3. Crisis and creative destruction: new modes of appropriation in the twenty-first century music industry

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INTRODUCTION

A recurring and pervasive narrative on the topic of innovation in media industries privileges the part played by technology in transforming the roles and interests of actors across the spectrum of media sectors, and their established practices and modes of operation. This is not least so in the case of the music industry that has (periodically across many decades) witnessed the evolution of a variety of technological innovations that have been widely regarded as delivering fundamental change to the production, distribution or consumption of music.

In many accounts and commentaries, media and academia alike, the twenty-first century music industry is characterized in terms of a crisis of digitalization, where new media innovations are widely perceived to be radically undermining the fundamental economics of the music business and collapsing the established order. We would argue at the outset that the kind of crisis 'moment' that has commonly been (and indeed still is) adjudged to afflict the music industry, diminish its economic significance and fundamentally undermine those corporate power structures that evolved across the twentieth century implies the need for, and benefits of adjusting the analytical lens to accord greater recognition and engagement with (1) a certain side-lining of the salience (or fundamental) role of the 'digital' or technological moment (that is, the internet) in well-grounded analyses of economic and societal development; (2) a corresponding accentuation of the 'fundamental' role of economic moments, especially struggles over distribution.

The music industry has been the first of the established creative or cultural industries to deal with digitalization, and in particular the challenges arising from the evolution of the internet as a medium for circulation and promotion of content. In this respect, the twenty-first century music industry is very much the 'cultural' canary down the 'digital' coal mine. However, when it comes to the potential to undermine the economics of the music business, the internet was far from the first technological innovation to bring cries of desolation from the corridors of industry. 'Home taping' was 'killing music' in the 1970s. However, when it first emerged as a medium for mass communication in the early part of the twentieth century, even radio was seen as a threat to the economic viability of the-then record industry with both in apparent competition for the same consumers (Frith 2001). 'Why' went the argument, 'should someone who could tune into music for free go out and buy records for themselves?' (Frith 2001, p. 40). While this debate quickly resolved with the realization that the relationship between radio and records would readily evolve into a mutually beneficial one, the argument around radical innovations in media technologies carrying with them the promise of wide-scale disruption to the music industry has remained rife.

A core aim of this chapter is to puncture much of the transformative hype surrounding digital innovations by demonstrating how the music copyright regime has reorganized itself in response to a changing and challenging technological environment.

Primarily, the chapter is significantly informed by a recent and extensive research study conducted by the present authors. Here, they have examined and unpacked fundamental strands of change and continuity that characterize the evolution of the music industry since the turn of the millennium by drawing upon a comprehensive range of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with music industry personnel and informants. In total, almost 60 interviews were carried out, and those participating interviewees represent a range of occupations spanning the spectrum of music industry sectors and activities. They comprised record industry personnel, music publishers, artist managers, live music promoters, record producers, recording artists, music broadcasting personnel, music journalists, policy makers and other key informants.

The evidence that we have gleaned through these empirical-level studies indicates strong strands of continuity regarding the power structures that underpin the music industry, and demonstrates how major and established actors in the music industry have ultimately proved themselves highly innovative in adjusting to the challenges posed by a changing technological environment.

In this chapter, we first assess and explain the background to the phenomenal growth experienced by the recording sector during the final years of the twentieth century. This is important as it is necessary to understand the 'artificial' nature/construction of economic growth, and the established labels' dominant position prior to the marked decline in record sales revenues in recent years. We then proceed to summarize and critique accounts of 'crisis' that have characterized much commentary on the music industry since the turn of the millennium before proceeding to consider the core response strategies of the music industry to a changing technological environment. Here, we examine and explain how, as physical sales have declined, the emphasis placed on developing and exploiting music 'brands' has increased. The music industry has increasingly shifted its emphasis to the licensing of services and brands across both traditional and new media platforms. This serves to generate fresh revenue streams and reinvigorate old ones. With record companies reconceiving themselves as music 'partners', multi-rights deals have become standard across the industry whereby the labels acquire the legal rights to exploit a whole new range of revenue opportunities deriving from the artist. 360 degree deals (or other multi-rights arrangements) represent acute structural and organizational change that ultimately bolsters and maintains well-established networks of power within the music industry. We ultimately argue that the ramifications arising from such developments are significant and multi-fold for artists and consumers alike and that these 'evolutions' carry severe consequences for the social function of music per se.

