



# *The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast*

## Ep51: Making the Most of Music Conferences

You're listening to Episode 51 of the Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast.

Hello! You're listening to [Episode 51: Making the Most of Music Conferences](#).

I'm your host, Suz – a mindset coach helping music professionals get clear on their goals and find the time to get it all done while maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

That balance isn't always easy, especially when you're on travel. I spoke in [Episode 10](#) about the importance of a self-care routine when on the road and in a future episode I'll talk about the importance of a daily routine in general, but today we're going to focus on keeping that balance, keeping that overwhelm at bay when you're in a new environment, challenging yourself to step outside of your comfort zone for the sake of your career.

I'm referring to those networking events, the conferences, and even the festivals that revolve more around live performances than industry panels. Whether you're a people-person or not, these events can take a lot out of someone and the amount of stimulation going on can overwhelm the best of us.

Between the cost to attend, the travel, and the possibility of not knowing anyone when you get there, it can feel more like a blind date than an opportunity to have fun and build your career. You may not feel like yourself, you may be worried about how you stack up against your peers, and you may even feel as though it's all a big waste of time and you'd rather be at home writing music.

I get it. These events can sometimes make us want to retreat. I've been there, believe me. I've come back from an event pissed off that I spent time and money to attend only to come back empty-handed because I was too overwhelmed to participate in any capacity.

After hiring a business coach, and talking to my therapist, I developed a few tricks and routines to psych myself up about these events and now attending them is one of my favorite parts of my job. Here's why {don't worry, the tips and tricks will be shared}:

Music conferences allow you to meet with a large number of industry professionals and musicians alike in one location for a concentrated period of time. It's not only efficient for growing your network rather quickly, but it also provides an environment where you can potentially bond with colleagues in a much deeper way than if you met them all organically out on the street or through a computer screen on social media.

I sometimes think about it as a brief sleep away camp – with all of the parties, panels, and shared meals happening on the premises there are opportunities to get to know people on a deeper level and share in experiences you normally wouldn't have with them under normal circumstances.

And I'm not talking about the drinking – in fact, I'll be touching upon why it's important to keep limits on certain vices – I'm talking more so about the ability to be immersed in a field you're passionate about with others who are also trying to make connections, share their knowledge, and grow their network.

Think about all of the times you go about your daily life and your friends, family, and loved ones just don't get it. I spoke about this in [Episode 16](#) and it was one of my most downloaded episodes so I know you know what I'm talking about.

Now imagine waking up and heading to a room where everyone in that room has struggled like you have, has experienced push back on their dreams the same way you have, and has been working towards achieving their dreams in spite of that push back the same way you have.

If nothing else, attending music conferences is a reminder that your dreams aren't crazy and that it's not time to give up.

Two years ago, due to a cancelled event that I and many others were planning on attending, I created The Music-Preneur Mindset Summit purely as a way to provide an opportunity for everyone to still come together and make the most of a weekend together.

Luckily, it went well and 2 years {and a podcast} later, we're preparing to announce dates for the 3rd annual Music-Preneur Mindset Summit. But that wasn't the initial intent. It was about a need to see my favorite industry peeps and musicians in one place for a weekend of camaraderie and mutual support and inspiration.

I wanted to use it as a space for artists to feel free to ask the questions I'd seen too many too hesitant to ask at other events, and to create an environment where they could attend one panel/workshop at a time – as I'd seen so many look stressed and harried as they tried to get the info they needed from multiple sessions going on simultaneously.

The thing is, these larger conferences don't have another choice – there are only so many hours in the day and with so much information out there to take in, sometimes you have to make a choice of which sessions to attend.

So how can you attend these larger events without feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or intimidated by crowd size or people with more experience?

As a self-proclaimed introvert I know what it's like to need a vacation after a large industry event. Hell, even after a small networking event I've been burnt out. As I said, eventually I got help and was able to create tools and structure around my day that enable me to get the most from these events without feeling completely spent after it's all over.

