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DEMAN Live: Inside the Music Industry with Small Town Records and Duke University Union

INTRO: Dave Karger

Welcome to DEMAN Live. I'm DAVE KARGER, Duke alum and host on Turner Classic Movies. DEMAN is the Duke Entertainment, Media and Arts Network. And it's the University's hub for the creative industries. On this show, you'll hear a past episodes of DEMAN live, which includes panels and one on one chats with alumni. Thanks so much for listening and enjoy.

Ethan Udell

Thanks for joining us. We're going to dive into some questions now and get the ball rolling. The first question is going to be aimed at Eric, Julie, and Caitlin. But we'd love to hear from you guys. What is working from home look like for you now during this time with everything going on? How has Coronavirus changed how you interact with your team, your clients and your fans? And can you share a few tips for some seniors that might be trying to establish themselves as artists after graduation?

11:13 Eric Holljes

I'll just jump right into it. It's changed literally everything about my life. Right now, I think I was supposed to be playing in Portland, Maine. Gramercy was two nights ago, in New York, and all of our touring, it looks like we postponed that tour for July. But I talked to our agent earlier this week. And it looks like all touring is just going to be kind of a wash for the year. So for bands like us we are. It's interesting, we were a touring band, that's kind of how we've always made enough money to stay afloat. So we're in a really hard pivot moment. For for, I think a lot of artists are I mean, I live in Nashville, I'm surrounded by artists, and we have Zoom chats like this, frequently, what we're talking about how we're gonna, how we're going to get through this this next year. But it's literally changed everything. So we're we are having zoom conversations with the band. We're all in different states, the band members, which complicates things. So currently not able to broadcast live performances, which I do see some artists doing, but we're putting a plan together. Luckily, we are an independent outfit right now. And we are very flexible, and owning our own content is an asset as of last year, so I'm actually excited and optimistic. But it is, it's one of those, it's one of those moments that I actually had flashbacks to when I graduated in '09, right after the Great Recession. I couldn't get a job even if I wanted one. So it's largely what pushed me into music to begin with. And for all of the students that are watching this, that are wanting to go in the arts, just recognize that that this is as scary as it is for people that maybe are more established, this is actually an incredible time to be an early adopter and an entrepreneur and help us pave a new way for for generate content generate generating income and generating art. So that's just a little glimpse I'll, I'll have more to share, I'm sure as we go on, but that's kind of it.

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13:40 Julie Williams

Yeah, as someone who just graduated last year, and was just feeling like I was starting to get my toes in the water in Nashville, it's definitely been tough to have everything put on pause, all the gigs paused and everything. And I think my tip for any seniors that are going into this time now is to use this time to learn all of those things that you've always said that you wanted to learn as a musician, like learning logic, Pro Tools, being able to make your own demos, because I'm finding now that when, you know, I'm doing songwriting sessions before when I would go to x person's house to record a demo. Now, that's not happening anymore. So it's always been on my bucket list to learn all these things and be able to use Final Cut Pro and record yourself and all this time. So I think in this period where everyone's pause, if you can get these tools and master them, when, when we're in this time and we come out of it, you'll be so much farther ahead than other folks. And that's what I'm trying to do now. And that would be my advice for for any seniors or others who are wondering what to do during this time.

14:50 Kaitlin Gladney

Going off what Eric and Julie said things are really different now, I mean, than they were a month ago and they're looking to stay different for a long time. So as my business is split between artists management or management in music photography. So like Eric was saying with touring being off the books for the rest of the year, it's looking like that component of the business has changed pretty dramatically, where we're looking for creative new ways to get photo opportunities, both as a photographer looking to get the work. And then as manager, we're looking to get the visual assets for clients. So work has become very much a work from home type of thing. We're looking for some of the artists that I work with that doing some creative photoshoots, using the digital tools available to us. So doing shoots over FaceTime and over zoom and getting results that way, which will be a little bit different than your traditional promo shoot. But we're hoping to work within the times to do that.

For me, working from home from the management side. I mean, like everyone else, our communication has moved entirely digitally. So coordinating with the different members of the artists teams, is a lot of phone calls, a lot of zoom, a lot of email, a lot of pivoting plans to move to this more increasingly in a fully digital world that we're looking at. As far as tips for seniors looking to establish themselves, I think, now, like Julie said, is a great time to master skills that you had been looking to expand upon, that'll be really valuable. It's also as an independent artist a great time, because you own all your content, you own all of your assets. And so you're going to be in full control of everything that you're releasing. And because you're in full control of that content calendar, you're able to maximize your revenue streams, and you're able to generate a little bit more than you might if you were further down the road and you were say recouping an album and own expenses to your label.

16:54 Mitra

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Awesome, thank you all for those answers. Our next question is going to be aimed towards Mary and Jessica. And we go on to kind of talk about the power of music to help people and ask what is the power of music as a catalyst for social impact? How do you and your organization prioritize this as a goal?

17:15 Mary Jurey

Okay, I'll go first, Jessica, I guess? Um, well, I mean, I would say that music always has social impact. So I don't know if that has entirely changed. But, yes, I mean, I think people are looking to music more and more as something to help them through this timeframe. You know, we just put out a record by an Irish artist, and it's just beautiful music. And, you know, there was a lot of questioning about whether or not we were going to stick to our release schedule, or whether we were going to push anything. And we generally found from both the artists and really the public that people want music. So, you know, they, they want new music to they want to hear it. And like in, in this instance, with her name's Lisa Lamb. You know, so many people have now commented, you know, saying, Thank you so much for putting this record out, it's really soothing me during this time, this music is great for right now, you know, we're so happy to have it.

