



Record Producer

How Has the Profession Changed over the Years?

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ABSTRACT

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Record producer is a term we have heard regularly since the 1960s, but after six decades of evolution, how much of the original profession is left besides its name? From Phil Spector to Paul Epworth or from Sir George Martin to Dr. Dre, roles, meanings, and methods vary.

Through books, interviews, and online research, this thesis takes a look back into understanding the evolution of record production since the 1960s, and how history has shaped the profession whether it is by technological advances, the emergence and multiplications of music genres or worldwide events.

The compilation of this historical base along with the interviews of four Finnish record producers, have given us a better understanding of what record producer means in 2020s and how the core of its purpose has remained the same since the 1960s. How technological advances, for instance remote mixing, will shape the profession during the years to come and what is expected from record producers in the future.

Key words: record producer, profession, evolution, history, technology

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

TAMK	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
MPC	Music Production Center
DAW	Digital Audio Workstation
SSL	Solid State Logic
MIDI	Musical Instrument Digital Interface
A&R	Artist & Repertoire
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
EMI	Electronic and Musical Industry
VST	Virtual Studio Technology
VHS	Video Home System
LP	Long Play
AI	Artificial Intelligence
VR	Virtual Reality

1 INTRODUCTION

When I decided in 2017 to apply for the music production path at Tampere University of Applied Sciences, my understanding of the word “production” was vague. I grew up listening to bands or solo artists and never paid attention to producers behind it all, but with the democratisation of the Internet and multiplication of platforms such as Myspace, Soundcloud or YouTube, the term producer became part of my vocabulary.

Between the bedroom record producers who would own an MPC or a cracked version of any DAW available and would upload their beats on Soundcloud, self-produced artists such as Moby making award winning records from his bedroom and the world-wide producer icon type like Dr. Dre, sitting behind a massive SSL desk, my knowledge of the profession was limited to the fact that they made music – and that was enough.

Still, when we talked about producers among us, there always seemed to be a business-man aura surrounding the profession which kept me somewhat unfriendly toward it. I soon realised it was hard to precisely describe what is a record producer, because it actually is such a wide profession that has evolved heavily since the Billboard magazine first mentioned it in a 1953 edition.

In this thesis, I take a deep dive in record production history to have a more accurate definition of what is a record producer of the 2020s. And following the constant technological advances and world’s global situation, what can we expect for the years to come.

2 OBJECTIVE AND STRUCTURE

2.1 Objective of the research

The main objective of the study is to analyse the profession of record producers since the 1960s, define the roles of a record producer in the 2020s, and speculate on the future of music production and the profession.

There is a myriad of music related careers, varying from session musicians to solo artists, recording engineer, mixing engineer, mastering engineer, lyricist, composer and many more. Through this thesis, I aim to give answers to any person with interest or wondering on what a record producer does – and potentially inspire them to become one, or not.

2.2 Structure of the research

The research has been divided between historical data, collected through articles, online magazines, books, documentary, and conversations with four Finnish recorder producers from different musical backgrounds, of different age, and with varying experience.

Historical analysis is an important key to understanding how the profession of record producers evolved over time and which roles it played through different musical movements. To achieve this understanding, we take a look at groundbreaking methods created by music producers and pioneers of their time starting in late 1950s until today.

Technology also had its part to play when it comes to the evolution of music production, whether it is through the creation of new audio-dedicated equipment such as samplers, or with wider targeted creations such as computers and Internet.

After analysing how pioneers and technology have shaped the past, I focus on present time and the tasks that fall under the roles of a record producer nowadays. I thus analyse interviews held with four Finnish producers and reflect on what their definition of a record producer is. For ethical reasons, I am entirely transparent with the interviewees on the purpose of said interviews.

The producers were chosen on the basis of the era of music production they represent. I thus pursue to offer as broad a timeline as possible, with, hopefully, different points of views. It is important to be noted that, unfortunately, very few female producers came up in my research while searching for possible interviewees – a reflection on the mainly male-dominant profession. Additional research on female producers could be an interesting continuation to the research done in this thesis.

The discussions were based on questions I wrote for all the interviewees, but the interviews were also adapted to the discussion when I felt it could add interesting information. Each interviewee was told the purpose of the interview, to which each of them agreed to. I provide a link to each of them in the appendices. (Appendix 1). We also discussed their opinion on the future of music production. After compiling their answers and analysing the data, I try to determine what the future might be like for producers, and how globalisation and technology might affect their profession.

2.3 Interviewees

2.3.1 Tipi Tuovinen

Since the 1970s, Tipi's (Picture 1) career has included the writing of music scores for movies, recording, mixing, and mastering engineering, as well as the role of a record producer. Amongst his work are recordings of the soundtrack for *Lumikuningatar* (1986), music production for *Säädyllinen murhenäytelmä* (1998), and record production, instrumentalism, and mix engineering for the album *Vote Him Anyway* by Finnish artist Paleface. (IMBD 2022; Tuovinen 2016; Discogs 2022.)



PICTURE 1. Tipi Tuovinen (Petteri Lappalainen)

Tipi was a record producer before becoming a recording engineer. He started when the guitarist of his band, who was also the owner of IP Musiikki, asked him to join a band to a studio to check that everything was alright. He produced a few songs at the Microvox Studio in Lahti, though he did not know what producing was at the time. At the end of the production of a single, the owner of the studio gave him a cognac bottle explaining that he gave one to every producer after one album; Tipi had produced so many tracks for different albums that it was his time to get one as well. This is when Tipi asked him what a producer is.

2.3.2 Tommi Tikkanen

Since he started music in the mid-1990s, Tommi (Picture 2) has worked as a musician, record producer, and recording, mixing, and mastering engineer, among others. His career path includes work with Cocoa Tea, Walshy Fire, Raappana, Jukka Poika, Damian Marley and many more. (Suomenlinnan Studio 2022; Tikkanen 2022; Discogs 2022; Soundbetter 2022.)



PICTURE 2. Tommi Tikkanen (Tikkanen)

As Tommi had a background in producing his own songs, and therefore had some technical knowledge on how to make it happen, he quickly became the person to make the decisions as a member of his band. The computer was his first instrument in 1993, when he started making music, before he picked up a guitar. At that time, it was very complicated for a person with a simple computer to record live instruments – and these were definitely two different worlds.

2.3.3 Hiili Hiilesmaa

Record producer, recording engineer, and mixing and mastering engineer Hiili's (Picture 3) professional career spans over 25 years. Besides his most well-known work with HIM, Amorphis, Apocalyptica, and Lordi, Hiili is also a musician in the band Itä-Saksa since 1994. (Hiilesmaa 2022; Discogs 2022; Rytmimanuaali 2018.)

He started his career when he was 12 years old and was helping his grandmother recording her opera singer students at a church. Later in the evening they would both sit and have a listening session, during which he wrote feedback on the vocal performances.



PICTURE 3. Hiili Hiilesmaa (Unknown)

At the age of 15, he started playing what he calls “band instruments”, such as bass, guitars, and drums. He bought his first own recording mixer and put up a home recording studio in the basement of his parents’ house with the help of his dad, who at the time was a radio amateur and an electronic enthusiast. From that moment he started working with local bands.

2.3.4 Patrick Tuominen

Producer and recording and mixing engineer for Finnish artists such as Eevi Sjöholm and Ylona, Patrick (Picture 4) graduated from Turku’s Conservatory in 2019 and is a great example of how producers in the 2020s can use modern approaches while drawing inspiration from the past. (Tuominen 2022; Suomenlinnan Studio 2022; Spotify 2022.)



PICTURE 4. Patrick Tuominen (Unknown)

Patrick tells the story of how he accidentally became a producer. He started as a guitar player, and during his journey as a musician, his musical dreams changed with experience. He went from a musician to becoming a mix engineer for live events, until he moved to mixing in a studio, and he still considers this as part of his career goals. However, moving into the Suomenlinnan Studio, Patrick started to produce for some friends, and he realised how production englobed wider musical aspects such as mixing, playing, and recording. Committing to all of these in order to serve the project is a better fit for him.

