

starting from seed  
by marc moscato

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## Preface

By Doug Blandy

Flourishing throughout the United States is a loosely knit coalition of activist culture workers striving to counter the homogenized effects of corporate control of culture and mass consumption. “My house” epitomizes the work of this coalition within the Willamette Valley. With an “out there” and sometimes “in your face” attitude, the culture workers appearing at my house promote an ethic that demands that the arts and culture be free from control by large national and multinational corporations. The multimedia artists, zinesters, and musicians appearing at my house contribute to an environment that is sometimes chaotic, disturbing, uncomfortable, sensual, complex, loud, confrontive, but ultimately an irreverent social critique of life on earth. Gender roles, religion, familial relationships, politics, academic disciplines, the fine arts, class structure, ethnicity, generational differences, economics, and pop culture are among the many issues that are celebrated, skewered, reconstructed, and illuminated on a regular basis in the basement of my house.

The culture work performed at my house is insurgently imaginative. As a consequence it is sometimes perceived as subverting what people might commonly think to be good within civil society. However, it is important to remember that civil society has as its purpose the creation of space for presenting multiple points of view and talking things over without the constraints imposed by the state and political parties. For me, my house represents the types of free spaces that we most need in democracy and must never lose. These are spaces that allow for the social critique of centralized power in all its many forms. In this regard, my house and the culture workers who appear there, represent a type of social responsibility that must be fostered within democratic societies.

## introduction

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## DIY Roots

Do It Yourself isn't that the philosophy Gandhi proposed: “Be the change you want to see”? Isn't

the idea that anyone can partake in the arts similar to hobbyists? How different is a punk show in a basement to a piano recital in a living room? Isn't trying to research the origins of house shows like trying to research the history of partying?

Do It Yourself (DIY) art could largely be thought of in the broader categorization of the unincorporated arts. The American Assembly for the Arts categorized the arts industry into three sub-sectors: the commercial sector (the entertainment industry), the incorporated sector (not-for-profit organizations), and the unincorporated sector (everything else not falling under the commercial or incorporated sector).<sup>2</sup> While there have been numerous studies on the commercial and incorporated sectors, little has been written and not much is known about the unincorporated arts. This group includes community orchestras, street musicians, quilt makers, artist collectives, public unsanctioned performances, local bands, craft circles, homemade Christmas cards, hobbyists, small galleries, craft fairs, and a wide variety of artists and curators working outside of organized institutional support.<sup>3</sup>

Unincorporated culture has an indefinite history, which can be traced to Quaker villages, colonial communes, and community gatherings of all sorts. Unincorporated art and counterculture of more recent years can be dated to parlor folk singers, surrealist parties, dada performances, beatnik poetry readings, counter-cultural happenings, Situationist actions, street theatre, punk rock, poetry slams, hiphop, raves, and fringe festivals. There is also a strong connection to political grassroots efforts, such as the social service programs of the Black Panther Party, Earth First! actions, copwatch groups, and other unincorporated community efforts.

While most DIY projects start from the unincorporated sector, some grow into incorporated or commercial entities. Regardless of their legal status, DIY projects can be defined by their intentions. Their purpose is not driven to achieve fame, money, or capitalistic success. Rather, the purpose of these efforts is to form a community free from institutional support.

### DIY and Punk

The punk rock movement of the late 1970s adapted the DIY home-improvement moniker as a metaphor implying that anyone could start a band, run a record label, publish a zine, or be limited only by the constraints of their own imagination. Punk music was simple and nihilistic, often involving three chord progressions easily learned by any beginning guitarist. Bands formed on a daily basis and the difference between artist and audience became increasingly blurred. DIY proved that young people could empower themselves to take control over their art and their lives.

English punk band Crass shunned not only mainstream rock bands, but also lashed out at supposed punk acts The Sex Pistols and The Clash for signing to major record labels. Contrary to Johnny Rotten and Joe Strummer, Crass put out records on their own self-created label (folding and printing their record packaging by hand) and booked tours without a manager or booking agent.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, English record label Rough Trade started in an independent record store and grew to be the major distributor for punk records released on small DIY labels. Now in their 27th year of operation, Rough Trade is still one of the most respected indie distributors in England.<sup>5</sup>

Since the 1970s, DIY continues to flourish. In the early 1980s American bands Black Flag and Minor Threat pioneered the touring circuit, finding punk venues from coast to coast to support themselves on the road.<sup>6</sup> The 1980s also saw a proliferation of inexpensive photocopier technology, leading the way to a mass influx in the production of self-published zines and small press. American

DIY punk culture exploded in the late 1980s, with scenes forming around various ideologies and music styles including straightedge (drug free bands), riot grrl (feminist bands), and post punk (pop music with DIY ideals).

Record labels Dischord Records, Kill Rock Stars, K Records, and Sub Pop were instrumental in setting the stage for punk's eventual breakthrough to the mainstream in the 1990s. As Nirvana's "Nevermind" landed at #1 on the Billboard charts, the band struggled with their new-found acceptance. Regret over the band's popularity is found in Kurt Cobain's suicide note: "All the warnings from the punk rock 101 courses over the years, since my first introduction to the, shall we say, ethics involved with independence and the embracement of your community has proven to be very true."<sup>7</sup>

Today, DIY projects are becoming larger and more diverse than ever before. With the creation of new technologies, artists are continually finding ways to democratize mediums and creating alternate ways of using and distributing their work through them. DIY is now much more than just music. Today it includes (but is not limited to) experimental film, art, books, infoshops, spoken word, fashion, all ages venues, activism, feminism, online resources, environmentalism, education, transportation, and food.

DIY could seemingly be applied to every aspect of life. For many DIY means living an alternative lifestyle that challenges authority as a personal daily activity. DIY functions as a protest to capitalistic industrialized consumer society and corporately controlled mass media. It brings us closer to the means of production by taking control over aspects of our lives. DIY, most importantly, is not just a theory: it is a real example of radicalism in practice. It is a living, breathing vision of a better world based on both the self-sufficiency of individual action and the inter-sufficiency of community support.

The goal of this zine is to motivate people to start their own projects. If you have a dream you believe in, the only constraints are the ones you place on yourself. You do not need an institution to make things happen, all you need to do is take it upon yourself to see your projects through to fruition. This zine aims to provide you with some practical strategies for grassroots DIY organizing.

This project profiles seven DIY groups in Oregon. I choose to interview these groups because they are representative of my local geographic area and I believe they serve as good models for DIY organizing. I have included their contact information if you would like to contact them with any specific questions you may have. These are transcriptions of informal open-ended interviews, which were severely edited for brevity and clarity.

Joe Biel & Alex Wreck | Microcosm Publishing

Joe Biel and Alex Wreck are Portland's zine duo turned business entrepreneurs of Microcosm Publishing, a zine distribution and mailorder operation based out of their home. Despite long hours and little pay (Joe claims to make about \$2/ hour), they couldn't be more content with their self-employment. They have both published numerous zines, gone on spoken word tours, and are key organizers in the annual Portland Zine Symposium, a weekend conference involving thousands of self-publishers. We talked over breakfast about their experience with zines and DIY organizing.

