



The Slackers Newsletter

Rude. Reckless.



Welcome! It's our First Newsletter of 2024!

The gig, the tour, the song, and the album are four building blocks of the Slackers and we talk about all these things in this newsletter. How we get things done. How we get to where we need to be. Dave gives a preview of upcoming spring touring, Vic talks about songwriting, Ara talks about tour preparation, and Dave talks about what goes into making an album.

Right now, we are two thirds of the way through our tour break. We take months off in the winter and summer so we can recharge our batteries. Glen is going to tell you

about a thing that he does during the break to help himself recharge. Then we got some new merch to share and the traditional newsletter ending of a long list of gigs.

Thank you for all the love and support.

See you on the road in April.

#weareslackers

#youareslackers

The Sounds of Spring

The poster features the band's name 'the SLACKERS' in a large, bold, black font with a white outline, set against a bright yellow circular background. Below the name, silhouettes of the five band members are shown walking on a dark, textured ground. To the right of the silhouettes, a list of tour dates and venues is provided in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The background of the poster is a solid, vibrant pink. The text 'Spring Tour 2024' is written in a white, cursive-style font in the bottom right corner.

the SLACKERS →

APRIL 4 • HARRISBURG • STAGE ON HERR
APRIL 5 • PITTSBURGH • MR. SMALLS
APRIL 6 • CLEVELAND • GROG SHOP
APRIL 7 • DETROIT • MAGIC BAG
APRIL 8 • BUFFALO • REC ROOM
APRIL 10 • KITCHENER • THE HUB
APRIL 11 • TORONTO • VELVET UNDERGROUND
APRIL 12 • OTTAWA • OVERFLOW BREWERY
APRIL 13 • QUEBEC • L'ANTIBAR
APRIL 14 • MONTREAL • CAFE CAMPUS

APRIL 26 • BALTIMORE, MD • OTTO BAR
APRIL 27 • SAYREVILLE, NJ • STARLAND BALLROOM
MAY 3 • WAYNE, PA (PHILLY) • 118 NORTH
MAY 5 • PROVIDENCE, RI • ALCHEMY
MAY 4 • ALBANY • LARK HALL
MAY 16 • STUART, FL • TERRA FERMATA
MAY 17 • MELBOURNE, FL • DEBAUCHERY
MAY 18 • SANFORD, FL • WEST END TRADE CO
MAY 19 • TAMPA, FL • HOOCH AND HIVE

