

**ALL-AGES
MOVEMENT PROJECT
A MANUAL FESTO
FOR YOUTH AND
MUSIC SPACE IN
EVERY 'HOOD**

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY
THE AMP NETWORK



THE PARTICULARS

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2. You are making a zine.
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The All-ages Movement Project is a nonprofit member-driven network of organizations that produce independent music and art and build power with young people. We cultivate relationships to raise visibility, share knowledge, and expand resources in order to foster social and cultural change.

Narrated and Compiled by Shannon Stewart

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WWW.ALLAGESMOVEMENTPROJECT.ORG

What you are about to read is the first chapter of the AMP Manualifesto, followed by a description of the contents in the full version. More information can be found online at:

WWW.ALLAGESMOVEMENTPROJECT.ORG

This book is being self-published in the spirit of DIY by the All-ages Movement Project with the support of individuals and organizations that want to fuel the all-ages, independent cultural movement.

CHAPTER ONE **TURN
THE BEAT
AROUND**

During his testimony in front of Washington, D.C., County Council in January 2007, Ian MacKaye said, “Music is for all people. Music is no joke. It’s a form of communication that predates language.” Ian, singer and guitarist of bands like Fugazi and the Evens, addressed the council when, following a tragic shooting at a local 18-and-up nightclub, panicked legislators proposed an ordinance that would outlaw most all-ages shows in D.C. He explained:

I come from a community of musicians who have worked for twenty-five years, responsibly, with venues like the Black Cat, the 930, and various halls around the area. We’ve provided music for people of all ages. I’m not talking about [audiences] 18 and up, I’m talking about [audiences] 10, 9, and up; it doesn’t make a difference, because in our community, people have looked after each other and we have really tried to make music accessible.

Acknowledging that the council members probably didn’t know who he was or how renowned D.C.’s music scene is, Ian continued, “There are many people around the world who would actually hear the name Fugazi, and think ‘Fugazi, all-ages, Washington, D.C.’ This legislation that you are proposing would actually wipe out” – and here he gestured, slashing his hands through the air – “something that has been so

inspirational, and so moving and so encouraging, to so many people.” He went on to explain that he doesn’t want to live in a world with the one-dimensional views of young people that dictate such restrictions. “It’s insane!” he exclaimed, and slammed his fist on the table in front of him. “Teenagers are human beings. To treat them like they are only fodder for either predators or businesspeople is nuts.” His expression changed as his time ran out. “Thanks for your time,” he said in a neutral tone, and sat back in his chair.

That same month, five years after the overturning of the Teen Dance Ordinance in Seattle, Washington – which had severely restricted all-ages shows between 1985 and 2002 – and with the scene bursting with new bands and all-ages venues, Chris Hong, a local Seattle musician and sound engineer, addressed a crowd. This one was gathered for a more uplifting purpose: to raise money to help the Vera Project, one of Seattle’s youth-run all-ages venues, renovate a long-term home. “Vera is not just a music venue. We are not a rec center, and we are certainly not babysitters,” Chris said emphatically. “We are a diverse community that is working at the grassroots to create consensus and credible social change. We are battling everything in our culture that seeks to make us boring, apathetic, and stupid. We are a community inspired and defined by our affinities and connections to each other, not by how marginalized we are from the rest of society.” While the atmosphere was hopeful, still-bitter memories of the ordinance that had nearly wiped out an entire scene only a few years after it was the center of the music universe lurked in the corners of many minds.

Here too, was an incredibly vibrant, hopeful, independent scene fighting like hell to keep itself alive financially while defending itself against threats of closure on many fronts. Undoubtedly, many all-ages music communities in between the Washingtons have been through this.

Now, fast forward to the compilation and release of this book.

- This book is here as proof that young people from Seattle, Washington, to Washington, D.C., and everywhere are creative,

smart, organized, and getting things done.

- This book is here to address and confront the forces that make it hard for independent music and art spaces to stay afloat.
- This book is about commitments and long-term relationships.
- It’s a self-help book.
- It’s a rant about how screwed up things are.
- It’s a book about optimistic music fans.
- It’s a history of little-known buildings.
- It’s a survival guide.



WHAT’S IN YOUR HANDS

“Grassroots,” “do-it-yourself,” “empowerment,” “agency,” “independent,” “guerilla,” “underground.”

These are words that describe the actions of regular people achieving things we’re often told are beyond our reach or out of our control.