Marc: How do you define DIY?

Joe: It's the idea that you're not dependent on an outside source to provide you with the things you want in your life. It's also the idea that it can be really rewarding to do those things yourself and not be reliant on a consumerist culture to do it for you.

Alex: Also, it's really empowering to know you don't have any limitations. Instead of waiting for someone to do things for you, you can just figure it out, learn about it, and do something the way you'd like to.

J: Once you get in that mindset you can really learn things just by having your mind open to thinking "why would I buy this when I can make it with my hands"?

A: Once you get into it you find others who are into it too and then it's a constant process of learning from other people.

M: So you think it's a response to consumer industrial culture?

J: It's definitely a backlash to consumer culture and the scales it functions on are getting larger and larger. There's a new bike project in New Orleans called Plan B. It's a complete non-profit volunteer DIY operation and they rebuild useable bikes out of all these supposedly scrap parts that are donated to them. There's also a place here in Portland called Free Geek and they've taken 44,000 donated computer parts and built new usable computers that are completely up-to-date. It's astounding that people would throw away something like that that's perfectly reusable. So it's a response to garbage culture, throwing away and buying anew.

M: How do you run your business Microcosm in terms of decision-making?

J: We talk about it with each other, there's a lot of individual freedom. I'll hand pick things to distribute and then go and do it and Alex will do the same. It's just to speed up the process so we don't get gummed down on making decisions.

A: It's like the saying, "When you're self employed you can work any 100 hours a week you want to work". And I'd just like to add you can wear your pajamas while you do it. It's just a matter of supporting what we both appreciate, like and respect.

M: Do you have a vision for Microcosm?

A: Joe has all these little pieces of paper where he writes all his business plans and schedules and he calls them his day planner. We usually go out to breakfast and discuss business plans and talk about, "Well do we want to go to the book fair in New Orleans?" or "What do we want to put out next?" or current things. It's never that far in advance.

J: I've surpassed a lot of my goals already so I don't know how to plan that far into the future. I would like to open a store but that's more than 5 years away. It seems that the growth that is inevitable and natural is already taking up so much effort that I can't step back and plan outside that.

M: I know you've both been involved with organizing the Portland Zine Symposium. How does that

group make decisions?

J: We've worked differently in different years. It really depends on whoever comes to the meetings. If someone doesn't come they lose their ability to have their voice in those decisions. It's not expressly consensus but in reality it is.

Inevitably when you work on a DIY project you have to work with other people and part of that is making everyone feel respected. That leads me to assume the only way to do that is collective organizing with consensus decision-making. It's really frustrating and burns people out really quickly. It takes a long time to make any kind of decision when you have more than two people. But in terms of appeasing people I see that as the eventual conclusion to come to.

A: This year we've broken it into committees that work on different things: there's a budget committee, a tables and facilities committee, an extracurricular activities committee, a workshop committee and each one manages a different aspect. People who are involved with those are all drawn to whatever project that happens to be involved.

J: We also have a general planning committee which is like a board of directors and then we have the exterior groups which works on the specific aspects. In terms of organization, that enables us to be much more on the ball.

M: How did you get other people involved in your projects?

J: Usually just talk to them as individuals in direct contact instead of generic bulk emails. That way they understand you sought them out for a purpose. We also put up fliers in places like Reading Frenzy, the IPRC, small press, record stores, and art spaces to attract the more general public. But I usually start individually.

Right now I'm trying to put together a crew to work on a documentary about zines. So my tactic is to talk to everybody that could possibly have any interest. I'll say, "This is what I want to do, are you interested in working on it?". It builds as they tell their friends. It's a good way to find out who's interested and what their expectations would be. I think that same tactic could be employed with any kind of project. It's just a matter of getting the word out to the right people at the right time.

A: After you get people interested you should create some kind of goal of what you want to do and start small. The first PZS started small, and we didn't expect it to get huge. We didn't expect people to come from Florida, but there is this year. So it's a matter of having realistic expectations for your projects too.

For more information about Microcosm Publishing, visit their website at [www.microcosmpublishing.com](http://www.microcosmpublishing.com)

For more information about The Portland Zine Symposium, visit their website at [www.pdxzines.com](http://www.pdxzines.com)

Joe Biel can be reached at [joe@onramp.net](mailto:joe@onramp.net)

Alex Wreck can be reached at [alex@microcosmpublishing.com](mailto:alex@microcosmpublishing.com)

Brad Adkins | The Charmbracelet

Brad Adkins and his “partner-in-crime” Christopher Buckingham are proprietors of The Charmbracelet, a roving DIY arts group that curates and instigates exhibits throughout Portland. Their projects have been of a varied nature including a number of multimedia events, a visual art show, and a new on-line and book project. One of their more successful projects “Meeting People” involved close to 500 artists in the Portland area creating artwork on uniform 4" X 4" blocks of wood, assembled onto a mural-like grid. Despite the lack of a clear mission, a permanent office, a permanent exhibition space, or even a home, Brad organizes some of the most inspiring and successful DIY arts projects in Portland. I sat down with Brad while he was house sitting for a friend to talk about his experience running The Charmbracelet.

Marc: How would you go about defining DIY culture?

Brad: I think of DIY culture as people who aren't interested in holding capital. They wish people would like what they do but whatever they do is part of a free exchange. It's not necessarily come watch my movie or my band but there's a suggestion that you could do it yourself with whatever resources anyone could have. There's nothing to gain. Interaction is what Chris and I gain. We get asked to be a lot of things and occasionally we get paid for them but that's not our prime motivation.

M: How do you and Chris function as an organization?

B: I don't know if I can answer that because it's project per project. We get an idea and we start mapping out what it would take to manifest that idea.

Like the next project we're planning on doing is building a giant stuffed elephant. It's going to be a giant plastic elephant stuffed with documentation of Portland in the last 5 years. We got asked to be part of this Portland project so the first thing we had to do was come up with an idea. Then we had to try to figure out where to get an elephant crafted. We made a few phone calls to see if anyone we knew had worked on floats or the Rose City Parade. We found a woman sculptor who's done large stuffed animals. We're meeting with her this week and she's going to give us step by step directions on how to take a miniature and make it full size. So then we've got to find plastic or vinyl. It's likely going to be the vinyl they use for shower curtains so we're going to try to find used shower curtains and craft it out of them. So it's just a networking scenario where we make one call to find out what one person knows.

M: You had a lot of people involved in the Meeting People show. Did you have a crew of volunteers?

B: Occasionally people help out but I've always been more seat of my pants. I'll start something up and start working on it and then I'll be like, “I don't know how to get this done”, and someone will show up. But I never had a volunteer schedule because I really don't like that kind of hierarchy. I never wanted to be telling people to do stuff. I'd rather be just telling people to do something themselves. So now we have an intern and it's very difficult for us to delegate because we're not sure what they're getting out of it besides school credit. If we can't let someone in on the creative process or decision making process then I don't want to have to bring them into it.

M: How often and when do you hold meetings?

