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Industry Spotlight: Producer Peter Junge

Hello and welcome to the only *Industry Spotlight* column we plan to run this week. We made a conscious decision to run less interviews over the summer, but with fall quickly approaching you can expect many new conversations to make their way onto this blog in the weeks and months ahead. Some will be bloggers, others will be professionals working in other parts of the industry, but every single one will have something to offer those hoping to get a leg up on this crazy thing we call the music business.

This blog exists to promote the future of the music industry, and to do that we need input from people like you and your music-loving friends. If you have any questions about the content in this article, or if you have an artist you would like to see featured on this blog, please contact james@haulix.com and share your thoughts. We can also be found on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



We receive more requests to interview producers than probably any other profession within the industry, but those who work in that field tend to be so unbelievably busy that organizing interviews has consistently proven difficult. There are more than a dozen producers who have expressed a desire to participate in recent weeks, but most have so much going on it will likely be fall before they can think about joining us. One person was willing to rearrange things to make time for us, however, and that man goes by the name of [Peter Junge](#).

Based out of London with a lifetime of experience and a degree in Recording Arts from Middlesex University, Peter Junge has been working in and around the music business for many years. He started as a musician himself, but over time learned the skills needed to foray into the world of production. His history both on stage and in the studio gives Junge better insight into the complex relationships shared by musicians and their music, as well as the engineers hoping to capture their creativity. That, coupled with experience gained from working with the likes of Andy Wallace and Chris Lord-Alge, have made Junge a powerful force behind the board, and today he shares his journey with the world.

I will admit to being far more familiar with Junge's work than his actual life prior to working on this feature, but now that I understand the experiences that made the man producing records today I feel I have gained a better appreciation for his art. My hope is that you will feel the same, but if not at least you can count of learning a few new tricks to apply when trying to get your start in the industry. If you have any questions or comments, please add them at the end of this post.



H: Hello there! Before we begin, please take a moment and introduce yourself to our readers:

PJ: Hi, my name is Peter Junge and I'm a recording & mixing engineer and producer based in London.

H: Thank you for joining us, Peter. We have been looking forward to this feature for a while. Tell me, when you think about your earliest interactions with music, what

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memories are the first that come to mind?

PJ: There are a few memories that come to mind right away. The first one is my family and I singing a lot when we were young, in the car, on holidays whilst hiking or on rowing boats. Also, around 9 years old, dancing to the vinyls of my dad's record collection. He had some Bulgarian and Russian copies of western music (I was born in East Germany), which were a mixture of The Beatles, Abba and the Stones as well as some of very good East-German rock bands like Karat and Puhdys.

H: Do you remember the first album you purchased with your own money? Bonus points if you remember the format as well.

PJ: It was a little after the Berlin wall came down; suddenly international music was readily available. The first proper album I bought was Erasure's Chorus on CD, followed by Metallica's Master of Puppets on cassette tape, two days later, and Kool Moe Dee's Go See The Doctor on vinyl shortly after. Quite a mix.

H: How about your first live show? Bonus points for a description of the experience.

PJ: I was quite lucky. Both with my family and through my school, we did trips to musicals and theatre plays, which were often supported by live bands. That was great, the music and stories always got me. I think my first proper gig was an open air with 5-6 Indie and Rock bands. It was great to be in a massive crowd and have hundreds of people singing, shouting and clapping along. Very inspiring and influential as it made me want to play at such events too, which later on I did.

H: Producers play an incredibly important role in music and we feel they all too often get overlooked by the media. I've found that a lot of people do not even fully understand what it is you do when working on a record. Can you please give our readers a quick description of your role in the album creation process?

PJ: That's true and especially nowadays with many people calling themselves producers who are actually beat-makers, someone who makes instrumentals for people to sing or rap on, making it even more confusing. A producer in the traditional sense is someone who oversees a project, for example, an album recording of an artist. How much he gets involved in the artistic side depends on the person. Some producers just make sure that the artist works with the right people whilst they look after the business side of things such as industry connections (management, additional song-writers, guest musicians, labels etc), budget and schedules. Others can also help with song-writing and making sure that the artist's ideas come across perfectly. In some cases the producer has even more control and writes or co-writes songs and, eventually, puts his vision on the artist's songs. I usually mix option one and two and offer ideas of what we could do with the songs, plan schedules and budgets, then work on the songs and help the artist in case they get stuck with anything. I also know a lot of excellent session musicians that I can bring in for all additional instruments.

