



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

Ep67: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Jackknife Stiletto

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Hello! You're listening to [Episode 67: Music-Preneur Mindset Spotlight: Jackknife Stiletto](#).

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.

We are officially less than 30 days away from The Music-Preneur Mindset Summit and tickets are about to go up in price in less than 48 hours, so don't wait! Sept 1st at MIDNIGHT prices will go up to \$87 so lock in your Summer Special price now for our limited in-person tickets.

You can purchase a ticket to stream it, however coming out live to an event can be incredibly impactful. Something different happens when you step out of your normal day-to-day - you leave your comfort zone and gain a new perspective on the work you're doing, all while being surrounded by a community who understands where you've been and where you want to go.

If you're constantly getting the "are you still doing that music thing" or the "what is it exactly that you do" or the "when are you gonna give that up and get a real job" comments, it's time to join your music industry family for 2.5 days on the beach in an intimate setting to build a strong, lasting foundation to your career as well as build relationships that will get you through those times where it feels like no one understands.

Having people to rely on in this industry is so important. Having a structure for clear communication and organization is also just as crucial and sometimes difficult to set up when you're overwhelmed with everything on your plate. We'll be addressing all of those things at the Summit, however we're also addressing it here today in my discussion with the badass ladies of Jackknife Stiletto.

Jackknife Stiletto is an all-female rock 'n' roll band from New York City. Their aggressive drive and punk attitude give them a sound all their own. But if you need a reference, and we all know most do, as they say think Rancid meets Black Sabbath — but with chicks.

Their latest releases: *Chronicles of Jane: Vol. 1 & 2* are out now on Joan Jett's label, Blackheart Records! It's a series of EPs and a comic book narrative, featuring illustrations by Toronto artist Becca T-R. The project debuted on the NACC Top 200 charts at #103 and was nominated for Best Rock EP by the Independent Music Awards.

They've toured nationally, sharing the stage with Joan Jett & The Blackhearts, Cheap Trick, Murphy's Law, Cherie Currie, Less Than Jake, Anti-Flag and Bret Michaels. These rockers have also brought the house down at SXSW and Warped Tour.

I recently sat down with members Annie Stoic, Mel Funk and Foxy Roxy to discuss how the hell they manage living their rock-n-roll dreams on the road with day jobs and what it's like to be signed to Joan Jett's label.

I will warn you, due to some unfortunate tech issues {if you know me at all you know I'm no stranger to those!} we did lose a piece of the interview, so unfortunately we don't have their answers to our rapid-fire questions that I ask at the end of every interview, but luckily what we do have is their honest, no-holds-barred, hilarious take on what it's like behind the scenes for a successful touring group and I KNOW after this conversation you're going to be inspired to up your spreadsheet game in an effort to be half as organized as these badass bosses are.

Take a listen...

Suz: Alright, so I'm here with the ladies of Jackknife Stiletto, hello! How are you? And thanks for being here!

JKS: Good! How are you?

Suz: Good good! So could you all just briefly introduce yourselves to our audience? I gave everybody a little bit of a background about you, but let's let them get to know who they're listening to.

Annie: I'm Annie Stoic and I sing and play guitar.

Mel: I'm Mel Funk and I play the drums and sing back up.

Roxy: I'm Roxy and I play bass.

Suz: Awesome! So it's hard to know where to begin with you ladies because you handle all of your own booking, your merch, your tech, your social media, plus you own a button company which I really want to get back to in a moment.

JKS: Yes!

Suz: And you all have multiple day jobs. You each have your own other commitments. So the content that you all put out is so great. Your pictures are professional, you have calls-to-actions on your website, your merch is so well branded, so I mean that's a lot to master and it's something that so many people struggle with. So, was this stuff that was all intuitive for you guys or did it take a lot of time and effort to learn all of those pieces? Let us in on what it's been like for your journey in the music business.

Annie: Definitely a lot of, you know, testing what works, what doesn't work. We're very much into the whole branding, making sure everything looks right in our websites and everything's the same on all of our social media, so we definitely take a lot of that into consideration. We've definitely done a lot of wrong things that don't work so we definitely had a lot of trial and error.

