



# The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

## EPI7: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Zach Golden of Broken Luxury



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Hey there! You're listening to Episode 17 - Music-Preneur Spotlight: Zach Golden.

I'm your host, Suz - a mindset coach to help music-preneurs build sustainable careers in music.

In this month's spotlight I spoke to Zach Golden, who has been a dear friend for over five years and is 1/2 of the future-soul duo, Broken Luxury.

Their upcoming EP, *Énouement*, will be out soon. Énouement is a term that refers to the bittersweet feeling of knowing what your future holds but not being able alert your past {or present} self.

Speaking of past selves, Zach and I met in the wonderful world of retail when we worked for Crate & Barrel's flagship store in NYC.

We were both in the stockroom, counting the days till we didn't have to show up at a day job that had nothing to do with our goals in music.

We soon realized we both attacked our goals with the same focus & drive and we became a support system for one another as we navigated our own paths.

In 2014, our friendship was forever solidified in history when we decided to brave a winter storm to bring home his music partner aka the other half of Broken Luxury - Josh Reynolds - who was stranded in a city he was unfamiliar with, but more on that later...

Aside from our life-threatening travels, Zach often served as an emotional support for me as I went through a difficult time with my father, as I discussed in [Episode 16](#) last week, often playing me his music which served as an incredible escape - as most of us know music can do.

**What I've always respected about Zach, and I'm sure you'll pick this up on as you listen to his story, is his respect for the art and the musicians with whom he collaborates.**

Although quiet at times, Zach's mind is always moving and thinking of ways to improve his craft and be at his best in order to allow others to shine - it's truly a collaborative effort with him.

In today's episode, I think the biggest takeaways you'll find will be the importance of your long game as well as the importance to trust your gut and create a path that is true to you.

So without further ado, here is my conversation with Zach Golden.

{Quick note, I've now learned not to place a mic on top of electrical equipment, my apologies for the occasional pops and sudden cuts that you may here.}

**Suz:** I'm here with Zach now and I've known Zach for a while and I'm really happy I got him to sit down. He's usually the quiet one of Broken Luxury, but I've gotten him to sit down with me and share some of their experiences and share what they do, because Broken Luxury does a lot of unique stuff with not only their sound, but their stage performance.

And I think a lot can be learned from them if you're an independent musician looking to stand out from people. They've always done things at the highest level, very professional and I think they've got a lot that they can share with us.

So, thank you, Zach, for sitting down with me.

**Zach:** Of course, thank you for the very kind words and the introduction. It's great to be here.

**Suz:** I've watched your style and sound kind of evolve over the years, so what, or who, are some of your biggest influences when it comes to your style your music, anything how you express yourself?

**Zach:** I think of the band, anybody who knows me would say, that comes to mind immediately would be Disclosure. Most people know them for the song *Latch*, which people consider to be Sam Smith's song. But they have

inspired me from their attention to detail within their production and they're incredible songwriting.

Because of the incredible group that they write with, one of the main writers is Jimmy Napes who's written almost all Sam Smith's stuff, almost all Disclosure's stuff, worked with Mary J. Blige. Just an incredible soul songwriter.

So, mixing it all together and then also their massive attention to detail when it comes to live shows and realizing that, in the world of electronic music, where DJs can press a button, and no diss on DJs, that's a definitely a cool experience with light shows. There's something to be said about being able to recreate a live experience by playing instruments. Whether they're electronic instruments or real instruments, and so they are consistently one of the biggest reasons of why I push myself daily.

**Suz:** Yeah, I mean I think that really shows in the music because when you listen to Broken Luxury stuff there's a lot of their soul, there's, you know, some rock and there's pop and dance. I think it's really interesting how you guys manage to put that all together and it doesn't sound like this club loop.

There's actually shape to it and seeing the live shows that I've seen, like, the light aspect to it too. Again, it's not just like this pulsing light and I'm kinda interested to know, like, how do you guys decide, how do you guys do the light design? Where does the inspiration come from and how you kind of attack that? Because it seems extremely tedious. Now, I'm sure there's a lot of technology involved, but where does that inspiration start?

