

Rockgrl



How to Build a Musical Cooperative, Organize and run it

by Emily Zuzik

Jan 2004 - Winter 2004 Issue

It takes a lot more than chutzpah and good friends to make a collective work. If you're forming a collective to share songs and common experiences, organizing meetings can be fairly easy. If you're trying to form a collective music label, however (like Cropduster in New York City), or a regularly occurring event, the division of labor is key to the group's success.

In 1988, Lori Maier of Chicago started Chick Singer Night, an event that enables singers who don't have enough original material, or who are too afraid to ask other musicians to play with them, to take the stage with a seasoned band. "The first Chick Singer Night was a big, kamikaze music fest and that's pretty much what every show has been ever since," Maier says.

Chick Singer Night is now a staple of the Chicago scene, and has expanded to a seven-city monthly event that gives singers of all levels an opportunity to perform. The daily work load has increased exponentially as the event's popularity has grown. Each Chick Singer Night city now has a designated director who handles the day-to-day responsibilities. These duties may include screening submissions, booking shows, making sure the band and all the featured artists know what time to show up for rehearsal, and preparing performers for the show.

Maier focuses on the bigger picture: launching new cities, securing the clubs, promotions and finding corporate sponsors.