

VALERIE ETIENNE 2117325

NEW TECHNOLOGY IN MUSIC AND CREATIVE MANAGEMENT

BMTY7004 ESSAY

ZOHE MUSTAFA

TECHNOLOGY IN MUSIC FROM PRODUCT TO SERVICE.

INTRO

The music industry has gone through a seismic change in the last 30 years. The need for re-development has never been so important. The 'old' industry model is no longer as viable and the hold that the big record companies (Warners, Universal, Sony etc..) had, has dissipated by the rapid emergence of innovative technologies that make it easier for ALL musicians in all walks of music to have an impact. The shift from selling millions of products to sharing, downloading, and streaming has forced us all to adopt, adapt and embrace what these modern technologies have to offer. It is much easier to record, mix & master content without the need of a huge budget & team.

This essay will explore the shift from the music industry being a product sector to a service sector, and conclude how even now, the two can (and should) still co-exist. This essay is written in part from my experience of working for 25+ years in the industry.

1. THE MUSIC INDUSTRY & THE EARLY RISE OF THE DIGITAL MEDIUM.

The last vestige of the product sector in the music industry (the CD) was beginning to be phased out by the late 90's. The old model had been so reliant on physical sales (Vinyl, Records, and tapes etc..) that the digital emergence was a huge wake up call. The industry overall has been notoriously slow to adopt new practises. Run by executives who by all intent & purposes, had no real relationship (Napier Bell) to their 'commodities' (The artist/band). Their involvement (in a lot of instances) was simply monetary. The deal signed; bands & artists made the record, released the single, made the video, toured... and started the entire process again. Sometimes artists were signed for as many as up to 8 albums! There was not much room for the artist to 'grow' or experiment, and execs only became 'visible' when the artist /band challenged the original signed contract.

That 'digital disruption' culminated in the late 90's with the emergence of Napster, a digital file sharing service which allowed users to download and share music illegally. Created & launched by student Shawn Fanning, who wanted to get access to his favourite songs without having to buy expensive CD's. Using MP3 technology, Napster was able to extract singular songs from albums, the user could then go on to make a personal list of their favourite tunes. Mp3 had already been around as a 'fledging' but successful technology since the early 80's (Rose) finally coming into its own with the global rise of Napster and other digital sharing services like LimeWire, Pandora (It pioneered the 'style of music' recommendation service) Pirate Bay and Grokster.

The Record Companies disliked Napster because it was **the** platform that people were paying attention to. It lost revenue for the industry & targeted their preferred audience;(consumers from aged 18-35), who were in no rush to go back to buying product. By the late 90's users of the platform had topped 25 million. It had proven there was a market, but the problem with the company was the lack of attention to copyright holders and how they could be remunerated for their music.

Napster, already struggling with a major copyright claim from the RIAA, had a further blow when the band Metallica (Law) launched a lawsuit, under the Digital Media Copyright Act, to get their music off the platform, making themselves unpopular in the process, (for some in the musician community) by tracking down 300,000 + fans who had downloaded their music and demanding that Napster get them blocked from using the service. Napster complied. Interest did not wane however, and by February 2001 the company had gained up to about 80 million users.

The Mp3 revolutionised (Brain) our consumption of music, internet speeds were improving, and it was only a matter of time before a company galvanised a more efficient use of the technology. Apple wanted to work alongside the record labels by, firstly, 'refining' the use of the Mp3 with the launch of iTunes in January 2001. An antidote to the illegal file sharing services. You were now able to purchase and download the songs of your choice. So, in a small way they began to address the issue of remuneration for copyright holders. Secondly Apple investigated ways to make MP3 technology more 'user friendly.'

Tony Fadell, after being turned down by Phillips, (his former employees) found support to invent a better MP3 player from Apple. (Bellis) He was hired in early 2001 as an independent contractor to lead a team to develop it. Fadell partnered with a company called Portal Player (who were already working on their own MP3 device) to design the software for the Apple MP3 player. They completed the first prototype in a few months, Apple refined the interface and added the famous scroll wheel.

