



**AD Chat With DASH TWO Ep 3:
David Cool of Bandzoogle**

<https://dashtwo.com/ad-chat/>

Speaker 1: Welcome to Ad Chat with Dash Two, hosted by Kim Pham

Kim: Thank you again for taking the time to chat today. If you could introduce yourself and tell listeners what Bandzoogles is, how you fit into the company, and what made you choose this industry.

Dave Cool: Sure. My name is Dave Cool. It is actually my real name. I work for Bandzoogles, which is a website platform for musicians. I'm the director of artists and industry outreach.

I oversee a lot of our content marketing, our blogging, our bloggers, and the blog itself, email marketing as well as oversee our industry partnerships. We work with a lot of different companies in the music tech industry. I'm in charge of managing those partnerships and relationships.

Bandzoogles has been around now for its 13th year. We power over 32,000 websites for musicians and bands around the world. We're a small team. We're about 20 staff. We all work remotely so there's actually now Bandzoogles offices anywhere in the world, but it's officially based out of Montreal, Canada.

We have staff across Canada, throughout the United States, and parts of Europe as well. We've always bootstrapped and profitable. We've never taken any VC money or outside investment or anything like that, so it's still owned-and-operated by the founder, Chris Vinson, who is a musician himself. Most of us with the company are either current or former musicians or married to musicians. It's a very musician-family company.

Kim: How do you guys do conference calls with all the time zone differences?

Dave Cool: It's a little tricky, but we make it work. A lot of our bands are in Europe, so we do the meetings early mornings and everything else we figure it out. It can be challenging, working remotely, as we grow especially. You've got to hire very carefully and make sure people are self-motivated and not everyone is used to working at home without that social aspect of having an office.

We use SLACK to keep in touch throughout the day. There's different channels for the different teams. We use base cam for all the projects to make sure everyone can communicate and see what's expected of them and by when. It's constantly checking in online and making sure that everything is moving in the right direction. Our COO, Stacey Bedford, is really the one who drives that. She communicates with all the different teams and makes sure that everyone's pushing in the same direction on the same projects and from design concept to developing to communicating and supporting of it, all down the line. Now, it's a very well-oiled machine and it's a lot of fun.

Kim: Sounds like you guys definitely have a system in place. What made you choose this industry?

Dave Cool: Personally, I grew up in music. I grew up in a household that had a Saturday night blues jam, which I was the drummer for from age five to 13, when it wasn't cool anymore and I started my own bands and played punk rock and the local music scene up here in Montreal.

From there, started a record label. I had made a documentary film about the music industry in 2004. That was at a point where things really started to shift. It was when iTunes was in its very early days and digital distributors like CD baby were just coming onto the scene where independent artists could take control of their career. Technology was advancing to the point where you could record at home for cheap and release it online for cheap and promote it for cheap. Back then, it was more MySpace, but social media's obviously developed since then, but the concept was the same.

I made a documentary of taking a snapshot of that. A little moment in time in the industry, which led to a series of events, getting contacted by the CEO at the time of Bandzoogles, who had heard about my work and found out that I was actually in Montreal, where the company is based.

They didn't know this, but I had been a Bandzoogles member for years. I had started using them I think the first full year they were in operation. I used them for my record label website and my documentary film website and loved the platform.

It was a happy accident that I came to work with them. Music tech has always been a passion for me personally. I loved seeing the tools and companies coming out at it all the time. It seems like every week there's a new music tech company and seeing how it solves issues and help musicians along the way in their career.

Kim: What kind of musicians are using the platform? What stage are they in their career, would you say?

Dave Cool: You know, I would say that early on it was very much DIY, do-it-yourself, independent artists, for the most part that were using Bandzoogle. In the last four or five years, that's really changed. I mean, budgets have been getting slashed at record labels for years. There's less money being invested into artist's development. We've started to see a shift. It's not a curated platform so anyone can go to Bandzoogle and try it free. If they like what they see, they can power their website through our platform. When an artist or a band that's a little bit more famous pops up, we don't automatically see it. Sometimes, someone has to let us know like, "Hey, did you know that [Indie REA 00:04:54] is on the platform? What? We have everything from garage bands, wedding cover bands, do-it-yourself singer/songwriters, all the way to Grammy nominees, Grammy winners, and everything in-between, in every genre imaginable. It's a mixed bag, for sure. It's anyone and everyone who wants to have control over designing their website and being able to update it themselves and being able to sell their music and merch directly to their fans commission-free and run their mailing list, which is also built into the platform. You can do all the selling and marketing and hosting and the domain name and everything all included into one platform. We're starting to see that more bigger name artists are taking that role back, whether they're still on a label or maybe they left a label or got dropped by a label and now they're doing it themselves. We're finding more-and-more of those artists are finding Bandzoogle and using the platform.