Yeah and so we're just hoping that we're going the right way right now and just keep doing it. And it's a lot yeah, it's a lot of trial and error, but I think we're in the right direction at this point so hopefully we'll just keep learning what's coming up and keeping up with new technology and stuff, too.

Suz: Absolutely! I mean I love your YouTube channel all the different content that, you know, you guys come up with is all stuff that I talk to artists all the time about. You know, thinking outside the box in terms of like I love, I think it was Mel who had the 'Oh shit!' Gig Bag or something, or what's in your... that was so interesting! And just to see you know how you pack

for a show and all the different things that you bring with you, you know, just in case or extra pieces that, you know, you can forget when you when you go on tour.

It was just so interesting and people like me who don't perform, you know, sitting at home at their day job like that stuff is really compelling. So, when it comes to the business side of things what keeps you guys passionate to keep learning and to keep trying it and and trying new things?

Mel: I think as far as keeping us passionate about it, I think we have so much to prove especially being an all-female band. It makes you feel really good knowing after the show happened or after the tour happen knowing that we put so much work into it and seeing it come to life is an awesome feeling. Like we said, everything is trial and error and then once you do learn something you make sure you do it better the next time even that 'Oh shit!' Bag - even that was all trial and error. You finish a show and someone goes "Oh shit! I need ..." and no one has it so then you make sure that's the first thing you pack for the next tour or the next gig. So we're always learning, always workin'.

Annie: Yeah and if you're not passionate about it ... Then why are you doing it? There's only so much you're going to do anyway I think passion is just you have no other choice really. You just have to do it.

Suz: Yeah I think that's a great answer. I find a lot of artists kind of allow themselves to get so overwhelmed by it that they fail to make progress with it or are too afraid to try because they don't want to be wrong, and so I just think that it's it's great that you, you know, you're out there and you're like this is what we want and come hell or high water, you know, we'll just figure it out - we got to do it. I think that's such a great attitude to have.

One of the things that I also really liked reading in your bio which is something we talk about a lot on this podcast and online is, you know, being able to give everybody a reference point and and let new people who may not know you kind of invite them into what you sound like. And in your bio you have "think Rancid meets Black Sabbath with chicks." And it was such a fun and cool way to explain like what we're in store for when we hit play.

So I'm just curious, you know, how do you feel about it when it comes to comparisons especially as you said you feel like you have a lot to prove in your genre and as you build your career? How do you feel about comparisons? Do you feel does it help? Do you look at it as just, you know, this is how we market ourselves? Or it doesn't rub you the wrong way if people compare you to other bands? Especially being women, they'll just you know compare you to maybe a female man that is not even in your genre ...

JKS: Right.

Suz: You know, how do you guys feel about those things?

Annie: Yeah that happens a lot with comparing us to other female bands like, "Oh! You guys are like The Runaways! Oh, you guys are like Kitty!" We're like, "We're not like Kitty!" Like love them, but you know,...

Mel: You know, country artists we don't even play that type of music. I mean it could be anything as long as there's a girl in it they'll compare you to it! But on the other hand, when you do get compared to someone, whether it is the same genre or not, sometimes it's a compliment. Sometimes it's "Wow! I can't believe they just compared us to that. That's awesome!" Especially if it's someone that we look up to, and if it's someone that you haven't heard yet sometimes it gives us a reason to go find a new artist and check them out.

Annie: Yeah I kind of thought it was a funny idea when people like... cause when you're a new listener you don't know what we sound like and you're like "What do you sound like? Give me a band name to refer you to" because they want to know something that they already know. Well it's very scary to listen to new music! It's very scary to go see a new band and go see new music, so they do want a reference to at least start their ideas, and I think kind of putting two male bands mix it's kind of like, "Oh! Well let me see what that's all about!" You know? Cause we're not completely like Rancid, we're not completely like Sabbath you know it's kind of like, you know, the mix of like hard rock and punk rock.

Suz: Right.

Roxy: And people like to be, you know, comfortable and familiar with whatever they're looking into, so that way it gives them a reference point kind. It's kind of a necessary evil - they know where you're starting and then take it from there.