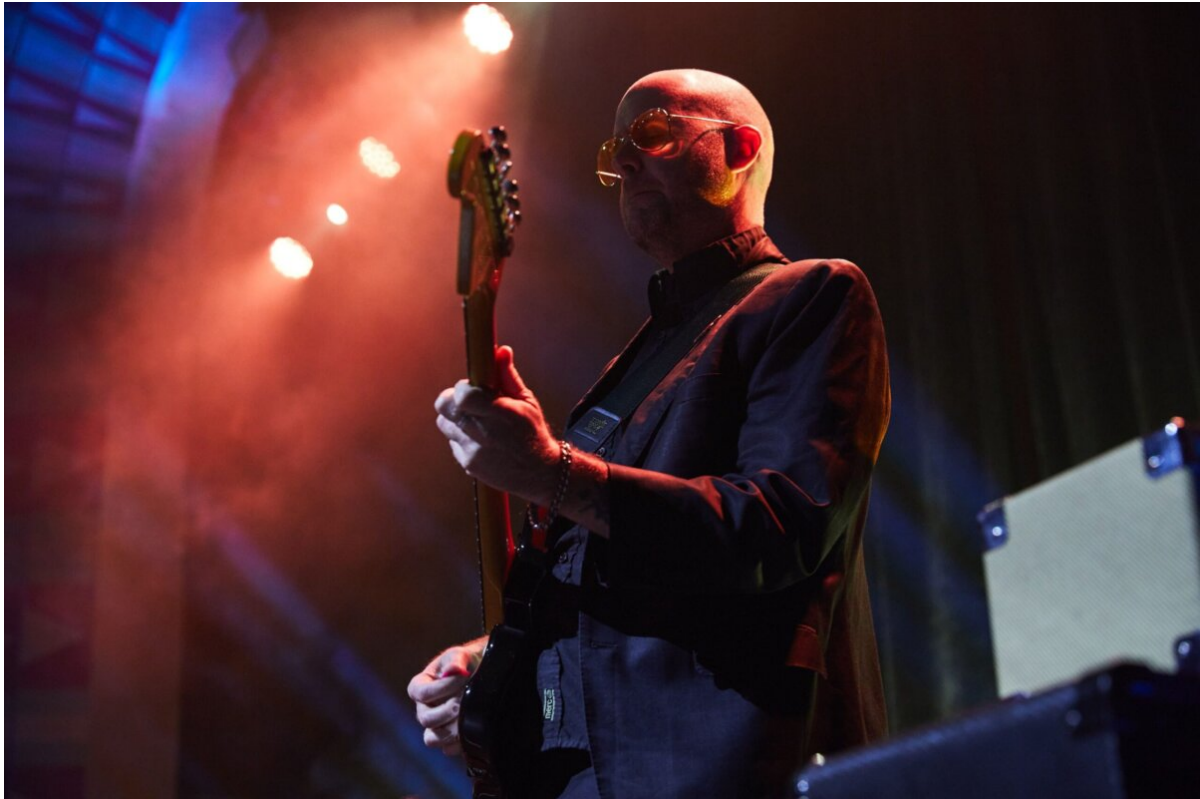
Spring Tour 2024

It's funny how after 37 years of touring that I still get excited about it. I always enjoy getting in the van and heading for another city over the horizon. I look forward to spending a couple hours of my life in a club or bar.

We are touring again on April 4th in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in a side room at the Harrisburg Midtown Arts Center called Stage of Herr. Hopefully by that point, we will have rehearsed a little bit and picked up what songs we are gonna have in rotation for the set.

People are always asking 'how do you decide which cities you go to?' Well, with this spring run, its built around anchor gigs with history. The near Midwest of Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and the Detroit area is one of the areas we have been touring since the 1990s. The Grog shop in Cleveland is one of two venues that we played on our first national tour

for Red Light that we still play. Its a gem of the Independent music scene.



The second week starts off in Buffalo and then goes into Ontario and Quebec. If you want bands to come to your town, have good Monday night gigs, and Buffalo has given us a lot of epic Mondays. Plus there's going to be a full eclipse on Monday, April 8. So that's something else to look forward to.

Canada is another place that embraced the Slackers' early, especially Toronto and Montreal. Canada was a hot spot for us since the early 2000s at a time when most of the US was cold for ska. Poutine and other treats will await us in April.

Ultimately, touring is a way for me to travel around and see my friends who I usually see once or twice a year. I have friends in almost all the towns on this run and it's always good to check in and see what they have been up to since the last tour.

Dave Hillyard, February 2024



On Songwriting

i write songs whenever... no particular reason. sometimes a bunch at once. i used to do this thing that Lou Reed talked about, supposedly Andy Warhol told him to write 10 songs a day or something... most of them aren't gonna be great, but if ya don't do it all the time yer not gonna get good at it... I used to write in my notebook constantly, and now i sing things into my phone... but its funny y'know? ... i'll look thru my old notebooks and in the midst of all this weird crap will be a tune that the Slackers play all the time...



i pay attention to the little things i sing in my head... if i gotta do something or remember something i sing it, like "shit, i better not forget my keys when i leave in five minutes". the tune that goes with that might be catchy and as i keep walkin down the block i start making up more stuff... if i get on the train or talk to somebody, or another tune is playing in the bodega, i'll forget it... so i try to notice that i'm singin it in my head and sing it into my phone. its easier than the old days... i used to have to notate it in my notebook... and when i'd come back i'd hope i could get the feel right. maybe that process was better? who knows...

