

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & STREAMING: The Cumulative Impact of Converging Production and Distribution Technologies on the Music Ecosystem

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The emergence and rapid spread of new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and Streaming, are introducing unprecedented dynamics into the way music is produced, distributed, consumed, and ultimately experienced as a cultural phenomenon. This paper explores the consequences of the application of new technologies in music production and consumption, examining how the overlap of AI and streaming, with the promise of digital democracy increasingly determines the form and content of music at the expense of its aesthetic value, symbolic significance, and consequently its social functionality. How does it affect the musical experience of musicians and audiences, how does it address the dilemma "art should be free - artists should be paid," and what are the cultural consequences of confining audiences to "aesthetic cells" and artistic communities to an economic margin, as the digital economy prioritizes scale over sustainability and innovation at the expense of artists' rights.

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1. Music as a Cultural Phenomenon and the Influence of the New Technologies

Music, with its profound character, connects humanity to its world and serves as a fundamental tool for its understanding. The musical experience, shaped by its respective cultural context, gives rise to musical genres. These genres function as markers of identity and cohesive bonds for communities, be they nations or online groups.

As a potent symbol of identity for individuals and groups, musical preferences reflect self-image and values on an individual level. On a collective level, they define communities, offering a sense of belonging and ultimately strengthening social cohesion, empathy, and solidarity through shared experiences.

As a supreme form of artistic expression, music transcends words, allowing creators to explore ideas and emotions, to innovate, and to experiment, offering aesthetic pleasure, emotional release, or catharsis. Its expressive power makes it a vital, evolving pillar of culture.

The rapid proliferation of new technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI) and streaming, is transforming the production, distribution, and consumption of music. This paper investigates how the convergence of these two technologies, under the promise of digital democracy, affects the form and content of music, potentially undermining its aesthetic, symbolic, and social significance. The study examines the impacts on the experience of both musicians and audiences, the confinement of audiences into "aesthetic cells," the economic marginalization of artists, and the prioritization of scale and innovation over sustainability and IP rights within the digital economy.

2. Artificial Intelligence, Streaming Services, and Their Convergence

2.1. Artificial Intelligence

The term "Artificial Intelligence" (AI) refers to the field of computer science dedicated to developing computational systems that simulate elements of human intelligence, such as learning, adaptability, and creativity¹. In simpler terms, AI is the ability of a machine to replicate human cognitive functions in which it has been trained.²

AI systems are adaptive, capable of identifying patterns in data, and autonomous when making decisions without continuous human supervision³. An AI system is defined as software or a service that incorporates AI models (comprising code and "weights") for specific tasks⁴. AI is already widely involved in numerous sectors of daily life (e.g., transportation, media) and the sciences, and its proliferation is rapid.⁵

Generative AI (GenAI), which produces multimedia content (text, audio, image, video) based on user prompts, represents a pinnacle of AI development, competing with human capabilities⁶. Its rapid expansion is documented in patent applications, with over 54,000 filed between 2014 and 2023, 25% of which were submitted in 2023 alone. Of these, 13,480 relate to speech and music. Tencent, Baidu, IBM, and Microsoft are leading this trend, with China at the forefront (with 38,000 applications) followed by the United States (with over 6,000).⁷



Image 01 - Boris Eldagsen, "The Electrician"
(Source: [Pseudomesia](#))

Public perception of GenAI is predominantly negative (N Castelo et al., 2019; Pew Research Center, 2023c), as it is seen to encroach upon exclusively human creative processes⁸. Human art conveys intention, cultural and historical context, elements that GenAI lacks⁹. Recent awards for GenAI-created works, such as Boris Eldagsen's photograph "The Electrician"¹⁰ (Image 01) and Rie Kudan's novel "Tokyo-to Dojo-to"¹¹, as well as instances of AI bands like Velvet Sundown¹², have sparked significant controversy. Despite this negative perception, 73% of independent artists believe that AI tools can enhance the creative process¹³. Furthermore, 13 20.3% of musicians have used GenAI for music production, 30.6% for

mastering, and 38% for creating artwork for their music¹⁴. From the audience's perspective, although human creation is preferred, studies indicate a growing acceptance of GenAI's ability to emulate aspects of human creativity.¹⁵

2.2. Streaming Technology

Streaming technology is defined as the technology used by digital platforms (Digital Service Providers - DSPs) to provide users with on-demand access to extensive music catalogs, podcasts, or audiovisual content (videos, vlogs) via the internet, without the need to download and permanently store files on the user's device. Instead, the media "streams" to the device during playback. Streaming accounts for 69% of recorded music revenue,¹⁶ with over one hundred platforms¹⁷ serving more than 600 million subscribers.¹⁸ These platforms (Digital Music Streaming Platforms - DMSPs) operate on subscription models (offering unlimited access for a monthly fee) or through free, ad-supported access- and sometimes a combination of both. They have radically transformed the way music is distributed and consumed, replacing physical media (CDs, vinyl) and digital downloads. Providers such as Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, and Amazon Music are dominant forces in the market.

Specialized AI systems ("Streaming Intelligence") have a catalytic effect on the listener's experience on these platforms.¹⁹ ²⁰ They are used on a large scale to personalize music recommendations with the goal of increasing subscriptions (O. Mokoena & I. C. Obagbuwa, 2025). For example, Spotify's "AI DJ" feature combines personalization technology with generative AI to recommend playlists (and enrich them with commentary and information), aiming for a more "human" and interactive listening experience.²¹

2.3. The Convergence of Technologies

AI produces "output" (e.g., content, recommendations) from "input" data, which in turn shapes the user experience on digital platforms.²² For playlist curation and new music discovery, algorithms²³ analyze users' listening habits, song characteristics, and trends. This collected information (Big Data) is used to train AI systems that improve personalized recommendations, as well as to develop AI tools for music composition and production tailored to listener preferences.

With streaming dominating distribution and algorithmic playlists serving as the primary promotional tool, platforms foster homogenization by featuring specific genres or AI-generated music (CISAC, 2024). The overwhelming majority of listeners (84%) cannot discern synthetic content²⁴- that is also economically advantageous for providers, due to reduced or non-existent royalty payments (E. Shaikh, 2025).²⁵ It is estimated that 18% of new music on these platforms is fully AI-generated.²⁶ This state of affairs not only impacts music creation and consumption but also the very structures of the music industry, perceptions of creativity, and cultural trends, thereby accelerating the devaluation of professional artistic activity and creative labor.²⁷ Other risks include copyright infringement through deepfakes²⁸ and the unlicensed training of AI on protected works (Tencer, 2024). Therefore, exploring the convergence of these technologies is crucial for analyzing the cultural implications for contemporary music.

3. Artificial Intelligence in Music Production

Generative AI (GenAI), as a model that produces audio content,²⁹ is used for music creation. This can be either "original" music, based on training data from musical genres and traditions,³⁰ or imitations of specific artists through "deepfakes" (K. Brennan, 2023, p. 18). Regarding the generated content, a question arises as to whether it lacks the dimension that includes "the elusive concept of soul" (N. Hageback & D. Hedblom, 2021, p. 2) and the human essence of art. The absence of elements such as "human friction",³¹ divergent thinking, and empathy,³² is highlighted, attributed to a lack of connection with the real world (C. Seelinger & D. Elflein, 2024) - although the potential for training AI in emotion recognition is being explored.³³ For others, the use of AI for creation is considered a natural artistic evolution. The concept of "meta-creativity"³⁴ describes the participation of non-human systems, where AI undertakes repetitive tasks, thus enabling broader artistic explorations (P. Esling & N. Devis, 2020).

3.1. AI in the Creative Stage



Table 02: 45,6 million tracks with zero streams
(Source: luminatemusic.com)

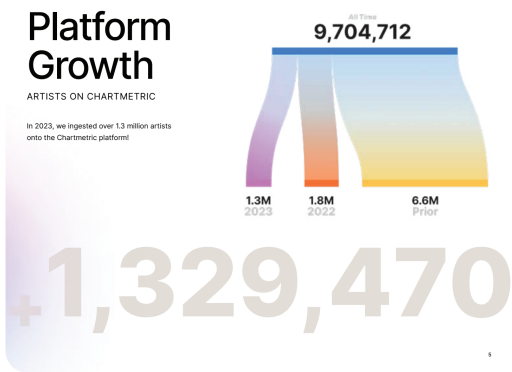


Table 03: 1.33 million new artists for 2023
(Source: chartmetric.com)

GenAI systems can facilitate the creative process by suggesting ideas, overcoming creative blocks, augmenting melody and harmony passages or creating new sonic textures (E. Navas, 2023; P. Esling & N. Devis, 2020; C. Seelinger, D. Elflein, et al., 2024). However, popular commercial applications such as Soundraw, Boomy, and Suno are not aimed at musicians but at the general public, allowing music to be created via simple text prompts. This leads to abuse, with millions of tracks³⁵ flooding already saturated platforms and cannibalizing the revenue of human artists (CISAC, 2024).