**Zach:** You have fifteen minutes to set up, get onstage, play your thing. Maybe you make a small impact, but you don't really make the statement that you want to because there's so many things happening. Along with the way that we decided to put our music together to make it one continuous song, so right when we start to the very end is music and that's a big reason if we want to compete with the world of DJ'ing, in the world of what is now expected, when somebody shows up to a show.

But then it kind of bled into the idea of the lights to take over everything that we could to make sure that every time you show up to the show people get a consistent experience from us. And that's really, really important for our vision of what we think Broken Luxury should be. That kind of stemmed this idea to build this light rig.

**Suz:** It's really something if you guys have a chance to see them live, you guys will be playing the music and then Josh has this, you know, epic kind of, I mean his voice is incredible, and then you're just surrounded by all this light and you hear his voice and then you come in with the drums.

It's like it is definitely an experience. It doesn't feel like, "Oh, they're up there with a laptop and they're hitting the loop and singing the words." So, what made you guys decide to bring on more people to your live show because it's always been the two of you and now you have a few other musicians joining on stage? So, what is that whole process like and what was that like to transition into bringing more people with you on stage?

**Zach:** It was a much faster transition than I thought it was going to be. It wasn't as much gradual... it's gradual in the sense of we have an entire album that we finished that kind of replicates, kind of, our live shows - where it's a continuous album that is fully immersive because I believe in that the artistic integrity of an entire album.

But these other people that are playing with us we've known for a long time. We've created these songs with these people as well, so adding them to the entire energy level that is on stage adding Jessi [Lee], who is an incredible saxophonist, incredible writer, incredible singer, too. She has some amazing music out as well so definitely check her out.

Her soloing, her interaction with Josh, almost acts like another vocalist because we don't have another vocalist on stage. And Pat McCusker is an incredible guitarist, he's amazing and has such a connection to it.

For the big show that we did a year ago, we did a full band of six people and so we had friends say playing bass, we played all together, and there's the infamous Will Wells, who I think everybody knows or will know, who has been an incredible ally for Josh and I and for Broken Luxury and is a massive supporter. And so many songs on this album have been written with him.

Just created this family environment that's on stage and I think that really comes through more than just hiring some random musicians. It wasn't like, "We need to have more people just to have more people," every single person on that stage has a very intense purpose and is very impactful to what Broken Luxury images and what Josh and I believe in.

And so that kind of grew to that full band experience and then you know, I think that although now, we play kind of with a smaller group like we did the few Anthony Ramos shows; two in New York, one with Jessi, one with Pat, and then one Chicago where both Jessi and Pat joined us. But that really just helped us on stage because we feed off each other's energy.

Josh feeds off of having Jessi to solo and to interact with him. I interact off of Pat's playing because I'm focused on the percussive element of it. And so, the four of us being able to feed on that can emit the power that it needs to, to be able to stand in front of the slideshow that can create the sound that we've imagined over the past few years, I guess.

**Suz:** I know it certainly adds to the whole, more fuller sound and when you guys brought those people on obviously you said you know, you didn't go the whole route of, "I'm just going to hire somebody because we need them." So, I take it kind of just happened organically and it was just like, "Oh, I like this let's see where this goes."

**Zach:** Yeah, everything was completely organic, no money was talked about at the time. Obviously, payment is absolutely done cause that is an important part of people being respected. Because you should be paid for what you do and for your talents. Jessi and I knew each other back at Berklee, kind of, not really closely, but then we reconnected through some shows that Josh and I were at.

And we met her, and we just got in the room and the song *Addicted*, that's already out right now, she just came in to solo on and it just it

opened up our minds to what the possibilities were. And so that just stemmed from there and then just having Pat McCusker solo on *One for You* brought a whole new life to that.

And that's basically how all that happened is that we kind of just all got together. It felt like a hang and then it grew into this greater thing that didn't have to be built, didn't have to be forced and also any of those things I think anybody in music knows is that.

**I use this analogy consistently, when you're working with somebody and it doesn't click that way, it's like a terrible day, it's like a really unfortunate day that your like, "I don't know how to get out of this, but I got to get out of here."**

And so, every, all those experiences were just, you know, happened the exact opposite way where this is fucking incredible. Yeah. And I know Josh can attest to the mindset of all those other people, of what they brought, would inspire him to think differently. For him to think of different ideas, for him to perform differently or be even more jacked to just get up on the mic and really go for it in a way that he probably wouldn't have if it was just him and I in the room.