The 1st generation iPod (eventually launched in Oct 2001) had 5 GB of data which allowed one to store up to 1000 songs. It was revolutionary. To be able to curate exactly what and how one listened to music was a revelation (Kahney). Apple's fortunes were built on the iPod and by 2008 and in conjunction with iTunes, generated revenue of up to \$25million, leaping up further in revenue (\$60 million) when Apple announced 'iTunes for Windows' making it accessible to computer users worldwide ..& not just Apple computer users who at the time only cornered 3% -5% of the market.

It wasn't going to last. With the introduction of the iPhone in the early part of 2007, iPod sales quickly declined. (Morgan et Al). In iPhone, one had a portable 'mini' computer; able to deal with a host of other features as well as the 'basics', messages, photos, email, and music.

2. THE ESTABLISHED MODERN SERVICE SECTOR

With the rise of streaming services, Apple Music, Deezer, Pandora, and Spotify, Mix Cloud, SoundCloud etc... There is now a myriad of ways in which the customer can enjoy music.

Apple & Spotify are the main competitors in the streaming market. Having been around (as iTunes) since the early 2000s Apple consolidated all the 'mess' that iTunes had become (To many users) to streamline all their services launching, Apple Music, (2015) Apple Podcasts, and Apple TV.

Spotify's (founded in 2007), business model is to sign licensing deals (like Apple did years previously) with all the major record labels, enabling them to offer a free service to the consumer but at a cost to the advertisers. Recognising very quickly, that consumers moved onto the premium subscription service; at £10 a month, they were buying less & streaming more.

Spotify are continually diversifying. While not the first to introduce podcasts to their platform, (They have been around since 2000, Apple re – introduced podcasts in 2005) their company was very instrumental in their rise in popularity, opening them up to all their users in October 2018. By the end of that year podcasting grew by over 160%. They introduced video podcasts In July 2020, and most recently (2021) they introduced the "canvas" feature on 'Spotify for Artists' enabling artists to post mini videos up to 8 seconds long. With the canvas feature attached to artists pages, fans tend to stream (+ 5%), share the track (+ 145%), add to their playlist (+20%) and save the track and visit the profile page (+9%).

They are not without criticism, (because of their payment terms for copyright to artists and (mainly) Indie labels of \$0.006 -\$0.0084 per stream) Taylor Swift took the company to task by pulling her music from the platform, saying in an interview with Yahoo.

"If I had streamed the new album, it was impossible to try to speculate what would have happened. But all I can say is that music is changing so quickly, and the landscape of the music industry itself is changing so quickly, that everything new, like Spotify, all feels to me a bit like a grand experiment. And I am not willing to contribute my life's work to an experiment that I don't feel fairly compensates the writers, producers, artists, and creators of this music. And I just do not agree with perpetuating the perception that music has no value and should be free."

Apple are of course still THE big player, the first trillion-dollar company, it covers all media. With 3 Radio stations, featuring big name interviews (Adele & Zane Lowe), Apple TV, (Manjoo) and Apple music for artists. The choice is endless, but the monopoly of Apple is often called into question.(Johansson)

YouTube is another huge force in global video and music streaming. From the beginning this company took off because it made video their primary Modus Operandi. The company's reach is phenomenal. In 2020 YouTube added a feature: YouTube Shorts; (a small 'challenge' to Tik Tok?). In 2021 alone, YouTube earned \$28.8billion. Entire careers have been made or given a boost on YouTube (Justin Bieber, Lana Del Ray, The weekend...)

It is depressing to me that Tik Tok is one of the primary places to discover, support and kickstart one's music career. Labels/artists are paying users of the platform to include their music on their accounts. Having one of your songs attached to the current viral 'whatever' is amazingly lucrative. Of course, it might be an anathema to a certain generation 45+ but it cannot be ignored. Although Tik Tok's main audience are Gen Z's, the platform is actively seeking older users. One of their most recent popular users is a woman called Leanne Bailey her 'TheBaileyBakery' Tik Tok profile has grown from posting cake decorating videos to music. With an average of up to 700,000 likes per post, it has given her a significant rise in her income. (Leight) Despite being new to the market, Tik Tok is already the 7th most active social media App in the world.

