



Running Your Own Night

What you will need...

- A DJ, or set of DJs
- A Venue
- A Night of the week.
- A Name
- An identity
- Sponsors
- Promotion

The First Night

Consider doing the first night as a cheap night, to encourage people to turn up. Run it as cheaply as you can, with minimal or no entrance fee, DJs that you can get for little or no fee and tell the bar that you're not looking for profit from the first night and that they can take a large cut of the takings from the bar, and door.

Also consider putting plenty people on the guest list for the first night, so that the hip kids bring their mates, and after a few nights you'll have all their friends, and friends of friends along – therefore outnumbering your guest listed people and making you money in the long-run.

A Dj or set of DJs

If you DJ yourself, then this is your opportunity to do some more playing-out. You can choose to do the whole night, if it's a small pub or venue or you only get a part of a night, or perhaps you can headline or support if it's a monthly gig that goes on all night in more of a club venue. This is your call.

You should consider getting a name for the first night. A big name DJ will pull in the crowds, and they will be able to get an idea of what sort of things you're playing and doing, as well as taking note of the drinks and bar promotions. DJ fee is difficult with a big name DJ, so it's probably worth getting in touch with any contacts you have to nail a big name, which you may get for a good price. It's amazing what you can get when you ask around.

A Venue

You need somewhere that will be open to the idea of bootlegs, remixes and mashups. They may have to be persuaded with research, preparation, demo CDs and sets, or even a live DJing example.

The venue should also be comfortable and in a good location for your demographic. The people you are aiming at won't want to trek across the globe to get to the night. If there's something else closer and easier to get to – they'll just forget it.

The venue should be happy to have you on a regular basis. Weekly, Bi-weekly, or monthly are all plausible, although monthly is the most popular for specialist nights. Maybe as it gets more popular you could switch to fortnightly, however bear in mind that there should be a big amount of preparation goes in to the nights – and you need enough time to promote the dates. Monthly keeps things special and also attracts bigger crowds.

The venue should have appropriate equipment. CD turntables, and if possible vinyl too – a combination is always a winner, and also if they don't then find out if there is room to set up your own equipment.

Following on from equipment, a sound system is essential. If they do not have one in the bar or club – then you will have to provide your own, which may involve hiring equipment which can be costly.

Another key point is – do the venue know what you're on about? Can you communicate your idea well enough to the manager or booking agent? They should really know what mashups or bootlegs are and be able to perhaps relate to you well enough.

A bar or club, who's on your side is a big step forward. Things are so much easier! If you can also get in with the doormen, and the bar staff – it's a win win situation. Not only will your night run much more smoothly because they all know who you are and why you're here, but they will also be more inclined to let you in on your nights off if you intend on frequenting the venue at other times.

A Night of the Week

Having been covered briefly in the 'venue' section, you should put some thought in to what night of the week you intend on using. Also how often you intend on hosting the night.

You should find out what night is considered 'student' night in your area – perhaps Wednesday or Thursday – then consider securing that. There's the failsafe Friday night, but students with Saturday jobs might be more inclined to go out on the classic Saturday night.

Remember that whatever venue you pick, will more than likely already have a club set up and running on the busy nights, meaning you may have to settle for a mid-week slot till you can prove your worth. You'll have to work extra hard to get the punters in now!

A Name

Calling the night something unique and catchy is a good start. The name is the first thing people will see, and it will have to become something of an institute. It is the title, and also more often than not the descriptor of the night in question.

A good title or name will encompass the feeling of the night, it will relate to the music and culture surrounding mashups or bootlegs, and it will give off a good vibe on what to expect.

A perfect example of a bad name decision happened to a friend of mine. He was a DJ at a local student's union, and when the new term arrived, he was billed to help with a night called 'Rockstar'. Your first impression, when seeing the name of the night anywhere, would be to assume it was a rock night... Wrong. The night was originally planned to be one that took on board all sorts of music from hip-hop, to electro as well as a selection of rock. The night should have been more than just rock, but because it was called 'Rockstar', the punters expected rock – it attracted certain types of people, and then there were complaints when electro or hip hop was played – so the night eventually turned into a purely rock night, and the DJ no longer enjoyed playing it, or taking the same requests, week upon week. So remember, the name of your night could end up far more important than you might think.

An Identity

This really relates to the name of the night. You should have a whole brand identity that relates to the night. A theme including colours, symbols, line styles, quirks and rules. These should all come together on flyers, posters, cards, websites, promo CDs and anything else you plan on linking to the night. Perhaps you have visuals for during the night – you'll need a logo for inclusion, an animated identity perhaps. What about giveaways? You should also think about promotion in the press, listings on sites and all of the associated public relations. They should all adhere to your brand and ID so that you build up an image of the night, in visual form.

Sponsors

Sponsors can be a good way of getting a bar or club to agree on hosting your night. If you can get Smirnoff Ice to provide a few crates of alcohol or perhaps Bud or Becks want to give you some beer for the first few people in to the club. This is usually in return for some mentions on flyers, advertising in the club or bar and a mention or two in your public relations.

Perhaps you could secure some off-the-wall sponsors. Maybe something out of the ordinary. Maybe a retailer like Pioneer, or a local shop that's doing well, depending on your nights – if you have a themed night, then there's the options for sponsors there! Maybe you have a Scottish themed night, and you can get a local whisky producer, or a kilt maker involved. Yes... these are silly ideas, but people love it! What about ice cream, or lollies – a perfect addition to a night out on the razz! Walls, or Lionsmaid might sponsor you! Ben & Jerry's anyone?

Promotion

This ties in with almost all the other aspects we've talked about. From sponsors, right back to the venue, and DJs. It's all held together by good promotion.