Have The Time appeared like some of the good ones do... in a flash and i dont even know what i'm singing... i recorded it into Marcus's old 4-track when i got home from a late gig... i might have gone back and transcribed the words even to see what i actually sang. you never know what's kicking around. Speaking of Lou Reed, once i put on the radio and heard his new song and said "man! he got that one too!" it's like we both tuned into the same frequency and he got his out on a record before i did... sounds funny, i know... but i

believe that's how it happens sometimes... put up the antennae and we can all pick up on whats floating around out there.

Vic Ruggiero. January, 2024.

Tour Preparation



In Slacker World, we take the Winters off. Thus, it can take some time to ramp back up to tour shape. I start doing this about 6 weeks before a tour begins. I'll go to the gym every day for a couple weeks in order to get my strength and stamina up, then I'll go down to my basement for the next couple weeks every day and play along with old set lists from previous tours.

In order to improve my timing, I'll play along with a metronome at 45 BPMs (super slow!), then 55, 65, etc. Once I am consistently playing every day for 90 minutes (the length of a Slackers gig) at a comfortable, confident level then I stop playing for two days prior to the first show in order to let the muscles heal. I try to over-prepare rather

than under-prepare, because if I know my shit then it will take the burden off everyone else.

Ara Babajian, February 2024.

The making of an album



The Slackers are as individuals and as a group, members of the cult of the album. That belief that a collection of songs put together in the correct order can change the world. When you talk to us about music, albums are where we come alive. Whether it's Coltranes' 'Love Supreme' or the Kinks' 'Village Green Preservation Society',

we think about albums when we think about bands and music.

https://youtu.be/lc7dmu4G8oc?si=1bzQeA2_ZhRFJrAt

Since early last year, we have been starting to record again. We worked on 5 new songs. Maybe some of these tunes will start to see the light of day later in the year?

In addition to albums, we also dabble in singles. Little short attempts to see what a tune can do on its own. Or we pair up two songs together, they become buddies on an A side and B side of a single. Sometimes we even get up to a 5 song EP.

We have a recording session coming up in May, where hopefully we will get some more tunes together. If we get up to more than 10 tunes recorded, the album talk will start again.

Sometimes it can be daunting to do new material and a new album. You always want the songs to 'be better' than the last one. That high standard can lead to stress and songwriting paralysis aka writers' block.

Presenting a new song to the Slackers is like running a gauntlet. You got to convince and interest them that the song is worth playing. You got to sell them on a hook and chorus. Make them feel that this scrap of lyrics with a chord progression is worth working on for an hour at rehearsal.

You got to also convince our fans that our new song is worth listening to. There is the problem of making new music when you already have 200 plus recorded songs. When you try them out live, there are always some people who roll their eyes when they hear 'this is a new song.' I know it happens because I've done it when I've been to see my favorite bands. They want to hear 'Married Girl' or 'Sarah' or whatever their favorite is....we get obscure requests for 'El Gato' for that matter. https://youtu.be/wS18PK1t_DA?si=seqcsiOAnOum-h8N

For some people, they are only going to have room in their hearts for one or two albums. I get that too. If Red Light summed it up for you. That's the album you heard and it spoke to you. Everything else is ok at best or a distraction from us playing those old songs.

It's a matter of finding room in people's hearts for new stories and new sounds. Then making it sound like 'The Slackers' or at least what we sound like now. Somewhere between trying to repeat our oldies and making that new groundbreaking track that will change the world. I'll keep you posted as to how that is going.



If anyone has any epiphanies or just questions to my questions feel free to send an email to Slackermusic1991@gmail.com Maybe we should have a letter to the editor section of the newsletter? Look forward to your thoughts. Dave Hillyard, February 2024.

In Search of Wild Fennel

"Prometheus stole fire back from Zeus in a fennel stalk and restored it to humanity"- An Ancient Greek Legend.