H: Was there a particular record or recording that first sparked your interest in becoming a producer? If so, what was it and what can you tell us about that initial experience?

PJ: In the beginning, I was only interested in the sound side of things and how certain engineers and mixers were able to make records sound so great, interesting, and different. It gradually came to me that a large part of that comes down to songwriting, arrangement and production. I often check who did what and how they did it. I try to listen for e.g. how did they make that chorus so big, how was the arrangement constructed, how did they achieve the contrast between certain sections and also, which techniques or FX can I hear that I might be able to apply to a project I'm working on.

H: So you realized you had an interest in production. What came next? Did you go to school for audio engineering, or did you take another route to learn your craft?

PJ: It has been a bit of a journey for me. Initially I just recorded the demos and EPs for my own bands and then other people started to ask me whether I could do their projects as well. I also did live-sound in a very good venue in my hometown Dresden where I got to work with a lot of high-profile artists, which motivated me even more. At that time, I studied sociology and was already a few years in when I decided to make a complete change, dropped everything else and looked for a way to work in music and recording. Germany is very formal when it comes to education, so the logical step was to look for ways to study it. I completed a diploma in audio engineering in Leipzig followed by a Degree in Recording Arts in London whilst always doing projects on the side.

H: The debate over whether or not college is a good idea for those who want to work in music rages on each and every day. Do you feel those who want to be a producer should seek out higher education?

PJ: This is a tough one as it really gets people arguing all the time. My take on it is that studying at a college will get you neither chart hits nor cover all the aspects of music production you can know about. Studying also won't automatically get you a job (at least in most of Europe, I can't speak for the US). Also, there are a lot of things you can learn by yourself, but the big question is whether

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that's as good as learning it from someone else. I know the argument is always that you could use the college money, buy equipment, books and watch tutorials. However, does it really give you the same knowledge as sitting in a classroom for a few years, learning the theory behind things as well as doing practical exercises in the college studios? Furthermore, from what I've heard, there are some colleges that help you to get placements and internships, which eventually might lead to a job. So is college necessary to be successful? No. But will it give you a few advantages? Yes, I think so.

H: What was the first record you produced on your own, and how did you find the band you worked with to create it?

PJ: I think the first one where I'd consider that was the album 'Under Oceans' of my former band _preen. At the time we were all happy with it. In retrospect I'd do things differently but I guess it is normal as you learn and grow. Nevertheless, it got us some good recognition, airplay as well as attention from fellow musicians, engineers and producers.

H: After that first release, how soon did requests for your time begin coming in from other bands? Did you have to do a lot of self-promotion, or did they find you through networking and hearing your work?

PJ: That release was around the time when I left Germany and moved to London. Therefore, I had to start from scratch again as it didn't really matter what you had done abroad. Of course, that and a few other projects were still on my website, thus I could use them to advertise my work. With some promotion as well as networking I got my first recording job here, the first mixes there and at some point the first productions.

H: How have your marketing techniques changed over the years? Do you do anything now to get word out about your work and availability that you perhaps did attempt when you first began?

PJ: I don't think they have changed a lot. I'm still handing out my business card to artists I like, and do online promotion wherever it makes sense. I think the best marketing is word of mouth. If you do a good job and people like what you do it's very likely something will come out of it, as they'll do the promotion for you.

H: Without going too in-depth, could you please walk us through a typical 'day at the office' for you?

PJ: I usually start doing admin work in the morning. That includes sending and replying to emails, enquiries and messages, organising meetings, updating my website and social media and listening to the music of potential clients. Usually by the time I've finished doing that it is already early afternoon. Then it depends on the phase of a project that I am currently working on. I may go for a recording session, work on some pre-production or start mixing (where I usually tweak details of last night's mix before I start a new one). I rarely stop working before 1-2am and try to use every minute of the day - scheduling any remaining spare-time.

H: A few of the producers we have spoken with are known for a particular style or sound. How would you describe the sound/style you deliver?

PJ: That's a tough one as I try to adapt and change that to the song and music I'm working on, especially since I work with so many different genres. I generally pay a lot of attention to the vocals, melody and drums as they are the main focus for me.

