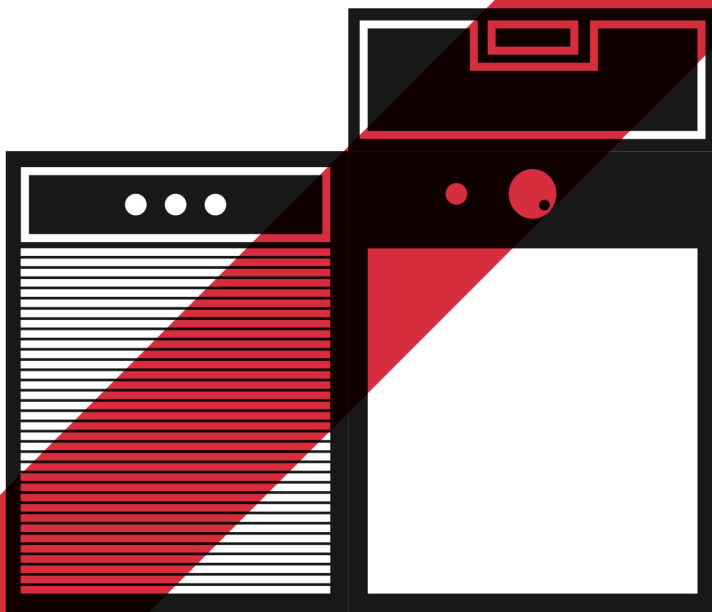


# DON'T MAKE A SCENE

£4.00

A field guide to putting on DIY gigs

**Featuring:** Andy Abbott, Adventures Close To Home, Braw Gigs, Lisa Brook, David Thomas Broughton, Neil Cammock, Craig Coulthard, Cry Parrot, eagleowl, fakeindielabel, Andy Inglis, Julie Tippex, Kit Records, Lost Map Records, Tim Matthew, Song By Toad, Lizzy Stewart, Stitch Stitch Records, Tracer Trails, Upset The Rhythm, Was Ist Das?, Cammy Watt, Withered Hand & Woodpigeon



**Compiled by:** Rob St. John and Bartholomew Owl

# INDEX

1	Don't make a scene	<b>Rob St. John</b>
3	Friends of friends	<b>Bartholomew Owl</b>
5	DIY bother? Reasons to keep doing it	<b>Andy Abbott</b>
7	We're good at taking things for free	<b>Andy Inglis</b>
10	Curate your event with imagination, honour and taste	<b>Chris Tipton</b>
17	DIY	<b>Lizzy Stewart</b>
21	How to escape your certain fate (a guide to not losing money on gigs)	<b>Emily, Tracer Trails</b>
26	Convincing people to come: the 'promoting' part of promoting	<b>Emma Cardwell</b>
29	Advancing a show	<b>Sofia Hagberg</b>
29	Communication	<b>DMAS</b>
31	Working with bookers: an interview with Marie Tippex	<b>DMAS</b>
35	Scouting new venues	<b>DMAS</b>
37	House shows	<b>DMAS</b>
38	Keeping on the right side of the law	<b>DMAS</b>
39	Kit Records illustration	<b>Sarah Tanat-Jones and Richard Greenan</b>
41	A DIY guide to sound engineering	<b>Tim Matthew</b>
48	Off the beaten track	<b>Ned, Was ist Das?</b>
50	How to put on a DIY gig in Edinburgh	<b>Nick Herd</b>
53	Applying for funding	<b>Fielding Hope</b>
55	Some things I've learnt about putting on gigs	<b>Johnny Lynch</b>
56	Find a common purpose	<b>Kate Lazda</b>
57	The music between the music	<b>Lisa Brook</b>
58	Make the scene you want to see	<b>Steve Brett</b>
59	Papi Falso: how to run a (small) clubnight	<b>Malcolm Benzie</b>
61	Gigs for all	<b>Clarissa Cheong</b>

<b>64</b>	Gigs are great
<b>65</b>	A DIY Leatherman
<b>67</b>	Bridging the promoter-musician gap
<b>72</b>	I've seen it happen
<b>74</b>	Two short notes on a music career
<b>77</b>	Promoters: I salute you
<b>79</b>	Contributors

<b>Narbi Price</b>
<b>John Egdell</b>
<b>Matthew Young</b>
<b>David Thomas Broughton</b>
<b>Mark Andrew Hamilton</b>
<b>Dan Willson</b>

## **Illustrations and photographs by:**

Tommy Perman (cover)  
 Cameron Watt (4, 6, 9, 13, 15, 21, 24)  
 Neil Cammock (34, 47, 76)  
 Matt Pattinson (41, 42, 43)  
 Craig Coulthard (71)

## **Thankyou:**

To everyone who has given up their time and talent to support and contribute to this zine. We're very lucky to have assembled such a talented cast. Don't Make a Scene was self-funded and all profits distributed equally between contributors. It was risograph printed with soy inks on recycled paper by Footprint Workers Co-Op in Leeds.

For more information and to contact us:

**[dontmakeascene.co.uk](http://dontmakeascene.co.uk)**

**[dmaszine@gmail.com](mailto:dmaszine@gmail.com)**

The copyright for all content in this zine remains entirely with the creators.

Published in Winter 2014. Second edition.

**DMAS001**

# DON'T MAKE A SCENE

Rob St. John

The first Adventures Close to Home show was in a small art gallery tucked behind a pub and a row of terraced houses in an Oxford suburb. Inside, around 30 people sit cross-legged on the wooden floor, watching a topless man squark and bark on a bass clarinet covered in tin-foil, the notes trilling sharply off the hard white gallery walls. Earlier in the night, the support act had played a John Cage score on an unamplified turntable using a series of objects to (almost-silently) scratch the revolving vinyl – a cappuccino whisk, some wire, a pipe cleaner – as the audience trickled in quietly, each footstep echoing louder than the piece itself.

At the next show in the same gallery, the headliner sang unaccompanied (except for a set of puppets), and the (slightly larger, phew) audience sat around like children at a campfire to listen to a history of folk music in Britain. The owner came this time, only to interrupt the author after half an hour to tell him that the audience seemed bored, and would they like a break? Lord knows what she would have made of the tin-foil clarinet and cappuccino whisk turntable.

The third was at a church that hadn't been used for shows before, where the rectors (after a bit of persuasion and the repeated use of the phrase 'folk music') let us have the building for the night. The headliner started his show by wheeling his scarf around his head and then onto a row of tealights that we'd lit around the altar. Emma and I raced to narrowly avoid this listed building being burnt to the ground (we'd lose our deposit, if nothing else). Next, he lined up chairs from around the church between the pews, and with loops cascading through the rafters, put his head down and charged the tottering tower like a bull at a matador. Again, perhaps fortunate that the rectors never followed through with their plans to come along ('we love folk music').

Emma and I started Adventures Close to Home as a means of bringing interesting bands to Oxford, to put them on in cool spaces, to charge as little to the audience whilst paying the bands as much as possible and welcoming musicians into our home as we would our friends. We started out by putting up a minimal amount of money for hiring venues and PAs and printing posters, and over two years and a couple of dozen shows we regularly paid bands over what they asked for, fed and watered them well, didn't lose money, and perhaps most importantly saw a lot of great music and made a bunch of good friends from bands, audience members, other promoters and venue staff.

We actively looked for unusual and unused spaces in the city in which to host shows: we used galleries, churches, basements, attic rooms, and very occasionally traditional gig venues. As well as being a way for us to host the bands we wanted to see in Oxford (who perhaps wouldn't otherwise likely be booked), we used our venue scouting as a way of exploring the city we lived in in a new way, encouraging people off the beaten track – both musically and geographically – in



evening-long 'adventures close to home' (thanks to The Slits and The Raincoats, here).

We were inspired by other promoters whose shows we'd attended and played at, people like Upset the Rhythm in London, Tracer Trails in Scotland and Cry Parrot in Glasgow, who put on consistently brilliant and challenging shows in interesting spaces, where there often seemed no distinction between the audience, the promoter and the performer, and where everyone was seemingly treated with fairness, openness and respect.

You'll notice that all these people have pieces in Don't Make A Scene. And that's the point, really: they inspired us, and hopefully they'll inspire you. Putting on DIY shows isn't difficult, nor does it have to be expensive. Sure, it's time-consuming, tiring and sometimes frustrating. Similarly, if you're out to make much of a profit out of putting on shows, this perhaps isn't the calling (or guide) for you.

There's a huge amount to get out of putting shows on: to meet interesting people and fostering a community in whatever shape or form; to create a space where would-be musicians, photographers, writers and other promoters are encouraged out of the woodwork; to collaborate with other people to make websites, posters, food and drink for the shows; and (last, but not least) to bring the music you want to hear to your town, even if it's small, rural and seemingly starved of creativity.

Don't Make a Scene is intended to help you achieve entirely the opposite of its title – do make a scene, its worth it. As such, it contains articles, how-tos (and how-not-tos) by a host of different people – promoters, musicians, bookers, festival organisers, sound engineers – on how to get started. The contributors are either friends of Bart and I, or people who we've been lucky enough to work with. As a result, Don't Make a Scene isn't (and perhaps can't be) comprehensive. Instead, it is meant as a resource to help inspire and inform you if you want to get started with putting on shows. Always, however, part of the fun comes from your own trial and error. Everyone has shows where no-one comes, where the band is late and their equipment fails. Don't Make a Scene is a nudge in the right direction.

'DIY' is an often contested and debated term. For us, DIY is about treating everyone involved in a show – the bands, the venue owner, the sound(wo)man etc – with respect and openness. Most often, this comes down to money, and being upfront, fair and honest about what's possible and what isn't. DIY isn't necessarily about being non-profit – although many promoters are.

DIY is about avoiding some of the negative trappings of the mainstream music industry where bands (and often promoters) are treated (and up to a certain level, paid) badly. It's about having a good time, being inspired, and working together to build the scenes you want to see.

# FRIENDS OF FRIENDS

## Bartholomew Owl

For me, the eureka moment came quite late. The ball was rolling with this zine, and we'd begun receiving contributions.

We started low key – getting in touch with our friends and immediate contacts in the first instance and taking it from there. But one of the first articles to come in was from Marie at (Paris tour bookers) Julie Tippex, which featured a 'testimonial' from Ian Svenonius – a man who has long been an inspiration for me: in his musical output, his approach to the DIY aesthetic, and – to a certain extent – his dress sense. He's one of the reasons I got interested in music and 'the DIY approach' in the first place.

So in that one email we had gone from a couple of guys emailing their immediate circle of friends, to being able to quote a lifelong hero. And in a weird way it summed up the whole endeavor, and made me think: this is why the DIY community operates – and is able to operate – the way it does. Everyone is connected.

Think about it. Any touring band has a list of promoters they have worked with (many of whom they'll regard as close friends). And each of those promoter contacts has a list of bands on the books (many of whom they too regard as friends). And in turn each of those bands have their own list of promoter contacts, and so on.

All of a sudden you have a vast interconnected network operating the DIY circuit, where every individual band or promoter is just two or three contacts away from every other band or promoter. Or to put it another way: you're never more than three contacts away from your heroes. Which is pretty amazing.

But it makes sense. And it goes some way to explain how the DIY community operates, and why manners, courtesy and respect can be just as important as being able to write a decent song or get an audience through the door. Doing things right is important. People talk. If a band works with a promoter who puts on a sweet show (busy room, well looked after, guarantee met, etc), then of course they'll recommend them to other bands. Contacts get passed on. Relationships are formed.

But it works the other way too. If a promoter books a band and they show up late, are bratty to the venue staff, complain about every problem no matter how slight, then the promoter is unlikely to book them again. And they won't think twice about telling all their promoter friends why.

Matthew at Song, By Toad has a great guest list policy – and that is 'don't take the piss'. Its beautiful in its simplicity. I think it acts as a good guiding principle for DIY shows in general. We're all in this together, after all.

What follows is more opinion than fact. Its a collection of experiences and ideas, rather than hard and fast rules. If anything, it's a step-by-step guide on how not to take the piss.

[eagleowlattack.co.uk](http://eagleowlattack.co.uk)



Illustration: Cameron Watt

# DIY BOTHER? REASONS JUST TO KEEP DOING IT

Andy Abbott

I think it's fair to say that at one point or another our faith in, and patience with, Do-It-Yourself activity will be tested. This is a scene, after all, that promises so much:

"In DIY everything is peachy. Everyone involved in DIY is cool. Everyone and anyone can participate in DIY. DIY is a fairer, better world. DIY doesn't need the outside world. DIY is fuelled by endless reserves of love and enthusiasm. DIY is authentic. DIY is real. The DIY scene is a community where everyone is on the same page. Everything is different in DIY."

Sadly the reality rarely lives up to our ideals:

"DIY sometimes mirrors and replicates the outside world. Sexism, homophobia and ignorance exist in DIY. DIY isn't as inclusive as I thought. There are people who have different priorities within DIY and many interpretations of what it means. DIY activity operates within a capitalist society."

It's easy to feel disheartened and burnt out, especially as so much DIY activity is done in our free time – supplemented by paid work in the very world from which we seek refuge. A lot of people, when faced with the challenges and disappointments of DIY, give up. Some move on to the 'next level'. Some exit the scene altogether. Others keep their hand in but with a more 'mature' and 'less naïve' expectation. The thread that joins these coping strategies is a rejection or scaling down of ambition: "I can't see DIY changing the world, so what's the point in treating it like it can."

My advice to those who are tested by DIY is to keep the faith. Only by approaching DIY with a full conviction that it can change the world, will it. We have to be truthful, however, and reframe DIY activity not as a faultless and utopian blueprint for a better world but as a test-bed for that society. Mistakes, pitfalls, errors, accidents, areas for improvement and so on, are part of that process.

Likewise, the fact that DIY sometimes replicates or has remnants of the normal world doesn't mean that it is the same as it. At heart, even if the form is identical, the ethics and social relations that comprise the content of DIY are worlds apart from the competitive, self-interested and ultimately conservative creative industries of the 'real world'.

DIY's radical quality is that it is a site for the collective experimentation with a type of human activity that is neither work nor leisure. In DIY we produce things together without thinking about their monetary value; we have fun but not by consuming stuff in order to recover from work; we act together without having to know where it will lead.

It's the ungraspable nature of DIY – its refusal to be pinned down or to fit a template – that makes it so special, so addictive and so life affirming. We have to learn how to be critical, self-aware and analytical without pulling DIY to pieces to the point of no repair. DIY is a manifestation of love, and who wants to be responsible for killing love? Let's pinch something back from the 'real world' and keep on Just Do(ing) It.

**andyabbott.co.uk**



Illustration: Cameron Watt

# WE'RE GOOD AT TAKING THINGS FOR FREE

Andy Inglis

There's not a lot of money rolling around at DIY shows, or in the UK's smaller venues. Unlike pretty much every major European market, we don't do so well at helping the grassroots industry, though PRS For Music Foundation and one or two others finally are making inroads there. It doesn't matter how small your show is, it's likely to cost you something to put on, and it's going to work better if everyone who turns up – audience, artist – understands that. If things go well for you, it might be you move away from the DIY circuit and become a bigger promoter, but that doesn't mean you need to abandon your ethics. Upset The Rhythm prove that.

A few years ago I ran a 275 capacity venue in London called The Luminaire, and Chris and Claire from UTR used to book all sorts of amazing shows there. In May of 2006, just over a year after we opened, they brought Lightning Bolt, which became a memorable show for a few reasons, two in particular. There had been a big wooden speaker sitting at the bottom of the stairs for a few weeks, and despite my best efforts I'd failed to identify the band it belonged to. I didn't even know if it worked.

When Lightning Bolt loaded in, their Tour Manager asked if they could borrow it to use that night. Take it if you like I said. It's just in the way and I'd rather it went to a good home. He asked what I wanted for it, I said I didn't want anything. He said he'd like to give me something. I asked him if he baked, and he did. He made a great banoffee pie, he reckoned. I like banoffee pie a whole lot and figured it was a good trade. He said that when he got back to Leeds he'd make one and post it down. A week later – his tour over – Royal Mail delivered a pretty mashed but pretty tasty banoffee pie.

The Lightning Bolt show was always going to be a hot one, and my colleague John – who I ran the place with – and I had some friends who were going nuts about it, and asked if they could come up. The venue legally held 300 people, but that was uncomfortably full for me, so we capped it at 275: 250 of which we gave to promoters to do as they pleased with, and 25 which we held back for staff (they're people too and take up space on the floor), and any 'house' guests; friends of the owner, manager, staff etc. Common practice.

I gave Chris a list of ten names – most were John's mates, one was mine who'd just lost his job – and he came to see me in the office. It wasn't the first time we'd had our own guests into an Upset The Rhythm show, but probably the first time on a sell-out. Chris wasn't happy. Without these guests he could have sold ten more tickets to those who'd be happy to pay. I explained

that it didn't work like that, that his capacity was 250. It was our building, our venue, our business, and if we couldn't bring a few friends into see a show now and then, well, Jesus. I don't know. All very polite, of course, as was he.

The show was amazing, still one of the best live performances I've ever seen, and Upset The Rhythm kept putting shows into Luminaire until we shut our doors in 2011. As the months rolled on, I got to understand UTR better, and (I think) they got to better understand us. In the end they were the promoter I'm the most proud to have worked with, the ones whose ethics I most respected, and whose open-mindedness I best appreciated.

Over the course of the club's seven year life, my stance on guest-list changed, and slowly became more hardline, until I reached the point I'm at now, which is that I'd ban it, universally, for everyone. Thor Harris of Swans famously said "Guest list is for friends, family and people you might want to fuck. Everyone else can pay. They have day-jobs." Thor Harris is wrong. If your friends, family and people you might want to fuck have day-jobs, they can pay too. If those closest to you won't support you, how can you expect anyone else to?

One day, while bored on a bus, I worked out that we gave away somewhere in the region of £250,000 worth of guest list at The Luminaire, give or take a few tens-of-thousands-of-pounds. A crude calculation, of course, but its purpose is illustrative. That money could have gone into the pockets of bands. I've heard it argued that so long as people are in the room they'll buy drink, which would help support the bands, but if we weren't promoting the show ourselves, we were hiring the venue to promoters, which meant the bands weren't seeing any of the bar money. And what about all the A&Rs who would come up, get in for free, watch three songs of a new band and leave? They're weren't contributing much.

People having more money in their pockets is good for small venues though, right? Small venues are pretty much bars with stages. No alcohol sales = death. So those not paying for guest list will have more money for alcohol, which is good, no? In my experience, even those who pay to get in still seem to find money for beer so on balance, I'd still rather have had the guest listers paying in full, or at least something.

