

On August 2nd, Hundreds of people packed into the small basement of a Como house to celebrate the end of Chop Shop.

A house show venue that opened in October of 2022, Chop Shop had quickly become famous around Minneapolis for its large and diverse array of artists; From She's Green to Ozone creations, Rawtwylah and Creeping Charlie, many artists you'd more likely see at first Ave. or 7th St. entry than in a basement off Como Ave.

"The initial idea for the space was a space to jam," says Eli Awada, owner and host of the Chop Shop. He could tell it would be a good house show venue, but the idea for a venue wouldn't become serious until a friend of Eli's, introduced him to Drew Kinkade of Flavor World. who helped brainstorm the name "Chop Shop" and give the venue a brand from the beginning.

Early shows included jam sessions, but soon fell way to being purely act-based shows and had become known for being a more professional venue than most. Part of this was the dedication of 30% of the funds from every show to improve the venue, alongside some money coming from Flavor World to buy equipment. Soon shows professional sound systems, extra monitors to view the show, and soundchecks for most bands.

Part of Chop Shop's success comes from the variety of bands he could draw from the local music scene. Eli held a job as host of OTR, the local music show, at Radio K and could often draw artists he had on like She's Green or Jail. This helped him develop an intentionally diverse sound and even helped Eli become a fan of new music.

He couldn't do it alone, alongside help from Drew, Eli also employed his roommates, his friend Beck, and other members of the music community to engineer and work the shows. Running the venue has been tricky, especially since it doubles as Eli's house. He and his roommates have dealt with mold, holes punched in the wall, and electrical issues. Even the last show couldn't skate by without some issue, with the breaker going out twice, and the large crowd of up to 350 could make things rowdy.

"Cleaning the space and getting ready to host hundreds of people, it's a lot but when it all comes together and its happening in the moment and you see the smile on people's faces and the bands are having a good time. It feels really good that I was able to put something together that caused this."

Eli credits this experience with helping him get a job at the Green Room in Uptown. "I think this space has done a lot for getting me on the owner, Tanner's, radar."

Even if it is a bittersweet to end Chop Shop, Eli is somewhat relieved, "It's very taxing... there are a lot of moving pieces, and you become a slave to it after a while." However, he hasn't ruled out coming back to Chop Shop in the future. "We've floated the idea of doing an annual reunion show in this space."