H: A big part of what we do at Haulix is helping bands and labels protect music from pirates and other digital thieves. Has the rise in piracy over the last decade impacted you or your work at all? If so, how?

PJ: Definitely and there are many things I can see as consequences. Apart from the things everyone is talking about (smaller budgets, no money and time for proper artist development, more and more studios closing down, no employment in the music industry anymore etc) it is also the way of thinking towards the value of music that has changed.

First of all, the obvious one, the thinking that everything should be free is now in a lot of young people's minds. To make them understand that music is art and has a value, that it took the musicians and people behind the scenes a long time to learn their craft in order to play on the song, record, mix, master, produce, design, manufacture, distribute, make videos and promote the recording, that it costs a lot of time and money to professionally make a record, that this is their work and that they need to be paid for it, is very difficult to bring across now. Of course, there are many ways of making money out of music that are not directly from sales but the main point is that everyone needs to be paid at some point and that sometimes seems to be difficult for people to understand. Often they don't see why they should pay for music and I've had many occasions where people expected me to work for free because of that, because it's fun, because the music will be free and therefore so should be the making of it, because something might come out of it etc - and that is simply not possible on a professional level.

Also, as a result out of how music is being consumed, everything has become so short-term that artists need to release new music much more frequently than ever before (if they want to stay

popular with their fans). Consequently, it is hard for many musicians to keep delivering the same high standard of songwriting and production and I can tell how some of the artists I work with need to compromise just in order to get things out a certain way. A lot of the big productions on radio bypass that by having many songwriters and producers working on one song, which again costs money that has to come from somewhere. At the moment, the safest way to make that money back is to invest in the same hit formulas and trends that keep feeding the same machine.

H: What advice would you offer to those reading this who may be considering a career as a producer?

PJ: Don't do it for the money, do it for the love of music. If you can't think of anything else but music, if you can't wait to wake up in the morning to work on it, if you don't mind working long hours, almost every day, and having a limited social life - go for it, learn and work hard on your way up.

H: Do you take on interns? If so, how should people go about contacting you if they want to apply for such a position?

PJ: Unfortunately, I don't currently have the facilities to take on interns.

H: What are the biggest challenges you face as a professional?

PJ: Probably the budget situation and all the results from it. There are so many great artists out there but in order to get them heard in a nice way it needs some money for recording, promotion and marketing. Self-funding and home-recording won't do that job well enough (most of the time). Of course, you can achieve a lot by doing things yourself but it is different to having a strong team of people, who know what they are doing, plus their money behind you. I'm not saying a label is a must, it certainly isn't nowadays, but it can still help to push things to a different level compared to what you can do in your bedroom at home. I think there is a reason why many of the big artists who tried doing everything themselves are going back to using labels.

H: If you could change one thing about the music industry, what would it be?

PJ: Artist development. We need more diversity on radio and artist careers that last longer than one hit-single. Many of the artists from the past that we still love today wouldn't stand a chance if they released their songs in today's music climate, simply because it may have taken us a few albums to get to know them, their style and their songs. That means more money investment from labels into artists' careers. Also, what many listeners perceive as good music is what gets played over and over again on radio and TV (it's there, so it must be good) and most of the songs there are carefully written by formulas (listen a few times and you'll like it, therefore it must be good) as opposed to music that is different and may need a few more listens to understand, appreciate and like it. I think if there was generally more diversity on radio there might also be more chances for longer careers, as people would get a different perception of what's out there and what's good. Therefore, people may take the time to actually sit down and listen to different music again as opposed to the same thing that happens in the background every day, on the way to work or in the clubs on weekends.

H: What has been your biggest accomplishment to date (in your opinion)?

PJ: To have the majority of my clients come back to me. It may sound basic but it tells me I did a good job.

H: What is your ultimate career goal?

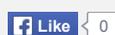
PJ: To make records that bring the artists vision across and are successful at the same time.

H: I think that covers just about everything. Before let you go, do you have any final thoughts or observations that you would like to share with our audience?

PJ: There's not much left to say apart from go and make music, go to gigs, see new artists and buy their music, it'll help them to keep doing what you like. Also, if your readers are interested in working with me, I'm based in London but I also do a lot work over the internet. Get in touch e.g. at www.peterjunge.com

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