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The Dynamics of Independent Music Scenes

“Musicking”

To the average person, music serves as a “wallpaper” to their daily lives. It plays in their earphones as they commute to work or school. It resonates inside office lobbies and elevators during work hours. It loops on the radio stations playing at department stores. Music is ubiquitous in the modern world and in the human experience. Despite this, many aspects of the music-making process have been far removed from audiences because the majority of popular music primarily exists as a product for consumers rather than a genuine inter-human experience.

In his 1998 publication *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Christopher Smalls coined the term “musicking.” Musicking is defined as “any activity involving or relating to music performance, such as performing, listening, rehearsing, or composing.” Smalls argues that “to music” is to be involved in the complex nature of human communication through musical performance. After all, historically, music is typically not created with the sole intent of having it be listened to. Music also encompasses the worlds of practice, communication, dance, visual art, performance, and creative expression.

Musicking is the innate humanness found in music that we lose sight of when we treat music as a wallpaper in our lives. Many listeners only concern themselves with their favorite artists’ releases on digital streaming services. However, consumers of music are not wholly or even mainly to blame for the decline in musicking in our modern world. Hypercapitalism in the “music industry” has perpetuated the norm that causes convenient music listening to be the

primary driver for music consumption. This has increased the wealth and influence of a “music industry” at the expense of accessible, human musicking.

The “Music Industry”

The scope of the current study is limited to the music business of independent and pop musicians. In this context, “pop” is defined as music created by artists and labels with the intent of being marketed to listeners who primarily use streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, and Bandcamp. The blanket term “pop” encompasses a variety of genres that include but are not limited to rock, hip-hop, rap, country, and singer-songwriter. To discuss the intricacies of the entire music industry would be a great undertaking. This is not to discredit the worlds of Western classical music, traditional folk music, or other forms of musical expression but to rather highlight the components, issues, compromises, and developments of one specific music scene.

The current landscape of the “music industry” is diverse and overwhelming to navigate for the average music listener or independent artist. In the twenty-first century, it seems that music as a monetized good or service has dematerialized under the influences and confines of modern capitalism. Throughout history, trending and charting music has been successful because it generated large amounts of revenue for top music business executives, recording artists, publishers, and songwriters. In most cases, these executives have had little direct influence on the music itself. This is especially true in the modern era of oligopolies and corporations that dictate the standards for entire sectors of businesses. The music business is not unscathed from this. As consumer-conscious audiences become increasingly aware of this phenomenon, they may be drawn closer to the music-making process and musicking. This is because consumer-

conscious audiences may disagree with the exploitative nature of the music business in favor of the genuineness of musicking. However, there are still facets of the industry that remain relatively veiled to the public, such as live music-making, touring, and streaming. To ignorant commercial audiences, music has become a good that is enjoyable yet plentiful. The notion that music is a seemingly infinite good may lead many of these commercial audiences to believe that music is “free.” Like many other goods and services, the music that we consume is massively influential in shaping our perception of art and of the world. Thus, music listeners should be aware of the inner workings of the music industry in order to better understand the value of what they are listening to, who is creating their favorite songs, and why those songs exist in the first place.

It is important to note that the term “music industry” eliminates much of the nuance that defines music as a social activity. By labeling the entire music making process as the “music industry,” we are ignoring the fact that music encompasses a wide variety of businesses such as production, management, distribution, logistics, and finances. As scholar Jonathan Sterne writes, “There is no ‘music industry.’ There are many industries with many relationships to music” (Sterne, 2014). Thus, it is more appropriate to label the “music industry” as a “music network,” or “music business complex.” Furthermore, the music business complex is almost guaranteed to change over time as it has historically done so. With the advent of new technologies and mediums by which audiences consume music, independent artists must be ready for whatever is on the horizon. The current study will examine the sectors of music distribution and its financial world in order to elucidate what the “music industry” has complicated.

Performing and Physical Goods

For most of humanity, music has been shared, felt, and created through performance. This includes but is not limited to oral storytelling traditions, busking, and improvisation. Live performance allows musicians to connect with each other and with their audiences in real-time. This connection is important because it is a core part of what makes “musicking” an innately human activity; it fosters communication, articulation, and emotions between individuals. In recent years, the act of performing music has been commoditized on a massive scale. It has also become an integral part of the music business as a whole. Touring has become common practice among gigging musicians who are trying to make a living performing and sharing their music. Despite the convoluted logistics and finances of touring, it still remains one of the most popular ways to consistently perform in a variety of locations. Thus, independent musicians should be aware of their personal pros and cons when deciding whether or not to make live performance a substantial part of their music career.

