

# EVENT<sup>TM</sup>

MARKETER

FOR CREATORS OF THE BRAND EXPERIENCE



DOUGLAS FREELAND, MCDONALD'S



## THE EVENT MARKETING DREAM TEAM

# Douglas Freeland

**DREAM TEAM TITLE:**

Director-Consumer Marketing

**CURRENT POSITION:**

Director-Marketing, McDonald's

**WHY WE WANT HIM:**

Freeland's a tough taskmaster who demands top-notch performance from the team and himself, but he readily acknowledges the contributions of others. He's got the ear of top executives who support his programs and, thanks to McDonald's Live, a 10-city music tour featuring emerging artists performing free live shows at McDonald's restaurants, he's now got the ears of young adults, too.

The idea for McDonald's Live came over a lunch meeting. "We were talking about music and came up with the notion of live music events, but felt having the events at McDonald's restaurants would be more impactful," Freeland says. With input from consumer research, the blessing of McDonald's execs Bill Lamar and Neil Golden and the support of his agencies, that germ of an idea led to one of the hottest gigs of the summer. The first concert, held on Venice Beach, drew 5,000; additional stops averaged between 600-700, except for Chicago, where 1,200 kids showed up. The tour exposed the young people to new artists (and what kid doesn't like to be on the leading edge!) and tapped into marketing's user-generated content trend as their fave artist, chosen via online voting, will be featured in a TV ad next year.

Freeland came to McDonald's by way of Quaker Oats in Chicago, where he cut his teeth on a different sort of music event—a Gospel music project for its cereal business. Now at McDonald's for more than 12 years, he has worked on the media side, on Happy Meals and on the McDonald's Monopoly promotion—one of the biggest undertakings, and at 15 years, one of the longest-running, by any brand anywhere.

Earlier this year, Freeland negotiated a partnership with Interscope Records involving producer and artist Timbaland that included a half-time performance by the superstar during the McDonald's All-American High School Basketball Game. Two of Timbaland's protégées performed at the final stop of the McDonald's Live Tour in New York.

Under Freeland's watch, events at McDonald's have evolved from "borrowed" equities such as Hot Import Nights and a House of Blues tie-in to original branded content for McDonald's Live, although both remain part of the marketing mix. "The real key is the type of connection we are making with young adults," Freeland says. "You can make a deeper connection when you create a memorable experience that is customer-driven and brand-produced with brand content."

And the fries are pretty darned good, too!



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