



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

Ep56: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Jeremy Young

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Hello! You're listening to [Episode 56: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Jeremy Young](#).

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.

One of the many times our minds can play tricks on us is when we reach a goal we've set. We get so elated, so proud of ourselves that we can sometimes, even just for a second, think we're somehow done.

We're done learning. We're done working hard and struggling. We're done making mistakes.

But soon enough we realize now that that goal has been reach, there are 100s of others waiting to take its place. There's always another mountain to climb, another puzzle to solve.

Some may find that endlessly frustrating. Those are the people who wake up every day, find something to complain about, drag their feet to work, and muddle through the day.

But if you want to build a career you love, using your passion to create, the best thing you can do is embrace the continuous education life brings us. We are never done learning and we are certainly never done making mistakes.

I recently sat down with Soundfly's Editor-In-Chief, Jeremy Young, to discuss his journey as a music-preneur and one of the things that stuck out the most from our conversation was his passion for learning.

It's no surprise that passion and curiosity has served him well throughout his career. He describes himself as a "sonic artist," and has created a career for himself that is constantly challenging preconceived labels and structures.

Jeremy came from a more classical, orchestral background, but after going down many different entrepreneurial paths, including audio book publishing and podcasting, he found

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himself in a music group, Sontag Shogun, who's sound truly can't be nailed down. So much so that they had to invent a new term for it – lullanoise, which you'll hear more about in a bit.

In addition to his role as Editor-In-Chief for Soundfly's popular music education blog, Flypaper, Jeremy creates music for a number of different projects, including his work as a solo artist.

In 2017, he was invited to contribute his sonic art and advisory skills to Jann Tomaro's guided meditation series, *Practice*. In 2018, he collaborated with fellow Shogun performer Jesse Perlstein to create Braided Sound, a collective of improvisational ensembles performing site-specific graphic scores, performing in Europe, Japan, Canada, and the U.S.

These days Jeremy is getting ready to release Sontag Shogun's latest album, [It Billows Up](#), which is now available for pre-order and will debut on May 17.

The group is signed to [Youngbloods](#), a Brooklyn-based label that proudly releases "leftfield downtempo music on new & archaic mediums," and more information about them and their latest music can be found in the show notes.

There's so much more to say, but I'll let Jeremy fill you in.

Suz: Alright everyone and now I'm here with Jeremy Young, and Jeremy I just want to thank you so much for joining us.

Jeremy: Thanks for having me!

Suz: So I gave our listeners a bit of background about where you've been so far in your career, but if you could tell us right now where you're at as a music-preneur?

Jeremy: Well, first of all, thanks for having me on this podcast, Suzanne. I'm an enormous fan.

Suz: My pleasure.

Jeremy: I'm a musician. I've been a musician for about fifteen years, and I have a few musical projects both here in Montreal, where I live, and back home in New York, where I'm originally from. One of which being Sontag Shogun which is a sort of electro-acoustic, modern, classical trio that does performances and recordings and scoring commissions for films and such.

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But with regards to this sort of entrepreneurial avenues of my life, I've done a few things including attempting to start an audio book and music company. I've had some podcasts, and I've worked for jazz festivals and I've done sort of commissioning for ensembles and orchestras and stuff.

But at the moment the main squeeze is that I work for this amazing online music education company called Soundfly and particularly what I do is I'm the Editor-In-Chief of our blog called Flypaper.

Suz: You had mentioned those audio books and kind of your journey as an entrepreneur, what did some of that look like?

Jeremy: I did a lot of research into audio books and this was a few years ago when audio books and podcasts were really kind of blowing up out of nowhere. And one of the things that I was interested in was the fact that the audio book world, the publishing side is really interesting.

Publishing houses are frequently releasing audio versions of books that they put out in print and that's great they sort of have a lot of power in that space. But annoyingly the distribution is all sort of filtered through basically a single company, and it's an enormous monopoly and they have complete control over everything that goes on in that market space.

And you know and it's associated with like iTunes and Audible are all sort of under the same umbrella of this overseeing audiobook distribution body. And one of the things that I was interested in, you know, coming up in in a very D. I. Y. sort of upbringing with regards to like music and being interested in book publishing myself from an independent stand point was like, what if there could be this sort of other route for audio literature?