We've created a culture of not paying to get into a gig because we've allowed "I'm the artist's manager/agent/boyfriend" to flourish, when in fact we should take the opposite tack:

**Small artist + independent promoter + independent venue + low ticket price = you should pay to get in, if you can afford it.**

It will make the next show slightly easier for the artist, promoter and venue to stage. Next time someone offers you free music, refuse it, or pay for it. Next time someone offers you guest list, buy a ticket. For those of you who're going to a great number of shows for work, say, it doesn't

need to be a hard-and-fast rule; if you're following the band you work with around on tour, it's going to get expensive if you're paying every night.

If the gig's at The O2, well fuck it; if AEG could afford to pay Beckham's wages, they can probably afford to swallow the cost of your ticket. Maybe you'll decide you feel the same about Live Nation venues. But if you're earning, and the show's £5, £7... buy a ticket, because that independent venue isn't about to get any help any time soon from anywhere else, whether it's from funding or from those who're doing pretty well out of our business at the top end. I've lost count of the number of arguments I've had with promoters who've booked a band I manage and they've found out I've bought a ticket. "But you're the manager!" they exclaim. Aye. That's why I bought a ticket.

We're good at taking things for free in this industry, but we're useless at putting back into it. We take free music (either stolen, or as gifts from PRs, labels or artists) and we're great at taking guest list for gigs when we can afford to pay in. "I'm on £45,000 a year; can I have a plus one?" Guest list is a malignant tumour on the lactating breast of live music. Or, if you prefer your guest list metaphors less graphic, they're the music industry's equivalent of benefit culture. They're abused, expected, demanded, taken for granted. And my unemployed friend who asked for guest list? If he asked for it now I'd tell him to fuck off. He didn't seem to have any problems buying beer back then.

**fivethousand.co.uk**



Illustration: Cameron Watt



# ADVICE FOR PUTTING ON A DIY SHOW: CURATE YOUR EVENT WITH TASTE, IMAGINATION AND HONOUR

Chris Tipton

The first bit of advice I'd offer up if you're thinking of putting on a DIY show would be to hardly listen to other people's advice. Most people will flag up all the reasons why your event won't work, most of these will focus on lack of experience. When you step through the DIY mirror glass you have to come to terms with the fact that what you're really dealing with is a sort of translatable self-belief. It becomes a case of mind over matter. If it's important to you, it's important to other people too, the only skill comes with linking that up. The promoting bit, if you will. If you're reading this and are already questioning whether or not you should set up a show, just jump in and set up a show!

When I founded Upset The Rhythm eleven years ago I didn't have a clue about what I was doing but I made up for that with enthusiasm – that was enough to get things going. So at the risk of sounding pious, there's only one place to start if you're really interested in organising live music events: you have to start with a passion for it! Through promoting DIY shows you will make innumerable friends, you will not make loads of money, but you will support underground music in a tangible and vital way and will never be bored again. If that all sounds satisfactory, then welcome aboard the good ship 'DIY Promoter'.

I began Upset The Rhythm with a group of my friends back in 2003, and then (as now) we had a single motive in mind and that was to make each event as memorable as possible. There are many ways of doing that, but the one thing to avoid at all costs is becoming predictable. As a promoter you can choose the date, time, venue, bands, ticket price etc. Have fun with those options: set up a breakfast show for £3, put on a gig in a crypt for a Japanese noise musician! Book all the bands/artists you'd like to see! If you plan a party that excites yourself then you won't fail in bringing everyone along with you. Upset The Rhythm has set up concerts in Elizabethan theatres, Norman churches, Georgian ballrooms, railway arches, disused shops, community centres, fire stations and art galleries, as well as established music venues and clubs. Our first shows took place in an Italian wine bar, go figure! Pavement pound and discover all the interesting spaces that are on your doorstep, try those first before doing what you think is expected. By making events memorable you can accomplish more than just hosting a band, you

can help inspire others who can in turn inspire you. Opening up the idea of where a concert can take place is an invaluable tool in capturing people's imaginations, as well as intensifying how the audience responds to the band and vice versa.

To get the promotional ball rolling I'd suggest choosing a headline act as a starting point. That way you can tailor your show in a way that makes it unique and feel natural. Comb the internet to see if any of your favourite artists are touring, shoot them an email on the off chance they might need a show in your hometown. This sounds presumptuous, but you'd be surprised, even some of the biggest acts often have holes in their tour dates that need filling. If there's an overall motto to all of this, it would be to venture first and think later. What's the worst that can happen! If that's not panning out for you, approach some of your friends in bands or other local acts that you like and start building your first show.

Booking a headline band will most likely be the most significant cost for your event so let that guide you on your ticket price. Most fees for bands are either flat guarantees (e.g. £400), or guarantees with a % profit split tagged on if the show does better than predicted (e.g. £400 + 70%). Nothing is set in stone though so feel free to make an offer of your own. Bear in mind that the band will most likely have a rider of hot meals, drinks and snacks that you have to pay for through the ticket revenue too. It's also worth checking at this point if there are any hidden costs involved in having the band perform, which can include hiring/lending amps, drums (backline), projectors, screens. With that all in mind you can negotiate a fair fee that works for you as well as the act.

It's imperative to keep ticket prices as fair as possible and pay everyone as well as you can. Don't oversell, don't undersell. If the band you want to work with has hired a booking agent to help them plot a tour together be aware that the agent's main aim is to inflate the band's fee (as they work for a % of that, typically 10%), so don't take their word as gospel and feel free to suggest an alternative offer. If you think the fee is unreachable, then don't be afraid to bow out. There's nothing worse than feeling overstretched on a show, and you never know, the band or agent might come back with a more achievable deal in mind.

With the headline act chosen, now's the time to settle on a date. I'd advise booking the show 2-3 months in the future if possible, that way you can do justice to the promotional side of things. Obviously Thursday-Saturday are the best nights but don't be put off if you start out being offered Sundays and Mondays: if a show is worth doing, it's worth doing anytime. When you have a date – or a choice of dates – then you can then follow up on the potential venues you've been hunting out. See if they're available, what their rates would be to hire for the evening and if they're amenable to you taking over the place for a gig.

I often find you make more leeway when talking to new 'venues' that don't normally host shows by referring to the event as a "concert" or a "performance", rather than a party or a gig.

This might not always feel accurate but it will carry with it an air of consideration that gets your foot in the door to begin with. Sometimes as a DIY promoter you are almost expected by others to behave in an amateur manner, so fight back against those assumptions by making the event as professional as possible. Make each show a credit to yourself, don't just make do and hope for the best. Show that you care about the sound (backline and PA) and the space, staging and lighting, it's all part of picture. If you take what you do seriously then others will and it'll become easier to book venues as a result, it'll also help maintain your reputation as a decent promoter with your bands and audience.

The next step after choosing the venue would be to look at some other acts to support the main group: for a normal evening show (8pm-11pm) two or three bands would make the most sense. If you have a weekend, why not consider doing a longer program, like an all-dayer or a festival if you are feeling adventurous? It's worthwhile asking the headliners how long they like to play for in advance, as if you end up having the show somewhere with a strict curfew this might prove critical. There's nothing worse than having the main band cut short their set due to poor planning on your behalf.

When choosing support bands, don't just exhaust your friends' projects either (although that is a good jumping off place), think outside of what would be expected and put together an interesting lineup. One of the biggest mistakes made with booking supports is to just have bands that sound the same as the headliner play, as these groups almost always will approach you about playing said event keenly by email.

Don't feel bad for turning anyone down for a show though as they might prove a worthwhile addition to another one, so make that known to them and stay friends. One last thing on this topic, make sure you pay everyone who performs, even if the show loses money. It can be a token gesture – for example covering transport costs – but I really believe that people should be paid for their art regardless.

With Upset The Rhythm, I have always been committed to having new bands and local acts playing in the support slots. It's easy to overlook your role as a patron to new bands starting out. Playing an early gig with a well-known headliner can really boost the momentum and vision of the first bands on. Now that you have some quality supports in place, think about the music played before, between and after the acts. You can always put together a mix of music you'd think would suit the evening: we always like to include songs that the bands playing would particularly be blown away to hear and make them feel at home.

Of course, having a dedicated DJ is even better but make sure they know what the vibe is, as a raging techno set won't necessarily compliment your acoustic folk event. Continue fine-tuning the event until you're satisfied that everything feels right to you, the aesthetic of the poster, a good mix of music, the name of your night even.



Illustration: Cameron Watt

When people think of what promoters do they normally forget all the planning elements and curation that go into the evening and focus on the most visible acts, such as sticking posters up around town (all record shops are a must), flyering shows, social media, smoke signals, sending out listings, word of mouth and adverts. These are all important to get in place as they help spread the word about the show happening to people outside of your immediate circle, and are very easy to do yourself or delegate to friends. Make an eye-catching poster – this can double as the flyer too if you wish – then use the photocopier at work, the library, or the copy shop to print off as many posters as you think you'll need. In London we typically print up 100 posters for each event, the quantity is determined by how many places you can think that'll take receipt of a sheet of paper on their wall vs. how much money you want to spend on the printing.

Black and white poster designs are good as they tend to be cheaper to print and that way you can get a feel for the economics at play. Give out flyers at similar events to your own if you can. Putting one flyer in someone's hand is worth more than dumping a thousand on the floor of a vintage clothes shop. Promoting is all about making connections so doing this in person is the most rewarding and effective method. Most social media sites let you create events to help advertise your show too, but don't overlook the potential of writing your own personal newsletter informing all and sundry about your upcoming event. You can collect names and email addresses from willing participants at your first show onwards, add your friends, setup a mailing list box on your website, tumblr, facebook etc. or just leave out a clipboard and pen: some shows can leave you with pages of new contacts.

Writing your own newsletter helps foster a sense of community as well as showing you care enough to let people know about what you're doing. Finally on this point of 'visible promoting', if you end up promoting a larger show it might be worthwhile taking out adverts in a local magazine/newspaper or music publication. This can often prove prohibitively expensive but a lot of shows bigger than 500 capacity usually will need this to help them sell strongly. Build any potential advert costs into your ticket price at the start and monitor ticket sales to see if this more conventional approach could be of assistance.

I thought this would be an opportune moment to mention selling tickets in advance for your event too. I'd really recommend this as it gives you some idea of how the event might pan out and there are many online ticket retailers who let you set up events with minimal fuss. By selling tickets in advance you can see if you need to push your promotion more or ease off, you can also move the show up to a bigger venue if sales are brisker than expected. It gives you some indication of whether you're doing things right and can take away some of those "will anyone actually come?" nerves that I think all promoters have when starting out. The downside is booking fees, but as long as you keep some tickets back for each event for people to buy on the door that squares that problem. We always make our shows the same price on the door as the tickets are in advance as I think this is the fairest and most transparent option.



Illustration: Cameron Watt

With the event upon you and hopefully minimal spanners in the works, there comes a point when you have to actively take control of the event. As a DIY promoter it is your responsibility to make sure everything runs smoothly, whether that involves hauling backline up spiral stairs, making sure everyone gets a soundcheck, that guestlists are agreed, basically that everyone's happy!

Get down to the venue early, be the first person there if you can and plan how everything should unfold. As and when the sound guy, venue staff, bands, DJs arrive introduce yourself and let them know what your plan for the evening is, this sounds obvious but by being in a band as well I know there's some truth behind the invisible promoter who you never meet.

As the event takes place make sure you look after your audience and the artists equally. For the audience that can mean staying on top of the running schedule, making sure it sounds good (befriend as many soundguys as you can) and that it ultimately proves an entertaining night. For the artists, think about sorting them out with food and drinks for the night, make sure you always pay them what was expected, if not more if you are able. Make sure they have enough time to do their job properly, ask them how long they need to soundcheck, ask what their ideal set length is and keep things on time, a fairly standard gap of 15-20 mins is needed for bands to change over.

Your duties as a DIY promoter don't finish with the show either, make sure any bands from out of town have somewhere to stay after the gig: most will be happy with a couch or sleeping bag situation. Start collecting a stockpile of blankets and pillows to help out with living room floor space.

When I put on my first show, I don't think I realised it was a DIY event at all, which is strange really as one of the bands performing decorated some canvasses with paint during their set with brushes taped to their guitars. I certainly didn't think it would lead to a decade long pursuit. The thrill of it all coming off was remarkable, it's a very empowering thing to make something happen, support underground culture and to see others enjoying your efforts.

Naturally the success of our first gig led to the second show and so on, like a snowball growing with each turn. Hopefully some of our luck will rub off on you, although after getting through this holy list of thou wills and wont's you've probably guessed that chance doesn't come so much into promoting events as some people will lead you to believe.

Many liken promoting events to gambling – sometimes you win, sometimes you lose – and whilst that's true to an extent I think it's wrong to appraise a show by its turnout alone. DIY promoters are often at the vanguard of new and challenging music, sometimes you get there first, setting up a concert for a band that ten people care about, whilst a year later the press have caught on as well as their fans. Be prepared to lose money on some shows. Not every gig will go perfectly, but such is life. Shows that do well can subsidise others that do less so. But as a DIY promoter it is of the upmost importance to nurture new music and provide a platform for those band's that need your help.

You have to curate your events with taste, imagination and honour. Stay true to the music you love and don't get swallowed up by hype or chasing easy money, as that's not the road of the DIY promoter. Stay interested, listen to demos, go to shows and always make a difference. Good luck!

**[upsettherhythm.co.uk](http://upsettherhythm.co.uk)**

# D.I.Y



The music I liked before I left home existed, for me, solely on the internet. I trawled pitchfork and drowned in sound, seeking out the obscure and (mostly) american bands that I would form intense, long-lasting relationships with. Going to gigs meant schlepping to Exeter on the train, to cram into the cavern club with serious young men in record-label t-shirts. This was a rare event however, and mostly I was bedroom-based, researching always.



In 2005 I moved to Edinburgh. Excited to finally be in a 'proper' city I would spend ages scouring the listings or the ticket display in the window of Ripping Records to find gigs to go to. Compared to South Devon Edinburgh's live music possibilities seemed endless, Glasgow's was downright daunting.



Illustration: Lizzy Stewart





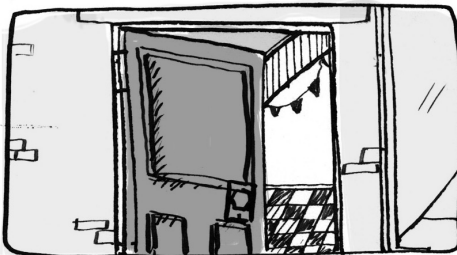
I'd see bands most weeks, in Edinburgh and Glasgow, occasionally even London (which was easier to get to from Scotland than it was from Devon). It was exhausting but exciting. I managed to 'tick off' many of the artists who made up my own, particular canon. It seemed a far cry from my bedroom at home, where acts had seemed so impossibly far away, though, often, depending on the venue the action could still be, geographically, distant.



An evening could be ruined easily by being squeezed between the tallest man in Scotland and a couple necking over-enthusiastically against your shoulder.



Then I started making gig posters. I'm not sure how it came about, friends of friends and all that I suppose. Anyway I found myself drawing pictures for an Edinburgh DIY promoter, Tracer Trails.



The first few shows I did posters for I skipped. I struggled to convince my flatmates to come to see bands with me at the best of times, but throwing around phrases like 'folk' and 'church hall' did very little to help my cause.



Eventually I summoned some courage and ventured out, to Bristol Hall to see what I'd gotten myself involved with.



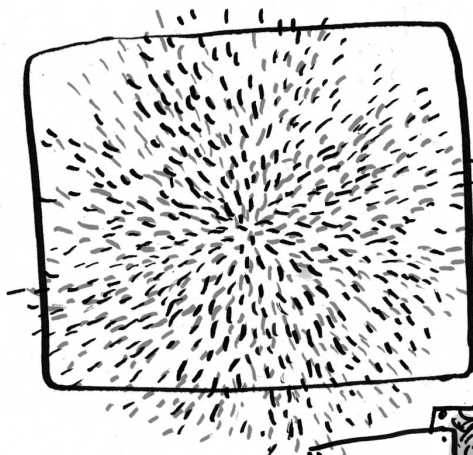


Bristo hall was beautiful and the instant I stepped through the door it all made perfect sense to me. There was tea and toast and candles on every table, none of the chairs matched. I wound my way through the crowd and found a step (which led up to a long-since used font) to sit on. I took out a notebook so as to look occupied between acts, conscious of flying solo I guess. I remember writing 'everyone has a beard' under a doodle of Mark Hamilton from Woodpigeon.



It seemed like everyone knew each other and, even though I knew no one it didn't seem to be a problem. The warm, orange candlelight and the smell of tea and toast made it seem as though, perhaps, we were in a giant (but nonetheless cosy) cottage, on some windswept Scottish island, listening to people we knew tell stories that we loved. Its easy to gush, to pour superlatives over things that exists only in the memory but, truthfully, that gig, all those gigs, they were special and I was hooked.

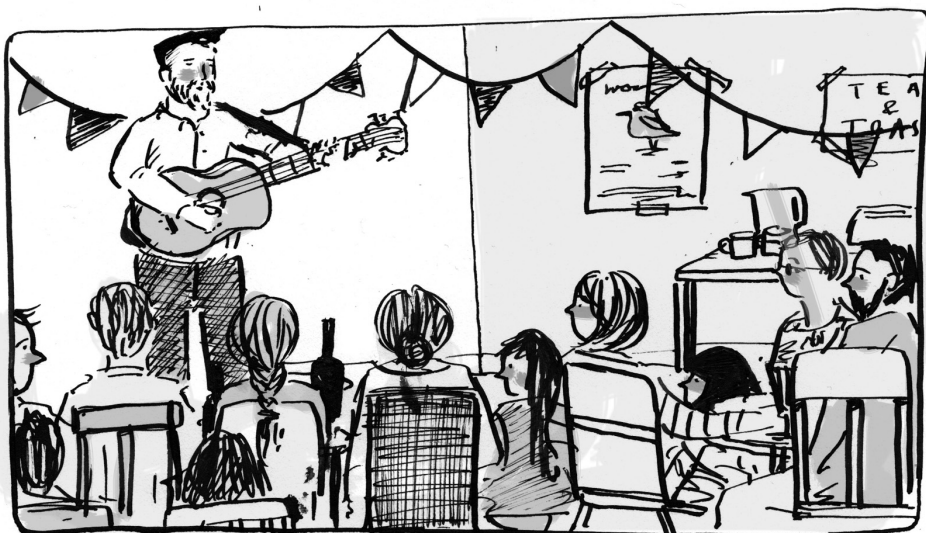
Three acts played, Les Enfant Bastard, Withered Hand and Woodpigeon. I sat and watched intently, as much taken in by the room as the music. I felt like I'd found a thing that I'd always hoped had existed.



I went to most Tracer Trails shows, sometimes I sold posters, sometimes I just watched in church halls, basements and galleries. I can't remember ever walking away from one of those nights not feeling like I'd witnessed something valuable. There was even the occasional miracle, when a song or a sound or a single note makes your heart swell so big, so full, that you feel like light might pour out of you. Somehow.



