

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRODUCER FOR YOUR MUSIC

If you're in the market for a music producer, choosing your producer is one of the biggest decisions you'll make about your recording process. There are a few things to keep in mind as you're narrowing down your producer options. Ask yourself these questions before you select the right music producer for your project.

1. Know Who You Are as a Musician

Musicians who don't know their "sound" often create studio albums that take on their producer's sound. It's not your producer's album. It's yours! Be confident in your music and your style. Bring what you have to the table and make sure your music stands strong on its own so that your producer knows exactly what he/she is working with.

2. Know What You Want

1 and #2 go hand-in-hand. Being in the studio gives you the opportunity to create a piece of art that explores the various personalities in your music. Even if your music is folksy, the studio gives you the flexibility of making a multi-genre project. Some songs may end up being more poppy, more bluesy, or more jazzy. There are so many options in the studio. A producer helps you discover the possibilities while still helping your project maintain its "YOU element".

As you enter into the recording process, know what you want out of each song and make sure you're working with someone who can understand that. Sometimes you might not know what you want from a song. That's ok. But make sure you're working with someone who can help you figure it out- not someone who does what they want. It's not their song. It's yours and ultimately you're going to be the one to take credit (or flak) for the final outcome.

3. Shop & Observe

Spend as much time as possible listening to other artists' music. Learn what you like and what you don't like. When you hear an album that stands out to you, email the artist and ask who they worked with. Ask them their opinion of the working relationship they had with their producer. Talk with that producer to see if you two might be compatible. Spend as much time as you can learning about the person you could potentially be working with. Look for a producer who has worked with comparable artists. In other words, if you want to make a pop album, don't spend your time talking to a producer who primarily works with heavy metal musicians. Music producers aren't mind readers, so get them some musical frames of reference to give them a clue as to where you want to go. Also consider who they've recorded

before and what those projects sound like. Are you seeing some middle ground? When they discuss your music, does it sound like you're on the same page? You can't expect a producer to listen to a bunch of albums you like and "get it" - you'll be much happier with a producer who really feels your direction.

4. Pick Someone You Get Along With

Incredibly important! Just because someone is good, doesn't mean they're the right person to work with. Make sure you're working with someone who you can get along with. Meet up before you ever decide to work on an album together. Can you talk with each other. Do you speak the same language? Are your personalities compatible? Is there potential to hash out touchy subjects civilly (these will definitely come up)? Being able to trust who you work with is of utmost importance. I can honestly say that working with a producer who I actually liked and felt comfortable around was what ultimately made working on my new album fun and stress free. Other than you, no one gets closer to your music than your producer. Choose wisely.

5. How Much Influence Do You Want the Producer to Have?

Some producers are a safe pair of hands who work to bring your vision of your sound to life. Other producers are integral in creating that sound. What are you looking for from your producer? Some of it may come down to your genre of music. Hip-hop producers, for instance, are sometimes as big (or bigger) than the artists they're working with. In that case, their stamp could make or break your track. In, say, folk music, you may be looking for less actual creative involvement by the producer. Be very clear about what you want before you settle on the producer, because you'll go nuts if you feel like your producer is hijacking your session, or alternatively, not giving you what you need.

6. Is the Money Right?

Producer contracts can work in all kinds of ways, and you could be potentially paying your producer for a long time. Understand how much you can afford to spend and whether you're looking to pay a single set fee or royalties ([producer points](#)) in the future as well. Don't start recording until you have this discussion - it's just too important.

Speaking of money, think long and hard about throwing cash at a producer just because you know the name. Consider how much promotional bounce their attachment to the project will make - and whether they really ARE attached to the project. If you're just a nameless face passing through their studio with a check, and they're going to forget they ever recorded you, you're not getting much bang for you

buck. It's better to work with a producer who gets what you're doing than someone who's name you can drop. [More »](#)

7. Can They Fit You In?

It may sound obvious, but don't underestimate the importance of addressing scheduling with your producer up-front. Music production schedules and studio time fills up quickly, and you probably have a deadline of your own. It's up to you to decide how much wiggle room you have in your timeline. If you're planning a self-release, you're the boss, so you can adapt your schedule as you see fit. If you have a label deal, chances are that the clock is ticking. Starting the producer hunt early helps, of course, but if you're in a quandary, definitely don't compromise deadlines set by a label to get the producer you want. You could [violate your deal](#) and end up with an album that doesn't get released at all.