



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

Ep49: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Matt Oestreicher

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Hello! You're listening to [Episode 49: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Matt Oestreicher](#).

I'm your host, Suz – a mindset coach helping music professionals grow their creative talents into full-fledged businesses by getting clear on their goals and next steps.

I'm so excited to share this next Spotlight with you today. Matt is the definition of multi-talented and multi-passionate.

Starting out as a mentor for children in a music program, Matt was inspired to expand his horizons inside the music industry when he realized he needed to “walk his talk” more when advising the youths who were looking to build careers in music.

As he'll share with you in our interview, the need to mentor with integrity pushed him to try new things and leave his comfort zone in an effort to learn more about the industry first-hand.

Since the start of that journey, over 20 years ago, Matt has been a producer, arranger, performer, writer, bandleader, podcast host, educator, and virtuoso on both keyboards and guitars in multiple genres – working with a who's who of industry royalty.

Currently, he is the arranger, keyboardist, and guitarist for the renowned Apollo Amateur Night Band, and recently ended his run as the Music Director for the New York revival of *Smokey Joe's Cafe*.

If that wasn't enough, he continues to mentor youths and co-founded the non-profit Your Time to Shine, with Apollo's head of stage – Joe Gray, and is now stepping out in front of the

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spotlight as he debuts his very own solo album – *Dream the World New* – melding 1980s pop-rock with self-reflective themes.

He is an inspiration for anyone who has had multiple passions wondering if it's possible to pursue them all and also to all of us who want to simply lead a life with more integrity and authenticity.

I hope you enjoy this Spotlight as much as I enjoyed recording it – special shout out to Ariel Hyatt of Cyber PR for putting this together. And be sure to stay tuned for a BONUS episode where I do a live consultation with Matt! Here we go...

SUZ: Alright welcome everyone! So I'm here with Matt and I am very excited to jump into this. Matt, I've just told our listeners all the amazing things that you've been able to accomplish so far in your career, but I want to hear a little bit more about your start in the front lines like being in the front as the musician, as the performer.

You have such an interesting story about integrity and authenticity where you started out mentoring kids and felt that something wasn't in alignment for you, so would you mind telling us a little bit about what that was like and what that led to for you?

MATT: Absolutely yeah, thank you, that's a great question. So I think really there were two sides of that were happening simultaneously. Like I always have loved teaching so I was like teaching piano lessons when I finished school basically, that was like one of my first jobs and I loved it and it was truly what I wanted to do. And then the more serious my students became, the more they would ask me about the music industry and about you know what you can do with this skill. And the more I started feeling like I need to be able to answer these questions first hand.

I grew up not knowing anyone in the music industry. I didn't know anything about it and so I was like, "I need to go on a journey with this." So I stopped teaching at that time and I just started kind of taking whatever gigs I got – which were, you know, the local bar gigs and

things like that and gradually as I was doing it more and more I would find out how different groups were doing it.

I'd meet all the different groups and then you know the word-of-mouth thing where you start getting recommend for other things, and basically the gigs got better and better. I say the gigs got better and better because the musicians didn't necessarily get better, there were great musicians playing at the local bars and I say that to this day some of the guys I was playing with at the local bars are as good as the people I play for, you know, festivals with fifty thousand people for, or played on TV with or whatever.

So I just noticed that I was kind of moving along in that and I wanted to have certain experiences in the industry so I can share them and say I did that and here's how you do it. I always wanted to be able to tell them you can do it and I knew I could only do that if I did it myself. So that list was like touring, playing on TV, and you know all things that I've done many times since, thankfully.

And then you know so that was part of it having integrity in being like I can teach this because I've done it and so I guess that's one answer, but I've had that come up over and over. And I still have a nonprofit in Connecticut called Your Time To Shine that myself and Joe Gray, who's the head of stage of The Apollo Theater, started together and we still teach kids and we both are always checking ourselves. I'm like, "Let's make sure we're living our dreams so we can tell them they can."

SUZ: That's amazing! I love that so much because I do think that's so important and I love how you know you didn't abandon teaching either, it sounds like teaching is really at the core for you, you know, one of your core passions because you know you could have just said, "Well I don't want to you know... I'm gonna go live my dream and I'll see you guys later, like I'll write a book about it."

But the fact that you still work and mentor and give back I think it's really... just speaks to your character and just who you are as a creative that it's also the teaching and the sharing of the

knowledge rather than just the teaching or just the doing. You know, I really I love that dual role.