What if independent publishing houses could have a distribution platform that paid more attention to their needs and would inevitably sort of give more power and more voice to the smaller book companies?

It's sort of the same thing a Spotify were like all the big labels kinda hog the streaming money and smaller labels don't really reap the benefits of that platform.

What I wanted to do was just enter the space and I worked with independent publishing houses to create audio versions of their books, something that they probably couldn't afford to do or weren't really interested in doing on their own, but as like an outsider and somebody who could offer that service that's what I wanted to provide.

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And I made it interesting and I made it musical because I commissioned a new “musical score” so I had an artist write new music for the book and it would be a chapter of literature and then an original piece of music and then a chapter and then music.

And I published a few books, I did I think three and I was working on some other books and I was really enjoying the process of working with independent publishers and getting to know these authors and working closely with musicians. All of that was great, but the entire, as you can probably imagine before I even say it, the entire process was incredibly long.

Books tend to be much, much longer than like album for example and it was also really expensive. You know, like I'm hiring voice actors and then it ended up being a loss it just ended up taking so much time and so much money that if I was going to continue building this company and building this business and becoming like a bigger player in this space that I'm trying to essentially create that doesn't exist which is the audio book distribution landscape for independent publishers.

If I was going to continue to go down that route I'd have to ask for lots of money and probably higher a team actually build a company as opposed to me trying to just do it in this D. I. Y. way. It was just a risk I was unwilling to take at that point because I hadn't proven that this would work, you know.

So yeah, I mean it's interesting, and I frequently think about going back to that idea maybe trying it from a few different angles, but unfortunately while I think audio literature has grown a lot in the last ten years I still don't really think that there are spaces for independent publishers that are worthwhile and safe.

Suz: I think it's great that you went out there and you know put pen to paper, you know, started walking your talk and saying let's just see! And now, if you go back to it you'll be coming at it from a different perspective, and, you know, that's really, really important, so, you know, you did the legwork to find out what the holes were and now you know what they are going into it again. So that's really important.

Jeremy: If you're doing anything with it you know with an entrepreneurial mindset, I think one of the biggest things is to sort of play in the space and not be too critical at first just sort of talk to as many people as possible really try to build your network and build connections.

I was surprised at how when I was reaching out to like a number of people that were working in the audiobook industry people just wanted to talk. They were just interested to

exchange ideas and talk about how you know the industry as they see it. And I think that's like an enormous take away for me that I, you know, in the years since then.

Basically anything that I've done, anything that I've tried to you know dip my feet into has involved a component of just R & D (research and development).

Just like reaching out to people, random people, you know, do your research, find out who's doing what and literally just say, 'Hey you want to get a coffee sometime? I'd love to pick your brain.'

Nine times out of ten, people be like 'Sure!'

Suz: Right, and I think that's important that to see the value in that and see the progress that that represents where I think a lot of musicians when they're, you know, doing all that backend work to get to know their audience, to network to build, you know, their contact list, it often feels like, "Well, what am I even doing?" 'cause it's not really tangible stuff.

You know, it's not merch sales, not downloads.

Jeremy: Yeah, it doesn't have to be.

Suz: Right! And so I think it's important to see, you know, and understand the value of the time you're putting in to growing, as you said, the research and development phase of what you're doing. You know, it's important to not overlook that.

Jeremy: I've like, you know as getting back to sort of myself as a musician, I've said this to a few people but I've often kind of just thought about it. I think I've learned more, you know, like backstage in the green rooms of venues just chatting with other musicians that are on the bill or whatever than I ever have by, you know, like going to conferences or reading books about music or etc.

You know and I didn't go to music school, which is a you know an interesting thing that we can talk about with regards to Soundfly, but there's just something like you know the world is your classroom when it comes to music and every single person can be a teacher.

And I've like, I know that I've said this just like a few minutes ago but I kind of came up in this, in like in a D. I. Y. way of working within the music industry. You know, like nobody's going to give me a gig if I don't make the gig happen myself.

Suz: Right.

