

DMMC 101

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

Gas Lamp 5:30-7:30pm

Discussion Notes

Question: How can local musicians make a career of their music?

Musicians need to learn how to invest in themselves. They need to learn how to strategically use their time and money. Making music as a career is not necessarily practical and is an idealized notion. Musicians are essentially entrepreneurs and need to maximize their time and efficiency. Decide if this is your career or your passion and dedicate the necessary time and money. Be strategic about booking shows after you determine whether you want money, exposure, or both.

A few ways to get started: piggyback on the success of other musicians by opening for their shows, making split LPs, market to their audience, etc. Play to a variety of audiences in general, even if not part of your genre's "scene." Have no expectations of the audience, but SELL yourself and your music. Ask yourself honestly, is there a market for my product? Are you personally cut out to be an entrepreneur? Make the audience care about what you are doing, because essentially your music is a product people don't need. You really have to sell your music and yourself. Play shows outside of Des Moines, because Des Moines might not be your crowd; your music may be accepted more readily elsewhere.

Question: Is Des Moines supportive of its music scene?

Des Moines is extremely supportive, to a fault. Too much back-patting in Des Moines. Musicians stay at the same level of quality because they are not offered enough constructive criticism. We need to offer open, fearless feedback to musicians if they are in need. As a musician, surround yourself with masterminds of the best intentions; people who work in various mediums, not just music; different genres. Sometimes the best advice comes from the most oddball places.

Question: How do we create an environment where people feel comfortable providing constructive criticism?

Need more honest and critical critiques online; perhaps blog form. With a broader interest than most bloggers currently in Des Moines; broader genres, broader instrument choices, etc. Many bloggers are stuck in a rut of writing about what they already know.

Fellow musicians need to take a step further rather than offer empty compliments. Recording studios can push musicians as they record albums. Put your demos out there for more people in the community to review before recording the final take. Every album is truly collaborative. Musicians need to be open to criticism and actually WANT it. Would be great to get an outside perspective that you've never heard before. Be open to feedback from various sources. Important to increase the quality of Des Moines' music, because it is currently at a stalemate of sorts. Need to provide constructive criticism so Des Moines can be known for its amazing musicians and songs.

Idea: Have a listening party where musicians bring their newest demos to swap with others. People will listen on headphones and provide private feedback. Perhaps each person who listens to the demo writes down one suggestion of how to improve the song. That way there is no public embarrassment and you can choose with whom you share your demo. Could be a quarterly or monthly event put on by the DMMC or a venue. Could also post projects on the DMMC website to elicit feedback if musicians want more public exposure and a wider variety of feedback.