

GRAMMY & TEC AWARD WINNING ENGINEER ON A CAREER WITH TAYLOR SWIFT, ADELE, BRUNO MARS & MORE

Rod Yates' Humans Of Music Interviews Engineer John Hanes

MUSIC INDUSTRY — CAREER PROFILE

2020

You're a GRAMMY and TEC Award winning engineer and mixer, having worked on releases by artists such as Taylor Swift, Adele, Katy Perry, Rod Stewart and Lorde, to name just a few. What was your path into the industry, and how did you progress to working with such artists?

I started with a pretty typical early 1990's Los Angeles career path. I studied Recording Arts at USC, started working in a couple of LA Studios as an intern, then as an assistant engineer.

My big break was getting introduced to Teddy Riley in 1993. He was coming off of the Michael Jackson "Dangerous" Album success and was forming the band BLACKstreet. He needed some new engineering staff at his studio, Future Records, in Virginia Beach, VA; so I packed up everything I owned, signed my car over to my roommate, and moved to Virginia Beach.

This is also where I met Serban Ghenea. He was hired about the same time by Teddy, and we became fast friends.

We worked with so many top producers and artists in Teddy's world, that I think I became immune to the celebrity and learned how to just grind and work. At the end of the day, these celebrities are regular people with an exciting and interesting job and life, but when we are working on a project, the concentration is on music, business, and quality; who is in the room isn't so important because every artist, every producer should get the same professional treatment.

I think that it was here that I learned that a recording or a mix was not finished until the producer and artist were both satisfied.

We have carried that philosophy onward ever since. We will keep working on a mix until they say it is done. If the artist wants to try something else, we'll try it. The job is to make their vision, their internal thought of a song, come to life for them. If you can do that you rarely lose a client.

I think that the philosophy along with a strong work ethic, attention to detail, and of course mixing talent continues to draw in new producers and new artists into our world.

WHAT OR WHO INSPIRED YOU TO FOLLOW THIS PATH?

I think that most of the path was falling into various situations and making the most of them. I have always been interested in music and in technology, so I think that I was mostly inspired to stick with it by fear of failing and not knowing when or how to quit.

WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MUSICAL MEMORY?

My parents had a pretty good vinyl collection back in the 1970's. My favorite was The Beatles Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band and I can remember listening to those songs in that house I grew up in vividly.

WHAT'S ONE SONG/ALBUM YOU COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT, AND WHY?

I'm going to cheat here and select a compilation. The Beatles "1". That music has been with me my whole life. It might not be something that I listen to often, but it is always familiar and comforting when I hear it.

WHAT'S YOUR PROUDEST MUSIC-BASED ACHIEVEMENT TO DATE?

Bruno Mars "24k Magic" sweeping every award at the Grammy's and at TEC was so amazing; I'm not sure anything can live up to that. We worked so hard on that album, it was such a special project to work on and it really felt like a collaboration with Charles Moniz, who recorded everything, Bruno, his producers, and Serban doing the mixing.

JAXSTA IS ABOUT GIVING CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE. TO WHOM WOULD YOU GIVE CREDIT FOR HELPING YOU GET WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

Serban Ghenea has certainly been the biggest contributor to my career. We've know each other for close to 30 years and our skillsets and personalities compliment each other very well and we are great friends as well as great business partners. I think that we have both had a part in each other's success.

QUICK CREDIT

Name a song that...

SONG SELECTIONS

- **Reminds you of growing up:** John Mellencamp "Jack & Dianne". We were on a camping and rafting trip in Canada when I was 13 years old. Some older kids had a boombox and played this song over and over, singing along every time. It is the soundtrack to that summer for me.
- **Helped you realize you wanted to work in the music industry:** This isn't a song, but as a High School senior, I was in a club that was doing a senior skit for spirit week, and we went to a recording studio to do some recording to make it really cool, and I was just amazed at the technology and the craft that the recording engineer had and helped us create something really special.
- **You sing in the shower:** Ok, no singing, but you might catch me humming. Usually something that I've worked on recently that has stuck in my head.
- **Makes you smile:** Perez Prado "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White". I'm a trumpet player. The difficulty and musicality of this song and performance is simply amazing. It blows me away every time I hear it.
- **Made you think of music in a different way:** Portishead "Glory Box". I immediately fell in love with this song, the production, the sound. It is so powerful yet so simple, it mixes genres in a way that I love.
- **You wish would never end:** Lynyrd Skynyrd "That Smell". I just with the jam at the end would keep on going. Almost any Skynyrd song could fit here.
- **You wish everyone knew:** "Royals" the Puddles Pity Party version. Puddles just does something for me, reminds me that talent and art can shine through anywhere, and to not always take everything so seriously.

ABOUT JAXSTA

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