



TuneCore's Kevin Cornell Interviews Madison House's Jake Schneider

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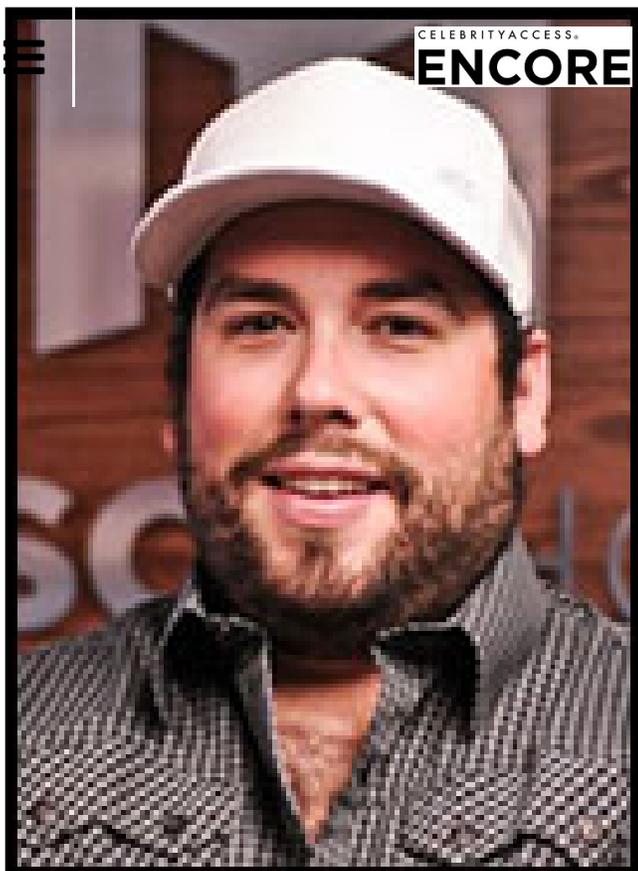
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(Hypebot (<http://www.hypebot.com>)) – Here Jake Schneider Partner and Director of Agency Development at Madison House Inc. and booking agent for high-profile artists like Bassnectar and Keys N Krates gives his side of the story based on his ten years of experience working in the EDM side of the music industry.

Guest post by Kevin Cornell of TuneCore

No matter what genres of music you love to make or listen to, it's nearly impossible to have missed the unprecedented rise of electronic dance music in popular culture over the past decade. Derived from electronic and house genres, EDM has become a mainstay on college campuses, at major music festivals, and in clubs and venues across America. In fact, for a lot of us, the soaring popularity of this specific subgenre seems to have come out of thin air. Of course, any independent artist dedicating their lives to the grind can trust that there was a lot more behind it.

Enter Jake Schneider, Partner and Director of Agency Development at Madison House Inc., a Boulder, CO-based booking and management company. Jake is the booking agent for some of the most successful and cutting-edge acts in electronic music, including BASSNECTAR, Keys N Krates, Paper Diamond, Lotus and more. At just 33-years old, he's got over ten years of industry experience that also includes event coordination and booking, as well as DJing.

Given his unique perspective CELEBRITYACCESS of this genre, and keeping in mind how much advice he has (https://celebrityaccess.com/) to offer TuneCore producers **ENCORE** interviewed Jake to get his side of the story from the middle of America: 

You began booking electronic artists at an interesting time in the genre's history. What kind of opportunities did you see in midwestern markets that weren't being capitalized on?

Jake Schneider: Uh-oh. This is a long answer so bear with me here!

Electronic music, like every genre, has been so cyclical in its nature. There are some legends in the electronic world hailing from places like Detroit or Chicago that have been doing this since I was in diapers. That's actually pretty disgusting to imagine me in diapers, but I want people to know that I don't think myself or any of my artists "reinvented" the wheel or anything here.

