

PULSE MUSIC

A full-page photograph of DJ Steve Aoki. He is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt with large black polka dots, black cargo pants, and white-rimmed sunglasses. He has a beard and two long braids that are swinging behind him. He is in a dynamic, mid-air pose against a bright blue background with vertical white light streaks.

**Steve
Aoki**

Famous Djs
EDM Djs



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Being a musician since I was a teen, Guitar Center is the staple. You need anything to create, it's there. You need a Guitar Center. You gotta give it homage. It's a tool shed, and without the tool shed, it's hard to create.

One of the most famous DJs

When it comes to the world of Electronic Dance Music (EDM), Steve Aoki is a household name. He is the founder of his own label, Dim Mak Records, subject and star of the 2015 documentary *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*, Billboard Awards winner for Best Mix Album, Grammy Awards nominee, and a three-time Guinness World Record holder; one of which is the record for the "longest crowd cheer." His three albums, *Wonderland* (2012), *Neon Future I* (2014) and *Neon Future II* (2015) debuted at No. 6, No. 2 and No. 1 respectively on the US Dance/Electronic Album Billboard charts. Shows by Steve Aoki have become iconic through his trademark stunts including acrobatic crowd surfing, hurling cakes into the faces of screaming fans and drenching audiences with gallons of champagne.

In April 2016, Aoki joined over 55 other musical acts on the SunFest stages in West Palm Beach Waterfront. We caught up with him to learn what we can expect from his show and why it will be much more than just a cake in the face!

Many EDM fans cite you as their first exposure to the genre. What is it about your music

and performances that attracts new audiences? For the last 20 years, I've been doing my label, Dim Mak. All that time, even before I was a DJ, I'd been finding, signing and developing artists in many genres like hip-hop and rock. Now Dim Mak Records is immersed in electronic music, but back then, we signed [indie rock bands] Bloc Party and The Kills. Also, whenever I do an album, I reach out to people outside of the electronic community, like Linkin Park and Fall Out Boy, and a lot of hip-hop artists like Kid Ink and Wakka Flocka Flame. So I feel like my sound and headspace are very diverse.

The bedrock of my music is in electronic but the channels and wingspan are far and broad. I sample guitar sometimes, or use 808s [a 1980s drum-mimicking synthesizer] and different sounds that emulate different things that aren't particularly just electronic. So people that listen to rock, hip-hop and other genres might find a synergy because I do all those different collaborations.

My journey

EDM has come a long way from geeky kids spinning records in dark corners. You're well known for your engaging showmanship and the production quality of your sets. Can you explain this evolution of the DJ?

I started seeing that change when electro really came into being around 2007. I remember in 2007 when Daft Punk emerged with their live show and it blew people's minds. We have to give them credit for really being the first spectacle performance from the electronic community that shook the world. It was like something you fell into and became hypnotized by their whole production.

And then Justice was, for me, the second artist that really had this rock 'n' roll punk spirit with their 2008 show at Coachella. Their production had this huge wall of Marshall amps and their sound was really distorted, loud and noisy and they had this punk attitude. People were going crazy; they were going off! I was definitely waving the flag for the whole new punk uprising in electronic music. I started sampling guitars, screaming on the mic and implementing the same processes of how I would go about being in a band but doing it as a DJ.