Jeremy: So even, you know, as an adult, and I have like many years of gigging behind me, I don't necessarily need to be playing shows in some college student's basement necessarily. But just always bringing that like that working aspect wherever I go has helped me so much, and it all boils down to just like people wanting to help other people.

Suz: Absolutely and let's dig a little bit more into your time as musician. Sontag Shogun, I love that you guys, I think it was on your Facebook page, that it was described as 'lullanoise' which I think is just such a great term for it. Because I loved listening to it and I was like 'Yeah! That term is so spot on.'

And on your website, you describe it saying that it makes use of hybrid-analog-digital sound treatments and nostalgic solo piano compositions in harmony to depict abstract places in our memory.

I love that and it's such a great description, so you know listening to it and as you said I know you said it's also used, you guys do a lot of scoring to film, but tell us how you guys found your niche and kind of put your mark on lullanoise and how that gained attention of Brooklyn-based label, Youngbloods kinda let us know where you guys, how you found this sound and kind of owned it as your thing.

Jeremy: That's such a good question. I love answering questions worded like that as opposed to somebody, and this happens so frequently in interviews or something, where people are just like 'yeah so where does the name come from? How did you guys meet?' which you know are pretty black and white, boring stuff. And by the way, there is actually no good answer where the name came from,

Suz: There usually isn't with most bands that's why I stay away from that. They're always like, "I found it in a magazine! I liked it."

Jeremy: When the three of us, it's a trio, so the three of us went to college in Montreal we had another band. We had a band that was like very technical, very musical we all played actual instruments I am a guitarist and somebody that now does mostly field recordings and laptop, electronically treated vocals in Sontag, he was just simply playing bass and our piano player in Sontag Shogun was also the piano player in this band, but it was a sextet and it was very musical, very technical.

We wrote music, we rehearsed it, and you know, as much as I don't like to think about what

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a wrong note is, if we played a wrong note you'd be able to sort of tell immediately because that's just how the songs were structured. So there was this need, early on, and I'm talking over ten years ago at this point, for there to be this other musical outlet something that was more improvisational, more open ended and exploratory where we could rub our hands on different surfaces to make these kind of different sonic textures happen, and really just sort of feeling out music from a completely different space than writing notes on a page.

It just started out like as a you know like a little jamming project, and we had different people come in and out of the project and over the years it was really just like a part-time thing, like a side thing. And eventually that that other band broke up, and then in a very real way the need for a musical project that could just exist on its own terms and change and be very flexible just seeped into our lives.

We could no longer handle something that required like a lot of upkeep and a lot of organization we needed something some musical outlet that would just be more fluid and improvisational. And so it eventually became a full-time project over the years and it's been full-time for a few years now, primarily because we've started to like record and tour more and we've made it a part of our lives in a way that you know we can all handle.

Suz: What made you then determine, 'okay, this is what we're going to be. We're going to handle like this niche'?

Because it seems to me that you guys kind of focused in on a type of specific genre, and you were able to get, you know, the attention of a great label where I think a lot of artists are like, 'Oh! I have to do what's popular. I have to do this big thing, and like make a big splash in order to get somebody to notice me,' so how did that kind of all unfold?

Jeremy: Right, yeah. This does fold into the lullanoise thing. "Lullanoise" is not a term, it's just something we made up. And it's almost a joke on the idea of genres and labels at all. Because every band should make up their own genre first of all.

Suz: I totally agree.

Jeremy: Yeah, unless you're, you know, playing covers and and you really need to lean on that genre as, you know, as a way in for people, which is fine. But for us it was like, we were literally trying to re-write the sort of spectrum of music that this project would happen across.

And that's not to say that we would like play songs or something that were like, you know,

one is a samba song and then we finish that go into like, you know, metal or something. We didn't really play music like that, but it is true that we don't think of genre when we're writing and we don't think of labels or we just sort of try to be open and intuitive to what speaks to us inspirationally.

The thing with this project is that it takes, mostly it takes inspiration from photographs and from the sort of abstract, expressionistic forms of art. Dance, film and and photography I think are big parts of it. The whole thing is we're trying to sort of create like a very open-ended music that leans on emotions like nostalgia.

