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**Interview – Marc Mozart, Producer Manager - Mar 27, 2006**

**Renowned producer manager signed new producers through HitQuarters. Read about the result, the new signings and the screening process.**



Marc Mozart, producer and manager for producers with credits from Backstreet Boys to No Angels (No.1 Germany), made public on HitQuarters in July 2005 that they were hunting for new talented producers. At the time he was part of MPF Entertainment, but today he runs his own company – Mozart & Friends, based in UK and Germany.

Through the announcement he started collaborations with producers Traq

Squad from Detroit and Patrick Flo Macheck from Vienna, as well as putting together a compilation, "Urban Village Vol. 1", which is being released on a completely new format – Mogoon. Most artists/producers on that album were found through HitQuarters.

Read the interview to find out what Marc's working process in the studio is like, why he thinks that a kick drum can make the difference as to whether a song is a hit or not and how he often finds it preferable working with new talent rather than established producers.

**How did you manage to sign your first major record deal at Sony Music Germany in 1993?**

When I was 14 years old I wanted to be a songwriter and music producer. I started producing r&b and hiphop. When I left high school I met every A&R in Germany, but I realized that I wasn't doing the right music because the labels wanted euro-dance music.

I was influenced by r&b acts from the 80s. Prince was one of my big idols. Nobody wanted that music in the early 90s in Germany. The market was influenced by Snap, who came out of Frankfurt and had huge worldwide success. That was the thing that would define the 90s in Germany. Because I wanted to make a living from producing music I just had to change my plan.

I got the chance to work as a DJ helping to start a new club in Frankfurt, which was a hot spot at the time. Sony had a label called Dancepool, which was the most successful label then with acts like Culture Beat and Jam & Spoon.

I started to make the records the labels were looking for. I played the records every night in the club and made little notes about which tracks worked on the dancefloor and where I would get the most requests. It took me about four weeks, then I had what I considered to be the perfect dance record.

I gave the tape of my best song to Sony A&R pop, who passed it on to Dancepool, and a week later the A&R **Alex Abraham** made an offer.

**Polygram Germany offered you a worldwide co-publishing deal in 1994 that helped you to develop your own production company. How come?**

"Love Transmission" was picked up by Sony US and UK, and had a

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Interview with HitQuarters artist **Bobby Creekwater**, who signed a record deal with Shady Records.

**From the archives:**

"I've had lawyers outside of the music business look at some of the recording industry contracts handed to artists, and they're absolutely shocked!" Interview with Peter Spellman of Music Business Solutions Inc. and author of Do-It-Yourself books

"The most common mistake that a young artist can make is that they make the assumption that the music industry is all glamour and glitts. They're not realizing that it's much more hard work and 95.5% business." Interview with HitQuarters artist Bobby Creekwater who signed a record deal with Shady Records

"Websites should have tour dates, contact info, and pictures. I would also suggest that every artist that has a

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worldwide release. It did well on all the dance and club charts in more than twenty territories. A couple of weeks later I placed all the other records I had. I got offers from Warners, BMG, Polydor. It was a logical decision to start co-publishing.

There was a young A&R guy at Polygram Songs named [Volker Neumüller](#), who was helping me set up meetings even before I had signed the first record. It was a logical step to sign with Polygram. I was writing a lot myself but also had a staff of writers and singers. That deal helped me to pay out advances to people and build a little organisation.

#### **What was your main focus at that time?**

I sometimes went on stage with ZED, where I played keyboards and where we finally did r&b and hiphop. But my focus was producing and writing songs.

My goal was to stay in the business. I realized that I was young and unexperienced. I had to survive the next couple of years.

#### **Launching your concept called "global online music production in the 21st century" lead up to big collaborations. Do you still benefit from those contacts?**

*I was looking for possibilities of reaching out to people, and wanted to work internationally. Along came an Internet start-up company from California, called Rocket Network, which had a huge financial backing by Paul Allen from Microsoft. They'd developed a system to network the most popular software like ProTools, Logic, Cubase, through Internet connections.*

We'd done a record using the system, and promoted it. We started reaching out to international executives. One of the first people responding was an A&R guy at Bad Boy named **John Eaton**, who became my co-producer on many of the Popstars records. John Eaton was the one who first got me over to New York, where I lived for a while.

