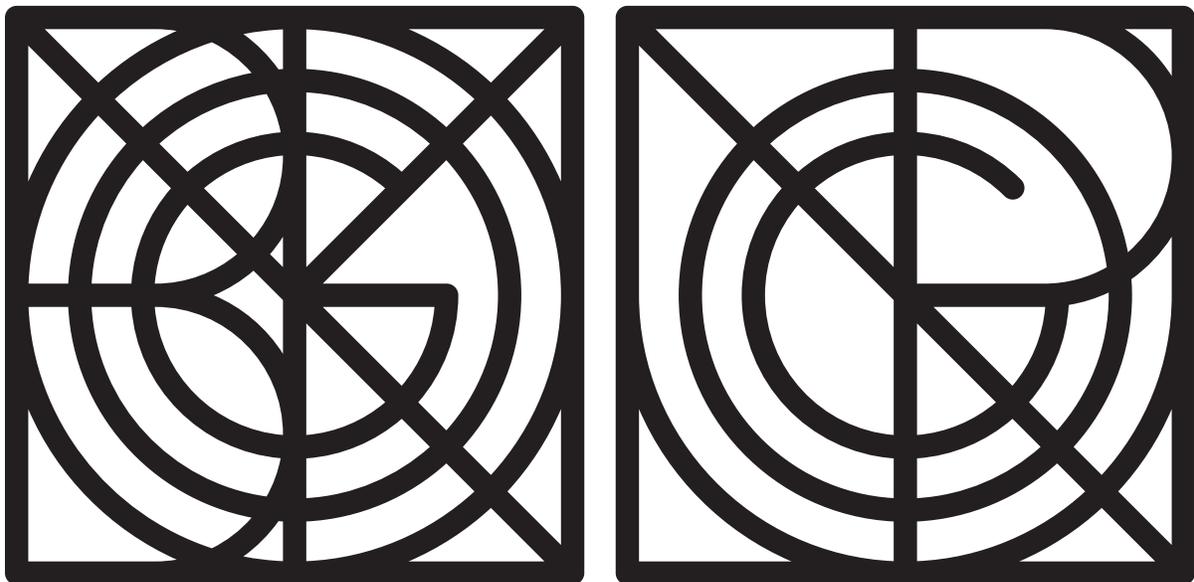


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LAUNCHPAD
LEARNING
ONLINE



BOOKING & TOURING AS
AN INDEPENDENT ARTIST

presented by Fresh Kils

What We'll Learn

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Resident Expert

Fresh Kils



Fresh Kils is known as one of Canada's most prolific music producers and businesspeople, whose accolades include multiple JUNO nominations, high profile collaborations, and performances with some of the most legendary Hip Hop artists to date. Over the years, Kils has also claimed his place in the underground scene, winning over fans and building momentum as the champion of Toronto's Sound Battle Royal.

Booking & Touring as an Independent Artist

Booking **SHOWS** and **TOURS** is a complicated way to make a living at the best of times.

The deeper you dive into what it takes for an independent performer to have longevity in their career, the more lessons you see emerging that apply across creative disciplines. Finding ways to add revenue streams, building valuable relationships by creating value for people in their work, and mastering the pillars of your craft to set yourself apart are some of the ideas we explore in these pages rooted in the world of booking and touring, but with application far more broadly.



**I began to realize
that I could take
opportunities
that were not so
great on paper
and I could turn
them into value.**

Q+A

with Fresh Kils

Can you share things that people can be working on now that touring is not happening?

In a lot of ways, it's a perfect time to be building content and building contacts. We usually wait until there is something we need in order to reach out to somebody. In terms of building relationships, that's just a classic mistake. Your best foot forward isn't asking for a favour, especially when you're booking independent tours. You're asking people you don't know for a lot: to put on a show.

Months before reaching out for shows, it's reaching out to promoters like, 'Hey, how's it going? Love your last post.'

Months before reaching out for shows, it's reaching out to promoters like, 'Hey, how's it going? Love your last post.' Who are the journalists that we want to get at? What are they doing? Let's read some of their articles and send them some love. An artist has an album out, support it. There's no better way to build with somebody than to put money in their pocket. It's about support.

When deciding on which cities to play and what days to book, how important is it for you to be real with yourself about your ability to pull a crowd?