MATT: Well they're so tied in for me and it's like I I talk about it with Joe, my partner at the non-profit, all the time that we get to do all this awesome stuff and sometimes we forget how awesome it is because it's our day to day and then we take it back to kids who have never done any of this because they haven't been the situations cause they're young and it helps us appreciate again what we do and it helps us share that, so they're totally intertwined for me.

SUZ: When you came to this realization that you wanted to you know have more integrity, walk your talk so to speak, was that just like an immediate change or did you have to do some further discovery into like what that looked like for you like what was that, how did that come about?

MATT: I love that question, yeah it's still a discovery process all the time like I knew I wanted to be creative. I knew I wanted to make a living playing music. I knew I wanted to collaborate with a lot of people I was inspired by and that you know I continued to try to do those things in different ways so it's a continued thing. Like, "What am I afraid of?" I ask that all the time.

"What haven't I done yet that I know I should be doing or would like to do or I see someone else doing?" I'm like, "Oh I should be doing that." Like oh there's a little twinge of like jealousy or curiosity any of those things - I look at and say what's, you know, "What's next? How can I keep growing?" And luckily I've had more choices to do that. In the beginning anything was growthful.

And now it's like okay, "What's the next thing that's going to push me and that I can really contribute to?" So it's an ongoing process always what is that integrity, but one piece of it was you know working on my own music giving time to that and you know that's very much in the forefront for me now, but it's always for me a process of that.

SUZ: Thank you so much for sharing that because I think what a lot of newcomers into this

industry also feel like they've gotta, number one, have it all figured out before they can take action and number two that there is going to come a point in time where it stops challenging them or you know like they've figured it out. And I think it's important to know that even somebody as yourself how has accomplished so much already there's still this discovery process that that never stops the reflection and the asking yourself questions in figuring out what's next.

You know that never stops but it sounds like you've been able to embrace that really make it a part of the journey. And I think that that's wonderful you know that's something that I'm always a proponent of is embracing the reflection and questioning things and saying, "Okay I've set these goals, but are they still the goals that I want? Should I change them?" And that it's okay to be wrong. You know, what I like about your story is you're always discovering something and it's okay to not have the answer at the beginning.

MATT: Totally I don't know another way, I can see that some people could do this better than I did were in the beginning I really didn't know what I wanted so I was doing crazy gigs, like things that were so different like I'd be playing guitar in a country band one night, then I'd be playing organ in a hip-hop show the next night and I feel like people can have *some* idea in the beginning. A lot of people do, like I want to... like this inspires me... like I was really trying anything I could do for years before I was like, "Okay I think I'm starting to find where where my groove is."

SUZ: Do you think that came from like a scarcity mindset in terms of like I gotta take whatever gig comes my way? Or do you feel like you were just lost in terms of like your vision?

MATT: Totally scarcity mindset. Only like I got a you know, I know nothing, I'm at the bottom here, I got to be working and if the phone rings I gotta take it.

SUZ: Yeah I think we've all been there.

MATT: Yeah I'm very happy to not be there now. Well even if I could go back and do it over I

would not approach the scene because the scarcity mindset makes it difficult to see clearly.

SUZ: Right.

MATT: I totally did that for years it was a process to shift that thinking. Where basically for a year I said, "No" to like ninety percent of the offers came my way.

SUZ: Yeah it's amazing how freeing "No" can be.

MATT: Yeah absolutely. I love how your podcast merges some kind of like personal growth themes and also like taking care of yourself scenes with this to they're so tied in. And that year saying no was like very powerful for that and for the personal growth of like of you know how challenging that can be sometimes. That was a personal process as well as a career process.

SUZ: Absolutely, and yes, thank you for that. I do feel that it's an important part to always be aware of the fact that we never stop growing and that it's part of the learning. And I think as somebody as yourself who put such a high value on teaching and on learning, I think it makes that journey all that much easier because you can see the lessons in it and you can say, "Okay I can use this! You know, it didn't go how I planned, but I can build off of that."

MATT: A hundred percent – I'm all about seeing those lessons, I love that part.

SUZ: What I also loved about your story is you're also somebody who really values yoga and meditation and mindfulness and I know you've got your own podcast as well that I'll link to in the show notes, and I'd love for you to tell us more about that. But first I want to touch upon how you brought your love for mindfulness and yoga and meditation and you merged it with your music to create your debut album, *Dream The World New*, and by the way congratulations on that and what do you mean when you say you've merged the two? What does that mean to you?