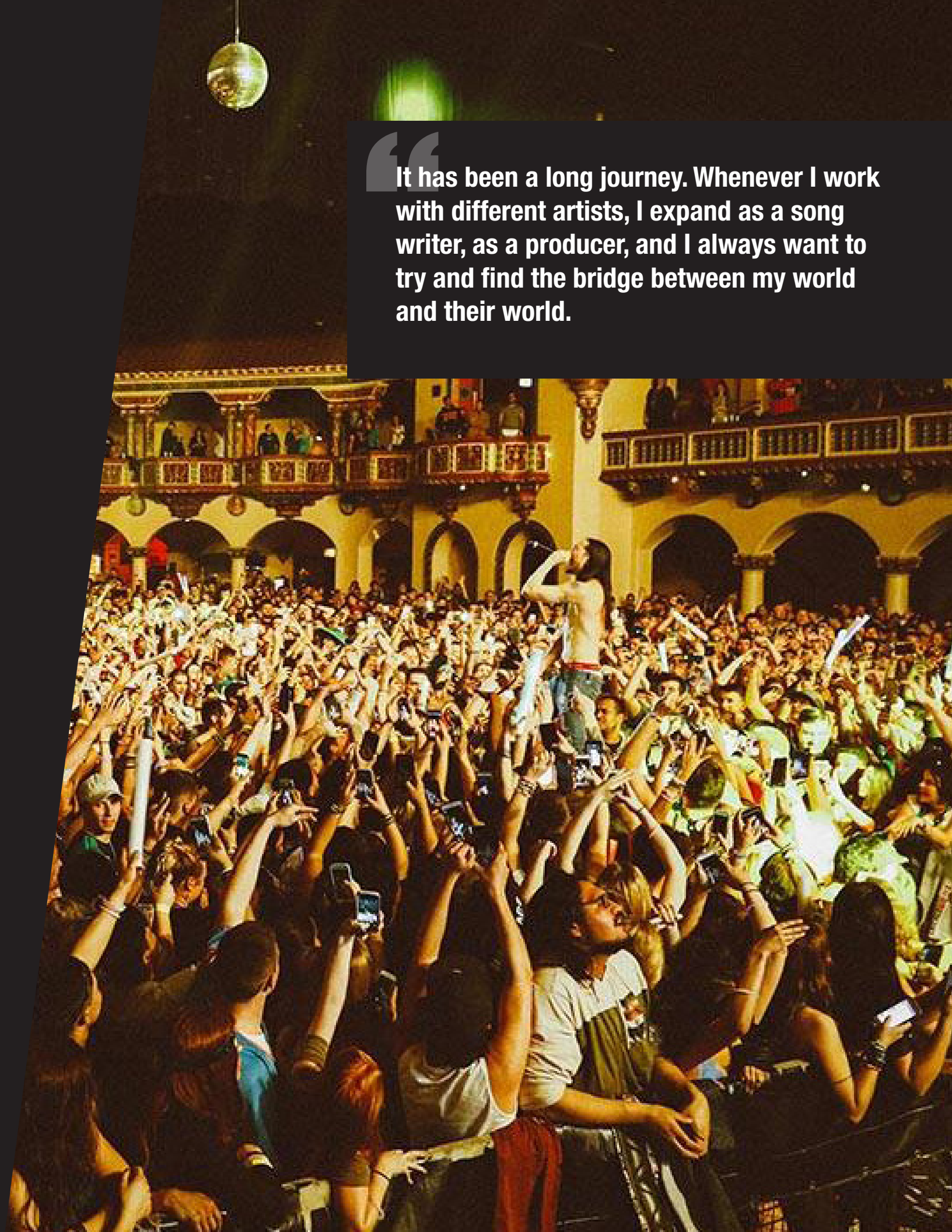
These artists gave me a platform and a forum to be able to do that because now there was an audience that wanted that kind of energy on stage. Years later, it has obviously evolved into what it is now, but that was kind of the springboard.

Your concerts are world famous for being gigantic parties with mammoth crowds and your dynamic stage presence. Can you explain why and how partying and the spectacle that comes with it became your trademark?

One of the hardest things to do is to find something unique that connects your fans to your music and your show. My aim or goal in my shows is to really connect with the crowd the best I can and the most efficient way possible with my short time on the stage. I do it through my dynamic shows, my music and the variations of what the music means to me. I introduced a raft to my show in 2009 and cake-facing was introduced in 2011. [Being hit in the face with a cake is a highly anticipated initiation into the inner circle of Aoki's devoted fans.]

I'm not saying I'm the founder of the cakes – people have been throwing cakes at each other for a long time! But I've definitely made it a signature that is unique to a Steve Aoki show. I've probably caked like 8,000 people's faces! And it's fun and for me it doesn't get old. I enjoy it because every cake face is a different cake face.

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