So it just has really reinforced that, you know, we made the right decision in putting in putting the music out and continuing to put the music out. So, I mean, I can understand from some of the major labels, why they are pushing things, but, you know, from our perspective, from my label, we have not moved any release dates. So, you know, we're sticking to our schedule. And so I you know, I mean, I think you guys probably inherently all know that, but, you know, music really leads the way in lots of times like this, you know, people look to the musical artists to, to, you know, lift their spirits or, you know, give them something to maybe even distract them. And, you know, I find that that is being shown through the release of our music on our labels.

19:08 Jessica Shaw

Yeah, I can add on to that. And obviously, my area of the business is very specific. And I'll turn back to that, but just on that topic of, you know, the question of whether or not to be releasing music right now, and what music can do for people in this situation. I know that that's, we don't need to be that specific here. But we have found overall at Sony, you know, people really responding to certain songs like we right now we're seeing a lot of momentum with a song that we put out on Arista in October, I believe by an up and coming artist named JP Saxe. The song was called the if the world was ending course it was written long before there was any, you know, knowledge of well, where we would be at this point in our as a global community by It's obviously responding people have found a song and are really reacting to it. And it's incredible to see. You know, the song that was, has been out for several months, people are finding it and really, you know, seeing that they can relate to the message right now and look it up, if you haven't heard it, it's a beautiful song.

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And then in the spirit of whether to delay a release, or put something out, we have, we do have a lot of releases that are being pushed, but we had Fiona Apple who has an album that was supposed to be coming out later. And she just said, you know, we'd want to put it out now. And it's been amazing to see the reaction. And response to that, which just came out on Friday, if you haven't listened to that, and the entire work is incredible. So, you know, in this time, especially you can see people really are looking to music to kind of try to understand what we're going through. On a broader level. Music is, is a catalyst for social impact, um, in the work I do, I work with brands, primarily. And, you know, we often do have brands trying to put out social messages. And a lot of what we do is, you know, aligning our artists and songs with whatever messages that the brand's put out in their commercials, but those are often, you know, with a purpose and a cause. And just this year, we had, for example, we had a randomly Beyonce, double whammy, where we had her song countdown in the Google Black History Month commercial, and then had Flawless in the Apple International Women's Month spot. So, you know, it's their brands they whether or not you think that's the way to be sending these messages out. That's your decision to make, but but you know, the uses of music are really powerful. And they both brands really felt so strongly about having Beyonce as an artist or their her song as the catalyst for their message. And I think they were really effective.

22:01 Ethan Udell

Awesome, thank you both for your insight there. Our next question is going to be aimed at Ethan and Tim. And I know that you both have worked a variety of different roles, some related to the music business, and some not. But I'd love to hear from you both what drew you to ultimately pursue a direction in the entertainment field that you did? And how does it compare to some of your roles that you've worked in, in other industries.

22:27 Ethan Schiffres

So I've had experience on both the company slash corporate side and then also on the talent side, and more independent side. My first job out of Duke I worked for Sony, but I wasn't doing anything fun like like Jessica's doing. I was in sales, doing compilation albums and non traditional retail. So things like putting a Dave Matthews album in Starbucks, or doing a sales plan for country love songs of the 1980s or Monsters of Rock, which you may remember those infomercials. So I was only there for about six months. And then I left to go into Artist Management working for a company called Red Light management, which at the time was a small independent management company now it's grown into one of the biggest in the country. And I found myself liking working on the talent side better than on the company side. I think primarily because I live by like living vicariously through my clients that I knew I wasn't talented enough to be an artist myself, although that didn't stop me from playing shows that the Armadillo Grill in the Bryan Center, which I think now is the loop back when it was a concert venue. But I knew I could never like Eric be a professional musician.

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So I liked working with talent, because I viewed myself as a failed talent as well as when you work with talent you get exposed to all sides of the business. So if you were if you're an artist manager or an artist lawyer as I am now you deal with the record companies you deal with the publishing companies you deal with the merch companies you deal with the with the brands, so you get exposure to a lot of variety in the work. And when I grabbed when I left management to go to law school, I took a job at a big corporate firm not doing music work. But just because everyone told me I needed to get some corporate experience before music firm would hire me and after a short stint there I went back to representing talent for a lot of the same reasons that I liked management other than no longer being a professional babysitter which I'm sure Kaitlin can attest to in her role

24:18 Tim Castelli

Talents easy to manage, come on! I really like all due respect to the talent on the phone call Julie and Eric, I'm sure you guys are not not that way. But the other I've been I've been in the media business frankly my entire career. Some very music related place like Rolling Stone in here obviously and some other you know, PC Magazine, Ziff Davis tech related, and Google and AOL and I think all the all the the thing I'm always liked about the media business and it's related to music, I am personally passionate about it, but the I think it's important if you're going to be in this business, I've always been a passion around content. I mean, like, like content that is that it strikes passion with people and whether you're a tech geek is that PC Magazine or your music geek or you're passionate about this or that I think that's, that's what I've always enjoyed about, you know, content that we're extremely passionate about consuming, either listening or watching and then developing working with brands and audiences to wrap that in an authentic way.

