

# Paul Thompson & Phil Harding: A ‘Service’ Model of Creativity in Commercial Pop Music at P&E Studios in the 1990s

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## Abstract

Producers in pop and dance music genres have a significantly different role to music producers in other music genres such as rock (Frith in Frith & Zagorski-Thomas: 2012). A prominent difference is that pop music producers are often part of a production team that involves direct collaboration and participation with songwriters, programmers, musicians, artists, record company A&R executives and managers. Pop music songwriting and production teams are therefore more frequently part of a larger creative collective (Hennion: 1990) in creating a musical product. This historical study introduces the record producer as ‘team leader’ and the creative production workflow at P&E Music Studios located within the Strongroom Studio complex in London during the 1990s. It investigates the ways in which the production team worked within the creative system of pop-music making and presents the pop music ‘Service Model’, which illustrates the various stages of the commercial pop songwriting and production process at P&E during the 1990s.

## *Introduction*

Simon Frith stated ‘the aesthetics of the popular [music] continues to be at best neglected and at worst dismissed’ (Frith: 1996) and 20 years on, the study of how popular music is made is now only beginning to be addressed in some areas of scholarly literature. Pop music in particular, with its labels of ‘manufactured’ or ‘teen’, has been overlooked as a valid area of popular music research because it is so often viewed in the popular imagination as an: ‘inauthentic exploitation of the masses’ (Gracyk: 1996, p.175-176). However, as Theodore Gracyk points out, even musical genres that are considered to be more closely related to art-making, such as rock music, take place: ‘in a system of music making and distribution that has been commercial since its inception’ (Ibid: p.179). The system of music-making in pop music typically involves a production team and, although the artist takes

centre stage, a team of music producers, songwriters, programmers, musicians, record company A&R executives and managers often work behind-the-scenes in collaboration with the artist.

Andrew Blake maintains the term ‘record producer’ is the: ‘greyest of grey areas’ (2009: p. 36) because of the ambiguity surrounding the role. The record producer has been characterized as ‘nexus’ (Howlett, 2009) because the record producer: ‘acts as a means of connection between the artist, the technology and the commercial interest’ (Howlett: 2009, p.1). Richard James Burgess (2013) has categorized the role of the music producer in terms of their functional typology identifying six broad categories: ‘Artist-producer, Auteur-producer, Facilitative-producer, Collaborative-producer, Enablative-producer, Consultative-producer’ (Burgess, 2013: p.9). Within these functional typologies, record producers have to deploy a vast array of skills using their background, experience and knowledge. Record producers:

‘have been (and are) individual entrepreneurs, freelance operators, record label owners and record label employees. They have been people managers, whether Svengalis, artist and repertoire developers, or gifted amateur psychologists able to guide temperamental artists through a recording session. They have been events managers... They have been music managers: session fixers, composers, arrangers, synthesiser and drum machine programmers, and conductors’ (Blake, 2009: 36)

In contemporary commercial pop music, the central producers at Chiron studios, Denniz PoP and Max Martin, have been characterizes as ‘song machines’ who work within ‘hit factories’ (Seabrook, 2015); equating them to the Tin Pan Alley writers in New York’s Brill Building, Motown and the UK’s own Stock, Aitken and Waterman (SAW) ‘Hit Factory’ of the 1980s. Although the record producer is acknowledged within the majority of these studies as requiring leadership qualities, none have identified or explored the record producer’s role as ‘team leader’. The team leader producer can be likened to the ‘entrepreneurial producer’ (Howlett: 2009) which describes the person who:

‘initiated, facilitated and inspired the production of a large amount of music and without whose talents the corpus of popular music would be the poorer. Prime examples would include Chris Blackwell (Island Records), Richard Branson (Virgin Records), Clive Calder (Zomba/Jive) and Dave Robinson of Stiff Records (Howlett: 2009, p. 24).

The following study therefore contributes to the further characterisation of the record producer as ‘team leader’ by exploring the creative production workflow, and the involvement of team leader Tom Watkins, at P&E Music Studios during the 1990s. Beginning first by outlining the design of this study, the creative system is introduced and each of the elements are re-contextualized so that they apply to the context of pop music production.