I left Edinburgh for London a few years ago. London, famously indifferent, proud of its cynicism, is a tougher city to negotiate. But it's not without its own pockets of wonder. There have been nights when I have found that elusive, magical thing that was present during every Tracer Trail show. Finding it feels a bit like finding a book from your childhood on a library shelf, a momentary glimpse of a home you'd mostly forgotten, integral to the person you are.



# HOW TO ESCAPE YOUR CERTAIN FATE (A GUIDE TO NOT LOSING MONEY ON GIGS)

Emily, Tracer Trails

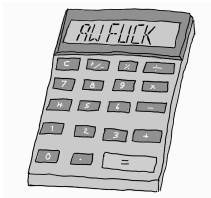
Money is not our friend, but if we treat it with appropriate suspicion we **can** prevent it from ruining our party. If you want putting on gigs to be fun and you want to keep doing it for a while, you've got to make it easy on yourself. The only way to do that is to take the time to figure out how to keep control of the cash that's involved. Otherwise, there's a fair chance you're going to end up either spending your rent on PA hire, or falling out with people over fees you can't afford to pay. Making a budget and sticking to it means you shouldn't lose money unless something goes badly wrong. We want everyone to be able to organise gigs – not just those with money to burn!

## M – C

### Making your Budget

Before you do anything else – before you pay a deposit on a venue, or even confirm a date with the bands – you need to make your budget. If you're not already comfortable with setting up a spreadsheet and using it to make calculations, it's a good idea to learn how. Failing that, pen and paper will do just as well.

You have to budget for **everything** you're planning to spend. The specifics are obviously going to vary depending on the scale of your gig, your technical needs, and so forth. Don't be tempted to underestimate any of your costs! Try to find out exactly how much you'll be spending before you make any commitments, and if you have to estimate a cost in your budget, estimate high. I would also recommend including a 'contingency' line of at least 10% of your overheads. This provides a buffer in case of unexpected costs, and if you don't end up using it, it'll be a welcome addition to the fees.



Your basic budget – for a gig involving a touring band and one local support act – may look something like this:

**EXPENSES**

Venue:	£ 80
Equipment/engineer:	£100
Taxis:	£ 20
Rider (food+drink):	£ 30
Poster/flyer design:	£ 30
Poster/flyer printing:	£ 30
Poster distribution:	£ 40
Room decorations:	£ 20
<b>Sub-total:</b>	<b>£350</b>
Contingency (10%):	£ 35

**FEES**

Touring band:	£ 80
Support act:	£ 40
<b>Sub-total:</b>	<b>£120</b>

<b>Total:</b>	<b>£505</b>
---------------	-------------

Whew. This is all money you’re really going to spend. £505 might be two months’ rent! You’re going to want to be sure you’ll get all this back.

**M – C – M**  
**Breaking Even**

Maybe you’re planning to sell tickets at £6. Now you can calculate how many people you need through the door to break even:  $505/6 = 84.17$ , so your break-even point is 85 tickets. Any sales above this will be profit, and you’ll be able to split the proceeds between yourself and the bands.

Remember, your first budget is a draft. You estimate the cost of the gig as you want it to happen, and you assess whether it’s realistic. If you’re not convinced you can reach your break-even figure, taking into account the capacity of your venue and any tickets you want to hold back for guests, you have a few options.

**1. Raise the ticket price.** Your calculation then is: am I more likely to draw 85 people to see these bands at £6 a ticket, or 73 people at £7 a ticket? (Also: who might I exclude by increasing the price? Is that going to make the show less fun?)

**2. Reduce your largest overheads.** The biggest costs in the budget are the venue, equipment and engineer. Is there another venue in town that can provide an in-house PA and engineer for less than a £180 hire fee? Do you know somebody who'd be willing to loan their equipment for free?

**3. Eliminate some other costs.** You could talk to the bands and see if they're okay with forgoing a rider on this occasion, and maybe you can distribute the posters yourself rather than paying someone else to do it (don't risk this if you think there's a chance you'll blow it off!).

**4. Adjust the fees.** It's important to pay everybody decently if you can – but it's also **really** important not to promise money that you might not have. If you do promise a fee, you've got to pay it, even if it ends up coming out of your own pocket. If your bands are local and your objective in organising the gig is to show a bunch of people a good time, a guaranteed fee isn't always essential.

Be up-front with everybody from the start about the financial prospects of the night – then they can make an informed decision about whether or not to play. When you invite each band, be open about the fact that your first goal is to break even, and explain how any profits will be split between the participants. Let them know that you've set aside money to cover travel costs, and that you'll be providing a meal and some drinks. If they think it sounds like a fun deal, they'll play. If they don't, you can ask them again some other time. Similarly, when you're booking touring bands, don't be tempted to offer them more than you can realistically afford. Discuss the budget with them openly so that they can make an informed decision as to whether they can afford to play the show.

This is the most important bit: don't start promising anyone money until you are sure that your budget makes sense. Once you're convinced that you're likely to break even, you are ready to book your venue, ask someone to make a poster, and so forth.

## **C – M**

### **On the Night**

Maybe you sold tickets in advance of the show in local shops, online or whatever. If so, you should probably take the tickets off-sale and settle up with the outlets before the gig starts, so that you know how many tickets you've already sold. (Try not to worry too much if it's not many – it doesn't always tell you much about how many people want to come to the gig.)

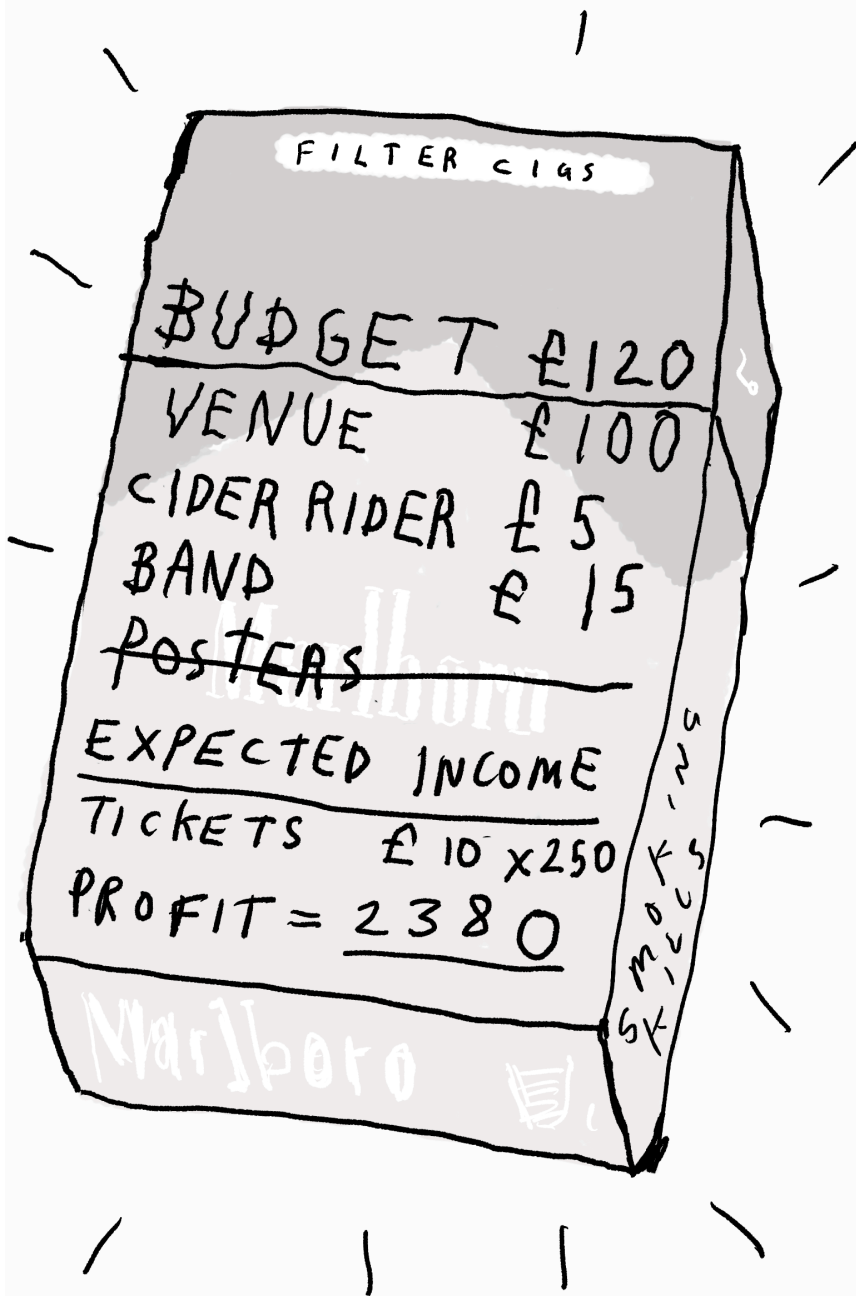


Illustration: Cameron Watt

You'll need someone to look after 'the door' at the gig – somebody who's willing to stay sober most of the night. You could ask them to take a tally of how many people are paying in, so you can keep track of how things are going. At the end of the night, count up your takings. Settle up with your engineer, the venue, and yourself (for costs you paid out of pocket, like the poster printing and the rider). Look back over your budget to make sure you've accounted for any unpaid costs, before calculating your profit.

## **M – C – M'**

### **What to do With All This Money?**

In my opinion, splitting any profits equally between each party involved (each band and the promoter, one share each) is the simplest and best policy in most circumstances. Normally you'll add the profit split on top of any fee that you've already guaranteed. Some situations may call for other approaches. I'd definitely recommend factoring yourself into the split wherever possible. You then have a couple of options: you can spend your split on cola bottles and strawberry laces to reward yourself for all your hard work, or you can put it aside as the first contribution to a kitty which will help to finance future gigs. If you have other friends who also want to organise shows, maybe you can all agree to contribute to a shared kitty, which could provide a safety net if something goes wrong and somebody faces a loss; alternatively, all being well, you could use it to organise something bigger – a festival? – further down the line.

## **M' – C – M**

### **What if it All Went Wrong?**

If you didn't break even on your gig, you might be feeling pretty disheartened. Once the gig is underway, there's not much you can do to reduce costs – in most circumstances, everybody's still going to expect to get paid. If you decide that you really can't afford to pay somebody you've promised a fee to, chances are they're not going to be able to force you to pay – but they're also unlikely to want to be involved in any future events you organise. Even if the promised fee was small, they may have been relying on it to pay for van hire, buy shoes for their daughter, etc. So it is important to pay everybody you've promised money to, and sometimes that means taking a hit.

It doesn't feel great, but try not to let it put you off. It may be that in your town it's going to take a few semi-painful efforts before people get the hang of coming out to DIY shows. You'll get better with each attempt at judging how much you should spend on stuff and how much you can expect to take in ticket sales. Every scene you've ever thought was bodacious started out hard – stick with it!

If you have questions about the boring shit involved in putting on gigs, or you'd like some help drawing up a budget, feel free to email me: **[tracer.trails@gmx.org](mailto:tracer.trails@gmx.org)**



# CONVINCING PEOPLE TO COME: THE ‘PROMOTING’ PART OF PROMOTING

Emma Cardwell

In the rush of organising lights and sourcing vegan food, it's easy to forget that there's a reason why you're called a promoter: one of your jobs is to publicise the gig and bring an audience for the band.

I've seen some promoters that seem to expect bands to do this vital work for them, asking them to put up posters and make their own Facebook events. No! Don't do that! That is your job! Plus, (in my opinion, anyway) it is one of the funnest parts of putting on shows. Here is a quick breakdown of some promotional and publicity activities that will ensure you always (usually) get a crowd and never (rarely) go home out of pocket.

## **The Internet and Listings**

Nowadays the internet is obviously the first stop for publicising anything. Make sure your event is on all the listings websites: Ents24, Songkick etc. plus any local listings sites. The best thing to do is search “gig listings [your town]” and make sure you add your events to every one of these pages. Link to a ticket selling website such as We Got Tickets or Brown Paper Tickets, so people can buy a ticket immediately. People without tickets will lurch at the last minute because it's cold/they can't be bothered to get changed/their friend didn't answer their text and is he being weird with me? I don't know. People who bought a ticket will come, and if they don't come at least they've contributed to you not having the hot sweats over meeting your guarantee. Back IRL, also use any local paper listings – they are often free. They usually have certain days to submit future gigs before, so it's useful to know these so your gigs can go in there in a timely fashion.

Depending on the genre of the band you're putting on, you will also want to get creative with your internet publicity: if it's a twee or indiepop band, post about it on the Anorak forums. If it's folk, see if there's a local folk society (there usually is). Get to know all the bloggers in your locale, and let them know if a band is coming through they are interested in – they may want to write a feature about it. If you are in a bigger town, university music societies are sometimes worth contacting, and (don't laugh!) Meetup groups. You're also going to want to use Twitter and

Facebook and all those social media sites to promote your gigs. In order to do that well, you're going to need to...

## **Brand yourself**

I know that sounds like a wanky "How to Get Ahead in Advertising" kind of thing to say, but it really, really helps. If you put on a high calibre of gig for long enough you'll find that people will come along for your name alone, even if they don't necessarily know the band. They will also follow you on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. and keep an eye on your upcoming listings. People enjoy going to good gigs! That works in your favour. So you need a snappy name that people can easily find online.

Your snappily-named promotions should really have a website. You can make one using Wordpress or Tumblr or something really easily, and it is worth it. Buy the domain name. For the sake of £5, sausagegigs.com is so much slicker than sausagegigs1.freesevice.net. Also, set up an easy to remember email account (sausagegigs@gmail.com or whatever will do) so people can contact you about gig stuff directly, rather than through your work or personal address.

The nicer your website is, the more it will convince people to shell out a fiver to come to your shows. I really recommend creating a cohesive visual identity. If you're not arty, you probably have a friend who is and who will do this for you just for the joy of it. If you don't (you do) then you can get a professional illustrator on board. Don't ask them to work for free – unless they offer to. Illustrators are like writers in that people expect them to work for nothing way too often. If you're totally non-profit, try asking a student who can at least use the stuff in their portfolio. If you're making money then you need to pay the illustrator, full stop.

## **Posters**

Which brings me to posters. A lot of people are down on posters and think they are sooo 20<sup>th</sup> century and you don't need them nowadays but I think YOU DO and THEY ARE GREAT. Even if you don't put them up around your town (you should put them up around your town\*) you can use them on your website, on your Facebook event page, listings pages, Twitter and so on and they are way more attractive, informative and enticing on those sites than a 5-year-old stock photo of the band playing in the dark or stood in front of a brick wall looking moody.

I've seen posters that are Times New Roman venue details with a picture of the band. This is not good. Make something beautiful: it will worm its way into people's subconscious and they will remember you – if not for this gig, for another. You don't have to do colour if you want to save money on printing. Black and white (or black and white with a bright potato print added by hand – just saying) is just as good. Obvious, but make sure that the dates, times, location and your easy-to-remember website are clearly on there.

\* Some big towns and cities have hordes of marauding thugs that will take down people's posters. If this happens to you, go home, have a cry, listen to Jeff Lewis's "Posters" and remember no one can take your posters off the internet.

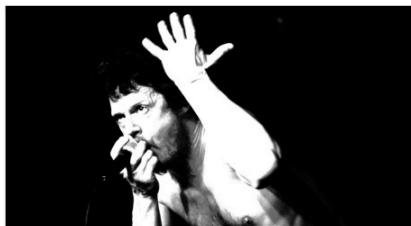
## Selling your bands

If you're putting on DIY gigs, there's a big chance that only about 0.001% of the population of your beloved town has heard of the bands you're bringing. Your challenge as a promoter is to get those elusive 99.999%ers through the door. If you're DIY this really should be easy – after all, you like the band enough to give up your time and effort for them. Just convince others of that! Write blurbs about the bands on your website. Make sure there are links to their Soundcloud so people can hear them. I'm also quite a fan of adding press quotes to posters, which is gauche I know, but gives people a heads up that this isn't just any old band they've never heard of, it's a fantastic band they've never heard of.

Something that worked well for us was to make mixes, both online using Soundcloud and on compilation CDs, of acts playing upcoming shows. We then gave the CDs away with tickets bought from the local record shop, or at the end of gigs. Obviously you have to get people's permission to share their music, but this is a great way to get people into your bands, to come to your gigs, and to know how lucky they are to have a DIY promoter like you where they live. And they really are!

**adventuresclosetohome.co.uk**

Adventures Close To Home present:



### Arrington de Dionysio

(K Records, Olympia, USA)

Patrick Farmer

Wednesday 6th April, 8 - 10pm

Art Jericho, Oxford OX2 6DF

£5 donation on the door

"Arrington de Dionysio's ... ravishingly alien sound (is) deep, guttural, trance-inducing and overpoweringly physical." *Plan B Magazine*

"Crucial listening for those who want music and sound that reaches back into the centre of your head." *Michael Gira (GWANS/Young God Recs)*

[adventuresclosetohomeoxford.tumblr.com](http://adventuresclosetohomeoxford.tumblr.com)

Adventures Close To Home presents  
a night of pastoral post-punk with

## WAY THROUGH

(Upset! the Rhythm)

### BOMBER JACKETS



"Invest in this musical and pictorial tribute to East London while you can." *heavily recommended*  
*The Quietus*

punk sentimentalism with an English candour  
*Dazed & Confused*

"A refreshing rejection of punk's tired uniformity"  
*NME*

Saturday, 25th February 7.30  
MODERN ART OXFORD

£5/£4

[adventuresclosetohome.co.uk](http://adventuresclosetohome.co.uk)

# ADVANCING A SHOW

Sofia Hagberg

I care about a lot about looking after artists, and a major part of that involves being organised and making sure that they have all the information they need as early as possible.

I always aim to send an itinerary to the artist (or the booking agent) within 1 week of confirming the booking and then I send it again about 2 weeks before the show is about to take place. Opposite is a copy of our itinerary template, which includes most things that are helpful for an artist to know, such as parking, load-in, merch and so on.

[twitter.com/samandsafia1](https://twitter.com/samandsafia1)

## COMMUNICATION

DMAS

Good communication is pretty crucial in keeping everything running smoothly with your gig. Without getting all 'project management', here's some tips for making your communication with bands, bookers, venues and audience as effective as possible:

- **Confirm and advance everything for the show:** as Sofia's advance sheet shows, you need to let a touring band know about every last detail. Bands will often have long, tiring drives between shows and you need to make their lives easy, and not leave any information hanging. Make your contact details clear and available.
- **Confirm all financial agreements:** alongside bad communication, money is the thing that causes the most fall-outs and let-downs in this game. Confirm everything in writing, don't leave any details of what you promise (and what you don't) down to chance.
- **Be honest and be realistic:** let a booker / band know how many people you can realistically expect for their show, and make an offer for a fee / food / accommodation based on that. If they turn it down, don't worry, move on!
- **Answer your emails and answer your phone:** maybe this is a 'general life' lesson for everyone, but it makes everything so much easier and less stressful. Even if you can't give a definite answer on something, just keep talking, and say "I'll get back to you next week with an answer". Ignoring and avoiding messages is not cool.
- **Be there when a band loads in:** even if you have to nip away again, it's important to be there to welcome the touring party, and let them know what's what.