And that's really important in collaborating is to be able to expand and find different emotions and intensities in your creations.

**Suz:** And I think that's really great to explain and that's a very apt analogy. When you and Josh, you know, you've talked about and I know from knowing you guys, how detail oriented you are, and what it means to, you



know, you take time to build something where it's not just we'll do this and see what happens. Do you look to other bands like Disclosure to see what's working, what's not? What's that like?

**Zach:** I think a lot of the things that we were thinking of how we wanted everything to be brought forward as Broken Luxury, I think a lot of it is intrinsic. For stuff like, you know, even like social media most of time we run past ideas or at least when we were first starting to post everything or started to find more of what we wanted Broken Luxury to be, especially with how this album is, you started to dive into okay, what type of pictures should this be?

We absolutely want them to be artistically done.

We don't want them to be as if we are taking this as a joke. We want to make sure that's it's represented in a way that shows what the music will be when you listen to it, which is consistently a learning process.

But switching to kind of black and white, making minimal statements in our pictures and like those statements are not really focusing on hashtags, although I understand the importance of that hashtags because it to get you out to more places.

It's just we believe in the integrity of the organic nature of it. An organic build that was just people who are seeking something, and they didn't know what it was until they've heard it. And that takes a very long time and that is not an easy road.

Someone I consistently look up to in that regard is Anderson Paak and the Free Nationals. They've been playing together for over a decade, working it just like any other person who understands the feeling what it's like to feel like a local band for a very, very long time. You never know when a break is going to come or if it will, but that's not why you end up doing it.

**If you're searching for that it won't come and when it does it will be a flash in the pan.** Because you need to find the happiness in the moments of the building, building everything around that to get to that moment or hopefully get to that moment. And so, those type of artists are the ones that I think both Josh and I look up to because we're not massive on selling ourselves.

I know that most artists are not like that because they believe in the artistry of the music, but I guess we're selling ourselves on not being big on selling ourselves and that's the big point.

**Suz:** Exactly, and I think it's important you're gonna do it your way and it's not going to be because of trends or a hashtag that works. This is you guys and if you want to hop on board that's great. Artists get so consumed with the promotions and the campaigns, and I mean hey, I teach this stuff for a living, so I definitely think that that stuff is good, I just think that more independent musicians need to empower themselves, that you know, do what's right for you.

And so, even if it's not something somebody else is doing it doesn't mean you shouldn't do it or shouldn't put all your efforts into making it happen if it's good with you guys. And I like that, you know, you guys said you sit

down and talk about this stuff and I always tell clients there's a million different ways to get somewhere.

But your success is going to be different than somebody else's definition of success and so if you're looking for the quick way to get the most fans and get in the most people's, you know, speakers, and there's nothing wrong with that, but there are specific strategies that work for that particular strategy.

If you set your expectations as to what you want out of it and you understand that it's a slow burn, I think that that's really cool for other people hear that. That you know, you guys aren't tied down to like this pressure of like if this doesn't happen by next month you know it's not gonna happen.

And that's not what it's about and I think that that's really great that you allow this to organically unfold and that you guys put a lot of energy into the fans that you already have making sure their experience is going to come out of the show.

And I think too many artists get consumed with how to get more fans. Well, you get more fans by, with what you just said, organically. Like I've been to your shows I tell people about you guys all the time, because I go to the show and you have made my experience really positive. So, that's who you want to focus on, focus on the fans that you already have, and they will do the work for you.

I think that's important for people to hear. You know you mention Berklee and I gave a little bit of info on that in the intro. How did that prepare you?

**Zach:** Yeah, absolutely. You know it was the place which gave me the energy to write for the first time. For the first year and a half I was there I met Josh and hung out with Josh and partied with Josh a lot and those are some ridiculous times, but, you know, that ended up turning into a much bigger thing and feeling like a much bigger meaning in life.

**Suz:** And how did writing together come out of it? I mean was it what not 'til years later that you guys started writing and doing music while you were in New York and he was Chicago? Or, did all that kind of start at Berklee?

