

By **Grant Gilmore** - January 7, 2019

After forming a strong friendship due to their similar taste in music, Gordon Huntley and Erick Muise came together in 2008 to form **Botnek**. The Halifax-based duo quickly caught the attention of many with their original tunes and remixes, notably putting their spin on massive tunes like "Animals" and "Selfie". Aside from their productions in the studio, Botnek also dominated the decks and moved crowds at major festivals like [EDC Las Vegas](#), Tomorrowland, and Ultra Music Festival.

In 2017 Botnek reached a major turning point in their careers as they began to shift away from their Big Room sound and take it back to their roots. That year they decided to open a new chapter of their story and released track **"Don't Need U"** while also debuting their new imprint, **World Famous Headquarters**. Making that jump and not looking back, they've hit the ground running with their mission of bringing some wacky, fun house music for fans to get down to on the dancefloor.

Closing out last year with some serious heat, we sat down with Botnek to chat with them to take a look at their past and see what's in store for the future. Tune in to their exclusive mix below and read on to find out more about this dynamic duo!

Stream Botnek's 2019 Kick-Off Mix on Mixcloud:

Hi Botnek, thanks for taking the time to chat with us today!

Erick: *Erick's radio voice* HIIIIIIIIIIIII.

Gordon: Yoyoyoyo

First of all, congrats on closing the year out with the release of the *Wiggle* and *Can't Remember* EPs, which both have that signature Botnek style that really makes the tracks pop. If your releases had a recipe, what would make up the ingredients?

E: Thanks for having us! Botnek Recipe Ingredients: Gordon + Erick

Seriously that's really just it! We try to have fun while pushing ourselves in the studio and it just seems to come out in this weird way. We both have side projects that are quite different sonically, but when we come together to make music together it comes out with that very specific sound and vibe.

G: It's true, while we both have a similar grasp on the technology we both use, how we use it is pretty different. And where we meet in the middle is what ends up sounding like Botnek.



"Sky High" saw you team up with Aylen for your second release together in 2018. What originally brought you together, and is the production process when collaborating any different for you guys?

E: We've played Aylen's music for like... forever at this point. **[Laughs]** It was actually sort of surprising that it took us this long to collaborate on the first tune "future of the underground." It worked so well we felt like we had to do another at some point but didn't really plan it out too much. Aylen sent us a demo and we were like "YOOOO."

That demo would turn into "Sky High," a mega-chunky, tech house groover. We had been talking to Audiophile XXL about doing an EP with them and the Aylen collab just seemed like the perfect tune to put out with them, especially because he's worked with Audiophile many times before!

G: Let's not forget the edit we did of his song "Quack Attack" in 1992! Well, the first collab "Future of the Underground" started as a demo he sent us just to share for feedback, I think it was originally called "Unicorns". We had a lot of feedback on the track and were just sending him stuff to add to it.

He came out to LA for a few days, and it was still kinda in a demo phase, so we decided to get together and flesh it out. "Sky High" was a lot quicker. Same thing, he had this loop of bits he sent us, and we added more bits and arranged it all out. That one is more restrained and was a much faster process just back and forth over emails and texting.

To kick off 2018 you dropped a remix of Hotel Garuda's "Dancing On The Moon" that brought some serious heat along with it. With a catalog full of epic remixes, do you have any plans on putting your spin on some tracks in 2019?

E: Not this very second no! We are usually asked to do a remix like with the Hotel Garuda tune! We've been having a lot of fun making edits for our DJ sets like we used to way back in the early days and especially re-working some of our newer tunes for live! (Might be re-releasing a tune we put out in 2018 that'll smash.)

G: Ya no plans at the moment. We've done more remixes than originals I bet, right now we gotta focus on creating new stuff vs fucking up other peoples ideas haha

It was two years ago that you hit a turning point in your careers. What was the biggest factor that led you to make some changes and evolve your sound, and were you ever nervous about making that decision?