Finally, the agents with the process are discussed and the pop music 'Service Model' is depicted, illustrating the stages of the commercial pop songwriting and production process at P&E during the 1990s and the involvement of the team leader producer.

### *Methodology*

This historical study draws upon a series of semi-structured interviews with those involved with the production or mediation of pop records during the 1990s at P&E Music Studios located within the Strongroom Studio complex in London. Participants included Ian Curnow, who was a programmer and producer at P&E Music; Tom Watkins artist and producer manager for East 17; pop music journalist Matthew Lindsey and pop music songwriter John McLaughlin. Interviews were conducted from May 2014 to December 2015 and focused upon the practices and processes within the P&E Music Studios from 1992 to 1999. The interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and later transcribed and analyzed for common themes, ideas and observations. As one of the authors of this paper, Phil Harding began working at P&E Music Studios as co-owner and producer from 1992 and was involved in recording and mixing all of the artists that worked at P&E Music Studios through to 1999. These artists included East 17, Boyzone, Deuce, OTT and 911. Harding's autoethnographic reflective data such as personal diaries, alongside press articles, sound recordings, and information collected for the book *PWL From The Factory Floor* (Harding, 2010) have all been used as data for this study and to support some of the themes and observations highlighted in the interviews because: 'it is only "with the falling of the dusk"—after the day's action is done—that reflection and analysis can take place. In the heat of the action philosophy is far from the participants consciousness (Howlett: 2009, p.3). For ease of presentation, the majority of responses from interviewees have been paraphrased and integrated into the main body of the text.

### *Creativity and Pop Music Production*

Although commercially driven, pop music production still takes place within an identifiable cultural tradition and involves using the language of this tradition to create something new. The 'systems model of creativity' (Csikszentmihalyi: 1988, 1996 & 1999) suggests that creativity is the result of a complex and dynamic system in action. This system has three essential and interconnected elements: (1) a set of symbolic rules, practices and guidelines called a 'domain', (2) an 'individual' who brings something unique into that domain and (3) a 'field' of specialists or experts who recognize and

substantiate that novelty (Csikszentmihalyi: 1996, p.6). In order to create something new, an individual must first acquire knowledge and understanding of previous creative works in that area and learn the content and rules of the domain. Creative individuals must also understand the parameters that control the selection of creative work by the field (Csikszentmihalyi: 1996, p.47) and for an idea or product to be creative it must be valuable to a particular social group (the field), have an element of originality and implemented into the cultural matrix or symbol system (the domain) (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe: 2000, p.81).

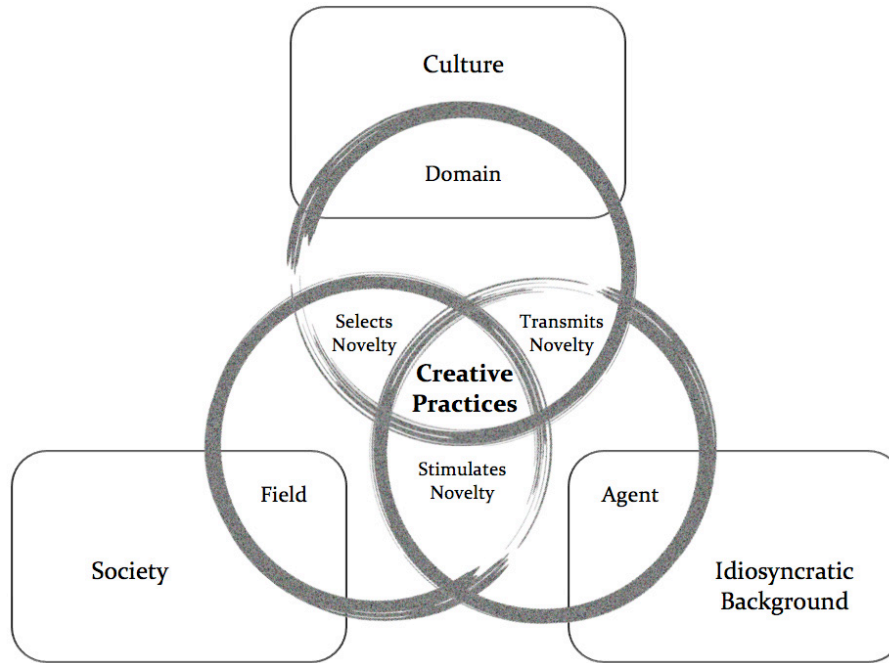


Figure 1. 'Revised Systems Model of Creativity Incorporating Creative Practice' (Kerrigan, 2013, p. 114).