You see pretty established underground or independent acts not playing big markets like New York and Toronto. I would look at their tour posters and I would be tailing them. I would notice they'd be playing Saskatoon, Regina

and Thunder Bay, but there'd be no Toronto show. Or they play Albany, Syracuse, and Providence, but not New York. I was like, 'wow, that's weird - what's that about?' It's because in Toronto on a Friday night, the competition is fierce. There's a ton of great shows going on all the time.

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What are your thoughts on pay-to-play?

It's interesting how this sort of art vs business relationship is obviously a tenuous one. Everybody complains about it, but that's what the market has dictated. And pay-to-play is, unfortunately, a byproduct of how difficult the market

has become. I've seen pay-to-play suck the life out of shows and suck the life out of scenes where people don't show up until the headliner - it's an empty room. I have also seen artists make it work. I've seen artists turn pay-to-play things into career moves. From a cultural standpoint, it sucks, but from a business standpoint, it becomes necessary.

I have also seen artists make it work. I've seen artists turn pay-to-play things into career moves. From a cultural standpoint, it sucks, but from a business standpoint, it becomes necessary.

When it comes to branding artists on social media, there is a lot of pressure around numbers, often at the cost of quality. What's your thought on that?

As a brand, I've got to make sure that I'm getting views, followers, shares, and buys, which is all inward. I'm trying to create gravity so that I can pull attention to myself. But the artists that you see kind of making it, they figure out a good balance between that and 'how do I service my fans?' If you attack that problem from the point of view of, 'what can I give people?' versus 'what can I take?', it changes things. Instead of spending money on a pay-to-play situation or buying views and likes, they should be spending money on giving really amazing content because that needs to be the first step.

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The Art of Digital Communication

EMAIL

- There are things that work in your initial communication and other things that work in your fifth communication.

- Understanding who you are emailing and how to push the right buttons based on who you are communicating with is key.

- Email gathering and contact building is important - Ask yourself, 'how do you induce interest in yourself and build contacts and networks that are going to work for you?'

- You're not going to get that sponsorship off of the first email, but don't wait until you think you are ready for the sponsorship to be the first time they've heard of you or from you.

- Before booking a tour, make genuine connections with promoters, artists, and

journalists that you will be working with when booked.

- Practice persistence based on the idea that you are stacking 'No's' and learning to find the 'Yes's'.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Create a balance between your personal and professional life on your accounts.

- Connect and follow individuals, businesses, venues, festivals, and any other event and or individual that will help your network.

- You want to create a multi-tiered contact resource for each individual. This means social+email+phone.

- Engage with their accounts and your followers. Comment on other people's photos and respond to comments on yours.

- Participate in the music community and find tangible ways to support your peers: share, show-up, and purchase.

- BE PROACTIVE! Reach out often and don't make the only time they hear from you be when you're asking for something.

PR

- A mistake people make is waiting too long to start PR.

- You can't measure the return on investment when you first hire PR support by how much media coverage you land.

- Early on, that \$3000 you are spending is about getting your name across people's desks and having the right people in conversation about what you are doing.

You've got to make sure that part of your routine is just giving love to people because we all get caught up in ourselves and we miss that.



Communicating with Promoters

It's important to learn what to send a promoter in an initial communication, and more importantly, what not to send.

COMMON MISTAKES

A big mistake I used to make when I was touring in support of an album was that I thought I should send the album.

Sometimes, they didn't care about the music. It was like they wanted to see what they're booking.

Another mistake a lot of people make is they're like, 'let's make a really champagne looking video.' You send that and it's sort of a misrepresentation because in the video you look like a million bucks and you're standing next to a Cadillac or something. Number one, that's not really who you are and number two, you're overextending.

When it comes to bookings or when it comes to anything

in a business agreement, you always undersell and over-deliver.

Now, you don't want to underdeliver to the point where they don't care, especially in an initial communication. There is this middle ground that I found does work and has worked for me.

SOLUTION

I have a one-minute long video and it was shot in a hotel room on tour. It's pretty low production value, which ironically makes it accessible.

It's short. I'm having fun. It completely conveys everything that I do on stage. And I started to find that video got me more gigs than any other piece of online content that I'd ever made.

