

CHAPTER B-2

Your People

77

“It’s not what you know, but who you know.”

Anon

INTRODUCTION

The music industry is not only built on a strong foundation—music—but also its greatest commodity—people. As a producer, it is the people you’ll meet, collaborate with, write with, engineer for, and do business with that make up what Napoleon Hill called a person’s “mastermind alliance.” Hill, one of the first gurus of personal achievement, in 1937 asserted the benefits of a group of like-minded people “working in perfect harmony toward a common definitive objective.” Many among you reading this will think we’ve gone mad, but there’s some synergy between Hill’s thoughts back in the 1930s and the music producers of the 2010s.

The team you use, amassed from years of collaboration, fun and business, will become the group that mastermind you to success. No producer chooses to work with a less able drummer or engineer than he or she has to, unless there is some loyalty that keeps connecting them.

Of many industries it is said “It’s who you know, not what you know” and never more aptly could it be applied to an industry than to ours. Making the best of your team to deliver on a project is part of the day-to-day work of the producer. It is important to select the right kind of team to work with that share the balance of solid working ethics with a sense of open innovation, making you open to possible experimentation.

There’s an excitement we all feel when we’re in the studio capturing a “moment” or writing music that moves us. This excitement is often where the options to choose different outcomes present themselves. Inspiration comes at certain unplanned times and we require the flexibility to embrace these serendipitous opportunities as they emerge.

This chapter focuses on the people the average producer will come into contact with and how they fit into the music production jigsaw. Starting with the artist,

moving through to any personal assistants you may hire, we discuss how the mastermind alliance for the producer connects and thrives.

Sir George Martin at a recent charity event we attended responded to a question from the audience about the importance of the record producer and suggested that the order might look something like the following, finishing his response with “to hell with the producer” to an audience of laughter.

1. *Composer*
2. *Performer*
3. *Producer*
4. *Engineer*
5. *The rest!*

Martin identified that without the music creation, there’s not much for the performer (artist) to go at and that the producer is much farther down the list of important people. We’ll begin by adopting this order.

Composer(s)

The composers are of primary importance to the process. Their music generation is the germ of the success through which the interpretation of the band and the production team provide vital assistance. Without the song, whether internally (by the artist) or externally written (by another writer), the production is not going to get very far.

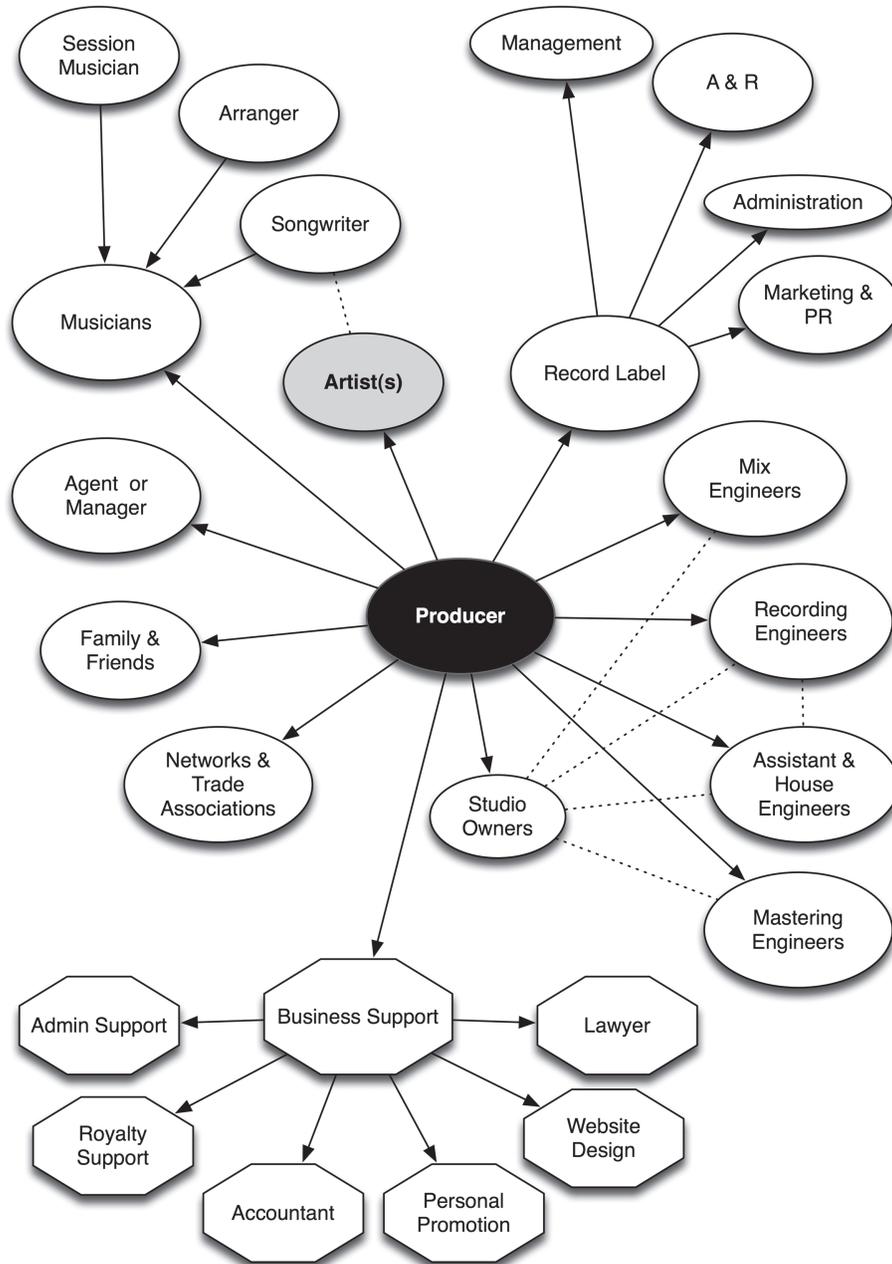
Working with songwriters, whether internal or external, can prove difficult. Often conflict within the band or the production team can occur as differing opinions come to the fore. As the producer you will try to smooth over disagreements where possible and bring the music to the best fruition possible.