SAM AND SOFIA PROUDLY PRESENT:  
**HEADLINER NAME + SUPPORT NAME (support)**  
**THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2013, THE GREYSTONES**

---

**LOCATION:**

THE GREYSTONES: Greystones Road, Sheffield, S11 7BS  
Tel: 0114 266 5599  
Public transport: Bus 81 stops right outside (from town centre, top of Fargate, nr Town Hall)  
Website: <http://www.mygreystones.co.uk>  
Tickets: £10 advance or £12 on the door (unless sold out in advance)  
Available through: WeGotTickets | <http://www.wegotickets.com/event/204247>

**SOUNDCHECK / RUNNING ORDER:**

Please plan ahead. If you're running late for soundcheck, please call Sofia as early as possible.

<b>17.00</b>	<b>Load In</b>
<b>17.15 – 18.00</b>	Headliner name Sound check [45 minutes]
<b>18.00 - 18.30</b>	Support name Sound check [30 minutes]
<b>20.00</b>	<b>Doors</b>
<b>20.30 – 21.00</b>	<b>Support name</b> on stage [30 minutes]
<b>21.30 – 22.45</b>	<b>Headliner name</b> on stage [75 minutes, including encores]
<b>23:00</b>	<b>CURFEW</b>

Your set times will be posted around the venue – please make sure all band members know when they're meant to be on stage. Please don't run over your set length time.

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

**SAM AND SOFIA**

Your name: 07786 491 206 / [info@samandsofia.co.uk](mailto:info@samandsofia.co.uk) [MAIN CONTACT]  
Name: 07000 000 000 / [soundengineer@gmail.com](mailto:soundengineer@gmail.com) [Sound Engineer]

**ARTISTS**

Headliner name: John / [headliner@gmail.com](mailto:headliner@gmail.com) / 07000 000 000  
Support name: Sam / [support@gmail.com](mailto:support@gmail.com) / 07000 000 000

**GUEST LIST:** 10 free names for headline act, 5 for support act. Ideally, please email your guest list to Sofia latest by 20<sup>th</sup> March, or alternatively give us the names when you arrive. Latest by 6pm.

**BACKLINE & PA:**

The Greystones does **not** supply backline, so we respectfully ask artists to arrange any backline needed between themselves. Please share if you can, as this will allow things to run more smoothly. Venue/PA tech spec is available separately.

**LOAD IN & PARKING**

The car park is free. Load in is through the back entrance, which goes straight into 'The Backroom' where the show takes place, so it's easy peasy to load in and out.

**MERCHANDISE:**

A table will be provided for all artists to share. This needs to be staffed by the artists themselves or their representative. There is no charge nor commission taken on merch sales – it's all yours, as it should be!

**We look forward to seeing you all and to having a great show!**

**And if you have any questions – please give us a shout.**

# WORKING WITH BOOKERS: AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIE TIPPEX

Working with some bands – especially those with a bit of success and those from Europe and the USA – will usually involve going through a booker. Bookers are essentially there to get the best deal for their bands in terms of fees, accommodation and food. They make their money by taking a cut of their bands' fees – usually 10-20%. As such, they'll often pitch higher than you might agree with (or be able to afford), so don't be afraid to haggle, to be upfront and honest about what you can offer, and how many people would realistically come to see an act in your town.

Bookers aren't the bad guys though, there's loads we could recommend, many of whom are singing from the same hymn sheet: Qu Junktions, Paper and Iron, Tin Angel, Trapdoor Tourz, TUSK Music, Filho Unico and Annex Agency amongst others.

We spoke to Marie from Julie Tippet – one of the best bookers around – to find out more about how booking agents work, and what they look for in a promoter to host their bands.

## **Hi Marie! Why did you set up Julie Tippet? What did you do before that?**

Julie Tippet was founded in 2007 in London, but was already back then an extension of a French non-profit organization started in 2004 to organize events, shows, tours in France, but also publish books on rock and DIY culture. Before this, I was head of a 400 capacity club in Paris, Nouveau Casino, and freelance programmer for the Parisian planetarium and a couple of other weird places. I wanted to bring Bush Tetras over in Europe and started to look for some flightshares with other clubs. This is how everything got started! But the primitive background of Julie Tippet is the fanzines scene where I was involved as young as being 14, interviewing bands in town, releasing tapes compilations... Julie Tippet is the daughter of these years, of that teenage drive which make things happen. We're now a collective of 10 agents.

## **What was the first show you ever booked? And how did that go?**

The first tour booked as Julie Tippet was a Faust UK tour. It was really stressful since we needed to arrange a concrete mixer and some visits to backyards for TVs to explode... The band's disposition was a bit edgy for health and safety rules but everything worked out fine at the end, but not without sweat. It was quite an intense start, especially considering my communication skills in English were pretty bad at the time! But we got through it and the shows were memorable for the attendees.

**What bit of knowledge or advice – whether for booking or promoting a show – would you have liked to have been given before you started out?**

We're learning permanently: acting as booking agent is being like a transmission strap within a huge map of people with different kind of needs, desires and aspirations, and we are there to make things happen, connect the right people together, and have tours to happen by gathering interests and possibilities.

A lot of bands wouldn't have toured without Julie Tippex: they were of little interest for the usual agencies. Enthusiasm and drive are the core of our activities from the very beginning and nothing could be done without that energy. This was our position from the start, and we believe that's how all things should be done in life.

**How would a new promoter start working with you and hosting your bands? What do you look for in a promoter to host your bands?**

A good tour is a tour which reaches economic, life experience and aesthetic goals. Bands need good fees to be able to cover their costs, but also special moments which make it all worthwhile. And this generally rarely happens within big, cold venues! The personal involvement of the promoter within things is key, from promotion to the show, making sure the band is taken care of.

The major thing I would say to a promoter is to... promote the show! Properly. Not only with a Facebook event but with posters, flyers, radio shows... It's all about gathering energies at a local level to get everyone being excited as much as you are.

**What do you look for in a gig offer? How far can a DIY promoter who might be able to offer a great place to stay, food and drink and excellent hospitality, but not a big financial guarantee, negotiate the process of hosting a band?**

It really depends on the profile of the band, and the tour economy. It's always tricky for us when a DIY promoter just asks us for our big names since we know it won't be realistic. But we still work with a lot of artists able to tour at this level, and they are not the less interesting, even if they're not historical figures yet.

**What can a promoter do to make your life easier?**

Clear communication with everyone! And only commit to things which can actually be handled.

## **Finally, what aspects of shows do your bands enthuse about when they return from tours? What can new promoters learn from this?**

Any kind of special attention from the promoter will do the trick: from home baked cakes to impromptu parties, special drinks and brunches the morning after. Food, in general, is a major key: a band well fed, with love, will remember the show and the city even a few years after! So pamper them well, and if it's all done with the right spirit, along with good show promotion and a good PA, they'll love you for ever!

Here's what **Ian F Svenonius (Chain and the Gang, The Make Up, Nation of Ulysses etc)** has to say about Julie Tippex and the importance of a good booker:

"As an asset for a touring group, particularly in a foreign land, there is none more vital than to work with the CORRECT booking agent. One who understands not just the music, but the dynamics, the politics, the aesthetics, et al of the particular scene, and who has the finesse, the grace, and the class to negotiate these factors.

It is also vitally important for the person one works with to not be solely concerned with profits and not to be tone deaf to the special situations which might present themselves which might not provide the best "bottom line" but might be enriching for the group in whatever way; experientially, artistically, et al.

That is why I am delighted to have found Julie Tippex as an ally. The Julie Tippex name is respected across the gallic world and into the farthest reaches of Europe because Marie is of the people; her organization grew organically from the fertile soil of the underground. Just like a wise farmer has to take the needs of the soil into account, Marie understands the situation on the ground and respects the various contributions of the different parties involved. When marshaling our forces for a tour with her we know we can plot a respectable takeover; no scorched earth policies, no slash and burn. This is of tantamount importance, because the underground group, like the resistance groups and revolutionary cadres of the past, relies on the support of the people for the survival.

All Power to Julie Tippex!"

[julietippex.com](http://julietippex.com)  
[kreccs.com/artists/chain-and-the-gang/](http://kreccs.com/artists/chain-and-the-gang/)





Photos: Neil Cammock

# SCOUTING NEW VENUES

## DMAS

Here's some suggestions for spaces where you might consider for putting on a show:

**Churches, church halls, cathedrals, scout huts, art galleries, warehouses, disused buildings and shops, houses, garages, basements, bandstands, theatres, cinemas, schools, art studios and workshops, practice spaces, restaurants and cafes, gardens, parks, big sheds, little sheds, boats, storage containers, launderettes.**

Here's some things to think about when you're using non-traditional venue spaces.

**Location:** people are often willing to travel a bit out of the way to see shows in unusual spaces. That said, you need to make it easy for them, giving maps, public transport routes, postcodes etc, maybe even putting up signs to help herd your crowd in.

**Architecture and history:** does a space suit a band's sound, ethos or aesthetic? Would attending a show here be an adventure for the audience (and for the band, and you)?

**Acoustics:** the acoustics of the space need to be suitable for the bands you're having play. Churches and warehouses are usually very echoey, and might suit stripped down, voice-led sets more than intricate, full band shows. Smaller, more acoustically dead spaces might suit a more fiery, loud band. (David Byrne wrote about the symbiosis of music and architecture in *How Music Works*). It might be a good idea to take a friendly sound engineer along to help you scout a venue's sound beforehand.

**Sound pollution:** is the space in a residential area? If so, you're going to have to think about not pissing the local residents off. Consider having an early curfew (if this isn't imposed on you already), or program quieter bands in areas where you think there might be problems.

**Access:** think about access for both your crowd (can people with disabilities easily get in?) and for your bands and sound engineer (how easy is load-in?). Can the band and engineer park easily?

**Space:** Is there a good place for you to set up a ticket and merch desk? How about somewhere with good sightlines for the sound engineer?

**The owners or custodians:** try and get a feel for what the venue managers are open to, and any restrictions they might put on you (alcohol, curfews, capacity etc).

**Toilets:** people drinking booze use the loo a lot. Make sure there's enough toilets (and that they flush).

**Licences and regulations:** find out about fire safety and fire exits, public liability insurance, Performing Rights Society and capacity regulations. (See the 'Keeping on the Right Side of the Law' chapter.)

**A decent stage can be really helpful,** but then shows where the bands are on the floor in the middle of the crowd are great too. Altars can be good, if a bit weird for the artists sometimes.

**Power:** are there enough power sockets on the stage? How about for the sound engineer and the merch desk? It gets messy when you have to trail extension leads about the place. Can the power supply for the venue handle the PA, a full backline, and lights? 16 amp Cee Form industrial sockets are ideal.

**Stuff that might break:** is your show in a space with priceless stained glass windows or paintings? How will you stop a potentially rowdy audience from damaging these? Are you liable if anything goes wrong?

## **A checklist for running a night at a non-traditional space:**

**Good communication with venue owners is essential.** As Chris Tipton says earlier in this zine, being DIY doesn't mean being amateurish or uncommunicative.

**Ensure the owners are happy with the content of the event.** There's leeway in how you talk about a show ('folk music', 'performance' and 'orchestral' are all good phrases to use...), but if you're putting on a black metal band in a church, the owners need to be happy with this.

**Make sure you have a contact number** in case something goes wrong on the night.

**Find out what the venue expects in terms of tidying up and cleaning after a show,** and whether they take a deposit off you on this basis.

### **Make sure to check:**

- access times and arrangements,
- what is available at the venue (e.g. PA, chairs and tables, lighting, smoke machine, laser machine, stage door, dressing rooms),
- nearby places to get rid of rubbish and recycling during and after a show, any licensing arrangements, curfew time,
- capacity (and related fire regulations).

# HOUSE SHOWS

## DMAS

Putting on a band in your own living room, kitchen or garage has never really taken off in the UK in the same way that it has in Europe and the USA. However, having a band you like and respect play in your house can be great fun, and gives you the chance to eat, explore and listen to records together.

**Only certain bands are suitable for house shows.** Can they set up and play easily in your living room or kitchen? Will they need to be stripped back? Will you be able to offer them a PA and microphones, or will you have them play unamplified?

**Think about whether you want crowds of strangers in your house.** How might you make your house crowd-proof? Can you make defined routes between the room where the music is, where the loo is, and where any beer and food is? Would you feel better if you shut (or locked) some of your possessions / animals in non-public rooms? Do you have flatmates to consider?

**Noise and neighbours.** Will your neighbours complain about the racket next door? At the risk of rehashing 'How to organise a party 101', think about inviting them (for free). Get them onside with something cool happening in your street.

**Selling tickets is potentially a legally grey area.** One way to make your life easier is to have a suggested donation on the night, which goes straight to the band / your catering bill. BYOB is a good idea, though you might also get a keg of beer and ask for (compulsory) donations.

**Can you feed both the bands and the audience?** Some of the nicest house shows I've played have begun with the band and audience clustered in the kitchen eating together.

**Have a plan for the night.** At a house gig there's none of the structure of a gig in a traditional venue (which can be a good thing), but it's still a decent idea to have a schedule for when the band(s) will play.

**Have a plan for if things go wrong.** How do you deal with your crowd and band if environmental health / the police are called? Will there be people at the show to help you deal with anyone in the crowd who gets too rowdy / drunk / destructive?

**Offer the band a place to stay.** But be aware that your house show is probably one show in a long tour for the band, who might want to get their heads down early. Be perceptive about whether the band wants to stay up playing records or whether they need to get some sleep.

# KEEPING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW

## DMAS

### Temporary Event Notices and Personal Alcohol Licences

Selling booze can be a really good idea, as it'll potentially allow you to make a much bigger profit to pay everyone with. It also brings a whole bunch of new stresses and complications (buying stock, getting hold of glasses, finding barstaff, fixing any running problems etc).

You will need a Temporary Event Notice to sell booze at an unlicensed venue. Your event must be for less than 500 people at any one time – including staff running the event, and (perhaps implausibly...) last no more than 168 hours, or 7 days. You will need a TEN for each event you hold on the same premises. You can get up to 5 TENs a year. If you already have a personal licence to sell alcohol, you can be given up to 50 TENs a year. A single premises can have up to 12 notices applied for in 1 year, as long as the total length of the events is not more than 21 days; and 1 person doesn't make more than 5 applications for the premises. You need to apply to your local council – **[gov.uk/find-your-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council)** – for a Temporary Event Notice at least 10 days beforehand. This'll cost you £21.

**[gov.uk/temporary-events-notice](https://www.gov.uk/temporary-events-notice)**

**[gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-licensing-personal-licences](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-licensing-personal-licences)**

### The Live Music Act and the Licensing Act

The 2012 Live Music Act amended the 2003 Licensing Act. It said that you don't need a special licence to stage a live music performance if:

- it takes place between 8am and 11pm
- it takes place at a licensed premises or workplace
- the audience is no more than 200 people (this has been raised to 500 people)

You don't need a licence to put on unamplified live music any place between the same hours. Schools, colleges, village and church halls are all classified as workplaces, though the workplace exemption doesn't apply if they have a licence to sell alcohol. But you can check with the venue if their licence allows for your performance.

**[gov.uk/entertainment-licensing-changes-under-the-live-music-act](https://www.gov.uk/entertainment-licensing-changes-under-the-live-music-act)**





PICTURE : SARAH TANAT JONES  
WORDS : RICHARD GREENAN  
KITRECORDS.COM

GET FRIENDS INVOLVED, WITH DJING,  
PLAYING MUSIC OR MAKING ART.  
DOING THINGS AS PART OF A TEAM  
IS MORE FUN, AND MORE RELIABLE.

THERE'S NO SECRET.  
CALL PEOPLE. EMAIL PEOPLE,  
ASK FOR THINGS.

PEOPLE ALWAYS ARRIVE LATE.  
LIE TO THEM ABOUT STAGE TIMES.

MAKING THE GIG FREE ENTRY  
MEANS NO WORRIES OVER DOOR STAFF,  
GUESTLIST, OR EXTRACTING CASH  
FROM YOUR BROKE PALS.

BRING YUMMIES.

NO MORE THAN 3 BANDS IN ONE NIGHT,  
UNLESS YOU'RE ORGANISING A FESTIVAL,  
OR FANCY A STRESS HEADACHE.

DO MENTION SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, AS PEOPLE  
NEED AND WANT THIS INFO. DO GET THE  
BAND TO SPEAK CLEARLY INTO THE MIC.  
BUT DON'T GO OVERBOARD WITH THIS STUFF.

MAKE STUFF! PEOPLE LOVE TAKING AWAY  
A FREE ZINE OR MIXTAPE FROM A NIGHT.

# A DIY GUIDE TO SOUND ENGINEERING

Tim Matthew

So you've booked an artist, secured a venue and advertised the show so well that you have a full house. Last thing to consider is that everybody will need to hear the performance, and that includes the musicians themselves!

Unless you're putting on a concert in a small room like the living room of a house concert, you'll need to get involved with amplification. It can seem like a terrifying world of electronics, expensive equipment and surly technicians in long shorts and black polo shirts but if you're putting on a small scale concert there's no reason why you can't hire (or buy), set up and operate the PA system yourself.

For the purpose of this article I'm going to divide PAs (public address systems) into two categories: **Vocal PA** and **Full System PA**.

## VOCAL PA

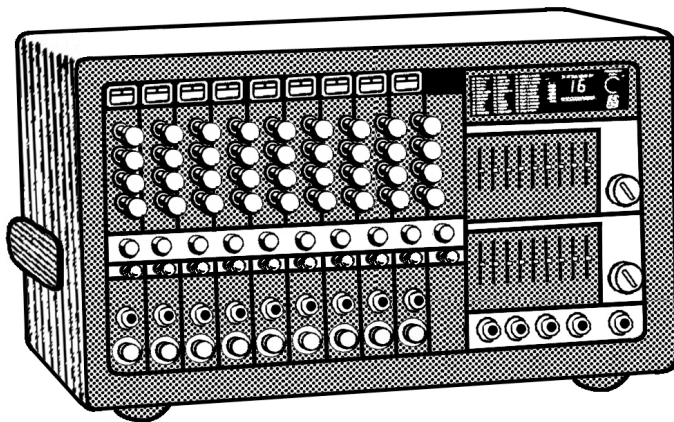


Illustration: Matt Pattinson

A very simple system with either a PA head or small mixing desk plus two speakers to broadcast the amplified sound to the audience.

The mixer head gives you volume control, some basic tone control and sometimes even effects. It also has the amplifier (amp) built in. Into this you can plug your microphones and instrument cables and then attach a couple of speakers.

