐ *Diversity*-
  - You can throw shows with music YOU wanna hear! All the weird stuff! You can book who you are excited about vs. bars who look for a profit margin or a band with draw.
  - You are able to give some musicians a platform they wouldn't have in a bar setting.

### b) Types of venues and spaces

- ☐ "House show" or "House venue" is a misnomer, because you can have a diy show ANYWHERE, not just a basement in a house! Get creative! You can have them in a back yard, living room, porch, barns, etc.

### c) Types of rules

- ☐ Because it's happening in YOUR space, YOU set up the rules (see second point under "why to run a house show"—comfortability). What do you want to happen in your house?
- ☐ Set a precedent on DAY ONE of what the rules are! Which bathrooms can guests use? Are you collecting donations? Where do you allow people to smoke? Do you allow drinking? Is it a sober space? Do you crack down on underage drinking? Etc.
- ☐ Milhouse has physical copy of rules in their house as a reminder and as reinforcement
- ☐ Some people don't want many or any rules at their house, which is fine! BUT—it is hard to go from a "no rule" space to having guidelines all of a sudden.

## Booking a house show

### a) Resources to find touring bands

- ☐ <http://dodiy.org/>—you can list your house or organization on there. DITKalamazoo is listed!
- ☐ Diytourpostings FB page

- DIT Kalamazoo Facebook/email
  - i. DIT Kalamazoo gets contacted by touring bands all the time, nonstop. Will send bands yr way! There is a running list of venues and points of contact for each house/space.
- There are various FB groups for different house genres and vibe—feel free to browse and see what you can find
- Bands will reach out through these platforms and many others! Just keep an eye out and explore
- Non-internet resources:
  - i. Hit up people who are already booking to alleviate their touring band “runoff”—they will not be able to give EVERY touring band a spot or a show! Let others know you are willing to help and take on some of those bands yourself.
  - ii. Making connections and building your credibility: if you book a touring band and they have a good experience at your house, they WILL tell their friends in other bands to hit you up, since you have established your space as being reliable and reputable.

#### b) Manage your time

- Managing shows takes a LOT of time! Booking, coordinating, set up, promotion, clean up... the list goes on
- Think about how often you want to have shows and what your limit is, because once the floodgates are open, they are OPEN!!!!
  - i. Know how to say no to a band politely and not feel bad about it
- Set a schedule for yourself with communication. Don’t double book! You’ll feel bad, but the touring band that just drove 8 hours to play will feel *way* worse.
- Keeping a calendar is a good idea so you have a timeline of all your events. This way everyone in your house is also kept in the loop!

#### c) Communication is key

- If you are excited about booking touring bands, you gotta get excited about answering emails/messages. Booking requires CONSTANT contact, and A LOT of coordination with A LOT of different people.
- Give performers more information that you think they need. As soon as you confirm the show, give them info like: your phone number, house address, load in time, show starting time, volume concerns, where parking is, if they can sleep at your house, if you have pets, etc!
- Putting local and out of town bands on a bill:
  - i. Suggested lineup: *local opener, touring bands, local closer*. This way you will draw people in from the beginning and keep them til the end. People come out to see their friends play, but are not always inclined to see an out of town band that they have never heard of before.
- When booking a touring band: put yourself in their shoes!
  - i. They might be tired, awkward, anxious, pissed off—maybe they had a bad last couple days on tour. Cut em a break!

#### d) Diversity of performers and genres

- ☐ Get out of your comfort zone! The majority of people who perform are white dudes. Don't just book your friends! Be MORE than just open to diversity, be proactive about it.
- ☐ Kalamazoo has ALWAYS had a lot of white dudes doing emo music. The more we can expand the scene the better. That's not to say this music isn't good—but there is a LOT of other music out there, and a LOT of other people who would LOVE to get a chance to showcase their art.
- ☐ It's ok with not having a totally "cohesive" show—it's easy as a promoter and booker to fall into the mindset of booking a bill that has the same sound and aesthetic. This can be boring to show-goers who don't want to hear the same exact sound with 4 different bands.
- ☐ When booking local acts, pick enthusiasm over sound! Book local folks who are EXCITED about the show, because even if their sound doesn't completely align with the touring band, they will put out a better, enthusiastic performance because they WANT to be there.
- ☐ When thinking about giving different types of people a platform and a chance to show everyone what they got, consider kids/underage folks. A lot of bands in Kalamazoo got their start when the members were in high school/right out of high school. To promote safety and to minimize risk, communicate house rules and establish a common goal with them—that they are here to play and enjoy music, not to party. Remind them that parents are always welcome at shows.
- ☐ Have more than one booker for your house! This could be someone else who lives at your house, or someone who lives outside of it! This will guarantee a diversity in acts since everyone has different tastes and different connections.
- ☐ Don't assume there is "no room" in the scene for a certain genre or type of music—people could be interested, but have never been given a platform or an opportunity.

