

Head of Blueprint discusses Squamish, FVDED, M.I.A. and much more in this exclusive interview

April 29, 2015



Alvaro Prol, the Co-Founder and Principal of Blueprint, the largest promoter in Western Canada, is a busy man. His company owns some of the hottest nightclubs in Vancouver and holds over 300 events a year. This year has been especially busy for Alvaro and Blueprint as they are planning their brand new FVDED In The Park at Holland Park, Surrey, B.C., managing their brand new underground club called M.I.A., renewed their involvement with the Squamish Music Festival, and much more. With a rock solid home base in Vancouver,



Blueprint has expanded to Alberta in the past year and had a successful Northern Lights Festival with the 2nd night completely selling out.

In this interview we discuss Blueprint's involvement with the Squamish Music Festival, their new FVDED In The Park, their latest club M.I.A., his views on the current festival scene and much more. Enjoy:

Can you tell me a bit of history with Blueprint's involvement with the Squamish Music Festival?

Alvaro Prol: Squamish Festival is run by Brand.LIVE, who are partners with Live Nation. They've been at it for a long time and we have good relations with them both, especially since we're also partners with Live Nation. Last year they invited us to do our own stage, so we curate and book our own Blueprint stage and help with any other electronic acts that will play at the festival. We also help with marketing and promotion. But our big thing is to curate our own stage.

Besides the lineup, what will be different at Squamish this year versus last year?

I think every year you do an event you just get better at it. You fine tune the product, to make it more comfortable, to be better run logistically. I think Squamish has really come a long way, matured a ton, and has become the destination for Western Canada seeking a contemporary festival. 2015 will be the best year it's ever had and I'm just really excited about the lineup. I just think it's going to be a great even overall. The product and experience is just going to come up.

Before Blueprint's involvement in Squamish – were electronic artists booked at the festival?

Yes, those guys have always been dance music fans. There's always been a good touch of dance music at Squamish. But last year was the first time they've given it a dedicated stage. This year we've got a deeper lineup and we've also added Kaskade to one of the larger stages. We want to throw some of the dance guys onto the bigger stages and that's something that we'd like to explore for next year.

EDM CANADA

Your stage has a deep underground feel to it, just like last year's. Is that something Squamish wanted from Blueprint or it was Blueprint that wanted to bring that feel to the festival?

When you think about what kind of music you want to bring to a festival, what kind of vibe you want to bring, these guys who run Squamish trust me to do my thing. But we collaborate, we talk, we throw ideas around. Putting Odesza on to headline is something I targeted from the beginning because I feel like they're just a great act that's growing so much. Adventure Club is an act that we go way back with... Bringing acts like Gorgon City, Tchami, Kaytranada, Porter Robinson to the lineup - we feel like we have a diverse lineup filled with young talent. We also have up and coming acts like Peking Duck, and Slow Magic.

We have A-Trak, who is just a full on great DJ and a legend. We feel like that we have a good diverse lineup of guys and we really want them to stand out on their own. We're also bringing local favourites like The Funk Hunters, Mat The Alien - we always try to bring love to local talent.

Is the competition heating up in terms of festivals in B.C./Western Canada?

I think the festival market is growing globally, just not in Western Canada. Festivals have been big business in Europe for a long time, and I think North America has woken up to it a bit later. We're seeing different brands going into different markets. I think it's busy but we believe that festivals must have a localized connection, with the right idea and concept. There's a lot of noise happening with festivals globally, but that will fade out because I think people will have a rough time because it's a difficult business to be in. It's very difficult to fight for the talent with the amount of festivals that will be happening. Only the strong will survive long term, and it will only be about quality over quantity. Today there's a lot of quantity out there right now.

So you believe that in a few years there will only be a select few festivals that will remain at the top?

I think the strong will survive. You take a festival like Shambhala which has been around for a long time and have been always true to what they do. Stuff like that will always work. But when a promoter wants to put together a festival because they have a lot of money to spend on a lineup, that's okay. But that's not as



important as a festival that commits to something like Squamish has. Squamish has a long term plan they have been building towards a festival that is being globally recognized.