3 RESEARCH

3.1 Iconic record producers since the 1960s

Up until the late 1950s, a producer's role would generally entail decisions on which songs to record, hiring backing musicians, and supervision of the authenticity of the recordings. However, in the early 1960s Phil Spector broke down the profession and took it to another level with his creation known as "The Wall of Sound" (Virgil Moorefield 2010, 9). He decided to not simply capture the authenticity of the live performance, but rather take advantage of the available technology and possibilities of a studio to layer multiple instruments and produce records that sounded like nothing else before. His ground-breaking idea to use a recording studio as an instrument paved the road to modern production. (Moorefield 2010, 9–12; Buskin 2007.)

In 1962, George Martin became the record producer for the most popular British band of the decade, The Beatles (Picture 5). Through his collaboration with the band and the impact his suggestions had, he quickly became known as "The Fifth Beatle". His role back then was to use his musical expertise to take crucial decisions on how to arrange the songs as we know them today (Runtagh 2016; Zollo 2020).



PICTURE 5. George Martin with the Beatles at Abbey Road Studio (BBC/ Apple Corps Ltd)

For example, Martin's decision to have Paul McCartney simply sing the song "Yesterday" with an acoustic guitar and a string quartet was not welcomed with open arms by the young musician, and it is undeniable that his ability to channel the band's talent into masterpieces was an immense factor in their success. (Runtagh 2016.)

In the following decade, at the heart of the 1970s, record producer Giorgio Moroder (Picture 6) was working with the American Singer Donna Summer, a collaboration that would propel Moroder's career to the front of the music industry and get him the well-deserved title of "Father of Disco" (Premo 2018). He quickly became a pioneer in electronic music and is a perfect example of a producer who took advantage of the technology to push the boundaries of production (Nika 2015).

He decided on the arrangements, hired musicians to perform the written songs, and made sure the recording translated the performance with great authenticity. But he also went further: in 1977, he decided to create the entirety of the song "I Feel love" with a synthesizer, in addition to the kick drum, which was a live instrument, as well as Donna Sommer's voice. (Moroder 2019.)



PICTURE 6. Giorgio Moroder and his Synthesizers (Michael Ochs Archives)

I hate to get into this publicly, but Michael stole a lot of stuff. He stole a lot of songs. [Donna Summer's] "State of independence" and "Billie Jean." The notes don't lie, man. He was as Machiavellian as they come. (Quincy Jones 2018)

Jones produced three albums for the "King of Pop", and when *Thriller* was released in 1982, he had already produced Frank Sinatra, Nana Mouskouri, Little Richard, and Billy Eckstine, to name a few. Jones's talent to cross musical genres, his decision-making on hiring the right musicians, and his knowledge of the music industry and diplomatic skills made him the perfect fit to produce an album that would contain only hit songs, as Jackson wanted. It is without a doubt one of the most fruitful collaborations of an artist and a producer, as *Thriller* is still today the most sold album of all time. (Heller 2018; Greiving 2017.)

On a different landscape, Brian Eno (Picture 7) brought his contribution to the world of record production with his experimental approach to music and search for new sounds. His extensive work on tape-loop technique revolutionized work in studios and modern-day sampling. According to Mark Edwards (1996), Eno's production technique doesn't exactly fall into the traditional record producer box. He would not just sit behind a mixing desk: he would organize role-playing games amongst musicians, have them swap their instruments, and by doing so, take them out of their comfort zones, and make them discover a new perspective on their art. Artists who claim to have been influenced by Eno's works and methods are countless: this group includes Björk, Phil Collins, MGMT, Thomas Felhmann, Laraaji, Nathan Fake, and many more (Spice 2017).

In an interview for *The Mix* (1994), Eno describes the old idea of a producer as being someone who mediates and converses between the non-technical musician and the non-artistic engineer. He continues to explain that this idea had died as musicians now occupy all three of these roles and predicts the emergence of new producers whose roles would not be to interface between the artistic and the technical, but rather to interface between different areas of existing culture.



PICTURE 7. Brian Eno in Studio (Echenberg)

Just like Eno's wide range of work, Rick Rubin's collaborations across music genres makes him one of the most influential producers of the past 40 years. Public Enemy, LL Cool J, Adele, Slayer, System of A Down, Kanye West, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Johnny Cash, Jay Z, and many more went to Rubin for his minimalistic approach and production style, known for its stripped-down sounds and instrumentation. (Reiff 2020.)

His approach to production is close to what a therapist might have with a client, as he discusses feelings and life to reach new ideas and self-discovery as well as understanding. There is a plethora of acknowledgements from artists who have worked with him and praised his workstyle, as you can read on the album cover of Radio by LL Cool J "reduced by Rick Rubin" (Picture 8). (Soulr 2021; Edwards 2014; Harvilla 2020.)



PICTURE 9. Butch Vig in his own recording studio (Vig)

In the video interview “Nevermind the garbage” for Waves Audio (2015), Butch Vig describes the producer’s role as follows: “The producer is the person that the artist is hopefully trusting to make a lot of decisions in terms of how the song is going to end up sounding, and hopefully helping them to find their vision”. Vig goes on to explain the role of the sound engineer, describing it as the person making sure the recording is going well sound wise, so that there is no problem for the mix engineer. The latter, Vig explains, is the person who needs objectivity to analyse what the producer and recording engineer have done and uses that objectivity in order to service the song. But most importantly, Vig specifies the fact that sometimes the producer can wear all three hats, extending their original role as the decision-maker to more technical roles as well. (Vig 2015; Childers 2021; Robson 2020.)

In the late 1990s until the early 2000’s, technology evolved fast and the line between bands/artists and the producer became blurrier. Self-produced artist Moby worked from a home studio in New York, and though he owned a lot of equipment, it was far from an expensive professional facility. In May 1999 the album *Play* was released, and in October 2000, the album was certified platinum in 17 countries. The album later became the most selling electronica album of all time. Moby

opened the door to possibility of commercial success with a production made in a bedroom (Picture 10). When asked by Larry King in an interview why he never did top the success of *Play*, Moby replies that he thought *Play* was the end of his career as he had gone broke and lost his record deal (Moby 2016). The authenticity and innocence of the record in its production are undoubtedly a large part of what made it a success. (Smith 2000; Spectralplex 2019; Moby 2015; Moby 2020.)



PICTURE 10. Moby's home studio during the writing of *Play* (Moby)

Since the 2000s, the general evolution of the music industry and the impact of the internet and television on music consumption led to an increasing number of successful bands and producers. Although I cannot talk about all of them, I will mention Paul Epworth (Picture 11).

Bloc Party, London Grammar, Florence and The Machine, Plan B, Coldplay, Lana Del Rey, Adele; all of them pop icons of the past two decades who worked with Epworth. In an interview with *Sound on Sound* (2009), he describes the term

“producer” as a person of many roles and states that “even down to being a project manager, to a vocal coach to a guitar tech. All of those things could come under the umbrella of a producer” (Epworth 2009).

In another interview for *Loud and Quiet* (2019), he explains the difference between what he calls “the old school production methods” and his view on music production when he started his career as a producer. “The old school production methods” refers to, by Epworth’s standards, having a band writing songs and going into a studio, and having the producer making decisions when the recording engineer operates under their supervision. Whereas Epworth’s view on music production at the beginning of his career consisted of a more creative input, covering as much of the process as possible. (Epworth 2019; Inglis 2009; Epworth 2015; Stubbs 2019.)



PICTURE 11. Paul Epworth during the *Sound on Sound* interview (Flint 2016)

3.2 The influence of technological advances on music production

It is safe to say that the evolution of music producer as a profession followed the technological evolution of the 20th century, and the evolution continued its course coming in the new millennial.

Let us concentrate on what were some of the essential steps in the technological evolution that enabled the evolution of music production, starting with tape, a medium that evolved and survived many decades of music production and consumerism. In 1909 the first non-magnetic tape was created by Franklin C. Goodale, which, throughout new experiments, lead to the invention of the magnetic tape recorder in Germany in 1930 (John 1996; William 1993). The development of the magnetic tape recorder brought more tracks, a smaller format, better quality, and constant improvement which, undoubtedly, played a large part in using a studio not only as a place to capture a live session, but also as a recording facility where producers could use technological advantages to sell a product never heard of before. (Hoermann 2016.)