Suz: Yeah, absolutely. Like you said it's just a starting point it's like it's getting them to hit play and, you know, then you stand by your own sound and your own talent and they stick around. Your latest release *Chronicles of Jane, Vol. 2*, as well as *Vol. 1* is out on Blackheart Records which is Joan Jett's label nonetheless, which is pretty friggin' epic and so many artists out there, you know, I hear all the time of the you know their goal is to get signed. So what has working with a label done for you? And, you know, if you're able to tell us like is it this magic God-fairy you know solution that everyone hopes it is? Or, you know, can you kind of give us a behind-the-scenes on what putting out an album with a label has been like?

Annie: It's definitely opened doors for us. It's still a very DIY label - Blackhearts is very DIY - so it's kind of just we have to...

Mel: You still have to do a lot of your own work.

Annie: Yeah you have to do a ton of your own, even more legwork on your own because you know they do have things that they can offer, but we have to do those things! You know, we don't have people that help us you know advance shows that they can help us get and things like that. Like "Oh, here. We got you an in-store" but we gotta advance it. We don't, you know, it's kind of like it's still very DIY with, you know, us and them.

Roxy: And now you have to prove that you're worth being on that label, so you have even more to prove.

Annie: Yeah exactly! So yeah it's a ton more work. But even any label in general now it's very rare for them to be like, "Oh! Well here's a million dollars!"

Suz: Right.

Annie: I don't see any labels doing that, you know, they're probably gonna help out with, you know, making the records - things like that, but you still gotta go and push and sell those

records, you know, no one's going to do that for you no matter what label you're on. You know if they're going to spend money on stuff they want you making that back for them, so it's ...

Roxy: They'll open the door but you still have to be the one to walk through it.

Annie: Yeah, so, you know, it's a lot more work that's all. That's what it is.

Suz: Yeah! Absolutely. I think it was John Mayer who said in an interview on a show somewhere that it was like the ... or maybe it could have been like the ASCAP Expo possibly a few years back... said you know getting signed like that's the day the real work begins.

Annie: Right!

Suz: And it sounds like that's pretty accurate from what you're sharing.

JKS: Sure! Definitely!

Suz: Yeah. I like how you put that - it's like now you're there but now you got to prove that you deserve to stay there. Yeah and I think that's something that a lot of people don't think about it's just like, "Oh okay if I get signed everything will just be simple!" You know, "That's the reason nothing's going well for me is I'm not signed and if I do that then everything will be great!"

Being that you have come to understand that ... did you kind of always go into that? Like did you go into signing with a label understanding that it was still going to be a lot riding on your shoulders or was there like an awakening that happened in terms of the fact that there are still a lot that you have to do yourself or was that just something you kind of always knew and moved forward with?

Annie: I mean when had the new record ready to go we didn't know whether or not it was going to be put out by Blackheart or not, so either way we were ready to push it hard. So the fact that it was able to be released on Blackheart was amazing. And we were like "Alright, now we really really really got to work harder at it." Not that anything would have changed that before but definitely more things happen and more opportunities came up for us. So it was

more work, but I wouldn't say that, you know, we weren't gonna keep doing it whether that happened or not.

Suz: And so when it comes to all of this responsibility to do all these things, cause there's so many pieces to it. I mean on this podcast we don't, you know, get too much into the music, for all you listening as a reminder all of the links to their music are in the show notes and I highly suggest you follow them and download and stream their music and you can find all those links there, but with this podcast we a lot of the times focus on the business end of things and what is that process like when it comes to, you know, "Here's the list of all the pieces of the puzzle that we have to take care of" - how does that all get divvied up?

JKS: GOOGLE DOCS!

Mel: We are obsessed with Google Spreadsheets!

Annie: I, Annie, am addicted to Google Docs.

Mel: So we have a million spreadsheets that we all, all three of us have access to. We have a team log, we have logs of our merch, we have logs of expenses, we have logs of show dates and all the details that go with that and tours - EVERYTHING is in a Google Doc and it's color coded so we know who has to do what.

Suz: Oh I love it!

Mel: And then there's to-do lists in there and then once you complete something on the to-do list, you put it in the "done" list, so yeah it is all in Google Sheets.