This can be difficult in situations where the songwriter is resistant to external influence, stifling the production of the song. Imagine a situation such as this where you, as the producer, can see clearly that improvements can be made to a song to make it a hit, while the songwriter is remaining resistant.

Other conflicts can occur between the songwriter and the band along the same lines inasmuch as the band wish to develop, or get in on the writing process, and are given the cold shoulder by the writer. As producer, it is perhaps likely that your inclination will be to accept and try out, wherever possible, every idea that comes your way.

Many producers do not see themselves as the be all and end all in such situations. Of course, many producers have to be decisive and lead the way, but most we have spoken to agree that they are rarely dogmatic enough to suggest their ideas are the only way forward. In many of our conversations, the words *facilitator* and *decision maker* are commonplace.

However decisive they are, they will have to deal with conflict inside and outside the studio as we’ll discuss in Chapter D-1, The Session. Needless to say, the producer’s management of these situations is paramount.



Being a producer is a lot like being part of a larger company or corporation as this diagram shows. These people make up your *mastermind alliance*.

Nevertheless, a shared view from all the producers we have spoken to in preparation for this book is that the song is the most important thing in production. As such, the composition and the composer should be developed and understood to assist the production.

The artist(s)

It's needless to point out, but artists are some of the most amazing and talented people you'll work with during your career. However, as folklore would have it, much of this tremendous talent can be wrapped up in either variations of anxiety or arrogance, much of which you have to navigate through to complete a project.

Developing relationships with your artists will vary. Producers can and do develop decent, sometimes lasting, friendships with the artists they have the pleasure to work with, but many do not. The studio can be a frenetic and often boring place to operate and, at times, tempers can run high. Many such relationships remain professional when in the studio, where the artist is ultimately the client, but outside of the musical sphere, the friendship remains. Other examples can be where artist and producer simply work together because they have to, and go their separate ways at the end of the sessions. Plus, of course, there are those sessions of folklore which describe Armageddon within the control room.

The key as the producer is to manage those sessions and ensure they work successfully. Becoming a master of managing issues, egos, or sensitivities in artists should, in time, become second nature. This is not to suggest that all artists have issues about their work; they do not. Many artists are confident, affable, humble, and open to development, making them a pleasure to collaborate with. But what for those who do not neatly fall into this category?

Let's be honest here. It's difficult. You win some and perhaps lose others. Working with people in confined spaces such as the studio, and for something that is obviously precious to them, is naturally a place for differences of opinion. Learning to manage these differences is one of the most important roles we believe a producer may be required to master.