So music that is sort of somber and sad, it can be uplifting but we're not trying to like ram an emotion down your throat like what happens in pop music where it's, you know, 'I'm telling you the story of what the song is about and I'm writing a chord progression that's going to echo that and there's, you know, there's no confusing what my message is.

Like this is about heartbreak and everything about the song's gonna sound like heartbreak. Our whole approach to writing music has been let's tangle that up. Let's make it a little bit more confusing and instead of giving you like a clear emotion, what we want to do is paint a picture that you can attribute your own feelings towards. Like you can attribute your own memories.

Like, 'What does this make you think of?' like no single person that ever goes to a dance show is gonna get the same thing. And, you know, like whatever the message is of the dance performance there's just something about like how the human body moves through space that is like personal to each and everyone of us and the simplest little gesture can have such contrasting resulting feelings in every viewer. And so yeah, basically we just wanted to create that in music.

Suz: Absolutely, and as you set out to create that, do you think there was, I mean did you go with this goal of like, 'We need to get signed!' or did you go with the goal of like we need to tour and like or sell this many albums... like what kind of motivated you or was it more general? Was it just a true passion for the act of creating? Or was there like a goal that you guys were kind of working towards?

Jeremy: I think since day one this there's been a sort of resistance to limiting ourselves in any of those types of decisions. I mean even the idea of signing with a label was not really something we thought about it and and if we did think about it it was like, well we'll do that if the right is the right label comes like knocking on our door, but there was never a thought where we were going to become like a career project with a certain label.

Like, you know, just get swallowed up by somebody else's roster.

Suz: Right, so then what was it about that that came about that you guys said, 'all right hmm... maybe we'll give this a go'?

Jeremy: Well, so with the Youngbloods specifically I mean we self-released a few of our records early on which is, you know, going back to the D. I. Y. thing that's just a really great way to kind of own your own sound and own your own, you know, politics and stuff when it comes to music.

Suz: Absolutely.

Jeremy: But those records did okay. I mean I think we toured a lot and working our own tours is really hard, but the good thing is that you meet a lot of people along the way, and some of those people you meet are artists, some of them are fans, some of those are like label people or press people, you just like come in contact with these people when you put yourselves out there on tour.

We did it ourselves and brought ourselves all across the U.S. and Canada, Europe a few times, Japan a couple times, even China – we played a couple shows in China, which is crazy. After like years of like touring sort of "on our own terms" and after meeting all these people, the funniest thing happened where we just played like a local show in Queens one night and annoyingly there was like a techno party going on downstairs while we're playing.

So we're trying to make our quiet music and being really like fed up with the techno party that's going on downstairs at some point the techno party ended earlier than our show, which I don't understand how that is possible, and everybody came up stairs and was like, 'Oh I wonder what this is' and checked us out.

And halfway through our set in like a almost empty room all of a sudden we're playing to like a full crowd, and it just happened to be a really good night we played really well and afterwards the people that were organizing that the techno party who at the time we didn't know this, but it ended up being the Youngbloods label came up and they were like, "Okay like I love your music, I don't know what just happened, but I just wandered in and saw you guys play like what's your deal? Like do you have a label? Like what can we do? How can we work together?"

And it was just a really funny sort of meeting of the minds. Like I don't care what the labels are it's like I don't care if I've put out like techno music or electronic music like what you guys

are doing fits with with my aesthetic and we thought the same thing about Youngbloods like at the time they were putting out dance music but they had this compilation of sort of like rhythm-less music like beat-less music.

So it's leaning more towards the ambient stuff. They're just really great guys, you know, we love working with them, and we just see eye to eye on so many things and they give us the creative freedom to go into a studio an experiment and do whatever the hell we want, and they're like 'Yeah let's do it! Let's release that.'

Suz: That's awesome. I think it's great that, you know, it came together with you guys just focusing on what you do best and just doing your thing.

Jeremy: Exactly, yeah.

Suz: And at the right time, the right people came together. I think too many artists focus on, "I need to get signed! I need to get signed!" and they lose track of just actually doing the work, so I love that.