In order to make a new pop record, the production team needs to draw from the domain to choose a unique selection of elements from this symbol system and then present it to the field for verification (Csikszentmihalyi: 1996). This can be seen in action as a new pop record is commercially released. The field, which is made up of the press, audiences, other artists, engineers and pop producers all comment on the record's uniqueness or creativity. The field decides whether the record is a creative record or not (economically) either by buying it or, historically, by incorporating it into the domain. The systems model of creativity has also been illustrated on smaller scales, for example on a group scale during the making of the pop record, by first contextualizing the domain and field so that they apply to the

specific context (Kerrigan: 2013; Thompson: 2016) and then observing the interaction of the elements of the system (fig.1). The creative system is therefore scalable and: 'applies equally well at the individual level and also at the group, organizational, institutional or sociocultural level' (McIntyre: 2013, p.91).

### *The Domain of Pop Music Production*

So in order to be creative, creative practitioners must first internalise the domain of pop music and pop music production, as this is essential knowledge. The domain of pop music is expansive so for ease of analysis, the cultural matrix and symbol system of pop has been divided into four broad areas: musical, technical, cultural and commercial.

The musical area of the domain in pop is centered on the contemporary western song, its structure and form (i.e. verse chorus, middle eight etc.), its lyrics and lyrical themes, its instrumentation and arrangement. Pop music producers must acquire knowledge of all of these essential parts to the domain. The Technical part of the domain includes the vast array of recording formats, recording and music technologies. This essential knowledge area also includes a working knowledge of computers, samplers, microphones, mixing consoles, room acoustics and monitoring equipment and the ability to use all of these.

The socio-cultural area of the domain has developed in response to the environment of the recording studio in pop music production. This relates to the social and cultural etiquette of collaborating with artists, how to communicate with them, their managers and their record company A&R representatives about musical and technical ideas. Finally, the Commercial area of the domain includes remuneration systems of pop production, royalties and the different types of business deals that exist within the music industry. Pop music producers need to develop an understanding of these in order to continue to operate financially within the field of pop production.

### *3.2 The Field of Pop Music Production*

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi states the field: 'includes all those who can affect the structure of the domain' (Csikszentmihalyi: 1988, p. 330) and in the case of pop music production this includes artists, engineers, songwriters, programmers, record producers, artist management, record label A&R representatives, the pop music press, TV, internet, radio, audiences and social media commentators. These individuals, groups and institutions form the field of pop music production and they not only comprehend and use the domain, but through their process of evaluation of creativity, help to decide what is included in the domain of pop music.

### *3.3. The Personnel of Pop Music Production*

The crucial member of the personnel for a Service Model of Creativity in Commercial Pop Music is the team leader, who needs to possess a high level of cultural, symbolic and economic capital (Bourdieu: 1984) in order to ‘get things done’. At PWL Studios in the 1980s the team leader was Pete Waterman (Thompson & Harding: 2017). In the case of P&E Music Studios, based at The Strongroom in the 1990s, the team leader was Tom Watkins. Working ‘in service’ to Tom Watkins during the 1990s at P&E Music were Ian Curnow (producer, songwriter, musician and programmer), Phil Harding (producer, songwriter, recording and mix engineer), Julian Gallagher, Dan Dodd (studio assistants at P&E Studios), Richard ‘Biff’ Stannard and Rob ‘Fingers’ Kean who were both co-producers and partners to Tom Watkins at Massive Management. In addition to those key studio personnel were session vocalists Tee Green and Andy Caine who regularly worked in the studio. There was also a fully-staffed office for Tom Watkins’s Massive Management Company that began at his home in Maida Vale, London and by 1994 had moved to a commercial office space in Shoreditch, East London. These offices were within walking distance of The Strongroom Studios. The Massive Management office from early 1995 retained a staff of up to twelve people taking care of the day-to-day management of their artists East 17, Deuce, 2wo Third3 and J-Pac as well as the P&E Production team. The lyricist / ‘top-liner’ in P&E Productions would change, depending on the project – importantly though, these top-liners were never Harding or Curnow; the top-liner would always be someone else. For East 17 it was band member, songwriter and rapper Tony Mortimer, for Deuce it was Tom Watkins and Rob Kean and for 2wo Third3 it was Richard Stannard or Rob Kean.