So I love the music business personally. So I've gotten lucky, where I'm able to kind of propel both sides something I actually truly like and been in and around it and then been able to work with brands and media and artists, and try to create things that work for all sides. So that to the benefit of the consumers and until the point earlier, I think I think it especially this time, music has such a power to bring people together especially on speed good during the times and they were doing a lot of they're trying to I don't know if you guys saw the the living room concert show we produced and put together on Fox early on raised, but \$50 million for Feeding America and a couple of charities and we're trying to work with the artist community and the the labels in order to try and create things to still entertain, but at the same time, do something good in the world and this time. So I think that's that's a really important role this music plays and if you're passionate about it, you can you can put it together authentic way. So that's how I think about it.

26:24 Mitra

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All right, thank you all. So moving on to our next question. We know that the music industry can be a little bit difficult to break into, especially for artists, and for those working more independently. So we wanted to ask Kaitlin, Julia and Eric, if there have ever been times in your career that you needed, like a side hustle to make your ends meet? And do you have any suggestions for seniors who might be a bit hesitant to jump straight into the music industry right now?

26:53 Kaitlin Gladney

Yeah, I've worked several side hustles or side hustles, that took up the same amount of time as full time hustles. I think when you're starting out, if you're looking at the revenue, you're able to generate as an artist or a manager or photographer. If you're taking a less conventional or more independent role in the music industry, the it's going to take you a little bit of time to scale the amount of revenue you're able to generate. So you might need to take a side job. So I've done everything from doing the copywriting descriptions for products on a website to do in marketing and communications for a wealth management firm. Which sounds like not a super music a day job to do. But it was something that was nice in the sense that it allowed me to save a lot of my creative and strategic energy for the work that I was really passionate about. I think in terms of looking at jobs, preserving that creative energy is really important so that when you sit down to write your music, or you sit down to come up with a plan for the artists you work with, or you sit down to prepare for that photoshoot, you still have that energy available.

I think transferable skills are also great to look at, if you have the option of just looking at like the marketing was great, because I was marketing in a different field. But I was still developing those skills, I was getting an understanding of what it meant to build a full marketing plan for a brand instead of a band, but a lot of that carries over. I think if you're looking at jumping in right away, if you can pay your bills, you got your health insurance, you got yourself covered, then as long as you have a plan, then go for it. But there's nothing wrong with needing to be strategic or needing to take a little bit more time and take a side hustle even if it's not that job that you've dreamed of. I think everyone has probably to make ends meet had to work a job or two that maybe wasn't on that linear path to where they're they're headed. But generally the pursuit of goals, especially in something like music isn't going to be a linear path.

28:55 Julie Wililams

I wholeheartedly agree with finding some if you're going to find a side hustle, which I'm definitely doing now to help pay my bills because it does take a while for artists to make make that money back, I would recommend Yes, finding some sort of job that doesn't suck all of your creative energy out of you that when at the end of the day, you want to sit down and write a song, you just want to turn on Netflix and watch that instead. And I also recommend especially for artists to know that you're coming out of Duke with a Duke degree that can get you side hustles that pay more than the average side

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hustle than other artists are going to be looking for. So I've found that tutoring people pay a lot of money for a Duke tutor all of these things that you can actually find side hustles that aren't as draining and can be much more high paying just for the fact that you have a Duke degree that it's not going to be your full time hustle, but I found that if I find those little things, I can actually work a little bit less and make a little more so that would be my advices to you. To really try to use your degree to find a great side hustle.

30:06 Eric Holljes

Those are such good answers. I I've just on the flip side of the coin, I've been very lucky in that I, the year I graduated, went into music and I've just been doing music for 10 years. But I the the side hustle thing has come up a lot with the band. So there was a period of time two years ago when we went on radio tour. And that only required our we have four singers in our band. So we would all fly all over the country and perform for iHeart and Cumulus and all the other radio station executives and all the stations and it left our bass player and our drummer who are in the band full time members not hired guns at home for long periods of time. It was a really challenging, weird time. But they both started side hustles one started two companies, our drummer started two companies and both have done they're now his full time hustles now that we're in quarantine, I mean, it's kind of remarkable. What's happened. One is a he created a instrument that ended up winning Best in Show at NAMM and then another is like a team building drum workshop company.

And then the other one started an apparel company that's called Human Good Kind, and they make T shirts for good causes. I think the side hustle thing is actually so clutch. The gig, the gig community that we have building that's in the arts is it's all built on what are your skills, what are your talents and how you can put them to use and I have I've leveraged so much coming out of Duke coming out of the Duke community into the into the work that I'm doing. I mean, the what you're what you're talking about, about learning the tools right now while you have some time that has come in key, right now I'm teaching myself unity, which is like the backend software for running apps. And I've already taught myself the Adobe Suite so that I can be a one stop shop for Photoshop, video editing, music, all that stuff. I mean, these these are becoming assets that more and more the band is absolutely relying on, so maybe those are my side hustles that I've just been kind of emerging emerged, immersing myself in other forms of media, so that I can all just build this whole thing around Delta Rae, you know, designing our website, all of that stuff. So I think that absolutely, this is an opportunity to build the tools that you're going to need to, to launch.

