



Doing an All-Vinyl Club Tour in 2016 Is Not Easy — Just Ask Richard Vission and Bad Boy Bill

BY LIZ OHANESIAN

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Richard Vission and Bad Boy Bill returned to vinyl for their latest tour.

Jesse Perez

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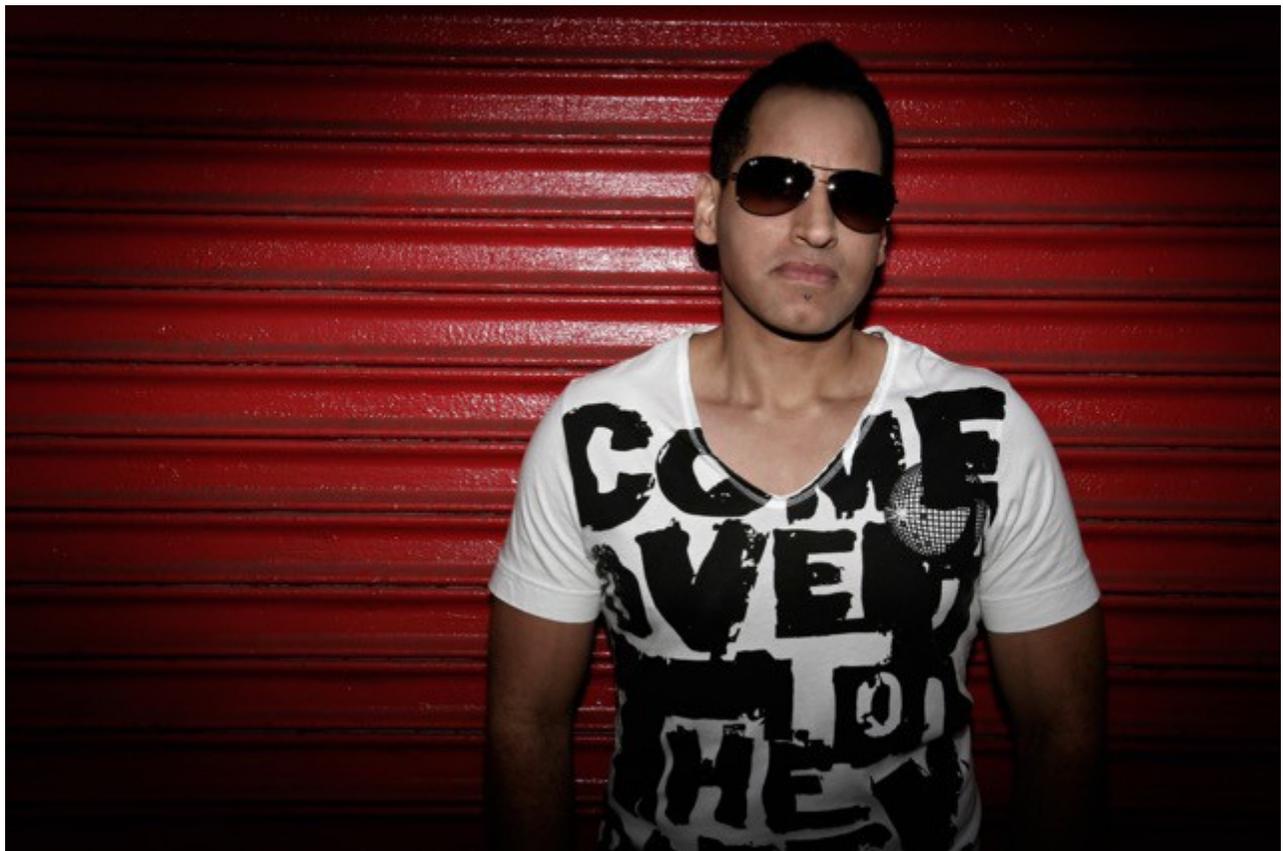


"If you asked me a year ago, 'Hey are you going to be doing a tour on vinyl?' I would say you are out of your mind," Richard Vission confesses.