Each role within the production process has varying degrees of creative agency that relates to the power relationships that operate within the specific context and pop music production more generally. For this study we are focusing on the importance and uniqueness of the team-leader, which in P&E’s case was Tom Watkins. When Tom Watkins began collaborating with P&E he was renowned for his previous artist management success with Pet Shop Boys and Bros, both of whom achieved sustained levels of commercial success in the 1980s. Tom had guided their careers from the beginning and, in the early 1990s, was still highly regarded by some UK record company executives as a successful entrepreneur that could find, form, develop and mould commercial pop acts. In other words, he had accumulated notable cultural, economic and symbolic capital.

### *Cultural, Economic and Symbolic Capital*

Shuker (2008) describes 'music as cultural capital' by stating that 'music consumption is not simply a matter of personal preference. It is, in part, socially constructed, serving as a form of symbolic or cultural capital' (Shuker: 2008, p.181). Cultural, economic and symbolic capital within a pop music production team is deployed in order to manage relations of power and establish a sustainable mode of production that allows creative activity to occur and (hopefully) achieve commercial success. Clearly defined roles and complementary skillsets amongst the agents within the pop production team are therefore necessary for a successful pop music production. The following section highlights the conditions that brought the P&E team together and their cultural, economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

### *Pop Music Managers & Tom Watkins's Capital*

Team leader Tom Watkins controlled the P&E team in terms of cultural, symbolic and economic capital. Watkins began his career in the music industry as the manager of UK bands Giggles (signed to EMI Records) and Grand Hotel (signed to CBS Records) in the late 1970s. Watkins then turned his hand to forming a design studio, named XL, which quickly became a favourite of Trevor Horn's ZTT Records; designing everything from the ZTT studios and offices through to leading the campaign for Frankie Goes to Hollywood in the early 1980s. By 1983 Watkins had returned to artist management, discovering and signing Pet Shop Boys and then Bros.

Watkins's involvement was both unusual and distinctive for this period of pop music because he managed his pop acts as well as his producers Phil Harding and Ian Curnow. Other managers such as Louis Walsh (Boyzone and Westlife) and Nigel-Martin Smith (Take That) only managed their artists. Typically, pop music producers and songwriters in the 1990s would have their own independent representation.

After the commercial success of the Pet Shop Boys Watkins found himself in a role of 'service management', in which he performed his management duties at the request of the act rather than dictating to them. After a series of successful singles and albums managing Pet Shop Boys he turned his attention to manufacturing Bros, co-writing the songs on their debut album under a pseudonym and achieving notable commercial success. However, Watkins relinquished songwriting duties for Bros's second album, and overall control; a decision that he believed was a key factor in their commercial demise. Watkins ensured that the next time he manufactured a pop act, he would take full control of all aspects of the process, as he explains:

'I would like mentioned in my obituary that I am a control freak and I believe that every time I take full control it happens [success]. The minute I relin-

quish any control, I think it's very dangerous. You just push me once over the edge and that's it because I was holding and watching every single aspect. It only worked when I was in my professional environment working with Gilberts [accountants], working with Paul Rodwell [lawyer], working with Neil Ferris [promoter] and there was a perfect understanding' (Watkins: 2014, personal interview).

Watkins forbade any marketing and promotion, whether it was external or within the record label, to be carried out without his permission. Watkins had control of the entire process, from the videos to the promotion campaigns and explained:

'That's why I formed my own film company, I formed my own graphics department, I employed my own graphic stylist and everyone else because I simply wouldn't trust people [record company executives]. I have often been quoted as saying it [control] is a 'necessary evil' right, because I knew how important it was once you had those quality goods. You do it for money and all the rest of it but to me it was a secondary thing [money], getting it right was far more important (Watkins: 2014, personal interview).

