



# *The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast*

## Ep71: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Ari Herstand

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Hello! You're listening to [Episode 71: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Ari Herstand](#).

I'm your host, Suz - a mindset coach helping music professionals get clear on their goals and find the time to get it all done while maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

I'll save my usual chit chat for another time, because I know a lot of you have been waiting for this interview - my sit-down with musician, singer-songwriter, author, actor, and educator - Ari Herstand.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the artist Forbes has deemed, "The poster child of 'DIY music,'" Ari Herstand is an independent musician who has played over 700 shows across the US, has opened for or toured with Ben Folds, Cake, and Ron Pope, among others, has performed on Ellen, and has had his music featured in countless TV shows, commercials and films. He also leads the 1973 funk project [Brassroots District](#).

Among the independent music community, he may be best known for his blog, [Ari's Take](#), as well as the countless articles he's written for Digital Music News, Music Connection Magazine, Hypebot and others, and has become a staple as a speaker at SXSW, CD Baby's DIY Musician Conference, and the ASCAP Music Expo, just to name a few. In recent years he has disrupted the music industry's book world by creating the new go-to text for creating a sustainable career in this business.

I'm excited to kick off the first of our Season 3 Spotlights with Ari, as he's a great example of what can happen when you stay true to and stay connected to your why.

During our time together Ari discussed his why, his mission as a music-preneur, as well as how

he handles his detractors and critics, and he even takes us behind the scenes of how he created chart-topping, best-selling book - [How to Make It in the New Music Business](#) - and why he decided to release the 2nd edition, now out wherever books are sold.

The rest, I'll let Ari tell you himself. Enjoy!

**Suz:** Alright so I am here with the very well known Ari Herstand. I'm so excited to finally have him on our podcast. Ari, thanks so much for being here!

**Ari:** Absolutely. I'm glad we get to catch up and chat on this format and, yeah, thanks for having me.

**Suz:** Absolutely. So I know many of our listeners already know who you are, but if you could just tell us a little bit, in your own words, about your mission as a musician and why you do all of the things that you do - what's your why?

**Ari:** Well, I started my music career as a singer-songwriter in Minneapolis. I was there for school. I initially went to University of Minnesota to be a high school band director, and I was a classical trumpet major. I realized very quickly that I did not want to do that. I didn't want to play classical trumpet. I didn't want to teach high school. After that first year I transferred to a music industry school where I learned music business and songwriting and I was studying jazz trumpet. And as soon as I kind of finished there, I started performing out and I kind of basically started, more or less, my music career.

But the interesting thing was, when I was in school learning music business, now mind you this was 2005, all the classes that we had in music business were about how the industry had been up until that point, and they basically said if you want to have a career in music you have to get signed to a record label, you have to go on tour, you have to get a booking agent and a manager and all that stuff and you know many of our classes were learning how to negotiate all of these record contracts and publishing contracts and all that stuff. And I quickly realized when I got out of school that everything that I'd been taught wasn't really how it was anymore.

**Suz:** Right!

**Ari:** And I was like sitting around waiting for this record deal that they told me was gonna just magically appear for me because they basically were like, 'Well you can't really have music career unless you have a record deal.' And I was like, 'All right, I guess, I wanna have music career so where's my record deal?' How do I get this?

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** And it wasn't coming so I'm like I guess I could sit around and like keep waiting for this or I can just kind of figure out how to make a music career happen, so that's what I did. And it was a lot of trial and error for years of figuring it out all on my own because none of the stuff they really taught me in school was really applicable. None of the books that were out were really applicable. None of that was really helpful, so I was kind of just learning as I went and made a ton of mistakes.

But after some time I figured out how to, at my peak in Minneapolis I was drawing about 800 people to my local shows, I was selling out venues in the 5 state region, I was touring nationally, I had songs placed on TV shows and in movies, and I was charting on iTunes and I was starting to actually have a real music career. And word kind of spread, you know, around Minneapolis initially and then around just kind of the Midwest.

I was playing colleges and high schools and festivals, and then around the country that, 'This guy Ari, he's kind of doing a music career independently on his own, without a manager, without a label, and if you have any questions like go ask him.'

And so people started writing me messages on Facebook and just asking me all these questions about how I was doing all of this. Just like, 'How did you get your song on TV?' or 'Hey you know this contract I just got from this talent buyer - is this any good?' or 'How do I go on this tour?'

And I was starting to get the same questions and I would get back to everybody, or at least I tried to, and then after a while I just didn't have time to get back to everyone because word spread and my inbox was just flooded.

And so my brother is a web developer and my friend's a graphic design artist, and we decided to just create this blog, my blog Ari's Take, and I basically just put up all of the most frequently

asked questions the answers to those. And then inevitably more questions came in, and I would answer those, but really it was anytime I learned something doing my own career, I would write about it and I would pass along the information that I learned. And there really wasn't any other working musician that was doing that - that was sharing what they were learning in real time.