E: We got burned out, honestly. We were bored and tired of what we were doing and completely lost inspiration to keep creating. At the time I was living in Seattle and going to a lot of house and techno shows. It really inspired me to get back into what I started out making many years before! We were really nervous about changing our sound. We've made a lot of different music over the years and for the most part, our fans were quite supportive of those different off-shoots. In total honesty though, if we didn't change the project likely wouldn't have survived. We just decided to dive headfirst into it and if no-one cared well... no one would care, but we had to try.

G: Yep, what Erick said. I had just moved to LA around this time and was surrounded by the EDM scene there that I had already totally outgrown. I was the most jaded shithead ever just reading comic books and listening to metal. **[Laughs]** Botnek could have had a divorce around this time. It took us a lot of time together, and apart, for our tastes to grow, and for us to come together and realize how Botnek could be exciting for us again and hope that it was as exciting for our fans.



You aren't just artists but also head up your own label, World Famous Headquarters. How do you manage the time between your own work and the growing label?

E: A LOT OF HELP! Our manager Griff does a lot of promo gathering and emailing (THANKS GRIFF) so that we can focus on doing our radio show, and working on future Botnek tunes! It's really and truly a team effort. Both Gordon and I need to be in the right headspace to make tunes that we're proud of, otherwise, we make cruddy tunes and that reflects in the music.

G: Griff really is the silent third member of Botnek. He reminds us we have an Instagram account, will tweet the crap either of us text him, and makes sure the boys get enough water and beer for the day. It's great, it lets us stay focused when we're in the studio. I have horrible ADD, if I get distracted I'll forget what I was doing in seconds and never get back to it. So the more we can focus on one thing at a time, the better. He makes sure we stay on track and don't forget shit. Like this interview haha.

Now that the label is open for other artists to release on, what are you looking for when you're listening to demo submissions?

E: It's hard to say exactly but when we all hear a submission and go "WOW" we want to put it out. We've received so many tunes like that and it has forced us to be more picky about what we put out. We tend to lean more old school fidget/house with lots of fun vibes. I'd say the first non-Botnek release "XTC" by Das Kapital and MNNR is the perfect way to explain what we love. It sounds like a classic tune but also sounds so future in so many ways. Each subsequent release has embodied that same ethos.

G: I call it when a song is "stinky". Like, you hear it and you make the "wtf is that smell" face. It's gotta be stinky as hell.



Last year also saw the debut of your monthly show World Famous Radio. When you're putting these shows together, what's your preferred method of finding fresh music to play out?

E: I usually just listen to DJ playlists while cleaning my apartment or try and go deep in SoundCloud! We also get an overwhelming amount of amazing promos and demos sent to our world famous headquarters label email! So it makes making a 30-minute mix once a month pretty darn easy – though my Rekordbox is bursting at the seams with tunes lmao

G: Yeah, given that there's a 30-minute guest mix each month, and an interview, we only really need to play like, 3 songs to fill the rest of the time. There was a time when I could never find a single new song I liked before a set, and now we can't fit them all in, not even close. Maybe our tastes have changed, but either way, our music folders are extra healthy these days.

Since first coming together back in 2008 to form Botnek, what has been the biggest struggle you've faced and how have you overcome it?

E: Deciding to re-evaluate where we wanted to take the project a few years ago. It was either we try and move forward or let the Botnek project die and we go our separate ways or decide to start something new together. Lots of beers and lots of music making and mood boards and all that stuff.. just trying to find the spark again to keep moving forward. Giving ourselves a lot of work with the radio show and the label and making music keeps us focused and inspired!

G: Yeah, our only goals when we started was to learn how to be better producers, and to do it for a living. No vision beyond that. I was such a novice producer when we started, I always felt about three steps behind Erick and 20 steps behind the people we looked up to.

