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After the Show: Ray Volpe

Sean Alexander, Director of Photography

As music producer Ray Volpe embarks on the Nexus tour alongside Excision, it marks a monumental full-circle moment for the mid-twenties DJ. A decade ago, in 2014, Excision featured one of Volpe's tracks during a set. Now he's sharing the stage performing and traveling alongside some of the biggest names in the business.

The Artist

Ray Volpe's first exposure to electronic music came from hearing artists like Skrillex and Dirtyphonics playing on "Call of Duty" montage videos. At the time, Volpe was also making montage videos and putting together clips from gaming to the beats of electronic music. After making these videos and listening to electronic music regularly, this inspired him to try his hand at making music himself.



Sean Alexander

SA: How did that get started? Going from making montage videos to then producing your own music?

RV: "It wasn't seamless, it never is. I went into it not knowing how to make music. But in terms of the production software, it felt seamless because making content and videos was very easy for me. I loved doing that. When I moved to Ableton, it looked very similar in certain ways to something like Premier Pro or After Effects. There are similarities in the way that timelines are presented to you and the effects are presented to you in terms of the user interface. So I found it very natural."

Volpe doesn't have a set way for how he produces a new track. Some days he might start with an idea for a drop, other days he might start with the melody, for him it depends on the day. Another method of Volpe's is anytime he has an idea, he tries to create it, even if it's not a fully fleshed-out song. Whether it's a melody loop, drop loop or drum loop, he stores them and has his ideas available so that later on he can return to them, look at the pieces he's made and see if he wants to expand on any of them.

RV: "I made a song that I'm playing tonight that I made recently. And it was literally a matter of 'Oh, I'm feeling like making something with a little more of a bro-step vibe.' And I just started writing the pattern of the drop, just kind of 'Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba.' Then I put midi notes in and then drums down and a sub down... now let's figure out how to make the drop out of that and expand out of that initial idea."

SA: What kind of emotion are you wanting to pull out of people when they listen to your music?

RV: "Many different ones at the end of the day. It's why I make multiple genres. I make both heavy and melodic dubstep. I also make a kind of base house because I want people to feel different things depending on what the song is. Music saved my life and I like, as I explained earlier, listening to a lot of Metalcore and post-hardcore, I'm an emo kid. I grew up an emo kid. So to be able to help anybody else, whether it's letting anger out at a show, crying at a show or jumping around dancing at a show, is what matters to me."

New Music

SA: So you dropped a new track today?

RV: "Yeah, we just dropped a song, 'SEE YOU DROP,' actually today. It was really cool seeing the overwhelming response because having a song like 'Laserbeam' to take off a couple of years ago and then feeling that fear of following it up. But then we kind of did with 'HAPPY SONG' and 'EAT SLEEP RAGE,' we had those songs that kind of lived in their own lane. I promoted this (new) one a lot less. It became such a staple in my sets...that it grew in its own right. It's the next follow-up of the saga for me. So it's cool to see that positive reaction. It's been really awesome."

SA: What is that reaction that you're seeing?

RV: "Well, partly it's the crowd chanting drop, drop, drop, drop. Back in the day I would always play, let's say, a song from Space Laces and they chant the pre-drop 'cause it's an iconic song. But I never had that. But now over the most recent years, I've been having those songs. So to have 'SEE YOU DROP,' join that, especially while it was unreleased, to have the crowd do that was really cool. I've already had so many people playing it out like Illenium. Kai Wachi already did a flip of it. A bunch of other people are playing it out as well."

Since its release five days ago 'SEE YOU DROP' has already been streamed over 200 thousand times.

What is Volpetron?

A big aspect of electronic music live performances is the visuals that accompany the music producer on stage, often tying in with the music they can take the form of whatever the artist wants them to depict. Volpe has used this element of his performance to create the character VOLPETRON, a robot that has become synonymous with his brand.

A little over 10 years ago Volpe was looking to record some taglines for his music so he contacted his friend Khinomyte, a rapper based out of Florida. Khinomyte recorded a few different samples but a recording of him saying "Volpetron 9000" ended up sticking and becoming a staple of Volpe's brand.

SA: Volpetron is a big part of your branding, what can you tell me about that character in relation to you and your music?

RV: "It's kind of like a forever-developing situation or story. Volpetron is definitely an extension of me at the end of the day as much as it is its own thing. At the same time, differentiating would mainly come down to it's kind of the outlet for me. I put music out as Ray Volpe. But Volpetron is that outlet of what it looks like visually."

Keep your eyes, ears and hearts open because a headline tour is in the works.