A lot of people desire to have a great youth program, a community space, and accessible music resources. It is something else altogether to get serious about making it happen.

It’s in *your* hands. You don’t need to wait for someone else to create opportunities for you and your community. It’s up to regular people like us to do this stuff, and if we don’t, other people, with less honorable intentions – like big corporations, media conglomerates, and megachurches – will do it first.

So, that said, *it’s* in your hands. This book is a snippet of what’s going on with youth music organizations in the U.S., and a compilation of the knowledge and experiences that have gotten the all-ages movement to where it is. Getting serious about taking action also means thinking seriously about what you’re trying to do, how it serves your community, and who should be on your team. This book doesn’t have all the answers, but it asks the hard questions you have to think about in order to build organizations that are useful, respected, and lasting.

Because this book covers a lot of different organizations, in different communities, using different genres and mediums, it's a given that you are not going to identify with all the language or philosophies presented. If you're a punk, emcee, or organizer worth your weight in vinyl, you'll critique these ideas and models, find the pieces that work for you, and eventually write the next book.



LET THE MEETING BEGIN

This book has seven chapters that focus on a certain logistical aspect of starting and maintaining a youth music program and all-ages space. Each one starts with explanations and straightforward how-to advice written and compiled by me (Shannon), and ends with one or two case studies of organizations written by different youth music organizers. The case studies give an overview of the organizations and the climates they exist within, focusing on the chapter topic at hand. The final chapter is a jointly written essay about how we see our work connected to social and cultural change. Throughout all the stories there are the following parameters and themes:

AGENDA ITEM #1: YOUTH

When the writers refer to youth or young people, we are talking about people entering young adulthood, between the ages of 14 and 24. Because the legal drinking age is the biggest barrier to youth's access to live music and consistent social-gathering places, the segment of the population in the most need is under 21. Beyond legal barriers to entry, there are many other factors that effect access to cultural communities for young adults.

As you will see, organizations choose to tackle the issue of pervasive adultism and age segregation from very different angles. In Chapter 2, the piece "When Teens Rule the Game," by Gavin Leonard, looks

at the renowned teen-run community center the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and explains how an adult-staffed organization does innovative work on youth leadership. Even organizations that don't focus as intensely on youth leadership can learn much from their point of view and success in creating age-integrated youth-led space.

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRANCHISES VS. MODELS

Community organizations are uniquely built to serve their locales and shaped by their founders. As writers of this book representing very different organizations, we know it would be impossible for one kind of organization to serve a variety of communities with diverse populations, differing economic resources, and locally influenced music scenes. Even amazing organizations and movements worth replicating in different places need to be relevant to their surroundings. Similarly, people decide to start all-ages spaces and music programs for different reasons, bringing with them their unique orientations as artists, promoters, community organizers, social workers, students, and/or concerned parents. For that reason, the organizations in this book are diverse on purpose.

In her piece on Batey Urbano (Chapter 7, "Players"), Diaris Alexander looks at how integrated the organization's work is with its neighborhood's nonprofit institutions, schools, and businesses – and how Batey's relationships with these other groups are key to its survival. Within a year of the organization's establishment as a center for culture and organizing among young people in its Puerto Rican community, the model immediately resonated with other tightly knit black and Latino neighborhoods, first in Chicago, then elsewhere in the country, resulting in the creation of several other Urbanos.

The 924 Gilman Street Project is the organization that many punk-oriented all-ages spaces claim as a reference point for what they do. In Chapter 3, "Democratize It Yourself," I look specifically at how parts of Gilman's membership and organizational structure are replicable in other places.

While looking at organizations in different regions of the country made up of different kinds of folks, the writers distilled some of the universal truths that were demonstrated over and over again. It's important to note that we aren't saying the organizations we profile are perfect or without issues. The point is to learn both from their successes and their challenges.

AGENDA ITEM #3: TO BE LEGIT OR NOT

Despite all the things that seem different about the organizations in this book, one thing is the same, and it is an important point when talking about mostly underground music and art organizations: They are committed to staying afloat, and being, for the most part, legal.

And so it goes that the ideas and tools presented in this book are focused on the legal side of sustaining an organization. We chose to do this not to make any sort of statement against doing things in a more under-the-radar way – in basements, kitchens, and illegal gallery spaces and warehouses. (Underground music gatherings are hugely important both for the sake of artistic experimentation and community building.)