THE HISTORICAL RISE OF THE RECORD INDUSTRY

Through the twentieth century, the world witnessed a manifold expansion in the market for records, and the record industry evolved as the predominant music industry sector, at least in economic terms. For example, Gronow (1983) details record sales revenues rising from $109 million in the mid 1940s to a value of $3.7 billion by the early 1980s, with other significant international markets following trends of similar growth across the same period. Throughout the 1980s – the decade that witnessed the introduction of the compact disc (CD), but not yet the super-profits emanating from its exploitation – the value of the US market effectively doubled to $7.4 billion. Global revenues had surpassed $24 billion by 1990 (IFPI, cited in Negus 2011, pp. 59–60). And for the record industry, the best was yet to come. The 1990s proved to be the real boom decade for this sector on the back of the mushrooming of the CD, which helped drive global retail revenues to an all-time high of $38.7 billion by the end of the millennium (IFPI 2000). This is not to say that the twentieth century painted a uniform picture of unbridled expansion for the industry. As Hesmondhalgh (2007) notes, as with other industrial sectors, cycles of growth and stagnation have characterized the record business across the decades. It experienced notable slumps in the 1930s and again at the turn of the 1980s in the midst of periods of worldwide recession. However, despite such occasional setbacks, the record industry saw its profits swell up until 1999.

In explaining the phenomenal growth of the record market in the final decades of the twentieth century, it is easy to fall into the trap of reducing everything to the 'technological', and the impact of the CD explosion on revenue intake. There were, however, a number of broader political-economic factors that also shaped and fuelled record industry growth. As neo-liberal policies gained currency from the 1970s, and the world subsequently witnessed the unleashing of Thatcherism and Reaganomics, new opportunities and markets for music emerged on an unprecedented level. For example, the privatization of broadcasting that spread from Western Europe from the 1980s onwards saw a multi-fold increase in the sheer amount of broadcast space that was available to music. Records could now colonize the airwaves like never before in many territories, thus generating not only marketing and promotion opportunities on a whole new level, but also new sources of direct revenue for rights owners. The premium prices charged for the CD – the new boom format that emerged in this context – thus facilitated the reaping of rich rewards for record labels.

While the past 15 years has seen numerous accounts (media and academic alike) of the extraordinary and unparalleled decline in revenues experienced by the record industry in the twenty-first century, few authors have stopped to question the 'legitimacy' of earlier record industry profits. Power and wealth in the record industry has traditionally been (and remains) highly concentrated. Such concentration has on occasions led to significant anti-trust allegations being levelled against the major record labels. For example, there have been a number of CD price-fixing investigations in both Europe and the United States since the 1990s.

Also, Longhurst (1995) highlights a House of Commons Committee monopoly inquiry into the overpricing of CDs in Britain in the 1990s that concluded that copyright restrictions were in effect anti-competitive in that they artificially inflated CD prices by restricting the import of cheaper recordings. Equally, as McCourt and Burkart (2003) indicate, by early 2000 the US Federal Trade Commission found that the-then five major labels had 'illegally discouraged' discount pricing of CDs at retail level. Furthermore, by summer 2000 an amalgam of 30 US states had filed a lawsuit against the record industry relating to price-fixing (Peers 2000, cited in McCourt and Burkart 2003). McCourt and Burkart conclude that the major labels' very public (successful) pursuit of Napster through the courts on piracy allegations around this time was, in fact, 'a counter-strategy to relieve anti-trust pressures' (2003, p. 340).

As is so often the case, the decline of the record industry in the twenty-first century digital world is measured against the over-stated value that it achieved by 1999. Yet, when we consider the apparent 'growth hormones' that had been injected into the market for records during the CD boom years and the illicit and anti-competitive nature of certain record industry strategies, we come to understand more the artificial character of the recording sector and the (economic) value assigned to it.

DIGITAL SHAKEDOWN, INDUSTRY BREAKDOWN … ?