In the 1950s, Lester William Polsfuss better known as Les Paul, used the overdubbing techniques he had been perfecting for years to create the song “How High the Moon”. The technique now known as “sound on sound” inspired companies, such as Ampex, to rethink the design and expand the recorders to multi-track recorders. Thus, it became possible to record a separate signal to a different track without erasing the previous recording. (Di Perna 2011; Museum of magnetic sound recording 2018.)



PICTURE 12. The first four-tracks acquired by BBC (BBC/ Apple Corps Ltd)

With the possibility to do so, Sir George Martin used the technique on the early Beatles songs, thus being able to balance the volume of the vocals and the instruments separately. In 1959, the BBC received its first four-track machines (Picture 12), and Martin's production work would, once again, take another step forward (Wilmot 2000). Ahead of Martin's popular approach was Delia Derbyshire. Her work at the BBC workshop laid the sonic foundations of new music production methods, popular music, experimental music, soundtracks for movies, and other audio-visual media for the next decades with the example of the 1963 *Doctor Who* soundtrack she created using only electronic instruments. (Butler 2021; Hodgson 2001.)

In the 1960s, as technology developed fast, producers and artists in general were experimenting a lot, and the use of speed variation to alter the sound, or pairing multi track to record ensembles and processing them to a single track of another recorder, became the new norm. These experiments largely contributed the creation of a new sound that had never been heard before. This new sound contributed to the success of many bands and sparked new creative approaches in the minds of bands, artists, and, of course, producers. (RSL Awards 2021.)

The multiplication of tracks available on recorders also multiplied the possibilities, and by the 1970s most of the professional recording studios around the world had their 12, 16, or even later on, 24 tracks recorder. Alongside the evolution of tape as the main medium used for recordings, better microphones, precise equalisation, compressors, and more accurate and reliable mixing desks were built due to the growing number of microphones and complexity of recordings. (Beentjes 2018; RSL Awards 2021; Reeves 2015.)

In the late 1970s, a new medium came out of the shadows and would propel the music industry into the era in which we are still living: the digital era. In 1977, Sony released the PCM-1, a machine that could convert audio signal to digital in order to store it on a VHS to be later used in digital mastering. The distribution of music remained analogue, via vinyl or magnetic tapes, and it was only in the 1980s that the digital era spread to the consumers with the introduction of compact disks (CDs). (Sound recording History 2022; Victrola N.D.)

According to Tipi Tuovinen (2022), the technological change that considerably improved his professional workflow was the arrival of proper digital mixer and overall moving away from analogue equipment. He explains how he used to own a Studer 24 tape recorder, and how much of a hassle it was to service it and maintain it in a proper work condition. Besides a preamplifier, he loves the fact that everything can now be done digitally, as he used to own an old Amek mixer, and it took him three weeks to change 5000 parts on the console.

As a teacher, Tipi presented two different recordings to his students, one done 30 years ago using an API mixer and Studer tape recorder, and another one done 10 years ago using all digital equipment. He asked them to guess which one was digital and which one analogue, and they all guessed wrong. In his opinion, you can perfectly emulate analogue recording with digital equipment if you know what you are doing. He later sold all his analogue equipment besides the microphones and the preamplifiers. (Tuovinen 2022.)

The 1980s was a time for another technological advance that would revolutionize the music industry, the creation of Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI). This system, still used today, was built to link multiple electronic devices together

and trigger them without human intervention. By using MIDI, one person can now, for example, use three synthesizers, an electronic drum-machine, effect units, and a sampler all at once, as long as they all had a MIDI compatibility (Figure 1). (Anderton 2021; Deep Signal Studio 2021; Hosa 2021.)

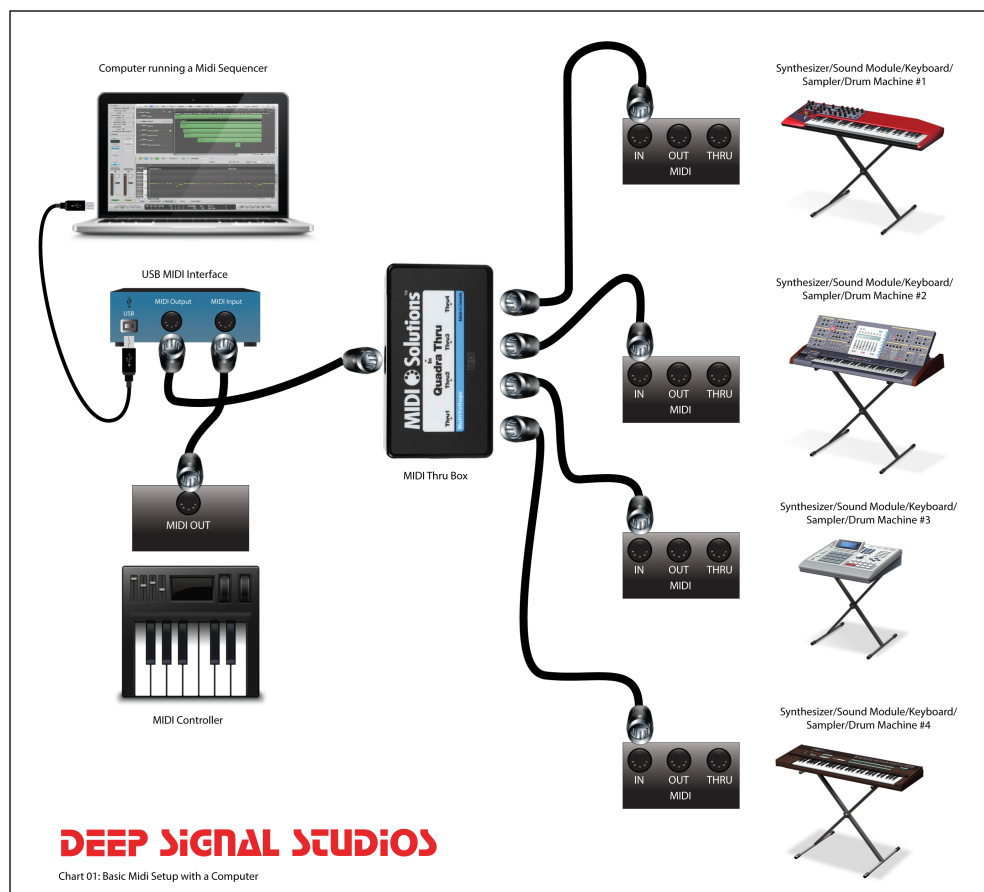


FIGURE 1. Example of possible midi connections

But as the recording media and methods improved, so did the instruments themselves, electric guitars, modern drums configurations, electric bass, effect units, synthesizers, electronic drum machines etc. A particular instrument based on the Mellotron increased in popularity in the 1980s and would serve as a pioneer in the emergence of new musical movement for the decades to come: The Sampler.

The idea of sampling and the use of loops were not completely new inventions: one of the founding fathers of Dub, producer King Tubby, had been using samples extensively from reggae records since the 1970s, but the technological improvement regarding memory storage drastically increased the possibilities. (Terich 2021.)

In 1988, Akai released their MPC (Picture 13), a machine that would revolutionize hip hop music. In her article for *Happymag*, Joanna Panagopoulos (2017) explains how the MPC fell onto the lap of a genre that was based around sampling. With a cheaper, fairly portable, and easy to use machine, making music was not so far out of reach anymore, and any person who could afford an MPC quickly became a self-made producer for their friends. (Vintage synth 2022.)



PICTURE 13. The famous Akai MPC 3000 (Akai)

During the mid-1980s, hip-hop groups were already using Soul and Funk samples especially for drums. James Brown became the most sampled artist in history, with bands such as Public Enemy being one of the firsts to sample “Funky President’s” drumbeat (Appendix 2). With the possibility to now store multiple sounds in the memory of an MPC and trigger them by simple hits on the pads, the dig for samples accelerated. (Turner 2020; Who sampled 2022.)