**Zach:** It actually... none... nothing like that start at Berklee. It was just a friendship that kind of grew and then the writing started once college was over for both of us. We kind of were both on our own paths at the time, just figuring ourselves out and at the point at which we crossed paths again which was back in Chicago. I think it was a growth period which does happen multiple times throughout life, in which you need to grow as a person to move forward and gain a better life that you want.

For me personally, I'm happy that I went through it because it made me write for the first time or at least kind of figure out the classic way of writing. Although, I was writing my version of modern jazz. Which is hilarious to listen to now, but I think for at Berklee at the time I was ...I'm like a pretty quiet person I'm much better in intimate situations than I am in large crowds.

And so, during the college years I wasn't the most social person as I could have been which I know everybody talks about - meet people, network, do all this shit. But I just kind of did my best. Not the best at it, but was able to spend a lot of time writing and was able to spend a lot of time making these relationships that with these people I'm still close with.

Which is crazy, and they're still all working in this world which makes me extremely happy to be able to still have the create these memories with all these people from now it's like... over a decade ago? Which is bananas.

**Suz:** You are old.

**Zach:** Yeah, so old.

**Suz:** Yeah, I've got, I've got years... So, for the musician that wants to be there at the forefront, taking that time to go to a school like Berklee, or any type of program where you can learn from other people, build that network, whether large or small on your own terms, and have that time to really develop as an artist, I think it's really important.

And the other thing I wanted to kind of tag on to that was day jobs. Right now, you're working at a studio, a well-respected studio in New York City, which is awesome and obviously at least something that is very clearly in the same realm of what you want to do in your career in music.

But I know that we've had to have jobs that we both hated, and we've definitely gone through the exciting world of retail.

**Zach:** It's like a rite of passage.

**Suz:** Looking back, I mean during the time you know you just can't wait to get out, but looking back, do you think there's anything that you really learned from it or took from it to apply to your career and how you approach what you're building now? Whether they were like lessons learned, mistakes and what not to do? Either one.

**Zach:** Yeah, there's like the classic... "No matter what your job is, just be proud of it." And in retail that type of work is more motivational for me. It motivated me to write a lot more to lock myself in my room and you know kind of it kind of went crazy in that respect because I was just doing that so heavily cause I was like, "I need to get out of here."

Like, "I can't believe that I'm... I just need to get out of here, I don't want to be here anymore." And even though you know, that still hasn't gone because there are just goals that I want to reach in my life and so where I am now I know it's not where I want to be.

And so, I just want to keep expanding and so I think working in retail was kind of a catalyst and that mindset has just kept on going as I've grown older. And it's also, I've also gotten more realistic about what I should be expecting. But it has not deterred me from working hard because like you said it's a long road but it's about consistency. And the majority of people who are, like, really seen as the successful individuals in this industry or in any industry is just consistency.

**Suz:** Right. Always like being there, always working, doing something. Kind of like people say they want to spend the rest their lives together and then rush to get married. It's like well if you're going to be their "forever" then you're fine. You don't have to rush to get married. I feel like I kind of look at this profession in the same light. Where if you're really serious about doing this for the rest of your life or for, you know, a big chunk your life, then you better love it enough to show up all the time regardless of whether the main goal you've wanted has happened yet or if it's still happening.

Because that one day when you least expect it, that opportunity is gonna knock, and if that's the day you're like, "Ugh, not today. I don't want to do anything," then what did you bust your ass for all those years, you know? So yeah, I definitely think, you know, if you can use the jobs that you're at and rather than waste those eight to ten hours being like, "Well it's not what I want to do."

I remember you and I talking about this and in the retail world we're just like, "Well we're here," so whether it's working on customer service or it's, you know, working on branding or it's using access to the color copier that they have to make your fliers, you know whatever. Let's at least use the time that you have while you are somewhere.

I like what you said, you know, using it to motivate your work ethic there.

**Zach:** Yeah, without a doubt.

**Suz:** So, I want to circle back to Josh and he's a very important part of Broken Luxury. He is the voice. I want to talk about, you know, you guys have been friends for a very long time, you've been making music together for a long time, but he wasn't always out here on the east coast.