It is all about trust, as we mentioned in Section A. Understanding the artist and how much the music means to them is also about empathy. As many producers are either musicians who have written or recorded material or engineers who have seen it all before in the studio, you'll be well-versed in what the artists are going through. We cover the studio session and interactions in much more detail in Chapter D-1, The Session.

On the flip side, there are those producers and artists who see the importance of developing long-lasting professional relationships. There have been many different examples of this. One such example is that of Van Morrison with producer/engineer Mick Glossop. Glossop has worked with Morrison for some 25 years and is clearly a trusted pair of hands on any new material. Other examples can be that

of Toni Visconti with many of David Bowie's albums and Hugh Padgham's long stint with Sting, among many more.

Gaining trust such as this over many years is something that can be mutually beneficial both in terms of business and creativity. Many producers report the almost telepathic communication that can occur between artist, engineer, and producer when the sessions are going well and they "click." This can be effective, efficient and fantastic ground for new creativity despite the seeming familiarity between all involved.

Seal writes in his sleeve notes to his 1994 Grammy Award-winning self-titled album of his desire initially to seek out a new producer:

"During this time [the album has] been through quite a few changes as I'm sure you can imagine. Different songs, different locations, and even different producers, which brings me to what was perhaps the most significant turning point in the recording of this album. Being the type of person who doesn't like repeating themselves, I thought it would be a good idea to offer a new sound and hence a new producer, but what I didn't take into consideration was the rapport that Trevor and I had built up during and after the first album, and that he and I were both thinking along the same lines. He is in my opinion the only producer for me."

Seal stuck with Trevor Horn for another two albums until working with Stuart Price on *System*, but appeared to move away from what he'd been used to and once upon a time praised. Perhaps Horn's not the "only producer" after all?

It is clear from this change of heart that an artist's creativity can lead them down a different path. Much of what they write is fuelled by a number of influences, not only internal ones from the song, which may lead them to a new producer, but also from external influences such as the modern times they find themselves within. Things change. People change, and we are all, especially in the music industry, painfully aware of this. Some producers are indeed flavor of the month and as such artists will follow in search of success. Fashion dictates much of what the populist end of popular music does and how it should react. Producers regrettably can become popular overnight and then are looking for a new career a year or two later.

So what about the producers? What we hear time and time again from the people we have had the pleasure to speak to in preparation for this book is that it's the "music," the "song," or the "artist" that is the most important thing in making a record and, in this instance, the artist must be given that priority. These will be your closest co-workers in the studio alongside the engineer. Getting the relationship right will ensure a pleasant experience within the studio, good music, and a successful album. What constitutes success is naturally up to some debate as to whether this is from sales (and thus income) or whether the objective, or vision, has been realized for the artist. In either of the situations described above, the producer is intrinsically important to the process, working with those most valuable of assets, the "songs" and the "artist."

The Producer

Naturally, you're important; you are the producer. Actually, Haydn Bendall, former Abbey Road chief engineer, says "we're not that important and in comparison to the artist we're very replaceable!" preferring to interpret the abilities of the artist and the quality of the song.

Anyway, in this part of the chapter we'd be foolish to discuss at length the producer, as that is what this book is mostly about. However, we wish to focus on the relationships and how these are made and managed.

As we established in Chapter A-2, Analyzing It, many producers would say they are opinionated and are paid to be so. But they are not without a great deal of humility. Some producers we have had the privilege of interviewing are some of the nicest and most personable people you could hope to meet and work with. However, many share traits inasmuch as they want to get on with people and collaborate. They can often be natural networkers, asking questions and making connections for the future.

We spoke about the art of networking in Chapter B-1, Being A Producer. Suffice it here to say that developing the right network, or mastermind alliance as Napoleon Hill would have suggested, will ensure a productive and valuable set of collaborators to work with. Now many producers are generally not too shy and can go out there and do business in the networking world. Some are, of course, more shy and overcome these issues in other ways, perhaps through raw talent, or simply the ability to listen and interpret an artist's ideas.

FELLOW PRODUCERS AND CO-PRODUCERS

It is rare that you will work closely with other producers in the studio or on the same act, but it does happen. It happens when, for example, you're one producer on an album containing songs produced by someone else. It may also happen where one producer has begun a project with an artist and for one reason or another, the work has been shifted to your in-tray.

It would be quite rare for you to work, or collaborate with, another producer on the same track, unless you chose to. However, it would be perfectly natural to have a co-producer, such as an artist or band member who works closely with you. Finding ways to collaborate, share, experiment, and agree on courses of action will be the key to a successful record.