With so many creatives identifying as introverts, it's important to remind ourselves that introverted doesn't mean shy – it means we've got to protect our energy when we're around a lot of people.

So what do these tools and structure look like? Glad you asked!

First, I get super clear on what I want to happen as a result of attending an event. Maybe it's to sign new clients, or connect with a new colleague or sell books. Maybe it's to have a better understanding of a topic I'm not well-versed on, like Spotify playlists.

The second thing is to identify why I'm going. This is slightly different than getting clear on my result. It's all about being clear on my role at the event. Am I attending as a panelist? Am I running a workshop? Am I going strictly as an attendee?

The reason this is important is because it does affect the way I carry myself at the event, to an extent, and, more importantly, what I bring with me.

Am I packing Planners with me to display on a merch table? What about business cards? Do I need my notebook I use to record meetings and potential client interactions? What about what I'm wearing – can I go casual or do I need to be more professional?

If I'm just going as an attendee I may bring a Planner or two in case it comes up in conversation and someone wants to purchase one, but otherwise I'm leaving that literal baggage at home and will be going in jeans and converse.

Another thing I like to do, especially if there'll be a lot of networking, is check the RSVP list or social group list and find 3 or so people that I'd like to connect further with once I get there. That way, if I am not in the mood to be there, I can make a deal with myself to introduce myself to just those 3 people and then bounce once I've accomplished that goal.

I then follow up with those 3 people via email so I can meet them individually for coffee or drinks at another time, in an environment that's more conducive to my liking so I can be more myself and focus on building a connection with each of them.

Those are the 3 main points I go over with myself before an event. However there are a few more that I find helpful and that I suggest to clients. I've written them all down in a handy checklist that you can download from the show notes page.

Simply go to [www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep51](http://www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep51) to download your own copy to fill out digitally when needed, no need to print it.

I'll go through the other checkpoints now:

Many of these events can be flowing with alcohol. It's great to have a good time, but there's always that person at the event that takes things too far. You don't want to be that person. You also want to be able to remember what you've learned and who you've met.

In an effort to decrease the overwhelm, make a plan for how much you will/won't drink, what time you'll aim to turn in each night, and which, if any, outside parties/events in the area that you'll be attending. It's also good to take a look at which public transportation will be available in the area.

Especially if it's an event like SXSW, knowing how you'll get around and how much money you'll need to budget for in order to use that transportation will enable you to have more control over your visit and lead to less surprises and stress when you're there.

Lastly, it's a good idea to review the topics being covered at the event and write down your questions ahead of time. In large crowds it can be easy to forget what you wanted to know from a certain panelist or mentor. If you're shy it can also be difficult to be put on the spot, so having your questions ready beforehand can help ensure they get answered.

Having a plan is the best way to gain more control over a situation that may bring stress or overwhelm.

Remember, these are professional events and people will be watching you, whether you're performing or not. You don't have to speak to someone directly in order to leave an impression. This industry is smaller than you think and people do like to talk. Don't give them a reason to take about you if it's not directly related to your music.

Your plan may not go perfectly – maybe you'll change your mind about a party or you'll decide

to skip a panel to go meet a colleague for lunch. But, having a plan to work off of will enable you to show up focused and act with intention even if you change your mind about certain choices.

I hope you're feeling a bit better about attending these events now that there's structure that you can adapt to your own situation and gain more control over the event rather than allow it to control you.

If you've never attended a music conference I thought I'd take a moment and share some of my favorites with you and how you can get more involved.