In more recent history, music has been tied to a physical object. In the late 20th century, music was popularly sold on CDs. Earlier than that, music was popularly sold on vinyl records. Prior to the advent of CDs and vinyl records, commercial music was generally tied to the manuscript paper that it was printed on. Thus, during these various eras of the music industrial complex, the price of music was generally correlated with the price it took to produce the medium that it was tied to. If you walk into a record store, more likely than not, many of the CDs and vinyl records for new or secondhand sale will be around the same price. Physical goods in the music business—CDs, vinyl, and even merchandise—rely on the economic principles of cost production and supply and demand. The price of a good may fluctuate depending on the value of the artist’s name and reputation but this may be less relevant for beginning or smaller independent artists. In recent years, this economic balance has been shaken up by the rise of

music streaming by introducing a seemingly endless supply of low-to-no-cost production in the digital world.

Music Streaming

The financial and executive forces of the music industry have pushed musicians to produce music that fits the wants of the listeners. After all, this is how capitalism ought to function. Furthermore, throughout history, technology has shaped how commercial audiences consume music. Just as radio revolutionized the music markets in the early 20th century, streaming services and social media have revolutionized the music markets in the early 21st century. For better or for worse, musicians who aim to grow their commercial audience have had to adapt their art to be more compatible with streaming application algorithms. They can achieve this by creating shorter songs that promptly begin with a hook or chorus. This format is also favorable on social media applications that promote short and catchy songs for trends. Musicians may also tweak their songwriting style to be as enticing to the general public as possible. This can include adding vocals or sung lyrics, adjusting lyrics to be more relatable, and utilizing familiar or trending timbres and song structures. Furthermore, in many cases, popular artists are left with no other choice but to change their style in order to maintain relevance. Alternatively, smaller artists also do not have many other choices if they want to quickly grow a commercial audience since they may not yet have an established presence. As new technologies are introduced in the music industry, musicians will naturally have to tailor their art if they would like to capitalize on what is current and trending.

Another point of contention within the streaming service business model is the application of curated playlists for individual users. Many streaming services are known for

creating playlists of music for their users based on algorithms and trends. In a world that is becoming increasingly data-driven, it only makes sense that streaming services would rely on semi-automated or fully automated programs that generate playlists that the listener is likely to binge. This presents an issue in music consumption that is unique to the 20th and 21st century—the feedback loop. By listening to algorithm-recommended music, streaming service users can find themselves continuously listening to the same artists, labels, and genres. This is not to say that preferring an artist, label, or genre is problematic. However, being coerced into doing so by a business model that favors user retention for profit is at best ingenuine and at worst unethical. Independent artists may find themselves having trouble being recommended to new audiences. Furthermore, the system encourages artists to value being “playlisted” rather than being naturally discovered by listeners. After all, once an artist’s music is put on a popular playlist, their monthly listeners, streams, and audience are likely to increase drastically. Some streaming services have attempted to mitigate these issues by introducing custom playlists that are curated by actual humans. This does not eliminate the human element of bias but it is a step towards a freer music market.

Technological advancements are not inherently a negative force on the music making process. After all, the recording music industry—which declined from 2001 to 2014—has seen unprecedented growth thanks to music streaming services (Hesmondhalgh, 2020, p. 3). Despite this growth, revenue has been continually dominated by the top 1% of artists (15). However, this inequality cannot be completely blamed on streaming services alone. Streaming services have pushed a “pro-rata” system in which an artist receives a proportional amount of a user’s subscription fee even if they have not listened to that artist (16). This is a massive oversimplification of how streaming services distribute earnings but it demonstrates how unfair

the current system is. A solution to this would be a user-centric system. Hesmondhalgh suggests that the proportion of a user's listening time to any given artist should result in that same proportion of the user's subscription fee being distributed to that artist. It would also be beneficial if users were given the option of directly supporting the artists they listen to. Although this is akin to tipping culture (which has its own issues), direct user-to-artist support is arguably one of the most fair forms of revenue distribution.

