



## **Pete Waterman *Entertainment***

:: Pete Waterman's Official Music Biography::

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## Pete Waterman's Official Music Biography

**After spending more than four decades in the entertainment business, Pete Waterman's depth of knowledge and his breadth of experience is unsurpassed.**

His passion, drive and talent have helped ensure that he, along with his world-famous company, PWE, remains a musical force to be reckoned with. Here is his own amazing story...

### From 'Dansette' to House Parties

If you are over 40 then you will remember the Dansette record player with its auto changer which allowed you to play ten singles at a time. It was this, or in fact the mutilation of the auto-changer that changed an industry and set one man on a remarkable career. This simple act of vandalism enabled Pete to keep records playing at parties without too long a break between each record. The year was 1958 and although now it is hard to conceive that anything so basic was revolutionary, history shows that's what it was. Up until the late 50's playing records was not classed as any form of entertainment.

So we have to understand that in a music industry which is not more than 50 years old this was pretty revolutionary stuff. By the time of the Beatles' birth in '62 Pete had already amassed himself a reputation of playing unheard of records by obscure artists that he had scoured record shops and American Airforce bases in Leicestershire for. Throughout the early 60's Pete was busy playing what could be loosely termed house parties and clubs. By 1964, he found himself working on what were then called jazz clubs and had started a friendship with the legendary Graham Bond. It was Pete's knowledge and love of rhythm and blues (R'nB) - and his undying unerring desire to find obscure records and artists - that had him pursued by the then early R'nB groups for a source of material.

Pete supplied, in this very early 60's period, almost all the groups, including the Beatles, with tracks they had not heard before. By the mid 60's Pete was certainly part of the then booming British R'nB culture regularly playing and championing bands like the Pretty Things, The Graham Bond Organisation, Georgie Fame and The Bluenotes, The Yardbirds and was working with a very young Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck Peter Green, The McVies, Rod Stewart.

Most of these bands chose not to leave the club when Pete played records but sat and listened to what he played to see if there was anything they liked. So good was Pete's reputation in the early R'nB field that in 1968 and '69 the young Fleetwood Mac booked Pete regularly as the compere for their shows.

By 1967 Pete had started to explore the American West Coast sound and was starting to champion bands like The Doors, Jefferson Airplane, The Velvet Underground, Iron Butterfly and a chance gig with the then legendary Byrds led him to a chance meeting with Stephen Stills and Pete worked quite closely with Buffalo Springfield, certainly was one of the first people to have any tracks by the newly emerging Crosby Stills and Nash.

In 1968 Pete joined the Mecca Group as House DJ. This again was a new departure as even as early as this Mecca did not employ DJ's - the DJ role was seen as a trainee management position but Pete made it plain from the beginning that he had no desire to be management of Mecca, as he saw this purely as stepping stone. He introduced into Mecca the then flourishing British wave of groups hosting Thursday

Night which featured a rock-culture which at this time was unheard of on the Mecca circuit and was classed as very daring. It was at this point that Pete started to formalise what were then his disco sessions on one of his nights; concentrating on then blossoming American R 'n B boom particularly Motown.

Since '65 Pete had had regular contact with Motown in Chicago and had corresponded on a regular basis with them and had been receiving promo copies from them during this period. Pete was now headlong into championing the Motown Sound. So much so that by late '68 Pete was given by Berry Gordy a test pressing of what was to become one of his all-time-favourite records "I Heard It through The Grapevine" by Marvin Gaye. This is a song which Pete had corresponded with Berry Gordy for more than two years on as it was one of those songs which had been recorded by most Motown Artists. By the early 70's Pete had become mostly known as the major Motown DJ in Britain and was thinking of moving to America to work with Motown. (He had also struck up a friendship with his all-time hero Lamont Dozier of Holland Dozier Holland.) In the meantime Pete was playing to packed clubs and earned his reputation by playing Motown or R'nB that nobody else had ever heard. It must be remembered that in the 60's there were no DJ mailing lists, no promotion nights and any club promotion was a completely hit-or-miss experience. Pete swiftly became a spearhead for the acceptance of DJ promotion as a recognised media outlet and his groundbreaking ideas in this area, soon led him into the record industry as a career.