In 2024, approximately 120,000 tracks were uploaded daily,³⁶ a significant portion of which (43% of 184 million in 2023)³⁷ had minimal or zero streams (Table 02). Meanwhile, the musician community grew by 1.3 million artists in 2023 (Table 03), with very few having any prospect of gaining recognition.³⁸ It is the abuse of AI within the framework of a "digital democracy" that raises the question of whether AI constitutes a threat or a tool for musicians.³⁹

An example of this disruption is found in production music,⁴⁰ where producers can create music at a low cost,⁴¹ threatening traditional production music libraries - a scenario identical to what happened to stock photography.⁴² The often low quality of AI-generated music is overlooked, due to its low cost, thus diminishing the aesthetic value of music in the audiovisual sector.

Beyond original creation, AI can emulate artists or complete unfinished works (e.g., Bach,⁴³ Mahler,⁴⁴ The Beatles⁴⁵). Deepfakes, such as the fabricated Weeknd-Drake collaboration by Ghostwriter⁴⁶ go viral, while virtual artists⁴⁷ and concerts (e.g., ABBA, Elvis)⁴⁸ blur the lines between the physical and digital worlds. The use of AI in live performance is limited due to the demands of interaction and improvisation, although pre-recorded backing tracks are very common in the live sector,⁴⁹ and there are examples that appear to be overcoming this barrier.⁵⁰

3.2. AI in the Technical Stage

In audio production, AI is applied to mixing, mastering, and plugins (e.g., iZotope, LANDR)⁵¹ increase speed and reduce costs, facilitating DIY production with a professional sound; for instance, LANDR processes over 3 million tracks annually (J. Bhattacharya, 2023). However, the reliance on stereotypes creates a risk of substituting specialized technicians, thereby precluding original creative decisions.⁵²

AI-assisted score transcription (e.g., ScoreCloud)⁵³ saves time, although few musicians consider the time spent on transcription to be excessive, recognizing its value as a practical exercise.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, here too, the commercial argument is one of ease and accessibility.

The restoration of old recordings (with remastering having increased by 120%, according to J. Bhattacharya, 2023) or the separation of stems using AI are useful for the preservation of musical heritage. However, these stems are often commercially distributed as karaoke tracks or sample libraries without compensating the creators and performers. Furthermore, vocal removal⁵⁵ to create karaoke tracks is frequently done either without copyright checks or under the loose provisions of safe harbor laws.⁵⁶

3.3. AI in the Business Stage

In music marketing, AI assists in understanding audiences and optimizing release strategies. In the past, only major labels had the resources for sophisticated market research. AI-powered tools (like Chartmetric) can give an independent artist powerful insights into where their listeners are, which playlists are driving discovery, and what kind of content resonates. However, as everyone follows similar strategies, standing out becomes more difficult, even for established artists (Chartmetric, 2023), thereby reinforcing the trend of "old music killing the new".⁵⁷ Investors show a preference for established back catalogs over new artists.⁵⁸ Promotional algorithms on streaming and social media platforms favor commercial appeal and recycling over innovation,⁵⁹ leading to stagnation, "echo chambers," and marginalization.⁶⁰

3.4. AI in Copyright Management

Copyright Management Organizations face challenges in the identification, tracking, licensing, and distribution of revenue from rights. Issues such as multiple data standards, errors, and incomplete metadata,⁶¹ are exacerbated by AI, which introduces problems of transparency and authenticity.⁶² The EU Regulation (1689/2024) on the labeling of AI works is considered lenient,⁶³ with GenAI providers shifting responsibility to the user. As each provider sets its own rules,⁶⁴ only Deezer has developed an identification tool (the reliability of which remains to be proven).⁶⁵ In theory, AI systems could be used by CMOs to scan the entire digital landscape - social media, streaming platforms, games, films - to identify unlicensed uses of their members' music with incredible speed and accuracy. This AI wouldn't be generating

content; it would be a powerful enforcement tool, finding revenue streams that are currently lost and ensuring creators get paid for uses that are impossible to track manually. Still the paradox is that its training already involves massive-scale mining of protected content, often without permission and hence can't be trusted to be let loose..



Image 04: SomaxII is a modular, interactive improvisation software, written in Max and Python by the Ircam Music Representation team. It can be controlled simultaneously by multiple performers and at various levels of interaction.

(Source <https://www.stms-lab.fr/projects/pages/somax2/>)

3.5. AI in Music Education

AI can be an educational tool featuring virtual tutors and interactive systems (e.g., Yousician, SmartMusic).⁶⁶ It has the potential to stimulate interest and aid in the preservation of local traditions.⁶⁷ However, the lack of emotion and cultural context - the "magic" of teaching - remains a limitation, especially in oral traditions. Experimental improvisation applications, such as SOMAX II (Image 05, IRCAM, 2022), OMax, ImproteK, Djazz,⁶⁸ LyricJamSonic,⁶⁹ Virtual AI Jam⁷⁰ show promise.⁷¹ Yet, on a global scale, there is a lack of research, guidelines, and regulations addressing the ethical issues of connectivism, such as data security, reduced human interaction, bias, and the blunting of critical thinking.⁷² The EU has focused on regulating AI for administrative functions in education rather than for pedagogical tools (EU Regulation 1689/2024). Technical difficulties, including infrastructure and training, persist despite calls for action from the European Parliament.⁷³

Despite the immense and acknowledged potential for AI to serve as a creative catalyst, a tool for accessibility and a powerful assistant in management and education, its current implementation by dominant market players has overwhelmingly trended not towards artist empowerment, but towards cost reduction, content homogenization, and the systemic devaluation of human creativity.

4. Streaming Technology in Music Distribution

The music industry has historically been shaped by the technology of consumption (T. Bonini & P. Magaudda, 2024).⁷⁴ Today, streaming is dominant, offering instant access to millions of songs and an apparent "digital democracy" free from piracy, where artists can promote their music on equal terms.⁷⁵ However, in contrast to owning physical media like CDs, users now "rent" music through subscriptions, transforming recorded music into a service controlled by providers and record labels on corporate terms (L Pelly, 2025). Artists, dependent on streams for revenue, receive minimal compensation, raising the question of whether streaming has created more problems than it has solved.

4.1. Historical Background and the Rise of Streaming

Throughout the 1970s to the 1990s, when vinyl and subsequently the CD were the dominant formats, music publishing was a profitable endeavor, with record labels investing in artist development. The 1990s brought the advent of the World Wide Web (www)⁷⁶ and file compression (.mp3)⁷⁷ which led to massive digital piracy and fostered a culture of free music circulation. The industry resisted by suing users and implementing copy-protection on CDs, but from 2000 onwards, the decline in physical sales was dramatic (Table 05; Baskerville, 2006). Artists turned to self production (DIY), while record labels shifted their focus to management services and the acquisition of back catalogs. While the latter fought the internet by all means, technology⁷⁸ companies seized - and now maintain - control over music distribution and, consequently, the music industry itself (T. Gioia, 2019).