A small mixing desk can do the same job:

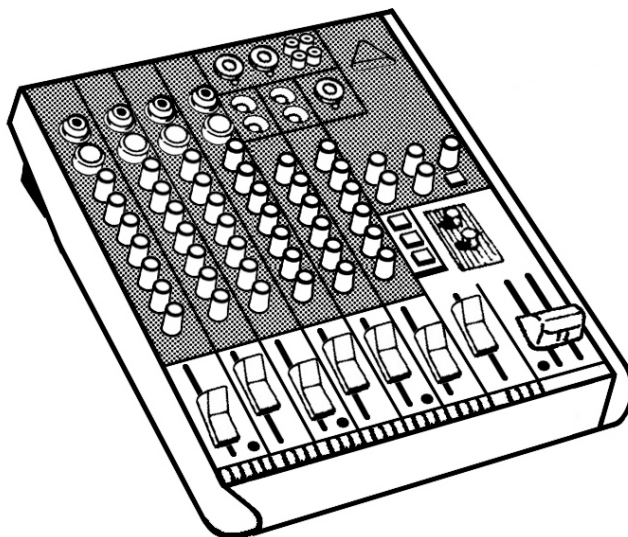


Illustration: Matt Pattinson

This has no built-in amplifier so must be used along with either an external amplifier or powered speakers (speakers which have their own built-in amps).

On each of these mixers you can see a number of 'channels'. Each channel relates to a single input – i.e. guitar, keyboard, voice – and will have a number of controls. More on this later...

## FULL SYSTEM PA

As well as providing the means to broadcast amplified sound to the audience, this kind of system also has the means to send a separate mix to the musicians on stage so that they can hear the sounds they produce more clearly. The speakers used for this are wedge-shaped and sit on the floor pointing back up at the performer. They are variously called wedges (for obvious reasons), monitors or foldback. As well as having an output for the main speakers (front of house), the mixing desk will have outputs for sending a signal to the amps which drive the monitors.

### Signal Flow

I find that understanding the flow of the audio signal is enormously helpful in understanding how to set up and operate a PA system. Let's use a singer as an example of the source of sound. Sound comes from the singer's mouth into a microphone where it is converted into an electrical signal. This travels along the mic cable and into the mixer where it has its volume and tone adjusted and is then combined with the other sound sources. The mixed sound leaves the



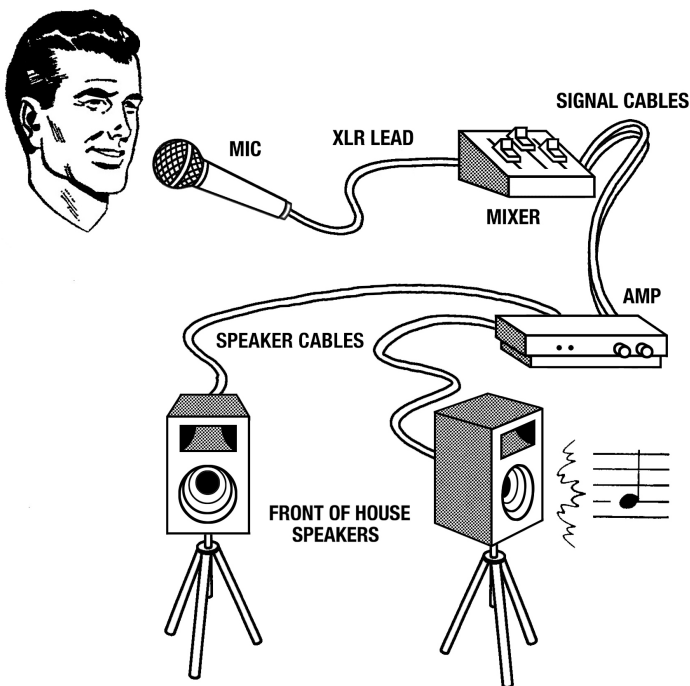


Illustration: Matt Pattinson

mixer and travels along signal cables (two for stereo) to the amplifier. The amplifier increases the volume of the signal by a large amount. The amplified signal then travels from the amp to the speakers via speaker cables (two for stereo). The speakers then convert it from an electrical pulse back into an audible sound.

## MICROPHONES, DI BOXES AND CABLES

### Vocal Microphones

The most common vocal mic is the Shure SM58 and it is very versatile. It's probably what you imagine when you think of a microphone – a cylindrical body with a spherical 'basket' on the end. The basket and the foam inside protects the delicate diaphragm from 'pops' – the sound made when the letter 'P' forces a lot of air out of the mouth.

### Instrument Microphones

Although you can of course use a vocal mic for picking up the sound of an instrument, there are mics specifically for instruments – the Shure SM57 being a common example. Essentially the same as the 58, it has a small plastic and wire grille instead of the large basket.

The SM57 and SM58 are examples of 'dynamic microphones' – a simple design largely unchanged for half a century. There are other types of microphones available and you may well come across condenser microphones.

## Condenser Microphones

These are more sensitive than dynamic mics and will not work without being powered. A mixing desk will send 'phantom power' down the mic cable to do this. You will see a button labelled +48v on the desk – this activates that power. Condenser mics can be either for vocals or instruments.

## DI Boxes

In basic terms, DI (direct injection) boxes convert the signal from an instrument – e.g. guitar, keyboard – into a microphone level so that the mixer can deal with it. If your mixer is close enough to the performer, you can plug the cable directly into the socket on the mixer but if not, you will be using a DI.

DIs come in two kinds: active and passive. An **active DI** requires phantom power and is best used for instruments such as guitars, violins. **Passive DIs** do not require power and are best for instruments such as keyboards, computers. Don't worry though – each kind can be used for either application.

## Cables

**Mic cables** – the 3-pin connection on a microphone is called XLR and so mic cables are also called XLR cables.

**Instrument cables** – also called signal cables or jack leads. To connect an instrument to a DI, mixer, or in the case of electric guitar, an amp

**Speaker cables** – can have XLR, jack or 'Speakon' plugs on the end. You should never use a speaker cable instead of a mic or instrument cable (or vice versa) as terrible noises will result.

**Power cables** - don't forget you'll also need some power extension leads!

**Microphone stands** – for obvious reasons you will need some mic stands so you can point the microphone at the sound source!

## EQ

EQ (equalisation) is the name for tone control and can be crucial for making a performance sound good. It is essentially the way of adjusting the treble, mid and bass tones of a sound. Bass is the low, boomy sound; mid the main vocal region and treble the high, crisp sound.

You will probably have two areas of EQ: a **'master EQ'** on the whole system which is a graphic EQ control with a slider relating to a particular frequency range and a **channel EQ** on the mixer. The channel EQ could just be 3 knobs relating to bass mid and treble or it could be more complex with 'swept' EQ. A swept EQ will have 2 knobs per frequency range – one knob to select a particular frequency and one knob to cut or boost it.

I find the best way to get used to this area of technique is to plug a mic in and just fiddle about – turn particular frequencies up and down and listen to how the sound changes. It's good to be able to get the equipment in the venue and set up in plenty of time so that you can experiment without alarming the performers!

And this leads on to the dreaded...

## FEEDBACK

No, not the questionnaire forms you left on the seats for the audience; this is the bane of every sound engineer. The squeal when a person steps up to a microphone is a 'classic' sound you will be familiar with, which can happen at any frequency. Knowing what makes feedback happen can help you avoid it, and avoid hurting your performer and audience's ears.

A feedback loop happens when sound coming out of a speaker gets back into the microphone is amplified more, comes out of the speaker, gets back into the microphone etc, etc, etc. Very quickly it can get out of control with painful results.

### Ways to avoid feedback:

1. Avoid making things too loud
2. Avoid putting microphones in front of speakers
3. EQ – turn down the frequencies that are feeding back

If you are using on-stage monitors you should have them behind the microphones (i.e. facing the bit where the cable plugs in). Most microphones will have a deadspot behind them so they don't pick up the sound from directly behind.

## EFFECTS

Many mixers now have built in effects units so you can add reverb or delay to a sound. There will be a knob on each channel dedicated to this. My advice is that unless you know what you're doing; err on the side of caution. Many a gig has been ruined by overuse of effects!

## MIXER CHANNEL STRIP

Most mixers have the same layout, a vertical strip and it helps me to think of the signal flow again. Imagine it comes in at the top of the channel and goes out from the bottom.

The first point of control is **Gain**. This alters the level of the signal coming into the mixer.

The next point is **EQ**. This alters the tone of the signal.

The next point is **Auxiliary sends**. These send the signal off to other places i.e. monitors and effects units.

The last point is **Level**. This can be a knob or a fader/slider and sends the signal to the output of the mixer. There will also be a master volume control on the mixer which alters the overall level of the mixed sound leaving the mixer.

## SOUNDCHECK

OK, you've set up the PA, it's all working and you've even had half an hour to play around with it – plugging in a mic and trying out the EQ and effects. Now the band has arrived and it's time for soundcheck. It makes everything much simpler if you stick to a system and I suggest this one.

**You ask one musician to play his/her instrument.** First you turn up the gain knob until there is enough level entering the mixer. If the mixer has a 'PFL' button, press this in and you can see the level reflected in the LED meters on the desk. If no PFL button, there may be a 'peak' light on the channel so turn up the gain until this lights then turn it back down a bit. If neither, turn it up about halfway and see how you get on.

**Next, turn up the output level so you can hear the instrument.** Have a listen, if you think it needs it, adjust the EQ knobs until you like the sound of it. If you have monitors on stage, use the auxiliary sends to let the musicians hear as much as they want of this instrument. Be careful – if you're too quick you might send too much which will result in feedback and musicians don't like that.

**Next, if you think it needs it, send some of the signal to the effects.** And then repeat this process for every input.

**Once you have all the inputs checked, ask the band to play together** and turn things up and down until you like the mix. And then you're ready for the concert!

Now although I haven't told you any lies, what I've told you is a vast simplification of the world of amplified music. It doesn't cover everything but it should get you started. And never be afraid to ask advice from an expert!



Photo: Neil Cammock

# OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## Ned, Was ist Das?

In 2005 I got involved with Huddersfield's new gig promoters. The gigs we put on were Camden-darlings, polishers of Pete Doherty's boots or NME types – fun but not really my kind of thing and certainly nothing that might trouble posterity. I persuaded the leader of our little gang to let me book Damo Suzuki. A week or two later I proudly showed her the Can Live film and she hated it. She started weeping and saying nobody would come. Then her next gig flopped and she announced that all upcoming gigs were cancelled as too much money had been lost.

Something woke up inside me. I straight away said Damo was not cancelled and that I would simply do it on my own. It could be a Was Ist Das? gig (I'd launched a site under this name a few months earlier). I went ahead and it packed the gig out. I realised that I may have been right but Huddersfield was wrong. After getting married, I moved to nearby Hebden Bridge because it was beautiful, dog friendly and vegetarian friendly. The town had a great venue but all it seemed to put on back then was folk music, reggae, world music and at weekends it was DJ nights. I dreamed of promoting again but for some reason, I didn't dare. That old stupid nagging doubt, the fear, held me back. Plus, it was just a small market town where people go to walk their dogs then get a pub lunch and potter round the shops. Surely it couldn't support an underground music scene?

What changed all that was the strange discovery that Hebden had become something of a bolt hole for Mancunians, including lots of Northern Quarter veterans. Everyone I met was either a musician, a DJ, a record label manager or a studio manager. Not only that but they had the same musical tastes as me. The encouragement of all these people inspired me to start promoting again, starting with Damo Suzuki backed by a Hebden Bridge supergroup. It worked a treat.

Since then I've promoted more gigs in Hebden Bridge than I can possibly count – so many special nights. I think bands love coming to somewhere that's not your normal run of the mill British post-industrial city. Word of mouth among artists has helped too. To be blunt, It's not been a big earner, it's not been easy and there's been plenty of knocks along the way but it has been the most ridiculous amount of amazing times that I have ever known. So, here's what I have learnt:

**1. Work out what time gigs need to end in order for people in the surrounding area to make their last trains and buses home.** Not everyone has a car and not everyone with a car wants to stay sober for a night out. Advertise it as being last train friendly, people appreciate that kind of thing.

**2. Don't go nuts on the support bands.** Someone local is desperate to play your gig. Do you want to support local talent or run way over budget booking more bands for the bill? You should only book travelling supports when they are so exciting that you can't possibly contain yourself and will regret it forever if you don't put them on.

**3. If you were staying in a town you didn't know and where you didn't know anyone, wouldn't you want someone friendly to show you around?** I am constantly amazed to hear of promoters booking bands and getting them someplace to stay locally but just saying a quick goodbye after the gig. Be a good host. If they've got time to kill the next day, show them around town. Give them the benefit of your local knowledge. Touring can be boring and lonely, lend a hand and make some memories for your acts. They will speak well of you and word does get out.

**4. If you're a one-man band operation doing underground gigs then it is best to stay away from big continental booking agencies.** They're used to dealing with full-time venue staff and you may end up being treated like one. The last thing anyone wants when they're stuck in a stressful day job is e-mails demanding a ticket sales report before 5pm. They also have a habit of sending over four page riders about a week before the gig with a shopping list that would plunge you deep into debt and which the artists usually deny all knowledge of.

**5. Learn to differentiate between fear and wisdom.** Fear is that irrational doubt that holds you back. Wisdom gives a carefully considered caution. Obviously, if you're loaded you can ignore this step but if you're like most people in this world and you don't have much spare money then it's good not to go and get yourself into debt. Some gigs are worth taking a loss for but ordinary folks just can't support that kind of thing all the time. Don't let the fear hold you back but do let the cautious wisdom protect you. The rent has to be paid.

**6. You're nothing special.** That is, you are the same as your audience. Don't try to be some aloof super-being to be admired by the paying punters. They are just like you, people with decent musical taste. Be yourself, don't be high and mighty and you will make some great friends who are on your wavelength.

**7. Be true to yourself.** Just book bands you want to see. Put your personal stamp on your gigs and make the bills truly your bills. People will begin to get a handle then on what your musical taste is and what your gigs are all about. If people get what you are doing, they will begin to take risks and try out gigs by acts they don't know just because you have booked them. I've been able to put on some crazily obscure stuff in Hebden and covered my costs with an audience split of 20% fans and 80% curious. Also, if you really have put on an amazing night then it doesn't matter if you do lose £20-50 on a good night out, that's a fair enough price for the time of your life, isn't it?

# HOW TO PUT ON A DIY GIG IN EDINBURGH

Nick Herd

So you wanna put on a band or artist you like? Well, just ask them! Most bands I speak to are ALWAYS up for playing Edinburgh but hardly ever get asked. They'll have contact address on their site / Bandcamp / Soundcloud / Facebook – so just Google it!

You'll always have to take consideration that Scottish cities are bit of a bawache for artists from down south and Europe to get to unless they're on a scheduled tour – which makes logistics a little easier. So pitch it as an Edinburgh / Glasgow weekend if they're not touring and agree on a realistic deal with travel and accommodation taken into consideration. If you can put 'em up at your gaff and they're cool with that, it'll save you hunners in hotels. If they're contracted to a booker, it's pretty much the same deal – BUT COSTS MORE. That's how bookers get paid, innit. Just tell them you're a DIY set up and 9 out of 10 times they'll be cool with. At the end of the day, performers want to perform, so just meet them in the middle.

**Find a venue which isn't going to shaft you.** Now this can be a tricky one. Ideally you wanna just pay for the sound guy's time (going rate is usually £50-70) or, if you're a Gordon Gekko type, wangle a venue for free. Venues in Edinburgh sit empty for the most part outside of August, it's NOT your job to pay stupid amounts for room hire on an empty space or a bar cut, for a bored security guy, or whatever costs they'll try to lump onto you. NEVER agree to a bar deal, you get no say in how they price or sell their drinks and they'll always bullshit you about the final count too, so just shoot that down instantly if the manager offers it to you. Minimising your own risk is key to balancing the ol' books, so just explain to them where you stand on this if you're in discussions about a show. For the record, the Banshee and Sneaky's are the most affordable small venues for Edinburgh gig hire, in that respect. If you're a new jack, just book a small show first and see how it goes. Don't go for the big fish if you've never done it before. Your lack of experience will make you look very sill indeed, if and when shit does hit the fan.

**If you wanna use an alternative space (like a church hall, social centre, batcave, sauna),** this can also be a good shout and reasonable hire wise – but realise that these rooms are literally EMPTY rooms with no PA System, no bar, no technician, no backline. So you'll have to supply all that yourself, load it in, load it out etc. The added cost of that can often be more than hiring a venue, but if you're confident enough about getting heads through the door then it can be a lot cooler than just using the same ol' grumpy bar venues. Diversity is good, so if you've got the elbow grease, a vehicle and helpful mates, this option is always a good one. Doing your own bar can also rake in the CASH-MONEY too, aight.



**If you agree to something, stick to it.** Word is bond in this game. If you fuck up, or break something, or haven't made the numbers up to pay an agreed fee or hire, then you're going to have to take the hit for it. If there's no fee agreed and it's just a door deal, then that's cool too – if all parties are down with it in advance. But backing out of an agreement or flaking out on money owed is some straight up cowardly shit, so grow a backbone and have some integrity about the situation. Back in the day, you'd literally get your fingers cut off for that sort of thing.

**Riders.** Ooft. These are kind of a joke, in fairness. But I do think getting food sorted (home cooked or takeaway) for the visitors is a good shout, and maybe a couple of beers too. You shouldn't be expected to pay for pricy restaurants and crates of beer because you'll be out of pocket before the show's even started. Don't be a mug, but obviously a bit of hospitality never goes amiss. Keeping things vegan / veggie friendly is usually a good idea, cause everyone can eat it and the Mosque Kitchen or the tattie place on Cockburn always goes down well with visiting bands – and they're pretty reasonably priced. Local supports do not need to be fed in my opinion, they can have a beer though.

**Communication.** The glue that keeps all this shit together. Be clear with artists and the venue / soundtech about what time load in and soundchecks are and have something resembling a running schedule you can all try and stick to. Shit happens though, people get stuck in traffic, accidents, bad weather, volcanoes. You gotta roll with it though and remember that Edinburgh has godawful phone reception in most bars and venues, so keep an eye on the blower. A lot of musicians are notoriously useless when it comes to communicating, so just be prepared to a lot of the nursing in this respect. Respect curfew times and if a band misses their soundcheck, they'll just have to go without. One mistake is having way too many bands on a bill, I'd suggest 3 acts if the two openers are cool with playing for 20 mins or so, and the headline for longer. Any more than that and you're just gonna overplay and cause the tech to have a headache.

**Guestlists.** If someone has helped in some way with the show, or is performing, or is married to someone playing, or if you fancy them – then they can go on a list. Everyone else pays. Use a tally when counting folks in, and mark their hands with a pen or stamp if it's unticketed – duh. So many chancers out there.

