



## Believers Den Studio and Open Mic

May 31, 2018

City of Urbana, Public Arts Program  
Community Development Services  
400 S. Vine Street  
Urbana, IL 61801

Over the last year, the Independent Media Center (IMC) helped to make Urbana a home for local hip hop thanks to a generous grant from the Urbana Public Arts Commission. With your support we had significant impact in surfacing underrepresented voices, and putting a spotlight on young, emerging talent. This project helped us to build on the work started by Open Scene, an NEA-funded collaboration between the City of Urbana and IMC. We have identified a need in the community for safe spaces where youth can freely create. In particular, the hip hop community has been pushed to the margins by local business owners, residents, and police. While we still lack the hardware for a community music studio, we held a series of workshops and showcases that helped to create a wide-reaching “buzz” across town about the studio, and collect significant donations toward building the facility.

Over the course of this project, we worked with Believers Dynasty, led by Jamie Gatson (aka J. Tune), but we also developed relationships with other local videographers and music producers, as well as with larger collectives including Champaign Cypher and BLQK. The workshops also helped to put a spotlight on new Black business owners at the IMC.

We held two DJ workshops teaching the skills of hip hop production and song recording. In December 2017, there was a workshop with RENO vs. Them (Lereno Hines) and Jamie Gatson, both from Believers Dynasty. Half a dozen people attended the session. Out of this, Power 102 Jamz, a local online radio station that rents office space at IMC, offered to help with setting up the studio. In February 2018, we held a second workshop with Derek Linzy, who gave a class on “How To Build A Home Studio” to five people in his studio, located at the IMC. We held a third workshop with Ibrahim Ouedraogo, a documentary videographer from Burkina Faso, home to the West African film industry, who is also housed at the IMC. The video workshop, taking place March 2018, was well attended by a diverse group of a dozen people. All workshops were free.

There were two showcase events with a variety of talented young musicians and artists to raise awareness about a community music studio. For Halloween 2017, the event “Are You Afraid of the Dark?” hosted by Wolf Thomas, founder of BLQK, featured an array of artists, dancers, and musicians. On March 30, 2018, “Good Vibes Only IMC Showcase,” organized by Robert Kjeverud of Champaign Cypher, included a lengthy bill of 20 plus performers, with hip hop and DIY musicians, a live artist, and comedy acts, with a special appearance by Kadeem’s Hard Kool-aide, a local Black comedy duo. This was

a very successful event that raised \$500 in donations toward the community music studio. Additionally, #NoLoveLost, a hip hop battle rap put on the previous month by Champaign Cypher, generated an additional \$160 in donations toward the studio. From these two events we raised a total of \$660.

As a result of ongoing outreach, we attracted a donor who recently gave us \$2,000 in music equipment left behind by her deceased husband. We plan to sell the equipment and use the proceeds to fund the studio. This will bring us close to our the \$3,000-\$4,000 total we need to start the studio. We are certain we can raise the remaining of the money to purchase needed hardware for the studio.

With the help of the last year's support, we have deepened relationships with our existing partners, and forged new collaborations that will surely lead to future opportunities. We're already seeing the fruits of our labor. A video released by Jamie Gatson earlier this year, called "[Bulletproof,](#)" was shot at IMC. Open Scene participants attended our events, and we're making plans to hold a series of Open Scene open mics in downtown Urbana. This summer, we have organized more DJ and video workshops. We have also scheduled two more upcoming hip hop shows.

IMC is well positioned to assemble a team of leaders able to put together a community music studio with additional knowledge sharing and fundraising. We succeeded in creating a space to nourish young and emerging talent in CU. With this grant, we started to spread the word about a coming studio. Over the years, support from the Urbana Public Arts Commission has contributed to making IMC a center for creativity in Urbana.