Will Blueprint ever establish their own summer festival in Vancouver?

We have. We just started this year with Fvded In the Park.

You've expanded it this year. Last year it was only 1 day.

Last year it was a party, so we don't even look at the past for this event. This festival is something new to us and we're launching it as a new event. It will be a 2-day outdoor festival with 2 stages. We really see it as our summer event and we didn't want to do what everybody else is doing.

We didn't want to put together a festival that based off of social media numbers, but rather to put together a festival that felt like a party in the park. We wanted Fvded In The Park to be a little more accessible as we didn't want people paying \$400 for a ticket to camp. It's more about jumping onto the Sky Train and checking out hip hop, RnB guys, and electronic acts. Fvded In The Park will happen on July 3-4th at Holland Park. That is our summer festival.

It will be a yearly event and the capacity is 22,000 a day. Being that this is the first one, we wanted to build it as big as possible and make it an awesome open format event. We wanted to open it up to fans of all kinds, not just dance music fans. I am a music lover of all kinds so I want to be able to see the Weeknd and see Deadmau5. I love them both. We want to get out of that bubble that Blueprint is "EDM" because we really are more than that. We are a very diverse company with an eclectic taste.

Fvded already had a great response from the community with strong sales, and we are very happy about it. I feel like in an environment where you have to pay a lot of money to go to Coachella, Squamish, or Pemberton – you also have the option to go to a park in Vancouver to party and then afterwards go to a nice restaurant and stay in a hotel. We're pumped about holding an urban festival. Money is tight out there and we want to make things more accessible to more people because it's difficult to get people to go to everything.



Do you think the Vancouver nightlife scene is in a good place?

I think Vancouver has always got a great scene. We have educated fans and they know their music. Things are growing, and within sub-genres we're seeing growth within the growth. Is every trance show selling out? No, but maybe they're into deep house or techno now. There's a lot of content out there right now and it's hard for a promoter to get that many acts through because there's too much.

But you're trying your best.

We do our best and we try to bring them to all of the clubs we operate, and we put on as many shows as we possibly can. We're busy as we have 120 acts coming through Vancouver in April.

M.I..A is your latest venture – do you aim for it to be the new hot underground spot in Vancouver?

We bought Shine some years ago, and when we bought it we knew it needed renovation. But we wanted to operate it ourselves, feel it out, and see all of the little corners and things that needed to be different to make the space better. Shine is situated on a legendary corner of Vancouver, at Water and Cordova, an iconic corner of the town. It's also just below our offices as we're on the top floor.

So we took our time designing the concept of this club and I'm really happy at the way it turned out. We gutted the whole place, started from scratch, got rid of the entrance as you now have to enter it from the back in a tunnel that opens up to a lush high-end room. It has a crazy funktion one sound system and it sounds like you have headphones on. We put this L.E.D. install all across the whole club that look like lines that cut across the entire space. It's turned into one of our favourite clubs that we own right now.

It's in intimate club so our thing here is that we're encouraging people not to use their phones to take pictures or have photographers. So when you're there, you feel that intimate vibe. You feel like you're at this amazing house party where you don't want to pull out your phone because you'd be a jerk. I'm stoked and I just want to hang out there all of the time. I can't wait to see what kind of music



that will flourish in that type of room. I feel like it will be a nice little cultural hub in the city.

Did you try to model M.I.A. based on famous underground clubs like Berghain or Verboten?

There were inspirations but I didn't want it to feel like you're in a techno club on the weekends. I want it to feel like you're a techno head grown up that knows all kinds of music, where you might hear some techno but you also might hear a Drake track. It doesn't matter because you're at such a cool party. We're not trying to pigeonhole ourselves into an underground sound but instead give them a sense that you're in a club that gives you a different vibe. We want people that get music, are cultural, and are underground in a sense that they can roll with anything.

Does M.I.A cater to VIPs with table/bottle service?