The thing that I'm thinking about right now more than ever and more than anything, and that I'm sure everybody else out there is in some form or another is what do I want? What do I really want? What do I want to put out in the world? How do I want to be of value? Now that all of the rules have changed for touring artists like me? I mean, I don't know yet what an audience wants right now. I don't know if

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they want to come to a venue. I don't know if they feel safe. I don't know if they want me to play a sad song or a happy song at the piano behind me, which you can't see. But I'm learning I'm in an absolute experimental phase. All yesterday I was on Twitch setting up live stream as I'm playing Witcher, just wondering if anybody wants to watch me play Witcher because I look like the freaking main character. I mean, that's what I'm doing as a musician that I can't be on tour right now. And so these are all side hustles. I mean, these are all experimental peripheral launchings around the music, I mean, my my band just came out with an album a month ago, literally to the day, and yet I can't promote it. So I'm trying to find ways to still exist in this quarantine time, and maybe, maybe be on the cutting edge of whatever is going to be coming after this. And so that's that's very much where my mind is, as we're as we're in this.

34:11 Ethan Udell

Awesome, thank you guys all for your answers there. Our next question is going to be for Jessica and Mary. We know that getting your foot in the door in the music world is certainly challenging already. And probably even more so now with with the lack of hiring and some of the layoffs that are actually happening in the industry. But what advice do you have for students and or alumni that are trying to get into roles in the industry? Either now or in the near future?

34:39 Jessica Shaw

Yeah, I can start with this one. This is clearly a very unique time to be trying to break into any industry. So it's hard to say of course. What this is going to mean but we do know that for the most part, most music companies are probably not hiring on mass at the moment. Hopefully, this period won't last too long. But either way, my advice would be the same, which is really that work, reach out, meet people do everything you can to take advantage of any connections you can find, especially through the Duke community, because that's such an amazing asset that you have I even see on here, I see Lily. And I see Logan and a few of you who have reached out to me, and I met in the past, and who've been great at keeping in touch with me and sending emails and updates. And that is so important. And it's such a smart thing to do. You know, I know Amy is going to share some of our information, you know, reach out meaningfully, to people that you really feel you might have a reason to connect with and if you're really interested in the area they work in, but make those connections and form relationships and then stay in touch with those people. You know, I love it. When I hear get a random email from a Duke student I met at a DEMAN event three years ago, just saying, Hey, this is what I'm up to, or, you know, I'm still looking. And this is what I'm interested in whatever it is, because I'm not like, I don't have the time to go on LinkedIn and follow up and see what everyone's up to. But I love to get updates. And I love to know because when I to hear of openings, those are the people that will be top of mind. And from my own experience. I mean, when I graduated from Duke, I applied to 50 jobs and got maybe one interview and it's hard, it's really hard to break in. But then as soon as I, you know, tapped into my Duke network, through professors and other students, older students who just introduced me to

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people, I managed to land my first internship at ASCAP, and I managed to land a part time with my side hustle, I was a personal assistant to like a conductor and pianist and, and I made it work. And from that internship, I got my first full time job and it all, you know, domino effect fell into place thanks to those connections and relationships. But that's my, my piece of advice, quarantine pandemic, or not. Now, you just have a lot more time to build those relationships.

37:09 Mary Jurey

Yeah, I mean, I would really just echo, you know, what Jessica said, I mean, I would say in general, that I find the music industry to be a lot of a who, you know, industry. And so, I think, Well, for one, I personally, you know, love doing stuff like this, so that I can help people that, you know, hopefully give back to the Duke community, you know, in a meaningful way. And so just participating like you are today and things like this is, is really helpful for, like she said, staying connected and getting your foot in the door. You know, I've had several interns over my working career that I now call my Super Interns and they kind of get mad that I still call them Super Interns, because they've all moved on to being in great positions in the music industry. But they were just so passionate and really dedicated. And just, that is what they wanted to do. And they just came in with like ideas and things they wanted to get accomplished and a passion for the music. And it just, you know it that that's I think the core thing that you need to have is that like desire to really be involved in the industry and a love and a passion for the music. And you know that that will just be very helpful. They've all gone on to have great careers.

So I mean, I want to foster that sort of being I think internships are great. I mean, I think it's going to be challenging, I don't think people are hiring very much just to see how this financially plays out for a lot of businesses. I mean, I can speak for my own label and saying that, you know, we felt we needed some people, but we've put that on pause. And we're just waiting to see how this plays out. Like Jessica said, we really hope it's a temporary situation, and we can kind of get back on track and a couple of months or so. But yeah, I mean, I think a lot of it is just staying in touch. I feel free to reach out to me, I'm happy to help you guys. I love hearing from Duke students. And yeah, I mean, I think, you know, talking to people, you know, and I would say also if you're an artist, you know, this is really the time to create, I think there's a real opportunity here to, to dig in, you know, if you write songs, you can really take the time to craft your music. And even like Julie said, I mean, I have several artists on our label who are like, I'm finally learning the piano, you know, I've always played the guitar and now I'm going to really get that piano going. So I mean, I think if if you are an artist or you're coming at it from an artist perspective, I would say really, really encourage you to, you know, be involved and get creative and make music, you know, write songs perform, you know, do things in your house, that you can do with from a social distancing perspective, that still still allows you to be creative and be the artist that you are.

40:23 Ethan Udell

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Yeah, and if I can throw any personal insight in as well, you know, as a student that's graduating, I think it's a really great time to, for students to try to pick up new skill sets. So whether that's working with a friend, that's an artist and and getting your feet wet, managing them or seeing what you can do on tick tock and how much Digital Influence you can have, you know, see if you can rack up a million views on a video or go learn Final Cut Pro or Photoshop or Logic or Pro Tools, you know, it's a really great time to dive into new projects and have some skill sets to show for it when when it does come time to be interviewing for positions again.

