



Q&A with Gian Fiero

Commercial Music Authority | *Independent A&R Specialist* | *Educator* | *Music Business Entrepreneur*

Like most professionals in the music industry, the man who is known for wearing stylish hats has worn quite a few throughout his career. Getting his start as a personal manager; operating a successful consulting firm; teaching at the high school and collegiate level on multiple music business topics; serving as a business coach for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA); and recently finding his groove (and his niche) as an Independent A&R Specialist, Gian answers common questions about his work, his passions, and his future.

Q: What is your background?

A: I started out as a songwriter. I wrote my first song when I was 10 years old after being influenced by The Stylistics, The Jacksons, and Heatwave. I formed a couple of vocal groups as a teenager and performed in many talent shows, but I never wanted to become a “star”. I was always intrigued by - and focused on - working behind the scenes. When my group disbanded I capitalized on my leadership skills by becoming a personal manager and starting my first company. I read every book on the music industry I could find, took courses on publishing and legal aspects of the music business, and negotiated my first record deal at the age of 19.

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Q: What is Independent A&R?

A: Independent A&R is the creative management and direction of musical talent and resources. Much like working for a record label, someone who does independent A&R finds talent and recordings to exploit or presents them to professionals who do so. It also entails overseeing projects, and when necessary, doing some talent development.

Q: What exactly do you do as an Independent A&R Specialist?

A: As a specialist I use my vision and marketing skills to help artists create and use songs constructively to build and promote their success and their brands. That entails connecting the right artist with the right song, and facilitating economic opportunities that enable artists to profit from the use of their talent(s) and recordings.

Q: Who do you provide services to?

A: The nature of being independent is that I work for whomever I choose. Clients don’t choose me; I choose them. I’ve always been partial to, and work predominantly with, music producers because they tend to be more business oriented and can justify the investment of time that my services require. But I also service labels, music supervisors, entertainment and production companies - anyone that utilizes or commercially exploits music or talent is someone that I can provide services to. I’m also meeting more independent music artists that are qualified to do business with me as well.

Q: What’s the qualification?

A: It’s simple: I need to be *excited* about your talent, you need to have a budget, and I have to be able to do business with you.



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Q: Is it really that simple?

A: Yes, it's really that simple.

Q: What do you mean by be able to do business with someone?

A: It means that I have to be able to trust them - trust that they can and will deliver. The ability to consistently deliver and exceed expectations is a quality I offer and look for in others that I work with. If I suspect that someone lacks focus or commitment, I won't get involved. From experience I've learned that you achieve your best results when working with people who are like-minded with similar values that have the same goals and share the same vision.

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Q: There's lot of reference to you on Google as a “commercial music authority,” what does that mean?

A: Much of that stemmed from my work as a music critic where I developed a reputation for only reviewing music that - in my professional opinion - is commercially competitive with songs at the top of the charts and on the radio. It was further cemented by a popular article that I wrote called “*The 6 Rules Of Commercial Music Success*,” which is widely circulated on the Internet and has been posted on over a hundred websites. I've made commercial music my niche as a music critic and my emphasis in doing independent A&R because my research shows that popular songs are the ones that generate revenue, establish careers, and create longevity.

Q: Do you only listen to commercial music?

A: As I wrote in “*The 6 Rules Of Commercial Music Success*,” everyone listens to commercial music. It's not the *only* kind of music I listen to, but it's the kind of music that the music business is predicated upon. I listen to everything personally, but at the end of the day, I always come back to the artist or the song that tops the charts since so many of the people that I work with and represent aspire to be *that* artist or to have *that* song.

Q: How long have you been writing reviews for the Muse's Muse?

A: For 5 years now. Writing reviews is one of the most enjoyable aspects of what I do. You often hear A&R reps from record companies say *how much* music they get, but they never say how much they actually *listen* to. I listen to everything that gets sent to me. Of course, only the most commercially viable songs and projects get reviewed, but I've amassed a body of work that reflects my passion and speaks to my commitment to find the best artists and repertoire in the country.

Q: Are there any other professional hats that you plan on wearing in the future?

A: Ultimately, I see myself having greater involvement with fewer artists, and making more of a contribution to the creative and commercial success of projects that I really believe in. I'm also branching out into other forms of media like radio and television to extend my reach, but for the immediate future, I will continue to wear my Independent A&R hat which fits very, very nicely.