One of the main factors to the success of many of our clients in the midwest was the fact that there wasn't any larger scale outlets or ways to bridge electronic music with my generation on a live touring level in the late 90's early 00's. I mean yes there were raves around that time, more so prior to that, and even more so in specific pockets of America, however that scene had cooled off a bit. If that wasn't part of your world, you and the rest of the Midwestern masses maybe knew about "dance music", and had listened to some of the big European artists like Paul Oakenfold, or enjoyed singles like "Sandstorm" by Darude, etc, but it was tough because there really wasn't a radio format that was pushing it. It wasn't as accessible as it was in Europe and other places around the globe. I'm from the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) and went to the University of Iowa and everyone that I knew just hilariously lumped dance music together and called it "techno".

Then, it all changed for me in 2000, when I was a freshman in college, had my own PC that could burn CD's (SICK!!!!!!), Napster was JUST blowing up and I'm in a dorm with KILLER download speeds and just shredding through music to play and experiment with. I would say 2000 or 2001 was the "wild wild west" of music with the ability to so freely obtain albums and tracks from any artist, from anywhere in the world so quickly. I started listening to some dance music, but really as I began working with SCOPE Productions at the University of Iowa, where I was the Talent Buyer and Director of Operations, booking concerts for the University, my musical tastes were quickly broadening. Soon I was booking concerts that need to cater to an entire student population with different musical agendas as well as servicing the people in Iowa City, IA and the surrounding areas who wanted to see big name marquee artists. The school was essentially the main hub for the majority of concerts that could accommodate over 300-400 people because all of those venues were on-campus. That was a pretty crazy experience.

I DO remember though exactly when I first realized that electronic music had a ton going on in the background and would continue to grow, especially in the midwest where it hadn't recently been prevalent outside of certain markets and straightforward "dance clubs" – I was DJ'ing four to five nights a week at a huge Big Ten bar (Go Hawkeyes) called "One-Eyed Jake's" (my name was Jake so that was always fun explaining to drunk bachelorette parties that "both of my eyes are fine" and that "no, I cannot play 'Yeah' by Usher for the THIRD time tonight because I just played it two songs ago,

and I'm sorry that the bachelorette party penis straws at me." because she likes that song, but she missed it and can't remember the name of the song. ANYWAYS, you please tell your friends to ENCORE (https://celebrityaccess.com/) bachelorette party penis straws at me." because she likes that song, but she missed it and can't remember the name of the song. ANYWAYS, that got pretty unruly, and I would occasionally fill in at it's sister club, The Summit, where there was a taste for those "four on the floor" dance tracks and if I were to DJ there I had to play some of that stuff, but at the end of the day I was much more of a Hip-Hop, R&B and Dancehall guy spinning records at those types speeds which were obviously a bit slower than the Tiesto tracks that a couple of my buddies were interweaving into their sets.

Towards the end of my tenure in Iowa City at one of our SCOPE meetings, a buddy of mine, Josh, who was working with us at the organization, had taken the time to burn me some music with The Disco Biscuits and LTJ Bukem. I didn't know what the hell I was listening to, but I knew that there was a fan base, and it was being driven pretty heavily from the East Coast, and that The Disco Biscuits were classified as a "jam band", but had electronic leaning sounds, and eventually learned that LTJ Bukem was a Drum & Bass electronic artist. I didn't know what the hell to do with DnB, where to put it, and what it meant until I made the transition to the Boulder/Denver area in 2005.

I had been hired as a Booking Agent, by an amazing outfit of people running a boutique booking agency and management company, amongst many other artist services, called Madison House. The roster was very jam-band heavy then, and one of the first acts that they let me work on was called LOTUS, but unlike other improvisational jammy acts, their albums, were significantly different. The electronic aspect of the album stuck out to me more. I thought to myself, "Whoa, this is a band playing dope dance music with a bunch of ridiculously gifted musicians". I started to go out in Denver and Boulder more and realize that there was a full on crossing over of jam bands, hip-hop and electronic music.