Since the evolution of the MP3 file and the advent of such file-sharing sites as MP3.com and Napster in the late 1990s, a rhetoric of crisis has persistently characterized much coverage given to the music industry in media and academic accounts alike (see Rogers 2013, pp. 5–9). As the availability of free online music files proliferated through the early years of the twenty-first century, much of this coverage has been apocalyptic in nature, chronicling the decimation of the record industry through the transition to a digital milieu. The form and nature of such coverage is captured by *The Economist* who described the 'noughties' as a 'brutal decade' where 'music was the first media business to be seriously affected by piracy and has suffered most severely' (*The Economist*, 12 November 2009). Its' perceived dismal fortunes through these years saw the music industry labelled 'the poster child of failed digital opportunities' (Tapscott 2011). Such depictions have endured from the late 1990s to the present day with headlines such as 'How digital revolution put [music] industry in a tailspin' (Walker 2014, p. 16).

Figures from the international political arena have likewise joined the clamour to lambaste those engaged in illicit online file-sharing and bemoan the implications of the internet not only for music as a cultural industry, but as a cultural form per se. For example, 2007 saw former French President Nikolas Sarkozy vividly and sensationally assert:

> We run the risk of witnessing a genuine destruction of culture … The internet must not become a high tech wild west, a lawless zone where outlaws can pillage works with abandon, or worse, trade in them in total impunity. And on

> whose backs? On artists' backs. (Reuters, cited in *New York Times*¸ 24 November 2007)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when asked to reflect upon the key changes affecting the music industry in recent decades, many of the informants who were interviewed for the empirical-level studies that inform this chapter initially responded by singling out the transition to a digital milieu, and the salient problems posed to the industry by the widespread availability of free music on peer-to-peer networks. Reflecting back on his entry into the music business just after the turn of the millennium, a marketing director at one major label notes that those years were 'the last of the good times … I came into the music industry just as it was starting its downward spiral' (personal interview). Another interviewee, a song-writer and composer, asserts that 'we are an industry that is under threat from industrial scale piracy. From where I'm sitting that's putting people out of business' (personal interview). Elsewhere, a record producer attests that by facilitating such illicit activity, 'the internet is killing the music industry' (personal interview). For another interviewee, an artist manager, 'the internet has been the biggest single thing in the thirty years that I have been in the business, and has shaken the industry to its core' (personal interview).

Perhaps reflecting the sensationalism associated with such comments as Mr Sarkozy, others take a much more fatalistic approach arguing that not only is the internet crippling the music industry, it is removing incentives to create music:

> If you keep robbing music off the internet, why would anybody make any music? Why would anyone ever write a new song if no one is ever going to pay for it? How are songwriters going to make money? (Independent label owner, personal interview)

Another major label representative echoes similar sentiments regarding the scope of labels to invest in fresh talent in the future:

> Piracy means that somebody gets the music for free. If people are taking music for free, where does the money come from? Where is the money going to come from for us to re-invest? That doesn't make any economic sense. (Personal interview)

Elsewhere, another record industry trade body representative protests with vigour that:

> All of a sudden, everybody could be a music consumer without paying for it. So people went on an acquisition binge, literally downloaded everything they

> could that they ever wanted, even if they would end up never listening to it … we had consumer behaviour that was totally at odds with the way that consumers had interfaced with music before. (Personal interview)

Evidence frequently drawn upon to support such 'digital-dystopian' perspectives can be found on the pages of various reports that document how the global record market has experienced significant decline in the twenty-first century. The new millennium has indeed seen the overall value of record sales fall dramatically. From a record high of US$38.7 billion in 1999 (Nurse 2001), recorded music retail revenues dropped to $24.4 billion by the end of 2010 (IFPI 2011). This represents an overall drop of more than 34 per cent across this period. Specifically in the Irish context – where the current authors are based – retail revenues nose-dived by 45 per cent across roughly the same period (see various IRMA reports, 2001–11 at http://www.irma.ie).

Other less-cited arguments advanced to support claims of music industry crisis include the culling of staff that took place at major record companies throughout the latter half of the last decade, and also the demise of many 'physical' retail outlets (both large and small) for recorded music products (see, for example, Rogers 2013, pp. 41–6).

In sum, innovations in the sphere of digital technology are often conceived as driving change in the music business and irreversibly corroding established power structures in the industry.