The studio owner/manager

You will develop relationships with studio owners or managers and their staff as your career develops. You'll want to book one studio for one recording job, another for the orchestral tracking, and perhaps another for the overdubs and mix. These different venues will have each of their own management structures based around the studio owner or manager.

Your relationship might be with those studio managers who are more involved in the day to day activity of the studio and the music industry. Others, such as

businessmen who may be less active on the music side, or indeed investors who may be silent owners, you'll have less to do with.

As with any relationship, it needs developing. The studio owner will see you as a client and will treat you with respect and will, certainly in the current economic climate, want your booking. You'll get to know these people if they're involved in the day to day running of the studio, but the larger the outfit, the more likely you'll be discussing your requirements with some of the studio staff.

For those studios whose owner is either an investor, or otherwise engaged in other business most of the time, a studio manager, or director, will hold the reins to the studio complex. This person will assume full management for the personnel and smooth running and development of the studio. Again, a good relationship with these positions of power within the studio will be beneficial for you should the option be available to you.

The more you book at the studio and the more you're part of the furniture, the more you'll get to know everyone and be privy to special rates that might come your way if they can. However, the starting point for your bookings into the studio and developing a longer term relationship with the studio will come from the studio staff with whom you'll have most contact.

Studio staff

The studio complex, certainly larger ones, will have sometimes up to 20 or more staff to keep things ticking along nicely. Obviously there are the studio owners, directors, or managers which keep things running smoothly. There are also a whole host of other staff which you'll come to relate to as you move from studio to studio, ranging from the booking staff, house engineering team, maintenance engineers, to the all-important in-studio catering!

BOOKINGS

Each studio will have one main person (or more than one, dependent on size) through which studio time is booked. You'll get to know this person very well and it would be well worth your while looking after them. They will become your conduit for booking time and will be key to you planning your sessions well into the future during pre-production.

Most studios will employ a database driven system to take details and make your studio booking. This is part of a wider database type known as a *client record management* system (CRM), which we introduced in the last chapter. In the world of commerce there are many systems used in all businesses for managing your data, which employee spoke to which client and what was said. It will manage all the email promotions and things you've purchased from that marketing campaign. It's all pretty clever stuff and for the likes of large corporations, it's vitally essential.

CRM systems in the recording studio are slightly different. Of course, one of the above could be tailored to become a music facility specific tool, but there are already systems in place as we discussed in the last chapter.

HOUSE ENGINEER(S)

In the early days of the studio, the house engineers were the only people available to you and it would be extremely rare for a freelance engineer to come into a studio, removing the house engineer from his seat.

Part of this culture was born out of a need to understand the equipment of that particular studio. Most early recording equipment was developed by the studios in which they were housed and used. For example, EMI at Abbey Road developed much of its own equipment, or indeed commissioned people to develop things such as the RS124 compressor. Trident, another famous U.K. studio from the 1970s, was also renowned for developing its own equipment, and in this case their mixing consoles.

These are some later examples of this trend, as very early studio complexes had to build all their equipment pretty much from scratch or experiment with things to make new and exciting recordings. It would therefore be akin to intellectual property rights management to keep hold of your staff for as long as possible, because your inventions and ways of working were not common knowledge and standardized as they now are. We all use Pro Tools, and similar solutions now, but in the early days proprietary recording devices and formats would adorn different studios.

The house engineering teams in these early days were large in size, given the mechanical nature of the recording process with large recorders, tapes, and reverb chambers. It is only now that engineering teams can be reduced to one producer/engineer given the advances of technology.

In line with this has been the shift of activity for the house engineering team at any studio complex. Today's house engineering team will often consist of a head engineer who could step in or be hired if the artist was not bringing their own engineer. Alongside the head engineer would be perhaps a number of assistants that incoming engineers and producers could call on to help them during sessions.

ASSISTANTS

(See also Freelance Assistants, below.)

Already introduced earlier in the book, assistant engineers are a breed of engineer whose role has changed somewhat over the years. Again returning to the pioneering early days of the studio, the head engineer, or main engineer on the session would manage the console, balances, and so on, but he would have at his disposal a large team of assistant engineers who would manage the recording process, often mic positions, and generally ensure the technical side of things was manageable.

