

# **SURVEY SAYS...**

**BY THE UNCULTURED**

Part of  
Producing Liveness in Interesting Times

**the uncultured**

When we were part of the Freelance Task Force in 2020, we were in a working group who conducted a survey and produced a report around working conditions for theatre and performance producers. It's a snapshot of data on working conditions at the height of the pandemic, but we wonder whether this survey would change at all if we did it every year (unlike most people's day rates).

Here are three noteworthy stats revealed in the survey:

- 82.60% of respondents earned less than the UK average salary of £30,353 in 2018/19.
- 73% of respondents need to subsidise producing work with other work or benefits.
- In the years 2017-2020, the 137 respondents supported 27,553 artists, employed 14,077 creatives and reached a cumulative audience of 4.06 million.

The report can be accessed on The Hale website here:

**[www.the-hale.com/post/the-producers-report](http://www.the-hale.com/post/the-producers-report)**

Something that cropped up on the survey, was that people felt producing was shrouded in mystery and that there was very little access on knowing how to become one, when to identify as one, and how to upskill.

So we asked the UK Theatre Producers facebook group (consisting of 18.1k people):

## What one thing do you wish you knew before you became an independent producer?

Here are some anonymised answers from this very wise crowd.

“Most of your job is troubleshooting”

“It’s ok to say no.”

“More information on what pay is like for both freelancers and producing roles in organisations. More of an indication of how consuming producing is as in - it’s not just a job or a career but a lifestyle. But also the context to know what pay is like in different industries to help you understand what is available and potentially a life you might be missing out on? For example saying that research demonstrates that freelance producers earn on average £5k/year from freelance producing. The average salary for an architect in the U.K. is £40k+. You hear a lot about there “being no money in a job in theatre”, but little context or specifics around it.”

“That there is no such thing as an “independent” producer... sure you may not work in an organisation, but you sure depend on a lot of people, organisations and their agendas, visions, priorities etc.”

“That we’re all making it up as we go along, just some of us are better at bluffing our way through than others.”

“Don’t always think in financial year cycles - the work you’ve done this year often pays off in 2-3 years (in terms of money, relationships, outputs) so look at the bigger picture. Give everything away that you can - knowledge, trade secrets etc (controversial, complex, subjective but you get it back 10 fold)”

“Don’t work for free, it undervalues everyone”

“A Producer’s skill set is really broad so think about how you can use it to your own advantage. Producing will probably take up most of your time but bring in the least amount of money, so balance it with fundraising and teaching to make your career sustainable if you can.”

“It’s important to define your role with the team you work with i.e. their expectations vs. yours. Even if you think that person is super experienced and they should know what you’ll be offering as a producer, they might not!”

“Producing is a really creative job, so don’t let anyone tell you you’re an administrator. It is a practice, and you should understand the purpose and limits of your practice so that you can do it in the way you want to.”

“The balance between seeking the work you want to make/produce against that of the approaches from artists. With that knowing the balance of work that you take on because you believe in it and the work that will pay for X months to enable you to do the passion work. It’s something you’re not taught.”

“Be strict on crediting and how you want to be represented right from the start. If your face isn’t in a picture you often won’t get tagged, but you’re definitely a part of the overall picture and deserve to be recognised.”

“That you can make humane, people-first decisions - it doesn’t have to be product and profit before people.”

# This work was commissioned by The Uncultured as part of their project, *Producing Liveness in Interesting Times*.

*Producing Liveness in Interesting Times* is a collection of writing, thinking and cheat-enabling works by Live Art and Performance Producers and Producer-adjacent arts workers who are working in the UK.

To explore other writings from *Producing Liveness in Interesting Times*, visit:  
**[the-uncultured.com/pliit](https://the-uncultured.com/pliit)**

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The Uncultured (Ashleigh Bowmott + Laura Sweeney)  
are arts independents working collaboratively  
to produce, curate, facilitate and advocate.

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