MANAGING CHANGE IN DIGITAL WATERS: THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE 'MULTI-RIGHTS' DEAL

We argue that the music industry in the twenty-first century should not be defined in terms of a crisis of digitalization and the consequent and crude (and overwhelmingly negative) transformations of this sector that is implied by many industry reports, media accounts and academic commentaries and analyses, and reflects the predominance of technological determinist thinking in contemporary society. Rather, the 'crisis' should be viewed in the context of fundamental reconfigurations on the part of established actors in the music industry, and a marked shift in emphasis in terms of some of their core practices as to sustain more traditional and deep-rooted power structures. Discourse surrounding 'innovation' is frequently preoccupied with the 'technological', particularly in the Irish context, the environment within which the current authors have primarily conducted their empirical-level studies. However, as we illustrate below, perhaps the most significant innovations in the music industry in the twenty-first century relate not to those perceived transformations driven by developments in the technological domain, but rather in the manner by which the music industry's core actors have demonstrated their dexterity in response to a changing technological environment.

Here, there is a pressing need to engage with and interrogate in a new light certain key conceptions of the music industry that have come to monopolize popular media and indeed academic understandings of what it actually is. Academic accounts alike have been guilty of such misrepresentation of the 'music' industry. For example, Williamson and Cloonan (2007) point to a range of key academic studies in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century that purport to offer an analysis of the music industry, while exclusively or near-exclusively dealing solely with just the recording sector. However, as we illustrate below, making a clear distinction between these terms is fundamental to understanding how the major actors across the industry have responded to the significant decline in record sales revenues in the twenty-first century.

As far back as the late 1980s Simon Frith had declared that '[f]or the music industry, the age of manufacture is over' (1987, p. 57). Frith's contention was decidedly premature given the growth hormones injected into the record sales market by the CD, which mushroomed in popularity throughout the 1990s, and saw mega-profits accrue to the major labels. However, Frith's key point – that music was increasingly gravitating towards a model characterized by the 'secondary' use of music and the exploitation of rights across a range of platforms – was, and remains, particularly pertinent. In fact, such a conception of music as a 'basket of rights' has become more and more relevant given the shift in emphasis that has occurred towards the licensing of both recording and publishing copyrights and also music trademarks. Music's evolving relationship with not only new, but also traditional media must thus come under significant scrutiny if we are to assess the outcome of the music industry in the early twenty-first century.

As the twenty-first century has evolved, the manner in which record labels conceive of themselves has also altered. A number of interviewees who work with some of the business's major actors now routinely refer to the labels they represent as 'music' companies or 'music partners'. Such a change in self-perception reflects the evolution of the '360 degree' music company and the increasing standardization of 'multi-rights' deals between label and artist. Under such agreements, labels not only control recording rights, but can also hold the reins on publishing, touring, merchandise channels and other.

More over, in such agreements, revenue streams are often cross-collateralized, whereby losses in one sector can be offset against profits gathered in another. As one particular interviewee, a music lawyer, is at pains to point out, only when investments across all sectors have been recouped can the artist start to earn an income in this context. In such a scenario, the artist is effectively reconceptualized as a core 'basket of rights' (to steal Frith's term), around which the various arms of the label administer and exploit the various revenue-generating possibilities arising from the spectrum of copyrights, trademarks, brands and so on emanating from the artist.

So, at the centre of the music industry strategy lies the ownership of music rights, and the ability to generate revenues by exploiting these rights in a plethora of different contexts. Here, it is useful to recognize just how unique music is as a cultural and media form. Music possesses a set of features and characteristics that enable it to access spaces and places that other media simply cannot access. Music is ubiquitous (see, for example, Kassabian 2002, 2004). It colonizes our public and private worlds alike. We hear it through our mobile phones and laptops. We hear it in our homes, or cars, our workplaces and in every conceivable public space. Moreover, music embeds itself in other media forms. It is a core aspect of radio, television, film, digital games and a plethora of other new and traditional media platforms. And almost every space where music appears involves the administration of copyright licensing agreements, and the resultant transfer of royalties back to copyright owners. Here, it is worth remembering that the 'primary' beneficiaries in this process are those major labels that possess ownership of established and popular repertoires.

Hence, as music's value as a commodity to be licensed becomes more and more important, it is simply not enough to focus on the overall decline in record sales as an accurate reflection of how the industry has fared in the new millennium.

The core point to be extracted here is that while the twenty-first century has witnessed a significant decline in overall record sales to 'end-users', the music industry has proved itself adept at generating revenues from a broader range of sources. Some where music features as a primary medium, others where music attaches itself to other products or services. The range of outlets through which music accesses us while simultaneously generating revenue for its rights owners is multitudinous, and too extensive to unpack in an elaborate manner in the current chapter. However, what follows below is a snapshot of the range of outlets currently being exploited by the music industry, as identified by our interviewees in the recent empirical-level study. As we illustrate, opportunities present themselves through both new and traditional channels.