As part of this team, there would be a role called the tape operator. The tape operator, often shortened to tape op, would manage all aspects of the tape machine, ensuring the open reel analog tape would be clean and set up to its optimum

performance. Not only this, most tape ops would be required to manage the transport controls (stop, play, record, etc.).

Despite being an incredibly responsible job, especially in the days before the undo feature, many tape ops were seen as the bottom of the pile and may have been asked to run all sorts of errands for the band and engineers.

These days, you might employ a Pro Tools operator, but more often than not the main engineer or assistant would manage this aspect of the session. So from a few assistant engineers many years ago, the roles have eventually reduced, partly due to the advance of technology. Assistants now perform a whole host of responsible functions in the session and can also be freelance, as we'll later explore.

Assistant engineers, given their knowledge of the region and the studio can also be valuable in ensuring that mics, equipment, and supporting items are located in the region for the engineer or artist in a timely fashion.

In the traditional model, most assistant engineers will have started in another supporting role such as the receptionist or even have started in the studio complex as a volunteer or under work experience.

STUDIO SUPPORT STAFF

Every studio of a larger size will have a number of support staff to ensure the smooth running of activity. These staff can range from the bookings person, as we discussed earlier, through a whole host of possible roles that may differ in each studio complex. We've put together a rough list for all the roles you might find for those larger studio complexes.

- Studio owners
- Directors
- Studio manager
- Studio bookings
- House engineer
- Assistant engineers
- Maintenance engineers
- Administrative support
- Financial and accounts staff
- Receptionists (can be future assistant engineers)
- Catering staff
- Cleaners
- Other staff (including volunteers and work-experience personnel)

Naturally you will come into contact with these staff in your time in the studio. You will have more liaison with some than others, such as the receptionists and catering staff, but these may not have an overbearing outcome on the success of your session (unless you upset them, of course).

More obviously, you'll have some connection with the administrative and accounts staff as you'll be billed for your time in the studio and for the

equipment you've hired from the stores. As with any business you'll find your key contacts with which you speak about aspects of your work. Keep these contacts up to date, especially if you're using the studio a lot. They'll keep you posted about the politics and inner workings of what is going on in the studio and the business that is passing through it. Some of that information might be very valuable moving forward.

ENGINEERS

The team you surround yourself with, should you need one, in the studio will be of paramount importance. This will be especially so if you're not going to get your hands dirty on the faders (or mouse and keyboard these days). As we've previously mentioned, many producers are engineers in their own right and as such would not contemplate passing the reins of the mother ship (a.k.a. the mixing desk) over to anyone else.

However, should you be a musician-producer, such as Trevor Horn, highlighted earlier, you will surround yourself with a number of talented engineers to enable your workflow. There are some excellent benefits to this, as you can work on more than one project concurrently, as I dare say someone as prolific as Horn does from time to time. More importantly is the benefit that you can leave the session for as long or as little as you want. While this might appear detached, it also allows clarity and objectivity at the many stages, as the engineer can be left to simply get on with tracking or mixing. The producer can then attend with fresh ears and provide clear advice regarding the mix. Robert Orton, who spent many years working as Horn's engineer, says of the times he got to produce, "It can be difficult to separate yourself from your engineering duties to think musically. The engineer in me can be distracting from the producer in me."

Choosing the right engineer will be down to performance and personality. The skill of the engineer is to capture and perhaps mix later the recordings. Naturally they'll be assessed as to their ability to capture great recordings. Also, personality is of course a huge part of it. Joe D'Ambrosio, producer manager for Tony Visconti among others, suggests that "producers have their guys [chosen engineers]... it's called having someone you're comfortable with just like a mate in life."

The ability to be cool and calm in the face of sometimes stressful activity can be paramount also. Being someone who the artist and you can get on with in the studio is to some more important than actually being the best engineer on the block, although it helps! Even if you are the best on the block, if you're difficult to work with, you will be less likely to get the gig. Phil Harding, engineer for Stock Aitken and Waterman during the 1980s, comments that the skills required are "character, attitude, and the ability to get into the right headspace," something that he describes as the "zone."

It can be common to employ a professional mix engineer these days. These specialist engineers focus on mixing and as a result become very honed in the tools of the trade, understanding how the music will translate to the record buying public. Tuning vocals, tightening up live drum kits, adding extra elements where required and permitted all point toward a glossy and highly professional mix. This practice appears part of the

process these days alongside a producer when the sums are calculated for the project. To gain the services of a mix engineer such as Tom Lord-Alge or Robert Orton can send a signal to the label that the producer is right behind the project or indeed the label has the investment clout to get the best names in the business to preside over the track.

