

CASE STUDY

MusicTech — The Operator Who Lives It

Fractional Operations for MusicTech Founders · South Africa – Global · 2014–Present

Delivered by Sharm Pillay, ProficientOBM

14+	5	9+	10,000+
Years as independent artist	Countries performed	Global radio residencies	International audience, zero paid promotion

THE SITUATION

Most operations professionals understand a music tech founder's user through research and data. Sharm Pillay understands them through experience. She is a Fractional Operations Manager with 15+ years of experience building infrastructure, streamlining workflows, and coordinating remote teams across advertising, healthcare, and non-profit sectors — and she is also a self-managed, award-winning international Techno DJ and producer: 14 years in market, five countries, no label, no manager, no operations support of her own.

When she sits across from a music tech founder, she is not learning the user's world. She already lives in it. She knows the tools, the gaps, the workarounds, and the friction in real time — a different kind of operational intelligence.

THE CHALLENGE

Since 2014, Sharm has self-managed every aspect of her own career as an independent artist — with no label, no manager, and no operational support. That meant building, alone, the exact infrastructure a music tech platform is meant to provide:

- Booking and coordinating live performances across South Africa, Australia, Thailand, Fiji, and New Zealand
- Managing nine-plus simultaneous global radio residencies across multiple time zones — New York, Italy, Venezuela, Netherlands, Sweden, UK, Melbourne, Ibiza, and India
- Producing, distributing, and releasing original music independently via DistroKid to 150+ streaming platforms
- Building and maintaining a cross-platform international audience of 10,000+ with no paid promotion budget
- Writing and issuing her own press releases, and managing media relationships that resulted in coverage on Beatportal, IOL Independent, and Texx & The City
- Researching, evaluating, and onboarding every tool in her own tech stack — production, distribution, promotion, and social media — independently
- Registering and launching Code 1313, an independent record label, including company registration, business banking, and music regulatory body onboarding

This is not background colour. This is operational experience, applied in one of the most fragmented, under-resourced, and fast-moving sectors in the creator economy.

WHAT SHARM BRINGS TO A MUSIC TECH TEAM

Music tech startups scale fast and break things. The operational gaps — systems that don't exist, processes nobody owns, teams that can't keep up with the product — are where growth stalls. Sharm fixes those gaps fractionally, with the added advantage of already knowing your users' world from the inside.

- Builds operational infrastructure from the ground up — SOPs, workflows, and project management systems teams actually use
- Coordinates remote, multi-time zone teams across creative and technical functions
- Manages vendor relationships — freelancers, producers, designers, agencies
- Implements CRM and project management tools (Notion, Trello, Asana)
- Integrates AI tools into operational workflows for efficiency gains
- Brings immediate, working knowledge of the independent artist's operational reality — distribution, promotion, booking, radio, press, and regulatory compliance
- Offers a credible user perspective on music tech products — what works, what doesn't, and what is still missing
- Available fractionally — no full-time hire required

OPERATIONS TRACK RECORD

- TBWA, BBDO, Joe Public — managed creative workflows, job lifecycles, cross-functional team coordination, and delivery across concurrent projects in high-pressure agency environments
- Covax Australia (Healthcare Startup) — implemented full operational systems, coordinated 300+ staff across multiple sites, delivered revenue within the first two weeks of launch
- Non-profit sector — built operational infrastructure and stakeholder management frameworks from the ground up

THE RESULTS

- 9+ simultaneous global radio residencies, including an 8-year residency on DI.FM's Techno Channel (Sweden)
- Lady of the House UK — Demo Competition Winner, 2025
- Pete Tong DJ Academy (Europe) — Qualifying Student & Moderator, 2025
- Top 6 DJane Africa — DJane Top 100 Global Rankings, 2017
- SABC3 (Mela TV Show) — documentary feature, 2016
- Code 1313 — independent record label, legally registered with a dedicated business bank account, launching formally in 2026
- 10,000+ international audience built across platforms with zero paid promotion
- Performed across five countries — notable engagements include Palazzo Versace Gold Coast (2× summer residency), Sub Rosa Brisbane (supporting international artist Matt Sassari), TreeHouse Bush Doof Festival, JW Marriott Gold Coast, Techno Invasion Johannesburg, HardRock Café Sandton, and an Estée Lauder / Tom Ford product launch
- Featured in Beatportal, IOL Independent, Texx & The City, Destiny Man, Psychologies Magazine, Entrepreneur Magazine, and Nex Media Online

"If you're building for independent artists, talk to someone who is one." — Sharm Pillay

WHAT THIS DEMONSTRATES

Building a functioning creative business — bookings, distribution, press, radio, regulatory compliance, and a label — entirely self-managed for 14 years, with no label, no manager, and no operational support, is not a music achievement. It is an operational one.

For music tech founders, that means Sharm doesn't have to learn her users' friction points through research. She has already solved them for herself, at her own cost, in real time, for over a decade. That is the lived advantage ProficientOBM brings to music tech engagements.

SECTORS & ENGAGEMENT

Sectors: Music tech startups and scale-ups, independent labels, music distribution platforms, artist tools, live events technology, creator economy platforms.

Engagement types: Fractional Ops Manager, Head of Operations (contract), operational advisory, project-based systems builds.

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