

Tour Booking Guide

A practical, end-to-end playbook for taking an artist from “ready to play” to a confirmed, advanced, well-promoted run of dates. Written for managers and self-managing artists in the US club/festival/electronic lane (house/tech-house artists like Snooko), but the bones apply to any act.

1. Is the artist actually ready to tour?

Don't book a tour to *create* demand. Book a tour to *meet* demand. Before you pitch a single date, sanity-check these signals:

- **A draw, somewhere.** Streaming numbers are nice; ticket buyers are real. Look at where your monthly listeners cluster (Spotify for Artists → “Cities”), where your email/Laylo list is concentrated, and which past shows actually sold.
- **A reason to come.** New release, a remix that's moving, a strong festival look, a co-sign, a video. Routing dates with no story attached is harder to promote.
- **A tight live show or set.** 45–75 minutes that holds a room. For a DJ act, that means crates deep enough to read any room and a sound you can reproduce on a club system, not just in headphones.
- **Assets ready to go.** Press photos (horizontal + vertical), logo, stage plot/tech rider, bio, links, and a 15–30s live/performance clip promoters can repost.
- **Money to float it.** Tours cost money before they make money. Know your runway.

If two or three of these are missing, the move is usually a few strong **one-offs** in your top markets, not a 12-date run.

2. Routing: build the map before you build the calendar

Routing is the geography + calendar logic of a tour. Bad routing kills margins and burns out the artist.

Principles:

- **Cluster by region.** Group markets so drives are reasonable (3–5 hours between shows is the comfortable zone for a van run; longer means you need days off or flights).
- **Anchor on your strong markets.** Build the route around 2–4 cities where you know you draw. Fill the gaps with developing markets between them.
- **Respect day-of-week reality.** Thu/Fri/Sat are your money nights. Mon/Tue are hard sells almost everywhere — use them for travel, a smaller market, or a radio/press/in-store day.
- **Avoid the zig-zag.** Don't play City A, then drive 4 hours past it to City B, then back. Lay markets out in a line or a loop.

- **Build in buffer.** At minimum one day off per ~5 show days. Hold time for load-in, soundcheck, and the inevitable late ferry/flat tire/traffic.
- **Mind radius clauses.** Many promoters require you *not* play a competing market within X miles / X days of their date. Festivals especially. Plan around these or you'll lose offers.
- **Watch the calendar around you.** Don't route into a city the same weekend as a huge competing event unless you're part of it.

Tools: a shared Google Map with pins, plus a simple spreadsheet (Date | City | Venue | Status | Capacity | Offer | Deposit | Contact). For electronic acts, also track which **promoter/brand** owns each night and whether it's a club resident night vs. a one-off.

3. Getting gigs: the four doors

Door 1 — Booking agents

A booking agent pitches you to talent buyers, negotiates fees, and papers the deals, usually for **10% of gross performance fees**. You generally need a real, demonstrable draw before a reputable agent takes you on. Agents are leverage, not magic — they bring you into rooms and relationships you can't reach cold. When you're ready, target agents whose roster matches your *lane and level* (don't pitch an arena agency a 250-cap act). Warm intros from labels, promoters, or other artists beat cold emails every time.

Door 2 — Talent buyers / venues directly

The person who books a room. Could be the venue's in-house buyer, an independent promoter who rents the room, or a national promoter's regional buyer. For developing acts, **booking direct** is normal and often better margin (no agent cut). Find the right human: venue website "booking" link, the promoter's social, or ask the local act you know who books the room.

Door 3 — Support slots

The fastest way into a new market with a built-in crowd. You open for a bigger touring act. Sometimes paid, sometimes "exposure" (be honest with yourself about whether that exposure is real). Get on the radar of agents/managers of acts one tier above you and make it easy: tight set, no drama, promote the show, be kind to the headliner's crew. A great support run can graduate you to headlining those same rooms.

Door 4 — Promoters & brand nights (key for electronic)

In house/tech-house, the **promoter or party brand** often matters more than the venue. A respected weekly/monthly brand brings the crowd; you slot into their night. Build relationships with the brands in each city that book your sound. A TechYes-style operator thinks the same way from the other side — owning the night, the door, and the list.

Reality check on cold outreach: keep it short, lead with the *ask and the proof* (specific date window, draw in their market, one link, one clip), and make it stupid-easy to say yes. Follow up once after ~5–7 business days. Track every pitch.

4. The pitch (and what a clean one looks like)

A booking pitch email should be skimmable in 15 seconds:

- **Subject:** Artist — [City] [Month] routing / avail [dates]
- **Who:** one line of context + the single most impressive, *relevant* stat
- **The ask:** the date window you're routing and the kind of slot (headline / support / festival)
- **Proof:** local draw if you have it (“~X in [city] on Spotify; sold ~Y last time at [room]”)
- **One link** (EPK or smart link) and **one clip**
- **Logistics:** ballpark fee or “open to your offer,” and that your tech/rider is ready

Don't attach huge files. Don't write five paragraphs. Don't pitch ten markets in one email.