It is impossible to imagine a rap and hip-hop music scene of the 1990s without samples. *Gangsta’s Paradise* by Coolio released in 1995 was the artist’s best-selling album, and the song of the same name used the famous sample of Stevie Wonder’s “Pastime Paradise” (Appendix 3); “As long as I’ve got you” by The

Charmels can be heard on the iconic “C.R.E.A.M.” by the Wu Tang Clan (Appendix 4); Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg sampled Leon Haywood’s “I Wanna do Something Freaky to” for their song “You Nothing but a G Thang” (Appendix 5). The list goes on and on.

We can now move on from samples to have a look at a company that greatly contributed to the sounds of today, Roland. They are definitely not the only electronic instrument manufacturer who had a large impact on the musical landscape for the past decades, as companies like Korg, Sequential, Yamaha, Moog. and many more all brought legendary instruments to the scene. However, Roland’s chaotic history with drum machines indisputably shaped modern electronic and rap scene. (Scratch 2020.)

From the TR-606 to the TR-909, the TB-303, Jupiter 4, 6, and 8, and Juno 6, 60, and 106, the number of classic units created by Roland is impressive. Let’s concentrate on the most iconic one of the past 20 years, the Rhythm Composer TR-808 (Picture 14). Released in 1980, this drum machine was a commercial failure with less than 12,000 units produced. But it was its innovative sounds and rhythm possibilities other than its accurate recreations of acoustic drums that made it the rhythm foundation of Trap and Drill music in the 2000s. Rick Rubin’s use of the kick and its long decay and pitch variation to create basslines influenced countless artists and fellow producers and is still extremely used and popular in the 2020s. (Hasnain 2017; Fact 2021.)



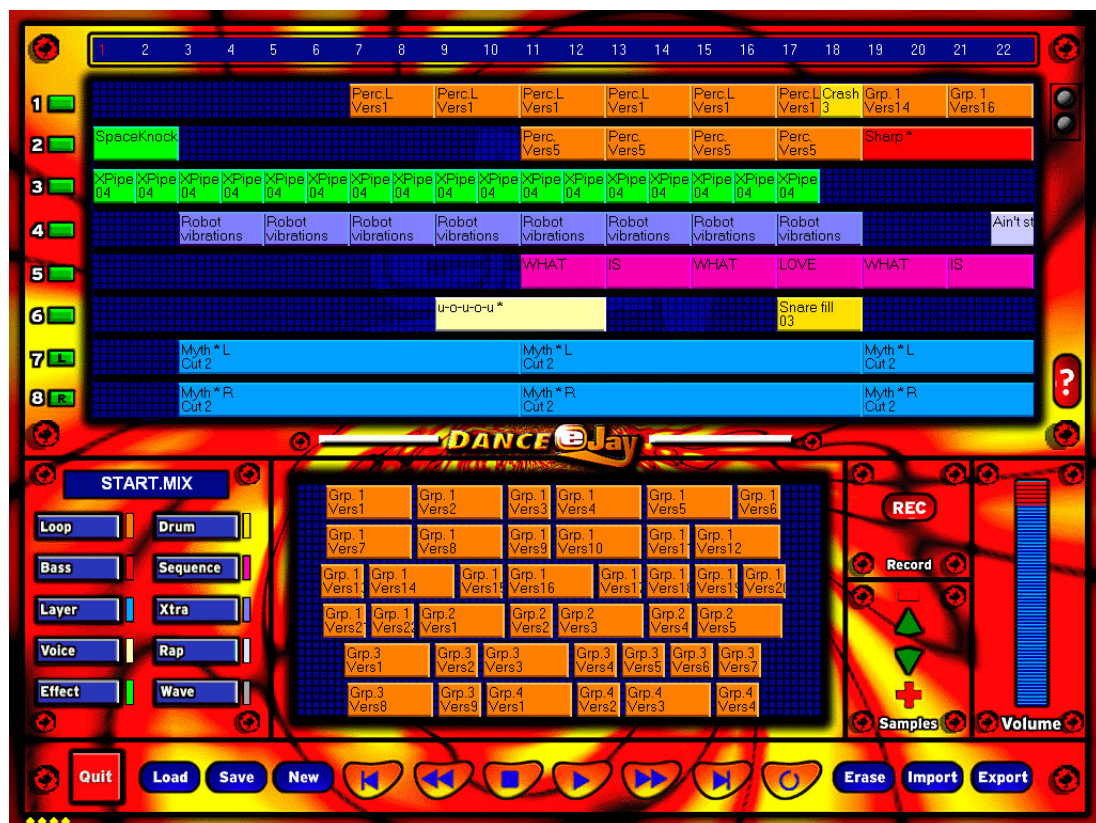
PICTURE 14. The original ad for the Roland TR-808 (Roland)

Between March 2019 and March 2022, the cost of a second-hand TR-808 unit varied from 3000€ to 7500€. With a very limited number of units and a price at least three times higher than its original sell price, many clones invaded the market by manufacturers such as Behringer and Acidlab. Software emulations and sample packs all based on the TR-808 are still widely popular today. (Herlihy 2018, Reverb 2022.)

Parallel to the hardware development including all types of workstations, instruments, and recording mediums, an event that drastically impacted the record producer's work was the globalisation and accessibility. With the World Wide Web 1.0's arrival in the 1990s and its massive improvement since then, the internet remains one of the most important communication tools to impact the world. (Jefferson Online 2016.) With the possibilities to store projects and terabytes of audio files online, share them across the world in a few clicks, or even simply to send emails to an artist, A&R, or mixing engineer, the workflow speed accelerated like never before. A producer from Finland can now work with an artist from Argentina, hire a guitarist from Burkina Faso, a drummer from South Korea, have the song mixed by an Australian engineer, and pitch the result to a Scottish label without anyone having to actually travel abroad or wait for weeks to have a tape mailed across the world. (Hiilesmaa 2022; Tuovinen 2022.)

The advent of the internet and globalisation democratized the musical world outside the recording studios as well. Producers and artists were able to reach musical movement and genres outside the physical frontier of their home country, and this access to foreign musical culture enriched producers', artists', and music lovers' knowledges. Knowledges or inspirations that are sometimes brought back to the local studios to try out new approaches with an artist. (Tikkanen 2022.)

With the increasing popularity of computers worldwide, the development of Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) followed (Picture 15). DAWs were already available on Atari, Commodore, and Macintosh in the 1980s, mostly for handling audio editing. In 1991 the company Digidesign released Pro Tools, a software that has immensely evolved since and is used by countless studios and producers. They were soon followed by other Software such as Cubase and Notator Logic (later Logic Pro) in 1993, Fruity Loops (later FL studio) in 1998, Ableton Live in 2001, Reaper in 2006, and Studio One in 2009, to name a few. (Recording Connections N.D.)



PICTURE 15. Ejay was my first DAW, they gave free CDs in cereal boxes in the early 2000s (Yelsi AG)

Following the development of DAWs came the audio plug-ins. Often based on actual pieces of hardware, whether it is an audio effect like a reverb or delay, or a processing unit such as equalizers or compressors, or even instruments like synthesizers or drum sets, these Virtual Studio Technologies or VSTs replicate or emulate vintage equipment. They could also simply be their own entity, developed to be used within DAWs or as stand-alone programs to extend the production possibilities for a lesser cost. (Vincent 2019.)

As an example, the French company Arturia offers in 2022 the V Collection 8, a library of virtual synthesizers that aims to replicate the vintage original ones. The collection includes VSTs of the Yamaha CS-80 and DX 7, the Roland Jupiter 8 and Juno 6, the Oberheim OB-Xa, and many others for 599€. In comparison, the actual price for a single second-hand Roland Jupiter 8 can reach up to 35 000€ as of April 2022. (Reverb 2022; Arturia 2022.)

The pros and cons of digital recording versus analogue recording, and the use of virtual instruments versus the original units are multiple. This thesis does not intend to answer these questions, but factually, the development of DAWs and audio plug-ins allowed any individual with a computer to start making music with a minimal budget. It influenced professional recording studios in their choice to move from analogue and outboard setups to digital ones that could be computer based. (Turner N.D.; Sheffield AV N.D.)