User-Centric Support

A user-centric system focuses on the needs of the user or consumer of a particular good or service. In the case of music, users typically want to enjoy songs from their favorite artists while supporting them at the same time. This support can manifest itself socially or monetarily. In turn, users can expect to receive a more personalized connection with the artist. By placing the listener at the forefront of an independent artist's business model, the listener may become more loyal to the artist and their brand. In turn, the artist gains financial and popular support for their music career. It is a win-win situation in many, if not all, cases. User-centric systems may be more sustainable, ethical, and human than our current profit-centric systems.

A few options exist that independent artists can utilize to be paid fairly in a more user-centric manner. First, artists can use subscription-based platforms such as Patreon. On these platforms, supporters donate to their favorite artists and typically receive bonus content from the artists as a "thank you." This system places emphasis on the user and reduces or eliminates the need to rely on per-stream metrics. Furthermore, a deeper connection can be made between the artist and the user if the user is directly financially supporting the artist. Second, artists can utilize "pay-what-you-wish" systems on platforms such as Bandcamp. On these platforms, artists

have the option to freely set the price of their music. They can also choose to let the user decide how much to pay. Naturally, users who want to support their favorite artists will willingly pay more for their music. Thus, the value of an artist's music is not tied to a per-stream payout, but rather, a user's personal connection to the art itself. Third, artists can develop a community for their listeners using online servers, forums, or messaging applications. This community can be fostered by means of direct conversation between the artist and listener. This can supplement or complement the aforementioned subscription-based or pay-what-you-wish platforms by connecting with listeners that appreciate artists for who they are and what their music represents. Finally, artists can find ways to mesh all of these options together. Perhaps an artist can use a subscription-based platform such as Patreon to give out tiered rewards to their listeners. Higher tiers may be linked to more personalized benefits when the listener purchases a pay-what-you-wish product from the artist's Bandcamp. Furthermore, this can be facilitated between the artist and listener through online communities and servers.

The Business of Music

Musicians should also understand how the music industry functions in order to adapt their business strategies to the ever-changing world of the music market. As professional studio-quality recording technology becomes more accessible and affordable to the average person for use in home studios, musicians will face a greater amount of competition in the music markets. If independent artists are able to navigate their way through their respective fields within the industry, they may be better positioned to grow their audience and make a living off of their art. In this way, musicians need to manage their artistry and personality as a business. Whether this is through social media promotion, traditional advertisement, or management companies, musicians should be aware of their business options when publicizing themselves. The business of

managing one's art is an unavoidable consequence of capitalism in creative spaces. Independent musicians face the brunt of this challenge because they likely have to market themselves and their music within the confines of what is profitable and popular. By exposing themselves to as many avenues of the music market as possible, independent artists can reach and retain larger audiences. However, musicians have to learn how to effectively manage their time between business and artistry. Furthermore, musicians may be under the constant stress of having to be active and appealing on social media and advertisements. This can affect the quality and substance of their art because they have less quality time to dedicate to the creative efforts of their craft.

One of the greatest—and arguably most essential—tools that most independent musicians have today is the internet. Many sectors of the music industrial complex have been digitized. This includes, but is not limited to, producers, distributors, and advertisers. In most cases, these services are as cheap as ever. However, it is important for artists not to rely too heavily on the internet as one's sole source of financial stability. Michael Phfal states in his article “Giving Away Music to Make Money” (2001) that although the internet could open many revenue streams for artists, the true value of “free music” (what we know today as streaming services) is to generate merchandise sales, produce interactive relationships between the fan and musician, and increase live performances. Much of this has come true today. Although the internet is an invaluable tool to begin one's independent music career, the value of physical goods and live performances should not be understated. Music as a career has existed long before the advent of the internet. The true financial support in a performing music career will stem from the user-to-artist relationship.

Although the user-to-artist relationship is crucial for financial success in the music business, peer-to-peer relationships are just as important. Independent musicians do not typically need a formal resume or cover letter to demonstrate their ability to create music. The demonstration is either seen in the music that they have already created or by word of mouth. Just like any other business, personal connections and recommendations hold a significant amount of power in the music industrial complex. This is why networking and branching out into musical communities is important. People will generally trust those who are recommended by people they already trust.