SoundCloud, Mix Cloud, Bandcamp, are significant challengers to the old model. They give the artist/creator more autonomy. With Bandcamp, one is in complete control. You set up an account for free and design how you want your page to look, and you can sell any content you want ... (the platform sells a lot of vinyl for instance). Artists take home 85% of their revenue.

SoundCloud & Mix Cloud are more streaming services popularised by Dj's, and producers who can upload up to two hours of original Mixes and single tracks for free, (SoundCloud) and unlimited uploads of curated mix tapes (Mix Cloud).

3. THE MUSICIAN IN THE NEW 21ST CENTURY LANDSCAPE AND THE EMERGENCE OF 21ST CENTURY PRODUCT.

Technology is moving so fast that the next generation of musicians will have a world of new software technologies at their fingertips. Musicians will be able to branch out internationally. With 'Radio Garden' one can tune into radio stations around the world. A fantastic way to gauge what type of music major cities in the world are listening to.

The 'Infinite Jukebox' is another innovative technology emerging, you can create a never-ending and ever-changing version of any song. Send your uploaded track over to the 'The Echo nest' where the track is broken up into individual beats, analysed and matched to other similar sounding beats in the song. The process of 'tagging' onto similar sounding beats can go on forever, resulting in an infinitely extended version of the song.

You can now emulate the sound quality one would get in a professional recording Studio; Apple has introduced 'Dolby Atmos 3D spatial audio' into both its Logic Pro music production software and in music on the iTunes store. An amazing tool to have if you are a musician with limited funds, you can now have surround sound (using portable headphones) while mixing your music.

The Australian made 'Nura' headphones take it one step further, picking up how a listeners ears respond to different frequencies and adjusting the sound to perfectly suit that listener.

Anyone and everyone can make music now, and they can distribute their work throughout the world without the need of a label. You need a huge amount of drive and confidence and a lot of luck. if you want to make a sustained living. There are thousands of artists/musicians around the world trying to make their 'mark', and it is exceedingly difficult to be heard above the 'noise' one must develop 'Digital Narcissism' as quoted by Andrew Keen from his book "What is social media Really Doing to Our Society?"

I do not doubt that the amazing technological advances available to us can make our lives a lot easier in so many ways. The 'world' metaverse is alarming for me. I cannot imagine living constantly in a 'virtual world' where I can be 'examined' by a doctor who has my Physiological data up on a screen and can adjust my medication etc... Without ever seeing me. The same argument can be attributed to music. I do not think people will want to buy tickets for a 'virtual' world tour, The Covid Pandemic showed us what could be achieved online with Live concerts, but I agree with the Taylor Swift comments about the de valuation of years of hard work, only to be streamed with little remuneration, and albums 'broken up' in the order the Spotify Algorithm decides.

The fact that young people interviewed by Svannah Tyk LeDoux, at College Du Page in Illinois could not identify 3 record labels amongst the four of them. The fact that three of the four had never paid for music, and all four of them found their favourite music online mainly through YouTube, suggests to me that there is still a disconnect. Does ALL music have to come with a visual for one to enjoy it.? What happened to just LISTENING? I would argue that if you ONLY consume music that way, it lacks value.

However, there is hope. There has been a shift towards a re-surgence in product; 14 million CDs were sold in 2021 boosted by the album sales of well-established artists Adele and Ed Sheeran, and the new Abba album. Even young up and coming artists like Olivia Rodrigo and Dave sold upwards of 200,000 cassettes in 2021. According to the BPI report (published in Dec 2021 definitive figures released in Jan 2022),

"The ability of fans to discover and enjoy the music they love has never been greater – with classic and new albums on Vinyl, CD, download and cassette formats complementing the availability of more than 70 million songs available on streaming services."

4. CONCLUSION

It has never been easier to create, perform and share music. However, for someone like me it has been a hard road to travel. Learning to navigate the most recent technologies in music software for me has been difficult in that I have to learn from scratch. The constant re-invention can be exhausting. I know how to record myself; I know how to perform; I have toured all over the world with various bands and released albums in my own right and with my group. I have a wealth of experience BUT for me to reinvent myself as a 'new' 'older' artist in this climate...

I must stay online. For now....