According to Tommi Tikkanen (2022), accessibility has been the biggest change in the music world. In 2001 him and his band, Soul Captain Band, were looking to go in a studio to make an album but couldn't afford it. They had an 8-track tape machine that they could make demos with at their practice place, but the machine was of such poor quality that they couldn't make it sound professional. The technology at the time was simply not as good, thus an expensive professional studio was the only option.

Having a simple audio interface, microphone, and computer is a lot more affordable today, and it also enables to widen the creativity and the possibility to make music without as much outboard equipment. For example, the use of cloud is a

more recent development but a very meaningful one. This accessibility allows more people to write, create, and publish their own music in their own way, but it has also brought producers and music lovers closer to foreign music.

Tikkanen recalls how 20 years ago one needed to go to a record store to discover new music. He states that the possibility to listen to a short part of a song online from foreign websites without having to order multiple records is a great advancement. This has changed the industry, not always for the best: as everything is so easily accessible nowadays, it takes away the exploration and discovery dimension there once was to finding new music. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Finally, we can see that big technological advances occurred in the 20th century and they continue in the 21st century. These advances not only changed the workflow of music production but also increased the communication speed of the industry, influenced music genres and record producers' visions, as well as evolved creativity in the use of technology for the benefit of music. Would the musical landscape be the same as today if technology had not evolved since the two-track tape recorder? Definitely not.

3.3 What is a record producer in the 2020s?

Now that we have briefly retraced the major steps of record production, and the technological development associated to it, let us dive into the roles of a record producer in the 2020s.

A rather interesting definition of the profession of music producer has been given by the Berklee College of Music. According to their online article "Music Production: What Does a Music Producer Do", a music producer's mission is to "vibrate air molecules in such a way that when the air molecules bump up against a human life form, that life form feels something" (Berklee Online 2020). As this definition might be correct in a more general or sentimental level, the answers we are looking for are more specific and correspond to actual concrete tasks of a record producer. So, what are these tasks? By cross referencing multiple sources, we can arrive to the conclusion that some of them are present in all projects, while some may never occur to a certain producer but be constant to another.

Schedules, budget, instrumentation, lyrical quality, beats, all of these fall under one category: decisions. In a simplified way, a producer works with an artist to channel and materialize the artist's vision through a decision-making process. These decisions have changed over time, but the principle remains similar: the scheduling of recording sessions according to the label's or the artist's budget, the sound-field to represent the artistic vision with the outmost precision, the lyrical quality of the overall project to fit the narrative arc and the artist's image. (kot 2016; Recording connections N.D.; Renegade producer N.D.; Slade, Thompson, Massy, Webber N.D.; Tuovinen 2022.)

In 2020, song writing is an important role for producers. Pharrell Williams, Max Martin, Diplo and many producers are what we call songwriter-producers. Their songwriters' abilities are often as refined as their producers' skills. Usually multi-instrumentalists and from time to time great lyricist, they have their hand on the entire process of a song from A to Z. (Berklee 2020.)

It is common for music business professionals to organize co-write sessions. They bring in producers with great songwriting skills, lyricists or topliners and artists to collaborate. Together they make a song that can be then pitched to an A&R. Many top songwriter-producers started as simple producers who could play an instrument or songwriters with great production skills and went from co-write session to co-write session, expanding their network and building a name for themselves in the industry. (Music Finland 2022; Billboard 2021.)

In Finland, a producer also often acts as a mix engineer for the project, bringing the vision closer to its original approach that can influence the mastering engineer in their work. During the discussions with the interviewees, they all agreed that when hired as a recording engineer for a band or an artist yet without a producer, their expertise was always sought-after to make decisions the band or the artist wasn't necessarily comfortable making themselves. (Tuominen 2022; Tuovinen 2022; Tikkanen 2022.)

Tipi considers that the tasks of a record producer depend on the agreement you may have with the person employing you as a producer and vary with each project. In his opinion, the most important task is pre-production, preparing the sound

fields and arrangements to try to be in the studio as little as possible. Pre-production also includes getting to know the person the producer must work with. (Tuovinen 2022.) Tipi also tells that an EMI person once told him that the producer is the person handing out the master tape to the record label. According to the EMI person, it didn't matter if the music was done by playing guitar or playing golf, he only cared what the end-product given to him was. (Tuovinen 2022.)

In addition, he explains how the tasks have changed but not disappeared over-time. When he started, only two-track tapes were available, so a music producer's tasks consisted technically of recording, cutting the tape, and sending the end-product to a label to be pressed as an LP. At that time, being a producer meant trying to make the band play better, not composing or writing lyrics, but mostly influencing the arrangements and how they play them. (Tuovinen 2022.)

According to Tommi, a record producer is the person in charge of making a record project happen. Their responsibility is to be sure everything comes together regarding the music: that the music works, and that the result meets the goal set for the aesthetic of the production usually set with the artists. He specifies that this responsibility may include a lot of work, like arrangements and helping musicians know their part in the project. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Tommi explains how the responsibility of a music producer also varies when working with different artists. Sometimes the producer might write and compose a song with a top-liner and present it to the artist who ends up liking it, whereas sometimes artists come in with a clear vision, and the producer's role is to channel and guide the work towards that vision and overcome any obstacles standing in the way. He insists on the fact that a music producer should be someone who loves music and the aesthetic of music. The pursuit of that aesthetic to its highest standard is, according to Tommi, one of the two major parts of what makes a record producer. (Tikkanen 2022.)

The second part includes a more secretary-like aspect: making schedules, discussing the budget, setting timetables, making decisions about who is going to release the project, and finally being the bridge between the label and the artist.

Tommi tells from experience that record producers are sometimes A&R for a label. Labels sometimes give rough feedback on an artist's project, or a tight budget, and the producer must be able to represent the artist in the discussion with the label. Overall, the artist and the song are above anything else for the producer. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Tommi, as Tipi, does not think that the responsibilities have disappeared over time, but mostly changed and expanded. Coming from a time when computers were not as present as now, and production work entailed a lot of communication within musicians and arrangements, is a strength for Tommi, as within a song he can now quickly analyse problems that might not be technical but more human related. (Tikkanen 2022.)

He specifies that he has engineered most of the work he has produced, mainly because of budgetary reasons, though sometimes just out of his love for engineering as well. Tommi mentions that he may have engineered some records that sound bad, that still have "a strong feeling and vibe" – and that is more important than making a poorly arranged record that is only engineered well.

According to Patrick, a producer is in service of the song, bringing the artist's idea to life by setting the goals and taking decisions to achieve said goals. The psychological approach of production, to be able to discuss with an artist and read their emotions, and vision are more important than the technical aspect. For him, a producer that only knows how to be technical and not how to communicate with others and have a social connection with people is more of an engineer than a producer. His advice is to first get to know the people you work with, and once a connection and trust are created, the technicality can take more space in the producer's roles. (Tuominen 2022.)

Patrick states that what might have changed since the 1960s, is that producers nowadays are not as technical as they used to be. Production being mostly made with computers now, the technical side of recording live instruments, such as drums or guitars, may be a rarer knowledge amongst young producers. This knowledge has been replaced with extended knowledge on how to use DAWs and plug-ins. The accessibility of our era allows people to become producers from

their homes with at times no need to ever going into a professional recording studio. Patrick does feel inspired by what can be called “an old school way of producing”. (Tuominen 2022.)

Hiili compares the profession of a music producer with the profession of an obstetrician, as the producer helps “giving birth” to a musical project. In his opinion, the person handling all aspects of the project does it smoothly like a professional. These aspects include music, human relations, budgeting, and technical aspects such as recording, mixing, and/or mastering. He specifies that it does not really matter who is responsible for this, it only matters that it is being done by someone. If the songwriter is handling it all, then the songwriter is also the producer. (Hiilesmaa 2022.)

I have been listening to a podcast by Arte called *Beatmakers*, in which producers and beatmakers that have worked on famous French rap hits are being interviewed on their process. A producer called Animalson explains in an episode how strange the creative process of being a producer or a beatmaker is, and how he works on hundreds or thousands of songs, and only a handful of them are finally considered successful (Arte Radio 2017). I couldn't help but wonder, what does commercial success or failure mean to producers?