Kim: What do you need to get started? How long does it typically take?

Dave Cool: It's free to try. There's a 30-day free trial period, so you just go to bandzoogle.com and try it free. It walks you through, just like a three-step process. Choose a theme, upload a photo, and then you can go in and customize and add pages and content and different features.

It's not the official company slogan, but I tell musicians that Bandzoogle's so easy your drummer could do it. I'm a drummer myself so I feel like I can away with that joke, but Chris, when he built the platform, was a web designer at a major record company in Canada that his band had been assigned to. When the band broke up, the label had hired him to design all the websites, draw the bands on the label. This is like 60 something websites. Everyone was asking him to change this photo, add this new show date, making constant changes, and so he built a control panel and gave them each a log-in and said, "Here, just do it yourself.", and realized that everyone left him alone after that. He thought that could be useful for other musicians. It really was built to save time and not have to know coding or design and so musicians could focus more of their time on making music and playing shows. You can build a website in a few minutes, like literally, in a few minutes.

You have to have some things in place so investing in professional photos, hiring a photographer and having a concept, knowing what your brand colors, more-or-less are, the colors that you like and want to reflect on your site, obviously having your music is helpful to get started.

Your official bio, upcoming show dates, things like that, and then you just link all your social profiles. You can make a website in under an hour for sure. If you want to really dive in and customize because you can really customize every element on the page. You can spend a few hours on it. I was at a conference last year and someone said, "On my flight from Austin to LA, I built a new website. There was WiFi on the plane and I have new project, so I built my website on the flight and now it's done and launched."

It was one of those things where people are updating it from the airport waiting for their flight. They're updating their store and their blog. It's really meant to be a time saver and shouldn't take you very long at all.

Kim: What happens if an artist has a domain already registered somewhere else?

Dave Cool: Yeah, that's not a problem. I mean, it happens all the time. It's one of the questions we get asked most probably in support, but when you create an account at Bandzoogle, if you need a domain name, we register it for you and we manage it for you. It's included in any of the plans, so you don't have to pay extra for that. If you ever decide to leave Bandzoogle for whatever reason or your band breaks up, you can take that domain with you. You own it. We just manage it for you.

If you already own the domain, if you're registered with another domain registrar, then you can simply point it to our name servers, which every domain registrar has their own steps to do that, but the support team can help people do that or if your domain is, I believe it's within ten days of expiring, you can actually transfer it to us. We'll then manage it for you. That is included in the plan. Kim: What are some of the biggest changes in how bands are marketing themselves on the site?

Dave Cool: One of the biggest changes we encountered being around for 13 years, a lot has changed on the web, obviously. With the advent of like social media platforms, one of the biggest challenges that we had to go through was mobile, with more-and-more people accessing the web through mobile devices.

We had hundreds of templates in our system that weren't mobile responsive. That was a challenge for us to go back in and make sure that all the templates are responsive with mobile, no matter what sized device or what type of device they've been used on, that they respond accordingly. That was a big challenge for us. Now, all of the templates are built with a mobile first mentality. The amount of time spent on mobile devices versus desktop, the percentages assigned to invertible from what they were, a rather big challenge. Also, just social media itself and artists believing that having a Facebook page is enough for their career. Well, it's free. I'm on Facebook. My friends are on Facebook, so I'm just going to create a page. I don't need a website.

A lot of it is education as well because some musicians may not have remembered MySpace because they're not old enough, but a lot of bands spent time building up a fan base on MySpace and then seemingly overnight, it became uncool to use MySpace. You had to start over again on Facebook or on Twitter and Instagram.

A website is really your little slice of the internet. As long as you own your domain name and keep renewing it, fans will always be able to find you there. Then, they can connect with you whichever social platforms you're active on.

All that data that you own on your website to figure out what they're listening to, where they came from, what sites brought them there, what songs are being streamed the most, download the most, what merchants are selling the best, that kind of thing. Just always make sure to have your hub online with your website and then connect your fans to the social media platforms that you decide that you're going to be the most active on.

Kim: Going back to your comment about how it's super important to have your space, your website, as for the social side of it. Are they using Bandzoogle to communicate to things, creating a social aspect to it as well?

Dave Cool: Yeah, in a few ways. We have a built-in mailing list tool so you can collect emails, you can offer a free download or a free album, in exchange for an email address for your website. You collect the emails so you can send out newsletters through the platform to your fan base. That's one way to communicate with the fans.