I also helped develop a boyband called **Northern Line** for Handprint. One of the guys in the band, **Andy Love**, was a very talented writer. We'd co-written one of the big Bro'Sis hits. He was later writing for Lemar, Blue and many others. He's an established writer in the UK now, and we've just now started working together very closely again.

#### **Did Popstars shape you in terms of how you create hit records?**

The act that they were about to create with the new Popstars TV series needed exactly the kind of music that I was producing. I continued what I started in Manhattan. I had the right music at the right time.

I was surprised on coming back to Germany to work with a fantastic group of people. I sent daily mp3s to the A&R people during production and they would immediately get back with comments. They fully trusted me that I was taking care of the production.

**Swen Grabowski**, who was Head of A&R at Cheyenne Records, and **Tom Bohne**, who was Managing Director of Universal Domestic Germany, helped to get that project on the way. Both are amongst the best A&R people I've ever worked with. There was a reason behind that success.

#### **Why should people come to work with [Mozart & Friends](#)?**

I've always had that dream of having international success with a strong team of producers and songwriters. I've done that with various companies, but now it's time to take it to the next level with Mozart & Friends.

I've learned how to develop people from scratch and I'm trying to teach my people everything I've learned over the years. The big difference between what I'm doing and what other managers are doing is that I'm actually a songwriter/producer myself and I know exactly what I'm talking about.

The link between many managers and producers is that they just pitch songs. They get material from writers or producers and then just try to place it. My work starts much earlier than that. I'm trying to take care of every little detail in the daily work of my team. I help them setting up their computer systems, getting organized, sorting sound libraries, backups,

**website posts new songs there at least quarterly."**

Interview with Clay Bradley A&R at Sony Music Nashville for Gretchen Wilson and Josh Turner

spending the money on equipment the right way. And we're also working from a goal list, which is the basis.

The goal plan is necessary before we start working. When I start developing somebody I have to know what he's looking for. Once you sit down and honestly analyze what you want in life, then you can start taking action and totally commit to reaching your goal. Which takes out a lot of political problems, because you simply look at your goal list and whenever some other stuff comes along that's not on your goal list you can eliminate that.

#### **What styles of music do you focus on?**

The biggest thing on my list is to break into the US market. I'll do whatever it takes. I'm not focused on any specific music. I'm looking at the market to try and deliver what is needed.

#### **How do you pick your right partners?**

HitQuarters has been a big help. People who come through this website have already started making their minds up about what they want to do. HitQuarters is one of the filters. I've got a lot of material from producers and writers.

#### **What is the screening process like?**

It starts with the music. I mostly get mp3s on my email account and organize all that music on my laptop via iTunes.

iTunes has a thing called smart playlists. When somebody sends me music I put the email address of the sender in the files' ID tags and add it to my playlist of new submissions. Then I use the rating system to give them stars. Sorting the playlist by rating the good stuff will automatically pop up at the top of the list. Then I would go back to these people and find out what they're looking for.

#### **What are your criteria for choosing the producers?**

***They have to stand out from the rest. It's got to be different. I'm not necessarily looking for somebody who delivers the full package. You hardly ever get a perfect song with the perfect vocal and lyrics. You might get perfect beats or playbacks, or you might get a perfect lyric writer who does great vocal arranging.***

I'm not looking for that complete hit record because that's rare. You get parts of it. I make sure that a great producer who's doing amazing playbacks teams up with a good writer who's doing good lyrics and vocal production.

A part of the daily process within Mozart & Friends is to bring people together and collaborate in all kinds of directions.

#### **How were the songs presented to you?**

Some people wanted to send CDs, but I had thousands or more mp3s through email.

I only received a few pieces of music that I would consider marketable, but I have received playbacks and beats of a very high quality. I've actually signed up two amazing producer teams and they're already working and pitching stuff, and getting great results.