Tipi states that he did not really know what success or failure meant, as he had the opportunity to work with music that he liked and therefore did not necessarily care about the commercial success. He explained that even with quite a few commercial successes, most of the music pieces he liked and worked with were not considered music that would sell well. In his early years as a producer, an album sale of 3000 to 5000 copies was considered a normal amount, whereas in 1990 selling 3000 copies was already considered a low sale. In his opinion, 3000 copies sold was enough to pay for a decent studio and have a salary. (Tuovinen 2022.)

In Tommi's opinion, anyone who works for a living should make a living out of it, and to be able to live out of what you do is important in order to feel meaningful and motivated in your field. The important and meaningful part is the product itself, not the physical product to sell, but the art: a producer needs to be a person

who loves music and who loves the product they're making, to make it the best they can. Tommi describes the working conditions of record producers as being hard in a way where you hardly get a steady minimum wage and can thus be technically always replaced. In his opinion, a valuable part is finding a happy medium between earning enough to avoid the stress of where your next paycheck will come from, as he did for the first 7 years of his career, and making music you love and are excited to work on. (Tikkanen 2022.)

According to Tommi, there is a lot between these two main lines. If you search Tommi's work online, his most popular hits are going to show up first. However, what is more meaningful to him is when he meets someone that has been touched by his work, no matter how popular it is commercially. (Tikkanen 2022.)

To Patrick, there is naturally a financial side to be considered if you want to make a living as a record producer. However, it is a wrong mind-set if at the end of your career you are only satisfied with your commercial successes. Producers never really know how much of a success a song will be, as there are too many outside factors to it, and a producer should work hard on every project so they can look back and know they gave the best of themselves for the music. (Tuominen 2022.)

Patrick states that when he leaves the studio knowing that everything sounds good, that is what he considers as succeeding. He questions whether it is really a success if a producer works all their life on projects they did not like or care for but sold very well. It may be successful from a commercial perspective, but that is all there is. (Tuominen 2022.)

Hiili considers success as something that can be measured differently by different people. Sometimes a commercial success is not an artistic success, sometimes it can be the opposite. Sometimes, to the artist, the pre-production and the production process of making a musical project can be the success, not necessarily the product coming out of the process. The accessibility of the 2020s and the place of social media in our society play a large role, too, in what can become a hit. In addition, from time to time, a song or an album released years ago can have a strong success long after its release. (Hiilesmaa 2022.)

During the discussions with the interviewees, I also asked them if they thought the meaning of being a record producer had changed since the moment they first heard about it and the moment they considered themselves one. Tipi estimates that he was named a producer after he produced an entire album. He explains that as time went by playing many different roles alongside musicians, artists, and bands, he just became producer. Only during the past four or five years he has been able to let go of most of the technical aspects of productions, like mixing and mastering. He now prefers to offer these tasks to some of his former students. (Tuovinen 2022.)

Tommi tells he had definitely felt a change during the development of his work experience, as his approaches to songs and career were not as analytical at the time. Analysing an artist's goal, vision, and his potential came with the success he had with the artists he produced for a long time. This made him understand the psychological importance of building a career with an artist. He explains how nowadays he may refuse to work with an artist if he knows it will only be a one-time collaboration. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Tommi states that over the years he has been able to better understand songs and making them, the meaning behind lyrics, and to step out of the traditional musician approaches that might focus more on the instrumental side rather than the lyrical one. He believes that it is something that has developed overtime from what he calls "a weird sense of masculinity" regarding lyrics: in the late 1990s, lyrics were considered to have feelings, and they were thus less important at the time. It took him over 10 years to get a better understanding of the impact lyrics can have on a listener. Now Tommi explains that lyrics are poems put into songs, and they are as important as words written in books or movie dialogues. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Patrick explains how, while playing guitar in his room, he thought it would be great to become a producer, as he considered it a more technical job. To him, the meaning of being a record producer did not change vis-à-vis the industry, but it did change for him between the moments he dreamed of becoming a producer and now. (Tuominen 2022.)

Patrick believes there can sometimes be a misunderstanding when a band comes in the studio and hires him only as a recording engineer: if they do not have a producer, they may believe that the recording engineer is responsible for making the decisions on arrangements, as well. He specifies that of course in the moment, he does what he is asked to do or what needs to be done, even if it is production. However, the meaning behind a record producer and a recording engineer is not the same for everyone. (Tuominen 2022.)

Hiili states that he considered himself a producer for years before actually hearing about it. He explains that at the time he was producing, he simply thought they were making music, and that he did not have a real title for what he did for a living. He is not fond of titles, since a finished record has been produced anyway – either by a specific record producer, or by the artists themselves, or the songwriter. According to Hiili, the term “record producer” is as flexible as the term “musician”: being a musician is a broad concept with extremely various factors. Nonetheless, he specifies that he did feel proud the first time he was credited as a producer on an album. (Hiilesmaa 2022.)

I asked the interviewees if they thought record producers were being replaced by self-produced artists and mix engineers, who have slowly been taking up the role of record producer when the situation has required it. According to Tipi, a growing trend can be recognized, but there are still full time producers. When he worked with many Finnish rock bands in the early 1980s, the bands would come in the studio with him as an engineer, yet he often ended up acting as a producer, for example taking decisions for the band. He specifies that a few of them even credited him with the title of producer. In summary, according to Tipi, if a product is being made, it means someone has made decisions, and thus someone was, knowingly or not, the producer. (Tuovinen 2022.)

Tommi explains that in most cases, especially with indie bands without producers, the recording or mixing engineer would take technical or artistic decisions for the band or artist seeking for approval. A mixing or recording engineer should always have a producer’s eye, as well, while working on their opinions. Calling audio engineers “technicians” is not correct, as their decisions are also artistic choices. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Tommi states that he used to make Jamaican dub mixes, and though he was credited with the title mixing engineer, the work had a very artistic foundation, and all of the choices he made differed artistically from the original song. We discussed the work of Mikko Rossi, who has been making dub mixes as well, and how far his choices have changed the original piece of art. In other words, though it is technical work, there are artistic choices to be made. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Technological improvement has also enabled artists to make demos closer to their original ideas. Through these demos, bands and artists have been able to better explain their musical ideas and artistic visions to producers, with precision that may be hard to put into words. Artists may get too attached to their demos, however, they often help to set a goal and direction to the project.

Patrick sees accessibility as a good evolution, as it is giving everyone a chance to learn how to produce songs – and how it might help artists and mixing engineers to recognize the actual need for a record producer. He does not think that producers are being replaced, but rather that engineers and artists are becoming producers as well. Thus, there is always the need for a producer. (Tuominen 2022.)

In Hilli's opinion, the situation is not as simple. The need for a producer has always been and will always be present, no matter what form it may take. The process of writing music and having a person reflect on the project with an objectivity that suits the art piece is a necessity in all cases. This person be the artist themselves, the mixing engineer, or anyone else. He mostly believes that it is rather A&R's that have been replaced by record producers. (Hiilesmaa 2022.)

Being a record producer in 2022 does not seem to have overshadowed the preceding production methods, but rather developed them. With the globalisation and technological improvement, producers can define their methods in a way that best suits them: some may never record or mix themselves, while others might leave most of the scheduling to the artist's manager. The choices in methodology have certainly multiplied, the musical landscape has modernised, the way indi-

viduals consume music has evolved, and the technological advances at our disposal are constantly evolving, but record producers in the 2020s are the decision makers after all. They have a love for music, and their job is to bring an artistic vision to life.

3.4 The future of music production and producers

We have established the evolution from what record producers used to do to what their roles are in the early 2020s, but one might ask what the future looks like for record production and producers. While we can only speculate on the subject, there are a number of articles that can give us an idea on the path music production is currently following.

Communication methods have improved and it is fairly easier to have smooth video conversations between people all around the globe. The idea of co-writing sessions takes a much larger sense, and we can easily imagine a situation where a producer, a lyricist, a vocalist, and a few musicians could work on the same project at the same time, each one from their own home-studio in different locations.