Then after seeing them up at JazzAspen, I picked up a band, Pnuma Trio, who were a super young threesome of kids inspired by electronic artists and other similar bands, one being, Sound Tribe Sector 9 and was fascinated with their love of these various worlds. The thing about all these bands is that they had Grateful Dead-esque followings where people would record the sets, look at the setlists every night on one of dozens of message boards and because those set lists were different every night, and the fans were so passionate about the music and the LIVE SHOW, you had kids touring across the country to see them night-after-night, like many did with The Dead, Phish, Dave Matthews Band, etc.

Because of this ability to sell "hard tickets", it meant they packed venues, and because they packed venues, promoters starting catching on and understanding that this was a whole new untapped world and when the "multi-genre" festivals started popping up all over the US, more and more acts like these were included in the lineups. On top of that the traditional "jam" festivals started booking more straightforward DJ's and producers, many of whom were influential for this new "jam-tronica" sound being utilized by the bands of this newer generation. It just started snowballing. Bands like, The Disco Biscuits, began throwing their own festival called Camp Bisco. It was a hybrid of anything and everything Jam, Electronic, Indie, Hip-Hop, etc. DJ's and producers were being flown in from

across the globe to the US for the first time over (or maybe for the first time in a long while) to be a part of these events. More and more pop up and I realized we had a whole new scene of fans willing to dig into all of these genres.

And all the while during this time, you've got a whole West Coast scene, with underground parties, raves, beach "gatherings", etc and along comes Burning Man. So many acts came out of that movement. I'm talking less about the Vegas or Los Angeles rave artists and more about these underground and grassroots DJ/producers who had cult-like followings. Burning Man also attracted some of the more free-spirited jam artists as well so there was some cross-pollination there also. One of the larger and lovable bands on our roster is The String Cheese Incident, who has been a Madison House client since day one. They did an amazing job creating awesome music and a touring fanbase, but even they interweaved electronic music throughout their sets. There was some collaboration and friendship between them and an act that I signed, Bassnectar, whose live show was unprecedented. If you asked any of his fans if it was "techno", you might get spanked. He was playing and melding all different genres of music like Breaks, some DnB at times, later Dubstep, but could not be pigeon-holed into any such genre. He had long hair like some guy out of a metal band and he was head-banging for most of the set. This wasn't what people thought was "TECHNO" coming from Los Angeles or Las Vegas, this was a completely different beast.

The midwest had a ton of different festivals and music fans, and because not all of the fans were raised in this rave era, they were just blown away that this type of music could be executed onstage. Moe's Summer Camp is an excellent example of crossing the bridges between live music and electronic music. Ian Goldberg from Jay Goldberg Events was watching the trends closely and booking the stuff that these kids wanted to see! There were fledgling promoters that are now BIG promoters who took a risk on this stuff and the kids just couldn't get enough. They wanted a "LIVE" show and they were getting it with these bands and the DJ's and producers that were affiliated with them. These DJ's started adopting the touring mentalities of the bands and next thing you know you have Bassnectar or The Glitch Mob going on tour and kids doing EVERY date on it. And it grew at a healthy rate. It wasn't overnight. There were SO MANY cities to service that hadn't been paid attention to, and now was the time to give them love. Those European "mega-club" DJ's who were getting paid crazy money to fly to Ibiza once a week weren't coming across the pond to play in places like Bloomington, IN or Madison, WI – two amazing college towns and just a SMALL fraction of the midwest in general. It spread like wild-fire and the adding of festivals continue to perpetuate it.

When developing, some of these acts could be touring for 8 weeks and giving THREE of those weeks to the midwest if they wanted to. So many college towns, so many underserved markets. It was realizing and paying attention to the fans in these secondary and tertiary markets and cities that helped propel electronic music in the Midwest. As soon as this stuff started coming to the Midwest, kids just ate it up. They were hungry for a change of pace. The record industry was becoming stale and it was all about the LIVE SHOW and now there were electronic bands and DJ's that had an actual LIVE SHOW. It wasn't just a little guy onstage amidst pyro drinking champagne – it was something completely different.