To start the new year off right, I decided to venture into a green space near the ocean to collect wild fennel fronds. Meditations by the sea. Fennel you say? You bet. Fennel grows wild across much of the California coast and is easy to identify. That sweet and pungent smell of Licorice/Anise

is unmistakable. Although I would not recommend gathering any random green and such for human consumption, A little research and practice makes one able to see these parks and fields as a sort of "garden". As a child growing up in Massachusetts, I became keenly aware of the various edible greens and roots across the Commonwealth after a summer camp trip. Things like sassafras, cucumber root, dandelions, and winter green now started to catch my eye. Fast forward to roughly 8 years ago, I attended a meet up in Prospect Park in Brooklyn with an expert in foraging(seasonal). A world of native and invasive plants opened up before my eyes. Deliberate treks into forests, parks, and fields, always affords the curious an opportunity to engage a world just beyond our door steps. A return to what is authentic and available for everyone. The wild world of nature. Unscripted and forever evolving. Allow yourself the joys that nature promises. Not just in a salad or cooking pot. But that can be the "icing on the cake". I ended up making a fennel frond salad with tomatoes and feta cheese on top. Delicious. Here is a picture of me enjoying a short hike for a "Little Fire" in the shape of Fennel. Cheers everyone. Glen Pine, January 2024.

New Tshirt Designs and Other Merch

It's springtime and we have some new tshirt designs for you. Check out these options!



We are right now making a new batch of t-shirts and that means we will have them in sizes from XS - 4XL!

Get your merch direct from the band at www.theslackers.com/store

We got Slackers vinyl, t-shirts, hoodies, jackets and more!