He, you know, was in Chicago for some time and during your first EP you guys were doing that kind of, you know, across cities. And then you guys were able to come together. So, what was that process like? How has it changed? Anything that's been very different about that?

Like, can you speak to what it's like to create something where you're not even in the same time zone versus being able to create something together? You guys were roommates for a while, what's that difference?

**Zach:** It creates a different type of trust. I think the original trust, Josh and I worked on a song I did on an EP that was just like my solo work. That was just when Big House was really big, and I was trying to dive first into electronic music and all this shit and hilarious stuff.

Josh wrote a killer, killer melody and lyrics to it. We kind of started there and the incredible chemistry kinda happened within the music without us being in the room. He's got the same mindset of me in the sense of he was working at a rental car place, he was like "Ahh...what the fuck is going on? I need to get the fuck out of here."

He's like, "I need to get the fuck out here," and his escape, you know, was writing just melody, lyrics and piano and so he'd send it to me and you



know what that was like besides the fact that somebody was entrusting me with their ideas on a base level to go somewhere.

I was like, "Okay," so I just like went completely at it and I was just sending him stuff back immediately, and it just grew from there. So that trust already began, but then we were like, "Okay, we need to record these vocals legit, like you can't just be on an iPad or anything right now. We need to get something really great," and so we got into Victorian Recording Studio, which is a studio I used to work at out in Chicago.

And so, we got in there for a week together and the trust grew even more and so after that, he was released [from his job] and he was like, "Let's fuckin' do this."

He came out to New York and got stopped in a snowstorm that landed in, oh my God, in Atlantic City and then you and I were like, "Alright, fuck this shit," so we just drove ten hours to Atlantic City, because that mathematically makes sense coming from New York City.

Josh had to fight off a bum who almost attacked him, which is fucking hilarious, and then we drove back the next day and surprisingly didn't die.

**Suz:** I mean welcome to New York.

**Zach:** Yeah, that's literally the greatest statement.

**Suz:** Did that make you guys at all nervous that this was the right choice?

**Zach:** No, I would say the fight through it to make it all happen was proof of that we both wanted it, you know, bad enough.

**Suz:** Yeah, just for the people listening I don't know if you remember a couple years ago there was a very massive snow storm and yeah, we're in New York, we're about an hour and a half from Atlantic city and due to the snow, it took us ten hours.

That's what it means guys if you want to make it that literally weathering the storm... that's what weathering the storm means.

You had mentioned before about you know the slow burn and understanding the climb that it takes to build a fan base in this authentic and organic way. What's your outlook on the whole D. I. Y. musician world? I mean do you feel empowered as an independent musician because it's all in, you know, under your say so, in your control? Or, do you feel like this is bullshit there's way too much that people put on independent musicians?

**Zach:** I mean, I feel great about doing things D. I. Y. Like, you know, I'm happy that we aren't signed, I'm happy that we own our own publishing. Which definitely make sure you have your own publishing company, because that's just money left on the table otherwise. When you do that D.I.Y. deal and you're doing everything then you understand how everything gets done.

So then once your team starts to grow, which whether it be you can hire somebody because you can finally afford it or it's just, you know, people that find you. Or friends who are just like, you know, "I just want to be a

part of this, I want to help, you make this happen." Then you're able to, like, delegate and in a legitimate way instead of being like, "Uhh...I don't know." Because they're looking to you.

**Anybody who works with us as well are looking to Josh and I to have the vision of how we want Broken Luxury to move forward.**

**Suz:** I think that's an excellent point about, you know, part of being a leader and an owner of your own business and this is what this podcast is all about guys - teaching you how to own your own business. And I'm very happy you brought up owning your own publishing company.

It's really important to have that control because yeah if people look to you and they say, "Well what do you want?" And you say, "Oh, I don't know," then you're not leading. So, if this is your brand and your baby and your music. You know you want to be able to do that, so great answer.

All right. So, I've put you under the spotlight long enough. Now here's some fun questions. I think they're fun. The last band I interviewed was like, "Fuck no."

Alright, so you've got one extra hour in the day. What do you do with it?

