

The Knocks: Adding substance to sound

The electronic duo proves that good dance music can be a little sad.



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The Knocks' Ben "B-Roc" Ruttner wouldn't advise most people to go into business with their roommate, but it's worked out pretty great for him. "James and I are really lucky," he says. "I always thought since our relationship was so easy that all other music groups were like that. But after being on the road with some other bands, I found out that is definitely not the case."

New York transplants Ruttner and his buddy James "JPatt" Patterson formed the electronic music duo back in 2010 while living in their East Village apartment where they survived on "dollar slices of pizza and had people living on our couch to pay the rent."



Ben Ruttner and James Patterson of The Knocks. **TATIANA TURIN**

In 2010, they made it big with their single, "Make It Better," which was featured on a Corona commercial. They have since worked with heavyweights including X Ambassadors, Fetty

Wap, Walk the Moon and Cam'ron. The duo is currently executive producing Wyclef Jean's upcoming album, and their own, long-awaited debut will be released March 4. We caught up

with Ruttner to get the full scoop.

No drama

Ruttner and Patterson's easy-going friendship spills into the way they

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collaborate with other artists. They really do seem like the type of dudes who avoid drama and are friends with everyone. Not only do they have a track ("All That") with Carly Rae Jepsen, they remained friends with her while working on a song with her ex-boyfriend Matthew Koma. "We actually worked with two of Matt Koma's exes," Ruttner laughs. "His other ex-girlfriend is Crista [Ru] from POWERS."

Ruttner says that particular song, "Classic," was actually the song that set the tone for their entire upcoming album. "We had a whole album

ready and done, but then 'Classic' set a new bar for us. Everything just clicked." The song has a throwback, disco-pop sound juxtaposed with the beat-heavy club trend that was happening in the EDM space, and the risk worked out in their favor.

Beyond the beat

Most electronic dance music sounds like happiness on steroids, but The Knocks' songs have a bit of melancholy and nostalgia to them. "With dance music, for a while it was about who could have the craziest sounds or the wildest drop, but Disclosure and other [artists] like that are letting the world know you can have a really good dance song that has really good lyrics and content," Ruttner says. "We aren't just making songs people can just jump up and down to. Actual good songwriting is important."

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