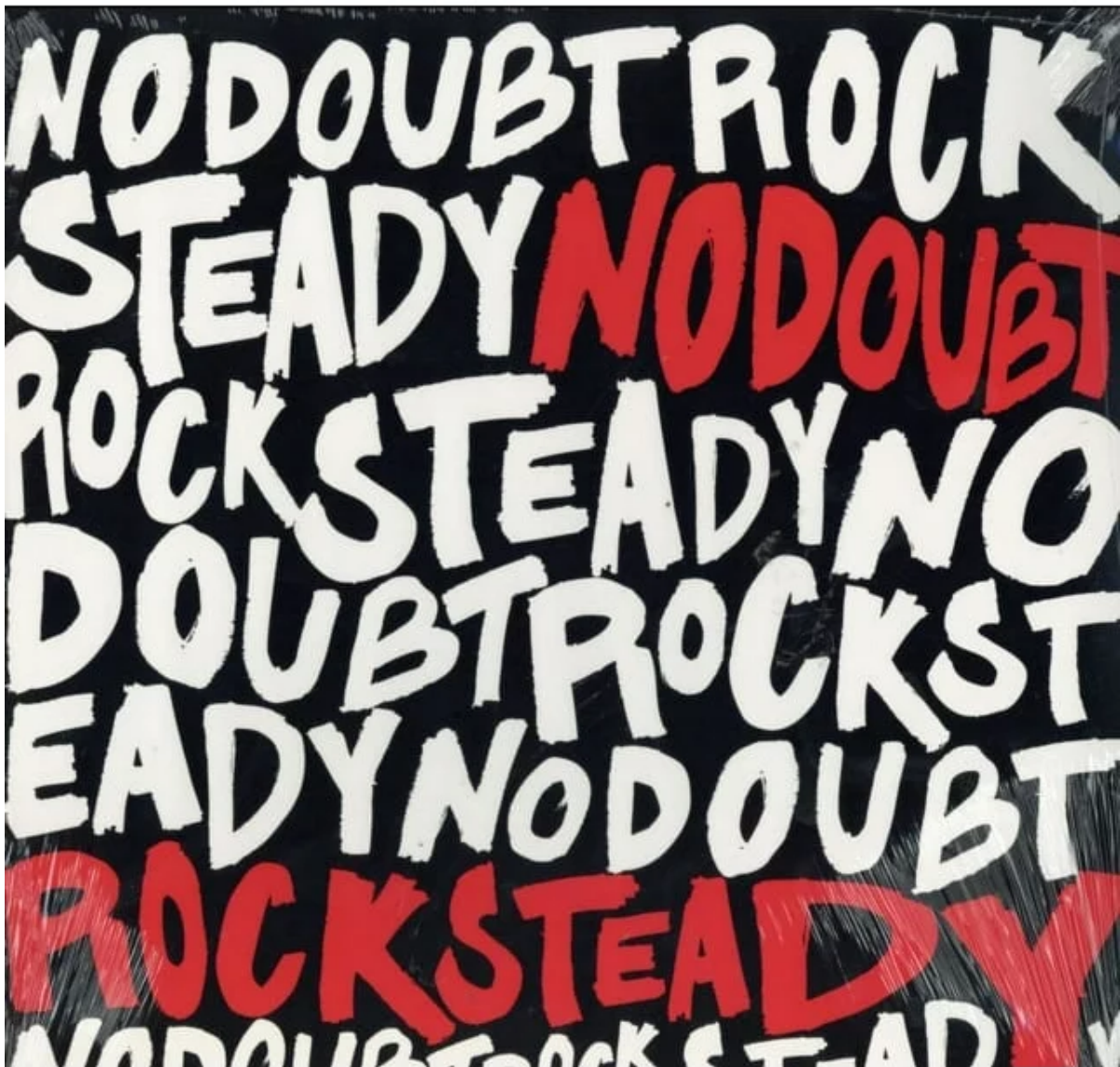
History of US Ska Episode 8



When we last left Ska music in the United States, it was 2000 and the boom years were over. In some segments of the world there was real hostility towards Ska.

It was seen that something that had 'already happened.' It was seen as corny, shallow music that didn't deserve much thought or devotion. Sound familiar? Yeah, I grew up in the mid 1980s hearing that the same thing. For me, the negativity of the early 2000s was just a mid 80s flashback.

As usual, there are always songs based on Jamaican ska and reggae that are popular at any given moment. In 2002, it was Sean Paul's cover of 'I'm Still in Love With You Girl' by Alton Ellis which was done pretty faithfully to the rocksteady original from 1967. But that was dancehall! Not the same music at all right? Or was it? Sometimes it's frustrating how ska and reggae links aren't recognized.



Speaking of Rocksteady, 2002 was also the year of No Doubt's successful Rocksteady album. A lot of which they recorded in Jamaica. There were several songs that were in the Ska Reggae idiom including this one, 'Underneath it all.'

[No Doubt - Underneath It All \(Lyrics \) ft. Lady Saw \(youtube.com\)](#)

There was still plenty third wave ska happening in the early 2000s. The music being made was mostly rock or metal and this obscured any sort of connection to Jamaican roots. Ultimately though, it was still called Ska and their sounds were what most people thought of when they thought of Ska.

A band that was gaining momentum in the early 2000s was Less Than Jake. They managed to even get on a major label, Warner Brothers, with their album, 'Anthem' in 2003.

[Less Than Jake - Welcome To The New South \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Another new band that also had tangential musical roots in Ska but still gets mentioned as a Ska band is Streetlight Manifesto. Their first EP came out in 2003 and they slowly began to gain a following.

One of the main avenues for bands like Less Than Jake or Streetlight Manifesto to grow their crowds was the Warped Tour. In the early 2000s, the more established ska bands like the Bosstones, Rancid, and Reel Big Fish all made main stage appearances and they played a mix of ska, punk, and what have you. Warped tour was transitioning to Emo as a whole but there were still a place for Ska and Punk there.

In addition to the Warped tour, there was the Ska is Dead tour. Its first run was in 2004. It featured bands like Big D and the Kids Table, Mustard Plug, and Catch 22.