Annie: We try to be as org- yeah Google docs is like...A lifesaver. Yeah it's great.

Suz: You guys are like talking dirty to me right now.

Annie: Yeah!

Suz: Color-coded spreadsheets I love it!

Annie: Who wants those Google Docs? But yeah if you're listening and don't know what Google Docs is if you all have Gmail, which I think you all need a Gmail account, but everything updates in real time so you can... You know, it's so great and easy to find.

Roxy: That's the funny thing actually, I can see you when you're typing.

Annie: So you can send messages to each other too if you want but yeah but it's a great way to, you know, so that we all just, you know, went to NAMM and we all put our contact like peoples business cards that we met, you know, who's following up with them ... it's just such an easy way to know who's doing what who sent an email so we don't send double emails to people.

Suz: Right!

Annie: So they don't go like "Well your other band member just emailed me. Why are you emailing me?" you know? So yeah I think it's like it's probably one of the, you know, greatest things... Thanks, Google!

Suz: If you're looking to sponsor bands they're open to it! No that's great and I love that you brought up the point of you know not just staying organized in taking action, but the *communication* portion of it is so important because of things like networking and building relationships. When there's three or, sometimes in other bands four or five, of you doing work at the same time, you know, on one hand you don't want things to fall through the cracks but on the other you don't want things like that to happen where somebody's just like, "Aren't you guys in communication? Like I already heard from you, why are you contacting me again?"

Or even just the time! You know, if you're tripling up on the same things then all that time and effort is wasted so that's a really good point to bring up. And so do you guys live with one another? Do you live close by? Are you just in constant contact with one another? Like how do you manage making sure that you know you're communicating clearly?

Annie: Group texting! Emails, you know, we pretty much live near each other, you know, we're all in New York but that could take hours to get to each other because of traffic, you know?

It's very rare that a day at least goes by where like we haven't at least said something to each other.

Roxy: And we do rehearse multiple times a week so we see each other at rehearsals, so if there's anything important that need to be brought up we can also discuss it there. Sometimes we have separate band meetings where we just get together with our laptops and over business stuff.

Suz: That's great! I'm always promoting time blocking and having, you know, separate spaces for all those different things. And that's amazing that you guys have, you know, where it's like this is just business time or this is just rehearsal time and trying to boundary that is really effective. I think it's great that you guys do that.

How do you manage it all with day jobs? And I mean obviously the city, you know, you guys live nearby and that, as you said, sometimes it doesn't even matter the way that the subways work...But how do you, I mean are there times that you are just like what day is today? What is happening? Or do you kind of have a system down now? Like what's that like?

Roxy: It's mayhem.

Annie: Yeah we're all constantly asking what day it is? Is rehearsal tonight? What year is it?

Mel: Or we'll be on tour and asking what state we're in cause we don't even know.

Annie: Yeah we don't even know where we are.

Roxy: We just see corn or dust or eggs... It does get really confusing and really difficult to keep track of so again Google Sheets!

Annie: We make sure our GPS is in the right day and our Google calendars are all aligned

Roxy: And make sure we're driving to the venue in the right state on the right coast.

Annie: Not leaving the van doors open while you're driving...

Roxy: That, too. Closing the truck before you drive away with no gear in the back... oh yeah we also have to remind each other always you know, does everyone have phone, wallet, keys?

Mel: Pants!

Annie: And pants!

Suz: I actually had a whole episode dedicated to me forgetting my pants - like all of them always.

Roxy: It's the first thing that is yelled when we get back in the van after the show, "Does everyone have their pants?! All right. Good."

Suz: You've gotta check! It's really important!

Annie: Well, yeah. We have different show outfits so it's like where are my pants? It's freezing out! I'm wearing fishnets!

Suz: And speaking of touring, what has that been like? Well there's so many questions I have about it that I know our audience would want to know about but let's just start with how do you balance touring with your jobs? Did you, you know, did you make sure you get certain jobs that are more flexible? Or is it always a new job when you come back from a tour? Or how do you kind of manage that type of lifestyle?

Roxy: I have a flexible job, so I use vacation time to tour.