MATT: Yeah it's kinda interesting because I had sort of two separate lives for a while. Like one

where, you know, what my first job out of college was working at a yoga center and a couple like monastic kind of places where I would cut vegetables or you know clean dishes, wash dishes in exchange for living there and studying yoga you know getting a yoga certification among others certifications. And I did that for years. I've always been an obsessive practitioner so it's either been music or yoga or meditation or martial arts or those kind of things. I love that process.

I love the concept of mastery and the whole kind of, you know, the old school ways that people would learn Zen or Kung Fu of the practice, practice, practice or and kind of the chipping away at the marble to find what's underneath kind of thing. So I did that and I ended up living in that world for awhile and working for Ron Dass, the author and spiritual teacher for awhile in Maui, and going to India and the whole adventure.

And then I moved to New York and I'm you know where I was in the Apollo Theater House Band, now still in that band for eight years and you know played with a lot of R&B artists like Stevie Wonder and Alicia Keys, Dionne Warwick all these people – and those were like separate chapters of my life.

And through doing my own music I could start to apply more of that like methodology and ideals and even lyrical themes into my music and kind of you know put that kind of energy into the world for lack of a better way say it, that to me is the experience of really practicing those arts – meditation, yoga all that stuff through the music.

So and also I'm like kind of – I enjoyed playing at yoga centers and those kind of things where it's like so it's just bring that energy into my music, where as my music was always whatever the situation demanded.

You know I just I've been working the last eight months on that show Smokey Joe's cafe on 42nd Street – we wrap up this Sunday after eight months – and you know that's all fifties music music of Leiber and Stoller, the two guys who wrote, "Stand by Me" and "Hound Dog" and on Broadway and all this stuff, and you know that's a totally different vibe and it's

beautiful music and the energy of the show was amazing. But each music because it's a world that lives and so now I'm kind of bringing those worlds together in my own music using the more yogic themes and that kind of thing. It's a long-winded answer I hope that answers it.

SUZ: No, no I think it's wonderful and I know that you've mentioned that this album takes you back to your 1980s pop rock that you love. How did you come at it? Was there like "Oh, who's my audience?" And, you know, "Let me build my following?" Or was it, "I just need to get this out and I'm going to express it." How did you approach this particular project?

MATT: Yeah that's an awesome question too, because I was writing, I have a blog post about how it's like you can approach it from a marketing point of view – like who's my audience? Or we can approach it from a "artists" point of view where it's like I want to express myself. And this is more the second because basically I knew I had to start somewhere with releasing music. I'd written you know a hundred songs and I never released them because I never particularly loved them, but that's when I realize that you know the same things we've already spoken about here of you know it's a process the first thing you create is not going to be perfect and the last thing you create isn't probably going to be perfect either.

SUZ: Right.

MATT: So I just, to me when I was sitting in the studio and I was trying to give myself some time to create and what kept coming back to me is the music I listened to what I was like thirteen years old the 80's pop with James Taylor, Van Halen, and the music I listen to before I knew a single thing about music. And all I knew is it made me feel great. And I just came back to that and kind of came to a place of innocence I was just like, "Okay I know how to write songs," in fact, for every amateur that's come through Amateur Night at the Apollo for the last eight years, I transcribe their song for them. So basically they'd send me a link and I would write it out, so I've dissected thousands of songs that way.

SUZ: Wow, yeah.

MATT: You know, written thousands charts for the Apollo Theater, which then I present to the band and we play it you know one shot basically. So I knew I wanted to work in song format like three to five minutes songs instead of like long form compositions or whatever. So I took that eighties stuff that I love to write AHA! and Mister Mister and Toto, and I just started writing songs you know from that kind of place.

So it was totally just I know I need to release something, luckily I'm not dependent on it to make money cause I have plenty of other work in music that pays the bills, so I can let this be an artistic dream, and then now of course I'd turn around with Ariel and I'm like, "Okay so how do I approach marketing and all that stuff?" And that's partially because I'd love to market this stuff and grow that part of my career and the other side because I want to – whenever kids asked me about the music business they don't want to be the side guy. They don't want to be composer, the arranger, the stuff that I've done – they want to be the front person. You know naturally, they see the person in front. So I want to know what and I want to be able to show how to do that too, and I want to do it for myself, too, because that's never been me and and it's part of growth, so yeah.