### **The 70's - Pete's Pop Foundations**

By the very early 70's Pete found himself running under-twelve sessions for Mecca on a Saturday morning which was a bit of a culture shock as he was playing records like "Jump Up and Down and Wave Your Knickers In The Air" and the "Pushbike Song" by The Mixtures. Although this wasn't what Pete particularly liked, he was fascinated by the way young kids reacted to certain records and by the way young children reacted to certain beats. Within six months, his Saturday Club was full to capacity even turning kids away.

For the first time in his life he was now playing what was termed as mainstream pop music - what he could not see was the start of a new revolution; Glitter Rock, and it was only in the late part of '71 to '72 when Motown moved from Chicago to LA that Pete saw his staple diet of obscure yet great records drying up as Motown records became more avante garde. To his dismay, Pete saw the Motown bubble bursting. It is important that we note that Pete was working two to three thousand people every night of the week; if the attendance went below a certain figure Mecca were not afraid to sack DJ's or move them on to be assistant managers. It is not stretching the facts to say that Pete was certainly the first DJ on the mainstream club circuit to feature the Glitter rock sound that was starting to emerge and he began playing between nine and ten of these during what he called his 'loon hour'.

Pete found his crowd double and the doors had to be closed most nights of the week. The young burgeoning glitter bands were only too keen to appear at Pete's shows or get him early demos. As with R'n B and Motown before there was no mainstream outlet for this sort of music and Pete saw himself championing groups that were to become household names such as Gary Glitter, Sweet, Mud, Elton John and Rod Stewart. At the same time Pete saw something he gained from his Saturday morning with the kids that he was to use later in life to great success - young teenage groups. Through his connection at Motown, Pete had played first copies of Jackson Five tracks and was now championing a young American act, The Osmonds and a young Scottish band managed by an ex Mecca manager.

It is hard to realise that a DJ working in the Midlands could have such an impact but key major record company promo staff often came to his gigs to see him plugging their records. The first Bay City Rollers tour, hosted by Pete in all the Mecca clubs was based on a lot of Pete's ideas on how to wind up crowds, a technique that Pete would bring to perfection in the 80's.

By 1973 Pete was looking for something new to champion and a burgeoning company in Philadelphia came to his attention. He became a devotee of the Philadelphia Sound and started to champion the likes

of the O Jays, the Three Degrees, Harold Melvin and The Bluenotes and Billy Paul, running all their early tours which were sponsored by CBS Records.

Late in 1973 Pete needed to know more about the American record industry and A & R (Artist and Repertoire). Buying himself an air ticket and with a letter of introduction from CBS he knocked on Gamble and Huff's door in Philadelphia. The sight of a white guy at that point in time, knocking on a decidedly black company's door, and an English white guy at that, was a strange sight. However Pete's knowledge and love of the music and the records, both American and British, soon saw him in the studios in Philadelphia assisting on the sessions. Pete still sees this as the turning point of his career. He was no longer on the outside championing, he was at the coal face digging. He worked with the legendary Tom Bell and Linda Greed and his favourite ladies The Three Degrees. Success was not long in coming and after two or three number ones in America Pete was given a holiday in Jamaica.

Now most people would take a holiday in Jamaica as a wonderful excuse to get a suntan, but not Pete Waterman! He drove the Jamaicans mad by turning up at all the recording studios to meet reggae artists and producers. His unique position as a white guy in an R'n'B world gained him access to places that no other A & R guys had ever been and he became totally immersed in the reggae of Jamaica meeting Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, the legendary Lee Perry and Gladstone Anderson. While he was there he made his own reggae record for eighty American dollars. Little did he know that this was a milestone because he had crossed the border and without even realising it had become a record producer. After this event, recording giant CBS brought him back to the UK to work on breaking the Philly sound for them in Great Britain. Through working on such acts as: The Stylistics, The Three Degrees, Billy Paul, The Intruders and also George McCrae and the Hues Corporation - which Pete had mixed while he was in the US - Pete met Steve Collier who moved to Magnet records as Head of Promotion and talked Pete into joining him as a part time promotion guy. Pete joined Magnet full time on 1st January 1975 and later that month attended Midem (The Music Festival).