And so anything I learned I shared, and so you know because I don't believe in competition in the music industry - I believe a rising tide lifts all ships - and it was honestly, I was seeing these bands, some of my favorite bands, in Minneapolis and then around the country who were so incredibly talented, but they couldn't figure out how to make a music career work for them.

Either they just didn't understand the business or they got taken advantage of by a label or a manager, for a myriad of reasons why they ended up breaking up, but every time one of these are bands broke up or artists quit music, it broke my heart.

And I'm like, 'I don't want to see these talented artists quit music or fail because they don't have the knowledge or the information, and so that became my mission and that became my why.

I continued to run Ari's Take and the blog I continued to share all the information that I was learning because I wanted the musicians who I loved and just any musician who is talented and hardworking and passionate enough to succeed with a music career. I tried to pass along all the information I learned just to kind of share amongst the music community.

**Suz:** You know Ari's Take has been around for a better part of a decade now, guiding fellow musicians through these murky waters. What I also find so impressive about it - not just the information that you provide, which is amazing, but also that you stayed extremely consistent - rarely taking any hiatus from producing content from the blog, so, when we work from our why consistency usually isn't such an issue, if you stay connected to your why, but given all the different areas of your career and all the growth you've had and we'll definitely get into that, how have you managed to stay so dedicated to the blog?

And do you have a certain structure for turning out this content or like you said because of the passion is it just like coming out of you and you're just like 'yep I'll put it up on the blog!' I mean how do you maintain the machine that is Ari's Take?

**Ari:** Hahaha yeah. I mean I appreciate all of that and that you think that and honestly, I haven't really had a routine or a method and or I haven't felt I've been very consistent. You know, over the years it's ebbed and flowed and yeah I started in 2012, and there was a period in time when I would be writing, yeah a few articles a month for Ari's Take.

But then, I started writing for a lot of other publications so for like three/four years I was writing for Digital Music News and other publications had asked me to write for them, too. And so, you know, at one point I was cranking out maybe 2 to 3 articles a week that some went on Ari's Take, some went on Digital Music News, some went on other people's blogs or, you know, Music Connection Magazine or whatever.

And then as other things in my career picked up and I just didn't have as much time for that, it slowed down. I don't write for other publications as consistently or as often anymore, and honestly with Ari's Take, I haven't written and published an article on Ari's Take for over a month or so, maybe a month and a half at this point. And so I'd like to get into a better routine, and because there's always something to share it's kind of taking that time to do that and so Ari's Take has evolved now in to an entire music business education company.

And now I have a few people who work for me, and so we have developed it are more than just a blog and we've created Ari's Take Academy which is an online school where we have three different courses that go much deeper and it's much more involved and very hands on with me and the instructors and the students.

And then obviously with the book, the book is now in its second edition, and I've done some speaking stuff, and then not to mention I'm still a musician and I still song write every week and I still play shows and I still put out music.

And so it's kind of finding that balance absolutely, that's a constant battling struggle, there's never enough time in the day and so one of my goals for the coming year is to be actually more consistent with what I write on Ari's Take. Honestly because so many people tell me how valuable it is to them and how much it helps them. And so I do really want to keep it going because it seems to be helping so many people.

**Suz:** Absolutely and a lot of people would start out altruistically in that way, and then when that starts to pay off and other things take off it's like, 'Okay guys, thanks! But like I've got other things now.'

**Ari:** Hahaha.

**Suz:** And so you can definitely tell it is a passion of yours. I've also noticed when someone such as yourself is outspoken and bold enough to take on certain topics that maybe other people don't feel comfortable shining a light on or feel like they don't want to come right out and say it, whether it's something to do with the Me Too movement that you've also covered and come out about, or whether it's just critiquing, you know, a platform or another company that you know most people don't want to come out and say, 'Hey I didn't like this about it,' you know, you've definitely given your critiques and your best and worst, you know, pros and cons of different platforms you've used and services. But when you take on that role I'm sure you've come across your detractors -

**Ari:** Sure

**Suz:** - or even even people may just have misinterpreted what you've shared. So how do you handle that and not let it stop you from saying, 'No this is my view. This is my take - and I'm going to say it'?

**Ari:** Yeah I mean, yeah no absolutely, I have made a few I don't wanna maybe say *enemies* over the years but a few people who have not been thrilled with what I have written about their company because that's the thing - at the end of the day there are I think so many people, especially artists, are afraid of offending anyone or getting blacklisted, whatever that even means, or, you know, burning bridges or whatever.

