



## **Sweet Tree Productions presents:**

### **How to put on a concert or So you're thinking of putting on a concert...**

One of the great benefits of living in the Shoals area is the rich music heritage. Concerts are a wonderful way to continue and nurture that heritage. As we have been doing this for over 15 years, we have developed a knack for navigating the complicated process of hosting a concert.

- **What's the point?**

It is amazing how many people do not start off with this simple question. It is most important for you to determine the goals of having your concert, goals by which you can gauge its success. Some helpful questions that will help you along the way;

- Who is putting on the event?
- Who are we trying to attract to the event?
- What do we hope to communicate through this event?
- What type of events in the area are successful?
- What events have been failures?
- What will the financial profits go to support?
- Are you clearly communicating the goals to your team, talent and community?

- **Counting the cost...**

The cost associated with hosting an event can be broken into the three t's; Time, Talent, and Treasure.

- Time-Events take time to plan, execute and close out. The more manpower the better the event will go. You will need people that focus on the following areas.
  - Planning-creating a budget, securing venue, booking talent, sound, lights and stage.
  - Promotion- if no one knows, no one shows.
  - Preparation-muscle to run errands, set up, line up and organize is essential.
  - Running the show-all hands on deck.
  - Break down- clean up, pack out.
- Talent-
  - Sound, lights and staging- Most people assume that the most essential part of a successful event is the musical talent. This is not true. You should spent most of your energy securing the right production company. Below you will find more information on how to secure the most professional company you can.
  - Musicians- Choosing the right band is essential to a successful event. The starting point is determining your goals. Who you would like to attract determines the acts you should secure. Just because you went to one concert and that one band was really great, does not mean that band will be able to attract the people you want to attract. A good way to determine this is to ask the demographic you wish to attract what local/regional/national bands they like.
    - Determine genre for the event.
    - Find bands/artists that fit your genre.
    - Communicate goals for the event to all talent.
    - Secure all acts and follow act's technical and personal requirements (tech riders).
    - Plan food and drinks for all workers and talent at the event.
  - SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF- The devil is in the details. It does not take too many surprises to ruin an event. Be sure to find a production company that shows up early, starts on time, and ends on time.
    - Create a schedule for all events beginning with when venue will open for production load in to when production has to be packed and off site. Make sure to include as much detail as possible, chronicling everything that will happen from beginning to end. A few questions that need to be answered;
      - Load in for production, lights, staging
      - Load in for bands

- Sound check
- Band set times. (ie. Start and stop times)
- How much time will you allow between acts for swap out.
  - Will there be backline (instruments shared by all bands) ?
  - What will be in the backline? EX. Drum set, Bass Amp, etc.
- Age restrictions(all ages, 18+, 21+)
- Ticket cost
- Door opening time (Allow time for sound check completion)
- Treasure-A great concert is an investment. We know that the penny's matter. We have been doing this a long time, we know that hosting a concert can turn into a huge investment. We want your event to be successful and to stay within budget.
  - Budget-determine a realistic budget for this event. Ask people who have had events how much you should budget for sound, lights, staging, talent, food, backline, venue, promotion, security, etc...
  - Stick to the budget- Don't be afraid to tell someone that something is not within the budget. It is not embarrassing that something is not within your budget, it is simply a fact. Things cost what they cost. If the talent is outside your budget, find talent that is within your budget.
  - Find ways of cutting cost- Volunteer manpower is a great way of cutting costs. The more labor that has to be hired the more expense. Find sponsors for your event. Putting up a banner cost you a few zip ties but could save you thousands.
  - Where not to skimp? Do not skimp on production. A great act with poor sound reinforcement, bad lights and inadequate staging is disastrous. A good production company will make sure your event has the keys to be a success.

### 3. Venue set up

#### 1. Production

a. Staging- Staging is one of the most hazardous things at a location. The stage should be provided by a professional staging company. This is going to be the platform for all that happens at your event. It will also be the place musicians will jump and drummers will beat. You need a stage that is on solid ground. A few questions that should be asked of the staging company are

- How long have you been around?

- Is your stage subcontracted with another vendor?
- How many staging options do they offer?
- Have you ever had a stage fail?
- Do you provide staging in this area?

b. Sound reinforcement- There are many options living in the shoals area, we encourage using sound companies that have been around for a long time, have a proven track record and use in house equipment ,engineers, stage hands, stage managers, etc...

c. Lighting- Once again we offer the same caution. Being a friend of a friend, buying a few lights and a lighting console does not make someone a lighting engineer. Choose the company that has been around for a while and uses in house equipment.

d. Power- The power requirements for an outdoor concert are significant. You will need to speak to the production company about their power requirements. You will also need to speak to vendors about their specific needs for power. Portable generators are not cheap to rent.

