A guide to hosting DIY events, written by the founder of DoDIY.org and edited by several people from all around the so-called USA. Includes comments on the DIY ethos, dealing with police, creating safer spaces, tips on booking and promotion, and much more.

“BUILDING: A DIY Guide to Creating Spaces, Hosting Events and Fostering Radical Communities” by Neil Campau

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OTHER READING
All of these are available for free download on the “Resources” page of DoDIY.org.

“A How To Guide On Starting A DIY Events Calendar”

“Know Your Rights: When Encountering Law Enforcement” by ACLU

“Your Rights and The Police” by Rose City Copwatch

“Sound Reinforcement Application Guide” by Yamaha

INTRODUCTION

“We have to invent a form of war such that the defeat of Empire will no longer be a task which kills us, but which lets us know how to live, to be more and more ALIVE.” - Anonymous

I run a website logging DIY venues and promoters all over the world at DoDIY.org. Users of the website have frequently asked me for advice on hosting DIY events and for years I have hoped that someone would create a clear, concise, and easily available guide. To the best of my knowledge that has not happened and so I decided to create it myself. I don’t consider myself to be an expert on “doing it yourself” and in my opinion that would be contradictory to the entire idea, so I asked as many people as I could to give me their input and advice. All of the people who have helped with edits and advice are credited in the last section of this book.

In an attempt to keep this guide interesting to read, I don’t walk you through every single step of the process. I instead try to focus on “bullet points” and ideas to spark thoughts and conversation. Don’t depend on this guide. Do it yourself.

I’d very much enjoy receiving feedback about these writings. You can email me at neil@dodiyo.org.

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HOMOPHOBIA: A range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

INFOSHOP: A storefront or social center that serves as a node for the distribution of political, subcultural, and arts information, typically in the form of books, zines, stickers, and posters.

MONOGAMY: The practice of maintaining a relationship with one romantic partner.

POLYAMOROUS: The practice of maintaining multiple romantic relationships.

QUEER: A label setting queer-identifying people apart from discourse, ideologies, and lifestyles that typify mainstream LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual) communities as being oppressive or assimilationist.

RACISM: Behavior or beliefs motivated by racial stereotypes; it generally includes practices of racial discrimination, and ideologies of racial supremacy and hierarchy.

SAFE SPACE: A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules guard each person’s self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others.

SECURITY CULTURE: A set of customs shared by a community whose members may engage in illegal or sensitive activities, the practice of which minimizes the risks of such activities being subverted, or targeted for sabotage. The term is most often used in the context of activist and anarchist subcultures.

DIY stands for “Do It Yourself.” As a general ethos, it’s about taking direct action to live independently from capitalist society. Some of us are creating safer spaces for people of all ages, genders, skin colors, sexual orientations, and abilities. Some of us are creating spaces that foster community and don’t operate solely on selling alcohol or acquiring assets for already quite comfortable, rich men. Some of us are creating art that doesn’t conform to whatever is popular. Some of us are sharing skills and knowledge. Some of us are trying to live freely and honestly. Some of us are trying to change the way we act and live to be more proactive and thoughtful. Some of us are actively working to dismantle and destroy this society. Some of us believe that only nonviolent actions can bring about positive social change and some of us don’t. Some of us deal with sexism, queerphobia, and/or racism on a daily basis and are fed up. Some of us aren’t allowed in bars.

We are vast and varied. Some of us drink alcohol or do drugs and some of us don’t. Some of us live in cities. Some of us live in suburbs. Some of us live in small towns. Some of us live in the woods. Some of us are proud to be outcasts and criminals. Some of us are monogamous and some are polyamorous. Some of us have been labeled as fat, ugly, pimply, loud, crazy, stupid, faggy, smelly, too thin, hairy, or sick. Some of us are brown and some of us are white. The one thing we all have in common is that we want control over our own lives and we’re doing something about it. We don’t want to depend on experts or authorities. We are a constantly growing community of artists, activists, musicians, anarchists, punks, crafters, queers, writers, lovers, fighters, haters, and builders.