By focusing on legal, aboveground organizations, we are trying to demystify some of the less sexy, glamorous, or talked-about aspects of engaging in music promotion and production: the laws, permits, regulations, and social issues that get in the way of people being able to come together and share music freely. Though many of the organizations here have an underground or radical orientation, they have intentionally decided to go the route of legitimacy. The question of how legal to be (or appear to be) is examined throughout.

Youth Movement Records in Oakland, California, illustrates how operating legally can meet certain progressive ends. To understand the full impact of organizations like YMR that blend record production with youth development in the San Francisco Bay Area, you would need ride the BART train and witness how record production has begun to replace other less positive street economies, as young people are selling their self-produced CDs to fellow train riders. Building on this underground

trade, YMR ups the artist development ante, teaching dozens of classes, putting out professional level compilations, connecting young artists to national touring opportunities and record publishing deals, while alumni are running community programs in juvenile hall. Now living in New Orleans, YMR alumni and recording artist Kameron Moore-Mitchell, aka the SeKond Element, tells the story of what it was like to be a young person involved in the beginning and how it has affected her. She explains the pedagogy of YMR leaders and what it was like to work with a group of her peers to make and release their first compilation album, "The Movement."

In another corner of the country, after years of toil, the all-ages music and art space Cave 9 in Birmingham, Alabama, filed its papers for official nonprofit status only to be hit with a governmental sucker punch: a \$6,000 tax bill from the state. Having played at Cave 9 with one of her bands, Katy Otto revisits the organization and documents their stripped-down methods of providing an all-ages music space in such a sincere way that it has put the city on the indie touring map.

AGENDA ITEM #4: "OPERA HOUSE = PUNK HOUSE"

This is a theme about the importance of real, physical space. During the writing of this book, an incredible coordinated movement called the Right to the City was officially launched at the 2007 U.S. Social Forum. The Right to the City presents a large-scale international call to reclaim land and resources for all people.

While community music and arts venues are a tiny part of what a more humane built environment could include, they represent existing examples of this ideology. Music is for everyone. Space to come together around music is for everyone. Space to feel safe, welcomed, acknowledged, valuable, and creative is a right of everyone.

Building off of this idea and the question of whether being legit is "selling out" by punk standards, in the Chapter 5 piece "With and Without Walls," Kevin Erickson addresses the quiet radicalism of sticking it out as a DIY space and what that means for cultural change.

Representing an organization straddling the line of legality, Kevin visits and then retells the story of ABC No Rio in New York City, an organization that went up against its landlord (the city itself) and successfully reclaimed its building in the Lower East Side of Manhattan for community resources and art.

In a slightly less confrontational example, in Chapter 7 Britt Curtis narrates the story of the Vera Project's alliance building with the city of Seattle, and how Vera was able to make the case that it's the city's duty to provide a music space for young people. As Vera founders used to say, "Opera House = Punk House."

Finally, taking this idea to a whole new level, it could be said that Providence, Rhode Island's AS220 is working for the right of artists to actually own an entire city. In Chris Wiltsee's piece "Unjuried, Uncensored, Always All-Ages," he visits Providence to hook up with the Rhode Show crew, a hip hop recording and performance program under the direction of David Gonzales at AS220, and stumbles upon evidence that the community arts organization is taking over downtown, modelling more sustainable development with their ownership of three (and counting) enormous performance/live/work buildings.

AGENDA ITEM #5: CLOSING THE DISTANCE

When the founders of Elementz: The Hip Hop Youth Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, reached out to David DeForest-Stalls in Denver, Colorado, for help, they received it. In the final case study of this book, in Chapter 8 Lori Roddy highlights how organizations can and should use each other as resources. One organization is not the right model for every place, but Elementz organizers saw something in the Spot in Denver that they immediately connected to. The Spot's model allowed the founders of Elementz to back up their ideas with tools and begin to transform a pattern of youth and police violence in their city into community power and police accountability.

With Elementz and the Spot as a collaborative inspiration, this book represents a collection of exchanges between people piecing together

our collective history. In doing this we acknowledge that within every community organization, the histories and experiences are complex; the perspectives on successes and challenges are constantly oscillating and contradicting one another. So much ground has been covered, so many people have burnt out or left to start new organizations, and so many others have stuck it out for decades. It is a major undertaking, and we didn't even get to the part where we give proper homage to the musicians that helped to shape these scenes (luckily, those books are more likely to already exist and be written in the future). Knowing this, we decided to focus on taking a snapshot, and, most important, to start talking to one another.