2. Vendors- There are many vendors in the area that will come to your event and sell their food and wares. You must decide what kind of vendors will compliment your goals. A few questions to keep in mind;

- Is this event kid friendly? If so, you will want kid friendly food(cotton candy and the like)
- Will alcohol be served at this event? Check your local municipality for applicable permits and laws.
  - Also you will need to increase your security requirements to adjust for alcohol consumption.

3. Security- We always hope that everyone will behave themselves. But when you have lots of people in one place, food, fun, music, and sometimes alcohol, things can get out of hand quickly. Production companies bring a great deal of investment to a venue. Talent brings years of hard work. You put your time, talent and treasure to make it a success. Security is an essential for all venues. Different security options;

- volunteer security- It is recommended that this minimal option be given bright tshirts to set them apart as security.
- Security company- There are many different companies that provide security.
- Off duty police- This is always a great option, probably the best. You are able to help the local police supplement their income and have official police on site for any of the unexpected.

4. Finances- An event should be financed before the event occurs. If you expect to pay for production, talent, venue, power, etc... out of ticket sales, you are creating a no win situation. The ticket sales should be used to fulfill the goal of the event, not pay for the event. If you cannot afford to pay for the event before the day of,

you cannot afford the event.

- a. Ticket price- It is a good idea to ask bands how much people usually spend to hear them play. If a local band plays multiple times a year for \$5, it is unlikely that their biggest fans will be willing to shell out \$20 to hear them play at your event.
- b. Arm band, ticket stub, hand stamp. Figure out how you will recognize someone who has paid for a ticket.
- c. Information harvesting- It is always a good idea to get information about who is attending your event, especially if it is for charity. One simple way of doing this is to have a raffle for items. They give their name, address, email, whatever, for a chance to win a doorprize. This will come in handy after the event.
- d. Sponsors- Sponsors are a great way to finance a show. You must clearly articulate your goals to prospective sponsors for them to buy in to the idea.
- e. Event memorabilia- You also can consider some sort of special t-shirt, poster, etc... You can sell sponsorship space to cover the cost of the item, and then sell them for profit.

5. Promotion- \*\*\*Radio, Tv, Billboards, Facebook. Twitter, word on the street, person in a costume???\* \*\*

6. The type "A" personality- It is good to put one person in charge of the clock. As long as you have a good schedule with ample time for acts to set up, sound check, and get off the stage, the show should run smoothly. But you need someone who is not afraid to tell the talent that they have one more song before they are off stage. Having the right time cop will make sure you do not go over on time.

7. The M.C.- This can be, but does not have to be the time cop. There is always a need to have a spokesperson. Someone who will stand up between acts and remind the crowd why you are all there, provide entertainment and distraction from the changing over of acts. This person will also thank the previous act and introduce the next act.

8. Seeing the unforeseen- Things happen, mistakes get made, people drop the ball. These things are all true. It is important that if something goes wrong to contact someone who can fix the problem and to stay calm. Panic will not fix it. If you having problems, go to the sound company. They have the keys to the buttons, a good sound company has good problem solving skills, which is one more reason why choosing the right company is so important.

9. Backstage- Many artists include food and drinks(as well as odd things) in their tech riders. Coffee, Tea, sodas and water are concert essentials. Snack foods are also a must. It is important to follow all of these contractual obligations or they do not have to play, but you still have to pay. Providing a shaded area for the talent to sit, with refreshments makes a huge difference.

10. Refuse the Refuse- It is important to have trashcans everywhere. It is equally important to provide bathroom facilities (Porta Poddy).

11. The end- It is important to work just as hard at the end as at the beginning. Be mindful to fulfill all contractual obligations, whether it is to the venue to clean up, or the production company to help load. The

concert is not over when the people leave, it is over when the venue looks like it did before the stage was dropped.

12. Follow up-

- Write thank you letters to all the talent and production crew. This is an opportunity to voice your appreciation for their hard work on your behalf. If there were problems, make sure to address these issues in a formal way (letter, face to face meeting, phone call). Do not leave issues unresolved. Most important of all, write thank you's to sponsors, and volunteers who helped make the event a success. Anyone that did anything should get a letter of thanks.
- If you harvested information, make sure to put it in some sort of hard data form. If your event was for charity, follow up with a letter showing them how their attendance helped the cause.
- Quantify the success of the event. The final meeting should be a debrief of all volunteers. Create a report of attendance, resources raised, etc... You should welcome input from talent, vendors and production on how the event went, what could be done better, what was a success, what should be dropped, what should be increased.