I'll be honest that I have always hated 'Ska is dead' as a label. For me, this is just an acceptance of the dominant narrative on Ska in the US. Ska is something I love. I think it's some of the most beautiful music in the world. I want to share it with the world. I don't want to refer to something I love as being dead. I feel that its just accepting conventional wisdom. I respect that Ska is Dead was a DIY tour and they made successes through hard work and determination, but I don't like calling Ska dead. Ever.

Speaking of dominant narratives not having much to do with the Slackers reality, the Slackers had some successes in the early 2000s. If anything, we were more successful in the early 2000s than we were at any point in the 1990s.

One of our flashes of success, happened when after Wasted Days came out we got 15 minutes of airplay on NPR's "All Things Considered" show with Linda Wertheimer. It was a segment about how the Slackers were one of the hardest touring bands in the USA at the time. We were playing around 120 shows per year at the time.

https://youtu.be/jInfVlaZ_DE?si=rE82f_Fc8xj1dYfN

We played 15 minutes of songs including Wasted Days. In the next couple days, we sold around 8,000 cds, basically all of the balance of the 10,000 pressing that epitaph had made. We were #6 for the country on a new chart, the Amazon music chart. For a couple days, we were up there with Madonna but then it suddenly dropped. We had sold out of the cds available to sell and our cd went from being immediately available to a 3 week order. We lost the momentum.

The success of Wasted Days is just more proof that there is some inherent appeal of the music, and when it's given a chance, it will reach people. Of course, we had to deal with the record label not believing in that appeal. We sold out of cds and no one at Epitaph cared enough to rush out some more.

After Wasted Days, we did Slackers & Friends, Close My Eyes, and the International War Criminal EP. Musically, we went back to roots and then came out with some of the more bitter and political songs of our career inspired by our post 9/11 world. Of course, we heard the "I liked your music better when it wasn't political" refrain. These are people who missed "Run Away" on our first album, "I Still Love You" and "Soldier" on Red Light...the list is long. We have always been political in the tradition of musicians like Bob Marley or the Clash. Its always there and in the early 2000s we were inspired to right a slew of political songs.

It wasn't all 3rd wave ska out there, cause one of the bright new bands of the early 2000s to emerge from Southern California was the Aggrolites. They formed in 2002 and put out their first album, 'Dirty Reggae' in 2003. They quickly established themselves as one of the best live bands out there and spawned a legion of imitators that were never able to capture that magic that is Aggrolites.



In some ways, the Aggrolites were the imaginary skinhead reggae band that never happened between 1968 – 1971. They get called a Ska band sometimes but ultimately they don't play any ska. They play almost exclusively music inspired by Reggae's first wave. The Slackers' had dabbled in this era with tunes like "keep him away" and "this is the night." For that matter, most of the 2 tone 'ska' hits were from the early reggae era like "Long Shot Kick the Bucket", "Skinhead Moonstomp", and "Message to you Rudi." But after 1971 and up to 2002, no one had played that era as fiercely and purely as the Aggrolites. They brought it back with attitude and passion.

[The Aggrolites - Dirty Reggae \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Another scene that was growing in the early 2000s was what became known as 'Latin Ska' or 'Ska en Espanol.' Again, this is one of those unsatisfactory labels when you

get into “what does that exactly mean?” Ska has always been cousins with Latin music, since the original Jamaican Bands were influenced by Afro Cuban bands. Ska classics like “El Pussycat” and “Phoenix City” were by Mexico City. One of the first places that Ska gained some popularity outside of Jamaica was Mexico where bands like Los Aragon played it in the 1960s.

[\(4\) SKA MEXICANO 1960 - 1966 - YouTube](#)

So in some ways, all Ska is Latin influenced. But that’s a musicologist point of view. When people talk about Latin Ska, they are usually talking about people from Latin American countries who have bands that play Ska music. In the US, they are talking about bands who have members who have origins or heritage from countries like Mexico, Venezuela, Columbia, and Peru. Lyrics are in Spanish or English. Bands play a mix ska, punk, reggae, rock, swing, cumbia, salsa and other styles. In Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, many of them like Café Tacuba, Inspector, Desorden Publico, and Los Fabulosos Cadillacs had big hits and were playing stadiums. This style extended into the United States. Voodoo Glow Skulls, who started in 1988, were one of the early bands in the USA.