B: We work on something related to it everyday of the week. We make to do lists. It's Chris and I, and the intern works once a week. We brainstorm, we walk around in circles. Sometimes when we disagree we flip coins. Or we say we'll figure out an answer tomorrow. If we disagreed so much the next day we'd talk it through. With two people it's hard because you don't have the third wheel to balance things out. With situations like this it's really a hobby/ interest/ art. If we were trying to run a business and trying to get it off the ground, we would butt heads a lot more than we do.

M: Do you have a mission statement?

B: Stay interested.

M: That's it? Do you have any kind of vision for your organization?

B: No. Just to stay interested.

Chris and I have had a lot of growing pains in the last year. We're like we've done this and this and this but nowhere in there did we figure out a draft for paying ourselves. Should we become a not for profit? Starting this new project we thought it might be necessary to become a not for profit for what we wanted to do.

You go from one scenario where you have Bill Daniel and Vanessa Renwick going on tour and setting up this "Pretty Gritty" fundraiser where all their friends donated artwork for the show and they're going to sell it to their friends to raise money for their new film. And on the other hand we've had to buckle down and write fundraising letters, it's really creepy. We're working on people we don't know at all, asking them to cut us a \$500 check. But we don't know if in the end it's a bad thing.

We originally had levels of giving but we just hated it, hated the way that was making people act. People were like, "They gave more, I wish I could give more then I'd be so much more cooler". It's very odd and that's what a lot of not for profits are built on. You get everybody guilt ridden so they all start writing checks. Not for profits are just a different version of capitalism, not even different, it's a fantastic version because somehow it's built on humanitarian concern.

M: What kind of strategies would you suggest to someone who wanted to start something similar to what you're doing somewhere else?

B: At this point I forget how we got going but the first thing is coming up with ideas. And then whatever you do just network. Raise your flag in the air and talk to everybody you know that's doing something similar and they could be really helpful about finding things. It's pretty simple. Make a list of what you need and then find out what you can get traded or donated or anything outside the realm of spending a lot of money. Then everything else falls into place if you're not a creep.

For more information about The Charmbracelet, visit their website at [www.charmbracelet.org](http://www.charmbracelet.org)  
Brad Adkins can be reached at [brad@charmbracelet.org](mailto:brad@charmbracelet.org)

Matt McCormick | Peripheral Produce

Matt McCormick started holding screenings under the banner Peripheral Produce 7 years ago with the intention of having a place to show his work as well as the work of some other experimental filmmakers he liked. He soon modified the idea to release videotapes, much like a record label, containing the work of experimental filmmakers shown at his screenings. Matt now carries eight videotape releases, in addition to organizing an annual film festival, The Portland Experimental and Documentary Film Festival. Matt and I talked at length about the origins of DIY and bridging the gap between activism and entertainment at a park in downtown Portland.

Marc Moscato: Where do you situate DIY in a historical context?

Matt McCormick: I think the spirit of DIY has always been there in one sense or another. I think you have to link it to the commercialization of entertainment and art. It was always do it yourself up until between when the first book was published and when Hollywood films were being pumped out. Then the DIY thing just stepped up to that level.

I don't think it was never not around. It just got overshadowed by the entertainment business that sprang up over the last 100 years. It's gotten to the point where if a painting isn't in the giant museum or if a movie isn't on the big screen or a book isn't for sale in the bookstore, people have this notion then it's probably no good. If it's not on MTV, then it's probably not good enough to be on MTV. DIY is a breaking down of that institution.

Over the last 30 years a large business economy has formed a monopoly around the economy of art, especially with the electronic arts and its distribution. It's a relatively new medium. It's not like singing or painting or dancing. It's stuff that hasn't been around for 50 years in most cases. Thirty years ago the idea of making your own record or your own films was almost impossible not only because nobody else was doing it but also because of the cost. The means of production have now become accessible to people who aren't backed by a major business venture.

Two hundred years ago music was someone in the family played the violin and someone else played the piano. And you had a party and they would rock out and people would dance and that was amazing. But I also think it's inspired by the entertainment industry too. Now you have musicians who aren't on a big label but they still want to tour, maybe not be famous and successful, but they do want to get out there and be seen in much more than just their neighborhood. Going on tour or selling tapes over the internet is very much a promotional thing. It's kind of like homemade capitalism.

As per my personal involvement with DIY, I was in bands and saw small record labels and bands going on tour and kids setting up clubs and doing everything with little money and resources but with a whole lot of energy and spirit. Realizing this network was something that existed in just about every town across the country: kids were getting in bands and going on tour, playing shows in basements, putting out records on record labels that were based in someone's bedroom, and getting reviewed in zines that were stapled together at Kinkos-and it was actually working. Being a part of that and seeing it in action was totally amazing.

I was a musician who was always a filmmaker at heart and it dawned on me well why don't I try to bring this same kind of practice to film. The style of film that I make is short experimental work that isn't going to show at the theatre at the shopping mall anyways and would never get that mainstream

validation. I had this same conversation with the guy who booked shows at the X-Ray Café 7 years ago and he said, “Why don’t you come book films here?”. I said, “That sounds really cool.”, we did it, it turned into a monthly screening series, that turned into the videotape label, and now’s its kind of taken off. So it turned out there was an audience for this work; it was just a matter of not sitting around and talking about it but actually making it happen with barely anything.

Marc Moscato: How does Peripheral Produce work as an organization?

Matt McCormick: It’s hard to say because in a lot of ways it’s mostly me but over the years there’s been so much input and help from other people. While there is no one clear-cut person that’s always been there, it really is representational of a community’s work.

It’s always been very improvised. The thing that has made it been able to exist for so long is that it’s been very flexible and if I need to walk away from it for a week I can. Everything slowly grows. With each accomplishment with Peripheral Produce much is learned. Each time it happens I’m able to figure out how to do something, get really good at doing it, and then next time do it just a little bit bigger and a little bit better so that it continues to grow.

At this point I pretty much know how to do this stuff. I know how to set up a show, I know how to release a tape, I know how to put together a film festival, and in some ways because I’ve been the only one who’s been doing it the whole time, I’ve come to figure out it’s much easier for me to just do it all. At a certain point you have to stop and show someone else how to do it. And that takes just as much time to just do it yourself.

What I’ve done is just rely on myself to be the infrastructure. And then always create a list of tasks that I know are going to have to happen. As the projects get bigger and those tasks get bigger I’ll then, if someone does come along and wants to help and has a specific skill, will give that person a specific task that goes along with their skill. With the PDX film festival it was a very specific event with a specific timetable so it was easy to get people involved. It was like, “Here’s the job, here’s the timetable, here’s the expectations and that’s it”. Whereas before there weren’t specific deadlines but just always things that needed to be done. That’s too much for someone who’s just coming to show up to help out.

One thing in being a solo operation is while it puts more of a load on my shoulders, it does make some things much easier and quicker. As opposed to something like The Four Walls Cinema Collective, I think the work they do is amazing but I think in being so large it slows them down. The collective is kind of like communism whereas I’m somewhere between dictatorship/ capitalism. It makes things easy and it allows me to put things on my own timeframe.

Marc Moscato: Is there a social cause to what you do?