Check out [www.mozartandfriends.com](http://www.mozartandfriends.com) and look at **Patrick Flo Macheck** from Vienna/Austria and **Traq Squad** out of Detroit. They first approached me through HitQuarters and I can guarantee those names will pop up on big records very soon!

#### **What had to be set up to make a deal?**

Technically, all you need today is an audio workstation and a fast Internet connection. Today you can make a great record with a laptop and headphones. I do actually work with people who do that.

Business-wise, the deals I do are simple management deals. Not even publishing or co-publishing is involved. I get a percentage from what they make.

#### **Where did you learn the business side of things?**

When I started with my first deal in 1993, everybody told me to team up with a lawyer. Over the years I've worked with a number of those and also some managers. But I never gave full responsibility to lawyers and managers. I've always tried to learn it myself. After a while you get into it and I'm negotiating many things on my own now these days.

**What does the future look like for the producers you've worked with?**

They're going to have a bright future. We started analyzing what they were looking for. We've ended up having the same goals. They're all looking for international success, writing and producing for big artists. Then we started reverse engineering, which involves asking what is needed to make big records for major artists.

When you break it down, it's taking care of all the details and making sure every little thing is perfect. Starting with technical stuff in production, such as setting up software and sounds, and teaming up with the right people. We all work with Instant Messenger. I would have one of my guys work on a track, and as soon as he is finished he would drop the file and transmit it.

***A whole Logic or ProTools session file would be transmitted in half an hour. I will have a look at it, rearrange it, and get it to a writer. Sometimes I would give one playback to three writers and they would all work on it not knowing what the other ones were doing. One girl comes up with a great bridge section and another guy in the UK ends up writing a fantastic hookline. The result is a great song.***

**How will you approach new producers and find new tracks?**

Once you start putting a team together you're not always looking for the same type. A great team consists of people with different skills. In a perfect world they're all complementary to each other. Today I would look at what potential there is and what is needed. I would get in a producer or writer that would help take my other guys to another level.

**What's the difference between working with young producers and established ones?**

***Somebody who made good money five years ago making huge hits can't make the same money this year or next year because the turnovers in the business are now smaller. Some people fall into that trap where they've had success in the past and they're moaning about the business going down. They bring in negative vibes.***

At the moment I enjoy working with people who are not used to making a lot of money but who are very hungry and ready to get to the top of the business. Some people who have had success tend to not want to go over that road again.

I prefer to develop people from scratch as far as Mozart & Friends is concerned. I enjoy developing people because I can develop good habits from the beginning.

**What advice would you have for new aspiring producers/songwriters?**

Focus on the music first. If you've got a piece of music that has power, that fits in your time, that everybody wants to dance to and wants to hear over and over again, then you have a very good start into the business.

It's important to stay humble, to collaborate, and to be ready to split your income with people who help you. It doesn't help to have 100% of a song that never goes out there. But if you only have 5% of a big hit, that might help you to do two more hits. And two more hits might create an energy out there that might lead you to place four more hits. All of a sudden you got a bunch of hits and then who cares what split you had on the first one.

**How should new aspiring producers or songwriters present their material?**

They should do everything they can think of to make the most amazing

piece of music that's ever been done. Only present it if you honestly believe that what you present is the best thing you have and the best thing you've ever done.

Listen to it on different speakers. Play it to people. Make sure you make a perfect piece of music that you're fully happy with. If you present something to somebody and you honestly think it's a fantastic piece of music and it's the best you can do, then if you get a negative feedback it's not such a big deal because you've done your best. But if you weren't happy with it in the first place, then you present it and you get a negative feedback it's almost like you knew it before.

#### **How do you work in the studio?**

When we start developing a song we try not to use more equipment than a computer and software. It helps to stay flexible. I can take my laptop and travel to Spain or Sweden and produce and record music, and then go back into the studio. In the process of creating a song I'm trying to stay very flexible because a lot of collaboration is involved. Once the song is there and we know where we want the song to go then the process of final production starts, which sometimes involves much more than a computer and software. Mixing details, plug-ins, treating, everything that's necessary.