My north star has always been let me find the most valuable resources and let me get the truth for independent musicians. So as long as I stay true to that, I can't miss. And so I know that like I don't care if there's a company out there that I'm gonna piss off because I trash them because I think they're taking advantage of musicians or they have a horrible business model or that they are just not delivering on their promises and that they are screwing over their musician clients - I don't care that I'm gonna piss them off and they can come at me and they *have* come at me they've threatened lawsuits against me.

They've gotten into Twitter battles with me, they've tried to, you know, tarnish my name with other publications that I've written for, whatever, and at the end of the day I've always won!

Because like, yes, I can be extremely critical, but really what it comes down to is I take my role as kind of in the in certain cases of of reviewing companies or pointing out where companies are missing the mark, or that's a nice way of putting potentially taking advantage of their clients. I make sure that I get all my facts correct that I almost act as an investigative journalist basically.

Like I spend a lot of time on some of these articles investigating, getting stories from many artists and and managers and and clients of the company that I'm researching and then I'll sit down with the owner the CEO of the company and I'll get their take, too. And I will get all the information, I'll distill it, and then I'll come up with what I think about them.

And there have been a few instances where I have found that companies are acting very nefariously, in that they are taking advantage of musicians, and if that happens... like nothing pisses me off more than when I see a company blatantly taking advantage of their musician clients or trying to shake musicians down for money.

Like promoters that do that - pay to play pisses me off, and I've called out a bunch of pay to play promoters. There been some PR companies... I had stories from artist saying that this PR company got them to pay them four thousand dollars and then they disappeared and they did nothing for them.

And I started hearing that over and over and over again and so then I went deep and I researched and I investigated I, you know, called up the company. I had two calls with the founder of the company and in the end I'm like yeah they are not just doing a bad job, they are actually neglecting their artists and they are stealing their money and this is not okay.

And no one was really speaking out about it because every artist I talked to thought, 'Well I just thought it was just me, I mean they have all these great testimonials on their website, and I thought you know it's just my case, and so I didn't really feel like I could tell anyone or I didn't know who to talk to or who I could tell like I'm small potatoes like I'm some no-name artist,' you know?

So I almost feel it's my responsibility and my duty when there are these companies out there that are taking advantage of musicians to call them out and to make sure that doesn't happen because, you know, I am a musician and I have this empathy and I have the musicians empathy and I feel for the musicians.

I understand what how hard it is and we're all just trying to figure it out. And then there's some companies in there that claim to have the answers and then they are take their money and if they don't deliver on it they need to be called out and there should be some transparency there.

Ditto is one of these companies, the distribution company, where you know I included them in my first distribution review and I was actually - wrote fairly favorable about them - and then I got wind from a publisher hit me up was like, 'Hey all these distributors and labels aren't paying us our proper royalties, you know.' And I'm like, 'Well that's concerning let me look into it.'

And so I sent all of these distribution companies and labels the identical email just saying, 'Hey I got tipped off by a publisher saying that you're not counting properly to them. I curious to know what's going on.' And every distributor got back to me very respectfully was like oh yeah this is what's happening this what's going on here is what's working, okay. And then Ditto freaked the fuck out.

And the CEO of Ditto like cc'ed Paul, who's the owner of Digital Music News, because that's what I was writing for the time, like trying to - he's like, 'This guy, you know, is trying to blackmail us and, 'Paul - I will never advertise with you again unless you fire Ari. And I cannot believe the audacity that he ask me this kind of a question or that he comes at me like this and this and this.' And I'm like, 'Whoa, dude.' I mean it's like if you have nothing to hide you would not get this defensive, because no other company got this defensive.

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** And I literally copy and pasted the email that I sent to everyone and so I'm like, 'Okay well maybe you're just having a bad day,' and so I like respond like, 'Hey I don't know what's going on man,' I just respond, 'I literally copy and pasted the email.'



So then he doubled down, you know, freaked out and then he started threatening me on Twitter and then he just went berserk. And so Paul, I mean to his credit, he was cc'ed on the email, he was like, 'Fuck it, we're gonna print his email.' So he printed his email.

**Suz;** Ah ha ha!

**Ari:** And when you search 'Ditto Music Review' that's what pops up is this like extremely unprofessional email and like we then reviewed the company and over the years various people at the company have got... because if you search 'Ditto Music Review' like my articles are the first things that pop up, and they are NOT favorable, obviously. And I'm like, 'You don't want this CEO representing you and if you're gonna use them as a company, like this kind of attitude seeps into every aspect of the company.'

And to be honest, I had gotten more complaints from artists that had written in about their distributor, more complaints about Ditto than any other company out there. And I just kind of kept it in, you know, in my vault and just like, 'Well this is good to know,' and I would ask them about it sometimes, but when he just went nuts on me I'm like, 'You know what? I'm going to I'm going to to print all of these and I'm going to really show the transparency that a lot of artists are struggling with them as a company.'