And speaking of work and other avenues of, you know, expressing yourselves as music-preneurs, I know that Ian Temple from your band started Soundfly, and as you had said, you run the blog Flypaper from Soundfly, so I'm curious how you kind of came aboard.

Was it simultaneously? Like Ian started this and you're like, 'Yes, let's do this!' or, you know, how did Soundfly really come about? And I want to know more about Soundfly's mission when it comes to industry education.

Jeremy: Yeah, so very simply Ian started the company with a couple people that he was talking to at the time about what he was thinking about doing. I wasn't involved in the early, early days, but he brought me a board basically within, I would say like a half a year or something, just asking my advice on things and asking how I would love to contribute if I had a little bit of time here and there.

And eventually, you know, over the course of like a year that just turned into a full time job, and now it's been a few years that we've been working together which is really nice. But Ian, I don't put words in his mouth, but I know that he started the company based on a sort of personal mission.

He had just left a very intense job in New York working for a company that was doing education stuff and he was really inspired by the educational work that he was doing, but

now that he had all this time on his hands you want to get better at playing music and just learn as much as he could and like really immersed himself in music education. And having gone online and started to take courses and check out YouTube videos, basically immediately he realized the thing that everybody that works for Soundfly right now has also realized at some point, which is that trying to learn something online leaves a lot to be desired, and it's not always easy, and it's not straight forward.

And there is this idea that learning online is very easy because you can just click, and then there's the video, and I can do it whenever I want, and all of that is really great, but time and time again research has proven that that's not really how we learn. Like we don't just learn by, you know, ingesting content.

And unfortunately for a lot of companies that produce content online, you know, especially in the music education space, a lot of the marketing is around this idea of like, you know, if you buy this course you have lifetime access to the videos and this and that – by the way research shows that even if you pay like five hundred or a thousand or fifteen hundred dollars for a course, nobody ever goes back and rewatches those videos. And repetition is, you know, is like a key to how we it's one of the foundational elements of how we learn something.

Suz: Right.

Jeremy: And there just isn't that aspect when somebody just puts a video online and says, "Okay, go learn this thing." So Ian was like, "Okay, this sucks. I need to figure this out, and I want to, you know, start a platform where I can teach music online, but really think through the learning process to make sure that every single student that comes across my content is a happy customer."

And over the years the company has worked in a lot of different capacities with a few different partners including NYU and Carnegie Hall as well as corporate partners and in all of the work that we've done, we've also been continually refreshing this research about how do people learn?

How to our students learn? What do our students want? What are they getting and not getting from our courses? Etcetera and it just reinforces everything that we stand for which is peer-to-peer learning, learning from somebody that you respect as a peer is a big aspect of it.

So we've included, you know, a mentorship component into our online courses. And being

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able to revisit the same subject matter from a number of angles which goes along with the idea of repetition, but also sort of creating, you know, like a personal relationship with the content that you're learning is really important.

So we've just redesigned our courses so many times to to maximize the the learning outcomes and to maximize student engagement and student happiness.

Suz: I love what you guys offer. I'm thrilled to have been a small contributor to Flypaper, you guys have a lot of great topics, and as you said you guys really understand the importance of learning and how that's done, so how can our listeners get involved with Soundfly? And where can they find it?

Just so you guys know, the links will be in the show notes, but why don't you tell them a little bit about the different ways they can get involved.

Jeremy: One of the great things about Soundfly at the moment, is that we have a lot of free courses on the site so all that costs is your email address. We have tons of free courses, you can go and check out any course on the site, and just you know go through it at at your leisure.

If you want to spend a little bit of money, take a, what we call a Main Stage course, which is a six to eight week online course and that involves one-on-one feedback and support from a Soundfly mentor who sort of guides you through the course and coaches you along.

We offer paid courses for \$499 which is a lot of money for some people, but we have payment plans and it's actually really cheap when you consider all of the stuff you're getting from that.

Otherwise, go ahead and check out Flypaper which is the daily blog all kinds of topics in music education. You can sign up for email list which is Soundfly weekly.

And one more thing is that if any educators are listening to this, any like music teachers or music tutors, I would really like you to get in touch with me because we are starting some new programs that we're working really closely with educators everywhere and there's some really interesting stuff happening and I'd love to hear from you Jeremy@soundfly.com.