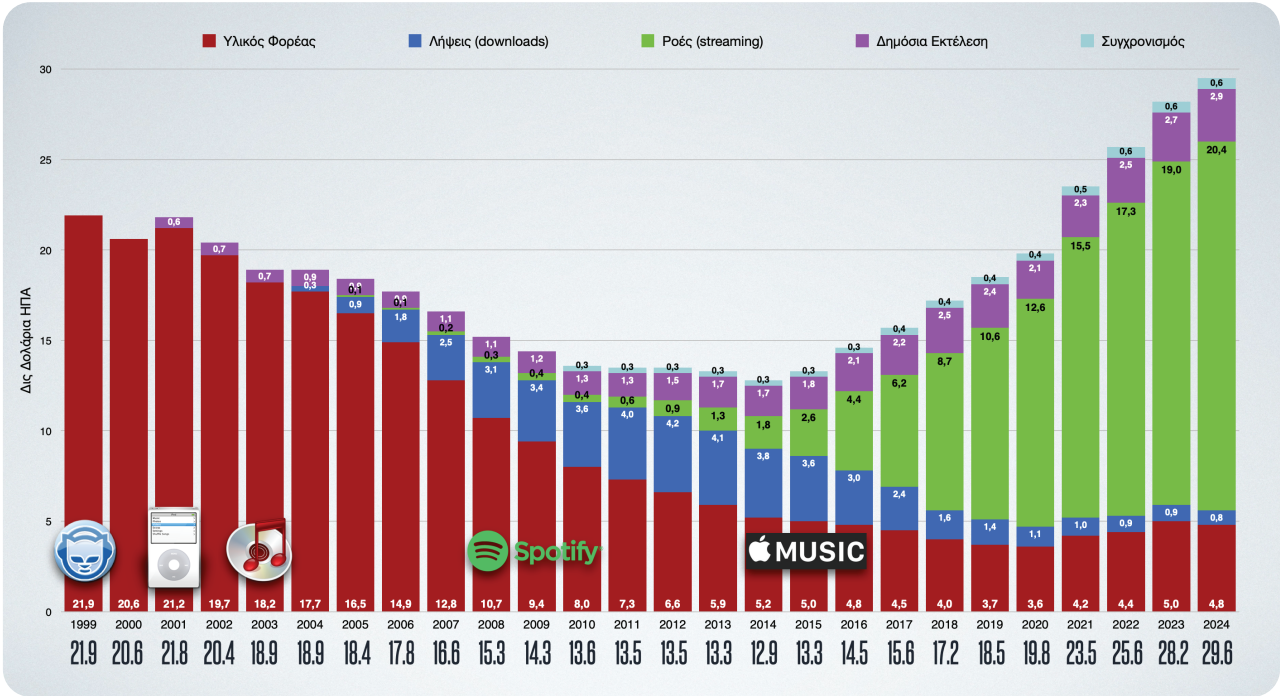


Table 06: Recording Industry Revenue 1999-2024
(Source IFPI Global Music Report 2025)

Daniel Ek, the founder and CEO of Spotify (established in 2006), identified an opportunity for legal and profitable online distribution. Initially using pirated files, Spotify evolved into a service that offered instant access to vast catalogs, first with advertisements and later with a "freemium" model. The agreements with record labels included large advances, guaranteed payments, and equity stakes, with Ek stating that Spotify sells access and subscriptions, thus treating music as an operational cost rather than a profit-generating asset (L. Pelly, 2025; T. Gioia, 2019). Simultaneously, Apple's iTunes (launched in 2003) promoted a model of purchasing and owning music,⁷⁹ a format that never managed to offset the losses from declining physical sales (M. 79 Eriksson, R. Fleischer et al., 2019; S. Carlsson, 2021).

4.2. Economic Data and Revenue Distribution

Spotify holds a 34% market share, paying artists between \$0.003 and \$0.005 per stream (Table 07),⁸⁰ with final earnings dependent on multiple factors such as the user's subscription type, country, and the artist's specific agreements.⁸¹ For companies like Apple, Amazon, and YouTube, music serves as a supplementary component to their primary business operations. The prevailing model encourages passive listening, treating music as "wallpaper," which devalues the musical work and, from the providers' perspective, justifies the low royalty payments. The use of the term "content" as a synonym for "music," as seen in Ek's 2024 tweet regarding zero production costs (Image 07),⁸² signifies this effort to diminish the value of the

cultural good. As former blitzscaling startups,⁸³ these platforms have focused on rapid growth, often at a loss; Spotify, for instance, reported a profit for the first time in 2024 (Table 08).⁸⁴

Platform	Current Rate Range
Deezer	\$0.00935 - \$0.01143
Apple Music	\$0.00804 - \$0.00982
TIDAL	\$0.00720 - \$0.00880
Amazon Music	\$0.00516 - \$0.00630
YouTube Music	\$0.00449 - \$0.00549
Spotify	\$0.00325 - \$0.00397
Pandora	\$0.00193 - \$0.00235

Table 06: Streaming platforms rates
(Source: [Royalty Exchange](#))

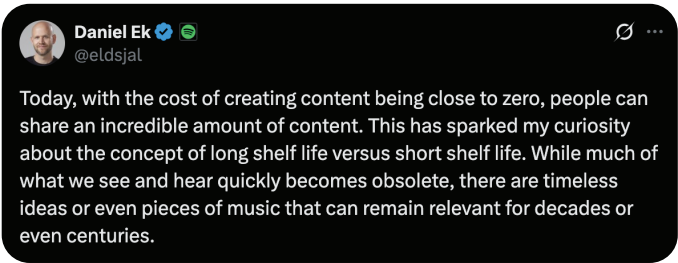


Image 07: Daniel Ek’s Tweet about content cost
(Source: [Twitter - X](#))

The industry’s revenue is essentially the turnover of technology companies that are not committed to the well-being of music culture. When adjusted for inflation (Table 09), the growth of the music industry over the past 50 years may be marginal.⁸⁵

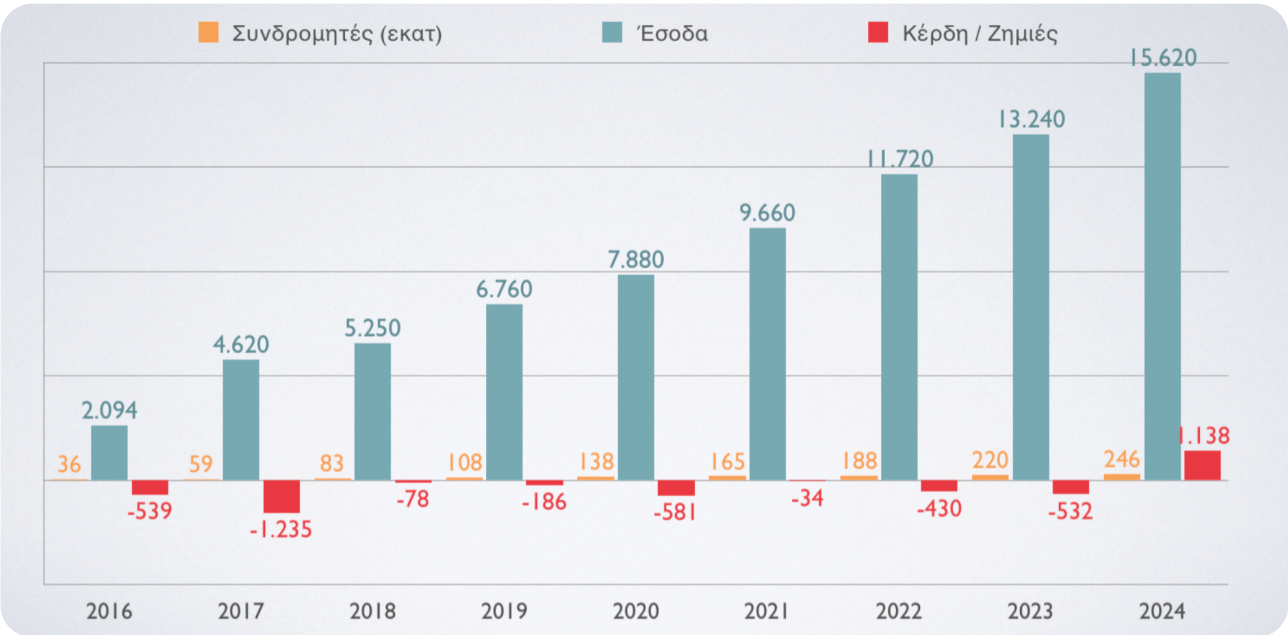


Table 08: Spotify Revenue 2016-2024 (Source: [businessofapps.com](#))