Obviously, we have a blog feature so you can blog and your fans comment. You can respond to those. All of the music features and the blog and the events calendar, the events feature, all have social sharing functionality so you can share like an upcoming gig date or share your latest song directly to Facebook and then type a custom message and use the content on your website to post to social media platforms, to communicate with your fans. When they click on it, it links them back to your website.

Kim: Going back to the reporting features, I know you had mentioned the emailing option also. It spits out a bunch of data, what kind of content people are engaged in. How are people leveraging these metrics for advertising?

Dave Cool: Most of the time, our members are using that data to help them book gigs. If they see have a certain amount of mailing list members in a certain city, they can go to a booker in that market and say, "Hey, I have 1,000 mailing list fans. I get this many visitors every month." It can help open the doors for booking gigs. It can be used that way. It can also be used into investing money into, let's say, making an official video. You can have a few songs streaming on your site. You can actually see in our analytics not only what songs are being streamed in those, but you can see, which songs and where in the song they're being skipped. We had some savvy members

who have side projects, they've used Google ad words, to book events in their local region and use Facebook ads, obviously, to promote upcoming tours and promote new albums and things like that.

Kim: That's really interesting going back to talking about using the platform to sell tickets. I wonder if people are seeing that they're not selling in a certain market, that's where they go to invest money for advertising.

Dave Cool: It's a great way to frame it. If ticket sales are slow in a certain market, then you can maybe put some more budget into targeted Facebook ads to people that like your page in that particular city, that kind of thing. Yeah, definitely, I can think of a few cases where those ads have actually worked on me where I didn't know one of my favorite artists was playing in Montreal and the Facebook ad popped up in my feed.

Oh, they're in town next week. I'm going to buy a ticket to that. It depends what your goals are. Like, if it's simply to drive up likes of your page, you have to be careful with that because you have to make sure that they're genuine fans and people that are interested in music or else when you want to boost a post, or boost content, to people that like your page, you may end up paying more to reach people that weren't that interested in the first place. Whereas, if you're going on tour, targeted ads by geographic routing are gold. I mean, you can really help all the other things that you're doing to promote that show, but those ads can help seal the deal. It's something I think a lot more musicians are experimenting with.

We're starting to get asked that question a lot more in the last year in terms of advertising in data and specific for advertising on Facebook. Should I advertise on Instagram? Should I advertise on Twitter? I'm actually starting a whole how to advertise your music blog series starting next month. We've hired some people who know that world and they're going to write some best practices for musicians using those various platforms where you can buy ads to target people.

Kim: Yeah, make sure to send that to us. We'll definitely link it. What's on the horizon for Bandzoogles?

Dave Cool: A lot of things. I mean, we're always adding to the platform. We release new features and new themes every month. The bigger picture is more design improvements, more design customization options. I mean, that's always a want and need from our members. They want to be able to do more with the platform and have more control over the design. Also, our mailing list. We want to do more with it and make it easier to criticism that's easier to incorporate some of those elements into a newsletter and email blast. That's something that's coming up. Also, data. We actually just launched our own internal metrics for members. Prior to a couple of months ago, our members would have to connect to Google Analytics. We know we feel strongly that data is important and musicians should be using it to inform some decisions they need to make in their careers, so we just built our own metrics system, analytic system, so now every artist can dig into that by custom date ranges. You'll get an itemized list of sales for that day and things like that. Right now, it's Phase One and we want to add more functionality, be able to dive deeper into the data, things like that. The mailing list and data are probably going to be big projects in the next year for us.

Kim: We always end on this question of all ads you've ever seen. What has been the most memorable?

Dave Cool: That simple Facebook ad that I mentioned before that worked on me. Like, I never saw ...

Kim: What band was it?

Dave Cool: It was an artist named Dan Mangan. He's a singer/songwriter out of Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada. He was passing through Montreal. His ad popped up. It was a very simple ad, but because I was familiar with his name and had seen him before and really liked his music. It really worked.

Kim: For listeners who want to get in touch with you, what would be the best way? What's the name of your documentary in case anyone wants to check it out?

Dave Cool: Sure. People can reach out to me directly by email at my email. Dcool. D-c--
-o-l@bandzoogle.com. If they want to see my documentary, it's called What is Indie? You can just go to my
website, which you can also contact me through, it's davecool.ca, because I'm up in Canada. So, davecool.ca.
There's a link to download the movie totally free, a digital download. It was distributed by the National Film
Board of Canada for about ten years and once that deal expired, I just put it online for free because a lot of music
courses use the film. I get emails from students all the time. I just put it out there for free and people can
download it if you want to.

Kim: David, thank you so much.

Dave Cool: Thank you.