**Marketing,** urgh, such a horrible term. Telling people about your show is pretty essential – I suppose. Anyone can invite a band to play and book a room, but getting paid punters into that room is the hard part. In this day and age, facebook, tumblr and twitter is pretty crucial in getting the word out. Spam it, but also don't over spam it. It's a bit amateurish and desperate if you overdo it, in that respect. Flyers are cool too, but just print enough to hand out at your own or similar shows. No one reads stuff that someone has handed them on the street, this isn't 1998. Posters in the venue or perhaps record shops etc are worth a shot, but realise that they WILL get ripped down by one of Hanging Rock's wee minions who have a racket on posterung.

**Finally, things go wrong, and it's often completely outside of your control as the promoter.** Accidents, bad weather, double bookings, sheister venues, rude technicians, amps blowing up, overdoses, armageddon etc. The trick is to try and have as much contingency for things which you can in fact fix or replace (it's impossible I know). I've been doing this for over 7 years now and there's still no ends to the kinds of stupidity that will crop up, it's always a learning curve so try to treat it as such, and with an open mind.

I'd also try to keep the following items on your person or in a bag when doing a show:

- A torch or torchlight on your phone
- Electrical tape (this shit can pretty much fix anything and save you from accident lawsuits)
- Some spare large jack leads, sound guys usually have spares, but sometimes they don't or won't let people use them.
- An ipod with a suitable playlist for in-between. I always try to put on stuff that is entirely different to the type of music being played on the night.
- A3 and A4 batteries from a poundshop, usually needed for guitar pedals and such
- A money box or box of some sort
- Maybe a wee stash of pound coins in case the venue are being dicks about a float
- Scissors
- Blue-tac
- A4 paper
- Assorted sharpie pens for merch, signs, marking hands etc

That's all I can think of for now, but if you have any other questions or gripes, email me at **skidblue@gmail.com**

**brawgigs.tumblr.com**

# APPLYING FOR FUNDING

## Fielding Hope

In 2013 I hit something of a crisis. Having organized DIY shows in Glasgow since 2007, I was dealt a sudden, heavy financial blow incurred through a slew of (arguably) overly ambitious events. Before it all happened I was certain they would all be fine; almost all the shows I had organized in late 2012 had 'broken even' and I seemed to be on some sort of good form. Unfortunately, the ever-unpredictable nature of event turnouts – and my naivety – emptied my Cry Parrot bank account completely.

Since then I have tried my best to be extra-cautious about what I do. Something that has kept what I do alive has been non-corporate funding – specifically from PRS Foundation, Creative Scotland and the Jerwood Charitable Foundation. I haven't received loads of funding as such, and I have yet to rely on it as a reliable source of personal income, but having put on events now for nearly 8 years I do believe it is a good way to sustain creative activity. Hats off completely if you are able to continue DIY practice without losing money, and I understand entirely those who like to keep away from any sort of private or public financial support. For everyone else, here is a nowhere-near-comprehensive and potentially ill-advised guide to the world of non-corporate funding...

### **1. Don't compromise what you do**

The fact that funding bodies look for original, ambitious, socially relevant, politically relevant or geographically relevant applications is no myth. They want to see ideas that stand out from the norm and excite them. But what's to say that the idea you have isn't already amazing? There is nothing more upsetting than seeing artists or producers create what can be described as 'funding friendly' ideas. My advice is to seek funding for something you believe in, not for something you think will tick the boxes of potential funders. Try and remember that all music has social, political and geographical relevance. All music is folk music, right? You will get funding if the idea you have is amazing. If it's not, try again. And if you are not getting anywhere, make sure it makes sense (which leads me onto my 2<sup>nd</sup> point)...

### **2. Describe what you do very clearly**

This can sometimes be the hardest part of a funding application; distilling what you do into comprehensible words, sentences and paragraphs. Take a bit of time to work out exactly what you do and reasons why you do it – even if those reasons feel purely instinctual. If you are struggling, ask a friend, colleague or suchlike what they think.

### **3. Value all aspects of what you do**

Funders like to see that you have taken into account all the different aspects that make your work complete. And do remember, just because you are seeking funds to make something happen does not mean you should not pay yourself for making it happen! In any budgeting make sure you value your own time, any band-mate or colleague's time, artist fees, office costs, travel costs, studio hire, project administration costs or any other costs that are involved in helping you deliver your project. The only thing most funders do not fund is the purchase of actual physical equipment such as instruments and amplifiers.

### **4. Speak to funders**

A lot of people can see funding as a distant, inaccessible world, whereas it can actually be quite the opposite. If you want advice on what funding opportunities work for you and how to apply, do not hesitate to contact funders directly.

### **5. Don't give up**

Without trying to sound too much like Andrew W.K, please DO NOT GIVE UP. Loads and loads of people are unsuccessful in applying for funding every year. If you are seeking funds for the first time there is a huge chance you won't succeed. Try to remember that the more you apply and the more you make yourself known to the funders, the more likely you are to receive funding over the course of time.

### **Some suggested funders:**

PRS Foundation – [prsformusicfoundation.com](http://prsformusicfoundation.com)

Paul Hamlyn Foundation – [phf.org.uk](http://phf.org.uk)

Jerwood Charitable Foundation – [jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org](http://jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org)

The Goethe-Institut – [goethe.de/en/index.html](http://goethe.de/en/index.html)

Creative Scotland – [creativescotland.co.uk](http://creativescotland.co.uk)

Arts Council England – [artscouncil.org.uk](http://artscouncil.org.uk)

Arts Council Wales – [artswales.org.uk](http://artswales.org.uk)

British Council – [music.britishcouncil.org/resources/uk-music-funding-and-support](http://music.britishcouncil.org/resources/uk-music-funding-and-support)

# SOME THINGS I'VE LEARNT ABOUT PUTTING ON GIGS

Johnny Lynch

**Work out what your costs are.** If you're going to put a band on, and you want to work out how much money to offer them, make sure you work out what your fixed costs are going to be, first. That includes your venue hire, equipment hire, sound-engineer fee, poster and flyer design / printing / distribution, rider, support band fees, door person, advertising costs etc. Work out ALL your costs, and put them in a spreadsheet so that you can show them to the band / booking agent. In terms of guarantees, the band / booking agent you are dealing with will usually have a figure in mind ... but a good rule of thumb is to think about how many tickets you (slightly optimistically, but still realistically) hope to sell. Then half that figure, and then guarantee the band 80% of ticket revenue from that half.

**Use the right sized venue.** If you optimistically think you can sell about 200 tickets for your favourite band, **don't** put them in a venue larger than this. Much better to have a packed out show, than a half-empty venue.

**Don't overpay on venue hire.** If you are spending more than £100 on venue hire for a 100 capacity venue, including sound-engineer, you are being ripped off. If you are spending more than £200 on venue hire for a 200 capacity venue, including sound-engineer, you are being ripped off. This includes big cities. There are plenty of established venues that will take your gig on for next to nothing. If a venue is charging you more than £200, you should remind them that they are running the bar. And if they are not running the bar, then you should. But that's a whole other can o' worms.

**What should you pay the headline act?** In my experience - which is playing mostly 100 to 300 capacity venues - headline bands will expect a guaranteed amount, versus a percentage split of profit (usually 80%). The artist will receive whichever is the greater amount. The important thing here is honesty. For Pictish Trail, I always ask promoters for a guarantee versus an 80% split of profits **after agreed costs**. This means that the promoter has to be upfront about what their costs are going to be, before the gig.

**If you're going to offer bands a place to kip,** make sure it's not where the party is after the gig. And don't put them in a place that is filthy dirty. They're going to need towels too - no one carries a wet towel around with them.

lostmap.com

# FIND A COMMON PURPOSE

Kate Lazda

**Make sure that you have a PA and sound engineer you can trust.** I'm not saying you need a 32 channel digital desk with 10 monitors and a monitor engineer – just someone who knows what they're doing and knows how to get the best out of whatever equipment is on offer, even if it is just a guitar amp and a loudhailer.

We once put on Joy Zipper gig at the St. Andrews Student Union where the equipment just wasn't up to scratch. It was pretty embarrassing for a touring sound guy to come along and have to basically construct the PA but we were totally clueless when it came to stuff like that. I don't suggest that I know much more now but I definitely know to have someone involved who does know what they're talking about!

**Think creatively about your line up.** If you put on stuff you are really into then I think people will appreciate it, assuming they trust your judgement obviously. I think this definitely develops over time. We're onto our fifth Christmas Baubles event (an all day festive shindig in Edinburgh) now and I think people trust us to put on a good show, even if they haven't heard of everyone who is playing. Same with Johnny (Lynch) curating past Fence and now Lost Map events. It means a band that perhaps no-one has heard of are still going to get a crowd because the audience genuinely believe they might turn out to be their new favourite thing.

Acts that in some way complement each other definitely helps too. I don't mean all electronic or all indie rock or all death metal. I don't really know what I mean. Some sort of common purpose or driving influence or ethos I suppose. Those random four band bill shows really annoy me. Especially when you get asked which band you are there to see at the door. I find it so depressing that there is so little connection between the bands or thought put into the night that the promoter does not envisage audience members staying for the whole thing.

**Encourage bands to stay for the whole weekend at bigger events:** it's not just about turning up to play and driving home. This works pretty well on Eigg (for Lost Map's Howlin' Fling) as there are limited ways of getting off the island anyway so you kind of have to stick around!

**We almost always forget a float.** Scrabbling around for pound coins when we could have just gone to the bank the day before is stupid. Also, if you think you've got a big enough float, you probably haven't – double it!

[kidcanaverall.co.uk](http://kidcanaverall.co.uk)

# THE MUSIC BETWEEN THE MUSIC

Lisa Brook

The music between bands might be the last thing you think about when you're planning a gig, but I think it's good to think about it as an integral part of the event. I've been to too many gigs where the 'background' music has been left to the venue or sound person, often ending up with something that feels at odds with the feel of the rest of the event. It's also a missed opportunity to play some great records.

Ask the venue what DJ equipment they have when you're booking the gig. Invite the DJ to play well in advance, not on the day (they may not even be planning to attend!) and let them know what equipment there is. It's really demoralising to lug a box of records across town only to find a CD player waiting for you, then scrambling to fill a few hours with a handful of CDs. As a DJ I wouldn't assume that a promoter can afford to pay me anything, but it's always nice to be offered enough for a taxi home.

I really enjoy choosing records that might reflect the bands' influences, and trying to play a series of songs that bridges the gap between two bands stylistically. There are no rules, but I'd strongly recommend not playing music by the actual bands on the bill, it's weird. The main thing is to have fun playing music you like, that you think the audience and bands might like too. A DJ should be ready to play as soon as a band finishes, and to stop as soon as the next band want to start, even if you're playing your favourite song.

## Some useful things to know:

- 1. A basic set up would be one or two record decks, one CD player and a mixer.** An MP3 player can usually plug straight into the sound desk using a mini jack to double phono lead. A record player won't plug into anything without a mixer.
- 2. Bring your own headphones and a mini jack to quarter inch adaptor.** Like plectrums you can never have too many of these.
- 3. If you're bringing all of the equipment** make sure you include a double phono lead to plug the CD player into the mixer, a double phono to quarter inch jack lead to plug the mixer into the PA, and a four way extension lead.

**headfall.bandcamp.com**

# MAKE THE SCENE YOU WANT TO SEE

Steve Brett

I put on my first show in October 2007, a year after I moved to Bristol, in the basement of the Here Shop on Stokes Croft. Making things easy for myself, I decided that it should be a six-band all dayer, and that I should record one song from the set of each band, make a compilation CD of the event, and give it to the audience as they left. Oh, and that there should be homemade lemonade.

One of the best things about putting on DIY shows is the group of people all over the country that you will befriend. I've met some of my closest friends from promoting their bands, and their music is now a core part of my life. Being part of a touring band, it's great when someone you don't know takes a risk to put you on in a town you've never been before. I don't mind if hardly anyone comes to the show. The promoters who were friendly, generous with their time and effort, who made us nice food, put us up and perhaps even took us to see something interesting the next day: those are always the best memories from touring.

In Bristol we are lucky to have the Cube Cinema and Cafe Kino, two excellent venues who champion interesting music and actively support its promotion. I've also put shows on in a beautiful classical recital room (superb acoustics, too expensive), a 14th century church (no toilets), a crypt (cold, so I made soup for everyone), a scout hut and a couple of boats. Having access to a PA system is not essential (I've done smaller, more flexible shows with a few microphones going into a keyboard amp) but you will probably need one for most bands. Organising things as a group may reduce your reliance on favours from others!

Only promise what you can achieve. When I put on shows it is within my means, perhaps no more than two or three times a year. More frequent shows might be good for attracting a regular audience, but would completely destroy me. Doing a good job of getting people to come to your shows takes a lot of energy. I don't make lemonade any more.

I am not the world's greatest gig promoter. I will probably never organise a show where I'm not fretting about breaking even, but that's not the point. Curating live music, bringing bands to where you live and enabling people to see them is really fun. Make the scene you want to see. And remember to cook the bands a nice meal!

**[stitchstitchrecords.co.uk](http://stitchstitchrecords.co.uk)**



# PAPI FALSO: HOW TO RUN A (SMALL) CLUBNIGHT

Malcolm Benzie

When I started Papi Falso, it wasn't through any desire to create a new creative scene or anything like that; I just wanted a night where me and my friends could get drunk and dance to some weird records. I think this is a perfectly legitimate reason to start doing DIY events, whether it's gigs, club nights, film screenings or poetry readings. I don't know if you'd call Papi Falso a successful night, but it usually breaks even, and I always have a lot of fun. After many hangovers and a couple of dance floor injuries, here are 10 things I've learned about putting on a club night:

**1. Get the right venue.** Small and dingy with sticky floor is best; if people feel like they have to keep the place clean then they won't relax and dance.

**2. No-one will arrive until after midnight.** If your night is 10-3 and no-one is there at 11.30, don't worry – they'll come when the pubs close. During the quiet bit at the start it's easy to panic and start drinking to calm your nerves. In my experience, this ends with you being hammered and playing the same records several times during the night. This will seem fun at the time, but counting up the money at the end of the night becomes very difficult after nine cans of Red Stripe.

**3. All of your friends will ask you if they can DJ – be selective about who you say yes to.** Just because someone has great taste in music doesn't mean they'll play good music for dancing. You don't want to end up with two hours of Bob Dylan.

**4. Don't have too many DJs each night.** You need to think about how long each DJ will get. It's tempting to have loads of people playing records, but it gets frustrating if they each only get 30 mins. For a 10pm-3am night I think four people is the maximum and three is ideal. Try and mix people around so you all get to play tunes when people are dancing. Inviting DJs from other clubs you like to come and play is fun, especially if they're from other cities – and you might get to play at their nights too!

**5. Make sure you know exactly what gear the venue has got.** You don't want to turn up with CDs and find that they've only got record decks (or vice versa). Always bring headphones, record centres for 45s, and a phono-to-minijack lead to plug in an ipod or phone, just in case. If you're using the venue's own stuff, it'll invariably be knackered.

**6. Make sure you know your records.** You don't want to get caught out by a long intro or a sudden end!

**7. If someone requests something and it's good (and you have it), I think it's nice to play it.** But most requests are not for good tunes. Don't be rude, but it's your night so you can play whatever you like.

**8. Good posters are essential.** For a club night, the only real archive you'll have in years to come will be the posters, so make sure they're good! Make sure you put some actual posters up, at least a couple of weeks in advance – don't just rely on facebook and twitter to promote the night. Also, make sure the poster is portrait format, as it's impossible to find space to put up landscape posters.

**9. Make it cheap to get in.** Papi Falso is usually £3 or £5. Do the sums and make sure you're not out of pocket, but a cheap night works like a sticky floor – people will be much more relaxed and likely to dance. At Papi Falso, once all the costs (posters, room hire) were covered, I split any profit evenly between all the DJs. Put money aside for future nights if you like, but make sure that at the very least all the DJs can have a couple of beers and a taxi home.

**10. Keep doing it!** If the first couple of nights don't work out, don't be disheartened – it takes a while to build up a regular crowd. There will always be duff nights, but the fun, busy nights are amazing, and will totally make up for the times when only 10 people turn up or you have to close early because the upstairs toilets have flooded the dancefloor. Putting on a club night isn't very hard, and you don't need to be able to DJ or anything like that. Just have a go, at worst you'll have had a good night dancing with your pals!

[eagleowlattack.co.uk](http://eagleowlattack.co.uk)



# GIGS FOR ALL

Clarissa Cheong

Picture this: it's 1985, two small girls parade around a pot-pourri scented wood-panelled living room, toes sinking in to the beige long-pile carpet, hairbrushes at the mouth and Madonna copying us on the 5 push-button T.V. Or so we like to imagine. We are Madonna. We are at one with Madonna. Madonna is Queen. The Virgin Tour, Live, 1984. She is untouchable, Like a Virgin indeed.

Fast forward a few more years and my first live experience, not counting the Singing Kettle, at the Adam Smith Theatre in Kirkcaldy. A school trip to a BBC Orchestra Christmas concert. My mind and belly are collectively blown. So much so that once back home, I huddle next to my yellow plastic portable radio-cassette player, fingers paused on the purple keys, waiting to hit record when the actual concert is broadcast. To be listened back to time and again, reminiscing of that magical evening and listening out for my mistakenly recorded \*cough\*.

Why am I telling you about these two experiences? These were the sum of my real musical 'live' experiences until the age of 14. Now, I'm not saying that there were no opportunities back then but what I am asking is: has anything changed? Yes, the number of family friendly music festivals has hugely increased, bursting at the seams with people of all ages but what about the rest of the dreich year? I bet I could count on one podgy baby hand the number of gigs in a month that actively promote themselves as all-ages, that consciously and considerately organise a performance around an all-ages audience. Imagine you were banned from seeing any live shows from the ages of 20-38. You get my point?

The typical set-up of gigs has always felt alien to me, both as a performer and audience member. Think about it. You are usually standing, eyes fixated on a group of individuals expressing themselves in a rather intimate way. You swap leaning legs regularly, trying to prevent numb calves. Your eyes dart from person to person, mind meandering around thoughts of how much they had to practice to get so good / bad and what does talent mean anyway? Then, to top it off, you have to slam your paws together at the end of each song in appreciation as that is what is expected by way of response.

When the gig is incredible, it's a release of pent up excitement to clap but why can't you express yourself throughout? Okay, you may scream if you are particularly delighted with the performance. But preferably at the end, thank you very much. All going well, you are blanketed in musical emotion and cast into incredible vulnerability, an intimate moment in a strangely isolating environment. Whose bloody idea was this? As a performer, being ogled, judged and watched with minute attention or conversely being talked over by an unengaged crowd whether induced



by alcohol, distraction or moon alignment-based disinterest, is a painful, painful experience. When it goes well, really well, it's one of the reasons I perform. The audience and performer meet in the middle and share an experience. But that doesn't always happen.

