

# CULTIVATING COOL

## JARED GUTSTADT CHANGES AN INDUSTRY'S TUNE WITH JINGLE PUNKS

By Jason Winders, MES'10

**Y**ou've felt Jared Gutstadt's groove – even though you don't realize it.

His brainchild, Jingle Punks, has provided a backbeat for entertainment across all media platforms for nearly a decade. And today, as company President, Co-founder and Chief Creative Officer, Gutstadt, BA'00, continues to fuel a company founded on creativity, cool and seizing every opportunity.

"Our motto is to say yes to everything and figure out the details later," Gutstadt said with a laugh. "When you say yes, great things can happen. Our answer is always 'yes and ...' never 'no but ...' Too many people throw hurdles in front of a great opportunity. We have friends who never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. We're not like that."

The public school system never embraced this suburban Toronto kid's way of thinking. And it wouldn't be until high school when he discovered his perfect outlet making "cool, creative stuff" through music, videos and other media.

"I was always very distracted, antsy in school," Gutstadt said. "The public school system wasn't really built for my out-of-the-box, crazy – I guess now they would label it ADHD – ways. But all that was a perfect storm that fed me going into first year at Western. A teacher, in my last year of high school, encouraged me to follow that path instead of becoming a doctor or lawyer."

At Western, Gutstadt migrated into the Media, Information and Technoculture program, within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies. The fit was perfect.

"In that program, I oscillated between really practical things, like learning how to compose music or edit video, and some really great theoretical stuff. It ended up dictating what the next 10 or 15 years of my life would look like. Everything I was doing day to day in the MIT program was what I was doing when I



Jared Gutstadt

moved to New York. I became a TV editor there because I had a great set of skills that allowed me to live in the city, pay my rent and play in bands at night.

"All those things converged when I started Jingle Punks."

Launched in October 2008, after future co-founders 'Jingle Jared' and Dan Demole met at a Black Keys concert, Jingle Punks has grown from a five-person operation into one of the largest music publishing and licensing companies, providing original and licensed music for television, film, video games and advertisements. Gutstadt and Co. have filled airwaves and bandwidth with hundreds of theme songs and scores ranging from *The Voice* and *Pawn Stars*, to collaborations with artists such as Nas, Kris Kristofferson, Dierks Bentley, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Snow and many others.

The company now has headquarters in five cities, in four countries on three continents.

This success was borne of Gutstadt's keen observation of a gap in the industry – a gap not of quantity, but quality.

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"Unscripted television was about to explode (in 2008), and there were only two or three music libraries that gave producers the ability to put wall-to-wall music in shows," he said. "Unfortunately, the music was godawful. It was being made by 60-year-old dudes in their mom's basements who were Devo rejects or by Foghat roadies. We decided to run the business like we did our bands."

Gutstadt jokes about not being a classically trained musician. His route to stardom began with him picking up a guitar one day, sitting behind drums on another day, and teaching himself to play in high school. He also learned a lot of his craft on stage, as a member of bands like The Izzys, Group Sounds and Generals & Majors.

As a musician, Gutstadt was a contemporary of successful acts like The



Gutstadt with supermodel Tyra Banks (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Strokes, White Stripes and The Kills. He saw how the bands marketed and branded themselves, cultivating cool through not only their music, but through style, story and stage presentation. Those lessons shaped who Jingle Punks is today.

"Steve Jobs is a folk hero because he made great products, had a signature take on the world, had a great presence. Why? He captured our imagination. There are also millions of other CEOs out there, like of nacho chip companies, who don't need to be publicly present because they spend millions marketing a product, not themselves," he said.

That desire to stand out – not only for what they do, but for who they are – led Gutstadt and Co. to mold Jingle Punks into the experience it is today.

"We decided to market ourselves and our brand, as much as our product. That way, people would affiliate us with our product," he said. "And somewhere along the way, we captured people's imagination in a big, noisy marketplace." **WAG**



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