Matt McCormick: I don’t think of what I do as activist but hopefully it’s a stepping stone towards that. Personally I feel like I’m much more connected to the peace movement or environmental movement than is shown in the work I show or make but it all has the first steps towards that in a subtle way. But it is there and it is my intention to get people to realize that they could pick up a camera and make their own movie. That’s one of the main criteria of the movies I show. I look for things that are made with no budget, it’s the stuff anyone could do with a camera and a computer or a

splicer.

I think having a media literate society is very important. Because of what I know about media and commercials I can see right through a lot of the stuff on the news that I know a lot of people can't. So I try to create a forum that inspires people to just grab a camera and think, "Hey I could do that". What they're going to learn in that process is immeasurable and who knows what contribution to society they could bring with the movie they create. It doesn't take a lot of money, equipment, or formal education to make a really good movie. Once that breaks down, we will live in a world of filmmakers. The mystery will be gone and it will be that much harder for Tom Brokaw to manipulate everybody.

Marc Moscato: What methods work well for doing things with a small budget?

Matt McCormick: Plan on doing a whole lot of work yourself. With the PDX fest I'm the director, Andy Blubaugh's the co-director, and we we're the ones staying up until 4 AM stapling programs. You have to have the understanding that there's a ton of busywork and that you're going to have to do a lot of it. To save money you have to do a lot of the labor.

It is also vital to incorporate people within your community to do things that they're good at. If you can find people who can and want to support what you're doing, exploit that. Let them put in however much they're willing to put in.

The most important thing in organizing is to always work within your means. I think what makes these things special is the individual attention that the person who's putting it together puts into it. Peripheral Produce is in many ways an art project. It doesn't have the size and scope of say the Portland International Film Festival. But what it does have is personality and that's because so much of it is me or a friend of mine. For years I used to design the posters, write the emails, design the programs, write the text, do it all. It had this personality of this is what it is, whereas you go to a big film festival and it's all dulled out. Any kind of individual form that goes into it is lost. When you're working with little money, make it your own project, do as much of it as you can yourself, and be sure to incorporate people around you.

For more information about Peripheral Produce, visit their website at [www.peripheralproduce.com](http://www.peripheralproduce.com)  
Matt McCormick can be reached at [matt@rodeofilm.com](mailto:matt@rodeofilm.com)

Iris Porter | Tin Can Sound Records, DIY in PDX

Iris Porter heads up Tin Can Sound, a record label based out of her studio in Portland, Oregon. She has released fourteen cds, recently edited and published a scrapbook of DIY groups in Portland, DIY in PDX, is the lead singer of the band The Culottes, as well as having self-published a number of zines. I talked to her over the phone about organizing the DIY in PDX scrapbook project. What follows are pieced together notes from that conversation.

Marc: How and when did you first get exposed to the idea of DIY?

Iris: Growing up in the Northwest and seeing good rock shows at the WOW Hall with bands like The Spinanes and Crackerbash were a big influence. Just being exposed to the idea of punk rock at that age.

When I was 15 years old I made zines. I made a zine called Crassy, a spoof on Sassy Magazine, which I distributed at rock shows in Portland. In 1998 I started the Culottes, which led to starting the record label.

M: Do you see DIY as being a movement?

I: DIY is rejecting a prepackaged lifestyle and not being lazy. It involves the community and is about living simply. DIY isn't a culture; it's more a way of living.

When I think of movements, I think of community. So the community of people who participate in the Handmade Bazaar in Portland or The Independent Publishing Resource Center could maybe considered a movement.

People have always crocheted hats and shared them. This is the same thing. As they say, talents that are not shared are not talents. I don't know how to sew but I know people who do. So I make them dinner and we trade. I don't know if that's a movement.

M: Tell me how you organized the DIY in PDX book project.

I: In October 2001 I came up with the idea to do this scrapbook. I set a deadline of the next winter to have the book completed.

I held four meetings at the Independent Publishing Resource Center about the project to get others involved and get ideas rolling. I sent out emails, made phone calls, and sent postcards to update people. I also met with people individually.

I made 1,000 copies of the book, which cost \$6,000. As for funding, I held six or seven benefit shows that raised \$1,000. I searched out foundations and was able to write a grant for \$5,000. There are foundations out there; it all depends on how ambitious and realistic you are. I also did all my own printing for flyers and printed on recycled paper to save money.

As for marketing, I know a writer for The Portland Mercury who was very helpful in promoting the project. I did an interview on the community radio station KBOO and had a full-page review in the Willamette Week. I also maintained the website and email list. I think a lot of it has been word of mouth.

M: What in your opinion makes for a good or bad DIY project?

I: A bad DIY project is a capitalistic one. If you're making money and are successful without exploitation, that's great. Everyone wants a comfortable lifestyle. But I don't need a fancy car or an excess amount of capital. I would like to make enough money to live a comfortable life though and have money to go back into something else I'm working on.

A good DIY project is doing something that you've always wanted to do. Believe in what you do, don't give up if it's a good idea, just figure out a way to do it.

M: Do you ever feel burnout and how do you deal with it?

I: Yes I do. I remember to breathe. I do physical things like take bike rides, sit down and read, take vacations, take baths, go to the beach, and visit my parents. It is important to know your limits.

M: What do you hope for as being the future for your projects?

I: When I was 15, being exposed to the idea of DIY was completely influential. I'd hope my book or projects would be picked up by kids who are 15 or 16 years old who hadn't been exposed to this idea. I'd hope to influence a younger generation of people and inspire them to not be lazy or complacent with what's going on around them.

For more information about Tin Can Sound, visit their website at [www.tincansound.com](http://www.tincansound.com)  
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Shawn Mediaclast | The Museum of Unfine Art

The Museum of Unfine Art is a storefront space in downtown Eugene that's about as large as a moderate sized bedroom. Behind the counter you'll find Shawn Mediaclast who single-handedly runs the open-seven-days-a-week record store/ thrift shop/ art gallery, in addition to playing in several bands, hosting a radio show, and being a prolific artist. We sat down at My House for a marathon interview about DIY, politics, and organizing strategies.

Marc: Do you have a mission statement?

Shawn: No, I don't really have a mission statement.

M: Well what are you trying to do with the store?

S: One, I'm trying to survive. Two, I'm trying to work with people that I like, that I trust, and that I believe in. I'm trying not to compromise my values about economies of corporate music versus independent music and aesthetics while surviving.

M: How do you organize things at the store?

S: I'm essentially an autonomous collective of one. I have regular meetings with myself and consider all aspects of a given situation before I make a decision. Sometimes it takes a long time to reach a consensus with myself.

M: You've been involved with collective organizing as well?

S: Yes, I have been involved in collective organizing and it's worked to varying degrees of success. I wouldn't downplay it all but I think consensus is kind of a bad idea. I think groups that go by consensus can have meetings that go on for too long. At a certain point you should say 2/3 majority rule, let's vote and move on to the next topic. But sometimes with consensus you get 2 people in a group of 30 who haven't been convinced. At a certain point people have to agree to disagree.

I feel consensus is like trying to convince everyone to think the same way. Why should everybody agree? Wouldn't that be scary if everyone thought the same way? In Cuba I've heard they have consensus meetings with 10,000 people and supposedly they get through those meetings and everyone agrees. I just don't buy it. You've got to have diversity of opinion.