#### **How do you know what works and what doesn't?**

Before you start finalizing a production you need a song that's tested and proven, that everybody agrees it's worth putting the effort into. I put a lot of effort into recording and editing vocals. Before I start messing with arrangements and mixing, I make sure that the vocal itself makes the song work. I would listen to the lead and backing vocals only and make sure the vocal on itself sounds so fantastic and great that I could listen to the vocal all day long even without the music. Then a lot of effort goes into the little details.

***For example, in hip-hop sometimes you don't have a lot of elements in the track. I would even go so far as to say that the kickdrum sound can make the difference as to whether the song is a hit or not.***

#### **What has to be done when something fails?**

You stand up, retry and do it again. You can't always change the circumstances, but you can change your approach.

It's about correction. Make sure from the very beginning that you stay on course. Make sure you have a goal when you start a project. Think about every little detail. Correct your course. Make sure that if you're not happy with that vocal you do it again. If you're not happy with that particular sound you should try another one until you're happy.

I'm never throwing things away. Sometimes you're looking for a specific thing and you're working on three or four different songs. One of them is better than the rest. That's just part of the process.

#### **How long does a production process take from the initial idea to the finished product?**

It depends on the amount of tracks and vocals recorded. No matter how good the vocalist is, I will always do tons of tracks. The screen will be full of different takes and tracks. Because even if you have a totally amazing singer and you do thirty takes with this singer you will always get one take that's better than the rest. You want to make sure you're using that take for the record. Listening through those tracks takes some time. You're combining them together into the one you're going to use on the record.

Vocal production takes between a day and three days. Mixing also. Sometimes you get a result much quicker. Sometimes when you've gone off course you've got to fix it and then it takes longer. Whatever it takes - I don't put a limit on it.

#### **Do you build strategies on how to target your market?**

A lot of business comes from the contacts I've built over the years. I also put a lot of effort into building new contacts. Reaching out for somebody I haven't talked to. Sending songs to somebody who hasn't heard my music.

Also, I do prefer to work from a good website. When somebody sends me something and I like it, I click on their website and get a more complete picture about who that person is and what he's looking for. A website can help you find out about the attitude a person has. But it's got to be a good one, one that really represents what you do.

#### **Do you get unsolicited material?**

Between 50 and 100 submissions per week. I collect the stuff and then when I relax for a moment I listen to the stuff and rate it. I always try to give a short feedback to everybody. I would like everybody to keep sending me stuff. People develop, and I'm trying to help as much as I can.

#### **You've put together a compilation called "absolute Urban Village, 20 hits from the urban underground", which is released on a new format MMC-Card by manufacturer Mogoon. How did that come about?**

I've always been looking at new media formats. I did mp3 distribution when it first started in 1997/1998. You've got a lot of new gadgets in consumer electronics these days, not only the iPod, but Playstation Portable, cellphones with CardSlots, cardreaders for PC.

Mogoon are distributing all kinds of content on memorycards. The MMC-Card would fit in a number of Motorola and Nokia cellphones and cameras. We are putting the record on that format. I made a content deal with them. This hiphop r&b compilation was the first project we put out.

#### **What are your future plans and dreams?**

We're targeting all the major US artists. We've started building good contacts there.

I'm looking for a co-managing partner in the US who has top first-hand contacts especially in the hiphop market.

I'm reaching out to a lot of people. We submit stuff. We get all the info on who's looking for what.

I'm actually more focused on business than the original Mozart was, because I don't want to end up the way he did. I try to focus on what I want to create in life and make sure I don't go off course.

In 5 to 10 years from now I will be doing the same as I'm doing right now, but just with more platinum records on the wall. This is just the beginning.

To view what their HitQuarters announcement in July 2005 looked like, [click here](#). Marc Mozart was then a part of MPF Entertainment.

To make a similar announcement, [contact HitQuarters](#).

Interviewed by Kimbel Bouwman

[Archive](#)