In the wake of Covid-19 and the effect the pandemic had on the music industry, many have realized that technology was not prepared to support such massive online projects, an assessment that has been noted by software developers such as Fora Soft. The company sets up on-demand high-end quality streaming services tailored to the clients' needs. With an expensive price, they cannot come to the reach of everyone, and as they explain on their website, the possibilities for musicians to play together without latency is not an easy obstacle to overcome. (ForaSoft 2021.)

We calibrate audiotracks: start sound at one node, and listen to it when it reaches the other node – thus measure the delay. Let's imagine we have a drummer, a guitarist, and a singer. The drummer starts, his audiotrack goes to the guitarist. The guitarist starts, the 2 audio tracks go to the singer in sync: the delay is added to the drummer track with which it goes to the guitarist. It snowballs from there: each next musician hears the previous musicians only. The singer

hears the guitarist and the drummer, the guitarist hears the drummer only, the drummer does not hear anyone. (Polina Sapunova 2021.)

A setup not very convenient for music creation, if only the last musician can hear in real time, or with little delay, the result of the production. However, it is surely a great step towards in-sync online record production and co-writing sessions.

One type of technological advance, with great potential to affect the music production world in the near future, is the development of remotely controlled analogue equipment. With the current number of plugins used in modern music production, which digitally recreates analogue equipment, some producers, mixing engineers, and musicians in search for the original unit may spend thousands of euros on a simple compressor, saturator, or other processing unit. (Douglas 2021.)

While others have stayed with a cheaper, more accessible, and convenient use of their VST equivalent, companies such as Mix:Analog based in Ljubljana, Slovenia have come up with a new approach. In their studio, a vast amount of vintage equipment such as Urei 1176, Pultec EQP1, Teletronix LA-2A, or even Fairchild 670, for which the second-hand prices are situated between 4000 € and 15 000 € per single unit (Reverb 2022). Meticulously modified to be accessed from remote locations, and taking advantage of great internet speed, these units are connected to their website. Once online, you can reserve the units for a specific time from anywhere in the world, allowing engineers to process audio with vintage equipment for a fraction of one unit's price (Picture 16). (Douglas 2021; Summers N.D.)

One might argue that a great vintage unit is not going to save a badly written song, and they would be right, but in the quest for a specific sound, the expensive sheen and warmth of equipment for a lesser price is tempting for producers. It is not impossible to imagine one of these remote-controlled analogue studios develop a catalogue of instruments, and producers may soon be able to use expensive synthesizers and drum machines for ten times cheaper than the instruments' actual price. (Machover, Holbrow 2019).



PICTURE 16. Mix:Analog rack installation (Mix:Analog)

In 2021, I worked as a sound designer and composer for the VR Gallery of TAMK's graduating students. Comparing an actual physical exhibition to a VR one is delicate, as they represent two different worlds. The physical exhibition at the Himmelblau Museum was the actual core of the project, where teachers and artists met with visitors on site and discussed the project. The VR Gallery was entirely based on the same physical exhibition, but the medium changed the outcome. Walking in a large space, discussing the artwork on display, and encountering other visitors is not possible while wearing VR equipment, however, the possibilities within the VR art space are endless.

For example, Aleksandra Näveri's work named "Urban Chaos" was on display on large screen in a 3D modelled city environment, where the visitor could walk freely and fly between buildings. Similarly, Jasmin Gams had her exhibition happening in a 3D modelled forest, where you had to follow the changes in the music to reach the end of the exhibition. Nearly everyone had a virtual exhibition following the same lines, and to include impossible or hardly possible dimensions to a physical exhibition through a VR Gallery is in my opinion a great addition. It immerses the spectator alone in the artwork and brings a different analytical angle to it.

This VR experience is a great example of how technology can help bring an artistic vision to life through new mediums, that can sometimes change our conception of possible and impossible. We can expect the methods to improve and evolve overtime, as with most technologies. AI written, produced, and performed songs may not seem appealing, nonetheless, AI is already heavily present in studios. (Ivines 2021.)

For example, Izotope's products can analyse the audio and apply changes only within a couple of minutes. In their plug-ins line, Ozon has included an AI powered mastering tool called "Master Assistant", who will listen to the input audio and recommend changes in terms of compression, equalization, and limiter (Izotope 2022). These recommendations can then be analyzed and disabled by their user, if needed, and can offer an external ear to a song. (McGlynn 2021). Though it seems AI is here to stay to take over an assistant's job, musical ideas and music production remains human (McGlynn 2021). Though, there is a possibility that by the 2050s professional studios will all be abandoned to the benefit of more compact and high-tech AI driven home-studios.

On the other hand, Covid-19 has also proved that humans are in need of real-life social interactions, and with the ever-increasing problem of climate change and the need to rethink the way we live and consume, globalisation as we know it will change and scale down. Thus, it would not be surprising if producers, too, will concentrate more on working in a more local scene soon.

In Tipi's opinion, it could be nice to have sessions online, but the current limitations concerning delay makes it impossible. Furthermore, the feeling of playing music together online cannot be compared to playing with one's bandmates or having face-to-face conversations while producing music. He explains how the accordion player of his current band is from Rovaniemi, thus the possibility, for bands at least, to be able to practice online would be of great help. According to him, the day technology can get rid of the nominal delay while playing online, it will change everything. (Tuovinen 2022.)

Tipi describes how he now works with his ex-student as a mixing engineer, and how they share audio files and Pro Tools -sessions. One would make changes and send the session file via e-mail, after which the other one would see the changes, thus being able to work remotely. They are now working on a new single, during which the two have yet to see each other live. (Tuovinen 2022.)

Tommi believes that music production and performances were always based on live interaction, and that this will remain the norm for a long time still. Even though Covid-19 has accelerated the debate around remote interaction and performances, only a few live streams have made profit during the pandemic, which can, in Tommi's opinion, be considered a failure. He argues that the failure lies in the audience having to stare at a screen: many would rather enjoy a well recorded, edited, and mixed live concert than a live stream of poor quality. (Tikkanen 2022.)

The majority of people Tommi works with continued to defy the restrictions and the pandemic in order to meet face to face. As many of them were from the United States, Tommi states that the US as the country of origin carried the damages for that behaviour. They had the will to overcome the paperwork and the hard visa application to be able to work face-to-face and are now collecting the fruit created by this risk taken. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Tommi explains that before the Covid-19, beat-makers would send their beat to a rapper to work on, but the rapper would rarely, or never, be alone to analyse the song by themselves. Tommi concluded the interview by saying that if Covid-19 taught us anything, it is that social media and online events are boring, whereas live events, such as concerts and studio work, are what constitute real life – and that is meaningful. (Tikkanen 2022.)

Patrick argues that online accessibility and new ways of remote communication are a great tool, and he believes that the pandemic also enabled people to understand that they can reach out to other without having to be physically present. However, he, too, strongly believes that music is a matter of face-to-face interaction, and that this should not be forgotten. (Tuominen 2022.)

Hiili reminds that music is a wide topic. Nowadays music movements and genres are unique and similar at the same time, and anyone can tailor their workflow to the specific project they are working on. As an example, Hiili suggests a drummer and a bass player that can only find a suitable workflow by playing together on location, not having the possibility to do so over the internet. In the other end, if you are producing heavily loop-based music, the internet allows you to work with other artists in a much more convenient way, for example by sharing files. (Hiilesmaa 2022.)

Evolving technology has always been evolving with the next generation. In Hiili's opinion, a good example would be the telephone, which was a "big deal" at its release and is now the main device used for communication. In the same way, Hiili started sharing files in 2008 when the internet speed was fast enough to allow it. The next step, in his opinion, would be to be able to play with bandmates from different locations, without any latency. (Hiilesmaa 2022.)

To be a producer who works only in their home country, with local artists, developing their roots and sound, handling anything from composition to engineering, is certainly always a possibility – even if the rest of the industry goes in the opposite direction, and that is a variable to remember in music production no matter what the era, technology, or genre. The pioneers we have briefly analyzed, their use of equipment and methods of social interactions all had one common point. They served the music they were making at that time, an artistic vision, and mutual trust they shared with a band, musician, or artist.