And so over the years, I've had different marketing directors at Ditto hit me up, I've had the new artist relations rep hit me up asking me to change my review and say Hey like can we start fresh and like absolutely can start fresh if your CEO Lee will apologize to me for dragging me through the mud on Twitter and trying to get me fired and freaking out. And of course he won't, he holds onto his pride

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** Or he just like will, he cannot, he just won't apologize. I'll look at it objectively but objectively I still continue to get complaints from your artist so...

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** Not only is your CEO an asshole who won't apologize for dragging me through the mud and continuing to threaten me, so it's my take and this is my blog and if your guy is being an asshole to me like I don't have to be nice to you, like this is my blog.

But also your clients have come to me because they can't get a response from you and that you messed up their release and they've asked you to fix it and it's been three months or other clients have come to me because they can't get paid from you or you stop paying them and I'm like this is legitimate.

My goal for Ari's Take is to shine a light on all of these are companies that are taking advantage of musicians, but also to shine a light on the resources that artists can use, and really at the end of the day the whole mission of Ari's Take is to support independent musicians.

**Suz:** That's a fantastic story! I think it's, you know, it's a real lesson in, you know, we say this on the podcast a lot - if you can really identify your why and stay true to it and remind yourself of it because, you know, life happens and we get distracted and sometimes we forget why we are in this at all - I think that because you've been able to keep that at the forefront it makes your decision making a whole lot easier.

It's like I don't have to talk about this I don't have to sit there and ponder oh did I do the right thing? Or is this the right course of action for my career? It's like no, if it's aligned with your why then there's your answer, you know. Like that's what this is all about.

**Ari:** Mhm.

**Suz:** You know, it also answers, one of my other questions was going to be as your career has grown, especially with the success of the book that we'll get to, having other people on your team that you have to answer to in terms of publishers or other partnerships, I was gonna ask it gets, you know, more dicey in terms of what you can speak out about or what you can say or - especially in this cancel culture that many people are feeling.

But to me and this is my take, you know the cancel culture happens when people aren't being true to who they are and aren't being, you know, moral, upstanding citizens, but aside from that, I mean I'm sure it does happen occasionally were something gets taken out of context...

**Ari:** Sure.

**Suz:** Do you worry as your career grows and do you ever worry about something that you've written or saying something, especially in platform like Twitter, anything getting taken out of context and it costing you? Or do you still feel that you know no as long as I'm being true to my why and I know where I'm coming from it will all work out?

**Ari:** I mean sure anyone who has somewhat of a public status and is on any level of public figure which I have become, you know, we think about and I guess I know where I stand ethically, and I feel very confident that I'm speaking my truths in a way that is honest, transparent, and respectful.

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** And I'm also not running for political office, and so there are different standards. So yeah, are there things on Twitter that I've said that people could take the wrong way? A hundred percent. I'm sure I've tweeted thousands of times over the years and I'm sure somebody could dig something up that if I was running for president or something like that they could like blow up and turn into a negative ad against me and it would probably work...

**Suz:** Haha or it might get you elected ... we don't know! Haha

**Ari:** You know, whatever, yeah! Or you know, actually you're totally correct. Haha. That's true! So yeah I mean have I drunkenly tweeted? Absolutely. Like who hasn't? Have I said some dumb shit on Twitter? Yeah, of course!

But like I feel very confident that I have kind of had the driving force behind everything that I've done, and the guiding light for me has been very honest and true from the beginning. I think if something gets taken out of context I think the the breadth of my work - most people know me well enough and have read enough of my articles and tweets and Instagram posts and stories and emails that I think if one person took a tweet or something out of context I feel like I would have thousands of people that would come to my defense and be like, 'Nah, that's not actually him because I've been following him for five years, and I know him now,' and stuff that I've written that might have been critical or negative or about other people or other

parties are companies or anything like that - you know I also take that very seriously because I don't want to unfairly cancel someone else, you know?

Like I know that there is power in the words in power in what I publish and write, so that's why I'm not quick to judge either. And so when I do my investigative pieces or when I am looking into a company or a person or a promoter or something like that, that's why I take my time with it and that's why I'm not quick to fire off that they're doing something negatively just because I heard a couple comments from a couple musicians this one time, you know, and so I also take that seriously on the other side.

When I do call people right and I do call companies out I know it can have affect. I have put a company out of business, and I don't regret it. Like I think they deserve to go out of business because they were taking advantage of musicians, and so I stand by that article still to this day, and I stand by them needing to reevaluate and take a long hard look in the mirror at what they were actually doing and reconnect with what they're why was. And their why seemed to be make as much money for me right now at any expense and any cost and that caught up with them, and yeah.