I try to avoid working in groups and do everything alone that I can. I really think people should work in very small groups of like 1 or 2 in order to accomplish much more. Groups just slow me down and make me compromise what I want to do.

I'm not trying to say that people should isolate themselves. In a lot of ways humans are dependent on one another and need to work together. But if you're going to be putting on shows for example to have a collective of 20 punks, it's really overkill. It'd be one thing if it was a farm and the 20 people had to get together to talk about how they're going to organize the labor and organize the profits and the distribution of their products: big issues that effect everybody. But some of the collectivism that's come out of this pseudo anarchist mentality is a waste.

I've seen some collectives where I can't believe the numbers of people who actually feel like they're part of it when they're not doing anything. It's a weird delusion that you're making a difference by being part of a group. Don't sit around and talk about it for 5 hours and then do it. Just do it and confront the particulars as you go. Think about all the great things that could have been happening in those 5 hours. They're just sitting there and there's three people who are really doing everything.

For a lot of people there's a psychological barrier that exists in our culture. People feel so alienated, removed and disempowered that they can't do the basic things. If they're in a group where 3 people are doing those basic things then they can learn from those people. It's learning by example, they feel they can then do that too, and maybe in some future setting they will be able to do something.

We're educated in groups early on. All of academia, high school and everything before that is all about being in a group of at least 30 people. It just makes sense that those people would need to be in a group first to learn how to become an individual. It's kind of like a 12 step program.

M: Is there a political nature to what you do?

S: I would hope to encourage people to view the world through exposing yourself to a variety of media and ideas that would open people's minds. Even if it's just viewing paintings, you're viewing the world through someone else's eyes. That's why art is important.

Even if art doesn't have an explicit meaning, for a brief moment you're looking at somebody else's way of seeing something. That's very significant. To whatever degree that people can open themselves up to the fact that people see the world in different ways is a big step.

Right now people are afraid of seeing the world through any other way than what they think is the cool, most righteous, most in line with a football thug corporate mentality. Anything that doesn't fit into that they think is stupid and they don't even want to look at it.

A friend of mine was standing outside the shop recently and there were two fraternity looking kids walking by the museum. The one person was like, "Hey why don't we go in there?". And the other

person was like, “Why would you want to do that?”. And it was like this shaming thing. And then they didn’t go in, got in a sports car and drove off.

People really are that narrow. People think if it’s not a mall or Frosted Flakes it doesn’t deserve their attention. It’s something to be feared, maybe it’s of the devil or gay or something. The brainwashing has been so pervasive and well done.

I blame football. I really do. I think football is extremely political. It’s a mega political militaristic ritual that’s like the ultimate propaganda. It’s something that people participate in collectively, they become a mob, a group mind, it’s very consensus based. It’s symbolic of a glorified butting of heads. Instead of using your brain, let’s crash them into each other and see who’s helmet breaks first. It’s an exercise in stupidity, just like war. It’s the ultimate expression of that kind of stupidity.

M: What are some good methods for organizing with a small budget?

S: What I would do is basically think about who is involved and who has a stake in the event and get together with them and say, “Ok let’s share the costs in whatever it’s going to take to make this event happen”. If it’s food, share the cost or everyone bring a different dimension of the food. So everybody who stands to benefit from the event contributes equally or whatever is possible. It’s kind of like a cooperative spirit of working together without having clear lines.

When I do openings, that’s the way I do it. I chip in and bring a couple bottles of wine and the artist brings crackers and cheese or vice versa. So you get this montage of stuff that all comes together. I also try to encourage self-promotion. The venue definitely has an interest in promoting the event, but the artists have a keener sense of how they want to be promoted. So I let them make their own fliers, they have artistic control, and they can put them up or call the paper. It’s a division of responsibilities.

Shawn Mediaclast can be reached at [unfineart@hotmail.com](mailto:unfineart@hotmail.com)

Steve Bouton | Les Sous Sol

Steve Bouton is co-owner of the Les Sous Sol house on River Road in Eugene that has hosted punk rock shows, several a month, for the last two years. A collective of 12 have put on about 60 shows, including performances by such bands as Mecca Normal, Submission Hold, and This Bike is a Pipebomb. The house also houses other projects, such as the office space for the Cascadia Media Collective and editing facility for the Cascadia Alive public access show. We talked on a Sunday afternoon about the politics behind the venue he helps run.

Marc: Tell me about when you first started, how you came up with the idea and why you felt there was a need for your space?

Steve: The reason it started and the reason for the French name is it literally means “the under sun”, which is French for basement. We had a roommate who had been a squatter in France and he had a lot of experience putting on shows. He was booking shows at a now defunct basement venue The Animal Farm. They started booking shows less and less as they ran into problems with their landlord. Our roommate had booked a show there and it got cancelled. So he came home and threw his bag down and said, “I’m throwing this show here and I don’t care what you think”. So that’s how we

started.

Our primary motivating factor is the pathetic lack of all ages venues that are affordable to people in Eugene and places where bands who aren't very well known can play out.

M: Where do you place what you do in a social context?

S: What we do is more in context with what a European squat would be doing than your traditional American punk house. There's definitely a punk house culture in America. Most places that do shows in their basements tend to have lots of people drinking Pabst Blue Ribbon every night of the week, playing loud music, and getting into trouble. People are always surprised when they come to our house for punk rock shows because our house is always quiet, mellow, and clean.

We have had some logistical issues that are problematic. One of the first shows someone smoked black tar heroin in our bathroom so that turned us off from letting people use our bathroom right from the start. The only major problems are people who've had too much to drink but it hasn't been too problematic. People know Shelley and I own the place so I think they treat it with a little more respect.

M: What's your organizational structure like?

S: We operate on ruthlessly enforced strict consensus. Anybody can block anything.

M: How many people are involved?

S: Twelve people are involved, the (eight) folks at the house (consent, mostly) and a few people from the local DIY punk scene (flyering, PA system, taking money at the door, etc.).

M: How does the decision making work?

S: Bands will get in contact with us. Either we'll know about them already or we'll like the demo they send us.

M: Do you all listen to it together?

S: No we take people's word for it. If someone's listened to the demo and they say the band would work in our house then we trust them. The person who wants to book a show will propose a date and we'll run it by the house. We don't actually have meetings. There's enough contact where we see each other enough to talk about things informally.

If I want to put on a show, I'll approach each of my roommates individually about the show. And they'll be like, "No, it's on a Tuesday I have a final on Wednesday, let's not do it then". And we'll go back and forth and I'll be like, "Fine I didn't really care too much about the show" or I'll say "It's Mecca Normal, c'mon!". And so we have some negotiating space within that. Most of the decision making has to do with saying no.

M: Can you give me an example of how it works?

S: The show we had on Friday was with a band from Bloomington, Indiana. They called me, they're friends of a friend, and they're from where I used to live, so I took an interest in it. That was my show. I got the other bands to play. I figured out what to do and asked my roommate if he could make a flier. He did, we turned them into handbills, and put a whole bunch up. The other people in the collective didn't really have to do anything. The people who do the work are the ones who are interested in it and want to see it happen. We don't have responsibilities outside of that.