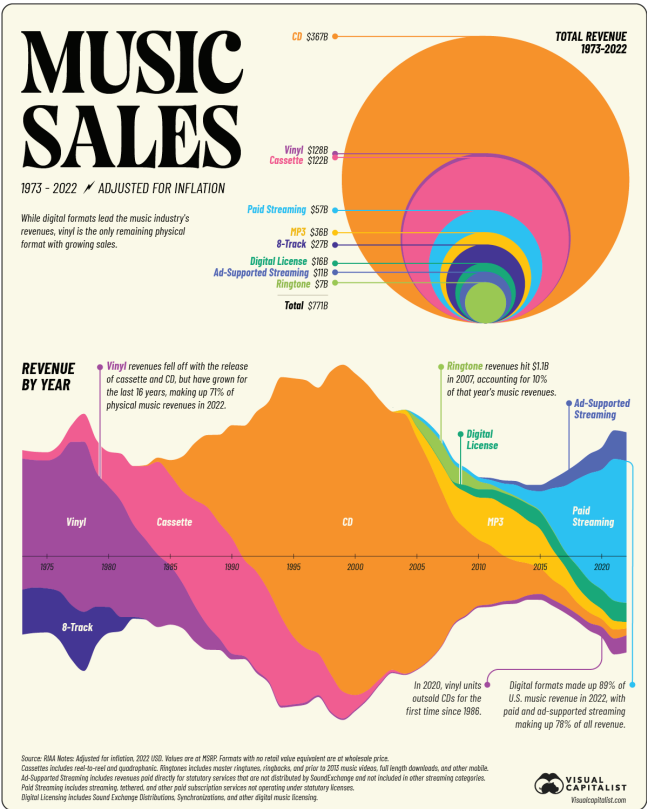


Table 09: Recording Industry Revenue, adjusted to inflation. (Source: VisualCapitalist)

The "pro-rata" revenue distribution model is based on each artist's market share of total streams. Typically, 30% of the revenue goes to the platform, while the remainder is distributed through complex, non-transparent contracts to record labels and publishers, resulting in significant losses for creators (approximately 11% for the artist and 10% for the songwriter in the example provided by D. Stopps, 2024, Table 11). Kobalt CEO Willard Ahdriz estimates that 75% of the money disappears within a dysfunctional system (de Souza, 2019), while the vast volume of data has led to litigation over unallocated royalties.⁸⁶ As the number of tracks increases, the per-stream royalty rate tends to decrease.⁸⁷

Furthermore, the pro-rata model favors famous artists, absorbing the subscription fees even from users who do not listen to them.⁸⁸ Alternatives like the user-centric model (employed by SoundCloud⁸⁹ and a Deezer/Universal version⁹⁰) are currently under consideration. However, the majority of artists (80% on Spotify in 2022)⁹¹ have very few monthly listeners (Table 12). As of April 2024, Spotify ceased paying royalties for tracks with fewer than 1,000 annual streams (affecting 62.5% of its content)⁹², a move aimed at combating the exploitation of the platform with "white noise" tracks or content created by GenAI.⁹³ It is notable that 99.5% of artists receive just 10% of total streams, while the top 0.5% (57,000 artists) command the remaining 90%.⁹⁴

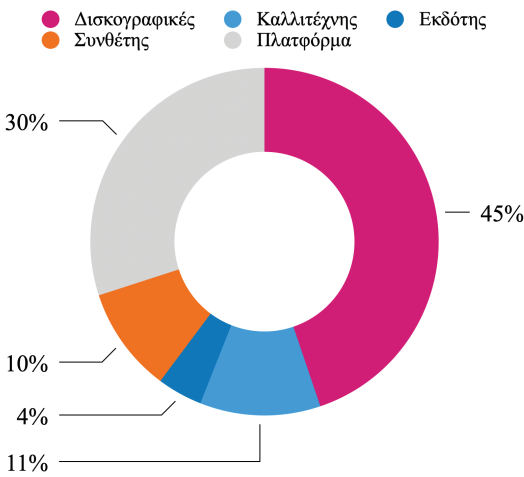


Table 10: Percentages from streaming (Source: D Stopps_ "How To Make A Living From Music")

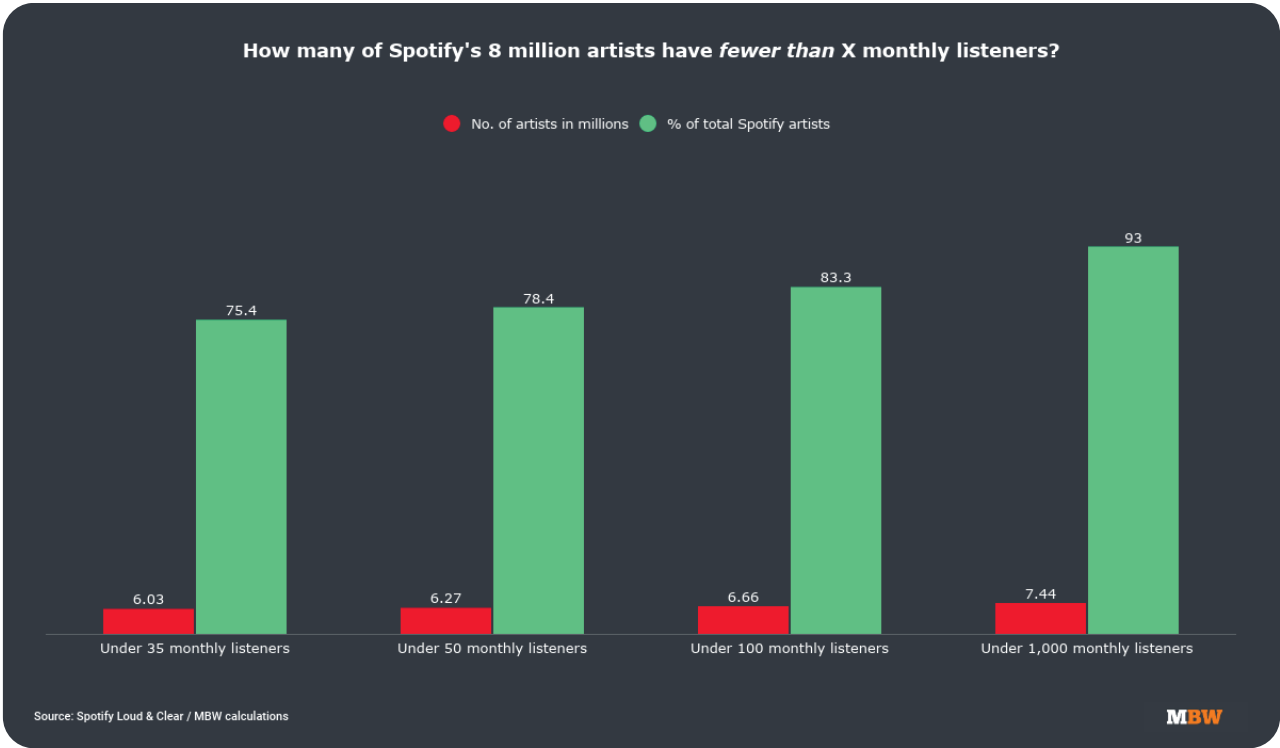


Table 11: 78.4% of the artists have less than 50 listeners/ month (Source: [MusicBusinessPodcast](#))

Despite the industry’s revenue growth, creators feel deceived⁹⁵, as the largest portion ends up with intermediaries.⁹⁶ Platforms are increasing subscription prices for consumers while paying progressively less to musicians (12-17% of total revenue).⁹⁷ In the United States, the "Living Wage For Musicians Act," ⁹⁸ a legislative proposal introduced in March 2024, aims to boost musician earnings by increasing subscription fees and creating a new fund. In the same month, Spotify unilaterally reduced its mechanical royalty payments to the US collection society MLC by 50%, justifying the cut by classifying its premium subscriptions as a "special bundle." ⁹⁹

5. The Cumulative Effects of AI and Streaming on the Music Ecosystem

5.1. The First Stage: The Demand for Perfect Fit Content (PFC)

Streaming, the dominant mode of listening (accounting for up to 80% of revenue in some markets), serves a massive scale of consumption (A. Arenal, C. Armuna et al., 2024). Spotify, which initially focused on user-driven music discovery, shifted its strategy in 2013 towards curated playlists, emphasizing listener mood (T. Bonini & P. Magaudda, 2024) and predicting preferences based on listening history - a practice subsequently adopted by all major providers. Streaming has thus integrated AI through algorithmic curation and personalized playlists, which are fundamental to both the user experience and the business model.

It is true that a significant market for purely “functional”, mood music (for focus, sleep, workouts, background ambience) has always existed and is distinct from the market for “artistic” music. One could argue that the rise of PFC doesn’t necessarily cause a decline in artistic listening, but rather serves a different, pre-existing need with new tools. The problem arises when the platform’s architecture and economic model fail to distinguish between the two, actively promote functional over artistic content (as it’s cheaper and more predictable), and incentivise the blurring of the lines, thereby devaluing artistic work in the process. While “curated” playlists aim to provide a personalized experience, they actively shape listener preferences (M. Eriksson, R. Fleischer et al., 2019), promoting specific values and framing music with the invisible authority of the algorithm (R. Prey, 2020). This process commodifies music, establishing a content policy that reduces it to a homogenized background, detached from its message, context, and even its creators.

