

Jonathan Shank

By BRADLEY TUCKER

JONATHAN SHANK IS a senior manager and executive producer at Red Light Management. Along with looking after acts like MAGIC!, Victoria Justice and Sam Tsui, Shank is the tour producer for shows such as Peppa Pig Live!, Fresh Beats Band, Octonauts, Power Rangers Live and Disney Juniors Dance Party. Shank got his start interning at House of Blues New Orleans while attending Tulane University. Although the venue didn't have a formal internship program at the time, it gave Shank the opportunity to lend a hand in every department and get a real feel for what went into putting on a show. Shank worked for a few management companies before landing at Red Light in 2010 and, since 2012, he has produced over 1,000 live shows in the family entertainment space.

What was the live music scene like where you grew up?

I grew up in Hatboro, Pa., and the local scene was small. I remember a Hall & Oates show put on by the local radio station at The Willow Grove Naval Air Station in the mid-'80s that made a big impact. After that, I would call the radio stations a lot for free tickets but never won. I saw about 40 shows at The Spectrum in the '80s and early-'90s, including Clapton, Billy Joel, INXS, Cindy Lauper, George Michael, U2 and the Grateful Dead several times. The funniest show I saw there was Milli Vanilli and Young MC, which was an MTV-sponsored tour.

What was your first job in the music business, and what led you to that job?

My first job was as an assistant to an agent in 1998. As luck would have it, my uncle had a connection to Paul Kantner, which led me to an interview



and then a job with his booking agent at the time. I started working with acts like Jazz Is Dead, Jefferson Starship, The Marshall Tucker Band, Dave Mason and Robby Krieger. One of the first things I did during my first week of work was pick up Jimmy Herring from the LA airport. He had never really played Grateful Dead music before that time, so it was the beginning of a new chapter in his career.

Describe an early influence on your career.

I had an internship with Kim Fowley in New Orleans in 1996 and 1997 while I was a student at Tulane. Kim had just moved to New Orleans and was running an indie-record label named St. Roch Records. The label had three or four artists but, mostly, I would sit in Kim's office across the desk from him while he pounded phone calls, one after the next, and told tales of old Hollywood. He encouraged me to move to LA after college and get into the music business. He sent me on my way to LA with a bunch of his business cards and he had written on the back: "Hire This Guy." He told me who to take them to when I arrived and he was such an influence that I invited him to come to my graduation dinner. He arrived in his canary-yellow suit and

spent quality time with my family. From time to time, he would check in on me, and as time went on, I would check in on him. He would always wrap the call with his famous slogan "Stay Teenage."

I managed Mickey Hart for a handful of years and he was also a big influence on my life and career. He played a role in my transition from manager to producer as well. When

we worked together, I was tasked with producing various benefits and events that Mickey supported. One day, Mickey's wife Caryl pulled me aside and said that I should continue producing tours and events because she felt it was something I did well. I had never thought of myself as a producer prior to that moment.

Recently, I went to visit Mickey up at his house and spent the day catching up on music and life. We went for a walk in the woods and I told him how much of an influence he's had on my career during the last 10 years and that he made me fearless in this business, which was a powerful moment. In case you were wondering, we also talked about Kepler, string theory, other dimensions, dark matter, Renée Fleming and family. I have a friend who told me I have gone from working with Mickey Hart to Mickey Mouse!

In 2010, you transitioned to Red Light Management. At that time, were you managing bands or had you already begun working on producing live shows?

I was working at AGP Frontline Management with various artists like Smashing Pumpkins, Paul Oakenfold, and Eve and I had taken an interest in Yo Gabba Gabba!

and wanted to take a stab at producing their tour. While I didn't end up producing the Yo Gabba Gabba! tour, the business model that was created as part of that proposal ultimately became the foundation of the production business and the division we now operate at Red Light. In 2010, I moved over to Red Light, which wasn't in the family entertainment business at the time. I had started managing Victoria Justice, which led to producing the Fresh Beat Band Tour that went on to sell 700,000 tickets.

Where are you when the show is going on?

If I am working, then I am generally moving around between the back of the house and the arena. If I am there as a fan, then I am totally focused on the music!

How has your current job changed from when you started?

When I started, I was at a small agency booking shows across the country for jambands and building tours for classic-rock acts. A lot of the skills I learned during that time are still applied to the tours I produce including Peppa Pig Live! and the Disney Junior Dance Party. On the other side, I manage a handful of artists and shows, including American Idol, MAGIC!, Victoria Justice, Ashley Tisdale, Kaya Stewart and Maddie Poppe. The skill set involved with managing them is pretty different from where I started, but all artists need a champion and someone to push the ball forward.

When does your day end?

The day ends once all the emails and messages have been returned. Irving Azoff once told me that all emails and messages should be returned within 24 hours. If he can do it, so can anyone else. **T**