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1 A few of the editors have argued that consumerism, not capitalism, is really the biggest problem to contend with, but I do not agree and feel as if I should explain myself. Consumerism is simply a result of capitalism. Because capital is what drives our society in such a large part, businesses and governments spend considerable energy and time to maintain a consumerist culture through advertising and other forms of social/behavioral manipulation. I’d rather look at the root of the problem, not symptoms.
ABLEISM: A form of discrimination or social prejudice against people with disabilities.

AGISM: Stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age.

ANARCHISM: The political philosophy which holds the state to be undesirable, unnecessary, and harmful, or alternatively as opposing authority and hierarchical organization in the conduct of human relations.

CAPITALISM: An economic system that is based on private ownership of the means of production and the creation of goods and services for profit.

CISGENDER: A gender classification used when someone identifies with behaviors and roles considered normal and/or appropriate for their body/sex.

CONSUMERISM: A social and economic order that encourages the purchase of goods and services in ever-greater amounts.

COPWATCH: To observe and document police activity while looking for signs of police misconduct (such as brutality).

GIFT ECONOMY: A society where valuable goods and services are regularly given without any explicit agreement for immediate or future rewards. Ideally, simultaneous or recurring giving serves to circulate and redistribute valuables within the community. Informal custom governs exchanges, rather than an explicit exchange of goods or services for money or some other commodity.
poor, yet dedicated, forever” - Jacob Bannon

MIKE SKIPPER - West Oakland CA
music@WOWDUDERECORDS.com

NATE ALLEN - Portland OR

PAT BELKEN - Yarmouthport MA
I run a record label called Cellar Hits, play music with The Zookeepers, work with the Big Collage collective and deliver pizzas.

RINNA V. REM - Madison/Seattle/PDXOXO
Radical librarian, 2nd generation Khmerican.

SHANNON CONNOR - Milwaukee WI
I live at a house show space in Milwaukee called The Laundry Chute and set up shows there as well as other spaces including Cream City Collectives, the neighborhood social center.

STEPHAN DOBOSH - Auburn PA

ZOE BOEBINDER - New Orleans LA
Available for weddings, birthdays, bachelor parties, and DIY events (only not the first three).

‘DEAR SPECTACULAR CAPITALISM
i AM BORED WITH MY
iMAgiNAtioN
I WANT MY
LIFE BACK’
- Zach Houston

The most obvious place to host DIY events would be where you live. A living room, a basement, a garage, a backyard, a roof. I used to have shows in my 400-square-foot studio apartment. We would push all of our furniture up against the walls and fit fifty or more cozy, cuddly people in that place. Be creative with your space and there’s a very good chance that you can make it work.

If for some reason you can’t use your living space (or prefer not to), there are endless possibilities. You could ask a friend if you can use their house. You could ask around at local businesses and try to convince someone to let you use a space in their restaurant, gallery, coffee shop, bar, ice cream shop, bowling alley, roller rink, or clothing store. You could rent a space. You could host events in a park, on a beach, deep in the forest, in a barn, under a bridge, in a parking lot, next to a pool, or at the top of a mountain. The event could be on wheels in an RV, on the back of a truck in a van. You could build a secret tree house. You could borrow a boat. You could find an abandoned or empty building and re-purpose it. If there’s no electricity and you need it for a PA, find a generator. If you don’t need electricity, use candles for lighting. If you would like to lessen the chance of police interference, acquire several buildings and move people from building to building during breaks. You could even take over a street.

Once you have found a space to host your event, it’s time to get it ready. First of all, you might do a bit of cleaning. Then I would think about things like lighting (e.g. placement, colored bulbs, etc.), the best place to put the “stage,” chairs, a table
If you're reading this zine, you're doing it right. Learn to be...
Understanding is a choice; everyone is everything by some degree.

ADAM BALBO - Oakland CA

AMY BROWN - San Jose CA
Designs and builds a variety of fabric sculptures including hats, costumes, puppets and plushies. Jumbojibbles.com

BEN TURK - Columbus OH
Insurgent Theatre creator and Prison Abolitionist.

BRYAN FUNCK - New Orleans LA
I have been involved in booking shows, playing in bands, doing zines, etc. 1997 until eternity.