At Midem Pete heard a sound that was to change the course of popular music. Through a booth wall he heard a thumping bass drum, burst in on the meeting and secured the record for Magnet. It was "Save Me" by the Silver Convention, which can justifiably take the credit for being the first disco record. Pete worked with the producers and musicians at Music Land in Munich on a sound which was a combination between the polka and R 'n' B and what we now know as disco music was born. By the end of 1975 Silver Convention had spawned a whole plethora of hits by acts including Donna Summer, Boney M, the Bee Gees and many more. Pete also brought in to Magnet an urban reggae record he had bought in Jamaica the previous year for \$80. By April 1975 "Hurt So Good" by Susan Cadogan was the second biggest selling single that year and was only held off the number one slot by Tammy Wynette. At the time this was called roots reggae, it also spawned a whole range of reggae artists of which Bob Marley went on to become the biggest star.

### **Start a Record Label?**

1976 saw Pete in Newcastle about to re-sign an act to Magnet - Chris Rea - and they spent many hours trainspotting before the deal was concluded. The same year Pete became enamoured with the punk scene and in 1977 Pete decided that he needed to set up his own label to work on his own hunches.

A chance meeting again at Midem with an old friend from Silver Convention saw Pete taken on as a consultant for an unknown actor who had just signed a three film deal. Pete was to act as A & R and promotion consultant - the artist was John Travolta; the films Grease and Saturday Night Fever . Pete was responsible for John Travolta's songs in Grease and for all the promotion of John Travolta as an artist.

In early '79 Pete's love of experimentation led him to manage a band who at the time were called 'Up The Automatics' - they later changed their name to the Specials and formed a company called Two Tone.

Although he was instrumental in setting up the success of Two Tone there were creative differences, and never afraid to walk away, Pete was soon looking for other challenges.

In 1979 he set up his own company Loose Ends and formed a partnership with Peter Collins. They started this most successful alliance in 1979 with a string of hits for Matchbox.

1979 was a busy year as Pete explored almost every area of new music happening in this productive post- era. His interests took him into the independent electronic scene where he formed his own electronic label working with the guys from Some Bizarre and their main act Soft Cell. A trip to Brighton to see an underground punk band, The Piranhas', had originally given him the idea for Two Tone, and now he wrote a parody on the gulf war with them and with Peter Collins produced a top 5 single "Tom Hark".

In the same year he joined Elton John's Rocket Records as A & R Consultant, placed an ad in the NME and offered free studio time to the best new bands around. The first independent sampler album gained huge critical acclaim and gave many new bands a platform from which to go on to greater success. On top of which he also became a consultant to the president of MCA music, and ran Loose Ends from there producing a string of hits for Alvin Stardust, Tracey Ullman and The Belle Stars.

### **80's S.A.W. Success by the Millions**

In 1982 Pete swapped from MCA publishing to records, signed Musical Youth and Nik Kershaw, and with Peter Collins as producer, they sold millions of records worldwide. The two Peters decided to live and record in America.

At the beginning of 1984 Pete came back to the UK, having set up his new label PWL. (Peter Collins stayed in the states going on to produce successful albums for major rock acts including Bon Jovi). Back in England Pete worked for six months with his friend and all time hero Lamont Dozier, writing songs for Alison Moyet and for Phil Collins for the film 'The Great Train Robbery'. He also signed two producer/writers called Mike Stock and Matt Aitken. Their first hit came after only four months of working together - Hazell Dean "Whatever I do (Wherever I Go)".

Pete had spotted a niche in the market place and had combined his knowledge of R'n'B, disco and pop to create a new trend called Hi NRG. It's unique sound gave them their first number one the following year with Dead or Alive's "You Spin Me Round". This was a highly original sound and by the end of the 80's Stock Aitken Waterman had become a household name.

What can be said about S/A/W which hasn't already been published? The easiest way to summarise the phenomenal success of this legendary production team - the most successful pop writers/producers of all time - is simply to refer you to their discography. A glance down the list of awards gained also tells its own story, but to pick out some real highlights, it is worth remembering that no other writers had ever gained the accolade of "Songwriter Of The Year" three years in a row!