M: What type of marketing do you do?

S: We make carts for KWVA, the campus radio station, we do flyers, and word of mouth. We may not be doing flyers any longer however because of recent hassles with the fire marshal.

One big thing is we will not be in print media or TV. A year or so ago The Register Guard came and did a big article and included our house. We wouldn't let them use our names or let them say where the place was. We also don't list things in the Eugene Weekly.

M: Why is that?

S: Precisely because of the issue of the fire marshal coming to shut us down. I think the rules of engagement are very different for people like us who are working within an explicitly political punk realm and someone like yourself who is engaging in more culturally acceptable and less threatening on the surface activities like art. The difference in potential retaliation is pretty large.

The one time we did have a show listed in The Eugene Weekly, 2 cop cars sat across from our house all night watching everybody. To us it's clear there's a negative cause and effect relationship between media profile and state repression.

If I'm given a choice between being insular and being totally open to the public I would lean on the side of being insular. It sucks that it's an in-crowd thing but I wouldn't want to be on the other side of the line where everyone knows about it and everyone shows up.

M: Don't you think that's a limiting way of organizing?

S: I think that's due to the inherently less repressive response to what you're doing.

M: I don't know if I buy it. I mean we've hosted some artists who are challenging all sorts of issues. We're extremely public and we've never had any problems.

S: But it's not punk rock and that's really what it comes down to. We're the ones who are going to get repressed. You're operating on a totally different level in terms of potential repercussions for what you're doing. It's not perceived as a threat to the establishment whereas what we do is perceived as far more of a threat than it actually is. If we stack this stuff up and compare what our groups do, your group is unquestionably radicalizing more people. It's ironic. I know it may not make much sense to you that we are so willfully under the radar but we see it as the only way we've been able to survive for the two years we've been going.

You have to keep in mind that our house is associated with a lot of other anarchist politics. We've been under surveillance before in relation to the Free and Critter trial. This is stuff we have from affidavits on paper; we're not just being paranoid. So the whole context we're working under is a lot different than what you're doing.

M: Do you document things at your place?

S: I think documentation is really important; it's key to any long-term impact for any kind of event or project. My mother and grandmother were both librarians so that's kind of where I'm coming from. There's something to be said of the ephemeral moments that are only remembered by the people who are participating in it. But in the long run people aren't going to be inspired by what you've done unless they know that it happened.

We have video of a lot of shows that have happened at our place, which I'm really happy about. We also have a big scrapbook that all the bands have signed and an archive of flyers.

M: Are you planning on doing anything with this stuff?

S: Not right now. But eventually we would like to put it together into a website with video clips, etc.

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You can reach Les Sous Sol at [lessousol@yahoo.com](mailto:lessousol@yahoo.com)

Jesse Garlick & Marc Moscato | my house

My house is a DIY arts group based largely out of the house where I reside in Eugene. A fluctuating group of three to five people organize shows that take place in our basement as well as other venues throughout the city. In the little over a year since we've opened, we've hosted over 30 art, music, film events and workshops. For this interview both my roommate Jesse Garlick and I formulated a list of questions to ask each other.

M: You're in an interesting position because you own this house and you had me move in. What did you think when I first suggested this idea and when everything first started?

J: I hadn't been involved in counterculture before, not in a radical way. I had been to some demonstrations in my undergrad and been involved in the eco-green movement but I had never considered myself an activist.

When you proposed this idea to bring all of these people together I was really excited about the idea of having something happen here. It was coming from this architectural perspective of what happens in our suburbs and communities. Residential communities in general are all really about private spaces that are defined by edges that divide homes with a series of gates and fences and doors. Something that's always fascinated me about this space is its ability to start engaging a larger community from this little island that we call my house.

I was unsure of how the first event was going to go; I hadn't had any exposure to basement shows in the past. I was unsure of firecodes, who would show up, police, etc. I think the way the events have

unfolded and the way the community has unfolded itself to us has just been a wonderful experience every time. Something about its' size and the fact that you go downstairs instills a certain sense of responsibility and community. You're not going to an anonymous club. Every show becomes a new "instant community".

It was exciting too. It was a reaction to what was happening here, that there was nothing in Eugene that was really exciting or new. School wasn't engaging the community like I thought it was going to be and we had this space and so there was just an attitude of "let's do it".

M: What do you think the contributions of a place like my house are to the community we live in?

J: One is the real time introduction of thought to the Eugene community right now. It's constantly bringing artists and ideas that would not be here without this place. But the bigger idea is really the people who come and the community that happens.

The community sees this place as something that's not that difficult to create. It could begin happening on a larger scale, to establish all these conduits that suddenly start coming into the community. And maybe we can just serve as a model. Maybe they're not exactly all like this, maybe it's on smaller scale; there are endless variations possible.

I think once you get exposed to this idea (of DIY) there's no turning back. The more exposure people can have to starting something on their own and not relying on other people to show them the way the better. And after that there's nothing except moving ahead.

J: Moving here from a bigger city like Buffalo to Eugene, I see you as being excited to bring this space here. Do you see that happening in the future? Do you see your role as delivering these little seeds?

M: I don't want to do this my whole life. At times on a personal level I feel that the powers over our lives are so overwhelming and pitted against us that I feel that I'm in the middle of a cultural war and I'm always having to organize these things in reaction. I have enjoyed doing it and it's still fun and interesting, but I would like to do something else besides organize art events all the time with no budget because nothing else happens in a particular area.

There certainly needs to be more places like this but that's for other people to do. There needs to be more democracy within our democracy and that's what a place like my house provides to a community. But I don't want to do it for the rest of my life, it's too taxing.

J: What are some of the shortcomings of DIY and what could the future hold?

M: It seems like a lot of DIY caters to a young hipster crowd or alternative art crowd. I would like to see it reach into low income and minority neighborhoods more. I also think attracting more multi-generational crowds, which my house does a pretty good job of, would be great too.

I think DIY is a really hopeful thing. It seems like the world is so encompassed in cynicism, the average person really doesn't have much hope. Most people are also very disappointed in the two-party system.

If we could take it upon ourselves to improve our communities and make more places like this, we could at least change our community where we live if not a larger picture. We've seen this in just the 12 months that we've been open. A few people have come here for a workshop who weren't into film or zines before have now started creating their own. If we could now just reach out into those other neighborhoods I think there's an opportunity for some potential lasting change.

J: Have you learned anything about yourself by doing this?

M: In the last 2 and half years I have thought more about feminist thought that may be of particular relevance. Not that I was sexist by any means before, but I have thought about gender equity in art. It may sound stereotypical but women are often marginalized in both mainstream and alternative media. It's very apparent in the number of requests placed upon our space, where it seems 90% of the people who contact us are male.

What I find most interesting about these DIY projects is that it's not just a theory: it's radicalism in practice. It's not an academic writing that takes place separate from community action. Making a zine or starting a DIY project and putting it out into the world is taking radicalism and putting it into your everyday life. It's not just saying something, it's actually doing it.

So if we're going to talk about radicalism we need to incorporate those ideas into our everyday choices. There's been a lot of sexism in punk and counterculture in the past. So it's important to show that as a healthy society that men and women's voices are equal.