So what can we do to ensure audience-performer engagement for an all-ages audience? Now, in teaching (I'm a teacher), one of the ways is to break down barriers. Remove the pedestal that us teachers or performers are on. We are all human. Set up a venue differently. Remove the stage. Welcome the audience on to the platform if they so choose. Garner a sense of 'we're all in this together'. Dance, offer the mic. Children frickin love it!

Pancake Mountain has recently re-established itself on a Youtube channel. Bursting onto screens in 2009, it garnered a huge cult following, programming children's TV with music acts parents could engage with. The concept was simple. Big names playing accessible music for all with children and adults mingling joyously on the same platform.

My son loves to sing the 'Gravity' song and has a crush on Charlotte Cooper of The Subways, what more could I ask of a hip TV show? It doesn't nostalgically make me want to be a kid like some shows which require suspension of disbelief or dumbed-down viewer interaction, it makes me love being a grown up sharing a mutually enjoyable experience with my children.

Magically, it's accessible to toddlers, teenagers, hip parents and grandparents. I hope that one day I'll be copying MIA's dance moves alongside my teenage grandchildren.

Of course, there's a time and a place for everything. I'm not suggesting that all gigs should be all-ages but what would be nice is if there were MORE gigs that we could attend as a family where I didn't feel on edge trying to keep my children quiet and under control. I want them to lose control. I want them to go bananas and feel what it's like to immerse themselves in live music, feeling unrestrained in their expression of the pure joy of music in the belly (I know you know what I mean). And I want to join them.

So...I propose we collectively question the concept of the traditional gig set-up: that we use all of our creative juices and pipe them into creating a different experience.

## What can we do?

**We could look at different venues.** This will be mentioned throughout this zine but as far as changes are concerned it's a pretty easy and obvious one to make. Alcohol licenses are a common barrier to all-ages shows. In an alternative venue other than a club or bar, licenses can be tailored to your own audiences needs. Overheads can also be significantly lowered, making ticket prices more affordable.

**Or what about timing the gig a few hours earlier?** Families and children, whether audience or performers, tend to eat during Neighbours and Home and Away (they still play those right?) and need bed way earlier than 11pm. I love a wee late night out but its no fun for no-one when we're wrestling tired hungry children in the throes of the beautiful thing that is the ear-splitting meltdown.

**Set up the venue differently.** Does there need to be a stage? Do the band want to rearrange their positioning? (Sorry sound engineers, you like a challenge though don't you?).

**Think about the band you want to put on; what are their strengths when it comes to creativity and performance?** As performers we love it when we're asked to do something a bit different, given half a chance we'd mainly play alternative, interesting shows over our album tracks. It doesn't take a lot, just a bit more thought. Encourage band-audience interaction. Feedback Human Pyramid, erm, anyone?

DIY gigs offer so many more opportunities to do things differently. You're already going against the grain, why not take everyone with you? Bands deserve better. Audiences deserve a change. And children and young people deserve to be involved.

**eagleowlattack.co.uk**

# GIGS ARE GREAT

Narbi Price

Putting on gigs give you sleepless nights. A multitude of different kinds of sleepless nights: excited ones, anxious ones, ones where you're just going over ideas and thinking about mundane but essential things like the best run for the multicore and where to put the cash desk. It rewards an obsessive personality.

That being said, most of it is common sense and lateral thought. Having an awareness of everyone's role and their needs is important. The soundperson wants to know how many electric guitars and how many musical saws they have to contend with. The bands want to know where they can park the van, when's their turn to soundcheck and where the beers and sandwiches are. The punters don't want to walk into a venue with the house lights up and guitar cases strewn all over the floor. Be as mindful and as efficient as possible – get your gameface on; your job is to know the answers. And make sure you've got a float for the door!

I have in the past been accused of being somewhat misanthropic by nature but over some two hundred and odd gigs I've had my stores of faith in humanity frequently recharged. My overarching experience has been of people pulling toward a common goal and going out of their way to help one another – from the most menial lends of plectra and leads, to lifts with gear, sharing of contacts etc. and providing food and accommodation for hungry touring bands and generally going to the nth degree to figuratively give each other a leg up. That's not to say you don't get the odd unscrupulous arsehole, you do but you learn who they are and to avoid them accordingly.

We at fakeindielabel have been fortunate to make really good friends from all over the world through putting on their bands and particularly good ones in Edinburgh. It's incredibly rewarding to know that you're the first port of call for certain bands when they're booking a tour in your town. Putting on gigs means you get to hang out with people who you really admire – Sunday lunch with Kelley Deal, voicemails from Andy Cairns, explaining to Billy Connolly what the Stinking Lizaveta on the t-shirt meant, Dressed In Wires running the length of an Artist's Bookshop at my first gig in order to smash a giant toy Barbie Aeroplane and innumerable lost evenings spent in Bartholomew Owl's beard (RIP) all swim to mind.

We've enjoyed gigs in such spectacular surroundings as a 19th century church, an 18th century library and an 11th century tower in the old town walls, as well as the Head of Steam. Once or twice. Or a hundred times. Putting on independent shows for close to ten years now has left us tired, older and poorer. It's also left us energised, youthful and richer. I wouldn't change a thing. Gigs are great. Let's do this.

**fakeindielabel.co.uk**

# A DIY LEATHERMAN

John Egde

When Rob and Bart asked me to write an article for Don't Make A Scene, having been around the block a bit, I thought the best thing I could contribute would be some portable little parables, intended as broad-stroke, universal and generic advice that I'd like to think could be applied to almost any situation a promoter may find themselves in – so if you're considering stepping up to the challenge laid down elsewhere in this publication and Doing It Yourself, feel free to print this out and stick it in your tool kit along with those other show-day essentials, your Leatherman and your Rescue Remedy, and think of the lessons below as some trusty Blu-tac of tactful succour, a Sharpie of sage counsel, or an XLR of excellent recommendations on how to deal with the everyday pitfalls and pratfalls of promoting gigs.

If, having spent the first six months of 2007 (and indeed the last two months of 2006) methodically making arrangements to host a rare-as-hens-teeth North East show by one of your favourite bands of all time\*, at a newly reopened venue in a city ten miles away from your hometown, circumstances conspire to make you miss them playing your very favourite song, which would otherwise have more than likely been the defining highlight of your gig-promoting career, because you were stuck in the box office staring down swathes of invoices and receipts, engaged in the Herculean task of weighing them all up against the shorter-than-you-anticipated stacks of crumpled tenners and piles of pound coins, then don't worry unduly, because more career defining highlights will come, probably.

If, at ten to eleven, with last orders looming, and curfew just around the corner after that, the US act\*\* touring by train who have misjudged the distance between London and Newcastle are just arriving at the station over the road from the show, full of apologies and East Coast sandwiches and warm tins of Stella Artois, intent on fulfilling their contractual obligation to perform the whole of their hour long set, then it pays to have a good relationship with the venue, so hanging out and regularly attending other gigs there isn't a bad idea. If, however, one year, along with the rest of the staff, you get a Christmas Card from the owner, then you might want to think about reining it in a tad.

If, an hour before doors open, in a taxi heading to an out-of-town shopping centre on a frantic mission to relieve Boots The Chemist of all nineteen Continental-Europe-to-UK Travel Adapters they have in stock on behalf of an Italian rock group\*\*\* who arrived in England two hours earlier with a shipping container of effects pedals, blissfully unaware of the idiosyncrasies of British plug socket design, you find that you're handling your frustrations by allowing your otherwise crystal-clear leftie conscience to entertain mildly xenophobic thoughts – specifically the idea of Nintendo icon Super Mario and his brother Luigi clowning around as incompetent electricians, shorting out

the street lights on Yoshi's Island – remember it doesn't make you a bad person: it's probably just the taxi driver's unabashed racism rubbing off on you, so don't beat yourself up about it.

If, in an attempt to answer allegations of nepotism and clique-creep when it comes to your line-ups, you throw caution to the wind and book as an opener an act\*\*\*\* who you've never seen live before, but who had sent you a single unsolicited MP3 via MySpace that you thought was 'well, OK', in a move not unlike a football manager signing a star striker on the back of a rather-less-than-inspiring YouTube highlights reel, and that risk blows up in your face when they turn up to the show wearing leather trousers and proceed to wallop a heinous noise out of a purple acoustic guitar for what feels like the World's Longest Half Hour Ever, then don't beat yourself up about that, either. If, however, six years later, your mate is still using this story to best you in arguments of taste, then feel free to beat him up.

If, on the eve of a show by an American act\*\*\*\*\* you've been looking forward to seeing for months and months, the band are denied entry to the country by an overzealous UK Border Agency drone, costing them thousands of dollars in lost fees, merch sales and non-refundable equipment hire deposits in the process, then you should definitely halve the ticket price and press ahead with the show, promote the tour support to headliners, and, in a gesture of transatlantic philanthropy, send all the proceeds, plus the contents of a collection bucket back to your stricken pals – you should however, draw the line at trying to raise funds by raffling off the uneaten pitta breads from the rider; charity does not begin at hounmous.

If, after having deemed it totally reasonable to mark the occasion of your 100th event by filling an actual art gallery with posters, ticket stubs, photos and other memorabilia celebrating your centenary of shows, thanks to a heady mix of idiocy and apathy you totally forget to do something similar after reaching the big two-zero-zero, then it's totally ok to convince yourself that milestones are millstones, maan, and that this stuff is supposed to be ephemeral anyway – you're an activist not an archivist!

If, on waking up the morning after a show to find that your favourite band of the last two years\*\*\*\*\* have done all the dishes in your flat, deflated your air beds and folded up the spare blankets they slept in, and are in the front room quietly writing songs with your crappy guitar, then savour that moment, because this is the career highlight you missed while banking up in that box office back in Sunderland, the proud pinnacle of your gig-promoting journey, the apex on the rollercoaster of emotions that comes with dealing with bands, agents and labels, landlords and licensees, TMs and techs. Especially if they've made you a cup of tea.

\* Deerhoof

\*\* These United States

\*\*\* Three In One Gentleman Suit

\*\*\*\* [redacted]

\*\*\*\*\* Cars Can Be Blue

\*\*\*\*\* [redacted, but for different reasons]



# BRIDGING THE PROMOTER-MUSICIAN GAP

Matthew Young

I only got into promoting after I had been running a record label for a few years, and had spent considerable time hanging out with bands. I had heard more complaints about promoters than any other aspect of the music industry. As a friend of mine said when I asked him about it directly, 'as a band, promoters rip you off more than anyone else'.

When I started promoting gigs myself, I was adamant that I was not going to be one of those promoters. You know, the ones where bands roll their eyes or dramatically exhale when they are mentioned. We would be different. We would be generous, and fair. And we are, mostly. I think. But we are dealing with the very lowest end of the gig-going pyramid: bands on their first tours with no more than a song or two on Soundcloud, tiny venues, shows where sometimes only ten or twenty people turn up.

It's usually a lot better than that, of course, and there's no reason you can't get plenty of people down to see bands with only a few tunes to their name, but in general that's where we operate – in one-hundred-capacity venues, putting on shows where seventy people feels like a triumph and making do with 30 or so isn't all that uncommon. But that's where everyone starts, right? Everyone in music has played those shows and they are important, whether or not there is money in it.

The problem at this end is pretty simple, I suppose. When you're dealing with touring bands, even a tiny gig with minimum demands costs hundreds of pounds to put on, and if 30 people turn up paying a fiver each, then it only generates £150, which it's likely to leave absolutely everyone feeling ripped off. The venue won't sell enough beer for it to feel worthwhile opening. The band won't even make their petrol money back. The promoter will feel that they have let everyone down, and that everyone wants money from them (unless they're a self-righteous prick of course, in which case it's probably all the band's fault).

## The Promoter's Lament

You can't get a venue in Edinburgh for much less than £100. Sure, there are amazing community halls and other special spaces in a city with such incredible architecture, but even if you get a space like that for nothing (which you generally can't) you're going to have to get a PA, and that generally costs upwards of £100. Either way, the actual infrastructure of the gig is likely to cost you £100 at minimum. That's twenty paying guests.

Promotional costs can also be pretty high. A lot can be done online these days, but good, old-fashioned posterage is still pretty necessary, so unless you can get on the work photocopier for free then you're probably paying £10-£30 for some posters and flyers, and even more if you need someone else to distribute them for you. This can come to £50 easily – another ten paying guests you need to find.

Next there's the bands' guarantees. Here we take a fairly ideological stance. I don't want to ask a band to play without a minimum guarantee, and a respectful one at that. £40 for a local band to make the trip seems like a bare minimum to me. Touring bands need and deserve more. A first tour is always expensive, because usually no-one has any idea who the band are. So we guarantee local supports about £40 or £50, with headliners getting a little more, and touring bands getting at least £100. So on a bill of three bands, we can be on the hook for a bare minimum of £150 in band fees – often more like £250. That's another thirty to fifty people we need to fund those fees.

And there's the rider too. Booking agents for bigger bands will sometimes demand ridiculous riders (which you might take with a pinch of salt), but as a minimum a touring band will need to be fed. I'd personally recommend you cook yourself, and try and make it healthy as they'll have had quite enough service station burgers by the time they get to you, and you've no idea how well vegetables go down with a band suffering from tour fatigue. And now a slightly more controversial one: beer. I've heard bands reasonably say that actually they'd rather no rider, and as much of a guarantee as possible, that way they can spend the money or not. Regardless, it's a good idea to get the band something. £20 for a case of beer? £15 for a few bottles of wine? Another handful of punters through the door are needed to cover that.

So all in, a promoter can be on the hook for £300-£400 just to put a gig on in the first place. Look around you. If you are in a venue with fewer than fifty or sixty punters then someone, somewhere is taking a hit. If you're in a band, then it's probably you, but almost definitely not only you. I've hosted gigs where the band were happy, the punters were happy and had a great time, and it still ended up costing me £200 at the end of the night because it's amazing how many folk you have to get through the door before you actually make any money.

## **The Musician's Lament**

If it can cost a promoter £300-£400 just to put on a show, how much does it cost a band, then? Firstly, you are never paying for 'a half hour set'. The amount of time and effort going into that half hour set is huge. Now, a promoter isn't funding a band to have a super-cool amp or to spend hours noodling away in their bedroom, but at the same time, musicians invest a lot in just being good enough to be asked to play a set in the first place, and that is rarely ever respected when sums are being done.

For touring bands, just travelling to Edinburgh from pretty much any city other than Glasgow incurs costs of between about £60 and £100 in petrol alone. Even Glasgow is a good £30 back and forth. And most tours have a couple of empty days (try getting a Monday night gig anywhere) where the band aren't getting paid at all, but still have to spend money to live. And there's accommodation of course. Unless you can put the band up for the night then they may need to spend money on a hostel, which can be hundreds depending on how far in advance they can book and how many of them there are. So it can cost a touring band up to £200 or £300 just to play in your city, once they've travelled there, slept over and had something to eat. Suddenly that £100 you're struggling to pay them as a promoter doesn't look so good, does it?

## **The Promoter-Musician Gap**

So basically, the costs of independently putting on a touring band with local support simply don't add up, unless you're getting close to a hundred people through the door. Even if you're only paying the touring band £100 and the local band £50, which as we've seen doesn't really cover their costs, you still need around seventy warm, paying bodies. Here in Edinburgh, frankly, that's an achievement. I've seen plenty of Pitchfork bands play to twenty people in this town. I've put on plenty of gigs myself where only thirty-odd people turned up and it was still an amazing gig. Every band in the world has played gigs to ten or twenty people, and most promoters have experience of putting them on. If those ten or twenty people are really into it, it still doesn't feel like a failure. But everyone is going to be hurting financially, there's pretty much no avoiding that.

## **How to Make it Work**

**At this level, I'd really only put a band on if you are excited about the gig yourself.**

Otherwise it'll show to the bands, and any money you lose will become a massive source of resentment. Turn up. Being there when an out-of-town band unfamiliar with the venue actually arrives is a big deal. It just sets everything off on the right foot. Sure, you can wander off afterwards while they soundcheck, but being around and available during the build-up is important. It calms everyone down, and shows that you care. Make sure you treat the word guarantee entirely literally. If you promise it, you pay it, no matter how much it stings.

**Online PR is free, so make sure you make the most of it.** Be sure the gig is listed in the basic places: Songkick, Bands in Town, local press, a few key local blogs. These will change with time, but you know what I mean. Minimal social PR is easy – all you need is a Facebook event page which you share and add material to occasionally, and invite all your music pals to. And mention it on Twitter every few days.

**And get your posters up.** At least some in some key places. If you do the work it also helps for the band to see that you're doing it, too. It will make them more confident in advance, and

more sympathetic if things don't go well. Send them your Facebook event page, ticket link and let them see the posters.

**Advance communication is hugely important.** Just a simple one-sheet with venue address, parking details, your contact details, backline, accommodation details, when and where they're getting fed and the load-in, soundcheck and stage times is hugely helpful. Write it out once and it can generally be copied and pasted pretty much verbatim for future gigs.

**Feed touring bands, and take a little care about it.** Cook something nice, make some time to sit around and have a chat. They may not feel like hanging out with you – they might just be knackered – but be available for a chat about music, a quiet drink after the gig if they want it, and generally just be aware that the band will probably want to relax and wind-down at some point. And actually if they have to play to twenty people, at least you taking a genuine interest in them can make it feel a whole lot better.

**Not providing a silly rider is often okay with the band, as long as you take some care over the other stuff,** but at least a few beers is a good idea. There's so much sitting around involved in gigs that they're going to want a pint at some point, and pishing away their fees in the very same venue isn't much fun.

**Remember that at this level, there's not much money going spare. So it has to be nice.** You have to take time and give a damn – it makes a huge difference. And who knows, if you're nice and generous and encouraging, they might well come back and play for you even when they can get more money playing bigger venues.

With thirty to fifty people through the door, we're all taking a hit, so cut the costs where you can, work as hard and as honestly as you can, and be respectful of what the band or the promoter are going out of their way to do for you, whichever hat you yourself happen to be wearing.

And at the end of the day, if you stop enjoying it, it's probably time to stop doing it.

**[songbytoadrecords.com](http://songbytoadrecords.com)**



Illustration: Craig Coulthard

# I'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN

David Thomas Broughton

I'm writing this brief passage as an artist who has travelled around meeting DIY promoters for the last 10 years or so. Perhaps this illustrates 'how not to do it'. A few years ago a somewhat unheard-of promoter pops his little head into the music scene of what is a fairly large university city. A scene I have no idea about, so forgive any inaccuracies. Before I launch into what may seem an attack, I'd like to highlight that I was not based in the UK during this time and ensuring some reasonable cover of my travel expenses is, I'm sure you can understand, necessary. I say 'attack' but it is merely an appraisal. I booked my cheapest option of travel. Coach. I have a return, the lowest fare, well in advance, but with this outlay I've spent enough to mentally tie myself to making this show. Not to mention the guarantee – a reasonable guarantee – is confirmed.