Watkins's surrounded himself with comments a team of business people he could trust and delegated jobs to personnel that had the right skills, allowing him to concentrate on what he did best, steering the pop production process; from the songs, to the production through to design, styling and promotion. Watkins was therefore able to ensure every link in the production chain was sufficient to enable commercial success (Harding & Curnow: 2010). Creativity comes about because of a system in action (McIntyre: 2012) and the level of control that Watkins describes above was important to him to achieve creative and commercial success throughout the 1990s. In the early days of Watkins's management of Bros in the 1980s there was a similar amount of control but this was relinquished when Bros demanded control of the songwriting for their second album. Bros's songs on the second album were not well received, principally because they lacked sufficient knowledge of the domain and an applied understanding of the criteria for selection operating within the field of pop. This caused Watkins's attitude to change from East 17 onwards and he decided to take full control of everything, having learned his lessons from Bros. Watkins's relationship with Pet Shop Boys was entirely different however compared his previous acts as Watkins as Watkins was viewed as:

'the big bad man that went to the record label, thumped his fists on the desk and got the money for Pet Shop Boys [for recording and promotion]. If Pet Shop Boys were informed by Tom it was more as a reaction against what Tom was trying to put across. For instance, for their 'Please' album cover, Tom turned up to the studio and showed them a mock-up of this huge foldout sleeve with maximum content. They balked at it and ended up with a plain white sleeve with a picture of themselves the size of a postage stamp on it.



They would say it was a very creative period though because Tom was someone they could constantly react *against* artistically. Tom wanted dancing girls in one of Pet Shop Boys videos and Neil was mortified that he was expected to stand there with dancing girls behind him – so it didn't happen' (Lindsay: 2014, personal interview).

Because he wasn't in complete control of the ways in which the band were marketed and promoted Watkins eventually parted ways with Pet Shop Boys, which fuelled his desire by the 1990s to be in full control of the artists he managed. Team leader working relationships require commitment from both sides, especially from the producer's point of view. It was clear early on that Watkins's relationship with P&E created conflicts of interest, not least because Watkins was managing East 17 (and his other Massive Management artists), as well as P&E. When making a decision, Watkins had to choose between one or the other and he typically took the side of the artist and was always willing to challenge P&E.

Few descriptions of what a music manager's role entails actually encapsulate the requirements of a manager in the manufactured Pop and BoyBand genre of the 1990s. Generally, management in the 1990s for manufactured artists such as East 17, Boyzone, Take That and so on, all started by brainstorming ideas of the type of pop band they wanted to formulate and then manage. East 17 are an exception to this as songwriter and rapper Tony Mortimer approached Tom Watkins with his song demos and Watkins offered advice and feedback with a recommendation to come back with some 'like-minded' friends. The other artists (especially BoyBands) typically attended auditions and were chosen, styled and mentored by the managers. The Boyzone and Westlife manager Louis Walsh (2007) calls it: 'Audition Hell; it is hard being judged and it's hard being rejected, but it's part of this business and it's certainly part of the audition process' (Walsh: 2007, p.25).

Watkins predicted the early success of the East 17 singles and debut album and had persuaded the band's songwriter, Tony Mortimer to sign to his publishing company, Porky Publishing. These developments were crucial in Watkins's accumulation of economic capital. Watkins used his successful cultural and symbolic capital by persuading recording companies that his new artists, together with the P&E production team could provide hit records for them. After the 1992/93 successes of the East 17 singles such as 'House Of Love' and the debut album 'Walthamstow', Watkins then signed Deuce to London Records and 2wo Third3 to Epic Records. Tom Watkins was therefore both an instigator and provider of the work for P&E Music and placed himself in the novel position of both knowing what his clients required and how to translate these requirements to the individuals within his team. This generative and interpretive role is unique in pop production and places Tom Watkins in the role of team leader at P&E because his cultural,

symbolic and economic capital contributed to the existence of the P&E production team and studio.

Watkins's cultural capital was therefore deployed within the evaluation process and his knowledge of the domain and the mechanisms and criteria for selection formed part of this evaluation. This is because: 'the influence of the market – what will sell – is important in shaping the content and form of the musical product' (Robinson et al: 1991, p.238).

