



Live California

A conversation with Live Nation's Rick Mueller

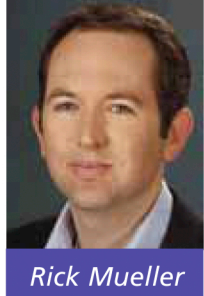
By Erick Weiss, Honeysweet Productions

In 2005, Live Nation was formed as a spin-off from Clear Channel Communications, which had acquired Robert Sillerman's SFX, who had created a coalition of the nation's iconic promoters, including San Francisco's Bill Graham Presents, into one company. Rising like a meteor straight out of college at U.C. Santa Barbara, Rick Mueller started working for Bill Graham Presents three days after graduating. He had been promoting concerts as a student at UCSB and had interned here in Los Angeles for a company called Goldenvoice. Two years after being hired by Bill Graham Presents, in 2008, he was the winner of industry publication Pollstar's prestigious "Bill Graham Award for Promoter of the Year". Still in his 30's, Rick Mueller is now President of Live Nation California and oversees their concert promotion and venue activities including events at the historic Fillmore Auditorium, The Hollywood Palladium, Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Shoreline Amphitheatre and the region's House of Blues music clubs.

"I stumbled into it by chance," he told me when we sat down for about 30 minutes out of his very busy schedule, "but quickly fell in love with the whole process of promoting concerts. I had always been a big music guy. I worked for a non-profit radio station while I was in high school and I played music as well so this was a really interesting opportunity for me at UC Santa Barbara and I got really involved in it and produced a good number of shows. After I finished up at UC Santa Barbara and started looking for a job, I got really lucky that Bill Graham Presents was hiring at the time and it was a good fit and I started there three days after I graduated and haven't had a break since!"

Rick started out as an assistant but he was fortunate that the company was really looking for a young person to mentor and bring up through the ranks. Pretty soon they were sending him out to book his own shows and he found himself booking some big stuff early in his career. He is credited with the development of No Doubt and John Mayer among others. He explained to me what a promoter really does: "I was promoting No Doubt when I was in college at UCSB and when their record, *Tragic Kingdom*, came out (which turned out to be a pretty big record). I've done all their plays since 1996. I work with the agent and the manager to figure out if this is the right venue at the right

time for them to play, if this is the right ticket price, etc. They are playing dates again this year after five years. So, to see a band who I consider my friends having such great success after being off, and selling more tickets than they ever sold before in Southern California, knowing that you were there at the beginning, is really kind of a cool feeling."



Rick Mueller

Cool indeed!

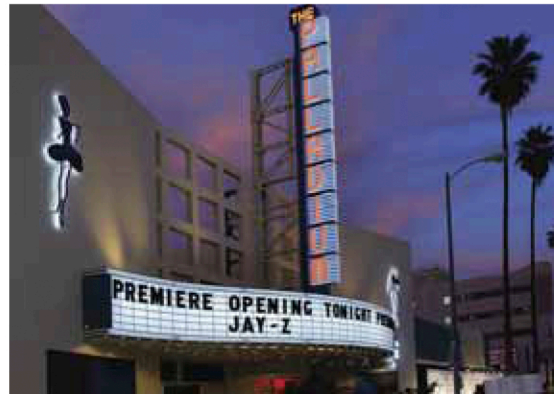
Now he's here in LA and clearly in his element. I asked him about his broader goals for Live Nation in southern CA. "We own and operate a number of venues in Southern California and we want to see a lot of activity and produce a lot of great shows in those venues. We really want to be bringing first-class entertainment into Southern California across all genres whether it be Latin (which we do very well with) classic rock or contemporary. We want to find and promote great shows in all those formats."

The bigger picture for Live Nation includes creating what they refer to as "360 deals" with artists which means that they are in business with the band and or artist in all their different ventures. As Rick put it, "We're going to put out Jay-Z's new record. We'll be releasing the record together with Jay-Z. We're working with him on his merchandise company so we sell all his merchandise and all his concert tickets

and we'll participate in releasing his DVDs, and anything else that an artist will take to market as a product, we will work with them to develop those products."