40:57 Tim Castelli

Can I add one thing to that too, just promoted because again, similar to Mary, we did the same thing. We're you know, we'd love to open positions that were just pausing right now to see how this plays out, obviously. But I think just to what everyone else is saying, I think, I think I just think in the future once things start opening up and we get back to normalcy. A, when you're sitting across the desk from a potential employer, one of the questions they're going to ask you is what you did during the COVID crisis in the quarantine? What did you create? What did you accomplish? What did you how did you spend your time that is going to be something on an interview question that you're going to get? And you should have a really good answer to that versus just watching you know, Tiger king, or, or the last dance with, which I hated. But it's good, because Jordans involved, but that's another story would be. But I think that's that's, you know, you know, use the time wisely, I guess is the best advice that I get a lot of people are talking about it, and it is an opportunity. And even Eric to your point, you know, God if this happened, you know, pre all the technology we had for artists, you know how you we could never get your music out right now you have so many platforms, Julie and Eric and Justin and all the appeals artists. I mean, it is it's not that we want it to happen. But the fact that it's happening now you actually can touch and connect with consumers with your music is is a huge opportunity. So So those I think there is an opportunity if there's a silver lining to take advantage of that stuff. Sorry.

42:18 Ethan Schiffres

Yeah and just follow up on on what everyone just said. And in particular, Ethan's comments about, and now's the time to start doing things on your own and Mary's comments that now's the time for an artist to create. If you're not if you're not talented, you're not interested in being an artist, but you're interesting being an executive or being on the business side. This is the perfect time to be entrepreneurial. And if you look at a lot of the most successful executives and managers in the business, they all have an entrepreneurial streak. And it is going to be challenging to get a job now or if you're a graduating senior or to get an internship if you're an underclassmen. But that doesn't mean you can't start your own shop, you can't you should go manage ours on the side, find someone you whose music you love on the internet and just reach out blindly and offer to help. And I think if you if you do that, you'll have a really good answer to the question that Tim said is going to be asked during an interview when it comes time to go into work for a company.

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43:07 Mitra

Yeah, thank you all for that insight kind of building off. We wanted to ask Tim and Ethan how they took advantage of their juke experience in and out of the classroom. And that's applied to that applies to their career, and what opportunities do they suggest that students should take advantage of to ensure future success?

43:36 Ethan Schiffres

I probably didn't take as much advantage of the opportunities that were there. Although I think now you guys who are currently Duke students have a lot more opportunities, especially with Small Town Records, I wish there was an opportunity to, to work on a record label and work with artists when I was on campus beyond working for the Union or putting on shows at the Coffee House. So if I were interviewing someone for a music position, who went to Duke, and they didn't have Small Town Records on their resume, I would be pretty surprised. And I would think that there should be some sort of explanation for why you weren't involved with the organization. But in terms of I mean, I think what what Jess and Mary were talking about earlier about the alumni network, I mean, it's important to take advantage of that starting now starting when you're a student and to really leverage those those networks throughout your career. Because people love to almost everyone I know who went to Duke love their experience there and have a tremendous degree of pride in the institution. And it helps you get clients if you're if you're a representative in terms of networking. It helps you do deals if you're working opposite someone who had to do just because you have this common bond. And I think that with that that shared interest it can really serve your career in terms of both getting a job and being effective once you have a job.

44:54 Tim Castelli

And like I echo you know what Ethan said, first of all, this was 32 years ago, I don't remember much about the classes and everything at Duke. For me, what sticks with you is your experience the friendships the, you know, the wood, that part of Duke is what sticks with you and, and what you have to like, you know, put yourself out there and not just within your small social group but as many different groups in need and, and be actively curious and that's in those experiences and that network then leaning on it. You know, that's where I think, you know, it's really come and beneficial, right? The friendships and then and then what's come out in the learnings and what you learn from each other, and then what you carry on and then the community and like, this isn't gonna save I graduated. You know, I long story, but I didn't have a job when I graduated. But the company that gave me a job had closed down the division about a week before graduation, a couple weeks for graduation. And it was you know, and it was a friend of mines, you know, dad who helped me out and kind of, you know, I can make some connections and open some doors to then go in and get off in the media business. But my point being is that that's it's the personal connections, it's that side of the Duke education that do

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community, I'm not saying classes aren't important. I'm not saying don't go to class and, and do all that, but and learn but but make sure you are investing in those relationships and those friendships and make sure you stay connected. Both people were there there during and future in this community, too. Because there's is an incredible community that wants to help you know each other be successful, especially in this area. So so that that's what I would say on that.

46:30 Kaitlin Gladney

Yeah, like to just jump in and emphasize the importance of the relationships both on campus and off. I was one of the many music alums who were able to work with Small Town Records, and I managed a band while I was on campus. For an artist who's still producing music today and still working, who one of whom, that particular artist was able to tour internationally in Europe with a DJ, they won some awards for their songs, which is a really cool experience to get to participate in. And then after I moved to New York City, one of the first things I did was reach out to my Duke network and some Duke alums and just say, Hey, I'm moving to New York, I want to work in music, do you know anyone who'd be great to meet. And one of the people I got introduced to was an artist named Skout, who's also a Duke alum, who I'm after New York, and we've been working together for, I guess, six years at this point on their career is one of the most fulfilling relationships I have in music. And we're also able to come great friends outside of the relationship, as well. So I would definitely emphasize what everyone is saying about the importance in the strength of keeping up those new relationships and forming new ones as you go forward.