By 2013, the overall value of the digital music market had grown to almost $6 billion (IFPI 2014). This is accounted for by a number of developments.

On the one hand, the digital music store model (best characterized by Apple iTunes) has evolved significantly across the past decade. While the download model may well have peaked with global revenue from downloads dropping by fractionally over 2 per cent across 2013 (Karp 2014), this sector nevertheless remains a relatively strong performer. According to one major label marketing executive, '[I]n a revenue sense, it's very important. You know that if you get in the homepage of iTunes, just by the nature of the number of eyeballs that go to the store, that's very important' (personal interview). iTunes witnessed its 25 billionth download in 2013 (Apple 2013).

Moreover, ad-supported streaming services, subscription-based sites and social networks offer a wealth of licensed online platforms for the circulation and distribution of music (Spotify, Deezer and We7 provide some of the most notable examples here).

The potential arising from streaming services is only now starting to be realized by major industry actors who view its recent evolution and future potential in overwhelmingly positive terms. As a range of interviewees observe, the past two to three years have seen a big shift towards music streaming services, a strategy that one asserts to hold the potential to 'kill piracy with convenience' (personal interview). Interviewees identify a shift within digital now, as opposed to physical sales depleting while digital sales emerged.

For one major label executive:

> We are seeing that streaming is evolving. And it has evolved to a point in some countries where it has become the dominant way in which people enjoy music, for example, Sweden, where in terms of the digital market, its 95% streaming … I think that in time … it will become the dominant model [everywhere]. It's just a case of how long it will take for that change to take place. (Personal interview)

The promotional and revenue-generating reality of YouTube is also advanced by a number of industry personnel. Another major label representative asserts that:

> In terms of revenue, it's one of our top commercial partners. It's one of those platforms that's got global reach … With YouTube, you can do things globally. So yes, revenue-wise it is very important. And when the subscription service launches, that's going to be a huge opportunity, and by the nature of

> Google and YouTube combined, it will become one of our major players to an even greater degree. (Personal interview)

Also, as another interviewee advances, YouTube 'is also closer to an exact science as its pay-per-stream' (personal interview).

So, the music industry is increasingly basing its activities around an 'access' model rather than just an 'ownership' model where, as a number of interviewees note, short-term income might suffer, but the scope to earn more money over a much longer time frame increasingly opens up. This scenario is perhaps most succinctly (and humorously) described by the chief executive officer of a rights administration organization:

> Elton John and Bernie Taupin would have made far more money out of me if Spotify had existed in 1971 from Madman Across the Water than they actually did. Because I bought the LP. I bought it again when I scratched it. I bought the CD. And I bought the super-audio CD. But I have listened to those songs for the last 43 years, and if I had been paying Spotify rates … they would [have] earned far more money from the Spotify exploitation. (Personal interview)

Beyond the realm of 'new media', the music industry has also been evolving its opportunities to exploit and grow the economic significance of other, more traditional 'spaces'. Film, TV and advertising – media that have long since enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with music – have become more important not just in terms of the promotional value they bring to music and artists, but also the direct revenues generated through licensing. As the director of marketing at one major label asserts:

> Synchronisation is big business and whether the audio is used for an advert on TV or online, or for a moment in a TV programme or film. Music adds emotion, and if it connects it works immensely. (Personal interview)

Another interviewee, a music lawyer, contends that synchronization is now 'far more prevalent than it was when I first came into the business ten years ago' with negotiating sync rights and drawing up the relevant contracts now a key feature of her routine (personal interview).

The lucrative nature of such activities is summed up by a music publisher who testifies that while 'TV can earn a lot of money … advertising is more lucrative now than even getting a track in a Hollywood movie' (personal interview).

Moreover, the nature of the live music industry, and the increased (economic) value assigned to it must also be added into the equation. It is no longer a case of touring agents and promoters 'piggy-backing' on the investment of the recording sector, and bands and artists using touring primarily as a means of promoting records. The (very) good fortunes of the live sector in the twenty-first century have produced significant benefits for key rights holders in the recording and publishing sectors. While the International Federation of Phonographic Industries (IFPI) estimated the value of this sector to have grown to $21.6 billion by 2010 (IFPI 2011), other analysts placed the-then value of the concert industry at $25 billion (Laing 2012). However, as it has mushroomed in value, actors not traditionally associated with this aspect of the business have repositioned themselves to benefit from its success.