Negotiating the offer. Common deal structures: - **Flat guarantee** — fixed fee regardless of door. - **Guarantee vs. % of net (whichever is greater)** — e.g., “\$1,500 vs. 80% of net box office gross receipts (NBOR) after costs, whichever is greater.” Standard touring deal once you draw. - **Door deal** — you take a % of ticket sales (sometimes after the promoter recoups expenses). Higher risk, higher upside in a market you own. - **Plus extras** — hospitality, lodging (hotel or “buyout”), ground transport, backline. These are real money; negotiate them, don't ignore them.

Know your **walk-away number** before you reply. Account for travel, lodging, crew, and the opportunity cost of the night.

5. Confirming: deposits & contracts

A date isn't real until it's papered and a deposit clears. “Verbal hold” is just a conversation.

- **The performance agreement / contract.** Should specify: artist, venue, date, set length and stage/set time, fee and payment terms, deposit amount and due date, what's provided (sound, lighting, backline, hospitality, lodging, ground), cancellation terms, **force majeure**, recording/streaming permissions, and any radius clause. (See the toolkit's Performance Agreement template — and have an entertainment attorney review anything unusual.)
- **Deposit.** Industry-standard is **50% deposit on signing, balance on the night** (cash or wire before or at the end of the show). For new relationships, the deposit is your protection. No deposit + no signed agreement = treat the date as soft.
- **W-9 / payment setup.** Have your W-9 and payment details (or the LLC's) ready so balance payment isn't held up. For international dates, withholding tax and visas (e.g., US P/O visas for foreign artists) are a whole separate process — start early.

- **Insurance & riders.** Some venues require proof of liability insurance. Your **hospitality** and **technical riders** travel with the contract — keep them current.

Keep a master deal folder per show: signed contract, deposit confirmation, advance sheet, day-of contacts.

6. Advancing the show

Advancing = confirming every operational detail with the venue/promoter in the 1–2 weeks before the show so nothing is a surprise on the day. Send an **advance sheet** and get answers in writing. Cover:

- **Schedule:** load-in time, soundcheck, doors, set times (yours + support), curfew.
- **Technical:** does your stage plot/input list work with their system? House console, monitors, DJ booth gear (which CDJs/mixer model — **confirm the exact models**, e.g., CDJ-3000 + DJM-A9), backline, power, projector/visuals.
- **Logistics:** parking/load-in access, green room, address that the GPS actually finds, wifi, where the merch table goes.
- **Money:** confirmed fee, balance payment method (cash/wire), who hands it over, settlement process, comps/guest list count.
- **Hospitality:** rider items, meals/buyout, water on stage.
- **People:** day-of contact name + cell for the promoter, the sound engineer, and house manager.
- **Promo:** what they're running, ticket link, what assets they still need from you.

The DJ/electronic advance hinges on **exact gear models and the booth setup** — get that confirmed in writing. (See the Stage Plot & Input List Guide.)

7. Promoting the date

The promoter sells the room; you sell *your* fans into it. Both have to happen.

- **Announce with a clean asset pack:** date, venue, city, ticket link, on-sale time, art sized for feed + stories.
 - **Drive presales.** Early ticket buys de-risk the show and make the promoter happy. Use a **smart link** / **Laylo-style RSVP** to capture fans and retarget.
 - **Localize.** Tag the venue, the promoter/brand, and any support. Repost their posts. Hit local tastemaker pages, radio, and any press you can get.
 - **Content cadence:** announce → reminder a week out → “this weekend” → day-of “doors at X.” A short personal video (“[City], I’ll see you Friday at [venue]”) outperforms a flyer.
 - **Guest list discipline.** Comps are a tool, not a giveaway. Every comp is a seat that didn’t sell — keep the list tight and tracked.
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8. On-the-road execution

- **Run a day sheet** for every show: date, city, venue + address, all contacts, full schedule (load-in → curfew), hotel, drive time to next city, and notes. One source of truth the whole party reads.
 - **Be early.** Arrive for load-in and soundcheck on time. The crew you're kind to today fixes your monitor mix tomorrow.
 - **Protect the show.** Sound, comfort, and the artist's energy are the product. Manage meals, rest, and water — a wrecked artist plays a wrecked set.
 - **Settle every night.** Reconcile the deal at the end: ticket count, expenses (for door deals), and collect the balance *before you leave the building*. Get a settlement sheet. (See DIY Tour Management Guide.)
 - **Sell merch.** Often the difference between a tour that loses money and one that profits. Have a table, change/Square, and someone running it during the headline set.
 - **Capture content.** Every night is footage for the next announce. Assign someone to shoot.
 - **Debrief weekly.** What sold, what didn't, which markets to come back to, which promoters to keep, which to drop.
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Quick pre-tour checklist

- ☐ Demand confirmed (draw data per market)
- ☐ Route built, radius clauses checked, days off scheduled
- ☐ Offers negotiated; walk-away numbers known
- ☐ Contracts signed + deposits cleared on every date
- ☐ W-9 / payment details ready
- ☐ All shows advanced (gear models confirmed for DJ dates)
- ☐ Promo plan + assets live; presale links out
- ☐ Day sheets built; merch + content plan set
- ☐ Budget with runway; settlement process defined