By the early 2000s, this scene or rather a bunch of loosely connected little scenes were spread from Florida to Texas across to California. Los Skarnales from Houston mixed Ska, Punk, Reggae, Swing, and Cumbia.

[08 - El Suavecito - Los Skarnales \(youtube.com\)](#)

Viernes 13 from LA was inspired by Ska of the 1990s from Mexico and the USA plus Punk and East LA Oldies. https://youtu.be/mdl1FaVWz5c?si=HBZq_m-V5ckrkNI7

La Banda Skalavera, also from Southern California mixed together Ska with Latin Rock and lots of horns.

These bands are literally the tip of the iceberg of what became 100s of bands in the 2010s. The Latin Ska scenes as they developed in the USA were often very DIY and grassroots. They reinvigorated a lot of the Ska scenes

locally in the early 2000s, especially in the Southwest, Texas, and South Florida.

So during the early 2000s, the music endured and even grew a bit here and there. There was a lot of ignorance, hostility, and a common belief that Ska was dead, but the various strands of the scene kept going and as the 2000s went on, a new thing called “social media” began to change how people experienced music but we will save that for the next chapter. David Hillyard, 2024.

Booking The Slackers

Our agent, John Pantle, just went and started working for a new booking agency called One Fiinix. Its' most famous artist and part owner of the agency is some guy named Ed Sheeran.

John has promised that he will continue to entertain any offer, big or small, if you feel it would be beneficial for the Slackers, state your case and we will see what can be done. If you want to book the Slackers for a club show, a festival, or a private party in your backyard email

John.pantle@onefiinix.com
Slackermusic1991@gmail.com



Tour Dates

Thursday April 4th Harrisburg Stage on Herr

Friday April 5 Pittsburgh Mr. Smalls

Saturday April 6 Cleveland Grog Shop

Sunday April 7 Detroit Magic Bag

Mon April 8 Buffalo Rec Room

Wed April 10 Kitchener The Hub

Thursday April 11 Toronto Velvet Underground

Friday Apr 12 Ottawa Overflow Brewery

Saturday April 13 Quebec L'Antibar

Sunday April 14 Montreal Café Campus

April 26 Baltimore Otto Bar

April 27 Sayreville, NJ Starland Ballroom with Pietasters,
Catbite



May 3 Philadelphia 118 North

May 4 Albany Lark Hall

May 5 Providence Alchemy

May 16 Stuart, Fla Terra Fermata

May 17 Melbourne, Fla Debauchery

May 18 Sanford, Fla West End Trading Co

May 19 Tampa, Fla Hooch and Hive

June 16 Boston Rock on Concert Cruise

Sept 13 Hampton, VA Supernova Festival

sept 19 Breda, NL Mezz
sept 20 Koln Gebaude 9
sept 21 Kortrijk, Wilde Westen
sept 22 Amsterdam Melkweg
sept 24 Brighton Arches
sept 25 London Underworld
sept 26 Glasgow Audio
sept 27 Sheffield Corporation
sept 28 Southampton 1865
sept 29 Bristol Exchange
sept 30 Swansea Sin City
oct 1 Boulogne Sur Mer Le Cave De Monseieur Guy
oct 2 Paris Glazart
oct 4 Sittard Volt Poppodium
oct 5 Madrid Gruta 77 night 1
oct 6 Madrid Gruta 77 night 2
oct 8 Vienna Arena
oct 9 Graz Explosiv
oct 10 Munich Feuerwerk
oct 11 Winterthur Salzhaus
oct 12 Leuven Het Depot
oct 13 Berlin SO36



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