SUZ: I think that's wonderful and you know you touched upon, too, that you were able to be this artistic and create something for yourself, something that you wanted to hear and you wanted to play and without that pressure of well "Who's my audience?" because you have been able to put in the work to build so many other streams of income for yourself. Just looking at this page of what others have hired you to do in the past, and I mean it's really quite impressive. And it just goes on and on with all the things that you've been able to do for music directing to consulting and charting as you said, and obviously teaching and arranging. Like was it more organic or was it more purposeful in that kind of growth?

MATT: It took me a long time to be purposeful I feel like I've only been purposeful more recently. Back then it was kind of part of the scarcity mentality of like, "I'm gonna build a lot of skills so I'm useful."

SUZ: Got it.

MATT: So basically I, you know, just studied. I practiced a lot of different instruments so I can do anything in the studio that I needed – from you know drums, bass, guitar, keys – and you know mixing and you know all the producing side and then writing, arranging. You know I've gotten to write for fifty-one piece orchestras and smaller for TV shows and for recordings and albums and live performances.

So it was basically like give me a job I'll do it, I'll learn how to do it. So it was just building a lot of skills and then you know jumping in fully. Like the first time I did arranging for an orchestra was someone called me at eleven at night and said I have a TV show that's airing tomorrow night and the arrangements are due at 7:00am – they just added two more, can you do them? And I'd never written for orchestras, I've written for multiple instruments, you know, but never that big. And I said yes and I stayed up from 11:00PM till 7:00AM and wrote it.

I had to look up the ranges of the few instruments and all that and you know I've been writing arrangements since then. So if someone give me a challenge I took it. Again the scarcity thing, but also like enthusiasm over creating opportunity. So it was very much just in the moment trying to build skills, build skills – I'm always trying to build skills. Right now I'm working on vocals and conducting skills cause I'm doing more of that.

SUZ: I tip my hat to you because you know somebody might see this and say, "Oh my goodness! So I have to go do all the things!" But as you just said, you know, you're creating a space for each thing at a different time. So now it's vocals goals and composition but it's you know – or conducting! I'm sorry. But you know, it's not like, it's not an overnight thing and to have, you know, a resume such as yours, it takes you know like you said a leap of faith and just jumping in, but it also takes time.

And I think for all those you know listening who may be new to the whole music industry or maybe just getting started in their career, listening to somebody like Matt and hearing what a vast catalog of experience he has, it didn't happen in a week, you know pace yourself. And as Matt said, you know, master a certain skills set before you just shift gears and move on to something else when you haven't really put in the time or the practice. And I think a lot of that

also has to do with how you practice mindfulness and so I know you've got your podcast The Mindful Musician and a link to that will be in the show notes – I urge all listeners to go check that out. Tell us how The Mindful Musician came to be and what spurred that on taking on one more thing on your plate?

MATT: The podcast is the first thing to fall on back burner when I get busy. But the reason why I did it is almost the same reason why I'm recording the album now is I was so used to being behind the scenes as a writer or as a producer or as a side man, and I wanted to just get better at talking. That's the honest truth of it.

I wanted to get better at talking and I wanted to learn more about other people's experience in the industry. So I started for that reason when I got to talk to really amazing, fascinating people and it took on a life of its own, you know, and then curiosity drove it. I got to talk to you know Bert Padell who just passed this year in his late eighties who was you know the music business manager for P-Diddy and Britney Spears, and so many, and I talk to music lawyers and a lot of musicians of course.

So I just got to learn so much about different sides of the business and to hear kind of like inside stories from people who have a lot of experience who haven't had a chance to really share you know what it's really like to do what they do in the music business.

SUZ: I think it's wonderful you know I myself definitely come from a place of curiosity where a lot of my jobs and places on my journey have all come out of the fact that I was like, "Hmm, I want to know more about that" or "I want to be able to you know speak confidently about this subject" or "I want to improve this particular skill set" and then out comes a job out of it or you know different project and I think that's really great.

I mean as you said earlier it's how you grow and it makes you a you know better at your craft even if it might not seem like it directly affects your craft. I mean you know practicing yoga and meditation might not immediately jump out to somebody as all this makes you a better musician but it obviously does and it goes so hand in hand but it might jump out to somebody

right away. Like, "Oh I want to be a better musician I'm going to practice yoga."

MATT: Exactly. I want to add like not everybody I don't believe that everybody needs to have such a wide skill set. I kind of wanted to take a survey of the music industry – in fact I've run venues for a period of time, I booked venues, I did a bunch of film scoring for a couple years. And not everybody needs to jump around that much some get really good at one or two things you have to make a whole career out of that so I just don't want to give anyone a misconception that you need to do a million things to be in this business.