Another indicator of intensified activity across many of these areas in recent years (among other spaces where music is performed) is the increase in value in performing royalties internationally. While in the Irish context, the 1998–2010 period saw the collection of such royalties effectively double to a figure close to €40 million (Rogers 2013, p. 101), global revenues reached a new peak of €7.8 billion by 2012 (CISAC 2014).

However, most tellingly, when it comes to the overall financial health of the industry, is a 2011 study that sees its 'total' value increase by approximately 40 per cent from $51 billion to more than $71 billion across the 1998–2010 period (Winseck 2011). This encompasses incomes derived from recording, publishing, live and other and, ironically, it coincides with precisely the same period that saw the record industry experience an unprecedented downturn.

Moreover, the apparent super-abundance of content that characterizes the digital era is identified by some as primarily benefiting established, major industry actors. For the chief executive officer of one record industry trade body, the more cluttered the marketplace, the more the opportunities for major labels, as 'curators', to have an impact. As a result, he asserts that his organization's research demonstrates:

> the number of purchases of the best-selling albums have gone up as a percentage instead of down as a percentage, and the tail has been smaller than anyone had anticipated, and it was already very small. So the overabundance of content has actually served labels well. (Personal interview)

So, in this account, people are gravitating more towards the hits rather than less in an environment where a super-abundance of content hampers discovery. Such a contention is supported by a recent MIDiA Consulting report, which concluded that the market for recorded music exhibits the effects of intensified 'superstar' dominance (Mulligan 2014). While, in line with declining record sales, artist income from recording fell globally from $3.8 billion to $2.8 billion between 2000 and 2013, the share of total income enjoyed by artists grew from 14 per cent to 17 per cent across the same period (Mulligan 2014). However, within this trend, the proliferation of digital music platforms and services have served to boost 'superstar concentration' as 77 per cent of recording music income is now accounted for by the top-earning 1 per cent of artists (Mulligan 2014). Here, the '1 per cent' account for 79 per cent of 'subscription' revenues as well as 75 per cent of CD revenues. Such statistics also need to be considered in the context of evolving ownership trends across the industry where just three major labels – Universal, Warner and Sony – account for 74 per cent of the global recorded music market (Rogers 2013). In Ireland, where the current authors are based, the market share enjoyed by the majors has reached 92 per cent in recent years (Rogers 2013). As such, this reflects that despite the liberative potentials that digital innovations promise regarding the bypassing of major labels in the contemporary era, power in the twenty-first century music industry remains remarkably concentrated, and wealth highly polarized.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING FOR MUSIC CULTURE PER SE

In the twenty-first century, music remains a significant and growing business and, as we have illustrated, evermore subject to the logics of commodification as demonstrated by the increasing and intensified shift towards licensing services across new and traditional platforms. Such developments have seen music's role as a 'secondary' medium become more important, as have the exploitation of music 'brands'. Having identified key trends that have occurred across the industry in recent years, interviewees were also asked to reflect upon these changes and consider any ramifications they saw arising from how the music industry has been evolving.

What follows is by no means an attempt at a definitive critique of the role and significance of popular music in recent history. Rather, it represents the combined reflections and observations of a host of music industry informants, personnel and artists on the form and nature of change that has occurred since the turn of the millennium and what they consider to be the most pertinent outcomes for popular music culture. Put crudely, what, if anything, do the changes that interviewees described as occurring in the music industry's approach in recent years mean for how we relate to popular music?

For a number of our interviewees, the processes outlined in the previous section carry with them significant implications. In particular, some interviewees advanced significant reservations regarding the scope of pop, rock and folk music to any longer act as sites of social agitation, resistance and social commentary given recent developments. As economic imperatives have dictated that music companies must increasingly pursue alternative strategies to the direct sale of music to consumers, the drive to maximize profits through other forms of commodification (through, for example, licensing, synchronization, branding) has seen music become ever more pervasive and invasive in our lives. For many interviewees, these trends carry potential consequences.

As we have seen, the use of songs in advertising has become not only a key tool in acquiring marketing and promotion exposure for new music and artists, but also an important source of revenue in its own right for recording and publishing rights owners, particularly when established catalogue material is used. However, for a number of interviewees, much music from folk and rock catalogues now occupies a space that would formerly have been considered alien to it.

