

DIY – Do it yourself. This refers to an ethos, culture, and set of expectations from a local scene. Take a little time to get familiar with the cultural norms of a scene or community before getting too involved.

flyer – This is a graphic used to promote and communicate with the potential audience of your event.

guarantee – This is when a band requests or expects a specific amount of money for performing.

instrumentation (ins and outs) – These are the instruments on stage during the performance that your sound person will run through the sound system. They're things like, vocals, guitar, bass, keyboards, a PC, or a DJ board.

load in – This is the act of the performers and tablers bringing in their equipment and setting it up before the door opens.

line up – This is a list of what bands are performing and in what order.

merch – This is what bands sometimes sell during a show. It's usually things like Tshirts, CDs, tapes, buttons, and things like that.

sober space – This means no drugs and no alcohol at the venue or during the show.

sound check – This is when the sound person runs through a check of the instrumentation between load in and doors opening.

stageplot – This is a map of where things and performers can fit on a stage. It's for the sound person and includes things important to them such as microphones, instrumentation, speaker and monitor placements.

How to book a local music show

steps, expectations, and definitions

by Davy Goldsmith

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If you're planning on booking a show or have ever wanted to, that's great! I hope you do because someone has to for every show that happens! In this short guide, I'll go over the people involved, the steps to take, expectations, and some useful tips.

Who's all involved?

It takes a lot of people coming together to fill some specific roles for any show to happen. Here's some of those most important roles. Often, the same person fills multiple of the following roles.

Promoter or Booker: This person communicates between everyone, at least initially. They are responsible for requesting the event space or venue, telling the bands when and what date to arrive and play, assigning a sound person, and making the flyer and promoting. Ultimately, they also decide how much to charge the audience for admission at the door, who fills which of the following roles, and what the general vibe and flow of the event will be like.

Bands or Performers: These are the people who perform for the show and who the audience is here to see.

Host or Venue Owner: This is the person who is letting you have the show at their venue, home, or event center. Be really nice and communicative to this person and try to make it something that benefits them so they keep hosting shows!

Sound Person or Audio Engineer: This is the person who runs the PA for the bands. For larger shows, there may also be a lighting or effects person, an assistant, or a whole events team.

Door Person: This is the person who stands at the door or entrance to venue and collects payment from the audience for entry. They sometimes also double as security or look-out. This position is not always necessary when shows are free or pay

If you run into a situation where this happens, you can see about combining the lineups and maybe dropping some of the bands or moving the date of one of the events.

Local Culture

Every local music scene does things a little differently or avoids booking at certain venues or bands. Assume that these things are done for a reason and honor the local and scene-specific rules and culture. If you notice that shows typically go from 7 to 10pm, book like that. If you notice that most flyers say "sober space" or "no drugs or alcohol," don't have BYOB on your flyer. Don't charge more than attendees are used to paying for a show.

If you feel strongly about breaking some cultural norm, have a good reason and be prepared to explain it in the face of some backlash.

Definitions

backlining – This is when bands share certain instruments or equipment such as guitar and bass amps or drums. It should be very much encouraged to minimize the time between bands and form bonds between musicians.

capacity – This is the maximum amount of people who can attend a show and fit in the venue. It's set by safety and fire regulations.

curfew – This is the time the show must end to avoid being shut down by the cops due to noise ordinance violations.

doors – This can refer to the time doors open to allow attendees in, the cost to enter, or the amount of money made from collecting money from attendees.

To the audience: The date, times of door and first performance, and the location of the show. They may need help knowing where to park or how to get to the venue. Any other special or unusual rules at the venue.

Tips

About the Flyer

This is how you communicate information to the attendees. Make sure it has all the information the audience needs to know! This includes the date, time for doors and time for music, location, a title if necessary, the cost to enter, the bands that are playing, if the show is all ages or the minimum age to enter the venue, and any other special information about the event.

Design it to look visually appealing and unique so it catches the eye! Make the information legible and feel free to be creative and use whatever methods you'd like!