In 1989 Pete came up with a completely new idea for a TV show which he took to the then head of Granada TV, David Liddiment. The show, titled 'The Hitman & Her', quickly gained cult status and featured records months before they were released, (often featuring completely new music genres and unsigned acts such as the Prodigy and gave many acts, including Snap and Take That their first ever TV shows). At the height of the Acid revolution Pete took cameras into the Hacienda. Excerpts from this historic footage has been used many times by film companies to recreate the period and today is the only footage (shot of any quality) of an acid house club with the rave generation into a full head-on rave.

In the early 90's Pete decided to sell 50% of his company to Warners looking to enlarge the scope of his company. Unfortunately this was not a happy period and although PWL International still enjoyed what most people would consider phenomenal success with acts like 2 Unlimited, Opus 3, Undercover, Sybil, Atlantic Ocean and Loveland, Pete was not enamoured with the lack of music within the company.

1996 saw Pete leave Warners to become independent again - and with this he began to gather together a whole new set of young production teams.

By late 1996, Pete had formed a new partnership with Zomba Records for his Eastern Bloc and Unity labels. In their first year, the new team clocked up hits for Kaleef, Will Mellor and Steps; whose debut single stayed in the Top 20 for fifteen weeks!

### **Steps In The Right Direction**

In the closing months of 1998, following on from his production teams working with the likes of The Backstreet Boys, Solid Harmonie and Five, Steps had firmly established themselves as pop act supreme. With sales of their debut album "Step One" in excess of 2 million worldwide, a No. 1 Video, and single successes with "5,6,7,8", "Last Thing on my Mind" and "One For Sorrow" it seemed that Steps could not achieve anything greater. Then, in the beginning of 1999, Steps hit the top slot with their No.1 single, "Heartbeat/Tragedy".

Further releases for 1999 included tracks by new artist Ellie Campbell, a tribute single to ABBA by Steps, Tina Cousins, B\*Witched, Billie and Cleopatra, an album from Tina Cousins and a second album from Steps.

March 1999 saw Pete win the music industry's own award for outstanding achievement when he picked up The Strat Award at The Music Week Awards. It must come as no surprise then that Pete is now considered one of the senior statesmen of the music industry. He is a Council member for the BPI who sits on their Chart Committee and he regularly holds Master Classes for them at the Brits school. He has also been invited to the Houses of Parliament to address the All Party Parliamentary Friends of Music Group.

October 1999 saw Pete back at No.1 in the album charts with the release of "Steptacular" by Steps. The following week Westlife's debut album was released and entered the charts at No.2. This saw Pete with production credits on both a No.1 and a No.2 album! On Nov 6th 1999 a TV tribute to pop-supergroup ABBA was shown on ITV. The accompanying album, ABBAmania, saw Pete acting as its Executive Producer, and one week after its release, this album entered the compilation charts at Number 3!

The new Millennium saw Pete Waterman still at the very top of the music industry. The first Number One single of the Year 2000 was produced by him and 2001 saw Pete's status in the Music Industry further enhanced through work with such musical luminaries as Lulu and Chris Rea via his second 'Mania' TV special; which was this time focussed on the sounds of Motown. More smashes with Steps, including the mega-selling Greatest Hits package 'Gold' and a Top 2 smash 'Sacred Trust' from One True Voice stood further testament to Pete's midas touch.

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### **Pete Waterman; Pop Svengali, TV Superstar, Doctor of Music and OBE!**

Today millions of people instantly recognise Pete's classic pop hits on the radio, however thanks to increased TV exposure, Pete Waterman's face is now just as recognisable.

In recent years Pete's celebrity status has soared thanks to his involvement in TV talent shows 'Pop Idol', 'PopStars - The Rivals' and 'Pop Idol 2'. Sometimes controversial, but always honest and heartfelt, his comments often hit the headlines. Along with the rest of the members of the judging panels and the contestants themselves, Pete helped make Saturday Night TV essential viewing once more. In addition to this, Pete has also fronted three very-successful Christmas TV specials for BBC TV's 'Songs Of Praise' (Dec 2002 / Dec 2003 / Dec 2004) and has also presented 'School Choir Of The Year 2005' for the same

production company. In addition to these TV appearances, Pete fronted his own TV series on the history of the locomotive for Channel 4, which was later repeated on The Discovery Channel to much acclaim, and he is often called upon to make contributions to shows which are concerned with popular music.