47:48 Ethan Udell

Awesome. And our next question is kind of gonna steer a little bit away from some of the topics we've been discussing. But this one's gonna be aimed at Eric, Julie and Kaitlin, but from your experiences, what have been the pros and cons of operating? Either, you know, with the label system or independently of the major label system? And, you know, Eric, I know, you'll have a lot of insight on this one.

48:14 Eric Holljes

Yes I can, I can really preach from both sides of, of this argument. I've been assigned to two labels. One was Warner and one was Big Machine. And, and now I'm kind of taking on this new chapter, where we started our own independent record label and put out our first album, and the success of that independent record label was built on the work that we had done with this, when we were signed. So these are all kind of inextricably linked for me. And I will just say that labels are just people, they're groups of people. And sometimes you have people that really believe in you. And they're your champions, and they will, they will talk about your talk about your song with people at iHeart, they'll

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talk about your song with the late night TV show, and they'll get you on and I swear, I mean, the having some of those people as early ambassadors changed my whole life. I mean, that's, it's it's hard to argue that that wasn't why I've had any of the success that I have been lucky to have.

But labels can get in their own way, too. In my experience, and I was signed for five years and unable to put out an album. And when I say unable, I mean I have to get permission from a label to record my own voice and make it public for for sale. So that the does this five years were the hardest years of my life trying to find where I should exist. I'm a musician meant to sing, and I can't sing and I don't know how to convince the label that that we should we should change methods and and you know, it's really for labels they have so much more to worry about than that they have to worry about the bottom line and and when I was signed, if you put out an album, then that immediately requires them to put money into it that immediately requires them, it starts the timeline for when they have to make a decision of whether or not you get dropped. And if they don't drop you, then you know that they have to owe you a certain amount for your next advance for your record. So all of the decisions that a label makes have a lot of strings attached financially. So they have to be very calculated about how they make them. But as an artist, I'm following a different muse, I'm following a different, just I'm much more in touch with something that feels emotional connected to the audience connected to the songs in the art. And so sometimes those things work together, and it can be amazing. And I can tell those stories, and sometimes they don't their work at cross purposes, and it's insufferable.

I will say that the the beautiful part of last year was that we launched a Kickstarter, and look to our fans, and ask for their help. And we became the most funded independent band in Kickstarter's history, raising \$451,000. And then we put out an album A month ago, and it was our highest charting album ever. Number 45 on the top album, sales on Billboard, and all of that was built by me and my team and my bands and my fans. And so it's a it's a, it's a really pure moment, pure victory that I'm getting to celebrate, in a weird way. But I do not discredit all of the people that that have helped along the way that are in the industry. And I love the industry. And I want the industry to start flexing and being a little bit more in touch with where the artists actually lives, which is listening to the audience and trying to give them what they need right now to make this day easier, more fun. And, you know, and hopefully make all that money back and then some, but I just think that they're, you know, there's a lot there's a lot there. But that's that's my Cliff's Notes answer.

52:16 Kaitlin

Yeah, to go off my work as a manager, I think a pro of the label system is the increase in resources and increase in support that you have access to for your artists. It's a right now I'm working with all independent artists. And sometimes it would definitely be nice to be able to call up a label and use some of their in-house resources to accomplish our goals for the band. But on the flip side of that, one of the nice things about being independent is you own all your assets, and you have complete creative

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control, and you have a lot of agility. So you're able to move really quickly, you're able to create in line with the artist vision, what they want to create, even if your budget might be a little more shoestring than if you had labeled backing or label funding. And I think, for developing artists, especially when you have so many tools available to you and so many different ways to reach your audience and grow your audience and form connections with your audience, that being independent can be a really, really powerful place to be. Because you're able to move quickly, you're able to build that growth, and you don't have to wait on anyone's permission to do any of those things you're looking to achieve.

53:20 Julie Williams

Yeah, I would piggyback on that, I think it's, it's at one point, pretty overwhelming. How many people can put their music out there so quickly and spread it, because there's so many people that people have to wade through, but it's really nice as an independent artist to be able to just put that music out, and especially coming straight from Duke and not not having to worry about oh, I need to get a record deal. Like I need to move to Nashville to get a record deal. And then that's gonna be how my dreams are gonna come true. And I've been shocked at the amount of people when I've come to Nashville that have said, don't even think about that right now you just focused on you and building your audience and getting your music out how it is. So it is kind of it's inspiring as a as a developing artist, that there's so many opportunities for you to do that without having those resources yet. And then when you and then when you want to go to those labels, you will have a little bit more leverage when you get there.

54:27 Mitra

All right, awesome. Thank you all. Before we move on to our next question. I had another question for Eric, which is would you like to play something for us?

54:38 Eric

Always. I'll play something for you guys. This will be very short, because I know. Thank you though.

54:48 Ethan

By the way, if Eric was still signed to Warner or Big Machine, he would need to get the labels permission before doing this and I would have to ask so we'd have to go through...

54:57 Tim

and we'd have to negotiate the rights of the video. In this on demand thing to so it'd be a whole thing. So thank God Eric.

55:03 Eric

Transcript

You know, I don't know how accurate that actually is, but it does feel really accurate.

55:11 Ethan

it is I've read the contracts.

55:13 Eric

I swear. Um, so the while we were talking this whole time I've been thinking about a song that we find it I wrote it five years ago, but we just got to put it out and it named drops duking it. So I just wanted to play from the bridge to the end, and the song is all about home and chasing a dream. So it's very connected to everything we're talking about. It's called the wrong ocean. And the main character me is dreaming about going to the other side of the countries from North Carolina, which is where I was born and wants to go to California wants to get signed he wants to have the dream when he gets there all the magic happens and yet he's left with this feeling here it is.