Songs by particular musicians that, even in relatively recent history, would not have been conceived in such a context as advertising, now get placed in national or global promotional campaigns for various products and services. For example, Woody Guthrie sells cars (Audi); so does Neil Young (Toyota); the songs of Bob Dylan sell lingerie (Victoria's Secret); and Credence Clearwater Revival have sold jeans (Wrangler). Equally, the songs of Lennon and McCartney have been used to sell hardware and electronic products (Target) and banking services (The Halifax). Perhaps with the Beatles' repertoire we might be less surprised, as such 'diversification' is not necessarily new for them. It is now approximately a quarter of a century since *Revolution* (penned by Lennon as a critique of the various political protests that occurred across Europe in 1968) was adopted by Nike.

However, when we consider the range of artists and music that is used in advertising campaigns, and how aggressively they are promoted to advertising executives by the major labels, this trend effectively goes against time-honoured standards for authenticity in folk and rock music culture.

While many interviewees, especially those employed by labels and publishers, cite the economic and promotional benefits of the licensing repertoire to the advertising sector, many others raise ethical or moral concerns regarding such pursuits. For one interviewee, a renowned international folk-pop artist, changing the space within which the music is consumed profoundly alters the meaning associated with it:

> Nowadays there appears to be a cachet gained from doing ads. Very wealthy artists endorsing all sorts. I don't get that … Advertising is a cunning and devious everyday presence in all our lives. Its primary purpose is often to tell lies. It saddens me when songs I have loved find their way into ads … Dylan is an enigma. Why he would permit his work to [be] used [in advertising] is a mystery … I believe it removes credibility from the song and the artist. (Personal interview)

Another such space that interviewees identify as witnessing the onward march of commodification relates to the realm of music merchandising. The most frequently cited example here relates to Ramones t-shirts, and how they now routinely find their way onto racks in department stores. While long since a source of revenue for artists and rights owners, such merchandise – and the bands and brands it carries – now occupies 'spaces' that would, until relatively recently, have been alien to it. Such a shift marks, for some interviewees, the relegation of rock culture to the realm of 'Disney' culture.

The changing character of the 'music festival' is also highlighted by a range of interviewees. As their economic significance has grown and as they have increasingly fallen under the management and administration of just a small handful of major promoters, they have become more important to established, mainstream artists as sources of revenue and promotion. For some interviewees, the evolution of major festivals as brands marks a radical departure from the interests and agenda that historically underpinned them.

One long-established music journalist puts it, rather crudely, as thus: 'Once festivals were about *something*. Now they are about *nothing*!' (personal interview). A London-based artist manager and former artists and repertoire (A&R) executive elaborates on the point advancing that:

> [T]raditionally, festivals were one of the places where people gathered to hear not just music, but also to hear political ramblings as well … But I always look at festivals now as being mere dots in the social calendar. It's a bit like someone that might go to Ascot, then might go to a polo match, and then they've got to make sure they take in Glastonbury as well. And that's what it is. (Personal interview)

Elsewhere, another band manager who has been active across the industry in various guises since the 1970s portrays the contemporary festival-goer as more and more conservative, and largely pursuing nothing beyond the instant gratification of the experience. As revenue from festivals and music events becomes more important to the overall economic health of the music industry, the 'exclusivity' and 'minority appeal' of such events, where the 'general population looked on askance' has been sacrificed (personal interview).

Speaking in general about such trends, another interviewee – a former major label A&R executive who now manages a major international pop artist – bemoans what he sees as a general malaise afflicting music culture nowadays. This he attributes to the fact that music has become so pervasive across our social and personal worlds, thus rendering it benign as a social force. Historically, he contends, popular music has carried immense social significance:

> from Guthrie, to Dylan, to Marvin Gaye talking about the Vietnam war, to the Pistols and punk reviving a generation that had seemed to be forgotten about. But where are the artists now that agitate for political change or want to send a message in what they do, however covert that might be? … There aren't any. I'd like to see more of that but people are worried about their careers. (Personal interview)

Another interviewee argues that in the past, the audience engaged on a more complex, sophisticated and thoughtful level, but the sheer volume of music flooding our lives in the 'digital age' minimizes the capacity for such objective engagement in an environment where we are routinely overwhelmed by 'information overload' (personal interview). In a similar vein, one US-based interviewee, himself a once internationally successful songwriter and performer, contends that there are no longer any 'brand new heroes who by accident or purpose pop up' to serve as 'critical voices' (personal interview). For this interviewee, this is particularly striking given the major economic turmoil of recent years and the effects of austerity on broad strands of society.