**Zach:** Okay, one extra hour in the day of not working?

**Suz:** You can use it to sleep, work, whatever you want to do. It's totally yours.

**Zach:** So, if I've gotten everything I feel that I need to get done in the day, then I will absolutely watch CDNThe3rd on Twitch.tv. Ceez, if you ever listen to this, I'm a huge fan. My girlfriend and I watch you all the time playing *Fortnite*. It's honestly the fucking... it's the most relaxing thing. It's the only thing that I do now that lets me decompress. It's fucking incredible.

**Suz:** That's amazing. I'm gonna put the link to that in the show notes for sure. So, we like to talk on this show about Big Asks. Putting out there in the Universe - what do you want? - because you never know who's listening or what's going on there. I always think people should ask, otherwise the answer will always be, "No."

So, you have one request when it comes to your music career. It can be a feature on an album, going on a tour, an award. Whatever it is. What do you want?

**Zach:** Damn.

**Suz:** I tell you people hate these questions. I think they are good questions.

**Zach:** No, I love this question.

**Suz:** The response is always, "Oh, fuck."

**Zach:** My one buddy, Matt, put up another question recently just like, "What are your five favorite songs of all time?" I'm like, fuck.

**Suz:** Oh, that would take me a really long time.

**Zach:** A really, really long time. This is like the one big ask of...

**Suz:** Yeah, like it could take out the worry of like ooooh will this happen. I think it takes the fear of asking it away. You know?

**Zach:** I've said this consistently, but it's like kind of a joke, but it's a serious thing is: I've never been to Madison Square Garden in the entire time that I've lived in New York and I don't want to go until I play there.

**Suz:** Nice.

**Zach:** And so, that is the big ask to play Madison Square Garden or just an arena tour in general.

**Suz:** Right.

**Zach:** Which is jumping a lot of steps, but whatever.

**Suz:** Hey, other things that happened, and it all starts by asking. I like that answer.

You can join one band for the day. Who is it?

**Zach:** Do they have to be alive alright now?

**Suz:** Ok, I'll make it easier. Yes, they have to be alive and you're going to go join them for a day and play with them. And do whatever.

**Zach:** Cool. It would be a tie right now between the two bands, the two groups I've already brought up. It would be a tie between Disclosure and Anderson Paak and the Free Nationals.

**Suz:** Very good.

As you guys know I'm all about taking action. So usually each week I have a downloadable spreadsheet or checklist for people so that they could take action on what we talked about. So, being that we talked about you and Broken Luxury today, what is the one action our listeners can take when they're done listening to our time here?

**Zach:** You can go directly to Spotify or whatever streaming service you like, follow us, add us, download any of the songs that we have up that are going to be off of the upcoming album, *Énouement*. That date is still to be determined, although by the time this comes out, it may be determined.

**Suz:** Just in case people don't check show notes right away what do they search Spotify to find you?

**Zach:** They look for B-r-o-k-e-n-L-u-x-u-r-y. We've had many other names when people don't understand us.

**Suz:** Haha, really?

**Zach:** Yeah, some have really taken the cake. We have Brooklyn Laundry was one. Well I guess if we were like, if we were, definitely deep into the Brooklyn scene make perfect sense.

**Suz:** Yeah, it's always good to spell out the name guys when you're giving people your names, always spell it out. But if you do check out [www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep17](http://www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep17) you will find all the links to everything we discussed here in the show notes.

You can find them on Spotify. I'll have all of their links there for us to use and enjoy. And Zach, thank you for doing this. I can't wait for the new music.

**Zach:** Thank you, I'm excited for everybody to hear it as well. This has been an absolute blast.

And that's all she wrote! Thanks so much for listening. I also want to take a moment to thank Zach for making time to talk to us. I hope you've taken something from Zach's story, as there's a lot we can all learn from it.

Every musician Zach mentioned can be found in the show notes of this episode, simply go to [www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep17](http://www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep17).

I've also included in the show notes an embedded Spotify player for you to sample Broken Luxury's new music. Be sure to take a listen and follow them on Spotify. Links to all their other pages are in the show notes as well.

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Until next time, Rockstar! Have a wonderful week and I hope to see you back here next Wednesday so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.