55:58 Eric sings "Wrong Ocean" and plays piano

So many smiles I can fake so many friends that I really don't know. A Blue Devil on my shoulder whispers in my ear. Look homeward angel, would you do it out here? It's been a long three years. And I've been looking at the wrong ocean. California has been good to me. I've been looking at the wrong ocean. Cause Carolina's where I'm meant to be. Yeah Carolina's still....home to me. Ohhhhh....Ohhhhh...Ohhhhh...Ohhhh, I'm coming home.....I'm coming home.....Carolina.

57:25 Ethan Udell

I'm going to clap because I think you deserve to hear that, Eric.

57:39 Mitra

Alright, thank you so much, Eric. That was beautiful of the song. So we'll move on to our next question. This might be our last one because it looks like we're running a long time. But again, asking about how students can best take advantage of this time, we wanted to talk to Mary and Jessica about what kind of resources they recommend for students such as books, movies, online resources, as ways to either just pass the time, or to continue and learn and develop skills.

58:10 Mary Jurey

Sure, I actually kind of made a list for you guys. Because I was thinking what do I do, I like to kind of keep in touch with the industry. There's a bunch of stuff that I check into that might be useful to you guys, there's this thing called the Music Business Worldwide may have a daily newsletter they put out which is just kind of a pulse on the industry, which I like to read a lot. I read the Rolling Stone Daily just to kind of keep up on major label things. Billboard also puts out a daily bulletin, which I glance and read through all the time, I mean, I might not read the whole thing, but I it's a good way to just keep up with

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what's going on. I would also really suggest if there's bands that you like, or that you're into, or that's the kind of music you're into to sign up for their email lists. You'll get lots of information from them, you get updated on what's happening with them.

You know, for me, from a business perspective, I like to see what other artists are doing are like what kind of promos they're working on and stuff like that. So that can be really helpful too. You know, I really am into jam bands. So I also get this Relics daily newsletter so that I can keep up on all the bands that I really like. So I mean, there's a lot of things out there for specific genres of music that you guys could, you know, sign up for, and yet it just sort of all together helps to keep a good pulse on what's happening even in all sorts of areas like you know, for me, it's good as from a record label perspective, just to know what other record labels are doing. So like I sign up for the YepRoc newsletter, I sign up for other indie labels newsletters so that I can see what they're doing. So, I mean, there's labels that you're into, there's generally a way to like sign up and get emails from them.

So I would suggest those sorts of things. So that's all good from an industry point of view, like from a creative point of view, too. I mean, I'm, if I could show you guys like, I can't hear, but I'm also obsessed with reading all the Rock and Roll books that come out. Like, I'm currently reading The Kathy Valentine book, which I don't know if you guys would know who she is. But she was one of the founding members of the GoGos. And she just put out a memoir, and it's, it's really good, which is called All I Ever Wanted. But uh, I love reading those books. I mean, I read them all, like Keith Richards Life, Patti Smith, Just Kids is probably the best one out there, I highly recommend that no matter what kind of music you like, or you're into, it's just amazing to read these artists, memoirs and stories, and you can just find inspiration, you can learn a lot, you can see the ups and downs of the business. So, I mean, I have a stack on my nightstand that's like 60, because I like to read them all. So there's, there's, you know, there's tons of books out there. But uh, I would suggest doing that too. I think that those are can be really helpful.

1:01:27 Jessica

Um, that was an amazing list. The only thing I'll add, just to kind of round out something to spend your time doing is listen to music and find music that you like and care about. And be fans of music. Because if you want to work in the music industry, the only people that make it in the music industry are people that are passionate about music, and every time I interview somebody for a job, without a doubt, I asked what kind of music do you like? What do you listen to what got you into music? So, um, yeah, don't forget to be a fan and be able to talk about the music you love, and be passionate about it.

1:02:04 Ethan Udell

Awesome. And for any of our other panelists that have any suggestions, feel free to send those to myself or to Amy. And we can add those to the DEMAN Lounge website under a section that's called

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What are the pros reading? And you can find, you know, a bunch of those resources there. I'd love to squeeze in one last question since we have a minute here. But for for Tim and Ethan, what do you guys think the impact of this pandemic will be on the music industry? How, you know, how is the industry going to rebound? And what does the future look like? What might change in your eyes?

1:02:35 Ethan Schriffres

Not to sure things knock, the short term is bleak. I don't think they're going to be any concerts in 2020. And I think that it's very possible that that could extend into a significant portion of 2021. That being said, Most artists that I work with, and most people that I know who work in the business aren't interested in the short term career. And eventually this will all be behind us. And I think that whatever the new normal is going to be is not going to look that far different than what it was before the Coronavirus. It's just going to take some time to get there.