### *1990s Pop Music Producers & The Harding / Curnow Capital*

Phil Harding and Ian Curnow formed as a remix, songwriting and production team at Pete Waterman's PWL Studios in the mid 1980s. Harding was already an established recording and mix engineer from the Marquee Studios and spent the first year of the Stock Aitken Waterman incarnation engineering their early mixes and recordings for acts such as Dead Or Alive at The Marquee. Having joined the SAW team in their move to PWL Studios in early 1985, Harding became chief engineer and oversaw the technology installations at the studio, the hiring of more recording engineers and the expansion of a second studio in 1986. During that studio expansion, a Fairlight programming room was built below the PWL Bunker studio and Ian Curnow was hired to manage the room, supply programmed keyboards and samples to the SAW team and deal with the increasing amount of external remix work that was being offered to Harding. Pete Waterman suggested that Harding and Curnow's skills were complimentary to each other and that he would market them as a remix and production team on behalf of PWL. Remix and production hits soon followed for the Harding / Curnow partnership for acts such as Jermaine Stewart / Rick Astley / Blue Mercedes / Jesus Jones and Pet shop Boys. It was during a Pet Shop Boys collaboration that the Harding & Curnow talent as a remix and production team came to the attention of Tom Watkins, the Pet Shop Boys' manager. These commercial pop music successes for Harding & Curnow earned them significant cultural, symbolic and economic capital and allowed P&E to leave a declining PWL in 1992 and create their own production facility within the Strongroom Studio complex in Shoreditch, East London. Their pop music domain knowledge had been somewhat limited by the way in which PWL was structured, with Pete Waterman and Tilly Rutherford insisting on conducting all business meetings and negotiations. In comparison to some contemporary pop production teams such as Denniz PoP and Max Martin at Cheiron Studios in Sweden, SAW's commercial success has been viewed as short-lived (Seabrook, 2015). Consequently, there was an eagerness for Harding & Curnow to learn more and develop a better understanding of the domain and field of pop music production. Their first assignment after leaving SAW was to mix East 17's first single 'House of Love' and Ian Curnow explains:

'We were like the rabbits in the headlights and we just went for it and I think that's what separates the good from the bad, not wishing to sound pompous. At that moment in time we were on it, we were a hot remix and production team willing to take risks and work with new technology. At those moments, if you dig deep and do something spectacular, which we did with 'House Of Love' [the first East 17 single]. We were also fresh from leaving PWL, keen to prove ourselves and this was a really exciting project for us to get our teeth into. It fired us up – Tom came in with tons of energy and enthusiasm about the project. Give us [P&E] the goalposts and we'll go for it' (Curnow: 2014, personal interview).

As Curnow mentions above, Watkins provided the brief for P&E to work towards and later provided a cassette tape of other East 17/Tony Mortimer song demos to listen to:

'we went off to the New Music Seminar in New York in June 1992 and we hired a car and drove into the upstate New York countryside to listen to them [demos] properly and we looked at each other and said 'what the fuck are we going to do with these?' From that demo tape we chose 2 or 3 songs that we felt we could produce a good result from and that was the next stage of our work with East 17 – productions rather than just remixes towards their first album 'Walthamstow'. There were no bridges and no song development on most of them (Curnow: 2014, personal interview).

### *The P&E Music Micro-domain*

As the pop music market showed its enthusiasm for P&E produced records, those involved in the process and principally Tom Watkins, grew in their own self-confidence. This resulted in the emergence of a P&E house-style (or distinctive sound), in which tried and tested production methods and sounds were re-used, Zagorski-Thomas (2014) calls these 'sonic cartoons or schematic mental representations'. This increased the symbolic capital of P&E and Tom Watkins as hit-makers. In this way, the P&E production team created their own unique sound through a process of internal re-evaluation. By early 1995 the P&E team had achieved the UK Christmas #1 (1994) with 'Stay Another day' by East 17 and a whole album of co-written and produced material of the pop act 'Deuce', ready to be released and launched by London Records during 1995. The creative system can therefore be seen operating inside the recording studio on a group level in which they drew from a limited area of the domain to rearrange it in a new way and then internally evaluate their contributions with Tom Watkins as the lead authority within each process. On a group level then, elements of the creative system can be scaled and the domain becomes a microdomain, which contains related elements of the pop song. The social organization inside the recording

studio is scaled to represent a microfield, which accepts or rejects new creative ideas. The scaled creative system is shown in figure 2.