But that's just one part of it. We need to analyze every aspect of our lives and create our utopian communities based upon the ideas we want to see in the world. We need to create a holistic view on life. That may include changing your diet to vegetarianism or your daily interactions. Our neighbor drives her car to the antiwar rallies, which are about 10 blocks away, everyday. I feel like saying to her you could do more by just staying home.

J: In a lot of ways what you're talking about is living an ideal life. It's all one thing: planting a garden, not buying packaged food, and rejecting complacency.

For more information about my house, visit our website at [www.notmyhouse.com](http://www.notmyhouse.com)

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You can get in touch with me at [mmoscato@darkwing.uoregon.edu](mailto:mmoscato@darkwing.uoregon.edu)

In summary, what I gathered from these interviews is that:

- DIY is being able to provide for yourself. DIY is rooted in self-empowerment, self-education, and community education and action. It takes place in a community that has relatively little money and values exchange over capital.

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- Some DIY organizations have mission statements while others don't. Some have visions while others don't. Some want to be a permanent part of the community while many are temporary and ephemeral. Because DIY groups are informal and unincorporated, they are often more flexible than institutions.

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- The organization and decision making process of DIY projects varies per group. Some DIY groups function as collectives based on consensus while others are one or two person operations. Most work in non-hierarchical collaborative models to make everyone feel respected.
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- Regardless of their size, most DIY operations involve others in some aspect of what they do. Many rely on the help of a network of similar groups in their community. Some actively recruit volunteers, some rely on their friends, while others prefer to work alone on their projects.
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- Most DIY operations have little to no budget. Some hold benefit events, others do fundraising, while others rely on personal or group investment in the project. Because of the lack of money, many rely on getting donated or traded goods and services to see their projects through.
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- While not all DIY projects are radical leftist, there is a strong ethic of social change. For many, simply being involved in DIY projects has led to personal radical change. The politics involved in many DIY projects are not along a party line but rather the self-empowerment of participating in a self-created culture.

### Guide to Organizing a DIY Project

This resource guide is informed by Root for the Little Guy, a zine compiled by fellow classmate Mi Jeong Kim and I in the winter of 2003. It was based on our experiences of grassroots organizing. I have re-edited it, based upon the comments of my interviewees for this project.

#### 1. Come Up with an Idea

What kind of project do you want to see happen? Coming up with ideas requires planning, which takes the initiative and vision of an individual or a group of people.

Using chalkboards and taking notes while brainstorming are always good ways to generate ideas. Go-arounds, where each person in a group is asked to give their opinion, are a way to involve everyone and can be very helpful in coming up with new ideas.

#### 2. Involve Others

While working alone allows you to not compromise your vision, you can often accomplish much more working in a group. The more people that are involved, the longer meetings can take. However, the more people that are involved, the more people there to divvy up tasks. Carefully decide how many people you want involved in the planning of your project. Much of this decision depends on the size and magnitude of what it is you want to do.

There are many ways to get people involved to organize the event you want to see happen.

Some tips to involving people include:

- call your friends and tell them about your idea
- tell your friends to tell their friends about your idea, etc.
- put up some fliers about your idea
- pass out handbills about your idea
- put an announcement in local newspapers
- call up a radio show and announce it

- do outreach to similar organizations in your area
- talk to people on the street

The No War Art Show

In February 2003 I got the idea to organize an art show that voiced creative opposition to a war with Iraq. I had no money to do the event so I enlisted help by:

- Having a Public Service Announcement printed for free by a campus paper, The Student Insurgent, and broadcast on a campus radio station, KWVA
- Posting an open call for submissions in the Eugene Weekly
- Handing out 300 handbills at the First Friday art walk
- Handing out over 600 handbills that simply stated “participate?” with contact info at an anti-war rally
- Placing posters in art teachers’ mailboxes asking them to announce this opportunity to their students
- Leaving handbills and posters around town
- Attending meetings and giving presentations to my house, Eugene Peaceworks, Students for Peace, the Survival Center, the New Zone Art Collective, and Justice Not War Coalition to get funding, in-kind donations, e-mail lists, and organizational help
- Maintaining and updating a website which prominently featured the event

Total cost of getting people involved = about \$8 bucks

Number of steady volunteers = about 10

Number of people who entered submissions = over 150

Number of people who attended the opening = about 500

Total number of people who saw the show = over 1,000

### 3. Mission, Goals, and Communication Methods

So you’ve got an idea and now you’ve gotten some friends and acquaintances that want to pursue it with you. Now you’ve got to refine your idea.

The first thing you should do is hold a meeting to talk about what exactly you will do as a group. The key to successful organizing is to find a group of people who all passionately believe in the same goal. If this is your first experience organizing a project like this, you may want to start small. That way you can ensure you will have a realistic and achievable goal.

Many people have different ideas about decision-making and organizational structure. While traditionally not-for-profits have adopted a business-like pyramid model, some have made strides for a more holistic and horizontal structure. Because of their often temporary and informal nature, most unincorporated organizations choose not to assign specific titles. Most work as collectives without a hierarchy, employ consensus decision-making, and share responsibilities in completing tasks. It is also common however, without a formal structure, for the majority of the work and responsibility to fall upon the shoulders of one or two people in the group.

Everyone in the group should agree on the mission, goals, decision-making methods, and delegation. Some prefer not having a mission and fixed goals of what they do. That flexible structure also needs to be based upon all members’ agreement.

Some tips to facilitate meetings with groups include:

- Create an agenda of what you will talk about at the meeting

- Assign roles of note taking, facilitator, and timekeeper
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak
- Make “to do” lists of tasks each person will complete
- Evaluate how the meeting went at the end with a group check-in

#### 4. Find a Venue

Search for venue options and carefully decide where your project will happen. DIY projects and events can take place at informal locations such as private houses, warehouses, converted churches and basements or formal locations such as galleries, community centers, and theatres.

It’s often a good idea to approach and network with other local organizations that are doing something similar to what you are planning. They can be very resourceful in finding spaces, materials, and resources as they have been doing what you’re planning on doing for a longer period of time.

If you choose to work in an informal venue there are several considerations to carefully evaluate. Many informal venues, while costing little or no money to rent, are often uninsured in case of liability, not accessible to people with disabilities, and not zoned for public, commercial purposes.

If you work with a formal venue, you will often need to sign a contract detailing the terms of agreement (rent, tech equipment, etc). Check and compile their rates and conditions.

#### 5. Gather Resources

Determine equipment and other materials that are needed for your project to be realized. Try to avoid spending a lot of money on materials. You can usually find a way to rent or borrow them from other incorporated or unincorporated entities.

Because unincorporated organizations have limited resources it is a good idea to share information, materials, and services. One opportunity that could be pursued as a collaboration between incorporated and unincorporated organizations is a local “resource bank”. This would be a directory of local organizations with various resources that would be available in time of need. This could be a great way to share limited resources and develop ties between local organizations.