CJ BOYD - Infinitour Earth
"Maturity consists in rediscovering the seriousness we had as children at play." -Friedrich Nietzsche

DANAH OLIVETREE - Oakland CA
danaholivetree.com

DREW DANBURY - Provo UT
I used to record songs and tour pretty much all the time...I haven’t stopped recording, but now I cut hair and do straight razor shaves at the Danbury Barber Shop.

DUSTIN GOLDKLANG - Guelph ON
Dustin sings short pop songs and enjoys running and loving.
My name is Neil Campau and, among other things, I sometimes identify myself as an artist, musician, anarchist, radical, feminist, non-voter, anti-racist, queer-ally, punk, slacker, and social agitator. I grew up in Adrian, MI, and so did several of my parents. My parents were a feminist non-voter and a Green Party punk slacker, and I was named for a couple years after a couple times I was nominated for a couple years, because they wanted me to have a cough and communicate thoughtfully and practice consent in both social and sexual relationships. My parents feel that all human beings are equal and that everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. I have been active in DIY events for a long time, but am no lon-
"When we talk about accessible or inclusive all-ages spaces, I think it's important to mention that those spaces don't always need to be accessible to everyone. It's totally okay not to let assholes into your show. The specific guidelines are up to you, but part of being a safer, inclusive space is minimizing anxiety and safety concerns for the people that make up your "community", a community that is hopefully trans-inclusive, radically feminist, anti-racist, non-ableist, body positive, non-heteronormative, and that strives to make shows accessible to people from all different socio-economic backgrounds. No capitalists allowed." - Jamie Menzel

There's a lot of talk about “safe spaces” in the DIY community, but I don't believe they are a possibility with all of the rampant and misguided societal ideas of gender, race, body image, family, and sex. We can create safer spaces by being aware that we all have different abilities, sensitivities, and experiences and by actively maintaining a space where everyone feels supported. You can't promise to preemptively mute insensitive people or their actions, but you can let people know that sexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist, ableist and/or other selectively offensive language and actions will not be tolerated. You may need to ask someone to leave or even forcefully remove them from your space. You shouldn’t be expected to do that alone; make sure you have a couple friends to support you.

I've included some stuff to think about below. If you don't understand or if you want to know more about some of these bullet points, do some research. Go to your local infoshop or library, look it up on the Internet, and talk with friends. Please don't depend on others to educate you or call you out when you're being an asshole. Check yourself.

• Not many people feel comfortable in a dirty, cluttered space.
• Events that only include white, cisgendered male performers are boring and usually don't represent the majority of your audience.
• Some people can't stand for extended lengths of time
or climb stairs.

- Some people are uncomfortable around drunk people.
- Some people are allergic to fragrances, smoke, and certain foods or pets.
- Nobody likes to have your political or religious agenda pushed on them.
- Some people don't identify as their assumed gender.
- Some people have kids.
- Some people are very uncomfortable in small or crowded spaces.
- Some people can't hear or see or speak.
- Good security culture is essential to many people's safety.
- Sexism, racism, queerphobia, ageism, ableism, rape, and the like are rampant and very much perpetuated in everyday life. Many people are fed up.

While you're thinking about this, please don't get discouraged and/or overwhelmed, thinking that you have to directly address all these things in order to be doing it right. A good and/or overwhelming thinking that you have to directly address and/or overwhelm thinking that you have to directly address all these things in order to be doing it right. A good

A good first step would be to open up conversations about all of these things with your friends and/or broader community.

If the cops show up and you don't want trouble:

1. Ask everyone to be quiet and stay inside.
2. Take one or two sober, experienced friends outside to greet the cops.
3. Close the door behind you and throw insults, bottles, what.
4. Be polite and avoid confronting the officers.
5. Your main goal should be to get the cops to leave without hurting anyone.
6. Do not consent to any searches or let them in the house.
7. If they try to enter your house, your main goal should be to get the cops to leave without hurting anyone.
8. If they are responding to a noise complaint from a neighbor, ask everyone to be quiet and stay inside.
9. Once the cops are gone, discuss the problem.