Spotify’s “Discover Weekly” feature (launched in 2015) is a prime example: AI algorithms—including language models, collaborative filtering, deep learning, and reinforcement learning—generate personalized playlists in a non-transparent, “black box” manner (T. Bonini & P. Magaudda, 2024), with their validity judged solely by commercial outcomes (T. Hodgson, 2021; A. Mathews, 2024). This mood-based organization turns music into “streambait” (a term analogous to “clickbait”)¹⁰⁰, reducing the cognitive effort of discovery and leading to “easy listening” (L. Pelly, 2025). The platform promotes the perpetual playback of “wallpaper” music, or Perfect Fit Content (PFC), focusing on mood and “vibe” instead of on artists, thereby shaping a particular type of listener and creating a musical pulp devoid of identity. Algorithmic playlists (which account for 60% of consumption on Spotify, according to Bhattacharya, 2023, and 70% of streams on Amazon Music via Alexa)¹⁰¹ encourage passive listening.

For their part, artists, seeking visibility, adapt their music to be "streaming-friendly," a trend that leads to "Spotifycore."^{102 103} Spotify's "Discovery Mode" program, a form of payola,¹⁰⁴ promotes tracks in exchange for reduced royalty rates without any disclosure to the user - a practice criticized by the U.S. House of Representatives (2021) as a "race to the bottom."¹⁰⁵ Even platforms with more equitable models, such as SoundCloud and Bandcamp,¹⁰⁶ have proven vulnerable to market pressures, leaving artists to search in vain for stability in the absence of structural regulation.

5.2. The Second Stage: The Creation of PFC

The "platformization" of culture - that is, the infiltration of platform infrastructures and strategies into the circulation of cultural goods - is leading to a reorganization of the creative industries (T. Bonini & P. Magaudda, 2024). This constitutes a radical shift in power, as creators are compelled to adapt their work to the platforms in order to reach an audience,¹⁰⁷ effectively "optimizing" it for the algorithms. This leads to changes in composition, such as the elimination of intros and the reduction of track length (adhering to the "30-second rule," J. W. Morris, 2020),¹⁰⁸ as well as more frequent releases of individual tracks. This trend was encouraged by Daniel Ek, who stated in 2020: in the streaming world, "you can't record music once every three to four years and think that's going to be enough to live on".¹⁰⁹ The demand for abundant, inexpensive, and "fitting" mood-based content is being met by a new class of music producers who exclusively publish "mood content" - primarily lo-fi beats or ambient music - with the goal of siphoning royalties. These "fake artists" are the quintessential symptom of the "race to the bottom," and Generative AI serves as the ideal tool for their proliferation.

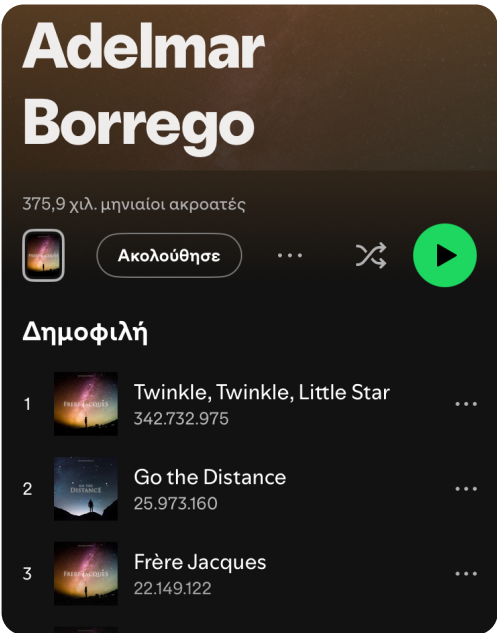


Image 13: Adelmar Borrego on Spotify (Source: [Spotify](#))

5.2.1. Case study 1: Fake Artists

According to an investigation by a Swedish newspaper,¹¹⁰ Swedish composer Johan Röhr, using 656 pseudonyms, has accumulated 15 billion streams on Spotify¹¹¹ from 2,700 instrumental tracks featured in over 100 of Spotify's own playlists, which have more than 62 million subscribers. His earnings in 2022 amounted to \$3.13 million. His musical pieces, such as "Twinkle Twinkle" with 341.5 million streams (as of May 21, 2025), "Frère Jacques," or "Kumbaya" (under the pseudonym Adelmar Borrego, Image 14), are generic "elevator music" intended for mood-based playlists.

Röhr's success depends on assigning his 2,700 tracks to fake creators, as no single artist could plausibly claim such monstrous inspiration (except, perhaps, GenAI) - and besides, more creators mean more streams. The YouTube channel for "Adelmar Borrego" has only 73 subscribers.¹¹²

According to the same investigation, 91 Swedish individuals, using 5,700 pseudonyms, are credited as composers on over 13,000 tracks. The practice of using multiple pseudonyms serves the demand for vast quantities of content. Companies like Epidemic Sound¹¹³ and Firefly Entertainment,¹¹⁴ acquire music through one-time buy-out deals and promote it under various pseudonyms. Major record labels, such as SONY¹¹⁵ employ similar tactics (M. Stassen, 2022). Finally, Spotify itself has been accused of collaborating with numerous composers like Röhr, thereby cannibalizing the revenues of "real" artists who do not have the privilege of being featured on the provider's official playlists.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the platform would have every incentive to create its own "fitting content": it would be lower-cost than licensing from major or independent label catalogs, could be promoted for free on algorithmic playlists, and would allow Spotify to retain a share (or even all) of the royalties. A former Spotify employee confessed that this practice is part of "a series of internal initiatives to reduce the royalties the platform pays to major labels. [...] and it helps in negotiations with them."¹¹⁷ Of course, such an activity could not be done openly, as it would be considered direct competition with its own suppliers. In any case, Spotify has categorically denied hiring producers to compose music under pseudonyms, after first pointing out that neither the use of pseudonyms nor the creation of mood-based playlists is illegal.¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, a growing number of new songs and albums on these platforms do not belong to real bands or artists but to AI-generated entities, often accompanied by fabricated biographies and historical details. A recent example is the band Velvet Sundown: they suddenly appeared in Spotify's Discover Weekly, rapidly acquiring hundreds of thousands of listeners without any prior history or information about their members. Their promotional photos and album covers, being unnaturally "clean" and digital, immediately suggested AI creation. Their biography, song titles, lyrics, and other texts were vague, lacking references to producers or collaborators, and filled with the kind of abstract, poetic expressions frequently generated by AI.

Velvet Sundown themselves fueled the mystery by denying they were AI, until a representative for the group publicly admitted that the music and the entire project had been produced on Suno.¹¹⁹ He characterized the project as "marketing" and "trolling," emphasizing his intent to explore the boundaries between real and fake in the internet age - not without financial gain, one might add. A former Spotify employee stated that Velvet Sundown's popularity likely stems from the service now accepting payments for playlist promotion, with playlists being

increasingly curated by algorithms that "select songs based on their sonic characteristics."

5.2.2. Case Study 2: Fraudulent Streams

In September 2024, Michael Smith was prosecuted in the United States for creating hundreds of thousands of GenAI songs and using bots to generate billions of streams, from which he extracted over \$10 million in royalties.¹²⁰ He used thousands of fake accounts and randomly generated artist and song names to make the streams appear legitimate. The phenomenon of "streaming farms"¹²¹ is widespread: a 2023 study in France¹²² identified over 1 billion fraudulent streams. Deezer suspects that 7% of its streams are fraudulent, while the Financial Times suggests the figure is closer to 10%,¹²³ thereby depriving legitimate rights holders of their due royalties. In 2018, Tidal was accused of inflating the stream counts for artists such as Beyoncé and Kanye West.¹²⁴ In 2024, a Danish man was sentenced to 18 months in prison for fraudulently inflating the streams of hundreds of songs on streaming platforms; he was also found guilty of copyright infringement for 37 of these songs, which he had "created" by altering the tempo and duration of existing tracks and releasing them under his own name.¹²⁵

6. Legislative Discomfort

As digitization and online distribution redefine the music industry, a polarized debate over copyright is unfolding: artists and record labels are calling for stronger protections, while technocrats warn against counterproductive measures. With AI dominating music discovery (used by 74% of users) and many top songs being shaped by algorithms (E. Shaikh, 2025), the combination of fake artists, fraudulent streams, and GenAI music creates a grim mosaic.¹²⁶ Despite new penalties introduced by Spotify in 2023,¹²⁷ algorithmic playlists and the ease of producing "perfect fit content" (PFC) with GenAI encourage the mass production of streambait. This content degrades quality, with 84% of listeners unable to distinguish synthetic music (E. Shaikh, 2025), portending a cultural cheapening. And while history is replete with legislative attempts to regulate music culture (T. Gioia, 2019), the legislature of a modern state would not wish to do so (though there are alarmingly many attempts).¹²⁸ However, it does try (as it is obligated to do) to regulate the unchecked infiltration of GenAI into the artistic ecosystem and its consequences in the field of copyright.