Explain the importance of an artist's performance in your opinion, and how you feel that's evolved in the past 10 years. **ENCORE** (<https://celebrityaccess.com/>)



When it comes to electronic music, if you want to be a producer and have no live show or stage presence, then that's what you should be. But if you are going to become an artist with a live show aspect, then the sound needs to be better each and every time you come back to a city or venue. It was to the point where there became sort of an "arms race" with production and technological improvements and this mentality that the more bass and subs, lights, LED panels, etc. that you had, the better. That was sustainable for a bit, but the music had to get better and progress and stay with the times. The amount of genres within electronic music is nearly comical, but again they're cyclical, so you need to stay relevant and one of the ways of doing that is by delivering sets that the fans are NOT going to forget.

From a professional perspective, what are some of the challenges you face today when trying to coordinate/curate/book the perfect event experience?

I think one of the toughest challenges we face is the fact that for many straightforward band's, fans have become accustomed to a very stale experience in shitty under-serviced venues, stale arenas, or awkward amphitheatres. There has got to be more than that to stick out, which is why you are seeing so many artists (and festivals of course) focus on the experiential stuff. How do you get the consumer to forget the fact that they are in a venue named after a mega corporation? There are so many ways to do it, be it production like I've talked about already, video content, ancillary performers, dancers, the list goes on.

At first it was a struggle with promoters to understand the need to spend extra on these types of things, but as they saw the artists grow and the fanbase engage more, they were more likely to increase the experiential or production budgets for the shows in the future. There's too many bands out there right now and at the end of the day most of them are just a name in a venue's strip ad on the back page of your local newspaper.

How do you become MORE than that?

You get your artist to help promote the show. There's this saying that "promoters don't promote any more". That's true sometimes, but it's complete nonsense other times, however in this digital age it's on the artist very much so to get the word out too. If I am working with acts like that, who are capturing the audience, and that artist starts selling loads of tickets, you better believe that all of the promoters around are going to want to help with the next show, and are going to either meet your needs for transforming the venue, creating a room within a room, or spending the extra money to bring in the correct support artists to compliment the show.

What do you consider to be some underrated advice for newer electronic artists who are looking to connect with fans among all the static?

Pay your dues. If you make music that people like, keep doing it, but figure out where it all came from. Just because you have a single, doesn't entitle you to endless success. Keep the creativity

juices flowing and study what hasn't worked in the past because there are lessons learned from the stor **ENCORE** (https://celebrityaccess.com/) major artist ranging from Jimi Hendrix to The Beatles to DJ AM!

Similarly, what are common mistakes you see artists in this space making on a daily basis?

Not paying their dues. Lacking humility. Take it down a notch, too. You're only 22!! Remember, there are other artists who have a 15-passenger van filled with 8 stinky band members playing rock clubs each and every night, splitting their money. You have got it good!

At what point do you suggest an indie DJ/producer begin to seek a booking agent? What booking abilities should they work on before then?

It's great if an act can be garnering a scene for themselves in the region they call home. There is no "steadfast" rule, but being able to sell 500+ tickets to a show in your hometown, or being able to add worth when added to a bill with one of my acts because you'll help the show sell better, and being able to sell 100-200 tickets in some surrounding cities – all of this can create the basis for needing and attracting an agent. There are anomalies though. Maybe one of your promoter partners has someone in their market that isn't doing a bunch of business yet, but is making crazy music. I've picked up acts on that level before. It's a slow build, but it can be done.

Quick: What are some of the biggest pet peeves of booking agents in your space and how can folks avoid being 'that artist'?

Oh wow, this is an interesting one. My attention isn't to come across mean about any with this, but in no certain order:

- I don't use my CD player and everyone knows that CD's don't really fit properly in anyone's pockets. They're just a pain-in-the-ass.
- Stop making up your own "sub-genres" of music. It's insane how often I get something like "I've created some new tunes and it's kind of got that World-Step vibe". Ugh.
- Be humble and don't cause problems for the bands that you're supporting. We've had acts that were supporting a band that complaining about their green rooms and other trivial things. If you create a disturbance then you're not doing it right.
- Same goes with the staff at venues. BE NICE. These people are busting their asses for you and are naturally going to be crabby at times. And you'll probably have to work with them again. We don't want bad feedback on you.

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