Flyers should be printed and shared digitally. Printed flyers should be physically posted in places where people interested in shows gather such as record stores, coffee shops, campuses, and the music venue where the event is happening. Digital files can be shared through text and email to specific people you'd like to attend or help promote, such as the performers of the show. You should also share on social media.

Coordinate with Other Bookers

It's never great to book two shows at the same time especially in a small scene or city. It helps a lot to have the foresight to reach out to other bookers about a show you're putting together to make sure they don't have anything planned and to see if they have any tips or are willing to help out! At a minimum, check places where flyers are posted and make sure you don't book on top of one of those dates!

what you can. DIY shows often collect payment from the audience after they've entered and the show has started.

Event Organizer or Planner: This person is often filled by the promoter or booker, but they are responsible for communication, setting up the layout or décor of the venue, and promoting the show.

Vendors or Tablers: Sometimes, you may request or have people table your event. This includes bands selling merch or artists or craftspeople selling their work. This can also include people giving out zines or flyers for cultural advancement, informational aid (like this one!), or political opinions. This can also include food and beverage carts.

Audience: These are the people who are here for your show.

Step-by-step

There are a few different ways you may start working on organizing and promoting a show. These are based off of how shows come about and who is initially requesting the show take place.

Let's address those and go over the order in which things happen.

1. If a touring band reaches out to you for help booking a show, and you agree to help, you need to know what day they will be in town and book for that date. If it's a show with only local bands, you can just pick a date that's available with the venue.
2. Find a venue for a date they are available and you're willing to do the show on. Think of what venues around town would be good for a show like you're planning and ask your first pick if they are available that night and if you could have a show there for that date. If they are not available or can't host it, ask your next favorite venue and go down the list.
3. Book local bands for the show. Think of bands that you think would sound good playing with lineup you have planned and reach out to them asking if they're available to play the date of the

event. They need to know what date and time, location, and location while considering playing. They should also know the lineup you have so far.

4. Get someone on sound if the venue doesn't provide a sound person.
5. Get any additional people on board if you would like or need them. These people can include vendors or tablers, a door person, or an additional organizer or assistant.
6. Make a flyer and promote your show!

What you need to know

From a touring band: You should know about how many people are in the band, what instruments they play, and what genre their music is.

They might ask for a guaranteed payment, food, and/or lodging. If there are any of those you cannot or are unwilling to provide, you should be upfront with that information and let them know.

If you can, it's amazing for a touring band to be able to stay the night at your place or with someone in town and be fed before but generally after the show. Think of some good, fast, and cheap recipes. My go-to is red beans and rice.

From a local band: You should know around how many people are in the band, what instruments they play, and their genre.

From the venue: Make sure you know if or how much they charge you for the event or how money collected from the door will be split. You also need to know the general layout and size of the venue, make sure they have functional bathrooms, and if they have a dedicated sound person or if you need to find one. Check if they have any additional or unusual rules or regulations such as a curfew time they need the show to end or

if attendees need to be 18 or 21 and over if the venue is a bar. Some venues allow people to drink or smoke and others don't.

From the sound person: How much they will charge for the night and if they aren't able to provide anything the bands need or are requesting.

From the audience: If there is someone or something making them unsafe or if there is anything you could do to make their experience better without compromising the purpose or culture of the event.

What information you need to share

To the touring band: The date, times of load in, doors, and performances, and location of the event. If they have a place to stay and eat, and recommendations if not. A description of the sound system and venue. How much or what percentage of the door money they will be paid.

To the local band: The date, times of load in, doors, and performances, and location of the event. A description of the sound system and venue if unfamiliar. How much or what percentage of the door money they will be paid.

To the venue: The date and times of load in, doors, and about when the show will end.

To the sound person: The date, times of load in, doors, and performances, and location of the show. Whether they need to provide a sound system or if one is installed at the venue. A description of the sound system if provided and the venue if they're unfamiliar and a stageplot if the bands provide one.

They should know the names of the bands so they can look them up if they want and what the instrumentation (ins and outs) are of each band.