Once we were eventually touring and had quit our day jobs, it took us a long time to be honest with ourselves and realize there was more than one way to have a music career. We were playing all these EDM shows at the time, we only saw that world and thought it was the only way to be successful. We didn't realize we didn't have to just do what everyone else was doing. In fact, we shouldn't.

We've definitely played songs we don't even like in the past, just because "they work". Enough of that bologna. Once we refocused, like Erick said, and realized where we actually belonged in dance music, things got back on track. Or more on track than maybe they ever were.



Photo Credit: Jimmy Hamelin

As artists who have been on a rigorous tour schedule, how do you manage to stay healthy on a mental and physical level while on the road?

E: I wouldn't say we were ever particularly healthy! **[Laughs]** But touring with another person made the whole experience more enjoyable, I can't imagine doing that by myself. I would be Facetimeing everyone all the time.

G: You never Facetime me you liar. But yeah, that first year we toured a lot was the year I got the fattest. You can't sleep till 5pm every day, drink beer and eat pizza after every show and not be a bit juicy. Plus we are bad influences on each other. If I'm on the fence about getting a beer with lunch Erick would be like "fuck that I'm definitely getting five," or vice versa.

But I guess also, something I still haven't figured out is traveling and having the energy to make music at the same time. Traveling is exhausting and I'm not sure why because most of it is just sitting and waiting in new locations. But for some reason getting home, all you wanna do is sit some more. Usually takes a full day to get back into creative mode. This might also have something to do with pizza and beer. Man, I need a vegetable.

We know you both love spicy food, so what's your most recent find that has had you feeling the heat?

E: I grew myself an assortment of peppers this past summer and got a decent crop of Habaneros! They got me feeling the heat in that I picked a few one morning and that night I went to take out my contacts and totally burned my eyeballs. Those residual oils are no friggin joke. Also, don't touch anything else. **[Laughs]**

G: I'm more on that, "I don't know how to cook" lifestyle. But my thing for spice is definitely Szechuan food. Ma Po Tofu baby. Literally, give me some.

If someone was heading to Halifax on a trip, what are three places that they should go and why?

G: Ok I'll take the reins on this one, I've spent more time recently back in the homeland than Erick. This would have been a harder question to answer, even two years ago. But luckily people our age are starting businesses in Halifax now, so it's not just 65-year-old bars that have fish and chips and cheap beer.

- Best Brewery: Unfiltered. Or “un-fucking-filtered” as they like to say. Don’t go and try to order a Coors. I swear most people in Halifax are friendly though.
- Best Bar: Unfiltered also has a great bar, but for more variety, Stillwell. Hot spot.
- Best Restaurant: Primal. Sorry vegetarians. I still love Ma Po Tofu, but this spot is more about, here’s some goddamn meat. And the chef knows what’s up. Plus they have dessert beer things that have ice cream and bacon in them, and it shouldn’t make sense but it does?

I guess there are also things to do that aren’t beer related, but I don’t do them. Go look at the ocean I guess.

Finally, what are some of the goals that you’re hoping to achieve in 2019?

E: We’d love to get back to Europe/Asia/Australia for tours! It’s been a number of years since we’ve been and our older and wiser selves have a reinvigorated need to travel and experience the new and the old.

G: Agreed! I’m ready to get back on the road for some extended trips. Weekend gigs are great for keeping productive, but longer tours are great for inspiration. Also, it’s always been a bucket list of mine to get a Pete Tong Essential New Tune. Before our music was probably too wacky for him, but maybe one day it’ll line up!

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GRANT GILMORE

Grant has been listening to electronic dance music since the early 2000s. Actively involved in the EDM community, Grant is an admin for the EDC & Coachella subreddits and their Facebook groups. Previously he has been part of several EDM startups and promotion companies such as Shamele55, Electric State of Mind and Q-Dance. Originally listening to trance artists such as ATB, Armin Van Buuren and Paul Oakenfold, Grant has expanded his listening experience to include a full set of genres ranging from hardstyle to deep house and has been regularly attending both festivals and club events since 2010.