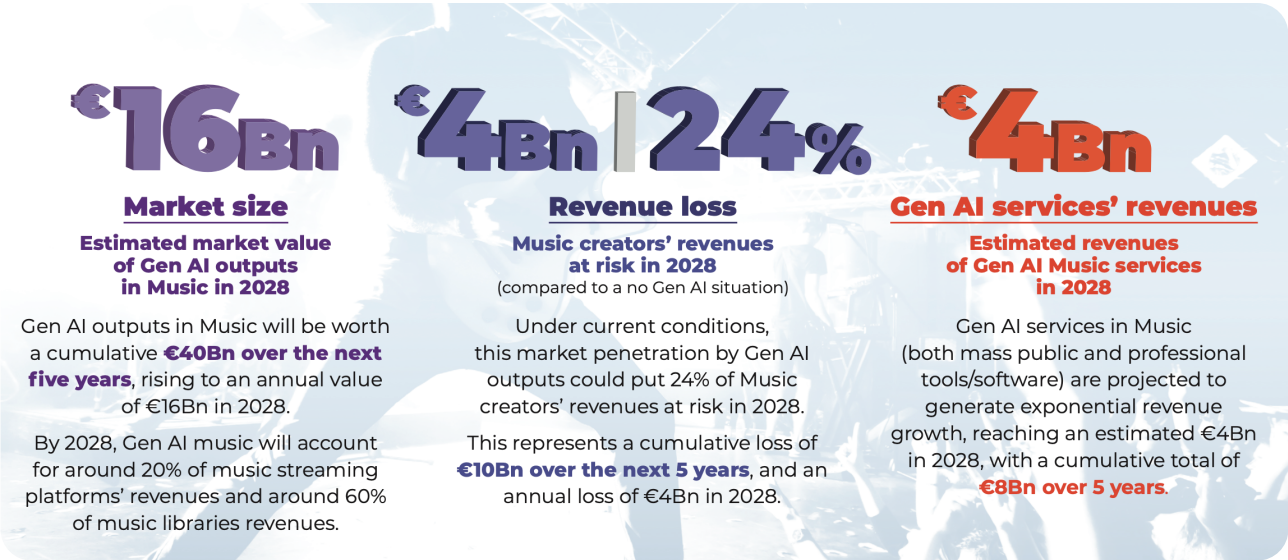


Image 14: 24% of creators' income will be at risk in 2028 (Source: CISAC)

The prevailing view is that machine creation does not give rise to a copyright claim (United States Copyright Office, 2025), or at least that it depends on the percentage of technological involvement in the creation.¹²⁹ The training of GenAI on protected content without compensating creators (the "input problem") and the cannibalization of their traditional revenues by AI-generated works (the "output problem") pose a significant threat to creators, with an estimated 24% loss of revenue, or a cumulative €10 billion by 2028 (Table 15, CISAC, 2024). Despite the existence of potential solutions (e.g., extending private copying legislation),¹³⁰ lack of agreement and political will favors the interests of investors.

Mustafa Suleyman (head of Microsoft's AI division, which is inundated with lawsuits for the alleged use of protected works),¹³¹ has argued that online content constitutes "freeware" based on a social contract,¹³² and, in any case, its use should be considered "fair and reasonable." The concept of "fair use," often invoked by AI companies, does not cover the mass training of AI systems on protected works, as this use does not fall under the limited exceptions (such as criticism, teaching, etc.) provided for by national and international legislation (like Law 2121/1993 in Greece). However, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, which is being sued jointly with Microsoft (E. Creamer, 2025), has stated that if the "social contract" is a problem, it can be changed.¹³³

6.1. Legislative Initiatives and Reactions

In the United States, Joe Biden's Executive Order 14110 (October 2023) on the safe development of AI was revoked by Donald Trump in January 2025.¹³⁴ In April 2024, a bill was introduced¹³⁵ requiring GenAI companies to disclose the protected works used in the training of their models, a measure supported by the music industry and a letter from over 200 artists (via the Artist Rights Alliance) protesting the "predatory use of AI".¹³⁶ And while state courts are issuing rulings on GenAI abuses concerning privacy, fraud, and bias,¹³⁷ the U.S. Congress (as of May 2025) is considering a ten-year moratorium on state-level AI regulations.¹³⁸

In UK in 2024, the government proposed¹³⁹ that creators must explicitly state if they do not permit ("opt-out") the use of their works for AI training, thereby shifting the burden onto them.¹⁴⁰ An amendment from the House of Lords calling for transparency from AI companies was rejected by the House of Commons due to cost concerns,¹⁴¹ with a new, more ambiguous amendment currently under consideration.¹⁴² It must be said that the very concept of an opt-out system is seen by rights holders as being in direct violation of long-standing international copyright principles. The ARI argues that such a system illegally imposes preconditions on the exercise of a fundamental right":

"A reservation of rights system simply adds formalities to the current copyright system. The Berne Convention's prohibition on formalities is a key principle that ensures the protection of copyright without requiring any formal procedures... the 'enjoyment and the exercise' of copyright shall not be subject to any formality." (Artist Rights Institute, 2024)

In the European Union, the AI Act (EU Regulation 2024/1689) requires providers of General Purpose AI (GPAI) to comply with copyright law and to provide summaries of their training content. However, the GPAI's¹⁴³ effort to establish a binding Code of Practice failed, as the draft was deemed inadequate by 26 organizations and unions¹⁴⁴ for protecting creators' rights.

Europe, dependent on American technologies,¹⁴⁵ hesitates to impose strict compensation, fearing the political cost of increased subscription fees. Despite imposing significant fines on American companies,¹⁴⁶ from time to time, primarily for reasons related to personal data and oligopolistic practices, copyright law is suffering the consequences of an undeclared economic war.

At the international level (WIPO), the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)¹⁴⁷ have been requesting talks on the inadequate compensation for creators from online exploitation since 2015.¹⁴⁸ Despite frequent and persistent consultations with representative organizations and numerous WIPO studies,¹⁴⁹ WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR)¹⁵⁰ cannot proceed due to a veto from the United States, which invokes market freedom.¹⁵¹

Despite ongoing and intense global protests from European artists¹⁵² and the recent successful mobilization of the SAG-AFTRA union in the US,¹⁵³ it appears that the artistic community is facing powerful lobbies and predetermined political decisions. The legislative inertia is viewed by creator advocacy groups not as a failure of understanding, but as a deliberate policy choice, aligning national interests with those of major technology firms. As Baroness Kidron argued:

"The Government are doing this not because the current law does not protect intellectual property rights, nor because they do not understand the devastation it will cause, but because they are hooked on the delusion that the UK's best interests and economic future align with those of Silicon Valley." (Baroness Kidron, quoted in Artist Rights Institute Consultation, 2024) As legislative regulation is delayed, record labels and rights management organizations are turning to the courts.

6.1.1. Case Study 3: Universal, SONY & Warner vs. Suno & Udio

In June 2024, the "big three" major labels - Universal, SONY, and Warner - filed a joint lawsuit against Suno and Udio, the leading GenAI music platforms, for copyright infringement.¹⁵⁴ The lawsuits state that a GenAI service's ability to produce convincing musical imitations is based on "copying a massive trove of sound recordings" for training purposes. The plaintiffs allege that during the training process, popular sound recordings spanning decades and from around the world were copied and used to train GenAI models to "emulate their qualities." The record labels insist that these specific GenAI services "exploit protected sound recordings without a license." The platforms invoke "fair use," combined with the argument that their "technology is designed to generate completely new output, not to memorize and regurgitate existing content."