CHECKLIST

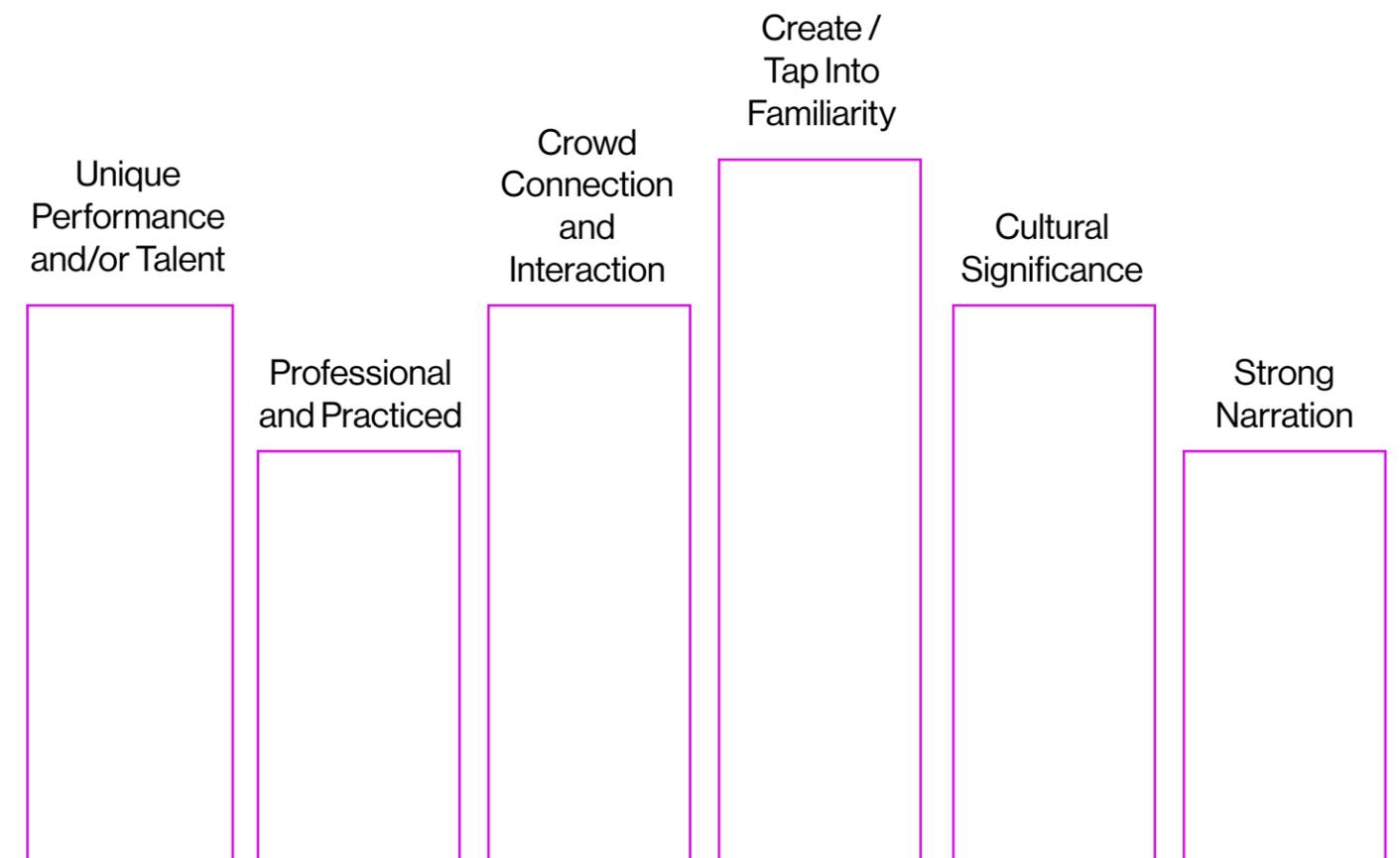
- ✓ Know Who You're Contacting
- ✓ Check Venue Guidelines
- ✓ Sell The Show
- ✓ Truth Is Best
- ✓ Short & Concise
- ✓ Desired Date(s)
- ✓ Short Bio / Noteworthy Points
- ✓ Market History
- ✓ Gas 'Em Up
- ✓ Clear Subject Line
- ✓ Follow-up / Volley
- ✓ Hold / Offer / Confirm

The Show is the Product

All the other financial streams, whether it's merch, guarantees, or routing comes from that source.

It's important for your show to connect with an audience because that's actually how you build the market.

PILLARS OF THE LIVE SHOW





I remember a tour that was a complete winner because of what we were doing in-between shows. We were literally booked every off day with a workshop that was paid. Not only did it turn all of our off days into moneymakers, but we were engaging with all different types of people in a much more personal way through the workshop. I sold way more merch at the workshops than I did at the shows.



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