SUZ: Absolutely and I'm so glad you brought that up you know I think it all comes down to working toward your strengths and obviously one of your strengths is this passionate curiosity so you've made that work for you in terms of of this multi-passionate creative where you've been able to feed all of these passions that you wanna fulfill.

And you've made it work for you in a you know there's a method to the chaos so to speak where you've got all these different projects and all these different hats that you wear, but you've made it work for you and as you said, other people might find like, "No I'm the best chart writer and best arranger and that's what I want to spend my time doing."

And you can have multiple income streams within one skillset, so anyone out there that's panicking, if you're not multi-passionate that is totally okay as well.

MATT: Yes, yes.

SUZ: So we've come to the point in the interview, I have four questions that I ask every guest. I'd like to know, if you could choose one super power what would it be?

MATT: So I don't know, superpowers can be dangerous. Cause all the traditional ones like flying and being invisible I don't know that I need those, so yeah if I could somehow help people to be more peaceful and to get along better I'll take that superpower.

SUZ: I love it – I love it. If time travel was possible what's one lesson you'd go back and teach yourself?

MATT: I would say you know value yourself, trust yourself. I was really inspired by being along side people who did that – you know I got to travel with the band on Interscope – Chester French who were the first band on Facebook and you know they had tons of buzz, bidding war with Pharrell and Timbaland and Kanye all wanted to sign this band in those guys they held strong in the face of everybody wanting a piece of them, they never you know they never gave themselves a bad deal they were very smart and self-directed. So I'd say valuing yourself, trust in yourself, believing that you deserve good things.

SUZ: Nice – I love it. And one of the the pieces of this podcast that you might have seen in other episodes is that we're all about taking action and every week I usually give a downloadable action sheet, but with these interviews my action to all of our listeners is to please go to the show notes and check out all the wonderful links to learn more about Matt and all of his talents and the things that he offers so please go and check that out as well as links to his podcast and his new album. So that is *my* actionable for them but what is *your* actionable – what is an action you would like our audience to take this week?

MATT: Well this might be an alternative action, you can tell me if it's a cop out, but I was talking with the composer today and we were just talking about this – just like trust you will have a great journey at this. And it may not be what you expect. There's no way to pre-plan but just trust that if you're going into this and if you do everything that you know you work hard, make it your own, you know you will have a great journey and great experiences beyond what you could even imagine.

So I would just say trust instead of giving... because everyone's got so much to do now you know what we have to do now as artist we have to create our art and be our own marketing, be your own manager, your own booking agent, so and there's a lot of information on how to do that right now, so I would just say relax for a minute don't stress and trust that you will have a great journey and everything ahead of you there's a lot of great things that lie ahead of

you.

SUZ: I love that – the exact opposite of a cop out that was wonderful. I think we could all use more of that in our lives and I thank you for that I want to thank you for you know spending time with us and sharing and letting us into your world a bit because you definitely have a very unique journey and it's definitely an outlook that I think more of us can have as we approach our lives with integrity and authenticity so I thank you so much for that and I invite our listeners to stay tuned for our bonus episode and we're going to do a live consultation.

MATT: Cool, thank you so much and thank you for what you do I really think you do great work from all the episodes I've been listening to and your website so I appreciate you talking to me.

SUZ: Oh, thank you so much!

Ok, are you inspired yet?

As we both said – the lesson to take from this is not to go out and compete with Matt to master a variety of skills – it's to create the path that feels most in alignment with your strengths and your passions.

If your passions are not yet your strengths be sure to dedicate an adequate amount of time into mastering the necessary skillsets so you can be great at your passions. Living life doing what you believe you were meant to do is the epitome of integrity and authenticity.

Be sure to visit the show notes – www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep49 – for links to all of Matt's work, his podcast, his non-profit, and best of all his new album – *Dream the World New*.

PLUS as a BONUS you'll find the live consultation we did after the interview where I guided Matt on some tips for booking shows as a new solo artist. Again, all of that is found at www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep49.

As always, I thank you for listening and I want to thank Matt again for giving us his time and sharing his amazing story with us.

If you're looking to figure out your next steps, find time to balance everything on your plate, or work on figuring out which passion you want to start following first, let's talk!

Email me at anytime: suz@therockstaradvocate.com

Until next time, Rockstar! Have a wonderful week and I hope to see you back here next week so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.