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A2IM FEATURED EXECUTIVE – RYAN VAUGHN, FOUNDER, BACKLINE CREATIVE; CFO, HEAD BITCH MUSIC

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Photo by Ashley Friedman

Throughout his more than 20-year career in music, **Ryan Vaughn** has had a hand in nearly every vertical in the industry, starting as a professional percussionist and drummer in both the studio and live on stage with artists of myriad genres, and transitioning to working in tour management, artist management, **label management, production, consulting, A&R, digital distribution, marketing, publishing, and more.**

After working for 12 years as a professional drummer in NYC where he performed with more than 1,000 artists, on more than 100 albums, and multiple TV shows and movies, Ryan moved to Los Angeles to work as an executive, eventually founding his management company Backline Creative in October of 2017. Currently, Ryan works as a manager for independent artists at Backline Creative, and as the CFO of Head Bitch Music, the custom music and digital distribution company he runs with his wife and business partner, Jessica Vaughn.

Tell us about how you got your start in the music industry, and how it lead to the work you do today.

I got my start in the music industry while I was 16, in high-school, and living in Prescott, Arizona. I was taking lessons from an incredible drummer from the bebop/hardbop community, Mel Zelnick, and I started to book gigs, play at private parties, etc. I was a part of the Sedona Jazz on the Rocks Youth Band, Young Sounds of Arizona, and All-State Jazz Band during my Senior year of high school as first chair. As a result, I was offered scholarships to continue my education in performance, eventually bringing me to Mesa Community College and later William Patterson University of New Jersey, before I settled into playing professionally in NYC.

Once I got to NYC, I spent 12 years as a professional drummer. I played with over 1000 different artists and on over 100 records including artists such as John Forté, Anna Nalick, Aloe Blacc, Dave Monks (from Tokyo Police Club), Joshua Radin, Rachel Platten, Jeffrey Gaines, Teddy Geiger, Tyler Hilton, Natasha Bedingfield, Rita Wilson, Hugh Jackman, Ben Taylor, and Carly Simon. I also performed on various TV shows, including being the bandleader for the daytime talk show Katie in 2013, the inaugural seasons of both The Masked Singer and Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist, Late Night with Conan O'Brien, and The Bachelor Presents: Listen To Your Heart. I even got to be involved in the development of the music for Fox 20th Century's The Greatest Showman! All that was great, but eventually I got burnt out. At the same time I had started to work in various parts of the industry including BMG Music Publishing imprint Fieldhouse Music in 2012 as their head of A&R.

As time went on, ad agencies began downsizing, friends were no longer playing and venues were closing, I decided to make a big change and move to LA in 2017 to chase my now wife, Jessica. I joined Marshall Arts USA and Merrill Artists Group as a Business Development Manager and Booking Agent, and eventually left to become an artist manager after many of my friends kept asking me to "manage" them. So, I founded Backline Creative, my boutique management company. In 2019, I also helped launch the custom music and digital distribution company, Head Bitch Music, with my wife and business partner, Jessica Vaughn.

📷 (<https://www.instagram.com/headbitchrecords>)

🌐 (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/head-bitch-music/about>)

🌐 (<https://www.headbitchmusic.com>)

Is there a success story or career milestone that you are most proud of?

*Working on The Greatest Showman was definitely a highlight and a milestone. I was fortunate enough to start working with Pasek and Paul subbing for another drummer and dear friend, Drew McKeon. I joined the creative team, alongside multi-instrumentalist Justin Goldner, early in the development of the movie. I watched in awe as Pasek and Paul slowly took over the soundtrack one song at a time. They would write a song, we would workshop and demo the song, and then we would take it to the reading with the cast. It was brilliant! We eventually performed the script in its entirety, music and all, for the board of Fox 20th Century. I literally watched as Fox greenlit the movie on the spot. It was all surreal. **And the rest, as they say, is history...***

Are there any projects you're working on or company updates that you're most excited about?

I am excited to watch my management clients grow personally and gain traction professionally. A couple of my clients are going on tour, another couple are getting offered label and publishing deals, and others continue to land sync after sync. The growth is the most exciting as it is the only tangible measurement of years and years of hard work on all sides. I am excited for everything the future holds for our small yet mighty team!

Outside of your work in music, do you have any other hobbies or particular areas of expertise/interest?

I particularly enjoy cooking in my spare time. I find a lot of interesting and exciting new recipes on TikTok and I love experimenting with them! I also enjoy spending far too much money on concert tickets and I rather unfortunately get played by my cat Giles sometimes.

Anything else to add?

I'd love to share a quote and some exciting work my clients have coming up!

*Back when I was finishing my bachelor's degree and playing in a jam band called Swampadelica, my musical mentor Damian Calcagne told me **"Kid, don't take anything personally...EVER. Not in work, music, life, or relationships."** This quote has affected my life every single day since. I practice it as a husband, a friend, a musician, and even as a manager. Removing emotion and trying to be objective or coming to terms with knowing that people's reactions whether positive or negative don't reflect upon you, has been one of the hardest things to practice in my life. While it took me a while, it has helped me maintain and develop relationships both personally and professionally.*

About A2IM:

~~And add it on @16 of my clients have exciting releases coming up! Here are a few:~~
 Anna Ross is releasing her debut EP, *Call of the Road*, in August 2023. Recently-owned American music labels A2IM represent these independently owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) interests in the marketplace, in the media, on Capitol Hill, and as part of the global music community. In doing so, it supports a key segment of America's creative class that represents America's diverse musical cultural heritage. Billboard Magazine identified the independent music label sector as 37.32 percent of the music industry's U.S. recorded music sales market in 2016 based on copyright ownership, making Independent labels collectively the largest music industry sector.

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Keep up with Ryan