“Industry Plants” and the Coexistence of Music and Business

“Industry plants” is a term used to describe artists who are signed to major record labels and marketed as “homegrown” or “indie.” The term can be used in both a derogatory or endearing manner. Record labels foster these types of artists to help them maintain an image of having cultivated an organic audience. In reality, these artists have the financial and strategic backing of experienced A&R personnel and marketing teams. This is not to discredit any of the talent or work that these artists put into their craft. “Industry plants” are simply a prime example of how artists are inherently integrated in the business of music. The coexistence of music and business have evolved to a point where the music industry complex has realized that audiences enjoy artists that appear to be “self-made.” The artist cannot reach their fullest economic potential without the record label and the record label cannot reach the largest audience base without the appeal of homegrown artists. Independent musicians should be aware that the landscape of the music business (like any other business) is not completely transparent in its practices and cultivation of “products,” which in this case is the industry plant.

Dynamic Shifts: AI, NFTs, and the Metaverse

With advancements in technology and online communications, the current dynamic of the music industry is likely to change within the next few decades. Thus, independent artists should be prepared for more new breakthroughs or social norms in the business. Some things to consider are the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) entering creative businesses and markets. Whatever may happen in the music industry, it is likely that many independent musicians will have to continue conforming to capitalism and the music markets in order to capture a wide commercial audience.

AI is a controversial tool in the music business as it is in other disciplines and industries. Proponents of AI may claim that it can create a more efficient creative workflow by making musical decisions that a composer would typically slave over. This could include finding sound samples or creating simple musical motifs. Those against AI may argue that it can reduce or eventually remove the human influence on musical compositions. Furthermore, music is arguably unique to humans as a species and to delegate it to machines is fundamentally “unnatural.”

Despite the polarizing nature of AI, it is still being used and studied in musical compositional contexts. For example, in the research paper *Music Creation by Example*, scholars Emma Frid, Celso Gomes, and Zeyu Jin examine how AI-generated music can be created and tailored to short online videos. In this study, the researchers admit that although AI has gotten advanced in recent years, it still cannot fully replicate the aesthetics of human-made music because “they usually do not include an element of reflection or evaluation” (8). It is important

for musicians to be aware of AI in music composition because its influence as a tool is likely to grow in the future.

In addition to the continual application of AI in music, the current trend of commoditizing music and art seems to be relying on blockchain technology to create NFTs. NFTs are digital assets that are bought and sold typically with cryptocurrency on the blockchain. They essentially represent a good—most commonly in the form of visual pop art—with digital code that is unique to each item. Thus, every NFT has some perceived value by the markets because each one is fundamentally not replicable (hence, the “non-fungible” part of “non-fungible token”).

Despite existing for several years, NFTs have skyrocketed in worldwide popularity within the investment and personal finance internet communities in 2020 and 2021. During this time, countless NFT transactions have been completed and millions of dollars’ worth of cryptocurrency has been exchanged within single projects or art collections (Nadini et al., 1993, p 4). However, all of this economic activity is not without its cons. NFTs are under scrutiny for their negative environmental impact due to the electricity-intensive nature of cryptocurrency mining. Furthermore, they arguably have little material, functional, or practical value in the current state of the market. These facets of NFTs have made them a polarizing topic in the age of digitization.

Technologies such as NFTs have the ability to fundamentally change how the public views art as a commodity. In several ways, this has already happened. In the past, music was materialized through physical mediums such as CDs, vinyl records, cassette tapes, and USB drives. There was a tangible value that could be assigned to this form of music. However, this was drastically altered with the introduction of digital music in the form of streaming and

downloads. Since that time music has become generally intangible and difficult to assign monetary value to. With the advent of NFTs, every single piece of music ever created can be assigned a unique digital code that undeniably gives it some quality of scarcity. Thus, it can be argued that a song that has been digitized on the blockchain as an NFT can have more value than the same song burned onto a CD or hosted on a streaming site. After all, anyone can access the song on CD or Spotify; only one person has the decentralized, digital rights to the same song.

Musicians can turn their songs into NFTs and sell them on the market for a quick profit. However, this business model is likely unsustainable and unethical in the long term. As the NFT market settles into its place in popular media, financial institutions, and the global economy, we will gain a clearer understanding of how art will receive its value in this new digital world. It is difficult to tell whether the NFT market will collapse or if it will become the next fine art market with investors seeking to own a piece of media that will appreciate in value over time.

It is also important to note that the future of music distribution and performance may occur in the developing metaverse or Web 3.0. The objective of these platforms is to create a decentralized network of communication and trade that is not bound by the limitations of corporations or governments like the current state of our internet. These platforms may provide the opportunity for musicians to create, promote, and perform their music in a digital landscape directly to their audience without much political, economic, or social friction. Although the metaverse is in its infancy and Web 3.0 is currently entirely theoretical (and arguably impossible to achieve), it is important for musicians to be aware of these seemingly far fetched digital advancements as they could disrupt the current music business complex if they come to fruition.