If the cops show up and you do want trouble:

1. Do whatever feels good; throw insults, bottles, what.
2. Be empowered, but also prepared to deal with the consequences.
3. Close the door behind you and throw insults, bottles, what.
4. Be polite and avoid confronting the officers.
5. Your main goal should be to get the cops to leave without hurting anyone.
6. Do not consent to any searches or let them in the house.
7. If they try to enter your house, your main goal should be to get the cops to leave without hurting anyone.
8. If they are responding to a noise complaint from a neighbor, ask everyone to be quiet and stay inside.
9. Once the cops are gone, discuss the problem.
Like I said earlier, be sure that you have a sign that states that the door charge is a "suggested donation." If you’re not keeping any of the money for yourself, you probably won’t have to worry about difficulties with the IRS or local business zoning officials. The performers are responsible for reporting their own income, regardless of whether you counted it and gave it to them. If you decide to keep a portion to pay for your expenses and you fear the slim-chance of an audit by the IRS, you could report via the Schedule C form, using business activity code 711410 ("Agents and Managers for Artists, Entertainers, and Other Public Figures"). There will be a section to enter that income, as well as your expenses (e.g. venue or PA rental, flier printing, travel, etc).

There are a whole bunch of other tactics that you could employ to lessen and/or deal with police interference. You could not allow alcohol or drugs at your events. You could only host quiet events. You could only host events on weekends. You could limit yourself to one or two events per month. You could create a phone tree of friends/supporters who will come out and support you if you are bothered by the police; they might be able to help intimidate the police and, at the very least, they can copwatch. You could avoid posting your street address publicly; tell people to email or call for the address. You could do whatever you want and tell the cops to fuck off (although you’ll probably be arrested).

If cops do show up at your door, be prepared and know your rights! I would recommend that you read ACLU’s booklet, "Know Your Rights: When Encountering Law Enforcement." It’s a really great resource, but here’s some basics:

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Specific to USA residents. I’m not a lawyer or government tax expert, but I am a resident of the USA and feel informed enough to speak a little about it. I definitely don’t feel at all comfortable giving any sort of advice on tax or zoning laws in other countries.
I was born into civilized society, and the priest, the judge, the moralist and the cop have tried to weigh me down with chains and transform my organism, exuberant with vitality and energy, into an unconscious and automatic machine for which only one word was supposed to exist: Obey."

- Enzo Martucci

When I talk about police, I use it as a synonym for uniformed cops, security officers, city/state/federal agents, grumpy neighbors, and anyone else that might attempt to restrict your activities. They might try to shut down your event due to noise, harassment, or simply make it difficult to enjoy your space and have a good time. It's not my intention to make you feel anxious or stressed, but it's important to be prepared.

The very best thing you can do to avoid police is to establish a good relationship with your neighbors. Tell them why you plan to host events and tell them all the positive things it can do for the community. Respond to all their questions and concerns. Give them advanced notice as to when you plan to host events and tell them what to expect. When the date draws near, leave them a friendly note with a reminder of the event. It can also be helpful to call them immediately if they have any issues. You might say something like, "Hello, my name's Neil and I live next door. I want to let you know that we're going to have some people over next week. There will be music, a puppet show, and we're cooking a big meal. We want to invite the whole neighborhood to come over and check it out. Would you like to attend?"

The very best thing you can do to avoid police is to establish a good relationship with your neighbors. Tell them why you plan to host events and tell them what to expect. When the date draws near, leave them a friendly note with a reminder of the event. It can also be helpful to call them immediately if they have any issues. You might say something like, "Hello, my name's Neil and I live next door. I want to let you know that we're going to have some people over next week. There will be music, a puppet show, and we're cooking a big meal. We want to invite the whole neighborhood to come over and check it out. Would you like to attend?"

It's also very important to maintain that you are not a business.
There are quite a few reasons why you might want to put together an event. Maybe there’s a touring band, punk circus, puppeteer, poet, theatre or dance troupe, comedian, or author coming through your town. Maybe you play music and can’t find a place to play. Maybe you’ve been to a DIY show and have seen that they can be really great. Maybe you or someone else would like to do a presentation to raise awareness about a political or anti-political topic. Maybe you would like to raise money for something. Maybe you enjoy hosting people in your home. Maybe you want an excuse to cook a big dinner. Maybe you want to have an art show. Maybe you’re too young to get into a bar or just would rather not.

If this is your first show and you’re not sure that you’ll be able to draw a decent crowd, you might consider starting with only local performers. It would be disappointing to have someone travel a long distance and end up with an empty donation jar.