Mel: And I have a lot of different part-time jobs. The reason that I've done that, I've always made sure that every job I take can be flexible. And let's say we go on tour for a week, if I am working part time in each job, I'm not necessarily taking off a whole week of work from each place. I may be taking off one or two days because I only go to that place one or two days a week. And then I'm taking off from the other place one or two days, so all in all it kind of balances, but it's difficult.

Annie: And then my job is also touring so anytime I'm home and I'm like alright then we're touring.

Mel: So we've all got different circumstances going on.

Annie: Yeah but they all, at some point, hopefully align themselves so that we could go out on tour as well.

Roxy: It actually, I know for me at least, it's the *least* stressful when we're on tour because I'm not in three different places at once. We're not running to our jobs and then run to rehearsal and then running to play a local show or anything like that. It's like you're in the van, you're all together, and your going to the show, so it makes it actually easier for each day. You're focused. You're doing that one thing.

Annie: You have one minivan...

Mel: One pair of pants...

Suz: So clearly organization matters a great deal to you all and that's amazing. What do you do on the mental front when it comes to, you know, you're changing environments? You were at this job, now you're on tour, and now you're, you know, doing new things and your promoting your album, and then you're back home from tour and then you've got to go back to the job...

I mean how is that how does it affect each of you in terms of, you know, your mindset and just kind of acclimating - do find it really easy to adjust to the touring and not touring? Or is there something that you do maybe a routine or any type of ritual to kind of come in and out of it? Or what's that experience been like for each of you?

Mel: It's probably the reason we're all crazy. I don't know. I mean transitioning to tour isn't really difficult but coming back and sitting at work I mean that sucks.

Roxy: You come back and you're like, "Can we leave again?"

Annie: You're like, "When can we go on tour again?" Cause you do all this work while you're working and doing all this stuff to go on the tour they you're like cool! I'm on the tour! I'm on the tour! Well now I'm not on tour and we have to do this same thing all over again.

Roxy: And then we get out our giant map and start playing pin the tail on... And then we book the next tour! It's like you always need that next tour to look forward to. That's what keeps you going at your other jobs. It's like "Alright, we're going on tour next month!"

Suz: And would you say that's your favorite part of music for you is the live performing?

Roxy: For me definitely, what about you?

Mel: I think so.

Roxy: Yeah? All three of us?

Annie: Yes! Confirmed!

Suz: And I guess my other question for you too around touring and especially in, you know, the genre that you're in and you've been able to tour and open up for some amazing bands that I told our listeners about earlier in the episode, that's a lot. I mean it's a lot going on, do you do any of your friends or family, was there ever any kind of like overprotectiveness or any kind of maybe misunderstanding?

Something else we've talked a lot on this podcast with other artists is just when family and loved ones just don't get what it is you're doing - have you found that? Or have the people in your life been fully supportive and they're like, 'Just go rock it! You know have fun on tour! See you when you get back!' or has it been you know a mixture? What that reception been like?

Mel: For me it's been a mixture. I've had definitely supportive but also like, 'Wait you're going where?! You're sleeping in a van?! You're doing what?!'

Annie: We really just don't tell them that we're sleeping in the van.

Mel: Yeah nobody really knows. They're just like, 'Call me every night. Let me know you're alive!'

Annie: Or 'What do you mean you're sleeping at a gas station?' or a truck stop at a Pilot...

Mel: And yeah it's... it's a lot of that. Like 'Do you know where you're going? Do you know who you're, you know, playing the show with?' And most of the time it's 'No... we'll meet them when we get there!'

Annie: No we didn't book a random house party with a bunch of dogs outside of the house. Yeah no that didn't happen! All the shows were great!

My first tour was Warped Tour. I was still in college and they were like 'You're not going out on the road for two months!' I said 'Well I'm either going or I guess I'm running away and you won't see me until I come back for school!' You know, I didn't really give them the option to tell me 'No'. They kind of get it now, so ...

Roxy: And now that like our families know that the three of us know each other and they all know each of us. It's like okay, at least we know you guys are together and ...

Annie: And we're pretty safe on the road. We like, with gear, with the van, we're uh very...

Mel: Buddy system.

Annie: Yeah, buddy system, you know, so ...