Surviving as an Independent Artist

Ultimately, the music business complex is only profitable and thriving because it exploits its primary commodity: namely, the artists themselves. Artists can only do so much on their own to compete against large record labels that function as entertainment mega-corporations. However, this does not necessarily mean that independent artists must sell their creative control to businesses in order to “succeed” in their music careers.

There are a few simple steps that artists can take to ensure that their music has a higher chance of getting heard while financially supporting their lifestyles. First, one should be knowledgeable with the landscape of musical trends and social media. New musical styles, trending timbres, and social media platforms are constantly evolving. Implementing interesting sounds and advertising techniques can help increase the reach of one’s music. For example, the recent rise in popularity of the hyperpop genre lends its clipped, distorted, and frenzied sonic atmosphere to popular YouTube and TikTok memes. Music is inherently cultural, so pop music is inherently tied to pop culture.

Second, one might consider signing to a smaller record label or hiring a manager when their music achieves a certain level of notoriety. Managing every aspect of one’s music is necessary for independent artists and the artists may not have the proficiency or capacity to fulfill the role as their own manager. The fact of the matter is that record labels, A&R (artist and repertoire), and managers generally have more experience in the music industry, especially within advertising, promotion, and finances. Furthermore, one can still remain an independent musician while having someone else manage their musical finances, show bookings, merchandise, public appearances, and musical releases. As mentioned earlier in this study, music is an innately human phenomenon so partnering with other musicians who understand the business is not always a hindrance.

Third, understanding and evaluating one's audience is crucial. Without the listener, there would be no one to consume streamed music, live concerts, or merchandise. This includes music critics and journalists. It is important to understand how one's music is being received by everyone who listens to it. This can provide you with invaluable information on how to continue with your future work.

Fourth, taking breaks from any given part of the music making process is likely inevitable. In our society, people are pushed to be as productive as possible. Unfortunately, productivity in a factory does not compare to productivity in the recording booth. Like other artforms, the quality of music is generally correlated to the amount of thought put into the creation of it. If you rush your work or are hyper-critical of yourself, you may be at risk of burning out and becoming less motivated to pursue what you have been passionate about.

Last, and arguably most importantly, one should not lose sight of why they are creating music in the first place. It is tempting to give up on one's music career because surviving in such a saturated market is difficult. However, as discussed earlier in this study, music is more than a career. Musicking is creating, performing, listening, dancing to, and experiencing music. As long as one creates their music in a way that is musicking, their art should be fulfilling in one way or another.

Reviving Musicking

There will always be a reason behind the existence of a musical composition. Folk music may be created and passed down for generations for the sake of keeping a cultural tradition alive. Pop music can be created for mass audiences with the goal of maximizing profits. Background

music for retail stores may be composed without thinking much about the musical creativity and interest within the artform of music. Music exists because it is an innately human activity.

Despite the complicated web of businesses that make up the music industry complex, music will still remain—at its core—a means of expressing human emotion and intent.

Recognizing “musicking” as an action instead of “music” as a noun can help us realize that the songs we listen to, sing along to, and create are much more than the medium or monetary value that it is attached to. The music industry complex will continue to exist as long as there is a way to capitalize on music. However, we as listeners, audience members, and consumers of music should navigate the system that is in place in order to source our music from the artists we want to support in a more human and ethical manner.

Annotated Bibliography

Nadini, M., Alessandretti, L., Di Giacinto, F. *et al.* Mapping the NFT revolution: market trends, trade networks, and visual features. *Sci Rep* 11, 20902 (2021).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-00053-8>

In this article, the authors compile information on the NFT market to identify the trends that exist within new blockchain technology. The authors also elucidate the functions of cryptocurrencies, the blockchain, and NFTs. This information is important for artists to know because art and collectibles are the most frequently traded digital NFT assets. Music can be traded on the NFT market and may change how the future of music ownership is discussed and handled.

Small, C. (1999) *Musicking — the meanings of performing and listening*. A lecture, Music Education Research, 1:1, 9-22, DOI: 10.1080/1461380990010102

In this brief lecture, Small presents his term “musicking.” This term refers to all of the components of music making. This includes but is not limited to performance, creation, practice, and composition. He explains that musicking is an inherently human verb that is necessary to define because music is often only discussed as a noun. Music is much more complicated than a song existing on a streaming platform; it is a form of creative expression that relies on human-to-human interaction.