The prospect of an all day alternative folk music event in a local arts centre is appealing. The lineup shapes itself into a genuinely interesting form. I'm placed top of the bill, and have the furthest to travel. I tend to take long strolls to find venues on foot. Without any grumbling others to round up I can please myself. I arrive to find an enthusiastic promoter. Expresses his long term appreciation of my music, quotes his favourite songs. I am suitably wooed. He offers a tipple from the bar, and proceeds to sip a red wine himself. All seems in order. Other acts filter in, finger pickers and quaint alternative folk, fairly lovely female songwriters. Yes. The acts are there, but what of the audience? One or two people saw a poster or perhaps know our host. But paying audience is by far outnumbered by the acts and their entourages. Apparently unaffected, our host is Cabernet Sauvignon-plussed about this discrepancy. "Perhaps hold off getting things going, see if a few more people arrive". Fair enough. It is a very early start.

Cutting forward a little while, we have to start the show. Scheduled to play first, a guitarist takes the stage (well the corner of the room which has had a PA squashed into it). Oh, I suppose more people will come later. A couple more people have shuffled in. Let's see how it goes, things seem quite relaxed. Schedule timings are well and truly out of the window. These things happen, so onward... I am introduced to some lovely music. They are playing for me and each other. Quite pleasant. Unfortunately a creeping thought pervades. A little thought about the confidence this promoter had in terms of providing the promised monies for this show, considering he'd taken close to naught on the door.

Sinking deeper into his Bordeaux-blur, his sip has turned into a swig. A realisation creeps over us that he is not in control. By the time I've managed to get used to the improvised sound set-up. Yes, did I mention? There's no engineer. We just have to see what we can do. The promoter lolls around the room, banging a clumsy hand around the set-up, with a chianti smile. Making it

clear it is his show. As I sing, who is that joining in? He picks up a guitar and plays along with me, it is awful and uncomfortable. A shout comes from the barman, the police have been called, we are exceeding curfew. The power is pulled. It's insisted I go on. I rattle through an unplugged number or two. Resigning myself to a talking-to but knowing my shoulders do not carry the weight of this debacle. We gather our things. Our claret confused host demands a street performance, well carry on this show without a venue! It is late. We are tired. I was promised a place to stay. Our stumbling host drunkenly explains how he recently lost his job, and is struggling to make ends meet. He's his elderly grandmothers carer. With this, an air of desperation is sniffed.

The next step I take is to enquire about where I am staying, which places me in an awkward position, as a frail grandmother's house is not where I fancy winding down... Luckily, in steps one of the other acts, to offer a comfy sofa within easy walking distance. The subsequent hours find us settled in a good old kitchen-based drink and chat, albeit with the continued company and interjection of our wine weary promoter. Pleasant and good humoured company of the folk singer and his girlfriend make for a recuperative comedown before a peaceful sleep on an ample settee. It transpires that our promoter, in his merlot-muddled mind, felt it quite alright to curl up in the corner of the master bedroom where the couple of the house slept.

A most interesting experience and a few lessons to be learned. In regards to the promoter in this instance, it would appear he has satisfied only the very first rule of DIY show organisation: his heart is good, he wants to put on music he is genuinely excited about. A shame about the rest. But it is not entirely an isolated incident: a bit of organisation and forethought can yield successes and an understanding of the risks, perhaps even a contingency to account for a sometimes unpredictable public. The best shows I have played may not have been the most well attended, or the best funded, but they tend to be for the promoters who have built a relationship with their local music scene and can guarantee a group of people who trust them to bring good shows to town. They also exhibit a level of professionalism, consideration and organisation, that lacked on the above occasion.

This account is not meant to place the entire onus on the DIY promoter. As you may infer, I took the evening in gentle humour, and never expressed anger toward the poor fellow at the time. In the spirit of mutual respect there should be some concession to the dedicated music lover who is not making profit, in many cases it is an uneasy position to be in, to take money from someone who hasn't reached break-even. Money. Oh, this is the least favourite subject of the artist. It is a necessary thing. Take care to make sure any transaction is simple. Be in a position to honour an agreed fee: be that a portion of door or a set figure. It's awkward for all to dance around the problems you've had convincing your unreliable regulars to come to a show. Of course we anticipate ups and downs, but with pro-activity from all involved we can make great shows. I've seen it happen.

# TWO SHORT NOTES ON A MUSIC CAREER

Mark Andrew Hamilton

Newcastle

I still remember my first show. Not the first first show, mind you (that was either the Everley Brothers or Gordon Lightfoot, or maybe even Bill Cosby doing stand-up in the Calgary Saddledome, all with parental supervision), but the first show that I went off to all on my own. Calgary, Alberta had very few all-ages venues, but down in Kensington the Carpenter's Union Hall – a decidedly non-descript little building torn down earlier this very month – momentarily hosted the young with open arms. As for that first show: Tristan Psionic (I loved them, they loved Sonic Youth), Sianspheric4 (shoegaze was alive and well in Canada), and Placebo4 (fronted by a young Feist, sounding a bit Babes in Toyland). The sound was unbearably loud. My friend and I handed out copies of our zine, *Get it Off*, it's *Chafing Me*, and a lad with a Mohawk pulled a razor blade out of his pocket and, whilst pogoing around the room, slashed at his arms with it. My people.

Shortly afterwards, as one does, I thought I could also put on shows, and my first (and final) attempt was held in aid of the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers at a godawful venue on 17th Avenue. A friend and I called out on our friends from the scene, booking CanConBritPop groups like Ray-o-Vaq and The Lux and curating a night of film screenings behind the band. Everyone seemed gung-ho, excited, in it for the music, man. I think we may have even told one group in particular what a "good bit of exposure" it would be for their career.

That group, however, was the one group who refused our advances. A pair of twin sisters who'd won a local battle of the bands, we all thought they were clearly letting things get to their heads. I remember their concerns: music wasn't free, what they did deserved respect, and while they supported our cause, in effect paying to play wasn't something they did anymore. Fair enough: since then, they've done quite well for themselves, that plucky Tegan & Sara.

That was the early 1990s. I played my first show as Woodpigeon in a basement theatre called Birds + Stone, in support of Sandro Perri's first forays into singer-songwriter heroics in 2005. I was so scared to perform, I asked Sandro to empty out the audience and sit in the back row with his eyes closed. If I could sing in front of him, I thought I'd be fine. The audience came back in, and without once looking up, I performed like a shaking leaf. Almost a decade later, I've done over 500 performances. In fact, I'm on tour right now, typing away in a launderette somewhere in the wilds of Newcastle waiting for my clothes to dry.



In these 9 years, I've done my time, yet still find myself on the receiving end of ridiculous requests and bizarre suggestions of what my work and time is worth. And coming to a realization of just what your work and time is worth to you is, for me, one of the most important moments in a musician's life.

I'm not saying we should never play for charity, or that there aren't moments where the visibility and (ugh) "exposure" provided by a show creates a tricky interior juggling act between grabbing that exposure and experiencing the financial losses taking such a show will cost. For example, a brilliant friend's band played an opening set at a sold-out Wembley Stadium for a paltry 150 quid.

There are times when it makes sense, and fantastic organizations worth playing for (such as Dublin-based Siobhán Kane's Young Hearts Run Free, raising money for the homeless, while treating its volunteer artists like royalty).

When this mentality stretches over into the realm of money-making promoters attempting to pull a fast one, however, there's not much else one can do but hold your head up high and realize you're worth more than that. If you're not getting up on that stage and owning what you're doing up there, then you're not doing it right. And to me, that includes what happens off-stage as well.

## **Montreal**

Weeks later, I'm here in Montreal. A new album has been recorded, the final vocal overdubs provided by Mary Margaret O'Hara at 6 Nassau Studio in Toronto. These few days in Canada's greatest city are my time off, and a perfect time to reflect.

The day after the above writing in Newcastle, I performed a show in Middlesbrough as part of a small festival there in the Town Hall Crypt. The headliner was someone I've never heard of, yet their crew treated me as though they were the hottest shit going.

2015 marks my tenth year performing music in front of audiences, and I'm rarely treated the way I was treated at this show. After my set, I placed my guitar in its case, and collected my pedals and cables. The sound man and roadie for the following performer were on-stage immediately following the last song. I was given neither space nor time to finish my task, and with large arm sweeping gestures these lads rushed me off the stage. I'm not the type to often snap back at someone, but in this case it seemed valid.

"Give me one minute."

And that brings us to Lesson Number Two: Don't be a dick. It's simple.

If you're a promoter, then value and respect everyone involved: support bands, sound engineers, venue staff, everyone. If you're a headliner, at least get the names of those performing before you. Say hello. It's reality that quite often you won't be in the mood to watch an entire performance before your own, but it's easy to at least make those sharing the bill with you feel like an important part of what's going on that night.

And those lessons go hand-in-hand: whilst valuing your own work and efforts, it's vital to realize the same holds true to everyone else out there who steps up on a stage and gives a piece of themselves away.

If only all promoters, performers, and crew could realize those two simple facts of this crazy life we call music.

**[woodpigeon-songbook.com](http://woodpigeon-songbook.com)**



Photo: Neil Cammock

# PROMOTERS: I SALUTE YOU

Dan Willson

I have been asked to write a few words about promoters. In my opinion they often get an unfair reputation due to the small minority of unscrupulous or inept promoters out there.

Promoters are the people or organisations who put on the shows which, as a music fan, you might sometimes attend. You might not even think too much about the mechanism behind staging the event you are attending and the complicated path which led to you becoming aware of the event and subsequently attending it but these generally are the remit of the promoter and he/she usually takes a split of the door money in return.

The promoter often has a difficult task, especially when promoting an act who is not well known already in the area. They have to make difficult decisions and staging a show can be costly and stressful, quite before any consideration is given to paying the act being booked. I personally feel that the promoting scene extends from those who do it for the love of bringing interesting new music to a town or city which is not well served by touring acts, to those larger organisations with a keen eye on the bottom line, with large venues to fill at any cost. Both ends of the spectrum include people who do it well, and people who do it badly, from the perspective of a touring musician.

Firstly, I have promoted shows myself so I have a little insight into that side of things. It isn't rocket science, but to do it well there is a fair amount of effort involved and it takes organisation, tact and effort to do it. Most people, with enough preparation, could promote a show successfully. I have done it well and I have done it badly. My main impulse was not to make money but I occasionally did. My main impulse was not to lose money, but I occasionally did. In the end I lost enough money to stop doing it and concentrate on my own musical path but it stood me in good stead as far as understanding things from the promoters side.

As yet, I have never had a booking agent in the UK. Booking agents are intermediaries between the artist and the promoters and they too take their fair cut of the little money on offer. That means I deal directly with the promoters I work with. This can be an advantage or a disadvantage (little protection against inept promoters who shall remain un-named who once double booked a show in Bristol and told us when we were already en route to Bristol) but it does mean I have had a chance to build personal relationships with the people putting on the shows. Initially I played shows where we were paid very little, to mitigate the risk to the promoter but over the years I have been lucky to play busy shows where some money is often made. Usually we agree a

guaranteed figure and then stipulate a door split should the show make any money after costs are deducted, taking the costs of staging the show into account.

I have slept on promoter's floors, couches, in spare rooms, and (eventually) we now might get a hotel room. There are some great people out there who want to bring music to their communities. They have cooked for us. Sought out interesting local fare for us. Given us tips for things to see on our way to the next show. They have refused to take their door split when the shows were not busy. They have rejoiced a few years later when the shows were really busy, having stuck with it through the hard times.

You can often see these promoters watching the show quietly from the door, pleased to be the reason the show is happening in their town. These are the real unsung footsoldiers of the revolution. I salute them.

**witheredhand.com**

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Andy Abbott** is an artist, writer and musician living and working in Yorkshire. He is a member of the artist collective Black Dogs, makes music as That Fucking Tank, Nope and Elizabeth, and is the director of the arts and music festivals Bradford Threadfest and Recon. In 2012 Andy was awarded his PhD from the University of Leeds with a thesis on 'art, self-organised cultural activity and the production of postcapitalist subjectivity' which he is currently working up into a book entitled 'DIY BOTHER?'. [andyabbott.co.uk](http://andyabbott.co.uk)

**Andy Inglis** has twenty-two years experience in the music industry, primarily in artist and venue management. He cofounded and ran the much-loved London venue The Luminaire and now runs 5000, a music management company. [fivethousand.co.uk](http://fivethousand.co.uk)

**Bartholomew Owl** founded Edinburgh band eagleowl, and promotes DIY gigs through The Gentle Invasion. He cofounded the Retreat! festival. [eagleowlattack.co.uk](http://eagleowlattack.co.uk) | [twitter.com/gentleinvasion](https://twitter.com/gentleinvasion)

**Cameron Watt** is an artist from Cleethorpes, who now lives and works in Gothenburg, Sweden. He made music in Edinburgh for almost a decade with his *Enfant Bastard* project and *The Love Gestures*. [cameronwattpaintings.com](http://cameronwattpaintings.com)

**Chris Tipton** founded the London DIY promotions organisation and label Upset the Rhythm in 2003. Originally from Shropshire, he makes music with his band *Way Through*. [upsettherhythm.co.uk](http://upsettherhythm.co.uk) | [waythroughwithyou.blogspot.com](http://waythroughwithyou.blogspot.com)

**Clarissa Cheong** is a musician, teacher and writer from Edinburgh. She plays double bass and sings in eagleowl. [eagleowlattack.co.uk](http://eagleowlattack.co.uk)

**Craig Coulthard** is a Scottish artist based in London. He releases music as *Randan Discotheque*. [craigcoulthard.com](http://craigcoulthard.com)

**Dan Willson** is a visual artist and musician based in Edinburgh, who has released two critically acclaimed albums and a number of EPs and singles as *Withered Hand*. [witheredhand.com](http://witheredhand.com)

**David Thomas Broughton** is a musician and artist from Otley in Yorkshire, currently based in Seoul, South Korea. [davidthomasbroughton.co.uk](http://davidthomasbroughton.co.uk)

**Emily** is a former gig promoter and anti-poverty campaigner from Fife, currently based in Glasgow. She organised DIY gigs and festivals (including *Retreat!* and *Music Language*) through *Tracer Trails* between 2006-11. [oldsite.tracertrails.co.uk](http://oldsite.tracertrails.co.uk)

**Emma Cardwell** is an academic and writer from South Yorkshire. She organised DIY gigs and film screenings in Oxford through *Adventures Close to Home* between 2010-12. [adventuresclosetohome.co.uk](http://adventuresclosetohome.co.uk)

**Fielding Hope** is a live music and arts programmer based in London. He promotes Scottish gigs through *Cry Parrot*, cofounded the *Music Language* festival with *Emily Tracer Trails* and is Senior Producer at *Cafe Oto*. [cryparrot.com](http://cryparrot.com)

**John Egdell** is a musician and DIY gig promoter from Newcastle, who cofounded *fakeindielabel*. [johnegdell.co.uk](http://johnegdell.co.uk) | [fakeindielabel.co.uk](http://fakeindielabel.co.uk)

**Johnny Lynch** runs *Lost Map Records*, makes music as *The Pictish Trail*, and organises the *Howlin' Fling* festival from the Isle of Eigg off the West Coast of Scotland. [lostmap.com](http://lostmap.com) | [thepictishtrail.com](http://thepictishtrail.com)

**Kate Lazda** is a musician and gig promoter based in Edinburgh, where she plays with Kid Canaveral and helps run Lost Map Records.  
[kidcanaveral.co.uk](http://kidcanaveral.co.uk)

**Lisa Brook** performs as DJ Cupcake, and in bands Headfall and Corey Orbison. She's been involved in putting on gigs in Bristol and Cardiff since 1996, including Ladyfest Bristol in 2002 and various gigs with Local Kid in Bristol.  
[headfall.bandcamp.com](http://headfall.bandcamp.com)

**Lizzy Stewart** is an illustrator and artist based in London.  
[abouttoday.co.uk](http://abouttoday.co.uk)

**Malcolm Benzie** plays guitar and violin in eagleowl and runs the sci-fi pop and psyche-rawke clubnight Papi Falso.  
[twitter.com/papifalso](https://twitter.com/papifalso)

**Marie Tippex** founded and runs the Paris-based booking agency Julie Tippex.  
[julietippex.com](http://julietippex.com)

**Mark Andrew Hamilton** is a musician and writer from Calgary, Canada, who releases music as Woodpigeon.  
[woodpigeon-songbook.com](http://woodpigeon-songbook.com)

**Matt Pattinson** is an artist based in Edinburgh.  
[culpritart.bigcartel.com](http://culpritart.bigcartel.com)

**Matthew Young** runs Song, by Toad records in Edinburgh and organises gigs and festivals including the yearly Pale Imitation festival.  
[songbytoadrecords.com](http://songbytoadrecords.com)

**Narbi Price** is an artist, musician and DIY promoter from Newcastle. He co-founded fakeindielabel (as you would expect).  
[narbiprice.co.uk](http://narbiprice.co.uk) | [fakeindielabel.co.uk](http://fakeindielabel.co.uk)

**Neil Cammock** is a photographer and artist based in Edinburgh.  
[neilcammock.blogspot.com](http://neilcammock.blogspot.com)

**Nick Herd** runs Braw Gigs in Edinburgh, promoting experimental artists in interesting spaces.  
[brawgigs.tumblr.com](http://brawgigs.tumblr.com)

**Ned** runs the Was ist Das? DIY promotions organisation in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire.  
[wasistdas.co.uk](http://wasistdas.co.uk)

**Rob St. John** is a writer and musician from East Lancashire.  
[robstjohn.co.uk](http://robstjohn.co.uk)

**Sarah Tanat-Jones and Richard Greenan** run DIY label, blog and radio show Kit Records in London. Sarah is an artist and musician who releases music as Synaesthete.  
[kitrecords.com](http://kitrecords.com) | [sarahatanatjones.com](http://sarahatanatjones.com)

**Sofia Hagberg** co-founded the End of the Road festival in Dorset, and now promotes DIY gigs in Sheffield.  
[twitter.com/sofiahagberg](https://twitter.com/sofiahagberg)

**Steve Brett** has run stitch-stitch records since 2007, and plays in The Nervy Better, I Know I Have No Collar and Boxcar Aldous Huxley.  
[stitchstitchrecords.co.uk](http://stitchstitchrecords.co.uk)

**Tim Matthew** is a sound engineer and musician from the Isle of Mull, now based in Edinburgh. He has worked with Lau and James Yorkston, and plays music in Lord Rochester and Mystery Juice.

**Tommy Perman** is an artist, designer and musician from Edinburgh. He was the bass player in FOUND until 2013.  
[surfacepressure.net](http://surfacepressure.net)