**Suz:** Right, right. And I think, you know, what I'm hearing, what I'm sure our listeners are taking away is that, you know, just like any other entrepreneur, you know, which is why it's so great to have you on this podcast because our focus and our why is to help artists see themselves as a music-preneur, is that you're somebody who, like we said, has defined their why very clearly from the beginning, and you know it's hard to predict as an entrepreneur where your success can take you.

As I'm sure, listening to your story in the beginning, when you decided okay I don't want to be high school band teacher, but I'm gonna go off and do my own, you know, become my own musician, you know, build my career as a musician, I'm sure, maybe I'm wrong, that you didn't at that moment say, and I'm going to be a writer and an interviewer and an educator and an actor and an author!

**Ari:** Haha right.

**Suz:** And I'm going to do all of these things, but as part of being an entrepreneur, you know, you define your why, you take your steps, you get messy as you said, you know, you made all

the mistakes early on to figure out what works and what doesn't, and then you build on top of that and build on top of that and when you sat down to write your book [How To Make it in the New Music Business](#), which by the way congratulations, it's done tremendously well over the last three years - I know tens of thousands of copies, top of the the the lists on all of the websites, *Forbes* deemed you 'The poster child of DIY music' - you know, really kudos on how this has resonated with audiences! When you first sat down I know now it's in its second edition - and I have some questions around that as well - but as you've built your career and you've let each phase kind of inform the next phase of your career, when you decided it was time to write this book, did you feel overwhelmed at attacking this project?

Or did you or have a vision of like how you wanted this book to look and the the pieces you wanted to cover? Because there's so much in it. I mean I've read it and obviously my first thought was, and I went to school a few years earlier than you at Drexel, I was actually part of their first graduating class in their music business program and we used Donald Passman's book as our text book, and now, years later, yours is being used in that same way.

And when I read it I remember thinking like, 'Oh this is the new generation of Donald Passman, that was my take on it.' A very long-winded question of me asking...

**Ari:** Yeah I kinda see where you're ... yeah! I understand

**Suz:** Like how did you attack this? Because that's... no one's knocked Donald Passman off his pedestal for quite a long time so... did you have that kind of goal in mind when you set to write it or was it just like, 'I've got something to say, I'm going to let this pour out.' Like what was that process like?

**Ari:** Sure. So yes to step back a little bit I have done a lot in my career and a lot of this was not planned from the very beginning. I always tell people to, especially musicians, like the most important thing you can do for your career is to set goals because then you can reverse engineer those goals and know how to reach those goals.

And you can't really achieve anything if you're not aiming for anything and so I, early on yes, it was just, 'I'm just a musician,' and that's what I did and made a hundred percent of my income just from music and that's all I did and I said no to every other opportunity.

Coming out to LA, that's something where I was surrounded by all these creative people and all these opportunities presented themselves to me and it's actually very challenging to start a music career in LA and the way that I functioned and operated my music career in Minneapolis and around the country didn't work in LA.

It was a very different beast here, and so I had to kind of get creative with how I was going to survive in LA and make my career work. And so I then started saying yes to opportunities and understanding where my strengths are and my passions and saying yes to those opportunities that aligned with my strength and passions.

And so, you know, I think a lot of musicians get caught up and saying, 'Well I need to be a full time musician. That is that is the goal!' It's like well, maybe but I would say it's almost better to become a full-time creative or at least spend your time doing something you really enjoy that you love and there is no panel of judges that is standing there and they are judging you if you don't make a hundred percent of your income just from your music revenue.

Like so many successful musicians have multiple businesses and revenue streams. I mean Dre has Beats, you think anyone is scoffing that he's not a full-time musician because the making a billion dollars from his headphones brand? Of course not, that's absurd! You know, it's like Jared Leto is also an actor, you think anyone is saying well haha he's not a full-time musician?

No! That's the thing. It's utilizing your own, your strengths and your creative talents to make it work. So, for me, one of my passions, you know, early on, yes was sharing the information. And so when Ari's Take started to take off, musicians actually came to me years into it and they're like, 'So I've read all of your blogs and it's very helpful, however I am struggling right now for direction and guidance, and I need something to connect the dots and to kind of give me step-by-step guidance. What books do you recommend?' Now I've read most of the music business book out there, you mentioned Donald Passman, yeah I've read his book three times, like everyone has. It's like that was, you know, the Bible of the industry for many years, but it's twenty five years old.

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** And so the industry has changed a *little bit* in twenty five years!

**Suz:** Right!

**Ari:** So I'm like, 'You know, to be honest really isn't a book I can recommend to you right now.' And the interesting position that I was in was I not only just was writing for Ari's Take, but because I was writing for Digital Music News, it give me access to sit down and talk with virtually anyone in the music industry that I wanted to talk to and interview and get their take and their information and learn from them.