The same is extended to the mastering engineer who will further perfect the mix. There are a handful of mastering engineers across the globe who engage in much of the available work. Some producers will have a chosen few mastering engineers. Tony Platt has worked frequently with AIR Mastering's Ray Staff.

Freelance engineers

Freelance engineers have become commonplace in recent years working in many different studios for many different producers. The world of the music production professional is now mostly freelance, as the days of staff engineers at large studios are mostly over. Producers will call a freelancer they have worked with before to engineer their session before asking the house engineer in most cases.

For this reason, the freelance industry is where you'll find yourself, unless you choose to become a company in perhaps a collective of producers or as a production team. This mode of operation is something we discuss in more detail in Section D.

Most engineers will be the same and work individually, some managing themselves, while others will use managers or agents to manage their time, as we'll come on to later.

RECORDING ENGINEERS

The majority of engineers these days are freelance and will move from studio to studio, but there are a whole host of others that either own their personal studio or are associated with one. Engineers, like all creatures, like to work in their favorite place, and certain studios can have that lasting appeal. Some engineers such as Jerry Boys will always be synonymous with Livingston Studios as the renowned engineer he is.

You will work with a variety of engineers in your time as a producer, unless of course you prefer to take the controls yourself. In either case you will meet and make use of many assistant engineers and other music production professionals throughout your years in the studio.

Ensuring rapport with colleagues is important and you'll soon find out who you like to work with and who you do not wish to work with again. This rapport will be the thing that can make a session smooth and perhaps make you wish to collaborate in the future. In any case, as with any industry, you will soon develop a list of contacts with whom you like to work on projects, developing that sixth sense together as you record.

FREELANCE ASSISTANTS

There is a healthy set of assistant engineers out in the industry which support many professional sessions. These are the often unsung heroes of the industry, as they are those people who serve the session and do so in a truly selfless and professional manner.

While some may be freelance, many assistant engineers will be attached to a studio and provide an interface between the freelance engineer and the equipment and personnel of the studio in which they're working.

MIX ENGINEERS

The concept of the separate mix engineer is a relatively new one, with a whole breed of engineers making names for themselves solely in this area. Today we're all familiar with Chris Lord-Alge and of course Bob Clearmountain. Both now work exclusively in mixing. There are newer people to the mantle such as Robert Orton, who we speak to in Chapter D-2, The Mix.

It has become recognized that those people who spend the majority of their time mixing can provide an additional layer of objectivity and a sheen on a mix that other engineers may not manage. An example of this is an album where there are some key tracks (the singles in the eyes of the label) which have been sent to be mixed by a professional (and usually pricey) mix engineer, while the rest of the album remains in the hands of the recording engineer for the project. The difference can, at times, be startling and only then can you hear the difference and reason why mix engineers have become popular. We're sure you can think of a few albums like that if you've been listening for it.

This is not to decry the work of the recording engineer, whose mixes will be of a very high standard. Conversely, it is very likely that should the mix engineer go into the studio to track the band, they'd not make the same quality job of it!

You will need to decide whether to use mix engineers in preference to your own engineer or your own efforts. Alternatively you might submit your preferred mix and the label might still wish for one of the named mix engineers to remix the track for a more specified sound.

MASTERING ENGINEERS

Mastering engineers are, as we'll learn later, an integral and vital part of the process. Their work is the final, precious stage of the production, placing the "gloss" over all the tracks, to make them punch and flow on an album. The details of this we'll get on to in Chapter D-3, The Mastering Session.

From a producer's perspective, choosing a mastering engineer can be decided on many different factors. Is the mastering engineer known to you personally? Have you worked with them before? Are they renowned these days for the type of music your current artist is making? Or are the label, artist, or manager insisting you use one person over another?

Many engineers have their preference as to who they like to collaborate with, and such relationships can span a whole career. Many producers prefer to select an appropriate mastering engineer based on the kind of music they're producing and the market need at the current time. These may be from a select few top-flight mastering engineers across the globe, or it may be that there is one person you work with really well and believe he's brilliant and yet to be catapulted to the top team.

