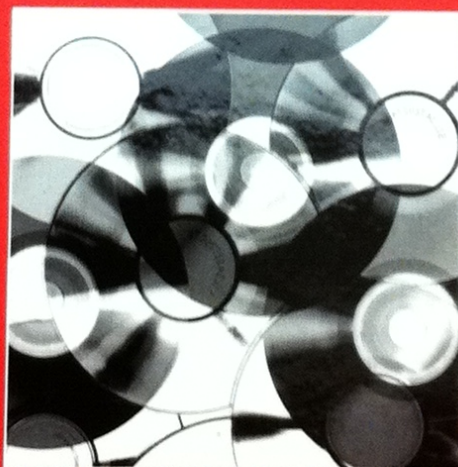


CONTINUUM ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
POPULAR MUSIC
OF THE WORLD



VOLUME II
PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION

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POPULAR MUSIC
OF THE WORLD

VOLUME II:
PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION

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4. Personnel

But the myth of all DJs being crusading, independent spirits was enhanced by the life style and on- and off-air activities of DJs on the progressive, free-form FM underground stations of late 1960s North America (see Ladd 1991; Keith 1997; Douglas 1999), and by the romance attached in the popular imagination to Britain's offshore pirate stations in the mid-1960s, which, with some exceptions, were in fact tightly programmed and, in some cases, corrupt businesses (Chapman 1992).

It has become rare for any DJ on a commercial, formatted radio station to have any say on the discs he/she plays. At many stations, there are no discs at all in the on-air studio; the music is loaded onto a computer hard drive, and the DJ starts each song by simply touching its title on a computer visual display unit. However, the DJ still has to 'ride the gain' on the volume sliders – 'driving the desk,' as it is called in Britain – preserving one aspect of the DJ's craft. The radio industry has come to prefer terms like 'presenters' and 'on-air talent' to describe its voices. Perhaps the experience of being the public, audio image of a radio station while being excluded from control of the music explains the legendary ego problems of many radio DJs, often documented in hilarious contemporary, behind-the-scenes histories (see, for example, Garfield 1998). The only radio DJs who choose their own discs are those heard on specialist, late-night, public and community radio programs.

The other workplace for a disc jockey – the club – where the DJ publicly plays discs for dancing, has proved a much more creative environment. The first discothèques may have appeared in Paris during the Nazi occupation, but the emergence of the DJ from behind the turntable as a notable person with influence on what discs are played can be dated to the beginnings of the disco scene in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is possible to argue that a relocation of musical authenticity from live performance to discs took place at this time. From this stemmed the star status of DJs in rap bands, as nightclub performers and as remixers in the 1980s and 1990s. The respect afforded by rappers to 'my DJ,' by clubbers to the world-renowned DJ doing a 'set' in their city, is a sign of the reverence displayed by members of youth culture worldwide for disc culture, discs and those who select and manipulate them for an audience (Thornton 1995; Poschardt 1998; Brewster and Broughton 1999).

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KEN GARNER

Engineer

Employed to manage the complex task of controlling the movement of sound from a sound source (performer or instrument) to an audience or recording medium, engineers are often considered to be simply technicians. They are, however, responsible for much more than simply technical matters. They are required to achieve particular sounds sought after by musicians and producers, as well as understand the nature and role of those sounds in specific musical genres and audience settings, keep abreast of quickly changing technologies, and maintain technical standards that allow large-scale performances to be mounted and recordings to be mass-produced and distributed.

Prior to the development of rock music, recording engineers generally came from the scientific and technical ranks associated with audio engineering and often held staff positions at recording studios owned and operated by major recording companies. The engineer's role at that time was to ensure a technically good recording

without exceeding the operating limits of existing equipment. In an environment dominated by craft unions and bureaucratic organization, the engineer's job was often governed by the clock: setting up microphones, preparing the recording equipment and getting a series of good takes had to be accomplished quickly and efficiently so that the added cost of musicians' overtime fees was not incurred.

With the advent of R&B, rock 'n' roll and rock music in the 1950s and 1960s, the studio climate began to change: fueled largely by changes in recording technology, independent record labels and the entrepreneurial spirit that guided them, the recording process became more flexible and experimental in character. The engineer's goal was to collaborate with producers and musicians and to experiment with the materials of recording in order to achieve a new kind of sound. To attain such goals, recording engineers worked long hours, and, partly because the musicians associated with the new musical styles often worked outside the confines of the unions, sessions typically started late at night and ended in the early morning hours.

In many instances, recording engineers became part of independent record label production teams and were perhaps as responsible for the sound of some musical styles as the songwriters, producers and artists themselves. Tom Dowd, for example, was sound engineer with Atlantic Records and worked closely with arranger Arif Mardin and producer Jerry Wexler. His experiments with microphone placement, multitrack recording and sound processing helped to produce some of Atlantic's classic R&B and soul hits of the early 1960s. Similarly, while the production team of Holland-Dozier-Holland is well known as the successful songwriting partnership behind many of Motown's early hits, it was engineers Lawrence Horn and Mike McClain who developed an approach to recording and signal processing that put a unique stamp on the sound of Motown's records and made them particularly effective in radio airplay.

By the late 1960s, pop artists began spending increasing amounts of time in the recording studio. For the Beatles, in particular, who eventually quit the concert stage altogether, the studio became the primary site of their creative activities. But, while the members of the Beatles remained the essential songwriting and performing entity on their recordings, it was producer George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick who were responsible for many of the instrumental arrangements and unique sounds that made the group's late recordings so remarkable. Emerick's work had an impact even on the sound of the group itself, and he is credited with, among other innovations, developing the double-tracking approach to recording John Lennon's vocals.

