

Professional music production is an aspiration for many, but a reality for few. It's an exciting business, but there's no clear career progression and competition is tough. We asked two top music producers about their experiences of breaking into the industry, and how others can follow suit.

Marc Kinchen, AKA MK

Marc Kinchen is a house and dance music producer from **Detroit**, Michigan. He's worked with artists including Celine Dion, Lana Del Ray, Enrique Iglesias and Will Smith. He's also co-produced pop music with industry production legend Quincy Jones.

So what's behind his successful career? "It's a combination of skills," he says. "The most important being that, when I make music, **I try to put blinders on** and not let anyone tell me how I should do it. For me it comes completely from whatever is inspiring me.

"**People skills** are also very important – often as important as the music you make. When you work with people like Will Smith or Jay Z, you must be able to relate to them and make them feel comfortable. The business is full of different types of people and you have to be able to suss them out and adapt."

But it's not all about hanging out with celebrities – Marc says he spends a lot of his working day on his own. "I think a lot of people would be surprised how much time I'm alone," he reveals. "Being in the studio can be a **singular existence**, I spend most of my time alone working on music and looking at the screens.

According to Marc, his career didn't have a single "big break" – instead, there's been a number of **smaller milestones**. "For instance, when I was 17, I was still in Detroit and I started my own label, Area 10. A couple of the records got attention and people started reaching out to me. All my friends told me I should go to New York, so I listened. **A friend introduced me to his manager** and we have been together on and off pretty much ever since.

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"Shortly after moving to New York, I signed my first record deal to Virgin and everything went nuts after that."

So what advice does Marc give to aspiring music producers? "Find people you trust and care for, and surround yourself with them. These can be friends, supporters or business people. If you're at the point where you need a manager, look around at your musical friends who may have managers or even ask your **mentor**.

"Ask questions – ask everyone questions and send your music to your favourite artists or producers. If you have a favourite DJ or producer, see who handles them and try to get a meeting. There are so many ways to reach people now, you can get them through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or email.

"Put a record out, do remixes on spec and offer to help in the office of your favourite label for work experience. Being loyal and nice pays off in so many ways. It makes for a more pleasant life and it helps you develop long term relationships – 99% of the people I started out with are still friends and we still help each other in some way."

DJ Chuckie

Comment [1]: Detroit is one of the cities where EDM had originated. It's surprising to see the trend.

Comment [2]: One of the challenges is to not let others influence your own music tastes. I know I will have a challenge with this.

Comment [3]: Being in the forefront of your music career, networking requires these people skills.

Comment [4]: I work well alone, so this fact comes to my liking.

Comment [5]: One step at a time. A successful career must take a long time.

Comment [6]: Networking!

Comment [7]: A good connection to ISM.

Real name Clyde Sergio Narain, DJ Chuckie is a producer and DJ in Holland – working prominently in the Dutch house scene. He's worked with the likes of Akon, 50 Cent, Lupe Fiasco, and LMFAO.

"To be successful in this industry, you have to put in a lot of time and a lot of hard work," he says. "Some people think that being a DJ is an easy lifestyle, but it is actually very demanding. For example, I played more than 200 gigs in 2012 and this year will be something similar. If I'm on tour, which it often feels like I am 365 days a year, a typical day is likely to involve cabs to and from airports, cabs to hotels, clubs and very little sleep. This can be exhausting."

Comment [8]: Reminds me of my quote.

Carving out a career in the music industry requires patience and a strong belief in your work. "Stick to your own beliefs and ideals instead of doing what you think is popular and expected of you. Stay patient and work towards becoming a more rounded artist, instead of looking to become as big as possible as soon as possible."

Comment [9]: Something I will need coming from usually being not confident in my own voice.

Having a strong presence on the music scene is also essential for building contacts – and a strong group on connections is fundamental to your career. "I go out and discover all this music and I start to meet other people who are as into it as I am. The deeper I get into the scene, the more people I meet. And you never know which people that you briefly met on the previous Saturday night would end up working with you professionally further down the line.

"The whole industry is like a huge web, with everyone interconnected. The more you tour, the more promoters you meet. And the more records you release, the more label managers you meet. The web just keeps on growing year by year.

"Everything I do has stemmed from a personal relationship with someone. Often it's DJs who I've played with or have known for years."

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