Promotion usually involves far more than people expect it to. Most people assume a good flyer or two will do the trick, and in some cases this may indeed be the case, but you shouldn't want to just leave it at that. There's far more you can do to promote your night.

First things first, a flyer is a good start. A good flyer will have all the right information on it, and will be absolutely all over the place in terms of distribution. It should contain the following elements as a guide...

- DJ Names
- Name of the night
- The venue
- The date
- The times
- The drinks promos (if any)
- The ticket price or entry information
- Some appropriate graphics

That's a start. Some flyers will have sponsor logos, details of other forthcoming nights. More nights on one flyer limits space, but saves on printing costs. Also included might be a map to get to the venue, any rules or regulations enforced by the venue – e.g. no caps, no tracksuits and so forth.

Flyer design can be important, as a badly designed flyer can reflect badly on the night, ensuring failure even before it's been staged. You should concentrate on securing a flyer where the visuals reflect either the type of night it will be, or the clientele you expect to secure, thus aiming the design at the right market. It should also link to the identity of the night you have – this is important in building up that image we mentioned.

Printing of the flyers can be a pricy affair – especially if you're starting on a low budget. You will have to decide on whether the flyers are going to be colour, or monochrome, or even just black on white. You will need to decide on single sided or double sided, and then you have to consider the size and shape. There are printing companies all over, but you will find that the variation in price is drastic. Prices can range from very cheap to stupidly expensive and you might find that the bigger companies can do it cheaper, based on volume, or that the smaller companies can do it cheaper to get the business. Either way you should look to build up a relationship with your printing company, as you may well end up going back to them for future work.

Flyer distribution is a large part of the game too. If you don't get it out to all the right places, then you can kiss your punters goodbye. People won't go out looking for a flyer and if they see a flyer somewhere that they've never seen before, there's always the chance that they might leave it, in the mindset that if nobody has the flyer, then nobody will be going and nobody likes a quiet night.

You should target all the places your clientele would go first – this will include shops, restaurants and other clubs or bars. Then you can expand to cafes, sandwich bars, train stations, newsagents, record shops and all the little places your clients are likely to frequent. This process involves generally going in to the establishment, and asking the person in charge if it's possible to leave a few flyers on a counter or stand. It's better to ask, as there's less chance they will just remove the flyers as soon as you leave.

You should also look at other ways of distributing flyers. There's the 'street team' option, where you can get a few people together – usually your mates – then wander the streets in the right areas, giving out flyers to people who you feel might appreciate your night. You could approach shops and ask if they would consider giving flyers out in their bags when people purchase an item. You could arrange to stand outside gigs or club nights at closing time, and hand flyers to all the punters as they leave. This is well employed if it's a gig that sums up the music you might be playing on your night.

As well as flyers, there's the poster option. Most club nights or events have posters these days. You have to go through the ordeal of designing them, and printing them too – although most posters are just an up-sized version of the flyer. You should remember that posters will only be viewed from one side however, and more often than not – from a lot further away too. They should be bold and attention grabbing, while still in-keeping with your design ideal.

Posters should be hung in all the right places too. There's the art of fly-posting which I would imagine is done late at night, with lots of posters and a bucket of wallpaper paste. Be aware though that if you post them in the wrong place, nothing is stopping somebody getting the contact details from the poster and speaking to the authorities about illegal bill-posting. The best thing to do is ask first if it's a shop or eatery, and chances are if it's another club or bar – they might be reluctant to put them up if your venue is a rival.

At this stage it's worth mentioning that if you have got a good venue, and you have a decent relationship with the venue manager – you may find that they are happy to help with the promotion process. Some may offer to cover flyer costs, some may offer to design them, or help distribute. Some may even help at all stages of the process, leaving you to make sure it looks good.

Now, aside from the posters and flyers – which is the obvious promotion tactic, there's a host of other things you might consider.

If you have a club night – why not team up with a nearby bar that your punters might frequent, and offer some sort of deal. Perhaps you can give them discounted entry if they pick up a drink at the bar first, or maybe you could get the bar to promote the night heavily

with its own punters – then you could crown it ‘pre-party bar’ or something like that. Maybe giving it a mention on the flyer to encourage people along.

If you have a sponsor involved – then maybe they can help you out with promotion. Something small scale and local, but effective. Maybe you have nailed a deal with an ice cream parlour. Let’s say they’re up for helping you promote. Why not stage a small-scale DJ set on their premises for their customers, to give them a taster of what the night might be like. This could be done with local bars, or even shops.

More and more these days – street art and graffiti are becoming involved with promotional tactics. Guerilla marketing can employ many types of street art or promotion. At the lowest end of the budget – you could chalk some flyer details on to walls round your town, or on the pavement where people walk. At the more expensive end, you could stage something like a giant projection, or a series of adverts.

Wikipedia has information on Guerilla marketing here - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerilla_marketing and is bound to give you plenty of ideas.

Text message campaigns, internet newsletters, promotional items, public speeches, projections, banners, billboard, personal ads, etc – you get the drift.

Summary

So in conclusion – your idea to start a night, may end up being more of a handful than you first imagined. It could go from being a simple night and flyer, to a huge social event encompassing sponsorship, public advertising and an entire street team.

Either way, it should be enjoyable. It should be something you’re passionate about – and it should be well planned. If you don’t plan the night and everything connected – then it could fall down at any one of the hurdles.

The more people you talk to and get to know, the more chance you have of getting things sorted. If you think you’ll get it done by talking to nobody, and just doing it all yourself – then you’ll be surprised. Those who go out of their way and put in the extra time, are sure to reap the rewards at the end of the night.

Credits

This article was written exclusively for [Boot Camp Clique](#) by [Alex C](#) (with help from members of [GYBO](#))

It was completed on 14th November 2006.