

# DUBLIN NEEDS DANCEFLOORS

## A PANEL DISCUSSION ON CREATING CLUB NIGHTS

FRINGE LAB AT DUBLIN FRINGE HQ | 16 NOVEMBER 2023

**Chaired by Dublin Fringe Associate Artist Dafe Orugbo,  
with panellists Lisa Connell (Mother), Azeez Saeed (The Sweet Spot)  
and Michal Mencnarowski (Rathaus).**

TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS | TOP TIPS

### FINDING YOUR NICHE

- Context is key - look at your environment and vibe.
- Find a gap in the market that aligns with your inspiration to create.
- Start with seeding ideas. Talk to people in the community and let them know what you're thinking about – you'll be surprised by the connections that you make.
- Reach out to communities that you're already a part of – fill a niche that's out there.

### SETTING UP AND MAKING APPROACHES TO VENUES

- Establish a clear artistic identity and public brand; work on compiling your manifesto, your biography, social channels (Instagram to start with) and compile mixtapes and then share with potential collaborators.
- There's a real lack of venues so think creatively about how you can utilise other spaces.
- Cash exchange is a key factor for venues. Where can the venue make money? Are you paying for the space? Are you promising a figure on bar spend?
- Venues want to see a return on events quickly, but clubs need time to develop and build a following, which is a challenge. So, how do you get it on track early to keep your venue? Work to sell them on the idea of audience growth, work with them on long-term visioning. Do your forecasting. Plan.
- Initial pitch for venues should include: Who, What, Where, Why? Have your USP (unique selling proposition) ready to share.
- Approach your venues only when you have researched them; what and who they have in, how do they programme, for e.g., weekly/monthly/residencies?
- Create an accessibility policy that you can and will stand over, with the spaces you're using.
- Stand by your USP – make sure what you do reflects your manifesto, your mission and your aims. Always take a moment to ensure you are following through in all of these.
- Make sure you have the right context (venue) for performers that you hire to allow them to shine. Will you get the right audience in? Does the staging suit their work?
- Start in lower capacity but great spaces and build your brand from there: Tengu, The Soundhouse, The Racket Space are all great spaces when starting!

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### AUDIENCE

- You must put in the work on creating engaging content that communicates who you are, what you do and imparts a solid brand identity.
- Don't underestimate local community – find out what your audience want and move between what your intended audiences know they want and what they don't yet know what they want!
- Make sure you feature local talent.
- Focus the buzz (content creation and marketing campaign) around the party and what audiences can expect rather than the acts if you want to showcase brand new artists.

### HOW TO GROW YOUR NIGHT!

- Collaborations with different venues and festivals can help to grow your brand.
- Before approaching and cold calling collaborators, make sure you have a clear identity and clear ask ready.
- Remember growth is not just about venue size, it's also about connections; think about who could be the connection that might add respect and/or legitimacy to your event, this could be alcohol sponsors, press, festivals, etc.
- You can generate a certain buzz through people not getting into your event – play with the 'hot ticket' to a certain degree, working this into your marketing campaign.
- Scale of success might not be capacity but instead landing a tour, brand connections and festival links.
- Start with where and what you want it to be and work backwards when planning.

### COLLABORATORS AND ARTISTS

- Community is built through booking local artists – it creates a sense of family, and artists can champion the night.
- Hire DJs/artists from audiences that you're not connecting with and want to.
- Your brand values and ethics will guide you in selecting your partners. Why are you making the connection?
- Where is your sweet spot of new voices and existing favs?
- Create a clear structure you can slot artists into night on night.

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### MONEY

- Speak to Festivals and arts organisations who can provide funding and put on shows.
- Which brands line up with what you do?
- What can you get that isn't money, for e.g., alcohol, equipment and space.
- Make sure you're valuing your work appropriately; even with accessible ticketing in mind it can be effective to make bookers commit to at least a €5 ticket, so you know who's coming.
- Tiered ticketing can be a great way to make events more accessible, giving a chance for cheaper tickets early on, discounts shared with close friends and supporters (via insta/mailout) with a discount link for regulars and friends.
- Audiences are more selective about club nights post-pandemic. Build a night that feels like a 'big night out'. Make it an experience.
- Avoid pricing tickets over €20+ (this is a lot!).
- Be careful of the booking fees when setting up sales.
- Working with people on a guaranteed fee with a further split on ticket sales can be a good way to ensure investment in sales from your acts.

### IN YOUR VENUE

- Make sure your team are good – lighting op, doorman, coat check, etc.
- Don't be afraid to debrief with venue staff, especially door staff. Let them know 'this is what the customer is like' so they are friendly and approachable. Speak with the security about how you want the night to feel and how it can align with venue policy (i.e. light touch, no entry search, etc.). Security can make or break a night.
- Your venue manager is your key contact, find out who they are and be clear and concise in your communication.
- Clearly communicate your needs to the venue manager. Can you build a brand together? Ask for the manager's contact number, build a relationship, let them know the 'mad shit' that's going on, be clear and transparent – don't surprise them, have a plan. The venue staff are going to be busy – don't add to their stress!
- Bargain with venues and stand your ground – you're doing the hard work of bringing people in.
- Venues are usually making more money off the bar than the rental, often filling the room is a key consideration for them.



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### MARKETING

- Weekend guides are very effective for bringing in new audiences: Nialler9, District, etc.
- Create promotion circles with other artists who match your vibe.
- Make it feel like a special occasion – a night out.
- Reels, video content, themes.
- How do you safeguard your audience against potentially difficult ticket buyers? Speak with the security. Set down clear house rules (i.e. we do not tolerate racism, transphobia, etc.). Make clear parameters for booking tickets so that it's easy to remove people if they don't meet them.

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Image: Panel discussion on creating club nights at FRINGE LAB on 16 November 2023.  
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