By the early 1970s, in part because of the rapid changes in recording technology (multitrack recording facilities expanded from eight-, to 16-, to 24-track capability and beyond in the space of only a few years) and in part because of the increasing demands of musicians and producers, most major recording companies had ceased operating their own recording facilities in favor of hiring independent, commercial recording studios. These increased in number during the early 1970s, creating employment for an entire generation of young engineers: 24-track recording had become the norm in most commercial facilities and, because automation was still not widely utilized, there was a great need for experienced recording engineers as well as for assistant engineers, tape operators and maintenance personnel (the latter positions allowing for an informal apprenticeship system in which would-be engineers could gain experience and work their way up to the status of studio engineer).

Over time, some sound engineers were able to develop their own 'signature' sound, which placed them in demand by musicians and record labels. This enabled some to achieve freelance status, setting up their own recording studios or hiring facilities on a per-project basis. Others became producers: for example, Steve Lillywhite's drum sounds won him an opportunity to produce for U2 in the early 1980s, and earned him both critical acclaim and requests from other musical groups and record labels seeking to achieve a similar sound with their music. Still others, such as engineer Bob Clearmountain, used their reputation for creating unique sounds to market original sample libraries, thus opening up new career paths and new sources of freelance revenue for themselves (throughout the 1980s, sampling was a controversial practise, potentially bringing engineers into conflict with musicians, and forcing many engineers to negotiate, and rationalize, a personal stance vis-à-vis sampling activity; see Porcello 1991).

While many engineers are highly skilled and dedicated to their chosen profession, there is some pressure on them to move into other roles, especially that of record producer. Indeed, the boundaries between engineer and producer are extremely fluid, and many successful producers began their career as an engineer: Phil Ramone, for example, undoubtedly one of the best-known independent A&R people and record producers of the past four decades (having produced recordings for artists ranging from Frank Sinatra to Billy Joel to the Rolling Stones), began his career in the music industry as a sound engineer. His interest in the technical side of recording has led him to take a leadership role within the industry in helping to establish technical standards

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for digital recording and in facilitating early experiments with remote recording and mixing via digital networks.

One of the chief motivations for engineers to shift into record production, however, is financial: producers enjoy legal rights over master recordings while engineers do not, and, aside from the artistic credibility that such rights bestow, rights to a hit recording can be extremely lucrative. Recent changes to copyright law in some countries, known as 'neighboring rights,' have afforded engineers some degree of legal recognition but relatively little financial reward. Nevertheless, the stature of some engineers in the industry has allowed them occasionally to negotiate 'points' (percentages of the profit in recordings) when their records have achieved a certain level of success. The record industry has also recognized the role played by remix engineers in creating unique versions of recordings designed for use in specific industry sectors, such as radio airplay and dance venues, and some have been able to negotiate lucrative long-term contracts with major record companies. Remix engineer Shep Pettibone, for example, established a substantial reputation for work he did in the early 1990s on singles by artists such as Madonna.

At best, however, the status of the recording engineer is still rather tenuous within the record industry. While a few engineers have achieved artistic credibility and independent status, many others labor away in commercial studio settings, typically uninvolved in decisions concerning musical performance, leaving those to a producer or to the musicians themselves. They generally do not offer aesthetic judgments (unless asked to do so), as their job is to take direction and capture as 'authentic' and technically unadulterated a sound as possible. Even this can create some tension regarding their role, however, given the inherently aesthetic nature of judgments of authenticity.

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Lyricist

A lyricist is the author of words intended to be sung. The lyricist generally works in collaboration with the com-

poser of the music for a song. The lyrics of a song may also be written by the same person or persons responsible for composing the music, or may consist of a previously created poem or piece of verse.

In European music, many of the first specialist writers of lyrics were librettists, creating words for operas. Thus, Lorenzo da Ponte, a former poet of the Viennese court, created the words for Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan Tutte*. The majority of operettas and stage musicals also followed this strict division of labor between composer and lyricist in their creation. In England, the humorist W.S. Gilbert provided dialog and lyrics for numerous operettas composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan, while the lyricists of the Broadway musicals of the twentieth-century United States included Oscar Hammerstein II and Moss Hart (both partners of composer Richard Rodgers), Ira Gershwin (with George Gershwin) and Alan Jay Lerner (with Frederick Loewe). Among the smaller number of Broadway composer-lyricists were Irving Berlin, Noel Coward, Cole Porter and Stephen Sondheim. In Europe, the lyricists Tim Rice and Alain Boublil worked with Andrew Lloyd Webber and Claude Michel Schonberg, respectively.

In the field of popular song composition, many early broadsides were not credited to specific authors, although some, like the seventeenth-century writer Laurence Price, have been identified (Harker 1987). By the eighteenth century, one convention in Britain was for composers to set already published verse to music rather than to commission new lyrics; a similar convention was often used in Western classical music. The exceptions, such as Thomas Moore and Robert Burns, were poets who set their own verses to music that was often drawn from traditional Irish and Scottish sources.

During the nineteenth century, the first great popular songwriter in the United States, Stephen Foster, also wrote both words and music for many of his best-known songs. In the era of vaudeville (United States), music hall (Britain) and *café-concert* (France), lyrics were sometimes written by the singers who performed songs onstage. Examples were George M. Cohan, George Leybourne and Aristide Bruant.

By the time of the formation of Tin Pan Alley, teams of professional lyricists and composers flourished alongside self-contained songwriters (that is, songwriters who wrote both lyrics and music), such as Charles K. Harris, author and composer of 'After the Ball.' Although he soon became a self-contained songwriter, Irving Berlin's first job was as a staff lyricist for a music publisher. Arthur J. Lamb wrote the lyrics to 'A Bird in a Gilded Cage,' a composition by Harry Von Tilzer.

The role of lyricist in vernacular musics such as country and blues was less precise, for two reasons. Firstly,