**Tools, equipment, logistics** (Separate DIT Free School class on this—Audio Engineering 101, March 31)

a) PA Needs

- ☐ This differ based on your space. Different if the show is in your basement, living room, or porch. If you don't know about sound, learn! Or you can have someone help you out.
- ☐ You are going to have to invest in the gear! You can share if you can find someone willing to share and teach you! Jarad says he may be able to rent stuff out from Selner Bros shop.
  - i. Some bands tour with PAs! Just ask what their gear needs are beforehand.
  - ii. Witch house in GR: has someone do sound for them, they get a cut of donations

b) Sound mitigation and treatment

- ☐ Loud shows are loud – know your neighbors and their limits. No one wants an altercation or the cops being called.

- i. Milhouse has foam on their windows and cinder blocks around outside of the house by windows to dampen sound
- ☐ If you are going to use foam or cloth, just be aware that they are fire hazards. Be smart about the placement!
- ☐ Facing the music AWAY from certain houses makes more of a difference than you think!
- ☐ Closing doors makes a huge difference
- ☐ The sound that is most likely going to get you in trouble is the people being loud outside, usually not the music. Set ground rules about where people can hang out when they are not listening to music or between sets.
  - i. If you have people outside in front of your house, you are a target for police
- c) Gear storage/Backlining
  - ☐ *Backlining*: equipment available for musicians to use so they don't need their own
  - ☐ Communicate with bands about their needs: bands may need to borrow things or share things.
    - i. Think about space—you may have 3 or 4 bands worth of gear you need to store. If you can, share gear.
    - ii. This helps with time management too. Time between sets is reduced
- d) Blocking off and restricting parts of the house
  - ☐ It's your house! Often, people will set barriers between living space and show space.
  - ☐ Watch for things that might be stolen
  - ☐ Pets that need to be safe
  - ☐ People set barriers by hanging up curtains or sheets, signs, etc.
- e) Lil things
  - ☐ Proper lighting is crucial! Make sure important areas are lit! This makes things safer. When things are lit, less bad things happen. Lighting also helps with keeping people's attention!
    - i. Don't get blue lights! It makes people feel weird – Rory
  - ☐ Take care of your pets!
  - ☐ Have earplugs on deck! This often gets overlooked. You can buy a pack of them for cheap! Have them in the open during shows so people can grab em if they want em (merch table is a good place!)
  - ☐ Beer can-toilet paper cycle
    - i. Collect all beer cans at the end of each show you will have enough to make up for all the toilet paper people used
  - ☐ For donations- use the same collection bin every time so people can recognize it

## Jobs

- a) Preparing the space: clean up before people come, set up PA, is toilet paper stocked? Etc.

- b) Running sound
- c) Watching house and restricted areas
- d) Collecting donations
  - ☐ "if you got beers you got bucks" has been common mentality in Kalamazoo
  - ☐ Explain to people why you are collecting money—you can get on the mic in between sets and talk about the premise of collecting donations
    - i. "Gas is not cheap" "donate OR buy merch" "all this money goes to the out of town bands"
  - ☐ You can go a lot of routes with getting donations—intimidation vs. being super nice
  - ☐ You can turn on lights and make an announcement about donations to catch people's attention
  - ☐ Start with a strong precedent that you will be collecting donations at EVERY SHOW
  - ☐ Again—use the same collection container every time so people can recognize it
  - ☐ Donation vs. door charge
    - i. Legally you are not allowed to have a door charge because then you are "running a business"
    - ii. Door charge also lowers peoples limits on how much they are giving -No fun house had \$2 donation, people only ever gave \$2.
    - iii. Milhouse ethos: no one is turned away for NOT having money, as long as this is not recurring behavior

**\*\*If you think of other that you need help with, feel free to reach out to people at the show for help! Don't be afraid to ask for help on the fly. Everyone wants to help in whatever ways they can.**