4 DISCUSSION

After the analysis of the collected data, a few assessments can be made and summarized as follows. From a technical point of view, technology has improved over the last six decades to a point where anyone with a smaller budget can become a record producer. Recording live instruments, owning expensive gear, and hiring musicians is not a necessity anymore, what remains intact is the desire to produce music in the present cultural landscape.

Because of the flexibility of the profession, we have seen how hard it is to pinpoint exact tasks under the large umbrella of “record producer”. The society’s constant evolution forces professionals to adapt their visions, methods, and creativity to either be a part of musical movements, or to try to reach the status of a pioneer by leading the cultural development.

But since the 1960s until now, to achieve this goal, the record producer’s roles can be divided into four pillars: communication, organisation, creativity, and technicality. For each project, artist, band, engineer, label, and producer, the meaning behind these four roles differs, but they are the cornerstones of every process of making a record. And these cornerstones finally rely on decision-making.

When George Martin decided to record “Yesterday” with only an acoustic guitar and a string quartet, he took an artistic decision involving creativity, technicality, and communication as well as organisation. Decades later, when Moby decided to record “Play” at home, it was an artistic and budgetary decision based on organisation. Much like Finneas O’Connell’s communication, organisation, creativity, and technicality skills behind making Billie Eilish the international artist she is today.

It is through this analysis we can understand that even with the constant evolution of the tools used by producers, what drives them in their decision-making process is their love for music.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interviews

1 (5)

Tipi Tuovinen:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b-OxCF2xvkfjyil-aQ6tra0Xk62g7rES/view?usp=sharing>

Tommi Tikkanen:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_49tbbBQ7sEjdzKST9BgX6q3qWZTI-oll/view?usp=sharing

Hilli Hiilesmaa:

Hi Vincent!

Here are my answers, hope they'll be helpful.

Very interesting questions. There is also a link to one interview of mine what is about working online. Maybe you can find something

from that too:)

Best!

Hilli

- In your opinion, what is a record producer?

Someone who makes or helps the record born. Like a obstetrician. The procedures are selected according to the patient's diagnosis.

(continues)

2 (5)

- What would you say are the tasks under his responsibilities?

Following that things are running smoothly and the quality is as high as possible what it comes to music, technical aspects, budget and human relations. If a songwriter takes care of those aspects oneself, then the result have been produced by oneself.

- Every project is different, but have you seen some of these responsibilities disappear over time?

In my experience all those four fundamentals are always there.

- How did you start producing? (Were you playing in a band or a beat-maker or a musician or helped out a friends band or else)

I was helping my grandmom recording her opera singer students in a church at the age of 12. Then later in the evenings we were listening the results and my grandmom was analysing the vocal performances and wrote feedback. I started with "band instruments" at elementary school and bought my first recording mixer at the age of 15 and started working with local bands in the basement of our house. My father is a radioamateur and into electronics, so he helped me building the studio connections.

- Did the meaning of being a record producer changed between the moment you first heard about it and the moment you consider yourself to be one?

Indeed. I had never heard a word "producer" until I had made recordings several years. It was just making music without titles. So I am not very title oriented. Each record has been produced somehow if it exists. I remember when I saw my name as a producer in an album cover for the first time. It felt a bit weird, but I felt a kind of pride.

(continues)

3 (5)

It is like a musician, who is a musician and when? The term producer is ultra flexible - like musician.

- In the podcast "Beatmakers" by ARTE, the record producer "Animalsons" explain how it is a strange creative process how producers create hundreds of song/musical pieces and end up with only a few of the said song becoming a success. What are your thoughts on this statement? (here is the link of the podcast, it is in French though:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/44fwdiykwWAY-txLKrWKXsX?si=bb7990b1a9a24329>)

Success can be measured in many different ways. Sometimes an album can be a big success in artistic way and sometimes it can be a big commercial success. Sometimes the artist feels that the album process itself has been a success.

The success can happen also a lot later than the release. Because of social media, it can be more random what becomes a hit. It can be a silly meme that creates a big hit. Also during the covid period artists couldn't support their music by making concerts.

- Do you think the profession of record producer has been replaced by self-produced artists and mix engineer filling the role of producer when the situation requires it?

I think is not that straightforward. People are cooking food at home, but still going restaurants. It is a different experience. People think often that the producer is needed to do recordings, I think that is not the beef. The beef is to reflect ideas with somebody suitably objective.

(continues)

4 (5)

This is strongly related to music genre. If I do programming with my DAW the workflow simply "spits" finished sounding stuff. So no kind of engineer or studio needed. In "a-group-playing-together" environment, the producer can monitor the performance and how the playing goes together. When music is made in a group, often the producer leads the decision-making process and makes sure everyone is heard.

Today many artist release their music by their own. I think the role of A&R person have been replaced by a producer in many cases.

- Is there any world-wide event that dramatically impacted your workflow/vision/considerations as a producer?

Internet (surprise:) The sessions can be held virtually all over. It can make some things way more budget friendly. I used to travel a lot, but now I can operate more effectively. For example, now I have productions in Greece and in Switzerland. The artists are working in local studios and I am in touch with the artist and studio engineer.

- Now in 2022, after 2 years of pandemic, we have seen the multiplication of online co-write sessions, and an increase in live-streamed performances. But the Corona-virus situation also taught us how humans need face-to-face interactions with each other. Do you feel like the future of producers will be more remote/online -oriented or do you think it will or should involve more local work (National at most)?

It is all about who are those that are working. There are so many types of people and a wide variety of different music types that some are better suited online and others local. For example, it is easier to send programmed loops to your partner via internet, but creating funky groove between a drummer and a bass player needs to be done at the same space.

(continues)

5 (5)

I think working online will be very basic thing soon. Like nowadays it is not a big deal to communicate via telephone like it used to be when telephones arrived. Technology gives possibilities to work online better and better. The next level will be that one can play together without any latency. I have worked remotely since 2008 when internet made it possible to send files” fast enough”.

(Here is an interview about online production from 2011, it might give some extra boost (it is in Finnish:)

<https://riffi.fi/artikkelit/haastattelut/tuottaja-valvoo-tuotannon-ja-tekee-sen-vaikka-et%C3%A4n%C3%A4>

I have researched this topic myself and considered the most essential differences between working in the same space compared to working remotely. For example, this information on mirror neurons has been really interesting:

A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another. Thus, the neuron "mirrors" the behavior of the other, as though the observer were itself acting. Such neurons have been directly observed in human and primate species, and in birds. (It is from Wikipedia:)

Patrick Tuominen:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TmvD-6X0zk3A0KCokhzKmJwXrf5-ZehZ/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix 2. Funky President's sample.

Funky President by James Brown, released in October 1974 on Polydor, produced by James Brown:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIU63C8K7-8&ab_channel=JamesBrown-Topic

Fight the Power by Public Enemy, released in July 1989 on Motown, produced by The Bomb Squad:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmo3HFa2vjg&ab_channel=PublicEnemyVEVO

Appendix 3. Pastime Paradise's sample.

Pastime Paradise by Steve Wonder, released in 1976 on Motown, produced by Steve Wonder:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNG3OLw7ICc&ab_channel=StevieWonder-Topic

Gangsta's Paradise by Coolio, released in August 1995 on Tommy boy, Warner Bros. and MCA, produced by Doug Rasheed:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1kKGW628aQ&ab_channel=Coolio-Topic

Appendix 4. As Long As I've Got You's sample.

As Long As I've Got you by The Charmels, release in December 1967 on Volt, produced by David Porter and Isaac Hayes:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gp9uZjPaB4w&ab_channel=isitretro

C.R.E.A.M by Wu Tang Clan, released in January 1994 on Loud, produced by RZA:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBwAxmrE194&ab_channel=WuTangClan-VEVO

Appendix 5. I Wanna Do Something Freaky To You's sample

I Wanna Do Something Freaky To You by Leon Haywood, released in October 1975 on 20th Century Records, produced by Leon Haywood:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUiy9X_dgRk&ab_channel=LeonHaywood-Topic

Nothing But A "G" Thang by Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg, released in November 1992 on Death Row and Interscope, produced by Dr Dre:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F0CAEoF4XM&ab_channel=UP-ROXXVideo

