

Man behind the curtain

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On tour at the Revelry Festival in Wisconsin, alumnus Mathew Irimpen, right, relaxes with performer Gerald “G-Eazy” Gillum, left, and crew. (Photo by Dusty Kessler)

Mathew Irimpen, a 2012 Tulane University graduate, has never been too far from the spotlight ? more like, just behind it.

As an undergrad, Irimpen worked in event promotion at the New Orleans nightclub Republic. The gig enabled him to meet top performers, including Loyola University student-rapper Gerald “G-Eazy” Gillum.

The two connected even as G-Eazy's career took off; he was named an Artist to Watch by MTV earlier this year and just finished a stint with the Drake vs. Wayne tour. This October, he'll headline his own tour to promote "These Things Happen," which debuted as the No. 1 rap/hip-hop album on Billboard in July.

"We stayed very close throughout college," Irimpen says. "I went into the professional world and he pursued music."

Sometimes those worlds aren't so far apart.

After graduation, Irimpen traded event promotion for a full-time gig in digital advertising at New York-based firm CPXi.

"G went viral on one song, viral on another song. [At CPXi], we see what trends are buzzing and target our ads," Irimpen says. "Both of us have the same element in our jobs ? to stay relevant. That's the most important part of being successful in today's Internet society."

Sometimes, Irimpen even gets a spot on G-Eazy's tour bus, after making arrangements with his day job, of course. "You fall asleep wherever you are, wake up in another city and load in," he says.

Irimpen often offers creative direction and branding advice, for which he credits his time in professor B. Michael Howard's Musical Theater Workshop.

"I learned a lot from professor Howard at Tulane about the importance of showmanship," he says. "Today in the music industry, people aren't buying records anymore, so your live show's where you have to make your money. He (G-Eazy) has to make every girl in that audience fall in love with him and every guy want to be him."

But Irimpen isn't always the man behind the curtain. He has had cameos in two of G-Eazy's music videos that went viral, racking up more than 10 million views.

Johanna Gretschel holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Tulane University. She is a freelance writer living in New Orleans.

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