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But when he and longtime friend and collaborator Bad Boy Bill jump on a phone call with *L.A. Weekly*, they are doing just that. The two just finished soundcheck at Output in Brooklyn, prepping for another date on an all-vinyl tour that will take them across the United States. They hit Los Angeles, Vission's hometown, on Aug. 6, for a night at Sound.

This was intended to be only a short jaunt, taking the two veteran house DJs to a few key cities. But after seeing the response from fans, they're thinking about extending the tour through the end of this year. They've also commemorated the event with the release of the *Back to Vinyl* tour EP.



Richard Vission

Courtesy of the artist

The tour is a return to the pair's roots but with a modern twist. Both Vission and Bill got their start on the decks as teenagers in the 1980s. Vission threw parties at his high school in L.A., which led to an internship at KDAY. Eventually, he went on to Power 106, where he continues to host the long-running mix show

"Power Tools." Bill, who is from Chicago, also went from teenage party promoter to radio jock. By the 1990s, he had risen to national visibility for his DJ mix compilations.

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While both cut their teeth on turntables and vinyl, they segued into 21st-century DJ tech smoothly. (Bill is a co-founder of Beatport, the DJ-centric digital music shop.) More than a decade has passed since they lugged their crates to the clubs. "I couldn't even find one of my turntables," Vission says. "That's how long it's been."

It's been many years since vinyl was considered the standard for DJs. Indeed, so much time has passed since the format's club heyday that among the new generation of club kids (Vission's own interns included), some had never seen people play turntables. So Vission and Bill wanted to show the younger crowd the skill and art that's involved in turntable mixing. Plus, they missed the challenges that this fragile format presents.



Bad Boy Bill

Courtesy of the artist

Vission and Bill put together their all-vinyl tour with a catch: While they wanted to go back to their roots, they didn't want to play an old-school set. That required sending most of the music they're playing on the tour to Capsule Labs in L.A. to have it pressed onto vinyl. "We had to be really, very selective because we were pressing a limited amount of music," Vission says, "so every song had to count."

Vission and Bill also had to retrain themselves to play the turntables. When you're playing records there's greater room for error, and the slightest shift in beats per minute can throw off your mix. "You can't really set the digital number and walk away," Bill explains. "You're constantly moving the analog pitch. You're moving the turntable. You're moving the vinyl and touching it. You're locked into the mix as it's happening."

The digital revolution has changed more than how consumers listen to music. It's changed how it's played at the club and how sound systems are built. Now, at the kind of venues that Vission and Bill play, the rumble of bass from under the DJ booth can easily create feedback or cause the needles to skip. Before the tour, Bill experimented on remedies for the situation, finally devising a fix with cement pavers and squash balls. "The squash balls absorb the bass frequencies and the concrete gives it the isolation," he explains.

Their soundcheck sessions can take anywhere from three to five hours as they prep the DJ booth and test out turntables. Since so few people play vinyl anymore, they sometimes come across turntables that aren't in the best condition. Typically, they'll have to try out six decks to get four that work properly. Even then, there might be a problem once they start playing. The night before our interview, in Washington, D.C., Bill had to quickly fix a turntable as they opened the set.

"Technical stuff is always going to happen during the set," he says. "You just have to roll with it and try to think quick and deal with it as it comes up."

Back To Vinyl Tour | Bad Boy Bill + Richard Vission



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For Vission and Bill, it's the challenges of playing vinyl that

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have been making this tour a blast. "It's really making us step our game back up," Bill says. "You can get really complacent playing digitally

because there's really not too much that can go wrong."

Now, they're back into a space where records skip when people dance into the DJ table – something Bill says actually happened when they played Sacramento. "That's what makes it exciting and fun."

Bad Boy Bill and Richard Vission's Back to Vinyl tour comes to Sound Nightclub this Saturday, Aug. 6. [More info.](#)



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