Watkins began the creative process as the strongest agent with the most amount of agency, gathered the necessary agents with their own musical and technical knowledge of the domain and steered them to deliver a creative product that would be deemed commercially successful by the field of pop music. When that product did succeed the recognition would return to Watkins, which further enhanced his cultural and symbolic capital. This was expected and accepted by the two other main agents in the production process – Harding & Curnow – whose contributions were always appreciated, credited and well represented.

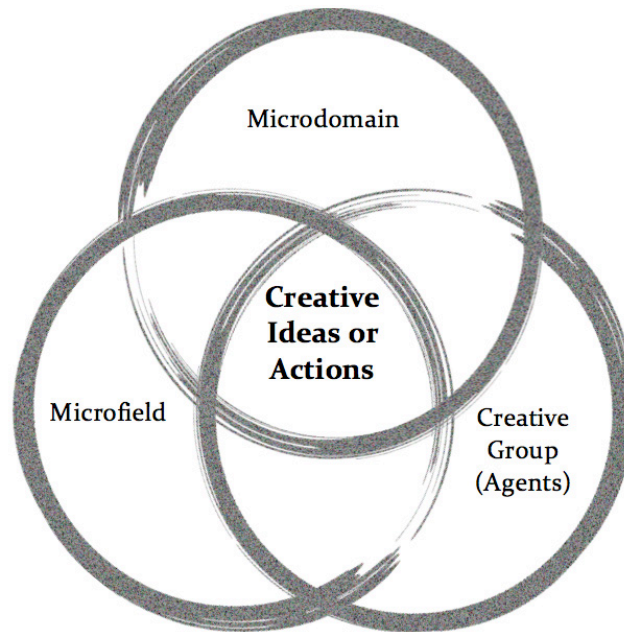


Figure 2. 'The Systems Model of Creativity Scaled to a Group Level' (Thompson: 2019, p.238).

### *The P&E Music Service Model in Action*

The macro process at P&E during the 1990s can be depicted as a flow diagram (figure 3) that models the involvement of Tom Watkins (team leader) at various stages during the production. It is important to highlight the element of time throughout the service model because the duration of a single pop project is often defined by the power and capital of the team leader.

Generally the agency of the team leader is not absolute as they won't be involved at particular stages of the songwriting and production process (see figure 3). This helps the team leader to maintain a more objective perspective on the musical product as it develops. It's also important to note that although the stages of the service model are linear, within each of these stages the creative process was non-linear as Sawyer states: 'creativity did not descend like a bolt of lightning that lit up the world in a single brilliant flash. It came in tiny steps, bits of insight, and incremental changes' (Sawyer: 2013, p.2). The P&E Music creative process demonstrates the steps that Sawyer suggests and most notable are the points of Tom Watkins's engagement with the process.

Very little began at P&E without Tom Watkins's agreement; Watkins would choose the song to record or would have some involvement in writing a new song, which would often be a substantial involvement as both team-leader and the lyricist / top-liner. Harding & Curnow and their team would compose a minimal backing track that included drums, bass, keyboards and a rough arrangement of the song.

Vocals, including lead and backing vocals, would then be recorded and arranged. The production team then completed the rest of the record in sympathy with the vocal; principally because this is considered to be the most important element of a pop recording (Harding: 2017). Watkins was not involved in the stages of vocal recording and music programming as he was content to leave these parts of the process to the rest of the production team. He did however return during the mixing stage and, after listening to a mix, Watkins offered his opinion on elements that required revision, which sometimes involved song arrangements and song structures. On occasion this involved revisiting previous stages to amend or add particular parts. In rare instances, it involved beginning the entire process from the beginning in order to react to new musical tastes, trends or market requirements. For example, East 17's 'Someone To Love' (1996) on their third album was recorded twice because both Watkins and songwriter Tony Mortimer rejected the first version at the mix stage. Their request was for Harding & Curnow to return to the original song demo by Mortimer and to re-produce the whole track again to this format and arrangement. This was an extreme example of how far a production team is willing to travel to be 'in service' to the client but in this case the client was the team-leader and the songwriter. Watkins had the symbolic and cultural capital to persuade the P&E team to take such drastic measures; his motivational abilities certainly had everybody absorbed in the conscious activity of working together as a team to produce hit records. Watkins engaged the PE Music team fully in what Keith Sawyer (2003) calls 'Group Creativity'. The Service Model and its stages are depicted in fig. 3 below:

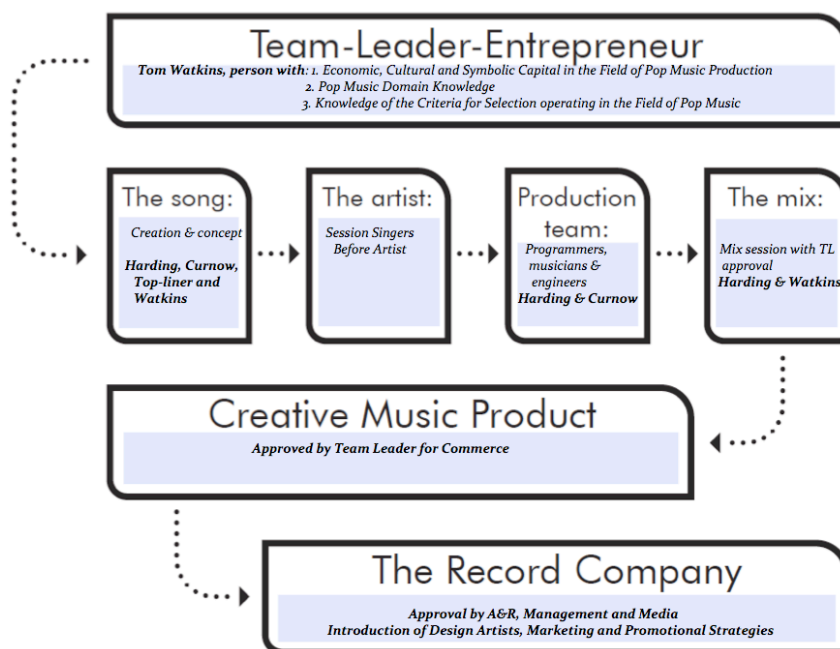


Figure 3. – ‘Simplified Service Model for P&E Music during the 1990s’.

### Conclusions

In Pop music it is normally the artist who receives the most attention because their contribution is the most prominent on the final record. However, during the production process inside the recording studio, the contribution of the artist is often a small one as a team of songwriters, programmers, lyricists, top liners, musicians and producers work ‘behind the scenes’ in creating a pop record. Each member of the team has their own respective domain knowledge and varying degrees of agency. Driving the process is the team leader who has the most amount agency and at P&E in the 1990s, Tom Watkins had accumulated enough cultural, symbolic and economic capital to undertake the role of team leader.

The simplified service model of pop production at P&E illustrates the role of the team leader and their involvement within the decision-making process and their involvement at both the beginning and the end of the pop production process. Because of Tom Watkins’s accumulated economic, symbolic and cultural capital the pop production process in the recording studio began and ended with him. As team leader, Watkins may choose the song to record or have some involvement in writing a new song, using his expertise as a

lyricist and top-liner to compose the melody and the lyrics for the song. The backing track would then be composed by the production team of Harding & Curnow, which involved programming drums, bass, keyboards and sketching out a rough arrangement of the song. Vocals, including lead and backing vocals, would then be added and the production team would complete the rest of the record in sympathy with the vocal. Within each of these production stages, the creative system can be viewed in operation on a group level as the production team draws from different areas of the domain of pop music and then verifies each of these creative ideas or actions in relation to Watkins's and the broader field's mechanisms and criteria for selection. At the stages where Watkins is involved, Watkins evaluates Harding and Curnow's creative contributions with consideration for the mechanisms and criteria for selection of the field of pop music and, in this way, a microsystem of creativity can be seen in operation during the pop production process.

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