Each bit of documentation was done through conversation among the writers and featured organizations, down to the last essay, "What Does the 'Movement' in All-Ages Movement Project Mean?" This essay represents a two-hour conversation in which we talked about the theme of music's presence in movements for social and cultural change as it applied to our various communities. For some people, the social change connection is built into why the organization exists in the first place. Others of us started intuitively, and through time and experience began to understand how this work does not and cannot exist in a vacuum, away from understanding of the conditions that determine who does and does not get space, who does and does not get record deals, who does and does not get harassed by cops or legislated against. And, knowing that, we decided we cannot exist in isolation from one another.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Use your imagination, and please invite us to the party.

THIS BOOK IS A SURVIVAL GUIDE

In the full version of the book, here's what you'll find in the next eight chapters:

How To:

PUT ON SHOWS AND FESTIVALS, AND PUT OUT RECORDS (CHAPTER 2)

- DIY vs the Industry
- Nuts and Bolts
- Event Planning 101 (booking, promotion, production)
- Record Production
- Creating Trainings and Programs

Spotlight: Youth Movement Records: The Making of a Movement
by *Kameron Moore-Mitchell*

Spotlight: Cave 9 Music and Arts: God, Taxes, and Punk Rock
by *Katy Otto*

CREATE YOUTH ACCESSIBLE AND YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS (CHAPTER 3)

- Info on youth legislation
- Different ways of involving youth
- Nonprofit youth program terminology
- Building youth power in your organization
- Checklist of youth engagement

Spotlight: The Neutral Zone: When Teens Rule the Game
by *Gavin Leonard*

**BUILD AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU/YOUR GROUP
(CHAPTER 4)**

- What it means to be participatory
- Parts of governance
- Organizational structures
- Decision making options
- Decision making bodies
- Legal statuses pros and cons
- How to make things more participatory
- Basic conflict resolution

Spotlight: 924 Gilman: The Punk's Guide to Building a Member Run Venue
by *Shannon Stewart*

FIND AND HOLD ON TO SPACE (CHAPTER 5)

- Things to consider operating illegally vs. legally
- What to look for in a space
- Using somebody else's space
- Finding your first space
- The live/work model
- Gentrification issues
- Prospecting permanent spaces
- Internal issues that come up once you have a space
- External issues that can close you down
- Getting a permanent space and capital campaigns
- Safety and security
- Intangible aspects of space – the woo woo stuff

Spotlight: ABC No Rio; Reclaiming Space for Arts and Activism
by *Kevin Erickson*

BUILD DIFFERENT FUNDING STREAMS AND SUSTAIN YOURSELF OVER TIME (CHAPTER 6)

- Sources of funding – special events, government, foundations, corporations, individuals, earned income
- Funding cycles – seed money, capacity building money, and sustaining money
- Survival in the nonprofit funding world

Spotlight: AS220: Unjuried, Uncensored, and Funded
by *Chris Wiltsee*

BUILD COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS (CHAPTER 7)

- Schmoozing for non-schmoozers
 - Neighborhood relationships
 - Sector relationships
 - Media relationships
 - Working with elected officials – learning to lobby
 - Police and fire departments
 - Other government agencies
 - Organizing your music community

Spotlight: Batey Urbano: Neighborhood Solidarity and Nights of Expression
by *Diaris Alexander*

Spotlight: The Vera Project: The Pop Culture and Politics Mash-up
by *Britt Curtis*

HOW TO PUT IT ALL TOGETHER, GET GOING, AND GET HELP (CHAPTER 8)

- Deciding what route to go
- Learning from the organizations that didn't make it
- Phase I: Research, Models, Surveys
- Phase II: Outreach, Funding, Youth
- Phase III: Pilot Project
- Phase IV: Reflection and evaluation

Spotlight: The Spot & Elementz, The Hip Hop Youth Arts Center:
Towards D-I-T. by *Lori Roddy*

AND FINALLY, HOW TO TALK ABOUT MUSIC AND YOUTH WORK IN CONCRETE
TERMS OF ITS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT. (CHAPTER 9)

PLUS, THERE'S A WHOLE BIG RESOURCE SECTION!



WOOT! WOOT!