Revolutionizing Music Through Technology:

The Impact of Digital Platforms on Music Creation, Distribution, and Audience Engagement

This project intends to take a deeper look at the effects of digital platforms on the music industry. Specifically, we intend to focus on the aspects of creation, distribution, and audience engagement. As more and more platforms are created which make music production more accessible, and entities allowing for easy publication on personal projects, there has been a large shift in how music is produced, shared, and consumed globally. There are three questions the study intends to answer. The study aims to answer how digital platforms enabled new forms of music creation. How streaming services have impacted the distribution of music, and how platforms facilitate forms of audience engagement.

Background

In the digital era, the music industry has undergone a large transformation. From the first mediums of musical storage in sheet music, to basic recording on records, analogue production, and the digital age, the trajectory of music production is ever changing. The evolution in storage methods allowed for the distribution of music. As tools are released and more platforms are created, they way artists create and share their media with consumers continues to evolve. These digital platforms are currently spearheading the evolution of music.

Digital platforms offer plenty of benefits to artists, especially independent ones that aren't already known, such as recording, producing, and distribution tools. One concern with this however is that this allows the market for music to become oversaturated. Because of this oversaturation, earning a living can be difficult and may be completely random as online platforms use algorithms to suggest music to others. A lucky break within the algorithm could be the difference.

The significance of this research lies in the platforms' impact on music. By looking at how technology has facilitated new forms of music, this study aims to shed light and how artists are navigating this digital age. This research will investigate the economics of the current models of creation and distribution to understand the sustainability of the industry as it currently stands.

Not only will the study look at creation and distribution, but it also intends to explore the dynamics between an artist and their audience. Digital platforms allow for interaction, special perks, and other premium content allowing an artist to directly interact with consumers.

The study will be guided by music theory, media studies, and cultural acceptance. Combining these will allow for a complete picture by looking at the specifics of music and how they are

viewed by the public. By looking at past trends, it's possible to give an educated guess about the future.

This research intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of the direction of the music industry. The transition from the earliest musical creations to the first methods of distribution, and the first methods of audience interaction should shed light on to where the future of the industry is heading.

Research Methods

Multiple methods will be needed to explore the dynamic impact digital platforms have had on the music industry. The goal of these methods is to provide important context free of bias by using both quantitative and qualitative information.

To start, basic data collection will be studied. Many digital platforms allow access to data such as play count, social media analytics, and popular genres. Collecting this information provides a baseline and context for the rest of the study.

Surveys will be distributed to both artists and consumers. This will provide two different perspectives on how digital platforms facilitate creation, distribution, and audience engagement.

Statistical analysis will be applied to the collected data to find trends between certain genres and compare what makes certain artists successful.

Interviews with targeted artists and audiences chosen from the statistical analysis will provide qualitative data. The interviews will give deeper insights into specific experiences from artists and audiences. The goal of the interviews is to find certain strategies that work and others that don't work.

Case studies will be selected from an even smaller group of those we interviewed. The case studies will paint a better picture as to what specifically makes an artist successful.

The month of May will be used to gather most of the quantitative data required. It may take some time to gather data from the many different digital platforms that exist and normalize the provided data. The month of June will be used to analyze the quantitative data and select what artists and audiences the study should focus on. July will begin the interview stage. Then once interviews are conducted, August will be used to mesh the quantitative and qualitative data together to create the final report. Once the report is completed, there will be a better understanding of how digital platforms directly impact artists and audiences.

Expected Outcome

At the conclusion of our research, we hope to have multiple deliverables to present to our peers and the community at large. We would like to have a full, comprehensive, research paper submitted into a peer-reviewed journal in the field of media studies, aiming to contribute to discussions about the impact of digital platforms on the music industry. Platforms will be considered for both distribution and creation. At some point, we would also like to have a presentation created so that we could present our findings to our peers. Ideally, we would gather feedback from the presentation that could better help us to present to others in the future. One idea for an outcome would be using our findings for consulting for students working with music. It would aim to educate UCF students who are looking to release music of their own. The new knowledge gained from this project will provide a deeper understanding of how digital platforms are reshaping music creation, distribution, and consumption. It will bridge the gaps between music theory, technology, and cultural shifts. Once we have aggregated the data from the research and presentations, we will have a broader understanding how technology impacts the music industry through multiple stages of musical creation. Students will better understand the music industry, not just the distribution, but how to craft a song using underlying music theory and how technology can assist them with creating music. Once music is created, they can use our findings to decide how best to release their music. The project will enhance curricular activities by integrating current industry practices into academic discussions and practical application, enriching the educational landscape. At the end, students will be better prepared to take the creative creations and spread them around to others thereby extending their musical reach to others.

Literature Review

[1] P. Hayward, Ed., *Culture, Technology and Creativity*. London: John Libbey, 1990.

[2] J. Bockstedt, R. J. Kauffman and F. J. Riggins, "The Move to Artist-Led Online Music Distribution: Explaining Structural Changes in the Digital Music Market,"

[3] R. Towse and C. Handke, *Handbook on the Digital Creative Economy*. Edward Elgar, 2014.

[4] Shane Murphy & Margee Hume. (2023) The new digital music marketing ecosystem: artist direct. Creative Industries Journal 0:0, pages 1-33.

[5] Pendergast, S. (2021). Creative Music-Making with Digital Audio Workstations. Music Educators Journal, 108(2), 44-56.

Preliminary Work and Experience

I have my own personal experience when it comes to musical creation and distribution. Not only have I created my own music, but I have also had songs that I helped record, mix, and played released on iTunes and Spotify. I already have plenty of background information. I have done my own personal research on DAWs, recording equipment, mixing, and mastering, and releasing digital music. I have a fair bit of experience with the top DAWs such as Ableton Live 12 and others. The one sector I would need to start almost from scratch would be how to best work with algorithms. Other than that, I have a baseline to work off of when it comes to the creation and distribution of digital media like music. Especially when it comes to using smaller publishers. Finally, I have a completed minor in music giving me plenty of music theory to get started on this project with.

IRB/IAUC Statement

This research involves conducting surveys and interviews with human subjects, specifically artists and music consumers. Therefore, it requires approval from the IRB to ensure all ethical considerations and participant protections are addressed.

Budget

Some money will be needed to provide an incentive for surveys. Surveys shouldn't take too long. 20 surveys for music producers and 20 surveys for consumers, each supplying $10 should be sufficient. That would bring the running total to $400. Lastly, software will be needed to track data, which could cost up to $100. An extra $100 would be used for miscellaneous expenses.