Beside the Music-Preneur Mindset Summit, which I'm obviously biased about and excited to bring you more details in the coming weeks, here are some conferences I highly suggest you check out {in order of event dates}:

1. The Millennium Music Conference, or MMC, is every February in Harrisburg, PA. It's got a good mix of engaging panels and workshops with a healthy amount of live performances. Big thanks to John Harris, the Executive Director. He also organizes the Cape May Singer Songwriter festival which I also recommend.
2. SXSW - I've never been but will be attending this year to mentor. We shall see.
3. Launch Music Conference is one of my favorites and is based out of Lancaster, PA in and around April each year. Last year they were one of the few to put a large emphasis on mental health and I'm a huge fan with how it's run and organized. Shout out to Jeremey Weiss and his team.
4. Off the Record Fest - while postponed this year - is one of my favorites and I have to shout out Jason Spiewak and his Noble Steed team for creating an event that is ALL about the musician. He also incorporated morning yoga as well as local community service activities for attendees - which I lovingly copied for my own Summit.
5. Sync Summit - Mark Freiser hosts the Sync Summit multiple times throughout the year in various locations. It's an impressive, intimate gathering of who's who in music licensing. If you want to build your network within the licensing world this one is a must.

6. Music Biz Conference is not one I've been to yet but comes recommended from many of my peers, I'm setting my sights on that one this year as an attendee.
7. CD Baby DIY Musician Conference is one of my absolute favorites. Many of my friends and I describe it as a large-scale conference managing to feel like a smaller-scale, more intimate event. It moves this year to Austin, TX – same as SXSW. I'm looking forward to heading back there in case I miss anything this March during South by.
8. The Music Entrepreneur Conference, presented by World Artists United, is an incredible event coming back this year on a date TBA. It was first hosted at Harvard University and attracted a who's who in the music industry. I'm a big fan of WAU's initiatives and was lucky enough to have founders Rachel and Jalen as my keynote speakers for last year's Summit.
9. I also need to give a very special shout out to Ken Norton and Joe Caviston of The Electric City Music Conference for giving me my first shot at speaking on a panel back in 2014. I still enjoy going to this growing event in Scranton, PA each fall.
10. Some others to be aware of are The Folk Alliance, AZIM, Midem, and Mondo. For a full list of conferences by State, be sure to check out [www.IndieOnTheMove.com](http://www.IndieOnTheMove.com) for a full and comprehensive list of events. I've put the full link in the show notes.

Looking to perform or be a panelist at any of these events? Ask! Use Indie On The Move to create a list of conferences that fit your audience and start reaching out {however first check their websites as some already post instructions on how to get involved}. For performances, often times ReverbNation has partnered with these events to offer a slot to a few of their artists, so if you have a profile search for these events in the offers they make available for you to submit your EPK.

For being on a panel, give yourself 8–12 months of lead time as many of these conferences book speakers far in advance. If there's one you really want to speak at and it's coming up soon, still reach out – you never know what speakers may have had to bow out last minute.

I love being on panels with actual musicians, not just industry "experts," and there's often not enough of them in my opinion. Sometimes it's an oversight by the conference hosts, but often it's because musicians aren't asking. Whether due to a lack of confidence in their ability to be an "expert" on a topic or the assumption that there's no room for them at the table they're an

important piece of the puzzle missing from many discussions.

However, if you don't get chosen, don't lose hope. Offer to mentor or volunteer to help during the event. So many workshops I've had started with me offering my time in a smaller role at the events. Build those connections and it will pay off.

*Now* how are you feeling about these industry events? I hope more amped to attend and participate!

I've tagged all of the people and events I've mentioned here today in the show notes, and again, there is also my Prep Checklist to download for free if you're so inclined. That link again is [www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep51](http://www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep51).

You'll also find on that page an announcement that February = FREE SHIPPING on The 2019 Rock/Star Life Planner. It's not too late to get yours and start your journey to ROCK your 2019!

As always, I thank you for listening and I'm here if you have any questions.

If you're looking to figure out your next steps, find time to balance everything on your plate, or prepare to ace your next industry event, let's talk!

**Email me at anytime: [suz@therockstaradvocate.com](mailto:suz@therockstaradvocate.com)**

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