#### **Revised Project Budget**

Over the course of this project, we shifted our focus as we have as of yet been unable to assemble the needed hardware—computer, software, a video camera. Additionally, the name has been changed from “Believers Den” to the more general “community music studio,” as more partners have come on board. We have reserved a space, a studio office in the basement of the IMC, but it has not been utilized. The grant monies were instead used to generate community awareness and fundraise for needed equipment.

FISCAL REPORT	Matching	Expenditures
Promoters		\$550
Workshop leaders		\$650
Catering		\$100
DJ support		\$150
Artist		\$150
Comedy		\$150
Technical assistance		\$100
Facebook advertising		\$15
Staff support	\$350	\$0
Space Usage	\$275	\$285
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$625</b>	<b>\$2,150</b>

### **Certification**

I hereby certify that I am authorized to approve this Report, which serves as a Request for reimbursement, that I have reviewed the attached invoices in the amount of \$2,150; that all costs claimed have been incurred for the Project in accordance with the Agreement between Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center and the CITY OF URBANA; that all submitted invoices have been paid; and no costs included herein have been previously submitted.

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### **Project Documentation**

DJ Workshop w/ Reno (sitting at table, Derek Linzy also in foreground) 12/9/17



DJ workshop w/ Derek Linzy 2/24/18



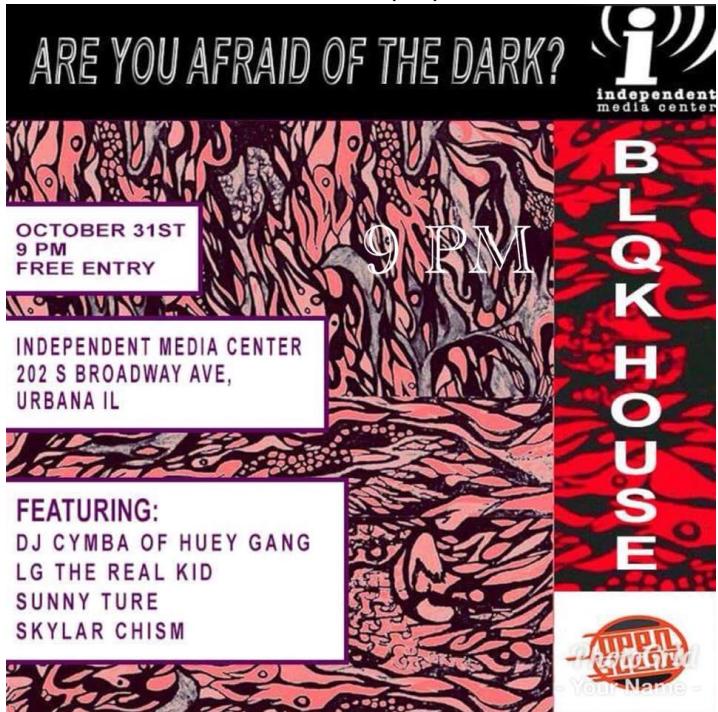
Video workshop w/ Ibrahim Ouedraogo 3/318



Good Vibes Only event 3/30/18



"Are You Afraid of the Dark?" 10/31/17



# GOOD VIBES ONLY IMC SHOWCASE

RunIMC - Champaign Cypher Series

**NEW SOULS      VOIDBRINGER**  
**DAVE & JOSH      MONSTREAU**  
**CORBREAD      BLACK MAGE**  
**JREL      ZOOT ELENA LIN MURR**  
**GATSON ROBERT K RECORDINGS**  
**ETUMU ELMARI      STARTIN'5**  
**THE TWO KADEEMS AARONTERS**  
**DANIEL JAMES BROWN DJ 2TIME**  
**TUESDAY LOVELIES YOUNG CLUB**  
**THE AQUILA TRIO BRENNIN KELLY**  
**JUPITER MOONDAVIDE GUISEPPE**  
**ALEXANDRIA HAWKEY**

HOSTED BY: THE PINK PANTHER & DJ BJ CLARK

**FRIDAY MARCH 30TH**