> [T]he industry is so controlled by corporations now … and it was just the fact that there was a crack in the wall in the sixties and seventies and things slipped through … [but] I just don't think that's possible these days. (Personal interview)

Another long-successful band manager (and former record label manager) emphasizes that any element of 'outlaw chic' is 'immediately clamped on by the marketing wing' of the label and is used as another element of promoting and selling 'the product that is the act' (personal interview). Other interviewees elaborate to a greater or lesser degree on a similar point, and describe the drive within music companies to forge 'brand partnerships' as playing an increasingly central role in the strategy of labels.

Overall, such lamenting of times past is a common thread linking many of the contributions of interviewees whose careers have spanned back across a number of decades. Others, however, do take a less pessimistic approach and point to a range of artists whom, as one singer-songwriter interviewee states:

> [are] prepared to stand up against the current political economic stranglehold that's being imposed. Damian Dempsey, Jinx Lennon, Capt. Moonshine to name but three. Billy Bragg and Dick Gaughan in the UK, David Kovacs in the USA, let's not forget Pussy Riot and Dixie Chicks. (Personal interview)

Other interviewees simply advance that to privilege the sphere of popular music as a vibrant and dynamic site of social commentary, resistance and agitation in bygone decades is simply to view the past through rose-tinted spectacles and to significantly misrepresent the reality of popular music at any point in history. For one interviewee, an independent label owner, privileging punk as a 'radical or revolutionary' movement from the 1970s is to ignore the broader 'crass' trends that defined the musical times and, within that context, to over-state the significance of punk that was 'little more than a marketing campaign run by Malcolm McLaren' (personal interview).

Moreover, a number of interviewees emphasize the music industry as first and foremost an 'entertainment' industry that simply places music in a multitude of contexts that, they contend, do not preclude the audience from assigning a multitude of meanings to it.

Equally, as many participating interviewees assert, any connotations arising from the use of 'old' songs in 'new' commercial contexts such as advertising or other spheres of synchronization do not retrospectively diminish any potency the same music and songs once held as tools of political or social commentary at particular points in history.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Some things change, but many things remain the same. While digital technologies have visited various transformations upon the spheres of music production, distribution and consumption over recent years, the fundamental power structures underpinning the music industry itself remain fundamentally intact. Recent and new internet and mobile technologies may carry the 'potential' to radically disrupt the interests and roles of established players in the music business, but the industry itself has mutated and evolved to bolster and sustain itself in turbulent waters.

We have demonstrated that the major music corporations remain 'major' players, indicating how notions of crisis must be accompanied by attention to restructuring processes whereby those corporations have mobilized their concentrated capital and human resources to devise new kinds of institutional, marketing and organizational innovations.

On the surface, the broad collapse of record sales revenues since the turn of the century offers support to the argument that the music industry is in crisis, and that once bloated labels are now left clinging to the wreckage of an internet revolution. However, such 'conventional' wisdom paints a picture that is simply too straightforward. The outcome of the music industry in the digital age is more complicated than that. While developments such as peer-to-peer file-sharing have evolved to threaten the economic health of major actors in the record industry, it is important to recognize that the music industry comprises a much broader range of activities than merely the sale of recordings. While the record industry itself has increasingly shifted its emphasis from the sale of products to the licensing of services, we also have the spheres of music publishing and live performance to consider. These three interconnected sectors of industrial activity combine to form the core of the music industry. Around them there exists a network of auxiliary actors and activities. Overall, if we recognize the music industry in this wider context, we can come to understand how it has formulated highly innovative response strategies in the context of the 'threat' of digitalization. Overall, the music industry remains in good health.

One of the most striking features arising from the recent data collected by the current authors is that the manner in which the music industry has mutated in response to a changing technological landscape raises, for many interviewees, concerns for the social and cultural functions of music beyond the economic concerns they articulate around the perceived effects of online piracy on the music business. While music's economic present and future is bolstered and sustained by the exploitation of music copyrights, trademarks and brands across a proliferating spectrum of arenas, this onward march of commodification, and resulting ubiquity, threatens to undermine the potency of music as a powerful social force.

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