If you are going to host some traveling performers, it’s a good idea to just stick to one. It’s not likely that you’ll make enough cash to pay two traveling acts very well. If you have more than one traveling act, then you’ll have to have fewer local acts (whom, often times, will draw more people to the show). After you’ve done this a few times, the word will get around that you’re hosting shows and you’ll probably start hearing from bands on tour that want to play the same night. Don’t feel like you have to help everyone and don’t be afraid to say no. Focus on hosting events that you’re really excited about and that you have the time and energy to promote well. More people will consistently come to your events because they will expect a good show, and you’ll earn a reputation amongst the tight-knit community of DIY travelers.

"It is by doing things that need to be learned in order to be done, that you learn them." - Aristotle
I think it's wise to stick to four or fewer acts per show. Some people book events under the logic of "the more the merrier," as they think that will mean more people will come. I understand that logic, but don't agree. From my experience, a long list of bands playing on one particular day makes people think, "I want to go see [insert favorite band], but I really don't want to sit through seven fucking bands."

Concerning the order of the performers or presenters, it usually works best to put a touring act somewhere in the middle and the act who is most likely to draw the most people at the end of the night. It's a good idea to dictate approximate set lengths to performers to keep the event interesting and moving forward.

If you are hoping to host more touring acts but are having trouble connecting with travelers coming through your area, I would suggest submitting a listing on one of the highly trafficked websites, such as DoDIY.org. Once you list yourself on one of these sites, expect to receive a whole bunch of emails. This can sometimes feel a little overwhelming, but keep in mind that it's not too hard to write back and say "Sorry, I can't help out." People will most likely really appreciate any kind of response.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO
ONLY BOOK SHOWS FOR STRAIGHT, WHITE, MALE-BODIED Dudes by Jamie Menzel

It's boring. And, it feels gross when everyone outside of that description (straight, white, male-bodied) gets allocated exclusively into the role of audience member. It can take extra encouragement to get people who haven't performed a lot to want to get up on stage, but I think it's important; this shouldn't be done as some half-assed lip service to social "justice." Instead, make an event deliberately inclusive and accessible because it will make for a more interesting and diverse show. There are TONS of amazing (queer, trans, differently-abled, non-white, female-bodied) artists and musicians all over who just aren't asked to play as much, but whose talent and creativity would add so much to the house & DIY communities. I usually work on one of these sites to find touring performers with a similar background or aesthetic, so if you want to be a good host, here is a list of some other ideas:

• A place to sleep
• Use of your kitchen, shower, and washing machine
• A towel
• A map of free/cheap/cool things to do in your town
• A free or cheap change of tune-up for their vehicle
• A bowl of trail mix or some other healthy snack
• A place to park and store gear
• A place to store beer
• A place to store bikes
• A place to store haircuts
• A place to store beer...
When communicating with the acts, be sure to ask what they need and if there’s anything else you should know (e.g. PA, number of mics, food preference, allergies, do they need a place to sleep, etc.) and also let them know what to honestly expect from the show, as well as any personal rules that you have about your space (e.g. no drinking, no assholes, etc.) and other important info (e.g. where to park, etc.).

Finally, tell the local performers that it would be really great if they’d not schedule any other local shows around the time of your event. Tell them that you asked them to perform because you really like them, but also because you’re hoping that they can draw some people to see the touring act. Be very clear with the performers about your expectations, and I promise everything will work out much better.

**EXAMPLE OF CONFIRMATION EMAIL FOR PERFORMERS:**

**DATE:** December 25, 2012  
**VENUE:** The Speakeasy  
**ADDRESS:** 555 55th St  
**LOAD IN:** Anytime after 5pm  
**SHOWTIME:** 8pm  
**SET LENGTH:** 25min  
**COVER:** $3-5 Suggested Donation  
**COMPENSATION:** All the cash goes to the touring band  
**AGES:** All  
**CONTACT:** NEIL at 666-666-XXXX  
**BILL (last to 1st):** Remambran, Upside Drown, Real Live Tigers  
**FLIERS:** Do you have a flier? If not, I’ll make one.  
**SLEEP:** We have 2 couches and lots of floorspace  
**FOOD:** I’ll have dinner ready by 6pm. Any food restrictions?  
**ALLERGIES:** Anything I should be aware of? We do have 2 cats.
money to the touring act. This is done for obvious reasons (they have more expenses) and also because many of us like to operate within a gift economy. The idea is that the people from out of town need the money much more, so we give it to them. And when we’re on the road, we hope that others will do the same for us.