And I'm obsessed with learning and then also obsessed with sharing that information and so just from writing for DMN and Ari's Take and everything else I literally interviewed *hundreds* of people on every corner of the industry from musicians and managers, to labels and booking agents, and music supervisors and start up founders.

And I interviewed so many people and learning what was working for them, and so I was getting all of these interesting stories, especially from musicians and managers, about how they were building careers in extremely innovative ways, oftentimes in ways that didn't exist even five years ago, and no one was talking about it! No one was telling these stories. Billboard wasn't writing about it they were right about how many records Adele sold or Taylor Swift's love life...

**Suz:** Right haha.

**Ari:** ... all of that bullshit that no working musician really cares about. All musicians really care about like how do I make my career happen for me? How do I make this thing work? And I was hearing all about these stories that no one was talking about, and I was actually connecting the dots and figure it out, okay this is how it works!

I am the only person on planet earth who is a working musician, who is also a blogger, who now also has access to talk to virtually anyone I want in the industry and get their information. And so I almost felt it was my duty and responsibility to write the book.

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** Because like a lot of the books, like Donald Passman's book, are written by lawyers. They don't know what it's like to be a musician. They don't *feel* it. They don't know what it's like to

release the song in for no one to listen to it or for a month into it to have less than a thousand streams on Spotify or, you know, less than three thousand views on YouTube when they just dropped five thousand dollars on this music video and they're like ... they don't *feel* that. You can't just say that to a lawyer and, you know, they'll be like, 'Oh yeah okay well that sucks.'

No no no, you don't understand. Like what being in the studio working for months writing and then recording and then working on the mixes and the takes and going through that process, having to fund it, and then finally getting the mixes back and working your mixes and then finally getting the masters back and then actually putting it out into the world for then to hear deafening silence...

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** And like you mean like nobody cares? Just like no lawyer or consultant or blogger or whatever can *really* understand what that feels like, unless they've felt it themselves. And so I've felt that and thousands of other musicians have felt that, and so I think like one of the reasons why people have connected to my blog and now the book so much is because they feel like I'm them. I'm in it with them and they understand that I'm coming from an honest, truthful place with this musician's empathy. Like I get it. I *truly* get it. Donald Passman doesn't get it.

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** Like he is a great writer and he's a great attorney and that's awesome and I learned a lot from his book. But he can't connect with the new musician, like he doesn't understand what artists are going through.

And so, you know, that's why I decided to write the book that's why I felt I *needed* to write the book, and, you know, thankfully a publisher agreed and we are able to get a publisher to fund it and put it out and the reason that I wanted to go with a major publisher and not put it out on my own was because I felt that this book needed to get into schools, it needed to be taught in schools, and I wanted to in every bookstore in the country.



And I knew that I couldn't do that by putting it out on my own. I wanted to get it in Barnes & Noble because that's how I discovered Donald Passman's book. Was I walked a Barnes & Noble and I saw it on the shelf. I'm like music business, sure!

**Suz:** Right!

**Ari:** I want my book there, yeah! I want my book there and yeah I want my book being taught, like you said, as a textbook at all the music programs and so I'm like I need a major publisher to do this to get me in the schools. And so that's what we did and thankfully and luckily and so many schools have actually adopted it and *are* teaching my book as their their new textbook as the curriculum and it's in Barnes & Noble and bookstores. And so it's been awesome to kind of see that happen. And yeah and now my book has bumped Donald Passman's off the chart, I mean not off the chart...

**Suz:** But yeah, off that top spot...

**Ari:** But currently my book is number 1 and he's 2. He's still there. He has twenty five years of reputation that he's going off of..

**Suz:** I think he'll be OK.

**Ari:** Yeah, he's gonna be fine. We're like 1 and 2 and we keep trading off 1 and 2 on the music business charts and currently because I have been promoting the second edition I'm number 1 but maybe he'll be number 1 tomorrow, and that's just kind of what happens on those Amazon Trending charts. And there's a place for his book and not to bash Passman, I'm sure he's a really nice guy and his book is great.

**Suz:** Sure!

**Ari:** There's definitely a place for him, but it was like his book kind of started at the point where you get the record deal and in like Chapter 1 is like build your team, you need a manager.

**Suz:** Right, exactly.

**Ari:** And like my book starts at when you decide to become a musician and you start your music career. My book basically takes you from that point up until the point when you get a record deal and *then* you can open Donald Passman's book and read his book be like, 'Oh! Now I know how to negotiate the record deal,' but like his book isn't going to tell you how to run a music career.

**Suz:** Right.

**Ari:** His book is going to tell you how to negotiate the record contracts and that's okay, like some people need that and that's totally fine, and that's what the point of his book is.

**Suz:** Well, exactly which is why it was our text book when I was going *for music business*.

**Ari:** Mhm.

**Suz:** You know, when I was looking to be the person at the labels or to run my own company, but now where we've evolved where schools *are* teaching you how to be a full time musician, as you said, now that perspective needs to be colored in.