Yeah we have all that. Shine was a very uncomfortable nightclub, so what we did was add seating everywhere. When we organize an underground night everybody knows that they can sit wherever they want. But if groups want to take sections and lock it down, we provide that service.

Blueprint was busy expanding to Alberta by bringing two promoting groups into your fold – how's that transition been going?

It's been great to go to a new market. I think Albertans have been really receptive of Blueprint the brand. Every time we do a show we sell out of merch as people are buying hats and tank tops. It's been a really really great welcoming feeling from the people of Alberta. We want nothing more than to continue by giving back and growing organically. It's definitely working out that way.

We just did Northern Lights in Edmonton and Saturday was sold out, which was great. We first started arena shows with Arrival, then we did Get Together, and now with Northern Lights. Things are going well. We're slow and steady, just like what we did here. We want to continue to build it and build it right. We want to give people good experiences at a good value. We want people to know that what we're putting out in Edmonton is just as good as what we're putting



out in Vancouver. We are continuing to build the business and the family across Western Canada.

Are there any other big plans set for Alberta?

The most important message I want to get across is that we're trying to build the business properly by giving them the best product that we can.

Is Blueprint happy with just the west coast, have you ever considered expanding further East?

No. We have a great relationship with the Ink guys in Toronto and other people out in the east. We are as busy as we could be and happy where we are. We have no plans in going past where we are now.

Anything else you'd like to announce?

We have our 18 year anniversary coming up this year. The Mad Decent Block Party and Life In Color are coming in September. Contact is going up in capacity this year and it's going to be bigger than it has ever been. We sold 14,000 tickets a day last year.

My thanks to Alvaro Prol for this interview.

FVDED In The Park will take place from July 3rd until July 4th at Holland Park, Surrey B.C. - just minutes away from downtown Vancouver. If you want to grab tickets - [click here](#).

EDM CANADA

HOLLAND PARK
SURREY, BC

deadmau5

TYLER, THE CREATOR - FLOSST
DANNY BROWN - CHUCKIE - PETE TONG - C
TOMMY KRUISE - DESTRUCTO - HA

SATURDAY, JULY 4

TheWeekno

AFROJACK - EXCISION - THE CHAINSMOK
TY DOLLA \$IGN - VIC MENSA - TOKI
KEYS N KRATES - STWO - BOTNEK - HU
THUGLI - FLIPOUT

WWW.FVDEDINTHEPARK.COM  FVDEDINTHEPARK #FVDED2015 FE

CLICK TO ZOOM

Squamish Valley Music Festival will take place from August 7th until August 9th at the Centennial Fields. If you want to grab tickets - [click here](#).

EDM CANADA

Virgin mobile
SQUAMISH VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL
August 7, 8, 9 2015

MUMFORD & SONS | DRAKE | SAM SMITH

OF MONSTERS AND MEN | ALABAMA SHAKES | BRANDON FLOWERS | KASKADE | SCHOOLBOY Q
CHANCE THE RAPPER | ADVENTURE CLUB | PORTER ROBINSON (live) | HOT CHIP | THE KILLS | MILKY CHANCE
DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979 | SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS | ROYAL BLOOD | ANGUS & JULIA STONE | G
DOESZA | KAYTRANADA | A-TRAK | TCHAMI | GORGON CITY (live) | SLIGHTLY STOOPID | K-OS | JOEL PLASKET
FIRST AID KIT | MARIACHI EL BRONX | WHITEHORSE | ROBERT DELONG | HANNAH WANTS | JAMES BAY |
BENJAMIN BOOKER | THE FUNK HUNTERS | SZA | BEAR'S DEN | ALVVAYS | JUSTIN NOZUKA | DE
P REIGN | TEISHI | OLIVER | MATTHE ALIEN | THE RIVER AND THE ROAD | WILLA | SCOTT HELMAN | BLOM

More artists to be announced!
Buy passes at squamishfestival.com

CLICK TO ZOOM

If you live in Vancouver and want to check out what Blueprint is planning, then [click here](#) to check out the Vancouver calendar.