

found sound nation

STREET STUDIO CITIES | producer's field guide

Description:

[Found Sound Nation](#)'s (FSN) **Street Studio Cities (SSC)** is a model for collaborative music-making that was pioneered at the [Lucerne Music Festival](#) in Switzerland in 2011 and has since traveled to all five continents and captivated audiences at festivals including the [Harare International Festival of the Arts](#) (Harare, Zimbabwe), [Lincoln Center Out of Doors](#) (NYC), [Big Ears](#) (Knoxville, TN), [the Bay Chamber Festival](#) (Maine), and [Make Music Day](#) in partnership with [Make Music New York](#). The premise is simple: transport the basic elements of a music studio to a public place, and make the studio open and accessible to everyone in the local community, musicians and non-musicians alike. With a simple setup - a laptop, mics, midi controllers, speakers, and instruments - the SSC producers invite passersby and festival musicians to join in a music creation session that is completely improvised. Songs, beats, stories, and musical ideas offered by participants are recorded and actively transformed into loops and soundscapes. After a period of post-production, this improvised concert of original music and documentation is shared with all participants and the world. **Street Studios** have the extraordinary ability to capture the particular energy of a time and place, tapping into the "collective unconscious" of public spaces.

Equipment Needs:

Required:

Computer ([Ableton](#) preferred or other DAW), 2+ channel interface, studio monitors (or small PA speakers) microphones (1 minimum, dynamic/hypercardioid preferred), mic stand, all necessary cables, power access*, power strip, extension cord*, table*, chairs*, signage*

**will be provided by SSC venue*

Optional:

Additional MIDI controllers
Various percussion and easy-to-play instruments
Headphones and headphone amp (for reference)
Zoom Recorders (to record sounds in the vicinity)
Tent for sun/rain

Staff Needs:

1-2 Producers

Producers run the *Street Studio* computer and are in charge of adjusting preamp level, recording and live audio processing, as well as post-production. *Producers* balance the immediate demands of participants, keeping live/recorded audio continuously flowing and sonically engaging, while also planning ahead for eventual mixdown.

1-2 Facilitators

Facilitators help to manage foot traffic and engage passersby. *Facilitators* are responsible for placing the microphone (or better yet, empowering others to), explaining the *Street Studio* premise to new participants and demonstrating creative sound making when activity wanes. *Facilitators* are also in charge of collecting participant names and email addresses to share the final mixes with later, and documenting the *Street Studio* via photo and video (iPhone or mobile quality).

Guest Musicians (optional)

We encourage you to invite *Guest Musicians* (along with their instruments) to drop in on the *Street Studio*. *Guest Musicians* should be encouraged to improvise and react to the evolving composition, as opposed to performing prepared pieces.

Time:

2-4 hours | *Public Recording Session*

Varies depending on venue requirements and arrangements. It is recommended to take short breaks and switch out roles when needed.

1-2 days | *Post-Production*

The *Producer* is in charge of arranging audio recorded during the *Street Studio* and using creative mixing methods to assemble 1-3 completed tracks.

Directions/Rules:

Public Recording Session

The *Street Studio* is set up in a public area, during hours with decent foot traffic. A sidewalk, public park, train station, street fair, a busy college hallway or music store are all viable locations. *Producers* begin *Street Studios* with a blank session, no pre-programmed MIDI or audio. The *Facilitator* convinces a

passerby (or *Guest Musician*) to start improvising and creating sound. One simple prompt is to break the ice with an easily loopable beat, such as a clapping pattern or rhythmically clear melodic line, and have the *Producer* record while tapping out the track's tempo.

The Producer captures and loops a section of the initial performance and quickly opens new tracks to layer other musical ideas atop it. Audio should be playing continuously during the *Street Studio* with new layers becoming quickly audible, so that participants can hear the result of their contributions (we recommend facing one speaker towards the participants so they can hear clearly). This will result in a certain amount of bleed from the speakers into each track, and thus we recommend using noise-rejecting microphones (such as a Shure SM57) placed close to the sound source. View the *Street Studio* as a performance and favor participant engagement and rapid transitions between recordings, over fidelity.

The track will build as participants add audio content. These could consist of: vocal melodies or spoken poems, pad-entered beats, synth lines, explanations of dreams, children's songs, raps or just about anything. *The Producer* should strike a balance between processing this material (quantizing, tuning, compressing, effects, etc.) in real-time and introducing new sounds. Periodically, the *Producer* should mute earlier loops and rearrange the role of dominant sounds in order to shift dynamics. The *Producer* can also alter the tempo or key/pitch for more drastic shifts in mood.

At some point, typically between 30 minutes and one hour, the *Producer* should decide that the song has run its course, accumulating enough ideas to form a track, and fade playback out. That's a good time to take a short break, for *Producers* and/or *Facilitators* to switch (if others are available) and begin a new session.

Post-Production

Following the *Street Studio* session, the *Producer* who recorded should also mix the tracks. Each *Street Studio* session ideally yields 1-3 recorded tracks of 2 minutes or more (musical quality being the priority, over quantity). *Producers* should use their discretion when mixing and feel free to highly manipulate sounds and rearrange audio as they see fit. However, these

ground rules apply:

No pre-recorded tracks -- All sounds used in the final recordings should be taken from the *Street Studio*, recorded that day. No pre-recorded tracks should be used.

No samples of other recordings -- No knock on sample-based beat making, we're actually fans. But it's not quite the aim of a *Street Studio*. Use sounds unique to the location!

Limit MIDI and synthetic sounds -- A majority of the finished track should come from recorded audio. Supplementing this with in-the-box sounds (drum machines, soft synths etc.) is fine, but the finished product should prominently feature unique recorded sounds generated by the participants.

Limits on Guest Musicians -- *Guest Musicians* lend added polish and proficiency to a track, however, *Street Studios* are equally about engaging non-musicians and those who aren't expecting to perform. Limit the contributions from *Guest Musicians* where possible and don't let them dominate the finished track over other participants.

Links to Street Studio Media:

Videos

[Lucerne Festival \(2011\)](#): Lucerne, Switzerland
[Street Studio Senegal \(2013\)](#): Rufisque, Senegal
[Lucerne Festival \(2013\)](#): Lucerne, Switzerland
[Mitya Street Studio \(2014\)](#): Russia
[Maskeliade Street Studio \(2015\)](#): Russia
[Street Studio Hungary \(2014\)](#): Hungary
[Big Ears Festival \(2014\)](#): Knoxville, TN

Audio

[Street Studio City \(2015\)](#)
[Live at the Winter Garden \(2014\)](#)
[Sun Shelter: Big Ears Street Studio \(2014\)](#)
[Lucerne Street Studio \(2013\)](#)
[Bay Chamber \(2013\)](#)
[Lincoln Center Street Studio \(2013\)](#)

Other Links:

[Street Studio Cities](#)
[Found Sound Nation](#)