If you're an educator, please get in touch and if you're a potential Soundfly student and you want to learn more just go to the site. You can also email me if you'd like.

Suz: Wonderful. So I'll have all of that in the show notes. Before we go, just three quick questions that I like to leave our listeners that I ask every guest.

Jeremy: Yes, I've heard.

Suz: If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

Jeremy: If I could have superpowers it would be to stop time in the middle of the day, so I could have two to three extra hours to get all of this stuff done that I need to get done.

Suz: Yes! I hear that.

Jeremy: I don't know how many times you've heard that answer, but I'm sure in the music-preneur community ...

Suz: Yeah, it's a wishful thinking for all of us. If time-travel was possible what's one lesson you'd like to go back and tell yourself?

Jeremy: I don't want to go too deep into this but one thing that I've realized maybe a little bit too late in life is the sort of power of being an apprentice or like just like having a mentor.

And, you know, these days every time I get the opportunity to pick the brain of somebody older than me, somebody like more experience than me, I really try to milk it as much as possible.

Suz: Yeah.

Jeremy: And these days I'm actually even kind of seeking out older musicians and older sort-of music people in the music industry that I can just sit down with and have chats with.

If I could go back in time I think I would try to do that more in my youth and really kinda go through life with that as a priority because looking back there were so many people that I met along my journey that, you know, I met, I shook their hands, had a stupid, small conversation with them and then we went our separate ways, and if I could go back and kind of, some of those people were like quite famous composers or something. I wish I could have just been like, "Okay, can I, you know, can I book an afternoon with you?" or something, you know?

Suz: Yeah, definitely an important lesson for sure. And lastly, the first three that come to

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mind – three musicians living or dead that you want at your dinner table.

Jeremy: The top person that pops into my mind is John Coltrane. Just the way that he thought about music and the way that he sought to like expresses his ideas through a musical form which at the time was, you know, people basically had wrapped their head around, so John was like 'Uh, no there's other avenues...' so John Coltrane. I would love to sit down with Stravinsky and, you know, there's so many reasons for that I don't want to go into that.

Suz: Haha, yeah!

Jeremy: Uh, living – I should probably choose a living person! So the person that came to my mind and this might not be the biggest person on my list but Ryuichi Sakamoto I think has had an enormous effect on the way that I think about music, and I know that he thinks very deeply about composition and film scoring and just the nature of creativity and collaboration, so yeah Ryuichi Sakamoto would be a great person to sit down and have dinner with. Phew!

Suz: That is awesome! Well this was a really great episode. I thank you so much for sharing your time with us, I know your schedule is pretty jam-packed and so we'll let you go but I just want to thank you. And for everybody listening, everything that Jeremy has mentioned, you will find links and resources – rocksources as I call them – in the show notes. So thanks so much for being here with us.

Jeremy: Thanks so much, Suzanne! This was great I wish we could have talked all afternoon.

Suz: I know! Well, we'll do another one – we'll do some follow-ups.

Jeremy: Sure, alright!

Suz: Have a great one!

Jeremy: You too!

Suz: Thanks so much!

Jeremy: Bye!

I want to thank Jeremy, again, for spending time with us and sharing with us his journey.

I loved what he said about connecting with older, more experienced people in the industry. So many times we look ahead to see what's next or what's new or where we should be headed, but soooo much can be learned about where we've come from and how certain things that came before us brought us to where we are now.

I encourage you to find a mentor of your own if you haven't already. Simply find someone who inspires you and ask them if you can take them out to lunch. As Jeremy says, never stop learning!

I also encourage you to check out some incredible lullanoise and pre-order/pre-save Sontag Shogun's upcoming album, *It Billows Up*. You can check that out and more in the show notes.

Simply go to www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep56.

In addition, if you're in a rut and not sure what you need to focus on first, try out my Next Steps Quiz! I've been told it's pretty accurate... answer a few questions and not only will I let you know what next step to take BUT I'll also provide you with a FREE download to help you get there!

The link to the quiz is in the show notes – that's www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep56.

As always, I thank you for listening and I'm here if you have any questions. Email me at anytime: 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.