So yeah, absolutely. I think that's fantastic and, you know, with all the knowledge that you had to share, you know, luckily you had the publisher there and that team - was it overwhelming to break it down? To organize how the information would be laid out? Or did you already kind of have envisioned how you wanted to communicate all of this information?

**Ari:** Sure, yeah so, you know, a lot of the philosophies had been worked out over the years of writing all of these blog articles. And so I had the philosophies worked out. In terms of laying it out, yeah putting the outline together and the table of contents that took some time. I couldn't actually get the book deal until I had that done, so that was pre-book deal. I had to put together a book proposal and in the book proposal was the outline, the table of contents, a couple sample chapters...that kind of stuff.

And then once I had the book deal, I basically had a year to write the book before I had to turn it in. I got the deal in January and I had to turn it in December 15th and come November 1st I only had 20% written because life happens and I was doing all of this other stuff and so that became a little overwhelming.

**Suz:** Yeah.

**Ari:** And so that's like, I started to freak out a little bit and so that's why I had to... I went on a month long writing retreat in New Orleans. And like I had to get out of LA, and I went off the grid and just kind of wrote for that month straight and finished the book and turned it in.

And I did the same thing for the second edition because I found that, you know, through this process of writing the book I found that's how I work best - is when I have dedicated time to sit down and actually write and just focus on the creation process and not have to manage that with emails or with show prep or booking or anything else that I was that I was working on at the time. I could just.. and no meetings would interrupt it, nothing like that. Like *just* focus every single day on writing, and I was fortunate that I was able to be able to do that.

**Suz:** How did you, I mean obviously things have changed, the platforms are ever-evolving, different strategies come out, but you could have written it five years after the next one, a year after the next one like what was it your publishers saying like, 'Hey we need a new one,' or how did you know like this was the time to write an updated version?

**Ari:** So I try to stay ahead of the curves and the trends and I try to see where the industry's heading so I can be slightly ahead of everything once the book hits the shelves because as a book about the music business, as you can imagine, things change very quickly. And so with the book I tried to kind of make sure I didn't put anything in there that could be outdated the second it hits the shelves.

I try to read the tea leaves and there were a couple instances in the first edition where I missed. Just for one small example, I turned in the final edits in August. It was printing and it came out in December and in October Vine died, if you remember, the six second video platform Vine.

Now thankfully I didn't spend much time in the book on Vine, I just referenced it a couple times here and there and there was two pages that I wrote about Vine, and so, you know, yeah that was outdated the second it hit the shelves because Vine died. But like, you know, that was one of the very few cases where something like as drastic as that happened.

**Suz:** Sure.

**Ari:** But other things kind of were evolving and so I tried to stay ahead of it and, you know, about a year ago when I started to write the second edition, and we kind of spent the last year working on it, I started to see things shift and evolve. And I keep a running list of notes and so anytime I see something new and exciting or learn a new story or someone does something super innovative or I just get questions from readers like people literally right to me every day, like send me Instagram DM's, and they tell me, you know, how the book has helped them or they have questions about it.

And I keep a running list of things that need clarifying, if I want to go deeper on a certain topic or philosophy, or I need to kind of re-think something and once my note list kind of got a little bit long and I kind of realize I'm like, 'Oh yeah, it's kind of time to do this.'

Now I think the goal is to update the book every three years, and so, for as long as I live, ideally I will update this book every three years and that's kind of what the schedule is right now. And so the book yeah it came out, almost, you know, almost to the day, three years after the first edition came out.

**Suz:** Thank you for explaining that process to us and giving us behind the scenes because I know if our listeners haven't grabbed it already, they'll definitely be grabbing it for the holiday. It's a great gift to give yourselves and to give the fellow musicians in your life because it is so needed. And it's a very unique perspective and something that every musician can relate to.

**Ari:** Thank you.

**Suz:** If you could go back and tell yourself one lesson what would it be?

**Ari:** Write more songs.

**Suz:** Nice.

**Ari:** I think the lesson that I learned very early on was I started to put out music and release music and start my career before I was ready. My first album had twelve songs on it. Why did

have twelve songs on it? Because I'd only written twelve songs at the time and I'm like, 'Wow! These are great. I'll put these out.'

No. I should have written a hundred songs and I'm a singer songwriter and that's what songwriters do. You write a lot of songs and of course those first twelve songs were not very good. Very few people get, you know, the first songs they ever write are that good, so that was a lesson that I learned that wondering why my career wasn't moving as fast as I thought it should be? Well my songs just weren't very good.

I needed to work on the music a bit more early on before starting the business, and I think that's something that every musician especially the younger early ones, don't start your career before you're ready.