Although Pete left school without any formal qualifications, his achievements have not gone unnoticed by educational establishments. In 2001 Pete received an honorary degree from Coventry University and in March 2004 the University College Chester awarded him an honorary Doctorate in recognition for his contributions to music. Pete's achievements have also received Royal acknowledgment. In November 2003 Pete attended a special reception at Buckingham Palace alongside many of Britain's top achievers, including Falklands hero Simon Weston, Sir Cliff Richard, celebrity chef Delia Smith and fashion designer Zandra Rhodes. The glittering event was held to pay tribute to the contribution of more than 400 pioneers in British life and was hosted by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Having conquered the pop charts time and time again, 2004 saw Pete Waterman set his sights on another target; the classical music scene, with the help of duo Duel. After seeing the two talented violinists playing on the streets of Manchester, he whisked them off into the studio and recorded an album. Issued through respected label Decca Classic, the album proved that Pete's finger was still on the record-buying public's pulse. The CD reached Number One in March 2004. Not content with this achievement, Pete also returned to the pop music charts with a new group, who were aptly named 'Pop!' The end of 2004 saw Pete Waterman on yet another high. On December 31st 2004 it was announced that Pete was to receive an OBE from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his outstanding contribution to popular music.

PWL Radio was launched in January 2005 following on from Pete's realisation that there was a genuine gap in the broadcasting market for a station that solely concentrated on pop music. It's PWL Radio Ltd was formed and the station hit the cyberspace airwaves amidst a lot of media attention and public interest. Only available via the Internet, PWL Radio gave people an opportunity to listen to the purest pop from the 1980s through to the present day, along with exclusive playings of future, and unreleased, PWL hits.

During the Autumn of 2005, the PWL empire announced the release of a brand new triple compilation CD to mark the 21st anniversary of Stock Aitken Waterman's first collaboration back in 1984. Simply entitled 'Gold', the CD show-cased all of SAW's biggest, and most-loved pop hits. The release also caused many to speculate that the chart-dominating trio were also to reform; confirmation of which came when Mike Stock and Matt Aitken joined Pete on an extensive media and press campaign to jointly advertise the CD and announce to fans old and new that they were to work together once more.

The end of 2005 saw a new chapter in PWL's history books open as Pete and his crew packed up their Borough High Street studios and relocated to new premises at the prestigious County Hall. Although PWL had moved studios in the past it had always been based within the Borough, however times had changed and a new start was required. Managing to keep an SE1 postcode, Pete spent much of 2006 trying to sort out his new studios, get planning permissions passed and fine-tuning his skills at being landlord of this new complex.

In January 2007 Pete celebrated his 60th birthday in a modest fashion and began planning for the busy year ahead as his recording studios finally neared completion. In March of the same year it was announced that Pete's studios were ready. Eager to put his state-of-the-art studio to good use, he immediately began working on brand new tracks. Collaborating with his former hit-making partner, Mike Stock, Pete Waterman launched SAW Productions in the Autumn of 2007 with the highly infectious single "(I'm So) Happy Happy (You're Mine)" which was recorded by The Sheilas (from the popular series of famous Sheilas Wheels TV adverts)

## **The Birth Of PWE!**

In June 2008, Pete re-organised his Empire and launched PWE – Pete Waterman Entertainment. Expansions due to his relocation to County Hall now meant that Pete could use his premises to help nurture new creative talent and use his state-of-the-art studios to do much more than just record pop music in. Since that time PWE has launched itself on the digital marketplace and, thanks to an exclusive deal with download market-leaders iTunes, has now issued the vast majority of its back-catalogue digitally – including some previously unreleased tracks and mixes from its most popular artists. In addition to this, PWE has also worked closely with a number of labels to help compile and release some definitive deluxe editions of some of its biggest hit albums. Recent honours awarded to Pete include being given a star on Coventry's 'Walk of Fame' and being appointed new Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Cheshire.

After spending five decades in the entertainment business, Pete Waterman's depth of knowledge and his breadth of experience is unsurpassed. Record producer, songwriter, radio DJ, author and television presenter; Pete is now considered to be one of the senior statesmen of the music industry who is equally capable of advising MPs on the music business as he is on offering insightful judgements on aspiring pop idols. His passion, drive and talent have helped him become one of the most successful, most influential and most accessible figures in British popular culture today.

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