1:03:11 Tim Castelli

Yeah, I'd love to disagree with you then. But, uh, I think I think 2020 is not looking too good. I mean, I look, I'm a soft, soft title, or aggressive optimist, so I can't help but think it's glass is half full, and we're gonna find a way. But I don't even if we start back, you know, Are people really gonna want to get back, you know, into stadiums into these places. I mean, we want to get, we want to get Eric and Julie back on tour and on stage and as much as everybody so I think I think this year is going to be really tough to do that, as it starts opening up kind of state by state market by market, we'll see. Like, I think we it's going to cause all of us weaves on our side where you know, when with the artist coming together, we're pivoting pretty hard into what, uh, in the virtual concert world. So I think you're gonna see a lot more of that. And it's forcing us all to adapt and use technology in different ways and think differently on how to get our music out and how to entertain and how to, you know, we create awareness for causes so then I think you'll see continued on that path and then I think will slowly and what it looks like in the fall who knows? Right, you know, I think I think we're gonna learn a lot in the next month. Things you know, if Major League Baseball gets canceled if the NBA Playoffs get said if the conventions get canceled, I think that will determine what the back half and the artist tours and if we're going to get back together in this next like month four to six week period, but I am with I think I think we're all looking at okay, what is 2021 look like? And then how will I do think what you know, when we get the next year that that we will learn things that worked virtually or through technology that we never would have tried this year without this happening that will incorporate into what tours or what artists and how they connect with us. How we put music out and work together with everybody to so I think there I'll stay optimistic there'll be some cool new things that and innovative things that come out of this as a result as well. So I'll take that view.

1:05:13 Ethan Schiffres

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Yeah, just quickly jumping in on the live streaming book, The streaming concert over the internet over zoom, or whatever stage at whatever platform, it's never going to replicate the in person experience. But it's still some form of entertainment that can keep people happy and hopeful and positive during this tough time. And it's also providing an opportunity for folks who don't live in major markets or don't live in live far away from from cities where ours would normally toward have the opportunity to get at least the spontaneity of a live concert, even if you're not getting the full production. And that's something that could could live on after the pandemic is over. And people are back touring, right.

1:05:48 Tim Castelli

And then the only challenge there that they would like, Sorry, I'll shut up, I promise is that, you know, how the artists really make money without touring, right? And what what is that? What are the economics look like? And how does that all ecosystem have to evolve in a new world, and that's, that's something we're gonna have to figure out together. Because it doesn't work. If you guys aren't, aren't, aren't making money, and then aren't able to do this, and what you're passionate about.

1:06:14 Mary Jurey

I just thought I would add that it really has, you know, I mean, music, people are creative people. And this has forced them to be almost hyper creative and coming up with the ways to do stuff. And I mean, our artists have been amazing at shifting to this online paradigm and coming out with their own idea of what that looks like, you know, we like we had a record release event that was completely virtual, that was just amazing. And then we had, you know, over 7000 people watching, which would have never happened if we weren't forced into this situation. And you know, all of them have kind of come up with their plan in a different way, which has also been really cool to see. So I think in some ways, it's really like, pushed this idea of how to promote your own music, in a virtual sense, instead of just relying on tour dates as your way to promote a record release to really like come up with different ways to do it. And it's really, in some ways, I've been just heartened by it, because it's been amazing to see all the different ideas and things. And then just on a personal level, like the other night on Friday night, I mean, I got to watch band after band after band that I love, just, you know, looking at my computer, but it was awesome. So I mean, I think those kinds of things are pushing artists to to come up with new and creative ways to promote their music, which I agree, I think will continue into the future, even when we get back to some sense of normalcy.

1:07:49 Ethan Udell

Thank you, and for other panelists, if you guys want to add anything as well, you're more than welcome.

1:07:53 Eric Holljes

Transcript

I was just gonna say that. I, the biggest challenge is what? What if any of them will make any money. And, you know, the thing that we're working on right now is really, we're experimenting to try to find the sweet spot, the Win Win, win something sustainable, something that our audience loves, and something that would make money. And the so far we haven't found it will still look and then figuring out what platform to go on. Is it twitch? Is that YouTube Live? Is it Facebook Live? Is it Instagram, Instagram has limitations, they don't allow outside broadcasting services. So you have to do it within their parameters. We're a band between three states, how can you get a broadcast happening? We have kids in the band, you know, now so we have to worry about family safety, as opposed to other bands where younger, who don't have any of those constraints can maybe just be in the same sequestered in the same house broadcasting every night.

So I think every artist is probably dealing with their own set of constraints. And, and trying to figure out in a two month or six, six weeks now we've had to wonder, okay, is this just going to be a month long changing of the rules? Or is this the rest of the year? Are we postponing the tour we canceling the tour? Now we know we're canceling. So what is what's the new normal looking like? I do think I mean, every day I'm I feel like a coder. Like I'm just thinking I'm thinking all the time. And I'm waiting till the last moment when I actually have to write the code. Because then I want it to be perfect. But right now I'm in the ideation mode of like, what does an audience even want? Because you're right live streaming. It's like, it's like not, it's just not the same experience. So is there something else you can do? I see a lot of bands doing like broadcasting them cooking dinner, and things like that. And I don't think it's going to work. And it's definitely not going to monetize. So we got some problems in real solve and if any of those geniuses watching right now in the Duke network, have any ideas, my emails over here in the chat column, and I'd love to hear from you.

1:10:01 Mitra

All right. Well, with that, I think we'll finish up. I hope that everyone's staying safe and well in these times. And thank you all for attending and good night.

OUTRO: Dave Karger 57:28

That's it for this episode of DEMAN Live. I'm DAVE KARGER, DEMAN is a signature program of Duke Arts and Duke Alumni Engagement and Development. Follow DEMAN on social and stay updated at DukeDEMAN.com, that's d e m a n.com where you can find our full archive of episodes. Thanks so much for joining us. See you next time.

This episode was produced by me, Lilly Clark, in collaboration with Hear at Duke, Duke's student run podcast hub. Our theme song is "Carolina" by Cameron Tompkins.

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