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The Ames Beat: Entering the local music scene

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The Ames Beat

Entering the local music scene.

BY CELESTE WELSHHONS    DESIGN RYAN EIFFERT
PHOTO JONATHAN LACZNIK AND MEREDITH KESTEL

Echosmith performs in the Great Hall at the Memorial Union in Winter 2015.

Entering the local music scene might sound a bit difficult at first, but if you're interested in playing shows in the Ames area, there are a few things you should do to get involved. "If you have unique gear, you need to go to shows," says Bryon Dudley, one of the co-owners of the Iowa Music Store. "If you have any specialized equipment, [make sure you have it]," Dudley says. "If you have any specialized equipment that you might be able to share with people, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and are willing to share their gear with others are more likely to find a band to work with.

One of the main ways to start getting acquainted with the Ames music scene is to go to a show and talk to the musicians. Outside of that, "you could go to an open mic night," Dudley says. "There are open-mic nights in Ames, or finding other like-minded musicians and people who set up shows, [you could] maybe put up a flier at a music store," he says. "If you're looking for people, social media if you're looking for people, [you could] throw it out there on Facebook and on various Tuesday nights throughout the year." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

Another way to get involved in the Ames music scene is to go to a Maximum Ames Music Festival. "Those are the folks that are musicians and people who set up shows," Dudley says. "Those are the folks that are gathering—or you've decided to go solo—maybe put up a flier at a music store," he says. "If you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

If you want to work with other musicians, you just need to go to shows." Dudley says. "If you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

One of the biggest mistakes new bands make is picking up band members before you know it. "If you have unique gear, you need to go to shows," Dudley says. "If you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

So you've decided that you actually have a song, but you're not sure what to do next. "You need to figure out what you want that kind of support and then, just try to figure out, but if you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says. "If you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

Another option is to use social media. "If you want to work with other musicians, you just need to go to shows," Dudley says. "If you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

Now that you have played some shows, you can start thinking about recording your songs. "The Ames scene is easy. If you're interested in playing shows in Ames, or finding other like minded musicians, you just need to go to shows," Dudley says. "If you have any specialized equipment, you need to go to shows." Dudley says that people who go to shows and talk to musicians are more likely to find a band to work with.

To beat continued...
Becoming involved with the Ames music scene might sound a bit difficult at first, but if you simply go to a few shows around town, you may start networking and maybe even picking up band members before you know it.

Nate Logsdon is the President of Maximum Ames Records, the co-founder of the Maximum Ames Music Festival and one of the co-owners of the Iowa Music Store. One of the other co-owners of the Iowa Music Store is Bryon Dudley, who is also one of the people in charge of Nova Labs, another Ames record label.

Both Logsdon and Dudley have been involved in the Ames music scene for many years as both musicians and businessmen. They have a great deal of knowledge on how to become involved in Ames’ music scene from both a business and a performer’s perspective.

According to Logsdon and Dudley, the main way to start getting acquainted with the Ames scene is to go to a show and experience it.

“I would recommend going to shows—that would be the top thing I would recommend. That’s where you’re going to meet other musicians and people who set up shows,” Logsdon says. “Those are the folks that are going to be your contacts for setting up your own shows.”

Local shows are a great place to network or even find potential band members. Another great place to look for like-minded people is at an open mic night. There are open-mic nights every Sunday at the Iowa Music Store and on various Tuesday nights throughout the semester at the Maintenance Shop in the Memorial Union.

“I know you can do things like Craigslist or some online ad or throw it out there on social media if you’re looking for people,” Dudley says. “The better way to narrow it down to people in your area is just finding an open mic to go to.”

“A lot of those people aren’t playing in bands, so they really aren’t attached to other musicians. Outside of that, [you could] maybe put up a flier at a music store,” he says.

Once you have your band members gathered—or you’ve decided to go solo—the next step to getting involved is booking some shows around town. Some established venues around Ames that routinely book shows are DG’s Tap House, Zeke’s and the Iowa Music Store.

“I’d say pretty much any venue has somewhere either on their website or Facebook page that lists contact information,” Logsdon says. “Trading shows is a good way to get in at new venues.” He recommends having a friend set up a show for you at a venue that they usually play, and in return set one up for them at your usual venue.

If you don’t feel that you are ready to play at an established venue yet, anywhere can be transformed into a venue. Logsdon mentions that you could use your garage or living room, too.

One of the big mistakes new bands make when playing their first few shows is overestimating what equipment will be provided at the venue.

“When you show up for a show, be prepared for anything as much as you possibly can. Most venues will have the PA (public address) system and stuff like that figured out, but if you have any specialized equipment, [make sure you have it],” Dudley says. “If you have unique gear, you need to have the cables to connect it up.”

“If you want to work with bands, you just need to go to shows.”

Now that you have played some shows and written a few songs, releasing a demo wouldn’t be a bad idea. Many beginning musicians mistakenly think that in order to get their songs circulating they should release everything through a label or record it in an actual recording studio. But according to two guys that run labels, this isn’t the best first option.

“There are professional studios that are really good and really affordable in Ames like The Spacement. There’s also Alexander Recording Kompany,” Logsdon says. “It’s not very expensive, and they have a lot of good resources there. On top of that, a lot of people record their own stuff at home because recording equipment has actually become a lot more accessible.”

If you’re looking to release a demo, it might be a good idea to make hand copies—copies that you do without help from someone with professional experience. If you want to release a demo but don’t want the hassle of making physical copies, the online site, Band Camp, is worth checking out. The website is free, and you can choose to either charge money or give away your demo for free. If you’re looking to release a full album, Dudley says that talking to a local label might not be a bad idea.

So you’ve decided that you actually have enough material to release your first full album. There are three different record labels in Ames alone—Maximum Ames Records, Nova Labs and Worker Bee Records. They are all different in what exactly they offer.

“If you feel like your album needs some kind of support like from a label or something like that, the labels here in town are very independent. They don’t provide a lot of resources typically, other than assisting in the process of marketing and distributing the album. It’s more of a vehicle to market it and distribute it more heavily,” Logsdon says.

“Part of what [Nova Labs] prides ourselves on is helping people through that whole process. Some people will show up and talk to us, and all they have is songs,” Dudley says. “They don’t know anything about recording or any of the steps from there on. There are also people who already have it recorded, mixed and mastered and the artwork done. We just walk them through a release schedule.”

That pretty well covers entering the scene from a musician’s perspective, but what about from a business perspective?

Bands need managers and people to help them organize and book shows. If this sounds interesting to you, once again, the first step is getting involved.

“If you want to work with bands, you just need to go to shows. There’s not really a trick to becoming involved with it,” Logsdon says. “Or, if you have a friend that is involved in a band, and you want to manage them or help them, just go for it. Talk to them, ask if they want that kind of support and then, just try your hand at it.”

Maybe you want to be involved within the scene, but performing music isn’t your thing and neither is business. Volunteering is a great alternative. One of the bigger shows that will be in need of volunteers is the Maximum Ames Music Festival, which will be back next fall. In previous years, volunteers have walked away with free t-shirts, access to some of the shows and some other perks as well.

Becoming involved in the Ames music scene is easy. If you’re interested in playing shows in Ames, or finding other like minded musicians, try going to some shows or an open mic night. There are abundant resources for Ames musicians whether they be recording studios, record labels or venues. Hop on your laptop and start looking and booking!
1. Gardens & Villa at the M-Shop in Fall 2014.
2. SKATERS at the M-Shop in Fall 2014.
3. Stick Figure at the M-Shop in Fall 2014.
5. Ursa Bones at the Iowa Music Store in Fall 2014 during Maximum Ames Music Festival.