

A musical matchmaker

Jordan Passman's scoreAscore puts companies seeking custom music in touch with composers.

ALEX PHAM

Musicians who have struggled in vain to break out will probably be able to relate to Jordan Passman's darkest hours in New York City two years ago.

Jobless and fresh out of college, Passman was in bed, unable to sleep as his mind feverishly questioned what the heck he was going to do with his life. And then it hit him.

He had an idea for a website that would match composers with paying gigs from advertising firms, independent film producers and game developers — anybody who wanted to buy a snippet of music for their projects.

He even knew what to call it: scoreAscore.

Launched 17 months ago from his parents' house in Beverly Hills, the site has served as a conduit for companies such as Walt Disney Co., Electronic Arts Inc., Universal Pictures and NBC to find custom music for their trailers, commercials, games and shows.

The business, while still tiny, was so intriguing that Business Week named Passman one of America's best young entrepreneurs this summer. Last week, Passman also garnered the most votes among the magazine's readers for most promising business.

That wasn't exactly what Passman had in mind that night in 2008 when he bolted up from bed to write down his idea.

The next day, he called his dad to run the concept by him. "I thought he was on to something," said his father, Don Passman, a music attorney in Los Angeles who was used to hearing ideas sprout out of his youngest son's head since he was a little boy with a mop of unruly black hair. "This one seemed



BONNIE SCHIFFMAN

FOUNDER: Jordan Passman got the brainstorm for scoreAscore during a sleepless night. The 17-month-old company could bring in \$250,000 this year.

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—JORDAN PASSMAN,
on scoreAscore

good."

Passman moved back to Los Angeles in August 2009 and spent nine months on his idea: to build a website that lets people post projects, along with the price they're willing to pay, the duration of the music and the emotional themes they want the music to hit. They can even include a snippet of the video they want the music to match.

Composers interested in the gig upload sample scores. Project owners pick the score they want or pass

on all of them.

The first month Passman launched his site in May 2010, he got just one submission, and it was from a family friend who needed music for a potato chip commercial.

Weeks went by when he heard nothing but crickets. Passman laboriously built up a spreadsheet of more than 5,000 contacts, along with notes from each conversation. Most of the contacts he acquired from cold calling, a skill he learned as a volunteer for the Barack Obama presidential campaign, ringing up registered voters and urging them to vote.

Little by little, business began to pick up. A photographer wanted some music to go with a slide show. An amateur video producer wanted a few seconds of music for his YouTube video. An ad company needed some background music for a commercial.

And then the Big One landed.

Someone from Denmark anonymously posted a short animation project that would pay \$6,000. The music had to have an Asian theme with moments of action and drama.

"We had no idea who it was," Passman said, but the princely price tag attracted a few dozen submissions. "The client turned out to be Lego, looking for music for a pilot project called 'Ninjabo,' " Passman said.

A 26-year-old composer named Jay Vincent won the contract. The pilot turned into a cartoon series on Nickelodeon, with regular work for Vincent.

Passman's company gets 20% of the revenue from custom projects that go through his site, 40% if the project uses already existing music.

This year, his company is on track to pull in \$250,000 in revenue — couch change by most corporate standards. Passman knows this, but still considers his company a success.

"It's a success because it means that the site is actually working," Passman said, beaming. "It's connecting composers with work, and clients now have a way to get custom music without having to take a blind bet on Craigslist. It's no longer just an idea in my head."

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KFI re KIIS at

The talk radio station finishes in the top spot for the first time in two years.

STEVE CARNEY

More than 70 years after Orson Welles panicked thousands with radio reports of a Martian invasion in Grover's Mill, N.J., another spoken-word broadcast shook up the status of radio Monday, at least regarding radio ratings in Los Angeles and Orange County.

Talk station KFI-FM (640) finished first in October, according to Arbitron figures released Monday, knocking pop station KIIS-FM (102.7) out of the top spot for the first time all year. KFI last won the local ratings race in September 2009.

On Halloween eve, Orson Welles and his Mercury Theatre on the Air performed H.G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" as a series of breaking-news radio reports, keeping listeners rapt with accounts of heat rays, tripods, weapons wielded by the "vanguard of an invading army" from "intelligent, vast, cool and unsympathetic." Welles closed the show reminding listeners that it was merely a Halloween prank, and that the grinning, glowing, globular invader of your living room was an inhabitant of the pumpkin patch.

For KFI's lineup of hosts, including Bill Handel, Bob Limbaugh and the duo of John Koylt and Chiampou, their real boogeymen more likely found in the White House governor's office or among the ranks of illegal immigrants. That's not to say KFI doesn't traffic in talk-show visitors from other worlds. Overnights, it features "Coast to Coast AM" with George Noory, a program that delves into UFOs, abductions and other strange phenomena.

The October ratings