Some people keep a small portion of the money to help pay for fliers, equipment, and other expenses. If you’re hosting shows regularly, you might even try to set some money aside as an emergency fund, in the event of a legal citation, your antique crystal lamp gets broken, a future show is less successful and you need to give the touring folks some gas money, or something else bad happens.

You’ll obviously have to decide for yourself how to handle money. If you’re fair and very clear with both the performers and audience from the very beginning, you’re less likely to have any issues.

If you don’t have time to promote the show, you probably shouldn’t be hosting it. Don’t throw together an ill-planned/promoted event just because you think you’re doing the touring band a favor. Keep in mind that most touring performers are on a very tight budget and traveling is expensive. When I think back on all of the ill-promoted DIY shows that I’ve played (which are too many to count), I definitely would have rather had a night off or have had a chance to find a better show if I had known that the hosts didn’t have time or interest in promoting. Just be real and don’t make promises that you can’t keep.

Before you get started, you should think about what would be an appropriate level of promotion. What is the capacity of your space? How susceptible is your venue to police interference? Are you hosting the event mostly for your friends
Hands you can almost help the touring folk.

You may not include something like, if you could send that, then in your

At the end of the night you'll need to count and split up the

See some future problems with city ordinances so do nothing on the extreme down-low. So can easily fore-tell; just keep this in mind.

If you feel scared by the idea of making a flyer because you're not the "artist" type, take note that really anyone can do it. One idea for a simple and engaging poster would be cutting a picture out of a magazine, gluing it to a piece of paper and writing all the details around the image with a marker. Easy. If you don't want to do it yourself, then you could ask an artist friend to help.

It shouldn't be your sole responsibility to promote the show. Make sure the local performers know that you expect them to do their best to promote as well.

Getting Off the Internet

• Make a monthly event list

• Send an email to local blogs and then to local DIY-minded people

• List the show on websites

• Make a small mailing list

• Tell local newspapers

• Tell your friends

• Create a website

Ways You Could Promote

Create a website

Social networking sites

List your event on local events calendars

Make flyers and pass them around town

Tell local newspapers

Create a small mailing list

Call your friends

Send out a mass text

Messages

Pass out handbills at other shows

Call a usual crowd

Create an email list

Visit DIY-minded people

Create a small mailing list

Tell your friends

Create an email list

Send out a mass text

Call a usual crowd

Create a small mailing list

Tell local newspapers

Make flyers and pass them around town

Tell local newspapers

Create a website

Social networking sites

List your event on local events calendars

Get off the Internet

Money is money, so concentrate when you count it. If you lose, you're going to have to deal with money. It's not fun, but you're going to have to deal with money.
MONEY
SOUND

“I used my mother’s radio as a PA system. I’d take the telephone, the speaking part and take those two leads off and lead them into the radio and the sound would come out of the speaker.” - Les Paul

Be sure to ask the performers if they need a PA and, if so, how many microphones, if you don’t own these things, ask around and hopefully you can borrow one. Otherwise, get creative. One example of a very simple DIY PA:

1. Microphone taped to a lamp post (acting as a mic stand)
2. Mic cable running from the mic to a small mixer
3. Bass Amp connected to the mixer (a guitar amp works too, but bass amps usually sound better when used as a PA)

If you’ve never used a PA before, don’t be scared. It’s pretty easy to figure out the basics, you just might want to mess around with it in advance, so you have less technical issues on the day of the show.

TIPS:

- If you’re hearing a loud squealing sound (called “feedback”), look at the following things:
  - Your microphones should not be pointing at the speakers.
  - Turn down the overall volume and/or gain.
  - Adjust the EQ by turning down either (or both) of the low and high knobs.

You should check to see if the outlets are grounded in your house or event space. If they aren’t, someone could get really hurt when plugging in PAs and amps. You can get a small tester that plugs into the outlet for fairly cheap at any place that sells electrical supplies.