According to the CEO of Suno, they attempted to explain this to the record labels, but "instead of entertaining a good faith discussion," the labels "reverted to their old-school, lawyer-driven playbook." For their part, the record labels maintain that Suno and Udio are profiteering by deeming it "fair" to use an artist's life's work without compensation. Although this is a positive development for musicians, in reality, record labels and DMSPs are fighting for a seat at the table, as music for the former is a profit-generating asset, while for the latter, it is a cost to be minimized.

Other entities are also pursuing legal action¹⁵⁵: in January 2025, GEMA, a major German collective management organization, took action against Suno, accusing the platform of processing sound recordings from its catalog without payment.¹⁵⁶ Earlier, in 2024, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) filed two copyright infringement lawsuits against Suno and Udio for the use of protected sound recordings that were copied and exploited by the companies without a license.¹⁵⁷

Bollywood has taken similar legal steps: a group of Indian record labels and publishers, from T Series and Saregama to Sony, is participating in a copyright lawsuit against OpenAI in New Delhi, highlighting their concerns about the unauthorized use of sound recordings for training GenAI models.¹⁵⁸

One might argue that labels want "a piece of the action", and these legal actions are merely ways to trigger negotiations between them and Big Tech. However, there is an obvious power imbalance that leads to a situation of de facto impunity for large platforms, a reality that has led creator groups to call for a radical shift in enforcement, moving from impractical civil remedies to state-enforced consequences:

"We suggest a very simple policy guideline - if an artist is more likely to be able to get the police to stop their car from being stolen off the street than to get the police to stop the artist's life's work from being stolen online by a heavily capitalized AI platform, the policy will fail." (Artist Rights Institute, 2024)

7. The Situation for Creators and Performers

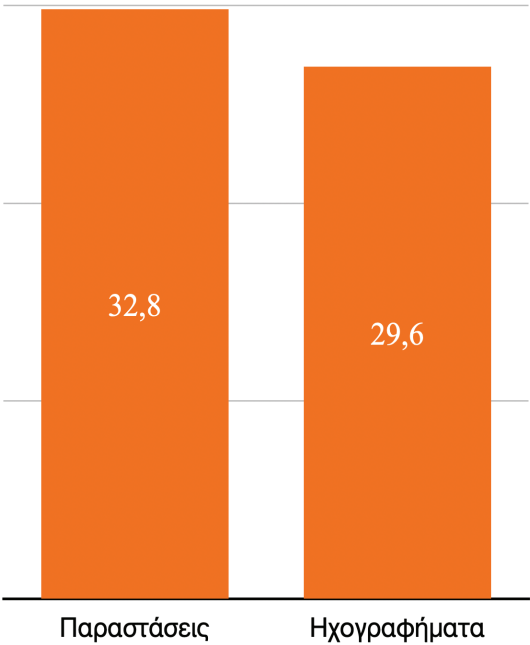


Table 16: Musicians’ revenue from live and recording
(Sources: [Live Music – Global Strategic Business Report](#)
and [IFPI Global Music Report 2025](#))

While streaming opens up global markets, it also intensifies competition and threatens local music scenes. The centralized distribution of recorded music profits makes it difficult for artists to achieve sustainability, leading to an erosion of their middle class. Low revenues, combined with an emphasis on algorithm-friendly music, cause musical homogenization, discourage investment in innovation, and favor established names and older repertoires (T. Gioia, 2022; S. Ramesh, 2024). With streaming revenues being absorbed by a technocratic elite (Spotify, Apple, Amazon, Google),¹⁵⁹ live performances have become the primary source of income for musicians¹⁶⁰ In 2024, live music generated \$32.8 billion¹⁶¹ compared to \$29.6 billion from recorded music (Table 14, IFPI, 2025). However, even successful artists are finding it difficult to make a living solely from their music.¹⁶²

7.1. International Overview of Working Realities

United Kingdom: Despite high levels of education, over 50% of musicians earn their living from other sectors.¹⁶³ The average musician holds 3-4 jobs, with an annual income from music of approximately £30,000 (lower than the national average salary)¹⁶⁴. Less than 0.4% of artists on streaming platforms achieve 1 million streams per month, the level considered necessary to make a living.¹⁶⁵ 65% do not make pension contributions, making retirement difficult.¹⁶⁶

United States: The primary source of income is live performances (28%), followed by teaching (22%) and salaries from ensembles (19%). Recorded music accounts for only 6% of total income.¹⁶⁷

Australia: Self-employment is predominant, with over 50% holding other jobs (89% of their income comes from non-music-related work).¹⁶⁸ In 2023, 50% of musicians earned less than \$6,000.¹⁶⁹

South Africa (Jazz scene): Even well-known musicians earn approximately \$1,392 per month, with no job security or stable income.¹⁷⁰ Professional expenses are burdensome, and piracy severely impacts their earnings.¹⁷¹

Asia: Despite strong music scenes in countries like Japan, South Korea, China, and India,¹⁷² musicians face economic instability, limited job security, and pressure from technological advancements and streaming, as well as issues of censorship.¹⁷³

7.1.1. European Context and Challenges

Within a context hostile to creators' rights, a revealing study commissioned by the European Parliament in 2021¹⁷⁴ (which led to the "European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU") summarizes the precarity of the music profession on the European continent. The sector, which employs 3.8% of the European workforce and represents 4.4% of the EU's total GDP, is not adequately protected.¹⁷⁵ Atypical forms of work, unstable income, and limited opportunities for collective bargaining are prevalent, alongside a high risk of underpaid or unpaid work, false self-employment, and abusive buy-out clauses.¹⁷⁶ Specifically, the main characteristics of the working conditions for artists and cultural workers across all member states are:

- Multiple definitions of the term "artist," which hinder uniform recognition.
- Low incomes and precarity due to multiple income sources and market saturation.
- A lack of uniform regulations for taxation, social security, minimum wage, and the recognition of diplomas.
- Challenges of the digital environment, particularly regarding fair remuneration and cultural diversity.
 - Frequent career changes without adequate support.
 - Chronic inequalities related to gender, disability, age, and origin.
 - Risks to freedom of expression and human rights.

In addition to the systemic and structural weaknesses exacerbated by the economic crisis, the pandemic and inflation, and compounded by incomplete or non-existent mapping and documentation due to atypical employment, artistic communities also face the labor deregulation caused by neoliberal policies. This occurs within an environment of general disengagement from collective bodies (unions, cooperatives, associations), which appear to have disillusioned the public. Automation is expected to further impact routine sectors such as production music, mixing, and mastering, while AI in distribution dictates the creative frameworks.

A case in point is Germany, where in 2022, out of 69,000 professional musicians,¹⁷⁷ 70% did not work exclusively as artists. The average monthly income was €2,660 (with women, who make up 28% of the total, earning 24% less).¹⁷⁸ One in five musicians earned less than €1,500 per month.

7.1.2. The Situation in Greece

In Greece, culture is often treated as a conservative, state-supported ideology oriented towards the past, resulting in the degradation of its social functionality. The lack of comprehensive mapping, the absence of a standardized framework for music studies, and the fragmentation of collective management organizations (CMOs) are indicative of the problems. Following the COVID-19 pandemic (during which the turnover for live entertainment decreased by over 80% across Europe)¹⁷⁹, the music profession returned to its pre-coronavirus "normality": entertainment venues and music scenes are once again operating only on weekends, and the drop in turnover has kept wages below levels seen when the cost of living was 60% lower. A study on the musical idioms of Greece, the Balkans, and the Eastern Mediterranean,¹⁸⁰ showed that two-thirds of instrumentalists/ songwriters have an annual income from music of up to €7,200, while 52% hold other jobs. Furthermore, 41.5% are not compensated for recorded sessions, 51% have never signed a contract concerning their rights, and 52% have limited or incorrect knowledge of copyright and neighboring rights.¹⁸¹ From the user side, it is estimated that the collection of royalties from businesses obligated to pay could be four times higher (up to €42 million) compared to the total turnover of the relevant CMOs.¹⁸² Proposed alternative income sources for musicians, such as teaching, instrument making, and independent micro-scenes¹⁸³ require a favorable social environment and further training. Outside of major urban centers, holding multiple jobs is the only viable option.¹⁸⁴

Beyond the practical costs (equipment, transportation, tuition, working hours, etc., as noted by C. Cooke, 2023), musicians face a deficit in "survival skills" (management, marketing, networking, technical expertise, stage presence), which are a consequence of the new market demands.¹⁸⁵ Interaction with other arts, knowledge of different musical traditions, multimedia expertise, and communication and business skills are now essential. Musicians must build a diverse portfolio, taking on multiple roles: creator, performer, entrepreneur, leader, and teacher. However, educational institutions do not adequately prepare them for this reality,¹⁸⁶ leading to failure, resignation, and psychological distress.¹⁸⁸ Research from the Journal of Psychiatric Research indicated that 73% of independent creators exhibit heightened levels of depression/anxiety and a five-fold higher rate of suicidal ideation compared to the general population.