Such a plan was proposed in 1990, as part of The Chicago Cultural Plan.<sup>8</sup> The Chicago Cultural Plan’s Technical and Materials Resource Center Recommendations included creating an infrastructure that would allow unincorporated organizations to share office equipment and supplies, donated by corporations, other arts organizations and individuals. It also recommended creating a “Costume Bank”, where theatre groups can store/rent costumes and a “Technical Equipment Bank”, where lighting, public address systems and audio/visual equipment would be available for storage/rental. Similar resources may or may not exist in your town. If not, start your own!

If you’re unable to get materials or equipment donated, call around to get the best deal.

## 6. Publicize!

Because unincorporated organizations are not well known and often lack a permanent location, promotion is very important. Standard publicity methods unincorporated organizations employ include posters, fliers, and press releases. The format and design of your posters can be creative and does not cost much. If no one in your group is familiar with graphic technology, ask for others' help.

You don't necessarily have to work with printing shops to print posters and fliers. You can make good posters using photocopy, letterpress, stencil, or silk-screen technology, formats that are cost-efficient but not always time-efficient. Consider marketing will be a large portion of your budget.

You should not be limited to traditional promotional techniques. Unincorporated organizations sometimes employ buttons, stickers, street theatre, handbills, and other nontraditional methods of communication.

in the past i have used the following methods of promotion:

- newspaper interviews and write ups
- print advertisements and public service announcements
- radio interviews and public service announcements
- television interviews
- class lectures and memos to art teachers
- e-mail lists
- maintaining a website
- buttons and stickers
- posters and handbills
- seasonal brochures
- telling our friends to tell their friends (word of mouth)

## 7. Funding

Government grants are generally not available for unincorporated DIY projects in the United States. Sales of goods and services and audience or member donations cover most expenses.

Try to avoid paying for things until you have raised enough money to cover your expenses. You may or may not be able to recover money you spend out of your own pocket. If you plan on doing things for an extended period of time, be sure to make your fiscal situation sustainable. You may want to think about generating a fund to save for future purchases. Of course, all members of a group should agree upon large expenditures.

Common ways to raise funds for unincorporated groups include: holding benefit concerts, bake sales, benefit dinners, art sale benefits, garage sales, and auctions. More traditional fundraising techniques include fundraising letters, offering memberships, asking for donations, and co-sponsorships. Co-sponsorships involve asking local not-for-profit organizations, school related groups, and local businesses for money, usually in return for acknowledgement of supporting a community cause.

There are also a number of foundation grants that are available to unincorporated organizations. A great resource for these grants that can be found in most libraries is the Foundation Grants Index. Foundation Center. New York, N.Y. : Foundation Center, annual. A good online resource is available

at:

[www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/fcguid1b.htm](http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/fcguid1b.htm).

Depending on the size and time-investment of your project, collaboration with incorporated organizations may help you get funding for your projects. Not-for-profit organizations can lend their tax-exempt status as an “umbrella” for unincorporated groups. They create an earmarked fundraising account for an unincorporated project so donors can receive a tax deduction.

## 8. Logistics

Now comes the time to actually do whatever it is you’re going to do. Proper planning will ensure that things will run smoothly. Here are some things to consider beforehand:

- Check materials that need to be delivered and who will take care of each item
- Volunteers: their tasks and time schedules (make sure there’s enough people to set up, keep the place open, and clean up). Also, make sure you get there early to have plenty of time to setup. If you are planning an event, it’s a good idea to have ushers and ticketing. Have a “bank” of at least \$50 to give change to the audience.
- Technical Support (make sure someone’s there who knows how to use and run any technical equipment that may be needed)
- Have a backup plan in case things don’t work out as planned
- Have a plan for emergencies (fire, paramedic, blackout, police, etc.)
- Set policies about illegal activities (alcohol, drugs, etc.)

## 9. Evaluation

It’s always a good idea to talk about how everyone felt the project went. Discuss the successfulness of the project, the planning and implementation process, issues and problems, and what could be improved on for future projects. One idea is to have a party at the end to thank volunteers for all their hard work and to ask them their critiques. You can also ask audience members for their input or use questionnaires.

## Conclusion

Humanity is in an unparalleled crisis. We are living on the brink of nuclear destruction, ecological collapse, and the extermination of indigenous cultures. Consumer industrial capitalism is destroying the planet.

Humanity has created its’ own problems. However, there is nothing saying that we can’t change the circumstances that we have created. If we want to see outward change, we will have to first start with ourselves.

If there’s one thing I’ve learned from being involved with punk rock and DIY projects over the last eight years, it’s that I have the ability to put what I want to see into the world. While the rest of society was telling me to be complacent, this art, music, and activism was telling me I could and should do otherwise.

I am not saying DIY is going to save the world. But what I am saying is it’s a place to start. Thinking, acting, providing for ourselves, and building community are the most important things we can be doing.

This zine has intended to provide you with some strategies for grassroots organizing. I have outlined a brief ideological/historical background, transcribed interviews of what I believe are some good examples of DIY projects, and compiled a guide to DIY organizing. I hope this holistic approach will be helpful.

I'm looking forward to all the inspiring projects that you will start in your community. If you have any questions or would like a penpal, please feel free to get in touch with me at:

Marc Moscato, 70 Victoria Blvd., Kenmore, NY 14217

footnotes:

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Wells, M. & Clemenzi, A. (2002). Rock out!: Ideas on booking DIY shows. \$2 to: P.O. Box 5027, Chicago, IL 60680-5027.

Wrekk, A. (n.d.). Stolen Sharpie revolution. \$3 to: Microcosm, P.O. Box 14332, Portland, OR 14332

web resources:

film & video:

exploding cinema | [www.explodingcinema.org](http://www.explodingcinema.org)

flicker | [www.hi-beam.net](http://www.hi-beam.net)

microcinema international | [www.microcinema.com](http://www.microcinema.com)

other cinema | [www.othercinema.com](http://www.othercinema.com)

paper tiger tv | [www.papertiger.org](http://www.papertiger.org)

peripheral produce | [www.peripheralproduce.com](http://www.peripheralproduce.com)

satan macnuggit | [www.satanmacnuggit.com](http://www.satanmacnuggit.com)

squeaky wheel | [www.squeaky.org](http://www.squeaky.org)

video activism | [www.videoactivism.com](http://www.videoactivism.com)

music:

book your own fucking life | [www.byofl.org](http://www.byofl.org)

the department of safety | [www.departmentofsafety.com](http://www.departmentofsafety.com)

maximum rock n roll | [www.maximumrocknroll.com](http://www.maximumrocknroll.com)

the mr roboto project | [www.therobotoproject.org](http://www.therobotoproject.org)

punk planet | [www.punkplanet.com](http://www.punkplanet.com)

the vera project | [www.theveraproject.org](http://www.theveraproject.org)

zine resources:

independent publishing resource center | [www.iprc.org](http://www.iprc.org)

reader's guide to the underground press | [www.undergroundpress.org](http://www.undergroundpress.org)

zine guide | [www.zineguide.net](http://www.zineguide.net)

zine resource center | [www.zinebook.com](http://www.zinebook.com)

information & additional resources:

indymedia | [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)

crimethinc | [www.crimethinc.com](http://www.crimethinc.com)

no media kings | [www.nomediakings.com](http://www.nomediakings.com)

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