Certain mastering engineers will build up a reputation for particular styles of music for which they become renowned. They might not wish to be pigeon-holed in such a way, but for a period of time this can be good for business. As we'll discuss later in the book, this can be a similar issue for producers, whereby a producer will ride a wave of a certain musical style for a period and then lose prominence as the tides of popular music change direction.

Finding the right mastering engineer may be something you develop through trial or error over time, but you may choose to use different engineers per project based on their previous work. Developing this knowledge will take time listening to material already mastered and speaking to your engineers. Ultimately it will be trial and error until you find the people who make things sing for you.

Agent and producer manager

Many producers choose to engage an agent or manager to assist them in finding work and then managing it. Keeping up with the creative aspect of producing is not always compatible with the business support side of things, let alone the going out and finding work part. Being creative is the paramount thing and having to worry about minutiae can be distracting.

A producer manager can be vital in touting you to labels and artists in an attempt to get you your next gig. Conversely, artists and labels will no longer necessarily come to you personally, but will go through your agent or manager. This can become a fantastic filtration mechanism should you be highly successful and not wish to take risks with artists with a limited shelf life (unless of course their music has something that you can see will be a hit).

Asking a manager to take over business aspects of your work can be very liberating as the deals, the money, and so on can be taken out of your hands, leaving you to get on with production at hand.

This is not to suggest that the majority of producers have their own managers, but some may do and, then again, many do not. It is a matter of preference. There are those producers who enjoy the business side and feel it necessary to keep on the pulse of the industry, as it changes form and direction. This can make those producers the innovators of the stock, potentially finding new acts and placing them into prominence using new deal types and marketing strategies. On the other hand, there are those producers who are simply too busy or in too much demand to not employ a manager.

In this book, we will cover a little about the kinds of administration and business you'll possibly get up to as you rise up the producer ranks. Knowledge of all this activity can be essential to make informed choices as you go forward. You never know, you might be good at it!

JOE D'AMBROSIO

Production management came naturally to Joe D'Ambrosio. "I was always a pretty organized person growing up... friends... say 'it all makes sense. You were always the organizer...this is what you did'... and based on that I had the innate ability to just be able to pull things off."

Joe had many careers over the years and it was Phil Ramone who helped him become a producer manager. Joe had worked with Ramone first as his personal assistant and then later his head of production for his label. Meeting with Ramone later in life, Joe suggested that they could work together again, this time as his manager.

Joe's business, JD Management, has been in business nearly 10 years now and has grown out of this initial work with Ramone. Joe now manages 19 professionals including Tony Visconti and Hugh Padgham.

"The work is 70:30. 70% of it I have to go out and find, while the other 30% comes in to me for my client," says D'Ambrosio. "The world has changed and I need to go get work. The ones with the longer reputations and the more success, such as Jay Newland [co-producer for Norah Jones], have not stopped working for five years.

"I represent people," says D'Ambrosio. "I'm a manager to some people, but some would call me an agent in certain circles."

D'Ambrosio explains the work he does: "Not only do I oversee their business, look for work for them, make deals, close deals. I also buy homes, rent apartments, help Tony Visconti get a book deal and Hugh Padgham a speaking engagement." D'Ambrosio sees his role in far more of a holistic way for his clients rather than simply "closing deals."

Musicians

In this game of music production, it is the musicians that make its world go around. Without musicians, where would we be? There was a time just after records arrived on the scene that people said that live music was dead. In some ways it was, insofar as the piano stopped being the focal point for entertainment in the family home or the pub or bar. Recorded music took its place. Professionally, however, musicians were still employed, perhaps even more so.

The same claims came about with the introduction of more comprehensive drum machines in the 1980s, that drummers would be obsolete in a few years' time. This also has not happened. A drummer is still a key part of a band and most performances.

Therefore, musicians are still the key to making these things happen and, as a producer, getting to know the best in the business might be a worthwhile expansion of your address book. Producers at the top of their game working with single artists without their own band have the ability to choose the best performers available to them. Producers will have a list of special musicians, called session musicians, who they'll call on, or travel to in extreme instances, just to get the right take.

Musicians are not just the people placing the music on the tape, but are also the professionals behind the scenes such as the arrangers and conductors for that rich orchestral session on your artist's ballad. They're all part of the picture. Getting to know your mastermind team will be of great benefit!

SESSION MUSICIANS

A label comes to you with a singer songwriter with an album of material to produce. What do you do? Do you program everything in Logic, or do you play the material yourself with the artist? Or do you gather a host of highly talented and adaptable musicians to play the parts for you?