Based on the above, there is an urgent need for targeted training for musicians in three areas:

- Understanding music as a cultural industry and familiarizing themselves with its characteristics, specificities, and technologies.
- Acquiring the technical and business skills necessary for the modern musician who produces, promotes, and commercializes their own music.
- Understanding intellectual property and the laws that regulate the rights of creators, performers, and other industry professionals (publishers, record labels, producers, managers, etc.), as well as the revenues derived from them.

This training can be supported by:

- **State Institutions:** Arts education requires robust reform, standardization, and a broader curriculum. It must develop a strong connection with the professional field, modernize, become intervention-oriented, and illuminate trends, attitudes, and values. This presupposes generous funding, infrastructure, and tax incentives for musicians who invest in their professional development, as well as subsidies for startups in instrument making, music technology, show production, and recording, with an emphasis on local music scenes and their international presence. Educational practices must also reinforce the protection of intellectual property.
- **Major Employers:** Cultural organizations, established orchestras, and foundations can provide training and professional development opportunities, such as educational programs, tuition reimbursement, and incentives for musicians who participate - including conferences, seminars, or events, and collaborations with educational institutions.
- **Labor Unions:** Beyond negotiating with employers and applying public pressure to elevate the profession, unions can develop their own or collaborative programs, offer access to educational resources (spaces, subscriptions, equipment), and foster organized communities.
- **Collective Management Organizations:** CMOs can ensure that musicians receive the royalties they are entitled to by pursuing legal action where necessary, intervening in the preparatory work of legislators, monitoring technological developments, and actively participating in international federations and European lobbying efforts to promote the interests of musicians.

8. Is AI the Ultimate Threat to Musicians?

Examining the utility of AI for musicians, it appears that the benefits derived from using it as a "tool" are disproportionate to the consequences of its abuse. Given that AI is here to stay and that every supposed "good use" either undermines existing revenue streams for musicians or replaces them entirely, it is essential to highlight its inherent weaknesses in relation to music as both an art form and a social phenomenon. These weaknesses include the lack of musical intention and meaning, the inability to perform and improvise in real-time, the incapacity for radical innovation, and the difficulty in understanding cultural/historical contexts or creating a genuine artistic identity.

Two primary paths of response emerge. On one hand, there is the redefinition of the value of human music, emphasizing characteristics that artificial intelligence cannot replicate: emotion, interaction, expression, and connection with listeners. On the other hand, there is the push to reclaim control over the technology, at least in partnership with the companies that produce it. Towards a strategy of adaptation without concessions and gaining control of the value chain, the following are necessary:

Legal and Political Protections: There is a clear need for greater transparency in royalty calculations, compelling AI companies to disclose the works used to train their models, and for more equitable revenue distribution models that are proportional to human artistic value, supported by updated and stronger copyright legislation. The structures tasked with their enforcement must be modernized to ensure that AI-generated music is not trained on works without permission and compensation (S. Ramesh, 2024). A collective compensation model for AI-generated music is needed: if platforms profit from AI music, musicians must receive a share, especially if their work contributed to its training. In Greece, we have Article 18 of Law 2121/1993 on private copying, which could be extended to include AI-generated works. However, not all countries have a corresponding regulation, and even in our own, companies are constantly seeking ways to circumvent it. This requires persistent legal efforts (and corresponding expenses), which technology companies will fiercely oppose.

Collective Bargaining: Musicians must negotiate with technology companies and streaming platforms. If American actors and writers (SAG-AFTRA, WGA) fought for protection from AI, musicians can do the same. The challenge is that musicians serve different genres, have diverse income sources, and often compete with one another. Politicians and investors know that musicians are, by nature, too independent, unconventional, and competitive to unionize effectively - and they rely on this to push AI with minimal resistance. Public pressure campaigns are essential to raise awareness among consumers who may not understand what

is at stake and why real musicians matter. If AI music becomes dominant, diversity, cultural identity, and any notion of artistic expression will be lost. Major platforms like Spotify, YouTube, and TikTok promote whatever is most cost-effective—and soon, that will be AI music. Incentives must be sought to encourage the promotion of a broader range of artists and genres to mitigate the phenomenon of homogenized music and streambait.

Positioning "authentic" music as a "premium" product, could create a specialized market. We can envision the creation of a counter-economy centered around a type of machine-readable "watermark," incorporating metadata that proves human creation. Such branding, supported by communities, could generate new musical movements with an emphasis on artistic individuality, experimentation, and innovation. Seeking funding from state bodies, non-profit organizations, and grant programs can provide the infrastructure and financial support for the production and promotion of authentic music. Within this framework, alternative revenue streams outside of streaming - such as live performances and the "fan economy" (licensed merchandise, crowdfunding, sponsorships, and other forms of direct support) - can be explored in collaboration with industry professionals.¹⁸⁹ Live events will gain even greater significance, as people will seek experiences that neither streaming nor AI can offer.

None of the above proposals is a panacea, and new data may emerge to complicate matters further. But the alternative of unchecked AI would be an even worse dead end. We have experienced technological changes in the past; while some fears proved exaggerated (e.g., drum machines and DAWs), others (like the internet and file-sharing) had catalytic effects (T. Gioia, 2019). Artificial intelligence presents itself as the most serious threat to date because it does not simply change how music is created: it replaces entire sectors in composition, performance, production, and licensing.

In any case, the cultural industries employ 15 million artists and professionals and are the third largest employer across Europe.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the grim state of music industry management should not be considered inevitable. It is the deficient representation of artists' interests in international lobbying that has shaped a global market that thrives on the commercial exploitation of their works and distributes profits according to the interests of the three major conglomerates that control 70% of the global repertoire (Universal, SONY, and Warner)¹⁹¹ the major intermediaries (Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple), and the AI tech-magnates (S. Hollister, 2024; D. Krukowski, 2024; V. K. Tiwari, & K. Siddiqui, 2025). From this perspective, the global lack of political will to control AI, under the pretext of research and innovation - but with the real cause being speculation - is particularly alarming.

9. Epilogue

It is easy for a musician to lose sight of the big picture, focused as they are on the latest musical trends, technological innovations, and popular idols - and the vast majority think this way. The deluge of information alters their aesthetic, and it becomes increasingly difficult to be impressed or inspired by the sheer volume of available music. Their exposure to the negative aspects of the industry, usually from the side of the wronged, and their conflicts with amateurs, opportunists, and other undesirables, frustrate their motivation and their disposition to offer and create. Combined, these two dynamics lead to "disenchantment" and cynicism. They become those who detest "the music of our time" and dwell on what they should have, could have, or would have done.¹⁹²

However, this discontent is often caused by the idea that somewhere out there, a technology exists that could solve musicians' problems but is not being advanced due to "vested interests." But no technological intervention will solve the complex and constantly shifting problems of the music industry - not downloads, not streaming, not GenAI. Because these problems are not technological. The problems that musicians face, like all problems in our society, are problems of power. (L Pelly, 2025)

The future of musicians was not sealed by the deals made between corporations, providers, and software engineers - they are not the ones who decide whether artists will win or lose. Justice and sustainability are values that are created and destroyed, claimed and defended - and sometimes lost, as technologies and formats come and go. There was a time, very recent, when the world lived without streaming and AI. To fix what is wrong with music, it is not enough to repair the music industry. It has, after all, been disappointing artists and audiences for generations. We must highlight why music and access to it matter, and what systemic political and economic realities are preventing so many people today from engaging with it seriously. Music cultures would be far more exciting and diverse if so many did not have to abandon the arts to find a job with health insurance.

As the reach and influence of Spotify's and YouTube's algorithms expand globally, it is urgent that we understand what is happening to musical practices and creativity in regions like South America, and South and East Asia, which are often overlooked by a Western-centric music industry (T. Hodgson, 2021). It is not enough to think only about changing music or changing technology. We must think about the world we want to live in, and how music fits into that vision (L. Pelly, 2025).

Some of us will live to see the era where robots make music for robots. At that point, we will need to redefine what music is and what purpose it serves. Because Art that needs to point out how necessary it is, is either not Art or not necessary.

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