Roxy: Yeah we watch out for each other, we don't just...

Annie: Pepper spray!

Suz: I imagine with the amount of organizing and the 'Oh shit!' bags that you guys have your bases covered. It's very common especially for females in this industry that the push back is just

like ... "Yeah, okay, that's great, I'm going anyway!" But I know it can get exhausting and overwhelming sometimes when loved ones kind of step in and they want to keep you, you know, in this little safe box and it's like, 'Oh you're up there on that scary stage doing all that music!'

Roxy: Yeah, we definitely get a lot of, maybe not intentionally, but a lot of people, it kind of makes you feel bad when it's like, 'What do you mean you're missing his birthday party?' Or you're missing this wedding... or you're missing this... it's like those are unfortunately the sacrifices that you have to make in this industry. You can't always be at everything at home because you are traveling a lot.

Suz: Yeah, yeah absolutely. And I would think, you know, just thinking about Joan Jett - I mean what an unbelievable badass, but when she was starting, you know, there's something to be said for not having technology and so when everybody is SO connected all the time and then you go off on tour it's like, you know, then you get the text messages and the phone calls or they want to know where you are... it's just a lot especially when everyone's used to being so connected all the time and knowing where everybody is at all times. I think it can be a little bit more like as you were saying before sometimes it's hard to shield them from certain things and just not tell them because they'll find out online. Or they'll find out from a Snapchat or something.

Annie: What was that bathroom you guys were all in?

Suz: Why was that posted at three in the morning?

Mel: Why were you taking selfies with an 18-wheeler?

Suz: And so what do you feel has been the biggest obstacle whether it's in your particular genre or just in business in general as professional musicians? What's been the most difficult thing for each of you to overcome as you build your career?

JKS: Everything? Haha! My life?

Mel: That's true. Making making those big sacrifices where you're not, you know maybe you're not earning that steady paycheck or working that high paying job... that comfy, cushy job because you want something flexible to go on tour.

Roxy: I think especially with YouTube and the social media and everything, I think I just, for me I just constantly feel old. Because I'm always... with technology... I feel like I can't keep up with it and I'm not good with it to begin with. So we're just like, 'Oh great! Another new social media platform - how do I use this one now?'

Suz: Right.

Annie: Yeah I learned an entire new video program to do all of the YouTube videos so I'm still learning that. I've learned Photoshop on my own, so I'm learning Premier now and it's just, it's a lot. I wish, I wish it would just work - like just go! Like here video program, edit this for me! Thanks. No, but yeah.

Roxy: And even playing around with settings for YouTube like we need the proper lighting or, you know, all the little things that you don't even think about when you watch a video, when you actually try to make one yourself -

Mel: Yeah the sound! It's like there's so much that goes into it. It looks so simple but it's really not and we're still learning!

The interview unfortunately cuts off there before the file got corrupted, but what a great note to end on and it's something I hope you all keep in mind - we're all still learning.

There will never come a time where you feel you've got it ALL under control. Where it feels like you've finally unlocked all of the answers you've been waiting for because it's not about reaching some end point. It's about the journey and the willingness to never give up.

I want to thank Annie, Mel and Roxy for being willing to share their story with us and give us a glimpse into what it's like after you get that sought after record deal - it's still work - hell even MORE work.

If it's your goal to be signed to a label make sure that there's an even bigger goal and a bigger intention behind it. A label is just another tool. It's not a silver bullet to success and it's not an end point.

Lastly, get organized! There's too much to juggle for you to be winging this. Whether it's Google Docs or Airtable or Asana or a mixture of things, don't be afraid to take the time to sit and organize your thoughts and what needs to be done.

If you would like help organizing this information and getting clear on your goals and next steps

I do encourage you to come join us in Long Beach this Sept 26-28 and let's get organized together. You can find more information and links to tickets in the show notes - www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep67.

I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to this Spotlight. I hope you'll follow & subscribe to Jackknife Stiletto's channels because they have more to share with you!

And before you go, I'm curious, did anything in particular hit home with you today? Did anything stick out as inspiring or surprising to you? Be sure to let me know! Leave a comment on the show notes page or send me an email: 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.