

Mavaru Artist Interview #6: Geoff Weers (The Expendables)

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posted by: Mavaru Team



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Mavaru: You guys have been playing together for quite a while. When did you guys get together and what are some of the highlights of your career up to this point?

Geoff: We started in high school – Adam, Raul, and I started the band in '99 and then Ryan, our bass player, joined in 2000. The highlights...back in the day, the highlight was playing The Catalyst in Santa Cruz. I could've died a happy man back then if I had played The Catalyst.

Mavaru: Right – your big goal, iconic venue?

Geoff: Yea we just wanted to play The Catalyst because there had been huge bands that had played there – we'd go to concerts there all the time. For us it was like a really big deal. Back then in our small sort of minds, The Catalyst was the 'end all be all'. After that, going on tour with Slightly Stoopid was another really big thing for us. That kind of helped sparked our national career as far as getting into other states outside of California. That kind of was the big the milestone, I think, in our career getting to tour with Stoopid nationally – get a bunch of fans from them.

Mavaru: That's when you started to realize you had something and you were pulling fans you didn't expect to, starting to have more of a career than a hobby?

Geoff: Yea, we had played The Catalyst a bunch before that, and we did really good. We had sold the place out a bunch of times before we started doing the Stoopid tour. So that

kind of made us realize that we could put a bunch of people in a room and they actually like the words to our songs and know our music. It kind of just never stops, steam always keeps building – we haven't really gotten smaller since we started, just slowly getting more and more fans and not losing them, I don't think.

Mavaru: What do you think it is that you guys did to enable that? Obviously you have to write good music, but was it mainly touring and playing shows or having people connect with you live?

Geoff: Yea definitely, back in the day, I'm talking about when we started we definitely had a very hardcore work ethic about getting our flyers out – we would divide up into teams and have a map of the town and one team would have a quadrant of the town and flyer up every telephone pole and hand out hand bills to everybody we could see and we'd do that before every show almost nightly, so I think our drive to get our name out there helped. I didn't even think we were that good as a band back then, 'cause we weren't that good back then! I think it was just being able to hype it up around town – we always played parties and people were getting drunk and having a really good time. I think that kind of just went into the venue – I don't know...

Mavaru: What about your first couple of shows out of town, when you sold out a venue in a town you've never been to?

Geoff: There was one specific show – Florida kind of took us by surprise. We went there once and went back again and we were selling out shows. We were like 'What the Hell?! This doesn't happen!'

Mavaru: Well, obviously the music industry is in a state of transition. How do you think that affects you guys as a band, and do you do things differently now to promote your band as opposed to the early days?

Geoff: When we started as a band, Napster was the thing to get music from. It was all free, kind of like the wild west open to get any kind of music you wanted. We had some recordings and we were on Napster and we got thrown around into the early days of having free music – the whole 'free-for-all' that happened back then. I think us getting caught in the mix of that definitely helped. When the internet cracked open the music industry, that helped bands like us who wouldn't have normally gotten a record deal that would've put us on the radio – we got to do it on our computers, very cheap, promotion-wise. As far as MySpace goes, we were able to get a bunch of MySpace friends and that enabled us to get bigger without having to spend any money really.

Mavaru: How do you feel about fans downloading and streaming your music for free online?

Geoff: I don't really care if people share it. I would rather people listen to the music than not buy it and not listen to it. I would rather have more people at shows.

Mavaru: What do you think your most effective strategies for marketing as a band are?

Geoff: Our band has viewed it as band members should try to be as personal and accessible to the fans as we can. Most of our tours and shows that we do, after we play all

of us go to the merchandise table and hang out and try to mingle, say hello to people, shake hands, take pictures, and say thanks for coming out to our show. I can recognize a bunch of fans that I've seen over and over throughout the years so it is really great to be personal. Other than that, doing the twittering, responding to people on Facebook and Twitter is a good idea, just having a presence of our every day lives keeps people interested and following along. I think that's the marketing that us band members can do on a daily basis to help out. I know that's what I can do as a band member, just to be personal and accessible to the fans.

Mavaru: It goes a really long way to form a meaningful relationship with a fan. On a different topic, what is your creative process?

Geoff: One guy will come up with an idea, say it is a chorus, or chord progression, or lyrics. We'll bring it to the band room, play it, everyone kind of writes their own part, kind of just jam it out. Pretty much one guy will bring an idea in and it just blossoms from there.

Mavaru: So you guys are on the Warped Tour this summer? How did that come about?

Geoff: You know, I'm not sure. We submitted and they said yes. We've been submitting for a few years now.

Mavaru: After you're done with that, what's next for you on the table?

Geoff: We're looking at doing some stuff with Pepper maybe. We're considering a tour in the fall and maybe try to get to Europe between now and the end of the year. So we're going to be busy during the last 6 months of the year.

Mavaru: Have you guys been abroad before?

Geoff: Yea last October we went to a few countries out there, mainly Germany.

Mavaru: Do you find people out there are familiar with your music?

Geoff: No, people don't know it at all out there. The crowd kind of just stands around. Unless they know your music they don't rock that hard. Toward the end of our set, they kind of got the idea of what we were about and we'd be able to turn a stale crowd into a rockin' crowd. Every once in a while they would just stand there – a little awkward but whatever, we got some new fans and it was a great experience. I can't wait to go back there again. It's more of a challenge to get these people in Europe into our stuff – hopefully our music will resonate with some of them.

Mavaru: Well thanks for the time – best of luck this summer!