## **Unwanted Guests**

- a) People- 2 different types
  - ☐ People you don't like – others should KNOW you are approaching someone in case things get violent. Best way to approach is calmly, from a distance. If they refuse, sometimes you do have to get physical. You HAVE to get problematic people out for the safety of other people, the house, and themselves.
    - i. Legally, if you are on your property you have the right to put your hands on someone to get them off your property. In this scenario they are trespassing.
  - ☐ Your drunk ass friend who is being a dick
    - i. This is easier to handle, but just because they are your friend, they still gotta go if they are causing a scene.
    - ii. No one else at the show will have your perspective of "damn, yeah, Roscoe gets mad rowdy when they're drunk," their perspective will be "damn, yeah, I feel unsafe/uncomfortable because of this person's drunk ass"
- b) Animals

- ☐ Sometimes people will bring their animals to shows. It's your call on whether you allow this or not.
- ☐ DO keep in mind—is this loud, crowded setting REALLY the place for an animal who has hypersensitive hearing?
- c) Police
  - ☐ Must be invited IN to your house to enter, or have a warrant. Otherwise you are under no obligation to let them inside.
  - ☐ DO exit thru back door to meet them outside on the sidewalk in front of the house, as far from the house as possible.
  - ☐ DO NOT call it a party!! Call it a **performance** or a **show**. **NOT a party**.
    - i. For LEGAL protection, you should post signs about **NO underage drinking**.
  - ☐ You must give them your name and birth date, **but that's IT without a warrant**. You do not have to tell them who is inside.
  - ☐ Kalamazoo.org for more info on noise violations and the sound ordinance (city AND county are different)

## Hosting bands overnight

### a) Sleeping Arrangements

- ☐ Determine if you are letting bands stay. If yes, provide sleeping arrangements and let them know what they are.
- ☐ Couch? Spare bed? Floor?
- ☐ PLEASE let your roommates know if you are letting a band crash at your place.
- ☐ It can be really fun to put up bands for the night. Sometimes they want to have some more fun, sometimes they just want to sleep. Either way, you make some good connections with some new folks.

### b) Food

- ☐ Are you gonna feed the band? Let them know if you are! Otherwise, it's not really expected. As always, just communicate to them about their needs.
  - i. Tell them if tap water is ok to drink!

### c) Shower and laundry

- ☐ Are you going to offer this? Tell the band if yes!
- ☐ Keep in mind that some of these people have been on the road for days and have not gotten the chance to get clean!

### d) Restricted rooms

- ☐ Let them know where they can go and not go, if applicable

**\*\*If you don't have the interest or capacity to put up a band, reach out the community!**

## Risks

### a) Theft/asset control

- ☐ Don't leave things out that are super valuable
- ☐ Have people keep an eye out

- Pay attention to gear left behind or mix ups with gear
      - i. Mark your own equipment with tape!
- b) Property Damage
  - There WILL be wear and tear on your house. It's unavoidable
  - Landlords and property management companies do NOT fix things here. Take it upon yourself to know how to fix things yourself.
    - i. And if you can't fix it yourself—don't tell them how it broke.
  - Don't expect your security deposit back.
- c) Violence
  - Get multiple people involved to help if you think there might be a physical confrontation
  - Let yourself be known as an advocate to the people in your house so showgoers/performers feel safe.
    - i. Violence takes on a lot of forms, some of which can be missed if people aren't paying attention. It can be a comment that is made, an unwanted conversation, or touching someone without consent.
    - ii. MAKE SURE PEOPLE KNOW THEY CAN APPROACH YOU IF THEY EXPERIENCE SOMETHING, SEE SOMETHING, HEAR SOMETHING, FEEL SOMETHING.
  - Even if your friend is the perpetrator of these things, they gotta go IMMEDIATELY. Have a more in-depth conversation with them the day after about their behavior if needed.
  - When you post the rules and make the rules of the house CLEAR, it minimizes the risk for situations like this but STILLL, be prepared.

## Final Thoughts

- ❖ Your house, your rules!
  - Let ppl you want there know you want em!
  - Let ppl you don't want know that they gotta go!
- ❖ Know your limitations!
  - o This is HARD WORK! IT'S EASY TO BE EXCITED BUT IT IS TAXING!
  - o Take some rest and don't feel bad about it!
  - o At the end of the day it's your house, your life, your energy.
- ❖ Things don't happen unless you make them happen! – Rory
- ❖ Everyone's input and actions are really important in a small place like this!
  - You can REALLY make a difference!
- ❖ Don't be afraid to ask for help! We are DIT! We are doing it together!