**Suz:** Mhm.

**Ari:** And really you have to work on the music first. That's the most important aspect of every music career. I think we lose track of that with all the business stuff that we talk about that needs to get done, but at the end of the day people aren't going to connect with you if they don't connect with your music.

And if your music isn't competitive and it isn't up to the standards that your potential fans are used to, they're not going to connect with you. So the lesson that I learned early on was I have to become great first before starting the business.

**Suz:** Three musicians living or dead who would you invite to dinner?

**Ari:** Oh, man. Dave Matthews - he's one of my biggest influences early on and he's just a quirky, goofy goofy dude. That would be awesome. Let's see, Miles Davis... That would be a very interesting conversation and he is just, I got the opportunity to speak with Herbie Hancock about kind of his experiences with Miles and the wisdom that Miles imparted on him.

**Suz:** Oh wow.

**Ari:** I'm like man, if I could have just been a fly on the wall in that room when Miles and Herbie... and Miles is imparting his knowledge into Herbie, so Miles would be one.

**Suz:** Wow.

**Ari:** And let's see, another, probably Beyoncé.

**Suz:** Not too shabby!

**Ari:** Because she's just the queen of the world? And I am just such a fan, and I also I think she's brilliant and has done so... just like the movement that she has built up and everything she's done, so yeah that's probably my three.

**Suz:** Nice! If you could have any super power what would it be?

**Ari:** Stop time. There just seems never enough time, and it's yeah, I would stop time, and then I would do all the cool things that I'd want to do and then start time back up.

**Suz:** Haha. Zach Morris style, I like it.

**Ari:** Yes. Yeah, timeout!

**Suz:** And so every week on this podcast I try to give my listeners an actionable, usually it's with a downloadable worksheet or some type of homework to go home with, but when I give these interviews I like to turn to our guest and have *you* give our listeners an actionable. What is something you would like our listeners to go do this week?

**Ari:** Great question! I would encourage you to sit down and write out your six month, one year, and five year goals. And they should be concrete goals, tangible goals and goals that you absolutely can foresee yourself reaching and make sure that they are concrete. Not, 'I just want to be a full-time musician.' No. That's too elusive. You know a concrete goal could be, 'I want to sell out this 500 cap venue in my hometown, and this is the name of the venue and that's my my six month goal.'

That's a very feasible goal and that's a real concrete goal. Or, 'I want to get the a song on a TV show within a year.' That's a feasible concrete goal and then you can you you lay out these

goals and then you can reverse engineer them and then you can set up a pathway on how you're gonna achieve those goals.

**Suz:** I love that and to all of our listeners if you happen to want to do that with the 2020 Rock/Star Life Planner you know where to find that! My actionable for all of us is to please go do your career a huge favor and go get Ari Herstand's [How to Make it in the New Music Business Volume 2](#).

Ari, thank you so much for taking the time to be here. If you need to get in touch with Ari and you should very much want to, subscribe to all of his channels and find out more about him and his amazing band Brassroots District you can find all of those links in our show notes. Ari, thanks again for being here.

**Ari:** Thank you so much

Well, there you have it! Not much left to say after that!

Again, thank you to Ari for taking the time to speak with us, and many congratulations for all the success the book brings! Here's to another best-seller, which I have no doubt it will be.

If you'd like to order his book and if you'd like to carry out his goal-setting actionable with the 2020 Rock/Star Life Planner, links to both books, as well as links to all of Ari's resources - including his blog, Ari's Take, his courses through Ari's Take Academy, and his music with Brassroots District can be found in the [show notes](#)!

Head on over to [www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep71](http://www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep71).

I thank you for tuning in, as I'm excited to celebrate this Season 3 kick off with you today. This episode was the 2nd episode released today, the first was [Episode 70: How to Get Rid of Shiny Object Syndrome](#) so if you missed it be sure to go back and give it a listen!

I hope Ari has inspired you to get clear on your why and your next goal(s). If you'd like help getting clarity on these crucial pieces as well as your next steps throughout January and beyond, I invite you to join me this December, during the week between Christmas and New Year's, December 26-31, at PLANCHELLA!

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I'm hosting a FREE 5-day virtual planning event where I'll share EVERYTHING I've learned over the years not only about planning and visualizing goals but also how to set yourself up for success amidst the mess of building your career.

It will all be hosted inside a private pop-up Facebook group, where each day will consist of a 1-2 hour workshop followed by sporadic check-ins to hold you accountable. You'll also have 30 days to watch the replays!

My main goal with this series will be to provide you with digestible, fun, actionable, and MANAGEABLE directives, above all else. If you'd like to join us I'm now accepting RSVPs!

Head on over to the show notes to learn more. Again that is [www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep71](http://www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep71).

Until next time, Rock/Star! Have a wonderful week and I hope to see you back here for next week so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.