Live Nation also touts its "artist to fan vertically integrated concert platform." "What we're trying to do ultimately with www.LiveNation.com," he explains, "which is the platform from which we are selling all our venue tickets, is to build into that the ability for a fan to not just buy their concert ticket there, but they can buy their concert tickets there, buy they can buy their tee-shirts or pre-register for the new album release coming out. They can find it all in one place rather than having to go to three or four different sites. We want to really service the music fan's wants and needs."

The big news last year was the reopening of The Hollywood Palladium. *Continued on page 16*



The Palladium Grand Opening



What the #%@& is Social Media?!

By Paulette Fontanez, Los Angeles County Bar Association

In this monthly column, we'll explore the different facets of social media and how they are employed by those in our field. This month we tackle Twitter.

But first, what the heck is "social media"? The mainstream media recently jumped on the bandwagon and now you can't have a newscast without reference to a Facebook page or a Twitter account, but what is all that really? Wikipedia defines it as "online content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies...[and] has become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships." (Wikipedia is an illustration of social media itself, by being an online user-generated dictionary!)

Okay, so what are these "publishing technologies"? Free online portals like Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, Twitter, blogs, even podcasts: all of these are platforms that allow the end user (you) to publish content, whether they are in written, video, photo or audio form. Great, so where does the event professional fit into this?

Social media is about the direct connection. Suppliers can connect directly to a client, planners can connect directly to vendors, and both can connect directly to an audience. But how?

Let's take Twitter as an example. Twitter is a method of exchanging information via short, 140-character updates called "tweets." The tweets are received by followers, people who opt-in to read what someone is sending. This is the audience. One grows the audience by seeking out other people on Twitter with similar interests. Suppose an event planner was looking for other planners on Twitter with whom to exchange info. Using the twitter search function, typing in "MPI" or "event planner" will net hundreds of results, showing the latest bit of info everyone tweeted. From there, one can decide who to "follow."

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Palladium. Rick couldn't have been more excited to come down to LA and be a part of that. "When they called me about this job they had just started the Palladium renovation and I had worked a bunch of Palladium shows in the box office, so that got me really excited. It was this great iconic historic venue. You ask a music fan in Southern California, everyone's got a show they saw at the Palladium or has a good story from the Palladium. You can't manufacture that kind of heritage." Shows have been doing very well there and Rick is also thrilled to have Nine Inch Nails coming through the Palladium this year as part of their farewell tour.

Rick told me that they really worked hard to make the Palladium a great place for events. I can tell you personally that its history combined with the recent upgrades make it a very

But how do you, as a nascent Twitter user, gain followers? Think of Twitter as a cocktail party: you enter the room and listen to the conversation of a few interesting people (who you probably found via the handy search function). You comment back to them using an @reply (where you begin a tweet with the @ symbol followed by a user's name) and then start tweeting out your own opinions on the given topic. People respond, and they follow you back. As you continue to add your own two cents (or 140 characters) to the conversation, and as you receive your own @replies, more people follow and respond to you. The bio area is another important field. Here is where keywords can be included that will then be indexed by the search function, and help you to be found by potential followers.

A note about tweeting properly: tweets need to engage the community, create topical interest and, most of all, be genuine. Just as we all prefer to do business with people we know and trust, the Twitterati want their information from people they've deemed trustworthy, not just faceless companies. Twitter—and all social media—is about connecting person to person, not person to Faceless Corporate Entity X. But make sure you're not sounding like a corporate automaton—be human, be you!

Next month we'll delve into how local MPI members are using Twitter, as a marketing tool and so much more. Paulette will also be speaking on this topic at WES September 18-20 at The Mission Hills Resort and Spa!

Paulette Fontanez can be found online tweeting for @MPISCC and @LACBA, and on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/paulettefontanez>.



Paulette
Fontanez

compelling location. The deal they struck with the union is very favorable, making it an even more attractive location for private bookings. But Live Nation also has some other terrific venues for events including the historic Wiltern Theater and the Gibson Amphitheatre. Our own MPI member, Jill Przelenski, is their VP of Special Events, so be sure to reach out to her at the next MPI function.

Rick Mueller is certainly blessed with a great energy and the creative barometer to keep Southern California a leader in the industry. And, Live Nation has become clearly one of the major players in the concert and music industry. They are also more than happy to work with the special events community to further build their reputation as the turn-key company for music and events.

Photos by: Randall/Michelson/Live Nation