Frid, E., Gomes, C., & Jin, Z. 2020. *Music Creation by Example*. Proceedings of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 1–13. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1145/3313831.3376514>

In this study, Frid, Gomes, and Jin explore the use of AI-generated music. They apply these compositions to short videos since this media format is popular on social media platforms. Their findings raise questions on finding the balance between AI and human-created music. They acknowledge the limitations of AI and their ability (or inability) to create aesthetic or musical works.

Pfahl, M. (2001). *Giving away music to make money: Independent musicians on the Internet*.

First Monday, 6(8). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v6i8.880>

In this article, Pfahl discusses the impact of the Internet on independent musicians. He claims that the Internet will return creative control back to the performer. Furthermore, the globalization of music communities may benefit independent musicians who may receive greater demand for live performances. He also writes about how the music industry has become reliant on “giving away music for free.” Thus, musicians need to rely on other sources of income, such as gigs and merchandise, in order to maintain financial stability.

Sterne, J. (2014). *There Is No Music Industry*. Media Industries.

<https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0001.110>

Sterne argues in this piece that the term “the music industry” has become a misnomer. This is because the “music industry” as we know it comprises so many other industries such as performance, production, circulation, and enjoyment to name a few. Music as a commodity and business has become socially regarded as an oligopoly. However, Sterne believes that this notion should be dismantled and instead offers the idea that the “music industry” is a complicated, polymorphous set of relations that have relationships to music.

Krohn-Grimberghe, L. (2021). *The dematerialization of music: How streaming technology impacts music production and consumption*. *Classical concert studies: A comparison to contemporary research and performance*, (296-308). Routledge.

In this article, Krohn-Grimberghe states that the modern music industry focuses on selling music through concerts and recordings. However, with the meteoric rise in streaming, music has been consumed in levels never seen before. He argues that streaming has defined the medium for music distribution and consumption in the past decade. Thus, the future of the music industry will follow in the footsteps of the immediate gratification that streaming has introduced to music audiences.

Ormosi, P., & Fletcher, A. (2021). *Music streaming: Listening to playlists drives down the revenue of smaller artists*. The Conversation (UK).

Ormosi and Fletcher discuss the economics of paying artists who have to rely on streaming services to distribute and market their music. They focus on how streaming services cut down the revenues of smaller artists who have to split their earnings with distributors, managers, and others. As a result, a split has occurred between musicians during the advent of streaming—popular artists have become even more popular and richer while smaller artists receive next to nothing. However, this may not always be the case in other avenues of the music business.

Jansson, A. (2021) *Beyond the platform: Music streaming as a site of logistical and symbolic struggle*. *New Media & Society* 21, pages 146144482110363.

Jansson views streaming platforms as a symbol of power in our modern digitalized society. This is because streaming has become so ingrained and normalized as a part of our daily lives. People should pay closer attention to the music that they consume and who is behind the creation of it. He also argues that this notion can be applied to streaming culture at large, not just within music streaming. Credits and liner notes on streaming platforms can help listeners better appreciate the people working behind the scenes. However, they are not always available or accurate.

Aguiar, L. (2017). *Let the music play? Free streaming and its effects on digital music consumption*. *Information Economics and Policy*, Volume 41 (1-14) ISSN 0167-6245, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoecopol.2017.06.002>.

In this article, Aguiar discusses the notion of “free streaming” and how it can change the consumption of music and the behaviors of audiences who cannot afford premium subscriptions. He finds that free streaming typically encourages purchasing and piracy activity. However, he also focuses on the streaming platform Deezer and how its streaming cap has slightly reduced piracy behavior. Whether a streaming platform is “free,” “premium,” or “capped,” streaming has changed the way that listeners discover and listen to music.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2020). *Is music streaming bad for musicians? Problems of evidence and argument*. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820953541>

In this article, Hesmondhalgh discusses the controversy of streaming platforms and how they are generally viewed in a simplified, limited scope. He finds that in the grand scheme of the music industry, streaming has allowed more artists to gain access to royalties and music ownership. However, this is at the expense of creating an unequal system that benefits musicians and business people who are already popular and successful. Hesmondhalgh argues that there should be more transparency regarding the usage and payments of music by streaming services.