Should you choose the third approach, you're most likely to be calling in the services of a session musician. This strange breed are incredibly talented at their own instruments and are adaptable to many different musical styles and ways of performing. Session players will be able to read music, learn fast, provide accuracy with style and when required assist you in coming up with ideas for their parts.

Obviously session players are not just for the session, despite what the name suggests. They are also the team of people that the artist may call on to hit the road with them when they tour.

As with all walks of life, we like to do business with people we've used before, because they're good, and we trust and we get on with them. The same works for the session musician. Take Peter Gabriel, for example. He has used mostly the same session players for many years in Tony Levin (bass) and David Rhodes (guitar) alongside a small handful of drummers.

There will be times when you want something unique or to provide that extra dimension to your music. Then you may wish to call in a specific player or a specific instrument to add to this. One of the most frequently added session players to pop music outside of the traditional band format would be either the quartet or the orchestra.

SECTIONS, QUARTETS, ORCHESTRAS AND CONDUCTORS

Think of so many of the early popular music recordings and you'll often consider the band behind in the rock and roll era. Alongside this were of course the famous singers, which would enjoy the backing of an orchestra, or at least a smaller chamber sized orchestra. These players were to some extent the soundtrack to many decades of so-called popular music before the advent of rock and roll.

These days, in most popular music, the music generation is what we'll call here band-orientated or electronic. Band-orientated instruments usually are the drums, bass, guitar, keyboards, and vocals. Of course, electronics have taken their fair prominence in the past 40 years or so, especially with the explosion of dance music.

However, there are those sections of the recording in a session in which we'll choose to either use a Roland synth or a set of samples stacked up in EXS24 to provide the parts an orchestra would. However, you'll at times, especially if you have the budget, choose to go the whole length and go for a real set of players. Before you do this, you need to decide who is going to arrange the parts. Will it be you? Or will you hire an experienced arranger?

ARRANGERS

Before recording either a quartet or an orchestra, it is likely that you'll need to hire the services of an arranger. An arranger can have multiple roles, as you'll learn in Chapter C-4, *The Desired Outcome* (see sidebar written by Brian Morrell). These music production professionals can provide arrangements for many different instrument groups, such as brass bands through to full orchestras.



Recording an orchestra to add to a pop track can be immensely powerful.
Photograph courtesy of Mark Cousins, www.cousins-saunders.co.uk

Classical musicians are quite different usually to those involved in popular music forms. They have been highly trained to perform to a score. Their sight-reading skills are highly tuned and they do not often improvise. As a result, a score often needs to be produced and will need to be arranged. In the classical world, the writing of a score would be considered composition, but in the case here of taking a popular music piece and providing a score to accompany it, it would be considered arranging.

Arrangers are brought in to provide services of arranging the parts required should you want to place backing on your artist's ballad or a horn section on the retro disco track you're working on. An arranger is a fantastic ally in the world of music production and can really enrich a production.

Record company

The record company, or label, was traditionally the organization that would seek out the talented artist and through its staff bring together songwriters, musicians, and a technical team to record and then manufacture records. The record companies were, and to some extent still are, extremely powerful. They can sign, develop, and bankroll artists helping them get to market and sell records, which will give them a return on their investment. Naturally sometimes these best-laid plans do not come to fruition and the label loses out, but in many cases large artists can reap considerable profit for the label. We'll discuss this a little later when we look at the deals for the producer.

The world is changing. The landscape of the record label is something that has been developing constantly over time since its inception, but that rate of change has dramatically accelerated in recent years. Nevertheless, the record label continues to play a pivotal role to many artists and therefore producers and engineers.

The current shift in power we're experiencing with companies such as Live Nation, predominately a live event organizer signing big acts such as Madonna, opens up uncharted territory. We must note the fact that the world of music is changing and consequently it is very difficult to predict the future of how the industry will operate.

In this section we'll discuss the interactions you may have with labels in the coming years. On your career path as a producer, the record label will be a body you'll deal closely with from time to time as a source of work, or the conduit through which the music is released. This chapter will introduce you to the entity and who, as a producer, you should communicate with.

This introduction is not intended to be anything other than that, an introduction. We would recommend further reading (see Appendix F-1 for more information) should you wish to know the intricacies of a record label.

TYPES OF LABEL

Labels for many years provided not only the machinery to get a record to market physically, but also the means by which to do it: the studios, the producers,